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<Abstract>

Qumran Manuscripts and Biblical Studies: 4Q285, 4Q448, 4Q246, 7Q5, 11Q13.

Prof. Chang-Hyun Song

(Catholic University of Daegu)

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the Qumran manuscripts and biblical studies. Among the Qumran manuscripts, the controversial manuscripts of 4Q285, 4Q448, 4Q246, 7Q5, 11Q13, which are the focus of scholars' dispute, have particularly been analyzed in relation to biblical studies. We have first introduced each manuscript briefly, attempted to translate the texts, and used literary and historical methods to analyze them. Through our studies of these five manuscripts, we were able to identify the values they hold for biblical studies. Our research results can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, the 4Q285 manuscript illustrates the stages of transmission of the Old Testament texts quoted in the Qumran manuscripts, and how they were understood by the Qumran community. This in particular proves that Isaiah 10:34-11:1 were understood in the context of the eschatological and messianic beliefs of the Qumran community, and this is found not only in other Qumran manuscripts but also in the New Testament. In addition, it illustrates the importance of reconstruction in manuscript studies, and also clearly reveals that accurate reading of the manuscript is the starting point of correct translation of the text.

Secondly, the 4Q448 manuscript shows how important it is for manuscript studies to discern the paleographic dates of manuscripts and to find out the identities of historical figures appearing in the text. Discerning the paleographic date of 4Q448 and finding out the identify of Jonathan constitutes very important information for the study of the early history of the Qumran community. Jonathan, who appears in 4Q448 and also in 4Q523, which is another manuscript with the appearance of Jonathan, is Jonathan Maccabee, and these manuscripts provide information about how the Qumran community thought of him. In Qumran manuscripts such as 1QpHab, etc., he is regarded as the "Wicked Priest." The 4Q448 manuscript is a precious document for study of the history of the Jews in 2C B.C. and the Qumran

community.

Thirdly, the 4Q246 manuscript is the most important, and at the same time controversial, in biblical studies. This manuscript carries the apocryphal book of Daniel in Aramaic, and Chapter 7 of Daniel greatly influenced the literary structure, words, and contents of 4Q246. This 4Q246 manuscript is important, as the expression "Son of God" found in it shows how this appellation was understood and used in the period in between the Old and the New Testaments.

Fourthly, the 7Q5 manuscript once again exemplifies the importance of accurate reading in manuscript studies, and vividly shows how incorrect manuscript reading can lead to all the wrong consequences when it is used as the basis of a certain hypothesis. This manuscript well illustrates the kind of results we can get regarding the relationships between the Qumran manuscripts and the New Testament, and the Qumran community and early Christian community from over-imaginative thinking not based on objective facts from literature review.

Fifthly, the 11Q13 manuscript clearly shows the role of Qumran manuscripts, in between the Old Testament and the New Testament. That is, 11Q13 provides valuable clues for understanding how Melchizedek, who was mentioned only in Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalms 110:4 of the Old Testament, comes to play an important role in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament. That is because the people of the Qumran community who knew the 11Q13 manuscript would be perfectly familiar with the Christ being referred to as Melchizedek in the book of Hebrews. In such a context, we can assume the significance of the Qumran manuscripts for our understanding of the New Testament.

The five Qumran manuscripts analyzed above suggest very important points for biblical studies. In other words, they remind us of the importance of accurate reading, reconstruction of the manuscripts, and tracing of manuscript dates in manuscript studies. On the other hand, the Qumran manuscripts are important not only for studying the history of the Old Testament text transmission and interpretation, but also for providing invaluable clues for understanding the New Testament and early Christian community.

<Abstract>

Some Practical Problems in Translating
the Book of Jeremiah

Prof. Dong-Hyun Park

(Presbyterian Theological Seminary)

In this article we take a look at some practical problems encountered in translating the Hebrew Bible into Korean, specifically centered on the Book of Jeremiah. The first text we look at is Jer. 1:1-3, the long and complicated superscription of the Book, showing the grammatical, structural and lexicographical features of the translation process. Secondly, we examine the translational consistency of some stereotyped expressions in the Book, such as 'to make ways and actions good' (7:3, 5; 18:11; 26:13) and "the word which came to Jeremiah" (7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1 etc.). Thirdly, the translations of the parallel verses of Mi. 3:12 and Jer 26:18 in Korean Bibles are evaluated. Lastly, Matt. 2:18 and Heb. 8:8-12 are examined respectively in comparison with Jer. 31:15 and 31:31-34 with regard to their translation into Korean.

<Abstract>
Exegetical Problems in Bible Translation

Prof. Tai-il Wang
(Methodist Theological Seminary)

The focus of this paper is to look at the relations between exegesis and translation, which may prevent the translation process from being faithful to the delivery of the meaning of the biblical text. It begins with an examination of the principle of dynamic equivalent translation, with its emphasis on the meaning of the text rather than its form, which has opened the way to understanding of exegesis and translation as inseparable disciplines. Exegesis is the art of describing the text, determining the voice and the meaning of the text as it is intended to be understood by its readers. Translation is asked to be involved in stating the meaning of the text in such a way as to have the readers of the translation understand the text in a way that is similar to the understanding of the original audience. The exegetical influence in translation or the translation factor in exegesis is, therefore, the subject of this thesis. Exegesis becomes a real tool for meaningful/faithful translation of the text.

Understanding of the exegetical nature of Bible translation requires us to realize what may be really useful for translators as translation resources: first, textual criticism, which is to determine what our textual decisions will be, and second, linguistic considerations that help us to pay attention to the weight/structure of words, phrases, and sentences in the translation process. Translation is the art of interpreting the text. Translators are asked to make decisions about what is being translated and how to translate specific words, phrases, and sentences from the original language. Cases in point are 13 passages in the *Revised New Korean Standard Version*, which reveal translational decisions in their notes, based on textual-critical considerations, not to follow the MT but to go with ancient translations such as the LXX, Vulgate, or the Syriac. Other examples are found in Hebrew terms and phrases in Deut. 5:17-21; 6:9; Ps. 42:1; Ruth 2:7; Jon 3:3; Ecc. 11:1-2, which have either difficult grammatical/linguistic issues or multivalent meanings in the text. When doing translation, translators must pay attention to exegetical aspects of the passage under consideration because translational decisions may weaken or change the meaning of the original text.

<Abstract>

A Study on the Korean Translations of
Official Titles in the Old Testament

Prof. Young-Jin Kim
(Yonsei University)

In translating the Hebrew Bible into Korean, it is difficult to choose proper terms for official titles. The purpose of this work is to determine proper Korean terms for some political and official titles such as שר העיר and נער, סגן, סריס, מלך, עבד, בית.

In the political context, בית does not mean house but dynasty. עבד does not mean servant but is the title of an official. Especially סריס has two different meanings: "eunuch" for foreigners but "higher military official" for Israelites. As the same, נער basically means boy or young attendant, but in the military context, it means 'armor-bearer' or 'higher military officer.'

Consequently, this study shows that some political terms should be translated into Korean according to their contexts.

<Abstract>

Some Problems in Translating Archaic Hebrew Poems with Special Reference to the Song of Moses in Deut 32:1-43 (Part II)

Prof. Jung-Woo Kim
(Chongshin University)

Following a previous paper on "Some Problems in Translating Archaic Hebrew Poems with Special Reference to the Song of Moses in Deut 32:1-18" (Part I), the author intends to finish this discussion of translation problems with reference to the rest of the Song (vv.19-43). Thus, the aim and the basic format of this paper are nearly the same as the previous one. Here, the author presents a fresh, new Korean translation of the text based on a semantic as well as stylistic analysis of the poem, together with thorough textual criticism. He also finds mythological allusions in the description of the destruction of the people of Israel in v. 24, and tries to reflect it in the translation. He finds it very difficult to figure out who the speakers are in vv. 26-35, and tentatively suggests them as follows: the word of Yahweh (v. 26-27ab), the word of the enemy (v. 27cd), the evaluation of the enemy by the poet (vv. 28-29), the word of the enemy and evaluation by the poet (v. 31), evaluation of the true nature of the enemy by the poet (vv. 32-33) and the word of Yahweh (vv. 34-35). A wide textual difference in v. 43 among the Qumran manuscript (six lines), LXX (eight lines) and MT (four lines) is suggested and evaluated with a table.

<Abstract>

Several Problems of Korean Bible Translation from the Feminist Point of View:
Based on *New Korean Standard Version*

Young-Sil Choi
(Sungkonghoe University)

Patriarchal and gender discriminatory texts and their male-oriented translations have long been abused as the "divine basis" for discriminating against and imposing silence and obedience on women. Western feminist theologians have raised feminist criticisms with regard to Bible translation. E. S. Fiorenza, in particular, has criticized the male-centered language and translation of the Bible, and scrutinized the Revised Standard Version from the feminist theological position.

Korean male translators, under the influence of Confucianism and patriarchal traditions, have used low forms of speech for women and referred to women with such disparaging words as 'omi' or 'gyejib'. Korean women theologians have pointed out the problems of gender discriminatory renderings and texts of the Bible, but none has seriously examined the problems of Korean translation from the feminist viewpoint.

It is true that the *New Korean Standard Version* published in 1993 - produced by a team of entirely male translators - did show, as Dr. Young-Jin Min has pointed out, some evidence of efforts to rid the translation of certain gender-discriminatory elements. Yet the author finds many of those unsavory elements still remaining, and believes that they ought to be put to the stringent test of feminist theology and that the results of the examination should be reflected in the next translation of the Bible.

Therefore, the author will first consider the points of Biblical translation and the problems found in the *New Korean Standard Version* from the feminist theological point of view; and will attempt a feminist, critical interpretation of some of the texts in question and translate those texts from the vantage point of feminist theology. Such an attempt will be but a beginning. Ultimately the whole Bible will have to be critically examined from the feminist theological perspective and translated anew. The whole Book must be retranslated because in Korea especially women are discriminated against and oppressed by church traditions that are deeply rooted in fundamentalist perceptions of faith.

<Abstract>
How to Translate the Prepositional Phrase?
– Focusing on διὰ, Part II–

Retired Prof. Chang-Nack Kim

(Hanshin University)

The difference between natural science and religion is the way they explain a causal relationship. The former assumes a causal relationship between two confirmed facts, while the latter presupposes unverifiable realities as the causes of certain events. The subject of s sentence with a transitive verb is considered to be the originator of the occurrence which the sentence describes, and it is to be taken for the cause of that occurrence. In the Bible there appear frequently the supernatural beings, i.e. God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and angels, as the originators of the worldly events. A difficult problem of both interpretation and translation is raised especially when the supernatural beings are described as if they were acting by putting up a mediator or an agent. The action of such an intermediary is expressed in the Greek language with the δια-phrase. A special difficulty consists in determining the amount of the role ascribed to the intermediary being. There is no exception for the English or German language, even though they have an equivalent preposition to the Greek one. Because there is no preposition in the Korean language, there arise a great deal of difficulty in translating the prepositional phrases into Korean. The above mentioned δια-phrases have been translated in the Korean Bible versions chiefly through using the words 'malmiama' and 'tonghayo'. Now we find this kind of translation to be too inaccurate expressions. Therefore it is an urgent task for the Bible translators to develop a more appropriate way of translating such δια-phrase.

Ethnographies of Speaking and
Bible Translation in Asian Contexts

Lourens de Vries*

1. Introduction

The term ethnography of speaking refers to all culturally and socially determined forms of language use: patterns of language use that both reflect and constitute cultural practices. Foley speaks of communicative relativism to denote the extent to which linguistic practices are determined by wider cultural practices and beliefs.[1] An example of a linguistic pattern that reflects and constitutes cultural practices are greetings. Foley compares Wolof greetings of West Africa and Australian greetings. Although these greetings are used in comparable social situations with at first sight similar social functions, they are totally different linguistic events. "A greeting is not simply a greeting; it is a forum in which to enact through linguistic practices the cultural ideologies of equality in Australia or inequality in West Africa."[2] Wolof is a stratified Muslim society of Senegal in which greeting rituals are used to negotiate social status among the interlocutors.[3] Other topics studied in ethnographies of speaking are crosscultural variations of Gricean Maxims, politeness and honorifics, social deixis, genre, and the linguistic construction of personhood.

For translators the area of the ethnography of speaking or cultural pragmatics is one of the most complex and demanding domains, also in translations from and to neighbouring or related languages like German and English.[4] The way translators

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1) W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics. An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 259.
2) Ibid., 259.
3) J. Irvine, "Strategies of Status Manipulation in the Wolof Greeting," R. Bauman and J. Sherzer eds., *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 167-191.
4) J. House, "Cross-cultural Pragmatics and Translation," A. Neubert and Gregory M. Shreve, eds., *Translation as Text* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1992).

as intercultural communicators mediate between the source and target ethnographies of speaking is determined by skopos factors.

First I will introduce the notion of skopos or function of translations. Then I will give an example of a specific pattern of the ethnography of speaking of a biblical text, the book of Ruth, to show how skopos factors controlled the way Bible translators mediated between the different ethnographies of speaking of ancient Israel and target communities in the Netherlands. Next I will turn to Bible translation in Asian contexts and to the ways in which in Asian Bible translations these extremely complex an delicate problems have been handled. The domain of politeness and linguistic patterns of honorifics form perhaps the most complex translational issue within the domain of intercultural mediation for Bible translators in Asian contexts. This is the reason that many Asian languages reflect in elaborate ways cultural practices and values of politeness, sociocentrism and respect.

2. Translation functions and ethnographies of speaking

2.1. The skopos or target function of translations

For most translators it is almost a platitude to say that a single translation can never show all aspects of its source text. "It is, at least it almost always is, impossible to approximate all the dimensions of the original text at the same time."[5] Translators have to choose and in that process inevitably some aspects of the source are lost. Furthermore, although some translations are excluded as wrong by the source text, there remains too much choice, since any text always can be translated in more than one way, with source texts legitimating these various ways of rendering the text. Source texts, however brilliantly analysed, 'underdetermine' their possible interpretations and translations, especially texts from Antiquity like the Bible.

Translators solve problems of selectivity and 'underdetermination' intrinsic to translation by invoking criteria *outside* their source texts. It is their only option, whether they are aware of it or not. These external criteria emerge from a complex and heterogeneous set of factors collectively referred to in translation studies as the

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5) J. Ortega y Gasset, "The Misery and Splendor of Translation," L. Venuti ed., *The Translation Studies Reader,* Esther Allen, trans. (London: Routledge, 2000), 62.

skopos or function of the translation in the target community. Take a simple Greek clause like *pantes (all) zētousin (seek) se (you)* in Mark 1:37. The Dutch *Nieuwe Vertaling* translates this clause as 'Allen (all) zoeken (seek) u (you)' and this translation shows one aspect of the source well, namely the syntax of the Greek clause but does not show the durative aspect that the Greek verb has in this verse. If translators decide to translate the durative aspect, there are various possibilities in Dutch, all equally supported by the source text. For example, the Dutch *Goed Nieuws Bijbel* has 'Iedereen loopt u te zoeken' with the durative auxiliary *lopen* 'to walk', the *Nieuwe Bijbel Vertaling* has another construction (with a form of *zijn* 'to be': 'Iedereen is naar u op zoek', literally 'everyone is for you on the look'). But the versions that reflect the durative aspect cannot at the same time reflect the syntax of the Greek clause. Conveying both the durative aspect and the syntax of the Greek source in one Dutch clause is simply impossible. Translators have to decide which aspect of the source should get priority in the translation (selectivity).

At the same time this example shows the problem of 'underdetermination': the Greek source text legitimates multiple Dutch translations like 'Iedereen is naar u op zoek', 'Iedereen loopt u te zoeken' en 'Allen zoeken u'. Translators are constantly confronted with such multiple legitimate possibilities and with source texts that are silent and refuse translators to tell which translation is the 'best'. When source texts fall silent, the translator has to turn away from it and find the answer elsewhere, and the answer is in the target or goal of the translation: what kind of text does the translator want to make, and for whom, and what kinds of things is his or her audience wanting to do with the text?

The term skopos was introduced to translation studies by Hans Vermeer[6] who views translation as action and grounded the idea of skopos not so much in selectivity and 'underdetermination' as I do but rather in the intrinsically purposive nature of all human action. For Christiane Nord "translation is the production of a functional target text maintaining a relationship with a given source text that is specified according to the intended or demanded function of the target text (translation skopos)".[7]

Now given the selectivity and 'underdetermination' of translations, how do

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6) H. J. Vermeer, "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action," L. Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader*, Andrew Chestermann, trans. (London: Routledge, 2000), 221.

7) Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Applications of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), 28.

translators into Dutch decide whether to translate Mark 1:37 as 'Iedereen is naar u op zoek' or as 'Allen zoeken u' or as 'Iedereen loopt u te zoeken'? Equivalence considerations cannot help them since all these translations can claim to be equivalent to some aspects of the source text and none is excluded by the source text, so they will have to take skopos considerations into account. The differences between the various Dutch translations follow from their skopos. For example, the Dutch *Goed Nieuws Bijbel* has a so called common language skopos. It is a translation primarily made for people outside the churches (external function). Accordingly, its translation of Mark 1:37 'Iedereen loopt u te zoeken' conveys what it means in common Dutch but does not show the form of the Greek syntax. The *Nieuwe Vertaling* of 1951 on the other hand has a church-internal skopos and was meant to function in church communities with inspiration theologies that extended the inspired nature of the Word of God to the language form of the source leading to the translation 'Allen zoeken u' that comes close to the form of the Holy Scriptures in this place and is good Dutch.

It is important to notice that source texts also *exclude* some translations like 'Sommigen (Some) zoeken (seek) u (you).' This is not trivial. In my understanding, the skopos approach is not necessarily a form of extreme relativism that wants to dethrone source texts. Following Nord[8] I use the skopos approach combined with a interpersonal loyalty notion ('function plus loyalty'). Loyalty to audiences and commissioners and loyalty to the writers of the source texts. Translating *pantes zetousin se* with 'some are looking for you' or with 'nobody is looking for you' would be disloyal to the obvious communicative intentions of the writer. With obvious intentions I mean intentions and meanings about which there is now and always has been consensus among those who can read biblical Greek. It is when the source text legitimates multiple interpretations and translations that skopos factors are needed to reach a decision, or when the translator is forced by the target language to choose between two aspects of the source that cannot be rendered in a single translation.

One can speak of function or skopos in relation to commissioners and translators who have certain skopoi or functional goals for the translation (*intended translation function*). For example a missionary may want to translate the Bible to plant a

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8) Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful activity. Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997), 123.

church in a community. In the course of time translations may acquire different functions in target communities since once born they have a functional life of their own (*acquired functions*). For example, some so called common language versions of the Bible were meant for external functions, to bring the message of Scriptures close to modern, audiences outside the churches, but many church members of churches that use older, more literal versions in the liturgy use the common language versions for private or family reading, and in some church communities common language versions are used in church services also. Communities may have expectations of translations, they expect to be able to do certain things with the text (*expected functions*). This is a crucial factor in Bible translations where the various Christian communities such as Catholics, Pentecostals or Orthodox have different theologies of Scripture, essentially different notions of 'Bible'. Sufficient overlap between the intended function and the expected function is crucial for acceptance of any new version of the Bible in the various communities. For some communities the translation must reflect the transcendent otherness of God and the translation functions mainly in the liturgy where the text is celebrated and its public reading is a sacred ritual; communication of messages is not the aim. Other communities see the Bible as messages of God for humanity, messages that should be communicated as clearly as possible.

The French literary critic Gérard Genette coined the term paratext for elements added to a text such as notes, prefaces, titles, and dedications.[9] He restricted the term to those additions that reflect the intention of authors. Paratext is a crucial, often overlooked aspect of translations. One could, with Pym,[10] even define translations a genre of texts in which paratextual elements in some way or other distinguish between the translator and the original writer(s). Paratextual elements play a crucial role in Bible translations, perhaps more than in any other type of text. In many Bible translations the text is structured in chapters, verses and pericopes, with chapter and pericope titles; there are notes of several types. There may be a preface, maps, glossaries and so on. Bible books receive titles and are presented in a particular order. Although not devoid of paratextual elements, written texts in Antiquity, including biblical texts, had very little paratext compared to modern translations of the Bible. Paratextual elements often give very clear indications of

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9) G. Genette, *Psalimpsestes: La Littérature au Second Degré* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1981).
10) A. Pym, *Method in Translation History* (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing, 1998).

the functions of Bible translations,[11] not only in prefaces but also for example in the way the text is structured in pericopes. For example, translations with ecclesiastical functions often have pericope divisions that originate in the liturgy: certain passages were read at certain times of the year. Modern Bible translations that try to express the literary structure of the biblical literature and that have a literary function in the target culture have very different pericope divisions that guide the reader to the literary and rhetorical structure of the text.

The core of the skopos of Bible translations is formed by theological and hermeneutic elements that define the notion 'Bible' for a given community and that emerge from the specific spirituality of that community. Such complex and sometimes partly implicit notions of 'Bible' define the target or goal of every new translation of the Bible. It would be misleading to call such notions of 'Bible' and the resulting functions of Bible translations 'culture-specific' translation functions, rather they emerge from global religious traditions such as Orthodox or Evangelical traditions, although local skopos factors interact with these global translation functions. The various Jewish and Christian communities have created their own Bibles in the course of their histories of translation. These creative translation histories involve the selection of textual traditions, of books to be included in the Bible, views on the relationship between the human authors and the Divine Author of the Bible, and different answers to the crucial question of the hermeneutical division of labor between tradition/Church, individual believer and Bible translation.

The skopos approach allows us to link textual shifts in translations in a systematic fashion to extra textual factors, to institutional and cultural contexts in which translations function. The skopos approach is especially appropriate for the study of Bible translations because in major languages there are many Bible translations. This means that translation decisions can be studied both with respect to source texts and with respect to other translations. Observations of translation decisions can then be linked to various functions of the translations in target communities, as I will now illustrate with Dutch and English translations of the book of Ruth

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11) L. de Vries, "Paratext and the Skopos of Bible Translations," W. F. Smelik, A. den Hollander and U. B. Schmidt, eds., *Paratext and Metatext as Channels of Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Leiden, Boston: Brill Publishers, 2003), 176-193.

2.2. Skopos and the sociocentric ethnography of speaking in Ruth

Local conceptions of personhood have been studied in cultural anthropology in terms of egocentric and sociocentric ideologies.[12] In sociocentric communities persons are largely understood to be their social positions,[13] the person is a summation of the network of social roles and relations. Two misunderstandings should be cleared away immediately. First, there are crucial differences between the various sociocentric communities and these lead to different articulations of sociocentric understanding and ideology.[14] Second, sociocentric conceptions of personhood may co-occur with well-developed awareness of one's individuality. The Korowai and other egalitarian communities of New Guinea for example combine an emphasis on the physical and oratorical strenght of individuals as crucial for achieving authority with a sociocentric conception of personhood.[15]

Sociocentric conceptions of the person express themselves in various ways in language. Shweder and Bourne point out how the Oriyas of India tend to describe personalities in terms of a cases and context approach in which a person's behavior is characterized in social interactional context.[16] When a woman is described as friendly, this would take a form like, "she brings cakes to my family on festival days" or an agressive man as one who shouts curses at his neighbours. Although personal names may be used, people are preferably referred to and addressed in terms of kinship and descent, profession, class, or other socially relevant aspects of their position in the community. In some sociocentric communities this preference is so strong that using personal names is considered very inappropriate in most contexts.

Geertz defines the egocentric conception of the person along these lines: "The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated

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12) C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

13) Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics*, 269.

14) See, M. Rosaldo, "Towards an Anthropology of Self and Feeling," R. Shweder and R. Le Vine, ed., *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 137-157.

15) L. de Vries and G. J. Van Enk, *The Korowai of Irian Java. Their Language in its Cultural Context* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

16) R. Shweder and E. Bourne, "Does the Concept of the Person vary Crossculturally?" R. Shweder and R. Le Vine, ed., *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 158-199.

motivational cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgement, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background."[17]   In Dutch society it considered essential to distinguish an individual sharply from his or her position in society. To "reduce" a person to a cluster of roles and positions would go against the fundamental value of the individual, autonomous person. People exchange personal names as soon as possible and these, rather than positional or relational terms, are then used to address and refer to people.

The Old Testament is a collection of writings originating in strongly sociocentric communities where a person is primarily seen from the perspective of social roles and relations, and of the prerogatives and obligations that go with these roles and relations. Since kinship and descent are a crucial factor in determining a person's social role and position, there is constant mentioning of the tribe or nation in which a person is born, the lineage, the family, kinship relations to socially or historically important persons. Besides genealogy, place of birth, profession or occupation, political affiliation or other things directly relevant to a person's social position may be mentioned.

In the little book of Ruth, participants like Boaz, Ruth and Naomi are good examples of persons that are referred to in sociocentric terms: there is a constant mentioning of their kinship relations, ethnic origin and the social obligations and prerogatives that go with their social position.

Take the dialogue between Naomi and Ruth when Ruth returns from the field of Boaz (2.19-22). At that point in the story the readers know very well that Naomi and Ruth relate to each other as mother-in-law and daugther-in-law. Yet the Hebrew text refers to Naomi and Ruth in 2.19 to 2.22 four times in four verses in terms of their affinal kinship relation, combining these kinship references with proper name references.

These 'redundant' sociocentric participant identifications are an example of a pragmatic pattern that is embedded in specific cultural practices. The cultural practice relevant in this case is rooted in sociocentric conceptions of the person, in the words of Foley: "… persons are largely understood to *be* their social positions. …"[18] It seems that, just like the societies of New Guinea that I lived in, ancient

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17) C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 59.
18) W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics,* 269.

Israel viewed persons primarily in terms of their relational position in society. Genealogies, references to profession or role, membership of ethnic or political groups, are culturally crucial and the pragmatics of participant handling is embedded in these cultural practices.

This constant mentioning of a person's tribe, clan, family and so on, is highly redundant and 'unnatural' from the point of view of the pragmatics of redundancy in primary Dutch texts and accordingly the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* (GNB, 1988) eliminates the four references to the affinal kinship relation of Naomi and Ruth in 2:19-22 while retaining them in 2:18 and 2:23. The *Nieuwe Vertaling* (NV, 1951) follows the participant references of the Hebrew source:

NV 2.19a:	zei	haar	schoonmoeder	tot haar
	said	her	mother-in-law	to her
GNB 2.19a:	vroeg	Noomi..		
	asked	Naomi		
NV 2.19b:	vertelde ze	haar	schoonmoeder	
	told	she	her mother-in-law	
GNB 2.19b:	vertelde		Ruth	
	told		Ruth	
NV 2.20:	zei	Naomi tot	haar schoondochter	
	said	Naomi to	her daughter-in-law	
GNB 2.20:	zei	Noomi		
	said	Naomi		
NV 2.22:	zei	Naomi	tot	Ruth, haar schoondochter
	said	Naomi	to	Ruth, her daughter-in-law
GNB 2.22:	zei	Noomi		
	said	Naomi		

By eliminating the repeated references to the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relation in these verses, the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* makes the story more like a story told in the Dutch way contrasting with the more sociocentric participant handling of the Hebrew source reflected in the *Nieuwe Vertaling*. The *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* sounds like a Dutch primary text but at a price: inasfar as the sociocentric pragmatics of person references is embedded in Hebrew cultural practices, the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* partly cuts that tie to the world behind the story of Ruth. The sociocentric ideology reflected in such person references is partly 'domesticated' to use the terminology of Venuti[19] and the 'foreign' sociocentric values are re-expressed to a certain extent in terms of the more familiar egocentric values of the target community. Hatim and Mason talk about a 'normalizing and neutralizing effect' in this context.[20]

The five references to the affinal relation between Ruth and Naomi in five verses of the *Nieuwe Vertaling* clearly constitute a violation of Dutch redundancy norms for primary texts and create pragmatic interference, making the text sound foreign, *at least in the ears of some audiences*. This last qualification is crucial since it points to the flexibility, openess and variability of the pragmatic component of languages: for some audiences perceiving the Dutch story of Ruth in the *Nieuwe Vertaling* as a secondary text, the foreigness is, paradoxically, natural. Mimetic traditions at the level of person references make it possible for church people raised in such traditions and for educated, secular audiences to suspend pragmatic norms derived from primary Dutch texts and to take the five 'redundant' references to the affinal relation in 2:19-23 as a linguistic reflex of cultural practices of other peoples, as the reflection in language of a different way of life, rather than as bad Dutch.

Ruth 1:4 tells us that Ruth is from Moab but so do 1:22; 2:2, 21 and 4:10. From a sociocentric perspective, the Moabite origin of Ruth is a central element in her identity and in the development of her identity: as often in the OT mentioning of sociocentric information has a spiritual and 'theological' dimension. Ruth's relationship to Israel and its God is portrayed against the background of Moab's relationship with Israel and its God and against that background Ruth comes to the statement so crucial in the development of her identity in the story in 1:16: 'your

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19) L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995).
20) Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *The Translator as Communicator* (London: Routledge, 1997), 145.

people shall be my people and your God shall be my God'. The Moabitess Ruth is loyal to and chooses to follow her Israelite mother-in-law and her God.

Repeating the Moabite origin of Ruth all the time that the source mentions it sounds rather redundant in Dutch, especially in 2:2 so soon after the last mentioning in 1:22. In the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* of 1988, in 2:2 and 2:21 the apposition 'de Moabitische' is left out. In the last verse of chapter 1, the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* once again emphatically indicates the Moabite origin of Ruth and the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* translators apparently felt it to be a violation of Dutch redundancy patterns to repeat the Moabite origin 'again' in the verses 2 and 21 of the second chapter.

We can understand the different ways in which these translations mediate between the ethnographies of speaking of the source and target communities in terms of their different functions in the target communities. A common language translation of Ruth, like the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel,* adjusts the sociocentric person references of the Hebrew source towards the egocentric person reference practices of the target audience but for other audiences that use the translation of Ruth to have access to a literary work of Antiquity, as a literary and cultural experience or for audiences that listen to the reading of the Bible at church, the translation would do well to retain the sociocentric flavour of the source. The resulting interference has a different communicative effect on this audience in that context of usage: they recognise the "strangeness" of the person references as a reflection of different cultural practices than their own.

3. Asian ethnographies of speaking and Bible translation

Many Asian speech communities have developed rich and elaborate linguistic means for the expression of social relations between speaker and addressee. Such linguistic practices reflect and constitute social and cultural practices of these communities and form the core of the ethnographies of speaking found in the region. Quite a few Asian languages developed elaborate systems of multiple speech levels (Korean, Balinese, Javanese) to express distinctions of respect, deference, solidarity and intimacy. Since Indo-european languages (including Greek) and Semitic languages (including Hebrew) have very different ethnographies of speaking without speech levels and elaborate honorifics, Bible translators who

translated into Asian languages have had to deal with these different ethnographies of speaking from the very beginning. I will give some examples of the fascinating ways in which translators struggled with their roles as intercultural mediators. First, I will discuss the first translation of the Bible into Javanese and the struggle to find proper speech levels and then I will turn to choices made in the area of forms of address in Malay Bibles.

3.1. Javanese speech levels: Gericke and his struggle with Kromo and Ngoko speech levels

The German J. F. Gericke (1799-1857), the first Bible translator of the Netherlands Bible Society working in Indonesia, is the translator of the first complete Bible in Javanese.[21] In 1823 he starts his training in the Netherlands studying biblical languages, Arabic and Malay and other topics. He arrives in 1827 in Java. In 1847 Gericke publishes his dictionary of Javanese and in 1848 the New Testament. Gericke regularly writes about the Javanese members of his translation team who were not only involved in teaching him Javanese and correcting his Javanese but also in drafting and checking the translation itself, people like Rd. Pandji Poespowilgo and Mas Pramadi. When Gericke's laudatory reports on Rd. Bagoes Moedjarat reach the Board of the Netherlands Bible Society, they propose that Rd. Moedjarat become directly employed by the Netherlands Bible Society.

Gericke also extensively wrote about the problems caused by the presence of speech levels in Javanese that reflect social relationships of hierarchy and solidarity (Kromo and Ngoko). Many factors enter the choice of level in Javanese, such as social status relation between speaker and addressee, their relative ages, degree of acquaintance and so on. When the Biblical source texts present dialogues, the rank differences between the interlocutors must be reflected in the choice of Kromo and Ngoko speech levels. For example how does Jesus speak to his mother in John 2:3? First Gericke decides it should be the Kromo level: "De kinderlijke eerbied jegens de ouders vereist volstrekt het Kromo" (The respect of the child in relation to the parents absolutely requires the Kromo).[22] But later he switches to Ngoko because it

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21) Section 3.1 is based on Swellengrebel 1974-1978.

22) J. L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers Voetspoor. Anderhalve Eeuw Bijbelvertaling en Taalkunde in de Indonesische Talen.* I (1820-1900) (Amsterdam, Haarlem: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1978), 80.

would express "vertrouwelijkheid en zachte terechtwijzing" (intimacy and mild rebuke). It is clear that these obligatory relationship distinctions of Javanese, reflected not just in pronoun choices or forms of address but also in choice of lexical items, particles, conjunctions and so on, imply important exegetical decisions and make the Javanese text more specific in this respect than the Hebrew and Greek sources. Interesting is also the choice of Ngoko or Kromo for the writer of the biblical texts. Luke writes his Gospel for the "most excellent Theophilus", "kratiste Theophile" in the Greek and there the Greek form of address makes abundantly clear that the addressee's of Luke's writing was (much) higher socially than Luke leading to Luke using Kromo.

But in other writings the case is less clear. Initially Gericke chooses Kromo for other books, the idea being that the audiences for those writings must have contained at least some people of high rank. Later Gericke lets the biblical writers generally use Ngoko arguing that the Spirit of God is the writer of the Bible, that Ngoko has more expressive possibilities (being the unmarked, basic form of the language) and that Kromo overemphasizes the subordinate status of the biblical writers.

