

# RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH



A survey of the most basic skills essential for  
Inductive Bible Study for students who are  
limited to the English language.

James Nizza



**YOUTH WITH A MISSION OZARKS**

Dedicated to all those who laboring to entrust to faithful men and women  
the truth of the Gospel so that it will be passed on to others as well.

2 Timothy 2:2



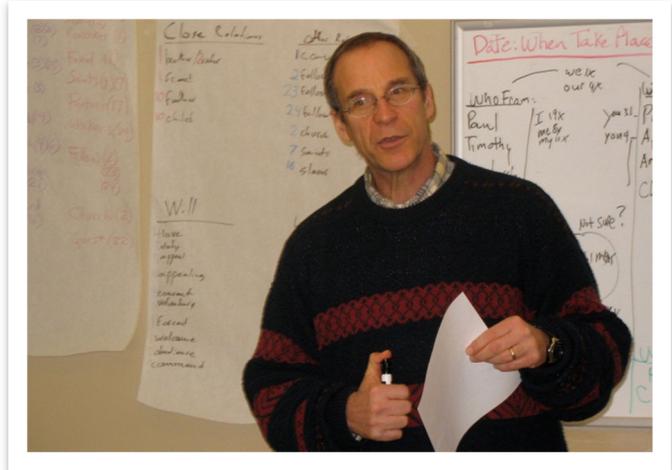
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## About the Author

James Nizza passed from this life on August 11, 2010, having battled cancer for eight years. His was an academic mind but his heart was intent on getting people firmly planted in the Kingdom. Right to the end he still dreamed of training more people in restricted nations so that they could train others.

Once immersed in a background of cults and the occult, Jim became a Christian at age 21, and immediately had an insatiable hunger for the Word. He had to start from scratch, not really knowing who Abraham or Peter or Isaiah were. A missions trip to Mexico led to enrolling in Bible college, which led to another missions trip, which led to meeting some YWAMers in Germany. He soon joined YWAM himself, first living in Germany, then Kona, Hawaii, and finally pioneering YWAM Ozarks in Arkansas. He worked for years with the School of Biblical Studies, and his hunger for more understanding of how to train people in Bible study led to the completion of his Master's Degree in Biblical Studies. Thus, this thesis.

Studying and teaching the Word stoked Jim's fire and passion. Students would tell him, "When you teach I see the fire of God in you." He could get teenagers and grandmothers both excited about digging into a passage for treasure. "I never knew that was in there...!" they would exclaim. When people in other language groups did skits during his Inductive Bible Study Seminars they would erupt in peals of laughter, a reaction so different from what they thought was Bible study.

This thesis encourages you to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength—with *all* that you are. Use it and pass its principles on to others. It would bless Jim immensely to see it multiplied through your life into many others.

Barb Nizza,  
YWAM Ozarks Director

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# Abstract

The Inductive Bible Study movement began at the dawn of the Twentieth Century. Beginning at Biblical Seminary in New York City, this movement quickly spread. It made a methodical procedure for Bible study available to theologians and layman alike. This thesis explores the inductive method of studying the Bible and many of the skills developed to implement it.

The inductive process consists of three stages. First, observation consists of determining what the text says. Second, interpretation involves determining the meaning of the text to the original reader. Third, application is concerned with acting on the truth learned.

Three phases of study are suggested. First, the whole book is surveyed to grasp an understanding of how it forms a unity of meaning. Next, a book's parts are analyzed. The meaning of paragraphs, sentences, and words are considered in details. Finally all that is learned is considered and life changes implemented in the synthesis phase.

In addition to the inductive method developed out of Biblical Seminary, this thesis also surveys the areas of general and special hermeneutics which were not a strength of the Inductive Bible Study movement.

## Preface

My initial exposure to the inductive method goes back to my Bible College class in the Methods of Bible Study. One of our texts was Oletta Wald's *The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*. But our time of studying this method was not sufficient to give me a grasp of the tools involved, nor a love of the process. My next encounter with the inductive method was not until fourteen years later when I studied at the School of Biblical Studies (SBS) at the University of the Nations in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Nine months of study gave me a new view of God and a new grasp on the Bible. After a few years on staff with the SBS in Kona I began to realize that I had enough of a grasp of the principles of the inductive process to teach effectively, but I did not necessarily have complete conscious knowledge of why all the exercises that I had been taught worked so effectively.

It was about this time that I was asked to take leadership of the SBS on the Kona campus. The challenge of training others motivated me to more careful analysis of the process. I became more and more concerned with how to effectively teach others to study the Bible. I decided that this was the area of specialty that I wanted to research for my Master's thesis.

In 1995 Dr. Ron Smith suggested I contact Dr. Mary Graham as a resource. Dr. Graham operates the Inductive Bible Study Network which helps to network those involved in Inductive Bible Study and helps to preserve the original focus of Biblical Seminary of New York. The resources Dr. Graham provided and her own input into our Kona program opened for me the whole world and roots of Biblical Seminary. My thesis begins with the establishment of this seminary and its outreach in furthering the use of Inductive Bible Study.

# Chapter 1 | Introductory Overview

*“If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?” – Albert Einstein<sup>1</sup>*

The Bible is one of the most important gifts God has given humans yet often it is not used effectively as an essential part of a Christian’s pursuit of life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Rather Bible study is often done in a hit-or-miss, haphazard fashion, and discoveries can be more an accident than by intention.

Robert Traina in his classic work, *Methodical Bible Study*, begins by comparing a Bible student to a detective.<sup>2</sup> Both need to systematically and efficiently gather evidence. Both need a procedure to process that evidence to come to the right conclusions. So, as a detective needs to be trained in these skills, so a student of the Bible needs a method of studying the Bible. In addition, the student of the Bible needs tools to guide him in the application of the truths discovered in his pursuit of life and godliness.

The term, “method”, is derived from the Greek *methods* which means “a way or path of transit.”<sup>3</sup> In application to Bible study it refers to the need to follow a certain path or “orderly procedure”<sup>4</sup> which will effectively and efficiently<sup>5</sup> guide a student in the study of the Bible. Therefore this thesis researches the inductive method of Bible study designed to effectively achieve this goal.

## The Beginning of Inductive Bible Study

The Biblical Seminary in New York, established by Dr. Wilbert W. White in 1900<sup>6</sup>, taught a method of inductive Bible study that has spread widely into many different Christian groups and is continuing today. Dr. White was inspired by William Rainey Harper, his professor at Yale, because Dr. Harper was such a phenomenal teacher and also because of a questionnaire Dr. Harper sent to one thousand ministers.<sup>7</sup> Eight hundred eighty-eight of the ministers in the active work of the pastorate stated that their greatest lack in seminary training was in the field of English Bible. Thus Harper held the conviction that the students had a greater need to study the scriptures in their own

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<sup>1</sup> Quote Attributed to Einstein from the World Wide Web.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Traina, *Methodical Bible Study: A New Approach to Hermeneutics* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Asbury Theological Seminary, 1980) 3

<sup>3</sup> Howard Tillman Kuist, *These Words upon Thy Heart* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1947) 46. See also Traina 4.

<sup>4</sup> Kuist 59; see also Irving L. Jensen, *Independent Bible Study: A Guide to Personal Study of the Scriptures* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971) 20.

<sup>5</sup> Traina 3, Kuist 48

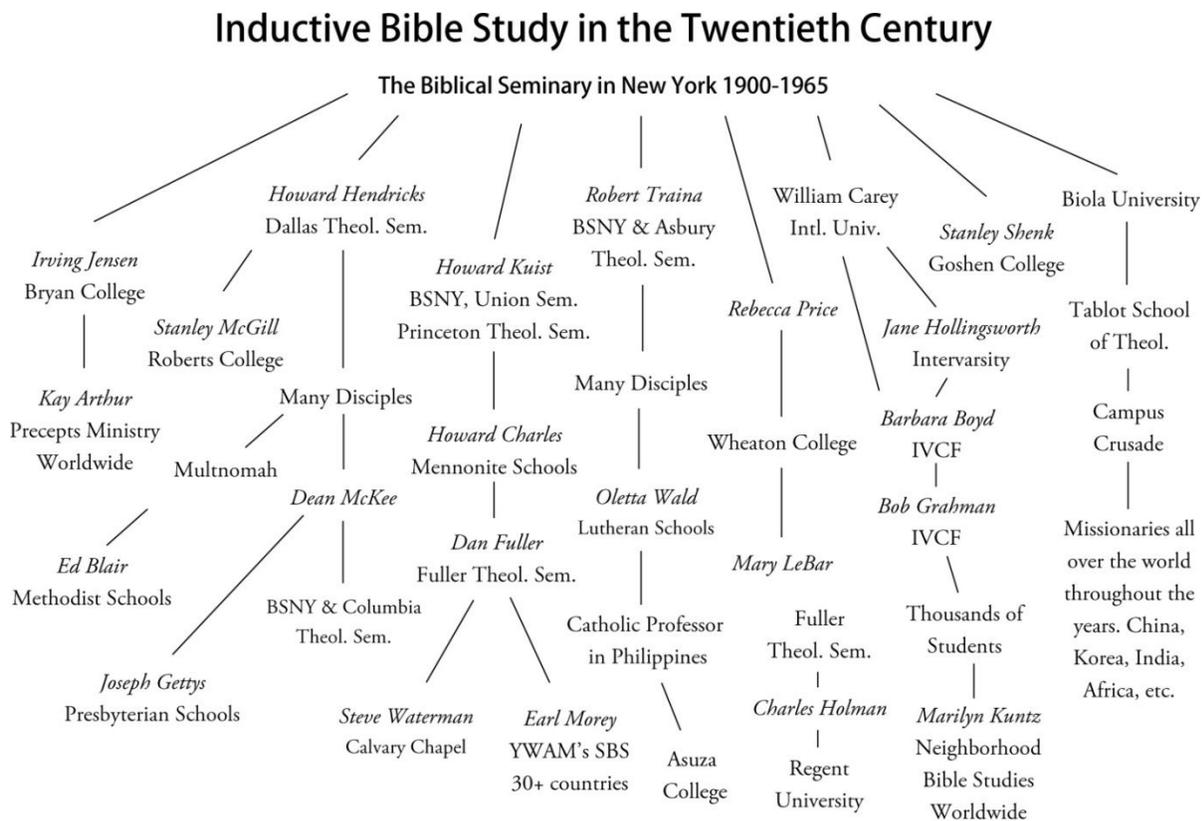
<sup>6</sup> Steven M. Nolt, “‘Avoid Provoking the Spirit of Controversy’: The Irenic Evangelical Legacy of the Biblical Seminary in New York,” *Reforming the Center, American Protestantism 1900 - Present*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998) 319. See also: David L. Thompson, *Bible Study That Works* (Nappanee, Indiana: Evangel Press, 1994) 12.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Richard Eberhardt, *The Bible in the Making of Ministers: The Scriptural Basis of Theological Education: The Lifework of Wilbert Webster White* (New York: Association Press, 1949) 53.

vernacular than in the Hebrew and Greek.<sup>8</sup> In his resultant campaign for reform he maintained that half of the students' program should involve study from the English text.<sup>9</sup> Little did either realize that Wilbert White, his assistant from Ohio, would be the man to inaugurate it.

White's conviction and fervency for Bible study in the students' own tongue appears to have spread among the faculty and students of Biblical Seminary. One graduate, Charles Eberhardt, quoted his professor Howard Tillman Kuist, as saying that "the mother tongue is the most effective instrument of learning because it is the medium in which he thinks best."<sup>10</sup> Traina adds that "the mother tongue enables one to see broad relations in a way virtually impossible when using the original languages."

Figure 1



Adapted from Mary Graham, ed., *Inductive Bible Study Network Newsletter* (1539 E. Howard St., Pasadena, CA 91104, No. 17, Fall 1996)

<sup>8</sup> Mary L. Graham, "The Present Status of Inductive Bible Study in Selected Christian Colleges and Universities, Bible Colleges and Seminaries." (Doctoral Dissertation. Columbia Pacific University, California, 1991) 17. See also Nolt 326; Thompson 11.

<sup>9</sup> Mary L. Graham, "The Present Status of Inductive Bible Study in Selected Christian Colleges and Universities, Bible Colleges and Seminaries." (Doctoral Dissertation Draft. Columbia Pacific University, California, 1991) 17. See also Nolt 326.

<sup>10</sup> Howard Tillman Kuist, *Introductory Lectures in Pauline Epistles*, given at the Biblical Seminary in New York, January, 1947, quoted by Eberhardt 106. See also Jensen 92.

The inductive approach to Bible study which Dr. White developed became known as the “Method of the Biblical Seminary.”<sup>11</sup> The method was received with great enthusiasm by the students and flourished as graduates went on to teach it globally. Figure 1 is an overview of the spread of the Inductive Bible Study Movement.<sup>12</sup>

## The Components of Bible Study

Although various authors emphasize different aspects in their approach,<sup>13</sup> the number of components needed for a methodical approach to Bible study can be reduced to three. These components are the phases of Bible study, the inductive process, and the elements of study.

## The Phases of Bible Study

There are sequential steps for studying a book of the Bible. These are the Phases of Bible study. In using the inductive process of observation, interpretation, and application, some employ them in two phases: analysis and synthesis. Others use a three phase paradigm of survey, analysis, and synthesis. This paper uses the paradigm of survey, analysis, and synthesis.<sup>14</sup>

## The Phases Defined

### Survey

The survey phase involves looking at a book as a whole. Another way of putting this is that the survey phase is the “macro” study of the structure of a book. It involves looking at how the paragraph blocks fit together. If one used an analogy of a forest versus trees, the survey would be the study of the forest, a big picture view of the book. It would be like getting into a helicopter and looking at the layout of the forest. What are the features of design? What groves of trees are in this forest? To borrow an analogy for the sake of camera buffs, it is like looking through a wide-angle lens to get the big picture of a book.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Unpublished letter from Mary Graham to the author in May 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Graham’s diagram did not intend to show the sequential progression of the inductive movement nor depict which ministries were spawned by prior ministries. Rather, the rays were intended to indicate how widespread inductive Bible study had spread. Dr. Mary Graham, Inductive Bible Study Network, Pasadena, CA, telephone interview, July 17, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> To note a few examples: Osborne and Woodward, Morey and Lincoln all approach a Bible study model from the general perspective emphasizing the survey, analysis and synthesis phases of study. Traina, Jensen, Hendricks, Wald, and Graham all approach a Bible study model from the perspective of the stages of the inductive process: observation, interpretation, and application.

<sup>14</sup> Traina, 72.

<sup>15</sup> David L. Thompson, *Bible Study That Works* (Nappanee, Indiana: Evangel Press, 1994) 33.

## Analysis

The analysis phase concerns investigation of the parts of a book. Another way of putting this is that it is the “micro” study of the structure of a book where the details of the text are scrutinized. In the analogy of a forest versus the trees, the analytical phase is the study of the trees. The student walks through a grove of trees and inspects individual trees. The bark, leaves, and roots are all scrutinized. To use the camera analogy, the wide-angle lens is replaced by a fifty millimeter lens,<sup>16</sup> and at times the camera is replaced by the microscope.

## Synthesis

The third phase is synthesis or integration.<sup>17</sup> This involves reviewing and evaluating all the material that has been studied in order to grasp new levels of meaning and applying principles learned from the book studied.<sup>18</sup>

## The Reason for Employing Phases

The author believes a three phase approach emphasizes the values of the Inductive Bible Study movement as a literary approach to the Bible. Students often miss the significance of considering a book as a whole unit because they want to “really study” (i.e., analysis). A paradigm which initially emphasizes the survey phase before the skill of observation orients the student to the significance of considering the whole as a literary unit before becoming engrossed in study of details of individual passages.

Ryken, in *Words of Delight*, lists a number of characteristics of a literary approach to the Bible.<sup>19</sup> Consider these characteristics, and how they demonstrate that the Inductive Bible Study movement embraces a literary approach. A literary approach:

1. “Refuses to separate meaning from form.”<sup>20</sup> Traina, Jensen, and Graham all speak of the meaning of a text being based on form and content.<sup>21</sup>
2. Focuses “on the unity of books and passages.”<sup>22</sup> A major premise in the Inductive Bible Study movement is that passages of literature, like the components in other forms of art, are

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<sup>16</sup> Thompson 33.

<sup>17</sup> Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living By the Book* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991) 41.

<sup>18</sup> Inductive Bible study involves good reading skills. Compare these three phases to Adler’ and Van Dorens’ four questions on how to achieve *active reading*: 1. What is the book as a whole? 2. What is being said in detail and how? 3. Is it true? 4. What of it? If the book has given you information, you must ask about its significance. Mortimer J. Adler & Charles Van Doren, *How To Read A Book* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972) 46-7.

<sup>19</sup> Leland, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49516-6287: Baker Book House, 1992) 20-23.

<sup>20</sup> Ryken 20.

<sup>21</sup> Kuist 93; Traina 37; Jensen 29; Graham 28, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Ryken 21.

arranged together into a unity by certain laws of composition.<sup>23</sup>

3. “Sees the value in the artistry that is everywhere evident in the Bible.”<sup>24</sup> Again, the area of laws of composition is founded on the premise that literary works are artistic compositions. The Bible not only conveys information but does it in a way that reflects the excellence of its Creator. Traina begins with the premise that the Bible is an exceptional literary work.<sup>25</sup>
4. Pays “attention to literary genre.”<sup>26</sup> All authors in this movement refer to genre.<sup>27</sup>
5. “Is sensitive to the imaginative nature of the Bible. It helps us to recreate the experiences and sensations in passages”<sup>28</sup> The concept of “re-creation”<sup>29</sup> and the use of the imagination is a characteristic which the author found unique to the inductive Bible study movement, and intrinsic to all the writers who have ties back to Biblical Seminary.<sup>30</sup>
6. “Is a book of universal experience.”<sup>31</sup> This is a presupposition in order to engage in application.

The order that Ryken listed these characteristics has been changed in order to show where they fit in a paradigm of the phases of Bible study. All six characteristics are also distinctives included in Inductive Bible Study. Points four and five will be discussed under interpretation, and point six is a presupposition of application. The first three characteristics are all intrinsic to the Inductive Bible Study movement.

Since the Inductive Bible Study movement is a literary approach, the paradigm initially emphasizes the phases of study. Therefore it is immediately accentuated that the student must first survey the whole before analyzing its parts. In contrast, when the student is presented with a model that underscores the stages of study—observation, interpretation, and application—there is the danger that the student will immediately focus on observing and interpreting the details of particular passages since that is the approach that most have been taught.

## The Inductive Process

As Traina notes, there are two approaches to any kind of study: induction and deduction.<sup>32</sup> The inductive process can be defined as the study of the specific details of the text in order to come to

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<sup>23</sup> Kuist 160, 161.

<sup>24</sup> Ryken 22.

<sup>25</sup> Ryken 9.

<sup>26</sup> Ryken 21.

<sup>27</sup> e.g., William C. Lincoln, *Personal Bible Study* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975) 121. See also Traina 68; Hendricks 209.

<sup>28</sup> Ryken 21.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix 1: Re-creation.

<sup>30</sup> e.g., Kuist 58, 59; Traina 93; Jensen 119; and Lincoln 94.

<sup>31</sup> Ryken 22.

<sup>32</sup> Traina 7.

conclusions and to determine general principles based on those specific facts.<sup>33</sup> As pertains to the Bible, it is the observation and study of the facts and details of the text. Conclusions are then based on the evidence found.<sup>34</sup>

## The Relationship of the Inductive and Deductive Approach

Deduction begins with general principles and moves to specific details.<sup>35</sup> In the study of the Bible, this means starting with theological and doctrinal positions, and then finding facts and details from the text which support this position or view.<sup>36</sup>

The two types of logic are actually complementary.<sup>37</sup> Induction is the process by which discoveries are made as facts and details are studied.<sup>38</sup> Deduction on the other hand is the “the logic of proof.”<sup>39</sup> From these definitions, it is clear that the initial process should be induction since induction is the more objective process.<sup>40</sup> In fact, the inductive method is often compared to the objectivity of the scientific method.<sup>41</sup> But after a truth is discovered, deduction needs to be employed to develop the implications of the truth for application.<sup>42</sup> Jensen says that complete Bible study would not take place without the inclusion of deduction.<sup>43</sup> Eberhardt concurs, stating that, “Induction, particulars, must always be understood in relationship to the grand relationships only deduction can give.”<sup>44</sup> The following comparison sums up how White depicted the dynamics between induction and deduction.<sup>45</sup>

### Induction

Observes particulars and then draws inferences

Formulation of principles

### Deduction

Starts with a general principles and then observes

Explication of principles

<sup>33</sup> Traina 7.

<sup>34</sup> Traina 7.

<sup>35</sup> Ron Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Seminar Handouts*, (Kailua-Kona: University of the Nations, no date).

<sup>36</sup> At the time that Biblical seminary was founded, theological education was “almost entirely deductive and “formal with students memorizing information.” Graham 20.

<sup>37</sup> Eberhardt 129.

<sup>38</sup> Kuist 61. See also Eberhardt 130.

<sup>39</sup> From Dr. H. H. Horne's' analysis of education quoted by Eberhardt 130; see also Kuist 61.

<sup>40</sup> Traina 7.

<sup>41</sup> Jensen 45. See also Wald, Oletta, *The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1975) 13; and Wilbert W. White, *Suggestions to Beginners about How To Study* (Albany, NY: Press of Frank H. Every & Co., 1930) 28-34.

<sup>42</sup> Kuist 61; see also Lincoln 22.

<sup>43</sup> Jensen 46.

<sup>44</sup> Eberhardt 129.

<sup>45</sup> Graham 20, 21.

Moves from part to whole	Moves from whole to part
Logic of discovery	Logic of proof
Beginning of process of knowledge	Conclusion of process of knowledge
Mental habits in process of formation	Mental habits in process of application
Leads students to inform themselves	Informs the students

Thus deduction necessitates accurate presuppositions. These presuppositions must be derived from “accurate observations and sound reasoning.”<sup>46</sup> Lincoln warns that one can use the process of deduction to “prove just about anything.”<sup>47</sup> So while the two processes “complement”<sup>48</sup> each other, the inductive process is needed first.

## Induction Requires Direct Study of the Bible

The primacy of the inductive method as a way of ensuring objective, accurate conclusions leads to another value that a student needs to have: a desire to study the Bible for himself. If induction is the initial process to be employed, then the student needs to be personally studying the Bible, not the thoughts of someone else about the Bible. Teachers within the Inductive Bible Study movement use terms to describe this kind of Bible study as a “direct encounter”<sup>49</sup> and “original firsthand”<sup>50</sup> work. Dr. Graham recalled how Biblical Seminary gave students a handout asking them to decide whether they would like to view a sunset or listen to a description of one. When they chose to watch a sunset, they were challenged that in Bible study as well, self-study was preferable to hearing someone else’s views.<sup>51</sup>

The primacy of the inductive process and original firsthand work in the Inductive Bible Study movement is captured in the humorous and often quoted story of a student entering the field of zoology in Harvard under Professor J. Louis Agassiz:<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Graham 21.

<sup>47</sup> Lincoln 21.

<sup>48</sup> Earl W. Morey, *Search the Scriptures* (Vienna, Virginia: Agape Ministry, Inc., 1993) 4; see also Eberhardt 129.

<sup>49</sup> Thompson 2

<sup>50</sup> Jensen 15, 173.

<sup>51</sup> Graham 22.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Scudder from Appendix *American Poems*. Houghton, Osgood & Co., 1880 quoted by Mary Creswell Graham, *Inductive Bible Study Explained* (Mary L. Graham, 1539 E. Howard Street, Pasadena, CA 91104: 1991, Revised 1995) 11. See also: White 24-27; Jensen 173-178; Graham 23-25; Lincoln 139-143; SBS Handout; Hendricks paraphrases the story 47,8.

## *The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz*

It was more than fifteen years ago that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz and told him I had enrolled my name in the scientific school as a student of natural history. He asked me a few questions about my object in coming, my antecedents generally, the mode in which I afterwards proposed to use the knowledge I might acquire, and finally, whether I wished to study any special branch. To the latter I replied that while I wished to be well-grounded in all departments of zoology, I purposed to devote myself especially to insects.

“When do you wish to begin?” he asked.

“Now,” I replied.

This seemed to please him, and with an energetic “Very well,” he took from a shelf a huge jar of specimens in yellow alcohol. “Take this fish,” said he, “and look at it; we call it a Haemulon (pronounced Hem-yulon); by and by I will ask what you have seen.”

With that he left me, but in a moment returned with explicit instructions as to the care of the object entrusted to me.

“No man is fit to be a naturalist,” said he, “who does not know how to take care of specimens.”

I was to keep the fish before me in a tin tray, and occasionally moisten the surface with alcohol from the jar, always taking care to replace the stopper tightly. Those were not the days of ground glass stoppers and elegantly shaped exhibition jars; all the old students will recall the huge, neckless glass bottles and their leaky, wax-besmeared corks, half eaten by insects and begrimed with cellar dust. Entomology was a cleaner science than ichthyology, but the example of the professor who had unhesitatingly plunged to the bottom of the jar to produce the fish was infectious; and though this alcohol had “a very ancient and fishlike smell,” I really dared not show any aversion within these sacred precincts, and treated the alcohol as though it were pure water. Still I was conscious of a passing feeling of disappointment, for gazing at a fish did not commend itself to an ardent entomologist. My friends at home, too, were annoyed when they discovered that no amount of eau de Cologne would drown the perfume which haunted me like a shadow.

In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the professor who had, however, left the museum; and when I returned, after lingering over some of the odd animals stored in the upper apartment, I found my specimen to be dry all over. I dashed the fluid over the fish as if to resuscitate it from a fainting spell, and looked with anxiety for a return of the normal, sloppy appearance. This little excitement over, nothing was to be done but return to a steadfast gaze at my mute companion. Half an hour passed, an hour, another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around, looked it in the face—ghastly; I looked at it from behind, beneath, above, sideways,

at a three-quarter view—just as ghastly. I was in despair. At an early hour I concluded that lunch was necessary; so with infinite relief, I carefully replaced the fish in the jar, and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the museum, but had gone and would not return for several hours. My fellow students were too busy to be disturbed by continued conversation. Slowly I drew forth that hideous fish, and with a feeling of desperation looked at it again. I might not use a magnifying glass; instruments of all kinds were interdicted. My two hands, my two eyes, and the fish—it seemed a most limited field. I pushed my fingers down its throat to see how sharp its teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me—I would draw the fish—and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the professor returned.

“That is right,” said he, “a pencil is one of the best eyes. I am glad to notice, too, that you keep your specimen wet and your bottle corked.” With these encouraging words he added, “Well, what is it like?”

He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me: the fringed gill—arches and movable operculum; the pores of the head, fleshy lips, and lidless eyes; the lateral line, the spinous fin, and forked tail; the compressed and arched body.

When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment, he said, “You have not looked very carefully.” He continued, more earnestly, “You haven't seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal, which is as plainly before your eyes as the fish itself. Look again! Look again!” and he left me to my misery.

I was piqued; I was mortified. Still more of that wretched fish? But now I set myself to the task with a will, and discovered one new thing after another, until I saw how just the professor's criticism had been. The afternoon passed quickly, and then, towards its close, the professor inquired, “Do you see it yet?”

“No,” I replied, “I am certain I do not, but I see how little I saw before.”

“That is next best,” said he earnestly, “but I won't hear you now; put away your fish and go home; perhaps you will be ready with a better answer in the morning. I will examine you then, before you look at the fish.”

This was disconcerting. Not only must I think of my fish all night, studying, without the object before me, what this unknown but most visible feature might be, but also, without reviewing my new discoveries, I must give an exact account of them the next day. I had a bad memory; so I walked home by Charles River in a distracted state, with my perplexities.

The cordial greeting from the professor the next morning was reassuring. Here was a

man who seemed to be quite as anxious as I that I should see for myself what he saw.

“Do you perhaps mean,” I asked, “that the fish has symmetrical sides with paired organs?” His thoroughly pleased, “Of course, of course!” repaid the wakeful hours of the previous night. After he had discoursed most happily and enthusiastically, as he always did, upon the importance of this point, I ventured to ask what I should do next. “Oh, look at your fish!” he said, and then left me again to my own devices. In a little more than an hour he returned and heard my new catalogue.

“That is good, that is good!” he repeated, “but that is not all; go on.” And so, for three long days he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. “Look, look, look,” was his repeated injunction. This was the best entomological lesson I ever had, a lesson whose influence has extended to the details of every subsequent study. It was a legacy the professor has left to me, as he left it to many others, a legacy of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part.

A year afterwards, some of us were amusing ourselves with chalking outlandish beasts upon the black board. We drew prancing starfishes; frogs in mortal combat; hydro-headed worms; stately crawfishes standing on their tails, bearing aloft umbrellas; and grotesque fishes with gaping mouths and staring eyes. The professor came in shortly after, and was as much amused as any at our experiments. He looked at the fishes.

“Haemulons, every one of them,” he said, “Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ drew them.”

True; and to this day, if I attempt to draw a fish, I can draw nothing but Haemulons.

The fourth day a second fish of the same group was placed beside the first, and I was bidden to point out the resemblances and difference between the two; another and another followed, until the entire family lay before me, and a whole legion of jars covered the table and surrounding shelves. The odor had become a pleasant perfume, and even now the sight of an old, six-inch, worm-eaten cork brings fragrant memories!

The whole group of Haemulons was thus brought into view; and whether engaged upon the dissection of the internal organs, preparation and examination of the bony framework, or the description of the various parts, Agassiz's training in the method of observing facts and their orderly arrangement, was ever accompanied by the urgent exhortation not to be content with them.

“Facts are stupid things,” he would say, “until brought into connection with some general law.”

At the end of eight months, it was almost with reluctance that I left these friends and turned to insects; but what I gained by this outside experience has been of greater value than years of later investigation in my favorite groups.

This story serves to emphasize some of the rudiments of any inductive study. First, the student needs to persevere in observation in order to grasp his subject. Second, he will increase his efficiency if he notes his observations. Third, it is not enough to note facts, but the student needs to note how they are organized and related to each other.<sup>53</sup> While pure induction by itself will not yield complete results, it is definitely primary and initial approach of personal, direct, methodical Bible study.

## The Three Stages of the Inductive Approach

There are three stages involved in the inductive approach to Bible Study. The first stage is observation. This stage answers the question, “What does the text say?” The specific facts and details of the text are thoroughly examined to note what is there. The second stage is interpretation. This stage answers the question, “What does the text mean to the original reader?” The concern in this stage of study is to determine how the text was understood by those to whom it was originally delivered. The third stage is application. This stage answers the question, “What does the text mean to me? How can I apply it to my life?” During this stage of study attention is focused on the meaning and application of the text in one’s contemporary circumstances. These stages must be followed in consecutive order in order to assure accurate Bible Study.

## The Elements of Bible Study

The *elements* of Bible study are the various “substances” that are analyzed in the inductive process. There are five broad categories that include all the elements that a student will study. They are *type of literature, terms, structure, atmosphere, and historical background.*

### Type of Literature

The first element that one needs to take note of is the Type of Literature. One of the great challenges in studying the Bible is the breadth of literary forms employed by its authors. Ferguson notes that “nearly every use of language with which we are familiar occurs in some place in the Bible.”<sup>54</sup> In the broadest of categories, there are two types of literature.

The first is primarily for relating information. It is meant to touch the reader on the cognitive, or intellect level. This is technically known as “referential language.”<sup>55</sup> It is also what is called prose. Prose is defined as “the ordinary form of spoken or written language, without metrical structure, as

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<sup>53</sup> Jensen 44, 45.

<sup>54</sup> Duncan Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986) 29.

<sup>55</sup> Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516: Baker Books, 1998) 73.

distinguished from poetry or verse.”<sup>56</sup> This is the kind of communication people use daily in their lives. It is standard language.

The second kind of literature is used to relate to the reader on the feeling level. It is used to raise up emotions and move people to action. This is technically known as “commissive language.”<sup>57</sup> As a broad category, it is often called poetry. Poetry is also widely employed in the Bible. Almost half of the Old Testament<sup>58</sup> and around a third of the Bible as a whole<sup>59</sup> is written in poetry, so one has to be aware of the poetic form. There are three traits of Hebrew poetry to note. First is the pervasive use of parallelism.<sup>60</sup> Second is the extensive usage of figurative language and figures of speech.<sup>61</sup> And third the writer seeks to touch the reader on an emotional level.<sup>62</sup> The writer wants the reader to not just cognitively understand his message but to experience it.<sup>63</sup>

## Genre

Within these two major types of literature are numerous genres that the reader needs to be aware of in order to interpret what the text means. While genres will be considered in more depth in the discussion of special hermeneutics, the following is a brief overview of the major genres found within the Bible.

- **Narratives.** This, also known as historical narrative, is a story.<sup>64</sup> In addition to the New Testament Gospels and Acts, the Old Testament is comprised of over forty percent narrative<sup>65</sup> and it is the most widespread style in the Bible. It’s also a very popular style.<sup>66</sup>
- **Wisdom Literature.** Wisdom literature deals with knowing how to live a moral and godly life,<sup>67</sup> gaining a practical knowledge for living, and providing a philosophical understanding of life.<sup>68</sup> Examples are Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes.

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<sup>56</sup> Webster’s *Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York, N. Y.: Random House, 1996).

<sup>57</sup> Stein 73.

<sup>58</sup> Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (1890; rpt. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999) 146.

<sup>59</sup> Dr. William W. Klein, Dr. Craig L. Blomberg and Dr. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction To Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993) 215

<sup>60</sup> Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992) 199; see Lincoln 122; Traina 69; Hendricks 213.

<sup>61</sup> McQuilkin 199; see Lincoln 122; Traina 69; Ryken 159.

<sup>62</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 212; see Traina 69; Lincoln 122.

<sup>63</sup> Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard 216; see Ryken 161.

<sup>64</sup> Fee and Stuart dislike the use of the term, “story,” to describe narrative because they feel it conjures up images of fiction in today’s reader. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth* (Michigan: Academic Books, 1982) 78,79.

<sup>65</sup> Fee and Stuart 78.

<sup>66</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 211.

<sup>67</sup> Fee and Stuart 208; see Stein 85.

<sup>68</sup> Baker Encyclopedia, Vol. 2 Peter C. Craigie, “Wisdom, Wisdom Literature” 2150, 2151; see also Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Seminar Handout*.

- **Prophecy.** As a genre, prophecy is about God communicating to His people through His mouthpieces the prophets.<sup>69</sup> Fee and Stuart call them “covenant enforcers.”<sup>70</sup> Often their purpose was to bring discipline to Israel.<sup>71</sup> The primary purpose of prophecy is to “tell forth”<sup>72</sup> or forth tell God’s message. While there is a foretelling element to prophecy, it was tied to the prophets’ message of repentance.
- **Gospels.** The Gospels are a unique genre created by the Gospel writers.<sup>73</sup> The focus is on the years of Jesus’ ministry.<sup>74</sup> A good deal of space focuses on His last week on earth as well as His resurrection. Their purpose is to give a foundation for faith in Jesus, “and to provide [the Church] firm support in its mission for preaching, instruction, and debate with its opponents.”<sup>75</sup>
- **Parables.** A parable is a realistic story with the purpose of teaching a spiritual truth.<sup>76</sup> These stories are meant to get the listener to respond and often shock the audience.<sup>77</sup> A third of Jesus’ teaching within the first three gospels was delivered in the form of parables.<sup>78</sup>
- **Epistles.** An epistle is a letter. It is written in response to a specific problem or occasion.<sup>79</sup> An epistle is written according to the format of letters of the first century. It is a logical discussion of ideas.<sup>80</sup>
- **Apocalypse.** Apocalyptic literature would arise in response to persecution in order to bring encouragement.<sup>81</sup> Its theme was the ultimate triumph of God and His saints.<sup>82</sup> This literature is highly symbolic,<sup>83</sup> and employs visions.<sup>84</sup>
- **Law.** The term, law, can refer to the entire Pentateuch or the body of laws in the Old Testament. As a genre the Law is the section of the Old Testament that contains its six hundred

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<sup>69</sup> Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985) 302; see also Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980) 39.

<sup>70</sup> Fee and Stuart 167.

<sup>71</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 218.

<sup>72</sup> Archer 303.

<sup>73</sup> Werner Georg Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Trans. Howard Clark Kee. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984) 37; see Fee and Stuart 133.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Seminar Handout*.

<sup>75</sup> Kummel 37.

<sup>76</sup> Terry 188; see also Sterrett 155; Lincoln 126; Traina 71.

<sup>77</sup> Fee and Stuart 138.

<sup>78</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral, A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1991) 235.

<sup>79</sup> Fee and Stuart 48.

<sup>80</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 210; see also Wald 33.

<sup>81</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976) 384.

<sup>82</sup> David E. Aune, “Apocalyptic,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible Volume 1* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989) 122.

<sup>83</sup> Lincoln 129; see also Traina 71; Hendricks and Hendricks 215.

<sup>84</sup> Traina 71, Lincoln 129.

plus laws.<sup>85</sup> It begins at Exodus 20 (the Ten Commandments) and extends to the end of Deuteronomy 33.<sup>86</sup>

## Terms

The second category of elements of Bible study are the terms. It is important to consider why the term, “term,” is used instead of the term, “word.” Communication is made up of words. A word is the most basic “building block”<sup>87</sup> of language. But words can change in meaning according to their usage or context, in a sentence and discussion. For example, one could say, “I saw a bear,” or one could say, “I couldn’t bear the load.” In both cases the same word was used, but the difference in meaning between an animal and an action is discerned by the reader through its context in usage. This is one of the difficulties of language. It involves symbols<sup>88</sup> that can have several meanings. It is only usage of the word which makes the intended meaning clear. In contrast, a “term is a word in its context in a sentence.”<sup>89</sup> Adler defines a term as “an unambiguous word.” In other words, when a word is unmistakably used for an intended meaning, then it is a “term” and not merely a word. Thus, for the purposes of this discussion, the most basic unit of thought is the “term.”<sup>90</sup> This topic and its significance will be covered in more detail in the analytic phase of study. For now it is enough to understand that it is very important to differentiate between a term and a word, and to understand why it is important to use the word “term” in these discussions. Thus “term” is a more accurate designation for the objectives of Bible study.

A term can be either in its literal or figurative sense. A literal meaning of a term refers to its common or usual designation.<sup>91</sup> A word can also be used in a figurative way to form a bridge between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar to the reader.<sup>92</sup> Again, while this subject will be handled in detail in the analytical phase, it is sufficient during the survey phase for the student to try and determine if a word is used in a figurative or literal sense, not to define what it means. While this may not always be possible, the fact that a term is giving the student difficulty would help to alert him to the importance of giving this term more attention later.<sup>93</sup>

This idea of noting words that are difficult for the reader to understand is a tremendous key that Adler has contributed. There is no way to understand an author’s message if one cannot understand his terminology. So the student has to take note of words that are troublesome. It might be that the

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<sup>85</sup> Jack Kuhatschek, *Taking the Guesswork Out of Applying the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois 60515: Intervarsity Press, 1990) 93; see also Stuart and Fee 149.

<sup>86</sup> Fee and Stuart 149; see also Stein 192.

<sup>87</sup> A. Berkley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977) 128.

<sup>88</sup> Stein 30.

<sup>89</sup> Traina 34.

<sup>90</sup> Kuist 101.

<sup>91</sup> McQuilkin 166; see also Terry 157; Traina 35.

<sup>92</sup> Mickelsen 180.

<sup>93</sup> Adler and Van Doren 102.

term is not included in the student's vocabulary, and he just needs to be looked up. But it might also be that these are key or significant words that the author is using in his own special way and need to be interpreted.<sup>94</sup> While the survey is not the time to come to conclusions about the meaning of vocabulary, this phase is important for noting those words which stand out and need further investigating, due to the reader's limited vocabulary, or because the word is key to the text.

## Structure

While terms are the most basic building blocks of content, structure is the element which considers and notes how that subject matter represented by the terms are organized to express meaning.<sup>95</sup> Traina defines structure: "[I]n a *general* sense structure involves all of the relations and interrelations which bind terms into a literary unit, from the minutest to the broadest, from the least significant to the most significant."<sup>96</sup>

The first step to discerning the structure of a book is to be aware of the various levels of structure within the Bible. From the most detailed to the broadest, the following are the levels of structure in the Bible:<sup>97</sup>

### Levels of Structure

<b>Term</b>	The most basic unit.
<b>Phrase</b>	Composed of two or more terms.
<b>Clause</b>	Includes a subject and verb but still does not stand alone.
<b>Sentence</b>	Comprises a complete or independent unit of thought.
<b>Paragraph</b>	Made up of two or more sentences. (A paragraph can also be composed of just one sentence.)
<b>Segment</b>	Two or more paragraphs.
<b>Section</b>	Two or more segments.
<b>Division</b>	Two or more sections.
<b>Book</b>	One or more divisions. <sup>98</sup>
<b>Bible</b>	Sixty-six books.

For the model of Bible study presented in this thesis, structure is broken into two categories: in-

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<sup>94</sup> Adler and Van Doren 104, 105.

<sup>95</sup> Traina 36.

<sup>96</sup> Traina 36.

<sup>97</sup> Kuist 101, 102; see also Traina 36, 37; Morey 30; Jensen 56, 57.

<sup>98</sup> A book may not have any divisions, e.g., Philemon.

ter-paragraph relationships and intra-paragraph relationships.<sup>99</sup> Inter-paragraph relationships, the relation of paragraph to paragraph, or how a series of paragraphs are related, is concerned with the literary structure. In the study of inter-paragraph relationships, the domain that one is concerned with covers a paragraph, as the smallest unit, through a book, the largest unit. In considering the structure of inter-paragraph relationships, the two categories that need to be taken into account are content and form, or design.

Intra-paragraph relationships consider the relation of terms within paragraphs, or the grammatical structure. While inter-paragraph relations covered the levels of structure from the paragraph to the book, the domain of levels of structure for intra-paragraph relationships cover the term up to and including the level of the paragraph.<sup>100</sup>

## Atmosphere

The fourth category under elements is atmosphere. Atmosphere is described in terms such as the “tone,”<sup>101</sup> “mood,”<sup>102</sup> “feelings,”<sup>103</sup> or “spirit”<sup>104</sup> of a book or passage. It is the most subtle and subjective element to identify.<sup>105</sup> Traina alludes to this in his comment: “though intangible, [atmosphere] is nevertheless real.”<sup>106</sup> But while this element can be difficult to discern, Traina warns that without identifying it “one has not come into vital contact with its author’s mind and spirit.”<sup>107</sup>

Some examples shared as possible types of atmosphere are: “despair, thanksgiving, awe, urgency, joy, humility, or tenderness,”<sup>108</sup> and “hate, or expectancy, or peace, or doubt.”<sup>109</sup> Atmosphere can characterize a book as a whole, but can also shift from passage to passage. For example, Philippians has an overall upbeat and joyful atmosphere, but Paul becomes quite intense in his reference to the circumcision party (Philippians 3:2-11).

## Historical and Cultural Background

The fifth and final category under elements refers to the historical and cultural issues found in the Bible. The Bible is written to real people in real situations. These circumstances need to be un-

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<sup>99</sup> Traina 36-59.

<sup>100</sup> During the survey phase of study, the inter-paragraph relationships will be the focus of study. During the analytical phase of study, the intra-paragraph relationships will be the focus of study.

<sup>101</sup> Howard F. Vos, *Effective Bible Study* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956) 27; see also Thompson 35; Traina 71.

<sup>102</sup> Traina 71.

<sup>103</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 38; Traina 71.

<sup>104</sup> Traina 71.

<sup>105</sup> In a conversation with Robert Evans in Oct., 2000, he pointed out that the very title, atmosphere, is an interpretive name.

<sup>106</sup> Traina 71.

<sup>107</sup> Traina 71.

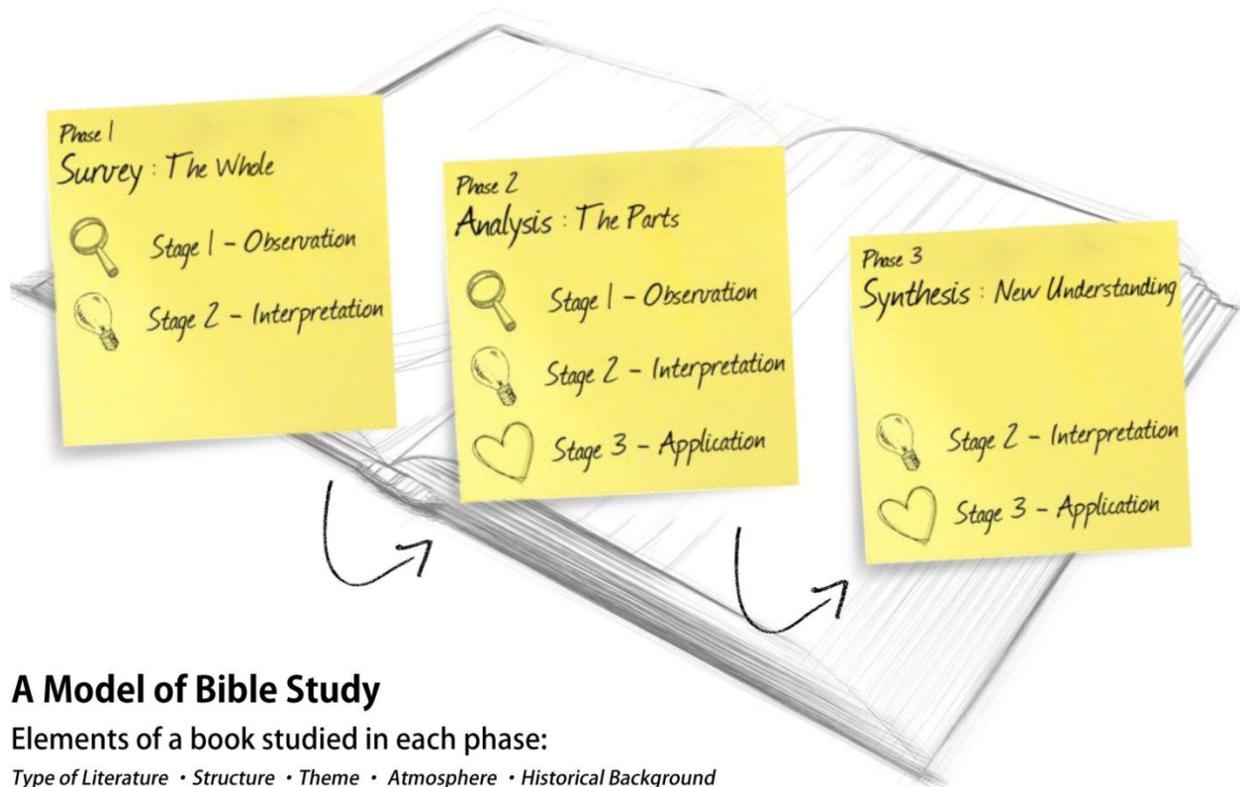
<sup>108</sup> Traina 71.

<sup>109</sup> Jensen 52.

derstood as thoroughly as possible to aid the student in accurately interpreting the text.<sup>110</sup> Kuhatschek uses the analogy of a time machine.<sup>111</sup> When one is attempting to understand the Bible, he is challenged by “barriers of time, language, culture and geography.”<sup>112</sup> The reader, rather than interpreting events through his own historical and cultural values and understanding, must strive to place himself in the setting of the original reader or hearer in order to understand how events and ideas would impact the reader living 2,000 - 3,500 years ago. There are two separate kinds of historical studies that will be discussed. In the survey phase, a background study of a book as a whole will be considered. Then in the analytical phase, the study of cultural and historical issues pertinent to specific passages will be discussed.<sup>113</sup>

Figure 2 illustrates the model of the three components of Bible study: the phases, the inductive process, and the elements of study.

**Figure 2**



<sup>110</sup> Traina 152.

<sup>111</sup> Kuhatschek 45.

<sup>112</sup> Kuhatschek 45.

<sup>113</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 179.

## Chapter 2 | The Survey Phase

*“You can observe a lot just be watchin’.” – Yogi Berra*

Having laid out the components of Bible Study, the process of the survey phase can be examined. There are two stages of the inductive process involved in this phase: observation and interpretation.

### Observation in the Survey Phase

The primary stage of the survey phase is observation. Again, observation deals with the question: “What does the text say?”<sup>1</sup> It is that initial stage of induction where the student looks at the facts and details of the text. This is the stage where the student, like a detective gathering clues, records evidence to be scrutinized later.

However, there is no such thing as pure induction. One is always making decisions and interpretations with the facts and details discovered. For example, most people have no trouble identifying when a figure of speech is employed in a passage. The author’s experience has been that students have difficulty finding figures of speech only because they have already interpreted them intuitively and thus do not even note that they are figurative. Thus, in the example of figures of speech, the student initially has to interpret just to acknowledge that a word or passage is figurative. These are usually very common sense interpretations. The author is not speaking of the students’ ability to accurately interpret what the figure means, or why it is used by the author in a passage. The fact is that the student uses interpretation and deduction as part of the observation process.

Deduction is also employed to organize facts into categories and to discern themes. As Traina warns, it is important to consciously be aware of what process is being employed. If the student is no longer clearly separating observation from interpretation, “then eisegesis will inevitably result.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the need for some movement into the stage of interpretation, the student will be focused predominantly on the first stage of the inductive process, the skill of observation. Traina concurs with this strategy: “Avoid application altogether in the observing process and keep interpretation to a minimum.”<sup>3</sup> The challenge is to remain as radically inductive as possible without becoming awkward. For example, any observation of a figure of speech involves an interpretive decision.

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<sup>1</sup> Morey 22-24.

<sup>2</sup> Traina 49.

<sup>3</sup> Traina 77.

## The Challenge to Maintain a Fresh Approach to Observation

Professor Agassiz, reflecting on his life, said that his highest accomplishment was “Teaching my students to observe.”<sup>4</sup> One of the challenges of observation is to come to the Bible every time as if it is the first for a new look.<sup>5</sup> It means maintaining a child-like attitude of “ardent curiosity, fervent imagination, and love of experimental inquiry”<sup>6</sup> each time one approaches the text. White quotes a challenge to a novelist:

“The old Bible is getting to be to us literary men a sealed book. I wish ... that you would take up the Old Testament and go through it as though every page were altogether new to you — as though you had never read a line of it before. It will astonish you.”<sup>7</sup>

The more familiar one becomes with the Bible, the greater the challenge not to take any book or passage for granted. Hendricks says that one can “read it over and over again, and [he will] still see things that [he’s] never seen before.”<sup>8</sup> Hendricks recommends using a variety of translations occasionally to help keep the message fresh.<sup>9</sup>

While the student needs to maintain a childlike wonder at the approach of Scripture, he also needs to maintain a disinterested and unbiased objectivity in his desire to observe the text.<sup>10</sup> Morey states the need for objectivity when he asserts that “there can be no debate among sincere students of the Bible as to what a passage is observed to say.”<sup>11</sup> The student must put his biases aside and objectively look at what the text says without imposing his own thoughts.

## Observation is Work!

Perhaps the most important quality to collect data in the observation stage is the willingness to work hard. The following quote by Augustine in A. D. 412 is worth reflecting on:

Such is the depth of the Christian Scriptures that even if I were attempting to study them and nothing else from early boyhood to decrepit old age, with the utmost leisure, the most unwearied zeal, and talents greater than I have, I would still daily be making progress in discovering their treasures.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Caroline L. Palmer, *Emmanuel: Studies in the Gospel by Matthew* (Atlanta, Georgia: Committee on Woman’s Work, Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1947) 6.

<sup>5</sup> Traina 74.

<sup>6</sup> White 10; Hollingsworth 2.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Arnold to Charles Reade quoted by White Study 13, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 81.

<sup>9</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 67.

<sup>10</sup> Kuist 53, 78.

<sup>11</sup> Morey 24.

<sup>12</sup> Irving L. Jensen, *Enjoy Your Bible: Making the Most of Your Time in God’s Word* (Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1992) 28.

While observation takes tremendous effort, many students would like to just open the Bible and have its riches pour out. The idea of doing exercises which seem mechanical in nature are unpleasant and appear unspiritual. But there is no way around the mechanics of Bible study.<sup>13</sup> There are observation skills which need to be learned which at first seem to be dry and fruitless. The musician must first learn the rudiments of music, practice fingerings and scales, and learn the basics of an instrument so that it becomes an unconscious activity before that instrument can be used as a tool of worship. In the same manner, the Bible student must learn the hard work of the basic skills before the riches of the Word of God will open up to him. Eberhardt says that Bible study begins with “rigorous induction. Its work is at first painful and plodding.”<sup>14</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard say it takes “diligence and commitment, hard work and discipline.”<sup>15</sup> Traina notes two distinguishing features of a competent observer: “awareness and thoroughness.”<sup>16</sup>

### Awareness in Observation

Traina’s first distinguishing feature is awareness. Observation can become an unsuccessful mechanical exercise if it is not approached with awareness. White said that for every thousand students he only found one who really thought, and out of a thousand thinking students, he found “only one who sees.” “Look! Look! Look!”<sup>17</sup> and “Observe! Observe! Observe!”<sup>18</sup> are the battle cries of the inductive movement to urge the student to observe the text. Kuist sums up the challenge to effectively observe in the assertion that people have the ability to perceive, but they are “notoriously unobservant.”<sup>19</sup> Thus it is not a problem of innate ability, but of conscious effort and exercise of the senses.

Observation must result in perception to be successful.<sup>20</sup> Kuist maintains that Jesus’ teaching reveals an awareness of a correlation between the acute development of the physical senses and the ability to comprehend.<sup>21</sup> Kuist refers to Jesus’ comment on why he spoke in parables: “The reason I speak to them in parables is that seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.”<sup>22</sup>

Jesus goes on to quote Is 6:9, 10 that the peoples’ hearts, ears, and eyes have turned away from God.<sup>23</sup> Kuist contrasts this attitude towards the masses with Jesus’ urgent attitude with his disciples;

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<sup>13</sup> Jensen 76; see also Morey 42.

<sup>14</sup> Eberhardt 187.

<sup>15</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 86.

<sup>16</sup> Traina 79.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, School of Biblical Studies Handout.

<sup>18</sup> White 11.

<sup>19</sup> Kuist 67.

<sup>20</sup> Traina 31.

<sup>21</sup> Kuist 67.

<sup>22</sup> Mtt. 13:13 .

<sup>23</sup> Mtt. 13:14.

“If His disciples were to understand they must really see and hear. ‘Take heed...how ye hear,’ was one of His favorite words of counsel.”<sup>24 25</sup>

Jesus’ urgent attitude with his disciples portrayed by Kuist stands in contrast to how many view Jesus today. Willard points out that no one, Christian or non-Christian, automatically considers Jesus from His intellectual capacity. Rather Jesus is portrayed as “a mere icon, a wraithlike semblance of a man fit for the role of a sacrificial lamb or alienated social critic, perhaps, but little more.”<sup>26</sup> Rather than striving for intellectual excellence, the Church, by and large, has bought the lie that intelligence is juxtaposed to goodness.<sup>27</sup> Thus some would suppose that believers who want to be holy cannot also use their minds. How different is today’s perception from reality? Jesus was able to run intellectual circles around the Pharisees and scribes, the Jewish scholars of his day. Rather than denigrating the use of the mind, he added to the Shema (Dt. 6:4) the command to love God with the “mind” (Mtt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 10:27). Merrill challenges the student with this quotation about Jesus:

His aim, as the Great Teacher of men, was, and ever is, not to relieve the reason and conscience of mankind, not to lighten the burden of thought and study, but rather to increase that burden, to make men more conscientious, more eager, more active in mind and moral sense.<sup>28</sup>

So rather than a “sloppy agape,” the student needs to approach observation with an urgent attention to receive from the Scriptures. Therefore Kuist asserts that it take discipline and focus to observe the text.<sup>29</sup> As one focuses and chooses to search for new details, he will remain sharp and focused.<sup>30</sup> Eberhardt calls observation “a venture in discovery.”<sup>31</sup> The student who does not apply himself to grow in perceptive observation risks doing his observations in a mechanical fashion<sup>32</sup> which will not yield insight and will destroy the motivation for inductive study. This serves as warning not to teach students too many skills without teaching why they are doing them. The overwhelmed student is likely to mechanically grope for whatever observations are evident just to have fulfilled a perceived assignment.

What are some suggestions to aid the student in developing the skill of “seeing” or perception?

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<sup>24</sup> Kuist 67.

<sup>25</sup> While the focus of the discussion is not how the Holy Spirit works with the Christian to receive revelation, it is clearly true that the believer’s efforts in seeking understanding of facts and relationships is a significant factor.

<sup>26</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998) 134.

<sup>27</sup> Willard 135.

<sup>28</sup> W.P. Merrill, *Christian Internationalism* quoted by Herman Harrell Horne, *Jesus—The Master Teacher* (New York: Association Press, 1920) 42, 43.

<sup>29</sup> Kuist 67.

<sup>30</sup> Traina 32.

<sup>31</sup> Eberhardt 122.

<sup>32</sup> Traina 79.

Perceptive observation is always consciously purposeful observation.<sup>33</sup> Observation has to do with seeing how the details are related. As in “The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz,” Louis Agassiz challenged students concerning observation: “Facts are stupid things until brought into connection with some general law,” It is necessary to identify how they are related.<sup>34</sup> One key to perceptive observations is to label or tag an observation with a notation. Thompson says to “*describe*,” “*label*,” and “*rephrase*” instead of just copying. This is because such exercises keep the mind involved in the process.<sup>35</sup> Traina demonstrates this process of notation using Is. 55:1:

“The passage begins with ‘Ho.’(v. 1)

The passage is addressed to ‘every one that thirsteth’ (v 1)”<sup>36</sup>

Thus one should note the perceived significance of the observation.<sup>37</sup>

Another insightful principle of observation for awareness presented by Traina was to look for attitudes and actions contrary to human nature or laws of nature. These details will help bring about new understanding. Traina cites Joseph’s forgiving attitude toward his brother’s maliciousness as an example of a fact that should tip off the reader to a new insight.<sup>38</sup>

## Thoughtfulness in Observation

Traina’s second distinguishing feature of a competent observer is thoroughness. The goal of observation is to make the student thoroughly aware of what is in the text. Traina states that a competent observer sees all the components<sup>39</sup> of a passage.”<sup>40</sup> Traina likens the student to a sponge. Everything needs to be soaked up.<sup>41</sup> This complete imbuing of the details of the text should give the student such a grasp of the context and its placement that he is aware of all the questions that need to be asked to accurately interpret the passage.<sup>42</sup> Traina’s challenge to the student is to find as many observations as possible in a unit of study. He urges students, “learn to spend hours in the process of observation.”<sup>43</sup>

In the course of observing the content, the following are the basic questions that will help the student discover the facts. These questions are summed up in the words of Rudyard Kipling: “I have six faithful serving men who taught me all I know. Their names are What and Where and When and

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<sup>33</sup> John Dewey, *How We Think* 91, quoted by White.

<sup>34</sup> Eberhardt 122.

<sup>35</sup> Thompson 107.

<sup>36</sup> Traina 74.

<sup>37</sup> Lincoln 62.

<sup>38</sup> Traina 75.

<sup>39</sup> The author’s term in this thesis is elements.

<sup>40</sup> Traina 79.

<sup>41</sup> Traina 48.

<sup>42</sup> Traina 31.

