

## NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: THE VARIOUS STAGES OF THE EXEGETICAL PROGRAMME

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### ABSTRACT

The various stages in the exegetical programme include preliminary selection of a passage, first close reading, demarcation, textual criticism, determining the real world context, the literary type, the place of the micro-text within its macro-structure, analysing the structure of the micro-text, detailed analysis, formulating the message for the first readers, guidelines for understanding the text's message for today and (optional) a translation. Lexico-grammatical, literary and semantic criteria for text demarcation are presented. Under detailed analysis a new linguistic tools, metaphors, Semitic influence and intertextuality are discussed.

### 1. PRELIMINARY SELECTION OF THE PASSAGE

The exegetical programme proposed in my previous article,<sup>2</sup> consists of 12 (possible) steps. The first step entails making a preliminary choice of a passage for analysis. A good rule of thumb would be to choose a passage which, at first glance, seems to exhibit a relatively strong degree of inner cohesion from a syntactical, literary and semantic perspective.<sup>3</sup> It should be long enough to allow for a meaningful analysis but, at the same time, still short enough to be mentally comprehended and handled conveniently. Such a unit will typically be a paragraph, as in Romans 3:21-26, or a pericope consisting of more than one closely related paragraphs, as in Romans 1:18-32.

### 2. FIRST CLOSE READING

The qualification "first" in this heading should not be taken absolutely, since this will most probably not be the reader's first encounter with the specific biblical text. And yet, for the enquiring mind, every new engagement with the biblical text, as with other meaningful text, will be a fresh experience. Close reading the text as if for the first time certainly has its own rewards. At this stage immediate problems such as difficult words,

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2 See the previous article in this issue of *Acta Theologica*.

3 The qualification "relatively strong" is important, since there should naturally exist a degree of cohesiveness between all the parts of a specific document.

grammatical issues, idiomatic expressions, etc. should be identified and resolved, as far as possible, with the help of dictionaries and handbooks on grammar and style.<sup>4</sup> In the case of syntactical problems it may be helpful to draw a tree diagram to help determine the inner composition of a sentence. A word for word translation of the Greek text should now be made. One should first try to solve translation problems on your own before consulting other translations. But when other translations are used, it will be better to start with relatively literal ones before moving to more dynamic ones. However, no translation should be accepted uncritically. There exists no perfect translation.

### 3. DEMARCATION OF PASSAGE

#### 3.1 General remarks

After the first close reading we should now check whether the passage is correctly demarcated. For sound exegesis we need a reliable demarcation. The text divisioning of our Greek editions may, in a given instance, be on target, but all too often that is not the case. The demarcations of our present Greek text editions, or in fact of any translation, should never be taken for granted.

Our New Testament documents are divided into chapters, pericopes, paragraphs and verses. Typically a chapter may consist of a number of pericopes, a pericope of a number of paragraphs and a paragraph of a number of verses. But these distinctions are relative. The boundaries of a chapter and a pericope may coincide, as in the Aland edition of 1 Corinthians 13. Again, in our Greek text of Romans 1:1-7, the pericope division and the paragraph division coincide. English translations, however, sub-divide these seven verses in a varying number of paragraphs: two (*JB*), three (*RSV, NIV*), four (*GNB*), etc. We have, in fact, in our present Greek New Testament many instances of the problematic divisioning of chapters, pericopes, paragraphs and verses.

Syntactic and semantic considerations should obviously have played a more fundamental role in the divisioning of our New Testament into smaller units. Often the reason for our present divisioning seems to have been more pragmatic than logical. This certainly does not facilitate understanding.<sup>5</sup>

4 Fee (2002:155-179) offers a helpful overview of aids and resources.

5 The ideal would be a New Testament with divisions based on sound linguistic principles. This implies that not only our present chapter divisions, but also their sub-units down to the very verses should be reconsidered. 1 Corinthians 12-14, for instance, should form one meso-unit within 1 Corinthians because these chapters belong intrinsically together.

Wrong demarcations are misleading. They hamper the reading process, and may cause serious exegetical blunders. Scientifically based text demarcation is therefore an essential part of our exegetical programme.

### 3.2 Criteria for text demarcation

A paragraph is the ideal starting point. It is long enough to allow for meaningful analysis, but at the same time short enough to be readily perceptible and focussed upon. However, as we grow into the exegetical process, it becomes increasingly easy and indeed preferable to work with a pericope, which is nothing other than a closely-connected string of paragraphs. Since the pericope elucidates a topic from more than one angle, it forms an even more meaningful unit to work with and which can serve as an eventual basis for preaching.

A paragraph can be defined as a relatively self-contained stretch of written speech, consisting of a series of sentences closely united by their relation to a common theme.<sup>6</sup> Jordan says of the paragraph:

Its indentation allows the writer to say to the reader, "This much of my thought I wish you to consider separately from the rest because it seems to me to have a particular unity and to advance the idea in a peculiar way" (Jordan 1965:121).

Since a pericope is bonded together by a cluster of cohesive paragraphs, the same will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, also to the latter.

In determining criteria for paragraph (and pericope) demarcation, features such as boundary markers, cohesion and breaks, genre and theme play a decisive role. These criteria function on the lexico-syntactical, the literary or the semantic level, but one cannot clinically separate them. First, because the lexico-syntactical aspects of a text are the surface expression of its deep level meaning. Secondly, because these viewpoints overlap with and complement each other. Keeping this *proviso* in mind, I shall move, broadly speaking, from lexico-grammatical considerations to literary, and from there to specifically semantic ones.