3.2. Feeling uneasy in Indonesian: second person pronouns and forms of address in Indonesian Bibles

For the overwhelming majority of the speakers of Indonesian, the national language of Indonesia, Indonesian is their second language. For example, the combined population of Java, Lombok and Bali represents more than 60% of all speakers of Indonesian, and it is in the first languages of these islands that speech levels and the linguistic pragmatics of politeness and social hierarchy are essential. The ethnographies of speaking of languages like Javanese strongly influences the way these speakers use Indonesian. Ugang and Soesilo point out how first language interaction with Indonesian complicates Bible translation in Indonesian in the domain of politeness, honorifics and speech levels.[23] Take the speakers of Indonesian that have Javanese as mother tongue. "Lacking the exact Indonesian equivalent for the Javanese Kromo term *panjenengan* 'you', Javanese Indonesians

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23) Hermogenes Ugang and Soesilo Daud, "Are Honorific Terms of Address Necessary in the Indonesian Bible?" *The Bible Translator* 42:4 (1991), 442-447.

will use terms of address such as Bapak 'father', Ibu 'mother', Tuan 'master', or Nyonya 'madam' to show respect … no Javanese will ever use the pronouns *engkau* or *kamu* to address a second person who has a higher status than the speaker. With this perspective Indonesians of Javanese background feel uneasy when *engkau* and *-mu* are used to address God or Jesus".[24]   But this is exactly what happens in the standard Indonesian version, the *Terjemahan Baru*. Take the translation of Mark 1:37 *pantes (all) zetousin (seek) se (you, sg)*. In the *Terjemahan Baru* (1987, TB) version this rendered as "Semua (all) orang (people) mencari (seek) Engkau (you)". The TB version as a rule tries to stay close to the (syntactic) form of the Greek, rendering nouns with nouns, pronouns with pronouns and so on, and preserving where possible Greek word order, just like other major formal translations. Since the Greek word order has a second person personal pronoun in this clause *(se)*, the Indonesian TB translates with the second person pronoun *engkau* which sounds rude and impolite in this context where Simon and other disciples are addressing their *guru* Jesus, their religious teacher, their rabbi. But for Indonesian speakers with Papuan backgrounds the use of *engkau* to address God or Jesus does not sound impolite or marked at all. They use second person pronouns in ways comparable to biblical Greek, often in combination with kinship terms to address people in polite fashion.

The Indonesian translation *Kabar Baik* (1985, BIS) renders Mark 1:37 as "Semua orang sedang mencari Bapak". The BIS version is a common language version that is meaning-oriented and emphasizes clarity and naturalness. Naturalness implies adjustment to the ethnography of speaking of its target audience. Since the majority of its intended audience would never address a religious teacher and leader with the second person pronoun *engkau*, the BIS version uses the polite and respectful form of address *Bapak* (Father, Sir).

Again, it is the skopos or function of these Indonesian versions that determines how the translators mediated between the ethnographies of speaking of source and target communities. There is an extra complication for translators into Indonesian because there is no uniform ethnography of speaking: there are significant regional differences in the ways Indonesia is used.

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24) Ibid., 444.

3.3. Globalisation of ethnographies of speaking: another look at Ruth

In subtle ways the ethnography of speaking of (American) English is manifesting itself increasingly in the way speakers of my native tongue, Dutch, use their language, for example in forms of address and forms of greetings, in the role of personal names in reference and address, and so on. The more egalitarian American ethnography of speaking replaces older forms of using Dutch that reflected a more hierarchical society with a far less egalitarian ethnography of speaking. It seems very likely that Asian speech communities similarly experience the dynamics of globalisation, especially in younger speakers that feel attracted to (certain) aspects of the American way of life. Of course, the ways in which such influences are absorbed and responded to, are highly dependent on existing cultural frameworks: foreign influences are always filtered and adapted in the process of absorption.

Let us now have another look at the passage discussed above, Ruth 2:19-22, in two English versions and one Indonesian version.

First, in the King James Version:

[19] "And her *mother in law* said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take notice of thee. And she shewed *her mother in law* with who she had wrought and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. [20] And Naomi said unto *her daughter in law*, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. [21] And Ruth, *the Moabitess*, said, He said unto me also. Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. [22] And Noami said unto Ruth, *her daughter in law*, It is good, *my daughter*, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field."

Notice that kin terms for mother-in-law and daughter-in-law occur four times in these four verses, just as in the Hebrew text, and that Ruth is referred to as Ruth, the Moabitess in 21. The sociocentric ethnography of speaking is transformed to a egocentric one in the Common English Version, for example in verse 19 the

Common English Version uses only personal names (Naomi and Ruth) where the Hebrew and the King James use kinship terms.

> [19] *Naomi* said, Where did you work today? Whose field was it? God bless the man who treated you so well! Then *Ruth* told her that she had worked in the field of a man named Boaz. [20] The LORD blesses Boaz! *Naomi* replied. He has shown that he is still loyal to the living and to the dead. Boaz is a close relative, one of those who is supposed to look after us. [21] *Ruth* told her, Boaz even said I could stay in the field with his workers until they had finished gathering all his grain. [22] *Naomi* replied, My daughter, it's good that you can pick up grain alongside the women who work in his field. Who knows what might happen to you in someone else's field!

In the whole book of Ruth the Common English Version removed 8 out of the 10 mothers in law. The constant sociocentric mentioning of a person's tribe, clan, family relationship and so on, is highly redundant and 'unnatural' from the point of view of the ethnography of speaking of English and is accordingly transformed.

The Indonesian common language version BIS renders the passage in Ruth 2 as follows:

> [19] Maka berkatalah *Naomi* kepadanya, "Di mana kau mendapat semuanya ini? Di ladang siapa kau bekerja hari ini? Semoga Allah memberkati orang yang berbuat baik kepadamu itu!"
> Maka *Rut* menceritakan kepada *Naomi* bahwa ladang tempat ia memungut gandum itu adalah milik seorang laki-laki bernama Boas.
> [20] "Nak, orang itu keluarga dekat kita sendiri," kata *Naomi*. "Dialah yang harus bertanggung jawab atas kita. Semoga TUHAN memberkati dia. TUHAN selalu menepati janji-Nya, baik kepada orang yang masih hidup maupun kepada mereka yang sudah meninggal." [*]
> [21] Kemudian *Rut* berkata lagi, "Bu, orang itu mengatakan juga bahwa saya boleh terus memungut gandum bersama para pekerjanya sampai hasil seluruh ladangnya selesai dituai."
> [22] "Ya, nak," jawab *Naomi* kepada *Rut*, "memang lebih baik kau bekerja bersama para pekerja wanita di ladang Boas. Sebab, kalau kau pergi ke ladang orang lain, kau bisa diganggu orang di sana!"

Just like the Dutch and English common language versions discussed above the Indonesian common language version (BIS) transforms the sociocentric references of the Hebrew to egocentric ones: in verse 21 the apposition "the Moabitess" is removed and the four references to the mother/daughter in law relationship found in the Hebrew are also removed.

Now if it is true that Indonesian society generally speaking can be characterized as sociocentric, why would the Indonesian common language version transform the sociocentrism of the source into a egocentric target text? Two answers are possible. The first would be that the Indonesian common language versions, like the Dutch, is influenced by the English model translations like the Good News Bible and the Common English Version, the mothers of all common language versions.

This may be partially true but notice that the Indonesian BIS is quite independent from the English models in other respects, for example in the use of the forms of address "nak" ("child") and "Bu" ("mother"). Therefore I am inclined to give another answer. The opposition sociocentric (East) versus egocentric (West) is too simplifying and does not take into account that Western and Asian societies have very intensive contacts and exchanges of people, ideas, foods, clothing and so on. This causes the picture to be much more dynamic and complicated. Just like in Dutch there is an increase of the use of personal names in Indonesian in various contexts, following the American ethnography of speaking, where in the recent past personal names would be avoided or used in combination with respectful forms like Pak and Bu. If this is true this complicates the work of Bible translators in languages like Indonesian and Korean because the rules governing speech levels or forms of address are no longer stable and predictable and may vary within the speech community, for example younger urban people with a lot of education may be much more influenced by egalitarian norms from American English than, say, older persons living far from the cities.

For national languages such as Indonesian this would mean that not only there are regional differences in the area of the ethnography of speaking (for example differences between Javanese and Papuan speakers of Indonesian) but that there are also differences between speakers caused by different exposure to languages such as American English.

4. Conclusions

Linguistics in the second half of the 20th century, the time when Nida and Naber wrote their influential books on Bible translation, was dominated by people like Noam Chomsky and by the quest for universals, especially universal *formal* properties of language *systems,* mostly in the area of syntax. Towards the end of the 20th century attention shifted back from language system to language use, from formal universals to functional differences. As long as the scholarly eye is focused on formal syntax, universals come to the fore but as soon as attention is payed to patterns of language *use,* there is renewed attention for the ways linguistic practices reflect and constitute cultural differences. This shift has important consequences for scholarly reflection on Bible translation. The way Hebrew and Greek are used in biblical texts reflects cultural practices. At the same time their target languages are interwoven with the cultural practices of target communities. Translators have to make difficult decisions in the way they mediate between the ethnographies of speaking of source and target communities. Bible translators always work in specific times and places and for specific audiences that want to do specific things with the translated Bibles. It is these functions of the Bible in target communities that determine the ways translators carry out their roles as intercultural mediators.

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The Tower of Babel:
Adventures in Biblical Interpretation

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This is not a paper on Genesis 11:1-9. I'm using the Tower of Babel as an image to portray the situation we are facing today. The image is meant to be evocative rather than exact. It is not possible for a simple image to serve as an exact representation of complex realities. The image used here is meant to portray some broad pictures or simple generalizations. Exceptions are to be expected.

I'm using the Tower of Babel in two different ways. On the one hand, the Tower of Babel is a symbol of human collaboration and achievement. In Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel is meant to be the rallying point, the visible and unifying center of humanity. In a sense, it symbolizes human aspirations and the pinnacle of human achievements.

On the other hand, the Tower of Babel is also a place of confusion. There was a confusion of tongues. This confusion led the builders of the tower to part ways. There were fragmentation, chaos and disaster.

In this paper, the image of the Tower of Babel serves a dual function: stability as well as chaos. It is an unstable image, yet it serves to highlight the situation we are in today.

1. The Tower of Babel as a symbol of human achievement

The ancient Tower of Babel has its counterparts today. Human beings seem to be fascinated with towers. Towers symbolize human aspirations and achievements. Some modern day towers include the once existed (pre 9/11) World Trade Center Twin Towers, Eiffel Tower, Tokyo Tower, Sears Tower, the Toronto CN Tower, the Pearl of Orient Tower in Shanghai, the Petronas Twin Towers and Kuala Lumpur

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Tower. All these towers are visible symbols of extensive human coloration, progress and achievement.

This image of the tower can also serve as a symbol of the modern period. The modern period has seen great innovations and technological breakthroughs. The following excerpt is a clear indication of how far we have come:

> Einstein said in 1932 that 'There is not the slightest indication that nuclear energy will ever be obtainable'. ⋯ Franklin Delano Roosevelt predicted, when he was Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Navy, that airplanes would never be useful in battle against a fleet of ships. ⋯ In 1883, Lord Kelvin, president of the Royal Society and no mean scientist himself, predicated that 'X-ray will prove to be a hoax'. ⋯ 'Everything that can be invented, has been invented,' Charles H. Duell, commissioner of the U.S. Patents Office, was said to have announced – in 1899.[1]

Things thought impossible before are now common commodities and taken for granted. Modernity has constructed its own Tower of Babel, and it is an impressive structure.

2. The Tower of Babel as a symbol of chaos

The tower constructed by modernity stood tall and majestic. But with the passage of time, cracks began to appear, and we noticed that the foundation is made of clay instead of steel.

Science and technology has developed by leaps and bounds. Today, we are living in a global village: with travel made easy by cheap airfares, information readily available via cable television networks, and instantaneous communications made possible by broadband Internet connections. Yet this global village is also one filled with cultural fragmentation and tribalism. In the field of biblical interpretation, we are seeing an increasing fragmentation in the interpretations of a particular text. Localism, fragmentation and globalization seem to go hand in hand together.

Human beings who are supposed to have come of age failed to live up to expectation.

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1) *Times* 2004. 10. 25, 41.

After two world wars to put an end to all wars, wars are still being fought in different parts of the world today.

The Asia-wide economic crash of 1997 resulted in plunging stock markets, depreciation of currencies, wiping out wealth, jobs and even lives. There is a sense of anxiety, despair, or even the lost of hope.

The once imposing and majestic World Trade Center Twin Towers are no more. When I first saw the images of the planes crushing into the towers on the Television screen, without knowing what had actually happened, I thought I was seeing a prelude of the latest Hollywood movie!

All of a sudden, we work up and found ourselves living in a strange new world. The world is not as stable or secure as we had thought.

We begin to realize that human history is not necessarily a continual progress towards greater heights. The Hegelian synthesis is not always an upward movement. It can spiral down to the depths of destruction as well.

We found out that the Tower of Babel constructed by modernity is built on shaky foundation. It is not as solid or stable as we once thought. The imposing tower began to show cracks and signs of crumbling.

The notion of progress, the reign of reason, science and technology, so cherished in the modern period, are now placed under scrutiny. This questioning and assessment of modernity, together with a complex of other factors, have led to shifts in mind sets and new approaches towards arts and culture, or what is called postmodernism by some scholars.

3. Uses of the term "Postmodernism"

It is difficult to locate the starting point of postmodernism. Postmodernism is a set of ideas that appear in different disciplines: arts, architecture, fashion, film, music, sociology, technology and philosophy.[2] Postmodernism is a broad and ambiguous term. It can point to different things in different contexts and may mean different things to different ones. Nevertheless, postmodernism emerged as an area of

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2) For a helpful discussion of the origins of postmodernism in the various disciplines, see Michael Drolet, *The Postmodern Reader: Foundational Texts* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-35.

academic studies only in the mid-1980s.[3)]

Some of the meanings of the term "postmodernism" are listed below:[4)]

1) After modernism (subsumes, assumes, extends the modern or tendencies already present in modernism, though not necessarily in strict chronological succession).

2) Contra modernism (subverting, resisting, opposing, or countering features of modernism). A couple of representatives of this view are A.K.M. Adam[5)] and Max Charlesworth.[6)]

3) Equivalent to "late capitalism(post-industrial, consumerist, and multi- and trans-national capitalism)".[7)]

4) Artistic and stylistic eclecticism (hybridization of forms and genres, mixing styles of different cultures or time periods, de- and re- contextualizing styles in architecture, visual arts, literature).

5) Global-village phenomena: globalization of cultures, races, images, capital, and products.

Besides the above, Jean-Francois Lyotard simplifies his definition of the postmodern as "incredulity toward metanarratives."[8)] Some scholars (e.g., Richard Rorty, Habermas and Anthony Giddens), on the other hand, viewed the term "postmodernism" as a misnomer. What we are facing today, they argued, is best described as hyper-modernism or the last gasps of modernity.[9)]

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3) Mary Klages, "Postmodernism" (www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/pomo.html: April 21, 2003).

4) Cf. Martin Irvine, "The Postmodern" (www.georgetown.edu/faculty/jrvinem/technoculture/ pomo.html: 1998); George Aichele et al., eds., *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1995), 8-9.

5) A. K. M. Adam, *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 1.

6) Max Charlesworth, *Philosophy and Religion: From Plato to Postmodernism* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2002), 156.

7) Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

8) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

9) Mark R. Schwehn, "Christianity and Postmodernism: Uneasy Allies," David A. Hoekema and Bobby Fong, eds., *Christianity and Culture in the Cross Fire* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 157.

For the sake of this paper, I will follow the majority and use the term "postmodernism" instead of debating the merits or demerits of using such a term. Neither will I discuss whether we should be talking about postmodernism or postmodernisms. In addition, I will simply narrow down the focus by looking at postmodernism in the field of humanities only.

Before that, we need to make a distinction between postmodernism and postmodernity. Postmodernism can be broadly described as an open set of approaches, styles or attitudes towards arts and culture. Postmodernity, on the other hand, refers to a historical period. The terms are not synonymous.

I do not see postmodernism as succeeding or replacing modernism in a linear fashion. We are living in the period of overlap between modernism and postmodernism. Both are present at the same time. In addition, a person can live in the postmodern world without subscribing to the mindsets of postmodernism.

As noted above, postmodernism is a broad and ambiguous term. Different scholars use the term in different ways to refer to various phenomena. Despite the various usages of the term, there are some general features associated with this term.

4. Some Salient features of Postmodernism

1) Anti-foundationalism.[10] Postmodernism rejects any premise as the unassailable starting point for establishing truth-claims. It insists that there is no context-free, perspective-free approach to interpretation. Meaning is relative and indeterminate. Knowledge is uncertain at best.

2) Anti-totalizing.[11] Postmodernism rejects all metanarratives.[12] Postmodern thinkers suspect that metanarratives suppress counterexamples and are oppressive in nature. There is a deep-seated skepticism towards absolute or

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10) Foundationalism refers to the external and immutable bedrock of first principles from which knowledge can be pitched. There are two forms of this: the rationalism of Descartes and the empiricism of Locke and Hume. The outcome is that meaning is clear and objective, based on some external reality. See Millard Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 128.

11) A. K. M. Adam, *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 7-10.

12) A metanarrative is an overarching narrative by which all other stories make sense. It unifies and accounts for everything.

     universal truth-claims.

  3) Demystification. Postmodern discourse suggests that appeals to abstract universal categories or cosmic laws are but mystifications of more concrete and worldly (economic, political) reasons. Mystifications are nothing but ideological projections.[13]

  4) The inherent goodness of knowledge is questioned. Discovery of truth may not eradicate evils or social ills. Knowledge can be used for destructive ends (e.g., wars). Hence the notion of progress is rejected.[14]

  5) The supremacy of the scientific method of inquiry is questioned. "Truth is not known simply through reason, but through other channels, such as intuition."[15]

There is a spectrum of postmodern thoughts, ranging from strong or radical postmodernism to moderate postmodernism. The moderate form of postmodernism is less vulnerable to criticism, but it is also less unique. On the other hand, the radical strand of postmodernism preserves its uniqueness, but it is also more vulnerable to criticism.[16] In the following, I will make some general comments without trying to sift through the various strands of postmodernism.

Postmodernism has aroused a wide spectrum of reactions. Some accepted it wholehearted, treating it as some form of salvation or the latest intellectual fashion. Others rejected it vehemently with or without really knowing what it is all about. I do not find these extremes forms of reactions helpful. It is perhaps better to deal with it critically and assess its contents and premises. Postmodernism may carry with it both promises and threats, opportunities as well as dangers.

In dealing with postmodernism, I will use the image of looking for gems in a quarry. In the quarry, I might find some precious gems, but there is also a lot of rubbish. There may also be artifacts that I'm not sure of their values. I will try to gather the gems, throw away the rubbish, and keep the artifacts aside for further examination. This pragmatic choose and pick approach is based on trial and error.

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13) Ibid., 11.

14) Millard Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 18-19.

15) Ibid., 19.

16) Millard J. Erickson, *The Postmodern World: Discerning the Times and the Spirit of Our Age* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002), 87; Thomas Guarino, "Between Foundationalism and Nihilism: Is Phronesis the via Media for Theology?" *Theological Studies* 54 (1993), 40.

Mistakes of judgment are bound to occur. Sometimes I might throw away gems that I failed to recognize and pick up rubbish instead!

In relation to the realm of biblical interpretation, I find certain aspects of postmodernism helpful and challenging. At the same time, I question some of its presuppositions and find other aspects unpalatable. The following are a few personal reflections. They are never meant to be exhaustive or conclusive. It is a work in progress.

5. Postmodernism and biblical interpretation

5.1. Partial understanding of truth

Postmodernism highlights the fact that a person's understanding of a particular text is at best partial. I look at a text from a particular perspective or presupposition. My understanding of a text is historically and culturally conditioned. My upbringing and experiences affect the way I look at things. I filter what I read through my colored lenses and I do not have access to the entire truth in all its perspectives. Postmodernism has been helpful by foregrounding these hidden factors.

This idea of partial understanding of truth need not imply that there is no such thing as absolute truth. That is a matter of faith claim or presupposition. What it does mean is that I do not understand truth absolutely. There are different perspectives of looking at things. Therefore there is some degree of tentativeness in my understanding. Paul echoes a similar view when he describes the incompleteness of human understanding in the realm of spiritual matters, seeing dimly, like cloudy reflections in a mirror (1 Cor 13.12).

The multiplicity of voices in various parts of the Bible also cautions us against absolutizing our readings of any one text. The emphasis on corporate punishment in various parts of the Pentateuch is countered by the emphasis on individual accountability, especially in the book of Ezekiel (e.g., Ezk 18). The change in historical context during the Babylonian Exile may have contributed towards this change in emphasis. There are emphases on divine sovereignty as well as human free will in the Bible. Jesus talks about loving one's enemies (Mat 5:44), but he also pronounces a series of woes on the scribes and Pharisees (Mat 23:13-36). These opposite strands caution us against universalizing a particular voice in the Bible. We

are presented with partial pictures at best, and our readings of these partial pictures are less than complete.

Some might take this perspectival nature of knowing to its extreme and argue that all views are equally valid and legitimate. This may well lead to chaos and cause us to drift aimlessly in total subjectivity. I do not find this extreme form helpful. If we are aware of our presuppositions or the perspectives from which we look at things, there is a possibility that we can strive to minimize our own biases and move toward a more "objective" understanding. Here I do not mean total objectivity, but at least a more commonly agreed and accepted view.

In addition, human beings do have critical self-consciousness, and this allows us to look at things from others' perspectives and to learn from them. We may only be able to enter the other person's perspective partially, but at least this will help us to gain some insight from the viewpoints of others. This self-consciousness may help us to modify or change our views. In so doing, it may help us to strive towards some measure of objectivity.

This idea of perspectival understanding does not necessarily mean that truth is fluid or relative. It is just that our appreciation of it is relative.

Another helpful aspect raised by postmodern scholars is the relationship between power and truth. Sometimes what is presented as truth may be nothing more than the viewpoint of the power elite. Truth can be manipulated by the rich and powerful to suit their own ends, and often their view is the one that is preserved. We see this very clearly, for instance, among the politicians, especially during election campaigns. The opposing camps construe the same event in totally different light in order to take credit for themselves and put the blame on the other party.

Power can be used to manipulate truth or to punish recalcitrant dissidents. It is certainly helpful to be reminded that all too often, power is used as a means of control or punishment rather than for the benefit of all. In some cases, the rich and powerful can even manipulate court verdicts, resulting in injustice and the distortion of truth.

In this regard, a healthy doze of skepticism on the part of the interpreter may be needful. Feminist criticism and ideological criticism, for instance, have helped us to see the power dynamics in the texts. In looking at a book or a text, we can ask, "Whose view is being presented here?" "Who benefits from this presentation of events?" Here, the hermeneutics of suspicion may be helpful.

While postmodern scholars have helpfully highlighted the relationship between power and truth, the presupposition that the quest for truth is "everywhere and always a disguised quest for power and dominion"[17] and will therefore lead to repression is too sweeping. The quest for truth need not always be a disguised quest for power and dominion. The quest for truth could be a quest for freedom or justice. In addition, power is not inherently bad in itself. The real issue is how power is put to use. Power need not necessarily be exercised top down, it can be exercised along side or from bottom up. Power can be used to empower the powerless or help the needy.

5.2. Author, Reader, Text

When I first started studying the Bible, I was told that biblical interpretation means seeking to uncover the authorial intention. The maxim is that I should try to understand the text as it was intended or understood by the original author. I happily went along with this approach.

Gradually, I begin to realize that often, I do not really know who wrote or edited a particular book in the Bible. This is especially true in the OT. Even in cases where I'm quite sure who the authors might be, how could I find out about their intention? How could I look behind the text to authorial intention? All I have are copies or translations of the texts. In practice, the appeal to authorial intention seems problematic.

While traditional methods of interpretation emphasize the author, there is a postmodern shift to the readers. Postmodern scholars have highlighted the role of the readers in creating meaning. Readers construct meaning as they read. Texts are interpreted according to the readers' aims, values and contexts. This has resulted in the multiplicity of interpretations that confront us today, all claiming to be valid and legitimate.

What are we to do with this postmodern flux?

In the light of this emphasis on the readers, David Clines has proposed an End-User theory of interpretation. In this postmodern world, there are no 'right' interpretations, no universally acceptable interpretations. It is therefore useless for

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17) Schwehn, "Christianity and Postmodernism: Uneasy Allies," 161.

interpreters to try to come up with interpretations that can command universal acceptance. In fact, interpreters do not even know whether their interpretations are right or wrong. They only know whether their views have been accepted.[18] Audience acceptance is the key issue in interpretation.

In view of this, the best that interpreters can do is to produce interpretations they can sell. They should aim at producing customized interpretation for the clients, cutting the garments according to the clients' requests and shapes.[19] Since it is the customers who decide whether an interpretation is accepted or not, they are the ones who call the shots. "Those who pay the piper get to call the tune".[20] Those who pay for our services decide what we should do!

How do we feel about this postmodern hijack by the readers or clients?

I find some aspects of this focus on the readers helpful. Readers do interact with the text in the creation of meanings. The construction of meanings takes place some where in the interaction between the readers and the text. In addition, we are all interested readers. We approach the text with our own aims and interests. The multiplicity of interpretations of a particular text may be in part be due to the differences in the readers' aims, interests and contexts.

Having said that, I find it difficult to accept the thesis that the meaning of a text is entirely what the reader makes it to be. I also find it difficult to accept that all interpretations are equally valid, and that the goal of interpretation is to produce readings that we can sell.

Acceptance by the readers is certainly an important factor that deserves to be highlighted, but I do not think it is a sufficient criterion by itself. Some readers may not have the necessary skills to make proper evaluations of the various interpretations that are being offered. The competence of the readers needs to be taken into consideration as well.

In this regard, I find it helpful to analyze, and help the readers to analyze, the process by which they arrive at their interpretations. An awareness of how our socio-cultural contexts, the presuppositions and the aims we bring to the text affect us in the process of meaning-construction is helpful. This may help to induce some

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18) David J. A. Clines, *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967-1998,* 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 59.
19) Ibid., 60.
20) Ibid., 61.

critical reflection and evaluation on the part of the interpreters. While different interpretations may be plausible, there are limits as well. It is certainly not a case of anything goes.

In practice, I do not know if we can actually live with the idea that meanings are entirely created by the readers and therefore all views are equally legitimate. I wonder how communication is possible if we hold on to such a view.

Imagine someone read a postmodern writing and then told the author, "There is a lack of clarity and coherence in your writing. This reflects a lack of clarity and coherence in your mind. Your mind is confused and disturbed. You have a mental problem. I suggest that you should stop writing, go and consult a psychiatrist instead".

I wonder how the postmodern author would respond. Would he still insist that meaning is entirely constructed by the reader and therefore all interpretations are equally legitimate? Would he instead reply, "Thank you for that very interesting comment. I guess the mental problem is yours, not mine!"

Even deconstructionists who revel in textual ambiguities and indeterminacies do write and expect their writings to be read and understood!

I'm more incline to think that texts do carry intended meanings, and these set boundaries on what constructed meanings are plausible. How clearly the intended meanings of the text are being communicated is another issue. Some texts may be ambiguous and therefore capable of interpreted in multiple ways. The ambiguity may be due to the aims of the writers, the technique of composition or the lack there of, or some other factors.

The presence of multiple interpretations of the same text does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that texts do not carry intended meanings. I presume when the President of the United States of America gave the order to his troops to "free" Iraq, the text does carry intended meanings and is meant to be understood. It is not simply left to the readers to construct meanings as they like without paying attention to the intention of the text. Similarly, when the High Court of Malaysia gave the verdict in September 2004 to release the former Deputy Prime Minister from prison, the text does carry an intended meaning, understood by the people. In these instances, the intended meanings of the texts are relatively clear.

The postmodern situation has sensitized us to the importance of the reader's context and the role of the readers in the construction of meanings, resulting in a multiplicity of interpretations. But at the same time, we should not loose sight of the context of the text. We should keep these contexts together.

Text and its context do set boundaries on what meanings are plausible. Here I do mean there is only one legitimate meaning to the text. I'm talking about a trajectory of meanings. A text may point to a trajectory of plausible meanings instead of "having" only one meaning.

In the case of biblical texts, we are far removed from the cultural, historical and linguistic situations surrounding these texts, and these gaps complicate matters. It may be difficult, and sometimes impossible to grasp the intended meanings of some texts. I may not get at the intended meanings of the text fully. This is not a problem. I'm not talking about exactness, but approximations. My aim is to get at some adequate readings of the text, not the meaning of the text.

In view of the multiplicity of interpretations available today, I also find myself thinking more and more in terms of an ethics of interpretation. What does this interpretation do to me and to others? When I propose this interpretation, am I doing justice to the text and to the community for whom I serve? Perhaps there need to be a sense of accountability between text, the interpreters and the communities for whom they serve.

5.3. Degrees of determinacy

In biblical interpretation, we are increasingly faced with the situation of multiplicity of readings. The abundance of different translations of the same bible text and the ever-increasing number of commentaries with diverse interpretations are indications of this flux.

Part of this fluidity is due to the fact that words are more like pointers rather than containers. A word may point to a trajectory of meanings. For instance, the Hebrew word "bat" in the OT can point to the following items, to name a few:
  - Daughter by birth.
  - Daughter-in-law. For instance, in the book of Ruth, Naomi calls her daughter-in-law as "daughter" (Ruth 1:11, 12, 13; 2:2, 22b; 3:1, 16, 18).
  - Young woman (Ruth 2:8; 3:10, 11).

- Metaphorical use of daughter. Zion is often described as daughter Zion (Isaiah 1:8; 10:32; 16:1).

While the word "bat" can point to a range of meanings, it does not imply that there are no limits to its meanings. Whatever meanings the word "bat" may point to in the OT, it probably does not point to "heaven", "cat", or "cheese".

In dealing with a text, I prefer to think in terms of the degrees of determinacy. Context and genre will influence the degree of determinacy. For instance, a coded military message in a war situation probably does carry highly determinate meaning. It is important to find out the intended meaning of the codes. Failure to get at the intended message could mean death or defeat. This genre of text may have a high degree of determinacy.

On the other hand, thrillers written to entertain or tease our imaginations may be deliberately ambiguous, filled with gaps, twists and turns of events. This kind of text may have a relatively high degree of indeterminacies.

If the above is true, then we have a continuum ranging from high determinacy to high indeterminacies, and points in between. Genres, contexts, and the intentions of the texts play significant roles in influencing the degrees of determinacy.

In trying to work out the plausible meanings of a text, perhaps we can think in terms of a series of related circles, each influencing the other. Any change in one part influences the whole. The meanings of a word are dependent on the meanings of a sentence. Similarly, the meanings of a sentence are dependent on the meanings of individual words. They are also dependent on the meanings of the larger passage as a whole. Conversely, the meanings of the passage are dependent upon the meanings of individual sentences and words. There are mutual causalities. Any change in one part influences the whole.[21]

Some additional circles that might help us decide which meanings are acceptable include:[22]

- The circle of praxis, in terms of individual piety, church worship and service, and involvement in society. Our understanding of the Bible does not always proceed in a linear fashion from theory to praxis. Sometimes we may begin with praxis and later postulate theory to fit our praxis.

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21) Edgar V. McKnight, "A Defense of a Postmodern Use of the Bible," Michael S. Horton, ed., *A Confessing Theology for Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 77.

22) Ibid., 77-80.

  - The circle of doctrine, in terms of how this reading relates to the doctrines of the church.
  - The circle of history and historical study
  - The circle of language and literature, in terms of whether the language allows for such a reading.

5.4. Multiplicity of methods

When I first studied theology, I learned the "grammatico-historical" method of exegesis. I was warned against reading my views and presuppositions into the text. Instead, I need to go through the time tunnel, transport myself back into the author's mind and times, and to listen to his words as if I'm among the original audience. Later, when I went to the U.S. for further studies, I was exposed to the historical-critical method. That was the method of biblical interpretation at that time. I learned to pursue highly technical matters or engaged in complex historical reconstructions. The text is placed under the tight scrutiny of reason.

In the last few decades, scholars began to talk about the limitations and one-sidedness associated with each methodology. A particular methodology is conditioned by the cultural context from which it develops. The use of "a given critical methodology, besides providing exegetes with the critical methods necessary for identifying several textual dimensions, predetermines the value judgment of these dimensions, posits their hierarchization, and thus engenders a one-dimensional exegesis".[23]

Outside the academy, the results of historical-critical studies are generally felt to be irrelevant, or even dangerous to Christian praxis. As a result, the pursuit of the critical scholarship is often viewed with suspicions by the churches and the lay Christians.

In the last few decades, we have seen the decline of the hegemony of the historical-critical approach of studying the Bible. This is partly due to the decline of the reign of science and reason. In the modern period, science has often set the agenda for biblical interpretation. Scholars have tried to harmonize the scripture text with scientific discoveries. For instance, various interpretations of Genesis 1 (the

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23) Daniel M. Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 46.

gap theory, the day-age theory) are basically attempts to harmonize the text with scientific findings. Other examples of imaginative harmonization of biblical text with the so-called scientific discoveries are too numerous to cite. As a result, the text has been submerged under the cold waters of scientism.

With the advent of postmodernism, there is now the realization that science is basically built on presuppositions. Science is not a neutral or objective pursuit. When probe rigorously, scientists have to admit that the foundation of science "looks much like the foundations of what was traditionally called religion: they cannot be established with hard proofs; they can only be discussed in the kind of language, or rhetoric, always employed by theologians".[24] Scientific experiments are geared towards a certain set of pre-determined goals. Its scope is rather limited and there is a degree of tentativeness in its conclusions. In addition, funding, self-interest and the imperfections of the scientists affect the pursuit of science.

There is also the recognition that human reasoning is not neutral, neither is it a natural universal category. There are different traditions of reasoning. Human reasoning is conditioned by socio-historical circumstances. It is bound by specific paradigms.[25] For instance, one paradigm of reasoning may reject miracles or supernatural occurrences, while another may allow for those occurrences.

