The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies intends to promote the hermeneutical approach to the study of the Scriptures generally known as Inductive Biblical Studies. By Inductive Biblical Study (IBS) we mean the hermeneutical movement initiated by William Rainey Harper and Wilbert Webster White that was embodied in the curriculum of The Biblical Seminary in New York founded in 1900. This approach had precursors in the history of interpretation and has since the beginning of the twentieth-century enjoyed widespread dissemination, being taught at such institutions as Princeton Theological Seminary, Columbia Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, Fuller Theological Seminary, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Azusa Pacific University, and Asbury Theological Seminary, as well as hundreds of other institutions and organizations around the world.
The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies

VOLUME 6/2
Summer 2019

Table of Contents

4 From the Editors
Fredrick J. Long

7 Streeter Versus Farmer: The Present State of the Synoptic Problem as Argument for a Synchronic Emphasis in Gospel Interpretation
David R. Bauer

29 Construing Culture as Composition—Part 2: Robert Traina’s Methodology
Lindy D. Backues

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

63 My Journey with Inductive Bible Study
James (Jim) C. Miller
From the Editors

Fredrick J. Long

It is astounding that The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies (JIBS) is completing Volume 6 with this summer issue. Readers must remember that Volume 5 of JIBS consists of the following published Festschrift for Dr. Robert A. Traina,


This book contains over fifty pages of hitherto unpublished material by Dr. Traina in which he describes his “Method in Bible Teaching.” This opening piece is then followed by twenty essays by his students or students of his students who reflect on Dr. Traina’s pedagogy as well as share their experiences and insights teaching IBS in various venues including the church, higher education in colleges and seminaries, and even the academy. The book includes an appendix of sample syllabi for a variety of IBS courses taught at undergraduate and graduate levels.

Importantly also, this book dedicated to Dr. Traina inaugurates The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies Monograph Series. This new series has as its goal to publish “creative, interpretive, hermeneutically informed, and exploratory research from the perspective of Inductive Biblical Study applied to Scripture and other discourse.” This purpose is admittedly broad and seeks to promote the theory and praxis of IBS methodology and perspective. As co-editor of this series along with
David R. Bauer, I would encourage you to consider offering a proposal for this series by contacting either one of us and/or by submitting a proposal at https://www.glossahouse.com/proposals.

Now, this present Summer Issue of JIBS 6/2 contains three articles. The first, by my IBS teacher and mentor David R. Bauer, surveys “Streeter Versus Farmer: The Present State of the Synoptic Problem as Argument for a Synchronic Emphasis in Gospel Interpretation” (7–28). Here Bauer shows the limitations of redaction criticism that it is essentially “contingent and conditional” (27) while advocating for resting our interpretation not on conditional reconstructions, but on “the Gospel texts themselves.” This foundational approach, sometimes called “new redaction criticism” (28) supports Gospel comparisons as a basis of evidence collection while including Mark’s “redaction” (selection, inclusion, ordering, etc. of materials) which is often excluded if Mark is deemed the Ur-gospel in many redaction critical assumptions.

Next, Lindy Backues offers Part 2, “Construing Culture as Composition—Robert Traina’s Methodology” (29–62). Backues’s first contribution as Part 1 “Construing Culture as Composition—The Narrative Nature of Truth” is found in JIBS 6/1 (2019 Winter): 7–54. Here in Part 2, Backues summarizes Traina’s hermeneutical methodology as it pertains especially to reveal “the embedded, fundamental structure of a given biblical text” as well as to ask penetrating questions that lead “the exegete to engage in a deeper and more accurate meaning of the text in question” (29). The concluding Part 3 of Backues’s articles, entitled “Construing Culture as Composition—Traina’s Methodology Culturally Applied” will be published in JIBS 7/1 (Winter 2020).

Finally, James (Jim) C. Miller concludes this current issue by offering autobiographically “My Journey with Inductive Bible Study” (63–73). Among many things, particularly noteworthy of Miller’s reflections are his view of IBS as formational and the appropriation of Scripture within an IBS perspective as missional.
Streeter Versus Farmer: The Present State of the Synoptic Problem as Argument for a Synchronic Emphasis in Gospel Interpretation

David R. Bauer
Asbury Theological Seminary
david.bauer@asburyseminary.edu

Abstract
The dominant method for Gospel interpretation over the past several decades has been redaction criticism, which depends upon the adoption of a certain understanding of synoptic relationships in order to identify sources that lie behind our Gospels. Yet an examination of the major proposals regarding the Synoptic problem reveals that none of these offers the level of reliability necessary for the reconstruction of sources that is the presupposition for redaction criticism. This consideration leads to the conclusion that approaches to Gospel interpretation that require no reliance upon specific source theories are called for.

Keywords: Synoptic problem, redaction criticism, new redaction criticism, Gospel interpretation, synchronic reading, B. H. Streeter, William R. Farmer.

1 Some minor portions of this article may be also found in Chapter 3 of my book, The Gospel of the Son of God: An Introduction to Matthew (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, forthcoming). See that chapter for a more specific treatment of the implications of synoptic relationships for the interpretation of Matthew’s Gospel.
The Problem

In the book I co-authored with Robert Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics,* I insisted that the employment of critical methods (e.g., source criticism and redaction criticism) contribute to the reservoir of potential types of evidence that should be considered in the interpretation of passages. But I also insisted that insofar as the evidence gleaned from these critical methods is dependent upon scholarly reconstructions of matters that lie behind the text, and therefore matters to which we no longer have direct access, such evidence carries an element of uncertainty. Consequently, we should factor into our work of interpretation the tentativeness that necessarily attends evidence derived from these critical methods.

Over the past 75 years the critical method that has been most dominant in the interpretation of the Gospels is redaction criticism, which investigates the additions and changes that each evangelist has made to the sources that he employed in the composition of his Gospel. In principle, this type of investigation has merit, for any modification of tradition is a deliberative act on the part of the writer, and therefore a window into intentionality. In other words, it is an entrée into the author’s mind.