<sup>43</sup> Traina 75.

How and Why and Who.”<sup>44</sup>

Five of these questions relate to the observation stage of the inductive process. “Who” refers to the people involved. “What” communicates events that take place. “Where” speaks of places. “When” identifies the time element of the text. “How” indicates ideas. “Why” is an interpretive question and will be discussed in the interpretation stage of study in the analytical phase. These categories of questions will help the student to approach the text with clearer goals.

A key to a student’s thoroughness lies in developing a diligence to write down his discoveries. The masters of the Inductive Bible Study movement all viewed the recording of information as an indispensable skill. Jensen maintains that, “The triad of Bible, eye, and pencil represent three crucial factors in a fruitful engagement of the Christian.”<sup>45</sup> He quotes Professor Agassiz that, “The pencil is one of the best eyes.”<sup>46</sup> The act of writing keeps the student focused<sup>47</sup> and broadens what a student takes in.<sup>48</sup> Writing down observations increases the amount that a student can deal with because once a fact is recorded the mind can then focus on additional material.<sup>49</sup> It can be helpful to use colored pencils to color-code these questions as well.<sup>50</sup>

While the student needs to be thorough in observations, recording every detail is prohibitive. This is where the development of perception will help the student to discern which observations are significant. Traina’s comment on this issue sheds light on the challenge:

“Although observation should result in seeing every particular of a passage, when recording observations one should write down only that which is noteworthy. Unless this type of discretion is applied the process of listing observations will become inefficient and discouraging.”<sup>51</sup>

While Traina’s statements are true, the student initially cannot always discern what is significant and could dismiss valuable clues if he is not careful.

## The Sequence of Study in the Survey Phase

As noted in the introductory overview, Bible study requires an orderly procedure. In addition, to determine the right sequencing of questions to ask, the reader needs to remember what his goals are. In the survey phase of study, the reader is attempting to discern how a book is a whole literary unit,

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<sup>44</sup> Grant R. Osborne and Stephen B. Woodward, *Handbook for Bible Study* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1973) 35. See also White 19; Traina 75; Morey 67; and Lincoln 71.

<sup>45</sup> Jensen 17.

<sup>46</sup> Jensen 77.

<sup>47</sup> Hollingsworth 4.

<sup>48</sup> Jensen 78.

<sup>49</sup> Gettys 13.

<sup>50</sup> Graham 28. See also Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>51</sup> Traina 73, 74.

and how this whole is organized together by its parts.<sup>52</sup> The following suggested principles and method will help the student approach the survey phase in an effective and efficient manner.

## The Survey Phase Emphasizes Reading

There is no way to get the big picture of a book without reading it through as a whole.<sup>53</sup> The author likes to use the analogy of watching a movie the way most people read the Bible. If the movie was viewed in ten to fifteen minute segments each day and then meditated upon for the rest of the day, it is doubtful that the message would have the impact that sitting through the whole film intended.

White included the following list<sup>54</sup> in his booklet on study:

- Read in the best version obtainable in your mother tongue.
- Read it thoughtfully.
- Read repeatedly. Return often to the beginning.
- Read telescopically. In light of the whole.
- Read aloud interpretively.
- Read patiently.
- Read selectively, rapidly. Scan for leading ideas and outstanding features.
- Read prayerfully, humbly, open-mindedly.
- Read imaginatively, visualizingly, reproducingly.
- Read reflectively, unhurriedly, meditatively.
- Read purposefully in light of aim or writer and for practical ends.
- Read judicially. ‘It is as hard to reason accurately as to observe accurately.’
- Read acquisitively, recollectively, with propensity to get and to keep. Record results.<sup>55</sup>

Reading is a major emphasis in the Inductive Bible Study movement. Hendricks urges to “read it over and over, and you’ll see things that you’ve never seen.”<sup>56</sup> Lincoln challenges to “read and reread and reread.”<sup>57</sup> For the survey, Thompson urges to “read several times, if possible.”<sup>58</sup> Morey insist that

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<sup>52</sup> Adler discusses the interrelationships between really being able to demonstrate a knowledge of the unity of a book by demonstrating its organization: 76, 77.

<sup>53</sup> Lincoln 28.

<sup>54</sup> From a diagram by Matthew Arnold. White 13.

<sup>55</sup> This author has the suspicion that this list was a standard part of teaching at Biblical Seminary. Howard Hendricks did graduate work at Biblical Seminary under Dean Greer McKee, Emily Werner, and Robert Traina (Graham 97). In *Living by the Book*, Hendricks wrote a chapter on each of ten of these points. He left out reading, “in your mother tongue” and “aloud interpretively and judicially.”

<sup>56</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 81, 82.

<sup>57</sup> Lincoln 39.

<sup>58</sup> Thompson 34.

the student must read the Bible “one [book] at a time, each in its entirety.”<sup>59</sup> LaHaye gives the insight that one does not become a student of the Bible unless he has the discipline of regular reading.<sup>60</sup> In speaking of the value of reading the Scriptures for the Jews, Kuist declares: “He who could not read the Scriptures was no true Jew! The Hebrew Scriptures had become a spelling-book; every Jewish community supported a school; religion itself was considered a matter of teaching and learning.”<sup>61</sup>

In the course of studying a book of the Bible, it needs to be read numerous times. But reading needs to be done in an active fashion. That is, the reader needs to be consciously asking questions of the text that need to be answered if greater comprehension is to be achieved.<sup>62</sup> Each reading needs to systematically ask more questions to bring the reader to a place of greater comprehension of the text.<sup>63</sup>

## The Role of the Elements of Bible Study in the Survey Phase

While it is difficult to isolate the function of the various elements from one another, it is helpful to consider their significance and general sequencing.

### Type of Literature

Adler’s first rule of interpretation is that it is critical to know what kind of literature one is dealing with before reading the book.<sup>64</sup> The initial observation one needs to make concerning the type of literature of a book is whether it consists of prose or poetry. The reader can usually discern whether a book or passage is literal or figurative, and that distinction will be helpful in making observations.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, the reader must determine the genre which is being addressed. To a great extent, how one perceives genre will dictate his approach to the meaning of various key terms. Since issues of meaning are relegated primarily to the analytical phase of Bible study, the treatment of types of literature and genres will not be covered until the section on special hermeneutics.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Morey 27.

<sup>60</sup> Tim LaHaye, *How to Study the Bible for Yourself* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1976) 25.

<sup>61</sup> Howard Tillman Kuist, *The Pedagogy of Saint Paul* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925) 34.

<sup>62</sup> Adler 46.

<sup>63</sup> Adler 19.

<sup>64</sup> Adler 60.

<sup>65</sup> The author recognizes that there can be major difficulties for a student to discern if the images of apocalyptic literature are literal or figurative, but the interpretation of these images would still be covered in the analytical phase.

<sup>66</sup> This kind of dichotomy between observation and interpretation is impractical in actual Bible study. Traina acknowledges that observations and interpretations work together. Observations beg interpretation which leads to further observations. But this dichotomizing of elements into the survey phase and the analytical phase is a useful structure for presenting the material into generally accurate categories. Traina 48.

## Terms and Structure

The two most important elements in order to observe the literary unity of a book are terms and structure. These are often referred to as the content,<sup>67</sup> or subject matter,<sup>68</sup> and form<sup>69</sup> of the book. Terms, the building blocks of language, comprise the content. The way they are arranged into a literary composition refers to the structure.

## Atmosphere

As mentioned earlier, this can be the most elusive element to identify. The accuracy of identifying the atmosphere during the survey phase will vary from book to book. Some books will yield an understanding of the atmosphere during the observation stage of the survey phase.<sup>70</sup> In other cases the student will not be able to accurately grasp the mood and tone until interpreting passages in the analytical phase.<sup>71</sup> In the survey, repeated terms and phrases might help to reveal the atmosphere as in the case of the sum of family and fellowship terms in Philemon.

A more subjective approach would be to consider the feelings the passage evokes. Lincoln asks the reader to identify with the audience and imagine how they would feel if in that situation or receiving the message of the book.<sup>72</sup> Hendricks takes a slightly different angle and asks the reader to consider “what it was like to be in the author’s shoes.”<sup>73</sup>

## Historical and Cultural Background

Historical and cultural background will be considered at the end of the discussion concerning the survey phase.

## Surveying the Unity of a Book

The student will ask why it is necessary to find the unity of a book in the Bible. Each book already has chapter and verse references. These describe sufficient structure and unity, don’t they? Unfortunately, chapter and verse references cannot always be relied on to accurately delineate a unit of thought. There were no verse and chapter references in the original books. Parchment was so expensive that no spaces would have been left on the page between words, much less verse and chapter

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<sup>67</sup> Jensen 29.

<sup>68</sup> Graham 28.

<sup>69</sup> Jensen 29. See also Graham 28.

<sup>70</sup> The placement of this topic before terms and structure is not an indicator of the sequence in which atmosphere and terms should be observed. It is necessary to first note terms in order to have evidence to base conjectures. It is just easier to speak of atmosphere before the discussion on terms and structure.

<sup>71</sup> Traina 71.

<sup>72</sup> Lincoln 35.

<sup>73</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 38; see also Traina 151.

breaks.<sup>74</sup> Stephen Langton created chapter divisions in A.D. 1228.<sup>75</sup>

The story in Acts of Ananias and Sapphira demonstrates the need for a cautious attitude toward chapter divisions. This story is a contrast between the heart attitudes of Ananias and Sapphira with that of Barnabas when each had sold a piece of land. This contrast is obscured by the chapter division which places the setting of those selling land for the common good, and the particular actions of Barnabas, in the previous chapter.<sup>76</sup>

The addition of verse references were a later addition by Robert Stephanus in A.D. 1551.<sup>77</sup> Stephanus was said to have been traveling on horseback from Paris to Lyon, France.<sup>78</sup> Studying the Bible in an atomistic fashion by individual verses will not result in a complete understanding of the text. So chapter and verse references are useful for locating passages, but should not be considered by the student as automatic indicators of the structure of a book. In fact, Dan Fuller quotes A.T. Robertson as saying, “The first step in interpretation is to ignore the modern chapters and verses.”<sup>79</sup>

Sentence divisions as well are not always accurate. Traina says that translations can be somewhat arbitrary in their decisions on making sentences.<sup>80</sup> Instead most authors in the Inductive Bible Study movement maintain as a general rule<sup>81</sup> that the primary level of structure to work from is the paragraph.<sup>82</sup> A paragraph is a whole unit of thought. It can cover a topic or part of a topic.<sup>83</sup> Kuist defines a paragraph further by calling it an “effective treatment of a single topic.”<sup>84</sup> Dan Fuller warns against Bibles whose layout indents every sentence. That layout would convey to the novice that each sentence is the unit of thought to work with.<sup>85</sup>

Since the present chapter and verse structure will not necessarily reveal the correct structural unity of a book, the student needs a method that will help him discern the author-intended unity of each book of the Bible.

There are numerous readings needed to collect the data necessary for discerning the literary composition in the survey phase of study. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Read the book out loud as a whole unit.

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<sup>74</sup> Jensen, *Enjoy* 79.

<sup>75</sup> Kuist 100, 101; see also Jensen *Enjoy*, 20. The author recognizes this date is disputed. Others assign this event to A.D. 1227. See Osborne and Woodward 48 footnote 5. Chapter divisions have also been credited to Cardinal Hugo de Sancto Caro in the year 1244. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 159.

<sup>76</sup> Acts 4:34-37.

<sup>77</sup> Osborne and Woodward 48 footnote 5. See also Kuist 100, 101.

<sup>78</sup> Kuist 100, 101.

<sup>79</sup> Dan Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible*, Zondervan Press, 1992, quoted by Mary Graham, ed., *Inductive Bible Study Network Newsletter* No. 27 (1539 E. Howard St., Pasadena, CA 91104, Spring, 2000) 2.

<sup>80</sup> Traina 40.

<sup>81</sup> This is not always the case. Other basic units will be considered for narratives and prophecy.

<sup>82</sup> E.g., Traina 40; Hendricks 131; Morey 30; Jensen, *Enjoy* 20.

<sup>83</sup> Morey 30.

<sup>84</sup> Kuist 05.

<sup>85</sup> Fuller quoted by Mary Graham, ed., *Inductive Bible Study Network Newsletter* (1539 E. Howard St., Pasadena, CA 91104, Spring, 2000) 2.

2. Discern the unity of the book as one whole unit.
3. Discern the unity of the parts of the book.
4. Discern major themes.

## Read the Book Aloud as a Whole Unit

The first step is to read the book as a whole to begin gaining an overview of a book's unity. One of the features of the Inductive Bible Study movement is to challenge the student to begin by reading a book of the Bible as a whole out loud. As White quoted Arnold, "Read aloud interpretatively." Or as Jensen put it, "Read interpretively with feeling and meaning."<sup>86</sup> The reason for reading out loud is that it aids comprehension. Hendricks says that reading out loud aids the individual focus as he hears his own voice.<sup>87</sup> In fact, psychological studies have demonstrated that reading out loud is two to three hundred percent more effective for retention than reading silently.<sup>88</sup> This issue of vocalizing should cause one to reflect on the effectiveness of reading out loud in groups, or listening to tapes. It seems that the research is claiming that the person reading for himself will be more effective. Speed tapes and group reading often has the reverse effect as the student's mind can wander while others read or a tape is played.

While the basic principle is to read through every book out loud at one sitting,<sup>89</sup> Morey makes an exception for Psalms, Jeremiah, and Isaiah.<sup>90</sup> He gives chapter break references for the most appropriate place to take one rest in Jeremiah and in Isaiah. The trade-off of telling a student where to break for Isaiah or Jeremiah rather than letting them decide for themselves is that the instructor gives away a division break but the ability to take a break in reading will probably yield a higher level of comprehension. Since 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles should also be read as one unit, this same principle should hold true for them. Dr. Graham, who's teaching audience is typically a weekly Bible study group who cannot or will not take the time to study such large units of material, is pragmatic in her approach. While maintaining that the unity and structure of books must be investigated and discerned, she holds that "this does not mean that the whole book must be read to start with."<sup>91</sup>

The challenge is to read the entire book through at one sitting to get the main idea of it. This kind of reading is called "inspectional reading" by Adler. It fairly corresponds to White's list to read rapidly, to scan for leading ideas and outstanding features, and to read telescopically for the big picture.<sup>92</sup> The difficulty of this kind of reading is not to get stuck on a word or thought. The goal is not

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<sup>86</sup> Jensen, *Enjoy* 35.

<sup>87</sup> Hendricks 84; Jensen, *Enjoy* 35.

<sup>88</sup> Ron Smith, *Hooked on the Word* (Montana: West Shore Books, 1994) 130.

<sup>89</sup> E.g., Jensen 108.

<sup>90</sup> Morey 27; footnote 2.

<sup>91</sup> Graham 26.

<sup>92</sup> White 13.

to comprehend everything, but to get through it without stopping.<sup>93</sup> If the book is difficult, the student might only comprehend fifty percent of what is read. But this initial overview will help the student grasp the whole in additional readings.

## Discern the Unity of a Book as a Whole Unit

Read the book a second time and try to grasp the big picture of the book. What is the book about as a whole? The questions the student should be asking in this reading are:

What kind of book is it?<sup>94</sup> The first question is to discern if the book is prose or poetry. Secondly it is important to try to discern the type of literature, the genre. This will influence how the book is interpreted.

What is it about as a whole? Try to grasp the main idea of the book. Sum up the message of the book in one or two sentences. This is a cursory attempt to grasp the literary unity of the book. What problem is the author trying to answer? This united literary work was written for a purpose. The student needs to attempt to discern the reason for this book.<sup>95</sup> While the student probably will not comprehend the reason completely until he has completed the analytical phase, wrestling with the question will help to keep the student consciously focused on the problem.

The reader might also note some prominent terms. The author says “might” because it is too much for most beginning students to manage. Even if a student does include this observation in the second reading, it should be a very superficial notation of terms. If a narrative, these would most likely be people, events, and places. If this book is poetic or didactic there might be words that stand out as well. Some authors advocate this initial exercise.<sup>96</sup> This can be a valuable exercise as part of a second reading when dealing with logical books, because it makes the student aware of terms that are difficult for him to understand. Other authors advise the student to make a paragraph title for each paragraph as the initial step after reading out loud.<sup>97</sup>

## Discerning the Unity of the Parts

The first two readings are focused on comprehending the book as a whole unit. But Adler points out that one does not really have a grasp on the meaning of the whole book unless he also can delineate how the book is broken down into its parts. The student might, in his initial readings, express accurately the message of the book as a whole unit. However, without going through the process of discerning how the parts function together to form that whole, the he could not be sure that he was

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<sup>93</sup> Adler 36.

<sup>94</sup> Adler 51.

<sup>95</sup> Adler 92; Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>96</sup> E.g., Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*. Morey advocates this in a large book, 36.

<sup>97</sup> E.g., Graham 27; Jensen 116; Thompson 34; James Braga, *How to Study the Bible* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1982) 13-15.

correct. He really doesn't have the understanding to explain why he is correct. It might just be a lucky conjecture.<sup>98</sup> So further readings need to be done to help the student see the parts which comprise the whole.

## The Paragraph Title

A paragraph can be defined as “usually a group of related sentences<sup>99</sup> unified by a single idea or purpose.”<sup>100</sup> Since paragraphs are the smallest unit focused on one idea, they are manageable units of thought to link together to grasp the authors' structure.<sup>101</sup> Therefore the initial tool for identifying the unity of the parts of a book is to create paragraph titles.<sup>102</sup> The purpose of the paragraph title is to describe what is being said in the paragraph. There are actually two types of paragraph titles. The one being discussed is known as a descriptive title. In addition there are interpretive titles.<sup>103</sup> An interpretive title is just what the name says. It is an explanation of the meaning of the paragraph and is by nature an interpretation. Since the survey predominantly utilizes the observation stage of induction, this type is not a helpful approach for beginners who are just learning how to study a text inductively.

There are two main schools of thought on descriptive paragraph titles. Some writers maintain that words from the text be used so that the student does not change the author's message.<sup>104</sup> The rationale is that if a student changes the word order, strings words together from various parts of a paragraph, or changes the inflection or number of a word, he could change the meaning. A second concern is that the Bible will not be held in as high regard if the student is given permission to tamper with the text. There is cause for concern with some students. This author has witnessed students finding new meaning in the text by changing the sequence of words.

Others hold that the student can use his own words as long as the content is truly represented.<sup>105</sup> This second kind of paragraph title is more of a descriptive summary. The goal is to accurately describe the essential content of the paragraph. However, any time someone is given permission to make a summary, there is the potential of changing the meaning of the text.

There are also two different ideas as to the function of the paragraph title. One function of a paragraph title is to show key terms that will later help identify key inter-paragraph relationships

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<sup>98</sup> Adler 89, 90.

<sup>99</sup> As opposed to a single sentence.

<sup>100</sup> John C. Hodges, and others, *Harbrace College Handbook* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Javanovich, Publishers, 1990) 567.

<sup>101</sup> One must recognize that an editor has grouped paragraphs, but they are usually an accurate logical unit.

<sup>102</sup> According to Dr. Graham, over two-thirds of instructors who teach the inductive method employ paragraph titles. Graham 77. Dr. Graham maintains that for a Bible class situation where the participants will not invest the time to do the survey all at once, the paragraph title is the place to begin without reading through a whole book. Graham 22. This is where the analysis and synthesis paradigm of Bible study would begin.

<sup>103</sup> Traina 77.

<sup>104</sup> Graham 27; Jensen 116.

<sup>105</sup> Traina 77; Osborne and Woodward 28; Morey uses the phrase “must *represent* the content” but doesn't say exact words 37.

whole book. A second function is to demonstrate the logical flow of paragraphs.

The first function serves as a unique reminder of the content of that paragraph, a device to jog the mind to recollection.<sup>106</sup> It should capture the content of the paragraph in a distinct way.<sup>107</sup> Some maintain that the paragraph titles must specifically be the main idea<sup>108</sup> while others say these titles are not necessarily main ideas.<sup>109</sup> Traina adds that a purpose of a paragraph title is to “recall relationships.”<sup>110</sup> Therefore, in a survey phase the paragraph titles will be used to group paragraphs into segments, segments into sections, and segments into divisions. They can be reminders of the content as well as, or instead of, the main idea. This understanding should be liberating. It is not as important that the student grasp the essence of the paragraph from a logical point of view as it is that the paragraph helps the student in his thinking processes to grasp relationships of the book according to how the student’s mind functions. Thus the paragraph title is content oriented but not necessarily logic oriented.

The second possible function of a paragraph title is to demonstrate the logical flow of thought of the paragraphs. This kind of paragraph title approach can be used for logical or didactic books. Morey gives a good starting point in pursuing the logical flow of paragraphs. He advises that the student begins by looking to the first sentence of a paragraph, and then to the last sentence of a paragraph in trying to find its main idea.<sup>111</sup> Since a paragraph can hold a number of propositions that are all necessary for an argument, creating titles can be frustrating when applied to logical books like epistles. This might be why Traina advocates the use of a paragraph title only for narrative literature. Noting characters and plot would follow the main thrust of a narrative.<sup>112</sup> So paragraph titles applied to narrative literature is a relatively easy task of following the main events and characters.

Creating a paragraph title in the second reading can pose a challenge in logical or didactic literature if the student is trying to demonstrate the flow of thought. This entails locating the main arguments that an author is making.<sup>113</sup> But Adler would point out that the key to understanding an author’s thoughts begins with wrestling with the difficult terms in a book.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, if the intention of the paragraph title is to find the logical flow, in some cases it could be a premature step. In difficult passages, the work of discerning the meaning of words and their entailing propositions in sentences is the work of the analytical phase. One should be aware that paragraph titles do not need to trace the logical flow even in a didactic book. Students who have difficulty in following the logical flow might benefit by following key words and ideas which they will later need to explore.

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<sup>106</sup> Graham 27; Jensen 116.

<sup>107</sup> Traina 77; Morey 37; Braga 15.

<sup>108</sup> Osborne and Woodward 48, footnote 5. Lincoln 60, 61.

<sup>109</sup> E.g., Graham 27.

<sup>110</sup> Traina 77.

<sup>111</sup> Morey 149.

<sup>112</sup> Traina 77.

<sup>113</sup> Adler 129; Kaiser 101.

<sup>114</sup> Adler 123.

The following are suggestions for writing paragraph titles:

Paragraph titles should be laid, one below the other, along the top of a sheet of paper placed in a horizontal orientation. It might take several sheets of paper to accommodate all the titles of a large book.

Consider the type of literature. For example, the focus of paragraph titles in narratives should be people, places, and events. The focus of paragraph titles in logical and didactic literature should be flow of thought or key words and ideas.

Try to keep paragraph titles unique to that paragraph. Some of the words used to describe a paragraph title are “distinctive”<sup>115</sup> and “picturesque.”<sup>116</sup> While some material is more conducive to mental pictures than others, one of the advantages of the freedom of a paragraph title which is not strictly limited to words from the text is for the student to creatively express the impression conveyed by that paragraph.

Paragraph titles should be short. Most authors advocate no more than four words,<sup>117</sup> but that is not an ironclad rule. Others allow up to eight words.<sup>118</sup>

Some authors suggest chapter titles for large books.<sup>119</sup> But all warn that chapter breaks will not necessarily be accurate. The rationale is that it is too much work for most students to make a paragraph title for each chapter in a survey. In the author’s experience, creating chapter titles defeats the purpose of creating paragraph titles. A chapter title contains too much material to grasp and the title will probably not be inductive or accurate. It would be better to encourage the student to work through paragraph titles over a period of time rather than do an exercise which is not accurate.

There is always going to be conflict between allowing creative expression of paragraph titles so the student’s title will recall the paragraph in a unique manner, and need for guidelines that protect from the potential loss of accuracy. On one extreme is the suggestion that the student only uses a phrase from the text. On the other end of the spectrum, if the student is given permission to change word order or word endings, or paraphrase, then there is a risk of distortion. As a general pattern, especially during the early stages of study, it is most prudent for the student to learn how to use the exact words from the text to create paragraph titles. This is a more inductive approach because it puts details from the text on the paper.

There is also a risk of paragraph titles becoming a mechanical exercise if there is no variation. Traina warns that creating paragraph titles should never become a rote exercise.<sup>120</sup> This is a challenge in a classroom context where the student studies book after book using the same exercise. A guard against monotony would be to occasionally assign different styles of paragraph titles for different

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<sup>115</sup> Morey 37; Traina 77.

<sup>116</sup> Graham 27; Jensen 116.

<sup>117</sup> Graham 27; Jensen 116; Morey 37; Traina 77.

<sup>118</sup> Braga 15; Osborne and Woodward 28.

<sup>119</sup> Braga 79; Jensen 108; Graham 34; Thompson 34 footnote. Thompson only recommends this to beginners as a starting point.

<sup>120</sup> Traina 77.

books. Perhaps students could change word inflections or use the antecedent of a pronoun for clarification. It might also benefit the student to periodically write summaries, and to vary the amount of words allowed in these exercises. Even if there is a slight loss of accuracy by the transition of styles and the freedom to paraphrase content, this loss might be more than offset by the freshness maintained. Students who demonstrate that they do not possess the skills to accurately summarize or paraphrase can be considered on an individual basis.

The potential risk of distortion needs to be considered. In light of the purpose of the paragraph title. The purpose of the paragraph title is to give the student a handle on the content of paragraphs in order to identify any laws of composition. Secondly it helps him to group paragraphs into segments. This author has never seen a student distort enough paragraphs that one could no longer discern which paragraphs fit together. There is a far greater chance that the student who continually uses the same method for producing paragraph titles will fall into a rut in which this becomes a mechanical process.

The placement of the paragraph titles is along the left-hand margin of a sheet of paper. They should be listed one below the other. It might take several sheets of paper taped together to list all the paragraph titles in a large book. Figure 3 is an example of paragraph titles using 2 Thessalonians:

### **Figure 3: Paragraph Titles**

1:1	To Thessalonians: grace
1:5	Righteous judgment
2:1	Rebellion comes first
2:16	May the Lord comfort hearts
3:1	The Lord is faithful
3:6	Idleness
3:14	Warn as a brother
4:3	Steadfast in persecutions
4:16	Peace
4:17	Grace

## **Inter-Paragraph Relationships**

Earlier it was said that the first step to discerning the structure of a book is to be aware of the various levels of structure within the Bible. The two major categories presented were inter-paragraph relationships and intra-paragraph relationships. For the survey phase, the student will be concerned

with inter-paragraph relationships. As a review, this encompasses the following levels of structure:

### Inter-Paragraph Levels of Structure

Paragraph	Made up of two or more sentences. <sup>121</sup>
Segment	Two or more paragraphs.
Section	Two or more segments.
Division	Two or more sections.

One task of the student is to observe how the material of a book is organized into paragraphs, segments, sections, and divisions. The first challenge, creating paragraph titles, has already been accomplished. This process of noting structural relationships will require another reading of the book.

Discerning the levels of structure can be approached from two directions.<sup>122</sup> First the student can begin with paragraphs as the smallest unit of the levels of structure, and observe how the parts are joined into a whole. In this manner, the student can note which paragraphs have related materials. Kuist labels this the “interpretive or synthetic” mode.<sup>123</sup>

Second, the student can divide a book into divisions,<sup>124</sup> and divisions into sections, and sections into segments if the size of the book warrants that many levels of structure. This is moving from the whole to the parts. Kuist calls this the “structural” approach.<sup>125</sup> It is sometimes easy to see where a book is broken into divisions, even before paragraph titles have been written. Kuist and Traina maintain that it is easier to go from the larger units to the smaller in a large book,<sup>126</sup> and Traina claims that in dealing with a large book the divisions should be identified first.<sup>127</sup>

Some students find it easier to go from the smallest units to the largest, and others who are able to see the big picture find it most natural to begin by breaking down the largest units. There is room for personal preferences and abilities. But ultimately the student will find the two meeting somewhere in the middle. These groups of material should be given titles.

Consider the levels of inter-paragraph relationships that may be grouped together and labeled in a small book, such as 2 Thessalonians. Figure 4 uses 2 Thessalonians to demonstrate one way of grouping the levels of inter-paragraph relationships.

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<sup>121</sup> A paragraph can be composed of just one sentence.

<sup>122</sup> Kuist 103; Traina 72; Lincoln 61.

<sup>123</sup> Kuist 103.

<sup>124</sup> A book may have only one division.

<sup>125</sup> Kuist 103.

<sup>126</sup> Kuist 103; Traina 72.

<sup>127</sup> Traina 65.

**Figure 4: Grouping Paragraph Titles**

<b>Paragraph Titles</b>			<b>Sections</b>		<b>Divisions</b>
1:1	To Thessalonians: Grace	}	Judgment & Comfort	}	The Coming Judgment
1:5	Righteous judgment – rest				
2:1	Rebellion comes first	}	The Rebellion & the Sanctified		
2:16	May Lord comfort hearts				
3:1	The Lord is faithful	}	Idleness Rebuked	}	The Present Duty
3:6	Idleness				
3:14	Warn as a brother				
4:3	Steadfast in persecution				
4:16	Peace				
4:17	Grace				

## The Horizontal Chart

At this point the student can portray what he has discovered about the structure of the book by means of a horizontal chart. The horizontal chart is one of the creative legacies of Biblical Seminary. A horizontal chart derives its name by the horizontal orientation of the sheet of paper. The horizontal chart may be defined as a visual layout of the content and relationships of entire books of the Bible. The space within the horizontal chart is divided up to reflect the approximate proportion of text allotted to each of the divisions, sections and segments noted on the chart. This demonstrates the law of composition known as principality or proportion.<sup>128</sup> Students often use graph paper in this exercise because it helps them to more accurately establish proportion. Figure 5 is an example of a horizontal chart.

<sup>128</sup> Laws of composition will be addressed as the next point of discussion.



## The Chart versus an Outline

The chart is proposed in contrast to an outline. Outlining is recommended by several authors.<sup>129</sup> Morey demonstrates how to outline, but maintains that it is more effective to chart a book of the Bible.<sup>130</sup> While Traina extensively teaches the use of the chart, he warns that it is not the only method of recording findings and there are times to use the outline as well.<sup>131</sup> Dr. Graham points out that for certain books of the Bible, the design may not be a logical point by point discussion.<sup>132</sup>

## Benefits to a Chart

First, a chart gives the student the benefit of using his eyes to see the whole work.<sup>133</sup> Gettys claimed that one learns better visually than audibly.<sup>134</sup> Kuist and Palmer, in advocating the horizontal chart, quoted Browning, “Image the whole, then execute the parts.”<sup>135</sup> Second, a chart allows the student to grasp relationships more easily within a work. Like a work of art, it is easier to see relationships of the whole at the same time.<sup>136</sup> Third, a chart makes it easier to remember material.<sup>137</sup> Fourth, a chart makes it possible to keep account of much material.<sup>138</sup> Fifth, charts make it easier to present large amounts of material.<sup>139</sup>

## Creating a Horizontal Chart

A horizontal chart may or may not include paragraph titles, depending on the size of the book. Smaller books may allow enough room to record each paragraph title on the chart. In these cases, the student will include the structure levels of divisions and sections, and the third tier of structure will be the paragraph titles. See 2 Thessalonians in Figure 6 as an example of this.

In the case of larger books, there are so many paragraph titles that it is not possible to list them all on the horizontal chart. These charts are divided into divisions, sections, and segments. Note the Acts horizontal in Figure 7 as an example. Segments are used in large books to group paragraphs into units of thought. These segments reflect the units of content that will be studied during the analytical phase.

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<sup>129</sup> Vos 30; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 163; Lincoln 33, 92.

<sup>130</sup> Morey 41.

<sup>131</sup> Robert Traina, *Methodical Bible Teaching* (unpublished, 1953) 233.

<sup>132</sup> Graham 32.

<sup>133</sup> Traina, *Teaching* 232; Hendricks and Hendricks 188.

<sup>134</sup> Joseph M. Gettys, *How to Teach the Bible* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1949) 28.

<sup>135</sup> Browning's "A Grammarian's Funeral" quoted by Kuist 103 and Palmer 19. Gettys phrased it a bit differently: "visualize the whole before dealing with the parts." Gettys 46.

<sup>136</sup> Graham 33; Traina, *Teaching* 232; Morey 40.

<sup>137</sup> Morey 40.

<sup>138</sup> Hendricks 181.

<sup>139</sup> Morey 40; Traina, *Teaching* 232.

Figure 6: 2 Thessalonians Horizontal Chart



1:1	To Thessalonians: Grace	Judgment & Comfort	The Coming Judgment
1:3	Steadfast in persecutions		
1:5	Righteous judgment		
2:1	Rebellion comes first	The Rebellious & the Sanctified	
2:13	Chose: as first fruits		
2:16	May Lord comfort hearts		
3:1	The Lord is faithful	Idleness Rebuked	The Present Duty
3:6	Idleness		
3:14	Warn as a brother		
3:16	Peace		
3:17	Grace		

2 Thessalonians Horizontal Chart

Figure 7: Acts Horizontal Chart



Ascension	Birth	Jerusalem
Pentecost		
Peter Heals a Lame Man	Growth	
Ananias and Sapphira		
Opposition from the Council	Persecution	
Stephen Martyred		
Philip Goes to Samaria	Church Scatters	Judea & Samaria
Saul Converted		
Peters Revelation: No Partiality	Church Receives Gentiles	
Peter's Imprisonment		
Westward: Antioch	Paul's 1 <sup>st</sup> Journey	The Ends of the Earth
Iconium, Lystra, Derbe		
The Jerusalem Council		
The Macedonian Call: Philippi	Paul's 2 <sup>nd</sup> Journey	
Thessalonica, Berea, Athens		
Corinth		
Ephesus	Paul's 3 <sup>rd</sup> Journey	
Paul's Farewell to the Churches		
Jerusalem: Arrested	Jerusalem Defense	
Paul's Defenses before Jews		
Paul's Defenses before Council		
To Caesarea	Caesarea Defense	
Paul's Defense before Felix		
Paul's Defense before Festus and Agrippa	Rome	
Voyage to Rome		
Imprisoned in Rome		

Acts Horizontal Chart

## Building Materials

The analogy of a house can serve us well here.<sup>140</sup> Houses, no matter what their design, are all built of materials such as lumber or rock. In the same way, books are made of content that an author uses to “build” his message. While an author may include substance of all these “building materials” in his literary work, one building material will be dominant in the organizing of his book. In such an analogy, the following can be considered “building materials” that are used in identifying structural relationship of a book or passage:

- **Geographical | Places**

The question “where?” will help identify geographical material.

- **Chronological | Time**

The question “when?” will help identify chronological material.

- **Historical | Events**

The question “what?” will help identify historical material.

- **Biographical | Persons**

The question “who?” will help identify biographical material.

- **Logical | Ideas**

The question “how?” will help identify logical material.

The analogy can be continued to consider the design or form of a book. Houses, no matter what building materials are used, are all arranged according to a specific design. In the same way, a book is developed with a specific design and purpose, although it may not be apparent to the casual reader. Like an artist, an author uses laws of composition to arrange paragraphs, segments, sections and divisions into a literary unit. The concept, laws of composition, refers to principles of design that are found in the field of the arts (e.g., art and music). The identification of laws of composition is one of the contributions that the inductive Bible Study movement gave the field of Bible Study through its embracing of a literary approach to the study of the Scriptures. References to laws of composition are traced back to John Ruskin who wrote an essay on composition. This essay is found in his “Elements of Drawing” which was published in 1857.<sup>141</sup>

While all of these building materials or types of content can be present in any given book, one will be the dominant type of material.<sup>142</sup> For example, if the content centers around a character or characters in the book, then the book is structured biographically. If the content centers around events in the book, then the book is structured historically. If the content centers around places, then

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<sup>140</sup> The following discussion is based on concepts from Traina 55-56; Adler 75-78; Kuist 99.

<sup>141</sup> Kuist 160.

<sup>142</sup> Graham 30.

the book is structured geographically. If the content centers around time elements or sequential time, then the book is structured chronologically. Once the various levels of structure are grouped together, the student can discern the dominant building material of the division first. Then the student should use a different building material or type of content to describe the next level of structure. Notice how in Figure 8 the divisions in Acts are based on geographic locations, but the sections are based on events.

Whatever building material is used as the lens through which a level of structure is viewed, this focus should be used consistently throughout that level. In other words, one should not begin by describing one division or section in terms of people, and then describe the next division or section in terms of time element.<sup>143</sup> If the student diligently applies this approach of using different building materials to label each level of structure, the result will be a much richer picture of the content employed by the Biblical author.

There are many variations of horizontal charts found within the Inductive Bible Study movement. Some charts were simple overviews of a book, segment or division as can be observed in the examples in Figures 9, 10, and 11. Other individual's horizontals do not conform to the rectangle format. Figure 12 is an example of a horizontal that expresses the structure of 1 Samuel without the use of the typical horizontal structure. There are too many expressions of the horizontal chart for this thesis to cover. The point is that the creative chart is not meant to be a rigid method to conform to but a format that lends creative expression to Bible study.

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<sup>143</sup> Traina 68.

Figure 8: Acts Horizontal Chart - Maintaining Consistent Building Materials in Each Level of the Structure



Ascension	Birth	Jerusalem
Pentecost		
Peter Heals a Lame Man	Growth	
Ananias and Sapphira		
Opposition from the Council	Persecution	
Stephen Martyred		
Philip Goes to Samaria	Church Scatters	Judea & Samaria
Saul Converted		
Peters Revelation: No Partiality	Church Receives Gentiles	
Peter's Imprisonment		
Westward: Antioch	Paul's 1 <sup>st</sup> Journey	The Ends of the Earth
Iconium, Lystra, Derbe		
The Jerusalem Council		
The Macedonian Call: Philippi	Paul's 2 <sup>nd</sup> Journey	
Thessalonica, Berea, Athens		
Corinth		
Ephesus	Paul's 3 <sup>rd</sup> Journey	
Paul's Farewell to the Churches		
Jerusalem: Arrested	Jerusalem Defense	
Paul's Defenses before Jews		
Paul's Defenses before Council To Caesarea		
Paul's Defense before Felix		
Paul's Defense before Festus and Agrippa	Caesarea Defense	
Voyage to Rome	Rome	
Imprisoned in Rome		

Acts Horizontal Chart

## Examples of Simplified Charts

Figure 9: A Simplified Horizontal of a Book<sup>144</sup>

Jonah: Running from God's Mercy							
Jonah runs from God		Jonah prays from the fish		Nineveh repents, God relents		Jonah angry at God's mercy	
1:1	1:6	1:17	2:10	3:1	3:10	4:1	4:11

Figure 10: A Simplified Horizontal of a Division of a Book<sup>145</sup>

The Coming of the Messiah		The Works and Teaching of the Messiah		The Death and Resurrection of the Messiah	
1:1	4:16	4:17	16:20	16:21	28:20

Figure 11: A Simplified Horizontal of a Section of a Book<sup>146</sup>

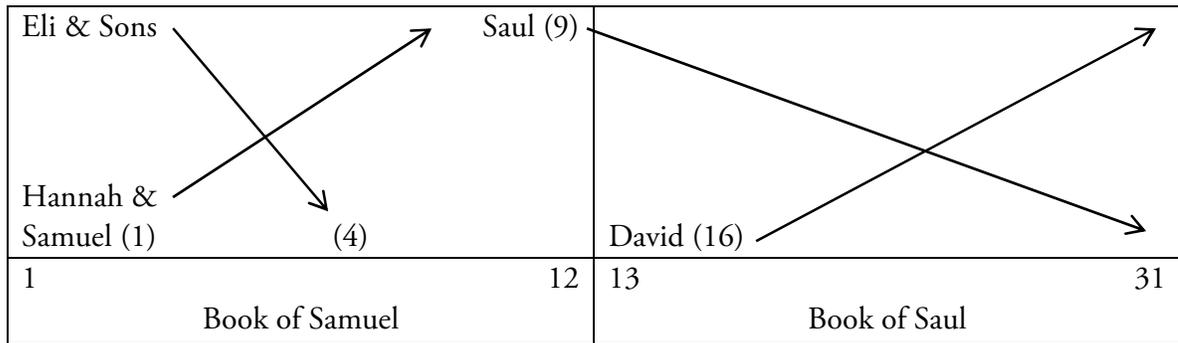
Leper	Centurion Servant	Fever Storm	Two Demoniacs	Paralytic	Woman	Raising Dead	Two Blind Men	Dumb Man
8				9				

<sup>144</sup> Adapted from Thompson 36.

<sup>145</sup> Adapted from Palmer 10.

<sup>146</sup> Adapted from Palmer 28.

Figure 12: A Creative Horizontal<sup>147</sup>



## Laws of Composition

The identification of laws of composition is one of the contributions that the Inductive Bible Study movement gave the field of Bible Study through its embracing of a literary approach to the study of the Scriptures. Many of the authors of the Inductive Bible Study movement have noted that good literature can be compared to other arts such as music, painting, sculpture, and drama.<sup>148</sup> This association can be traced back to John Ruskin who wrote an essay on composition.<sup>149</sup> Literature, as other arts, is composed of subject matter and design.<sup>150</sup> Together they express the author's meaning.

Dr. Graham illustrates this relationship using slides of the Last Supper.<sup>151</sup> There are numerous paintings of the subject of the Last Supper. This is the content that the artist is explaining. But there are many different ways that this subject matter can be depicted. The Last Supper can be painted realistically or in impressionist style, it can use warm or cold colors, the lines can be sharp or soft. The various forms of art and the different characterizations of the disciples or their surroundings will all affect the meaning that the artist is trying to portray.<sup>152</sup> The three synoptic Gospels can be compared to this. The material in each Gospel is similar, but the arrangement is different to portray a distinct message.<sup>153</sup> The following formula is very helpful to show this process:

$$\text{Content} + \text{Design} = \text{Meaning}^{154}$$

<sup>147</sup> Adapted from Traina 243.

<sup>148</sup> Graham, *Explained* 16.

<sup>149</sup> This essay is found in Ruskin's *Elements of Drawing* which was published in 1857: Kuist 160.

<sup>150</sup> Kuist 91; Traina 37; Graham 31.

<sup>151</sup> From handout by Mary Graham "Slides of the Last Supper" to illustrate 'subject matter plus form equals meaning.' The following pictures were cited: Leonardo, 1495-97 – Renaissance, Italy; Tintoretto, 1591-94 – Mannerism, Venice; del Castaango, 1450 – Ren.; Psalter miniature, c.1255 – Gothic, Austria; Nodde, 1909 – Expressionism, Germany; Poussin, 1647 – Baroque, France; Suriguerola, late 1200's – Gothic, Spanish; Mosaic in church, c.520 – Early Church & Byzantine, Ravenna, Italy; School of Lorenzetti, early 1300's – Fresco (Gothic/Proto Ren.) Italy; Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, Ren. Vatican, Rome; Stanley Spencer, 1920 – Modern, British.

<sup>152</sup> Graham 31, 32.

<sup>153</sup> Kuist 91; Dr. Graham used this example in two occasions in teaching the SBS in Kona, Hawaii.

<sup>154</sup> Graham 31; Kuist 91.

## Laws of Composition Described

The following is a list of the laws of composition:

1. **The law of proportion** is a law of composition also known as principality. Consider how much a writer could choose to write about over the almost two thousand years of history that the Bible covers. In creating a literary work, the author has to decide what materials are omitted, which are included, and how much space will be allocated to discuss a topic. Naturally, the more space an author relegates to a given topic, the more he is choosing to emphasize that event or subject. That is the principle behind principality: emphasis and de-emphasis, or the proportion of space given to a topic. Thus it is a significant task of the student to observe how much space an author chooses to spend, or not to spend, on a given subject.<sup>155</sup> An example is the amount of space the Gospels devote to the last week of Jesus' life on earth.

It is interesting to note that Traina and Thompson do not include principality in their lists. This is probably due to the significance that they place on proportion as a primary principle rather than their neglect of the principle. Traina gives great emphasis on selectivity as an overriding principle of literary structure.<sup>156</sup> Traina's asserts that "purposive selectivity characterizes the books of the Bible."<sup>157</sup> Thompson lists proportion as one of his basic principles for the survey method.<sup>158</sup> While quantity is the definition of space used by most authors for principality, Kuist uses this law of composition in a different, more subtle way based on Ruskin's work. Ruskin calls principality the "one feature ...more important than all the rest."<sup>159</sup> According to Kuist and Ruskin, an artistic work has one outstanding attribute or quality. The rest of the composition augments that attribute. As an example, Kuist points out the need to distinguish what is central to a parable to be able to properly understand its message and not get sidetracked.<sup>160</sup>

2. **Repetition** is the reiteration of a word, or phrase. This could also apply to a passage. Thompson uses the heading recurrence as a blanket term to cover any sort of repetition.<sup>161</sup> This is a basic learning tool to reinforce the importance of an idea.<sup>162</sup> This is also a key prin-

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<sup>155</sup> Traina 61, 62. See also Morey 72; Braga 27; Hendricks 144.

<sup>156</sup> Traina 60.

<sup>157</sup> Traina 59.

<sup>158</sup> Thompson 35.

<sup>159</sup> Kuist 163.

<sup>160</sup> This author doesn't advocate this usage for two reasons. First, this is no longer the current definition for principality. Second, there are other tools used, such as understanding genre in the case of parables, which will give the student skills for this type of interpretation. Because of this potential for confusion, the terminology, law of proportion, is a better nomenclature.

<sup>161</sup> Thompson 40.

<sup>162</sup> Graham 29; Jensen 40.

principle for demonstrating the unity of a work.<sup>163</sup> Kuist maintains that if there is no repetition evident, then there is not really any design but instead confusion.<sup>164</sup> This is one of the most employed principles in the Bible.<sup>165</sup> Ryken says it is used not only with words, but with “motifs, themes, and whole scenes.”<sup>166</sup> Examples of repetition are: the word “holy” in Leviticus; and Paul’s testimony in Acts 9:22, 26.

3. **Continuity** is the repetition of similar terms or ideas. Ruskin notes that the most successful continuity includes a gradual completion “in the aspect or character of the objects.”<sup>167</sup> An example is the three parables in Luke 15.<sup>168</sup>
4. **Climax** occurs where the unity of book or passage is found in an upward progressive building of “feeling, importance, or intensity”<sup>169</sup> to a high point or peak experience. In chiasmic structures, a climax may be found at the center of the structure. Kuist and Ruskin label climax as *curvature*.<sup>170</sup> In art this law is expressed by the beauty evoked from a curved line as opposed to a straight line or angle. In music it is manifested either by a crescendo or diminuendo.<sup>171</sup> In the same way, in literature a good story builds in impact.<sup>172</sup> Kuist, in his discussion of curvature, adds that this progressive intensity can also be achieved by showing a cause/effect relationship. Thus climax is related to continuity. It is an intensifying continuity. Examples are found in final chapters of Job, Revelation, Ecclesiastes, and Exodus.
5. **Comparison** identifies people, places, things, actions, and attitudes that are that are alike or similar. This a way of teaching by comparing what is clearly understood to that which is unknown.<sup>173</sup> Examples are found in Romans 7:1-6 and Hebrews 5:1-10.
6. **Contrast** identifies people, places, things, actions, and attitudes that are that are unlike or opposites. The use of contrast helps recall and hold attention.<sup>174</sup> Examples are found in Acts 4:36-5:1 and Romans 5:15-17.
7. **Interchange** is the alternating of two topics. It could be people, events, or ideas. An interchange can either serve to reinforce or highlight a contrast or a comparison. This law is asso-

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<sup>163</sup> Ruskin quoted in Kuist 165.

<sup>164</sup> Kuist 82.

<sup>165</sup> Tremper Longman III, “Biblical Narrative,” *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993) 76. See also Jensen 40.

<sup>166</sup> Ryken and Tremper Longman III 76.

<sup>167</sup> Ruskin quoted in Kuist 167.

<sup>168</sup> Traina 50.

<sup>169</sup> Thompson 38.

<sup>170</sup> Kuist 84, 168-72.

<sup>171</sup> Kuist 84.

<sup>172</sup> Kuist 84.

<sup>173</sup> Lincoln 53.

<sup>174</sup> Horne 117.

ciated with the law of contrast according to Kuist and Ruskin.<sup>175</sup> Examples are Luke 1-3: A. John's birth announced. B. Jesus' birth announced. A. John born. B. Jesus born. Another example is observed in the opening chapters of 1 Samuel 2 and 3 between Samuel and Eli's sons.

8. **Chiasm** gets its name from the Greek letter, "chi" which is designated by an "x". In chiasms, events or ideas are presented, and then the same or similar concepts are presented in the reverse order. This is a way to emphasize major themes.<sup>176</sup> Thus a passage or book is structured symmetrically. The most significant part is often found in the middle of the chiasm. Morey categorizes the chiasm as a variation of interchange.<sup>177</sup> Examples are observed in the structure of James and Philemon.<sup>178</sup>
9. **Cruciality** is also known as the pivot or hinge.<sup>179</sup> It is the turning point of a story. The subject or plot hinges on a factor or an event which changes the course of the narration. Examples are Mark 8:27-30, and 2 Samuel between chapters 11 and 12.<sup>180</sup>
10. **Radiation**<sup>181</sup> involves a "central person, event, or idea"<sup>182</sup> that everything is tied to. In art, it is demonstrated by all lines converging or diverging from one point.<sup>183</sup> This concept could also be illustrated by the image of a wheel with spokes extending out in all directions. Examples include Philemon v.10, Philippians 2:1-11,<sup>184</sup> and the "The Word of God" in Psalm 119.<sup>185</sup> Kuist says the main idea of this Psalm is like the trunk of a tree and the development of the theme are like branches extending out from it.<sup>186</sup>
11. **Harmony**<sup>187</sup> states that there will be congruence and consistency in the way a completed work fits together. Rather than being an actual law of composition, harmony is a law of truth by which laws of composition can be tested. Harmony, according to Kuist, is "really the out-

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<sup>175</sup> Kuist 86, 177.

<sup>176</sup> Osborne 39.

<sup>177</sup> Morey 76.

<sup>178</sup> It was surprising to the author that the chiasm, while fairly common both to Old and New Testaments, is not included by most of the authors with roots back to Biblical Seminary. Only Osborne 39 and Morey 76 included it in their treatment of laws of composition.

<sup>179</sup> Thompson 39; Hendricks 121.

<sup>180</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>181</sup> This law is found in few works [Kust; Morey; Jensen] while it appears to be a significant law of composition.

<sup>182</sup> Morey 72.

<sup>183</sup> Kuist 84.

<sup>184</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>185</sup> Kuist 85; Jensen 40.

<sup>186</sup> Kuist 85.

<sup>187</sup> While this is the most elusive law of composition to grasp and use, it seemed important to include it from historical perspective since it is listed by White, Ruskin, Traina, and Morey.

comes of the other laws.”<sup>188</sup>

Morey categorizes a number of other laws of composition as sub-laws or ways of achieving continuity. Because none of these laws of composition are found in Ruskin's original work, and do not have artistic application, Morey's further cataloging provide handles for the student to understand the purpose of these laws. They are as follows:

12. **Particularization** and generalization is movement by the author in either direction. Either an author begins with observations or an example and the development of thought is to a general principle (i.e., generalization). Or the author begins with a principle and encompassing statement and gives evidence to support it (i.e., particularization). An example of particularization is Matthew 6:1-18, and the discussion on faith in James 2 an example of generalization.
13. **Explanation** or analysis is employed the first time a concept or event is introduced or portrayed. The author explains or helps the reader to understand it. Traina holds that this law is associated with particularization.<sup>189</sup> Examples can be observed in Mark 4 and Luke 2:22, 23.<sup>190</sup>
14. **Causation and Substantiation** can also be labeled “Cause and Effect Relationships.”<sup>191</sup> Here the author's purpose is to give the cause or reason for a circumstance (i.e., causation). The reverse, looking at a situation or facts with the intent of establishing the cause can also take place (i.e., substantiation), though Lincoln maintains that this construction is infrequent.<sup>192</sup> Osborne analyzes this law as answering the question “why?” Thus it answers why this purpose (cause) or why this result (substantiation or effect).<sup>193</sup> Romans 1:18-32 is an example of causation, and Romans 8:18-30 is an example of substantiation.<sup>194</sup>
15. **Instrumentation** involves purpose but goes further and seeks to explain the mechanism by which the result took place as well. Examples are John 20:30-31<sup>195</sup> and Acts 1:8.<sup>196</sup>
16. **Theological to Application** occurs when the author presents the theological portion of his work before he goes into application. This law is not listed in any laws of composition except

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<sup>188</sup> Kuist 86, 179; Ruskin quoted in Kuist 180; Traina 52; Morey 76; White 20.

<sup>189</sup> Traina 52.

<sup>190</sup> Traina 52; Lincoln 54.

<sup>191</sup> Thompson 37.

<sup>192</sup> Lincoln 55.

<sup>193</sup> Osborne 37.

<sup>194</sup> Traina 51.

<sup>195</sup> Traina 51.

<sup>196</sup> Hendricks 121.

those of the University of the Nations School of Biblical Studies (SBS) program.<sup>197</sup> Certainly it is a clear and common logical structure for epistles. As it explains the implications of theological truth, it appears to be a subset of instrumentation. An example is Galatians.<sup>198</sup>

17. **Introduction** is useful in narratives where the author wants to prepare the reader for what is to come. This information would not be known to the characters of the story. Examples are found in Job 1 and 2,<sup>199</sup> and Genesis 2:4-25.<sup>200</sup>
18. **Summarization** is when a passage or idea is reviewed and condensed in order to bring clarity. Adler asserts that logical books will periodically sum up their argument.<sup>201</sup> A summary can precede or follow the section of thought. An example of summarization is found in Acts 9:31.
19. **Interrogation** is also identified as “Question/Answer.” This is a style where a question or problem is set forth, and then the answer is given. Hendricks says that the question format is a highly effective method of communication.<sup>202</sup> An Old Testament example of this is observed in the structure of Habakkuk<sup>203</sup> while Romans 6 and 7 are a New Testament example.<sup>204</sup>

## Recording Material on the Horizontal Chart to Observe the Laws of Composition

Many authors of the Inductive Bible Study movement believe that the purpose of the horizontal chart is to view the book as a whole to see how the book functions as a literary unit, a complete composition. This is achieved by taking the content and observing how it is laid out to express a design.<sup>205</sup>

Dr. Graham maintains that if the content is laid out on a chart, one will be able to discern the design or laws of composition employed by the author.<sup>206</sup> She states: “The main reason for making a chart is to discover the compositional structure and unity of a book, that is, to see the whole and the relationship of the parts to the whole and to each other.”<sup>207</sup> Jensen adds that understanding of content is found in the design.<sup>208</sup> Dr. Graham also suggests that “the chart shows meaning as well as

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<sup>197</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>198</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>199</sup> Thompson 40.

<sup>200</sup> Traina 52.

<sup>201</sup> Adler 130.

<sup>202</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 155.

<sup>203</sup> Traina 52.

<sup>204</sup> Lincoln 54.

<sup>205</sup> Graham 28, 31; Traina 37; Jensen 29; Thompson 32.

<sup>206</sup> Graham 32, 33.

<sup>207</sup> Graham 33.

<sup>208</sup> Jensen 29.

facts.”<sup>209</sup> Traina advises that there must be interpretation of the facts, and not just “exact words of Scripture.”<sup>210</sup> In these instructions, the implication is that some charts were being produced that just gave inductive particulars observed for the text, but it was insufficient without interpretation to show relationships. While the student should aspire to create charts that will express the meaning of a book, it should be an encouragement to the beginner that they can initially create simple charts that reflect what they have observed in the text with a minimum of interpretation.

Identifying laws of composition can be one of the most difficult exercises of the survey phase. It is as much an art form as a science. First, the student must be aware of how to identify the most significant terms of the text. There are laws of composition which will aid the student. These are principally and repetition. The topics which take up the most space, and the terms which are continually noted will be strong indicators of the Biblical author’s subject matter and predominant building materials.

It is difficult to give the student a definitive method for identifying laws of composition. One helpful practice for large books is to note words that appear to be key terms that correspond to each paragraph.<sup>211</sup> This might be especially helpful for those who are using a paradigm which skips the survey and begins with analysis. Others might begin, with small or large books, by jotting down key terms which correspond to each chapter. Later, if the student determines that the divisions, sections, and segments do not correspond to chapters, he can adjust where these terms are found. Others might decide that the book needs to be read once or twice more after the rough horizontal has been established in order to identify key terms and place them where they appear in the text.

There is a significant reason why the student is asked to place this raw data in a chart format. The work done so far in the first three (or four) readings has been a function of the left side of the brain.<sup>212</sup> The left hemisphere is involved in spoken, logical, analytical, and sequential functions. Now in contrast the task is to observe the chart as a whole, to look for how the parts of the book all relate as one. Observing how content is arranged in laws of composition to express a unique message is a right brain activity. The right side engages in picturesque, intuitive, holistic, and non-sequential functions. Hendricks appears to be aware of this function as he challenges the student: “As you visualize your chart, ask: What are the relationships?”<sup>213</sup> Thus one of the benefits of creating a horizontal chart is that it employs the right side of the brain as well as the left. Figure 13 is an example of how text laid out on a chart can help to demonstrate a chiasmic structure which would not be identified without laying out the text in a graphic form.

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<sup>209</sup> Graham 34.

<sup>210</sup> Traina, *Training* 232.

<sup>211</sup> Mary Graham, ed. *Inductive Bible Study Network Newsletter* (1539 E. Howard St., Pasadena, California Telephone interview, June 30, 2001.)

<sup>212</sup> For this subject I am indebted to Dr. Graham 84, 85.

<sup>213</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 18.

Figure 13: The Letter of James: Wisdom to Live By

Response to Trials	Warning: Produce Fruit Consistent with Faith	Wisdom	Fruit of Living for Self	Response to Trials
Need for Maturity	Social Injustice	False & True Wisdom	What's in the Heart	Social Injustice
1:1-27	2:1-26	3:1-12	3:13-18	4:1-12
Attitude toward suffering: JOY Actions to do: - Prayer - Boast in circumstances - Endure temptation - Doers of word Attitude towards God: Trust His character	Partiality [Addressed to Christians] A. Favoritism	Hypocrisy Sins: - Boasting - Cursing/Blessing	Two Kinds of Wisdom Earthly Wisdom Fruit: - Bitter Envy - Selfish Ambition	Bitter Envy Sins: - Cravings - Coveting - Adulterers
Characteristics of God: gives life Time focus: - Present Age - Patience builds maturity Tongue: quick to listen slow to speak (don't judge circumstance) Need for maturity: Pray for wisdom to be righteous Farm Metaphor: Implanted word = the seed	Warnings: - Don't judge by partiality - Will be judged by law of liberty B. Neglect of the poor Fruit of Abraham's faith: Friend of God	Tongue: a world of iniquity	Wisdom from Above: Pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits Earthly Wisdom Fruit: - Partiality - Hypocrisy	Warnings: - Judge law = not doer - Who are you to judge neighbor? Tongue: do not speak evil Fruit of craving & coveting: Enemy of God
	Scripture examples: Abraham & Rahab		Farm Metaphor: Harvest of righteousness is sown in peace	Warning: Rich oppressors are judged Two categories: A. Business Merchants B. Landed Aristocracy
				Attitude toward suffering: PATIENCE Actions to do: - Prayer - Praise - Bring back wanderers Attitude toward God: You know His character
				Characteristics of God: the Judge Time focus: - Wait patiently for the Lord - Judge at doors - Age to come Tongue: No oaths Yes and No Result of Maturity: Prayer of righteous is effective Farm Metaphor: Farmer waits for crop = the harvest Scripture examples: Job and Elijah

## Determining the Meaning from Form and Content

The content is laid out on a chart, and its significance is considered in light of the design or laws of composition. There are some laws of composition that take priority over others. Traina points out that interchange is a secondary law of composition because its purpose is to express an alternation between two topics.<sup>214</sup> Therefore, a law of composition that reveals the topics, or the content, is the primary design principle to seek out. Traina speaks of a principle of selectivity in relationship to structure. The Bible covers a massive length of history and events. For the length of history it covers, it really is not that many pages. But for each book, the author had a specific message he wanted to convey. As an artist, the author chose material, and placed it in structural relationships, in order to convey the message he had for his audience. In creating these literary works, they really did operate as artists.<sup>215</sup>

There are two principles of selectivity which Traina says the student can employ to discern what content is important to an author. The first is “quantitative selectivity,”<sup>216</sup> and the second is “non-quantitative selectivity.”<sup>217</sup>

Two primary laws of composition will lead the student to grasp the “quantitative selectivity” of the author: repetition and proportion.<sup>218</sup> Repetition is based on how often a term is used. Proportion is how much space is given to a subject. Both of these will alert the reader of an important subject to the author. They can also overlap. A change in the quantitative subject will probably demarcate a change in division, section, or segment. The work done with these two laws of composition should indicate the major themes of a book that need to be traced and developed in study.