It is extremely important that these criteria should not be individually absolutised, since there are many exceptions to the rule. One should look for converging criteria. The more criteria converge, the stronger one's case will be.

6 Due to semantic coherence and the hierarchical character of linguistic communication, important elements of this definition are, *mutatis mutandis*, also true of pericopes, chapters, etc.

## 3.2.1 Lexico-grammatical criteria

The most important demarcation criteria in this category are the following:

- (a) Some markers indicate the beginning or conclusion of a passage. In the Gospels, indications of time in the form of adverbs, adverbial phrases, participles, e.g. genitive absolutes, often perform an introductory function.

Illustration: In Matthew 2:1-3:1 we have the following indicators of time/time change marking the beginning of a new unit: 2:1: “when Jesus was born” (τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος [genitive absolute]); 2:7 “thereupon” (τότε [adverb]); 2:13: “when they had departed” (ἀναχωρησάντων δὲ αὐτῶν [genitive absolute]); 2:16: “then Herod, seeing that” (τότε Ἡρώδης ἰδὼν [adverb with participle]); 2:19: “after Herod died” (τελευτήσαντος δὲ τοῦ Ἡρώδου [genitive absolute]); 2:22: “hearing” (ἀκούσας [participle]); 3:1: “in those days” (ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις [adverbial phrase]). The introductory phrase καὶ ἐγένετο (“it happened that”) occurs in Matthew as well as in Mark, but, alternating with ἐγένετο δέ it abounds in Luke and Acts. In, e.g., Luke 1:8, 59; 2:1, 6, 15 it follows after a relatively major break, and in 1:23, 41; 2:46 after a minor one.<sup>7</sup>

In the letters, inferential conjunctives may indicate a new beginning. Διό (“therefore”, e.g., Rom. 2:1; 15:7; 2 Pet. 1:10; 3:14), Διὰ τοῦτο (“therefore”, e.g., Rom. 5:12; 2 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 1:15), ἄρα (“then”, “therefore” - Rom. 8:1, 12 etc.; cf. also Mat. 18:1; 24:45) and οὖν (“therefore”, “then” — e.g., Rom. 3:27; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; Hebr. 2:14; 4:1, 11, 14; 1 Pet. 2:1; 4:1; 5:1)<sup>8</sup> often perform this function. A referential marker such as περί (“concerning”, “about”), followed by the genitive of the matter referred to, usually indicates a major (or minor) new phase in the argument: 1 Corinthians 7:1, 25; 8:1, 4; 12:1; 16:1, 12; 2 Corinthians 9:1; 1 Peter 1:10 (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13; Tit. 3:8). Disclosure formulas often signify the beginning of a new section, as in Romans 1:13; 11:25; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 12:1; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Philippians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; Colossians 2:1. Appeals and injunctions may perform the same function: 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philemon 9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; 1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:6; so also rhetorical questions (Rom. 3:1, 9, 27; 4:1, etc.). As in the Gospels, time indications may also signify a fresh start. In Galatians 1:15-2:5, the beginning of several consecutive paragraphs is signalled by an adverb of time (ὅτε [1:15], ἔπειτα [1:18, 21; 2:1]).

7 In his discussion of this phenomenon in Luke, Fitzmyer (1981:119) states: “It occurs so often as to be monotonous”.

8 See also John, where this usage abounds — John 2:18; 3:25; 4:1, 46, etc.

Expressions indicating the conclusion of a passage are less prominent. However, inferential conjunctions such as οὖν (“therefore”, “then” — e.g., Mat. 1:17; 5:48; ), ἄρα (“then”, “therefore” - e.g., Rom. 14:14; Gal. 6:10; cf. also Mat. 7:20; Luke 1:66) and διό (Gal. 4:31; 1 Thes. 5:11), may signify the logical conclusion of a stretch of discourse, thereby binding it with the foregoing, but also anticipating an imminent break. The adverb οὕτως may perform the same function (Luke 17:10; Rom. 6:11).

- (b) When we move to the inner texture of the text, we find that cohesion<sup>9</sup> (with breaks as its counterpart) is a most important criterion for demarcation. The following are some of the most prevalent indicators of cohesion/breaks:
- (i) The replacement of words, phrases, and larger syntactical configurations by pro-forms indicate cohesion. One of the most prominent examples of this kind of substitution, which occurs abundantly in the New Testament, is pronominalisation, i.e. a pronoun replacing and referring back to a more descriptive previous lexical item. A typical everyday example would be the following:

Mrs. Jones first went to the shop to buy some groceries. Then *she* went to the Post Office, and subsequently to the fruit market. Having completed *her* errands, *she* returned home again.

In this passage, the personal pronouns “she”, occurring twice, and the possessive pronoun “her” replace the original reference to the person identified as Mrs Jones and bind the passage together.

Renominalisation, as the counterpart of pronominalisation, sometimes reflects a textual break:

Mrs. Jones first went to the shop to buy some groceries. Then *she* went to the Post Office, and subsequently to the fruit market. Having completed *her* errands, *she* returned home again.

Mrs. Jones, on arriving home, found an old school friend, Lydia Gordon, waiting for *her*. They spent a lovely afternoon together, chatting and giggling about the good old days.

The renominalised form, “Mrs. Jones”, reflects a break, while “her” and “they” are instances of renewed pronominalisation. One of many New Testament examples of this language strategy is the following:

Galatians 3:1-2: O foolish *Galatians*, who has bewitched *you* (ὕμᾱς) to *whom* (οἷς), before (your) very eyes, Jesus Christ was portrayed as

9 For a discussion of cohesion, cf. Halliday and Hasan (1976:31-225); Berger (1977:12-17). Cohesion in New Testament Greek was extensively investigated by Howard (1982).

the crucified. I want to learn just this one thing from *you* (ἀφ' ὑμῶν): Did *you* receive (ἐλάβετε) the Spirit through works of law or through believing what (you) heard?"