Yet this redaction-critical investigation necessarily presupposes that we can identify the sources to which our evangelist had access, for only if we reconstruct the source, or Vorlage, can we trace the editorial changes the evangelist has introduced. And the identification of sources behind each of our Gospels assumes a certain solution to the “Synoptic problem” (i.e., the problem of the literary relationship among our Gospels). The exploration of the Synoptic problem has

---

implications for the ways in which one or more of our Gospels served as the source for the other Gospels. Redaction criticism flourished and gained prominence in Gospel studies because many scholars were convinced that the “Two-Source Hypothesis” offered a solution to the Synoptic problem. That is, Matthew and Luke used as their primary sources the Gospel of Mark, which would make it the earliest Gospel, and a hypothetical sayings-source dubbed “Q,” which contained mostly teaching material common to Matthew and Luke but absent from Mark. Consequently, almost all critical study of the Gospels in recent decades depends upon this understanding of synoptic relationships.

It is my intention to demonstrate that this level of dependence upon the Two-Source Hypothesis is problematic, and this realization should therefore lead to a tentativeness in the employment of the redaction criticism that stems from it. Such tentative employment may use redaction criticism as a heuristic device to discover elements in the text that we otherwise might have ignored, but will avoid drawing definitive and final interpretive conclusions on the basis of an evangelist’s putative alterations of received tradition in favor of a construal that focuses upon contextual innerworkings within the Gospel itself.

The Emergence and Destabilization of a Consensus

The history of attempts to address the Synoptic problem has been described elsewhere, and readers should consult those discussions for a more complete treatment.3 From the time of the fathers until the

---

nineteenth century it was generally held that Matthew was the first Gospel written, followed by Mark and later Luke. We find this ordering in Irenaeus, Origen, and Jerome. For example, Irenaeus insisted that Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure [i.e., death], Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also handed down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him.

Yet these fathers did not address the literary relationship between the synoptic Gospels. The first to do so was Augustine; on the basis of his analysis of Gospel relationships that he conducted in the course of assembling his *Harmony of the Gospels*, he concluded:

Now those four evangelists … are believed to have written in the order which follows: first Matthew, then Mark, thirdly Luke, lastly John…. Of these four … only Matthew is reckoned to have written in the Hebrew language; the others in Greek…. For Matthew is understood to have taken it in hand to construct the record of the incarnation of the Lord according to the royal lineage, and to give an account of most part of his deeds and

---


words as they stood in relation to this present life of humans. Mark follows him closely, and looks like his attendant and epitomizer.\footnote{Augustine, \textit{Cons.}, 1.3–4. Augustine goes on to say, “For in his [Mark’s] narrative he gives nothing in concert with John apart from the others: by himself separately he has little to record; in conjunction with Luke, as distinguished from the rest, he has still less; but in concord with Matthew, he has a very large number of passages. Much, too, he narrates in words almost numerically and identically the same as those used by Matthew, where the agreement is either with that evangelist alone, or with him in connection with the rest.”}

Thus, Irenaeus and Augustine explicitly mention that Matthew was written in Hebrew, by which they presumably mean Aramaic. Here they are following the tradition of Papias to the effect that Matthew composed his Gospel in “the Hebrew dialect.” Indeed, throughout this period almost everyone believed that Matthew was the first Gospel to be written; that it was produced by the Apostle Matthew and had as its source reminiscences from his first-hand experience of the ministry of Jesus; and that it was composed in Hebrew/Aramaic.

The notion that the first Gospel to be composed came from Matthew and was written in Aramaic eventually gave rise to the hypothesis put forward by G. E. Lessing and J. G. Eichhorn that a now-lost Aramaic Gospel of Matthew (which they believed Papias was referencing) is the ultimate source of all four of our canonical Gospels, including our (Greek) Gospel of Matthew. This view (the “Primitive Gospel Hypothesis”) began to take hold in the beginning of the nineteenth century,\footnote{Farmer, \textit{Synoptic Problem}, 1–35.} along with the “Griesbach Hypothesis,” which held that Matthew was the first Gospel produced, followed by Luke, which was dependent upon Matthew, with Mark “abbreviating” both Matthew and Luke.\footnote{Griesbach published his views regarding the Synoptic problem in 1783–1790.}
By the middle of the nineteenth century the consensus regarding the Synoptic problem had begun to break down. This situation was soon addressed by a series of studies that argued for the priority of Mark. But it was through the work of Christian Hermann Weiss in 1838 and especially the monumental study by Heinrich Julius Holtzmann in 1863 that the Two-Source Hypothesis was forged. With the notion of the priority of the Gospel of Mark, these scholars combined the idea of a sayings source that were both used by Matthew and Luke to form their Gospels. Although Matthean priority continued to be argued by a few scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, notably Theodor Zahn, Marie-Joseph Farmer cites Holtzmann to the effect that “the only consensus [Holtzmann] could find was the notion that all the Synoptic Gospels go back to a common Grundschrift” (Synoptic Problem, 36).


Farmer traces the notion of a sayings source ultimately to Schleiermacher from whom certain later scholars developed the idea (Synoptic Problem, 15). Holtzmann originally labelled this source Λ. Johannes Weiss is usually credited with designating it “Q,” the first letter in the German word, Quelle, for “source.”

Streeter Versus Farmer

Lagrange,\textsuperscript{16} and Adolf Schlatter,\textsuperscript{17} the Two-Source Hypothesis became the new orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{18}

**Strengths and Weaknesses of the Major Proposals**

It was Burnet Hillman Streeter who in 1924 put forward the fullest and most convincing argument for the Two-Source Hypothesis, or more precisely the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis, since he identified an additional two (less prominent) sources: “M” (Matthew’s special material) and “L” (Luke’s special material).\textsuperscript{19} His work remains the classic expression of this dominant view regarding Gospel origins. The following are Streeter’s main arguments.

1. *The Argument from Content.* Matthew contains 90\% of Mark, with very similar language in details; while Luke contains a little more than 50\% of Mark.
2. *The Argument from Wording.* In a typical section which occurs in all three Gospels, most of the words in Mark are found in Matthew and Luke, either in one or the other or in both together.