The limitation of logic has also been noted. This is not something new. The ancient sages realized this long ago. "Heraclitus said, 'You cannot step into the same river twice' and his student added, 'not even once, since there is no **same** river.' The ancient Eristics showed the unreliability of logic alone".[26]

This loosening of the biblical text and the methods of study from the tight control of reason and scientism is a good thing. Biblical interpretation is emancipated from the tyranny of modernity and scientism. At least, there is an opening for the ancient, pre-scientific biblical texts to speak with their own voices, no matter how strange those may be, instead of being domesticated under scientism.

At the same time, there is an explosion of methods or approaches in biblical interpretation: Social-Scientific approaches, Canonical approaches, Rhetorical

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24) Wayne C. Booth, "Deconstruction as a Religious Revival," David A. Hoekema and Bobby Fong, eds., *Christianity and Culture in the Cross Fire* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 138.
25) Guarino, "Between Foundationalism and Nihilism," 45-48.
26) Eugene T. Gendlin and Richard A. Shweder, "Conference on After Postmodernism" (http://www.focusing.org/apm.htm, 1998).

approaches, Narrative approaches, Reader-Response criticism, Feminist criticism and Ideological criticism, to name a few. This mushrooming of methods is a healthy development. There is an increasing realization that no one method is the gatekeeper to all truth. In that sense, there is no one right method. We are talking about a multiplicity of legitimate methods. This is an exciting development. Different methods can be used to shed light on different aspects of the texts. Different methods allow us to look at the text from different angles or perspectives, and this can enrich our understanding of the text.

5.5. The purpose of interpretation

The postmodern situation has sensitized us to the different aims of the interpreters when they approach a text. Some may want to find out what the text meant and what it means for us today. Others may be content to use the text for their own purposes. The difference in aims may lead to different treatments of the text.

The postmodern emphasis on humor and play provides an alternative to sterile and antiquarian modes of research. Some biblical texts are indeed rich in humor and irony. I'm often amused whenever I read the account of the creation of woman in Genesis 2. After the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner" (2:18), God proceeded to make birds and animals and brought them to Adam (2:19-20). It is a bit like parents bringing their son to the zoo to see if he will find a suitable life partner! I also have a great deal of fun reading the hilarious reaction of the Assyrians in response to Jonah's message. They even made the animals fast and put on sackcloth (Jonah 3:7-8)! It is also exciting to read deconstructive interpretations of certain passages in the Bible. Some texts are indeed rich in ambiguities and deconstruction has exploited these texts in helpful ways. The postmodern authors have sensitized us to the playful aspects of some texts. It is good to be reminded of this.

However, I have difficulty in accepting the attempt to treat all texts indiscriminately in the same light-hearted manner. Biblical texts do convey a multiplicity of themes and notes. If salvation is an important theme in the Bible, then this is a serious matter that we should pay careful attention to, not just simply to play with.

In addition, there is a missionary emphasis in various parts of the Bible (e.g.,

John 20:31; 1 John 5:13). It is also intended for the life and instruction of faith communities. This overall purpose of the Bible will have bearing on what aims of interpretation may be appropriate.

5.6. Imagination and Interpretation

I'm becoming increasingly aware of the role of imagination in interpretation. We are far removed from the worlds of the biblical text. Sure, I need to do my research and careful exegesis, but these can only help me up to a certain point.

In biblical narrative, for instance, how do I envisage the relationship or interactions between the participants in the text? What were their relative ages, the form of language used or their intonation in conversation? These paralinguistic features will affect our understanding of the text. My construal of the ancient world and how I imagine the scenes and the exchanges taking place will affect my interpretation.

On a broader level, other questions related to the text can be raised as well. Why was the text written? What were the social and political matrixes of the text? Who benefited from the preservation of this text? These questions will influence how we approach the text. For instance, in 2 Sam 21:1-14, we read the story of seven sons and grandsons of Saul were impaled on the mountain before Yahweh in order to bring the years of famine to an end. The ritual was effective and brought about the much needed fertility to the land. Now, besides the general populace, who else benefited from the slaughter of Saul's descendants? Was this an attempt for David to eliminate rivals to the throne without casting a bad light upon himself?

This does not mean letting imagination run wild. Imagination has wings that may need to be clipped. Here careful research may help to set boundaries to our imaginative construal of the situation.

Leander Keck observes that for the past two centuries, "there has been a persistent effort to translate biblical language, pre-scientific and mythological, into abstract idiom."[27] In so doing, we may have sacrificed some features of the texts. Perhaps there is a need to let the biblical images and metaphors speak to us in all their richness rather than trying to reduce the richness to only one thing. Keck's

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27) Leander E. Keck, "The Premodern Bible in the Postmodern World," *Interpretation* 50:2 (1996), 138.

thesis is that "It is now time! Time to stop worrying about the Bible and to start worrying about ourselves. Time to stop using the Bible and start living with it. Time to stop telling the Bible what it means and to let its mythological character restore imagination to our thought and praise."[28] That is certainly a helpful reminder.

5.7. Some problematic areas

There are problematic areas in postmodern thoughts, some of which have been noted in the above discussions. Some of the presuppositions of postmodernism are questionable. For instance, the insistence that the quest for truth is a quest for power, which will lead to oppression, is too sweeping. We have noted that while this has often happened in history, it is not the inevitable endpoint. Truth can be liberating, and power can be used to empower the powerless.

There are also inherent contradictions or inconsistencies in the more extreme form of postmodern thoughts. Deconstruction, for instance, is helpful in that it helps us to see the self-interests, personal biases and the presuppositions we bring to the text. But deconstruction has its own problems too. In theory, deconstruction should itself be subjected to deconstruction, but adherents of this approach have refused to allow the method deconstruct.

Derrida revels in the indeterminacy of meanings. But even a deconstructionist like him seems to believe in the intended meaning of the text at times. This can be inferred from the ninety-three-page paper he wrote in response to John Searle's criticism. In it, Derrida objected that Searle has misunderstood and misstated his position at several points. Derrida even asserted that what he had meant should have been clear to Searle.[29] If meaning is entirely constructed by the reader, no such response is needed. Apparently, Derrida is not quite happy with that, especially when he felt that readers have misunderstood him.

While deconstruction vehemently rejected all metanarratives, it has somehow made itself into a metanarrative. It rejects all metanarratives except its own. This is an inherent contradiction.

We also need to bear in mind that postmodernism is only a chapter in our cultural

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28) Ibid., 130.
29) Jacques, Derrida, "Limited, Inc., abc," *Glphy* 2 (1977), 162-254; cited in Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 156.

history, our current chapter. We do not know how long it will stay with us. Civilizations and worldviews come and go. On November 14-16, 1997, the University of Chicago organized a seminar titled, "Conference on After Postmodernism."[30] Ninety-three scholars were already discussing on what might come after postmodernism at that time. There is a certain measure of arbitrariness and tentativeness in postmodernism. There are helpful aspects in postmodernism that we can embrace, but we need to be careful and discriminative, lest we become totally absorbed into all that postmodernism espouses.

5.8. Concluding remarks

Modernity has constructed its own Tower of Babel. It is an impressive structure that has stood for centuries, with reason at its apex. However, postmodern scrutiny has revealed cracks in the Tower. Will it collapse? Will it become a leaning Tower, a historical monument for tourist attraction? Will it be rebuilt or modified into something else? It is difficult for us to know what will happen in the future. What we do see is that multiple mini structures are sprawling up, each competing for our attention. Whether this will eventually lead to a more even playing field is not clear, but at least it opens up the opportunity for other voices to be heard. In the case of biblical interpretation, we are indeed living in exciting times.

The Tower of Babel is a place of chaos and fragmentation, but it is also a place of grace. In the story recorded in Genesis 11.1-9, the barrier of communication and the subsequent dispersion in a way prevented human beings from being united in rebellion against God. For us today, postmodernism shatters human arrogance. The reign of reason, science and the notion of progress are being called into question. In this mode of questioning and reflection, there is a possibility for us to read and hear the biblical text afresh in its own voice, and let that voice challenge us.

The Tower of Babel, left uncompleted, may be a good thing after all.

* Keyword

postmodernism, Biblical interpretation, metanarrative, multiplicity of methods, modernity.

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30) For access to some of the conference papers, please go to http://www.focusing.org/apm.htm.

A Literary (Artistic-Rhetorical) Approach to Biblical Text Analysis and Translation:
with Special Reference to Paul's Letter to Philemon

Ernst Wendland*

General aim:

This study is intended to serve as a partial introduction to what is here specified as a "literary" (artistic rhetorical) method of approaching the cross-cultural, interlingual communicative task of analyzing, interpreting, translating, and transmitting the Scriptures, with the epistle to Philemon serving as the primary source of illustration.

Specific goals—to attain a better understanding of:

- What "literature" is, and why the Scriptures too may be viewed as being essentially "artistic" in character, that is, manifesting a prominent application of the *poetic*, form-focused function of communication.
- What "rhetoric" is, and why many texts of Scripture are also regarded as being essentially "rhetorical" in nature, that is, manifesting a perceptible persuasive impact and affective appeal through an exercise of the *expressive* and *imperative* functions of communication.
- How to study the diversity of biblical literature more effectively by means of a specific set of artistic (stylistic and structural) and rhetorical discourse analysis procedures.
- How to apply a literary-oriented methodology during the examination of certain key compositional qualities and communicative strategies of Philemon.
- What "translation" is, and how the proposed definition forms the basis for a practical, context-sensitive textual exchange program that is motivated and guided by an explicit project agreement and commission (*Brief*).

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- How a literary functional-equivalence (*LiFE*) approach can be employed in the translation of the Bible, namely Philemon, with respect to a communication-centered "frame of reference" (specific target audience, social setting, pragmatic situation, and religious circumstances of use).
- How a *LiFE* methodology may be extended also to influence other ways and means of re-presenting the Scriptures today, e.g., through different modes and media of transmission.

A good motto for "literary" Bible translators:

רָחַשׁ לִבִּי ׀ דָּבָר טוֹב
אֹמֵר אָנִי מַעֲשַׂי לְמֶלֶךְ
לְשׁוֹנִי עֵט ׀ סוֹפֵר מָהִיר׃

Beautiful words stir in my mind,
as *I recite* a piece for the King;
like the pen of a *skillful scribe*,
  my tongue is ready with a poem.

[Psalm 45.1; Hebrew v. 2 — *GNB*, modified; <u>note</u> the emphasis here on both the excellent *manner* of composition and also the *medium* of poetic communication.]

1. General introductory overview of a literary method of analyzing biblical texts, with an illustration from Judges 4—5

I begin by proposing a basic definition of "literature" and indicate why many passages of the Scriptures may be considered "literary," that is, both artistic and also rhetorical in nature. This compositional quality necessitates an appropriate, twofold form-functional methodology for analyzing such texts (1.1). I then employ selected features of a "paired" pericope from Judges 4-5 to illustrate the difference between *prosaic* and *poetic* literature in the Hebrew Bible (1.2).

1.1 Definition: What is "literature"?

One popular American English dictionary defines *literature* as "all such writings considered as having permanent value, excellence of form, (and) great emotional

effect" (*Webster's New World Collegiate Dictionary*). The three characteristics mentioned here would appear to be closely connected: Thus the "excellence" (beauty, attractiveness, ingenuity, originality, etc.) of literary "*form*" creates or evokes a significant "emotional *effect*" within readers or hearers, and this gives what has been written a perceptible artistic "*value*" that may be more or less enduring. However, the criterion of value normally relates also to the *content* of the text. Most literary productions tend to deal with subject matter that is of considerable importance to many people (i.e., inspiring, enriching, influential, life-related, etc.), although appreciation for certain works may be restricted more to a segment of society that happens to be interested in a particular topic (e.g., science fiction) or style of writing (e.g., the "detective" story).

We may observe that the preceding concept of literature is quite relative and contextually conditioned. *Who*, for example, should be the one(s) to determine what constitutes "excellence of form" and *how* or on what basis is such a decision made? Similarly, what exactly is to be regarded as "great emotional effect" and having "permanent value"? To a large extent, the answers to these questions are a matter of personal preference, or "taste." However, if a sufficient number of people agree in their positive assessment of a particular text, then its classification as being "literary" in character can be justified on some objective grounds (e.g., statistical), though there would still be room for debate.

There is another problem involved with the definition above, and this further concerns the matter of *evaluation* and the relative degrees of *quality* involved. In other words, not all public writing would be classified as "literature." Take a typical news report, for example. Most experts would not consider the majority of writing that appears in the daily papers as being "literary" in nature. Why or on what basis would they come to this conclusion? Probably one or more of the criteria listed above might be used: impressive stylistic form, important content, discernible emotive impact, and pragmatic value. One way then to tighten the process of assessment would be to stipulate that *all* these factors need to apply *to an appreciable extent* to the work in question.

Therefore, when carrying out such an appraisal, it would be appropriate to allow also for qualitative levels, e.g., superior, high, above average, mediocre, substandard, poor, and so forth. In this connection then, our initial definition of "literature" may need to be modified also to include the author's perspective: "all

such writings that *are intended to* be considered as having permanent value, excellence of form, (and) great emotional effect." Many writers try, but in fact fail to achieve the public's stamp of approval. More significantly, inferior works generally fail to impress expert literary critics and analysts—those who can support their opinion with concrete facts that pertain to the form, content, and/or function of recognized categories or types of literature, termed "genres" (see 2.2.1 below).

In the case of the Bible, one would not expect much debate regarding its primary content and function. In the opinion of believers as well as many non-Christians—scholars, clergy, and lay people alike—the Scriptures do, by and large, manifest "permanent value" and also elicit "great emotional effect." But what about the *form* of the text: how much "excellence" of artistry do we see in the *structure* and *style* of the various documents of the Old and New Testaments, at least as they appear in translation? Here is where some degree of ignorance, uncertainty, and doubt enters the picture. Often this is simply due to people being unaware or unperceptive of the many issues involved. They do not usually think of the Bible as being "literature" because they have not closely examined its various textual forms, certainly not in the original languages, Hebrew and Greek.

So this is what we will be giving special consideration to in the present study, which focuses upon the analysis and translation of Paul's epistle to *Philemon*. Our attention therefore centers upon the *formal* dimensions of biblical discourse, that is, the diverse verbal techniques and patterned arrangements that in large measure encode the semantic content and communicative purpose of most, if not all, books of Scripture—the great (e.g., Isaiah, Romans) as well as the small (e.g., Obadiah, Philemon).

1.2 Example: Three descriptions Jael's daring deed

Perhaps the difference between *artistic* literature and another, non-artful type (genre) of writing can best be demonstrated by an example: After carefully reading each of the three citations below, A, B, and C (better to do this aloud), a person is usually in a position to determine which text is more clearly "literary" than the other and in which respects. More experienced readers may even be able to give some reasons for their preference and opinion, based on the different styles of writing that these three selections exhibit:

A

But Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite;
for there was peace
between Jabin the king of Hazor
and the house of Heber the Kenite.

And Jael came out to meet Sisera, and said to him,
"Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear."
So he turned aside to her into the tent,
and she covered him with a rug.
And he said to her, "Pray, give me
a little water to drink; for I am thirsty."

So she opened a skin of milk
and gave him a drink and covered him.
And he said to her,
"Stand at the door of the tent,
and if any man comes and asks you,
'Is any one here?' say, No."

But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg,
and took a hammer in her hand,
and went softly to him
and drove the peg into his temple,
till it went down into the ground,
as he was lying fast asleep from weariness.
So he died.

B

Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed. He asked water and she gave him milk, she brought him curds in a lordly bowl. She put her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen's mallet; she struck Sisera a blow, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple. He sank, he fell, he lay still at her feet; at her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell dead.

C

> In sharp contrast to the curse against Meroz is the blessing reserved for Jael, a woman who refused to remain neutral… She initially treated Sisera in accord with his noble standing. But this once magnificent leader was quickly struck down. This heroine is compared to an expert archer, for the verbs "shattered" and "pierced" are used of arrows in Nu 24:8 and Job 20:24. … Sisera had been a mighty and devastating force against Israel, but now the destroyer was himself destroyed (cf. Isa 33:1).

We note, first of all, that the general subject matter of the preceding passages is very roughly the same. However, in addition to their distinctive styles of composition, it is evident that the three texts differ from each other also in terms of their respective communicative aims. Text A includes several quotations of direct speech and is quite dramatic in character. It sounds like a narrative, but somehow it does not look quite right on the page as it has been printed. Text B seems to tell roughly the same story as A, but in a more colorful, less orderly way; furthermore, it seems to incorporate a lot of repetition. Finally, text C appears quite different from both A and B in that it makes more "objective," analytical comments about the basic story in common rather than reporting it more, or less, directly like the other two.[1]

How then should we classify these passages and what difference does it make in any case? Clearly, our judgment concerning the type of discourse that we are reading greatly affects our understanding and application of it. For example, in most public settings of worship one could not substitute selection C for either A or B since as a commentary it is perceptually and conceptually removed from the biblical text itself. On the other hand, although A and B are more similar to each other in content, they obviously differ significantly in their apparent communicative purpose and therefore are not interchangeable in terms of their preferred situations of use. Text A, for example, would be an essential part of a Bible history lesson (probably not a sermon!), whereas B might more readily serve as the basis for a popular religious ballad or chorus.

The salient differences between texts A and B may be revealed more noticeably by means of a somewhat revised rendering, [2] one that more literally reflects the

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1) Selection C is taken from K. L. Baker and J. Kohlenberger III, eds., *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary,* vol 1, *Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 339.
2) A and B are quotations from Judges, 4:17-21 and 5:24-27 respectively, taken from the Revised

actual form of the Hebrew text. This is also better visualized through a change in their respective printed formats, for example, by filling out the individual lines of A to fit within the frame of standard paragraph units, or by setting forth the lines of B, the "Song of Deborah" (Judges 5:1, 7), to read in poetic fashion as shown below:

> Most blessed of women be Jael,
> the wife of Heber the Kenite,
> of tent-dwelling women most blessed!
>
> He asked for water, she gave him milk,
> she brought him curds in a lordly bowl.
> She put her hand to the tent peg,
> her right hand to the workmen's mallet;
>> she struck Sisera a blow,
>> she crushed his head,
>> she shattered and pierced his temple.
>>> He *sank*,
>>> he *fell*,
>>> he *lay still* at her feet;
>>> at her feet he *sank*,
>>> he *fell*;
>>> where he *sank*,
>>> there he *fell*
>>> **dead!**

For those who can read the original Hebrew language of selection B, its essential poetic nature and characteristics stand out much more sharply, as may be seen in the re-lined Masoretic text displayed below:

תְּבֹרַךְ מִנָּשִׁים יָעֵל 24

אֵשֶׁת חֶבֶר הַקֵּינִי

מִנָּשִׁים בָּאֹהֶל תְּבֹרָךְ:

מַיִם שָׁאַל חָלָב נָתֵנָה 25

בְּסֵפֶל אַדִּירִים הִקְרִיבָה חֶמְאָה:

יָדָהּ לַיָּתֵד תִּשְׁלַחְנָה 26

וִימִינָהּ לְהַלְמוּת עֲמֵלִים

וְהָלְמָה סִיסְרָא מָחֲקָה רֹאשׁוֹ

_____

Standard Version (RSV).

וּמָחֲצָה וְחָלְפָה רַקָּתוֹ׃
27 בֵּין רַגְלֶיהָ כָּרַע נָפַל שָׁכָב
בֵּין רַגְלֶיהָ כָּרַע נָפָל
בַּאֲשֶׁר כָּרַע שָׁם נָפַל שָׁדוּד׃

Some of the prominent stylistic features that appear in this critical portion of the poetic narrative are briefly described below, being highlighted in corresponding colors:

- A new poetic paragraph ("strophe"), v. 24-27, is emphatically initiated by a "blessing" (תְּבֹרַךְ) that is pronounced upon the text's heroine (יָעֵל).

- The central character, "Jael," is further spotlighted by having her name and identification set within a lexical *chiasm*: "blessed" − "of women" (מִנָּשִׁים) // "of women" − "blessed" (v. 24).

- This passage manifests the typical Hebrew poetic and iterative *parallel arrangement* of lines, each consisting of three or four word utterance units, except at the climactic verse 27. The lines of the Masoretic Text at first appear to be longer, but as shown in the preceding English text (RSV) display, they may be broken down rhetorically into very short, repetitive and verb-oriented expressions (e.g., "he fell" נָפַל) that effectively dramatize the action being depicted.

- There is a perceptible *condensation* in the diction of this passage (in comparison with the prose version, selection A); this is particularly evident, as noted above, in the progression of short clauses that constitutes the action *peak* of v. 27. [The emotive *climax* occurs in the following strophe, v. 28-30.]

- A number of so-called "poetic *word pairs*" are present to draw attention to various descriptive elements of the dramatic build-up, for example, "[her] hand" (יָדָהּ) and "[her] right hand" (וִימִינָהּ) in the first two lines of v. 26.

- Phonological foregrounding is used for special effect in the shocking depiction of v. 26 − that is, through *assonance* (A vowels) plus end rhyme in both lines; also worthy of note in this verse is an *alliterative* sequence of guttural fricative sounds, especially (ה) and (ח). The two lines feature another graphic word pair: "his head" (ראשׁוֹ) and "his temple" (רַקָּתוֹ).

- A measure of dramatic *suspense* is built into the account as the main villain and victim, "Sisera" (סִיסְרָא), is not revealed until he is the object of Jael's crushing blow to the head in v. 26b (cf. v. 20b).

- *Word placement* is utilized to generate a certain amount of verbal impact. This is exemplified most patently in the strophe's very last word－a summary of the outcome of Sisera's "fall": Israel's enemy was down and "dead," literally 'devastated, ruined, destroyed' (שָׁדוּד)!

- We also detect a subtle *play on words* that comes to the fore in v. 26: Jael "hammers" (הָלְמוּת) Sisera's head with a "hammer" (הַלְמָה). Here we have a touch of dramatic *enigma* and *irony* as well, for this same verb was used in v. 22 to describe the "thundering" hooves of horses as they raced with their riders to the kill. But whose horses were these? At first glance, the song seems to suggest the battle steeds of Sisera's vast military force (cf. v. 20b). Another reading, however, one that includes the repeated lexical parallel found in v. 26, suggests quite a different interpretation. Perhaps the reference is actually to the cosmic stallions of the "celestial stars" (v. 20)—that is, the angelic hosts that Yahweh (or "the angel of the LORD" מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה, v. 23) dispatched into battle on the side of Israel to give them the victory that day.

- Lexical *repetition* with significant *variations* (on the third and final instance, i.e., "there⋯dead!") serve to give prominence to the final verse of the strophe (v. 27). This also sets the stage for the ironic poetic segment that follows, v. 28-30, which acts as the *denouement* of this powerful narrative ode (cf. Judges 4).

So what have we learned from these examples? Is text B more "literary" in quality than A? No, but it is definitely more *poetic* in character. Text A reveals its own stylistic *prose* features that are distinct from those of B, for example: a chronological narrative progression; more explicit reference to persons and places; paronomasia (*Jael*, meaning "ibex, wild mountain goat," takes some [goat?] milk from a [goat] skin to give Sisera to drink, ostensibly a more worthy beverage than the "water" that he asked for, v. 19); snatches of dramatic character dialogue to register different points of view and to highlight personal emotions; ironic lexical repetition (an ordinary peasant woman, "the wife of Heber,"[3]) repeatedly "covers

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3) There may be some dramatic irony underlying the repetition of this *epithet*, "the wife of Heber" (4:17, 21; cf. 5:24): Heber, the husband of Jael was probably some sort of an ally of Sisera (v. 11-12), and perhaps that is also why Sisera fled for safety after his defeat to Heber's tent (v. 17, soon followed by Barak, v. 22). Could it be that Jael did not agree with the allegiance of her husband and revealed where her true loyalty lay by eliminating the enemy of Israel? This unexpected outcome was predicted, or "foreshadowed," by the other heroine of this account, the prophetess Deborah (v. 9). Such intricate ironic coloring and topical layering are typical of Hebrew narrative—seemingly simple on the surface, but so complex underneath.

up" Sisera, a once mighty military man, in her tent);[4] a progressive build-up to a prolonged action peak in v. 21 (an excellent instance of "end stress"); a concentrated series of events in this same passage that also serves to spotlight the peak of this story's plot; and an iterative "denouement" in v. 22 (not shown above).

The point of the preceding cursory comparison has been to show that a literary method of analysis is needed to fully investigate the artful compositional aspects of biblical discourse. Such a study gives both individual and collective attention to the following stylistic features of a particular text:[5]

❖ **Structure** – how the pericope is linguistically shaped in terms of its hierarchically arranged, larger and smaller verbal patterns and constituents, i.e., the "macro"- and the "micro"-levels of textual architecture; how one pericope in turn may comprise an integral portion of another.

❖ **Function** – what the discourse communicates by means of the whole as well as its parts, with a special emphasis upon its ideational content (involving primarily the *informative* function), the interpersonal context (the *expressive*, *imperative*, *ritual*, and *relational* functions), or its textual architecture (the *compositional* and *poetic* functions).

❖ **Genre** – conventionally recognized and widely appreciated *literary types*, both major and minor, selected and arranged to constitute the macro-form of a text, which may be classified along a relative continuum ranging from the clearly prosaic to the completely poetic in nature.

❖ **Artistry** – the formal organization of a discourse in such a way that it exhibits a marked *affective* impact and *aesthetic* appeal, the qualitative effects of which may be demonstrated and evaluated by means of an analytical stylistic comparison with other, formally-related texts.

❖ **Rhetoric** – how the various textual forms are selected and arranged in order to have a *persuasive* influence in relation to an identified audience, within a specific setting, and in service of an author-determined *communicative goal* (or related set of goals).

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4) According to ANE custom it was strictly forbidden for a man other than a husband or father to enter a woman's tent. Sisera, Heber's friend and ally (v. 17), had found the perfect hiding place—or had he?

5) These and other literary considerations are examined more fully in section 3.2; see also Ernst R. Wendland, *Translating the literature of Scripture: A literary-rhetorical approach to Bible translation* (Dallas: SIL International, 2004).

These five interrelated facets of a literary text, when considered on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures lead to an important exegetical *conclusion*, an equally significant *implication*, as well as a practical *definition* of the ultimate task of translation:

> ➢ **Conclusion**: The religious corpus known as the "Bible" *does* contain many texts and pericopes that may, on the basis of abundant textual and comparative evidence, be classified as "artistic" literature in terms of their compositional form, as well as many other passages that are highly "rhetorical" with respect to their apparent communicative function in relation to their assumed ANE contextual setting.
>
> ➢ **Implication**: Granted that the Scriptures are thus manifestly "literary" in character, it is imperative that this quality be taken into consideration and *duplicated* (to the extent possible) during the translation of a given biblical text, whether that rendering be more or less literal/idiomatic, in order to respect the communicative intentions of the original author.
>
> ➢ **Translation:** the selective *re-presentation* (re-writing, re-telling) of a given source text by means of another, a target text, the forms of which are generated within the framework of a different conceptual system, linguistic inventory, social setting, and cultural environment. This includes the *format*, which is the manner in which the written text is *displayed* on the page of *print* with respect to lineation, spacing, indentation, placement, type size, font styles, and so forth (with corresponding media-related characteristics applying to audio and video productions).

The preceding conclusion, implication, and definition will be examined in greater detail in the sections that follow. Special attention is devoted to showing how these factors may be substantiated and illustrated by means of Paul's epistle to Philemon. This letter is seemingly an unlikely candidate for inclusion within the category of "literature," biblical or otherwise, but as we shall see, there is abundant evidence of its highly artistic manner of stylistic composition to accompany a powerful rhetorical mode of verbal expression.

2. Explantion and exemplification of five important techniques of literary composition as manifested by a text

analysis of Paul's letter to Philemon

After introducing the text under examination (2.1), I devote most of this section to an investigation of five vital aspects of literary discourse, which may be viewed as the particular artistic and rhetorical strategies that the original author employed to effectively (e.g., creatively, persuasively, attractively, etc.) communicate his message to a specific target audience (2.2). These features are illustrated with reference to Paul's epistolary appeal to Philemon on behalf of the slave Onesimus. In conclusion, the chief components of a literary approach are summarized in the form of ten procedures which provide a systematic text-centered and context-sensitive manner of analyzing biblical documents with special reference to their formal compositional structure and primary communicative functions (2.3).

2.1 An overview of the discourse

In order to provide an initial conceptual "frame of reference" for developing a literary approach to the analysis and translation of Philemon, the original text (UBS Greek NT of *Paratext* 6) is reproduced below along with a literal (mainly RSV) rendering set out in parallel. The Greek text has been formatted so as to reflect putative rhythmic "utterance units,"[6] that is, lines which end at potential pause points that might be realized if the letter were being read aloud and in public. This is all rather conjectural, but the breaks are not completely arbitrary since most divisions do occur at the end of some natural syntactic construction. It is necessary to give serious consideration also to this *phonological dimension* of the discourse for the epistle was undoubtedly first communicated in *oral-aural* form, and its composition was probably also prepared in the light of that eventuality. The implications of such usage for Bible translators will be considered more fully in part three of my study.

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6) "We should simply recognize that Paul's speaking (and writing) style, developed and shaped by long experience, naturally fell into a rhythmic pattern." D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon,* The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 224.

Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ

καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφὸς

Φιλήμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ ἡμῶν

καὶ Ἀπφίᾳ τῇ ἀδελφῇ

καὶ Ἀρχίππῳ τῷ συστρατιώτῃ ἡμῶν

καὶ τῇ κατ᾽ οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ:

[1] Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus,

and Timothy our brother,

to Philemon our beloved fellow worker

[2] and to Apphia our sister

and to Archippus our fellow soldier,

and to the church in your house:

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη

ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν

καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

[3] Grace to you and peace

from God our Father

and the Lord Jesus Christ.

---

[4] Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε

μνείαν σου ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου,

[5] ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν,

ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν

καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους,

[6] ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου

ἐνεργὴς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ

τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν.

[7] χαρὰν γὰρ πολλὴν ἔσχον

καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγάπῃ σου,

ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων

ἀναπέπαυται διὰ σοῦ,

ἀδελφέ.

[4] I thank my God always

when I remember you in my prayers,

[5] because I hear of your love and of the faith

which you have toward the Lord Jesus

and for all the saints,

[6] and I pray that the sharing of your faith

may promote the knowledge of all the good

that is ours in Christ.

[7] For I have derived much joy

and comfort too from your love,

because the hearts of the saints

have been refreshed through you

my brother.

---

[8] Διό, πολλὴν ἐν Χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων

ἐπιτάσσειν σοι τὸ ἀνῆκον

[9] διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ,

τοιοῦτος ὢν ὡς Παῦλος πρεσβύτης

νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ

[10] παρακαλῶ σε περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου,

ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς,

Ὀνήσιμον,

[11] τόν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον

[8] Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ

to command you to do what is required,

[9] yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you,

I, Paul, an ambassador

and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus --

[10] I appeal to you for my child,

whose father I have become in my imprisonment,

Onesimus.

[11] (formerly he was useless to you,

νυνὶ δὲ [καὶ] σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὔχρηστον,	but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.
¹² ὃν ἀνέπεμψά σοι, αὐτόν,	¹² I am sending him back to you,
τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα	sending my very heart.
¹³ ὃν ἐγὼ ἐβουλόμην πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν κατέχειν,	¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me,
ἵνα ὑπὲρ σοῦ μοι διακονῇ	in order that he might serve me on your behalf
ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,	during my imprisonment for the gospel;
¹⁴ χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης	¹⁴ but without your consent
οὐδὲν ἠθέλησα ποιῆσαι,	I preferred to do nothing
ἵνα μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθόν	in order that your goodness might not be by
σου ᾖ	compulsion
ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἑκούσιον.	but of your own free will.

----

¹⁵ τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν,	¹⁵ Perhaps this is why he was parted from you for a while,
ἵνα αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχῃς,	that you might have him back for ever,
¹⁶ οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον	¹⁶ no longer as a slave
ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον,	but more than a slave,
ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν,	as a beloved brother,
μάλιστα ἐμοί,	especially to me
πόσῳ δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ	but how much more to you,
καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ.	both in the flesh and in the Lord.

----

¹⁷ Εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν,	¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner,
προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ.	receive him as you would receive me.
¹⁸ εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε	¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all,
ἢ ὀφείλει,	or owes you anything,
τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα.	charge that to my account.
¹⁹ ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί,	¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand,
ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω	I will repay it--
ἵνα μὴ λέγω σοι	to say nothing of your
ὅτι καὶ σεαυτόν μοι προσοφείλεις.	owing me even your own self.
²⁰ ναί, ἀδελφέ,	²⁰ Yes, brother,
ἐγώ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κυρίῳ	I want some benefit from you in the Lord.
ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ.	Refresh my heart in Christ.

----

²¹ Πεποιθὼς τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου ἔγραψά σοι,	²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you,
εἰδὼς ὅτι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις.	knowing that you will do even more than I say.

²² ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἑτοίμαζέ μοι ξενίαν ἐλπίζω γὰρ ὅτι διὰ τῶν προσευχῶν ὑμῶν χαρισθήσομαι ὑμῖν.	²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I may be granted to you.