“Non-quantitative selectivity” is a bit more subtle. Words that a student designates as key terms are considered under this category. As mentioned earlier, perhaps the best way to be alert to potential key terms is noting those terms that the reader struggles with.<sup>219</sup> This principle also holds true with narratives. Traina gives the example of Abraham in Genesis 12:10-20. It is uncharacteristic at this point in the narrative to see Abraham act without faith. Thus this event will raise the question of why is it included here. What relationship to the whole does it serve?<sup>220</sup>

Connectives are useful, especially in logical literature, to show a change in topic. Connectives are what Traina would refer to as “surface structures”<sup>221</sup> Surface structures demonstrate obvious relationships between paragraphs.<sup>222</sup> For instance, the “but” which opens chapter 5 of Acts is a surface struc-

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<sup>214</sup> Traina 53.

<sup>215</sup> Traina 59, 60.

<sup>216</sup> Traina 61.

<sup>217</sup> Traina 62.

<sup>218</sup> Braga 25-27; Traina 61.

<sup>219</sup> Adler 102.

<sup>220</sup> Traina 62.

<sup>221</sup> Traina 38.

<sup>222</sup> This discussion of connectives is limited to what relates to inter-paragraph relationships. Connectives will be discussed in detail in the analytical phase.

ture which shows a contrast between Barnabas' heart and that of Ananias and Sapphira.

Kaiser gives some additional cues for discerning transitions of structural units. A rhetorical question can indicate a transition. So can a transition of geographic location, time element, or setting.<sup>223</sup>

Once the placement and volume of content, and connectives have been noted, it is time to observe the design. Traina also calls these patterns "subsurface" structures<sup>224</sup> because they are implied relationships rather than explicitly stated. For instance, in the Genesis narrative, there is the story of Judah and Tamar inserted within the account of Joseph in Genesis 38. Why is it there? It is an implied contrast between the character of Judah and that of Joseph in his relationship with Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39).<sup>225</sup>

If a chart is going to be used as a visual tool to grasp a scope of the entire picture, and to allow some right brain activity, it seems that the number of laws of compositions employed need to be limited initially to those that are visually oriented. Particularization and generalization; explanation or analysis; causation and substantiation; instrumentation; theological to application; introduction; summarization; and interrogation are probably all analytical, left brain functions and can be applied to the text later. If the goal is to visualize the chart, then the student should initially employ the laws of composition which are more artistic in nature and lend themselves to visual, right brain activity. Therefore it appears most prudent that the student initially limits his focus to the following laws of composition: comparison, contrast, interchange, chiasm, radiation, cruciality, and climax. The student should look at the content and see which of these laws of composition are employed by the author.

The student must experiment to decide how he will approach the horizontal. The fact is that discerning the structure of a book is work and requires effort.

## Discerning Themes

Many authors advocate topical studies or themes.<sup>226</sup> Various laws of composition can be used to identify topics that are emphasized by the author: repetition,<sup>227</sup> contrast,<sup>228</sup> and proportion are probably the most common. Additional levels can be added to the horizontal as needed, and several topics can be included for each level based on the section or segment they are found.<sup>229</sup>

Traina encourages the student to note major themes to the Bible such as "God, Christ, man, sin,

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<sup>223</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology, Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981) 72.

<sup>224</sup> Traina 38.

<sup>225</sup> Traina 38.

<sup>226</sup> Graham 43; Jensen 110; Morey 320-1; Braga 25-31.

<sup>227</sup> Graham 43; Jensen 110; Braga 25-27.

<sup>228</sup> Braga 27, 28.

<sup>229</sup> E.g., see Braga 32; Morey 321; Graham "Numbers" chart 37.

and redemption.”<sup>230</sup> Nolt states that the study of such themes was what constituted theology at Biblical Seminary.<sup>231</sup> So thematic studies were a significant aspect to the horizontal chart.

## An Additional Observation Exercise

Another exercise that Dr. Graham recommends is to summarize the “characteristics” of a book.<sup>232</sup> These are the distinguishing features that help to portray the message of the book. Here are two of Dr. Graham’s examples:<sup>233</sup>

- “**Genesis:** beginnings, genealogy, narrative, biography, right and wrong, families, candor, and promise.”
- “**Mark:** fast movement, little details, amazement, editorial notes, miracles, no genealogy, opposition, popularity, and training.”

It should be evident that characteristics produced will be personal and unique to each student. In addition, Dr. Graham says that students can also add “other information such as summarizing statements, conclusions, references, quotations, significant insights, and any other observations.”<sup>234</sup>

After the horizontal is completed, the student should take the opportunity to review what he thought to be the main idea. Does it still convey the complete main idea of the book, or only part? Perhaps it only captured a secondary theme?

The most important summary, according to Dr. Graham, is the book title. She calls this the “grand synthesis.”<sup>235</sup> What encapsulates the design of all the laws of composition working together and the various themes? If this kind of value was placed on naming a book, emphasizing it as the zenith of the survey process, students would probably rise to the challenge of more creative labels.

## Historical and Cultural Background

The study of historical and cultural issues pertaining to a book as a whole unit is often referred to as the critical method.<sup>236</sup>

As Ramm puts it, the critical method creates a “framework”<sup>237</sup> for studying a book. The critical method sets a context to help understand the circumstances of the author and recipients of a book,

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<sup>230</sup> Traina 76.

<sup>231</sup> Nolt 334.

<sup>232</sup> Graham 42.

<sup>233</sup> Graham 42.

<sup>234</sup> Graham 33, 34.

<sup>235</sup> Graham 43.

<sup>236</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994) 236; Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>237</sup> Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993) 10.

and aids the student to identify with the author's and recipients' perspective rather than to impose their own contemporary setting. Vos points out that there are numerous parts of Scripture which will not be meaningful to the student of the Word without a grasp of the historical and cultural settings.<sup>238</sup> Consider what is lost on the student who reads Philemon without an understanding of first century slavery.

Terry communicates the passion a student needs to catch concerning the critical method when he exclaims that the student must "transport himself into the historical position of the author, look through his eyes, note his surroundings, feel his heart and catch his emotions."<sup>239</sup> Traina challenges the students to "*stand in the shoes of the author himself, to adopt his mentality and peculiar point of view.*"<sup>240</sup>

The questions that need to be addressed in the critical method are as follows:<sup>241</sup>

1. Who wrote the book? This refers to authorship. Answering this question might also include an attempt to find out what the author was like.<sup>242</sup> For authors like Moses and Paul, there is a lot of information to research on their lives and personalities.
2. To whom was the book written? This refers to the recipients. Traina encourages the reader to discern distinguishing features and issues that concern the original readers.<sup>243</sup>
3. When was it written and from where was it written? The when and the where questions are closely related and therefore will be discussed together.

"Where?" refers to the geographic locations. Most writers suggest asking where the recipients are located. The location of the recipient will help the student to discern the culture and history of the people. It is interesting to note, however, that the author's location is not a category normally cited by any writers. Perhaps this is because the author's location is considered in the historical setting. It makes a difference if the author is on death row as in Paul's case in 2 Timothy, or in God's presence on Mount Sinai (Moses in Leviticus). But this same argument can be used to defend the need to cite the location of the recipients, so the student might consider including this as an additional category to study.

"When?" refers to the dating of the book. Sproul holds that the suggested date is closely re-

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<sup>238</sup> Vos 62.

<sup>239</sup> Terry 129.

<sup>240</sup> Traina 152.

<sup>241</sup> Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics – Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516: Baker Book House, 1981) 16, 17; Terry 129; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 180; Osborne 127; and Traina 152.

<sup>242</sup> Braga 61; Jensen 110.

<sup>243</sup> Traina 152.

lated to the viewpoint of the writer.<sup>244</sup> He cites the problem of the books that liberal scholars claim cannot be written by the author. Since they reject the supernatural, they cannot accept that prophetic books really predict the future. They attribute predictive books to a later date, or at least attribute parts of books to later authorship as in the case of Isaiah.<sup>245</sup>

The date also influences the historical setting. Terry believes that they are so closely linked that date and place of writing should always be considered together.<sup>246</sup> One example is the debate over Galatians. There are significant implications concerning the state of the church in Asia Minor, and the leadership in Jerusalem, in dating Galatians before or after the Jerusalem Council.

4. What is the historical and cultural setting of a book as a whole?<sup>247</sup> It is not possible to totally understand a book without knowing the historical and cultural setting.<sup>248</sup> Culture includes all the “moral, intellectual, and social”<sup>249</sup> development of people or nation. Mickelsen calls it the “creative result of man’s actions.”<sup>250</sup> Culture is a comprehensive field. It includes worldview,<sup>251</sup> beliefs,<sup>252</sup> social relationships such as marriage and family,<sup>253</sup> religion,<sup>254</sup> politics and government,<sup>255</sup> economics,<sup>256</sup> language,<sup>257</sup> arts,<sup>258</sup> music,<sup>259</sup> and literature.<sup>260</sup> There is also an anthropological category of material culture including such items as clothing, homes, and implements.<sup>261</sup>

Geography is another category under culture.<sup>262</sup> Students should become familiar with the location of a nation, scale of distances, topography, climate, seasons, proximity to bodies of water, travel routes and other pertinent issues which will help to understand the development of a people.<sup>263</sup> Beitzel captures the significance of geography when he states that “history it-

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<sup>244</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1977) 59.

<sup>245</sup> This is not an issue for this thesis since the audience has been defined as those who hold to the inspiration of Scripture.

<sup>246</sup> Terry 132; see also Braga 61.

<sup>247</sup> Jensen 110; Osborne and Woodward 25; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 181.

<sup>248</sup> Virkler 77; Sproul 57.

<sup>249</sup> Vos 133.

<sup>250</sup> Mickelsen 160.

<sup>251</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 182.

<sup>252</sup> Braga 59.

<sup>253</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 182.

<sup>254</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 182; Braga 62; Mickelsen 160.

<sup>255</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 182; Vos 113, 121; Traina 153.

<sup>256</sup> Braga 62; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 182.

<sup>257</sup> Braga 62; Vos 133.

<sup>258</sup> Vos 133.

<sup>259</sup> Vos 133.

<sup>260</sup> Braga 45; Vos 133; Mickelsen 160.

<sup>261</sup> Ramm 155.

<sup>262</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 182, Braga 45.

<sup>263</sup> Braga 42-43; Mickelsen 165, 166; Ramm 153.

self in many respects is inseparably bound by and subject to the limitations of geography.”<sup>264</sup> For instance, Palestine held a central position in the Near East.<sup>265</sup> Thus Israel was vulnerable to invasion by any nation that was bent on conquest and needed to rely on Yahweh for protection.<sup>266</sup>

The study of culture is vast and pervasive. It encompasses every part of daily life. The student will have to discern which aspects of culture are needed as part of a general understanding of a book, while other cultural issues can be left to the analytical phase in which specific passages are studied. For instance, the study of the Gospel of Mark definitely requires an understanding of the political circumstances of the Roman Empire in A.D. 64, and the persecution the Christians were enduring. However, an understanding of the custom of “Corban” (Mark 7:11) is not necessary until the student studies Mark 7 in detail.

Historical background has to do with the events and actions of people of the Bible in facing the challenges of their circumstances. While they are separate categories of study, culture and historical background are not mutually exclusive issues.<sup>267</sup> The way a people responds to historical circumstances is largely affected and influenced by their culture.<sup>268</sup> Thus culture is an essential element in the history of a people. The more thorough the consideration of general issues of culture and historical events surrounding the writing of a book, the better the chance that the reader will accurately perceive the issues, concerns, and thought patterns of the Biblical situation.

In some books, the author’s historical circumstances might be significant to take into consideration, such as Paul’s circumstances and conditions in his letter to Philemon or 2 Timothy. But it is more critical to grasp the historical setting of the community being written to. Kuhatschek likens this study to being transported through a “time barrier,”<sup>269</sup> to where one can begin to perceive the original events. Knowing the location of the recipients will allow the student to research the geography, culture, and history—not just of the recipients, but the surrounding nations and world powers, if relevant.<sup>270</sup>

There are two kinds of evidence the student needs to look for in the critical method. The first is internal evidence.<sup>271</sup> This is evidence which comes from the book being studied. For example, the

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<sup>264</sup> Barry J. Beitzel, *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody, 1985) 2.

<sup>265</sup> Mickelsen 165.

<sup>266</sup> Israel was also in a central location for sharing its special revelation of God to the nations.

<sup>267</sup> Braga 45.

<sup>268</sup> Braga 55.

<sup>269</sup> Kuhatschek 39.

<sup>270</sup> Terry 129.

<sup>271</sup> Morely 33; Mickelsen 162; Virkler 81.

author of an epistle often identifies himself or to whom he is writing and where they are. When the student has exhausted his clues internally within the book being studied, the next step is to look for additional internal clues in other books of the Bible. For instance, the book of Acts often gives valuable information about circumstances for various Pauline epistles. Another source of information is to cross-reference with other books written by the same author.

When internal evidence has been exhausted, the student can look to external evidence.<sup>272</sup> These are the historical documents which give additional information. Such resources include Bible Encyclopedias, Bible Dictionaries, Bible Handbooks, and Bible Atlases.

Mickelsen warns that while the study of history and culture are important, they cannot take precedence over the Biblical content itself.<sup>273</sup> Some authors suggest that the critical method be studied before the horizontal,<sup>274</sup> but because of the priority on content, this thesis has followed the example of those like Morey<sup>275</sup> and Lincoln<sup>276</sup> who place it after the survey of the book. While the critical method gives a framework to better understand the text, it must not become the central focus.

A good example that Mickelsen brings up is dating. Dating can be a time consuming process, and even then there are examples when a book can have several possible dates. In those cases the various viewpoints and implications should be acknowledged. He goes on to point out the historical circumstances are more important and can reveal the author's message even if the date is somewhat obscure. Mickelsen cites Obadiah where, while the time period is in question, Edom's historical animosity towards Israel results in gloating over Jerusalem being sacked. Regardless of the time period, the message of judgment on Edom because of wrong attitudes toward his close relative, Israel, remains clear.<sup>277</sup>

## Discerning the Author's Reason for Writing

The final question usually associated with the critical method is the reason or purpose for the writing of the book.<sup>278</sup> All books are written with an intended purpose. For example, 1 and 2 Kings does not just present the history of Israel, but is probably written to explain to the people of Judah why they are in exile. The Gospels, with a general purpose of evoking faith in Jesus, each have their own specific audience and a purpose to communicate to that audience. In the case of the Gospel of Mark, the backdrop of Nero's persecution is plausible evidence that it is written to evoke faith and perseverance among a community experiencing severe suffering.

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<sup>272</sup> Mickelsen 162; Morey 33; Virkler 81.

<sup>273</sup> Braga 63.

<sup>274</sup> E.g., Terry 129; Arnold 43; Osborne and Woodward propose at least the historical and cultural background be done first 25.

<sup>275</sup> Morey 15.

<sup>276</sup> Lincoln 36.

<sup>277</sup> Mickelsen 161, 162.

<sup>278</sup> Braga 63; Osborne and Woodward 25; Virkler 81.

Mickelsen's warning not to give precedence to background studies must be heeded here as well. Discerning the purpose can be difficult to ascertain and a highly interpretive exercise. When the purpose is not clearly given, one must be cautious not to become too committed to any hypothesis concerning why the text was written.

This author recommends that the student attempt to answer the question of reason written late in the survey phase in cases where the purpose is not clearly expressed. This is because determining the reason for writing can be highly interpretive and therefore requires as much evidence as possible. Wald recommends that purpose for writing is one of the first questions that a student ask.<sup>279</sup> Adler asserts that a book is fully understood as a unity only when its purpose is also understood.<sup>280</sup> While posing this question early may help the reader to reflect on the unity, it is most prudent to hold any hypothesis tentatively until the end of the survey phase.

Arnold has an interesting formula to arrive at the reason for a book: "Historical Context (Who/When/Where) + Ideas/ Themes (What) = Author's Purpose (Why)."<sup>281</sup>

While this formula is somewhat simplistic because it is geared for the beginner, it is fundamentally true. When the student discerns the essential truth or truths of a book, and places them in a historical context, the purpose for presenting these truths should become evident. This is a helpful formula for students who confuse the main idea with the reason for writing. The main idea is the truth that needs to be learned by the recipients in their situation. The reason for writing clarifies the problem that requires application of the presented truth. Whatever purpose is concluded, the student must remember that his conclusions might need to be reevaluated after the analytical phase of study.<sup>282</sup>

Before completing the survey phase, review all titles, main idea, and the key verse. The process of review will continue throughout the phases of Bible study. The more one studies, the more understanding the student acquires of the book. Since the book is a whole unit, every new perception of one aspect of the book has the potential of influencing a revision in another aspect of the book.

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<sup>279</sup> Wald 49.

<sup>280</sup> Adler 43.

<sup>281</sup> Jeffrey Arnold, *Discovering the Bible for Yourself* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993) 67.

<sup>282</sup> Morey 153.

# Chapter 3 | The Analytical Phase

## Observation Stage of Analytical Phase

The goal of the analytical phase of Bible study is to understand the meaning of the Biblical text. But theology and doctrine cannot be understood without understanding the Bible from a grammatical standpoint.<sup>1</sup> Grammatical relationships and structure must be identified before its meaning can be surmised. As in the survey phase, the student begins with observation and moves to interpretation. Observation in this phase is the study of grammar and syntax to discern relationships, and move to interpretation to understand meaning.<sup>2</sup> While many students have had a bad experience with grammar, probably due to the fact that they didn't see why it was a significant subject to master, it is a critical area to gain competency in.<sup>3</sup> Kaiser gives an important reminder that the motivation to learn how to read and write among the American colonists was primarily their desire to be equipped to better understand the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup> While all people have sufficient grasp of grammar to communicate, there will be structures not perceived without a conscious awareness of grammatical relationships.<sup>5</sup>

## Observing Structure: Intra-Paragraph Relationships

Because of the importance of grammar in the analytical phase, the student will begin with a focus on the element: structure. While the student must also consider how paragraphs relate to each other, both structurally in terms of laws of composition and logically in terms of flow of thought, the primary level of structure for the analytical phase is intra-paragraph relationships. For those who desire to review or grow in their understanding of grammatical terms and their function, refer to Appendix 2.

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<sup>1</sup> The Navigators, *The Navigator Bible Studies* (Handbook, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80935: Navpress, 1994) 19; Hendricks and Hendricks 115.

<sup>2</sup> The two terms, grammar and syntax, overlap to some extent. Webster defines grammar as "1. The study of the way the sentences of a language are constructed; morphology and syntax." Webster 561. Harbrace defines grammar as "The system of rules by which words are pronounced and arranged into structures meaningful in a language." [Webster 1929]. Harbrace defines syntax as: "sentence structure; the grammatical arrangement of words, phrases, clauses." [John C. Hodges, and others 573]. It seems there is some overlap, but that syntax covers the relationship of language in a broader sense. Syntax can be used in a limited way to mean the same as grammar, but can also include all relationships of a paragraph. [Osborne 93]. Mickelsen calls syntax the "study of thought relationships [Mickelsen 129]. For the sake of those who are not familiar with the term, this thesis will use "grammar" to describe both functions.

<sup>3</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 38; Stein 178.

<sup>4</sup> Kaiser 10.

<sup>5</sup> Mickelsen 129, 130.

## Vertical Charts

In the survey phase, the vehicle for observing and recording information was the horizontal chart. In the analytical phase, the primary vehicle is the vertical chart. The vertical chart is a blown up version of a segment or section (in a small book) from the horizontal. Therefore the vertical is focusing on the levels of structure from terms up to and including the relationship of the paragraphs which compose that segment.

To create a vertical chart, a sheet of paper is placed in a vertical orientation. A rectangle, or “vertical,” is formed on the page that covers approximately the center third of the page. This proportion can be adjusted as the student progresses and discovers what proportion works best for him.

The space within the vertical is divided up to reflect the approximate proportion of each of the paragraphs included in this segment. This again is demonstrating the law of composition known as principality. As in the drawing of the horizontal chart, it is helpful to use graph paper in this exercise in order to more accurately establish proportion. There are two points that the author would like to make concerning proportion of vertical charts. The first is that he agrees with Jensen’s opinion that each vertical should reflect proportion of the paragraphs in the vertical, but not a uniform scale between all the verticals.<sup>6</sup> The latter stipulation limits the student from having the opportunity to expand the details of a small vertical. The second point is that the student should not be overly concerned about an exact scale of proportion. The student can get so bogged down with the mechanics of creating a chart that it takes the joy out of studying the Word of God.<sup>7</sup>

Morey points out that the student must not only be aware of how many verses are in a paragraph, but the fact that verses are of different length.<sup>8</sup> If the student really wanted to be accurate, he would have to take into account how many characters there are in each sentence. The point of showing proportion is that the student becomes aware of how much space the author allocates to each discussion. Sadly, the student often stresses over how to create exact proportions, and then never considers the significance of proportion in studying the passage.

The two best sources for how to go about creating a vertical are Jensen and the SBS handouts used by the University of the Nations for training students. Both of these sources state that the purpose of re-creation is to graphically lay out the text.<sup>9</sup> In the work of Jensen and the SBS program, the insides of the vertical chart contain only exact text from the Bible passage. Both encourage the student to lay out the text in a creative manner, to “pictorialize” the passage, as Jensen puts it,<sup>10</sup> so that the message becomes clear in a graphic way.

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<sup>6</sup> Jensen 118.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson 35; Morey 77.

<sup>8</sup> Morey 77.

<sup>9</sup> Jensen 127; SBS does not use the term “re-create,” but conceptually that is the intention of charting.

<sup>10</sup> Jensen 127.

## Filling in the Vertical Chart

A vertical chart of a segment begins with the title of that segment at the top, and the chapter and verse references that it encompasses. The first information to be entered in the vertical should be the paragraph titles. They should be entered at the top of each paragraph section. Writing them in a different color is a good strategy to make them stand out.

In filling out the rest of the vertical, the SBS program suggests that the student chooses three or four phrases or points from the text that are the most important. Jensen advocates using all of the text of Scripture. There are some advantages to both systems. The SBS system allows the student to enter enough Scripture onto the page that the main message of the text is clearly displayed without getting bogged down in details or having so much information that nothing stands out.

The advantage of Jensen's method is that there is no risk that the student will leave out some main point, and major on a minor issue. For Jensen's method, the student needs far more time. Because of the volume of information that is recorded, he recommends that the student make a rough copy before entering the information on the final chart. While this is a thorough system which ensures the student has thought through the material, it would not work with the SBS model which is designed to enable the student to work through whole books of the Bible in short periods of time. The challenge of the SBS model is for the student to accurately reflect the most important points of the text, and at the same time not modifying the message by leaving out crucial information. (For example, the author has witnessed a student leave out an "if" and then interpret what was conditional as an imperative!)

Whether the student is required to write all the text, or a number of key phrases, he is encouraged to show the relationship of sentences, clauses, and phrases in a creative manner. While an understanding of grammar is essential for this task, the student is also encouraged to demonstrate laws of composition between paragraphs when applicable.

Jensen shares a list of suggestions that will aid the student in creatively laying out the text:<sup>11</sup>

Indentions	Various Colors
Underlines	Arrows
Small-Type Letters	Numerical Listings
Color Shading	Circling, Boxing
Large and Small Capitalizations	

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<sup>11</sup> Jensen 127.

In addition to making observations of text inside the boxes, the student can also make observations outside of the vertical box. While the insides of a vertical chart include only exact Biblical text, exact words of the text are not required outside of the vertical charts. The opportunity to add additional information is especially useful in the SBS system where much of the text is left out of the vertical.

There are some differences in philosophy among SBS instructors as to how much information should be included on the outside of a chart. All agree that the goal for inside the vertical is to sift out the essence of a passage. The question is whether or not it is helpful to add additional details outside the vertical. Some instructors believe that if an adequate job is done of filling in the text of the vertical chart, the flow of the passage is evident, and observations should be done just from the chart itself.<sup>12</sup> The benefit of this perspective is that the charts are kept simple and uncluttered. This is an especially helpful format for students who are just learning the inductive method so that they are not overwhelmed with details. There are others who advocate limited observations on the outside to highlight observations within the vertical and demonstrate relationships between paragraphs in a graphic manner. This author maintains that it is important to go back to the text itself and observe important pieces of information that were not included within the vertical chart. For example, a key word or words that are not understood can be defined, or lists could be included that were too cumbersome to include on the chart. An objection to this procedure is that the student makes an immense amount of observations which are never transferred into interpretations so it is better if the student just records significant observations. The problem with this logic is that, as in the analogy of a detective, important clues can often be overlooked as insignificant if all are not gathered together.

The method of limiting observations to the text recorded in the vertical is probably a good way for students to begin. Later, other options can be introduced and the student can experiment until he finds the style which works best for him.

Besides additional observations, the outside of a vertical is used to record interpretations. The placement and sequencing of observations and interpretations is also a point of discussion among SBS instructors. Some SBS instructors maintain that the left side of the page outside of the vertical should be used solely for observations, and the right sided is used solely for interpretations. This helps the student from confusing observations and interpretations. In addition, some teach that the student should do all his observations for that vertical before making any interpretations. This helps the student to consider a chart as a whole unit and fosters an attitude of considering content and form. All terms, connectives, laws of composition, literary and atmospheric transitions, and background issues have been considered before interpreting.

The other broad school of thought is those who train the student to make an observation, and follow it by an interpretation. Thus a student might observe one paragraph, or even just one clause

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<sup>12</sup> Introduction Seminar: School of Biblical Studies Core Course, U of N, 1999, 45.

from a paragraph, and immediately make an interpretation. Both the left and the right side of the page are filled with a series of observations followed by interpretations. The author believes this practice is maintained because it helps the student to link observations to interpretations. The student can observe something and immediately respond to it. However, this approach does not foster an inductive approach in the student. No instructor would consider studying in this manner. At best this is the equivalent of verse by verse teaching. If the student was continuously aware of the structure of his horizontal this might be effective. But most beginners do not have that awareness, and so the chart is vulnerable to become a series of micro-interpretations on verses and individual paragraphs. Rather, students should be taught to gather all the clues, look at them as a unit, and decide which are the most significant to comment on in interpretation.

Figure 14 is an example of what a vertical chart might look like.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This author recognizes that James 1:1-8 does not constitute a full unit of thought. Rather, this unit of thought should encompass the entire chapter. For the sake of demonstration it was easier to take a smaller unit of Scripture and enlarge it. The types used allow the example to be observed in a font size that doesn't cause eye strain.

**Figure 14: Vertical Chart Example from James**

Who is James? 12 tribes?  
 Define "dispersion:" name applied to Jews living outside of Palestine - cf. Dt. 4:27; (Zondervan Dict., p.217)

Repeated words, ideas:  
 Temptation 9x, Endurance, 3x  
 Atmosphere: Joy, positive  
 Key Words: Faith, wisdom

Repeated idea: Doubt  
 Contrast: Faith/Doubt  
 Define: "Ask in faith" (v.6)  
 "double-minded" (cf. 4:8)

Comparison: lowly/rich  
 flower/rich

Illustration: Isaiah 40:6-8

Figures of Speech:  
 "crown of life" (metaphor)  
 "desire" (personification)

Contrast: God/self  
 (source of temptation)

Progression → conceived  
 → birth to sin  
 → birth to death

CONTRAST: 2 BIRTHS  
 Define: "First fruits"  
 cf. Lev. 23:9-14, Jer. 2:3  
 To acknowledge all belonged to God, Israelites brought of the fruits that ripened first. (Zondervan Dict., p.284)

Character of God

**Segment 1. 1:1-18**

1:1 JAMES – TO TWELVE TRIBES Servant of God, Jesus
1:2 TESTING FAITH PRODUCES ENDURANCE  Whenever trials Consider it JOY..... Because  Endurance → Mature, Complete
1:5 LACKING WISDOM – ASK GOD  Who gives: generously, ungrudgingly  But ask: in faith.....never doubting For doubter not receive
1:9 LOWLY BOAST > BEING RAISED Rich → being brought low Because rich like flower: • Sun withers field, • The rich beauty perishes wither
1:12 BLESSED: WHO ENDURES TEMPTATION Will receive crown of life No one say: Tempted by: God B Tempted by: Own desire U Desire → lured T
1:17 EVERY GIFT FROM ABOVE From Father of lights – no variation His purpose – birth So that: Kind of first fruits

• 12 Tribes, Dispersion – is it literal?  
 What about Gentile believers? Perhaps figurative – speaking spiritually to the whole church cf. Acts 8:1b.

• Why the emphasis on endurance?  
 Church is experiencing difficulties. He's giving them a future perspective so they can see how God will use this to their benefit if they persevere.

• Why: "Ask for wisdom?" Tests & temptations can cause foolish choices. •  
 • Why mention God's character? Testing could make the readers question God's concern & goodness.  
 • "Ask in faith" appears to mean focusing on Jesus, or the opposite of being double-minded.

• Why an illustration about the rich?  
 Perhaps the rich are persecuting poor believers? Isaiah 40 focuses on how short life is. Perhaps James wants them to see how transient earthly wealth is.

• "Crown of life" = eternal life. James is giving them an eternal perspective for endurance.

• Why contrast God/self? Trials could cause them to blame God for their internal temptation. Again, the need for wisdom.

• Personification & progression: shows the power of sinful desires and the end result of sin.

• Not only is God NOT to be blamed for sin, but He wants to give life in contrast to the death caused by sin.

• First fruits – a way of saying that believers belong to God. This should build security in the reader.

Summary of Segment: James is speaking to believers, perhaps the poor, in the midst of trials. Appealing to God's character, he encourages them to ask in faith for wisdom to endure and mature.

## Additional Tools for Observing Structure in the Analytical Phase

While the vertical chart is the predominant tool for the analytical phase of study, there are other tools available as well. It is important for the student to have a number of tools to work with so that a method does not become mechanical. As Jensen puts it, the danger is that the student will develop a “routine of sameness, lameness, or tameness.”<sup>14</sup> One method which is effective for studying a segment is simply to take the segment and place in the center third of a page.<sup>15</sup> This can be done by copying the text from a Bible and pasting it onto a page, or to generate this by computer. This solves the problem of missing text, and does not involve much effort, but allows the student to record observations and interpretations on both sides of the text. What is lost is the ability to portray the text in a graphic fashion.

An additional safeguard to prevent Bible study from becoming a mechanical or rote procedure is to vary the depth of study that is performed by the student. This is a similar concept to that of cross training in physical sports. The long-distance runner, while needing extended runs, can also benefit by sprinting and adding strengthening exercises to his program. Similarly, vertical charts are an excellent tool to focus on segments, but the student will continually skim over much of the detail of a passage. He runs the risk of never learning to probe thoroughly into a passage. In a program like the SBS, which seeks to have the student cover the entire Bible in a nine month period, time constraints necessitate that the student learn to cover material quickly while getting as much detail as possible. As Dr. Ron Smith defines it, the SBS provides “a fairly in-depth overview.”<sup>16</sup>

### The Grid Chart

Hendricks suggests the grid chart.<sup>17</sup> This is another way that a segment can be handled as a unit. It is limited in its usage. A grid chart is useful to compare a series of events or people. In this method, a grid of boxes is drawn in which the left hand vertical column lists the person, place, thing, etc. that are going to be compared. Along the top of the grid in a horizontal orientation, the grid through which they are going to be compared is listed. The greatest challenge of a grid, it seems to this author, is that the student must have the perception to know what elements must be included in the chart in order for it to produce the desired result. In other words, if the student does not recognize what is important to observe before he set up the chart, it will not be very useful.

Figure 15 is the grid chart Hendricks used to demonstrate how to study Mtt. 13:1-23.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Jensen 96.

<sup>15</sup> Wald 20, 21.

<sup>16</sup> University of the Nations, School of Biblical Studies brochure, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 171-180.

<sup>18</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 180.

**Figure 15: Grid Chart Example**

Soils	Description	Growth	Hindrances	Results

### Thompson’s Chart

Thompson recommends a simple format.<sup>19</sup> The example he uses to demonstrate this method is a Psalm, but the length (24 verses) shows that this could work with any segment. It includes a vertical title, paragraph titles, and allows for the inclusion of observation of information from all the elements of Bible study. This chart style is easy to demonstrate. It could reflect proportion, or rely on the horizontal for this. While it will not demonstrate relationships or laws of composition, this system does provide a way for the beginning student to record his observations in a systematic manner which can be expanded. This structure only accommodates observations. Additional paper would be needed for interpretation. Figure 16 demonstrates how to set up Thompson’s observation chart.

**Figure 16: Thompsons Observation Chart<sup>20</sup>**

Psalm Title \_\_\_\_\_

Paragraph Titles			
Main ideas, items of content for each paragraph			

<sup>19</sup> Thompson 106-109.

<sup>20</sup> Adapted from Thompson 109.

## The Term Chart

Osborne and Woodward propose a simple tool called the “Term Chart.”<sup>21</sup> The term chart, as its name implies, focuses on terms. This type of chart is limited in use since it does not show any intra-paragraph relationships. This same limitation makes it useful for beginners to isolate and focus on terms in the text. Included is a part of Osborne and Woodward’s example of how to use a term chart. Figure 17 demonstrates the concept of the Term Chart.

Figure 17: The Term Chart<sup>22</sup>

Scripture	Observation	Questions/Application
(Scripture phrases placed here)	(Observation on phrases here)	(Questions arising from observations here)

## Digging Deeper

The tool used by the SBS program to develop the students’ skills in more depth is called “Digging Deeper.”<sup>23</sup> As self-described, “A Digging Deeper is a thorough study of a specific passage.”<sup>24</sup> A passage is chosen and written or printed out double or triple spaced. Then it is bombarded by at least ten significant (as opposed to obvious) observation questions. This includes color-coding where this exercise will help the student see relevant relationships. The student then asks another ten interpretation questions which are followed by an application. Finally a “mini-commentary” is written on the passage.<sup>25</sup> See Appendix 3 for detailed instructions on a Digging Deeper assignment.

<sup>21</sup> Osborne and Woodward 32-47.

<sup>22</sup> Adapted from Osborne and Woodward 34.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

## Diagramming

A final tool advocated by many authors is diagramming.<sup>26</sup> Diagramming is the skill of graphically laying out the text of a passage so that the reader can perceive, in a visual way, the grammar and thought flow.<sup>27</sup> While this sounds similar to the vertical chart, there are some differences. First, the diagram includes all the text of a passage. Second, in the kind of diagramming that will be described here, the text is kept in the same sequential order that is found in the passage.<sup>28</sup> Third, every phrase and clause is separated and placed on the paper according to its function in its sentence.

Diagramming results in several benefits. The first is that it becomes a picture of the grammatical relationships of the parts of each sentence and how they relate as a whole. The clauses that can stand independently are identified. The other parts of the sentence, whether clauses or phrases which serve to give additional definition to the main clauses, are distinguished and their relationship is shown.

Second, identifying the main clauses will clarify the central idea of a paragraph.<sup>29</sup> Most paragraphs have a “theme” or “topic” sentence. Hopefully this was identified in the process of writing paragraph titles, but not necessarily, especially in the case of difficult passages. Remember that some writers teach that the paragraph title is meant to jog the memory for an understanding of the survey. Even in the case of paragraph titles that were written with the intent to show a logical flow, there is no guarantee of the accuracy of these titles when dealing with a complex passage.

Third, while the focus of diagramming is primarily an observation tool, the exercise of diagramming will confront the student with the challenge of analyzing the relationships of difficult or ambiguous constructions. Terry declares: “But especially is it necessary to ascertain the correct grammatical construction of sentences.”<sup>30</sup> Here the student must grapple with difficulties in the flow of thought. Wrestling through these passages is an intrinsic step in the process of interpretation. Stein comments that grammar is often neglected in the process of interpretation.<sup>31</sup> Diagramming forces the attention of the student on intra-paragraph relationships and prepares them for the task of interpretation.<sup>32</sup>

Diagramming can be used with any passage, but it is a time-consuming process. It is useful when approaching dense passages which contain a highly logical flow of thought, and difficult passages. Adler gives some very practical advice that sentences which are hard for the student to understand are very likely to be ones which contain important information from an author.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, any paragraphs containing sentences that a student has difficulty understanding are good candidates for

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<sup>26</sup> The following authors all speak of diagramming: Vos 33-38; Kaiser 165-181; McQuilkin 144-151; Osborne and Woodward 50-60. Other authors do not mention the term but include simplified methods to help the student discern grammatical relationships: Lincoln 50-52; KBH 206-208; and Jensen 53-55.

<sup>27</sup> McQuilkin 144, 145; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 206, 207; Osborne and Woodward 50.

<sup>28</sup> McQuilkin 145; Kaiser 99.

<sup>29</sup> McQuilkin 144, 145; Kaiser 100, 101.

<sup>30</sup> Terry 103.

<sup>31</sup> Stein 179.

<sup>32</sup> As stated earlier, observation and interpretation continually work together.

<sup>33</sup> Adler 121.

diagraming.

In difficult passages, diagraming holds some advantages over vertical charts. Creating a vertical, at least in the SBS system, requires the inclusion of only a number of key points. These points are not necessarily decided after careful deliberation of the structural elements of a passage. Key connectives can easily be missed. The process of diagraming will reveal which clauses are independent and give the student a better focus on the main theme of a passage.

In the SBS program, while instructions are given to students to demonstrate the relationships of a passage in a graphic way in a vertical chart, usually no instructions are given to ensure that the outcome is accurate. Rather the instructor relies on the student's past literary skills, and hopefully still retains. The intuitive skills by which all of us understand language are also relied upon. If students were given some training in diagraming, it would aid their ability to discern what is key to include in a vertical.

As a disadvantage, diagraming is a tedious process. It really takes some thought concerning grammatical relationships before one can begin diagraming, and, even with the help of a computer, it is time consuming to write everything out. In addition, this process lacks the creativity of the vertical chart, and does not reflect laws of composition.

Many students today do not have the foundations of grammar to parse and diagram. Perhaps they were not taught these skills, or maybe the student did not see the relevance of the subject and thus was not motivated to learn. Whatever the case, the appendix on grammar is included to meet the needs of those students who have not previously had the foundations to define grammatical relationships, especially the art of diagraming. Those desiring to learn more about the mechanics of diagraming can see Appendix 4.

## **Observing Other Elements in the Analytical Phase**

The discussion on observation during the analytical phase has thus far focused primarily on structure. It must also be presumed that the effective observation of structure includes attention to the other elements of Bible study. The following are some suggestions for observations of the other elements during this phase of study.

### **Type of Literature**

The student needs to note changes in the type of literature from segment to segment or within a segment. This could be a transition from poetry to prose, or from prose to a parable in the synoptic Gospels. Type of literature will be handled in more detail under special hermeneutics.

## Observing Terms

While terms have received some attention during the survey phase, they need to be considered in more detail during the analytical phase. At this point the student is focusing on units of literature no larger than a segment, so terms can be scrutinized in more detail. The exercise of observing and writing out the text, regardless of the vehicle, has involved a significant degree of observation of terms. Vertical charts and diagramming involve scrutiny of terms and their function in a text. In the vertical chart and term chart, there is also a process of determining which terms are significant to include. There are additional skills that can be implemented now.

The easiest term observation is repeated words.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps there is a word or two that didn't appear to be critical during the survey, but does now. It could be that a specific term did not stand out in the book as a whole, but is very prominent in this particular passage. A term could point to a theme of the paragraph.<sup>35</sup>

Words which the student does not understand need to be looked up.<sup>36</sup> These words could be key, or the reader may simply not know the meaning. There will be no way to decide until the meaning, or possible meanings, of the word is known. When a word is looked up, the student might find that he still is struggling with the meaning of the sentence or passage. This might lead the student to two additional categories of words which the student must try to discern.<sup>37</sup> These are words which are "crucial"<sup>38</sup> and those which are described as "technical."<sup>39</sup> Adler would identify these words under the general umbrella as those which "give you trouble."<sup>40</sup> Crucial words are those which are needed to understand a passage, but their meaning in context is not clear.<sup>41</sup>

Technical terms are words which either have been generated by the author as new words, or words which have been taken from everyday life and given a new meaning by the author.<sup>42</sup> This is often the case of philosophers.<sup>43</sup> It is also often the case in the Bible. These are words which are "theological."<sup>44</sup> These words "state basic New Testament truths."<sup>45</sup> Traina describes them as "profound concepts."<sup>46</sup> Words such as "mercy," "peace," "love," "flesh," and "justification" are theological terms which are loaded with shades of meaning and implications.

An attempt to locate some of these words was made in the survey phase. But as Adler points out,

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<sup>34</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 190; Osborne 90; Jensen 84.

<sup>35</sup> Osborne 90.

<sup>36</sup> Graham 48; Lincoln 44; Traina 34; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 190.

<sup>37</sup> There is also the additional category of figures of speech, but this will be considered under special hermeneutics.

<sup>38</sup> Traina 34; Osborn 90.

<sup>39</sup> Adler 105.

<sup>40</sup> Adler 102.

<sup>41</sup> Osborne 90.

<sup>42</sup> Adler 105.

<sup>43</sup> Adler 105; Terry 79.

<sup>44</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 190; Osborne 90.

<sup>45</sup> Osborne 90.

<sup>46</sup> Traina 135.

it is often difficult to locate significant words before wrestling with their meaning within a passage.<sup>47</sup> Only when they are studied in their grammatical context will the difficulties really become apparent. Conversely, the act of trying to understand the meaning of a sentence will lead to challenging words which the reader might discover are key or technical.<sup>48</sup> It is something of a cycle which continually brings more insight. Identifying words which seem critical will lead to the scrutiny of a passage which will shed more light on those which are truly difficult passages. The process of discerning genuinely key words needs to be done within the framework of grammatical structure.

## Observing Atmosphere

As has been mentioned earlier, atmosphere is often a highly subjective determination. It is also possible that the observation stage of study will result in recognition of the atmosphere of a passage.<sup>49</sup> Therefore observation should be made of the atmosphere of individual segments. It is possible for the overall tone of a book to be a certain mood, but for individual passages to have a completely different atmosphere. Traina points out that a portion of Scripture can not only have a mixture of atmosphere, but “there may be a drastic change of atmosphere within one unit of Scripture.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore it is important for the student to carefully observe words which might indicate atmosphere and changes of atmosphere within a passage.

## Historical and Cultural Setting of a Specific Passage

In the survey phase, the vast scope of culture and history has been discussed. Even when the historical and cultural setting has been thoroughly researched for a book, there will be the need for additional research to interpret certain passages. The initial challenge is to determine if tentative interpretation is consistent with the historical and cultural background of the book. In addition, individual passages may contain historical and cultural information which needs to be researched by the student in order to properly grasp its significance to a passage. For instance, a study of the background of the Gospel of Mark as a unit would not yield an understanding of term, “Corban,” in order to interpret Mark 7:1-23. A cultural understanding of the Talmud is necessary to learn how this practice was used to avoid the responsibility of caring for one’s parents.<sup>51</sup> In the same chapter, a survey of the background would probably not include the significance of Jesus’ response to a woman of “Syro-Phoenician origin” (Mark 7:26). However, an understanding of Israel’s historical relationship with its Canaanite neighbors would help the reader to identify with the typical Jews’ abhorrence of

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<sup>47</sup> Adler 102.

<sup>48</sup> Adler 123.

<sup>49</sup> Traina 71.

<sup>50</sup> Traina 71.

<sup>51</sup> “Corban,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, Merrill C. Tenny, General Editor, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967) 182.

dealing with a person of Canaanite origin (e.g., the introduction of Baal worship from Phoenicia into Israel by the Omri dynasty which nearly resulted in the Davidic line being wiped out. 1 Kings 16:31- 2 Kings 11:20). This historical and cultural information will also aid the reader in discerning the values of the people in a passage being studied, and the emotional impact that a teaching or event would have on them.<sup>52</sup> So additional information must be sought both from the Bible (e.g., Leviticus 15:25-30 for Mark 5:25), and from external sources like Bible dictionaries when necessary (e.g., for Corban).

## Interpretive Questions in the Analytical Phase<sup>53</sup>

The first step in the process of interpretation is to ask questions of the clues which have been discovered. Recall the assertion by Professor Agassiz that isolated facts are stupid things. Much of the information gleaned in the observation stage of study will be useless without it being filtered through a grid of questions that will help it to make sense. On the other hand, approaching a book or passage with a grid of questions will facilitate learning. Lincoln claims that learning is the result of “personal involvement,”<sup>54</sup> and this is actuated by the process of asking questions. The value placed on asking questions can be seen in the four questions Dr. White gave to his class as the assignment for the entire course:

1. What is in the Gospel of Matthew?
2. Where is it in Matthew?
3. Why is it in Matthew?
4. Why is it where it is in Matthew?<sup>55</sup>

A thorough application of these questions will reveal not only the content of Matthew, but the structure and design and reasons for this design. Thus the formula will be employed: form plus content equals meaning.

Therefore the student has to learn how to ask good questions. The skill of learning to ask questions is actually an intermediate stepping stone between observation and interpretation. Sometimes questions asked of the text will be a function of observation, such as in the case where a term is not understood but the solution is merely looking up the definition in a dictionary. At other times a question will move into interpretation as in the case of a term which is ambiguous and the student will need to choose which definition is most appropriate for the text. Traina rightly holds that the ability to ask good questions is a significant percentage of the inductive methodology.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 176.

<sup>53</sup> While this is included in the analytical phase, the following information is pertinent to the survey phase of study as well.

<sup>54</sup> Lincoln 69.

<sup>55</sup> Eberhardt 151.

<sup>56</sup> Traina 135.

A key to ferreting out the riches of the biblical text is to ask questions from many angles. Because of the depth of the Bible, and human limitations to perceive truth, asking similar questions of the text from slightly different perspectives can often open up meaning that would have been missed.<sup>57</sup> In fact, the terminology used by teachers of the inductive movement is to “bombard” the text with questions.<sup>58</sup> Traina says that the student should ask every question that he can think of.<sup>59</sup> This is helpful because if the student is going to be inductive, he cannot know what questions will reap significant results at the onset of study. Every student should be encouraged to creatively ask questions. With this comes the warning that students should not expect to be able to answer all the questions they ask.<sup>60</sup>

### What Questions to Ask?

If a paradigm of questions for Bible study is confined to Rudyard Kipling’s six “serving-men,” the student has a simple method of study, but one that is somewhat limited. In that paradigm, the only question that refers to interpretation is “why?” Asking this question will help the student to consider the purpose of Scripture, but will also miss many facets of questions that the student could be asking. Thompson also warns that unguided “why?” questions can become extremely speculative and get into questions that the student cannot possibly answer.<sup>61</sup> Instead the student needs to learn to ask questions which keep him focused on the passage at hand.

There is a three step process of interpretive questions<sup>62</sup> that can be asked of all the elements of Bible study: definitive questions; reason questions; and implication questions.<sup>63</sup> Thompson calls these “the stock set of questions.”<sup>64</sup> They will give the student a grid through which to filter observations.

The first category, definitive questions, relates, as the name describes, to defining. It refers to explanations, or the meaning of something.<sup>65</sup> It can also be used to express what or who<sup>66</sup> something is. For type of literature and structure, this will entail identifying the genre or structural relationships employed by the author. For atmosphere, this will involve determining the combined meaning of the emotional tone used. For historical background, this will involve research into Biblical and extra-biblical sources such as handbooks, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and Bible atlases.<sup>67</sup> When

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<sup>57</sup> Traina 134.

<sup>58</sup> Traina 134; Hendricks 39; SBS handout.

<sup>59</sup> Traina 132.

<sup>60</sup> Hendricks 39.

<sup>61</sup> Thompson 47.

<sup>62</sup> The following discussion is based primarily on the work of Robert Traina 96-135 and to a lesser degree Thompson 44-49.

<sup>63</sup> Traina 99; Thompson 46.

<sup>64</sup> Thompson 49.

<sup>65</sup> This defining needs to be done in terms of the original audience.

<sup>66</sup> Thompson includes “who” in this category. It is an easier paradigm than Traina’s to remember.

<sup>67</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explain the usage of these tools.

asked of terms, this will involve word studies using dictionaries, Bible dictionaries, and lexicons.

The second category, reason questions, concerns the question: why? This is the step that pertains to the author's purpose or motive for a text. Traina offers two helpful questions: "Why is this said and why is it said here?"<sup>68</sup>

The third category, implication questions, relates to the further significance and assumptions that can be made. This final step is really an extension of the reason question.<sup>69</sup> It involves taking the time to consider all the ramifications of a truth in its context. As Traina puts it: "What are the full implications of this particular thing with this particular meaning placed here for these particular reasons?"<sup>70</sup>

This step necessitates reflection time. Every clear, unambiguous statement of truth carries implied or tacit meaning. It takes time, serious thought, and prayer to grasp such truths and their presuppositions. For instance, the clause, "God is love" (1 John 4:8 NRSV) has implications concerning the nature of love, the value of love, the quality of love, how one knows what love is, as well as implications concerning how a person should live.<sup>71</sup> Most Bible study does not enter into the implication step of interpretation.

The sequencing of these questions should also follow the same order as well.<sup>72</sup> As Thompson declares, "One cannot well reflect on why something is, or what it implies, until one knows what it is."<sup>73</sup> Lincoln puts the same questions in a simpler format: "what? why? and so what?"<sup>74</sup> Essentially he is asking the key question that each of these steps addresses. "What?" refers to what is the thing being defined. "Why?" concerns the author's purpose for inclusion and the placement. "So what?" refers to implications. This simplified format might be an easier introduction for some students.

Traina, Thompson, and Lincoln all include additional secondary questions which refer to Kipling's remaining "serving-men."<sup>75</sup> "Who" and "what" is involved? "How" is it accomplished? "When" is it accomplished? And "where" is it accomplished? Lincoln follows Traina's paradigm. He labels these additional questions as "subordinate," the same nomenclature used by Traina.<sup>76</sup> He merely lists them as "where? when? how? and who?"<sup>77</sup> These additional questions serve the role of providing further ways of asking questions of the text to allow for thorough interpretive questions. Figure 18 summarizes the interpretive questions. The student can filter his observations through this grid. In addition, Figure 19 is a list of interpretation questions<sup>78</sup> that the students in the SBS pro-

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<sup>68</sup> Traina 99.

<sup>69</sup> Traina 108.

<sup>70</sup> Traina 108.

<sup>71</sup> This is by no means an exhaustive list of questions about 'love' or God that can be asked of this clause.

<sup>72</sup> Thompson 49.

<sup>73</sup> Thompson 49.

<sup>74</sup> Lincoln 78.

<sup>75</sup> The following is Traina's paradigm 99.

<sup>76</sup> Traina 99; Lincoln 78.

<sup>77</sup> Traina 99.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

gram are given. These questions have been rearranged and modified to reflect the sequencing of the grid in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Interpretive Question Grid

<b>A. Primary Interpretive Questions</b>				
		<b>Step 1: Definitive</b>	<b>Step 2: Reasons</b>	<b>Step 3: Implications</b>
<b>Key Idea:</b>		Meaning	Purpose	Presuppositions
<b>Key Questions:</b>		- What is it? - What does it mean to the original reader?	- Why? - What purpose”?	- What is the Significance?
		↓	↓	↓
<b>Elements of Bible Study</b>	Type of Literature →			
	Terms →			
	Structure Inter-paragraph → Intra-paragraph			
	Atmosphere →			
	Historical Background →			
		↑	↑	↑

**B. Secondary Interpretive Questions**

- Who and what is involved?
- How is it accomplished?
- When is it accomplished?
- Where is it accomplished?

## Figure 19: SBS Interpretation Questions

### DEFINITIVE QUESTIONS

#### What does it mean?

1. Ask meaning questions. What is the meaning of this term to the original reader? What is the meaning of this phrase, statement, or theological concept?
2. What did it mean to the author? Does the author give his own interpretation?
3. What did it mean to his audience?
4. To develop this, ask how is this term, phrase, or concept used in the context of: this passage? the rest of the book? other writings by the author?
5. Look it up in: a concordance; a Bible dictionary; other word study books; and a dictionary in your own language. Relate your findings back to the original context of the passage you are studying.
6. Does the author quote Scripture? Look up the passages quoted and observe his context.
7. Take into consideration the type of literature.
8. Is this literal or figurative language?
9. Interpret figures of speech. Does the author interpret his use of symbols?
10. What elements of composition or structure are used in this book or passage?
11. Consult Bible dictionaries, atlases, and historical background resource materials for unanswered questions or more information.

### REASON QUESTIONS

#### Why is it used here?

12. From the text, what do you see are the author's concerns, characteristics, convictions, emotions?
13. Likewise, list the reader's concerns, questions, emotions, characteristics, convictions, strengths, and weaknesses.
14. Does the author state why he wrote the book?
15. Why does the author quote Scripture in this passage? Does it prove a point, illustrate a truth, support the author's argument, or contribute to the emotion of the passage?
16. Pay careful attention to the context. How does this passage fit in with the overall message of the whole book? What is its relation to the surrounding paragraphs?

17. What is the historical context? Who is addressed? What cultural issues need consideration? When did the events occur?

18. In the Epistles, determine from the text what questions the believers were asking, and what struggles they were encountering. This is like listening to one side of a phone conversation. For example, in Paul's letters we know what Paul says, but we must do some thinking as to what the congregations may have been asking or thinking that would result in Paul responding as he does.

19. Why use this figure of speech?

20. Bombard the text with "why" questions.

21. Ask: Why is this said?

22. Why are certain elements of composition or structure used in this book or passage?

23. Why is this type of literature used here? For example, what is the impact of poetry instead of prose?

24. Why this literary context? How does this passage prepare me for what follows? For what went before?

25. How would the meaning be affected if this term or passage was missing?

### IMPLICATION QUESTIONS

#### What is the significance of this?

26. What is the significance of this passage, idea, word, or statement?

27. Determine whether the issues addressed apply to the local situation in the author's day or universally apply to all believers.

28. Ask: What does this imply?

### ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

29. If you're having difficulty, then ask yourself if you need to backtrack and do some more observation.

30. Read the book or the passage in another translation.

31. Context is the most important interpretation question. Pursue it relentlessly!

32. Put the main idea of the paragraph in your own words.

33. Summarize, meditate, and reflect on the material you've observed and interpreted.

34. Consult a commentary. Do this last.

In Thompson’s paradigm, rather than having a primary and secondary set of questions to ask, he incorporates them all into one set of questions.<sup>79</sup> He includes the same primary categories—defining, reason and implication—with his only variation being the incorporation of the “who” question, “who is this?” into the definition question. He adds two additional questions.<sup>80</sup> First, “How is it done?” Second, “Ask the other questions concerning place and time [when? and where?] as they are appropriate.”<sup>81</sup>

This model has the advantage of one neat list. Students can be exposed to both and find which works best for them.

These categories of questions, both primary and secondary, can serve as a tremendous stimulation for the student to bombard the text with intelligent and appropriate questions that will greatly aid the learning process. Even with a grid of questions, the student can be overwhelmed as to where he should begin asking questions. Thompson gives some valuable counsel to address this issue. Rather than getting overwhelmed with all the details of a text, he suggests that the student should keep in mind the big picture of structure and flow of thought from his study during the survey phase.<sup>82</sup> This is an excellent starting point, especially if a student only has limited time to study.

Lincoln, presumably working directly from the biblical text, suggests another way to record material which is especially useful for the student to record his questions. Each verse reference is written down, and then observation notes are recorded. They are followed by interpretive questions with ample space left for interpretive answers.<sup>83</sup> Figure 20 presents an example from Lincoln’s work.

**Figure 20: Recording Questions and Answers**

<b>Verse</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
1:1	1. Note 1	1. (a) Q. 1	1. (a) Answer 1
		(b) Q. 2	2. (b) Answer 2
		(c) Q. 3	3. (c) Answer 3
	2. Note 2	2. (a) Q. 1	
		(b) Q. 2	
	3. Note 3	3. (a) Q. 1	
		(b) Q. 2	

<sup>79</sup> Thompson 46.

<sup>80</sup> Thomson 46.

<sup>81</sup> This is listed before implications in his pattern.

<sup>82</sup> Thompson 47.

<sup>83</sup> Lincoln 79, 90.

## Interpretation Stage of Analytical Phase

So far in the analytical phase, grammatical relationships have been considered, and how to ask intelligent and insightful questions in order to get the most out of study. The next focus of attention is on meaning: What is the message of the text to the original reader? This is an area of study that was weak in the Inductive Bible Study movement.<sup>84</sup>

Some students might question the necessity of a discussion on how to interpret the text. Language was a gift to man from the garden of Eden, and all children naturally learn to speak without any formal training.<sup>85</sup> Therefore the student might question why it is not an easy and natural process to interpret the Bible. Many authors allude to this naturalness in their discussions on interpretation. Advice is given such as to interpret according to “common sense,”<sup>86</sup> “as we interpret any other volume,”<sup>87</sup> according to “the straight-forward and obvious meaning,”<sup>88</sup> and “most naturally.”<sup>89</sup> However, some of these same authors spend significant effort to explain how to interpret in this fashion. And anyone who has done a cursory study of Church history, or has attended a few Bible studies, will note that “common sense” means different things to different people. The problem is that language is not precise.<sup>90</sup> Hirsch says it best:

The great and paradoxical problem that must be confronted in considering the double-sidedness of speech is that the general norms of language are elastic and variable while the norms that obtain for a particular utterance must be definitive and determinate if the determinate meaning of the utterance is to be communicated.<sup>91</sup>

While spoken language can communicate clearly, partly due to non-verbal cues, situational context, and the ability to explain if misunderstood, written language does not have the benefit of those communication cues. And language is flexible enough that a given written text holds the possibility of being understood differently by different people. Hirsch cites the fact that various sincere and well-meaning interpreters interpret Scriptures differently as proof of ambiguity of language. Therefore, if any written language is to be understood, but especially a text as important as the Bible, there needs to be a consistent way of determining its meaning which safeguard against misinterpretation.<sup>92</sup> That method is called “hermeneutics.”