Here the personal pronoun "you" (once implied in the second person plural verbal form) acts three times as a pro-form for "Galatians". The dative plural of the relative pronoun ("whom") does the same.

In Galatians 5:7-13 we have two examples of renominalisation indicating a break:

<sup>7</sup>*You* were running a good race. Who hindered *you* from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup>This persuasion does not come from him who calls *you*. <sup>9</sup>A little yeast leavens the whole lump.<sup>10</sup>I am confident in the Lord that *you* will take no other view (than mine). He who is confusing *you*, will pay the penalty, whoever he is.

<sup>11</sup>But if I, *brothers*, am still preaching circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. <sup>12</sup>I wish those who unsettle *you* would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

<sup>13</sup>*You* are called to freedom, *brothers*; only do not use that freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another in love.

In vv. 7-10 the pronominal "you" occurs five times. In v. 11, the renominalised word "brothers" reflects a minor break and it is replaced by another "you" in v. 12. In v. 13 "brothers" (in conjunction with other considerations)<sup>10</sup> signifies a major break.<sup>11</sup>

Pronominalisation occurs not only in the case of words or phrases. It can also act as a pro-form for much longer foregoing statements. For instance in Galatians 5:21 "such things" (τὰ τοιαῦτα) refers back to the long list of the "works of the flesh" previously mentioned.

Pronominalisation is only one of many instances of the usage of pro-forms in the New Testament. Pro-verbs, for example, may be substituted for verbs. One instance would be the replacement of the verbal form "showing mercy" (ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος) in Luke 10:37 by "do the same" (ποίει ὁμοίως) in v. 38 (Berger 1977:15). The important point to remember is that the presence of these pro-forms indicate close cohesion.

10 E.g., the re-introduction of the concept of freedom.

11 However, there are numerous exceptions. The context should in every instance be considered. Especially in the Gospels, this criterion is not very effective. In this regard, Hinds (1977) made the important observation that renominalisation, when occurring within a paragraph, usually appears in peak sentences; see especially Hinds (1977:82-95).

Another form of replacement is that of an indefinite or generic reference by a definite one in the form of the definite article (cf. Plett 1975:72-73).

Illustration 1: In Matthew 8:5-13 the indefinite form “a centurion” (ἐκατόνταρχος) (8:5) is replaced by one with the definite article in v. 8 (“the centurion” - ὁ ἐκατόνταρχος) and again in the concluding v. 13 (“the centurion” - τῷ ἐκατοντάρχη).

Illustration 2: In 1 Corinthians 13 three generic references to “love” (vv. 1-3) are followed by three with the definite article (vv. 4-8).

- (ii) A second form of cohesion is that of repetition. Repetition of the same or semantically related nouns, pronouns or verbs,<sup>12</sup> provides a lexical and semantic glue which contributes strongly towards inner cohesion.

Illustration 1: In 1 Corinthians 13 “love” is repeated seven times, bonding this chapter to a close unit around this theme.<sup>13</sup>

Illustration 2: In Galatians 5:16-26 the repetition of the related configurations “walk by the Spirit” (v. 16), “led by the Spirit” (v. 18) and “live by the Spirit” (v. 25) is a clear indicator of cohesion.

The repetition of antithetical combinations also creates cohesion. In John light and darkness form such a combination, e.g., John 12:34-36. In the same way the Spirit-flesh opposition binds Romans 8:1-16 (cf. Gal. 5:16-26) together.<sup>14</sup>

- (iii) The collocation of associated words and phrases likewise indicates cohesion. Such a collocation would be “game - player - ball - kick - goal - referee”. In John 2:1-10 “wedding - was invited - wine - servants - master of the banquet - bridegroom” all belong to such a collocation.
- (iv) In linguistic discussions on cohesion, ellipsis receives much attention.<sup>15</sup> Ellipsis takes place when a word or phrase is omitted which is essential to the meaning of a statement, but which can be retrieved from the context. However, since ellipsis is usually restricted to short stretches of language, its usefulness for determining cohesion is limited. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, where we find a twelvefold ellipsis of “love”, is an exception.

12 In modern semantics the terms “objects” and “events” are used. “Objects” refers to persons or entities which may serve as the subject or object of an action. However, in this context, it is less confusing to speak of “participants”.

13 It also occurs in 14:1a, but this is clearly a bridging passage, recapitulating chapter 13 and preparing for what is to follow in chapter 14.

14 Which, of course, does not exclude minor breaks, e.g., at the beginning of v. 12.

15 Cf. Blass-Debrunner-Rehkopf (1975:par. 479-483); Halliday & Hasan (1976: 142-225); Howard (1982:159-229); see the latter for extensive literature.

- (v) Cohesion is also indicated by congruence of location, occasion, time, participants, time sequence (the use of verbal *tempus*) and modes of verbal action (cf. e.g. the heaping of participles and imperatives in Rom. 12:9-20). Conversely, a break in congruence signifies a new beginning.

Illustration: In John 1:43-51 the location is somewhere in Judaea; the occasion is the calling of certain disciples; the time is the “next day” (v. 43); the participants are Jesus, Philip and Nathanael. In John 2:1-10, on the other hand, the location is Cana; the occasion a wedding, the time the “third day” (v. 1), the main participants Jesus, his mother, the servants, the banquet master and the bridegroom.