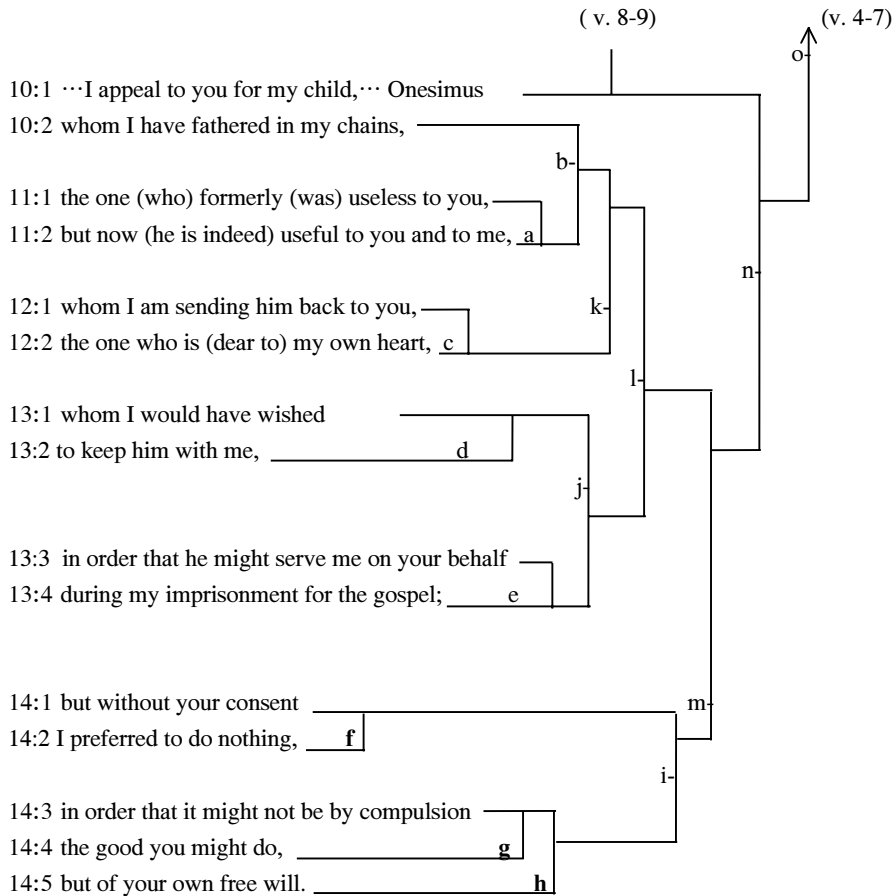|	
²³ Ἀσπάζεταί σε Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ²⁴ Μᾶρκος, Ἀρίσταρχος, Δημᾶς, Λουκᾶς, οἱ συνεργοί μου.	²³ Epaphras sends greetings to you, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, ²⁴ so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

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²⁵ Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν.	²⁵ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with the spirit of you all!

Our textual frame of reference for Paul's letter to Philemon may be significantly expanded by means of a *syntactic-semantic (SS) display* of the entire discourse. This is an important part of any comprehensive exegetical examination and also an essential step that prepares one to carry out a subsequent literary (artistic-rhetorical) analysis of a given oral or written text (cf. step 7 of the set of procedures outlined below). Due to space limitations, I will not reproduce the complete *SS* chart and its commentary here, but will simply give a sample to illustrate the nature of such a systematic, discourse oriented study.[7] The portion that I have selected for consideration constitutes the "heart" and core of Paul's appeal to Philemon on behalf of his slave, Onesimus—namely, verses 10-14 (evidence for this conclusion is supplied below). This segment comprises the major portion of a single sentence in the UBS Greek text as it has been punctuated (v. 8-14).[8] The two initial upward lines indicate that the passage is closely linked to and based upon the preceding discourse units, a minor (v. 8-9) and a major one (v. 4-7); in like manner, this text lays the foundation for the subsequent sub-section of the epistle (v. 15-16).

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7) This is based on an unpublished paper entitled, "The dynamics of discourse: Rhetorical structure and strategy in Paul's appeal to Philemon" (1-49). I benefited from a number of helpful comments on this study by Dr. Eugene A. Nida shortly after it was written in 1985. For more details concerning this method of text-based semantic analysis, see Ernst R. Wendland, *Analyzing the Psalms: With exercises for Bible students and translators,* 2nd ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2002), ch.3.

8) This reconstruction may be compared with the pure *semantic* display of John Banker, *Semantic structure analysis of Philemo* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1990), 26-38.

(v. 8-9) (v. 4-7)

o-

10:1 ···I appeal to you for my child,··· Onesimus

10:2 whom I have fathered in my chains,

b-

11:1 the one (who) formerly (was) useless to you,

11:2 but now (he is indeed) useful to you and to me, _a_

n-

12:1 whom I am sending him back to you, k-

12:2 the one who is (dear to) my own heart, _c_

l-

13:1 whom I would have wished

13:2 to keep him with me, _____ d

j-

13:3 in order that he might serve me on your behalf

13:4 during my imprisonment for the gospel;_____ e

14:1 but without your consent _____ m-

14:2 I preferred to do nothing, _____ **f**

i-

14:3 in order that it might not be by compulsion

14:4 the good you might do, _____ **g**

14:5 but of your own free will. _____ **h**

listing of syntactic-semantic, inter-clausal relations:

a) ***base-contrast***	b) *base-amplification*	c) *concession-contraexpectation*
d) *base-content*	e) *base-circumstances*	f) *grounds-conclusion*
g) *base-content*	h) ***base-contrast***	i) *reason-purpose*
j) *means-purpose*	k) *base-amplification*	l) *base-amplification*
m) ***base-contrast***	n) *base-attribution*	o) [*grounds-appeal*]

(<u>Note</u>: The binary semantic relations are listed as pairs, in text-sequential order, with the "base" clause, or *colon*, designating the logical point of departure for each couplet. In some cases, several possible relations could apply to the pairing, and I tried to pick the most prominent in view of Paul's current argument structure, e.g., relation [c] could also be classified as *base-attribution*. Of course, analysts will differ with regard to the identification of these connections, their respective levels of

dependency in the construction of the discourse, their individual designations, and how they can best be diagrammed. But an explicit display does allow close comparisons to be made so that the differences may be highlighted and hence debated. The aim is to "spatialize" the text so that its inter-clausal linkages can be more overtly visualized and precisely investigated as a means for better understanding the original author's selection, "packaging," and arrangement of the basic content units of literary discourse. Relation [o] suggests how this entire paragraph connects with the material found in the preceding major discourse unit covering verses 4-7.]

What can such a chart tell us? In addition to providing a more detailed perspective on the epistle's organization of semantic content, on the micro- as well as the macro-structure of discourse, this display serves to indicate the intricate manner in which the Apostle has set forth his urgent, but low-keyed argument on behalf of Onesimus. This is just part of the total picture, to be sure, but it gives us a glimpse of how skillfully the letter has been shaped both stylistically and rhetorically in order to achieve the writer's chief communicative goals. We observe, for example, that Paul tactfully *delays* the expression of his primary purpose—namely, his personal plea to Philemon—until he has deftly developed a case that would urge eventual acceptance. Thus his "appeal" of 10:1 is not actually mentioned anywhere in this section; in fact, Paul does not get around to stating it until verse 17. On the other hand, the Apostle's deep-down desire is covertly suggested in the middle of a later purpose clause (13:3), which is carefully balanced in turn by his expression of concern for the authority and "free-will" of Philemon in this whole matter (another purpose clause, 14:3-5).

We note also the triad of contrasts that are built into his marshalling of "evidence" (i.e., couplets a, h, and m), which together intimate how a serious interpersonal situation has been significantly changed for the better. In this way Paul delicately prepares the ground for the major decision(s) that Philemon will have to make in order to allow these changes to become a reality for the ultimate good of all parties concerned. A sound exegetical understanding of the text, coupled with all pertinent background information, is also crucial for those who seek to translate its artistic excellence and rhetorical power into another language and cultural context.

Before turning to a literary examination of Philemon, we might consider an alternative method of analyzing the linguistic structure of a text by visualizing it in

terms of its sequential clausal arrangement. This simpler procedure may be employed either instead of or alongside the one illustrated above. The following is an example of this diagramming technique, using the next paragraph unit of the letter, verses 15-16:

Ref	LINK	Pre-Verb	VERB(AL)	Post-Verb 1	Post-Verb 2
15a	For because-of-this	perhaps	*he-departed*	**for-an-hour**	
15b	so-that	**eternally** him	*you-might-receive*		
16a			----------	no-longer	as a-slave,
16b	but		----------	above a-slave,	a-brother beloved,
16c			----------	especially to-me,	
16d	but		----------	how-much-more to-you,	
16e	both		----------	in (the)-flesh	
16f	and		----------	in (the) Lord	

This method of text examination helps one to see the various lexical *correspondences* (similarities or contrasts) and *parallels* within the overall discourse organization. Note for instance the set of personal contrasts that is foregrounded by the final series of verbless utterances. Such a charting of the text also reveals certain *chiastic* arrangements, for example, the one highlighted by boldfaced and italic print above in v. 15. This diachronic display of clause units prepares the way in turn for a subsequent formal literary analysis.

2.2 Five literary techniques

In this section I will build upon the discussion above in order to summarize and exemplify five prominent literary characteristics of biblical texts. Like the preceding linguistic analysis, this discourse-centered approach can further serve to "flesh out," as it were, the "*internal*" frame of reference that guides the process of interpretation. This must always be coupled with the text-"*external*" perspective that is provided by the total situational environment and interpersonal setting in which the words were originally spoken or written (this being a distinct study in itself). From the point of view of Bible translation then, we are dealing with a case of one conceptual framework (that of the target text) being situated within the scope of another, circumscribing frame (that of the source text), which must be given the priority. Thus the diverse dimensions of meaning that inform, motivate, and give purpose to

a specific biblical passage, pericope, or entire book serve in turn as a referential structure that must govern or shape its linguistic re-presentation (or, "re-textualization") in a given translation.

My main concern is that such a semantic schema should also include a thorough examination of all the different *literary* devices and *rhetorical* strategies that an author employed in order to contextualize—that is, to motivate and to direct—the interpretation of his text in a certain way. Functionally equivalent means must then be found, if available and useable (according to the project protocol), to carry out similar communicative goal(s) in the target language. In one sense then, these literary techniques either constitute or serve to reveal the various hermeneutical "clues" that have been built into the text by the original author, whether deliberately or intuitively, to guide his target audience (readership) along the path towards correctly interpreting the intended message that he has verbally conveyed to them. Some of these clues are more ostensible and hence understandable (even in translation), others are less so, while still others may require a great deal of study with reference to the original text and context before their full semantic, thematic, aesthetic, rhetorical, or symbolical significance can be perceived and understood.

The five textual strategies discussed below are composite literary categories in that each consists of a number of different facets or procedures. They are listed in a suggested general order of application during text analysis:[9]

Formal category	*Functional operation*
genre selection	picking the overall discourse compositional template
compositional shifts	altering the unforlding progression of discourse
patterned recursion	shaping the larger discourse arrangement of form
artistic highlighting	accenting selected areas and points within the discourse

9) In Timothy L. Wilt, ed., *Bible translation: Frames of reference (*Manchester: St Jerome, 2003), I used the following nine general categories of literary feature: *unity, diversity, rhetoricity; structure, patterning, foregrounding; imagery, phonicity, dramatics* I organized these into three sets as follows: The first set includes factors that are general and foundational in nature; they are thus presupposed to varying degrees by all of the others. The second set pertains largely to the macrostructure of a text, while the third is associated more with the microstructure of literary discourse. These perspectives are of course complementary and closely interrelated, even overlapping on occasion with respect to their manifestation in the diverse texts of the Bible". In the current study I have reorganized and simplified the presentation to a certain extent

| rhetorical shaping | giving the discourse some force and feeling |

Together these overlapping and interconnected tactics were presumably employed by an author to shape a particular passage of Scripture into its present textual form, one that reflects the specific theological or ethical purposes for which it was initially composed. The resultant "discourse structure" in turn must be fully investigated as the first step in the overall translation process Also pointed out in the course of this survey are different ways of utilizing the visual *typography* and *format* of print in order to display pertinent aspects of the textual organization for Bible readers.

Why was *Philemon* chosen to illustrate this exercise? Obviously, it is a short document (just 335 words in Greek) and can therefore be scrutinized in considerable detail and with reference to the complete composition. Perhaps due to its length and highly personal nature, this letter certainly does not rank among the "greats" of Pauline epistolary composition. In fact, it is often left out of discussion altogether, as demonstrated by the dearth of references to it in most scholarly studies of NT literature. A systematic examination of this text, however, leads us to a different conclusion. It serves to reveal the many literary—artistic and rhetorical—qualities of Philemon, features that not only *signify* meaning in a semiotic sense, but which also *constitute* meaning in that they effectively contribute to the letter's overall impact, appeal, and purpose. In this light then we may be led to revise our assessment of the quality of this text and hence also its relevance for all Bible readers—and translators—today.

2.2.1 GENRE SELECTION

The term "genre" refers to a conventional category of literary discourse, often one that is used in a particular social or verbal (oral or written) contextual setting. Genre analysis is a crucial facet of any artistic or rhetorical study. This is the characteristic that a person tends to consider first, often automatically, without realizing it, since knowledge about the kind of composition that s/he is working with normally influences how s/he interprets the text (and perhaps also translates it then into another language). This is because each genre tends to have a typical form (structure), content (subject matter), and function (usage) within a given literary (or oral) tradition. A given genre thus sets up a pattern of expectations which acts like

map along with a guidebook, or set of directions, that enables the analyst to know where s/he is going within the discourse and how to move from one place to another with greater confidence and understanding.

There are many different genres (and sub-types) of literature in the Bible, and so the first step of analysis is learning how to distinguish one from the other.[10] I cannot consider this subject in detail here[11], but do wish to underscore its critical importance to translators. They must first analyze the original text in terms of its relevant literary categories and then seek an appropriate way of re-expressing those in their language, not only in terms of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, but also with respect to the larger units of discourse along with their implicit communicative goals. Varied patterns of textual arrangement are often associated with particular genres of writing, each of which then acts as an initial hermeneutical frame of reference as we perceive and process any literary text, whether secular or religious.

The following chart offers a summary of some of the important text-types, or genres, that are found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Judges 4, for example, would be classified as a "narrative" (which may be broken down into more detailed sub-categories, e.g., "biography"), while Judges 4 is an obvious "eulogy," or praise-poem. The New Testament corpus of literature may be related to this general classification, with certain modifications. The epistle to Philemon, for example, would probably require a *prosaic* hybrid category situated somewhere in the area of "exposition" and "exhortation."[12]

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10) Strictly speaking, the term genre applies to *emic* literary categories, that is, those kinds of discourse, large and small, that are recognized within a given cultural and linguistic tradition, e.g., επιστολη and παραβολη in Greek. "(Sub)types" then designate various items within an *etic*, non culture-specific or "universal, system of literary classification

11) Ernst R. Wendland, *Translating the literature of Scripture: A literary-rhetorical approach to Bible translation,* ch.3.

12) For further information concerning OT genres, see D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament codes: A guide to interpreting the literary genres of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995). A problem inherent in this classification(and others like it)is presented by the relative generality and flexibility of some of these categories with respect to the Prose Poetry continuum. For example, prophetic oracles of salvation or judgment will normally include passages of "exposition" and/or "exhortation." The chart is proposed here merely as an example to serve as the springboard for a more precise consideration of the classificatory issues involved and how these relate to the task of interpreting any given biblical text in terms of both form and function.

PROSE

-- *Report* (sequential recording [+/- description] of events, persons, places, e.g., Ezekiel 40-48; also *letters* and *decrees*, e.g., Ezra 6-7; minimum form = *genealogy*, e.g., Gen. 36, or a *census*, e.g., 1 Chron. 23-27)

-- *Law* (formal commands, ritual or architectural instructions, covenantal language)

-- *Exposition* (explanation of meaning, e.g., Gen. 41; Est. 9:26-28)

-- *Exhortation*

    Blessing, encouragement (if you act righteously, the LORD will prosper you)

    Cursing, admonition (if you act wickedly, the LORD will punish you; Dt. 28)

    Argument +/- appeals (the prophetic indictments of Malachi)

-- *Prayer* (a more formalized exhortation, coupled with appeals to Deity, e.g. 1 Kg. 8; includes the category of *confession* as in Neh. 9)

-- *Narrative* (historical, dramatic [+ plot], parable, prose visionary report/ description)

Prosaic Poetry

-- *Prophecy*

    Apocalyptic Visions (decorative and distant salvation oracles; special diction; symbolic and visionary; the text requires a hermeneutical key)

    * [didactic wisdom discourse fits here in terms of form]

    Salvation oracles (divine promises of blessing, restoration, fruitfulness)

    Judgment decrees (divine predictions of punishment for sin/impenitence)

-- *Wisdom Verse* (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes)

    Proverbial (minimal length; concise and concentrated mnemonic microform)

    **Didactic* (longer length; parabolic, sapiential, instructional, enigmatic poetry)

-- *Lyric Verse* (Psalms, Song of Songs)

    Lament (appeal for protection, rescue, healing, and other kinds of help)

    Eulogy (praise the nature, attributes, and actions of a person or God)

    Thanksgiving (grateful acknowledgment of blessings or help received)

POETRY

The distinction between prose and poetry in the Bible, the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor. 13) as well as the Old, is rather nebulous. The genres at the edges of the continuum are not controversial; as noted above, the narrative account of Judges 4 is clearly prose, while its celebration in song (ch. 5) is just as patently Hebrew poetry. Thus Deborah's ode manifests lyrical features such as these: much lexical recursion, paired parallel lines, phonological appeal, concentrations of figurative language, a condensed often enigmatic (i.e., without the background of ch. 4), allusive, even

cryptic manner of expression, intensified rhetorical flourishes, and general restriction in the incidence of the so-called "prose particles" (prepositions, sign of the direct object, the definite article, and the relative particle). However, in the middle of the chart, there is room for debate as to whether the devices of prose or poetry predominate in the passage at hand. The point of such a formal categorization is not the precise classification of any given instance, but rather its functional implication, which the literary stylistic forms do help to give an indication of—that is, when considered in relation to one another, the text's content, and the discourse structure as a whole. In this respect, a progressive continuum is also evident, one that ranges from the *informative* function on the prose end to the *affective* (emotive + imperative) and *artistic* functions in the case of pure poetry.

How then can the necessity of genre selection, which is a characteristic of every meaningful text, assist us with the interpretation of Philemon? Although it is one of the briefest NT letters (only 2 and 3 John being shorter), the overall discourse organization and basic stylistic features of Philemon match those of its much larger counterparts. The larger structure of Hellenistic letters is quite simple, consisting of a relatively short phatic *opening* and *closing* with a longer informative and/or affective *body* in-between.[13] In the Pauline corpus this basic tripartite arrangement was often modified to match the apostle's chosen communicative goals on a particular occasion. Thus each of the three major epistolary divisions would be differentiated into at least two subsections, as we see in his letter to Philemon [with the pertinent verse references given in square brackets]:

- **OPENING**
    - o Prescription
        - ▪ *Superscription* [1]
        - ▪ *Adscription* [2]
        - ▪ *Salutation* [3]
    - o Thanksgiving [4-7]

- **BODY**
    - o Rationale/Exposition [8-16]

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13) See the discussion in David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its literary environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 204-212; James L. Bailey and Lyle D. van der Broek, *Literary forms in the New Testament: A handbook* (Louisville: Westminster; John Knox, 1992), 23-30; Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter-writing in Greco-Roman antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster,1986), 185-186.

o   Appeal/Exhortation [17-22]

- **CLOSING**
    o   Secondary greetings [23-24]
    o   Grace benediction [25]

Certain minor structural-thematic elements of a Pauline epistle may shift in location—and function—as we observe in his *autograph* [19] and *request for hospitality* [22], which have here been moved from a more usual position in the "closing" to the "body" in order to serve in support of the Apostle's personal appeal on behalf of Onesimus.[14] As we will see below, this sort of epistolary arrangement overlaps with and is complemented by its rhetorical structure, that is, according to the compositional principles of Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) formal argumentation and public speaking.

The text-type of Philemon may be classified more specifically with respect to its literary genre as a personal "letter of *recommendation*," of which there are two related subtypes—epistles of *introduction* or *intercession* (or *mediation*).[15] General features of the latter are described in the ancient epistolary handbook of Demetrius [16]:

The Commending Type (*systatikos*)
1.   Two people are separated.
2.   One person attempts to converse with the other.

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14) Other such subsidiary genre constituents are not present in the letter to Philemon, for example, an *autobiographical statement* (e.g., Gal. 1:13-2:14), *diatribe* (Rom. 2:17-29), *midrash* (Gal. 3:6-14), *typology* (Rom. 5:12-21), *eschatological prediction* (1 Thes. 5:1-3), *Ot citation* (Rom. 9:25-29), *virtue/vice list* (Gal. 5:19-23), *household code* (Col. 3:18-4:1), *liturgical* instructions (1 Cor. 11), *administrative instructions* (e.g., 1 Cor. 16:1-4), *hymn* (Phil. 2:6-11), *travelogue* (e.g., 1 Cor. 16:5-9), *health report* (e.g., Eph. 6:21-21), *doxology* (Rom. 16:25-27). For a description of these and many other NT genre forms and functions, see James L Bailey and Lyle D. van der Broek, *Literary forms in the New Testament: A handbook.*

15) In addition to "letters of mediation" (or recommendation), Stowers (1986) also describes and gives examples of the following Greco-Roman epistolary types: friendship, family, praise-blame, exhortation-advice (encouragement, admonition, rebuke, reproach, consolation), accusing, apologetic, and accounting. Barclay cites a similar, somewhat later letter written by Pliny that is "an example of 'resort to the friend of a master', which [is] a plausible explanation of the Onesimus story". John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon,* New Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

16) Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter-writing in Greco-Roman antiquity,* 54.

   3. There is an established positive social relationship between the two
       (e.g., friendship, family, patron-client).
   4. The writer intercedes on behalf of a third party in order to initiate,
       maintain, or repair the relationship between the recipient and a third
       party.

Clearly, these situational and functional elements would apply well to Paul's letter
to Philemon, which as Stowers also notes, "contains several phrases and topical and
formal features of introductory and intercessory letters" [17)

   A few of the advantages of considering the different aspects of *genre selection* in
literary analysis are noted here with reference to the formal organization of Pauline
epistles in general (to be specified in relation to Philemon below):

- The basic tripartite epistolary structural framework, with subdivisions, gives one
  an initial perspective on the arrangement of the discourse as a whole which can
  then be modified to correspond with the particular letter at hand, e.g., Philemon.
  Portions of one letter—from key concepts and expressions to entire paragraph
  units—often correspond in various respects with their counterparts in another
  epistle (or even a secular letter), thus aiding the process of interpretation, e.g.,
  Ephesians/Colossians, Colossians/Philemon, Timothy/Titus.
- The manner in which Paul composes the "thanksgiving" portion of the letter
  opening (in terms of content, special emphases, modifications, etc.) often serves
  as a preliminary cue or signal with regard to prominent topics and issues that
  will be discussed or argued later in the larger "body" section. Thus this
  thanksgiving section is "contextualized" to meet the concerns, needs, and
  problems that pertain to a letter's designated recipients in their current
  sociocultural and religious setting
- Ancient letters appear to have been conceived of as the overt half of a dialogue
  or a formal speech and therefore can often be analyzed in terms of the stylistic
  categories and strategic devices that were common in ANE rhetorical discourse
  (see below). Such features are particularly evident in the body of an epistle, for
  example, in Paul's use of "the genre of deliberative rhetoric to achieve his
  hortatory purpose" in Philemon.[18) Furthermore, this communication-based

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17) Ibid., 155.
18) Clarice J. Martin, "The rhetorical function of commercial language in Paul's letter to Philemon
    (verse 18)," Duane F. Watson, ed., *Persuasive artistry: Studies in New Testament rhetoric in honor*

perspective underscores the need for understanding the other (implicit) half of this dialogue by investigating as much as possible of the contextual situation of the community or individuals being addressed in the letter (i.e., the so-called "rhetorical exigency").

- The identification of a particular stylistic or rhetorical form and argument strategy within an epistle helps to define the major as well as minor units of thought and their complex interrelationships within the discourse as it unfolds, thus contributing to a fuller understanding of the complete text as well as its parts. This is well exemplified by the paramount "appeal" constituent of the letter to Philemon, which is extended with rhetorically varied prominence throughout the entire body, or mid-section (v. 8-22).

Obviously, the insights to be derived from a careful study of genre and related matters are of great relevance also to Bible translators, who endeavor to achieve a nuanced functional (if not also formal) *equivalence* with respect to these structural and rhetorical qualities as they compose a re-presentation of the biblical text in their mother-tongue.

A final note: literary genres and their form-functional components are not monolithic or invariant verbal structures. In the mind of a skilled author (or orator), like all the strategies discussed in this section, genres are flexible discourse templates that can be incorporated and combined or otherwise modified in diverse, often subtle or imperceptible, ways in keeping with his/her artistic genius and specific rhetorical intentions. Certain portions of the epistles, for example, may be viewed as realizing an underlying *narrative* account that must be taken into consideration when interpreting the text. Petersen points out that Paul's letter to Philemon features "a story within a story":

> Thus, the story of Onesimus's running away/debt, conversion, return, and of Paul's repayment of the debt occur within the story of *Philemon's* conversion/debt

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of George A. Kennedy (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 322; "deliberative rhetoric···[has] its emphasis on effecting the expedient (or inexpedient) and the advantageous (or disadvantageous) in future time" (Ibid., 322-323). Watson observes that a combined methodology of this nature serves to highlight the unified nature of a NT epistle by "showing that its seemingly disparate elements are part of a coherent whole which conforms to both epistolary and rhetorical conventions" Duane F. Watson, "The integration of epistolary and rhetorical analysis of Philippians," S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht, eds., *The rhetorical analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 399.

and his projected repayment of his debt in the form of his response to Paul's appeal[19)

A *narrative* consists of a series of chronologically arranged events (the "story"), which is often re-arranged (e.g., flash-backs, flash-forwards) or otherwise modified (e.g., through repetition, deletion, and marked intensification) by a skillful narrator in order to create greater impact and appeal. The latter re-structured, cause-effect oriented event sequence is termed a "plot," which often exhibits one or more high points of action (the "peak") and/or emotion (the "climax").[20)

Petersen has proposed a useful method for comparing the story events (which he terms the "referential sequence"—RS) with the plot events ("poetic sequence"—PS) of Philemon, which may be charted as follows.[21)

Referential Sequence	Text Appearance	Poetic Sequence
1. Philemon incurs a **debt** to Paul.	19b	7
2. Paul is imprisoned.	9 (cf. 1, 10, 13, 23)	2
3. Onesimus runs away and incurs a **debt**.	15 (cf. 11-13, 18-19a)	5
4. Onesimus is converted by Paul in prison.	10	3
5. Paul hears of Philemon's love and faith.	4-7	1
6. Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon.	12	4
7. Paul sends letter of appeal to repay O's **debt**.	17-19a	6
8. (projected) Onesimus arrives with the letter.	12 (implied)	8
9. Philemon responds to Paul's appeal (how?).	20-21 (cf. 9)	9
10. Paul's pays a visit to Philemon.	22	10

We observe three strategic dislocations in the realized, textual order with respect to the hypothetical referential sequence of narrative events (i.e., elements 7, 5, and 1). These instances of "poetic" movement are of *artistic* significance because they represent a variation from the norm, a strict chronological progression, but they are even more important for their *rhetorical* implication. Paul begins (PS1) by praising Philemon for his Christian virtues (RS5), thus setting him up for the appeal that he

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19) Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the sociology of Paul's narrative world* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 66.
20) For more extensive descriptions of the structural categories of *story* (idealized chronological sequence) and *plot* (realized textual order), see Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, *Literary terms: A dictionary* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux and Arthur Ganz, 1960), 187-188.
21) Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the sociology of Paul's narrative world,* 69-70.

is about to make on behalf of a new "brother" in faith, Onesimus. The fact that Onesimus has incurred a serious but (deliberately) unspecified social and material *debt* in relation to Philemon by running away from home (RS3) is intentionally delayed (PS5) until Paul has laid the foundation for his intercessory request. On the other hand, Philemon's spiritual debt to Paul (RS1) is deferred until the Apostle reaches the climax of his argument (PS7), stating his proposal in terms that Philemon would be hard pressed either to ignore or refuse.

> We have seen that Paul's story about Philemon is constructed around the [*power*-related] themes of indebtedness and repayment as these occur within the brotherhood of Christ, and that these themes, however literal or metaphorical, raise the fundamental issue of the economy, the integrity [*and the solidarity*] of the brotherhood[22]. (Petersen 1985:78; material in italics added).

2.2.2 COMPOSITIONAL SHIFTS

Verbal compositions are constructed by their author in textual *chunks* of varying sizes and diverse syntactic shapes to reflect a hierarchical organization of topics and sub-topics. These are normally all related in some way to the major theme or action-line and purpose of the discourse at hand—that is, in keeping with its primary *genre* category (2.2.1). Thus a given text is normally broken up into more manageable portions as it progresses so that the various aspects of its content may be introduced and developed. One focal subject, person, event, setting, or circumstance shifts to the next in an unfolding syntactic and synchronic (topically-related) sequence.

This overt manifestation of "chunking" is one of the principal internal (cognitive) frames of reference that an author employs to direct his/her readers (hearers) along the path of interpreting the message that s/he wishes to communicate with them. Our minds progressively "process" such text portions as we hear or read them, the *paragraph* (prose, a "strophe" in poetry) being the most salient discourse segment since it embraces a number of conceptually related events, images, issues, and/or ideas. But how does this happen—how does the author guide his readers during this essential process of interpretation? In this section we will examine another notable way whereby a literary text is "structured" into a more manageable and memorable

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22) Ibid., 78. (material in italics added.)

format, namely, through compositional *shifts*.

The main strategy for identifying the breaks and transitions of any text, no matter what the genre, involves noting where a significant *shift* in the progression of composition occurs. For example, a noticeable modification is detected with regard to one or more of the following discourse features:

- the *central topic* (subject matter) or main *event line* that is being discussed or referred to
- the *principal agent* or set of *participants* who are engaged in a certain action or event (the "cast of characters")
- the *speaker* and/or *addressee*(s) when direct speech occurs
- *genre* or *sub-type* of text (e.g., prose/poetry, direct/indirect speech, judgment/salvation oracle)
- the discourse *setting* (time, place, circumstances)
- prevailing type of *imagery* (e.g., from drought and devastation to a rich garden paradise)
- prominent rhetorical *device* or discourse *function* (e.g., from ironic/sarcastic indictment to formal judgment)
- accompanying *emotive tone* (e.g., from sorrowful mourning to joyous exaltation)
- a new cluster of stylistic features that signal an *aperture* (e.g., vocative, imperative, rhetorical question, asyndeton)
- forms that signal a prior emphatic or distinctive *closure* (e.g., refrain, summary, exclamation, direct citation)

These ten elements often coincide or converge in their textual realization along with genre-specific opening or closing conjunctions, formulas, transitional expressions, and concluding summary statements that serve to signal the close of one unit and hence also the onset of the next (e.g., Ruth 1:5, 22; 2:23). The more features that are activated at a particular point in the composition, the more prominent and noteworthy the disjunction that occurs there. In this way "minor" breaks may be distinguished from "major" ones, for example, a paragraph ("strophe") from a new section, episode, or stage in an argument (or a new "oracle" in prophetic poetry).

Certain types of text are easier to demarcate on the basis of such changing elements than others. A narrative, for example, is relatively easy to structure into paragraphs as one scene, setting, or sequence of actions moves to the next. Note how the spotlight of attention shifts from one character to another in a given

description, set of events, or speaker in Judges 4: verse 1 (Israel as a nation—*narrative setting*), 4 (Deborah), 8 (Barak), 9 (Deborah), 11 (Heber), 12 (Sisera), 14 (Deborah, Barak, Sisera—*episode peak*), 17 (Sisera), 18 (Jael), 19 (Sisera), 21 (Jael), 22 (Barak, Jael, Sisera—*discourse climax*), 23 (God, Israel—*denouement*).

In the case of poetry, this segmentation process is not quite as straightforward, and so the nature and amount of stylistic evidence has to be carefully weighed in relation to the discourse cotext in order to arrive at a preferred decision, e.g., Judges 5: verse 1 (narrative setting/prologue), 2 (onset of a song/poetic genre), 3 (vocative, imperative), 4 (vocative, imagery of theophany begins), 6 (historical summary initiated by an emphatic closure), 10 (new addressees with description), 11b (historical section begins), 13 (new participant list and description), 19 (poetic narrative account begins), 24 (exclamation of praise, introduction of heroine), 28 (shift in character and point of view), 31a (change in addressee, exclamation), 31b (concluding narrative setting/epilogue).

Such heuristic procedures for delineating a discourse into its constituent units invite a critical review of the facts when the scheme is actually applied to a given text. Differences of opinion among the versions and commentators are to be expected, and these must be comparatively examined in order to determine the most cogent and coherent solution in accordance with the organization of the text under consideration. Bible exegetes and translators too must have a method for testing and evaluating various structural and stylistic clues in the interest of better understanding the form, content, emotion, and intent of the original text. Their ultimate goal then is to more effectively communicate this total meaning-package in their own language.

The five general literary strategies being discussed in this section offer one coordinated approach to this task. In other words, by weighing together the diverse evidence supplied by *genre selection* and *compositional shifts*, further substantiated by *patterned recursion, artistic highlighting,* and *rhetorical shaping* (to be presented below), the analyst is in a good position to suggest where the main breaks, transitions, peaks, and climaxes occur within a complete composition or a distinct portion of one. This is especially important in the lengthy central section of an epistle (the "body"), where a semantic outline may not always agree with the formal syntactic structure of the discourse. Literary criteria then can shift the balance in favor of one arrangement over another. The following is my proposal for Philemon

(v. 8-22):

> *Begin new paragraph at verse → Evidence based on compositional shifts and related cohesive properties:*

- 8 → Paul's word of "thanksgiving" (Εὐχαριστῶ -- v. 4) ends at the close of v. 7 with the foregrounded vocative "brother" (ἀδελφέ). His argument of "appeal" now begins at v. 8, marked by the conjunction "Wherefore" (Διό). Paul's focus shifts from Philemon (4-7) to himself (8-9), and his tone from "consolation" (παράκλησιν) to "boldness" (παρρησίαν).

- 12 → As shown in the Greek text above, the sequence of relative clauses initiated in v. 10 does not end here, but there is an evident change in discourse development as Paul moves from the preparation for his appeal (v. 8-11), including its object (Ὀνήσιμον), to his plan of action, which began by "sending" Onesimus back to Philemon (ἀνέπεμψά - v. 12). A new paragraph is not opened after the sentence which closes in v. 14 because the topical spotlight remains on the new "beloved brother" (ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν) Onesimus.