Hermeneutics are the principles or rules for interpreting the Bible.<sup>93</sup> Hermeneutics is supposedly

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<sup>84</sup> See Appendix 5 for Interpretation in the Inductive Method Bible Study Movement.

<sup>85</sup> Kaiser 33, 34.

<sup>86</sup> Traina 137.

<sup>87</sup> Terry 25.

<sup>88</sup> Ferguson 101.

<sup>89</sup> Traina 182.

<sup>90</sup> Adler 166.

<sup>91</sup> Hirsch 69.

<sup>92</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 18.

<sup>93</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 5; Virkler 16; Ramm 10; Terry 10.

derived from the name of the Greek messenger god, Hermes, who delivered and explained the communications of the gods to the people receiving them.<sup>94</sup> The field of hermeneutics is defined both as a science and an art. It is considered a science because it provides principles for a consistent, orderly method of investigating the Scriptures.<sup>95</sup> It is also considered an art because language is so fluid that it is not possible to use a mechanical application of these principles.<sup>96</sup> When the student moves from studying the principles of hermeneutics to applying them to the Bible, he has moved from hermeneutics to exegesis.<sup>97</sup>

The field of hermeneutics can be broken down into two major subcategories: general hermeneutics and special hermeneutics. General hermeneutics is the study of principles of interpretation applicable to all language. These are not special principles for the Biblical text, but can be employed with the study of any book.<sup>98</sup> Special hermeneutics is the study of principles of interpretation in reference to their application to specific types of literature and genres.<sup>99</sup> This present discussion is limited to the development of the study of general hermeneutics.

## General Hermeneutics: Determining the Meaning of the Text.

In discussing meaning, the first question that needs to be addressed is: Whose meaning is going to be accepted? For, as Hirsch states, “The text has to represent somebody’s meaning.”<sup>100</sup> Once this question has been settled, the next step is to agree on a hermeneutic by which the meaning can be established.

In considering the question of whose meaning is determinate, there are two main categories: the author or the reader. To discuss this issue, there is an additional question that needs to be addressed: Does a text have only one meaning, or is it possible that a text can hold multiple meanings? This question is settled if the interpreter decides that meaning is reader oriented since it is obvious through history and the personal experience of most Bible study attenders that readers will not always come to the same conclusion as to what the meaning of a text is. This can also be easily verified by taking a handful of commentaries and comparing their discussion on a controversial topic.

## Options for Multiple Meanings

There are number of possible options to consider when exploring the potential of multiple meaning when discussing author based meaning. The following three options are expounded as ways

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<sup>94</sup> Virkler 15.

<sup>95</sup> Virkler 16; Ramm 11.

<sup>96</sup> Virkler 16; Ramm 11.

<sup>97</sup> Virkler 18; Ramm 10.

<sup>98</sup> Terry 17.

<sup>99</sup> Virkler 16.

<sup>100</sup> Hirsch 3.

in which a text may contain multiple meanings:<sup>101</sup>

The first option is that the author intends a text to contain several meanings or layers of meaning.<sup>102</sup> One potential example cited to demonstrate two levels of meaning is the prophesy of the birth of a son to Isaiah (Is. 7:14) which is later quoted by Matthew as a reference to Jesus (Mtt. 1:23). A problem with this example is that Matthew was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the modern interpreter is not. Therefore this is not the kind of hermeneutic that can be duplicated.

Another option for multiple meanings from an author orientation is the concept of “*sensus plenior*”<sup>103</sup> in which, unknown to the author, the Holy Spirit intends a text to have a fuller or deeper meaning to be discovered later. The Scripture, 1 Peter 1:10-12, is quoted as proof of this potential:<sup>104</sup>

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look!

Whether one chooses to accept or reject this concept, the problem is the same as with the previous option: there is no way, outside of revelation from the Holy Spirit, to discover a meaning embedded by God’s Spirit. Therefore a hermeneutic cannot allow for this kind of multiple meaning.

Still a third option for multiple meaning is that while the original Biblical writer only purposed one meaning for a text, a succeeding author found new meaning. This was done, they maintain, by using some of the hermeneutics of the rabbis of their day.<sup>105</sup> Three of these rabbinical methods are numerated as employed by New Testament authors.

One such method was the midrash<sup>106</sup> or midrashim.<sup>107</sup> The midrash focused on the Pentateuch (Halachic) or the whole Old Testament (Hagadic).<sup>108</sup> Their purpose was to get to a deeper level of interpretation than the literal sense.<sup>109</sup> Longenecker points out that some of their principles were sound, and some were not.<sup>110</sup> In time, the midrash hermeneutic developed further into mystical and

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<sup>101</sup> For these categories the author is indebted to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 122-132.

<sup>102</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 122.

<sup>103</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 125; Kaiser 110.

<sup>104</sup> This topics will be considered in more detail under special hermeneutics.

<sup>105</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 127.

<sup>106</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 127.

<sup>107</sup> Terry 33.

<sup>108</sup> Terry 33; Richard N. Longnecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999) 18.

<sup>109</sup> Longenecker 19.

<sup>110</sup> Longenecker 20, 21.

allegorical methods and went far beyond what the text could actually imply.<sup>111</sup> Both Jesus (Mark 7:1-13) and Paul (Col 2:8; Titus 1:14) can be cited rebuking these commentaries.<sup>112</sup>

Another method whereby New Testament writers found new meaning in the text is *peshar*<sup>113</sup> or *pesharim*.<sup>114</sup> This is a method of interpretation used by the Qumran community.<sup>115</sup> Scripture was interpreted from an eschatological perspective.<sup>116</sup> Longenecker points out that Jesus was using the story of Jonah in this fashion when he spoke of His impending death in Mtt. 12:40.<sup>117</sup> While Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard concede that there is usage of both of these hermeneutics by the New Testament authors, their employment “appear extremely restrained.”<sup>118</sup>

A final hermeneutical method that the New Testament authors are observed to use to derive new meaning was typology. Typology is the “correspondence between New and Old Testament events.”<sup>119</sup> It was the recognition by a New Testament author that God was doing something in the New Testament history which was similar in some way to the Old Testament. A typological interpretation therefore is not necessarily the discovery of new meaning of a text, but showing how God is again moving in history the same way. An example of a typological interpretation might be where Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1 (Mtt 2:15). Here God is calling His people, embodied in Jesus, out of Egypt again. Typology will be considered in greater depth in special hermeneutics.

While it is fascinating to consider how the New Testament authors used rabbinical methods to perhaps find additional meaning in a text, the fact remains that this was done, as in each of the above-mentioned options, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These are not viable options for developing a hermeneutic for today.

## Single Meaning of the Text

This really leaves only one option for an author oriented meaning: a single meaning. There are several presuppositions behind this position. The first is that a passage in its given context can only have one meaning.<sup>120</sup> Second, the author has willed a historic meaning<sup>121</sup> which he intends to be understood by the reader.<sup>122</sup> Third, the reader does not have the right to impose his own meaning onto the text, but must discover what the author intended to communicate.<sup>123</sup> Fourth, it is possible to

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<sup>111</sup> Terry 33.

<sup>112</sup> Terry 34.

<sup>113</sup> Longenecker 24.

<sup>114</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 128.

<sup>115</sup> Longenecker 24; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 128.

<sup>116</sup> Longenecker 25; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 128.

<sup>117</sup> Longenecker 58.

<sup>118</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 129.

<sup>119</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 130.

<sup>120</sup> Traina 182; McQuilkin 88.

<sup>121</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard points out that this text, even if edited, is still the Holy Spirit's intended meaning 132.

<sup>122</sup> Hirsch 31; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 98, 120, 132; Ramm 115.

<sup>123</sup> Hirsch 142; Ramm 115; Ferguson 101.

understand what an author meant, or at least determine his probable meaning.<sup>124 125</sup>

This position stands in contrast to a reader oriented, multiple-meaning theory of meaning. Reader oriented meaning has its origins in 1946. Wimsatt and Beardsley, literary critics, put forth the notion that what an author intended a work to mean doesn't matter.<sup>126</sup> Once a literary work is written, it takes on a life of its own. Thus it becomes independent of the author.<sup>127</sup> This position is technically known as the "semantic autonomy theory."<sup>128</sup>

This school of thought holds some objections against those who maintain that an author's intentions must be determined. First, they charge that meaning of a text changes because an author even can change his feelings or thoughts towards work he has written, even disclaiming it.<sup>129</sup> This is not an issue of the meaning changing, only of an author seeing further implication to what he had written or even changing his mind about what he said.<sup>130</sup> Another objection posited is that even authors occasionally don't realize what they meant in a work.<sup>131</sup> The case is cited concerning Kant saying he understood Plato better than the author himself. Hirsch says that the issue is not that the author did not know the meaning of his literature, but that Kant knew the subject better than Plato himself.<sup>132</sup> There is also the issue of "attended and unattended meaning"<sup>133</sup> in which an author does not grasp all the ramifications of a passage.<sup>134</sup> This does not mean that he did not know the intended meaning he purposed to communicate. Rather it demonstrates the flexibility of language and the difficulty of crafting a text to mean exactly and only what one desires. Another objection is on psychological grounds that it is impossible to understand an author's meaning because the circumstances of the writing cannot be reproduced and thus the interpreter will not know exactly what the author was thinking. This is known as the "intentional fallacy."<sup>135</sup> While it is true that all people must have somewhat different thinking processes, all people are enough alike to understand words the same way.<sup>136</sup> The goal is not to relive what the author lived, but to understand what he was trying to communicate.<sup>137</sup>

Of course there is some truth in these objections to an author intended meaning. There will be

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<sup>124</sup> Hirsch 44; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 98, 132; Osborne 366.

<sup>125</sup> The nature of survey of this exegesis does not lend to a full discourse on the subject. Those wanting to go into more detail should consult Hirsch.

<sup>126</sup> Kaiser and Silva 28; Hirsch 11.

<sup>127</sup> Hirsch 1; Kaiser and Silva 28; Stein 18.

<sup>128</sup> Hirsch 1.

<sup>129</sup> Hirsch 6, 7.

<sup>130</sup> Hirsch 8.

<sup>131</sup> Hirsch 19.

<sup>132</sup> Hirsch 19, 20.

<sup>133</sup> Hirsch 22.

<sup>134</sup> Hirsch 20, 21.

<sup>135</sup> Hirsch 14, 15; Stein 23.

<sup>136</sup> Hirsch 32, 32.

<sup>137</sup> Those wanting to pursue this subject in more detail should read Hirsch.

nuances of meaning, emotions and attitudes that will not be transmitted.<sup>138</sup> And these challenges are multiplied when crossing the time, culture and language barriers of the Biblical text. But this does not mean that the reader cannot expect to gain an adequate grasp of an author's intended message. The question that needs to be answered by those propounding a reader based meaning is: Why would an author bother writing any book if he did not believe that the reader could understand his message?<sup>139</sup> As Kaiser puts it, there would be chaos of everyone communicating messages and no one receiving any, or at least not knowing if they had accurately received a message, if one cannot rely on an author based single meaning.<sup>140</sup>

For someone with a Biblical worldview,<sup>141</sup> the preceding argument might seem absurd and unneeded. The Biblical Christian believes that the Bible is God's objective revelation and it is the responsibility of the interpreter to carefully apply a hermeneutic which will help him to "stand under"<sup>142</sup> a passage and discover its meaning. But Osborne warns that this debate is raging and needs to be taken seriously.<sup>143</sup> In order for a theory of meaning to be popular, it must be congruent with a current worldview. In the case of the semantic autonomy theory and a relativistic worldview, the rising worldview which the student must be aware of is postmodernism.

Postmodernism rejects many of the values that Western civilization is built on.<sup>144</sup> In fact, "postmodernism is worldview that denies all worldviews."<sup>145</sup> It has developed between 1960 and the present, and in part is a product of the information age.<sup>146</sup> There is no such thing as object truth in postmodernism. The mind does not just function to observe and grasp truth, but it is part of the process of creating truth.<sup>147</sup> If there is no objective truth and the mind helps to create it, what would those who hold to this worldview devise as a hermeneutic? Carl Henry makes his conclusion that within a postmodern worldview "meaning resides not in external reality or texts but in the interpreter."<sup>148</sup> Therefore the reader is at liberty to create the meaning of a text.<sup>149</sup> Grenz sums up the contrast between a Biblical view of the Bible and one based on postmodernism in his summation that "the postmodern era has in effect replaced knowledge with interpretation."<sup>150</sup> The danger of reader based interpretation is that the standard of interpretation becomes each individual.

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<sup>138</sup> Hirsch 31.

<sup>139</sup> Kaiser 113; Hirsch 18, 40.

<sup>140</sup> Kaiser, 47.

<sup>141</sup> "A worldview is a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously) about the basic make-up of our world." Sire 25.

<sup>142</sup> Ferguson 101.

<sup>143</sup> Osborne 366.

<sup>144</sup> Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999) 613.

<sup>145</sup> Gene Veith, *Postmodern Times*, quoted by McDowell 615.

<sup>146</sup> McDowell 613.

<sup>147</sup> McDowell 614.

<sup>148</sup> Carl Henry, "Postmodernism: The New Spectre? The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement." Ed. David S. Dockery 41, quoted by McDowell 616.

<sup>149</sup> McDowell 618.

<sup>150</sup> Stanley J. A. Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, quoted by McDowell 619.

## Which Hermeneutic Yields the Most Accurate Interpretation?

The need to bring forth an author based, single meaning for a text which is accurate to the interpreter's best ability calls for the conscious employment of the most objective and unbiased hermeneutic available. Kaiser holds that there are four major models for deriving meaning.<sup>151</sup> They are the "proof-text" model, the "historical-critical" model, the "reader-response" model, and the "grammatico-historical" model.

Proof-texting, which dates back to the late middle ages,<sup>152</sup> is a method of interpretation still used by some<sup>153</sup> to prove a Biblical idea or doctrine.<sup>154</sup> It is the practice of selecting isolated verses out of a passage to support a position. Thus, single verses or even a part of a verse is given an independent status, "like a number in a phone book."<sup>155</sup> Terry refers to this method using the Bible like "an atomical collection."<sup>156</sup> While this method may yield accurate results on occasion, it also can result in inaccurate interpretations since it does not take into account the historical or literal context of a passage.<sup>157</sup> Kaiser calls this method "reprehensible."<sup>158</sup> In his book, *Scripture Twisting*, Sire notes five ways that the practice of taking Scripture out of context is used by the cults.<sup>159</sup>

The "historical-critical" model was a method which developed out of the nineteenth century and was dominant during the twentieth century among scholars.<sup>160</sup> Because of the various methodologies that have developed out of this field, scholars admit that it is hard to define as a single method.<sup>161</sup> The worldview that this method rose out of was a rationalistic closed system that did not believe in miracles. Rather, scholars believed that all biblical events could be explained out of a "scientific" empiricism.<sup>162</sup> The focus of study in the historical-critical method was to find the sources from which texts were constructed and the historical development of these texts.<sup>163</sup> The result was a tendency to

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<sup>151</sup> Kaiser and Silva 26, 31.

<sup>152</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, "Biblical Theology," *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 83.

<sup>153</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard attribute this usage to "some conservative Christians" 19. Kaiser and Silva refer to "many evangelical circles." Kaiser and Silva 32. Osborne calls it "the basic evangelical fallacy of our generation" Osborne 6, 7.

<sup>154</sup> Anderson 83; Kaiser and Silva 285.

<sup>155</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 160.

<sup>156</sup> Terry 69.

<sup>157</sup> Virkler 84; Mickelsen 43; Kaiser and Silva 31.

<sup>158</sup> Kaiser 82.

<sup>159</sup> James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1980) Footnote: "Misreading No. 3: The Biblical Hook" 41, 42: This is the method of quoting a scripture to launch into a topic the speaker wants to discuss. It is also used by some Christian preachers" 42. "Misreading No. 4: Ignoring the Immediate Context." 52. "Misreading No. 5: Collapsing Contexts." This is the practice of putting together scriptures from various passages as if they were meant to be read as one unit. 58. "Misreading No. 11: Selective Citing:" This is the practice of quoting only the portion of scripture that proves one's point. 80. For instance, quoting 1 Cor. 14:5a "Now I would like all of you to speak in tongues..." (NRSV) to support the doctrine that all should speak in tongues.

<sup>160</sup> Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism, Second Edition* (Revised and Augmented, Atlanta; John Knox Press, 1781) 87. Kaiser 32; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 44.

<sup>161</sup> James Barr, "Modern Biblical Criticism," *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 318; Soulen 86.

<sup>162</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 44; Mickelsen 44, 45.

<sup>163</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 44; Kaiser 32.

break down texts, but never show their significance to the Church, so it is not a complete process of interpretation.<sup>164</sup>

The “reader-response” model is, according to Kaiser, a reaction to the “historical-critical” model.<sup>165</sup> As has already been discussed, it is derived out of a relativistic worldview and is without any objective moorings. It leaves each student of the Word to believe whatever he feels is correct about the text.

The “grammatico-historical”<sup>166</sup> model is also known as the “historical method,” the grammatical method,” or the “literal method.”<sup>167</sup> It is the method of interpretation that takes into account the literal and historical context of a passage. The term, “literal,” is described by such words as “simple,” “direct,” and “ordinary”<sup>168</sup> and refers to the plain language way of interpreting literature as opposed to an allegorical interpretation.<sup>169</sup> It takes into account the grammatical structure of a passage, and considers literary works as whole literary units in its interpretation. This method is considered grammatical in that it considers the logic of the grammatical relationships in a passage as well as genre considerations. As has been mentioned before, while genre is an integral and critical element to successful interpretation, it is a broad enough topic to warrant being handled separately under special hermeneutics.

The “grammatico-historical” method also takes into account the historical factors such as date, circumstances, geography, setting, and culture that will influence the meaning of a text.<sup>170</sup> Osborne admits that since this can involve reconstruction and conjecture, it is the more challenging context to grasp. It can be observed that the grammatico-historical method of interpretation is the most suitable methodology to be used with an inductive Bible study method. It begins by looking at the evidence of the text, takes into consideration a holistic literary model, and incorporates the element of historical background.

## Grammatico-Historical Method

Naturally the two focuses of the literary context and the historical context are considered together in the process of interpretation. For the convenience of explaining them, they will be considered individually.

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<sup>164</sup> Kaiser 32.

<sup>165</sup> Kaiser 32.

<sup>166</sup> Kaiser 33; Terry 101; Ramm 114.

<sup>167</sup> Ramm 114.

<sup>168</sup> Kaiser 33; Terry 101.

<sup>169</sup> Ramm 114; Terry 101.

<sup>170</sup> Kaiser 33; Terry 101; Virkler 79.

## Literary Context

The term, context, comes from two Latin root words: “*con*, together, *textus*, woven.”<sup>171</sup> It expresses the idea of something, like a fabric, woven together. When applied to literature, it refers to the fact that there should be a connection that ties together a literary unit. The term, “the connection,” could even be used in place of context if it clarified the meaning to the student.<sup>172</sup> Whether determining the meaning of individual terms, or deriving meaning of a literary passage, context is critically important.

In relation to a sentence or passage, the literary context refers to the concept that thought is usually communicated by a “series of related ideas”<sup>173</sup> or statements. Writers don’t usually jump from one sentence to another, stringing together random thoughts. Rather a writer develops a theme, and each statement is logically connected and controlled to what preceded and follows it.<sup>174</sup> It has been pointed out that one of the frustrations of those in public life is that they are quoted by the press out of context to distort what they had said.<sup>175</sup> If one considers the various abuses of Scripture James Sire associated with proof-texting, each will be seen to derive from a lack of context. Context is such an important aspect in the determinacy of meaning<sup>176</sup> that it could be said: “context is king!”<sup>177</sup>

In order to effectively interpret a passage, scholars say that the interpreter needs to be aware of not only the context of a passage, but also the scope and plan of the book. The scope refers to the author’s purpose or purposes in writing, and the plan refers to the structure of the book. The student who has followed the model of three phases of study in an inductive system has already done a great deal of work on the literary context. In the survey phase, he has considered the type of literature he is dealing with. The student has discovered the divisions, sections, and segments as well as the laws of composition of the book as a literary whole that compose the plan. In fact, a method that takes into consideration laws of composition as well as levels of structure holds an advantage over those that only consider the structural dimension of an outline. Repeated words have led to general themes and the main idea of the book. In addition, the student has wrestled with the scope or purpose of the book as a whole unit. Also, the overall atmosphere has been considered in this phase.

In the observation stage of the analytical phase, a segment is taken and its grammatical structure has been laid out either in a vertical or by diagram. Therefore its logical relationships have been studied. More attention has been given to key words and thematic development of a passage. The at-

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<sup>171</sup> Terry 108.

<sup>172</sup> Terry 108.

<sup>173</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 157; Mickelsen 100.

<sup>174</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 157; Mickelsen 100.

<sup>175</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 157.

<sup>176</sup> The author recognizes that Hirsch would argue that meaning is not determined by context. In his development of an argument for an author-based meaning, he holds that meaning is determined by the author’s “act of will.” Hirsch 47. In this process of seeking the author’s will, context is useful in limiting the possible meanings constructed by a passage. The nature of this thesis is not to explore the nature of meaning in this kind of detail. I refer the reader interested in this topic to Hirsch.

<sup>177</sup> McQuilkin 153.

mosphere in this specific passage has been considered. Thus the context of the passage as well as the book as a whole has been taken into consideration. This involved the levels of structure from a book down through the segment.

### Levels of Literary Context

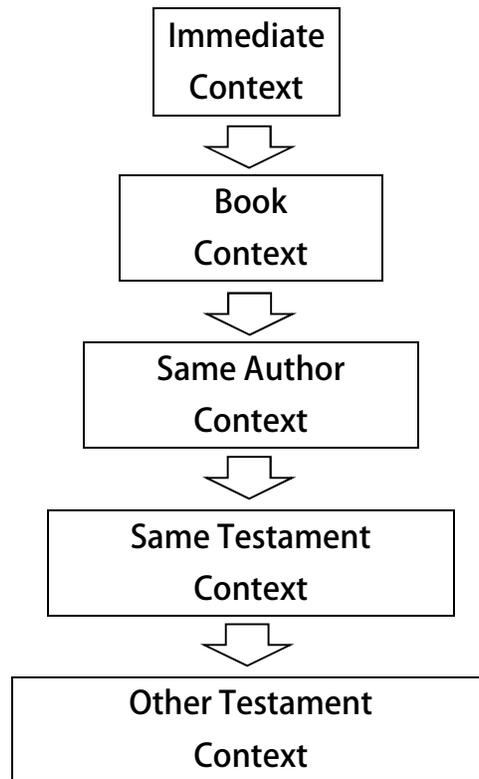
Now the student is pursuing a passage from the segment down to the level of individual words. There are various levels of literary context that need to be taken into consideration in interpreting the meaning of a passage. The interpreter must begin with the immediate context of the passage. This includes the flow of thought of phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs as they compose a segment. If this context does not provide an adequate understanding of the passage, the next level of context to consider is the book within which this passage is found. This would include broadening the context to include the other segments, sections, and divisions of the book.

If adequate understanding for the passage is still not established, the next level of context to consider would be parallel passages in other books written by the same author which might shed light on the passage. If adequate understanding is still not gained, the interpreter should study the context of parallel passages in books by other Biblical authors within the same Testament of the Bible. The final level of context which needs to be taken into consideration is the whole Bible.<sup>178</sup> The context diagram in Figure 21 displays how each level of context fits within another.

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<sup>178</sup> For these levels see Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 161; Mickelsen 113; Ramm 138.

Figure 21: Context Diagram<sup>179</sup>



Some further instruction is useful for the investigation of parallel passages. There are two kinds of parallel passages: “verbal” and “topical.”<sup>180</sup> Verbal parallels use identical<sup>181</sup> language to the passage being studied. A topical parallel might use different words but the ideas being discussed are the same as those of the passage being studied.<sup>182</sup> These passages can be very valuable as they may add definitions and nuances of meaning to the passage under scrutiny.

A warning is given about verbal parallels. A passage may appear to be concerned with the same subject, but the words are used as different terms. Virkler cites the usage of the word, “sword,” in Ephesians 6 and Hebrews 4.<sup>183</sup> A closer study of the context of both of these passages will reveal that these two words are used as two different terms in their respective passages.

Parallel passages within the book being studied are usually not a problem because the student would have enough knowledge of the book as a whole to identify true parallels. However, the stu-

<sup>179</sup> Adapted from Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 162.

<sup>180</sup> Kaiser and Silva 199, 200.

<sup>181</sup> Kaiser and Silva 199; Virkler 109; Kaiser 125. Mickelsen is similar. Mickelsen 104.

<sup>182</sup> Kaiser and Silva 200; Mickelsen 104; McQuilkin 211.

<sup>183</sup> Virkler 109.

dent must exercise caution that he has enough knowledge of the structure, purpose, genre and immediate context of the book from which the parallel is being selected to discern whether it really is a parallel. Terry also points out that it is best to find parallels from “books of the same class.” That is, compare passages from historical narratives to historical passages, epistles to epistles, poetry to poetry, etc.<sup>184</sup> For the Gospels, a helpful tool to note parallel passages is a “harmony.” This is a tool which lines up the parallel passages of the Gospels for comparison. One such harmony considered a standard work on the subject is A. T. Robertson’s, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*.<sup>185</sup>

Mickelsen and Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard both point out that the danger of misinterpretation rises as the passage of Scripture being studied decreases.<sup>186</sup> In other words, trying to study a small passage without the benefit of an understanding of the surrounding context increases the chances of a mistaken conclusion. An often quoted maxim is “A text without a context is only a pretext”<sup>187</sup> That is, a text quoted and interpreted without its surrounding context should alert the listener to potential error.

#### Word Studies: Defining Terms

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.”

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything, so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again.

“They’ve a temper, some of them—particularly verbs, they are the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, I can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That’s what I say!”

“Would you tell me, please,” said Alice, “what that means?”

“Now you talk like a reasonable child,” said Humpty Dumpty, looking very much pleased. “I meant by ‘impenetrability’ that we’ve had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you’d mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don’t mean to stop here

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<sup>184</sup> Terry 120.

<sup>185</sup> A. T. Robertson’s, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1950.

<sup>186</sup> Mickelsen 113; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 161.

<sup>187</sup> Mickelsen 113; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 160.

all the rest of your life.”

“That's a great deal to make one word mean,” Alice said, in a thoughtful tone.

“When I make a word do a lot of work like that,” said Humpty Dumpty, “I always pay it extra.”<sup>188 189</sup>

The concept explained earlier of a term being a word in context needs some further expansion at this point. A word is a “combination of symbols or sounds that represent an idea.”<sup>190</sup> As such they have no concrete meaning, but are arbitrarily assigned meaning.<sup>191</sup> Their meaning is based on a group of people agreeing and using this symbol to consistently designate an idea. The common usage at any given time is called the *usus loquendi*.<sup>192</sup> One of the problems with language is that meaning, or the *usus loquendi*, evolves over time. These symbols can change their designation. As arbitrary signs, they do not remain static.<sup>193</sup> Words can also represent a number of different meanings.<sup>194</sup> But while words are arbitrary symbols which have variable meaning, the reader is not at liberty to “pay them extra” to produce the outcome of meaning which he would like. The challenge for the interpreter is to determine what the *usus loquendi*, or current usage, was of a given word at the time of an author's writing. But this problem is magnified because there might have been several legitimate meanings of a given word as a *usus loquendi*. So the difficulty is to discover the legitimate range of meanings for a time period, and which definition, or term, was most appropriate to the context of the passage under study.

It is difficult to say dogmatically whether the student should begin by defining individual terms, or by trying to perceive the logical flow of the entire passage. As Adler has been quoted, it is possible that the student will not recognize the need to define certain terms until struggling with the meaning of a sentence.<sup>195</sup> The fact is that the student will need at some point to consider which terms deserve special attention. It has already been noted that terms which are not understood, repeated words, and significant and theological terms all are candidates for word studies. Another indicator of the need of further word study is to compare translations. If a number of translations are significantly different, this would indicate the presence of some difficulties to interpret that passage.

The process for determining the meaning of a specific term is similar to that of understanding

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<sup>188</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and Through the Looking-Glass* (New York: A. L. Burt, Publisher, no date) 265.

<sup>189</sup> This author has used Carroll as an example for a number of years. The following authors also cite him as an example: Stein 55, Kaiser and Silva – Kaiser 27; Hirsch 24.

<sup>190</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 183.

<sup>191</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 183.

<sup>192</sup> Terry 79; McQuilkin 123.

<sup>193</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 187; Mickelsen 124.

<sup>194</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 185.

<sup>195</sup> Adler 123.

any passage.<sup>196</sup> The student begins by studying a term within its immediate context. If this does not satisfy the interpreter, the context of usage for the whole book should be considered. The student would then consider the broader usage of the term by the same author in other books, as well as the usage of the term by other authors in the same Testament. For the study of New Testament terms, especially theologically significant terms, it will help the student to go to the Old Testament and see how the term is used there since “word usage is often formed by Hebrew thinking.”<sup>197</sup>

The best tool to begin a thorough word study is an exhaustive concordance. If *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* is used, the student will also need a King James Version Bible since it is keyed off the vocabulary of that Bible. When a word is looked up, the student should note that on the right side of each entry in the Strong’s Concordance, there is a number, ranging from one to four digits in length. This number corresponds to either a Hebrew or Greek Lexicon in the back of the Strong’s Concordance. If the number is not in italics, it refers to the Hebrew concordance, and if the number is in italics, it refers to the Greek concordance.

The first step is to gather all the evidence that is going to be studied. The student should write down all the references in the main concordance of the word being studied which have this same lexicon definition number after it. The challenge at this point for the student who does not know the original languages is to collect all the references to usage of this word in the Bible. These entries may include all the references to this word in that Testament, but it is also possible that some are missing. This is because one Hebrew or Greek word can be translated by a number of English words. It may not make a difference if one has not exhaustively gathered all the evidence. It is possible that even if some of the usages are not present, the student will have enough to accurately define the term. For the student with limited resources who only has a Strong’s available should proceed with his study with the evidence gathered. Those who have additional resources available, or who are in a position to purchase additional resources, should consider the following additional step.

There are tools available to help an English speaker track down all the usages of an original language word in the Bible. For the study of Hebrew words in the Old Testament, the tool is the Englishman’s *Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance*,<sup>198</sup> To use it there is an English dictionary in the back of the concordance.<sup>199</sup> The student looks up the English word from his translation, and under it are listed all the different Hebrew words which are used for that same English word. While the student can’t read these words, he can look up the page references noted to the right of these words which identifies on what page in the front of the concordance they are found. Going to the page in the main concordance for each Hebrew word, he must find the Hebrew word that is used for the verse in question. Once he has found the Hebrew word that is used for his passage, he can check to see if

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<sup>196</sup> For much of the material in this section on word studies I have used the general outline of McQuilkin 114-133.

<sup>197</sup> McQuilkin 122.

<sup>198</sup> *Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance*: Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.

<sup>199</sup> McQuilkin 116.

he has missed any of these references in his search.

For the New Testament, there is an *Englishman's Concordance* available as well. McQuilkin, however, recommends using the *Word Study Concordance*.<sup>200</sup> This tool allows the student to take the number associated with the Strong's *Concordance* and immediately look up all the references to a particular Greek word. The student should note if he has missed any of the references included.

After gathering evidence, the second step for the student is to come up with his own definition for this term according to contextual usage. First, the references need to be categorized into the various ways a word can be interpreted. Again, the usage of the author, the *usus loquendi*, is the most important. Consider the usage in this passage as well as other books. McQuilkin warns that if there are many references to a word, it might be overwhelming to study them all. Rather, only study only those passages which seem to indicate different shades of meaning.<sup>201</sup> Of course one of the problems with that approach is that one might not know what constitutes a nuance of meaning until the passage has been studied. But since in this stage of study the student is formulating his own definition, an exhaustive study might prove to be inhibitive.

This step of formulating a definition from a contextual study appears to be unique to McQuilkin.<sup>202</sup> His goal is that the student will have a foundation of independent work before looking at what the "experts" have to say. This method certainly also holds merit for those who only have access to a *Strong's Concordance*. For training students in developing nations where tools and training opportunities are scarce, this is an important skill to consider.

The next step in a word study is to look at the range of meaning discovered by the scholars. While there are some limitations for those who do not have the tools of original language, today there are significant resources available, nevertheless.

First, there are tools available in the form of single volume Bible dictionaries and more expanded encyclopedias. One encyclopedia, called a "masterpiece" by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard,<sup>203</sup> is the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.<sup>204</sup>

There are lexicons, or dictionaries of ancient languages, available. For the Hebrew, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* is coded to the *Strong's Concordance* so that the layman can find the word he is looking for.<sup>205</sup> For the Greek, the standard lexicon<sup>206</sup> is the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and*

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<sup>200</sup> McQuilkin 116 footnote: George V. Wigram and Ralph D. Winter. *Word Study Concordance*: Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1978.

<sup>201</sup> McQuilkin 115.

<sup>202</sup> McQuilkin 109-134.

<sup>203</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 471.

<sup>204</sup> Bromiley, G.W. ed. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 volumes., revised edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976-86. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 471.

<sup>205</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 192.

<sup>206</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 193.

*Other Early Christian Literature*.<sup>207</sup> While this work is not coded to Strong's, there is an index to this lexicon: *Greek Lexicon*<sup>208</sup> by John R. Alsop. The book gives all the major words of each verse in the New Testament. These words are indexed to the page and quadrant of the page of Bauer. Alsop also identifies the definition which he considers to be most accurate for that verse's context. The student will need to learn a minimal level of how to pronounce the letters of the Greek alphabet in order to use this tool.

There are also word books available to those who don't have any original language skills which will focus on important words. For Old Testament study, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard<sup>209</sup> recommend the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.<sup>210</sup> For New Testament study Thompson suggests<sup>211</sup> *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.<sup>212</sup>

Another method of discerning shades of meaning is the study of synonyms.<sup>213</sup> McQuilkin offers a method of comparison which only requires the use of a *Strong's Concordance*.<sup>214</sup> Within the main concordance, one can note that an English word is translated by several different Greek words. For example, the word "deceive" in the New Testament is translated from three different Greek root words: (# 4105,6 - planaō; plane: to roam; to deceive; #1818- exapataō: to seduce wholly; #538 - to cheat). The study of these synonyms would shed further light on the nuances of meaning of each. Ramm is more focused, encouraging the student to study synonyms that a writer used as a way of gaining insight into his meanings.<sup>215</sup> Both Ramm and Traina recommend Girdlestone's *Synonyms of the Old Testament* and Trench's *Synonyms of the New Testament*. Ramm does warn that these are not recent books.<sup>216</sup>

A field that many authors express caution about is the use of etymologies.<sup>217</sup> Etymology is the study of the root of a word.<sup>218</sup> Mickelsen warns that these "highly theoretical reconstruction[s]" are best handled by the experts.<sup>219</sup> Rather than looking at the past root of a word, the most important factors are usage and context.

One situation where etymology can be helpful is in the case of a word which is rarely found in the Bible or only in one place. Words that only are found once in the Bible are called *hapax le-*

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<sup>207</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> English edition, by W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. Danker.

<sup>208</sup> John R. Alsop, *Greek Lexicon*: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan House Publishing, 1977.

<sup>209</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 192.

<sup>210</sup> Harris, R. L., et al. eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 volumes: Chicago: Moody, 1980.

<sup>211</sup> Thompson 56.

<sup>212</sup> Brown, Collin, ed. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 volumes: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1975-1979.

<sup>213</sup> McQuilkin 124; Traina 141.

<sup>214</sup> McQuilkin 124.

<sup>215</sup> Ramm 132.

<sup>216</sup> Ramm 132.

<sup>217</sup> Ramm 128; Traina 140; Osborne 66; Stein 173; Mickelsen 6.

<sup>218</sup> Ramm 128; Traina.

<sup>219</sup> Mickelsen 120, 121.

*gomena*.<sup>220</sup> Without any biblical context outside the one usage, these are difficult to define.<sup>221</sup> It is necessary to consider sources outside of the Bible as well to determine the meaning of a *hapax legomenon*. However, one must be careful to stay within the contemporary usage, and not import a future meaning,<sup>222</sup> or one from the past. Jensen warns that only the experienced student who desires to do an exhaustive study should consider looking to extra-biblical sources.<sup>223</sup>

Once the student has done the work of studying the potential meanings of a word, the most important factor in determining the meaning of the term in question is context.<sup>224</sup> It is important to note here that the use of these lexicons and word books will not resolve the challenge of interpretation. Osborne warns:

“It has become common, especially since the appearance of Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT, 1932—1977) and to a lesser extent its Old Testament counterpart (1970— ) to assume that word studies can settle theological arguments.”<sup>225</sup>

Consideration of the theme of the segment or paragraph, the structure and logic, and the historical and cultural context will all factor in. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard note this as “the key principle: *The use of a word in a specific context constitutes the single most crucial criterion for the meaning of a word.*”<sup>226</sup> So, based on the resources studied, and in light of usage and context, the student should define the word for the passage being studied.

McQuilkin gives some additional helpful instructions. Word studies are subject to time constraints and available resources. It is possible that there are still some unresolved issues in regards to the passage. If so, these should be recorded. In addition, a list of resources that was employed should be recorded for the benefit of further research that might be done in the future.

To summarize the word study process, the student begins by searching for the usage of the word in the Bible. Then the student, by contextual self-study (if desired), and by use of available resources, determines the possible meanings of the word within a given time period. Based on usage and context, the student chooses the most appropriate meaning for that passage.

Consider how the process of interpretation started with a grasp of the whole, and moved to the sentence and down to the meaning of individual words. Then the context of the passage is taken into account again. Ramm points out that the process of growth in understanding is like a “hermeneutical circle or ‘spiral.’”<sup>227</sup> Many short passages and terms cannot be understood until a student under-

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<sup>220</sup> Kaiser 127.

<sup>221</sup> One such case that has been controversial is: *authenteo* 1 Tim. 2:12.

<sup>222</sup> Osborne 71.

<sup>223</sup> Jensen, *Enjoy* 105.

<sup>224</sup> Mickelsen 128.

<sup>225</sup> Osborne 65, 66.

<sup>226</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 199.

<sup>227</sup> Ramm 139; note Osborne’s book of the same title.

stands general theological themes of the Bible as a whole, and various individual books. As terms are grasped in individual passages, their significance as part of major themes is also enhanced. The student of the Bible must continually grow in understanding of the parts of the Bible, and add that to his comprehension of the unity of the Bible, and with that new level of understanding go back to studying individual books and passages. Thus it is a lifelong cycle of revelation.

## Figurative Language

The discussion on general hermeneutics began by questioning the ability to follow the advice of some authors to interpret according to “common sense,”<sup>228</sup> “as we interpret any other volume,”<sup>229</sup> according to “the straight-forward and obvious meaning,”<sup>230</sup> and “most naturally.”<sup>231</sup> While it was necessary to discuss the various options of meaning, most people can recognize the “common sense” or “literal” meaning of a word. The literal meaning is the meaning that a word has come to represent in the everyday language of a people. It is the agreed upon primary meaning that is typically understood.<sup>232</sup>

In contrast, a term is designated as figurative language when it is used to convey a meaning which is different than its primary sense. When words are used figuratively, one everyday term is used to represent a new concept because the first will help the second to be understood in some analogous way.<sup>233</sup> Terry explains that figures of speech have developed for two reasons. First, it is because of the need to express more in a language than the words available are able to denote.<sup>234</sup> This can be seen in the case of an author who takes what is unknown and explains it by what is known to the reader.<sup>235</sup> Second, there is a propensity for the mind to make comparisons and analogies<sup>236</sup> Forbes goes so far as to maintain that communication would not take place without the employment of metaphors.<sup>237</sup>

There is an abundance of figurative language in the Bible. One reason is that the Bible is the product of “the eastern mind”<sup>238</sup> which uses picturesque language. Another very practical reason is that it is necessary to use analogous language in order to communicate spiritual realities.<sup>239</sup> God has accommodated Himself to man’s ability to understand and uses concrete images to explain the spir-

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<sup>228</sup> Traina 137.

<sup>229</sup> Terry 25.

<sup>230</sup> Ferguson 101.

<sup>231</sup> Traina 182.

<sup>232</sup> Ramm 120; Mickelsen 179.

<sup>233</sup> Mickelsen 129.

<sup>234</sup> Terry 157.

<sup>235</sup> Mickelsen 180.

<sup>236</sup> Terry 158.

<sup>237</sup> Cheryl Forbes, *Imagination: Embracing A Theology of Wonder* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1986) 33.

<sup>238</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *All About Bible Study: Methods and Techniques for Understanding the Word of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977) 117.

<sup>239</sup> A. Berkeley Mickelsen and Alvera M. Mikelsen 146.

itual. Consider how God refers to Himself in terms of the human body such as arms and eyes.<sup>240</sup> For example, “With your strong arm you redeemed your people.” (Ps 77:15, NRSV.)

The process of interpreting figurative language has two steps. First, the student needs to discern what terms are figurative, and second, he must decide what the author intended to mean by that figure.<sup>241</sup> Ramm warns that unless Scripture is initially considered in its literal sense, there is no control on figurative interpretations.<sup>242</sup> The following are some guidelines to help the student determine if a word or passage is to be considered figurative or not.

A guideline with broad approval is to consider if an interpretation would be absurd or irrational if taken literally.<sup>243</sup> There are two other guidelines which seem to be corollaries of this guideline. One is that a Scripture cannot be taken literally if it contradicts a clear teaching.<sup>244</sup> This would violate the theological assumptions that “Scripture interprets Scripture,” the “analogy of faith,” and the “unity of the meaning of Scripture.” The example is cited of Jesus’ command to hate one’s father and mother (Luke 14:26). Any interpretation which contradicts Scripture should be considered to fit the category of being “absurd.”<sup>245</sup>

The other corollary is where there is “a mismatch between subject and predicate” such as in the case of the metaphor, “God is our Rock.”<sup>246</sup> Both McQuilkin and Terry<sup>247</sup> warn, however, that one whose worldview does not accept the supernatural will consider all supernatural references as figurative.

Identifying a Scripture as figurative is not enough, for the student’s task is not done until he discerns the meaning and purpose of the figure. Since figures are a comparison to something familiar, the student must first consider what is the significance of the literal term, and the points of reference that the author is making.<sup>248</sup> It must be remembered that any comparison is only partial and thus the student must be careful not to push the analogy too far.<sup>249</sup> The challenge is to interpret the figures in a manner that brings the reality of the image home to the modern reader.<sup>250</sup> This might take historical and cultural background as well. For instance, Paul’s connotative usage of “dog” in Philippians 3:2<sup>251</sup> cannot be understood without a background understanding of the Jewish usage of this term.

There are a number of ways that figures of speech can be classified. It is hoped that the following survey of the most useful short figures of speech will aid the student to identify figures and their

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<sup>240</sup> Vos 97; Mickelsen 322.

<sup>241</sup> Jensen 97.

<sup>242</sup> Ramm 124.

<sup>243</sup> McQuilkin 170, 171; Kaiser 122.

<sup>244</sup> McQuilkin 171.

<sup>245</sup> One has to be sure that this is not just an apparent contradiction that can be reconciled.

<sup>246</sup> Kaiser 122.

<sup>247</sup> McQuilkin 171 and Terry 159.

<sup>248</sup> Mickelsen 198.

<sup>249</sup> Traina 142.

<sup>250</sup> Mickelsen 322.

<sup>251</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 189.

purpose.

The first category is figures of “intensification or reversal of meaning.”<sup>252</sup> This category includes hyperbole and irony. Hyperbole is exaggeration or overstatement for effect rather than to deceive.<sup>253</sup> It is meant to get the reader to listen.<sup>254</sup> Irony works by saying the opposite of what is meant.<sup>255</sup> In spoken language, irony can be detected by the tone of voice, but in written language, one has to be aware of context.<sup>256</sup> Harsh or cutting irony is sarcasm.<sup>257</sup>

In contrast to overstatement the next category is understatement. This grouping includes litotes and euphemisms. Litotes are understatements to emphasize a truth.<sup>258</sup> Some of the best known litotes are in the works of Luke (e.g., Acts 15:20). There are also other examples of litotes. Mickelsen points out that in 1 Thessalonians 2:15 Paul is making an understatement when he says that the Jews “displease God” (NRSV) in their persecution of the Church.<sup>259</sup> Euphemisms are the substitution of a term that would be considered harsh or offensive by a milder term. Euphemisms are employed especially “with taboo or sexual items.”<sup>260</sup>

The next grouping of figures are “figures of comparison.”<sup>261</sup> This category includes similes and metaphors. McQuilkin holds that this is the most common category of figures.<sup>262</sup> A simile is a formal or explicit comparison. A simile is typically introduced by words “like” or “as.” A metaphor is a comparison that is not introduced by a preposition. It is an indirect comparison. Metaphors are a much more prevalent figure than similes.<sup>263</sup> Longman III gives the tip that one is probably dealing with a metaphor if the connection between the image to the real is absurd when interpreted literally.<sup>264</sup>

Another category is “figures of association.”<sup>265</sup> This category includes the metonymy and synecdoche. A metonymy is where one word is replaced by another which is closely related.<sup>266</sup> The relationship of association is based on the comparison of unlike things. A common example is the case of “circumcision” being used to signify the Jewish people.<sup>267</sup> A present day metonymy is the White House being used for the presidency.<sup>268</sup> The association is based on “the situation or living context of

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<sup>252</sup> Mickelsen 193.

<sup>253</sup> Mickelsen 193.

<sup>254</sup> Forbes 57.

<sup>255</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 250; Mickelsen 194.

<sup>256</sup> Mickelsen 194.

<sup>257</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 250.

<sup>258</sup> Osborne 107.

<sup>259</sup> Mickelsen 193.

<sup>260</sup> Osborne 107.

<sup>261</sup> McQuilkin 173.

<sup>262</sup> McQuilkin 173.

<sup>263</sup> Terry 170.

<sup>264</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1997) 134.

<sup>265</sup> McQuilkin 174.

<sup>266</sup> Osborne 108.

<sup>267</sup> Osborne 108; McQuilkin 174.

<sup>268</sup> Mickelsen 186.

the writer.<sup>269</sup> A synecdoche is a figure where a part of something can be used to represent the whole, or the reverse where the whole can be used to represent a part.<sup>270</sup> In the case of a synecdoche the association is based on “*the nature* of the things associated.”<sup>271</sup> An example from the Old Testament is the usage of “the law” to represent the entire Pentateuch.<sup>272</sup> Mickelsen gives the example of Jephthah being buried “in the towns of Gilead” (Judges 12:7 NRSV footnote) to show how the whole can be used for a part. It demonstrates the loyalty the cities of Gilead felt for him.<sup>273</sup>

Another category is concerned with figures that “emphasize a personal dimension.”<sup>274</sup> The first of these is anthropomorphism where God is described in terms of a human body. This is actually a kind of metaphor.<sup>275</sup> Closely associated is the anthropopathism which describes God in terms of human emotions.<sup>276</sup> Mickelsen warns that the student must try to remove self-centered aspects of emotion when interpreting an anthropopathism.<sup>277</sup> <sup>278</sup> The challenge for the student is to discern what is being communicated about God in both these types of figures.<sup>279</sup> Another such figure is personification which depicts a thing or an idea as a person.<sup>280</sup> Two popular examples are Proverbs 8 and 9 where wisdom is personified. A third figure in this category is apostrophe. Apostrophe is similar to personification, but rather than the personified object speaking, an address is focused on a personified thing or person who is not present,<sup>281</sup> as in the example, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1Co 15:55, NRSV.) Ryken points out that people don’t ever speak this way in real life. He encourages the student to be alert to perceive the emotional intensity expressed.<sup>282</sup>

A final category is rhetorical questions. Mickelsen points out that asking questions has more function than merely a teaching method. Sometimes the text answers the question posed. At other times the answer is obvious. But in either case it serves the purpose of focusing the discussion on a dominant idea.<sup>283</sup> Terry adds that a question can be the most effective way to portray a truth.<sup>284</sup>

Word pictures are the most widespread images in the Bible.<sup>285</sup> In summary, figures of speech will

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<sup>269</sup> Mickelsen 186, 187.

<sup>270</sup> Mickelsen 186.

<sup>271</sup> Osborne 108.

<sup>272</sup> McQuiklin 176.

<sup>273</sup> Mickelsen 187.

<sup>274</sup> Mickelsen 188.

<sup>275</sup> A. Berkeley and Alvera M. Mickelsen, *Understanding Scripture* (Venture, California: Regal Books, 1982) 96.

<sup>276</sup> Mickelsen 185.

<sup>277</sup> Mickelsen 185.

<sup>278</sup> This author recognizes that there is a debate concerning the legitimacy of antropopathisms. The issue is, if God really has feelings, then references to them are not just accommodations to man’s understanding. The scope of this thesis does not permit a more thorough discussion of this topic.

<sup>279</sup> McQuilkin 177.

<sup>280</sup> Osborne 108; Mickelsen 187.

<sup>281</sup> Mickelsen 188; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 247.

<sup>282</sup> Ryken 178.

<sup>283</sup> Mickelsen 197.

<sup>284</sup> Terry 164.

<sup>285</sup> Longman III, 42.

always strengthen or accentuate the meaning of the text. Thus it is important to be able to recognize the presence and function of figures of speech.

## General Principles of Interpretation: Theological Assumptions

The approach taken in considering which meaning is legitimate was to work through some rational interpretive principles. Proof-texting can miss the context of a passage and result in a wrong meaning. Norms of language were considered to show that a multiple-meaning, reader-based interpretation is not legitimate. While this was helpful due to the battle raging in the institutions of higher learning over the issue of semantic autonomy, these discussions were not necessarily needed for the audience of this thesis. Conservative, evangelical Christians understand that the Bible is not typical literature. They believe that the Scriptures are the Holy Word of God. As God's Word it holds supreme authority (*Sola Scriptura*).<sup>286</sup> Therefore the Biblical interpreter must work within boundaries of how the Bible may be interpreted. There are theological assumptions, dating back to the Reformation, which should function as boundaries for potential interpretations. The following list of six theological assumptions should help to guide the student in his endeavor to interpret the Bible accurately.<sup>287</sup>

The first is "the perspicuity of Scripture."<sup>288</sup> Perspicuity refers to the fact that the meaning of the Bible is clear. It is not an esoteric book that is meant for the few or the initiated to understand. God's purpose is to clearly communicate to His people. This is done through external and internal clarity.<sup>289</sup> External clarity refers to the fact that the Bible is communicated as a book in grammatical language that all can understand. Internal clarity refers to the power of the indwelling Spirit of God to illuminate truth to the believer. This assumption means that the Scriptures are clear enough for a man to receive salvation and to continue in growth in the faith. Scholars are quick to add that this does not mean that the Bible is a simple book and anyone can understand all of it without any training.<sup>290</sup>

The second assumption is that the truth of the Bible is "accommodated."<sup>291</sup> That is, God adapted His revelation to a form that man could understand. This involves communicating through language, the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek tongues, within the confines of man's culture and experience, in a way that he can grasp. This involves spiritual truth being communicated in "an anthropomorphic character."<sup>292</sup> This would especially be the case when God was communicating truth about Himself.

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<sup>286</sup> Sproul 46.

<sup>287</sup> For the preceding topic I am indebted to Ramm 97, 98; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 109, 110.

<sup>288</sup> Kaiser and Silva 199.

<sup>289</sup> Ramm 98.

<sup>290</sup> Ferguson 28, 29; Ramm 113; Kaiser and Silva 199.

<sup>291</sup> Ferguson 100; Ramm 99.

<sup>292</sup> Ferguson 100; Ramm 99.

The third assumption is that the truth of the Bible is “progressive.”<sup>293</sup> That is, God has progressively shared revelation of Himself and His plan to man. This progression began in the Old Testament and climaxed in the New Testament.<sup>294</sup> Ramm points out that while this is a generalization, there are mature spiritual truths in the Old Testament as well. An example of the progressive nature of the Scriptures can be seen in its silence concerning the practice of polygamy in the Old Testament while the New Testament is quite clear in its emphasis on monogamy.<sup>295</sup> This assumption holds the implication the New Testament teachings should take precedence over the Old Testament<sup>296</sup> and the Old Testament should be understood in light of the New.<sup>297</sup> Hendricks adds that in evaluating the actions of Old Testament characters, one should always consider how much revelation and access to Scripture that person had.<sup>298</sup>

A fourth assumption is that “Scripture interprets Scripture.”<sup>299</sup> This is the principle that the obscure passages are to be understood in light of the clear passages. An unclear passage could not be interpreted in a fashion that would contradict the clear teaching of Scripture. Ramm points out that the word, “Scripture,” is used as two different terms here.<sup>300</sup> In the first usage, Scripture refers to the whole of Scriptural truth. In the second usage, Scripture refers to the specific passage under scrutiny. Therefore any specific passage must be interpreted in a way that is consistent with what is clearly set forth in the Bible.

The fifth assumption is the “analogy of faith.”<sup>301</sup> This assumption states that any statement or doctrine concerning Scripture must be consistent with all other teachings about Scripture. This is closely tied to the preceding principle. There would be no ability to develop systematic theology if the parts of the Bible all did not fit into a coherent whole.

The final assumption about the Bible is the “unity of the meaning of Scripture.”<sup>302</sup> This is tied to the preceding two assumptions. This concerns the truth that there is only one meaning to Scripture. Ramm alludes to the allegorical method and cultic methods of interpretation which seek to give the text new meaning.

## Historical and Cultural Context

If the student has done a conscientious job of researching the historical and cultural background of the book as a whole, much of the foundation for understanding the historical and cultural context

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<sup>293</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 112; Ramm 101; Traina 156.

<sup>294</sup> Ferguson 100, 101.

<sup>295</sup> Ramm 104.

<sup>296</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 112.

<sup>297</sup> Ferguson 101.

<sup>298</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 228.

<sup>299</sup> Ramm 104; Ferguson 101; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 113.

<sup>300</sup> Ramm 105.

<sup>301</sup> Ramm 107; Osborne 330.

<sup>302</sup> Ramm 110.

is already established. The writer and recipient have been established, and the general historical background of the nation and the surrounding nations has been identified. Geographical elements have been researched, and pertinent cultural elements that affect the book as a whole have been investigated.

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard list two ways that the historical and cultural background will aid the interpreter to understand a specific passage.<sup>303</sup> The first way is that it helps the interpreter to understand the “*perspective*”<sup>304</sup> of the original writer and reader. Perspective includes all the historical and cultural information that a group of people share in common. This mutual understanding does not come out in the biblical literature because it is assumed that both the original writer and reader possess this knowledge. The interpreter needs to gain as much detail of history and culture as possible for that specific situation. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard point out that this still happens in communication today. They used the example of someone receiving a letter in which information concerning a third party of whom the recipient is not familiar is mentioned. He would need to inquire in order to fill in the missing information.

The second way that historical and cultural background will help produce accurate interpretation is the issue of “*mindset*.”<sup>305</sup> what emotional impact would a given Scripture have. Mindset is a subtle ingredient to discern. It has to do with the value system of a culture. An idea or event does not just have a cognitive meaning, but carries an emotional response or reaction as well. This is the additional connotative value of a word or idea.

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard offer two questions to facilitate the process of discerning mindset.<sup>306</sup> First, would the text “conflict or agree with the [original] readers’ value systems?” Second, what would be the emotional impact? An example in which mindset is important to discern for proper interpretation is Amos. Using the formula of “For three transgressions...and for four” (Amos 1:3,6,9,11,13; 2:1,4; NRSV), Amos pronounces judgment on the surrounding nations. This judgment find approval in the minds of Judah and Israel who see themselves as God’s chosen people. The shock comes when they realize that they are the prophet’s next target!<sup>307</sup>

When analyzing a passage, the first guideline is to determine which interpretation best fits the original historical and cultural circumstances.<sup>308</sup> Interpretive conclusions should fit with the known historical and cultural evidence. Ramm calls this “a preventative function”<sup>309</sup> of cultural study. A study of culture takes into account the *usus loquendi* of words. It should help the interpreter to un-

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<sup>303</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 172, 173.

<sup>304</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 172.

<sup>305</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 173.

<sup>306</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 176.

<sup>307</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 176.

<sup>308</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 174, 175.

<sup>309</sup> Ramm 152.

derstand “*the original things*”<sup>310</sup> that the Scripture was alluding to. Cults, on the other hand, ignore culture in their interpretations. While there is much cultural evidence that archaeology has discovered, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard warn that there is still far more that needs to be learned.<sup>311</sup>

There are numerous examples of the kind of historical and cultural issues that need research within a passage. Consider the process involved in Abraham’s purchase of a burial plot for Sarah (Genesis 23) or Abraham asking his servant to put his hand under Abraham’s thigh in performing an oath (Genesis 24:2). For Acts 23, the student has to understand the view on the resurrection of the Pharisees and the Sadducees in order to understand why it had such an emotional impact. Mickelsen advises that the past history behind a historical event is also necessary for complete comprehension. He uses the example of the need to understand the past history with Samaritans to really understand the impact of Jesus’ conversation at the well of Sychar.<sup>312</sup> Osborne points out how critical past history is to understand Jesus’ confrontation of the oral history of Judaism (Mark 7:1-23).<sup>313</sup>

Some warnings concerning the study of historical context have been issued. Osborne admonishes the student to be sure that cultural documentation truly belongs to the time period under study. He cites the error of attributing full blown Gnosticism to the first century. He also advises that the student take care not to collect evidence in a selective manner.<sup>314</sup> Finally, while Mickelsen agrees that cultural and historical issues are critical, he cautions that they are secondary elements to the content of a passage.<sup>315</sup>

## Atmosphere

Atmosphere, a category unique to the Inductive Bible Study movement, takes into account literary and historical contextual materials. While the student may have accurately discerned the general atmosphere of a book, it is also true that the specific atmosphere of a book can change from passage to passage. Traina warns that there can be “drastic change”<sup>316</sup> of tone even within a given passage. Therefore, he warns to give heed to all evidence of atmosphere within a given text.<sup>317</sup>

As in identifying overall atmosphere, empathy with the author and recipients continues to be an important method of recognizing atmosphere within specific passages. Hendricks urges the student to use his sanctified imagination to identify with the original atmosphere:

“You want to transport your senses into the passage. If there’s a sunset, see it. If there’s an odor, smell it. If there’s a cry of anguish, feel it. Are you studying the letter to the Ephesians?”

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<sup>310</sup> Ramm 157.

<sup>311</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 175.

<sup>312</sup> Mickelsen 166, 167.

<sup>313</sup> Osborne 139.

<sup>314</sup> Osborne 139.

<sup>315</sup> Mickelsen 159.

<sup>316</sup> Traina 71.

<sup>317</sup> Traina 71.

Then join the church at Ephesus, and listen to Paul as he goes down on his knees to pray (Ephesians 3:14-21). This is an exercise for the imagination, not just the intellect.”<sup>318</sup>

Atmosphere can at times help the student to correctly interpret the content of a passage. Traina notes that Paul’s consistent compassion toward Israel observed in Romans 9-11 can help the student to accurately interpret Paul’s message.<sup>319</sup> The student should continue to strive to become comfortable handling this element.