- (vi) Certain conjunctions (particles) create cohesion. Copulatives such as *καί* and *τέ* (“and”), *καί ... καί* and *τέ ... τέ* (“both and”), *οὐ μόνον ... ἀλλὰ καί* (“not only ... but also”), adversative conjunctions such as *ἀλλὰ* (“but”) and *δέ* (“but”, often preceded by *μέν*) and disjunctive conjunctions such as *ἢ* (“or”), *ἢ ... ἢ* or *εἴτε ... εἴτε* (“either ... or”) and *οὔτε ... οὔτε* or *μήτε ... μήτε* (“neither ... nor”), as well as permutations of these, are all in the picture, but they function mainly on the sub-paragraph level.

### 3.2.2 Literary criteria

Certain literary features provide us with significant criteria for text demarcation:

- (a) Variation of genre or of other small units, e.g., literary forms, within a specific genre<sup>16</sup> is such a criterion. In e.g. Acts 15:23-29, the switch from a narrative to a letter indicates a new discrete unit. Also speeches, such as those in the Gospels and Acts, distinguish themselves from their narrative surroundings. Literary forms such as parables, *Haustafeln*, virtue and vice catalogues, hymns and credal statements,<sup>17</sup> often signify discrete smaller units. Within a narrative, various episodes form separate entities. In the New Testament letters, the elements of the Hellenistic letter, as adapted by the New Testament writers, indicate separate entities such as the letter prescript (e.g. Rom. 1:1-7; 1 Cor. 1:1-3), the thanksgiving section (e.g. Rom. 1:8-12; 1 Cor. 1:4-9), the body-

16 In the case of larger literary units we speak of “genres” and in the case of smaller units we use the term “literary form”. For a concise definition, see Aune (1987:13).

17 Syntactically, hymns and credal statements can often be recognised by the initial or recurring use of the relative pronoun *ὅς* (“who”): Philippians 2:6-11; Ephesians 1:7-14; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 2:22-24. They also display a distinct style and rhythm.



opening (e.g. Rom. 1:13-17; Gal. 1:6-10), the body-closing (e.g. Rom. 15:14-33; 1 Cor. 16:1-18) and the letter-closing with greetings and valediction (e.g. 1 Cor. 16:19-24; Phlm 23-25).

- (b) Stylistic figures are important indicators of cohesion. Parallelism is a stylistic convention which create cohesion, but then usually on the level of sentence clusters which may constitute sub-units within a paragraph.

Illustration: 1 Corinthians 15:42b-44a consists of four parallel members, each of which develops into a climactic antithesis:

<sup>42b</sup>What is sown in mortality, is raised immortal.

<sup>43</sup>What is sown in dishonour, is raised in glory.

What is sown in weakness, is raised in power.

<sup>44a</sup>What is sown as a physical body, is raised as a spiritual body.

Chiasms, which are, in reality, inverted parallelisms, are exceedingly popular in the New Testament.<sup>18</sup>

Illustration 1: James 1:22-25 is only one example of many, in this instance covering a paragraph:

Doers of the word (v. 22a)	a
<div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Mere hearers of the word (v. 22b) </div>	b
<div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Mere hearers of the word (vv. 23-24) </div>	b
Doers of the word (v. 25)	a

One of the most prevalent stylistic figures in the New Testament is ring composition, also called *inclusio*. *Inclusio* is a very useful criterion for the demarcation of linguistic units in the New Testament. One example must suffice:

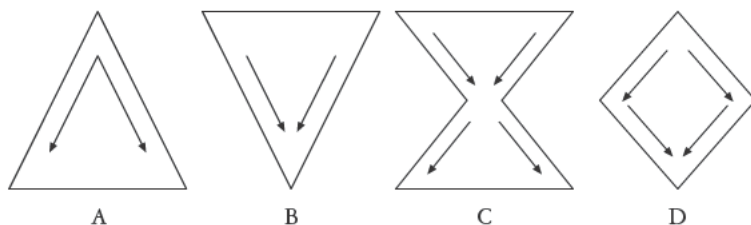
Illustration: In 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, we find a textbook example of such a ring composition demarcating a unit: v. 4 starts with referring to the *charismata*, their *diversity* (διαιρήσεις) and “*the same Spirit*” (τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα). In v. 11 the passage concludes with a back-reference to the *charismata* (in the form of the anaphoric pro-form “all these” [πάντα ταῦτα]), once again referring to the *diversity* aspect (by means of the verb διαιροῦν), and reiterating the *sameness of the Spirit*, this time highlighting it even more strongly (τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα). Some semantic progress is registered. At the same time a clear *inclusio* is formed.

18 Lund (1942) gave extensive attention to this figure, but his identification of chiasms is open to criticism; cf. also Thompson (1995) and Porter (1998:213-221).

## 3.2.3 Semantic criteria

The semantic perspective is of extreme importance. Whereas other criteria for demarcation may vary, semantic coherence is a constant prerequisite for any normal communication. Semantic coherence, which is of course intrinsically related to cohesion,<sup>19</sup> requires a topic (in the case of discursive material) or an occasion (in the case of narratives) which binds a section together.

Jordan has studied the way in which a topic may manifest itself within the overall structure of a paragraph. According to him four main types can be identified, which can be diagrammed as follows:<sup>20</sup>



Naturally, these four models are over-simplifications; they only indicate broad tendencies. Many permutations and divergencies can occur.