\textsuperscript{17} Adolf Schlatter, *Das Evangelist Matthäus: seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbständigkeit: ein Kommentar zum ersten Evangelium* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1948). Zahn and Schlatter argued that Aramaic Matthew was the earliest Gospel, which was adopted by Mark as his source; our Greek Gospel of Matthew, then, was based upon both Aramaic Matthew and Greek Mark.

\textsuperscript{18} For the history of the Two-Source Hypothesis, see H.-H. Stoldt, *History and Criticism of the Marcan Hypothesis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980).

3. The Argument from Order. The order of Mark is generally the same as that which we find in Matthew and Luke. Where Matthew departs from the Markan order, Luke maintains it, and where Luke departs from the Markan order, Matthew maintains it.

4. The Argument from Modifications. Matthew and Luke contain modifications to Mark that reflect what Matthew and Luke might well consider to be improvements or corrections to Mark. Specifically, they omit or “tone down” certain phrases in Mark that readers might consider to be too negative towards the disciples or problematic in relation to Jesus, such as the change from Mark’s “And he could do no deed of power there” (6:5) to Matthew’s “And he did not do many deeds of power there” (13:58); or the change from Mark’s “Why do you call me good?” (9:18) to Matthew’s “Why do you ask me about what is good?” (19:17). According to Streeter, the Gospel of Matthew expresses a higher Christology; thus, Jesus is addressed as “Lord” (κύριε) but once in Mark 7:28 (and that by the Syrophoenician woman), while he is addressed with this honorific title 19 times in Matthew, and always by disciples or persons of faith. Moreover, Mark’s account betokens the vivid, picturesque, and redundant character of verbal storytelling, suggesting “rapid dictation by word of mouth,” while the differences from Mark found in Matthew and Luke suggest the process of literary refinement of Mark. So, when Matthew and Mark share the same story, Matthew will often describe the event more succinctly, avoiding the redundancies of the Markan passage. This simplification and shortening of individual passages in comparison with Mark is typical of Matthew throughout, so that, contrary to Augustine’s claim, Mark is not an “abbreviator” of Matthew; if anything, Matthew is the
abbreviator of Mark. Finally, Matthew avoids or improves several grammatically awkward expressions found in Mark.

5. The Argument from Combination. The combination of Markan and non-Markan material in Matthew and Luke makes best sense if we posit that Matthew and Luke used Mark. Matthew seems to have used Mark’s narrative as the framework into which he added non-Markan material, on the basis of the principle of joining like with like. In other words, Matthew apparently added non-Markan material at places that would be appropriate to the content of the Markan passage.

6. The Argument of a Sayings-Source. The non-Markan material found in Matthew and Luke is best explained by their separate and independent use of a written source, usually called “Q,” which contained mostly sayings, or teachings, of Jesus, along with a few brief narratives. The similarity in wording excludes the possibility that Q was oral rather than written tradition when Mark and Luke appropriated it.

Streeter himself recognized that the first three arguments belong together, in that they point to Mark as the middle entity, standing between Matthew and Luke. Streeter summarized their significance thusly: “This conjunction and alternation of Matthew and Luke in their agreement with Mark as regards (a) content, (b) wording, (c) order, is only explicable if they are incorporating a source identical, or all but identical, with Mark.” Many recent scholars have noted that this claim is problematic in that the fact that Mark stands as the common denominator between Matthew and Luke may be explained by positing that Mark used both Matthew and Luke (the Griesbach Hypothesis). Indeed, some scholars have dubbed Streeter’s conclusion the “Lachmann fallacy” (Lachmann being the first to suggest Mark’s priority on the basis of the argument from order). Thus, these first

---

20 Streeter, *Four Gospels*, 151.
three arguments indicate that Matthew and Luke may have used Mark as a source, but they do not prove it, since considerations of content, wording, and order may indicate Mark’s employment of Matthew and Luke.21

The argument from modifications also contains some difficulties. One could take issue with Streeter’s claim that Matthew edited Mark so as to describe the disciples in a less negative light. It is true that Mark presents James and John asking for the most prominent seats in the kingdom (Mark 10:35), while Matthew describes their mother making the request on their behalf (20:20–21); but in 20:22–23 the Matthean Jesus responds to the mother’s request by saying to the brothers, “you do not know what you [plural] are asking.” It is unclear that the brothers’ making the request through their mother leads the reader to have a more positive assessment of them.22 And while Matthew omits the Markan reference to the disciples’ hearts being hardened when Jesus enters the boat having walked on the water (Mark 6:52), the Matthean form of that story contains the account of Peter sinking into the water when Jesus commands Peter to come to him, with Jesus calling him a man “of little faith” (14:29–31). And at the very end of Matthew, as Jesus is about to commission the disciples to their global mission, when they saw the resurrected Jesus, “some doubted” (28:17).

The passages just cited are of course only a handful of the many references to the disciples in Mark and Matthew; and it would be

---

21 Benjamin C. Butler first named the “Lachmann Fallacy.” See Benjamin C. Butler, The Originality of St. Matthew (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 53. For discussion of the Lachmann Fallacy, with some defense of Lachmann’s arguments for the priority of Mark, see Stein, Synoptic Problem, 69–70.

22 John Nolland insists that the mother of the sons of Zebedee is here reflecting the typical attempt of women to exercise their own power through their “continuing influence over their adult sons.” He concludes that “Matthew is not moving the responsibility from the sons to their mother (‘with her sons’ ensures their complicity in this), but allowing the woman’s stake in this also to come to the fore.” See John Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 819.
inappropriate to draw conclusions from a small sampling. But the point stands that at least several of the differences between the Markan and Matthean presentations of the disciples can be explained in other ways than a simple enhancement strategy on the part of Matthew. In some cases the disciples are presented more positively in Matthew than in Mark, but in other instances Matthew may describe them just as negatively. Moreover, is it not possible that a later writer might, for his own reasons, wish to introduce a more negative portrayal of the disciples? In other words, can we simply assume a positive trajectory of the presentation of the disciples through the Gospel tradition?