## Introduction to Special Hermeneutics

Initially when the elements of Bible study were introduced, two broad categories of type of literature were presented: “referential language”<sup>320</sup> and “commissive language.”<sup>321</sup> Referential language, usually referred to as prose, is to relate information. It is the common form of language that is spoken daily, or read in a newspaper. Commissive language, commonly called poetry,<sup>322</sup> has the purpose of expressing feelings and stirring motivation. In addition, a number of specific kinds of literature, or genre, were introduced that a student needs to be familiar with in order to be competent to interpret the Bible. The Bible is a rich book in its diversity of genre. This poses a problem as well. The student needs to know how to approach all these genres. Special hermeneutics deals with how one should approach the interpretation of these different kinds of genre. Genres can be compared to rules of a game.<sup>323</sup> Consider the rules of the game, chess. If one tried to play chess according to checkers rules, he will not get very far. Or if one who bowled tried to transfer the objective of that game to golf, he would be very disappointed at the response of his fellow golfers when the eighteen holes were completed.

If a person is going to play a game well, he must learn all the rules.<sup>324</sup> But Hirsch brings up an additional problem. Not only are there many genres to master within the Bible, but the student has to determine which game is being played!<sup>325</sup> This adds another component to a previous discussion on how to interpret what is literal or figurative. The genre a reader determines a book or passage to be can determine whether a literal or figurative interpretation is rational and valid.<sup>326</sup> It is the genre

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<sup>318</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 39.

<sup>319</sup> Traina 151. Traina goes on to say: “Apparently Paul wants it unmistakably understood that all his about to say grows out of a grave concern and a self-sacrificial love in behalf of Israel, and an empathy which includes a profound appreciation of their unique position. He is saying, in effect, ‘Let nothing that I say be construed otherwise, there is nothing in my heart of hatred or bitterness or belittlement.’” Traina 151.

<sup>320</sup> Stein 73.

<sup>321</sup> Stein 73.

<sup>322</sup> Stein 73.

<sup>323</sup> Hirsch 70.

<sup>324</sup> Hirsch 70.

<sup>325</sup> Hirsch 70.

<sup>326</sup> Terry 159.

of a book or passage that “sets the mood or stance from which the book is seen.”<sup>327</sup> Ramm uses the example of the *Song of Solomon*. If one determines that a literal approach is warranted, then this book will be interpreted as referring to human love. If however it is deemed that an allegorical interpretation is appropriate, then this is a story about the relationship between God and man.<sup>328</sup> Therefore it is very important to accurately ascertain what genre is being studied. As Adler expresses in his first rule of analytical reading:

“YOU MUST KNOW WHAT KIND OF BOOK YOU ARE READING, AND YOU SHOULD KNOW THIS AS EARLY IN THE PROCESS AS POSSIBLE, PREFERABLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO READ.”<sup>329</sup>

The study of genre is so broad that it cannot be covered thoroughly in a survey thesis. Rather, the larger categories of genre which the student will encounter will be discussed here. The genres which fit under the category of prose will be discussed first, and then those which possess the characteristics of poetry will be discussed second.

## Prose Genres

### The Gospels

The first genre under the heading of prose that will be considered is the Gospel. The Gospels are a distinctive genre. Some authors maintain that they are unique<sup>330</sup> or “new and distinctive.”<sup>331</sup> Others like Ryken<sup>332</sup> and Guthrie<sup>333</sup> point out that no literature is totally unique. It has to be built on genres that are already in existence, but they are an adapted form which cannot be compared to anything that existed before them.<sup>334</sup> There were “Greco-Roman biographies” before this time,<sup>335</sup> but the Gospels are not biographies. The Gospels do not cover the development of Jesus’ life, nor events which were going on in history during the time of his growth.<sup>336</sup> There is no information to reveal his psychological development.<sup>337</sup> In fact, Tenney points out that two of the Gospels state that a complete account of Jesus would not be possible.<sup>338</sup> Kummel adds that the Gospels also do not fit

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<sup>327</sup> Ramm 145.

<sup>328</sup> Ramm 145.

<sup>329</sup> Adler 60.

<sup>330</sup> Fee and Stuart 103.

<sup>331</sup> Kummel 37.

<sup>332</sup> Ryken 357.

<sup>333</sup> Guthrie 17.

<sup>334</sup> Guthrie 19.

<sup>335</sup> Guthrie 17.

<sup>336</sup> Kummel 37; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1990) 16, 17.

<sup>337</sup> Guthrie 17.

<sup>338</sup> Tenney 133.

the genre known as memoirs. This genre gathered the words and tales of great men, and just listed them all in succession.<sup>339</sup> While there are miracles, neither do the Gospels fit the genre where heroes were exalted for miracles “in a more or less stylized manner.”<sup>340 341</sup>

Ryken makes an interesting analogy to the three possible kinds of visual arts that could be employed to depict a person: “a photograph, a painted portrait, and an abstract painting.”<sup>342</sup> A photograph reproduces a subject’s exact objective likeness. A painting can selectively emphasize certain features and ignore others. An abstract painting gives the least accurate portrayal, and is only a slightly like the subject. While the information given about Jesus in the Gospels is accurate, it is far from a complete picture as has already been discussed. Thus each Gospel is more like a portrait of Jesus which selectively highlights Jesus’ life as well as interprets it.<sup>343</sup>

The Gospels are unique in a number of ways. First, not only are they a modification of existing genres, but they are a combination of a numbers of genres such as parables, history and poetry.<sup>344 345</sup> Second, they are not the writings of Jesus, but another author who took Jesus’ “sayings” and combined them with a historical narrative to present a message of Jesus’ life and ministry.<sup>346</sup> Third, there are four Gospels.<sup>347</sup> One reason for multiple Gospels is that Jesus’ life and ministry is so profound and contains so many facets that it demands a number of outlooks.<sup>348</sup> It appears that there is another reason as well. While the message of the Gospels is universal and meets the needs of every generation, they were written for four different audiences that had different needs.<sup>349</sup> While there are different theories as to which was first and their source,<sup>350</sup> scholars agree that the authors of the first three Gospels, the synoptics, used much of the same materials. The very name, synoptic, means “common view.”<sup>351</sup> John’s Gospel is significantly different<sup>352</sup> and was written for a different purpose.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Kummel 37.

<sup>340</sup> Kummel 37.

<sup>341</sup> There is great division over the classification of Gospels as a genre. While it is true that they are not biographies in the modern sense of the genre, some authorities observe that Luke in particular has similarities to a Greek biography in a number of categories. Other scholars would say that Luke as well is quite dissimilar to ancient biographies. Dr. Douglas Feaver, Professor Emeritus, University of the Nations, Kona Campus, personal interview on the Gospels, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, 28 June 2001. The purpose of this thesis is not to come to a conclusion about such a scholarly debate but to point out that this debate does add to the evidence that the Gospels are a unique genre.

<sup>342</sup> Ryken 376.

<sup>343</sup> Ryken 376.

<sup>344</sup> Ryken 360.

<sup>345</sup> Stein identifies overstatement, pun, proverb, riddle, paradox, a fortiori, and parabolic action. Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus’ Teachings* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1978) 8-26.

<sup>346</sup> Fee and Stuart 103, 104.

<sup>347</sup> Fee and Stuart 105.

<sup>348</sup> Kaiser and Silva 190.

<sup>349</sup> Fee and Stuart 105.

<sup>350</sup> Tenney 134-139.

<sup>351</sup> Tenney 133.

<sup>352</sup> Tenney 185.

<sup>353</sup> Fee and Stuart, Fee 105.

Despite their audiences, the resulting narratives were written for two basic reasons according to Kummel. The first was to elicit and strengthen faith in Jesus. The second was to provide a tool for the ongoing missionary work of the Church, and for refuting enemies.<sup>354</sup>

There is a unique challenge in the interpretation of the Gospels. The Gospels are narratives which take the account of Jesus' life and ministry, but are arranged to meet the needs of a later audience in a different location. Therefore the student has to be aware of two audiences. The first is the setting of the Jewish community Palestine in the first century, and the second is the setting of the community that the Gospel author is addressing.<sup>355</sup> The first setting was the people that Jesus was speaking to. This could be called the "original hearer." To understand the first century mindset, one needs to know situations such as the background of Israel's deportations, their return, the Maccabees and the resulting rivalry which led to the Roman occupation. Jewish customs, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, the Herods and messianic expectation are just some additional issues that the student should be knowledgeable in.

There is an additional historical context problem in the first century audience. Many of Jesus' teachings have been handed down without any historical context.<sup>356</sup> The authors of the Gospels used these teachings in a context that served their purpose. Therefore the same passage can be used by different authors in a different context. (The implications of this will be discussed shortly). It has also been suggested that the student asks which of Jesus' three audiences, his disciples, the crowds, or his enemies, was he addressing when giving a teaching? While this cannot be answered for certain, it does add to the angles through which a student can view a passage.<sup>357</sup>

The second audience, the one to whom the author is writing, could be called the original reader. These are the people that the student has to keep in mind when he is considering the purpose for the Gospel.<sup>358</sup> This must be discerned through internal evidence, structure, and external evidence. In the case of *Mark's* Gospel, which is believed to have been written in Rome shortly after Herod's persecution began, an understanding of the Caesars, Rome, and the Neronian persecution are some of the historical background issues that are helpful in order to grasp the setting, background and atmosphere in this Gospel. It also must be remembered that the New Testament must be read in conjunction with an understanding of Old Testament rituals and prophecies. It takes an understanding of the Old Testament to recognize how they are fulfilled in the New Testament.<sup>359</sup>

In surveying a Gospel and its structure, the student must remember that these materials are put together by the author in order to convey a message to his audience (form plus content equals mean-

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<sup>354</sup> Kummel 37.

<sup>355</sup> Fee and Stuart 106.

<sup>356</sup> Fee and Stuart 107.

<sup>357</sup> Fee and Stuart 108.

<sup>358</sup> Fee and Stuart 109.

<sup>359</sup> Leland Ryken, "The Literature of the New Testament," *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993) 373.

ing). It should be noted as well that the writers do not say that they are reporting the story of Jesus chronologically.<sup>360</sup> The three principles to develop structure are: arrangement, “selectivity and adaptation.”<sup>361</sup> In the discussion on structure and laws of composition, the significance of selectivity and arrangement have already been considered. However, adaptation is an additional principle to be aware of in order to interpret the Gospels. Fee and Stuart use the example of the cursing of the fig tree in Mark (11:12-14) and Matthew (21: 18-22). These two authors use the same material for different purposes. In Mark, the fig tree passages are used in interchange with Temple passages to demonstrate that as the fig tree was cursed, so will Jerusalem be judged. In the Matthew account, the fig tree is used solely as a teaching on faith.<sup>362</sup>

In interpreting individual segments, Fee and Stuart suggest that the student “think horizontally, and think vertically.”<sup>363</sup> Thinking horizontally means that parallel passages of the other Gospels should be consulted as well. The issue of parallels has been discussed previously, but it is more significant in the Gospels. It isn’t just a case of finding material that contributes to the same topic as in the case of other biblical writers. Rather, God ordained that there be four different accounts. The interpreter cannot study them “in total isolation from one another.”<sup>364</sup> There are two purposes in considering parallels or thinking horizontally. First, it gives the student the opportunity to consider what is unique about each, “the distinctives”<sup>365</sup> as Fee and Stuart put it, and why. Second, it enables the student to see how the author used the material in different contexts.

To demonstrate how considering the distinctive characteristics between parallel passages can help the reader, Fee and Stuart use the Olivet Discourse, and the term, the “desolating sacrilege” (Matthew 24:15-16; Mark 13:14; Luke 21: 20-21). Mark gives the briefest description: “the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be.” (Mk. 13:14, NRSV). Matthew gives more information by identifying the place that it “ought not to be” as “the Holy place.” (Mtt. 24:15, NRSV). Luke is far more explicit when he says that Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies. (Luke 21:20).<sup>366</sup> In this way the distinctives can clarify and confirm the meaning of a passage.<sup>367</sup>

Fee and Stuart also show how studying the Gospels horizontally will reveal how the same passage can be used in a different context for a different meaning. They cite Jesus’ lamentation over Jerusa-

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<sup>360</sup> Ryken 399.

<sup>361</sup> Fee and Stuart 115.

<sup>362</sup> Fee and Stuart 115, 116.

<sup>363</sup> Fee and Stuart 110.

<sup>364</sup> Fee and Stuart 110.

<sup>365</sup> Fee and Stuart 110.

<sup>366</sup> Fee and Stuart 11, 112.

<sup>367</sup> Fee and Stuart’s argument includes the construct that Mark’s Gospel was written first, and the other two accounts embellished Mark’s. Others, like Dr. Feaver, would maintain that Matthew is the oldest Gospel. Dr. Feaver asserts that classical literature tends to be shortened as time goes on. He points to the example, Aristoxenus, in classical music theory (an area in which he is an expert). The initial Aristoxenus works are always the longest and the later versions are shortened. Thus Dr. Feaver would argue that there is a trend towards creating reader’s digest versions of works. In like manner, he conjectures that Matthew was complete first, and later used as one of the sources for Mark. Dr. Douglas Feaver, Professor Emeritus, University of the Nations, Kona Campus, personal interview on Gospels, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii 28 June 2001.

lem (Luke 13:34-35; Matthew 23:37-39). In Matthew, this lamentation is preceded by Jesus' seven woes against the Pharisees. It is part of a theme that prophets were martyred in Jerusalem. In Luke's account, this passage is preceded both by a caution concerning Herod, and a response to that caution, as "it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem." (Luke 13:33, NRSV). Fee holds that the point here is that Israel will be judged because it rejected God's prophet.<sup>368</sup>

Thinking vertically means that the student bears in mind that there are two levels of historical context that require interpreting: the original hearer (Jesus' audience) and the original reader (the writer's audience). Fee and Stuart use the example of Matthew 20:1-16, the laborers in the vineyard. In the context of the original hearer, they surmise that the original audience was probably the Pharisees and this parable acted as a defense of his actions in embracing sinners. Here the first who became last would be the Pharisees who served God, but with a wrong motive. Sinners who received the grace of God would be the last who became the first, ahead of the Pharisees. In the context of the original reader, the writer's audience, the last who became first were Jesus' disciples.<sup>369</sup>

While it is important to consider the two audiences of the Gospels, it is also important to realize that there may be the same message on both levels of meaning.<sup>370</sup>

Further issues which need to be studied are Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God<sup>371</sup> and Jesus' ethics.<sup>372</sup> In brief, the Kingdom of God concerns when Jesus will usher in His Kingdom. The Jewish view was that the Messiah would arrive and destroy his enemies and inaugurate the Kingdom.<sup>373</sup> So when Jesus said that "the kingdom of God has come near" (Mark 1:15, NRSV), the Jews expected Him to establish His kingdom immediately. There was no concept of a second coming of the Lord after His Kingdom had been inaugurated (called "*inaugurated eschatology*").<sup>374</sup> Thus in the present age the Kingdom of God and its blessings have broken into the world, and yet there is still sin and sickness to deal with. This period where the kingdom is "already" in the world, but not yet consummated<sup>375</sup> has been labeled "the age of tension."<sup>376 377</sup>

Jesus' ethical standards were extremely high in the Gospels. The first and most extensive example is found in the Sermon on the Mount. The question which the student has to wrestle with is how to apply these radical passages on ethics.<sup>378</sup> The nature and scope of this thesis does not leave time to address this issue, but it is important for the student to be aware that there are challenging questions

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<sup>368</sup> Fee and Stuart 112.

<sup>369</sup> Fee and Stuart 114.

<sup>370</sup> Fee and Stuart 114.

<sup>371</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 332-334; Fee and Stuart 118-121.

<sup>372</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 334-336.

<sup>373</sup> Fee and Stuart 119.

<sup>374</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 332.

<sup>375</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 335; Fee and Stuart 120.

<sup>376</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>377</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to cover this topic in detail. Those who would like to study this further can read Stein, *Method* 60-79.

<sup>378</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 334, 335.

that need to be answered.

## Parables

Parables are one sub-genre found within the Gospels which need which require their own separate treatment. Terry claims that parables were employed by all oriental peoples and were used by the rabbis during Jesus' day.<sup>379</sup> A parable is defined as "a story with a purpose of giving some moral or spiritual truth."<sup>380</sup> The word, parable, comes from the Greek, "paraballo," "to *throw* or *place by the side of*."<sup>381</sup> It communicates the idea that a concrete story is put alongside a spiritual truth or reality as an analogy to clarify it.<sup>382</sup>

Miller points out that Jesus' use of parables is explained by the reference to Isaiah 6:9, 10 by the three synoptic writers (Matthew 13:13-5; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:8, 9). As in the days of Isaiah, Jesus is dealing with a people that is dull to the truth.<sup>383</sup> Their perception of his teaching is dependent on their heart condition.<sup>300</sup> Therefore for those who have hardened themselves, this form of teaching is judgment. Those who are spiritually open to the Lord will receive more, but those who are hard will lose even what they have (Mark 4:24, 25).<sup>384</sup> It is difficult to speak of parables without also breaching the topic of allegories. This is because up to the twentieth century most parables were interpreted in an allegorical fashion.<sup>385</sup> The easiest way to compare the two is to describe a parable as an extended simile and an allegory is an extended metaphor.<sup>386</sup> The parable is a formal comparison which begins with a phrase such as "the kingdom of God may be compared to..." (Matthew 18:23, NRSV), or "For the kingdom of heaven is like..." (Matthew 20:1, NRSV). The analogy must then be examined to see how it reflects the spiritual truth. In the case of the allegory, the explanation is within the allegory.<sup>387</sup> The details all have symbolic meanings.<sup>388</sup> It is up to the interpreter to discover that meaning. While there are true allegories in the Bible such as John 15:1-16, the problem with taking parables allegorically is that each interpreter can come up with his own unique meaning. Fee and Stuart give the following well-known example of Augustine's interpretation of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25).<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Terry 188.

<sup>380</sup> T. Norton Sterrett, *How to Understand Your Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois 60515: Intervarsity Press, 1974)

<sup>381</sup> Terry 188.

<sup>382</sup> Traina 70.

<sup>383</sup> Donald G. Miller, *Fire in thy Mouth* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1954) 46.

<sup>384</sup> Kaiser and Silva 111.

<sup>385</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 336.

<sup>386</sup> Terry 189; Mickelsen 212.

<sup>387</sup> Terry 189.

<sup>388</sup> Osborne 236.

<sup>389</sup> Fee and Stuart 125; Mickelsen 212.

*man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho* = Adam

*Jerusalem* = the heavenly city of peace from which Adam fell

*Jericho* = the moon, and thereby signifies Adam's mortality

*thieves* = the devil and his angels

*stripped him* = namely, of his immortality

*beat him* = by persuading him to sin

*and left him half-dead* = as a man he lives, but he died spiritually, therefore he is half-dead

*the priest and Levite* = the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament

*the Samaritan* = is said to mean Guardian; therefore Christ himself is meant

*bound his wounds* = means binding the restraint of sin

*oil* = comfort of good hope

*wine* = exhortation to work with a fervent spirit

*beast* = the flesh of Christ's incarnation

*inn* = the church

*the morrow* = after the resurrection

*two-pence* = promise of this life and the life to come

*innkeeper* = Paul

It has been pointed out that not all the teachings that are referred to as parables are really parables. Some are similitudes.<sup>390</sup> Similitudes can be described "as more developed similes."<sup>391</sup> An example of a similitude is the parable about the leaven or yeast (Matthew 13:33). Similes, similitudes, and parables can be considered a continuum of development of formal comparisons. Mickelsen offered the following comparison of the three.<sup>392</sup> (The bold is added by the thesis author):

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<sup>390</sup> Fee and Stuart 125; Mickelsen 212.

<sup>391</sup> Osborne 236.

<sup>392</sup> Mickelsen 213.

<b>Simile</b>	<b>Similitude</b>	<b>Parable</b>
1. One main verb	1. Plurality of main verbs in <b>present</b> tense	1. Plurality of main verbs in <b>past</b> tense
2. Formal comparison	2. Formal comparison	2. Formal comparison
3. Words used literally	3. Words used literally	3. Words used literally
	4. One chief point of comparison	4. One chief point of comparison
	<b>5. Customary habit, almost a timeless truth</b>	<b>5. Particular example, a specific occurrence</b>
	6. Imagery kept distinct from the thing signified	6. Imagery kept distinct from the thing signified
	7. Story true to the facts and experiences of life	7. Story true to the facts and experiences of life
	8. Explained by telling what the imagery stands for in the light of the main point of the story	9. Explained by telling what the imagery stands for in the light of the main point of the story

A true parable is a story. The following discussion is directed to the interpretation of true parables. In analyzing a parable, three factors have to be taken into consideration: the occasion for which it was given, the story which comprises the parable, and the application.<sup>393</sup> In the Gospels, there are parables where there is no occasion included, and in other cases there is no application. There are even instances where there is just a story.

Unlike the stories told by the Rabbis and Greek philosophers which were literally impossible, the hallmark of the stories of Jesus' parables was how realistic they were. All of His parables drew on everyday experiences and common life.<sup>394</sup> Ryken declares that Jesus used "the most realistic situations imaginable."<sup>395</sup> Some topics covered included "home life,... nature,... the animal world,... agriculture,... commerce,... royalty,... hospitality."<sup>396</sup> Terry adds that there was nothing mythological in Jesus' stories like talking creatures or plant life.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> Sterrett 115, Terry 193.

<sup>394</sup> Osborne 236; Terry 188.

<sup>395</sup> Ryken 403.

<sup>396</sup> Osborne 239.

<sup>397</sup> Terry 188, 189.

The beginning place for interpreting a parable is to consider the story as a story and discern its concrete meaning.<sup>398</sup> As stories, parables follow the conventions of stories. There are characters, plot development, and a setting. So the characters, plot, and setting within the story all have to be taken into consideration. For characters, the student should identify the main characters. There will be two or three at most, and a good indicator of key characters is how much space is allocated to them.<sup>399</sup> Osborne points out that any switch of focus of characters is also important to note.<sup>400</sup> For plot, issues such as “plot conflict,” “suspense,” and a “foil” must be considered.<sup>401</sup> The conflict will lead to a turning point and a climax of resolution.<sup>402</sup>

The occasion is the context in which the parable was given. Sterrett maintains that the most significant factor for interpretation of a parable is often the occasion.<sup>403</sup> As in the general principles of hermeneutics, this includes literary and historical considerations.<sup>404</sup> Similar to what was discussed in regards to material in the Gospels in general, the authors placed the material according to the meaning that they want to express. The student should consider the audience, if any, that Jesus was engaged with, and any questions or conflict that precede the parable. Mickelsen adds that the student should also note the level of spiritual understanding of the original audience.<sup>405</sup> The historical and cultural issues which are involved should also be taken into consideration.<sup>406</sup> Not only is the setting that prompted the parable important, but the response of the hearers after the parable was delivered.

One of the challenges in interpreting a parable is found in the original function of the parable. According to Fee and Stuart,<sup>407</sup> a parable, like a joke, was meant to be delivered orally and would elicit an immediate response. This response was based on the discrepancy between what the listener expected to hear, and the outcome of the story as it is told. While a joke is a good analogy of the relationship of a parable to the hearer in terms of the oral delivery and the surprising punch line, Jesus’ motive was not to amuse. Ryken describes parables as “invitations and even traps designed to elicit a response.”<sup>408</sup> The parable was meant to leave the listener with his mouth hanging open and a challenge to how he believed and behaved. So the twists in the parables had a “subversive quality”<sup>409</sup> which was meant to challenge the values and worldview of the listener.

Therefore as a means of communication a parable could have a greater and lasting effect on the

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<sup>398</sup> Mickelsen 229; Sterrett 117.

<sup>399</sup> Stein 146, 147.

<sup>400</sup> Osborne 246.

<sup>401</sup> Ryken 405.

<sup>402</sup> Osborne 247.

<sup>403</sup> Sterrett 115.

<sup>404</sup> Osborne 245.

<sup>405</sup> Mickelsen 229.

<sup>406</sup> Osborne 245; Ramm 281, 282.

<sup>407</sup> Fee and Stuart 126, 127.

<sup>408</sup> Ryken 406.

<sup>409</sup> Ryken 406.

hearer.<sup>410</sup> Ryken claims Jesus' parables would not be totally understood at the time of delivery, but the impact they made would cause the hearer to reflect to gain increased insight.<sup>411</sup> As a joke does not work if it needs to be explained, so it is impossible for the parable to have the same impact on the reader today as it did two thousand years ago. The student is required both to identify the important points of the story, as well as to understand the historical and cultural context so that he can identify the points of reference for the original audience. The points of reference are the characters and events that set up an expectation of what should normally take place.<sup>412</sup>

The parable of the Good Samaritan demonstrates this. (Luke 10:25-37).<sup>413</sup> In this case the occasion is very clear. The question "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29, NRSV) is concerned with what is the extent of love that God expects of a man? The points of reference are the Samaritan and the "half dead man." (Luke 10: 30, NRSV). To understand the punch line, it is vital to understand the cultural context. First, that the lawyer is aligned with the Pharisees and would be delighted that two members affiliated with the priestly order, a priest and a Levite, would both pass the man and not help him. But conventional wisdom would dictate that a Pharisee, who values giving to the poor highly, would come along and rescue the man. The shocker was that a Samaritan, with whom the Jews have a long history of hatred as half-breeds, would come along and help the man. This destroys the limited view of love that the lawyer held. In the case of this story it is easy to see that the hearer would identify with the dilemma of the wounded man and the conflict of choosing to get involved. It is also clear that the impact of the parable is not caught without either the literary context of the occasion or the historical context of the relationships between of all the characters involved. Part of the literary context should be to see what Jesus has to say. For some parables Jesus gives an interpretation (e.g., the Parable of the Sower). The Good Samaritan ends with a generalization<sup>414</sup> by Jesus: "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:37, NRSV). Therefore it is fairly clear to see the principle Jesus is commanding.

The above example leads to a debate of interpretation that needs to be acknowledged. For centuries parables were abused by the use of the allegorical method as has already been acknowledged. At the end of the nineteenth century Adolf Julicher came up with the theory that each parable only had one point of truth that it was trying to communicate.<sup>415</sup> This theory was supported by Jeremias.<sup>416</sup> Interpreters are still debating the amount of meaning to assign to parables.<sup>417</sup> Terry notes that while many details are assigned meaning in the parable of the sower, other parables are not assigned with

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<sup>410</sup> Virkler 163.

<sup>411</sup> Ryken 406.

<sup>412</sup> Fee and Stuart 127, 128.

<sup>413</sup> For this example I am indebted to Fee and Stuart 128, 129.

<sup>414</sup> Mickelsen 229.

<sup>415</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 336, 337.

<sup>416</sup> Osborne 237.

<sup>417</sup> Jensen 70.

that level of meaning.<sup>418</sup> While not wanting to open the door to the abuses of allegorizing, Osborne suggests that on an individual basis the student should be open to seeing meaning in minor points of various parables.<sup>419</sup>

In determining the meaning of any parable, one must keep in mind “*the kingdom principle*.”<sup>420</sup> Parables were part of Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God. As has been discussed in the subject of the Gospels, Scripture maintains a tension about the presence of the kingdom of God. On one hand, it declares that the kingdom of God already is being established, and yet on the other hand Scriptures teach that the kingdom will not reach fulfillment until the second coming.<sup>421</sup> Many parables speak directly about the kingdom of God. Fee and Stuart call these the “parables of the kingdom.”<sup>422</sup> Other parables, while not explicitly referring to the kingdom (i.e., The kingdom of God is like...), still relate to the kingdom. The student should be aware that the kingdom is the central theme of the parables,<sup>423</sup> and consider how the parables express the claims of the kingdom on God’s people when interpreting them. Fee and Stuart warn that the parables of the kingdom cannot be looked at as just a way of teaching about the kingdom, but must be seen demanding a response to the kingdom.<sup>424</sup>

Another question that arises in the usage of parables is whether or not a parable can contain a doctrinal teaching.<sup>425</sup> Both Ramm and Osborne maintain that it is legitimate to find doctrine within a parable, but that it should be verified with a clearer portion of Scripture.<sup>426</sup> This is an example of the application of the two principles: “Scripture interprets Scripture” and the “Analogy of Faith.”

## Epistles

Epistles are the genre also referred to as letters. This is the genre which can most readily apply the general principles of interpretation which have been discussed thus far.<sup>427</sup> In fact, Osborne observed that he knew of no book on hermeneutics which included this genre in its special hermeneutics section.<sup>428</sup> This is straightforward expository prose.<sup>429</sup> While the principles discussed in general hermeneutics can all be employed with epistles, they still contain some characteristics which deserve note.

The first characteristic that the student needs to keep in mind in studying an epistle is the logical

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<sup>418</sup> Terry 196-198.

<sup>419</sup> Osborne 240; see Longman III 196.

<sup>420</sup> Ramm 280.

<sup>421</sup> Ramm 180, 181.

<sup>422</sup> Fee and Stuart 130.

<sup>423</sup> Osborne 243.

<sup>424</sup> Fee and Stuart 130.

<sup>425</sup> Ramm 285.

<sup>426</sup> Ramm 285 and Osborne 248.

<sup>427</sup> Osborne 252; Fee and Stuart 58.

<sup>428</sup> Osborne 252.

<sup>429</sup> Kaiser 91.

nature of an epistle. If narratives are popular because people like stories, then epistles are popular because people like “logic, structure, and order.”<sup>430</sup> These straightforward arguments have an appeal to reason.<sup>431</sup> In studying an epistle, it is important for the student to follow its logic and progression.<sup>432</sup>

An awareness of the form of an epistle will aid the student to track its progression. A student’s ability to interpret any written document is always contingent upon his ability to perceive its form and structure.<sup>433</sup> While the terms, epistle and letter, are often used interchangeably, there actually is a difference. Adolf Deissmann discovered that letters were personal correspondence while epistles were a literary form that was intended for public use.<sup>434</sup> Deissmann felt that most of Paul’s epistles<sup>435</sup> were personal.<sup>436</sup> The body of texts referred to as epistles in the New Testament resemble a formal epistle or a personal letter to varying degrees.<sup>437</sup>

As today’s letters follow a standard form, so Greco-Roman letters of the first century epistle followed a standard form closely.<sup>438</sup> This form began with a salutation. It included the name of the sender, followed by the name of the recipient, and a greeting. Next followed a prayer or thanksgiving. The body of the letter was next, and the letter was closed with a final greeting and farewell.

Some epistles do not include all the structural elements of a letter. These are not considered true epistles.<sup>439</sup> Hebrews is such an example. It does not have the opening of an epistle. Other examples that could be discussed are James, 1 John and 2 Peter.<sup>440</sup> It isn’t the purpose of this thesis to discuss the structure of each epistle in detail. There are also sub-genres of letters that can be explored such as the “*exhortational letter*,” “*diatribe*,” “*letter of commendation*,” and “*apologetic letter of self-commendation*” to name some.<sup>441</sup>

In other cases elements are left out of an epistle as a part of its message. For instance, in the case of Galatians Paul is upset with the recipients who appear to be moving from a grace to works salvation. They are accepting a false gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). In this epistle, the thanksgiving appears to be intentionally left out of the letter to the Galatians as part of the intended message: he is not thankful for how they are handling the Gospel of Jesus Christ. An understanding of the form of an epistle can therefore aid the student in tracking its message and logic.

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<sup>430</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 210.

<sup>431</sup> Traina 69.

<sup>432</sup> Osborne 258.

<sup>433</sup> Kaiser and Silva 131.

<sup>434</sup> Fee and Stuart 44.

<sup>435</sup> For the sake of uniformity, all potential epistles and letters will be designated by the term, “epistle.”

<sup>436</sup> Osborne 254.

<sup>437</sup> There is still much debate in theological circles concerning the degree and complexity of structure in the Epistles. Osborne 255, 256. But this goes beyond the purpose of this thesis.

<sup>438</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 354; Fee and Stuart 46; Stein 169, 170.

<sup>439</sup> Fee and Stuart 45; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 359.

<sup>440</sup> Fee and Stuart 45; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 359.

<sup>441</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 353, 354.

A second key to following the logic of an epistle is to “THINK PARAGRAPHS.”<sup>442</sup> While this is a general principle for inductive study, it is especially applicable for logical material. Fee and Stuart maintain that it is “an absolutely essential key”<sup>443</sup> if one is to track the logical flow and progression of an epistle’s argument. Paragraph titles force the student to be consciously aware of the flow of paragraphs. In difficult logical arguments, it would be helpful to note in a sentence or two how each paragraph contributes to the development of the author’s argument.<sup>444</sup>

The second characteristic that the student needs to keep in mind in studying an epistle is the occasion and historical background of the epistle. Epistles are known as “*occasional documents*.”<sup>445</sup> This means that an author wrote a letter to a community of believers in response to a need or an occasion. He did not just sit down to write a theological document. Rather, the truth of the Gospel and its ethical implications are explained to correct an attitude or behavior that a community is manifesting. As Longman III puts it: “Theology is not abstract; it is rooted in human experience.”<sup>446</sup>

But there can be a challenge to determining the occasion of an epistle. This can best be described by the often used analogy of listening in on one side of a telephone conversation.<sup>447</sup> It is necessary for the listener to piece together what is being said by the person on the other end of the telephone. In the same way, part of the student’s task is to try and discern what were the concerns and issues, if any, that the recipients were experiencing. This is not necessarily an easy task. Much of the background is left unsaid because of the common understanding of knowledge and experience shared between the author and the recipients.<sup>448</sup> Internal sources such as Acts and other epistles may be useful to reconstruct the setting and specific circumstances. External, non-biblical sources can also be useful. For example, one would need to consult external sources to understand Gnosticism. This is an issue which might be alluded to in Colossians.<sup>449</sup> But much of the occasion needs to be found in the epistle itself. This can take some inference or “reading between the lines.”<sup>450</sup> The challenge is to inductively build a scenario based on facts. The more the occasion and historical context is built on conjecture, the more tentative should be the student’s commitment to that construct.<sup>451</sup> This reconstruction must be taken seriously because it will greatly influence the student’s interpretation.<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Fee and Stuart 51 (author’s emphasis).

<sup>443</sup> Fee and Stuart 51.

<sup>444</sup> Fee and Stuart 51.

<sup>445</sup> Fee and Stuart 48; Kaiser and Silva 125.

<sup>446</sup> Longman III 48.

<sup>447</sup> Fee and Stuart 48.

<sup>448</sup> Kaiser and Silva 125.

<sup>449</sup> Osborne points out that the controversy among scholars in determining what philosophy, or how developed a philosophy, is being addressed in the epistles to Corinth, Colossae, and Philippi. Osborne 258.

<sup>450</sup> Kaiser and Silva 126.

<sup>451</sup> Kaiser and Silva 127.

<sup>452</sup> Kaiser and Silva 129; Osborne 258.

## Narratives

Narratives are a pervasive part of the Bible. Over forty percent of the Old Testament is comprised of narratives<sup>453</sup> while sixty percent of the New Testament is narrative.<sup>454</sup> Under the broad heading of narratives can be found many other sub-categories of narrative literature such as “reports,” “heroic narrative,” “prophet story,” “comedy,” and the “farewell speech.”<sup>455</sup> For the purpose of this survey, the focus will be on general principles useful for most narrative literature.

A useful approach for interpreting narratives is a literary perspective. The historical narratives of the Bible seek to recreate historical events<sup>456</sup> and to portray man in his relationship with God and other people in time and space.<sup>457</sup> The purpose of narratives is not just to tell stories, but to show God at work in the history of mankind.<sup>458</sup> Through the medium of literature, history is made alive and man can identify with others who have gone before him.<sup>459</sup> Inherent in this approach is the idea that the characters in the story can be identified with as typical of “the human condition.”<sup>460</sup> This identification can help to contextualize the truths of the Bible. Ryken adds that this process involves use of the imagination and the thinking processes involved with the right lobe of the brain.<sup>461</sup> Traina agrees that it is necessary to employ the imagination and emotions to interpret narratives.<sup>462</sup>

An advantage claimed for interpreting the Bible as literature is that it can help the student to concentrate on major issues and not get distracted with minor details. The case is cited of Abraham lying twice about his wife. It is held that the main concern is not about the morality involved, but God’s program of fulfilling his promises to Abraham.<sup>463</sup> On the other hand, there are those who say that a literary approach will allow the student to see “the many-sidedness of real life in a biblical text” rather than shrinking the text to a “unifying idea.”<sup>464</sup> They cite the example that Judges is structured around the cycle of sin while a literary critic would consider episodes of actions and the characters in the passages.<sup>465</sup>

There are also some grave dangers in studying the Bible from a literary perspective. One is the propensity to dismiss the historicity of a book.<sup>466</sup> A way to counter this is to be careful in how the Bible narratives are labeled. Stein says that the term, “story,” should not be used because of the ten-

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<sup>453</sup> Stein 151; Fee and Stuart 78.

<sup>454</sup> Stein 151.

<sup>455</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 261-270.

<sup>456</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1981) 33; Ryken 364.

<sup>457</sup> Alter 22.

<sup>458</sup> Stein 157; Fee and Stuart 81.

<sup>459</sup> Alter 33.

<sup>460</sup> Ryken 365.

<sup>461</sup> Ryken 15. This topic of the right brain will be explored further in the synthesis phase.

<sup>462</sup> Traina 69; See the Appendix 1 for what the Inductive Bible study movement had to say about re-creating.

<sup>463</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 434.

<sup>464</sup> Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, “Introduction,” *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993) 22.

<sup>465</sup> Ryken and Longman III 22, 23.

<sup>466</sup> Osborne 164.

dency to call the text a myth. Rather it is better to use the label, Biblical narrative.<sup>467</sup> Another problem is that many involved in this field are using a reader-response model.<sup>468</sup> An additional threat is the tendency to interpret a book only in terms of plot or setting.<sup>469</sup> Both of these preceding dangers are derived more from presuppositions than from a problem with using some of the literary skills of this discipline. Some authors involved in this field practice the same theories used to analyze modern fiction.<sup>470</sup> Therefore this approach, while potentially adding to the tool kit of the interpreter, must exercise caution in its application.

There are a number of characteristics to Bible narratives. The first is “realism.”<sup>471</sup> Realism refers to the historical nature of the narratives. They are written in a factual and concrete fashion<sup>472</sup> to portray real life situations. Another factor in realism is to portray “unidealized human behavior.”<sup>473</sup> Character flaws are not hidden. Consider the mistakes made by of Abraham, David, and Peter that the Bible exposes. There is attention given to minor details like Joseph cleaning himself up before seeing Pharaoh (Genesis 41:14).<sup>474</sup> Ordinary people and individuals are significant in Biblical stories, in contrast to ancient epics like Homer’s.<sup>475</sup> Consider Hannah and Elkanah in the first chapter of Samuel. Ryken maintains that the Bible holds “an astonishing sense of reality.”<sup>476</sup> These stories communicate to the audience that spiritual life is real and meant for the normal person.<sup>477</sup>

Some narratives are the opposite of realism. They are “romance.”<sup>478</sup> Romances are stories which are more prone to the imagination. They have “mystery, supernatural, and the heroic.”<sup>479</sup> Like fairy tales where the “good guy” wins and the “bad guys” are defeated through great exploits, the Bible includes adventures and heroes. The difference between typical romantic literature and the Bible is that all the events in the Bible are real and true. The tendency is to identify with a character in these stories.<sup>480</sup> These kinds of stories can have the effect of keeping the reader aware that there is a spiritual reality to experience.<sup>481</sup>

Another characteristic of Bible narratives is that they are short. This is helpful because those who are not skilled in literature are not intimidated about reading the Bible. Not only are passages brief, but there is a pattern of repetition. Sometimes repetition can be of just one word, but it can also be

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<sup>467</sup> Stein 152.

<sup>468</sup> Osborne 164.

<sup>469</sup> Osborne 165.

<sup>470</sup> Osborne 165. For additional concerns about this approach, see Osborne 166-168.

<sup>471</sup> Ryken 36.

<sup>472</sup> Ryken 36.

<sup>473</sup> Ryken 36.

<sup>474</sup> Ryken 37.

<sup>475</sup> Ryken 37.

<sup>476</sup> Ryken 37.

<sup>477</sup> Ryken 37.

<sup>478</sup> Ryken 38.

<sup>479</sup> Ryken 38.

<sup>480</sup> Ryken 38.

<sup>481</sup> Ryken 39.

of events or pattern of events.<sup>482</sup> Consider that Peter denied Jesus three times, or that John's Gospel records Jesus going to three Passover feasts.<sup>483</sup>

A final characteristic to be considered is archetypes. Archetypes are images and symbols that all people can identify with because of their recurrence in literature.<sup>484</sup> The inclusion of these images is part of what makes the Bible enjoy such a widespread appeal.<sup>485</sup> Archetypes appeal to the imagination and therefore transmit truth through images.<sup>486</sup> There are three kinds of archetypes. The first is in the form of characters. These tend to be contrasted. Some examples are the hero, the godly wife, and the compassionate king on the one side; on the other side are the villain, the adulteress, and the "oppressor (usually a foreign oppressor)."<sup>487</sup>

There is also the "archetypal plot motif."<sup>488</sup> Figure 22 depicts the monomyth (the "one story") of literature as a whole.<sup>489</sup> It portrays the four phases that correspond to any event of life. A story can begin in the summer phase where life is ideal, and move towards tragedy, or in contrast a story can begin in winter which depicts a life of "bondage and misery"<sup>490</sup> and move towards the ideal. Tragedy is a life that plummeted from the ideal to the miserable while comedy reflects a phase of release from misery to the idyllic. While this diagram can explain any plot pattern of any story, there are numerous specific patterns that have been identified. Some of these are: "*The Quest*," "*The Journey*," "*The Rescue*," and "*The Temptation*". These motifs are so well-known that they hardly need an explanation.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Ryken 46, 47.

<sup>483</sup> Ryken 47.

<sup>484</sup> Ryken 26.

<sup>485</sup> Ryken 26, 28.

<sup>486</sup> Ryken 29.

<sup>487</sup> Ryken 48.

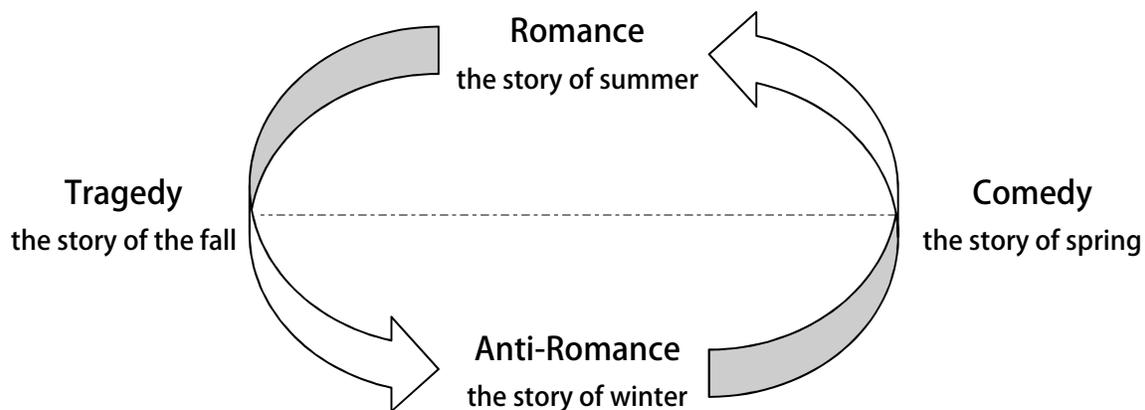
<sup>488</sup> Ryken 48.

<sup>489</sup> Ryken 48.

<sup>490</sup> Ryken 48.

<sup>491</sup> For further details and categories of archetypal plot motifs, see Ryken 49.

Figure 22: The "One Story" of Literature<sup>492</sup>



Bible narratives have the same basic elements of any other story: setting, plot, and characters.<sup>493</sup> These elements allow the author to create a reality through which to communicate a message. The reader needs to let himself enter the story by means of the imagination and empathy.<sup>494</sup>

There are three categories of setting: “physical, temporal, and cultural.”<sup>495</sup> The physical obviously refers to space where the action takes place.<sup>496</sup> Temporal refers to the time element and can either refer to a year or time of day, but also broader period of time<sup>497</sup> like “In those days...” (*Judges* 21:25, NRSV) referring to the period of the Judges. The cultural setting refers to all the cultural factors that have already been considered earlier. Ryken challenges the student to carefully note any setting descriptions because they will all have significance.<sup>498</sup> Physical setting can also produce an atmosphere. Ryken cites the inclusion of tents and trees as a way of focusing on Abraham as a wanderer.<sup>499</sup>

Ryken shares how setting can also hold a symbolic significance. The narrative of Abraham’s journey to sacrifice Isaac shares more of a psychological and spiritual setting than a physical one. No details of the physical journey are shared, but the reader gets an image of bleakness as Abraham travels in obedience.<sup>500</sup> These two examples are illustrations of the need to reflect carefully on the details presented. There is always a message to be gained from what might appear to be mundane historical details. Ryken shares from *Genesis* 26:17, 23: “So Isaac departed from there, and encamped in the

<sup>492</sup> Adapted from Ryken 49.

<sup>493</sup> Ryken, *Literature* 53.

<sup>494</sup> Ryken 53.

<sup>495</sup> Ryken 54.

<sup>496</sup> Tremper Longman III, “Biblical Narrative,” *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993) 74; Ryken 54.

<sup>497</sup> Ryken 54.

<sup>498</sup> Ryken 55.

<sup>499</sup> Ryken 55.

<sup>500</sup> Ryken 60.

valley of Gerar and dwelt there.. From there he went up to Beersheba.” (NRSV). He relates that these historical details relay the message that this is a true story to be taken seriously.<sup>501</sup>

The second category is plot. Plot can be defined as a series of incidents which are usually provoked by conflict.<sup>502</sup> These incidents are unified by cause and effect.<sup>503</sup> This connectedness results in a story with a beginning, middle and end.<sup>504</sup>

Ryken says that a good plot will follow a pattern called “the well-made plot.”<sup>505</sup> He shares it using the story of Joseph as an example:

1. *Exposition* (background information): Joseph in his family environment.
2. *Inciting Moment*: selling Joseph into Egypt.
3. *Rising Action*: Joseph's fortunes in Egypt.
4. *Turning Point* (the point at which we can see, at least in retrospect, how the plot will be resolved): the journey of Joseph's brothers to Egypt.
5. *Further complication*: Joseph's testing of his brothers.
6. *Climax*: Joseph's disclosure of his identity.
7. *Denouement* (tying up of loose ends): Jacob's moving to Egypt and the death of Joseph.<sup>506</sup>

What keeps a person interested in a narrative is the “suspense or curiosity” revolving around how the conflict will be resolved. These conflicts can be physical, character, psychological, or moral/spiritual. Ryken gives an excellent suggestion for analyzing the structure of a narrative when he suggests that the student consider how that story keeps his interest.

For narratives the most natural unit of study is the narrative episode. The first step for analyzing a narrative is to determine where each episode begins and ends. This has already been done during the survey phase when segments were established. Of course it is possible that a segment contains several episodes.

The next step is to analyze how the episode functions as a unity.<sup>507</sup> People’s conflicts are fundamentally internal. These problems revolve around how one responds to external frustrations and obstacles that confront them. These obstacles furnish an opportunity to view how a person will respond morally: good or bad.<sup>508</sup> Since a plot revolves around conflict, the focus of the episode centers on one of several conflict motifs, or how to get from struggle to a resolution. One is “the motif of *choice*”<sup>509</sup> where a character has to make a critical choice. Another is the “*test motif*” where there is a challeng-

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<sup>501</sup> Ryken 58.

<sup>502</sup> Longman III, “Biblical Narrative” 71.

<sup>503</sup> Ryken 63.

<sup>504</sup> Ryken 62.

<sup>505</sup> Ryken 104.

<sup>506</sup> Ryken 104.

<sup>507</sup> Ryken 65.

<sup>508</sup> Ryken 6 and Longman 34.

<sup>509</sup> Ryken 65.

ing situation. Other motifs try a character's "resourcefulness," "mental" abilities," or a final motif can test a character's "moral or spiritual integrity."<sup>510</sup>

The third element is the character. Ryken maintains that a good narrative is the result of the combination of plot and character functioning together.<sup>511</sup> And while Ryken holds that the plot is the more effective way to analyze how a story is organized, organization of characters is easier for the beginner. This is because narrative actions are so selective and structured, while characters in stories function similarly to real life people.<sup>512</sup>

There are a few basic terms which literary criticism uses in referring to characters. They are the: protagonist, antagonist, and foil.<sup>513</sup> The protagonist is the main character. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard note that the protagonist may be a single person, but may also be in the form of a family or nation.<sup>514</sup> The plot is seen through his eyes. The antagonist is the one who frustrates the goal of the protagonist. The foil functions to contrast other characters, and usually the protagonist.<sup>515</sup> Characters in the course of a story will be viewed as "sympathetic" or "unsympathetic" and how they are viewed can change during the course of the narrative. The events of a character's life that are related in a story are not typical every-day scenes of life. Rather, critical moments are narrated which expose the heart motives and personal development of the character.<sup>516</sup>

The reader's scope and comprehension of the characters is controlled by the narrator.<sup>517</sup> The narrator can use any or all of the following methods to reveal the characters: straight narration, another character, or the character himself or herself.<sup>518</sup> The easiest way is by narration, just describing the character. Another character can be used to say things that will depict what a character is like. A character might speak as a way of exposing who he is.<sup>519</sup> The most used method is to present the characters dramatically. Their actions, speech, and thoughts express what the characters are like.<sup>520</sup>

These categories can also be defined in terms of how clearly they reveal information about a character by narration.<sup>521</sup> Alter finds three levels of clarity.<sup>522</sup> The most unambiguous level is when the author explicitly relates information about motivations or emotions. Ryken calls this "authorial assertion."<sup>523</sup> These kinds of intrusions into a story are not often used and deserve attention.<sup>524</sup> There

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<sup>510</sup> Ryken 66.

<sup>511</sup> Ryken 71.

<sup>512</sup> Ryken 71.

<sup>513</sup> Longman, "Biblical Narrative" 73.

<sup>514</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 268.

<sup>515</sup> Longman, "Biblical Narrative" 73.

<sup>516</sup> Alter 51, Ryken 72.

<sup>517</sup> Longman, "Biblical Narrative" 73.

<sup>518</sup> Ryken 73.

<sup>519</sup> Ryken 72, 72.

<sup>520</sup> Ryken 73.

<sup>521</sup> Alter 116.

<sup>522</sup> Alter 116, 117.

<sup>523</sup> Ryken 84; see also Stein 161.

<sup>524</sup> Alter 75; Longman III, "Biblical Narrative"73.

are two possible reasons. The first is to express information which is part of the plot but difficult to relate in conversations.<sup>525</sup> A second is to relate additional information which is not directly part of the drama. This could be a description, commentary,<sup>526</sup> or summary.<sup>527</sup> Descriptions are not long, and are included with the intention of prodding the reader's imagination.<sup>528</sup> Ryken maintains that even when there is a commentary, it only interprets a part of a story's meaning.<sup>529</sup> Another important feature to be aware of in a narrative is repetition.<sup>530</sup> Narration can repeat what was just said in dialogue to emphasize or confirm it. Narration can also be included to refute what was said in dialogue.<sup>531</sup> Another technique which does not provide explicit information is when another character or the character himself makes a comment. This level of data can relate details about the character's intentions without revealing the incentive.

The least clear way of presenting information about a character is through dramatic scenes of action and direct dialogue in which it is up to the reader to infer the right conclusion. The problem is that while dramatic scenes are the most cryptic way to present facts, it is the most typical method used in Biblical narratives.<sup>532</sup> An especially important moment in dialogue is when a new character first speaks. A character's first discourse will normally reveal much about who he is.<sup>533</sup> The reader should ask why the author chose this moment to have the character reveal himself.<sup>534</sup> Another principle to consider in dialogue is that normally only two characters are speaking, and their speech serves to contrast the two roles.<sup>535</sup> In the case where there is one character and a crowd, the crowd will perform as an individual.<sup>536</sup>

Fee and Stuart assert that the student needs to be conscious of three levels on which the story is being told. The "*top level*," or the broadest scope, is God's purposes in history to bring about salvation for mankind. The "*middle level*" is the story of God's call, development, and dealings with the nation of Israel as His agent in salvation history. The "*bottom level*" is focused on the individuals in Israel's history that God used in Israel's history and the broader picture of salvation history.<sup>537</sup>

This helpful picture emphasizes a general principle of hermeneutics which should always be employed with Scripture: context. Narratives should be read and studied in light of the various levels of structure. Each book is written as a whole unit with a main idea, themes and a reason for writing. As

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<sup>525</sup> Alter 77.

<sup>526</sup> Ryken 44.

<sup>527</sup> Stein 161.

<sup>528</sup> Ryken 44.

<sup>529</sup> Ryken 44.

<sup>530</sup> Stein 163.

<sup>531</sup> Alter 77.

<sup>532</sup> Alter 67.

<sup>533</sup> Alter 74.

<sup>534</sup> Alter 182.

<sup>535</sup> Alter 72.

<sup>536</sup> Kaiser and Silva 71.

<sup>537</sup> Fee and Stuart 74.

a student surveys a whole book in the Old Testament, he should consider how God's salvation plan and the history of Israel are being conveyed through the book as a whole and its themes. Stories, which may constitute a segment or a part of a segment, need to be interpreted in light of the whole book, the division, and section within which they are found, as well as their immediate context. A story needs to be looked at as a unit, and interpretations need to consider its point and contribution to the major themes and main idea of the book. Fee and Stuart warn that a story might not be meant to express an ethical meaning of its own outside of its surrounding stories or the entire level of structure within which it is found.<sup>538</sup>

To interpret a passage a reader needs to determine what the author wanted to communicate to the reader through it. This is the element known as "*point of view*."<sup>539</sup> As Stein puts it, point of view is another way of phrasing author's meaning.<sup>540</sup> This is the author's theme.<sup>541</sup>

Ryken suggests some presuppositions that are necessary in order to interpret a narrative. First, the reader should assume that the author has a message about "reality and human experience."<sup>542</sup> Second, characters have more significance than just who they are. They represent a principle of human behavior in some way. They represent a universal principle that everyone can identify with.<sup>543</sup> Third, a character, usually the protagonist, represents an "experiment in living."<sup>544</sup> He has embraced certain values and a worldview, and the narrative will determine how valid those morals are.

Ryken gives some principles for determining the point of view of the author. First, the author may by direct commentary or through a character, relate the meaning of the narrative.<sup>545</sup> Second, the student must bear in mind that the author is employing careful "*selectivity* and *arrangement* of detail."<sup>546</sup> All aspects of setting, accounts of plot, and references to character through the narrator and dialogue must all be considered carefully. Alter points out that the author is all-knowing and yet rarely enters the narrative account. He chooses very selectively the moments to make a comment.<sup>547</sup> In addition, Longman III points out that the omniscience of the author in Biblical accounts will naturally be affiliated with God.<sup>548</sup> The way in which a story ends should be considered a prime indicator of the author's point of view as well.<sup>549</sup> Finally, as with any literary work, the meaning of each individual episode cannot be considered outside of a framework of the meaning of an entire book: How does it contribute to the whole? Ryken lists some major themes that are pervasive in the

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<sup>538</sup> Fee and Stuart 83. This issue will be considered again in the synthesis phase.

<sup>539</sup> Ryken 84.

<sup>540</sup> Stein 152.

<sup>541</sup> Ryken 84.

<sup>542</sup> Ryken 82.

<sup>543</sup> Ryken 83.

<sup>544</sup> Ryken 83.

<sup>545</sup> Ryken 84, 85.

<sup>546</sup> Ryken 85.

<sup>547</sup> Alter 183, 184.

<sup>548</sup> Longman III, "Biblical Narrative" 75.

<sup>549</sup> Ryken 86; Kaiser and Silva 72.

Bible and are important for the reader to consider in determining the meaning of a passage and book: God's character, the nature of man, why there is suffering and sin, and issues of what is really valuable and moral.<sup>550</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard add other examples of themes such as "election, conquest, religious apostasy."<sup>551</sup>

## The Law

While the entire Pentateuch is often referred to as the law, the law can also refer to the section of the Old Testament that contains its six hundred plus laws.<sup>552</sup> It begins at Exodus 20 (the Ten Commandments) and extends to the end of Deuteronomy 33.<sup>553</sup> There are a number of ways that authors have categorized the content of the Old Testament laws. Fee and Stuart offer the simplest paradigm for the beginner by separating the laws into two categories: civil laws, dealing with various levels of crimes, and ceremonial laws, dealing with various issues pertaining to worship.<sup>554</sup> Ceremonial laws constitute the single largest category of laws.<sup>555</sup> The Old Testament body of laws is usually divided into three categories: moral, civil and ceremonial laws.<sup>556</sup> A more detailed system has been devised of five categories: criminal law, civil law, family law, cultic (ceremonial) law, and charitable law.<sup>557</sup> The student can decide which system is most helpful for him.

There are two main types into which laws are grouped: apodictic and casuistic law. Apodictic laws are "unconditional, categorical directives."<sup>558</sup> They begin "you shall or shall not."<sup>559</sup> They are typically negative, as in the Ten Commandments, but can also be positive such as "honor your father and mother."<sup>560</sup> These kinds of laws are normally written in a series format as in the case of the Ten Commandments.<sup>561</sup>

The second type of laws is casuistic or "case-by-case" law.<sup>562</sup> The structure of these laws is an "if A happens... then B will be the result..." format. The greatest amount of the six hundred laws are of this type.<sup>563</sup> This structure, often used in civil law,<sup>564</sup> predated the Bible and is found in other Near Eastern cultures such as the code of Hammurabi.<sup>565</sup> The nature of the wording of a casuistic law is

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<sup>550</sup> Ryken 512.

<sup>551</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 268.

<sup>552</sup> Kuhatschek 93; Fee and Stuart 149.

<sup>553</sup> Fee and Stuart 149; Stein 192.

<sup>554</sup> Fee and Stuart 152.

<sup>555</sup> Fee and Stuart 152.

<sup>556</sup> Kuhatschek 93; Stein 194.

<sup>557</sup> Kuhatschek 94; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 279.

<sup>558</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 276.

<sup>559</sup> Fee and Stuart 155; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 276.

<sup>560</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 276.

<sup>561</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 277.

<sup>562</sup> Stein 193; Fee and Stuart 156.

<sup>563</sup> Fee and Stuart 157.

<sup>564</sup> Stein 193.