In model A, the so-called triangle, the topic is initially announced and then expounded. Thus Romans 8:1 announces the topic of 8:1-4<sup>21</sup> and 1 Thessalonians 4:13 the theme of 4:13-18. In B, the wedge model, the theme appears at the end. Thus Romans 6:11 spells out the topic of 6:3-11. C indicates the hour glass pattern. In this case a number of propositions head for the theme, which is then propounded, and afterwards again amplified. We find a fine specimen of this pattern in Philippians 3:4b-11. In 3:4b-6 Paul counts his gains as a pious Jew. V. 7 signifies the turning point and theme: "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ."

19 Cohesion usually refers to a well-bonded syntactic unit, whereas coherence is used for a logically well-interconnected semantic structure; cf. Howard (1982: 62-63). However, these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, e.g. by Guthrie (1995:38).

20 See Jordan (1965:124-126). His "paragraphs" would include what is here defined as "pericopes". Cf. his example from Stevenson on pp. 123-124. See also Louw (1976:123).

21 In spite of the Aland-UBS text, a break occurs in 8:5. Romans 8:5-8 pivots around the mindset (cf. φρόνῃς/φρόνημα) of those living according to the Spirit *versus* those who live according to their sinful nature.

The first half of this verse harks back and summarises vv. 4b-6. Its second half formulates in essence what is going to be expounded in vv. 8-11. In D, the diamond model, the theme is initially mentioned, then expounded and repeated again at the end. This model, which coincides with what is also termed an *inclusio* or a ring composition, appears in many variations, not only on the micro, but also on the meso and macro levels of the New Testament documents. We have already seen that 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 is an example of *inclusio*. The theme is announced in v. 4, expounded in vv. 5-10, and repeated, in extended form, in v. 11. A second one is Matthew 1:1-17:

Illustration: Matthew 1:1-17 forms a ring composition starting in v. 1 with the theme announcement and the names of Jesus Christ, David and Abraham. In v. 17 it concludes with an extended back-reference to the theme, now referring to the same persons in reverse order.

### 3.3 Concluding remarks

Much attention has been given to text demarcation, because it forms such an important part of the exegete's groundwork and also because new linguistic developments can help us significantly in this respect. Initially this process may seem quite complicated, but that is only superficially the case. These criteria very soon become internalised and they spring to mind almost spontaneously at the initial reading process.

## 4. TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Before moving to the main exegetical phase, the text-critical status of a given passage should be considered. In order to do this, the exegete should have a working knowledge of textual criticism. Our modern editions of the Greek New Testament are prepared by specialists. The exegete should therefore think twice before he decides on a different reading. In any event he should be wary of succumbing to his own preferences.

Illustration: Mark 16:17-18 is sometimes used in discussions and sermons about the spiritual gifts. However, cognisance should be taken of the fact that Mark 16:9-16, although appearing in Bible translations, is unanimously regarded by experts as not originally belonging to the Gospel of Mark.

On the other hand, textual criticism is an ongoing process. There is still uncertainty about an impressive number of readings and in those instances decisions were often made on the basis of a majority vote. This implies that

the exegete may occasionally find it necessary to query a specific reading, substituting it by another.

Illustration: In a study of the role of women in the church, one should realise that, in Romans 16:7, there are convincing grounds to replace the present male form Ἰουνιᾶν (Junias) with the female form Ἰουλίαν (Junia), making the latter an important female co-worker of Paul. Hopefully future Greek text editions will reflect this change. One should also consider important arguments indicating that 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36 may be an early interpolation.

## 5. DETERMINING THE REAL WORLD CONTEXT OF THE PASSAGE

The critical importance of bringing together all possible knowledge about the general and the immediate social context of a communication has already been extensively discussed.<sup>22</sup> Therefore we need not further embellish this point.

## 6. DETERMINING THE LITERARY TYPE OF THE MICRO-TEXT

The importance of literary genre and form (in the case of smaller units) is today universally recognised.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately it is not always respected.

Illustration: To analyse, for instance, a text from Revelation, without sufficiently respecting the specific nature of the apocalyptic genre and giving due attention to the intertextuality between various apocalyptic documents, would be exegetical suicide. "To mistake the code, and to send a funeral-wreath to a wedding would be to commit a social gaffe, comparable to interpreting the Apocalypse as empirical description." (Thiselton 1992:81.)

Responsible exegesis requires that New Testament genres should be respected and interpreted according to their special characteristics. Every genre plays its own tune and unless the exegete dances to that tune, he will make a mess of the understanding process. Respecting the various genres will not

22 See points 3.1 and 3.3 of the previous article in this issue of *Acta Theologica*; also Du Toit (1998:3-31).

23 For introductions into the phenomenon and importance of genre in the New Testament, see Bailey (1995; with suggestions for further reading) and Pearson and Porter (1997). More substantial works are those of Berger (1984), Aune (1987) and Bailey and Vanderbroek (1992).

only prevent the analyst from grave blunders; it will also deepen his understanding significantly.

The majority of New Testament books belong either to the narrative or the letter genre. The four Gospels and Acts are narratives. Some are inclined to view the former as biographical narratives. Acts, again, is sometimes characterised as a historiographical narrative.<sup>24</sup> But these ultra fine, rather academic distinctions do not always contribute to a better understanding.

Because the Apocalypse of John is held together by a narrative line, some regard it as belonging to an apocalyptic sub-category of the narrative genre. Others regard it as an apocalypse *per se*. But this does not really make a difference. It is much more important to recognise that the Apocalypse of John belongs to a larger corpus of books, claiming to give the reader a special insight into God's plan and which, in order to do so, uses symbolical language. This implies that the Apocalypse of John should be understood in terms of the reference of its symbols and not as a historical description.