The situation is similar when we examine the claim that Matthew and Luke present a less problematic and more exalted Christology. Again, can we assume a trajectory at every stage in the Gospel tradition from a “low” to a “high” Christology? By all accounts the epistles of Paul predate any of our Gospels, and yet it would be difficult to imagine a higher Christology than we find in passages such as Phil 2:5–11. Nor could we think of a more exalted Christology than what we find in Matt 11:25–27/Luke 10:21–22, which, according to Streeter’s own hypothesis, belongs to Q, the earliest strata of the Gospel tradition we possess.

Moreover, the two examples Streeter cited for a more exalted Christology in Matthew could be explained on other grounds. The change from Mark 6:5 to Matt 13:58 is not as dramatic as Streeter suggested; for Mark follows “He could do no deed of power there” with “except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and he cured them.” Consequently, the sense of Matt 13:58 substantially agrees with Mark 6:5. In the case of Mark 9:18/Matt 19:17, we note that Mark writes, “Why do you call me good?” because the rich young man had addressed Jesus as “Good teacher,” while in Matthew the young man asks, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to inherit eternal life?” Consequently, Mark 9:18 accords with the question of Mark 9:17, while Matt 13:58 accords with the form of the question in Matt 19:16. Of
course, one could posit that Matthew has changed both the question and the answer to avoid what some readers of Mark may have considered the christologically problematic character of Jesus’ answer in Mark 9:18. But the Matthean form of 19:17 actually makes better sense of the flow of the narrative; the issue is not the goodness of the teacher but the goodness of the deeds that lead to eternal life.

But these differences between Mark and Matthew that I have just described do point to the fact that Matthean passages often reflect an improvement of sense and an enhanced clarity over against the Markan parallels (which is true of Luke as well). And Streeter’s claim that the Greek of Matthew and Luke is more polished and reflects a decided improvement over the quality of Greek constructions in Mark is legitimate. This observation was first made in detail by John C. Hawkins, and it has been developed and confirmed many times over the past century. This is perhaps the strongest argument for Streeter’s position. It is much easier to imagine Matthew and Luke improving the Greek style of their Markan source than to conceive Mark introducing less felicitous and more awkward forms into his Matthean and Lukan sources.

Another consideration that has been used in support of the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis is the argument from redaction. In short, redaction criticism which has been based on the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis has been able to discern a consistent redactional strategy in Matthew and Luke that is quite compelling. Now it is right

---


to point out that this argument that appeals to the ability to reconstruct a compelling editorial strategy on the basis of the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis must be qualified by the consideration that most redaction-critical work has assumed the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis, and that it is possible that if more redaction-critical study were conducted on the basis of another source theory that such redaction-critical study may support the alternative source theory. But, in fact, some attempts have been made to explain Lukan and Markan redaction of Matthew on the basis of the Griesbach Hypothesis, and the results have not been particularly persuasive.26

Streeter rightly recognized that the priority of Mark requires the postulating of something like the document Q, unless one accepts the notion that Luke used both Mark and Matthew. Of course, it is possible to insist that Luke did in fact edit both Matthew and Mark, as Austin Farrer, Michael D. Goulder, and several others have argued.27 The major difficulty with Q is that its existence must remain hypothetical; it is a scholarly construct on the basis of the agreements of much non-Markan material that is common to Matthew and Luke.28 But it is a scholarly construct that is plausible. For those who argue that Luke used Mark and Matthew have been unable to explain satisfactorily why Luke would have disassembled the unified blocks of sayings material in Matthew only to distribute it apparently somewhat randomly throughout his Gospel. And Graham N. Stanton trenchantly


28 For a strong defense of Q, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Priority of Mark and the ‘Q’ Source in Luke,” in Miller and Hadidian, Jesus and Man’s Hope, 131–70.
asks: “if Luke has used Matthew, why is it so difficult to find traces in Luke of Matthew’s expansion, abbreviations or modifications of Mark’s content and order?” Thus, the existence of Q must remain an open question but the weight of all the relevant considerations leans slightly in its favor.

Before leaving this discussion of the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis we should note that a possible objection to the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis is that a number of minor agreements exist between Matthew and Luke over against Mark. These minor agreements have caused pause regarding the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis from the beginning and have led advocates of that hypothesis to attempt an explanation. Streeter insists that most of these minor agreements can be accounted for by material that Mark and Luke shared from Q, or by the coincidence of independent improvement by both Matthew and Luke in line with the general editorial practices of these two evangelists, or by the coincidence of their common omission of Mark’s verbosity, which again was typical of their redactional practice in relation to Mark. But some minor agreements cannot be thus explained. Regarding them, some have postulated that Matthew and Luke used an earlier version of Mark as the basis for their editorial work (an “Ur-Markus”). But Streeter rejected this notion, since in those passages where we find these minor agreements “the existing text of Mark seems the more primitive and original.” Others have argued that Matthew and Luke used a later recension of Mark, which has subsequently been lost. But Streeter preferred the text-critical explanation, namely that a careful analysis of the manuscript tradition indicates that these minor agreements have been introduced into the

30 Stein, Synoptic Problem, 89–112.
31 Streeter, Four Gospels, 180, italics his.
text by way of scribal attempts to assimilate the wording of Matthew to Luke or of Luke to Matthew.\textsuperscript{32}

Into the consensus of the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis two alternative theories have been put forth. In fact, these theories represent the re-emergence of earlier hypotheses. Some scholars, notably John Chapman and Benjamin C. Butler,\textsuperscript{33} have attempted to revive the Augustinian Hypothesis (Matthew-Mark-Luke). Yet this view has gained almost no support.\textsuperscript{34} But the re-emergence of the Griesbach Hypothesis, particularly under the tireless efforts of William R. Farmer, has created a major re-examination of the Synoptic problem.\textsuperscript{35} Farmer has offered the following major arguments for the Griesbach Hypothesis:

1. \textit{The combination of agreement and disagreement regarding the order and content of the material in the Synoptic Gospels is best explained by Mark’s editing of Matthew and Luke.} Yet, while it is true that the order and content of the Synoptics is explicable on the basis of the Griesbach Hypothesis, in the judgment of most scholars Farmer does not succeed in demonstrating that the Griesbach Hypothesis better accounts for the content and order we find in the Synoptics.