<sup>565</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 275, 276; Stein 193.

more detailed than an apodictic law. As a result, casuistic laws are not grouped in series but in a topical format.<sup>566</sup>

In seeking to interpret the truth within Old Testament laws, it is important to remember that it was given in the context of a covenant. In His desire to demonstrate the kind relationship that He wanted with His people, God gave Israel a covenant based on the model of the Hittite suzerain, or feudal lord, who made a covenant with his subjects whereby they would receive certain benefits such as protection and food in return for their loyalty. This was not a covenant between equal parties, and the conditions were solely up to the feudal lord.<sup>567</sup> It can be easily demonstrated that Deuteronomy follows the pattern of a suzerainty covenant document with the elements: preamble (1:1-5); historical prologue (1:6-4:49); stipulations (5:1-11:32); curses and blessings (27:1-30:20); list of witnesses (30:19; 31:19; 32:1) and provision for continual reading 27:1-14; 31:9-13)<sup>568</sup> as well as in Joshua 24: 1-33.<sup>569</sup> Stein demonstrates the consistency of God's use of the suzerain structure in Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 17:1-14, and Exodus 19-24.<sup>570</sup>

Stein exhorts the student to remember the context in which the Law was given. Yahweh had already made a covenant with His people before the Law was given. Keeping the law was always meant as a response and not a way of earning salvation.<sup>571</sup> It is important to note that, unlike the tendency in the United States government today to write law to cover every situation, Biblical laws are not exhaustive. Rather they supply a pattern or principles of how to act or respond in various situations.<sup>572</sup> If these laws acted to demonstrate a pattern, there must be a level of principle within them that can be gleaned out by the Christian today.<sup>573</sup> In the case of moral law, or the ethical laws, Stein asserts that there is no need to find a principle demonstrated in the law, because the laws themselves demonstrate the heart and character of God.<sup>574</sup> Consider the admonition not to lend to the poor with interest (Exodus 22:25). In Yahweh's warning, He adds that He is "compassionate" (verse 27, NRSV). Civil laws, such as an "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" show God's concern for justice and limits in retribution.<sup>575</sup>

Finally, in considering the demands stated in the law, one must be conscious that the law demonstrates the inability of the believer to live up to the standards of a holy God.<sup>576</sup> It shows the believer his need to seek God's mercy and live in dependence on the grace of God, and to extend grace and mercy to others who fail him. For further study on this topic, one should read Paul's dis-

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<sup>566</sup> Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard 277.

<sup>567</sup> Fee and Stuart 150, 151; Stein 188.

<sup>568</sup> Stein 191.

<sup>569</sup> Stein 191.

<sup>570</sup> Stein 190.

<sup>571</sup> Stein 195.

<sup>572</sup> Fee and Stuart 155; Stein 193.

<sup>573</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 279.

<sup>574</sup> Stein 195.

<sup>575</sup> Stein 194, 195.

<sup>576</sup> Stein 196.

cussion of the relationship of law and grace in Romans.

## Poetic Genres

### Poetry

As mentioned earlier, poetry comprises approximately one third of the Bible.<sup>577</sup> It is found in poetical books such as Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, as well as large portions of the prophets.<sup>578</sup> It can also be noted in predominantly historical books such as Genesis (chapter 49), Exodus (chapter 15), and Samuel (2 Samuel 1:19-27).<sup>579</sup>

It is important that the student learns how to read poetry. Terry states emphatically that the poetic form, when used, is a necessary part of the message which was employed because prose would have been an insufficient form.<sup>580</sup> Because poetic form is part of the message, it is inadequate to “depoeticize” the form, but rather the student needs to learn how to properly handle Hebrew poetic passages.<sup>581</sup> Trying to put a poem in prose form is compared to the futility of trying to get the same effect from music by expressing it in a speech.<sup>582</sup> Alter would add that the “spiritual, intellectual, and emotional values of the Bible”<sup>583</sup> found in poetry usually have not been grasped.

According to Longman, it is not easy, even for scholars, to reach consensus concerning the differences between Hebrew prose and poetry.<sup>584</sup> He goes on to say:

“The most productive way to explain the presence of such large portions of poetry in a book that intends to communicate a message is to remember that the Bible does more than simply feed the intellect with facts. The Bible is an affective book that communicates much of its meaning by moving the feelings and the will of its readers.”<sup>585</sup>

In other words, the poetry of the Bible is meant to touch the heart. The poets of the Old Testament were sharing emotions, both joys and the anguish of sorrow, of their personal lives and of the nation of Israel as a corporate entity.<sup>586</sup> At times poetry can be likened to a wiretap on the personal worship and intimacy of the author with God. In this way an example is shared on how to commune

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<sup>577</sup> While poetry can be found within the literature of the New Testament as well, for a survey the most important portions of poetic Scripture that the student needs to become familiar with is found within the pages of the Old Testament.

<sup>578</sup> Terry 144; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 215.

<sup>579</sup> Kaiser 228.

<sup>580</sup> Terry 147.

<sup>581</sup> Tremper Longman III, “Biblical Poetry,” *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993) 81.

<sup>582</sup> Bayard Taylor’s preface to “Translation of Goethe’s Faust” quoted by Terry 147.

<sup>583</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1985) 205.

<sup>584</sup> Longman III, “Biblical Poetry” 80, 81.

<sup>585</sup> Alter, *Poetry* 81.

<sup>586</sup> Ferguson 95; Mickelsen 328.

with the Lord.<sup>587</sup> Because it is meant to touch the heart, the student needs to become involved with the poetry and experience its message.<sup>588</sup> Mickelsen gives the example that the book of Lamentations needs to be read as a whole unit in order to capture the emotion and devastation that the poetry is expressing.<sup>589</sup>

There are three main characteristics of poetry. It is compact writing, highly structured, and uses imagery.<sup>590</sup> The most outstanding feature of poetry is its terse, compact language.<sup>591</sup> As Longman III puts it: “Poets say a lot in just a few words.”<sup>592</sup>

There are several factors which contribute to the compact style of Hebrew poetry. Fundamentally, there are some differences between the style of poetry and prose. In prose, the author writes in sentences. In poetry, the poet writes in lines. These are much shorter than a sentence.<sup>593</sup> And while an author of prose uses more space to get his message across, the poet communicates in brief images. Ryken uses the example of an author trying to communicate how to be godly. In expository prose of an epistle, the author might take a few paragraphs or a segment to explain what it means to be godly. In a historical narrative a story might be included to convey the example of how a godly character acts. But in poetry a picture is given: “They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season” (Ps. 1:3, NRSV).<sup>594</sup>

The use of the line instead of the sentence leads to some technical terms that should be defined concerning poetry. The term for a single verse is a “*stich*”<sup>595</sup> which is pronounced “stick.” Two parallel verses together form what is called a *couplet* or *districh*.<sup>596</sup> Three lines together are called a *tristich*.<sup>597</sup> Vos adds that there can also be “quatrains, sextets, and octets.”<sup>598</sup> A “stanza” is a group of lines which concern an idea like a paragraph.<sup>599</sup>

In grammatical structure, there are some characteristics that Hebrew poetry usually follow.<sup>600</sup> Hebrew poetry does not normally use the definite article, “the,” or the conjunction, “and.”<sup>601</sup> Neither does it employ the relative pronoun or logical connectors. Hebrew poetry makes use of the ellipsis. An ellipsis is where part of the second stich is left out and left to the reader to understand and fill

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<sup>587</sup> Jim Downing, *Meditation: The Bible Tells You How* (Colorado: Navpress, 1982) 17.

<sup>588</sup> Longman III 135.

<sup>589</sup> Mickelsen 330.

<sup>590</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 216, 217; Longman III 131, 132.

<sup>591</sup> Longman III, “Biblical Poetry”82.

<sup>592</sup> Longman III 131.

<sup>593</sup> Longman III, “Biblical Poetry”82.

<sup>594</sup> Ryken 159.

<sup>595</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 227.

<sup>596</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 227.

<sup>597</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 227.

<sup>598</sup> Vos 91.

<sup>599</sup> Mickelsen 328. There is still debate concerning whether or not Hebrew poetry can be grouped into stanzas. Kaiser 214.

<sup>600</sup> Kaiser 213 and Terry 91.

<sup>601</sup> Longman III 132.

in.<sup>602</sup> An example can be found in Amos 8:10:

a	b	c
“I will turn	your religious feasts	into mourning,
A’	B’	C’
and	all your singing	into weeping. <sup>603</sup>

The second major characteristic of Hebrew poetry is its structure. Scholars agree that the use of parallelism “is the dominant stylistic feature of poetry in the Old Testament.”<sup>604</sup> A parallelism is a structure where one “line of thought is parallel to the first.”<sup>605</sup> This concept is a common feature in English poetry as well, but there is a major difference in what is compared between the two lines. In English poetry the two lines form a “balance of sound.” That is, they rhyme.<sup>606</sup> In addition rhythm is important. A simple example could be:

Ros-es	are	<u>red</u>
Vio-lets	are	<u>blue</u>
I’m-goin’	to	<u>bed</u>
And-so	should	<u>you</u>

This is a familiar kind of poetry style where every other line rhymes, and there is a consistent rhythm.<sup>607</sup> In Hebrew poetry there is no concern for rhyming sounds, nor much focus on rhythm.<sup>608</sup> Rather, focus is on the “rhythm of logic.”<sup>609</sup> The kinds of logic within parallelisms were first defined by Dr. Robert Lowth. In 1753 Dr. Lowth discerned three kinds of parallelisms: synonymous, antithetical and synthetic.<sup>610</sup> In the synonymous parallelism, the second stich repeats the same or similar

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<sup>602</sup> Mickelsen 189.

<sup>603</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 228.

<sup>604</sup> Kaiser 212; Terry 149.

<sup>605</sup> Mickelsen 324.

<sup>606</sup> Mickelsen 324.

<sup>607</sup> This author recognizes that there is a debate on the place of rhyme and meter in the academic world, but for a student who does not know the Hebrew language it is not an issue which needs to be addressed. In like manner, the role of assonance, alliteration, and wordplay are not very helpful to discuss in a thesis focused on the student who is only familiar with the English text.

<sup>608</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *A Historical Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991) 218.

<sup>609</sup> A. Berkeley Mickelsen and Alvera M. Mickelsen 151.

<sup>610</sup> Terry 150; Osborne 176.

thought of the first stich.<sup>611</sup> An example of this type of parallelism is Psalm 117:1 (NRSV):

Praise the LORD, all you nations!  
Extol him, all you peoples!

The antithetical parallelism, rather than repeating the same idea, gives a contrasting term. Proverbs have many antithetical parallelism. An example is found in Proverbs 29:4 (NRSV):

By justice a king gives stability to the land,  
but one who makes heavy exactions ruins it.

Lowth's third parallelism, synthetic, is not really a parallelism.<sup>612</sup> Rather than paralleling the first line, the second line develops the first by adding new ideas. Ryken uses Psalm 103:13 as an example:

As a father pities his children,  
so the LORD pities those who fear him.<sup>613</sup>

While many texts define these parallelisms by the above definitions, there is a more recent theory that their function serves to develop, intensify or clarify the first stich.<sup>614</sup> Alter says that, conservatively in his estimation, two-thirds of what initially looks to be only repetition is "a focusing, a heightening, a concretization, a development of meaning."<sup>615</sup> Consider Alter's translation of Proverbs 3:10 as an example:

Your granaries will be filled with abundance,  
with new wine your vats will burst.<sup>616</sup>

In this couplet there is a clear development and intensification from the first stich to the second.

Osborne is a bit skeptical to embrace this position totally, and considers that "The truth might indeed lie somewhere between the two."<sup>617</sup>

Since Dr. Lowth's original discovery, numerous additional parallelisms have been discovered. While it would be a work in itself to cover all of them,<sup>618</sup> there are two which are commonly identified by various authors. One is the emblematic parallelism. In these, one line is figurative representation of the other. Psalm 42:1 is the common example used to illustrate this.<sup>619</sup>

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<sup>611</sup> Mickelsen 325.

<sup>612</sup> Ryken 182; Mickelsen 326.

<sup>613</sup> Ryken 182.

<sup>614</sup> Longman III, "Biblical Prophecy" 83; Alter, *Poetry* 33; Osborne 176.

<sup>615</sup> Alter, *Poetry* 29.

<sup>616</sup> Alter, *Poetry* 11.

<sup>617</sup> Osborne 176.

<sup>618</sup> E.g., see Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard for a new system of identifying parallelisms 230-237.

<sup>619</sup> Vos 91.

As the hart panteth after the water brooks,  
so panteth my soul after thee, O God.<sup>620</sup>

The final parallelism that will be considered is the climatic or stair-like parallelism.<sup>621</sup> In these the second line begins by repeating part of the first line but goes on to build on what was said. Psalm 96:7 illustrates this:

Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.<sup>622</sup>

Ryken gives the admonition that there is no inherent value in just identifying various parallelisms. In fact, his opinion is that the parallelism only enhances the message of poetry in a few instances and its interpretive significance has been inflated by biblical scholars.<sup>623</sup> He does add some important functions of parallelisms for the student to consider. First he sees the parallelism's primary function as contributing to the artistry and pleasure of reading poetic literature.<sup>624</sup> Secondly, Ryken points out that parallelisms cause the reader to slow down his pace and read poetry more slowly and carefully. A concept is presented in two different ways, like the varying facets of a diamond, and the student must take time to consider these two perspectives that the author presents. Thus there is more reflection due to parallelisms, and the more time to be touched on the emotional level.<sup>625</sup> Longman III would agree that the denseness of Biblical poetry demands the student to read this material in a different manner than prose. It takes more time and reflection to grasp its meaning.<sup>626</sup> Parallelisms aid in this process.

In addition there are a couple of practical considerations concerning why parallelisms were employed by Hebrew authors. Alter says that the purpose of parallelisms is to make the poetry flow like a narrative.<sup>627</sup> This is an important consideration in literature that is so terse. Ryken reminds the reader that poetry was initially an oral form of literature. The use of parallelism made it easier for the people to both understand and to remember what was being spoken.<sup>628</sup> Thus it had a very practical teaching purpose as well as being rich to listen to.

The third characteristic of Hebrew poetry is its use of imagery. Ryken states that this is the most foundational guideline of poetry but also the most important characteristic.<sup>629</sup> The poet is an artist. His medium is painting word pictures. His goal is not only to relate information, but also to touch

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<sup>620</sup> Vos 91.

<sup>621</sup> Ryken 181; Mickelsen 326.

<sup>622</sup> Ryken 181.

<sup>623</sup> Ryken 180, 181.

<sup>624</sup> Ryken 183.

<sup>625</sup> Ryken 181, 183.

<sup>626</sup> Longman III 342.

<sup>627</sup> Alter, *Poetry* 40.

<sup>628</sup> Ryken 184.

<sup>629</sup> Ryken 160.

the heart. So he uses vivid images that draw the reader into a situation and have them experience the setting. He wants the reader to become involved emotionally.<sup>630</sup>

The way the Hebrew poet goes about this is by analogy. He uses concrete images to express symbolic and abstract ideas.<sup>631</sup> The primary tool of comparison used by the poet is the simile and metaphor.<sup>632</sup> These were referred to briefly in figurative language under the heading of “figures of comparison.” By way of review, a simile is an explicit comparison introduced by words “like” or “as.” A metaphor is a direct comparison. It is not introduced by a preposition. Both show a relationship by analogy. A comparison is set up whereby the concrete example in some way reflects the reality of the abstract truth or situation.<sup>633</sup> And while there are numerous similes found in poetry, there are more metaphors.<sup>634</sup> Longman III declares: “Metaphor has long been considered the master image or even the essence of poetry by literary scholars since the time of Aristotle.”<sup>635</sup> He gives two reasons for this statement. First, the direct comparison forms a tighter link between the two objects of comparison than in the case of a simile. Second, greater interest is raised by the dissimilarity of the two objects being compared.<sup>636</sup>

As in the case of the parallelism, there is no value in just identifying a simile or metaphor. Once a figure of speech has been identified, there is a two-step process that must take place. First, the reader must experience the concrete image.<sup>637</sup> This requires the use of the imagination which employs the right side of the brain.<sup>638</sup> Earlier it was mentioned that the poet wants the reader to experience the images of his poetry. In order for this to take place, the reader needs to imagine the setting and get involved with his senses as much as possible. The senses of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste should be considered. The reader should also try to imagine the feelings and emotions that the concrete setting would produce. Ryken encourages the reader that the more concretely one can imagine an image, the fuller will be the resulting experience of the poetry.<sup>639</sup> Ryken expressed his concern over the tendency to just move to interpretation without taking this step. He gave the example of a commentator who was interpreting the meaning of “raising the horn” in Psalms without ever considering what kind of horn the poet was using. He ended with the challenge: “What we need is commentaries that give us photographs to make the literal level of meaning come alive in our imagination.”<sup>640</sup>

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<sup>630</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 241.

<sup>631</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 216.

<sup>632</sup> Ryken 176.

<sup>633</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 216.

<sup>634</sup> Osborne 180.

<sup>635</sup> Longman III, “Biblical Poetry” 84.

<sup>636</sup> Longman III 84, 85.

<sup>637</sup> Ryken 161.

<sup>638</sup> Ryken 161, 162.

<sup>639</sup> Ryken 161.

<sup>640</sup> Ryken 167.

The reader must move to the second step of determining the interpretation. What is the figurative analogy of the concrete image? There might be a number of potential associations which a concrete picture could provoke. It is up to the reader to discern which the correct interpretation is.<sup>641</sup> Ryken warns that this is not an arbitrary procedure. The poets did not make up images, but used the images that had a proper correlation to their message. Therefore by logical analysis the student should be able to discern the relationship of the image to the message.<sup>642</sup> Ryken uses the example of Psalm 119:105. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (NRSV). In noting the relationship between the Word of God and a light, he states, “God’s law does function in a person’s moral life the way a light functions when a person walks down a dark path.”<sup>643</sup> Thus Ryken demonstrates how the student must first picture the image in its concrete reality and then discern its figurative relationship in context.

The preceding three characteristics, compact language, parallelism, and imagery, are distinctions which the student should remember in approaching Hebrew poetry.

There are several ways that Hebrew Psalms can be classified. The following are some classifications that the reader should be aware of:

1. **Laments:** Laments are the largest category of Psalms. Laments are expressions of pain, anguish and disappointment to God. They can be made by individuals or represent Israel as a nation. Laments offer models of how to cry out to God in times of distress.<sup>644</sup>
2. **Imprecatory Psalms:** They are usually laments<sup>645</sup> which not only include strong expressions of emotion but they are requests for God to inflict retribution on their enemies. They employ hyperbolic language,<sup>646</sup> but could also truly be a cry for God to repay as their defender.<sup>647</sup> Imprecatory Psalms can model how to pour out emotions to God while in distress, yet without sinning.<sup>648</sup>
3. **Thanksgiving Psalms:** These are the opposite yet associated with laments. Thanksgiving Psalms are responses of joy and thanksgiving for answered prayer made for a previous problem.<sup>649</sup> As in the case of Laments, these Psalms can be individual or corporate.
4. **Hymns of Praise:** Osborne calls these “the nearest thing to pure worship of any type of biblical poetry.”<sup>650</sup> These Psalms praise God for who He is in His character and as Creator.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 151.

<sup>642</sup> Ryken 166, 167.

<sup>643</sup> Ryken 167.

<sup>644</sup> Fee and Stuart 175; Osborne 182, 183.

<sup>645</sup> Osborne 185.

<sup>646</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 285; Osborne 185; Fee and Stuart 183.

<sup>647</sup> Osborne 185; Fee and Stuart 183.

<sup>648</sup> Osborne 185; Fee and Stuart 183.

<sup>649</sup> Osborne 183; Fee and Stuart 175, 176; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 286.

<sup>650</sup> Osborne 183.

<sup>651</sup> Fee and Stuart 176.

These Psalms model individual and corporate worship.<sup>652</sup>

5. **Psalms of Celebration and Affirmation:** This category of Psalms includes a number of different kinds of Psalms which “celebrate God’s covenant relationship with the king and the nation.”<sup>653</sup> Since they focus on the king and the unique status of Jerusalem, some have labeled these “royal psalms.”<sup>654</sup>
6. **Wisdom Psalms:** They teach how to live a wise life and embrace divine wisdom.<sup>655</sup>

The following are some guidelines for studying poetry. First, as in any book, the poem should be considered as a whole unit before its parts are considered. The student should discern the scope or topic of the entire poem.<sup>656</sup> Next the theme about the topic would be discerned.<sup>657</sup> Ryken gives the example of Psalm 1. The topic is “the godly person” and the theme about this topic is “the blessedness of the godly person.”<sup>658</sup> The poem’s historical background and setting should also be considered from internal and external evidence.

Much attention has been given to the place of parallelism. Longman III encourages the student to not only consider these couplets but also to group them into larger sections of stanzas.<sup>659</sup> As in the case of paragraphs, this is done by focusing on the changes in content or thought development.<sup>660</sup> Parallelisms should be noted and grouped together.<sup>661</sup> Finally imagery should be studied.<sup>662</sup>

## Wisdom Literature

James, in the epistle bearing his name, asked the question:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. (James 3:13, NRSV)

As James admonishes, the wise person needs to demonstrate wisdom in his actions. Biblical wisdom is not just a matter of knowledge or mental assent. Wisdom involves the heart and will as well as knowledge. Therefore wisdom is demonstrated when one’s actions are in conformity with what one knows to be true. Biblical wisdom is not theoretical but learned through life’s experiences.<sup>663</sup> Wisdom could therefore be defined: “Wisdom is the discipline of applying truth to one’s life in light

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<sup>652</sup> Osborne 183.

<sup>653</sup> Osborne 185.

<sup>654</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 287.

<sup>655</sup> Fee and Stuart 177; Osborne 185.

<sup>656</sup> Ryken 208; Kaiser 230.

<sup>657</sup> Ryken 208.

<sup>658</sup> Ryken 208.

<sup>659</sup> Tremper Longman III, “Biblical Poetry” 86.

<sup>660</sup> Osborne 187; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 252.

<sup>661</sup> Osborne 188.

<sup>662</sup> Osborne 188.

<sup>663</sup> Fee and Stuart 189.

of experience.”<sup>664</sup>

Wisdom literature looks at how people live and measures their success in terms of how well they live out the truth they know, and grow from their experiences.<sup>665</sup> There are three books of wisdom literature<sup>666</sup> in the Bible: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job.<sup>667</sup>

Since most authors focus on Proverbs as the primary example of wisdom literature, the book will be considered first and in the most detail. The principles covered here can be applied to the other two books by the reader as well. There are three characteristics found in the definition of Proverbs: They are short, easy to remember, and express a general truth.<sup>668</sup> Kaiser and Silva would add that they “have a bit of kick or bite to them to ensure their saltiness and continued usefulness.”<sup>669</sup> These are nuggets of truth written in a way that will help the reader to retain the truth.<sup>670</sup> Osborne notes that the focus of Proverbs is in the lives of individuals as opposed to prophetic books which are concerned with the corporate life of Israel as a nation.<sup>671</sup> The topics covered by the Proverbs are very practical. They can be categorized as: “God and man, wisdom, the fool, the sluggard, the friend, words, the family, life and death.”<sup>672</sup>

The genre of wisdom literature is poetic literature. As such, the student will need to consider the characteristics of poetry in the interpretations of Proverbs. Synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic parallelisms are all found in Proverbs,<sup>673</sup> and the most common proverb is the antithetical.<sup>674</sup> These contrast foolish and wise living in gross contrast to discourage foolishness.<sup>675</sup> One example is: “Those who are hot-tempered stir up strife, but those who are slow to anger calm contention.” (Proverb 15:18, NRSV). The contrast is clear, and the former unattractive.

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard identifies two other types of Proverbs. One category is “descriptive proverbs.”<sup>676</sup> These make an observation about life without making any application.<sup>677</sup> An example is: “Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want.” (Proverb 11:24, NRSV). The second type of Proverb identified is the “prescriptive proverb.”<sup>678</sup> This kind of proverb goes further than making an observation. It has the goal of producing

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<sup>664</sup> Fee and Stuart 187.

<sup>665</sup> Fee and Stuart 187.

<sup>666</sup> Fee and Stuart 187; Osborne 188; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 313.

<sup>667</sup> Kaiser and Silva add the Song of Solomon. They also hold that this genre contains many subgenres such as “allegory, saying, riddle, admonition, dialogue, and onomastica.” 99. The detail required to cover all these subgenres is beyond the purpose of surveying this area.

<sup>668</sup> Fee and Stuart 196; Osborne 195; Terry 239; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 313.

<sup>669</sup> Kaiser and Silva 99.

<sup>670</sup> Fee and Stuart 201.

<sup>671</sup> Osborne 195.

<sup>672</sup> Osborne 192.

<sup>673</sup> Terry 238.

<sup>674</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 314.

<sup>675</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 314.

<sup>676</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 313.

<sup>677</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 313.

<sup>678</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 313.

behavior. An example is: “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and will be repaid in full.” (Proverb 19:17, NRSV). The benefit expressed by this type of proverb has the purpose of encouraging obedience.<sup>679</sup>

There are several principles that will aid the student to interpret Proverbs. The first, Proverbs should be understood as general truths or guidelines for a godly lifestyle.<sup>680</sup> They express what generally is true if a person lives with certain attitudes and actions. However, Proverbs are “probable truth, not absolute truth.”<sup>681</sup> They are not promises that guarantee specific results.<sup>682</sup> Consider the following example: “Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.” (Proverbs 16:3, NRSV) When someone commits their way to the Lord, this does not guarantee success. He could commit a business venture to the Lord, but if it is a foolish venture there is no promise for success.<sup>683</sup>

It is the short and memorable characteristics of Proverbs which tends to limit their application. In order for a proverb to serve the purpose of being short and memorable, its broad range of truth suffers. Fee and Stuart point out that the shorter the expression of a truth, “the less likely it is to be totally precise and universally applicable.”<sup>684</sup> Proverbs are often described as “pithy.”<sup>685</sup> To make a forceful memorable point, a proverb tends to sacrifice accuracy.<sup>686</sup> It is not that proverbs claim to be all inclusive truth. Rather, they are just too short to bother discussing exceptions.<sup>687</sup>

A second principle for interpreting Proverbs is to remember that as poetry, the student needs to be aware of figurative language and figures of speech. Consider the hyperbole in the following:<sup>688</sup> “Honor the LORD with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.” (Proverbs 3:9,10; NRSV). Osborne warns that this is not a promise, but an exaggeration of a generalized truth. As figurative language, Proverbs “express things suggestively rather than in detail.”<sup>689</sup> Consider the following:

Can fire be carried in the bosom without burning one's clothes? Or can one walk on hot coals without scorching the feet? So is he who sleeps with his neighbor's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished. (Proverbs 6:27-29, NRSV).

This is not to be taken literally but to demonstrate that adultery is destructive and will have consequences at some point.<sup>690</sup> Terry warns that some passages will not be clearly literal or figurative. He

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<sup>679</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 313.

<sup>680</sup> Osborne 195.

<sup>681</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 215.

<sup>682</sup> Fee and Stuart 198.

<sup>683</sup> Fee and Stuart 198.

<sup>684</sup> Fee and Stuart 196.

<sup>685</sup> Terry 239; Osborne 200.

<sup>686</sup> Osborne 200.

<sup>687</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 316.

<sup>688</sup> Osborne 200.

<sup>689</sup> Fee and Stuart 197.

<sup>690</sup> Fee and Stuart 197.

cites the following: “When the ways of people please the LORD, he causes even their enemies to be at peace with them.” (Proverbs 16:7, NRSV). Terry challenges the student to use “common sense and sound judgment”<sup>691</sup> when all else fails to determine the literal or figurative nature of a text.<sup>692</sup>

A third principle that the student needs to consider is context. Osborne points out that certain Proverbs (Proverbs 1-9; 30; 31) are written in a “discourse style”<sup>693</sup> and so context is a significant consideration. At other times immediate context is not so important. In these cases it is still crucial to balance the teaching of various proverbs with the whole counsel of Proverbs as well as the teaching of other parts of Scripture.<sup>694</sup> A danger of studying the wisdom of Proverbs outside of the context of the rest of the Bible is that it can yield an imbalanced focus on the natural, materialistic side of life.<sup>695</sup> One needs to balance its practical orientation with the eternal values and perspective of the rest of the Scripture.

Proverbs which deal with the same theme can also be cross-reference and collected. These can then be studied topically.<sup>696</sup> This gives a more complete picture of what Proverbs has to say on a specific topic.

A fourth principle is Proverbs must be considered in terms of their modern equivalents in order to understand their meaning. This takes cultural research to grasp the circumstances and customs in each original setting.<sup>697</sup> Consider Proverbs 2:11 (NRSV): “Those who love a pure heart and are gracious in speech will have the king as a friend.” An equivalent for a king would be to consider the leaders in modern culture.<sup>698</sup>

The second book in the category of wisdom literature is Ecclesiastes. Fee and Stuart call Ecclesiastes “Cynical Wisdom.”<sup>699</sup> The book paints a picture of life as meaningless and empty.<sup>700</sup> Most of the book portrays a fatalistic picture of life that would truly be the case if God was not real or uninvolved with our lives.<sup>701</sup> The last two verses of the epilogue are the key (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).<sup>702</sup> Life would be meaningless if “lived apart from God and the wisdom of living in the fear of God.”<sup>703</sup> Fee and Stuart call Ecclesiastes a “reverse apologetic.”<sup>704</sup> It causes people to look for answers beyond the emptiness of life that the “Teacher” offers.<sup>705</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> Terry 242.

<sup>692</sup> This thesis has previously considered the difficulty of judging what constitutes “common sense.”

<sup>693</sup> Osborne 199.

<sup>694</sup> Fee and Stuart 200.

<sup>695</sup> Osborne 191; Fee and Stuart 200.

<sup>696</sup> Osborne 199.

<sup>697</sup> Osborne 201; Fee and Stuart 202.

<sup>698</sup> Fee and Stuart 202.

<sup>699</sup> Fee and Stuart 191.

<sup>700</sup> Osborne 200; Fee and Stuart 191.

<sup>701</sup> Fee and Stuart 193.

<sup>702</sup> Fee and Stuart 193; Osborne 200.

<sup>703</sup> Osborne 200.

<sup>704</sup> Fee and Stuart 193.

<sup>705</sup> Fee and Stuart 193.

The key to understanding Ecclesiastes is to think big picture. The student needs to see how the “Teacher’s” wisdom fits into the message of the book as a whole. Context is extremely significant here.<sup>706</sup> Consider the message of the following:

For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth? Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 (NRSV).

This passage is confusing and contradicts the full counsel of Scripture if not considered within the purposes of the author that all life is empty when not lived for God.

Job, like Ecclesiastes, is another wisdom book where wrong counsel is used in contrast to God’s truth, for the purpose of highlighting it.<sup>707</sup> Its structure is in the form of a cycle of dialogue.<sup>708</sup> As with Ecclesiastes, the dialogues of Job’s comforters are full of misrepresentations of God.<sup>709</sup> Fee and Stuart maintain that the message of this book is almost the opposite of Ecclesiastes. While Ecclesiastes’ perspective is that God is not involved, the dialogues in Job promote the idea that there is a continuous cause-effect relationship between what one does and what one gets in life from God.<sup>710</sup> Consider the following:

The wicked writhe in pain all their days, through all the years that are laid up for the ruthless. Terrifying sounds are in their ears; in prosperity the destroyer will come upon them. They despair of returning from darkness, and they are destined for the sword. (Job 15:20-22, NRSV).

Eliphaz sees a direct correlation between suffering and rebellion against God.

As in Ecclesiastes, the reader of Job needs to be aware of context. It is important for the student to discern what principles or philosophy is maintained by each “comforter.”<sup>711</sup> Since Job is the hero of this story, his “comforters’” perspective “often reflects a position diametrically opposite from God’s.”<sup>712</sup> True wisdom is found at the end of the story when God demonstrates His knowledge (Job 38-41), and vindicates Job (Job 42). The student should reflect on God’s sovereignty, and His ultimate vindication of the believer.<sup>713</sup>

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<sup>706</sup> Fee and Stuart 188.

<sup>707</sup> Fee and Stuart 193.

<sup>708</sup> Fee and Stuart 194.

<sup>709</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 321.

<sup>710</sup> Fee and Stuart 194.

<sup>711</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 321.

<sup>712</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 321.

<sup>713</sup> Fee and Stuart 195; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 322.

## Prophecy

When the New Testament claims that the return of Jesus to Palestine fulfills Scripture (Mtt 2:15 “Out of Egypt I have called my son”), many students are puzzled. This fulfillment and other challenging issues concerning the genre of prophecy should be clearer to the student after the following discussion. Both Ramm, and Kaiser and Silva, quote Girdlestone that “there is no royal road to the scientific study of prophecy.”<sup>714</sup> In others words there is no easy way to lay out a way of studying prophecy. This is because the topic of prophecy is the most difficult genre to really grasp.

They cite two reasons for this. First, the language of prophecy is “vague and cryptic.”<sup>715</sup> Second, prophecy is so pervasive. It is found from Genesis to Revelation.<sup>716</sup> Fee and Stuart note that more books are included in the genre of prophets than any other genre topic. Since it is such a massive area of study, the nature of this thesis will only allow for a brief overview of the potential treatment which the genre of prophecy deserves. This discussion is primarily focused on the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

Because of the difficult nature of the material of prophetic literature, scholars stress the importance of studying the literary and historical context of these books. Ramm urges the student to study “all proper names, events, references to geography, references to customs, references to material culture, references to flora and fauna, and references to climate.”<sup>717</sup> In other words, grasp any particulars that will shed light on the passage. He warns about taking a location for granted when it might refer to a place other than it does today. He also exhorts the student to do thorough research on the historical setting of the prophet and his circumstances as well as the general religious, social, and economic settings.<sup>718</sup>

Both Osborne and Fee and Stuart<sup>719</sup> point out the difficulties of grasping the historic circumstances of these books. Fee and Stuart note that there was much prophetic activity between the years of about 760 B.C. and 460 B.C. They cite three reasons for this. First, there was tremendous crisis and change in the “political, military, economic, and social”<sup>720</sup> spheres. Second, Israel faced immense religious apostasy. And third, there was great flux in population and national boundaries.<sup>721</sup> The student must be concerned with any surrounding empires, such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, as well as the history of Israel and Palestine. While some of this background can be found in the Bible, it takes research into Biblical resources (Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and Bible hand-

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<sup>714</sup> Girdlestone, *Grammar of Prophecy*, 104, quoted by Ramm 244; see Kaiser and Silva 148.

<sup>715</sup> Mickelsen 299.

<sup>716</sup> Kaiser and Silva 148; Ramm 244, 245; Mickelsen 299.

<sup>717</sup> Ramm 246.

<sup>718</sup> Ramm 246.

<sup>719</sup> Osborne 212 and Fee and Stuart 151.

<sup>720</sup> Fee and Stuart 157.

<sup>721</sup> Fee and Stuart 157.

books) as well as secular external sources.<sup>722</sup>

## Structure: Think Oracles

As a general principle for inductive study, the paragraph is the basic unit of study. For the study of prophetic literature, the basic unit is the entire message that a prophet would have spoken or written to a specific group at a given time and place. These messages are known as oracles. In fact, one author states that the student needs to “THINK ORACLES.”<sup>723</sup> The challenge is that many sections of prophetic works are a compilation of the spoken or written words of a prophet. The beginning and end of these individual messages is not indicated by the text.<sup>724</sup> Some authors recommend the use of a Bible dictionary, Bible handbook, or commentary to identify various oracles, and their audiences and historical settings.<sup>725 726</sup>

## Types of Oracles

In addition to identifying individual oracles, the student will be aided by an awareness of the various forms of oracles and the features of each. This will help the student to identify where an individual oracle begins and ends. In some oracles, all the elements are not sequential, and some might just be implied (e.g., this can be true in a lawsuit oracle). In these cases, knowing the form of an oracle will help the catch the flow of the logic.<sup>727</sup> The following are some of the more common oracles.

The “judgment speech”<sup>728</sup> or “prophecy of disaster”<sup>729</sup> is the basic formula of the prophetic message to an individual or nation. It begins with an introduction to the situation where the charges are stated, followed by a “messenger formula (‘Thus says the LORD’),” and a prediction of the coming disaster which is often introduced by “therefore.”<sup>730</sup> Consider the following example:<sup>731</sup>

### Prophetic Commission

God up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them,

### Indication of the Situation

“Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?”

### Messenger Formula

Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty says,

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<sup>722</sup> Fee and Stuart 155.

<sup>723</sup> Fee and Stuart 158 (emphasis theirs).

<sup>724</sup> Osborne 217.

<sup>725</sup> Fee and Stuart 158, 159; Osborne 217.

<sup>726</sup> While handling oracles as individual units of thought is an essential skill, one must not leave out the significance of considering the arrangement of oracles as a unity and the message created by the organization of these individual oracles.

<sup>727</sup> Fee and Stuart 158.

<sup>728</sup> Osborne 215.

<sup>729</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 292.

<sup>730</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 292; Osborne 215.

<sup>731</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 292, 293.

## Prediction

“You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!” (2 Kings 1:3-4)

The “promise or salvation oracle”<sup>732</sup> has a similar format to the judgment speech, but it is concerned with God’s future mercy.<sup>733</sup> The elements to be aware of are: “the future,” “radical change,” and “blessing.”<sup>734</sup>

The “woe oracle”<sup>735</sup> is another way of expressing impending disaster. It is named for the Hebrew word translated as “woe” or “ah” or “alas” which the Jews expressed as a sign of mourning.<sup>736</sup> There are three parts of this oracle. First, the declaration of distress could be expressed by “woe.” Second comes the reason for distress and third follows the prediction of doom.<sup>737</sup> The woe oracle had connotations of impending disaster.<sup>738</sup> Consider the example of Micah 2:1-5:<sup>739</sup>

### Declaration of Woe

Alas for those who devise wickedness and evil deeds on their beds!

### Explanation: Offenses

#### Basic Statement

When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in their power.

#### Amplification

They covet fields, and seize them; houses, and take them away; they oppress householder and house, people and their inheritance.

#### Messenger Formula

Therefore thus says the LORD:

#### Prediction

Now, I am devising against this family an evil from which you cannot remove your necks; and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time. On that day they shall take up a taunt song against you, and wail with bitter lamentation, and say, “We are utterly ruined; the LORD alters the inheritance of my people; how he removes it from me! Among our captors he parcels out our fields.” Therefore you will have no one to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD.

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<sup>732</sup> Fee and Stuart 160; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 293; Osborne 215.

<sup>733</sup> Osborne 215; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 293.

<sup>734</sup> Fee and Stuart 160, 161.

<sup>735</sup> Fee and Stuart 160; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 293; Osborne 215.

<sup>736</sup> Fee and Stuart 160.

<sup>737</sup> Fee and Stuart 160.

<sup>738</sup> Osborne 215.

<sup>739</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 295.

The “lawsuit”<sup>740</sup> or “trial”<sup>741</sup> oracle takes on the form of a cosmic court trial where God is prosecutor and judge.<sup>742</sup> The structure of this oracle includes “a summons, a charge, evidence, and a verdict.”<sup>743</sup> Consider the example of Isaiah 3:13-26:<sup>744</sup>

<b>Summons to Trial</b>	The LORD rises to argue his case; he stands to judge the peoples. The LORD enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people:
<b>Charge</b>	It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord GOD of hosts.
<b>Evidence</b>	The LORD said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet;
<b>Verdict</b>	the Lord will afflict with scabs the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the signet rings and nose rings; the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils. Instead of perfume here will be a stench; and instead of a sash, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a binding of sackcloth; instead of beauty, shame. Your men shall fall by the sword and your warriors in battle. And her gates shall lament and mourn; ravaged, she shall sit upon the ground.

The “war oracle”<sup>745</sup> is a form of disaster prophecy focused on foreign nations. This type of prophecy not only announces doom of Israel’s enemies but also comforts Israel that the Lord will protect her. Consider the example of Zechariah 9:1-8:<sup>746</sup>

<b>Announcement Against Foreign Nations</b>	The word of the LORD is against the land of foreign nations Hadrach and will rest upon the word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach and will rest upon Damascus. For to the LORD
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<sup>740</sup> Fee and Stuart 160; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 299.

<sup>741</sup> Osborne 215.

<sup>742</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 299.

<sup>743</sup> Fee and Stuart 160.

<sup>744</sup> Fee and Stuart 160; Osborne 215. Analysis is the author’s.

<sup>745</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 300.

<sup>746</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 300.

belongs the capital of Aram, as do all the tribes of Israel; Hamath also, which borders on it, Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise. Tyre has built itself a rampart, and heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets. But now, the Lord will strip it of its possessions and hurl its wealth into the sea, and it shall be devoured by fire. Ashkelon shall see it and be afraid; Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish; Ekron also, because its hopes are withered. The king shall perish from Gaza; Ashkelon shall be uninhabited; a mongrel people shall settle in Ashdod, and I will make an end of the pride of Philistia. I will take away its blood from its mouth, and its abominations from between its teeth; it too shall be a remnant for our God; it shall be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites.

### Comfort For Israel

Then I will encamp at my house as a guard, so that no one shall march to and fro; no oppressor shall again overrun them, for now I have seen with my own eyes.

There are many other oracles that could be explored, such as the prophetic dirge; prophetic hymn; prophetic liturgy; prophetic disputation; prophetic vision report. See one of the authors cited such as Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard.<sup>747</sup>

## Studying the Content of a Particular Prophetic Passage

### The Role of the Prophet

To study the content of a prophetic passage one needs to understand the role of the prophets. The prophets spoke for God. They were his mouthpiece to God's people, Israel. They declared His will to the people.<sup>748</sup> "The prophet spoke *from* God *to* the community *about* the community, *about* the nations round about, and *about* the world at large."<sup>749</sup> They addressed the community of God's people in a specific time and place.

Any discussion of the role of the prophets must include Israel's covenant relationship to their God, Yahweh. As was mentioned under the genre of Law, Israel's covenant with Yahweh followed the pattern of a suzerainty covenant. Part of this covenant included blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 27:1-30:20) which entailed consequences if Israel either obeyed or disobeyed God. Fee and Stuart summarize the categories of the covenant under which the blessings or curses fall as "life,

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<sup>747</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 295-298.

<sup>748</sup> Mickelsen 286.

<sup>749</sup> Mickelsen 287.

health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect, and safety.<sup>750</sup> The prophets let Israel know what the consequences would be for the nation when they obeyed or disobeyed the Covenant. Because of this role, Fee and Stuart describe the prophets as “*covenant enforcement mediators*.”<sup>751</sup> They were God’s police force who declared the ramifications of disobedience to the covenant. Therefore it will be advantageous to the student to be familiar with the blessings and promises found in Deuteronomy 28.<sup>752</sup>

## Two Functions

This role of the prophet was fulfilled by two different functions: to “forthtell” and to “foretell.”<sup>753</sup> Forthtelling was the primary task of the prophet. It included “exhortation, reproof, correction, and instruction.”<sup>754</sup> Prophecy was directed to one of two large categories of sin: spiritual idolatry or social injustice.<sup>755</sup> The prophets’ proclamation was meant to return the people to a holy life and the fear of the Lord.<sup>756</sup>

In contrast, most people today see the second function, foretelling or prediction, as the sole prophetic function. Foretelling, however, was not divorced from the primary role of forthtelling. Predictions were given to a specific group of people in order to influence and change their attitude and behavior.<sup>757</sup> And while prophecy was future in relationship to the people prophesied to, most of it was fulfilled within the Old Testament dispensation. Thus most prophecy is past history in relationship to the contemporary reader. Fee and Stuart lay out the following figures: “Less than 2 percent of Old Testament prophecy is messianic. Less than 5 percent specifically describes the New Covenant age. Less than 1 percent concerns events yet to come.”<sup>758</sup>

## Prophetic Perspective

Part of the challenge of understanding prophecy is that the modern reader is unfamiliar with the way that prophets viewed future events. This is called “prophetic perspective.”<sup>759</sup> They did not note the distance between various events that the Lord showed them. They would speak of events of Christ’s first coming and His second coming without any reference to a separation in time.<sup>760</sup> To the

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<sup>750</sup> Fee and Stuart 152.

<sup>751</sup> Fee and Stuart 151.

<sup>752</sup> There is a list of curses found in Leviticus 26 that is also important for the student to be familiar with.

<sup>753</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 303; Mickelsen 288.

<sup>754</sup> Mickelsen 288.

<sup>755</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 303.

<sup>756</sup> Mickelsen 288.

<sup>757</sup> Mickelsen 287.

<sup>758</sup> Fee and Stuart 166. Osborne notes that Fee and Stuart’s percentages depend on interpretive decisions as to what was originally meant to be taken as Messianic 212.

<sup>759</sup> Kaiser and Silva 144; Sterrett 140.

<sup>760</sup> Kaiser and Silva 144; Sterrett 141.

modern reader it appears that the prophets suffered from a lack of spiritual vision depth perception. The illustration often used to demonstrate this is the perception one has when viewing a mountain range from a distance. There is no sense of how far the mountains really are from each other. They seem to be grouped all together. It is not until one gets closer that he can discern the great distance which might be between them.<sup>761</sup> This concept is also known as “prophetic foreshortening”<sup>762</sup> or “telescoping.”<sup>763</sup>

This perspective was due to the way the prophets viewed history. They saw the relationship between the various events they were being shown by the Holy Spirit. Thus events being fulfilled hundreds of years apart were still related as part of an ultimate fulfillment. This outlook of the way prophets viewed history is known as “inaugurated eschatology.”<sup>764</sup> To a prophet, in alluding to a series of coming events, he perceived them as part of an ultimate fulfillment. Therefore there is “an ‘already-fulfilled’ and a ‘not-yet-fulfilled’ aspect for many of the predictions in both the Old and New Testaments.”<sup>765</sup> Kaiser and Silva use the example of the antichrist. The spirit of antichrist is already being manifested but will find an ultimate fulfillment in one person.<sup>766</sup>

Another concept related to prophetic perspective is the way prophets viewed the end of history. They thought that there were only two epochs: the present age, and then the age to come upon the arrival of the messiah. Christians know that while Jesus came to earth the first time, the age to come will only be inaugurated with Christ’s second coming. This understanding will be reflected in the way fulfillments are interpreted.

## Interpreting Prophecy

In studying a passage, it is helpful if the student analyzes what part of a passage is forthtelling, and what is foretelling. The forthtelling portion is the teaching or ethical-moral passages. Ramm gives the example from Zechariah. Zechariah 1:1-6 is a teaching section followed by 1:7-21, which is a prophetic vision.<sup>767</sup> If the student has studied terms and historical background, an analysis of forthtelling passages should not be difficult. It is in the study of foretelling passages portions that the most attention needs to be paid in order to interpret prophetic literature accurately.

## Fulfillment of Prophecy

In considering the fulfillment of prophecy it is important to understand that most prophecy is conditional. Kaiser points out that there are a small number of unconditional prophecies in the Bi-

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<sup>761</sup> Sterrett 140; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 304.

<sup>762</sup> Kaiser and Silva 144.

<sup>763</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 304.

<sup>764</sup> Kaiser and Silva 144.

<sup>765</sup> Kaiser and Silva 144.

<sup>766</sup> For this discussion on inaugurated eschatology I am indebted to Kaiser and Silva 144.

<sup>767</sup> Ramm 250.

ble.<sup>768</sup> These are made unilaterally by God who plans to sovereignly fulfill them. Most prophecies, however, have a conditional element. A commonly cited example is found in Jonah 3:10, where God repents of His judgment on Nineveh when they repented.<sup>769</sup>

The issue that some struggle with is how God can have an immutable nature and yet repent?<sup>770</sup> The text commonly cited to answer this issue is Jeremiah 18:7-10:<sup>771</sup>

At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. (NRSV)

This passage makes explicit the conditional nature of prophecy. What God is looking for is “a right relationship between the people concerned and God.”<sup>772</sup> Osborne holds that this principle will explain why many Bible prophecies go unfulfilled. He gives the example of the prophetess Huldah stating that Josiah would die in peace when in reality he died in opposing the Egyptian forces who were attempting to aid the Assyrians (2 Kings 22:18-20).<sup>773</sup>

### **Fulfilled or Not Fulfilled? That is the Question<sup>774</sup>**

Whether one considers a prophecy fulfilled or not depends to some extent on how literally or figuratively one perceives the prophecy as being fulfilled. Much of prophetic writing is in the form of poetry which has been shown to contain much imagery and vivid language. But while the challenge of prophecy includes the issues of discerning figurative language, the problem goes beyond this issue to the question of whether prophecy should be fulfilled literally or spiritually. An example of a literal fulfillment is that in the “millennium Jerusalem will be the capitol of the world.”<sup>775</sup> A spiritual fulfillment of the same concept would be “the great successes of the Christian Church.”<sup>776</sup>

While sometimes it appears that there are camps of extreme literalists or spiritualizers, this is not always the case. As many scholars will admit, the actual positions of interpreters are not so extreme.

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<sup>768</sup> Kaiser and Silva 149; They cite: Gen. 8:21-22; 2 Sam. 7:8-16; Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 65:17-19, 66:22-24.

<sup>769</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 306.

<sup>770</sup> Virkler 197, 198.

<sup>771</sup> Kaiser and Silva 149; Virkler 197, 198; Osborne 213; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 306.

<sup>772</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 306.

<sup>773</sup> Osborne 213, 214.

<sup>774</sup> This thesis is aware that there are those who hold a naturalist worldview and consider prophecy “a more vivid way of writing history after the event has occurred,” Mikelsen 289. As mentioned before, this thesis is addressed to those who believe the Bible is supernatural and inspired.

<sup>775</sup> Ramm 241.

<sup>776</sup> Ramm 241.

“Spiritualizers” note passages that are literally fulfilled while there are “literalists” who “find a moral application in a passage, when they find a typical meaning, or when they find a deeper meaning (such as in Ezekiel 28 with reference to the kings of Babylon and Tyre). Nobody is a strict literalist or a complete spiritualist.”<sup>777</sup>

No one holds a consistent position of interpreting from a totally literal or spiritual position.<sup>778</sup> Rather, as Virkler puts it, the questions concern “how much” and “which parts” of prophecy should be fulfilled in a spiritual fashion.<sup>779</sup>

## Kinds of Fulfillments

With an understanding of the challenge of potential fulfillments, the various options for fulfillment can be discussed. There are four kinds of fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies that can be considered.<sup>780</sup> Those that were fulfilled in a short time period, those that were fulfilled in a longer period but still within the Old Testament, those fulfilled in the New Testament, and those yet unfulfilled.

It is when one considers New Testament fulfillments that disagreements arise. Sterrett maintains the position that the New Testament must dictate which approaches to fulfilling prophecy are legitimate.<sup>781</sup> He identifies three ways in which New Testament authors find fulfillment.

Some prophecies are “direct prediction.”<sup>782</sup> These prophecies refer only to their New Testament fulfillment, and have no prior or later application. They are fulfilled in a literal fashion. An example is the prediction of the birth of Jesus (Micah 5:2) found in Matthew 2:6.<sup>783</sup> Another example is the ministry of John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus (Isaiah 40:3-5 fulfilled in Lk. 3:3-6).<sup>784</sup>

Some prophecies find “figurative fulfillments.”<sup>785</sup> This means they find fulfillment in the New Testament but do not correspond to any concrete person or event in the Old Testament. Sterrett cites Psalm 118:22, 23: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” This is quoted as being fulfilled in Jesus (Mtt. 21:42), and by Peter (Acts 4:11 and 1 Peter 2:7) to refer to Him.<sup>786</sup> Another example is Zech. 13:7b:<sup>787</sup> “Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered.” In Matthew 26:31 Jesus quoted this prophecy as referring to Him when the disciples fled at His arrest. Both of these prophecies re-

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<sup>777</sup> Ramm 243, 244.

<sup>778</sup> Ramm 243, 244; Virkler 196; Osborne 218.

<sup>779</sup> Virkler 196.

<sup>780</sup> Sterrett 139, 140.

<sup>781</sup> Sterrett 142.

<sup>782</sup> Mickelsen 300.

<sup>783</sup> Sterrett 142; Mickelsen 300.

<sup>784</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 307.

<sup>785</sup> Sterrett 143; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 307.

<sup>786</sup> Sterrett 143.

<sup>787</sup> Sterrett 142; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 307.

flected the vivid imagery of poetry and did not appear to imply a literal fulfillment.

Sterrett and others have observed a third type of fulfillment which has been labeled a “literal/spiritual fulfillment.”<sup>788</sup> This is a prophecy where the context would assume a literal fulfillment but the New Testament interprets it as referring to the Church. The following explanation encapsulated well the position of those who maintain a spiritual fulfillment of prophecy:

While some interpreters tend to agree with us, they argue that prophecies like Amos 9 and Jer. 31 [his] still have a future *literal* fulfillment involving the nation of Israel. Though Rom. 11 admits some future place for Israel in God’s plan, we do not believe the Bible supports this literal view. First, we contend that the NT assumes that such prophecies have already achieved literal fulfillment through Christ and the Church. It leaves no reason to anticipate a second, later fulfillment. Second, to expect the latter implies that God has two separate peoples, Israel and the Church, each serving a different historical purpose and each having separate dealings with God.<sup>789</sup>

But in our view, the Bible teaches that God’s plan was to create one people composed of Jews and Gentiles (cf. Is. 19:19-25; Eph. 2). He chose the OT nation of Israel as a means to reach and eventually incorporate believers from all nations into his people. The NT clearly teaches that Christ’s coming fulfilled Israel’s national destiny. In addition, 1 Pet 2:9-10 assumes that the Church in this messianic era now constitutes *the people of God* (cf. Gal 6:16; Rom. 2:28-29). According to Rom. 11, God will graft future Israel, presently a discarded branch, back into his olive tree, presently the Church. In sum, we see no persuasive biblical reason to expect a future literal fulfillment of what the NT says has already occurred, though with an additional spiritual dimension.<sup>790</sup>

The example of Amos 9:11-12 is cited<sup>791</sup> when James, at the Jerusalem Counsel (Acts 15:16-17), interpreted that “the booth of David and Edom are now fulfilled spiritually.”<sup>792</sup> This prophecy is literal in that it was prophesied to take place in history, but it is spiritual in the sense that it refers not just to physical Israel but includes the Gentile Church.<sup>793</sup> In the same manner, Jeremiah prophesied (Jeremiah 31:31-34) that a new covenant would be created with Israel and Judah. But the New Testament author of Hebrews declares that the fulfillment is in the covenant made with the Church (Hebrews 8:6-12).<sup>794</sup>

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<sup>788</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 308; Sterrett 143.

<sup>789</sup> This is the view of dispensationalism.

<sup>790</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 308.

<sup>791</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 308; Sterrett 143.

<sup>792</sup> Sterrett 143.

<sup>793</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 308.

<sup>794</sup> Sterrett 143.

Sterrett goes on to conclude that if the New Testament finds these fulfillments, then there is legitimacy to these methods of interpretation. He does add that “this does not help us to know quickly or easily what is the right interpretation.”<sup>795</sup>

## Single versus Multiple Meanings

As can be observed in some of the above New Testament interpretations, the authors of the New Testament often interpreted the fulfillments of Old Testament passages in ways that hardly seem legitimate from an Old Testament perspective. This has given rise to the idea that prophecy holds a double sense or a meaning different from the Old Testament for the New Testament.<sup>796</sup> This is technically referred to by the term “*sensus plenior*.”<sup>797</sup> The idea of the text containing multiple meanings has already been considered and refuted in the discussion on the meaning options for words. A group of words in a given context can only have one meaning. As Terry quotes Owen: “If the Scripture has more than one meaning ‘it has no meaning at all.’”<sup>798</sup> Rather, when it appears that a Scripture has more than one meaning, what is being observed is the multiple applications of a prophetic passage.

The solution to this seeming difficulty of New Testament interpretations can be found in several principles. First, one needs to remember prophetic perspective, how prophets see history. Time is a corridor that they are looking down. They see numerous events in a telescopic fashion.

Second, they see these events form an analogous link of God’s purposes. This touches on the broad topic of typology. A type can be defined as a person, object, or event in the New Testament which is prefigured in the Old Testament.<sup>799</sup> A type is like a simile and parable in that it expresses a formal comparison between itself and its “antitype” (something which has gone before).<sup>800</sup> A type in the New Testament always refers to something which is real as opposed to fictitious.<sup>801</sup> A type is God ordained and will always be something more worthy or of higher application than its Old Testament counterpart.<sup>802</sup> So the New Testament writer notes a person, object or event in his time which he sees as having an analogous development of the Old Testament antitype. Rather than fulfilling a literal prediction made in the Old Testament, the New Testament author is aware of the recurrence of “a divinely intended pattern that is seen to occur in the history of salvation.”<sup>803</sup>

This leads to the third principle: prophecy is progressive. Successive prophecies include addition-

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<sup>795</sup> Sterrett 143.

<sup>796</sup> Kaiser and Silva 156, 157.

<sup>797</sup> Fee and Stuart 165; Kaiser 110.

<sup>798</sup> Terry 383.

<sup>799</sup> Terry 246; Mickelsen 239.

<sup>800</sup> Mickelsen 239.

<sup>801</sup> Terry 246; Mickelsen 238.

<sup>802</sup> Terry 247.

<sup>803</sup> Donald A. Hagner, “When the Time had Fully Come,” *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy*, eds. Carl E. Armeding and W. Ward Gasque (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992) 91.

al information and “and the fulfillment is greater than the sum total of the preceding promises.”<sup>804</sup> Messianic prophecies are the clearest example because the Jewish people could not conceive of the fulfillment found in Jesus.<sup>805</sup> Another example cited is that of the “abomination that desolates” Daniel 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11 (NRSV). This was fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the Temple with the sacrifice of pigs. This had a second fulfillment when the Zealots occupied the Temple and committed atrocities there during the revolt against Rome prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. As Lane summarizes:

During this period the Zealots moved into and occupied the Temple area (*War* IV. iii. 7), allowed persons who had committed crimes to roam about freely in the Holy of Holies (*War* IV. v.4). These acts of sacrilege were climaxed in the winter of 67-68 by the farcical investiture of the clown Phanni as high priest (*War* IV. iii. 6-8).<sup>806</sup>

The references in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and Revelation 13:14 point to a greater fulfillment yet to come.<sup>807</sup> This illustrates how the prophetic perspective of time, coupled with progressive revelation, can produce multiple analogous or typological applications of relevance.<sup>808</sup>

## Unfulfilled Prophecies

The final category deals with prophecies which still appear unfulfilled after thorough study. One principle which may account for these is the conditional nature of prophecy. There are prophecies which will not be fulfilled until the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. A challenge that the student faces is to determine if a prophecy is dealing with the second advent. There are a number of formulas that usually indicate if one is dealing with end time or eschatological prophecy.<sup>809</sup>

- “*In the latter days or in the last days.*” This phrase refers to “the complex of events” related to the return of the Lord.
- “*The day of the Lord*” or “*that day.*” This refers to “the grouping of events that precedes and includes the second advent of Christ, during which time God moves in judgment and salvation.” (cf. Amos 5:18; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; for “that day” see Amos 8:3, 9).
- “*Restore the fortunes of my people or return the captivity.*” This picture of restoration is analogous to God’s freeing of His people from Egypt (e.g., Jer. 30:3; Ez. 39:25).
- “*The remnant shall return.*” This is similar to the above concept of restoration, but focuses

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<sup>804</sup> Osborne 213.

<sup>805</sup> For the above discussion I am indebted to Kaiser and Silva 157; Osborne 213.

<sup>806</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974) 469.

<sup>807</sup> Osborne 213; Mickelsen 292, 293.

<sup>808</sup> Osborne 213.

<sup>809</sup> For the following information I am indebted to Kaiser and Silva 153, 154.

on the idea of God retaining a faithful remnant (Is. 6:13; 10:21, 22).

- “*The dwelling (or tabernacle) of God is with men.*” As God walked in the garden and Jesus became incarnate on earth, in the final restoration Jesus will live among his people (Ez. 37:27, 28; Zech. 2:10, 11; Rev. 21:3).
- “*The kingdom of God.*” This is the culmination of a recurrent theme that God rules His people (1 Sam. 12:12). God promised a descendant of David to rule forever (2 Sam. 7:16) and this prophecy developed into the messianic rule on earth (Is. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:14).