We have 19 clear examples of New Testament letters. Although 1 John does not have a letter-opening or a letter-closing, its conversational tone indicates that it should probably also be regarded as a letter. Hebrews does not begin like a letter, but ends like one. Its contents suggests that it should best be regarded as an exhortational sermon in written form (cf. 13:22), probably presenting the gist of several sermons, and to which a letter-ending was added.

All these macro-genres typically contain smaller units. The Gospel narratives contain episodes, but also speeches. In addition to speeches, Acts also contains some letters. Many of these smaller units belong to specific literary types: In the Gospels we find, for example, literary forms like parables, genealogies, pronouncement stories, miracle stories, wisdom sayings, etc. Apart from the different epistolographical sections (the prescript, thanksgiving section, body-opening, etc.), the New Testament letters also contain diatribes, confessions, hymns, doxologies, virtue and vice lists, etc. The exegete should know the specific characteristics of these different literary forms, their function and the correct way to interpret them. The parables, for instance, have suffered terrible abuse in church history.

Two *caveats* should be heeded here: First, we should not pressurise our texts into what we think they should say as a result of our prior knowledge of a specific genre. Here also the text itself has precedence.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, a

24 E.g., Pearson and Porter (1997).

25 Cf. the warning notes in Pearson & Porter (1997).

specific literary form should never be decontextualised; it should always be interpreted within its literary meso- and macro-context.

Illustration: When studying, for instance, the christological hymn in Philipians 2:6-11, it should be remembered that its contextual function is not to make a resounding dogmatic statement, but to induce Paul's readers to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

## 7. DETERMINING THE PLACE OF THE MICRO-TEXT WITHIN ITS MACRO-STRUCTURE

As already indicated, meaning is primarily determined from the larger text configurations down to their constituent parts. Therefore it is of the greatest importance to determine the function of a pericope within its macro- and meso-contexts.

Illustration 1: In Mark 8:22-26 we find an impressive example of how the broader narrative context can add meaning to a miracle narration (and *vice versa*). At first glance, we simply have in front of us the healing of a blind person, taking place in two stages. First he sees only partially (cf. v. 24). Only after Jesus' second attempt does he see perfectly (v. 25). This is the first and only occasion that a miracle of Jesus is not an immediate success. In addition, this passage is positioned at the apex of a most important turning point in the Marcan narrative. Until now Jesus' career was, according to human standards, a roaring success. But from 8:27 onwards Jesus begins to reveal to his disciples that he is on his way to the cross. Thus far they have understood him only partially. He is indeed the messiah, but this messiah must suffer. Only as the suffering messiah will they "see" him fully for who he really is. Within this context, the healing of the blind man becomes a transparency for the two-stage process of understanding through which Jesus' followers should go in order to really "see" Jesus, his cross and their own calling clearly.<sup>26</sup>

Illustration 2: In dogmatic treatises, Romans 6:3-11 is often excised from its context and discussed as a baptismal passage. It definitely sheds important light on Paul's view of baptism. But from the context it is clear that Paul did not write this passage for our dogmatic edification. Romans 5-8 deals with the new situation of those who have been justified and now are "in Christ". Within this context, chapter 6 argues that our new situation requires a life of obedience. Those who, in baptism, have died to their sins and have been raised to a new life, simply cannot continue sinning. That would be unthinkable! (Du Toit 1979).

26 Cf. e.g. Johnson (1986:152,163); Barr (1995:229); Ehrman (2000:67-68).

## 8. ANALYSING THE STRUCTURE OF THE MICRO-TEXT

Before analysing the passage in detail, it is important to examine its inner structure. This is required in order to determine how the different pieces on the mini chess board of the pericope are related to each other, how the argument flows and what the main theme and possible sub-themes are. In this way, the text is “opened up” for the detailed exegesis which is to follow. To facilitate this process, various models of structural analysis could be considered. The type of discourse analysis which has been initiated under the leadership of the well-known Greek linguist, Professor J. P. Louw, has proven to be very valuable in this regard.<sup>27</sup>

## 9. DETAILED ANALYSIS

At this stage, a detailed word-for-word and verse-for-verse analysis must be undertaken. However, all the insights gained in the foregoing steps should be incorporated into this process.

The purpose of a detailed textual exegesis is to determine the semantic content and thrust of a text by applying all relevant instruments which may serve this end.

The instruments referred to include all the traditional ones such as concordances, dictionaries, encyclopaedias and commentaries. It may, however, be wise, to initially delay the use of commentaries since these tend to precondition the exegete and preclude fresh insights. It also includes all the methods which can contribute towards a better understanding.

Since lexical and syntactical studies form part and parcel of an exegete’s traditional equipment, I need not elaborate on them. However, it should be added that relatively new linguistic tools such as immediate constituent analysis and the study of the semantic deep structure of texts can contribute considerably towards making a difficult passage intelligible.

Stylistic conventions such as foregrounding, metaphors, idiomatic expressions and even the so-called “figures of speech” do not always get the attention they deserve. Foregrounding is an important highlighting device.<sup>28</sup>

27 Cf. Louw (1976/1982).

28 For an overview of the study of this phenomenon and the various types of foregrounding, see Maartens (1977). See Levinsohn (1995) on the closely related concepts of topicality and focality.

Illustration: One of the most obvious foregrounding techniques is to move a linguistic element to the first slot of an utterance, as in: The man is *old*. *Old* is the man.