2. \textit{We can best account for the minor agreements of Matthew and Luke over against Mark by postulating that Mark knew Matthew and Luke, and that Mark for his own purpose sometimes chose not to follow Matthew and Luke, but to chart his own path.} Yet, while Farmer’s

\textsuperscript{32}Streeter, \textit{Four Gospels}, 295–331.


\textsuperscript{34}For arguments against the Augustinian Hypothesis, see Farmer, \textit{Synoptic Problem}, 211–32.

explanation is plausible in principle, an examination of the specific passages involved makes it difficult to understand why Mark would have deviated from the two sources at his disposal when he did and in the ways he did. Moreover, while Streeter’s careful explanations for these minor agreements is not certain, they are satisfactory at least to those who otherwise grant the possibility of the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis.

3. *The correlation that exists in the Synoptic Gospels between order and wording is best explained by Mark’s use of Matthew and Luke.* Here Farmer points to the observation that, in general, when Matthew and Mark agree in order over against Luke the wording seems to be close; and when Luke and Mark agree in order over against Matthew the wording between them seems to be close. Yet Farmer grants that this phenomenon is more conspicuous in the first half of Mark than in the second half, and that exceptions to this rule exist. In fact, Farmer sees these exceptions as pointing to the kind of “ambiguity” that one would expect on the hypothesis that Mark was using Matthew and Luke. Farmer thus turns a possible objection into a virtue; this move might make sense for someone who is otherwise persuaded of the Griesbach Hypothesis, but probably not for many others.

4. *The redactional process Mark would have pursued in his use of Matthew and Luke is understandable.* Farmer offers a “history of the redaction of the synoptic tradition in Mark,” examining several passages in order to identify the rationale for Mark’s redactional activity.36 It is beyond the scope of the present article to discuss the detailed explanations offered by Farmer on several synoptic passages.37 Farmer describes here why


37 James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 49, identifies at least one form of Markan “expansion” as a rhetorically effective “two-step progression.” This indicates that
Mark might have made the changes he has introduced to his Matthean and Lukan sources, yet Farmer presents no overarching theological or pastoral agenda on Mark’s part that forms a pattern for Farmer’s suggested Markan redactional strategy. In some passages, the Griesbach explanation seems preferable, but in at least as many other passages, the Two(Four)-Source explanation is more compelling. At best Farmer indicates that such Markan redaction of his sources is possible.

5. The Griesbach Hypothesis makes sense of the agreements between Matthew and Luke without the necessity of positing another source (Q). Farmer is correct that a major drawback of the Two(Four)-Source Theory is the requirement of appealing to another (and otherwise unknown) source. The principle of Occam’s Razor (the simplest explanation is, everything else being equal, the best) would seem to favor the Griesbach Hypothesis at this point. On the other hand, it may be simpler, or at least more compelling, to explain the manner in which Luke incorporated non-Markan sayings material on the basis of the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis than the Griesbach Hypothesis.

6. Literary-historical and form-critical considerations indicate that Matthew is more primitive, closer to the original events, than Mark. Here Farmer points out that Matthew is the most Jewish of the Gospels, and that Mark bears signs of adaptation to a more Gentile audience; this would suggest that Matthew represents an earlier stage of the Gospel tradition than Mark, since the general trajectory of earliest Christianity is away from a Jewish-centered orientation towards one that was progressively more Gentile-centered. Those who adopt the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis must argue that Matthew represents a “re-Judaizing” of the Gospel

rhetorical intentionality might be claimed for some features that advocates of the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis have described as unnecessary and redundant details.
tradition, which of course contradicts the general direction of the trajectory. This is a strong point on the part of Farmer; and while it doesn’t “prove” the Griesbach Hypothesis, it does point to a weakness in the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis.

This juxtaposing of the main arguments for these two major views regarding Gospel origins indicates that each of these proposals has strengths and weaknesses. This situation has prompted other theories regarding Gospel origins. For example, some scholars have rejected the notion of simple stages of literary dependence among the canonical Gospels in which later canonical Gospels are directly dependent upon an earlier one(s) in favor of complex and reciprocal sharing among the canonical Gospels or in favor of the view that each evangelist made use of a number of written and oral traditions (perhaps in addition to one or more of the canonical Gospels), some of which are no longer available to us. We might refer to this cluster of proposals as the Multiple Interaction Hypothesis. Some scholars who adopt this view posit elaborate and complex interconnections among our canonical Gospels or between now extinct sources and our canonical Gospels; but others simply insist that some such process is likely responsible for our Gospels even though we cannot now describe the specific form it may have taken.

---

38 An excellent example of this move is found in Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 86–118.

But these proposals are even more complicated and speculative than the Two(Four)-Source or the Griesbach Hypothesis. And in many cases, they fail to take seriously into account the close similarities in both order and wording among the canonical Gospels. Yet the Multiple Interaction Hypothesis, while not entirely compelling, is a viable alternative to the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis and the Griesbach Hypothesis. In addition, Robert MacEwan has recently urged a consideration of Matthean posteriority, which is the view that Matthew made use of Mark and Luke in the production of his Gospel. Yet even he does not argue that this is the best solution, but only that it deserves attention.

The present state of the scholarly discussion on this matter is somewhat fluid. The major contenders are the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis and to a lesser extent the Griesbach Hypothesis. In my judgment, the fundamental issue in deciding between these two proposals is the consideration that it is very difficult to account for Mark’s redaction of Matthew and Luke on the basis of the Griesbach Hypothesis. In the final analysis, it is unclear what kind of community situation or theological, pastoral, or literary purpose would have led Mark to create his Gospel out of Matthew and Luke. For example, when one considers the verbosity of Mark’s Gospel, it is difficult to understand why, on the theory of Matthean priority, Mark would have enlarged individual passages that he found in Matthew with the addition of unnecessary details only to omit so much of Jesus’s teaching material in Matthew, for instance, neglecting to include practically the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, even though Mark

describes Jesus as a teacher and makes mention of his teaching activity more than does Matthew, and includes some blocks of teaching (e.g., Mark 4:1–34; 13:3–37). On the other hand, the extensive redaction-critical study that has been conducted on the basis of the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis has demonstrated the reasonableness of such redactional activity on the part of Matthew and Luke on their Markan Vorlage. But reasonableness is not certainty. And significant arguments exist against the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis.