- 17 → Paul's overview of his tacit as well as explicit hopes for Onesimus concludes in v. 16 with the emphasis upon the transformed relationship that now exists between the former slave and his master "in the Lord" (ἐν κυρίῳ). The Apostle's overt appeal finally appears at the onset of v. 17, which is linked to the preceding grounds of his argument by the consequential conjunction "therefore" (οὖν). The essence of Paul's plea to "brother" Philemon is set forth in v. 17-20, which concludes with the passionate reiteration "refresh my bowels in Christ" (ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ -- cf. v. 7).

- 21 → A summary of Paul's confident purpose in "writing" (ἔγραψά) Philemon leads off this transitional portion that brings the letter body to a quiet culmination (v. 21-22). The future perspective here is reinforced by the Apostle's final request to "prepare me a guest room" (ἑτοίμαζέ μοι ξενίαν), which not incidentally will offer him the opportunity of seeing first hand how the Onesimus affair has turned out. Paul's final "greetings" (Ἀσπάζεταί σε) lead off the letter's formal close in v. 23.

Translators must accordingly train themselves to pay close attention to the assorted aspects of discourse organization and their textual cues, for these should be

reproduced, to the extent possible, in a natural way also in the target language. Thus the beginnings and/or endings of the pertinent units of thought (paragraphs in particular) ought be clearly evident in the translation. To accomplish this task, it may be necessary to mark such boundaries in the TL more overtly, for example, by means of a repetition of key lexical elements, a modification of the section-initial word order, or a conjunction that pertains to time, space, the cast of characters, or logical argument (some Chichewa examples will be cited in section 3).

Clearly marked external borders provide a referential framework for the portion of text that is contained within a given unit, thus strengthening one's perception of its internal bonds of *coherence* (content) and *cohesion* (form). The larger arrangement of a verbal composition (and the conceptual development that it signifies) cannot be taken for granted, for instance, if translators decide to simply follow the divisions of one standard translation or another, or even a set of versions. Such a perfunctory procedure may be an indication of the fact that they have not really mastered the sense or significance of what is being said in the biblical text, including the specific function of each of the distinct segments in the compositional sequence.

In fact, quite a diversity of opinion may be manifested by the major translations that are consulted with regard to their demarcation of a particular discourse segment. The following is a sample of English versions with regard to Philemon v. 8-23 (**C**ontemporary **E**nglish **V**ersion, **N**ew **R**evised **S**tandard **V**ersion, **G**ood **N**ews **B**ible, **R**evised **E**nglish **B**ible, **N**ew **J**erusalem **B**ible, **N**ew **I**nternational **V**ersion, and my proposal outlined above—**EW**; "X" marks the "verse" where a paragraph division is displayed; **GR** indicates where the original Greek text makes a *sentence break*):

Verse	CEV	NRSV	GNB	REB	NJB	NIV	EW	GR
8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12	X		X			X	X	
15	X		X					X
17	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
19								X
20								X

21	X		X	X			X	X
22		X			X	X		
23	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

As the chart above shows, there are only two places (out of nine passages selected) where all the versions consulted agree that a break should occur—at verses 8 and 23. There is widespread agreement also at verses 17 and 21. Important differences, however, are found elsewhere; furthermore, no single English version completely agrees with the Greek sentential units.

So, what difference does it make in any case? Most readers more or less automatically rely on a text's published segmentation pattern as they mentally process the discourse, whether sequentially or topically. This is especially true when they must at the same time also articulate the text aloud in some manner of common public utterance, as in the case of a formal liturgical service of worship, when established customs of intonation, pausing, rhythm, volume, and accentuation are necessary (and often taken for granted). These paragraph along with larger sectional divisions help the reader to discern how the biblical writer has shaped his argument and developed his line of thinking in a particular direction, including special points of emphasis along the way. Modify this format on the printed page, and you change the way in which a person perceives and often reacts to the message as it has been represented. In this sense too, *format has meaning!*

When differences of opinion arise as to where the principal compositional breaks should occur, which version should be followed? Should translators merely reproduce the syntactic configuration of the original Greek text? That sounds reasonable, but not one of our sample translations did that. Or should they more creatively look for a prevailing opinion among selected model texts and copy this consensus in their TL text? That too is a possibility, but not a very satisfactory one since they are then not basing their decision on meaning at all, just the mechanics of majority. Clearly the natural structures of verbal organization in the closest corresponding TL genre is an issue to consider, but it should not be the determining factor, for the semantic shape or argument strategy of the original document must not be distorted for the sake of ease or expediency. That is why this exercise in discourse analysis is so important, for it concerns the literary arrangement and the rhetorical dynamics of both the SL and the TL texts.

2.2.3 PATTERNED RECURSION

In addition to the conventional formatting techniques of a certain genre (2.2.1) and the sequence of compositional shifts (2.2.2) noted above, a literary text is normally also organized in various ways by different kinds of linguistic "recursion." Such reiteration may involve sounds, morphological constituents, lexical items, grammatical constructions, and/or larger patterns of discourse structure. The *recursion* of verbal form and associated content may be exact, when it is termed "repetition," or it may be approximate or otherwise corresponding in nature, e.g., synonymous, contrastive, and metaphoric or metonymic.

Along with helping to segment and arrange a composition into sections of varying sizes, recursion also provides the included units as well as the complete text with a meaningful sense of semantic coherence as well as linguistic cohesion. Discerning this essential literary property of *unity in diversity*—the significant *parts* functioning within an encompassing and integrating *whole*—is important both for guiding one to an accurate interpretation of discourse content and also for leading one to appreciate its intrinsic beauty of form and rhetorical forcefulness.

In this section we will examine several types of recursion that are used—together with the various shifts that occur—to further delineate the boundaries of internal units that comprise a larger work, namely, Paul's letter to Philemon. A proposed textual arrangement based on reiterated elements thus acts as another vital structural frame of reference for interpreting the relationship of ideas that occur within the discourse as a whole. This *demarcating* function exists in addition to the *integrating*, or connective, function that recursion always serves by its very nature.

As noted earlier, it is helpful to keep in mind the principle that a *combination* of literary features (as opposed to isolated instances) always provides stronger evidence for marking the initial and final boundaries of a compositional unit. In short, the *more* markers, or structural indicators, that are present in one verse, the *surer* the analyst can be that a distinct text segment either begins or ends there. As a corollary to this in the case of recursion, the more *exact* the reiteration is (i.e., repetition), the *stronger* it functions as a signal of discourse organization. This method of demarcative structural analysis can be carried out with respect to any text-type in the Bible, but it is especially helpful in the case of non-narrative discourse, namely, poetic, prophetic, and epistolary literature.

The following lists a number of the more noteworthy instances of patterned recursion in Philemon. To save space, only a literal English translation is given, with the key corresponding elements indicated by italics, underlining, and/or boldface print:

- *Grace to you* and peace from God our Father and <u>the Lord Jesus Christ</u>. (3)

  The *grace* of <u>the Lord Jesus Christ</u> *[be] with your spirit*. (25)

  [At the beginning of the letter and again at its end—a structural *inclusio*—familiar epistolary formulas of Paul appear. However, these words also serve to highlight the essential theological context in which he makes his brotherly request of Philemon, namely, the "grace" shown to all believers by God the Father through Jesus Christ. This intercessory action occurs within the interpersonal framework provided by "you" (pl.)—that is, Philemon's "house-church" (v. 2b).]

- Paul, a <u>prisoner of Christ Jesus</u> and *brother* Timothy [we send greetings] to beloved Philemon, our *fellow worker* and to *sister* Apphia and to Archippus our *fellow soldier*. (1-2)

  Epaphras, my <u>fellow captive in Christ Jesus</u>, greets you [and]···my *fellow workers*. (23-24)

  [Again we are dealing with the circumscribing aspect Pauline letter style (i.e., an *inclusio* that crosses with the preceding one), but it is modified here to fit the immediate setting and the enclosed content, which emphasizes mutual *brother-* and *sister*-hood in Christ.]

- I thank (Εὐχαριστῶ) my God always making mention of you (sg.) *in my prayers*··· (4)

  ···for I hope that *through your (pl.) prayers* I may be restored (χαρισθήσομαι) to you (pl.). (22)

  [The body of Paul's appeal to Philemon is further enclosed by mention of mutual prayer, which is a prominent attribute of God's people in every setting and situation.]

- ···because the *bowels* of the saints have been <u>refreshed</u> through you, **brother**. (7)

  Yes, **brother**, ··· <u>refresh</u> my *bowels* in Christ (20)

  [As part of the build-up to his central plea for Onesimus, Paul reminds Philemon of

the quality for which he is well known among the Christian community. As he brings his appeal to a close, Paul calls upon his "brother" to exercise that virtue once again with respect to the person who has provoked a possible bone of contention among them. The notion of reciprocal action is mirrored in the iterative chiastic construction of key terms here: *A* : B :: **C** ::: **C'** :: B' : *A*. This artistic feature (see also 1.1.4) helps to mark the respective end-points of sub-units within the epistle (a structural sub-type of the *inclusio*, termed *epiphora*).][23)

- ···*whom* **I** sent back to you—*him*, *the one* who is **my** very bowels··· (12)

  If **me** you regard as a partner, [you] receive *him* as **me**! (17)

  [The onset of each of these crucial paragraphs in the discourse (i.e., structural *anaphora*) features a complex weave of pronominal usage—one that may reflect the current situation of controversy, that is, with Philemon now situated in the middle between Paul and Onesimus with a decision to make. How would Philemon react— would he personally solidify their mutual bond of fellowship by his action, or would he disrupt it by not responding to Paul's request?]

- ···the one [who was] then to you useless, but [who is] now both **to you** and **to me** *useful*. (11)

    ··· no longer as a slave, but *more than a slave*—a beloved brother—especially **to me**, how much more so **to you**, both in the flesh and in the Lord. (16)

    [The respective anaphoric boundaries highlighted in the example above (i.e., new units *beginning* at v. 12 and 17) are reinforced by conceptual reiteration at the *ends* of the preceding units (i.e., structural *epiphora* involving v. 11 and 16). The amplification at the close of v. 16 clarifies the subtle enigma that Paul has generated: He has elevated Christian priorities ("in the Lord") over what were formerly pressing social concerns ("in the flesh").]

- Yes, brother, as for **me** from **you** may I have some benefit, in the Lord. (20a)

  [In parallel with v. 16 noted above, this wish similarly concludes a discourse unit, i.e., v. 12-16 and 17-20 (structural *epiphora*), with a strong personal emphasis. Thus the two authority figures, Paul and Philemon, are juxtaposed with one other, but more importantly with "the Lord," whom they both served, and whose will was being sought in this human crisis that was threatening to

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23) For a summary of some of the main recursive patterns in biblical discourse structure, see Timothy L. Wilt, "A new framework for Bible translation," 209.

disrupt or delay the progress of his heavenly mission.]

The preceding parallel sequences combine to form the foundation of a more significant recursive pattern that extends right through the entire discourse—an all-embracing textual chiasmus. This may be outlined as follows:

A (1-2) *Opening greetings* ("Christ Jesus" + five names)
|　　B (3) *"Grace" blessing* ("Lord Jesus Christ")
|　　|　　C (4) *"Prayers"*—Paul for Philemon
|　　|　　|　　D (5-7) *Pre-appeal prayer*—that Philemon would continue to be active in
|　　|　　|　　|　　　　"faith" and "love" to "refresh the hearts of the saints"
|　　|　　|　　|　　E (8) *Paul's authority*: he could be "bold" and order Philemon
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　to forgive the debt of Onesimus
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　F (9-10) *Paul's "appeal" for Onesimus*: focus on Paul's plight
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　G (11) *Contrast*: formerly Onesimus was useless, but
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　now useful "to you (Phil.) and to me (Paul)"
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　H (12) *Action*: Paul sends Onesimus back
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　→ I (13) *DESIRE*: what Paul would
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　　　really like to do: keep One-
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　　　-simus to serve the gospel in
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　　　place of Philemon in prison
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　H' (14) *Non-action*: Paul does not keep
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　　　Onesimus with him in Rome
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　G' (16) *Contrast*: Onesimus is no mere "slave", but a
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　　　"dear brother"—dear "to me" and "to you"
|　　|　　|　　|　　|　　F' (17-19a) *Paul's appeal for Onesimus*: focus on his promise
|　　|　　|　　|　　E' (19b) *Paul's authority*: he calls in Philemon's spiritual debt to him
|　　|　　|　　D' (20-22a) *Post-appeal plea*—that Philemon would "refresh [Paul's] heart"
|　　|　　|　　　　through his "obedience" in bringing "benefit" to Paul
|　　|　　C' (22b) *"Prayers"*—Philemon for Paul
A' (23-24) *Closing greetings* ("Christ Jesus" + five names)
　　B' (25) *"Grace" blessing* ("Lord Jesus Christ")[24]

Admittedly, some of the structural parallels noted above, involving similarities as well as contrasts, are more credible than others, but on the whole it is apparent that the overall topical organization of this letter is strongly concentric and recursive in

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24) Note the twist in the general pattern at the very end, i.e., A'—B', perhaps in itself just another unobtrusive way of formally signaling the letter's conclusion.

nature. The inverted literary arrangement of the discourse is not as noticeable as its linear, syntactic construction, but the former is significant in the sense that functions covertly to reinforce the main stress points of the latter. If, as is commonly asserted, the core of such a formation (and the midpoint of this epistle) reveals the heart of the author's argument or thesis, then one might conclude that a major aim of Paul is to make Philemon aware of his real desire that Onesimus be released and commissioned to go back as a free man to serve him on behalf of Philemon in the Apostle's prison ministry (segment **I**).[25] This wish is conveyed in a very muted manner, however—that is, buried deeply inside a dependent syntactic construction (a purpose clause) which lies embedded within another subordinate sequence (of relative clauses) in verses 10-13.

2.2.4 ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHTING

This category within the inventory of an author's literary strategies targets the different stylistic forms on the *microstructure* of a composition, which an author employs to spotlight or to underscore selected portions of the text, whether prose or poetry. The operation of these features is especially apparent when they are found in more *concentrated* combinations as they reinforce one another to augment a particular thematic concept or a pragmatic effect. There is a wide range of artistic devices to consider here, but most of them should already be familiar to experienced Scripture exegetes and translators, for example: varieties of figurative language, idiomatic expressions, marked syntactic movement forwards or backwards, lexical reiteration, rhetorical or leading questions, ellipsis, hyperbole, irony—to list several of the more common forms used for focusing and foregrounding selected portions of the biblical text.[26] These stylistic elements are not merely esthetic or decorative in

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25) "Paul's word choice for *helping* [NIV] (*diakoneo*) [v. 13] is striking because it comes from a different word for "slave" from the one he then uses in verse 16 (*doulos*). ⋯ Paul uses words from the *diakoneo* family when speaking of gospel ministry (as in Col 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7, 17)⋯ [Onesimus] is Paul's minister and therefore a useful substitute for Philemon" (Robert W. Wall, *Colossians and Philemon,* The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 209-210.). Bruce notes that "[a] parallel to Onesimus's serving Paul on Philemon's behalf is provided by Epaphroditus of Philippi," who was sent by his local church to Rome with a gift and also to render service to the Apostle on their behalf; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 215.

26) In an earlier development of the *LiFE* approach, I used the term "poetic" instead of "artistic" to

nature (i.e., "art for art's sake"); rather, in the biblical literature they always serve some sort of "rhetorical" (functional-communicative) purpose. For example, they frequently call attention to, and thereby also "cement," as it were, the discourse framework that has been postulated for a certain work, that is, with respect to its main structural boundaries and thematic peaks.

In this section, I will identify and exemplify four important facets of such creative highlighting in Philemon which are not often noticed or discussed, even in critical commentaries: syntactic positioning, conceptual recycling, intertextual resonance, and phonological foregrounding.[27]

Several instances of striking *syntactic placement* have already been noted on the macrostructure of Philemon. In the central passage of v. 13, for example, we observe the following arrangement, which is punctuated by emphatic personal pronouns:

ὅν   *he whom*
  ἐγὼ ἐβουλόμην πρὸς **ἐμαυτὸν** κατέχειν,   **I** for my part resolved with **myself** to keep,
       ἵνα ὑπὲρ σοῦ   → in order that on your behalf
μοι   **me**
διακονῇ--ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου… *he might minister to* - in the bonds of the gospel…

"*He*"—"**I**"—"you": the three focal human participants of this epistle are intimately linked together in this subdued expression of the Apostle's wishes. Here Paul comes the closest to revealing his heart-felt desire concerning his "heart" (v. 12), Onesimus, the slave who had undoubtedly broken his master's heart through some undisclosed act of infidelity. However, as a result of what had transpired there in Rome, all three "brothers" (v. 16) were now inextricably bound together in the service of Christ—for the sake of "the gospel."

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describe this interest in and concern for the *formal* dimension of literature. The problem is that in ordinary English "poetic" seems too specific (being so closely identified with pure poetry), while "artistic" may be too broad in scope. But a choice must be made so I have designate "artistic" as referring either to "a person who does anything very well, with imagination and a feeling for form, effect, etc." (Webster—or to the creative product of that person's artistry, applied especially with respect to form.

27) There are a surprising number of other artistic features in this short letter, in particular, figurative language such as *metaphor* (e.g., "fellow soldier"—2, "child"—10, "bowels"—12), *metonymy* (e.g., "chains"—10, "gospel"—13, "hand"—19, "yourself"—19, "spirit"—25), and a thematically significant *idiomatic* expression ("refresh the bowels"—7, 20).

Paul's wishful plan, however, had to deal with the reality of the situation, one that involved hierarchical sociocultural conventions (*master—slave*) in contrast to an egalitarian mode of Christian communal organization (*brother—brother/sister*). To be sure, the early church did have its authority figures, such as the Apostle Paul, who was a "father" in relation to his converts, his "children" (v. 10). There were also local leaders, like Philemon, men who were highly respected both within the fellowship of believers and also in secular society. Paul tacitly indicates his recognition of the status quo in the very next verse (14) by unfolding a set of contrasts that clearly reveals his deference to Philemon's ecclesiastical position as well as his role as a beloved colleague in the gospel ministry. This circumstantial gap between the expectations and exigencies of the situation is reflected in the contrastive parallel syntactic arrangement of v. 14 in relation to v. 13:

13: "*I*" (ἐγὼ)	**14:** "without *your* consent" (χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης)
"I *would have liked*" (ἐβουλόμην)	"I *was not willing*" (οὐ…ἠθέλησα)
"to *retain*" (κατέχειν)	"*nothing*⋯to do" (οὐδὲν ποιῆσαι)
"in order that" (ἵνα)	"in order that *not*" (ἵνα μὴ)

This expression of dramatic alternatives with regard to possibility is concluded then in v. 14, with a modification in the normal grammatical positioning being employed to stress the ultimate virtue ("[doing] good"—in the *center*) coupled with the right attitude for achieving it ("free will"—climactic *end stress*):

ἵνα μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνᾶγκην   in order that not by compulsion
     τὸ ἀγαθόν σου ᾖ   your goodness might be [done]
ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἐκοῦσιον.   but of your own free will.

Another striking example of syntactic positioning coupled with emphatic pronominal usage occurs in v. 20 as Paul reaches the peak of his appeal: **ἐγὼ σου** ὁ ναῖμην ἐν κυρίῳ "**I** from **you** want some benefit in the Lord." This parallels v. 13 above as the form of the text in effect mirrors its essential meaning: Paul expects a concrete demonstration of assistance ("benefit" ὀναῖμην) from Philemon in the very person of "Onesimus" (ὀνήσιμον — v. 11)!

In section 2.2.3 we considered the structurally significant recursion of lexical

items within the discourse of a literary text. At this point I will simply list instances of the more loosely connected kind of reiteration that functions to highlight the main topics in Paul's appeal to Philemon and to give a perceptible referential cohesion to the entire composition. This repetition of ideas creates a paradigmatically established set of semantic categories, each of which clusters around a principal subject, termed a "key concept," which has been abstracted as a label for the category as a whole. Four key concepts have been identified within the referential scope of Philemon. The following is a sequential listing of the related notions that are viewed as constituting these four cognitive classes (verse numbers in parentheses):[28]

verse	AFFECTION	BONDAGE/DEBT	KIN-/PARTNERSHIP	SERVICE
1	beloved	prisoner	brother, fellow-	-worker
2			sister, church, fellow-	-soldier
3	grace		Father	Lord
4	thanks		prayers	
5	love		saints	Lord
6			fellowship	operative
7	joy, love, encouragement		brother	refreshed hearts
8				do the right thing
9	love	prisoner		
10		bonds	child, begat	
11				[useless], useful
12	my heart			
13		bonds		minister…gospel
14				do good, voluntarily
15				receive him
16	beloved	slave, slave	brother	Lord
17			partner	receive him
18		wronged, owes, reckon		
19		repay, owe in addition		
20			brother	benefit, refresh bowels
21				obedience, you will do

28) In order to simplify this analysis somewhat, several related concept have been combined into one generic category, e.g., bondage and indebtedness; kinship, fellowship, and partnership. The selection and placement of the individual lexical item her is a rather subjective exercise, but hopefully the chart will reflect, at least to some extent, the semantic links that are forme in a person's mind as s/he cognitively processes a text from beginning to end. Certain key terms do not appear in this listing, but I regard them as being closely related conceptually to one of the categories already present, e.g., "faith" (5-6) ⇒KIN-/FELLOWSHIP.

22			your prayers	prepare lodging
23	greet		fellow-	-soldier
24			fellow-	-workers
25	grace		your [pl.] spirit	Lord

This is obviously a very tight-knit letter in terms of its lexical inventory and conceptual integration. A relative small corpus of key ideas is interwoven throughout the discourse to function as the basis for its central appeal and supporting argumentation: *affection*, *bondage*, *partnership*, and *service*. In many verses three or more of these notions are manifested. They are enacted by a small cast of characters within the letter: *Paul*, *Philemon*, and *Onesimus*—all three in relation to *Christ* (God) on the one hand and the *Church* (the fellowship of believers, functioning as a unity) on the other. These thematic interrelationships may be schematized as shown on the diagram below:
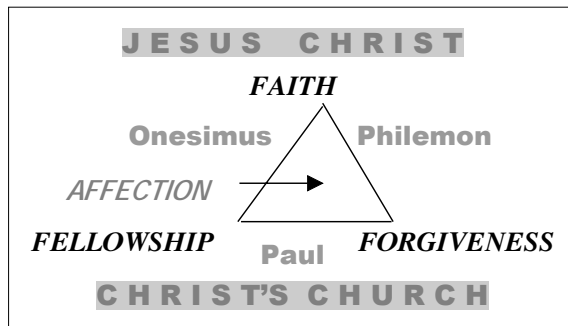
"Christ" begins and ends the discourse (v. 1:25), thereby embracing all the named representatives of his faith-ful community, who in turn act as a human field of reference to contextualize the tense interaction of the central trio of participants: Paul who is attempting to mediate between the alienated Christian brothers, Philemon and Onesimus. Thus within the spiritual framework of the invisible Christ (v. 1, 3, 25) and his visible Church (v. 2: 23-24) the drama of this epistle is played out. "Faith" (v. 5-6) is the indelible tie that binds individual believers to Jesus Christ and to one another, thus creating the distinctive "fellowship" of God's family. They demonstrate their faith in turn by means of various acts of "love" (v. 5, 7, 9-10, 16). In the special case at hand, such "affection" is manifested through "forgiveness"—a free and full release from the "bondage" of social, moral, and spiritual indebtedness (v. 17-19)—and by mutual acts of "service,"[29] wherever there is a need that relates

to the gospel ministry (v. 11, 13, 20, 21-22) and the unity of fellow workers in the community (v. 4, 7, 15-16).[30]

Summarizing the semantic force of the key concepts in the letter as a whole, the following general theme can be proposed:

> *CHRIST motivates the personal AFFECTION arising from FAITH, which transforms servile human BONDAGE into brotherly PARTNERSHIP through mutual SERVICE in his CHURCH.*

This theme is realized in a concentrated mode of affective expression in certain focal passages within the text, in particular, v. 9 and 17, which together set forth the letter's primary purpose:

> ⋯on the basis of love (*AFFECTION*) I rather appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner (*BONDAGE*) of Christ Jesus ⋯ So if you consider me a partner (*PARTNERSHIP*), welcome him as you would welcome me (*SERVICE*).

Another crucial example occurs in v. 12b-13, which in a very passive manner presents the real desire of Paul's heart—that is, the pragmatic motive of the entire epistle:

> ⋯this one/Onesimus is my very heart (*AFFECTION*), whom I would have liked to keep with me here so that he might minister to me (*SERVICE*) on your behalf (*PARTNERSHIP*) while I am bound by and for the gospel (*BONDAGE*).

In this way the *content* of discourse is highlighted by its literary *form* (e.g., recursion, textual architecture) in order to better effect the author's communicative *function*—artistry in action to enhance the rhetorical purpose of personal persuasion.

The mention of "the gospel" in v. 13 raises this question: Why is so little of the

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29) Burtchaell notes that *slavery* (not *servant*hood) is "a master metaphor for Christian discipleship". James T. Burtchaell, *Philemon's problem: A theology of grace* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), 17.

30) Note that the only two verses omitted from the preceding summary are those that refer to actions and attitudes that Paul does *not* want to see exhibited on the present occasion within the Body of believers, namely, v. 8 (an authoritative order), 14 (coercion)

"good news" (εὐαγγελῖον) expressed in this letter, that is, the essence of the apostolic message of salvation (sin-repentance-redemption-sanctification, etc.) that acts as the motivating force of the believer's life? The answer to this introduces another important aspect of an author's literary strategy—namely, the use of a pervasive *intertextual resonance* that creates allusions to information that he can safely assume his audience (readership) will be quite familiar with. This essential presupposition of understanding makes it possible for Paul to keep his personal letter to Philemon brief and to the point.[31] In other words, he can take for granted the fact that Philemon, along with those of his "house church," all know the basic principles concerning the "gospel" that Christ and his Apostles preached and which is expressed elsewhere in early Christian discourse. The most likely literary candidate to provide this religious and moral background information—the principal *subtext* for Philemon—is Paul's epistle to the *Colossians*, which was apparently written, sent, delivered, and communicated at roughly the same time as his letter to Philemon (Col. 4:9).

A number of key words, expressions, and references in Philemon thus function as verbal cues that call to mind the indispensable issues and timely topics that Paul or one of his colleagues (like Epaphras, Col. 1:7, Phm 23) had at some time in the past presented to the congregation meeting in Philemon's house—either orally or in writing. When arguing his case on behalf of Onesimus then, Paul did not have to reiterate this theological and ethical foundation underlying their common faith and life; a mere intertextual allusion would call such evangelical instruction to mind— the "word of truth" (Col. 1:5-6). For example, when Paul praises Philemon for his "faith" and "love" (v. 5) it must have reminded him of a similar prayer-ful commendation for the Colossian churches in general (Col. 1:3-4, NRSV):

> [3] In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord

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31) *Allusion* also plays an important part in the artistic-rhetorical (figurative) element of Paul's argument, for example: "Paul's stated readiness to share his economic resources [v.18] shows the boundless character of his concern for Philemon. The commercial allusions function, then, as a quintessential illustration of the fact that Paul would utilize all resources at his disposal to prevent possible economic barriers, or any hindrances from forestalling the full granting of his request. ⋯ [t]he language of personal indebtedness also brings Philemon's story line to a climax in v. 19." Clarice J. Martin, "The rhetorical function of commercial language in Paul's letter to Philemon (verse 18)," Duane F. Watson ed., *Persuasive artistry: Studies in New Testament rhetoric in honor of George A. Kennedy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 336-337.

Jesus Christ,

[4] for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints…

In like manner, when Paul asks that God would lead Philemon to "be active in sharing [his] faith" and come to "a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ" (v. 6, NIV), the scope of this prayer would have been enriched by a corresponding passage in Colossians (1:9-10, NRSV):

…asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

As for the essence of the "gospel" message, there could be no finer summary to keep in mind than that recorded in the Colossian epistle (1:13-23a, 2:9-15, NRSV):

[1:13] [God] has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. [15] [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; [16] for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers--all things have been created through him and for him. [17] He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. [19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.[32]

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32) There is perhaps an ethical implication arising out of this Christological summary that carries an added intertextual application for the Philemon epistle. Thus Paul makes four demands of Philemon in relation to the crisis with Onesimus (v. 17-22: "welcome [him]" … "charge [me]" … "refresh my heart" … "prepare a room" [for me]"). All four actions have "the exchange of Paul's payment for Onesimus's debt in mind. … While Paul addresses Philemon in an emphatically personal way, each demand, tied to the idea of an exchange, illustrates Paul's Christology: Christ became what we are so that we might become what he is…(Col. 1:18-20)" Robert W. Wall, *Colossians and Philemon*, 213.

[21] And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [22] he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him-- [23] provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard,⋯

[2:9] For in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, [10] and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. [11] In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; [12] when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. [13] And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, [14] erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. [15] He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.

With regard to the practical aspects of Christian living, there are several key passages in Colossians that pertain directly to the social, ethical, and ecclesiastical problems posed by the estrangement of the slave Onesimus from his master Philemon. First, what should be their mutual responsibilities in relation to each other and to the Lord (Col. 3:22-4:1, NRSV):

[3:22] **Slaves**, obey your earthly **masters** in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. [23] Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, [24] since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. [25] For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality.
[4:1] **Masters**, treat your **slaves** justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Second, in the light of Paul's comprehensible admonition in Col. 3:12-15, the manner in which Philemon is to "welcome" Onesimus is clarified (Phm. 17), and the rather cryptic "benefit" that Paul seeks (Phm. 20) is illuminated:

> ^{3:12} As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

There is another important, but often overlooked artistic method that a biblical author frequently employed in order to shape his discourse as a means of directing its intended interpretation. This is through the use of certain devices applied to the *oral-aural* dimension of his composition—features like alliteration, assonance, rhythm, rhyme, paronomasia—in order to create a variety of subtle effects that pertain to content, intent, emotion, attitude, and esthetic value. Such *phonological enhancement* was especially important for a live audience, though in ancient times literature was often read aloud by a reader even in isolation. There is abundant evidence throughout the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures that the original text was written with eventual public articulation in mind.[33] In other words, the author formulated his composition, whatever the genre, so that it could be read—*aloud*—in such a way as to complement the message being communicated in several essential respects. Sound may be used, for example, to embellish or to emphasize selected aspects of a major theme or critical points of a narrative, to highlight prominent borders within the discourse structure, and to render the text as a whole more memorable as well as easier to remember.

The most obvious instance of this artistic device in the letter to Philemon occurs when Paul finally gets around to introducing the human object of his appeal－and then immediately forms a thematically-based pun that is related to the meaning of that name: "Onesimus"－"profitable, useful" (from the adjective ὀνῆσιμος), the person who was formerly "useless" (ἄχρηστον) to Philemon (for whatever) reason, was now through the conversion of Christ most "useful" (εὔχρηστον),[34] not only to

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33) "The Greek word *epistol*ê ("epistle") originally referred to an *oral* communication sent by messenger (Herodotus 4.10.1; Thucydides 7.11.1)" David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its literary environment,*158.

34) "These two words are frequently contrasted in ancient moral literature and typically refer to a person's character more than to the quality of one's work" Robert W. Wall, *Colossians and*

his master, but also to the apostolic prisoner, Paul (v. 10b-11). The impact of this pun may have been reinforced due to the similarity of the root χρηστος to the name for "Christ" (Χριστος). Also phonologically significant is the fact that each of the three focal terms here is situated at the close of a complete syntactic constituent. There may be a faint echo of this usage later on in the letter as Paul draws his appeal to a close and requests a special "benefit" (ὀναίμην) from his good brother in the Lord (v. 20).

As was illustrated in the Greek text reproduced in section 1.3, the entire discourse may be broken down into relatively short, rhythmic cadences of "utterance units," each of which represents a putative "speech span"—that is, a meaningful stretch of articulation after which a breath pause might well occur. A closer examination of the text often reveals an even more artfully constructed passage, as we see for example in Paul's emotive build-up to his intercessory petition (v. 15-16):

τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο **ἐχωρίσθη**	Perhaps this is why **he was parted** (from you)
πρὸς ὥρ<u>αν</u>,	for an hour,
ἵνα αἰῶν<u>ιον</u>	so that for all time
<u>αὐτὸν</u> **ἀπέχῃς**,	*him* **you might have back**,
οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλ<u>ον</u>	no longer as a slave
ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ δοῦλ<u>ον</u>,	but more than a slave,
ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητ<u>όν</u>,	as a beloved brother,
πόσῳ δὲ **μᾶλλον** <u>σοὶ</u>	**especially** to *me*
μάλιστα <u>ἐμοί</u>,	but how much more **rather** to *you*,
καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ	both in the flesh
καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ.	and in the *Lord*.

The contrastive nature of this persuasive piece of argumentation is strengthened by the carefully positioned syntax—first a chiastic formation, with an emphasis in the middle (v. 15), and then a dual terraced pattern that mounts to a climax at the end of each series of units (v. 16). The poignant peak of v. 16 (overlapping with v. 15b) is augmented in Greek by a little phrasal rhyme scheme (underlined above), accompanied by alliteration and assonance, which also serves to throw the verbal spotlight of the author's concern squarely upon the participants involved: "him" (Onesimus), "me" (Paul), "you" (Philemon), and "the Lord" (cf. a similar

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Philemon, 206.

juxtaposition of persons and sounds in the parallel lines of v. 20a and 20b).

The potential influence of such overt phonological enhancement is therefore very important for contemporary translators of Scripture to attempt, at least, to duplicate, since the vernacular text will be most often communicated by being read orally in public. For this to happen, however, in addition to the sound dimension, equal consideration will have to be given also to a visual display of the composition on the printed page—in particular, to features like *typography* (type styles, weights, and shapes; non-justified or hyphenated lines), the use of *space* (e.g., indentation, along page borders, in between lines), and the manipulation of *format* to reflect patterns, breaks, continuities, and correspondences in the discourse. This vital visual aspect of artistry in the interest of greater legibility has been illustrated in many of the passages reproduced above.