## Describing the Past in Terms of the Future

An accurate appraisal of how these prophecies might find fulfillment requires an understanding of the terminology of the prophets. One of the theological assumptions discussed earlier was that the Bible is accommodated to man. God accommodated the prophets by presenting future conditions in analogous terms that they could relate to. Thus it was common for prophets to describe the future in analogous terms of past events and patterns. Below are some typical motifs.<sup>810</sup>

- “*Creation.*” Creation terminology is used to describe the new creation (Is. 65:17 and 66:22).
- “*Paradise.*” There is future garden imagery reminiscent of the Garden of Eden (Is. 51:3; Zech. 1:17; and Rev. 2:7).
- “*The Flood.*” As in the days of Noah, judgment is impending on those who continue with life as usual. (Mtt.24:37-39). The unbelief of the ungodly in those days is a pattern that will repeat itself (2 Peter 3:3-7).
- “*The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.*” The cataclysmic destruction of these cities (Gen. 18, 19) should serve as a warning of how the ungodly will not be spared (2 Peter 2:6; Mtt. 10:15; 11:24; Rev. 14:10-11; and 19:20).
- “*The Exodus.*” God will personally intervene on His people’s behalf as He did in the Exodus (Is. 11:12 and Zech. 10:10-11).
- “*The wilderness experience.*” The way God provided and protected His people in an inhospitable climate by means of the pillar of fire and a cloud, and with streams in the desert demonstrates how He will personally care for them (Is. 4:5, 35).

When the student comes upon language which seems too good to be true or not yet fulfilled, he should consider that the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled at the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>810</sup> For the following discussion I am indebted to Kaiser and Silva 151, 152.

## Apocalyptic Literature

“Fascinating,” “mystifying,”<sup>811</sup> “the subject of so much controversy”<sup>812</sup> and “entering a foreign country”<sup>813</sup>—these are some of the ways authors describe readers’ feelings on approaching apocalyptic literature. It is in this genre that the student will have to deal with the challenge of interpreting visions and symbolism.<sup>814</sup>

The term “apocalypse” has the meaning “revelation”<sup>815</sup> or uncovering “knowledge previously hidden.”<sup>816</sup> Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel (chapters 37-39), Isaiah (chapters 24-27), the Olivet Discourses in the synoptic Gospels, and Revelation are all apocalyptic.<sup>817</sup> This genre is not unique to the Bible. Numerous apocalypses were familiar to Jews and early Christians,<sup>818</sup> such as the Jewish writings of 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and in Enoch.<sup>819</sup>

There are some basic characteristics of apocalyptic literature that any student needs to understand. The first has to do with the purpose of the apocalypse. Apocalyptic books were written during times of crisis when the people of God were oppressed or persecuted. These were usually times of pessimism and despair,<sup>820</sup> times when things had gotten so bad that man could not do anything to rectify this present age. While prophetic and apocalyptic literature both have a future element, there is a major difference. The prophetic books were still concerned with the present age. They warned of what could be done to avoid disaster. Apocalyptic works held no hope for this age. Rather they looked exclusively to the future where God would move from outside history and bring a radical end to this age. He would judge the wicked, save His people, and establish a new world order.<sup>821</sup> As Terry puts it, the apocalyptic genre centers on the theme of “the holy kingdom of God in its conflict with the godless and persecuting powers of the world—a conflict in which the ultimate triumph of righteousness is assured.”<sup>822</sup>

An apocalypse was a literary form with its own style and structure. This is a notable difference from prophetic books. Oracles were usually spoken and given individually, and then later compiled.<sup>823</sup> But apocalypses were crafted as literary works. Terry considers “their highly-wrought artistic arrangement and finish”<sup>824</sup> one of the most distinguishing features of an apocalypse. The messages

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<sup>811</sup> Osborne 221.

<sup>812</sup> Terry 356.

<sup>813</sup> Fee and Stuart 205.

<sup>814</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 311.

<sup>815</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 311.

<sup>816</sup> Osborne 221.

<sup>817</sup> Osborne 221; Kaiser 94. Ferguson would hold to a stricter standard. He maintains that only Daniel and Revelation can truly be classified as apocalyptic, although parts of other books of the Bible can be said to have apocalyptic features 99.

<sup>818</sup> Fee and Stuart 206.

<sup>819</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 370.

<sup>820</sup> Fee and Stuart 206; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 311; Osborne 226.

<sup>821</sup> Fee and Stuart 206; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 311.

<sup>822</sup> Terry 338.

<sup>823</sup> Fee and Stuart 207; Osborne 223.

<sup>824</sup> Terry 339.

were arranged carefully and often would “divide time and events into neat packages.”<sup>825</sup> Visions could be organized in cycles or sets which “expressed something (e.g., judgment) without necessarily trying to suggest that each separate picture followed hard on the heels of the former.”<sup>826</sup> An awareness of form and structure will aid the student in identifying these features.

Apocalypses are also pseudonymous.<sup>827</sup> That is to say that the writer used the name of a great man of history as the “hero” to give his apocalypse more credibility or authority.<sup>828</sup> Credibility was also established by writing past history as if it were prophecy<sup>829</sup> which had been “sealed” until a later date.<sup>830</sup> This of course is not the case with Biblical apocalypses. They were written by one of God’s “heroes” and were truly prophetic.

This hero was taken on a journey by an angelic guide<sup>831</sup> who would show him visions or dreams.<sup>832</sup> These visions are described by various authors as “cryptic and symbolic,”<sup>833</sup> “esoteric,”<sup>834</sup> and “strange, even enigmatic.”<sup>835</sup>

These visions used imagery from the realm of fantasy. This imagery is another distinguishing feature of apocalyptic works. Most prophecy used objects from real life for their symbolism<sup>836</sup> such as “locusts, horses, salt, lamps.”<sup>837</sup> In apocalyptic literature the imagery was from the realm of fantasy, such as “a beast with seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 13:1), a woman clothed with the sun Rev.12:1), [and] locusts with scorpions’ tails and human heads (Rev. 9:10).”<sup>838</sup> Fee and Stuart emphasize the bizarre combination of features such as locusts with human heads. Symbolism is expressed through numerology as well. Osborne explains that “the numbers three, four, seven, ten, twelve and seventy predominate” as symbolic numbers in apocalypses.

## Principles of Interpretation

In addition to the general principles of interpretation that have been presented throughout this thesis, apocalyptic literature holds the challenge of interpreting visions loaded with symbolism. A symbol is a special kind of metaphor.<sup>839</sup> The student’s task is to consider the literal object used as a

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<sup>825</sup> Fee and Stuart 207.

<sup>826</sup> Fee and Stuart 207.

<sup>827</sup> Fee and Stuart 207.

<sup>828</sup> Virkler 192; Osborne 225.

<sup>829</sup> Virkler 192.

<sup>830</sup> Fee and Stuart 207.

<sup>831</sup> Virkler 192; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 371.

<sup>832</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 331, 371; Osborne 222; Fee and Stuart 207.

<sup>833</sup> Fee and Stuart 207.

<sup>834</sup> Osborne 224.

<sup>835</sup> Virkler 192.

<sup>836</sup> Osborne 224.

<sup>837</sup> Osborne 224.

<sup>838</sup> Fee and Stuart 207.

<sup>839</sup> Osborne 227.

symbol and determine the idea or truth that it represents.<sup>840</sup>

As with any other term that one seeks to define, the student needs to discern what the author intended it to mean.<sup>841</sup> The student should begin by noting any definition that the author gives to his symbols. For instance, in Revelation “the seven golden lampstands” are seven churches (Rev. 1:20) and the “seven stars” are the angels or messengers of the seven churches.<sup>842</sup> When a symbol is interpreted, it becomes the control and guideline for the student to build upon in his interpretation of that passage and the book in general.<sup>843</sup>

The challenge is when no interpretation was given. In these situations, the author expected his contemporary reader to understand and interpret the passage by its context.<sup>844</sup> The modern reader should study the passage to see if there are any clues to the meaning of the text. The next step for the student is to study cross references where the same symbol is used in other passages and books.<sup>845</sup> This is especially helpful in the Revelation of John because much of the symbolism and imagery found there is rooted in Old Testament background.<sup>846</sup> For instance, the imagery of savage beasts are used in Daniel to represent “wicked political leaders or nations.”<sup>847</sup> This same imagery appears to have the same meaning in Revelation.<sup>848</sup>

This kind of consistent imagery found in apocalyptic literature can be compared to modern political cartoons. The symbol of an eagle for Americans, or a bear used to represent the former Soviet Union is common cultural knowledge.<sup>849</sup> But interpreting these cartoons also takes an awareness of current events. That combination of cultural imagery and historical background<sup>850</sup> is an advantage that the modern reader does not have when studying Biblical apocalyptic literature. There is a great gap in historical and cultural distance.

Another problem is that symbols do not always remain consistent. First, numerous symbols can be used to represent the same reality. Consider, for instance, two symbols representing Jesus in John’s Revelation. The “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5, NRSV) becomes the “Lamb” in the next verse (Rev. 5:6, NRSV).<sup>851</sup> Second, they can change meaning. The symbol of a lion does not portray a consistent message. It can depict “the ferocity and predatory nature” or “lordly nature” of the beast.<sup>852</sup> The lion can also refer to Jesus (Rev. 5:6) or the devil (1 Peter 5:8).<sup>853</sup> Therefore the stu-

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<sup>840</sup> Mickelsen 278; Ramm 233.

<sup>841</sup> Osborne 228.

<sup>842</sup> Fee and Stuart 210.

<sup>843</sup> Ramm 233; Osborne 229.

<sup>844</sup> Mickelsen 266.

<sup>845</sup> Ramm 234.

<sup>846</sup> Fee and Stuart 210.

<sup>847</sup> Ramm 233.

<sup>848</sup> Ramm 233.

<sup>849</sup> Fee and Stuart 210; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 372.

<sup>850</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 372.

<sup>851</sup> Osborne 229; Fee and Stuart 210.

<sup>852</sup> Osborne 229.

<sup>853</sup> Ramm 234.

dent must be aware of “the qualities of the literal object,”<sup>854</sup> and see which of those are the points of identification in the context of the passage.

In addition to internal research in the Bible, study needs to be done in secular sources for symbolism within the same time period and culture. In Revelation, for example, John uses some ancient mythological symbolism.<sup>855</sup> Osborne challenges the reader to consider Hellenistic background in the symbolism of John’s Revelation.<sup>856</sup>

In interpreting apocalyptic literature, the student should consider what the point of each vision or passage is as a whole unit. What is the message each vision is trying to convey? As in the case of parables, the student should not try to find meaning in every detail.<sup>857</sup> Fee and Stuart give two purposes for details.<sup>858</sup> The first is “for dramatic effect.”<sup>859</sup> They cite an example from Revelation:

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and there came a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. (Revelation 6:12-14, NRSV)

In this passage they maintain that the details “probably do not ‘mean’ anything.”<sup>860</sup> Rather they are there to add to the impact of the earthquake. The second purpose for including details is to give a fuller picture so that the points of reference are not missed. The example of this is also from the Revelation:

In appearance the locusts were like horses equipped for battle. On their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; they had scales like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. They have tails like scorpions, with stingers, and in their tails is their power to harm people for five months. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. (Revelation 9:7-11, NRSV)

In this example, one theory is that the “crowns of gold, human faces, women's long hair”<sup>861</sup> would give a picture of the Parthians threatening the Roman borders which would be easy for the

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<sup>854</sup> Mickelsen 278.

<sup>855</sup> Fee and Stuart 210.

<sup>856</sup> Osborne 229.

<sup>857</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 312; Fee and Stuart 211.

<sup>858</sup> Fee and Stuart 211.

<sup>859</sup> Fee and Stuart 211.

<sup>860</sup> Fee and Stuart 211.

<sup>861</sup> Fee and Stuart 211.

reader to identify.<sup>862</sup>

In summing up an approach to apocalyptic literature, the student should keep in mind the big picture of the structure of the book, its historical and cultural background, and this genre's purpose of comforting God's people in tribulation. Osborne would add a final reminder that one needs to hold his interpretations with humility. The student should remember how the Jewish leaders missed the signs of Jesus' birth in their interpretations.<sup>863</sup>

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<sup>862</sup> Fee and Stuart 211; Other scholars would debate this interpretation of the locusts. Dr. Feaver interview.

<sup>863</sup> Osborne 232.

# Chapter 4 | Synthesis Phase

*“Imagine...driving by a church with a large sign in the front that says, ‘We Teach All Who Seriously Commit Themselves to Jesus How to Do Everything He Said to Do.’” – Dallas Willard<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction to Synthesis

Most Christians would agree that application is the goal even if they were not consistently applying what they learned. There are two steps in the application process. First, the student must determine what truths holds value for application. Second, how does one apply this truth to his life?<sup>2</sup> The challenge is two-fold. What is applicable to the believer in his modern life? Then, what practical steps can he take to insure that transformation takes place? In some ways, the illustration of a transformer gearing down the energy of a nuclear power plant is a useful analogy. The Word of God is power and life, but one must learn to “tap in” and transfer it to the levels of everyday life. These are questions that will be addressed in this section of the thesis.

## Evaluation

This thesis has been written for an audience who is assumed to believe the Scriptures are the Word of God with an eternal relevance. The view of this audience can be summed up in the text of 2 Tim. 3:16-17:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. (NRSV)

The Scriptures bear witness to their relevance elsewhere as well. Deuteronomy 31:9-13 gives instructions for the Bible to be read to the entire assembly every seven years.<sup>3</sup> Throughout Israel’s history when there was revival, as in the case of Josiah (2 Kings 22, 23) and Ezra (Neh. 7:73b - 8:18), the Law was read and explained to the people of Israel.<sup>4</sup> This covers a span of almost a thousand years in which the Law was not considered outdated. Again in Corinthians (1 Cor. 10:6), Paul affirms the value of the Old Testament to the Christian.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Willard 314.

<sup>2</sup> Traina 203, 204; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 18.

<sup>3</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 402.

<sup>4</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 402.

<sup>5</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 402.

While it is true that all Scripture is profitable, it is also true that various books and passages cannot be applied in the same fashion, or to the same extent. For example, didactic prose found in the epistles will lend itself to broader application than wisdom literature of Job.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Bible was written to specific audiences in specific periods of time and takes into account their culture and level of revelation they received.

The question is: How does one determine the degree or level of relevance of various passages? Evaluation, also known as contextualization,<sup>7</sup> is the study of this process. In this discussion, it is assumed that the student has already thoroughly completed the analytical phase. The author admits that this is a complex field with a wide range of opinions. Since this thesis is a survey, it will only be possible to explore some of the basic issues which evaluation entails.

## Guidelines for Determining the Truth

The first category to explore is universal truths.<sup>8</sup> A universal truth can be defined as a text which is “normative at the surface level.”<sup>9</sup> That is to say, as the student initially reads the text, its relevance to his contemporary life is clear and obvious. This goes by a number of terms including “timeless,”<sup>10</sup> “general,”<sup>11</sup> or “supra-cultural.”<sup>12</sup> The student usually knows intuitively that this type of Scripture has direct relevance to his life. Consider Ephesians 4:28: “Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.” (NRSV)

While the student will intuitively sense the relevance of this passage and others, it is helpful to have some criteria for evaluating if a Scripture is normative on the surface level. Here are a couple of indicators to help identify a Scripture as being universal.

Is the command being observed a general principle that is repeated in various forms throughout Scripture?<sup>13</sup> For example, all of the Ten Commandments except the Sabbath can be noted in some form throughout Scriptures. Jesus’ Great Commandment (Mark 12:29-31), which sums up Deut. 6:45 and Lev. 19:18, to love God and to love one’s neighbor, can be seen as a universal truth throughout Scriptures.<sup>14</sup> These same truths can be noted in the two recurring themes of the prophets: religious apostasy and social injustice.

Do the life circumstances of the contemporary reader match those of the original reader? If so,

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<sup>6</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 403.

<sup>7</sup> Osborne 318.

<sup>8</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 411.

<sup>9</sup> Osborne 326.

<sup>10</sup> Traina 206.

<sup>11</sup> Traina 206.

<sup>12</sup> Osborne 326.

<sup>13</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 411.

<sup>14</sup> Kuhatschek 52, 53.

the instruction or command is again a universal truth and can be taken as God's Word to him.<sup>15</sup> For example, it has not changed that the Christian is still a sinner saved by grace and needs to appropriate all the fruit of the Spirit in his life.

## **Guidelines for Evaluating Factors that Limit the Relevance of Scripture**

While a portion of Scriptures will have a universal significance on a surface level, the majority of the Bible will need some discernment in establishing their relevance for the contemporary reader. This thesis will consider three categories that will help the student evaluate how to apply various passages of the Bible. The author has reduced these categories to general context issues and theological assumptions.

## **General Context Issues for Limiting the Relevance of Scripture**

This category deals with how careful attention to context will aid the student in determining the limitations to the application of various texts. Some of the principles presented here will have already been discussed in the analytical phase.

### **Context Limits the Audience**

Context will alert the student to the intended audience. If a teaching or command is directed to a specific person or group, then it is the express will of God only for that designated audience unless a normative parallel teaching can be identified elsewhere in Scripture.<sup>16</sup> One example is found in John (Jn. 21: 18-23) where Jesus told Peter he would be martyred. The immediate context after this prediction, in which John is foretold to have a different fate, alerts the reader that the command to Peter should not be taken as a universal expectation.<sup>17</sup> Another example is Paul's advice on singleness in Corinthians (1 Cor. 7:8). Paul gives the counsel in a setting that demonstrates he was not advocating a universal truth.<sup>18</sup>

This is also true in the case of promises. The student needs to observe if a promise is universal in nature or if it is directed to a specific individual or group. For example, it is not legitimate to claim the Lord's promise to protect Paul while he was ministering in Corinth. (Acts 18:9, 10)<sup>19</sup>

## **The Broader Context of Scripture Can Revoke a Command**

This is clearly demonstrated in the abolition of the Levitical sacrificial system in the New Testa-

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<sup>15</sup> Fee and Stuart 60.

<sup>16</sup> Ramm 119; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 412; McQuilkin 281.

<sup>17</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 412.

<sup>18</sup> McQuilkin 280.

<sup>19</sup> Ramm 193.

ment (Hebrews 9, 10). However, the repeal of commands is not limited to Old Testament injunctions. The New Testament can also revise its directives. Jesus commanded his disciples to go out in ministry without any supplies (Matthew 10:9-10). The disciples were later told by Jesus that the time had come for them to travel equipped (Luke 22:35).<sup>20</sup>

## Context Can Reveal a Conditional Element

This principle is relevant in the case of promises. Ramm notes that “Every promise in the book is mine’ is one of the overstatements of the century.”<sup>21</sup> Not only must the student be aware of the intended audience of a promise as mentioned earlier, but if there is a condition attached to a promise.<sup>22</sup> Some promises have a more obvious or explicit condition attached as in the case of forgiveness of sins associates with 1 John 1:9. The conditional nature of other Scriptures is more implicit in nature. This is the case of Matthew 7:7: “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.” The promise of answered prayer must be considered in the context of discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>23</sup>

## The Role of Theological Assumptions in Limiting the Relevance of Scripture

Earlier a number of theological assumptions were considered, dating back to the Reformation, which can aid the student interpreting the Bible. These assumptions are helpful in developing objective criteria for the relevance of various passages of the text.

### Theological Assumption: Analogy of Faith

This assumption states that any statement or doctrine concerning Scripture must be consistent with all other teachings about Scripture. Therefore no command or teaching should contradict the whole counsel of God. This assumption ought to alert the student to commands found in the Old Testament which conflict with the greater teachings of Scripture.<sup>24</sup> For example, God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22 is not congruent with the character of God nor his many commands against Molech worship (e.g., Leviticus 18:21).

### Theological Assumption: The Progressive Nature of Biblical Revelation

This assumption refers to the fact that God revealed truth in the Scriptures in a progressive manner through history. This progression began in the Old Testament and climaxed in the New

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<sup>20</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 412.

<sup>21</sup> Ramm 192.

<sup>22</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 418.

<sup>23</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 418, 419.

<sup>24</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 413.

Testament. One example of the pertinence of this assumption is observed in God's revelation on the marriage institution. While polygamy was tolerated among many men of faith in the Old Testament such as Jacob and David, in the New Testament Jesus made it clear that God intended marriage to be limited to one man and woman.<sup>25</sup> Thus the New Testament revelation concerning marriage takes precedent over Old Testament revelation.

The progressive nature of revelation is a valuable assumption to consider when evaluating the relevance of the Old Testament Law. Biblical scholars agree that the New Testament has set aside the Levitical sacrificial system, circumcision, and kosher foods.<sup>26</sup>

These are clear precepts revealed in the progression of Biblical revelation. But what about the cases where the New Testament is silent? Writers hold various additional presuppositions on the relevance of the Law for the contemporary believer. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard explain that there are two widely held views.<sup>27</sup> First, classic covenant theology holds that all the laws of the Old Testament should be considered relevant unless specifically revoked in the New Testament. This would forbid the present methods of farming and the combining of materials in the production of garments (Deut. 22:9-12). The second view, classic dispensationalism, maintains that the only valid laws for the New Testament believer are those which have been restated.<sup>28</sup> A strict adherence to this position would conclude that "sorcerers, mediums, and spiritists" should be permitted to practice their craft. (Deut. 18:9-13).<sup>29</sup>

For example, Fee and Stuart appear to hold the dispensationalist view. They maintain that since the Christian belongs to a different covenant, none of the statutes or requirements of the Old Testament are binding on the Christian unless they are "restated or reinforced"<sup>30</sup> in some form in the New Testament. McQuilkin, on the other hand, seems to be in the covenant theology camp. He holds that any Old Testament law that was not deliberately abolished by in the New Testament should not be set aside by the Christian. He does not find a precedent for the presupposition that the New Testament must reinstate or repeat any statute from the Old Testament in order for it to be obligatory for the Christian. McQuilkin goes on to say that this is a "dangerous mandate"<sup>31</sup> because there are numerous Old Testament injunctions, such as those against "bestiality and rape,"<sup>32</sup> which are not renewed in the New Testament.

Both of these two positions hold merit. McQuilkin is correct in his desire to safeguard the authority of Scriptures by refuting any arbitrary mandate for rejecting previous revelation. On the other hand, Fee and Stuart are correct in their position that the Christian is not bound to the Old Tes-

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<sup>25</sup> Mtt. 19:5, 6; Mk. 10:8.

<sup>26</sup> McQuilkin 283.

<sup>27</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 280; see also McQuilkin 283.

<sup>28</sup> McQuilkin 280; Fee and Stuart 151, 152.

<sup>29</sup> McQuilkin 283.

<sup>30</sup> Fee and Stuart 137.

<sup>31</sup> McQuilkin 283.

<sup>32</sup> McQuilkin 283.

tament law. It must also be added that the positions of these authors are not as far from each other as these initial comments might lead one to think. Fee and Stuart note that certain “*aspects*”<sup>33</sup> of the ethical law of the Old Testament are repeated in the New Testament. Jesus summarized these “aspects,” or essence, of the entire Old Testament in a conversation with a Scribe in Matthew 22:36-40:

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (NRSV)

Thus any parts of the Old Testament Law that support or reinforce the principle behind these two great commands is to be considered renewed in the New Testament.<sup>34</sup>

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard offer a third alternative to the covenantal and dispensational views of evaluating Old Testament law. They refer to Jesus’ declaration:<sup>35</sup>

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. (Mtt. 5: 17, 18. NRSV)

This group of writers show that the first two chapters of Matthew’s Gospel list five events by which Jesus’ life fulfilled Old Testament prophecies (Mtt. 1:22; 2:5,15,17,23). While these references demonstrate that the Gospel writer believed that Jesus fulfilled prophecy, Jesus includes the fulfillment of the law in His declaration. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard go on to note that Matthew follows with the extremely high standards of Jesus’ ethics in the Sermon on the Mount. In light of this combination of Jesus’ fulfillment of prophecy and a standard of the law which man does not fulfill, they conclude that “to fulfill a law must mean to bring to completion everything for which that law was originally intended (cf. v. 18: ‘until everything is accomplished’).”<sup>36</sup>

Some of this fulfillment took place on the cross as in the case of the sacrificial system. In issues of moral law Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard assert that this fulfillment will not occur until Jesus’ second coming. Thus they see Matthew 5:17, 18 as the key to applying the Old Testament laws in the New Testament age. These verses are pertinent to a Christian’s life, but must be interpreted in terms of how they are fulfilled in Jesus. Therefore while all Scripture is profitable to study (2 Timothy 3:16), the principle<sup>37</sup> must be discerned for its application.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Fee and Stuart 13.

<sup>34</sup> Fee and Stuart 138.

<sup>35</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 280.

<sup>36</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 280.

<sup>37</sup> The next theological assumption will consider how to evaluate principles.

<sup>38</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 280, 281; Kuhatschek 96-99; Stein 194.

When respected authorities hold contrasting presuppositions, it can become confusing for the student to determine which position he will adopt. It is helpful for the student to remain mindful of the assumptions concerning Scripture as a firm foundation on which to develop further presuppositions. The student will need to decide which approach of additional presuppositions he is most comfortable employing.

## Theological Assumption: Scripture Interprets Scripture

Scripture interprets Scripture refers to the need to interpret obscure passages in light of the clear passages. This Biblical assumption is a safeguard for those who seek to evaluate passages of Scripture by deductively generalizing or finding Biblical principles.<sup>39</sup>

## Old Testament Commands

This process of finding Biblical principles can be applied in evaluating the relevance of Old Testament commands. As already noted in the discussion on the progressive nature of revelation, Jesus generalized the Law, all six hundred thirteen Old Testament laws<sup>40</sup> into two in Matthew 22. Kuhatschek likens the multiple levels of application that can be deduced from the Bible to a pyramid.<sup>41</sup> At the top of the pyramid are the two great commandments summed up by Jesus. By nature these two generalizations are abstract. As one travels down towards the base of the pyramid, the commands become more specific and concrete. Some of these detailed commands found near the base of the pyramid appear to have no relevance to contemporary life. But since all Scripture is inspired and profitable, relevance will always be found in a text if one travels higher up on the pyramid of application to a more general level.<sup>42</sup> Consider, for instance, Deut. 22:8: “When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof; otherwise you might have bloodguilt on your house, if anyone should fall from it.” (NRSV)

This passage appears obscure and meaningless to the modern student. However, if the proper cultural studies have already been completed, the student is aware that the homes being spoken of had flat roofs where people would sleep or even add an additional room (cf. 2 Kings 4:10). Therefore roofs, as living quarters, especially at night in a culture without electric lighting, held the possibility that someone would fall off and get hurt or killed. If one could not find a more specific principle than this command entails, at least one could say that this is a manifestation of how to love your neighbor as yourself.

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<sup>39</sup> Kuhatschek’s whole thesis; Virkler 211-230; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 406-423. Virkler and Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard recommend this process for finding principles in narratives while Kuhatschek advocates finding principles in Old Testament commands as well as in narratives.

<sup>40</sup> Kuhatschek 52.

<sup>41</sup> Kuhatschek 54.

<sup>42</sup> Kuhatschek 58.

The next logical progression in determining principles from commands would be to topically record what is said on a subject to derive general principles. As McQuilkin maintains, this is a necessary step since the Bible does not specifically speak to all contemporary issues.<sup>43</sup> But this enters the area of developing doctrine<sup>44</sup> which is beyond the scope of this thesis. The issue is that the key to accurately evaluating the relevance of Old Testament commands is to use the standard of clear New Testament teaching.

## Narratives

There is agreement among Biblical scholars that narratives in the Bible are historically true and accurate.<sup>45</sup> There is also agreement that any historical episode conveys implications.<sup>46</sup> The debate in studying historical narratives concerns what lessons can be derived as normative from these stories. The application of the biblical assumption, Scripture interprets Scripture, is maintained at various standards of stringency by different authors in finding relevance in narratives.

There are three general categories of historical narratives: explicitly evaluated, implicitly evaluated, and unevaluated. Explicit evaluation can be effected by the author of the passage whereby he unambiguously evaluates the behavior of a person or group.<sup>47</sup> An explicit evaluation can also be established by a later Biblical author in a didactic passage. For example, one would not necessarily consider Lot righteous if not for this evaluation in 2 Peter 2:7: “and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless...”

Authors who advocate the need for an explicit evaluation hold stringently to the assumption that clear teaching must evaluate unclear passages. Either a didactic passage must define a historical event,<sup>48</sup> or the author of the passage must make an evaluation of the behavior.<sup>49</sup> As McQuilkin sums up this position:

“An event or specific behavior should not be considered normative for today solely on the basis that it is recorded in the Bible. It must be evaluated in the light of direct biblical teaching.”<sup>50</sup>

The second category is the implicitly evaluated narrative.<sup>51</sup> Here the book’s author gives clues as to his view of the character or characters. An example of this type of evaluation is Jonah. His behav-

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<sup>43</sup> McQuilkin 301.

<sup>44</sup> Sterrett 150.

<sup>45</sup> McQuilkin 280.

<sup>46</sup> McQuilkin 301; Fee and Stuart 77.

<sup>47</sup> Kuhatschek 107.

<sup>48</sup> Osborne 330.

<sup>49</sup> McQuilkin 280; Fee and Stuart 78; Ramm 191.

<sup>50</sup> McQuilkin 281.

<sup>51</sup> Kuhatschek 107; Fee and Stuart 78.

ior and attitudes are clearly not those to be desired or emulated.<sup>52</sup> The student needs to exercise more caution in assessing these narratives since he is basing his evaluation on inductive clues and not an express biblical judgment.

The third category of narratives are those that are left unevaluated. While these are the most difficult to evaluate, they are also the most prevalent type of narrative.<sup>53</sup> For this grouping, there are a number of authors who advocate finding principles.<sup>54</sup> Again, the issue is for the student to discern a more general biblical principle that is reflected in the story. There are some limitations that are conceded to this methodology. First, Virkler clarifies that the principles found may not be normative.<sup>55</sup> This method of determining relevance might discern a biblical truth, but that truth may not be taught from the passage under scrutiny. Thus if it is not the author's intention to teach that truth, it cannot legitimately be considered normative.

The second limitation to this method is concerned with the level of authority which such a principle will hold.<sup>56</sup> For instance, the example of Abraham's test in being asked to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22: 1-19) is considered.<sup>57</sup> There are a couple of possible general principles that are offered from this passage. First: "Trust in God's Sovereignty."<sup>58</sup> This is a principle that reflects a biblical truth, but it is very general. The second principle offered was: "We will not grieve or overly worry when death threatens us or fellow believers, since we know that even if it comes, we will be resurrected on the last day."<sup>59</sup>

While the two principles derived are true, they are so general and removed from the original passage that they do not hold much authority as principles stemming specifically from that passage.<sup>60</sup> This level of principle appears to this author to hold the risk of advocating an eventual slide back into allegorizing.

The intensity of disagreement which is held between those who maintain that Scripture must clearly evaluate narratives, and those who assert that one can principlize<sup>61</sup> stories can be seen in two appraisals of the potential use of the narrative concerning Joseph. Kuhatschek maintains that while the story of Joseph was never intended to give an illustration of moral purity: "Yet common sense tells us that Joseph is an excellent illustration of a biblical truth taught elsewhere."<sup>62</sup> He goes on to cite 1 Corinthians 6: 18, and 2 Timothy 2:22:

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<sup>52</sup> Kuhatschek 111-115.

<sup>53</sup> Alter 67.

<sup>54</sup> Virkler 211-230; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 406-423.

<sup>55</sup> Virker 220.

<sup>56</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 422.

<sup>57</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 422.

<sup>58</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 422.

<sup>59</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 422.

<sup>60</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 422.

<sup>61</sup> Virkler 212.

<sup>62</sup> Kuhatschek 119.

Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. (NRSV)

Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (NRSV)

Unlike the principles extracted from Genesis 22, these passages reflect a clear Biblical teaching which is well identified in New Testament didactic passages.

However, Fee and Stuart take a very different approach to the potential for finding truths in Joseph's life: "Joseph's lifestyle, personal qualities, or actions do not tell us anything from which general moral principles may be derived. If you think you have found any, you are finding what *you* want to find in the text; you are *not* interpreting the text."<sup>63</sup> Fee and Stuart are taking the more conservative position that narratives are not self-contained stories in themselves, but should be noted within the broad context of the narrative in which they are found.<sup>64</sup>

In summary the Biblical assumption of Scripture defining Scripture is a significant principle to guide the student in his search for relevance in Biblical narratives. The student will need to determine how far he is willing to venture beyond the explicitly stated relevance that any given narrative has for relating truth.

### **Theological Assumption: The Bible is Accommodated**

As mentioned in the analytical phase, this assumption is predicated upon the fact that God had to adapt His revelation to a form that man could understand. This involves communicating through language, the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek tongues, within the confines of man's culture and experience, in a way that he can grasp. Sproul frames the challenge well:

Unless we maintain that the Bible fell down from heaven on a parachute, inscribed by celestial pen in a peculiar heavenly language uniquely suited as a vehicle for divine revelation, or that the Bible was dictated directly and immediately by God without reference to any local custom, style or perspective, we are going to have to face the culture gap. That is, the Bible reflects the culture of its day.<sup>65</sup>

In short, in many passages the student is faced with difficulty of determining to what extent a passage is supra-cultural and universal, or culture-bound and local.<sup>66</sup> Sproul notes a further complication because the student himself is also culture-bound and brings to the text his own "host of ex-

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<sup>63</sup> Fee and Stuart 80.

<sup>64</sup> Fee and Stuart 79.

<sup>65</sup> Sproul 102.

<sup>66</sup> Osborne 326.

tra-biblical assumptions.”<sup>67</sup> This baggage includes one’s own theological biases. The liberal interpreter will have the tendency to assert that unclear passages are culture-bound while the conservative interpreter’s propensity will be to claim an ambiguous passage to hold a universal relevance.<sup>68</sup> The problem is to establish an objective method of approaching these culturally conditioned passages.

## **An Overview: Three Steps to Determine if a Command is Culture-Bound or has Universal Relevance<sup>69</sup>**

The first step is to attempt to discern indicators that a passage holds a universal truth. One of the clearest indicators of universal relevance is to note evidence of the essentials of the Gospel. Verses that are concerned with issues such as salvation, the Fall, redemption, the resurrection, and Christ’s second coming will clearly be involved with universally relevant truths.<sup>70</sup> Another indicator of passages of universal relevance is those which deal with intrinsically moral issues.<sup>71</sup> Stuart and Fee refer to “Paul’s sin lists”<sup>72</sup> such as Romans 13:13 as examples of ethical issues which are never culturally bound: “let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy.” (NRSV) Mankind is universally familiar with these sins in all cultures and therefore they can be clearly identified as universal.

The second step is to discern to what extent a command has elements which are associated with the culture of the day.<sup>73</sup> Some cultural elements are not difficult to discern such as clothing styles.<sup>74</sup> Customs such as “foot washing, exchanging the holy kiss, eating marketplace idol food”<sup>75</sup> can pose more of a challenge to discern, but they are not intrinsically moral issues either.<sup>76</sup>

The third step is to evaluate how closely the command is linked to the universal or cultural elements.<sup>77</sup> However, if a command is found to be culturally oriented at the surface level, it does not necessarily mean that it has no value. As noted earlier, there is usually a broader principle below the immediate surface level. While the command might not have any immediate comparable situation in the reader’s present culture, it still will contain a principle at a deeper level that the reader may be

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<sup>67</sup> Sproul 104.

<sup>68</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 410.

<sup>69</sup> Osborne 328-329.

<sup>70</sup> Fee and Stuart 66.

<sup>71</sup> Fee and Stuart 66.

<sup>72</sup> Fee and Stuart 66.

<sup>73</sup> Osborne 329.

<sup>74</sup> Sproul 108.

<sup>75</sup> Fee and Stuart 66.

<sup>76</sup> The author is deliberately avoiding controversial examples dealing with the role of women. The goal is to give general principles. As Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard note, women issues are so volatile that if an example is taken from a passage dealing with their role of women, and the student disagrees with the interpretation, they might also challenge the validity of the principle used. [Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 409, 410] Therefore rather than run the risk of throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water, more generic examples will be cited.

<sup>77</sup> Osborne 329.

able to discern.<sup>78</sup>

For instance, consider Leviticus 19:28: “You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the LORD.” (NRSV) While this command is related to Canaanite religious rituals which are not relevant to the modern Western Christian, it does contain a principle at a more basic level not to “imitate pagan religious practices.”<sup>79</sup>

## Principles for Dealing with Difficult Passages

The most difficult categories to determine the level of relevance are cultural institutions such as slavery, government, and the role of women. Here the challenge is to distinguish between what is merely being acknowledged as part of that culture in which the Bible is written, and what is being advocated as part of a Kingdom culture.<sup>80</sup> These cultural institutions, especially the role of women, could easily fill volumes. The following criteria will help the student discern the level of universal relevance of various challenging commands.

Commands that refer back to creation as their foundation are considered to hold strong evidence of a universal truth.<sup>81</sup> Sproul argues emphatically that “if any biblical principles transcend local customary limits, they are the appeals drawn from creation.”<sup>82</sup> He goes on to say that when an appeal is made to creation, it does not deal with man as belonging to any specific culture but in his fundamental relationship and accountability to God.<sup>83</sup> The explanation has also been set forth that the creation ordinances affirm the standards that God ordained before the Fall.<sup>84</sup>

Commands that challenged the norms of the biblical host culture should be taken note of as holding a strong potential of containing a supra-cultural truth.<sup>85</sup> A commonly cited example of this principle is the sin of homosexuality.<sup>86</sup> This practice was commonly accepted among the Greeks<sup>87</sup> but never in a Biblical culture. Osborne cites the issue of slavery commented on in Galatians 3:28 as another example:<sup>88</sup> “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” This perspective goes beyond any perspective of slavery of that culture. Such a teaching would thus be more likely to demonstrate a normative view.

There are also some questions to pose which will help to caution the student from making too

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<sup>78</sup> Osborne 327.

<sup>79</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 421.

<sup>80</sup> Sproul 109.

<sup>81</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 417.

<sup>82</sup> Sproul 110.

<sup>83</sup> Sproul 111.

<sup>84</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 417.

<sup>85</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 418; Fee and Stuart 67.

<sup>86</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 418; Osborne 329.

<sup>87</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois, Intervarsity Press, 1993) 416.

<sup>88</sup> Osborne 331.

quick a judgment on a passage. First, one should ask if the commands and teachings are consistent on a topic.<sup>89</sup> This is an important question when considering, for instance, the role of women and the Bible's perspective on the institution of government. For instance, both Romans 13:1-5 and 1 Peter 2:13-14 advocate submission to government. However, the prophecy concerning human government in Revelation 13-18 is a very different picture.<sup>90</sup>

Another question that needs to be raised in determining the universal elements of a passage is, What were the cultural options that were available to the Biblical authors?<sup>91</sup> For example, Paul does not speak against slavery in his letter to Philemon. He does, however, include a radical concept that anyone who has become a Christian is now a part of a new kingdom family. In passages dealing with women, the starting place of study is not to compare the role of women to the freedoms of women in twenty-first century, but to note how much more women are esteemed in Biblical writings than in the culture of the day.

Another question to ask is if the term noted in the Biblical passage still is identified in the same way by that term in contemporary culture.<sup>92</sup> An example cited is the significance of tattooing from Leviticus 19:28: "You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the LORD."(NRSV) While tattooing had religious significance to the original audience, the motive for tattooing needs to be questioned in its modern usage. Thus it would be prohibited if employed in a Satanic rite. If however tattooing is practiced as a cosmetic fad, the reason for its prohibition might be removed unless there was an additional Biblical principle that it violates.<sup>93</sup>

Hopefully these few guidelines will help the student in determining the relevance of the Biblical text. The final word to be said on the subject is that the student must always be aware of his dependence on the Spirit of God to guide his attempts to find relevance in the Scriptures,<sup>94</sup> and the need to exercise Christian love and humility with those who are equally sincere but have come to different conclusions.

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<sup>89</sup> Fee and Stuart 67.

<sup>90</sup> Fee and Stuart 67.

<sup>91</sup> Fee and Stuart 68.

<sup>92</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 415.

<sup>93</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 415.

<sup>94</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 426.

# Application

*“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” – Jesus Christ<sup>95</sup>*

## The Need to Apply Biblical Truth

This thesis began by stating that the Bible is one of the most important gifts God has given Christian’s to pursue life and godliness. Some information and tools have been presented to aid the student to understand what the text means and how it is relevant to the contemporary Christian. But Bible study is not complete until the student applies what he has learned. In fact, this author would challenge the concept that learning has taken place if there is no response. The system of education that dominates Western society often defines learning as gathering data.<sup>96</sup> The goal in the Western educational system is to collect information even if it is not relevant nor has a resultant effect on the life of the “learner.” It is not that there is anything wrong with studying the Bible and learning the truths within its pages. But it is not enough. The goal of Bible study is not just to know more knowledge but for each student’s life to be changed by the life-giving Word of God. As Wink put it: “The payoff is not information but transformation.”<sup>97</sup>

Responding to truth demonstrates that the student has been touched by it. As Kuist notes: “The one universal language known to be understood by all men is action.”<sup>98</sup> The Apostle John affirms this in his Gospel: “But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.” (John 3:21, NRSV). This challenge to keep the Christian’s focus on living out Biblical truth is not new. Moody also challenged his generation with the declaration that “the Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.”<sup>99</sup> Rather the student needs to be challenged that the same amount of effort and focus must be exerted to walk out the Bible as to interpret it.<sup>100</sup>

Put another way, to be a disciple of Jesus means that one should seek to be holy like him. Sire defines holiness by two characteristics. First, “Holiness is to be set apart for the glory of God.”<sup>101</sup> Second, to be holy means to exhibit the character of God.<sup>102</sup> Therefore Christians’ goal in Bible study should be to continually give the Holy Spirit more access to their lives, and to reflect the character of God in greater and greater measure. Sire would challenge the disciple that:

We only know what we act on.

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<sup>95</sup> John 8:32, NRSV

<sup>96</sup> Walter Wink, *Transforming Bible Study* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1980) 85; Willard 113.

<sup>97</sup> Wink 95.

<sup>98</sup> Kuist 142.

<sup>99</sup> NavHandbook 77.

<sup>100</sup> Kuhatschek 10.

<sup>101</sup> James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2000) 90.

<sup>102</sup> Sire, *Habits* 90.

Or:

We only believe what we obey.<sup>103</sup>

In other words, one has only learned as much as one incorporates into his life. Sire goes on to show how the New Testament indicates an essential relationship between knowing and doing. First, Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount, with its tremendous ethical standard, with the warning:<sup>104</sup>

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell--and great was its fall!” (Mtt. 7:24-27, NRSV)

It is hard to imagine that Jesus did not expect his words to be taken seriously with that kind of an ending. Second, Sire points to the Epistle by Jesus’ half-brother, James:<sup>105</sup> “But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.” (James 1:22, NRSV). James challenged his readers that true Christianity left no place for mere mental assent. While the nature of this thesis is not to go into the relationship between justification and sanctification, it is sufficient to say that the Scriptures appear to demand a response in the life of the believer, and not just an intellectual assent. It is important that the student enter study of the Word of God with a determination, by the grace of God, to conform his life to the truth that the Spirit of God reveals to him.

## Determining What to Apply

While it is necessary to know what the relevant truths are in the Bible, they will not profit the Christian if he does not know how to apply them to his life. This requires the student to be aware of the areas that need attention in his life, and Hendricks observes that most people don’t know themselves very well.<sup>106</sup> The first step of application begins with prayer. The Holy Spirit knows each person best and can illuminate Scriptures and principles that the believer needs to apply.<sup>107</sup>

There are two basic types of application that the believer should consider: worldview and lifestyle. The first, worldview, has to do with what the Christian believes. It includes what one thinks about God, himself, man, and creation. This includes the category called doctrine. It also includes the categories of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and teleology. In short, it encompasses the pre-

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<sup>103</sup> Sire, *Habits* 96.

<sup>104</sup> Sire, *Habits* 98.

<sup>105</sup> Sire, *Habits* 98.

<sup>106</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 294.

<sup>107</sup> Kuhatschek 83.

suppositions and values out of which each person makes decisions. It is the man's heart.

Willard points out that too much effort is spent by leaders in the modern Church trying to get people to change behavior and do good things without first transforming what they believe. He goes on to assert that often when people are accused of not walking out what they believe, it is a false accusation. The fact is that they are truly living out what they believe. The problem is that what they profess among Christians is not what they really value.<sup>108</sup> Willard sums up the challenge to the Church well that “*to enable people to become disciples we must change whatever it is in their actual belief system that bars confidence in Jesus as Master of the Universe.*”<sup>109</sup>

The second category, lifestyle, involves the way one lives as a result of one's beliefs. This also includes habits of lifestyle which have developed unintentionally. The following are some suggestions to help the student reflect on what areas of his thinking and lifestyle need to be conformed to the image of Christ.

### Grid of Categories to Consider

A number of authors suggest several grids that the believer can ponder prayerfully to discern if they reflect areas where a given passage or principle can be applied. One type of grid comprises the categories of relationships that a believer must maintain. These categories include relationship to God, self, believers, and unbelievers.<sup>110</sup> Hendricks would add that the believer has a different relationship to the enemy from his past life as well.<sup>111</sup>

The most significant category to take inventory in is how one thinks of and responds to God. Knowing who God is is the first half of the motto of Youth With A Mission. As an organization, Youth With A Mission has witnessed the transformation in young people when they are taught who God is. Willard declares that the single most important objective in training Christians should be to help the students “come to the point where they dearly love and constantly delight in that ‘heavenly Father’ made real to earth in Jesus and are quite certain that there is no ‘catch,’ no limit, to the goodness of his intentions or to his power to carry them out.”<sup>112</sup> This is a matter of really grasping the character, the essential goodness, and the nature, the attributes of power, which are true about the Triune God. When one comes to know and trust God, there will be a natural emotional response of love.<sup>113</sup> Willard challenges the disciple to complete the statement: “‘This is the message we heard from Jesus...’ (1 John 1:5).” The answer, of course, is: “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5b, NRSV). Thus God is a good God and the Christian should feel com-

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<sup>108</sup> Willard 307, 308.

<sup>109</sup> Willard 307.

<sup>110</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 297, 298; Mickelsen 358.

<sup>111</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 298.

<sup>112</sup> Willard 321.

<sup>113</sup> Willard 323. See also Kahutschek 91, 92.

fortable and safe in His presence, yet Willard claims that one would be surprised at the responses with which people complete this sentence.<sup>114</sup>

The truth is that one only obeys someone whom he trusts, and no one trusts someone he does not know. The knowledge of who God is must gradually develop in the believer if he is to progress in his faith. The most concrete example of what God is like is found in the life of Jesus. In fact, Jesus told his disciples that they were seeing who God was when they observed him:<sup>115</sup> “Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:9, NRSV). The more one studies the teaching and behavior of Jesus, the more familiar one will be with who God is and how He acts.

Veerman notes that a great emphasis should be placed on the category of the home.<sup>116</sup> These are the categories that will reveal the truest picture of the spiritual condition of each believer. Veerman’s list is extensive but these categories are worth pondering: “Husbands and wives, parents and children, parents and teenagers, children and parents, extended family, the family together, adults at home, marriage, roommates.”<sup>117</sup> He goes on to define more specific categories within the husbands and wife relationship: “love, friendship, sex, conflicts, communication, partnership, commitment, changes, pressures, leadership, in-laws, faithfulness.”<sup>118</sup> For singles living on their own with someone, he offers some example categories such as “conflicts, communication, privacy, partnership, friendship.”<sup>119</sup> For parents relating to their children he suggests the categories of “nurturing, communication, disciplines, conflict, training, goals, and development”<sup>120</sup> as a starting point. Willard would agree with the significance of these categories. He states that “most of our doubts about the goodness of our life concern very specific matters: our parents and family, our body, our marriage and children (or lack thereof), our opportunities in life, our work and calling.”<sup>121</sup> The assessment of these areas will also indicate the student’s worldview and emotions about God.

Another grid for determining possible areas of application is questions of possible action or avoidance. These include the following categories:

1. Is there a sin to avoid or confess?
2. Is there a promise to claim?
3. Is there a command to obey?
4. Is there a warning to note?
5. Is there a truth or doctrine to believe?

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<sup>114</sup> Willard 321.

<sup>115</sup> Dave Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers Inc., 1993) 97.

<sup>116</sup> Veerman 120.

<sup>117</sup> Veerman 120.

<sup>118</sup> Veerman 120.

<sup>119</sup> Veerman 120.

<sup>120</sup> Veerman 120.

<sup>121</sup> Willard 338.

6. Is there an example to follow or avoid?
7. Is there a prayer to imitate?
8. Is there a verse to memorize (that will particularly meet a present need or vulnerability)?<sup>122</sup>

Perhaps this grouping is best summed up in the acrostic: SPECK.

S - Is there a sin for me to avoid?

P - Is there a promise from God for me to claim?

E - Is there an example for me to follow?

C - Is there a command for me to obey?

K - How can this passage increase my knowledge about God or about Jesus Christ?<sup>123</sup>

A final grid offered by Willard are “the seven ‘deadly’ sins.”<sup>124</sup> These are “arrogance, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lasciviousness.”<sup>125</sup> This list hits at the core issues in the lives of all believers.

## Reflection

An important discipline that one can employ to discern areas needing change is reflection. Arnold defines reflection in contrast to meditation. He maintains that reflection is going over the events of one’s life while meditation holds a focus on God and His work.<sup>126</sup> Another area to reflect on is the discrepancy between “espoused theology” and “lived theology.”<sup>127</sup> That is, is there an incongruity between what the believer claims to believe and the reality of how he responds to God in actual circumstances? The discipline of reflection involves “prayer and journaling.”<sup>128</sup> Reflection can be used in conjunction with the grids that have already been presented, or as an exercise where one prays and asks the Holy Spirit to lead him to consider events and experiences of life that reveal the need for transformation.

## Accountability

Arnold touches on an issue that no other author mentions: the need for group Bible study and accountability in determining what areas of the Christian’s life need development. First, he challenges the student to attempt to identify with the weaknesses as well as the strengths of various characters

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<sup>122</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 408.

<sup>123</sup> The Navigators 23.

<sup>124</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, a division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1998) 191.

<sup>125</sup> Willard, *Disciplines* 191.

<sup>126</sup> Arnold 104.

<sup>127</sup> Thompson 88.

<sup>128</sup> Arnold 104.

in the Bible. He goes on to say that this is especially effective in a group setting. Most people do not want to expose their vulnerabilities. This kind of transparency would develop humility and interdependent relationships.<sup>129</sup> He continues that there are numerous areas that one would not even be aware of if all study was done on an individual basis outside of relationship with others.<sup>130</sup>

## How to Apply Biblical Truth

It is not enough to know what needs to be changed. The student needs to make a conscious decision to want to change.<sup>131</sup> Next, one needs a plan for how to change. Without a plan, all one has is good intentions,<sup>132</sup> and all have heard of the adage that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The following are some suggestions for plans to facilitate transformation in worldview and lifestyle.

### Worldview Changes

“You brood of vipers! How can you speak good things, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person brings good things out of a good treasure, and the evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure.” Jesus Christ (Matt. 12:34,35, NRSV)

The process of sanctification involves right doctrine and responses to that doctrine which open up the believer to more revelation. One cannot say dogmatically that the place to start is in changes that affect the heart and mind. Most Christians in Western culture already have far more truth than they have ever applied. But since actions are derived from belief systems, the author believes that it is a safe precedent to have the student first consider areas of thinking and doctrine which need adjustment.

### The Use of Left and Right Brain Hemispheres in Bible Study Processing

One of the challenges in determining what to study is to really understand how a text is meant to touch the believer. In general, books on Bible study approach this determination from a very analytical perspective— from a scientific model.<sup>133</sup> Longman suggests that Bible study should be considered from the perspective of an artist:

Artists are passionate people. They don't study the world with their minds only, but with

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<sup>129</sup> Arnold 90, 91.

<sup>130</sup> Arnold 93.

<sup>131</sup> Hendricks 326.

<sup>132</sup> Hendricks 325.

<sup>133</sup> Longman III 67.

their whole beings. They lean toward intuition rather than strict logic in their thinking. They aren't ruled by an unbending method of study, but they do follow their instincts and experience.<sup>134</sup>

Science seems to confirm that there is a more holistic way of employing intelligence than a solely logical approach of a scientist. Wink refers to studies on brain physiology that demonstrate that the two hemispheres of the brain are specialized in their functions.<sup>135</sup> The left hemisphere, or side, of the brain focuses on “temporal analysis” thinking while the right hemisphere focuses on “spatial synthesis” thinking.<sup>136</sup> Figure 23 illustrates the functions of the two hemispheres, or sides, of the brain.

### Figure 23: Left and Right Brain Functions<sup>137</sup>

#### Left Hemisphere

Dominates the right side of the body

Temporal relations

Linear time sense (chronos)

Thinking: Analytical

Logical

Abstract

Sequential

Cause and Effect

Speech

Grammar

Naming

Math

Music (trained)

#### Right Hemisphere

Dominates the left side of the body

Spatial relations

Simultaneous time sense (kairos)

Thinking: Synthetic

Imaginative

Holistic

A-casual

Metaphorical

Art: Music (untrained)

Drawing

Depth perception

Complex visual patterns

Recognition of faces

Gestures and facial expressions

Gestalts

Shapes, sizes, colors, textures, forms

<sup>134</sup> Longman III 68.

<sup>135</sup> Wink 21.

<sup>136</sup> Wink 23.

<sup>137</sup> Adapted from Wink 24, 25.

## Dreaming

## Meditation

In studies of brains which had disengaged hemispheres, there even appeared to be a hostile relationship between the two sides.<sup>138</sup> Consider the following account:

One male patient whose two hemispheres had been severed was given several wooden shapes to arrange to match a certain design. His attempts with his right hand (left hemisphere) failed repeatedly. His right hemisphere kept trying to help, but whenever it did, the right hand would knock the left hand away from the puzzle. When the researchers suggested that he use both hands, the spatially “smart” left hand had to shove the spatially “dumb” right hand away to keep it from interfering.

The dominantly used side of the brain in Western society is the left side. This is particularly true of men who are encouraged to focus on logic from childhood.<sup>139</sup>

Wink pointed out another study in which elementary grade students were given less math but more art and music. The result was that math scores increased because “when students steeped in art turned to math, they were able to bring more of their brains to the task.”<sup>140</sup>

If it is the case that the two hemispheres do not naturally work together and yet will result in more effective processing if they are used together, how important is it for the student of the Bible to learn to use his whole God-given intellect in his study rather than just the logical functions?

The following are some exercise suggestions to facilitate use of both sides of the brain in processing Biblical truth. Wink warns that so much of Bible study has been done as a purely left brain function that objections will arise to any type of exercise which proposes the use of the right hemisphere. The student is encouraged to explore some of these options despite initial logical objections that might emerge.<sup>141</sup>

- **Paint Pictures.** There are two different kinds of pictures that the student could explore: an objective, realistic scene, or a subjective, personal reaction. The former takes time and can be done meditatively while the latter is quick and expresses impressions. A second phase of this exercise could be for the student to share and explain it to his class.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Wink 23.

<sup>139</sup> Wink 22.

<sup>140</sup> Wink 27.

<sup>141</sup> The following exercises, unless otherwise cited, are found in Wink 114-122.

<sup>142</sup> Wink 114.

- **Role Play.** This involves taking on the role of a character and acting out a scene. It involves trying to immerse oneself in identifying with the feelings and thoughts of the role. Wink warns that the class can become so identified with their roles that they need to be de-rolled. This is done by processing their feelings and what they learned from the experience.<sup>143</sup> Role plays appear to be spontaneous and in response to a lesson or study. This appears to be the same exercise called “psychodrama” by Lincoln. He suggests that it can aid the student in developing the gift of empathy.<sup>144</sup>
- **Mime.** Wink differentiates mime from role playing in that each student can have the opportunity to play each of the roles.<sup>145</sup> With mime, Wink suggests variations in the story if the story is too well known as in the parable of the Good Samaritan.<sup>146</sup>
- **Skits.** Skits are sketches or performances. Groups can determine if the skit will be historically accurate or in a contemporary setting. Either will help the students to process the content.<sup>147</sup>
- **Work With Clay.** The best medium to work with is real clay which will harden and can be kept for further reflection by the student. As an alternative, “Play Doh” can be used but loses the secondary value of further reflection. Wink suggests that the students work with their eyes closed, and later express what the creation means to the class. He states that “often a clay object will seem meaningless until its maker begins to speak; then suddenly it all comes together and the insight dawns.”<sup>148</sup>
- **Repeat Biblical Sentences (Mantras).** This exercise involves a class walking around the room while each one repeats out loud over and over a key phrase or sentence from the biblical text being studied.<sup>149</sup> This exercise appears to be a kind of corporate meditation.
- **Move to Music.** For this exercise, music is chosen which seems to identify the atmosphere of the passage studied. The class is asked to move around the room and spontaneously express actions that they feel corresponds to that passage, or that describe the feelings they are experiencing in response to that passage.<sup>150</sup>
- **Paraphrase the Text.** The text of a passage can be written out in the students’ own words without any theological jargon. This exercise can bring new understanding to sections of Scripture that have become common or routine to the student.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Wink 118, 119.

<sup>144</sup> Lincoln 95.

<sup>145</sup> The author is not sure why this cannot be the case with role playing except that it appears the role playing is done spontaneously and thus cannot be repeated without losing its initial value.

<sup>146</sup> Wink 117.

<sup>147</sup> Wink 119.

<sup>148</sup> Wink 120.

<sup>149</sup> Wink 120, 121.

<sup>150</sup> Wink 121. While Wink maintains this is not dancing, the author sees no reasons why this could not be dance.

<sup>151</sup> Wink 121, 122.

- **Write a Prayer.** This could be a response to a study of a passage or book, or as a petition to God to respond to a need that the text identified.<sup>152</sup>
- **Expressions of Art.** Any other expressions of art such as poetry or music can be used by the student to express feelings after the study of a book.<sup>153</sup>

The student should take time to experiment with these various exercises to determine which are most valuable to aid him in processing Biblical truth.

## Meditation

Meditation is the process of concentrating on and mulling over and pondering a portion of Scripture.<sup>154</sup> Meditation requires focused attention. It is best done in a quiet place where one can prayerfully concentrate.<sup>155</sup> It also takes time. Traina challenges the student to spend at least an hour on a passage or truth.<sup>156</sup>

A synonym of meditate is to ruminate. As a cow has four stomachs and it systematically brings up food periodically to chew on it over and over again, so in Biblical meditation the student continually chews on a passage to derive its spiritual nutrition.<sup>157</sup> Meditation is compared by many to feeding the soul spiritual nourishment.<sup>158</sup> In fact, Andrew Murray speaks of meditation as “that gateway to the heart.”<sup>159</sup> The testimony of these authors is that meditation is the most effective means of receiving the power of the Bible into the believer’s life.<sup>160</sup> Studies by the Minirth-Meier Clinic indicate as well that a practice of meditation over a sustained period of about three years yields not only spiritual maturity, but emotional stability as well.<sup>161</sup>

There are many fine books on the technique of Biblical meditation<sup>162</sup> which the reader may look to for further instruction in this discipline. The following story, however, may serve as an inspiration for some to incorporate meditation into their Bible study. An elderly Christian leader related this incident to Campbell MacAlpine concerning a speaker he had heard during his own youth.