In my judgment, the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis is more likely than the competing proposals; but we can no longer think of it as an “assured result” of NT criticism. Unless additional evidence surfaces or revolutionary new ways of construing the evidence emerge, the scholarly pursuit of Gospel origins has reached an impasse. Further endeavor will likely yield little in the way of new insights.

**Consequences for the Method of Gospel Interpretation**

Redaction criticism of the Gospels emerged from a double conviction, viz., that we can identify with a probability approaching functional certainty the literary sources behind our Gospels so as to make firm judgments regarding the redactional moves of the evangelists with a view towards making those moves the definitive basis for Gospel interpretation; and that an analytical comparison of synoptic parallels has significant value for the interpretation of Gospel passages. A critical examination of the history of investigation into the Synoptic problem, which I have offered in brief fashion above, renders the first member of that double conviction dubious. All redaction-critical work must include at least an implicit caveat that reads, in essence: “Assuming the Two-Source Hypothesis (or the Markan-priority-non Q Hypothesis, or the Griesbach Hypothesis, etc.)….” Interpreters who employ such redaction criticism, based as it is on the
espousal of certain source theories, should acknowledge the tentativeness of any interpretation derived therefrom. It does not exactly negate such an interpretative conclusion, but it does render it contingent and conditional. But a gnawing suspicion arises from deep within that the data, or grist, of our interpretation should be more reliable and stable. In the final analysis, therefore, the focus of our interpretation must be that which we actually possess, which exists without question or any doubt, viz., the Gospel texts themselves. We are left with the necessity of a close reading of the Gospel passages in their book contexts. This is ultimately the only reliable vehicle for the communicative intentions of the Gospel authors.

But what of the second member of the double conviction lying behind redaction criticism, the impulse to consider the other Synoptic Gospels for the interpretation of a particular Gospel under consideration? This is a legitimate impulse, arising from the relationship that exists among our Gospels. The very combination of continuity (the same general story, with many of the same particulars) and discontinuity (the multiple differences in specifics) invites us to consider how this coalescence of similarities and differences offers insight into the meaning of Gospel passages.

But we can engage in this kind of fruitful analysis without dependence upon a specific theory of synoptic relationships. It involves interpreting a Gospel passage (in part) by examining how it differs, both in substance, style, and context, from its parallels in the other Gospels with a view toward allowing the unique features of our passage to point to distinctive or emphasized aspects of the message that our evangelist wished to communicate. Thus, for example, Matthew could have reported the ministry of John the Baptist in the same way that Mark, Luke, or even John did; but he chose to describe it with his own distinctive features, and these distinctive features may clarify the meaning of the Matthean passage and may alert us to Matthean emphases. An additional advantage of this approach over
against redaction criticism that is based upon the Two(Four)-Source Hypothesis is that it can be confidently applied to Mark; those who accepted Markan priority have always had difficulty applying redaction criticism to this Gospel, since we have no extant sources for it.\footnote{This fact has not prevented scholars from attempting to employ redaction criticism with Mark. They have found it necessary, of course, to reconstruct the source material that Mark presumably had at his disposal. One of the most serious and careful attempts to interpret Mark on the basis of reconstructed sources is William L. Lane, \textit{Commentary on the Gospel of Mark}, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).}

Indeed, a movement in this methodological direction is already beginning to emerge. It is sometimes referred to by the imprecise and misleading moniker “new redaction criticism.”\footnote{Goodacre, \textit{Case Against Q}, 108; Joel B. Green, “Narrative and New Testament Interpretation: Reflections on the State of the Art,” \textit{LTQ} 39 (2004): 162–63; Roland Meynet, \textit{Le fait synoptique reconsidéré}, Retorica Biblica e Semitica, 7 (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2014). An example of the practice of this “new redaction criticism,” without so naming it, is R. T. France, \textit{The Gospel of Matthew}, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007). Of course, “composition criticism,” a later stage in the development of redaction criticism, anticipated to some extent this movement, in that composition critics considered not only editorial changes that the evangelists presumably made to their sources, but also the total authorial performance of the evangelists. Nevertheless, composition criticism was still dependent upon source theories. See William G. Thompson, \textit{Matthew’s Advice to a Divided Community Mt. 17,22–18,35}, AnBib 44 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), which is generally considered to be the first attempt at composition criticism.} But whatever one wishes to call it, this approach is arguably more inductive than traditional redaction criticism, in that it is based upon a more reliable gathering of evidence.
Construing Culture as Composition—Part 2: Robert Traina’s Methodology

Lindy Backues
Eastern University
lbackues@eastern.edu

Abstract
The present essay is the second of three articles that re-purposes Robert A. Traina’s exegetical/hermeneutical methodology, designed primarily for the study of the biblical text, to illustrate how methods in theological hermeneutics can cast light on the growing field of cultural hermeneutics and symbolic anthropology. This article summarizes Traina's hermeneutical methodology, especially how it allows the exegete to uncover the embedded, fundamental structure of a given biblical text. Traina's methodology also helpfully isolates exploratory interpretive questions tied to the now uncovered structure of the passage and subsequently leads the exegete to engage in a deeper and more accurate meaning of the text in question.