2.2.5 RHETORICAL SHAPING

In the section on genre selection above (1.4.1), the book of Philemon was classified as an "epistle of recommendation," which like all ANE letters manifests a basic tripartite discourse organization. As was already noted, an excellent literary work is normally arranged not only to communicate its message effectively, that is, in an appealing way with regard to both style and structure, but also to convince its intended readership to accept that message in terms of its subject matter and/or moral imperatives.[35] These three functions—the *informative*, the *artistic*, and the *rhetorical*—are distinct, but closely interrelated in most biblical literature. In this section I will survey some of the main structural aspects of Paul's epistolary plea to Philemon in order to provide a sharper perspective on the expert manner in which this letter has been fashioned. Its persuasive power and influence should be evident even today among the community of believers, where the same pressing issues of mutual service, partnership, indebtedness, and affection continue to have the utmost relevance.

But why should we pay attention to another mode of construction in addition to the epistolary form that was outlined earlier? In answer, Aune[36] writes:

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35) Burtchaell, among others, considers the letter to Philemon to be "a masterpiece of Greek persuasion". James T. Burtchaell, *Philemon's problem: A theology of grace,* 17.

36) David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its literary environment,* 158, 160.

> The letter form exhibited great flexibility in the ancient world. Virtually any type of written text could be sent to individuals or groups in an epistolary format. ··· The letter is therefore a substitute for oral communication and could function in almost as many ways as speech. ··· By the first century B.C., rhetoric had come to exert a strong influence on the composition of letters, particularly among the educated. Their letters functioned not only as a means of communication, but also as sophisticated instruments of persuasion and media for displaying literary skill.

One standard format for constructing a speech, or the argument of a letter, features four main divisions within the body portion :[37)]

- **Introduction** [*exordium*]: The beginning of the discourse in which the writer attempts to elicit the goodwill of his addressees (*ethos*) and to prepare the ground conceptually and emotively for the subject or exhortation at hand (Philemon, v. 4-7).
- **Proposition** [*narratio, propositio*]: A clear summary statement (*logos*) of the central theme, thesis, opinion, request, or appeal (concerning belief or behavior) and the reason for this proposal in the current setting of communication (v. 10··· [13]···17-18).
- **Elaboration** [*probatio, exhortatio, refutatio*]: Sets forth various "proofs" for the

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37) The corresponding Latin (sub-)designations are given in brackets, as nearly as I can determine them. It s almost impossible to find a pair o contemporary scholars who completely agree on these rhetorical labels, categories, or even the structure as a whole. The following is my synthesis of the sources cited in the light of additional background reading on the subject. We recall that Philemon is primarily an instance of *deliberative* rhetoric, with an emphasis on convincing an audience concerning what was expedient or advantageous for them to think, say, and/or do in a positive or negative sense. It should also be pointed out that like the epistolary form itself (discussed above), the rhetorical organization of an argument was no straitjacket with regard to its structure or content. Creative writers (speakers) would often modify and elaborate upon the standard forms and conventional topics in accordance with their paramount communicative motives and aims. There is no greater example of this flexibility than the Apostle Paul in his various letters written to a diverse assortment of early Christian Jewish and Greco-Roman communities. cf. David E. Aune, *The Westminster dictionary of New Testament and early Christian literature and rhetoric* (Louisville & London: Westminster; John Knox Press, 2003), 354-355; Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin eds., *Dictionary of Paul and his letters* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 823; Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 41-42; Clarice J. Martin, "The rhetorical function of commercial language in Paul's letter to Philemon (verse 18)," Duane F. Watson ed., *Persuasive artistry: Studies in New Testament rhetoric in honor of George A. Kennedy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 323-326; Richard R. Melick Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon,* The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 340-341.

chief line of argument in support of the Proposition, whether logical (deductive) enthymemes or commonplace (inductive) examples, citations, maxims, anecdotes, analogies, contrasts, an appeal to some authority, etc.; these are often accompanied by personal entreaties and admonitions or a pointed refutation of a contrary position on the matter (v. 8, 10-16, 18-19).
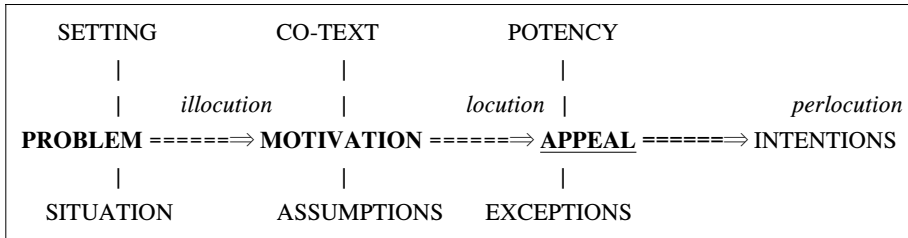
- **Conclusion** [*peroratio*]: A reinforced summary or recapitulation of the central issue(s) and a final effort to evoke a sympathetic response (*pathos*), that is, to influence the attitudes and capture the emotions of the addressees with respect to the author and his expressed Proposition (v. 20-22).

Note how the two middle constituents are interwoven in their textual realization as part of the Apostle's insightful strategy of argumentation. I am also suggesting that underlying Paul's overt requests, which constitute the "Proposition" (v. 10, 17-18), is another one that is actually quite important to him personally (v. 13). The specific aspects of these four major rhetorical moves in Philemon will be presented later. At this stage I simply mention the availability of a diverse array of stylistic techniques which were at the disposal of ancient literary practitioners. It is interesting to observe how appropriately they appear to describe the compositional development of a Pauline epistle, even one as brief and seemingly insignificant as his letter of intercession on behalf of Onesimus.

In order to understand and interpret the rhetorical dimension of any literary discourse more precisely, one must carefully investigate its *extralinguistic background*—in this case, the sociological, cultural, and religious setting of the text in its original Ancient Near Eastern environment. A thorough examination of this nature would take us well beyond the scope of the present essay so I will merely offer a suggestion as to how this contextual consideration may be combined with a co-textual and a textual study within the scope of a single analytical framework.[38] Such an "argument-structure analysis" is especially helpful when dealing with the largely *paraenetic* (hortatory-admonitory-minatory) texts to be found in both the Hebrew prophets and also the apostolic epistles, because it takes into consideration a relatively large number of verbal, interpersonal, and situational factors. The key structural and pragmatic elements that are explicitly or implicitly involved in the

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38) The following discussion is borrowed, with some modification, from Ernst R. Wendland, *Translating the literature of Scripture: A literary-rhetorical approach to Bible translation*, section 6.2.5.

formal presentation of an argument are displayed below in dynamic interrelationship with each other and the central constituent of the whole, namely, the "speech act" of making an *appeal* on behalf of someone:

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SETTING           CO-TEXT            POTENCY
   |                 |                   |
   |     illocution  |       locution  |                   perlocution
PROBLEM ======⇒ MOTIVATION ======⇒ APPEAL ======⇒ INTENTIONS
   |                 |                   |
SITUATION        ASSUMPTIONS        EXCEPTIONS
```

According to this approach, the ten aspects of any hortatory discourse operate as an integrated communication system within the framework of the broader pragmatic theory of speech (and "text") acts,[39] which refer to what words (oral or written) actually *do* as distinct from what they overtly *say*. A speech act then may be defined as a combined sequence of three basic constituents: an *illocution*, or underlying utterance intention, a *locution*, the concrete verbal representation in a given language, and a *perlocution*, which designates the desired consequence or outcome of a certain speech act. The larger *argument structure* may be briefly defined in terms of NT epistolary discourse in general and illustrated with specific reference to Paul's letter to Philemon as follows (references to the text are given in parentheses):

- *Setting*— encompasses the general historical, cultural, social, political, religious, and environmental milieu in which the written act of communication takes place, as this concerned both the author and his addressees/audience. Paul presumably wrote his letter to Philemon from a Roman prison (or while under house arrest) early in the second half of the first century c.e. (1). Philemon was apparently a wealthy Greek Christian living in Colossae, a market town located in the prosperous Roman province of Asia (2). Philemon had been directly converted through the preaching ministry of the Apostle Paul some years earlier (19). This was an age when commercial and domestic slavery was widely

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39) The appropriateness of a "speech-act" approach to the analysis of the Pauline corpus is supported by the following observation: "Functioning as a substitute for Paul's presence, the letters became an appropriate 'surrogate' medium by which Paul could address the congregations as God's representative". Clarice J. Martin, "The rhetorical function of commercial language in Paul's letter to Philemon (verse 18)," 324-325.

practiced and recognized as an important economic institution. It was also a time when many slaves were being converted to Christianity with the ensuing question: how would this change in their spiritual status affect their social status in the community of saints?

- *Problem*—refers to the particular spiritual or moral lack, fault, failing, need, test, or trial that the author wishes to discuss and deal with in his text, whether an entire book or only a portion of one. In Philemon, Paul had the problem of how to reconcile the estranged slave Onesimus with his master Philemon without the benefit of a personal talk or the opportunity to bring the two together. It is interesting and important to note that neither Onesimus' flight from Colossae nor his apparent theft (18) is mentioned explicitly anywhere in the letter. This could be an essential aspect of Paul's argument strategy—a rhetoric of silence, that is, by not indicating any sort of wrongdoing on the part of Onesimus, the Apostle may be tacitly suggesting that a complete forgiveness of all "debts" is the right place to start.

- *Situation*—considers the human events or interpersonal interaction that occasioned or provoked the "problem"; it is the set of circumstances (the "rhetorical exigence") that calls for a verbal response from one or more of the parties concerned. By fleeing from slavery and service, Onesimus had committed a serious capital offense. If ever identified and caught, he would be subject to imprisonment and death under Roman law. In the meantime, however, Onesimus had somehow come into close contact with the Paul in Rome and was subsequently converted to Christianity (10). Perhaps, regretting what he had done and remembering that Paul, a close personal friend of his owner Philemon was under house arrest in Rome, Onesimus actually sought the Apostle out to serve as a mediator. In any case, he had certainly risked his own life by ministering to am infamous political prisoner (11). Now Paul was sending Onesimus back to his master as his personal emissary with this letter of intercession (cf. Col. 4:8-9).

- *Appeal*—designates the specific exhortation, command, admonition, rebuke, or warning that either promotes or prohibits a certain way of thinking and/or behaving in keeping with biblical teaching and its associated sanctified lifestyle. In this letter Paul makes two related overt requests, both of which involve some act of forgiveness: first, that Philemon "receive" (i.e., forgive) Onesimus, whom Paul is sending back as a Christian brother ("free" in Christ, v. 17); second, that he charge any of Onesimus' debts (such as those due to stealing or lost service)

to Paul's own account (v. 18). The first appeal entails an associated behavioral consequence, namely, that Philemon would not punish Onesimus in any way, either personally or through the public legal system. Paul's second petition calls to mind the fact that in one sense or another, all Christians are indebted to one another whether virtually or in reality.[40] Those who are in no position to repay can only be forgiven.

- *Intentions*—summarize the author's desired results in terms of either new or reinforced thinking and behavior that may be expected to materialize, sooner or later, if the addressee(s) fully comply with the appeal. As a result of his passionate entreaty on behalf of Onesimus, Paul is hopeful that Philemon "will do even more than I ask" with regard to the case in question (21). It is reasonable, or at least arguable, that the main intention here (or implicature, considering the text in relation to its interpersonal context) is that Philemon would go beyond what Paul requests on the surface and would read between the lines, so to speak, in order to do something even greater to "refresh the apostle's heart" (20). This would undoubtedly be to give Onesimus his freedom so that he might return to Rome to assist as a "partner" (Philemon's proxy) in Paul's mission outreach and stand as a living testimony of the power of forgiveness (13, 17, 20-21).[41] Whether or not this implicit personal aim of Paul is applicable, the potential impact of this master-servant crisis and its outcome for the Christian community was indeed great. Onesimus was a test case for the Colossian house church. If its leader, Philemon, would act in loving forgiveness towards his errant slave, he would not only confirm his status in the congregation, but would also establish the unity of the body and set an example for other Christian slave owners (5-7).
- *Potency*—estimates the relative degree of linguistic and emotive strength with

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40) Several additional Ancient Near Eastern sociological facts are relevant here: "Respect for age was important in his culture, so Paul appeals to his age [v.9]. ⋯ The point of Paul's plea [v. 10] is that one could not enslave the son of one's own spiritual patron. ⋯ Slaves were sometimes freed by their masters to become slaves of some god; here [v. 13] Paul asks that Philemon free Onesimus for the service of the gospel. He appeals not on his own authority but to Philemon's honor as a friend. ⋯ Roman law saw slaves as both people and property; but a full brother [v. 16] would naturally not be viewed as property. ⋯ By ancient social custom, friends were bound by the reciprocal obligation of repaying favors [v. 19]" (Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 645-646 ; verse numbers added in brackets).

41) "The word 'emancipation' seems to be trembling on his [Paul's] lips, and yet he does not one utter it"—J. B. Lightfoot (Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon,* Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 278.).

which the text's major appeal and supporting motivation(s) are expressed (i.e., its apparent level of directness, urgency, and authority) or the relative degree of mitigation and indirection manifested during the overt or covert line of argumentation. An imperative verb, for example, would exhibit the least amount of verbal alleviation while an implicit request would convey the greatest mitigation. Paul's approach, as he develops his multifaceted petition to Philemon, is very low key. He issues no direct command in connection with Onesimus's social and legal predicament (8), and although he refers in different ways to his special personal request, he nowhere orders Philemon even to forgive Onesimus, let alone release him for service to Paul. The intention of the entire argument is developed by subtle implication and is based primarily upon Paul's close "loving" relationship with Philemon (5, 7, 9), on the one hand, and the bond that exists between Christ and his church on the other (3, 5, 16, 20, 23-25). It is a masterfully constructed deliberative discourse aimed at fraternal persuasion for the common good of the larger fellowship.

- *Exceptions*—encompass any potential objections to the central appeal or imperative. Exceptions are conveyed by such devices as contrast, antithesis, counter-case, opposing evidence, or a hypothetical rebuttal. They are generally anticipated by the author and dealt with in the discourse, whether overtly or—to avoid drawing too much attention to them—indirectly. Since exceptions are often implicit rather than stated, their postulation in the analysis must be tentative. As part of his plea to Philemon, for example, Paul confronts the chance that Onesimus may have stolen from Philemon by offering to make restitution on the slave's behalf (18-19a). The significant financial loss that the release of Onesimus would mean for Philemon is gently handled by a reference to the unpayable debt that Philemon owed Paul for his spiritual deliverance (19b). Anticipating Philemon's possible tardiness, reluctance, or even refusal to deal with this sensitive issue, one that could bring him into sharp criticism (along with considerable "shame") within the secular community if he acquiesced, Paul makes a pointed promise to visit Philemon in the near future (22). At that time he would be able to see for himself how the matter has been resolved and to address any outstanding concerns over the matter. This proposal merges with Paul's strategy of covert "motivation" (see below).

- *Motivation*—specifies the various types of reasoning offered in support of the author's appeal(s). These may be either deductive (e.g., cause-effect, general-specific, lesser-to-greater) or inductive (e.g., proofs, maxims,

syllogisms, testimonies, examples, analogies, case studies). Both kinds of reasoning relate to content (*logos*), emotion (*pathos*), and/or the speaker's personal credibility, reliability, and authority (*ethos*). In my view, the Epistle to Philemon consists of a string of interconnected motivations of varied potency that extends throughout the entire text, from the salutation to its valediction. This semi-narrative thread of largely implicit importunity builds progressively to a climax in v. 21b. The principal elements may be summarized as follows:

o   Philemon's love and faith are well known in the community of believers; thus he stands as a prominent model to follow (5-6). =>

o   Such Christian behavior has greatly encouraged Paul, a beloved coworker in Christ's kingdom work (1b, 7, 17). =>

o   The Apostle prefers not to command his honorable colleague Philemon (1) with regard to how he should act (8), but Paul wants his friend to do the righteous thing of his own free will (14). =>

o   Paul is currently living in dire and depressing circumstances (9). =>

o   Formerly "useless" Onesimus is now a fellow believer and most "useful" to and loved by the imprisoned Apostle (11-12). =>

o   Paul wishes to keep Onesimus with him in Rome to assist in the gospel ministry (13). =>

o   Onesimus is in a position to serve Paul on Philemon's behalf (16). =>

o   Philemon owes his present spiritual state as well as the hope of eternal life to Paul (19). =>

o   Paul could really use some extra personal "refreshment" from Philemon (20). =>

o   Paul is most confident that Philemon will "obey" and do "even more" than what he is overtly requesting (i.e., a forgiving welcome for Onesimus), namely, release him from slavery for evangelistic service (21) (this being the culminating climax of Paul's line of motivation). =>

o   Paul will visit Philemon as soon as possible to wind up the case of Onesimus in person, perhaps receiving him as a personal aide (22a) (this being one possible denouement). =>

o   *Ultimate anticipated outcome:* The answer to Paul's prayers and those of Philemon will merge (22b) so that the Apostle is once again "encouraged" by his dear friend and fellow worker's display of brotherly "love" (1b, 5-7).

- *Co-text*—identifies all texts that are either semantically or pragmatically related to the discourse under consideration, whether syntagmatically (i.e., intratextually, as part of the same document) or paradigmatically (i.e., intertextually, from a different but somehow related discourse—oral or written). Since the Epistle to Philemon is a short document, intratextual influence is for the most part the product of recursion and the structural patterns which serve to demarcate and unify the discourse (cf. 2.2.3). As for external sources, the greatest influence comes from Paul's letter to the Colossians, which was written and sent about the same time (Col. 4:7-9). In addition to the same names of those being greeted by the Apostle (see Col. 1-2; 4:10-14; Phm. 1-2, 23-24), there are some important thematic similarities: praise for the clear manifestation of the recipients' "faith in Christ Jesus" and "love for all the saints" (Col. 1:4; Phm. 5); the call for believers to forgive one another (Col. 3:13b; Phm. 17); and a strong appeal to demonstrate the qualities that promote spiritual unity in the church (Col. 3:12-17; Phm. 6, 15-17). Other instances of intertextuality that forge a conceptual link between these two epistles involve certain key theological and ethical presuppositions as noted earlier (see "assumptions" below). In addition, there are also a number of lexical parallels between Paul's exhortations in Philemon and his other epistles (e.g., Ephesians 4:2-3, 12-13, 16, 32; 6:9).
- *Assumptions*—indicate the various ideas, values, attitudes, and feelings that a writer shares with his readership. A writer takes it for granted that his own presupposed viewpoint (including a wider worldview) will be understood and applied to the text at hand by his audience according to the pragmatic principle of relevance. When they share knowledge, it does not need to be made explicit in the text, though it may be stated for special effect (e.g., Paul's reminder to Philemon in v. 19 that he owes his life to Paul). Some other important assumptions underlie the argument of the Epistle to Philemon: In early Christianity the institution of slavery was accepted (without defending or supporting it) with the idea that it could be ameliorated through a spiritual change in the persons involved. Reconciliation involving fellow Christians of diverse social statuses was essential to the unity of all believers in Christ and to the church as a religious fellowship (1-3, 23-25). So too the demonstration of partnership in the work was crucial to their survival and promotion (6, 13, 17). Philemon is a genuine Christian and sincerely desires to be of assistance to Paul (21); moreover, he has the legal power and wealth to enable him to commute

Onesimus' potential sentence. Paul has the religious authority to command Philemon (8). The congregation at Colossae, to whom this letter is also addressed (2, 25), will support Paul's appeal that Philemon should forgive Onesimus. Paul will do his best to keep the promise to visit shortly–to pursue the Onesimus case if it has not yet been satisfactorily resolved (22). As a believer and a beloved disciple of Paul (10), Onesimus is personally demonstrating his repentance by returning to his master despite the potential danger of doing so. A positive decision by Philemon will benefit all the parties concerned (11, 16).

It is interesting to observe when reading this hypothetical scenario that as Paul develops his discourse with Philemon (primarily, and secondarily also with the Christian assembly meeting at his house), he incorporates the three fundamental motives prescribed by the ancient teachers of rhetoric, namely, to establish rapport (*ethos*), to convince the mind (*logos*), and to move the emotions (*pathos*). These verbal tactics would no doubt have been familiar to most members of his intended audience and correspond to what are termed in modern parlance the "relational" (or "phatic"), the "informative," and the "affective" (emotive, imperative) functions of communication.[42] The three types are subtly modulated from Paul's point of view and interwoven throughout the text as part of his applied strategy of persuasion, at times converging within the scope of a very short passage, for example, the

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42) These broad rhetorical motives are supported by specific stylistic devices and persuasive techniques within the text, for example: the indirect summons of supporting witnesses through the personal references of verses 1-2 and 23-24; the ironic self-abrogation of one's right or authority, such as the power to "command" Philemon what to do (8); the use of emotively-charged personal terms (e.g., "prisoner"—1, 9; "old man"—9; "begotten"—10; "in chains"—10; "partner"—17); an appeal to divine providence and planning (suggested by the particle "perhaps"), that is, God purposefully working in the "short separation" of Onesimus and Philemon for their "eternal" benefit (v. 15); "especially to me⋯how much more to you"—a *qal wehomer* rabbinical rhetorical device that progresses from the lesser to the greater (16); vicarious analogy with regard to desired action—to "receive him as me" (17); the "anticipation" of problems or objections (18); parenthesis/ellipsis (19a); "not to mention" what is then immediately mentioned *paralipsis*) (19b); concealing one's ultimate objective or primary request and leaving this to the addressee(s) to figure out (21); committing oneself to the "obedience" of the addressee without actually commanding the person what to do (21a)—even what is "above and beyond the call of duty," an instance of calculated understatement (21b); the further addition of "one thing more" (22), whereby the writer/speaker seemingly adds an afterthought, yet one that is actually tied in with his preceding argument; and finally Paul's "token offer" to repay the financial debt incurred by Onesimus (19—an offer that he was probably not in a position to carry out, though there is some debate on this issue).

juxtaposed promise and plea of v.19-20:[43)]

> I, Paul, am writing this with **my own hand**, I will pay it back─ (*performative*)
> let me not mention to you that you even owe me your very self. (*informative*)
> Yes indeed, brother, (*relational*)
> may I have some benefit from you in the Lord; (*imperative*)
> refresh **my heart** in Christ! (*emotive*)

It is entirely possible that at this climactic stage in the unfolding development of Paul's argument the mention of "heart" (literally, 'bowels' σπλάγχνα) is a veiled reference to the chief object of his request─Onesimus himself (cf. v. 12). Thus, the implication is, Philemon should "refresh" both Onesimus as well as Paul by freeing the former![44)]

On a more abstract level of conception, the rhetorical organization of any persuasive discourse may be further analyzed by examining the textual realization of the two interpersonal macro-functions of promoting *POWER* and/or *SOLIDARITY*. The former, *vertical* dimension of social interaction represents an effort to exercise some measure of control in personal relations; the latter, *horizontal* dimension focuses upon a desire to create an emotive, cohesive bond between two or more individuals or groups. Thus, when composing his text to Philemon, Paul skillfully balances one impulse over against the other in order to convey his obvious as well as his unstated wishes with the greatest amount of impact upon and apparent value for his addressee(s). Though he clearly alludes to his apostolic authority, he makes sure not to do this in a heavy-handed, obtrusive manner.

On the contrary, Paul implements a gentle, restrained approach, one in which his

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43) With respect to the central literary technique of applying a distinctive "point of view" in a text, Barclay observes that "[a] key aspect of Paul's letter is the way he represents what has happened, portraying the actors and events from the perspective, and the order, that will best suit his appeal" John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon,* New Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 103.

44) "At every point [in the letter] Paul interposes himself into the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus, and this strategy reaches its climax in the direct appeal of v. 17. ⋯ Here is the essence of Paul's strategy: so to identify himself with Onesimus and Onesimus with himself, that Philemon has to regard the returning Onesimus as if he were Paul himself [and act accordingly]. ⋯ Thus the returning Onesimus is totally transformed in the eyes of his master" (John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon,* 108.)—as being someone most "useful" (11), a "brother in the Lord" (16), of great "benefit" both to Paul and also to Philemon (19-20).

foremost desire is partially, but not entirely concealed. His chief interest seems to be to remain on good terms with his friend and colleague Philemon and to promote a prevailing atmosphere of harmony, brotherhood, and partnership in their common concern for the gospel ministry. In the passage above, for example (v. 19-20), we see how Paul deftly words his text to move from an expression of deference (solidarity) in a promise to "repay" Onesimus's debt (line 1), to an exercise of power in a pointed reminder to Philemon about who led him to conversion (line 2), back again to an expression of "brother"-hood (line 3), a little more power in his request for "some benefit" (line 4), and closing with an appeal to the inclusive solidarity of faith that binds together all brothers "in Christ" (line 5).

The primary rhetorical-argument line, involving the triadic cause-effect sequence of *[problem + motivation → appeal]* and its various textual extensions or transformations, constitutes the essential backbone of any Old Testament or New Testament hortatory discourse, which may be more specifically minatory, admonitory, consolatory, advisory, motivational, or inspirational in nature. The surrounding situational factors give substance to the central appeal in terms of related and relevant presuppositions, assumptions, implications, implicatures, and other contextualizing background information. Translators need to keep these ten interactive variables in mind when analyzing any biblical paraenetic text in preparation for transmitting it both meaningfully and also movingly in their language. Much pertinent material concerning setting, situation, or supposition may have to be relegated to marginal notes or to the introduction to a given book, chapter, or section. But in order for the basic thrust of the discourse to be accurately conceptualized and comprehended, the writer's paramount problem-solving stratagem of rhetorical expression must be clearly stated or inferred somewhere, whether within the text itself or in the surrounding para-text. Otherwise, the translation cannot be deemed a success since the communication process will be deficient or defective to a greater or lesser degree.

2.3 Summary of a literary methodology—a 10-step procedural sequence

I conclude this section by offering a summary of the chief steps that one might carry out as part of a coordinated literary analysis of any biblical text. My proposed

set of procedures is just one of many that could be utilized to accomplish this aim, and the sequence suggested below can be easily modified in terms of subject matter, order of occurrence, and/or analytical objective.[45]

1   Carefully examine the pertinent sociocultural, situational, and religious *setting* (*con*-text) of the biblical book or pericope under consideration.
2   Examine the surrounding verbal *co*-text of the passage being analyzed and note any points of continuation, correspondence, and/or contrast.
3   Identify the principal literary *genre* and sub-genres along with their associated stylistic features and functional implications.
4   Note all "break points" and transitions in the text, that is, areas of *disjunction* where one or more prominent shifts in form, content, or function occur.
5   Record all instances of formal or conceptual *recursion* (phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, textual), and note any patterns formed thereby.
6   Locate the chief *artistic devices* and *rhetorical techniques* and determine their local or global textual significance.
7   Do a detailed *discourse analysis* of all constituent verses within the framework of the entire pericope.[46]
8   Make a comparative (SL/TL) study all key terms, concepts, images, and symbols in their respective contextual settings.
9   Look for any prominent *intra-* and *inter*-textual references and allusions that are embedded within the text.
10 Identify the main *communicative functions* of the text and, in direct discourse, also its primary *speech acts* along with their interrelationships.

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45) For example, some may prefer to carry out a complete *discourse analysis* (step #7) much earlier in the process of analysis. These ten steps are practically applied to Paul's letter to Philemon in a forthcoming training manual for Bible translators using the "frame of reference" model (T. Wilt & E. Wendland; cf. Wilt, Timothy L., "A new framework for Bible translation," ch. 2.). For a somewhat different formulation of these ten basic procedures of literary analysis, see Ernst R. Wendland, *Translating the literature of Scripture: A literary-rhetorical approach to Bible translation,* ch. 7.

46) This methodology features a literary approach, but *linguistic* analysis methods are certainly involved for these serve both to inform and also to substantiate the specific literary methods that are applied during the course of any given study.

After completing the preceding set of general exegetical procedures with reference to the SL document, one is in a good position to apply the results when composing a corresponding *literary* translation. In preparation for this, one might re-consider the source text and try to collect, categorize, and prioritize all potential "[form]-functional matches" with respect to literary style and structure for possible use in a subsequent translation.[47] This would require translators to *think in* their own language even as they are reviewing the linguistic forms of the source text. Therefore, this step can perhaps be performed best in two separate stages: (a) with special attention being given to SL literary forms and their assumed communicative functions within a specific co-text, and (b) with a corresponding emphasis placed upon discovering close literary (oratorical) form-functional equivalents in the TL, especially in the area of key thematic terms and expressions according to the particular genre of literature in focus.

As will be stressed in the next section, an artistic and rhetorical rendition does not need to be a total genre-for-genre transfer. Rather, the transformation process may be employed *to a greater or lesser extent* within the target language text—that is, in keeping with the principle of *relevance* (weighing cognitive "gains" over against text processing "costs")[48]. Such a strategic evaluation must be made in the light of local circumstances as set forth in a previously determined project commission (*Brief*), in particular its primary communicative goal (*Skopos*), to be discussed further below.

3. Application of a literary approach to translation in comparison with other translation methods, as exemplified by selected English and Chichewa renderings of Philemon.

This section begins (3.1) with several examples to illustrate how a literary

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47) This important exercise may also be carried out *during* the sequential exegetical-literary study instead of waiting till later. For more information regarding the procedure of identifying form-functional matches, see Lynell Zogbo and Ernst Wendland, *Hebrew poetry in the Bible: A guide for understanding and for translating* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), ch. 4.

48) cf. Ernst-August Gutt, *Relevance theory: A guide to successful communication in translation* (Dallas: SIL, 1992), 24-25.

(artistic-rhetorical) perspective can help resolve certain text-critical and translational issues and ambiguities that arise in the book of Philemon. This is followed by a summary of a "literary functional equivalence" (*LiFE*) approach to Bible translation —that is, what it is and how it relates to other popular methodologies (3.2). This "*LiFE*-style" technique is then applied and assessed with respect to the central letter "body" of Philemon as this has been rendered by different versions in English and Chichewa, a Bantu language of east-central Africa (3.3).

3.1 Shedding some literary light upon several hermeneutical grey areas

Before one can translate an assigned passage of Scripture, one must first know what the text is and what it says. There are a few text-critical questions in Philemon to be answered,[49] as well as a number of more important difficulties of interpretation that need to be resolved before translating. The following notes summarize the main problem that is presented in a selection of these verses and offer tentative suggestions as to how a literary perspective can in some (not necessarily all) cases contribute evidence to assist the exegete-translator in arriving at a more definitive and defensible solution:

- In a few versions (e.g., KJV), the Byzantine text, and most minuscules, Apphia (v. 2) is qualified by the adjective ἀγαπητῇ ("beloved"), rather than by the noun ἀδελφῇ ("sister"). A literary-based rationale for this modification sounds more convincing in this case than a purely text-critical one, i.e., to conform the text to the preceding ἀγαπητῷ.[50] A personal aspect of Paul's argument is to stress Philemon's quality of "love" (e.g., v. 5, 7) so that he can later use this as the basis for his appeal (v. 9) to forgive Onesimus, who is now a "beloved brother" to them both (v. 16). Thus the strong link with love that Paul seeks to associate with Philemon's attitude and behavior would be weakened if the term were to be applied also to someone else in this epistle.
- Speaking of "love," there is a question as to whom this characteristic (action) applies, along with that of "faith," in verse 5, which reads ambiguously in its

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49) For a complete listing and discussion of these textual issues, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament,* 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 588-590.

50) Bruce M. Metzger, *A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament,* 588.

literal form: "Hearing of your love and faith, which you have towards the Lord Jesus and to all the saints."　To whom then are Philemon's love and faith directed? There is considerable ambiguity here, which is best clarified by a literary explanation:[51]　Paul introduces a *chiastic* **A:B::B':A'** construction in this passage, perhaps to distinguish it in Philemon's case from its unambiguous intertextual parallel in Colossians 1:4, thus—love : faith :: Lord Jesus : all saints. In other words, Philemon's love is exercised with respect to fellow believers, while his faith is directed towards the Lord Jesus.[52] The operation of literary *intertextuality* in this instance is made more likely due to the correspondence that exists also between the above-mentioned passages, namely, Philemon 4 and Colossians 1:3. Notice also that in fact another chiasmus is formed with these same two key terms in verses 6 and 7 of Philemon, where "faith" and "love" are cited respectively. The former is again connected with "Christ" while the latter is directed towards "the saints."

- Instead of ἐν ἡμῖν ("in us") the Textus Receptus with notable textual support reads ἐν ὑμῖν ("in you") (v. 6). It is difficult to understand how the former is "more expressive" and "more likely to be changed by copyists to ὑμῖν than vice versa"[53]. More likely is the simple pragmatic-rhetorical fact that Paul would prefer to retain a singular "you" throughout the letter to render his appeal to Philemon in more personal terms. The only exceptions could then be explained structurally—that is, the communal plural "you" being appropriate for the opening epistolary salutation (v. 3) as well as the concluding apostolic benediction (v. 25).

- "The ὅπως construction in v. 6 "is potentially the most difficult construction in the whole epistle to analyze"[54]. One reason for this (among others) is the genitive construction with which it begins: "the partnership/fellowship of your faith" (ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου). Greenlee lists five different possible interpretations of this phrase[55], and there are undoubtedly more. Literary considerations may affect the translation of κοινωνία in particular, since it is a key component of the thematic core of this letter. Paul wants Philemon to

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51) For alternative readings, see John Banker, *Semantic structure analysis of Philemon,* 18-19 and J. Harold Greenlee, *An exegetical summary of Titus and Philemon* (Dallas: SIL, 1989), 120-121.

52) Harris lists five reasons why this construction is preferable to other construals. Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon,* 250.

53) Bruce M. Metzger, *A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament,* 588.

54) John Banker, *Semantic structure analysis of Philemon,*19.

55) J. Harold Greenlee, *An exegetical summary of Titus and Philemon,* 122

demonstrate his "partnership" in the gospel ministry by forgiving Onesimus⋯ and more (v. 17, 21). Therefore, the rendering of κοινωνία should be made to correspond in verses 6 and 17 to the extent possible in keeping with a natural TL style, e.g., "the *partnership* that is forged by your faith." This would appear to be preferable than using a synonym, e.g., "sharing" (NIV) or "fellowship" (GNB).

- The preposition "for" (γάρ) that begins v. 7 is omitted in many contemporary English versions, e.g., NIV, GNB, NRSV, REB, NJB. While this may be justified to some extent stylistically, it does create a perceptible disjunction between this verse and the ones that have preceded it in the epistolary unit (paragraph), i.e., v. 4-6. It would be preferable, if possible, to retain this connection in Greek, whether as "a further reason for Paul's thanksgiving in verse 4" or to indicate "the grounds for Paul's prayer in verse 6"[56] "For" is also employed as a discourse marker to express "continuation or connection"[57]. The chiastic construction of this paragraph would support the last mentioned motive; thus Paul mentions Philemon's "love" and "faith" in v. 5 and then goes on to elaborate upon each concept in inverse order—"faith" in v. 6 and "love" in v. 7. How to convey this larger text function of connection and/or continuity would of course be specific to the TL concerned—in English, for example, the emphatic "indeed" might do (analogous to certain usages of the so-called "asseverative *kiy*" [כִּי] in Hebrew literary structure).

- The manuscript evidence supports πρεσβύτης "elder/old man" in v. 9, but a number of commentators argue that in Koine Greek this word was often written interchangeably with πρεσβεύτης "ambassador"—a sense that they feel better fits the cotext here. The latter is clearly a "power" term that would underscore Paul's apostolic authority. However, as I have argued above, Paul's overt rhetorical strategy seems to be based more firmly on an appeal to his "solidarity," or "partnership" with Philemon in the gospel cause (v. 13, 17). Accordingly, he prefers to "entreat" rather than "command" Philemon for the sake of Onesimus, as he has just stated (v. 8-9). This is not to deny that πρεσβύτης may act as an underlying reminder of Paul's respected position and role in the church (cf. 19), but its translation in v. 9 should first of all reflect his desire to appeal to Philemon's sense of compassion and concern for the situation that Paul was currently in as a prisoner in Rome.

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56) Ibid., 124.
57) John Banker, *Semantic structure analysis of Philemon,* 23.

- The Textus Receptus tradition along with the versions based largely upon it include the verb προσλαβοῦ "receive/welcome" in v. 12 as well as in v. 17. Indeed, the textual difficulties to be found in v. 12 are substantial, for this verb appears in three different positions in many Greek manuscripts but in others not at all[58]. Arguing from text-critical principles, it is hard to understand how such a key command could have been omitted from this passage. Furthermore, as part of Paul's strategic method in this letter, the tactic of delayed revelation appears to be prominent—for example, postponing the mention of Onesimus until the very end of v. 11, or the reference to Philemon's debt to Paul until the closing portion of his restrained argument (v. 19b). Therefore, it is in keeping with rhetorical form and appropriate also to the development of Paul's argument that the thorny request to "receive" Onesimus should be delayed to v. 17 – that is, until he has had a chance to emphasize both his affection for the latter as a dear Christian "brother" (v. 16) and also his high opinion of Onesimus's "usefulness" as a potential co-worker (v. 13).
- In v. 13 we have a good example of a literary device that I have elsewhere termed "semantic density"[59]. This refers to an important SL word or expression that can be interpreted in two (or more) ways in its textual setting with the likelihood, or at least a strong possibility, that both (all) meanings were actually intended by the original author (hence different from "ambiguity"). In other words, both senses are valid and relevant to the discourse content at that point. Thus at the close of this central verse Paul adds the motivating mention of ἐν το ῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου "in the bonds of the gospel," which could be understood as a reference to his imprisonment "because of" (cause), "for the sake of" (purpose), or less likely "by" (means) – the gospel message centering in the person and work of Jesus Christ. If such semantic density applies here, as in the case of a genuine ambiguity, there are two translational solutions: Either the most supported or preferred sense can be rendered in the text and the other(s) relegated to a footnote, or the expression can be translated in such a way that both meanings are implied in the TL. In this instance "because of" might work in English (or *chifukwa cha* in the Chichewa language). There are a number of other examples of semantic density in Philemon (as in the NT literature generally, especially in John's writings), e.g., the key term κοινωνία,

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58) John Banker, *Semantic structure analysis of Philemon,* 35.

59) Ernst R. Wendland, "What is truth? Semantic density and the language of the Johannine epistles: with special reference to 2 John," *Neotestamentica* 24:2 (1990), 301-333.

which requires that its two senses be kept in mind－namely, the dynamic concept of "partnership" as well as the relational notion of "fellowship."

- The paired εἰ ("if") condition-of-fact clauses of v. 17-18 (with indicative verbs) play an important part in Paul's rhetorical tactics at this critical point in his letter. In the first instance, the Apostle seeks to mitigate his imperative command for Philemon to "welcome" Onesimus back as a brother by hypothetically pointing to the reality of their "partnership" in ministry. In a sense, he thus leaves it to Philemon to make this crucial assessment, though he has already stated his positive evaluation (v. 1). However, in many languages the use of "if" would imply that Paul had certain doubts about his colleague's opinion regarding this matter. In such cases a more overt indication of estimation may be necessary, in English for example, by opening with "since." The rhetorical situation is rather different in v. 18: Use of the contrastive/ continuative initial conjunction δέ ("but") suggests that Paul had some uncertainty over how Philemon was going to react to the plea to receive Onesimus *as if* he were the Apostle himself. Once again Paul defers judgment to Philemon－that is, with respect to the nature and size of Onesimus's "debt" or "wrongdoing." Paul surely had no doubt that Philemon had been wronged (and one's translation should not suggest this),[60] but there was some question as to how the latter would react to the revelation of his slave's changed spiritual status. Thus, in English at least, the hypothetical conjunction "if" is appropriate, even though the formal parallelism with v. 17 is then obscured.

- The rhythmic (artistic) and rhetorical emphasis of v. 19a is missed out in many translations. The use of explicit personal pronouns is particularly striking, for they serve to anticipate and thus also to foreground the final verb, "I, Paul, write with my very own hand, I myself *will repay*"(ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί, ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω). Other languages may well require different stylistic devices to reproduce the overall impact of the original. The GNB makes a

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60) There is considerable speculation in the commentaries concerning precisely how Onesimus had "wronged" (ἠδίκησέν) Philemon, or exactly what he "owes" (ὀφείλει) his master (v. 18). Questions also arise in connection with why and how it was that Onesimus came into contact with Paul in prison (v. 10). See the discussion in D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon,* 302-305; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon,* Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 266-267; Robert W. Wall, *Colossians and Philemon,*183-185. In any case, these basic facts are clear: Onesimus *had* done something very wrong; he had run away from his master, Philemon; he had subsequently become a believer in Christ after coming into contact with the Apostle Paul; Paul now uses this letter to intercede on his behalf to effect a reconciliation upon the return of Onesimus to Colossae.

noteworthy attempt: "Here, I will write this with my own hand: *I, Paul, will pay you back*."

- The rhetorical particle of affirmation (ναί) that leads off the climactic verse 20 presents another challenge to find an idiomatic translational equivalent in the TL. It is apparently ignored by the NIV, and many English versions stick to a relatively literal "yes," which may work—but could still be improved, e.g., "Well then⋯" (NJB), "⋯please⋯" (CEV), "So⋯" (GNB). Similarly, if it is assumed (as argued above) that the optative verb ὀναίμην is a play on the name for Onesimus (Ὀνήσιμον; cf. v. 10), one would like to duplicate this poetic and rhetorical touch in a translation, if possible, e.g., "⋯may I receive some benefit, some *usefulness*, from you⋯" If the implicit desire expressed by Paul in v. 13 is deemed accessible and relevant at this stage of the discourse, one might translate even more boldly: "may I have Profit—that is Onesimus—from you"[61]. Perhaps that is going too far to make Paul's intention explicit in the text, but it would certainly be legitimate to record this hermeneutical possibility in a footnote.

- Verse 20 also calls the translator's attention again to the strong *emotional* overtones conveyed by this little epistle—so short in length but deep in feelings. A literal rendering of the Greek "refresh my bowels" (ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα) would no doubt have quite the opposite effect, so some creative artistry needs to be put into practice in order to achieve an appreciable degree of literary functional equivalence (*LiFE*), e.g., "please, would you cheer me up!" (cf. GNB, CEV). Equally difficult, but worth trying, would be an effort to maintain through reiteration a measure of intratextual resonance with the parallel phrase that occurs at the close of Paul's "thanksgiving" in v. 7.

- The literary structure of the letter, as proposed earlier (2.2.2), suggests that verses 21-22 should be treated together as a discourse unit (prose paragraph). That decision will affect one's formatting of the text on the page and the transitional techniques that are used to indicate a break (between 20 and 21) as well as a connection (between 21 and 22). GNB does a good job (in English) to mark the gap, beginning v. 21 with: "I am sure, as I write this, that you will do⋯" The interpretation of the linkage between v. 21 and 22 is more difficult. The conjunctions ἅμα δὲ could be understood in two ways: "at the same time" －that is, when welcoming Onesimus home as a Christian brother, or "one thing more"－that is, a second request, in addition to what I have already asked of

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61) J. Harold Greenlee, *An exegetical summary of Titus and Philemon,* 20.

you, i.e., concerning Onesimus. Perhaps both notions are involved, another instance of "semantic density." In any case, it is important that the translation replicate the discourse structure of the original text as it has been determined through literary analysis, namely, to suggest a perceptible continuity coupled with a distinct amplification as one moves from v. 21 to v. 22, e.g., "And one thing more—…" (cf. NRSV). The lack of an adequate lexical connection can have a disruptive effect upon readers; for example, even though it treats these two verses as a conceptual unit, the CEV fails to bind them together adequately: "I am sure you will do all I ask, and even more. Please get a room ready for me…"

Certainly other significant translational issues could have been mentioned, but the preceding examples should be sufficient to demonstrate how literary (artistic-rhetorical) criteria may be utilized, along with other evidence, in order to help establish the central meaning of the biblical text so that it can be re-textualized in the most acceptable, "relevant-equivalent" manner in the target language.

3.2 What is a "literary functional−equivalence" (LiFE) translation?

Translation in general is an instance of *complex, contextualized* communication—an intricate process of textual exchange, or verbal *trans-form-ation*, one that involves two basic procedures:

o   the *intercultural* re-conceptualization of a given SL *text*, which is a meaningful and purposeful selection, arrangement, and differentiation of oral or written signs, as it is cognitively transferred from one world-view domain to another;

o   the semantically accurate, formally appropriate, and pragmatically acceptable *interlingual* re-signification of the original text in a specific TL, along with any essential *para-textual* bridge and background material needed to facilitate audience comprehension.

The first procedure requires the cognitive processing and transformation of all the deep-level semantic and pragmatic features of the original text, whereas the second, which follows from the first, deals with the more overt surface-level semantic, structural, and stylistic aspects of a discourse. Mistakes that occur during the initial step of translation, *re-conceptualization*, are generally introduced into, and hence

also distort, the latter stage, *re-composition* in the TL.

Communication by means of translation is complicated due to the fact that at least two languages, cultures, conceptual grids, and semiotic systems are involved.[62] In many project settings where translators are not able to access the original text, it is necessary to introduce another version in a *third* language-culture and cognitive framework (world-view), one that may be quite foreign in both respects to the SL as well as the TL. Such a "*bridge* translation" is often composed in a major western Language of Wider Communication (*LWC*), such as English, Spanish, French, or Russian. This inevitably presents a team with some serious conceptual and translational problems. However, in the case of a regional *LWC*, like Swahili in East Africa or Chewa further to the south, the situation is not as problematic because these languages belong to the same general linguistic family (Bantu) as many others in the area, and they also reflect many more cultural similarities.

A translation of the *Scriptures* presents further challenges because of the great time-gap that exists between the initial setting of composition and the present-day. As a result, the biblical writers and their compositional or cultural environment can no longer be directly observed or investigated. Furthermore, there are no original documents extant, and thus text-critical questions periodically arise. Therefore, the real test for Bible translators is presented by the initial "re-conceptualization" process. Once they have accomplished that assignment in relation to the Hebrew or Greek text and its circumstantial setting (with the help of critical commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, and other exegetical aids—including electronic tools like *Paratext* and *Logos*), the second step, creating a linguistic "re-presentation" in the TL is not quite so difficult. Nevertheless, determining the relevant textual "appropriateness" (relevance, acceptability, etc.) for a particular target group is still a formidable task that requires of translators the highest level of competence and commitment.

The task of interlingual communication is further complicated by the prestigious nature of the source text that is being rendered in the case of the Holy Scriptures. It is what we might call a "hot text"—a sacred, authoritative, revered, and normative SL document (albeit the edited copy of copies), hence one that will always take precedence in value over its translation. Therefore any TL version must continually

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62) Thus for a shorter definition, we might say that translation involves a *re-conceptualization* and *composition* of the same text in a different linguistic, sociocultural, and situational context.

be comparatively examined, corrected, and improved (where possible) in the light of the original—as well as under the influence of a long tradition of translational predecessors, whether in the TL itself or versions in other languages. Such a comparative assessment also involves several areas of implication that need to be closely monitored. Thus, as has already been noted, a desire to express as much as possible of the "meaning" of the Word of God (certainly the ideal goal, though ultimately unachievable) requires that one pay attention to not only the *content* of the biblical text but also to its presumed *communicative functions* and *emotive impact* in relation to its intended audience and their social (including religious) setting and situational context.[63]

However, there is even more of a debt to the original to repay: Translators must carefully study the linguistic and literary *forms* of the source document being translated, not only to determine its semantic content and pragmatic intent but also because these forms themselves often convey, display, or represent meaning— namely, semiotic significance of a stylistic, structural, rhetorical, and even *isomorphic* nature. We have already seen many examples of this, including discreet phonological effects such as punning and alliteration, word order variations to indicate topic and focus, repetition that produces thematic cohesion as well as emphasis, constructions serving to mark structural peaks and boundaries within a discourse, rhetorical devices that generate emotion and suspense, and creative formal arrangements which appear to reflect an artistic impulse to beautify the text conceptually, to give it a special aural appeal, and/or to reflect certain logical concepts (e.g., the use of a chiasmus to suggest some sort of semantic reversal).

In short then, every well-shaped literary composition gives abundant evidence of the fact that textual *form has meaning* too and must therefore be given its due in any translation effort.[64] This is accordingly a primary goal of our literary-oriented

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63) I must emphasize here the utter impossibility of translation in all of its aspects—*form*, *content*, *function* and *effect*. Translation always involves some sort of *distortion*—of addition, subtraction, or modification. It is simply not possible to reproduce the full denotative and connotative significance of the original in any version because a "translation always functions in a totally different socio-historical context" (Lourens de Vries, "Bible translations: Forms and functions," *The Bible Translator: Technical Papers* 52:3 (2001), 317.) Therefore, a careful selection in terms of what can, and what needs, to be done must be made in the light of the requirements and resources of the contemporary target audience and their circumstances. More will be said below about this important pragmatic translation principle of the "limited good.

64) Thus the proverb *traddutore—traditore*, roughly put: "the translator is a traitor,"applies also to the form of verbal discourse. The more literary the text, the more "traitorous" a translator becomes!

translational approach, namely, an effort that aims to achieve the *maximal utilization* of the available and appropriate TL forms in one or more significant (perceptible) respects. This might be achieved in terms of sound, sense, syntax, or structure with respect to the closest equivalent genres of vernacular verbal art. The method being proposed here may be attempted and potentially accomplished *to a greater or lesser extent* in every application to a particular biblical text, depending on local community requirements and their resources of production.

There are two specifically *literary* areas of importance and consequence that must be considered during the translation process, as was noted above. An "*artistic*" concern leads one to concentrate upon the *formal*, esthetic and iconic facets of verbal texts, whether oral or written, i.e., what is beautiful, euphonious, memorable, sensually appealing in discourse. Consequently, there is an emphasis upon the *poetic*, *relational* (*phatic*) and *ritual* (*liturgical*) functions of communication. A "*rhetorical*" interest, on the other hand, directs one towards the *functional*, dynamic aspect of text transmission, i.e., what is powerful, persuasive, influential, pragmatically effective in discourse. In this case, the emphasis is upon the *expressive*, *affective*, and *imperative* functions of communication.

The formal scope of a literary (or "poetic")[65] approach thus extends in two directions which converge and overlap in many places. One impulse examines the artistic beauty of the Scriptures with respect to both the original and the translated text. Here one seeks to determine what makes the biblical text *esthetically* attractive —capturing the eyes, ears, and interests of its hypothetical audience—thereby also enhancing the other communicative aims that the author sought to achieve in and through his words. The second literary inclination highlights the potency, or *persuasive* power, of the source and target texts. How did the writers of Scripture use language to capture minds, hearts, and wills—that is, to influence their hearers and readers to understand, feel, accept, and do certain things? Here the analyst

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Moreover, not only "two principal models" of translation exist—a "formal imitation" of the original text and a version that aims for "semantic equivalence" (Carlo, Buzzetti, "Mini-notes: A 'new' resource in translating the Bible?" *The Bible Translator* special issue 55:3 (2004), 408.), but there is at least another possibility to consider: This is a rendering that seeks to achieve an appreciable degree of semantic equivalence, but does so by utilizing *the most excellent available* TL structural and stylistic forms in the process. In this sense then, the creative and skillful translator becomes a verbal "trader" in the interlingual exchange of texts

65) The discipline of *poetic* refers to the study of formal (structural and stylistic) *artistry* in literature— its analysis, interpretation, and comparative evaluation.

attempts to identify the specific stylistic features that enabled people to *experientially* sense the Bible's impact in terms of diverse emotions, passions, attitudes, and moods.[66] Together, the manifest artistry and rhetoricity of the original text serves to enhance its overall credibility, authority, and authenticity, while effecting varying degrees of power and solidarity in relation to a continual succession of audience groups, from ancient to modern.

We recognize that every translation is only a partial (indeed a very pale) reflection of the original text because only selected constituents of the source language document can be adequately, let alone equivalently, represented in the target language. Furthermore, this conceptual transaction must be carried out using the verbal currency of a language whose forms embody and represent a world-view and value system that is very different, often radically so. Therefore, a *choice* must always be made—that is, in the light of the total cognitive and emotive frame of reference presented by the translation setting and in accordance with "situational relevance." Also applicable here is the "integrity factor," namely, the desire to keep the inevitable interference, distortion, or *loss*, in crucial areas of significance to a minimum—in loyalty to the original author and his initial communicative intentions.

In view of the complex nature of our task, therefore, it may be worthwhile to expand upon the minimal two-step definition of translation that was presented at the beginning of this section. The following is a more systematic "componentialized" summary that intends to be inclusive of different current approaches, while at the same time bringing the possibility of a specifically literary rendering in the TL to the fore (namely, at component f):[67]

Translation refers to the:

a) **conceptually mediated re-composition of**　　　[The translator acts as a "mediator," or verbal "stock broker," who must fairly represent all his "clients"-the original author and his communicative intentions as well as the needs and desires of the target/consumer audience.]

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66) From a theological perspective, my view is that this literary motivation and textual implementation was guided in the case of the various authors of Scripture by the essential effectual operation of the Holy Spirit.

67) This chart presents a reworking of material found in Ernst R. Wendland, *Translating the literature of Scripture: A literary-rhetorical approach to Bible translation*, section 2.7.

b) **one contextually "framed" text**   ["Context" denotes the complete cognitive-emotive framework that influences and guides the perception, interpretation, and application of a given text.][68)

c) **within a different communication setting**   [The translator negotiates a re-formulation, that is, a verbal re-signification, of the original text in a new language, mind-set, and socio-cultural environment.]

d) **in the most relevant,**   [The aim is to achieve greatest number of beneficial conceptual, emotional, and volitional effects without expending excessive or undue processing effort.]

e) **functionally equivalent manner possible,**   [The target text should manifest a sufficient degree of similarity to the original in terms of the meaning variables of semantic content, pragmatic intent, connotative resonance, emotive impact, artistic appeal, and/or rhetorical power, in accord with its literary genre.]

f) **that is, stylistically marked, more or less,**   [The degree of stylistic domestication (or foreignization), that is, idiomacity (or unnaturalness), will be more or less strongly realized with respect to the TL.]

g) **in keeping with the designated job commission**   [A TL text's level of accuracy and acceptability is defined with respect to the translation project's guiding terms of reference, that is, its primary communication goal(s),   staff experience and training, available resources, quality-control procedures, community wishes and requirements, administrative and management procedures, desired completion schedule, and so forth.]

h) **agreed upon for the TL project concerned.**   [The overall communicative framework of the target social and religious setting is determinative for establishing the project commission, or *Brief*, which needs to be first carefully researched, then agreed-upon by all major sponsors and supporters, and finally, closely monitored, evaluated, and, if necessary, revised on an on-going basis.]

The definition of translation in general or the qualitative assessment of any particular translation is influenced by three principal factors:

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68) More specifically, in terms of "relevance theory," *context* refers to the "cognitive environment" of a person—a mental construct, or conceptual-emotive framework, which is composed of inferences based on his/her individual psyche: prior *learning*, both formal and informal; past *experiences*, good as well as bad; the immediate physical and social *environment*; the present *co-textual* setting of the text under consideration; current *assumption* (including those that pertain to the "cognitive environment" of other interlocutors on the scene); all other perceptible communicative *stimuli* (semiotic verbal or non-verbal signs, including the text that s/he happens to be reading, watching, and/or listening to); any non-communicative stimuli, that is, any random *noise* that happens to be manifested in the present setting, perhaps even hindering the current process of communication (cf. Ernst-August Gutt, *Relevance theory: A guide to successful communication in translation* (Dallas: SIL Inc., 1992), 21-24.).

- the underlying theoretical **model** of translation that one adopts (e.g., source-text or target text oriented; SMR-code, "generative" text-linguistic, or "relevance" based);
- the designated **motive**, or purpose (*Skopos*), of the translation in relation to the target audience in one or more preferred settings of use; and —
- the style or **manner** in which the re-composition process is carried out (e.g., relatively literal vs. idiomatic), including one's view of "Scripture."

Within the scope of the longer definition of translation above, I have incorporated a prominent "literary" component—a perspective that is informed by the insights of "*relevance* theory" as well as "*Skopos* theory" and further specified by a contextualized, "frame"-oriented functional approach (cf. Wilt 2002:ch. 2).[69] The aim is to achieve "sufficient similarity" also in terms of artistry as well as rhetoricity within the setting of a contemporary translation project and a clearly-defined set of communicative goals. Relevance theory serves to contextualize a functional equivalence methodology in broad cognitive terms, while *Skopos* theory constrains such an approach more precisely by identifying which functions will be emphasized during the translation process, that is, with respect to desirability and acceptability in relation to a particular audience and setting.[70] The wider objective is to offer a more flexible viewpoint in practice, one that allows for different procedural options within the terms of reference of a specific translation commission (called a project *Brief* in *Skopos* theory).

A literary functional equivalence (*LiFE*) manner of translating stresses the importance of *form*, or style, in text analysis and transfer, that is, with respect to both the SL and also the TL documents. This approach may be further described by means of the following characteristics which, taken together, serve to distinguish its

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69) Relevanc theory" offer a cognitive, inferential perspective o text processing and communication, including translation (see Ernst-August, Gutt, *Relevance theory: A guide to successful communication in translation Skopos* theory" is an explicit goal-oriented project-based approach toranslation theory and practice pioneered and developed by a German school of translation specialists (see Christiane Nord, *Translating as a purposeful activity: Functionalist approaches explained* (Manchester: St Jerome, 1997); cf. also Lourens de Vries, "Bible translations: Forms and functions." for an insightful application to issues of Bible translation).

70) "A single translation can never reflect all aspects of the source text. Translations always select certain aspects of the source text and it is the social function, the skopos, of the translation that determines the nature of the translational filter" (Lourens de Vries, "Bible translations: Forms and functions," 308.)

practical methodology as applied to Bible translation:

- A *multi*-faceted, *discourse*-centered, *genre*-based, *holistic* technique of text-processing (cf. 10 steps for analysis, section 2.3).
- A prominent *pragmatic-functional* component that evaluates a given biblical discourse in terms of its assumed interactive *speech* and *text acts* along with its manifest *rhetorical strategies.*
- A concern for investigating complete communication *frames*, that is, the entire process of message transmission, taking into consideration also the extralinguistic *sociocultural setting* of the TL text as well as that of the original document.
- A focus on the *artistic* and *rhetorical* aspects of discourse—its presumed impact, appeal, beauty, and relevance in relation to its intended audience or readership, then and now.
- A special interest also in the *oral-aural ("oratorical") dimension* of the source and target texts, as well as its *visual display*, or typographical format, including *legibility*, on the printed page.
- A recognition of the need for a variety of *para-textual supplementary devices* that seek to highlight and explain significant structural or stylistic features to be found in the biblical text and/or reproduced in the translation.
- An ongoing, monitored sensitivity to translation *users* (their wishes, needs, limitations, values, expectations, etc.) and also to *usage* (when, where, and how the version is programmed to be employed).

The fullest type of *LiFE* application is realized in a total *genre-for-genre* transformation on both the MACRO- and also the micro-structural levels of the TL text. This sort of version would tend to demonstrate the widest possible (yet also suitable) use of TL artistic and rhetorical resources in keeping with the genre that has been chosen as a translation model. But this is by no means the only option. There are many potential "*LiFE* forms" depending on the local circumstances, but one procedural principle is paramount, namely, that every translation can be made "literary" ("oratorical"), at least to a certain minimal degree.[71] The primary aim is

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71) An "oratorical" version is a literary translation that is meant to be *recited*, *heard*, *memorized,* and *transmitted* orally and has been composed specifically for that purpose. The text is therefore both *translated* and also *tested* aloud as a matter of explicit procedure with special attention being given to its acoustic appeal and sonic aesthetic. The appeal to orality does not necessary mean that oral genres of verbal art provide the best models for Bible translators to imitate. On the contrary, many stylistic devices featured in Chichewa oral narrative, for example, are unsuitable and sound

to produce a translated text that both *reads* easily and *sounds* natural to the ears of a clearly-defined TL audience in specified, relevant respects, as determined by the project commission.

Five fundamental premises or assumptions underlie such a *LiFE* approach as applied to the Scriptures:

- The foundational *base* text, the canon of Scripture, is arguably an excellent, "literary" document, consisting of many different genres and styles of composition.
- The available literary/oratorical *resources* of the TL are not often utilized, even partially, in most Bible translations, whether literal or idiomatic in nature.
- Diverse *degrees*, or strategies, of *LiFE* translational application are possible with respect to both the Bible as a whole and also the particular text to be translated.[72]
- Depending on the target language involved, different features of linguistic form may be selected for specific "literary enhancement" (*foregrounding*, *marking*— making more "relevant" or "domesticated") in a *LiFE* translation.
- A literary (artistic + rhetorical) translation is aesthetically stimulating and intellectually satisfying for competent translators to exercise their *ingenuity* and *creativity* to produce.

The first premise provides the motivating force for the others: *IF* the text of Scripture is somehow "literary" in nature (manifesting certain functionally-significant artistic and rhetorical qualities), *THEN* this dimension of overall "meaning" needs to be taken into account when setting up a project and formulating its goals. The organizers must at least acknowledge the presence of this factor in the biblical documents even if they are unable, for whatever reason, to take it into serious consideration within the translation itself.[73] It is important to note once

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unnatural in written discourse, e.g., the amount of exact repetition, use of exclamations, redundant connectives, and the like. For a detailed discussion of some of the outstanding issues involved in this subject, see Lourens de Vries, "Bible translation and primary orality," *The Bible Translator: Technical Papers* 51:1 (2000), 101-114.

72) In this respect, the *LiFE* method is not really a new translation approach; rather, it is supplemental and may be applied—more or less—to any type o rendition, whether relatively "domesticated" (or "foreignized") in nature.

73) To ignore the literary dimension of a text is to *diminish* its full meaning. "Approaching the complexities of translation from a literary theoretical angle makes sense when one keeps in mind that literature is regarded as the most complex form of language usage, incorporating much more than semiotic meaning or signification. In poetic language all the aspects and possibilities of language are deliberately exploited to concentrate meaning, to achieve that density of meaning

again the variety of potential applications: Many different areas and degrees of literary engagement and enhancement are possible, depending on the technical organization and practical capabilities of the project, which may range in scale from the production of a full Bible to a brief selection designed for a special religious occasion. I suggest that as a basic minimum, it would be most expedient, and perhaps also the most acceptable solution, to apply a *LiFE* manner of translating consistently to the *phonology*, or sound structure, of the TL text. This would involve features such as: a natural, rhythmic flow of discourse,[74] a balanced pattern of sequential lineation based on oral utterance units, idiomatic collocations of words and phrases, euphonious alliteration and assonance, pointed paronomasia, and, if common within the TL genre concerned, also a touch of internal or end-rhyme.[75]

Thus the component of "literariness" (verbal resourcefulness, rhetorical persuasiveness, etc.) may be introduced in a translation through diverse devices and in different measures. The emphasis, as always in the case of the Scriptures, remains focused firmly upon the semantic *content* of the original text, but there is an interest also in conveying its communicative significance, including emotive overtones and connotative associations, *artistically* when translating. This would be accomplished in accordance with the linguistic "genius" and literary inventory of the target language. The latter refers to the various stylistic features which distinguish the discourse of different genres—that is, as currently recognized and evaluated by

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which Jurij Lotman… saw as the essence of the artistic text when he coined the phrase 'Schönheit ist Information" (H. du Plooy, "Listening to the wind in the trees: Meaning, interpretation and literary theory," J. A. Naude and C. H. J. van der Merwe, eds., *Contemporary translation studies and Bible translation: A South African perspective, Acta Theologica* 2002 Supplementum 2, 266-279.)

74) For a pertinent caveat concerning the assessment of rhythm in literature, see Simon Crisp, "Does a literary translation have to be literal?" S. Crisp & M. Jinbachian, eds., *Text, theology & translation: Essays in honor of Jan de Waard,* Reading (UK: United Bible Societies, 2004), 49.

75) The <u>bottom line</u>: Any biblical text—large or small, poetry or prose—can (*should?*) be translated in a literary manner to the extent and degree possible, that is, with an ear keenly attuned to the rich phonic potential and the distinctive expressive beauty (the linguistic genius) of *both* the biblical text and the vernacular version. Of course, a more radical application of a "domesticatin," literary method of translation in the TL may result in certain lack of equivalence with regard to the forms of the original SL text, for example, various types of repetition and larger structural patterns *inclusio*, *chiasmus*, an *acrostic* arrangement). This loss must be balanced against the increased *psychological effect* (literary *perception*, rhetorical *impact*, aesthetic *appeal*) that an artistic-rhetorical version might generate, for a listening audience in particular. Simon Crisp, "Does a literary translation have to be literal?" provides a helpful overview of some important issues pertaining to the relative *literary* potential of a *literal* Bible translation in English.

artistically-sensitive lay-people as well as by local "experts" in the TL and its literature (orature). There is in effect a *continuum of possibilities* that capable and creative translators may work with, as schematized on the diagram below:
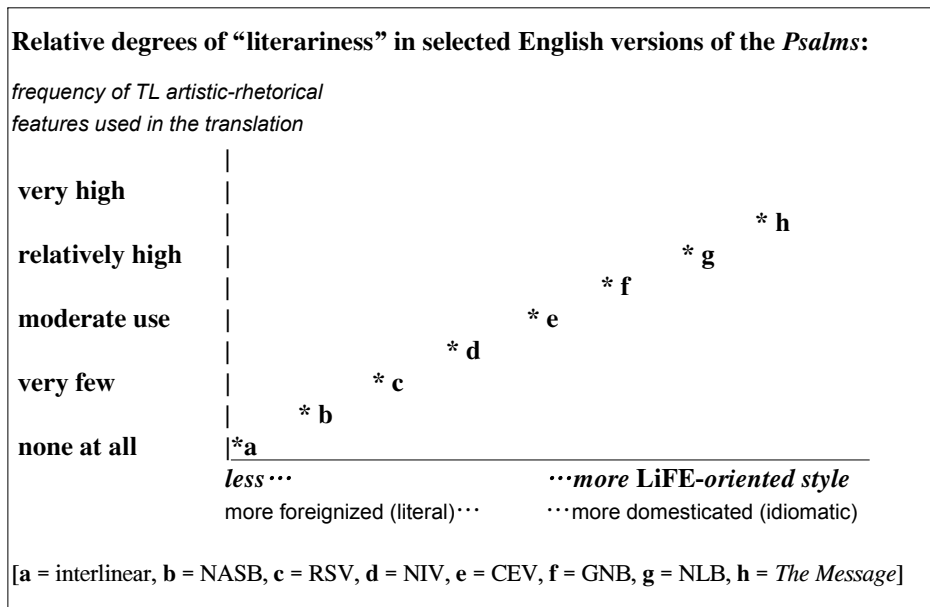
A proposed translational LiFE-style continuum:

less <============= *"literariness"* =============> MORE

[Literary features applied (in increasing scope): *phonological < morphological < lexical < syntactic < textual*]

Different *types* (or "styles") of translation also range along this continuum, that is moving from a "foreignized" formal correspondence version at one end to a fully "domesticated," functionally equivalent genre transformation at the other. However, the chief requirement or guideline is that every version would display *at least some* perceptible literary embellishment aimed at rendering the text more natural-sounding in the TL.

The chart below gives an approximate idea of how an assortment of popular English versions might comparatively relate to one another with respect to their manifestation of different literary attributes within the biblical text, in this case, the *poetic* discourse of the Hebrew Psalter:

Relative degrees of "literariness" in selected English versions of the *Psalms*:

frequency of TL artistic-rhetorical
features used in the translation