Sitting on the platform was a man in a rough suit, with his head leaning to one side, and his mouth partially open. He asked a friend, ‘Who is that?’ He was told that he was the speaker;

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<sup>152</sup> Wink 122.

<sup>153</sup> Graham 47.

<sup>154</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 299.

<sup>155</sup> Willard 177.

<sup>156</sup> Traina 188; see also Willard 177.

<sup>157</sup> Jim Downing, *Meditation: The Bible Tells You How* (Colorado: Navpress, 1982) 26, 27.

<sup>158</sup> Downing 51; Smith, *Hooked* 52; Campbell McAlpine, *The Practice of Biblical Meditation* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981) 87.

<sup>159</sup> Andrew Murray, *Abide in Christ* (Ohio: Barbour and Company, Inc., 1992) 14.

<sup>160</sup> Smith, *Hooked* 52.

<sup>161</sup> Smith, *Hooked* 49-50.

<sup>162</sup> Such as McAlpine and Smith, *Hooked*.

a farm labourer who had left school at the age of twelve. So he said he sat back, waiting for the worst! After the hymn singing and prayer, this big man stood up, came forward to the rostrum, stretched his arms out and quoted the verse of a hymn:

O Christ what burdens bowed thy head,  
My sin was laid on thee,  
Thou sufferest in the sinners stead,  
Took all the guilt for me.

He said suddenly the place was filled with the presence of the Lord, then he opened the Bible and give [*sic*] us honey out of the rock.<sup>163</sup>

Meditation is a powerful means of appropriating spiritual truth. It is perhaps the most effective discipline for worldview changes.

### ***Lectio Divina***

Similar to meditation is a form a of meditative reading dating back to the Middle Ages known as *lectio divina*.<sup>164</sup> Briefly explained, *lectio divina* is defined “as a form of reading directed by thinking.”<sup>165</sup> This is a prayerful form of reading the Bible text. Sire notes a number of elements that are included in this type of reading. It is practiced using a predetermined passage or book of the Bible to be read over a set period of time such as a month of study. It requires a quiet and consistent place to practice. A passage is read outloud, and repeatedly. Prayer and great focus must be given to these readings. This is considered “*Entering the world of the text.*”<sup>166</sup> Application is an expected outcome of this style of reading for “it is how we live in the ordinary world that demonstrates whether we have lived in the world of Scripture.”<sup>167</sup> The expectancy is that prayerful, concentrated reading of the Scriptures will allow God to speak to the Christian’s heart and mind.<sup>168</sup>

### **Memorization**

One of the disciplines that will aid meditation is to have Scriptures committed to memory so that they can be processed continually,<sup>169</sup> and so that the Holy Spirit can bring them to remembrance at an opportune time.

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<sup>163</sup> McAlpine 166, 167.

<sup>164</sup> Sire, *Habits* 152.

<sup>165</sup> Sire, *Habits* 152.

<sup>166</sup> Sire, *Habits* 157.

<sup>167</sup> Sire, *Habits* 157.

<sup>168</sup> Sire, *Habits* 151-159.

<sup>169</sup> Kaiser and Silva 170.

## Lifestyle Changes

Even if the worldview of the believer is transformed, there is still the need to implement plans to bring about lasting changes in lifestyle. A plan needs to be concrete. It has to have steps which are measurable and achievable.<sup>170</sup> Veerman suggests that the student consider two kinds of plans: intentional and conditional.<sup>171</sup>

Intentional plans involve a number of incremental steps that can be taken in order to achieve a goal.<sup>172</sup> Veerman presents the analogy of a set of stairs. The stairs represent steps that need to be taken to achieve the goal.<sup>173</sup> He gives the helpful advice of an intentional plan having “the statement ‘I will’ followed by a To Do list in chronological order.”<sup>174</sup> For instance, if one realizes that he does not have enough intimacy with God, he could have a statement: “I plan to spend more time with God.”

1. I will purchase a schedule for reading the Bible through in a year.
2. I will reserve a consistent time in my schedule to read through the Bible and pray for fifteen minutes, five days a week.
3. I will study through a the Gospel of Luke every Saturday morning from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m..

Perhaps a father realizes that he is not spending enough time with his son. It is not enough to have a goal of spending more time—that is merely a good intention. A more concrete goal would be: “I plan to spend five quality hours a week.” The term, quality, needs to be defined. It could be times where total focused attention is given to the son. Then weekly activities could be scheduled to achieve that kind of quality time.

1. I will take my son out to breakfast once a week for one hour.
2. I will read the Bible to him at bedtime for thirty minutes, four days a week.
3. I will play catch with him on Friday afternoon for two hours.

Whatever the goal, it must have a plan that may be measured and achieved. For those who would like to study more on how to set up goals and plans, Veerman’s book is a great starting place as well *Strategy For Living* by Dayton and Engstrom.<sup>175</sup>

Conditional plans, rather than a goal of what one wants to achieve, are plans if certain situations arise.<sup>176</sup> A conditional plan could be in response to a vulnerability. While the Bible promises that “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it,”<sup>177</sup> it is always better to have a pre-determined escape route before entering a temptation.<sup>178</sup> For instance, if one has a problem with over-

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<sup>170</sup> Anthony Bash, *How to Study the New Testament: Six Simple Steps* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988) 26; Hendricks 327.

<sup>171</sup> Veerman 57.

<sup>172</sup> Veerman 57.

<sup>173</sup> Veerman 109.

<sup>174</sup> Veerman 57.

<sup>175</sup> Edward R. Dayton and Ted W. Engstrom, *Strategy for Living: How to Make the Best Use of Your Time and Abilities* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1982).

<sup>176</sup> Veerman 56.

<sup>177</sup> 1 Cor. 10:13 NRSV

<sup>178</sup> Veerman 108.

eating or drinking alcohol, then a conditional plan could be the steps that one will take if offered food or a drink. It could include a statement such as “If I am tempted with alcohol, I will: 1. Humbly admit I have a problem in this area. 2. Leave the setting immediately. 3. Call a friend I am accountable to.

Two strategies to ensure progress in application are to have accountable relationships and to evaluate progress.<sup>179</sup> Both of these have been mentioned already and are part of a cycle of growth. Both accountable relationships and times of evaluation not only initially alert the believer to areas where growth is needed, but also to help him to see progress or a lack of it. Whether a formal or informal relationship with an individual, or with a small group, relationships will help the individual to stay with a plan.<sup>180</sup>

Figures 24 and 25, the Johari Window,<sup>181</sup> help to demonstrate how growth develops among those who maintain transparent relationships within a group. Figure 24 demonstrates four areas of each person’s life: 1. Shared: These are areas of shared information. Each person is self-aware, and is willing to share this information with others as well. 2. Feedback: These are areas that others can perceive but are blind spots to the person. These are areas in which the individual needs feedback from others for awareness in order to grow and change. 3. Hidden: Information in these areas is known by the individual, but he does not feel safe to share them with others. Only by sharing from these areas will others gain understanding about these categories of the person’s life. 4. Unknown: There are areas of each person’s life in which neither the person nor others have understanding.

Figure 25 demonstrates what happens as an individual has an accountable relationship with a group. As an individual gets feedback from others, his awareness of himself expands. Therefore his “1. Shared” area enlarges, and the areas needing “2. Feedback” decreases. As his confidence in the group progresses, he shares more of his “3. Hidden areas.” The more that he reveals his hidden areas, the more others know of him which results in further feedback. As he shares his “3. Hidden” areas and others give “2. Feedback,” the combined disclosures result in greater understanding of the areas that were originally “4. Unknown.” The result is a man or woman of God who is walking in greater and greater light and understanding.

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<sup>179</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 328, 329; Veerman 116.

<sup>180</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 328, 239; Veerman 116.

<sup>181</sup> Gary Sweeten, *Apples of Gold II: Speaking the Truth in Love* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Christian Information Committee, 1987) 37.

**Figure 24: Johari Window: Trust & Feedback Loop<sup>182</sup>**

	Known to Self	Not Known to Self
Known to Others	1. Shared	2. Feedback
Not Known to Others	3. Hidden	4. Unkown

**Figure 25: Johari Window: Self-Awareness Gained from Transparent Relationships**

	Known to Self	Not Known to Self
Known to Others	1. Shared	2. Feed-Feedback
Not Known to Others	3. Hidden	4. Un-known

A regular time of journaling will help the student to monitor his progress, and occasional extended times alone to reflect and evaluate growth and new areas the Lord is addressing will help to ensure continued improvement.

## Prayer

Many helpful skills and exercises have been suggested. The final word on application, as in all other phases of Bible study, is an attitude of dependent prayer. The Scriptures are all God-breathed, and it is only God Himself who can truly bring forth change in the Christian by His Spirit. As Jesus opened the minds of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the prayer of each one should be that his mind would be opened by the Living God of the Scriptures to breath His life into every session of study, and that each one would respond in loving obedience to the revelation graciously given by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>182</sup> Adapted from Gary Sweeten, *Apples of Gold II: Speaking the Truth in Love*, 37.

## Chapter 5 | Conclusions

There are several contributions that the Inductive Bible Study movement has made to the field of Bible study. First, it encourages students to survey a book as a literary unit before analyzing its parts. This literary approach to the Bible recognizes that good literature, like other art mediums, often employ form or design as well as content to convey their message. These designs are expressed as laws of compositions. A corollary contribution that this movement has made to Bible study is the horizontal chart. Horizontals serve both as a means of discovering the relationship between form and content, and as a way of graphically portraying it.

Another contribution of the Inductive Bible Study movement is to encourage layman that they do not need to rely on experts in order to understand the Bible. Figure 1 demonstrated the success of this movement to develop training for layman. Many streams of Bible study can be traced back to Biblical Seminary. White wanted the student to be able to teach anywhere with just a Bible and a dictionary. Not only has this movement encouraged the widespread study of the Scriptures, but the inductive process encourages independent thinking and therefore builds the intellectual foundations of those who study the Bible inductively.

A third category of benefit that the Inductive Bible Study movement has brought to the Church is that this method of study begins with inductive observation of the text and not doctrinal or denominational presuppositions. Therefore it fosters unity around which many of different denominational backgrounds can gather to study the Scriptures together.

The desire to make Bible study available and inclusive for the layman also produced some weaknesses in the Inductive Bible Study movement. As Traina observed, this movement is inadequate in training the student in hermeneutics. Those involved in inductive Bible study therefore tend to interpret intuitively based on their observations without applying conscious hermeneutical principles. This lack of training was presumably part of the movement's attempt to keep inductive study from becoming too complex and thus discouraging those who are first attempting to interpret the Scriptures. While this approach does open much of the Bible to the novice, further training is advisable for those who want to continue their growth in the Scriptures.

This is especially true in the postmodern culture of the Western world where most Christians are confronted with relativism daily. The student will also need competence in special hermeneutics in order to study genres with a conscious understanding of the implications for approaching the text with varying presuppositions.

Finally, one needs to be sure that Bible study results in transformation. As a discipline, Bible study tends to be dominated by analytical, left brain activity. Those who study the Word need to be challenged to prayerfully include all of man's God-given brain functions (i.e., right and left brain

hemispheres) in order to fully process and appropriate truth. Then both the emotions and the will need to be engaged in order to take these truths and implement them to bring about life-changing transformation.

# Appendix 1: The Use of the Term Re-Creation in the Inductive Bible Study Method

Re-creation is a term used by many of those affiliated in some manner with Biblical Seminary.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty is that they discuss different aspects of the term, but don't clearly define it. The greatest scope of this term is given by Jensen. It involves:

1. Rediscovery of what the authors—human and divine—intended to say.
2. Recognition of what the authors *meant*.
3. Receptivity to the divine message by a submission and obedient spirit.<sup>2</sup>

From these points, one would assume that re-creation encompasses the Bible study process since it is concerned with the three stages of Bible study: observing what is in the text; interpreting what the author meant, and applying the determined truth. Other statements concerning re-creation lead to the conclusion that Re-creation is primarily focused on how observation and interpretation are involved in the analytical phase. Eberhardt makes a statement which implies the intent to combine the observation and interpretation stages:

The aim of interpretation, then, is re-creation of the author's intentions, and the first requirement, if this goal is to be achieved, is absolute mastery of the form and content of the record or composition.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the final goal is to interpret and understand the author's message, but an integral part of that process is to fully grasp the message and the medium of how it is presented. But re-creation also transitions into the synthesis phase and application of Scripture.

The first aspect of Re-creation has to do with observation in the analytical phase and how to record material and layout of the text.<sup>4</sup> Jensen was the only source available for this function of re-creation. He calls it "textual re-creating."<sup>5</sup> Textual re-creation is the process of layout of observations on a vertical chart in such a manner that it makes the author's message clearer.<sup>6</sup> Terms such as "re-casting"<sup>7</sup> and "pictorialize"<sup>8</sup> are used to describe the intent to produce a more visually clear represen-

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<sup>1</sup> For example Graham thesis, Arnold, Eberhardt, Hendricks, Jensen, Kuist, Lincoln, Palmer, Traina, and Wald

<sup>2</sup> Jensen 48.

<sup>3</sup> Eberhardt 184.

<sup>4</sup> McQuilkin, while this author has not seen his name associated with the inductive Bible study movement, does use the term, "textual recreation," in relationship to diagramming. McQuilkin 145.

<sup>5</sup> Jensen 119-133.

<sup>6</sup> The SBS program also advocates the use of vertical charts for this purpose, but they do not use this terminology.

<sup>7</sup> Jensen 132.

<sup>8</sup> Jensen 127.

tation of the text. Proportion,<sup>9</sup> emphasis,<sup>10</sup> and graphic symbols<sup>11</sup> are all incorporated into the chart.

Most of those authors who include a discussion on re-creation do so under the category of interpretation. Traina states that “*the problem of interpretation is the problem of re-creation.*”<sup>12</sup> The premise behind this problem of interpretation is that for the student to truly grasp the meaning and significance of a book or passage, he must identify with their experience and circumstances. The concept repeated is that the student must “relive their experiences”<sup>13</sup> and “make it excitingly contemporary.”<sup>14</sup> Empathy for the characters<sup>15</sup> is developed by the sanctified use of the imagination.<sup>16</sup> The student must seek to put himself into the situation of or “crawl into the skin’ of”<sup>17</sup> the characters by identifying with them.<sup>18</sup> This involves the use of the imagination concerning sight, sound, smell, touch, emotions and thoughts.<sup>19</sup> This obviously is a tremendous help to discerning the atmosphere of a passage.<sup>20</sup> Traina adds that a perception of atmosphere is critical in order to attain “vital contact with its author’s mind and spirit.”<sup>21</sup>

But the motive here is beyond atmosphere. The student needs to recognize that the characters in the Bible were real people, and man’s nature is still the same today.<sup>22</sup> The Scriptures are trying to convey their experience with God.<sup>23</sup> In the same way that there was an encounter with God in the text, the reader needs to try to perceive and gain the value of that experience for today.

The illustration used by W. W. White and others of the Inductive Bible Study movement to depict this kind of interpretation was the musical interpretation of the conductor, Arturo Toscanini:<sup>24</sup>

While rehearsing Beethoven's ‘Ninth Symphony’, the musicians responded with a particular sensitivity to Toscanini's every wish and desire. What resulted was a performance that moved the men of the orchestra to a spontaneous ovation. They rose to their feet and cheered the little man who had just given them such a new and wonderful insight into the music. Desperately, Toscanini tried to stop them, waving his arms wildly, shouting to them. Finally when the ovation subsided, he said in a broken voice: ‘It isn’t me men - it’s Beethoven.’<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Jensen 133.

<sup>10</sup> Jensen 133.

<sup>11</sup> Jensen 127.

<sup>12</sup> Traina 93.

<sup>13</sup> Traina 93, 188; Lincoln 95.

<sup>14</sup> Lincoln 94, see also 83.

<sup>15</sup> Traina 93; Lincoln 95.

<sup>16</sup> Traina 93, 188; Palmer 6; Wald 35; Hendricks and Hendricks 39.

<sup>17</sup> Sproul 65.

<sup>18</sup> Arnold 56.

<sup>19</sup> Traina 93; Arnold 57; Palmer 6; Wald 35; Lincoln 97; Hendricks 39.

<sup>20</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 39; Gettys 47.

<sup>21</sup> Traina 71.

<sup>22</sup> Lincoln 97.

<sup>23</sup> Traina 155.

<sup>24</sup> Traina 94, 95; Eberhardt 184; Graham 184.

<sup>25</sup> D. Ewen, *The Story of Arturo Toscanini*, quoted by Traina 94, 95.

The process of empathizing is not achieved through the imagination alone. Eberhardt reminds the student that it also takes prayer for the process of re-creation to become perception.<sup>26</sup> Arnold calls it “listening.”<sup>27</sup> Thus the process of re-creation should produce a spiritual congruence with the author and his message.<sup>28</sup> Traina maintains that this empathizing results in “a mental and spiritual transference to Scriptural situations.”<sup>29</sup>

Application is also implied in the teaching on re-creation. This new awareness cannot end just with intellectual understanding. The ultimate test of a revelation of Scripture is to live it out. Kuist states that “Scriptures come alive for [the student] with real urgency as the word of the loving God only as they function *in* him.”<sup>30</sup> He goes on to tell the story of a Chinese student who was studying the Bible but not content with his Christian life until he began living out the truth he had learned. The student’s comment was: “I have found new light in Holy Scripture since I began reading and behaving it!”<sup>31</sup> Therefore the implication of re-creation is that the realities of the Scriptures from re-creation of the text will naturally lead to living it out. Gettys suggests this in his statement that the function of Bible study is “to re-create in believers the kind of experience and character described and commended in the Old and New Testaments.”<sup>32</sup> Therefore this concept of re-creation appears to include a challenge to the student not to allow the pursuit of Biblical truth to become a sterile intellectual exercise.

While these authors advocate re-creation and the use of a sanctified imagination, they are not suggesting that this is a license to create new meaning. Kuist acknowledges the need for rigorous critical study prior to re-creation. Historical and cultural study gives the student the foundations of knowledge needed to understand the Scriptures.<sup>33</sup> This is the logical study of the text. But he maintains that a psychological study through re-creation is also necessary.<sup>34</sup> Therefore the relationship between the two is that the critical study grounds the student in facts and then re-creative study breathes life into it.

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<sup>26</sup> Eberhardt.

<sup>27</sup> Arnold 57.

<sup>28</sup> Arnold 200.

<sup>29</sup> Traina 188.

<sup>30</sup> Kuist 59.

<sup>31</sup> Kuist 60.

<sup>32</sup> Gettys 17.

<sup>33</sup> Kuist 59.

<sup>34</sup> Kuist 59.

## Appendix 2: A Grammar Overview

This discussion needs to be prefaced by underscoring that this thesis is written for those who only know the English language. The treatment of grammar here is limited to the English language. There are numerous significant differences in Greek and Hebrew grammar which would benefit the student but are beyond the scope of this thesis.

The most important level of structure for studying passages in the analytical phase is the clause.<sup>1</sup> This is because, according to Traina, there is not enough context to study terms or phrases on their own. There are two kinds of clauses: independent and dependent. The independent clause, or sentence, is defined as: “A grammatically independent unit of expression.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, it is a group of words that can stand by itself and make sense. The most basic sentence has two parts: a subject and a predicate<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> The subject does the action or takes the action (in the case of a passive verb). The predicate has to have a verb, but can include more than a verb. The dependent clause has a subject and verb, but cannot stand alone or independently make sense.

All other parts of a sentence are attached in some way to the independent clause. The ability to accurately observe and analyze sentences is contingent on understanding how the levels of structure function in a sentence. In this section the function of words, phrases, and subordinate clauses will be considered.

### The Function of Words: The Eight Parts of Speech

All words can be categorized in one of eight parts of speech: verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, interjections, prepositions, and conjunctions.<sup>5</sup>

Before considering all the parts of speech that words are categorized into, it is helpful to observe that words can be divided into two major categories. The first category is “words that express the great essentials of human thought, as objects, qualities, or actions.”<sup>6</sup> These are content words. The kinds of words that compose this category are nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and interjections.<sup>7</sup> This is the category which has been referred to as “terms.” Thus it is from nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and interjections that repeated and key words are ferreted out.

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<sup>1</sup> Traina 131.

<sup>2</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 572.

<sup>3</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 3.

<sup>4</sup> In the case of a command where the subject, “you,” is understood, the sentence can be only one word such as “Look!”

<sup>5</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 12.

<sup>6</sup> James C. Fernald, *Connectives of English Speech* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1904) vii.

<sup>7</sup> Because by definition interjections express emotion [Webster 994], in broad categories this author thinks they are content words.

There is a second category which are necessary in order for content words to communicate meaning. These are “thought-connectors,”<sup>8</sup> or connectives, which show relationship between content words.<sup>9</sup> Hendricks likens connectives to the coupling pins that connect the cars of a train.<sup>10</sup> The cars carry the content, but it is critical that the pins link them in order for them to stay together and make sense. Prepositions and conjunctions are both in the category of connectives.<sup>11</sup> It will be helpful for the student to keep this broad distinction in mind as a helpful handle on the purpose of most grammatical categories.

## Content Words

Since the vast majority of terms fall under the category of content words, this is the first group that will be considered.

### Verbs

A thesis could be written on the characteristics and function of verbs. The purpose here is to give the student a basic understanding of the characteristics and function of verbs.

A verb shows “action, occurrence, or existence (state of being).”<sup>12</sup> Two important terms for identifying verbs are *transitive* and *intransitive*.<sup>13</sup> Transitive verbs take an object. For example, “The boy threw the ball”, where the ball is the object. An intransitive verb doesn’t need an object for complete action.<sup>14</sup> For example, “The boy sits.”<sup>15</sup>

Verbs that show existence are some form of the verb: “to be.”<sup>16</sup> These verbs link the subject to the predicate. There are two ways that a “being” verb links a subject to the predicate. The first is a predicate nominative or predicate noun.<sup>17</sup> In this case the predicate is another noun or pronoun which could be exchanged for the subject. For example: The sheep is an animal. The second way a “being” verb shows a relationship between the subject and predicate is a predicate adjective. In this case the predicate is an adjective which describes the subject, such as: “The sheep is black.”

There are some aspects of verbs that the student needs to be aware of: tense, mood, voice, and

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<sup>8</sup> Fernald vii.

<sup>9</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 211.

<sup>10</sup> Hendricks and Hendricks 128.

<sup>11</sup> In addition, there is another type of connective, the relative pronoun. While not part of speech, the relative pronoun will hold a significant role in the discussion on subordinate clauses.

<sup>12</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 574.

<sup>13</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 574.

<sup>14</sup> Webster 1001.

<sup>15</sup> This author recognizes that there are also link verbs [cf. John C. Hodges, and others 563.]. The purpose here is not to demonstrate every function of verbs, but to give enough awareness that the student can identify general functions of verbs and employ basic diagramming.

<sup>16</sup> This is a generalization. There are other words, such as “become,” which also show existence.

<sup>17</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 569.

person and number.

## Verb Tense

Tense refers to time element. Does the verb express some degree of present, past, or future activity?<sup>18</sup> While the student needs to be aware of verb tenses, he must also realize that without a mastery of the original languages he will need the help of scholars to grasp the significance of certain verb tenses. For example, Greek verb tenses indicate not only time element but also “*the kind of action*.”<sup>19</sup> The Greek can show if an action is for one time or continuous. Osborne warns the novice to be careful not make ignorant assumptions about Greek tenses. He cites the example of those who always refer to the aorist as being the ‘once-for-all’ tense.”<sup>20</sup>

## Verb Mood

There are three moods that the student needs to be aware of.<sup>21</sup> They are the indicative, subjunctive, and imperative. The indicative mood refers to what is actual or real.<sup>22</sup> It deals with “declarative statements or questions.”<sup>23</sup> “I go to the store” and “Are you going to the store?” indicate indicative mood. Subjunctive mood indicates potential action or possibilities.<sup>24</sup> This mood is used in hypothetical or conditional discussions. Examples of the subjunctive mood are: “I would like to go to the store” and “If you go to the store....” The imperative mood is used to express commands. Examples of the imperative mood are: “Go to the store!” and “Let him go to the store!”

## Verb Voice

For verbs which are transitive, there are two potential voices: active and passive. In the active voice, the subject does or acts out the action.<sup>25</sup> An example is: “The boy threw the ball.” In the passive voice, the subject is acted upon or receives the action.<sup>26</sup> An example is: “The ball was thrown to the boy.” A clue to when a transitive verb is used in the passive voice is that a helping word, a form of the verb “to be” is added before the verb.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> English grammar has a present, past, future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect tense. John C. Hodges and others 75.

<sup>19</sup> Mickelsen 132.

<sup>20</sup> Osborne 51.

<sup>21</sup> Infinitives and participles will be handled under the topic of verbals.

<sup>22</sup> Mickelsen 133.

<sup>23</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 564.

<sup>24</sup> Lincoln 48; Mickelsen 133.

<sup>25</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 575; Lincoln 49.

<sup>26</sup> Lincoln 49.

<sup>27</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 7.

## Person and Number

Person refers to the form of verbs and pronouns which indicate who is speaking:

I – first person; the person is speaking.

You – second person; the person is being spoken to.

He or She – the person is being spoken about.

Number refers to whether the person being spoken to is singular or plural.<sup>28</sup>

I, We

You (singular or plural)

He, (She, It,) They

## Nouns

Nouns are the “part of speech that names a person, place, thing, idea, animal, quality, or action.”<sup>29</sup> In English, the clue to noun is that it usually follows the indefinite article (*a* or *an*) or the definite article (*the*).

## Pronouns

Pronouns are used in place of nouns. The person changes in pronouns as well as verbs. The following are pronouns:<sup>30</sup>

### Singular

I, me, my, mine, myself

you, your, yours, yourself

he, him, his; she, her, hers; it, its

this, that

who, whom, whose; which, one, anyone

### Plural

we, us, our

you, your, yours, yourselves

they, them, their

these those

ones, everybody

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<sup>28</sup> One needs to be aware that there are a number of gender-neutral translations that have been made. These include the New Revised Standard Version, the New Living Translation, the New Century Version, the Contemporary English Version, and the British version of the New International Version. [Grudem 1] These translations have been created to remove “masculine oriented language.” [Grudem 1] Grudem’s examination of the NRSV notes these changes have removed thousands of references to “masculine words ‘he,’ ‘man,’ ‘father,’ ‘son,’ ‘brother.’” Grudem also finds it interesting that the translators of the NRSV do not even claim their gender-neutral rendition is more accurate. [Grudem 1] Rather, Grudem notes that thousands of these changes should raise apprehension among the evangelical community. The student needs to be aware of this issue when using one of these translations. [Grudem 1] Wayne Grudem, “What’s Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations?” The Council of Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: Helping the Church Deal Biblically with Gender Issues; <http://www.cbmw.org/resources/articles/genderneutral.html>.

<sup>29</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 565.

<sup>30</sup> Adapted from John C. Hodges, and others 13.

## Adjectives

Adjectives modify or give further definition to nouns and pronouns.<sup>31</sup> They describe “who, whose, which, what kind of, how much.”<sup>32</sup> For example, “Look at the car” is further defined by “Look at the green car.”

## Adverbs

Adverbs modify or give further definition to “verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.”<sup>33</sup> They indicate “how, when, where, what is the result, why (what is the purpose).”<sup>34</sup> For example, “Look at the green car” is further defined by “Quickly look at the green car.” It is a helpful to know remember that adjectives with an “ly” ending are adverbs: “quick” becomes “quickly.”

## Connective Words

The last two categories of parts of speech fit under the broader heading of connectives.

## Interjections

An interjection, or emphatic,<sup>35</sup> is an exclamation.<sup>36</sup> A strong interjection is punctuated by an exclamation point (such as “Wow!”). A milder interjection is punctuated by a comma (such as in John 13:21: “Very truly, I tell you...” NRSV).<sup>37</sup> Some interjections are:<sup>38</sup>

for example	namely
indeed	indeed
in fact	only

## Prepositions

Prepositions show relationship.<sup>39</sup> Prepositions are always found in phrases. They have an object, and they show a relationship between that object and some other word in the sentence.<sup>40</sup> That relationship can define “space, time, accompaniment, cause, or manner” between the object of the preposition and a verb, noun, or adjective in the sentence.<sup>41</sup> The purpose of prepositions, which will be

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<sup>31</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 14.

<sup>32</sup> Osborne and Woodward 56.

<sup>33</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 14.

<sup>34</sup> Osborne and Woodward 56.

<sup>35</sup> Klien, Blomberg, and Hubbard 212.

<sup>36</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 16.

<sup>37</sup> This thesis is using Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard’s 212 and McQuilkin’s 142 classification of emphatics as connectives.

<sup>38</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 212.

<sup>39</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (The United States of America: The Macmillan Company, 1951) 40.

<sup>40</sup> Machen 40; John C. Hodges and others 15.

<sup>41</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 15; Webster 1527.

discussed in more detail under phrases, is usually to function as an adjective or adverb.<sup>42</sup> The following list of prepositions<sup>43</sup> has been categorized to give an idea of the percentage of prepositions available for various relationships:

### Spatial Relationships

above	below	inside	through
across	beneath	into	throughout
after	beside	near	to
along	between	off	toward
among	beyond	on	under
around	by	onto	underneath
at	down	out	up
before	from	outside	upon
behind	in	over	within

### Temporal Relationships

during	since	until
past	till	

### Accompaniment, Cause, and Manner Relationships

about	but	except	like	with
against	concerning	excepting	of	without
besides	despite	for	regarding	

These lists show that a high percentage of single prepositions are used to express spatial relationships. Figure 25 will aid the student to see graphically the kind of spatial relationships that prepositions express.

### Phrasal Prepositions

In addition to single word prepositions, there are also “phrasal prepositions”<sup>44</sup> that the student should be aware of:<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 20.

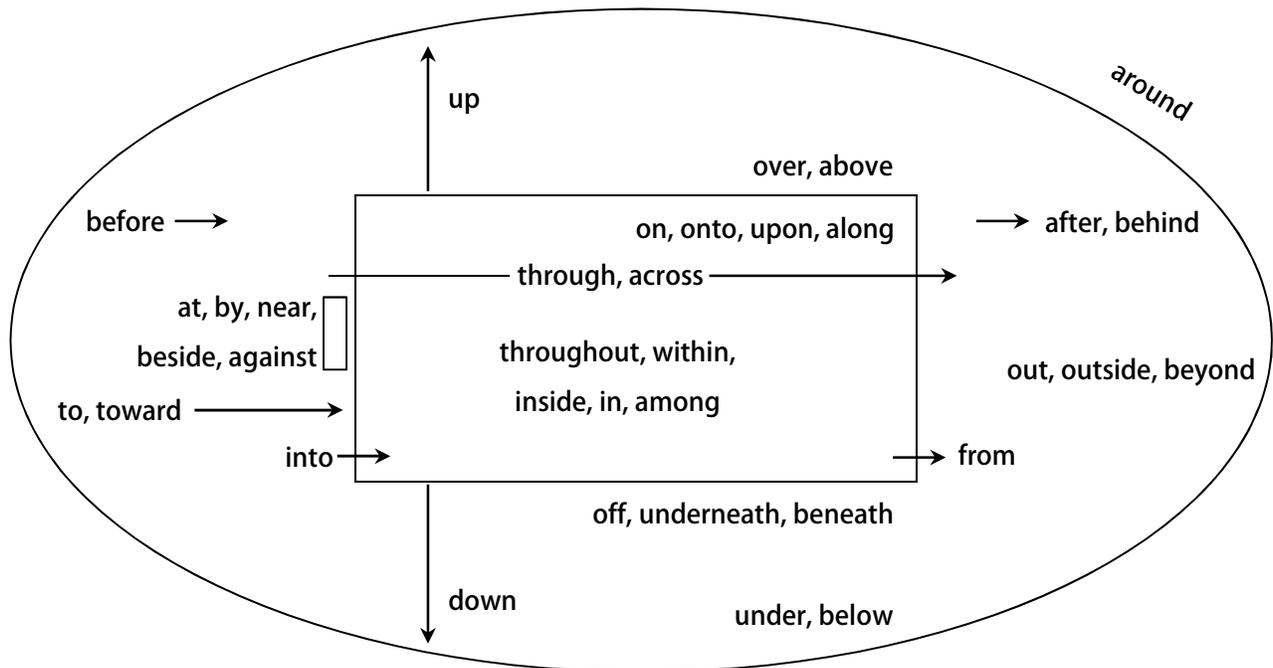
<sup>43</sup> Taken from John C. Hodges, and others 15.

<sup>44</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 15.

<sup>45</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 15.

according to	by means of	in front of	on account of
along with	by reason of	in lieu of	out of
apart from	by way of	in place of	up to
as for	due to	in regard to	with reference to
as regards	except for	in regard to	with regard to
as to	in addition to	in spite of	with respect to
because of	in case of	instead of	with the exception of

Figure 26: Spatial Relationships of Prepositions<sup>46</sup>



## Conjunctions

The final category of parts of speech is conjunctions. Conjunctions by definition are connectors.<sup>47</sup> They connect “words, phrases, clauses, or sentences.”<sup>48</sup> There are two kinds of conjunctions: “coordinating conjunctions” and “subordinating conjunctions.” Coordinating conjunctions connect parts of a sentence — independent clauses, dependent clauses, phrases, and words — that belong to the same structural level. Subordinating conjunctions link dependent clauses to independent clauses (sentences).<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Adapted from Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996) 358; and Bruce M. Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek* (Princeton, New Jersey: Published by the Author, Distributed by the Theological Book Agency, 1977) 80.

<sup>47</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 15; Webster 431.

<sup>48</sup> Webster 431.

<sup>49</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 16.

## Coordinating Conjunctions

The following is a list of coordinating conjunctions:<sup>50</sup>

also	nor	so
and	for	yet
but	or	

## Correlative Conjunctions

There is an additional category of conjunctions that connect part of a sentence of equal value known as “correlative conjunctions.” Correlatives are pairs of words where the second one is a coordinating conjunction.<sup>51</sup> The following is a list of correlative conjunctions.<sup>52</sup>

both – and	not only – but also
either – or	whether – or
neither – nor	

## Subordinating Conjunctions

The following list of subordinating conjunctions has been categorized to help the student see how they function in a sentence. It is by no means an exhaustive list, nor does it include every possible way of categorizing these conjunctions.<sup>53</sup> Note as well that certain words which function as prepositions can also function as subordinating conjunctions.

Temporal	Contrast	Concession	Comparison
after	although	although	as [far/soon]
before	even if	while	as
till	even though	in spite of	as if
until	except	though	as though
when	however	unless	how
whenever	nevertheless		now that
while	although		
as	much more		
	no matter how		
	notwithstanding		

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<sup>50</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 16.

<sup>51</sup> Webster 455.

<sup>52</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 16.

<sup>53</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 22; Fernald 195-271; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 212; McQuilkin 142.

Conditional <sup>54</sup>	Reason	Purpose	Result <sup>55</sup>
if	because	so that	so
inasmuch	for as much	in order that	so that
in case [that]	since	that <sup>56</sup>	as a result
insofar as	therefore		hence
in that	whereas		thus
lest	for		then
once	inasmuch		consequently
provided [that]	as		
supposing [that]			
whether			
unless			

## Punctuation

It needs to be mentioned that there is no punctuation in the original languages. In fact, there were no spaces between the words in the original manuscripts. Parchments were too costly to leave spaces. Therefore any punctuation is the addition of an editor.<sup>57</sup> Many issues turn on the varying use of punctuation in the text.<sup>58</sup> For instance, the removal of a comma after Ephesians 4:11 would put the burden of equipping the saints solely on pastors and teachers rather than including apostles, prophets, and evangelists in the equipping process.

Traina adds an additional implication concerning the lack of punctuation. Different translators determine where sentences begin and end “by rather arbitrary means.”<sup>59</sup> That is why he advocates the paragraph as the basic structural unit.<sup>60</sup> Dr. Feaver even cites an example in which the even the paragraph division is arbitrary:

A notorious case involves paragraphs. (The problem goes back to the publishers of the Greek text, such as the CBS.) In Ephesians 5:18 and following, all translations mark a paragraph break (in fact, mark a section break!) between verses 21 and 22. This conceals the fact that the ‘submit’ in verse 22 is missing (though properly supplied from verse 21).<sup>61</sup>

Thus the publishers of the Greek text make a section break at verse twenty-two but it is all part

<sup>54</sup> Mickelsen points out that these are common in the New Testament 151.

<sup>55</sup> Stein points out the close relationship between Purpose and Result: Purpose refers to intent while result refers to outcome. If a desired purpose is achieved, there will be a given result 181.

<sup>56</sup> *That* can also be used to denote fact. Fernald 242.

<sup>57</sup> Feaver interview.

<sup>58</sup> Feaver interview.

<sup>59</sup> Traina 40.

<sup>60</sup> This does not resolve the issue of the meaning of sentences where grammar varies.

<sup>61</sup> This is a comment on the author’s thesis made by Dr. Douglas Feaver and explained during the author’s interview with Dr. Feaver.

of a single sentence. For the student who is only aware of English grammar, he will have to refer to commentaries for the insights of scholars who have studied the original languages.

## Phrases<sup>62</sup>

The next level of structure above words is phrases. A phrase can be defined as “A sequence of grammatically related words without a subject and a predicate.”<sup>63</sup> A key to identifying a phrase is that it will not have a verb. It might have a verb form, but it won’t function as a verb. (See “Verbals” below.) There are three kinds of phrases that are important to be aware of: appositive, prepositional, and verbal.

### Appositive Phrases

An appositive is a phrase which comes right after a noun, set apart by commas, and it adds additional information or identity to that noun.<sup>64</sup> Scripture has many appositives.

Example: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.” James 1:1 (NRSV) The underlined appositive tells the reader more information about who James is.

### Prepositional Phrases

As already mentioned, prepositions always are found in a sentence in a phrase. The function of prepositional phrase is usually as an adjective or adverb.<sup>65</sup> Thus the prepositional phrase functions as one of two parts of speech already discussed.

Example: “Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest.” (Acts 9:1 NRSV)

- a. Prepositional phrase as an adverbial modifier: against the disciples — describes how he was “breathing threats and murder.”
- b. Prepositional phrase as an adjectival modifier: of the Lord — describes whose disciples were threatened.

### Verbal Phrases: Gerunds, Participles, and Infinitives

Verbals are verb forms which function as some other part of speech. When verbs which have

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<sup>62</sup> For this discussion neither noun nor verb phrases will be considered because all students will intuitively understand their purpose and it will not aid the purpose of showing the development of a sentence.

<sup>63</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 568.

<sup>64</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 19.

<sup>65</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 20.

“ing” and “ed” endings function as verbs, they have a helping verb. For example, “He is going to the store” or “He had loosened the screws.” However, when a verb form with an “ing” and “ed” ending does not have a helping verb, the word is a verbal.

A gerund is a verb form which has an “ing” ending and which functions as a noun.<sup>66</sup> An example is: “Driving can be hazardous.” A verbal can also be in a phrase as: “Driving a race car can be hazardous profession.”<sup>67</sup>

A participle is a verbal which has an “ing” or “ed” ending and functions as an adjective. “The driving rain caused hazardous driving conditions.” “Washed clean, the car shone in the sun.”

An infinitive is a verb form with the prefix “to” before it. It usually functions as a noun but can also function as an adverb or adjective.<sup>68</sup> Example: “To drive a race car is my dream.”

## Subordinate Clauses

The next level of structure above the phrase is the subordinate or dependent clause. A subordinate clause has a subject and predicate, but unlike a sentence, it cannot stand alone as a complete thought. Thus it is also called a dependent clause because it is dependent on its relationship to an independent clause to be a viable part of a sentence. The subordinate clause functions as one of the following parts of speech: noun, adjective, or adverb.<sup>69</sup>

Most subordinate clauses are introduced by subordinating conjunctions.

Examples:

“So when they had come together, they asked him...” Acts 1:6 (NRSV)  
Adverbial clause modifying “asked.”

“...they went to the room upstairs where they were staying...” Acts 1:13 (NRSV)  
Adjectival clause modifying “room.”

“I know where you are living, where Satan’s throne is.” Rev 2:13 (NRSV)  
Noun clause.

## Relative Pronouns

In addition to subordinating conjunctions, relative pronouns also function to connect subordinate clauses to independent clauses. Like other pronouns, relative pronouns function as adjectival or noun clauses.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 561.

<sup>67</sup> This is a generalization which is not always true. Some gerunds end in “ed” Feaver interview.

<sup>68</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 562.

<sup>69</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 22.

<sup>70</sup> John C. Hodges, and others 571; Webster 1627.

The list of relative pronouns are:

who	that <sup>71</sup>	whoever	whatever
whom	which	whomever	
whose	what	whichever	

Examples:

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” Acts 9:5 (NRSV)

Adjectival Clause modifying Jesus.

“Whoever does not love abides in death.” 1 John 3:14 (NRSV)

Noun clause.

## Independent Clauses

The next level of structure with is the independent clause. This is the complete sentence which is able to stand alone and make sense. Not only can a coordinating conjunction link information within a sentence, but one can be located at the beginning of a sentence to link the flow of thought of what has already taken place.<sup>72</sup> For example, consider this Scripture: “But a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property.” Acts 5:1(NRSV)

This is in contrast to the action of Barnabas in the previous chapter. Within a sentence, a coordinating conjunction links two clauses that are of the same level of structure. For example: “Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father...” 1 Timothy 5:1(NRSV)

Of course coordinating conjunctions can just link compound sentences. For example: “...he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.” Mtt 5:1 (NRSV)

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<sup>71</sup> *That* is a comprehensive term. [Franklin 242] The reader should note that “that” is listed both as a subordinating conjunction and as a relative pronoun. In addition, it is a demonstrative pronoun (along with *this, these, those*). Fernald states: “it is possible to use six ‘that’ consecutively in the same sentence. [243].

<sup>72</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 211.

# Appendix 3: Digging Deeper – Guidelines and Explanation

## I. What is Digging Deeper?<sup>73</sup>

A. Digging Deeper is a thorough study of a specific passage. All three steps of the Inductive method are applied to the passage and a conclusive summary is then written which assimilates all the three steps of the Inductive study. The final summary is a mini-commentary on the passage based on your observation, interpretation and application.

## II. Why a Digging Deeper?

A. This exercise enables you as a student to do all the 3 steps of Inductive Bible Study on a significant passage thus sharpening your skills of observation, interpretation and application. A Digging Deeper teaches you to then compile your observations, interpretations and application into a summary statement on the passage. Your summary statement pulls together what you have dug out of the passage. A Digging Deeper teaches you to integrate your observations, interpretation and applications. For example, if you observe a repeated idea, then your interpretation should build on the repeated idea. You should ask, why is this idea repeated? What is the significance?

B. Digging Deeper enables the staff to see your strengths and weaknesses. For example perhaps you are strong on observation but don't build on it with your interpretations. Maybe you are able to interpret but you are weak in giving observational evidence for your interpretation. Maybe you are strong on application but weak in pulling all your material together into a summary statement. Maybe your weakness is asking questions that don't open up the passage etc. This exercise will enable the staff to help you build on your strong points and improve your weak areas.

## III. How to do a Digging Deeper

A. Select one of the suggested passages. (The staff will give suggested passages for each book.) If you want to choose a passage other than the suggested passages then have it approved by your present chart checker.

B. Write or type out the passage double or triple spaced. (This will be your observation worksheet.)

C. Use your handout, "The Basics of Bible Study."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

1. Ask and answer the 10 observation questions. Choose relevant questions. (Don't count asking the where question if it is obvious that there are no geographic locations mentioned in the passage under scrutiny. Use your typed or written out passage of the text as your work sheet. For example color code all of the who's one color.

Write the antecedent of a pronoun above the pronoun (Christ). Him

Be sure and state the questions asked and give the color code. Don't just say "I asked question #5".<sup>75</sup> See example below:

- a. "I asked the who question" – color coded as blue = God  
green = Christ  
pink = Paul

or

All who's are shaded green with these additional symbols

- triangle = God  
underlined = Jesus  
circled = Paul

- b. "I observed the repeated words color coded as blue"  
underlined = grace  
circled = deeds

2. Now using your Basics of Bible Study handout ask 10 interpretation questions of the text.

a. Build on your observations. If you observed lists then ask WHY are these lists included? What is the content of the lists? Why is the content important? What is left out of the list? Is the list complete, etc.? Be sure and write out your answers to your observation questions or show them clearly on the written out worksheet.

b. Consider carefully page 4 of the Basics of Bible Study. Consider doing the interpretation question mentioned under #9.

c. You may ask more than one WHY or WHAT question. However, if you ask several WHY or WHAT questions centered around one topic all of those WHY or

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<sup>74</sup> "The Basics of Bible Study" are lists of questions to be asked of the text for Observation, Interpretation, and Application stages of study. Figure 19, SBS Interpretation Questions, is an adapted form of the SBS interpretation questions. Smith, *School of Biblical Studies Handout*.

<sup>75</sup> Question numbers refer to sheets of observation and interpretations that the SBS gives to their students. See Figure 19 SBS Interpretation Questions 118 as an example.

WHAT questions will only have counted as 1 question for interpretation in the Digging Deeper. For example if you observed the lists, you could ask the WHY and WHAT questions as previously suggested (What is the content of the list? Why is the content important.? What is left out of the list? Is the list complete? etc.) Because these all centered around lists they together would count as only 1 question in the Digging Deeper. You could then ask a why question about the contrasts observed and it would count as a separate interpretation question in your total of 10 questions.

3. Now apply the passage. Applications are based on your observations and interpretations. This could be a personal application on how the Basic truth speaks to you or a couple of ideas of how you would apply this passage in the 20th century. Make it relevant to the 20th century. Use the application guidelines on p. 5 of the Basics of Bible Study.

4. Now write a summary statement (mini-commentary) on the passage pulling together your observations, interpretations and application. The goal is to organize your data and articulate your thought in a manner that communicates the meat of the passage. In this exercise you are passing on (teaching) someone else what you have learned about the passage. Your complete Digging Deeper is then a teaching or sermon that only needs illustrations before delivery.

\*\* (To the staff-The Digging Deeper introduction and explanation should be followed or accompanied by an in class demonstration of a Digging Deeper.)

## Appendix 4: Diagramming

The starting point of diagramming a paragraph is to be aware of the sentence, or independent clause, level of structure. These are the clauses with a subject and a predicate that can stand alone and make sense as units of thought. These independent clauses will be the most significant concepts for the student to focus his attention on.<sup>76</sup>

One strategy for locating the independent clauses is to find all the possible verb forms available in the paragraph and decided which ones are verbals, and which ones function as a verb. That is, check verb forms with “ed” or “ing” endings but no helping verb which are functioning as gerunds or participles. Also check for verbs forms preceded by the “to” which function as infinitives. This might seem like a tedious process, but it help the student to quickly identify the main action or focus of the sentence. Consider the following example, James 1:2-8 (NRSV).

<sup>2</sup>My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; <sup>4</sup>and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. <sup>5</sup>If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. <sup>6</sup>But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; <sup>7, 8</sup>for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

In this paragraph, verse 3 “testing”, verse 4 “lacking,” verse 6 “doubting,” “driven and tossed,” and verses 7,8 “being” and “to receive” are all verbals functioning as participles, gerunds or as an infinitive.

The next step is to look for a subject for each of the verbs, and to note if there is more to the predicate than just the verb (e.g., a direct object). These would be the clauses of the sentence. Note if any clauses are preceded by a subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun, thus modifying another word of the sentence. These are dependent clauses, and function to support the main clauses. This process can help the student to quickly assess which clauses are independent. Sometimes there will be more than one independent clause in a sentence. The key is to be aware of coordinating and correlative conjunctions which connect equal levels of structure.

In the following example, the subject of each sentence has been single underlined, and the subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns have been bolded:

<sup>2</sup>My brothers and sisters, **whenever you** face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy,

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<sup>76</sup> Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 206.

<sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; <sup>4</sup>and let endurance have its full effect, **so that** you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. <sup>5</sup>If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, **who gives** to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. <sup>6</sup>But ask in faith, never doubting, **for** the one **who doubts** is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; <sup>7, 8</sup>**for** the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Note that after all the dependent clauses are located, the independent clauses, excluding coordinating conjunctions, are:

Verse 2: “consider it nothing but joy”

Verse 3: “let endurance have its full effect”

Verse 4: “ask God”

Verse 5: “it will be given to you”

Verse 6: “ask in faith”

Once the independent clauses have been identified, the diagram can be laid out. There are several variations or degrees diagraming. The simplest skill, which is really a precursor to diagraming, is to identify the independent clauses within a paragraph, and then to notice how other other parts of a sentence relate to those clauses. The layout used could be the same as that employed with the skill of “Digging deeper” previously described. The passage could be written out double or triple spaced and then note the independent clauses by underlining or color-code.<sup>77</sup> Then the student can note the relationships of other surrounding clauses. Again, using James 1:2-8:

### **Adverbial Clause Noting Time**

<sup>2</sup>My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy,

### **Adverbial Clause Noting Reason**

<sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance;

### **Adverbial Clause Noting Purpose**

<sup>4</sup>and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

### **Conditional Clause**

<sup>5</sup>If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God,

### **Adjectival Relative Pronoun Defining *God***

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<sup>77</sup> Adapted from Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 207; see also Jensen 53 and Lincoln 50.

who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.

### Reason Clause

for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind;

### Reason Clause & Adjectival Clause Defining *Doubter*

<sup>7, 8</sup>for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

An additional exercise suggested by Osborne and Woodward is that conjunctions are placed on the far left side of the page, and separated from the clauses they introduce.<sup>78</sup> This is an excellent way for the beginner to become aware of how connectives word to relate clauses to one another. For example:

	My brothers and sisters,
<b>whenever</b>	you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy
<b>because</b>	you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect,
<b>so that</b>	you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.
<b>If</b>	any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who give to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you.
<b>But</b>	ask in faith, never doubting,
<b>for</b>	the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind;
<b>for</b>	the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord

These exercises will help prepare the student to diagram. The kind of diagramming advocated here is known as either the “block diagram”<sup>79</sup> or the “mechanical layout.”<sup>80</sup> In this method of diagramming, the words are kept in the same order that they appear in the text. The independent clauses, being the most significant levels of structure, should be placed on the left-hand side of the page. All other structures in each sentence will support and define the independent clauses in some manner. Whether the level of structure is a dependent clause, a phrase, or a single word, modifiers should be slightly indented to the left of the independent clause. Each should be noted on a separate line, and indented below the preceding unit that it modifies.<sup>114</sup> Arrows can be used to help express relationships. They point to the word or phrase which is being modified. A variation that can be used to show more detail is for single-word modifiers to be placed under the words that they modify. As with the vertical

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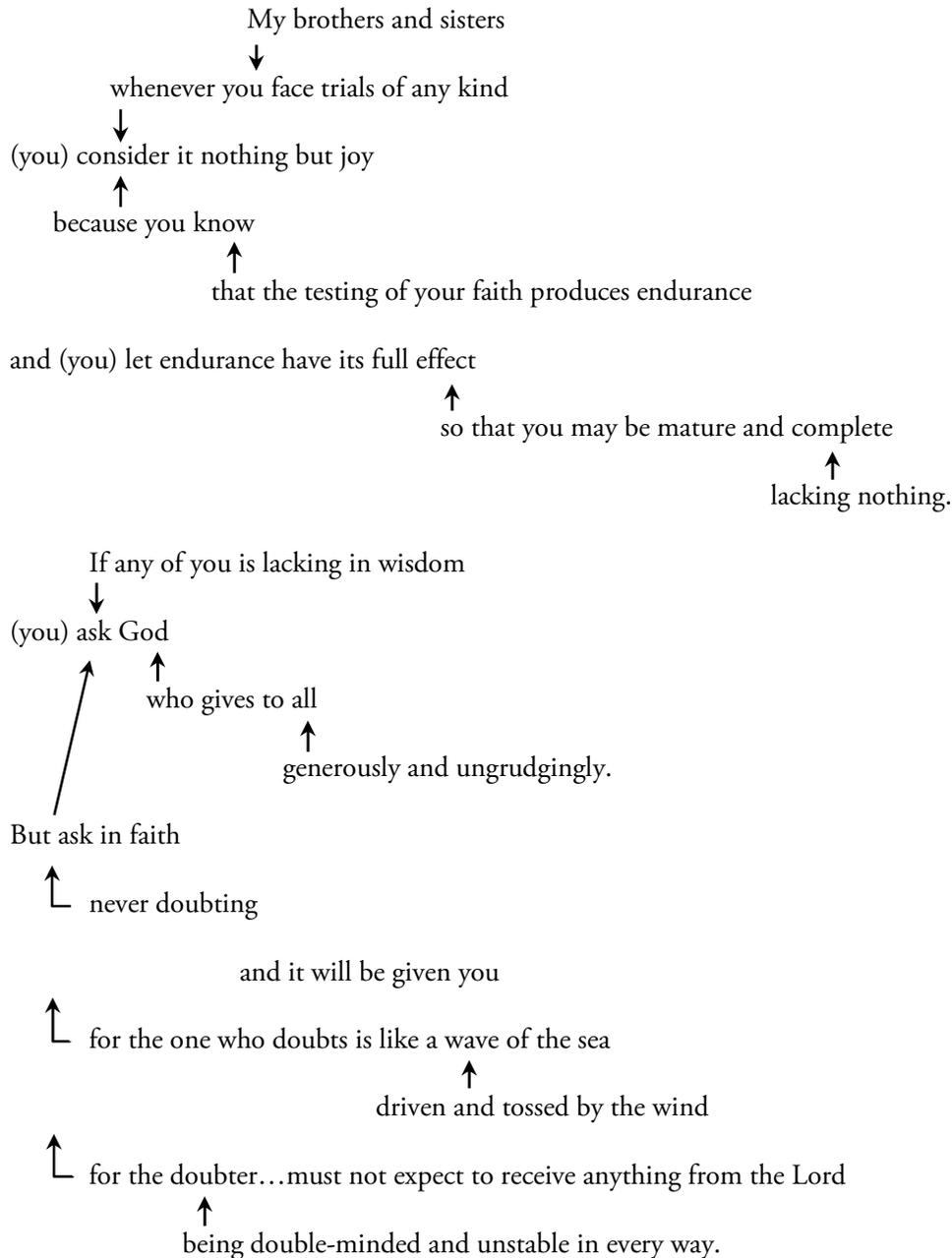
<sup>78</sup> Osborne and Woodward 53.

<sup>79</sup> Kaiser 100.

<sup>80</sup> McQuilkin 145.

chart, color and various symbols can be used by the student to visually enhance the relationships of the diagram.

**Figure 27: Diagramming Example: James 1:2-8<sup>81</sup>**



<sup>81</sup> Method adapted from Kaiser 174-181.

# Appendix 5: Interpretation in the Inductive Bible Study

## Movement

According to Dr. Graham, Traina, who was a classmate of hers, said that he felt there was not enough attention given to interpretation in Biblical Seminary. Instead the student gave great attention to observation and went right into application. Dr. Graham's quotes a personal letter from Traina:

Much of the work done in English Bible at the Biblical Seminary relied heavily on intuition in the area of interpretation with a real emphasis on observation as preceding interpretation. I have become convinced that though intuition has its proper place, the emphasis in interpretation, and in evaluation and application for that matter, should be on inductive inferential reasoning. Otherwise, there are no controls, and it is impossible to answer key inductive questions, such as, 'What is the evidence for a particular interpretation in contrast to others?' Reliance on intuition stands the danger of thinking deductively, that is, based on presuppositions which are not examined in light of the evidence. So I am incorporating a heavy emphasis on inductive inferential reasoning in the sequel, which I am now writing.<sup>82</sup>

This author of this thesis has noticed the need for more attention to interpretation in other works by authors in the Inductive Bible Study movement as well. Kuist endorses an intuitive way of perceiving the Scriptures in *These Words Upon Thy Heart*. In his discussion of a student as an "agent"<sup>83</sup> who needs to be committed to responding to the Scriptures, he states that "An agent is any person who participates at firsthand in any given situation and contemplates the object of his attention with sympathetic understanding based upon immediate intuition."<sup>84</sup>

Jane Hollingsworth, another graduate of Biblical Seminary, begins her section on interpretation in *Discovering the Gospel of Mark* with the statement: "The second step is to let the Holy Spirit tell you what these facts mean to you."<sup>85</sup> First, the author needs to acknowledge that this is a small booklet so Hollingsworth might have felt constrained to limit her discussion of the subject. But while acknowledging the limited space, this statement seems to imply a greater dependence on intuition than on an objective hermeneutical method.

In yet another example of a Biblical Seminary graduate, in the books of Irving L. Jensen, there

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<sup>82</sup> Mary Graham, ed., *Inductive Bible Study Network Newsletter* (1539 E. Howard St., Pasadena, California 91104, No. 17, Fall, 1991) 1.

<sup>83</sup> Kuist 52.

<sup>84</sup> Kuist 52 [italics mine].

<sup>85</sup> Jane Hollingsworth, *Discovering the Gospel of Mark* (Toronto, Canada: Intersity, 1950) 3.

appears to be a focus on observation, and then an intuitive slide into interpretation-application. Since the ethos of Biblical Seminary was that thorough observation by means of the inductive process led to right conclusions, this was a natural result. Thus, while the Church owes a tremendous debt to the Inductive Bible Study Movement, some additional emphasis can be given to interpretation.

The silence in this sphere of hermeneutical principles appears intentional rather than an oversight or from an inability in W. W. White. First, while White was a brilliant scholar, his goal was to give his students the tools to be independent thinkers who would then train others as well. The highly developed skills of observation in the students of Biblical Seminary aided them to be inductive. As Eberhardt observed: "White would tolerate no interpretation until every detail of the passage of Scripture under consideration had been scrutinized and weighed."<sup>86</sup> This methodology also greatly empowered the student rather than making him dependent on the experts. The student's text was the Word of God and they were expected to come to their own conclusions about it.<sup>87</sup> White's desire was that his students could succeed as teachers with just the tools of a Bible and a dictionary.<sup>88</sup> Dr. Graham relates how one of her professors would say that if a student were shipwrecked with nothing more than his Bible, he should be able to teach without any difficulty.<sup>89</sup>

Second, White was not just an academian. He had a heart for missions and to reach the common man. He demonstrated the power of inductive study in training missionaries in India,<sup>90</sup> and personally working among Hindu students.<sup>91</sup>

Therefore, if White wanted to produce independent thinkers who could function with only a few tools, and focused his attention on students and missionaries as well as seminarians, perhaps he thought that specialized training in hermeneutics would be more intimidating than helpful for the majority of those he was trying to influence.

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<sup>86</sup> Eberhardt 139.

<sup>87</sup> Graham 22.

<sup>88</sup> Kaiser and Silva 163; Eberhardt 139; Jensen 44.

<sup>89</sup> Graham 47.

<sup>90</sup> Dr. Howard Kuist also taught in India. In 1954 he conducted twelve hour seminars in sixteen locations. Mary Graham, ed., *Inductive Bible Study Network Newsletter* (1539 E. Howard St., Pasadena, California 91104, Winter 1995) 1.

<sup>91</sup> Nolt 320; Thompson 12; Graham 18; Kuist 47.

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