Key Terms: Erklären, Verstehen, structure, interpretation, Bible study, structural relationships, inductive bible study (IBS), observation, understanding, explanation, Methodical Bible Study, Robert A. Traina, Paul Ricoeur, John Ruskin, pre-understanding, Howard T. Kuist, The Biblical Seminary in New York
Main units and subunits have to do with linear arrangement of material, the movement of the book according to major shifts of material emphasis. These structural relationships are organizational systems that pertain to the dynamic arrangement of various thoughts and themes throughout the book. As we shall see, the relationships about to be described are found in all cultures, all genres, all time periods, and all forms of art, not simply in literature. They are pervasive and foundational for communication. Communication seems to be impossible without these structural features; therefore a recognition of their presence and an analysis of their use is extremely helpful in accurate, specific, and penetrating interpretation. Again, readers should remember that in practice, separating form and material is ultimately impossible; the only way fully to understand the material that is presented is to examine seriously the form (i.e., structure) in which the material comes to us.¹

In his long and illustrious career—first as professor at The Biblical Seminary in New York and thereafter at Asbury Theological Seminary (ATS) in Wilmore, Kentucky—the late Dr. Robert A. Traina left an indelible impression on a vast array of students. Frequently enough, his classes drew visitors whose sole purpose was to gain insight into the biblical text in ways rarely afforded in other seminary courses. Former students include the likes of Irving L. Jensen, former lecturer at Bryan College in Tennessee and creator of a series of inductive bible study guides known as *A Bible Self-Study Guide*; Oletta Wald, author of both *The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study* and its companion teacher’s guide,

To understand Traina’s methodology, one must first know a little about the raison d’être of The Biblical Seminary in New York—his alma mater and former employer for approximately 20 years. It was here that his methodology was given birth, brought on by principles of inductive inquiry around which the entire institution was fashioned.²

² Oletta Wald, *The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975); *The Joy of Teaching Discovery Bible Study* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976). These persons do not all reflect an equally faithful handling of Traina’s methodology. For instance, Pat Robertson’s theology (as well as—or perhaps due to—his biblical methodology) seems at great variance with Traina’s. This list of previous students is provided simply to illustrate the extensive impact Traina’s teaching and methodology has had down through the years. The individual who principally took up the mantle from Traina at Asbury Theological Seminary (ATS) after the latter’s retirement is the last person cited: David Bauer. While still a student in seminary, Bauer was hand-picked by Traina to eventually return and occupy a teaching position at ATS. His academic expertise is in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. his *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, BLS 15 [Sheffield: Almond, 1988] and “The Major Characters of Matthew’s Story: Their Function and Significance,” *Interpretation* 46 [1992]: 357–67), as well as the book he co-authored with Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*. Each of the above students, except for Bauer, Dongell, and Long, sat under Traina’s teaching at The Biblical Seminary in New York.

³ What was formerly The Biblical Seminary in New York is now called the New York Theological Seminary. It has since abandoned much of the inductive biblical program which was its distinctive hallmark in its early days. Traina came to ATS in 1966 and retired in 1988. For a very brief examination of the origins of what has come to be called the inductive approach to bible study, see Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 1–2. For the standard work on W. W. White and The Biblical Seminary in New York, see Charles Richard Eberhardt, *The Bible in the Making of Ministers; the Scriptural Basis of Theological Education: The Lifework of Wilbert Webster White* (New York: Association Press, 1949). For more on The Biblical Seminary, see Fredrick J. Long, “Major Structural Relationships: A Survey of Origins, Development, Classifications,
In addition, the thinking of many of his instructors and colleagues had a profound impact upon what eventually became his hermeneutical system.

The Biblical Seminary in New York was established at the beginning of the twentieth century by the late Wilbert W. White. His purpose was to establish a theological institution whose curriculum centered around the study of the Bible and the principle of induction. In other words, it was hoped that the seminary’s students would come personally, immediately, and self-sufficiently into contact with the biblical text as a basis for all their theological education.

[White] vowed that as a teacher he would assist the students not only to learn but pre-eminently to learn how he learns. The student must be “taught to believe that he is to be throughout life an independent, yet humble, investigator of truth as it presents itself in living form in the literature of Scripture and to find in the Christ its highest and complete personal manifestation.”

He wanted his students to be able to go “anywhere with a Bible and an unabridged dictionary” and with these make themselves ready for classroom and the pulpit.4

Consequently, inductive methodology was at the heart of the way education was viewed and set in motion at The Biblical Seminary. Due to this, it attracted both lecturers and students who were in sympathy with this position.

Some of the distinguished faculty members at this institution were Donald G. Miller, one-time professor at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and later president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary; Caroline L. Palmer, one of Traina’s principal instructors in inductive methodology; Louise Meyer Wood, Professor of Religious Art and Assessment,” Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies 1 (2014): 22–58, at 27, 31–33.

4 Charles R. Eberhardt as cited in Wald, Joy of Discovery, 6, emphasis original.
Architecture at The Biblical Seminary and the first to suggest John Ruskin’s laws of composition (which we will briefly examine below) as tools for the exegesis of the biblical text; and Howard T. Kuist, instructor at a number of prestigious theological institutions who, while at The Biblical Seminary, was inspired by Professor Wood’s suggestion to pioneer a methodology utilizing Ruskin’s principles of aesthetics as aids to biblical hermeneutics. Each of these individuals had their own unique influence upon Traina’s thinking. Most significant was Kuist’s overall interpretive design, which served as the stimulus for the drafting of Traina’s first book Methodical Bible Study. In fact, if one wishes to examine the basic foundations of Traina’s methodology, it is helpful to read Kuist’s own These Words Upon Thy Heart, a summary of the talks he gave during the 1946 Sprunt Lectures at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. I will refer to its contents now and again below.

Equipped with this brief overview, we are now ready to evaluate Traina’s methodology. I will also highlight similarities and differences in relation to James P. Spradley’s program, discussed in Part 1 of this article series. After this we will be poised to apply this methodology to a cultural scene.

The Building Blocks of Induction

Observation

Bauer and Traina—toward the beginning of their book Inductive Bible Study—underscore the importance of observation, stressing that it involves more than the simple act of seeing.

---


6 Howard T. Kuist, These Words Upon Thy Heart: Scripture and the Christian Response (Richmond: John Knox, 1947), 160.

Because an inductive approach fundamentally entails the movement from evidential premises to inferences, students must become acquainted with the evidence, and this acquaintance is accomplished by means of observation. Observation is the act of regarding attentively (i.e., noticing, perceiving), of being alert. This action involves more than physical sight; it has to do with keen mental awareness. Through observation the mind encounters the primary data from which it draws conclusions.  