The rearrangement of the normal language pattern (noun-copulative verb-complement) by moving “old” to the first slot immediately gives this word a special focus. In Matthew 6:6 “you” is strongly foregrounded: “But *you* (Greek *σύ*), when you pray...” This is accomplished, first, by the explicit use of the second person pronoun, in spite of the fact that it is already subsumed in the Greek verb, and, secondly, by its prominent positioning in the first slot of the clause. This extra-patterning emphasises the radically different life style which Jesus expects from his followers in contrast to that of the “hypocrites”.<sup>29</sup> It is unfortunate that translators and commentators so often ignore this feature.

Also the significance of metaphors needs to be more universally recognised. An important recent development is the recognition that metaphors often function, not individually, but in image clusters, like those of the family, shepherding, warfare, athletics, all of which are extremely important for New Testament exegesis.<sup>30</sup>

Figures of speech are not always recognised, with the result that their semantic value is not recognised.

Illustration 1: Litotes is often overlooked. When Paul states: “I do not want you to be ignorant that...” he clearly means it very positively: “I definitely want you to take notice that...” (Rom. 1:13). Likewise, when he confidently declares: “I am not ashamed of the gospel”, a better translation would be, “I am absolutely proud of the gospel” (Rom. 1:16).

Illustration 2: The recognition of stylistic figures may also help us to resolve exegetical headaches. Matthew 7:6 is a typical example in point. The usual translation of this verse, according to which the swine, after trampling one’s pearls may turn and attack one, could lure us into looking for a specially ferocious new species of pigs, whereas the picture changes immediately when we realize that we have a chiasmus before us:<sup>31</sup>

Do not give what is holy to the dogs;	a	} ]
and do not throw your pearls before the swine,	b	
less they (= the swine) trample them under foot,	b	
and they (= the dogs) turn on you and attack you.	a	

29 This contrasting is repeated in 6:17. Cf. Maartens (1977:57-61).

30 On this, see Van der Watt (2000), especially pp. 18-19, 21, 137-138.

31 Turner (1963:347); Blass-Debrunner-Rehkopf (1976:§477<sup>3</sup>).



Expressions reflecting Semitic influence are often not fully recognised.

Illustration 1: A prominent example is the idiomatic phrase τὶ ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί (lit. “what is there for me and you”) which causes so many problems (Mark 1:24//Luke 4:34; Mark 5:7//Mat. 8:29//Luke 8:28; John 2:4). An intertextual comparison with its Old Testament usages indicates that it should be understood in the sense of “leave me alone”. Performatively it is intended to create distance between the speaker and his addressee (Du Toit 1992b).

Illustration 2: Hyperbolic contrasts are often overlooked. When Paul informs the Corinthians: “For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the gospel!” (1 Cor. 1:17), our first impression may be that Paul’s commission excluded the charge to baptize (which would clash with what he said just before in vv. 14-16). When we recognise that Paul’s statement is a hyperbolic contrast, it becomes clear that he only wished to state that he regarded the evangelistic aspect of his charge as definitely more important than baptizing. Similarly, 1 Corinthians 7:10 is usually interpreted as exclusive: “To the married I give charge, *not I, but the Lord*”. However, Paul has just said that he is giving instructions. His negation is therefore to be understood hyperbolically: “To the married I give charge, but rather not I, the Lord himself”.<sup>32</sup>

It has already been stated that the multi-faceted character of our New Testament texts requires, methodologically, a multi-dimensional analysis. All synchronic methods are here relevant: lexico-grammatical analysis, literary analysis (including narrative analysis), socio-scientific analyses, etc. Even redaction criticism has proven its worth. The way in which, for instance, Matthew changes his Markan *Vorlage*, reveals not only his redactional activity, but also what his text is intended to convey. Already Günther Bornkamm (1975) has shown how Matthew, by means of a skilful redaction of Mark, turned a mere narration of the silencing of the storm (Mark 4:35-41) into a discipleship passage (Mat. 8:23-27). However, not all methods are equally applicable to all genres.

Thus far attention has mainly been given to methods dealing with the informational aspect of texts. Those focussing on the performatational dimension of the New Testament documents have lately received special and wide attention. These methods ask how the New Testament texts have been formulated in order to bring about a desired effect. The focus falls on what change the text should bring about. Speech act analysis, reader response criticism and rhetorical criticism all belong to the interactional paradigm. This development, especially the rediscovery of rhetorical criticism, has enriched our understanding of the New Testament documents immensely.

32 Instances of this can be multiplied. See Du Toit (1986; 1992a).

No exegete can afford to neglect this exciting development, the prerequisite being that he should have a clear insight into and respect for the specific kind of questions each of the various exegetical methods should be expected to answer and that, methodologically, he should keep them apart.

Since Julia Kristeva first articulated intertextual theory in the late 1960s,<sup>33</sup> the idea of intertextuality has become a literary commonplace. This does not imply that consensus exists about the meaning of this term. According to Allen (2000:2), “intertextuality is one of the most commonly used and misused words in contemporary critical vocabulary.” It has nevertheless become axiomatic that all texts, whether literary or non-literary, form part of a socially and culturally determined network of traditions and textual relations and that meaning is generated by moving between a specific text and all the others to which it relates (Allen 2000:1) Although the notion of intertextuality and its critical refinement is of recent date, Biblical scholars have traditionally realised the importance of reading New Testament texts within the broader context of the Old Testament, other New Testament books, as well as Jewish and Graeco-Roman texts and traditions. Especially Old Testament quotations have received much attention. However, modern developments must make the exegete even more aware of the critical importance of intertextuality.