```
                        |
 very high              |
                        |                                      * h
 relatively high        |                              * g
                        |                        * f
 moderate use           |                  * e
                        |            * d
 very few               |        * c
                        |    * b
 none at all            |*a _____
                        less···              ···more LiFE-oriented style
                        more foreignized (literal)···  ···more domesticated (idiomatic)
```

[**a** = interlinear, **b** = NASB, **c** = RSV, **d** = NIV, **e** = CEV, **f** = GNB, **g** = NLB, **h** = *The Message*]

It should be noted that this is a highly impressionistic, unscientific diagram, introduced for the purpose of illustration and discussion only; it is certainly not intended to suggest a *qualitative* scale of excellence or of relative translation *quality*. Such a contrastive visual evaluation may be made then with respect to the various versions that are available in other languages. Every translation has its particular strengths and weaknesses, both exegetically and stylistically, depending on which aspects of the original text the translators (and/or their commissioners) have chosen to either to downplay or to highlight during their work.

The "perfect" translation never has been, nor ever will be, realized in human language. Therefore, the ideal is to have several diverse renderings available in a given sociolinguistic and ecclesiastical setting so that they may be used to complement each other during any kind of Scripture study, instruction, or proclamation, thus enriching the overall communication of the biblical message.[76]

3.3. Applying a LiFE-style method of translation to Philemon in English and Chichewa

How would a literary functional-equivalence rendition read, or better, "sound," in the Chichewa language?[77] This may be best demonstrated perhaps through a simple comparative examination of a pair of completely different translation styles. Reproduced below are two different versions of the main "body" of the letter to Philemon (v. 8-22), accompanied in each instance by a relatively literal back-translation. But first a word of explanation:

The first text, called *Buku Lopatulika* (*BL*, 'Sacred Book'), was published as a complete Bible in 1923. It was prepared as an initial translation of the Bible in the Chichewa language for the general Protestant church-going public. The *BL* was produced primarily by missionaries who did not fully control the linguistic, stylistic, and rhetorical resources of the vernacular. This project was undoubtedly founded

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76) "[O]ne type of translation is not enough for the various things people want to do with the Bible" (Lourens de Vries, "Bible translations: Forms and functions," 312.) Of course, this presupposes that they are sufficiently educated as to the various options available and how to apply them in their lives (see further below).

77) Chichewa is the major *LWC* of east-central Africa, being used by an estimated fifteen million first and second language speakers in the region. It is the principal language of Malawi and an official language of Zambia and Mozambique.

upon the theological premise that the only "accurate, faithful, and reliable" translation of the Word of God is a more or less literal reproduction of the original text, in this case Hebrew and/or a concordant English version like the KJV. Such a rationale may be ideologically defensible, but in practical terms it all too often turns out to be a disaster, for the *BL* sample shown below in its published, half-column and justified format is nearly unintelligible, even when read by educated respondents within its full verbal cotext. However, this translation remains very popular today among Protestants (Catholics have their own literal "missionary version")—so much so that it inspires among much of its constituency the "KJV effect," a reverential feeling that virtually equates the vernacular text to Scripture itself, hence not to be changed.

The second sample is derived from the contemporary "popular language" version of 1998 called *Buku Loyera* (*BL*, 'Holy Book'). The ideology of this Bible translation version was, in contrast to the first, much more ecumenical in its outlook and designed to reach people (Catholics as well as Protestants) who had difficulty in really understanding *Chibaibulo*, "Bible-language," the ritualized ecclesiastical dialect that had developed under the influence of expatriate clergy in churches and schools. The *BY* was composed and edited completely by mother-tongue speakers, inspired and guided by Nida's principle of "dynamic equivalence," though this criterion was adapted and contextualized in various ways[78].

For the purpose of this comparative study, the *BY* has been revised by rendering and formatting the text in a more literary ("oratorical" elocutionary) style in Chichewa.[79]   Accordingly, this experimental version has a much more specific target audience in mind—namely, young people who desire a more vigorous verbal rendering of the Scriptures to use both as a comparative Bible study tool and also as the basis for popular musical and dramatic presentations of the Scriptures. This

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78) Cf. Ernst R. Wendland, *Buku Loyera: An introduction to the new Chichewa Bible translation,* Kachere Monograph 6 (Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998), 67-113.

79) The main vernacular model which I followed in this compositional exercise is that exhibited by popular Chichewa revival preachers whose spontaneous (un-writen) sermons are broadcast on local radio (for an example, see Ernst R. Wendland, *Preaching that grabs the heart: A rhetorical-stylistic study of the Chichewa revival sermons of Shadrack Wame,* Kachere Monograph 11 (Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000)). Certain modifications had to be made of course to adapt this dynamic oral sermonic style to a written rendition of a selected Scripture text. In short, the vigorously colloquial verbal technique of these orators had to be considerably toned down in order to render the letter to Philemon in an situationally acceptable manner, e.g., no dramatic ideophones or exclamations were used in the translation.

novel stylistic rendition was motivated by the aim of communicating the Word in a fresh, thought-provoking manner—having both aesthetic appeal and rhetorical impact. It thus aims to serve a youthful constituency which appreciates a text that speaks more energetically and pointedly in the context of their particular life-related questions and concerns about contemporary moral as well as spiritual issues.

BL	Back-translation
8 Momwemo, ndingakhale ndiri nako kulimbika mtima kwakukuru m'Kristu kukulamulira cimene ciye nera, 9 koma makamaka ndimadanda ulira mwa cikondi, pokhala wotere, Paulo nkhalamba, ndipo tsopano wandendenso wa Kristu Yesu; 10 ndikudandaulira chifukwa ca mwana wanga, amene ndambala m'ndende, Onesimo, 11 amene kale sanakupindulira, koma tsopano wa-tipindulira bwino iwe ndi ine; 12 amene ndi yemweyo ndikubwezera iwe, ndiye mtima weni weni wa ine. 13 Ameneyo ndikadafuna ine ku msunga akhale nane, kuti m'malo mwako akadanditumikira ine m'nde-nde za Uthenga Wabwino; 14 koma wopanda kudziwa mtima wako sindi-nafuna kucita kanthu; kuti ubwino wako usakhale monga mokakamiza, komatu mwaufulu. 15 Paukuti kapena anasiyanitsidwa ndi iwe ka-thawi cifukwa ca ici, ndi kuti udza-khala naye nthawi zonse; 16 osatinso monga kapolo, koma woposa kapolo, mbale wokondedwa, makamaka ndi ine, koma koposa nanga ndi iwe, m'thupi, ndiponso mwa Ambuye. 17 Ngati tsono undiyesa wonyanjana nawe, umlandire iye monga ine mwini. 18 Koma ngati anakulakwira	8 Accordingly, even though I have great courage ['a large strong-in-heart'] in Christ to command you what is pro-per, 9 but especially I make an appe-al in love, being like this, Paul an old man, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus; 10 I am appealing to you because of my child, whom I begat in prison, Onesimus, 11 who formerly did not profit to you, but now he has pro-fitted us well you and me; 12 who is the very one I am returning to you, he is the very heart of me. 13 That very one I would have wanted to ke-ep him to remain with me, so that in place of you he would serve me in pri-son things of the Good News; 14 but without knowing your heart I did not wa-nt to do anything; so that your goodness might not be like being forced, not freely. 15 For perhaps he was separated from you for a sh-ort time for this reason, that you mi-ght be with him for all time; 16 not again like a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially with me, but more still with you, in body, and also in the Lord. 17 If now you consider me in agreement with you, receive him like me myself. 18 But if he wronged you

kanthu, kapena wakongola kanthu, undiwerengere ine kameneko; 19 ine Paulo ndicilemba ndi dzanja langa, ndidzacibwezera ine; kuti ndisanene nawe kuti iwe ndiwe mangawa anga. 20 Inde, mbale, ndikondwere nawe mwa Ambuye: utsitsimutse mtima wanga mwa Kristu. 21 Pokhulupirira kumvera kwako ndikulembera iwe, podziwa kuti udzacitanso koposa cimene ndinena. 22 Koma undikonzerenso pogona; pakuti ndiyembekeza kuti mwa mapemphero anu ndidzapatsidwa kwa inu.

anything, perhaps he has borrowed something, reckon that little thing to me; 19 I Paul I write it with my hand, I myself will return it; lest I mention to you that you yourself are my debtor. 20 Yes, brother, I am pleased with you in the Lord: refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Trusting in your obedience I am writing you, knowing that you will also do more than what I say. 22 But you should also prepare for me a place to sleep; for I expect that in keeping with your prayers I will be given to You.

BY

8 Tsono, ndithudi, m'dzina la Khristu n'kotheka kuti ndingalimbe mtima kukulamula zimene uyenera kuchita. **9** Komabe chifukwa cha chikondi makamaka ndingochita kukupempha, ine Paulo apo amene ndili nkhalamba, amenenso ndili m'ndende tsopano chifukwa cha dzina la Khristu Yesulo. **10** Choncho ndikukugwira mwendotu m'malo mwa mwana wanga mwa Khristu, amene ndidamubala m'ndende momwemu. *Iyeyu ndi Onesimo!* **11** Kale iwe unalibe naye ntchito konse, koma tsopano angatigwirire nchito tonsefe, indedi, iweyo pamodzi ndi ine ndemwe.

12 Ndikumtumizanso kwanu tsopano, koma inetu pakutero ndikumva ngati ndikutaya mtima wanga womwedi! **13** Kunena zoona, ndikadakonda kuti iyeyo akhalebe ndi ine kundende kuno, kuti azinditumikira m'malo mwako pofalitsa Uthenga Wabwino waufulu. **14** Sindifuna kuchita kanthu osakufunsa,

Back-translation

8 So then, to be sure, in the name of Christ it is possible that I could take courage ['to be strong in heart'] to command you what you ought to do. **9** But for the sake of love rather I am merely going to request of you, I Paul who am now an old man, I who am also in prison at the moment because of that name of Christ Jesus. **10** Thus I make this fervent appeal ['grabbing leg'] in the place of my child in Christ, whom I begat in this very prison here. *This one is Onesimus!* **11** Formerly he was of no use [work] to you, but now he can work [be of use] for both of us, yes indeed, you along with me myself.

12 I am sending him to your place now, but in doing this I feel like I am throwing away my very heart! **13** Telling the truth, I would have liked that that he remain with me in prison here, so that he must serve me in the place of you by broadcasting the Good News of freedom. **14** I do not want to do anything without asking you,

kuwopa kuti ungandikomere mtima
mokakamizidwa, osati mwaufulutu.
15 Kapena adangokusiya kanthaŵi,
kuti udzakhale naye nthaŵi zonse,
16 osatinso ngati kapolo tsopano, ayi,
koma ngati mbale weniweni wapamtima.
Ine ndimamkonda mwanayu kwambiri,
koma nawe uyenera kumkonda koposa,
popeza kuti iye ndi munthu mnzako
ndiponso makamaka mnzako mkhristu.

17 Choncho ngati umati ndine bwenzi,
umlandire iyeyu ndi manja awiri, basi,
momwe ukadandilandirira ineyo.
18 Ngati m'kalikonse adakulakwirapo,
kapena ali ndi ngongole kwa iwe,
mlanduwu ukhale wanga ndithu!
19 Inde, mau amene ali m'munsimu
ndikulemba ndi dzanja langalanga kuti,
"Ine Paulo, n'zoonadi ndidzalipiradi!"
Nkosasoŵekera kukukumbutsa kuti
paja iweyo ngongole yako kwa ine
ndi moyo wako womwe wachikhristuwu!
20 Tsono, mbale wanga, inenso
undithandizeko
chifukwa ifetu tili pamodzi mwa Ambuye.
Chonde, undisangalatseko mtima mwa
Khristu!

21 Ine ndikukulembera zimenezi
popeza ndatsimikiza mtima kuti
udzachitadi zonse ndakupemphazi.
Kupambanapo, ndikudziŵanso kuti
udzapanga zopitirira zopemphazi.
22 Tsono kanthu kenanso ndi aka:
Undikonzere malo kunyumba kwanu
chifukwa ine ndimakhulupirira kuti
Mulungu adzamvera mapemphero
a nonsenu—adzandibwezera kwa inu!

fearing that you might favor me ['in heart']
by being forced, not in real freedom.
15 Perhaps he just left you for a short time,
so that you would be with him for all time,
16 not any more as a slave now, not at all,
but as a real brother of the heart.
I love this child very much,
but you ought to love him even more,
seeing that he is your fellow human being
and what is more your fellow Christian.

17 So if you say that I am [your] friend,
welcome him with both hands, finish,
just as if you were welcoming me.
18 If in any respect he has wronged you,
or if he has a debt with you,
let this very offense be mine indeed!
19 Yes, the words that are right below here
I am writing with my very own hand, saying
"I, Paul, in truth I will surely repay!"
I must not fail to remind you that
as you know your debt with me
is your very Christian life!
20 So then, my brother, would you help me out too
because we two are together in the Lord.
Please, make my heart happy in
Christ!

21 I am writing you these things
since I have a confident heart that
you will really do all that I've asked you.
More than that, I also know that
you will perform even more than these requests.
22 Now here's another small matter:
Prepare me a place at your house
because I trust that
God will heed the prayers
of you all—he will restore me to you!

Even a reading of the English gloss reveals quite a few differences between these

two translations in terms of manifest style and content. Some of the more important variations of literary significance in Chichewa are listed below for reference:

- The *BY* text has been composed and formatted in terms of a sequence of rhythmically measured utterance units so that the reader (lector) can move easily down the page and comprehend the discourse.[80] This in turn makes it possible for a more natural, nuanced public articulation of the text to be made. The difficulties of the *BL* text in terms of legibility are clear to see, in particular, the awkward word breaks caused by excessive hyphenation and the often inappropriate line endings, that is, breaking off in the midst of a meaningful construction.

- In addition to the rhythmic lineation, the *BY* text evinces a number of other euphonious phonological features which are absent in the *BL* rendition, such as: occasional end rhyme (e.g., /-i / in v. 21); alliteration (e.g., Nkosasoŵekera kukukumbutsa kuti in v. 19); assonance (e.g., chifukwa ine ndimakhulupirira kuti in v. 22); and the referential pun on "useful" in v. 11 (modified to a play on the noun "work" *nchito*, which is more prominent and natural-sounding than the corresponding "profitable" - *pindulira* of *BL*.)

- There are many functionally emphatic word order placements and pronominal-demonstrative combinations in *BY* which serve to highlight key terms and points in Paul's argument, e.g., *Tsono, ndithudi, m'dzina la Khristu* "So then, to be sure, in the name of Christ (8); *Iyeyu ndi Onesimo!* "This one is Onesimus!" (10; note also the dramatic brevity of this revelatory line); *indedi, iweyo pamodzi ndi ine ndemwe* "yes indeed, you along with me myself" (11); *mlanduwu ukhale wanga ndithu* "let this very offense be mine indeed" (18; the first word of this example also illustrates the following feature); *a nonsenu— adzandibwezera kwa inu!* "of you all—he will restore me to you!" (22b; an overlap from the preceding line, analogous to *enjambement* in poetry, is coupled with *asyndeton*, the lack of a connecting conjunction, to create paragraph *end stress*, with an emphasis upon the pronoun "you"—plural).

- Several redundant or elaborative textual expansions are employed in *BY* either to generate a balanced line structure or to underscore a crucial concept found in the original, e.g., *koma inetu pakutero ndikumva ngati* "but in doing this I feel like⋯" (12); *pofalitsa Uthenga Wabwino waufulu* "by broadcasting the Good

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80) In an actual published version a larger type size and a greater amount of interlineal space would be used in order to increase this text's legibility.

News of <u>freedom</u>" (v. 13, the wording here also produces a chiastic sound pattern that foregrounds the main ideas); *Ine ndimamkonda mwanayu kwambiri* "I love <u>this child</u> very much" (16a); *ndiponso makamaka mnzako mkhristu* "and <u>what is more</u> your fellow <u>Christian</u>" (16b); *Inde, mau amene ali m'munsimu* "<u>Yes</u>, the words that are <u>right below here</u>" (19a); *ndi moyo wako womwe wachikhristuwu* "[he] is your <u>very</u> <u>Christian</u> life" (19b).

- A number of idioms and figures of speech embellish the *BY* text, thus rendering it more forceful in tone and attractive in wording, e.g., *ndikukugwira mwendotu* "I am really grabbing your leg" (as when a self-effacing suppliant kneels and holds on to the leg of the person whom s/he is appealing to, v. 10); *umlandire iyeyu ndi manja awiri basi* "welcome him with both hands finish" (i.e., as when receiving a gift from someone, v. 17; the final word being an intensifying particle); the underlying emotion of this entire passage is brought out in *BY* in a cohesive manner by means of a sequence of figurative expressions based on the reiterated image of "heart" (*mtima* – v. 8, 12, 14, 16, 20, 21).

The point of the preceding comparative exercise is not to lead to an evaluative judgment; that can be done easily enough by anyone reading the two sample texts, even in translation. The *BL* translation is obviously more difficult to read and understand; the *BY* literary version on the other hand expresses the original text in a verbally creative, idiomatic manner—as if Paul had originally composed his persuasive appeal in Chichewa. This does not make the latter translation necessarily any "better" than the former. It all depends on *who* is its target audience and what *purpose* (*Skopos*) the version is primarily intended to achieve within the particular frame of reference specified by the project commission (*Brief*).

In many situations, as suggested above, it would be most advantageous to make use of *both* versions: The *BL* is able to give Bible students, for example, a rough picture of the literal forms of the biblical text as actually written, while the modified *BY* can provide them with an easier access to the meaning of Paul's words, plus some idea of the literary power and appeal with which he expressed his argument. One possibility for combining both of these benefits would be a well-annotated *BY* version that includes within its corpus of expository and other footnotes those that list the formal correspondents from the *BL* in cases where there are significantly different textual renderings.[81] Thus, a *LiFE* method of translating is not proposed in

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81) Buzzetti proposes that such "mini-footnotes" would make available "also to average readers (who

an effort to produce a ("the") single, all-purpose version, nor is it restricted to one recommended textual outcome in the TL. In fact, many grades of implementation are possible, depending on a wide variety of circumstances, not the least of these being the personal skill and competence of the translators.[82]

Finally, it may be noted that even a relatively literal rendering can be polished up linguistically with a literary oriented touch-up, that is, to impart a more natural sound in the vernacular. A modification with regard to format is desirable in any case, and from there the word order, basic sentence structure, and a few other minor changes may be introduced to produce a less alien ("foreignized") verbal progression in the TL. A slight revision of verses 10-11 in the *BL* version is reproduced below to illustrate several of the possibilities in this regard:

10 Ndikudandaulira chifukwa ca mwana wanga, amene ndambala m'ndende, ndiye Onesimo.
10 I am appealing to you because of my child, whom I begat in prison, he is

11 Kale iyeyu sanakupindulira konse, koma tsopano akutipindulira tonsefe, iwe ndi ine.
11 Formerly this one did not profit to you at all, but now he is profiting the both of us, you and me.

What a difference even a little *LiFE* makes!

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cannot handle more than one version at a time) the possibility of easily comparing different Bible translations [*namely, the main alternative versions that readers have access to*] in all the most relevant passages. ⋯ No matter what type the translation belongs to, its defects can be systematically compensated for" (Carlo Buzzetti, "Mini-notes: A 'new' resource in translating the Bible?" 409; my comments in italics). It is doubtful that notes of this type could fully accomplish the last-mentioned objective, but this comparative procedure can certainly enrich the quality of one's Bible study At a recent meeting of the Chichewa study Bible editorial committee (November 2004, a dual-text version was proposed for trial production—that is, a Scripture publication featuring the BL version on the left-hand column, the BY on the right in parallel to the former, with all the corresponding expository and contextual notes and other paratextual features (maps, cross-references, etc.) placed on the facing page.

82) A *new* translation does not turn out *better* if translators are unequal to the task set before them. The most recent version in Chichewa, for example, is the *Chipangano Chatsopano mu Chichewa cha lero* (*CC, The New Testament in today's Chichewa* (Nairobi, Africa: International Bible Society, 2002).). The *CC* is a relatively literal transformation of the English *New International Version*, and this *modus operandi* puts a great deal of stress on the vernacular text as far as the resultant meaning is concerned. For example, Phm. 12 reads in the NIV: "I am sending him—who is my very heart— back to you"; cf. *CC*: *Ine ndikumubwezera kwa iwe – amene ndi mtima wanga weniweni*, which says, literally: "I am returning him to you – who are my real heart." And how about this for n epistolary close (v. 25):*CC*: *Chisomo cha Ambuye Yesu Khristu chikhale ndi mzimu wako* "May the good fortune of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your [sg.] [ancestral] spirit!

4. Some pertinent implications of a literary approach

In this concluding section I will briefly discuss several implications that stem from a literary-based methodology, first, when applied to the translation of certain non-conventional modes of Scripture text presentation (4.1) and, second, when considered in relation to a number of practical issues and concerns that may arise during committee planning and project development sessions (4.2). My general aim is to encourage the establishment of a comprehensive, cross-media translation strategy that seeks to apply—liberally, but also judiciously—an artistic-rhetorical method as part of its normal working procedures from beginning to end of the overall intertextual-exchange program.

4.1 LiFE in non−conventional translations of Scripture

The term "non-conventional" (or "non-traditional") refers to Scripture products that feature a non-print medium of transmission or assume a different published format. By their very nature, such representations of the biblical text call for a more dynamic manner of expressing the discourse, especially where character dialogue is concerned or direct speech, as in a psalm or prophetic oracle. One obvious place for a more vivid, even colloquial *LiFE* rendition would be Bible comics or more their more extensive upgrade, "graphic novels," a sample page of which is shown below:

Samson & Delilah

Thus in the various white "bubbles" of speech it would be fitting to employ a verbally vigorous, but succinct style of speaking to accompany the striking

visual illustrations. Perhaps several social varieties (sociolects) would be needed to properly portray the different backgrounds of the speakers concerned—that is, when viewed from the cultural and sociolinguistic setting of the TL constituency. In many speech communities, for example, Samson would be expected to talk quite differently from Delilah as a reflection of their disparate ethnic and social (including religious) origins.

An idiomatic *LiFE*-style of translation would also be appropriate for use in any sort of *oral-aural* presentation of the biblical text such as an audio-cassette (CD) or video production. Due to the sensory nature of the medium, a more vigorous application of "functional equivalence" is desirable in the first place with regard to the literary properties of the passage concerned, including its specific genre-related attributes. But the text's auditory features also need to be taken into consideration as they apply to the participants and circumstances at hand—for example, tempo, timbre, tone color, pitch, and rhythm in relation to the specific characters being depicted in a narrative, or the authorial voice that proclaims the words of a psalmist, prophet, or indeed Yahweh himself. In the case of Samson, for instance, the vocal sound would need to evoke the acoustic impression of some extra-large, strong man —perhaps one who is not too bright intellectually—while Delilah's speaking part is played by young woman with an enticing, coquettish voice, a typical caricature within the language concerned. These roles must be carefully researched in advance and then cast accordingly since a mismatch can connotatively color the text in a negative way. In the Chichewa version of "The Jesus Film," for example, the character of Christ speaks in a voice that is pitched much too high and weak; this inapt auditory quality detracts noticeably from the force of the Lord's words during his various dialogues.

Some non-conventional productions may offer translators the opportunity to experiment with certain genre-for-genre *LiFE* translations, whereby a recognized TL equivalent is utilized to formally represent the biblical text. This could work out especially well in the case of distinctive poetic texts such as the Proverbs, Psalms, and Lamentations where close vernacular correspondents are sought in the area of sapiential, panegyric, and funerary styles respectively. The local models might have to be adapted in certain stylistic respects to render them more suitable for public Scripture performance, but this process should not prove to be too difficult provided that expert verbal artists are available as translators or consultants and an adequate

amount of time is set aside to do research and to field-test experimental editions among designated target constituencies. Selected portions of Proverbs, for example, could be composed either in the form of a didactic vernacular song or with an engaging musical background to create a literary piece that deals with various AIDS-related issues. A different song genre might function to accompany a dynamic poetic rendering of the text of 1 Corinthians 13 aimed at youthful audience. Similarly, the book of Ruth could no doubt be readily transposed into an indigenous narrative style that would lend itself to a public dramatic performance.

Of course, in the case of each of these more innovative productions, the aim is not novelty or artistry or rhetoric for the sake of itself. Rather, the point is to forge a natural integration of form (structure, style), content, and function in the service of re-presenting the Scriptures more effectively for particular needs and special consumer groups. The artistic and rhetorical resources of the target language and literature are thus exploited as a means of rendering certain portions of God's Word in ways that are both meaningful and relevant to the pressing social and spiritual life-experiences that listeners find themselves confronting on a daily basis. The goal is is not merely to attract people to the translation, but to encourage them through a more vibrant style to take their Bible study to a deeper level of understanding and subsequent personal application.

4.2 Project production—administration, management, and quality-control

How a translation committee decides to verbally embody a particular text of Scripture in another language should be determined first of all on the basis of its intrinsic content as selectively highlighted and reinforced by various artistic and rhetorical techniques as they would have been perceived in the original Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context of communication. Today of course we can never be too sure about the conclusions that we reach with respect to a remote biblical setting, but a careful, comprehensive study of the text in the light of available scholarship on the various issues that arise can lead contemporary analysts in the direction of some supportable hermeneutical hypotheses.

A thorough literary as well as linguistic examination of the original text provides a solid foundation in turn for the task of translation. For example, a given book's overall organization of stylistic features, discourse structures, rhetorical devices, and

speech functions constitutes the basic interpretive "model" with which any textual recreation in the target language must continually be compared and evaluated in terms of possible semantic losses, gains, and distortions. The actual shape of this translation, e.g., how literally or idiomatically it is to be worded in the target language (TL), will also be governed by the project commission (*Brief*) that has been mutually agreed upon in advance—that is, in keeping with its primary communication goals (*Skopos*) as well as the combined abilities of the translators and support staff.

But how can this fundamental guiding prospectus (constitution, terms of reference, etc.) for a translation project be determined? To be sure, such a blueprint for organization and action cannot be drawn up in a vacuum, that is, in isolation from the grass-roots constituency that a version is intended to serve. This brings up a matter that has already been touched upon in the preceding discussion, namely, the need for some intensive pre-project "market research" followed by an on-going program of testing, evaluation, and, where necessary, a revision of the production process. This is in accordance with the new "frames of reference" approach to translation planning and management that the United Bible Societies have recently implemented in partnership with participating churches and other supporting agencies.[83] Thus a project is initiated by a comprehensive investigation of the various issues and influences that may concern the new or revised version that the Christian constituency wants to prepare either for the group as a whole or for a specific target audience among them. The *situational variables* that need to be considered are many and varied, for example:

- *Historical*, e.g., the presence of a long-established and revered but unnatural older version
- *Sociocultural*, e.g., pressure from a dominant language-culture in the region or nation
- *Ecclesiastical*, e.g., the degree of ecumenical cooperation among the area churches
- *Political*, e.g., official government support, or the lack of it, for literature in the TL

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83) This translation action plan is well described and illustrated in Timothy L. Wilt, "A new framework for Bible translation"; Timothy L. Wilt, ed., *Bible translation: Frames of reference,* ch.2 and Appendix F.

- *Institutional*, e.g., desire and ability of the national Bible Society to assist the project
- *Educational*; e.g., the level of youth and adult functional literacy in the vernacular
- *Linguistic*, e.g., presence of several major dialects and/or sociolects of the language
- *Transmissional*, e.g., choice of the appropriate medium and format for the new version

The listing above highlights the importance of long-range planning and solid management strategies. Above all, the project must be a cooperative enterprise, building from the ground up to assess the outstanding needs and available resources of the entire community. These variables will then be set forth in detail within the official agreement and production document (the *Brief*), which specifies translation principles, policies, priorities, procedures, and personnel. This is done on the basis of mutual negotiation with reference to the prioritized list of communicative goals (the *Skopos*) that the project has set for itself, one that is audience-oriented, situation-sensitive, and locally contextualized.

Nowadays the final, "transmissional" factor is becoming of increasing importance as we seek new and better ways to reach previously unreached or unreceptive audiences. For certain groups (e.g., inner-city youth, "burned out" Christians, non-literates), the typical Bible model, characterized by page after page of small print, is in fact a closed book; they simply will, or can not make the effort to read it. In such situations, alternative media (e.g., audio, video, radio, electronic, "comic") and also different translation techniques need to be tried out. This might well provide the occasion for a more *LiFE*-like rendering, one that is accompanied perhaps by a more lively musical style and/or more graphic visual effects. One must always take care lest the medium detract from or drown out the message, but some added verbal vim, vigor, and vitality may be just the invitation that people need to give the text at least an initial hearing.

It is clear that there are a number of *critical pre-requisites* for success in any endeavor that aims to produce a literary translation. These would include:

- highly competent *personnel* (SL exegetes as well as TL verbal artists, including poets!)

- enough *time* to do the job (including pre- + post-production research operations)
- adequate overall program *finances* (including staff salaries and working facilities)
- a qualified and committed administrative committee (as ecumenically representative as possible)
- translator *training/apprenticeship* opportunities (before the work starts and periodically thereafter)
- skilled *consultants* (translational, vernacular, media-related associate advisers)
- broad-based church/community *support* (from the widest possible constituency)
- a well-formulated and implemented action and management plan (e.g., one that is based upon a cogent text quality priority rating system, such as: *fidelity > clarity > idiomacity > proximity*)
- sufficient ongoing *testing* procedures (for translation assessment and subsequent revision)
- a clearly-defined literary *need*/desire/objective for the project as perceived by the TL constituency
- supplementary audience *education* with regard to the principles of Scripture exegesis, hermeneutics, translation, and contextural engagement (to be continued also *after* a translation has been published)
- a pro-active public relations and resource support program (to keep the target community continually involved as the self-motivated "owners" of their project)

The preceding summary may be complemented by a corresponding list of several potentially serious "*limiting factors*" that can hinder or even prevent the undertaking and implementation of a specifically literary translation. Seven of these come to mind, and there are undoubtedly more (these incorporate a number of the concerns that have already been noted):

- *Historical:* pre-existing translations of influence, whether in the TL or a related language that any new translation must somehow correspond to or pattern after, especially in the area of crucial biblical vocabulary.
- *Ecclesiastical:* some major local church opposition to what may be negatively perceived as a "paraphrase" of the Bible, that is, not a "true translation."
- *Temporal:* continual pressure to complete a project within a specified time frame, one that allows little or no opportunity or provision for research, testing, revision, and target-group education (e.g., with regard to the nature and purpose

of a new rendition).

- *Administrative:* lukewarm support on the part of sponsoring churches or the management committee for any sort of stylistically fresh or idiomatic translation in the vernacular no matter how great the demand.
- *Financial:* an inadequate budget allocation to do the work properly in all of its aspects and phases, including poor staff salaries and substandard office facilities.
- *Qualitative:* translators and support staff (possibly including the translation consultant!) who are ill-prepared to produce a literary rendition (with no poet or rhetor among them).
- *Quantitative:* not a large enough current or potential audience or readership for a non-standard, locally-tailored version of this stylistically more vibrant nature.

In short, a literary (artistic-rhetorical) version is not easy either to plan or to produce. Furthermore, it requires the *very best* in terms of time, talent, and treasure that a language community is prepared to give in order to ensure at least an adequate measure of success.

Finally, we must not forget what is perhaps the principal benefit of a literary approach to our study and translation of the Scriptures—conceptual *illumination*. This method, used in conjunction with other accepted exegetical procedures, helps one to better analyze and hence also understand the biblical text on many different levels. From that standpoint one is more prepared to carry out any kind of subsequent communication, beginning with a personal application to oneself for instruction, edification, and life-application. Structure and style, artistry and rhetoric, are important, to be sure, but they are by no means the *sine qua non* of the discourse—the essential message as intended by the original inspired author.

In this respect then we must point out once more the urgent contemporary relevance of this little epistle of Paul to Philemon. We recall the main thematic concepts of this letter: *affection, indebtedness, partner-ship, service* (cf. section 2.2.4). These summarize the interpersonal ideal that could well serve Christ's contemporary Church through the common recognition that we are bound to one another by these same four factors. To be sure, the Lord himself first had to model them all for us in perfection.[84] Thus, whenever and wherever in the world these

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84) "Luther traced in [the letter to Philemon] a theological paradigm: Paul identified himself with Onesimus to advocate his cause, just as Christ takes our part to reconcile us to God" (John M. G.

qualities or activities are applied in mutual concern for fellow members of the Body, there is great hope for the future, no matter what the prevailing social, political, economic, and related circumstances happen to be. Paul's appeal to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus is indeed a dynamic, creative application of the gospel to the personal life of God's people:

> The way Paul handle[d] that situation continues to model how God's people should respond whenever social arrangements keep Christians from living out the truth that believers of all social [and cultural] backgrounds are equal in Christ. … The difficult prospect we face…is to set aside our social differences and the values undergirding society's various hierarchies to build *koinonia*─congregations of redeemed persons who have been given a new capacity to value and to love one another equally. Within Christ's church, [the Father] is an equal-opportunity God!85)

But we are left, here at the end, with one lingering enigma from this minor epistle: How did Philemon actually respond to Paul's evangelically based, artistically phrased, and rhetorically toned request? It is probable, at least arguable, that the very presence of this letter in the canon of Scripture would suggest a positive outcome to its fervent expression of what must have been a serious personal crisis and test of faith within the congregational life of the early communion of saints. Indeed, the potent, provocative, proactive message of Philemon continues to confront and challenge the Church of Jesus Christ today with a multitude of "Onesimuses" on every hand.86)

Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon,*120.)

85) Robert W. Wall, *Colossians and Philemon,* 189; my additions are in brackets.

86) "What might it mean to take our fellow Churchfolks as our dear brothers and sisters in Christ… including junkies, those with brains burnt out by Alzheimer's, those on death row, [*those condemned with AIDS*], those who despise us, those who cheat, and those we have cheated? What might it mean to be goaded to find what we owe to these dearest brothers and sisters? … Once we figure that out, we will know that the *Postcard to Philemon* was a divinely benevolent letter-bomb" (James T. Burtchaell, *Philemon's problem: A theology of grace,* 334; my addition in brackets)

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