Intertextuality may occur on various levels and in many forms, not only in quotations and allusions.<sup>34</sup>

Illustration: Although we do not find any Old Testament quotations in John 10:1-18, the shepherd imagery in John 10 cannot be interpreted without keeping Ezechiel 34 and Psalm 23 in mind. Similarly, New Testament references to a vineyard such as Mark 12:1-12 par. and John 15:1-8 cannot be isolated from Old Testament and Jewish traditions referring to Israel as God's vine/vineyard.

At the same time a note of caution should be registered. In the history of New Testament research it became clear that many so-called “parallels” from Jewish, Graeco-Roman, Gnostic and other sources were not really relevant. Whether specific utterances or traditions belong to the intertext of a given passage cannot be decided by mere lexical resemblance.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, in considering the intertext, the focus should not shift away to the in-

33 For the genesis and subsequent development of the concept of intertextuality, see Allen (2000). Plett 1991 presents a very useful overview and analysis; cf. also Court (1997:59-72.)

34 Cf. Claes (1988:50-184).

35 The massive work of Billerbeck (Billerbeck 1956), for instance, has been criticised for presenting anachronistic parallels.

tertext as such. The right question would rather be how the intertext enriches the text that is being studied.

Het gaat erom te ontdekken welke extra betekenissen ermee na de nieuwe tekst worden gebracht ... Het productieve aspect van dit tekst-hergebruik staat centraal (Meijer 1996:18).

Illustration: Commentators differ whether the conclusion of Romans 1:17b, which is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, should be translated as “the righteous shall live // by faith”<sup>36</sup> or as “the righteous by faith // shall live”.<sup>37</sup> In the first translation the Habakkuk text carries more weight than the macro-context of Romans. In Romans righteousness is always appropriated by faith. Therefore the first translation violates the intertextual rule as indicated above. The intertextual function of the Habakkuk citation is to give special scriptural sanction to Paul’s statement in v. 17a.

Biblical commentaries have their own history of intertextuality. The exegesis of the fathers, for example, received much attention in the commentaries of Calvin and other Reformers. In turn, the latter are quoted in many later works. In particular the well-known *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar* series gives ample attention to the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of biblical texts. Informing oneself about the exegesis of the fathers will certainly show rewards. However, we must not be overly optimistic. We have made so much exegetical progress since the times of the fathers that more recent, scientifically based commentaries will be of more help, provided that the supremacy of the text is not sacrificed in favour of popular socio-political trends.

## 10. FORMULATING THE MESSAGE FOR THE FIRST READERS

All the previous exegetical steps were teleologically determined. Their purpose was to arrive finally at a stage where we can formulate the *content* and *impact* of the biblical text on an ideal first century readership/audience. We should now be able to articulate the thrust of the message and its main contours, as well as its perlocutionary goal. How were the issues addressed that were at stake? What solutions were offered to resolve the problems facing the readers/hearers? How would the message touch their lives, challenge their complacencies, open their eyes, broaden their perspectives, change their attitudes, guide them towards a decision, bring them to a re-appraisal of their

36 See Michel (1978:79, 91); Schlier (1977:34,46); Schreiner (1998:74).

37 See Barrett (1962:27, 31); Käsemann (1974:18); Cranfield (1977:87, 101-102); Wilckens (1978:76, 90).

priorities, nurture their spiritual life, invigorate their discipleship, strengthen their faith, widen their love, rekindle their hope, re-focus their service, rectify their misunderstandings, remove their distrust, build up the congregation, console them amidst affliction and persecution, enrich their worship, etc., etc.?

## 11. GUIDELINES REGARDING THE TEXT'S MESSAGE FOR TODAY

It is a moot point whether the exegete should limit himself to what the original text would have conveyed to its first addressees,<sup>38</sup> or whether he should also cross the hermeneutical bridge and transform the original message into a relevant message for today's readers/hearers. In favour of the latter position one could argue that it will obviate the ever threatening short circuit between the exegete and the preacher, even if both capacities reside within the same person, e.g., in the case of a pastor. The former will be denied the luxury of withdrawing into his/her ivory tower and the latter the easy way out of shunning the exegetical effort. Against this position is the problem that, in spite of all the communalities of our global village, the specific life setting of various communities and persons differs so much that the effective crossing of the bridge in a way that would be applicable to all is impossible. Contemporary discipleship, for instance, not only takes up different forms from those in the first century; it will vary between different modern day contexts. On the other hand, certain basic aspects of discipleship will remain the same, for example the decision for radical obedience.

The best solution would therefore be to settle for a compromise, asking of the exegete to formulate *some clear guidelines* within which various forms of modern contextualising may be possible. Within these parameters, the message may then be further concretised by others. In this way, modern day audiences may be guided and invited, each within their own life settings, not to do the same, but to do likewise.

38 This was the position of most twentieth century exegetes. Eugene Nida also advocated a clear distinction between exegesis and hermeneutics: Exegesis would then consist in reconstructing the original communication event. Hermeneutics, on the other hand, would involve the transfer of the meaning of such a discourse into an entirely different time-space context" (Nida *et al.* 1983:151, 152). But many theologians will regard this as an uninvolved and socially irresponsible stance.

## 12. TRANSLATION (OPTIONAL)

At this stage, the exegete should be in a good position to attempt a translation which would be, at least to some degree, the semantic equivalent of the original Greek text. Bible translators are not always in a position to make a thorough analysis of the books they have to translate. Individually, or as members of a team, exegetes can make a valuable contribution in this regard. However, effective Bible translation is a strongly specialised branch of biblical studies and requires some very specific skills.

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Fokalisering

Metafore

Hiperboliese kontraste

Intertekstualiteit

Hermeneutiek