What they underscore here has long been the bedrock for Traina’s inductive approach. When located within Paul Ricoeur’s three-phase dialectic we looked at in the earlier article, this observation stage constitutes the point where we begin (i.e., understanding as a guess about the whole—an initial naïve grasp or hunch). One of the terms used earlier for this experience was insight. It just so happens that Kuist, in describing the place observation played in the thinking of Jesus himself, closely links the notions of observation and insight together.

Being a wise and shrewd observer Jesus recognized the intimate relation between sight and insight; between the use of one’s senses and the power to understand…. Training the eye to truth’s exact severity was the price Jesus knew men [sic] must pay if they were to understand.

---

8 Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 75.
9 Note the following directly from Traina: “Observation transcends pure physical sight; it involves perception. Thus, for example, one may see a particular term used in the preceding sentence, namely, ‘perception.’ But unless one is conscious that this term has certain peculiar connotations and that an attempt must be made to discover them, one has not really observed its presence. Observation, then, is essentially awareness” (*Methodical Bible Study*, 31, emphasis original).
11 Kuist, *These Words Upon Thy Heart*, 67. In fact, as if to anticipate Ricoeur by some two to three decades, Kuist’s subheading for the section from which this quotation is taken reads: “The Relation Between Sight and Insight.”
For Traina, the primary objective of observing in biblical exegesis is to become saturated with the particulars of a passage so that one is thoroughly conscious of their existence and of the need for their explanation. Observation is the means by which the data of a passage becomes part of the mentality of the student. It supplies the raw materials upon which the mind may operate in the interpretive process.¹²

The preponderance of Traina’s attention when discussing observation is focused upon what he calls structural relationships operative in a given passage.¹³ These relationships bear a striking resemblance to those purportedly ubiquitous Gestalt groupings we looked at in our previous article.¹⁴ As we saw there, Spradley’s universal semantic relationships exhibit a remarkable similarity to these as well.¹⁵ Hence, it is not inconceivable that these constructs do indeed function as the raw cognitive materials that “are pervasive and foundational for communication.”¹⁶ This being the case, it would certainly behoove us to get a better understanding of Traina’s structural relationships.

As was just stated, the inspiration for Traina’s structural relationships was John Ruskin’s Essay on Composition.¹⁷ Therein Ruskin lists nine “simple laws of arrangement”¹⁸ which, when properly employed, serve as “an objective guide to exact observation.”¹⁹ Both Ruskin and Kuist enumerate the following relationships:

---

¹³ He sometimes labeled these relationships *structural laws*.
¹⁴ Backues, “Construing Culture,” 41–42.
¹⁵ Backues, “Construing Culture,” 44–47.
¹⁶ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 94.
¹⁷ An abridged form of this essay is reproduced the appendix in Kuist, *These Words Upon Thy Heart*, 159–81.
¹⁸ Kuist, *These Words Upon Thy Heart*, 81.
¹⁹ Kuist, *These Words Upon Thy Heart*, 87. This, of course, is certainly an
Labelling these principles “Laws of Composition,” Kuist states that, for Ruskin, the first six were the “most commonly used” with the latter three serving instead as “outcomes of the other laws,” as “good tests by which the unity of a composition may be judged.”

However, rather than slavishly adopt Ruskin and Kuist’s configurations, Traina chose instead to re-label and modify several of the axioms to more accurately reflect the way in which he viewed the hermeneutical task. When I sat under his teaching, Traina admitted a total of eleven primary relationships in all.

1. Preparation/Realization
2. Contrast
3. Comparison
4. Recurrence
5. Causation/Substantiation
6. Generalization/Particularization
7. Climax
8. Pivot
9. Interrogation
10. Summarization
11. Instrumentation

While particulars related to the majority of these relationships seem fairly self-evident once sufficiently attended to, special mention

overstatement on Kuist’s part. What we are seeking at this stage is not exact observation but simply a facsimile of reality which can serve to initiate Ricoeur’s dialectic. But it seems that when it came to hermeneutical assuredness, Kuist, similar to what we saw with Schodde in our previous article, underestimated the role an interpreter’s bias might play in the hermeneutical enterprise. See Backues, “Construing Culture,” 14–15.

20 Kuist, *These Words Upon Thy Heart*, 86.
21 Preparation/Realization are also known as the Introduction.
is still in order concerning a couple of the less than perspicuous features concerned. In explaining these features, I will also touch upon the chart designated Simple & Complex Structural Relationships as found in Appendix B.

First, it should be noted that several of the relationships above are mirror images of each other. For example, the configurations known as Causation and Substantiation both consist of identical components: a cause and an effect. In the former, the cause precedes and brings on the effect, whereas in the latter it is the effect which appears first, validating and corroborating the cause. The same inversion of elements holds true for the Generalization/Particularization dyad. The first is a movement from particular to general, whereas the second is from general to particular.

Second, Traina was accustomed to pointing out that the categories of Contrast and Comparison are altogether relative concepts depending a great deal upon emphasis—what we have here are two points appearing at different ends of the same continuum. When comparing

---

22 See Appendix A for an annotated list of Traina’s relationships in the form I found them when I was his student, inclusive of biblical examples and various explicit linguistic indicators for each construct. Bauer and Traina offer a slightly different list; see Inductive Bible Study, 94–116. In my analysis here, I will continue to reference this list, since it is what I have employed over these past thirty years. The fact remains that the points I make below hold, irrespective of the precise number or collection of relationships one espouses. Much of the focus of Long’s article, Major Structural Relationships, centers on the fact that a variety of practitioners of Traina’s methodology enumerate differing collections (and thus put forward a varying number) of structural or compositional configurations.

23 Of course, the structural relationship of Substantiation can only appear discursively, since the linear time of actual events does not permit causes to follow effects. This does not mean, however, that the relationship will be of no value for us in analyzing a cultural scene since, while I have indeed rejected a strictly cultural idealist position (as I explained in the previous article), the fact remains that Geertz’ text analogue approach (based upon Ricoeur’s dialectic) does not preclude causal flows from idea to behavior. That approach simply asserts that such is not the only—nor, most times, even the predominant—direction in which the causal sway is felt. In the chosen cultural scene below, the relationship of Substantiation will indeed be operative. See Backues, “Construing Culture,” 42–3,
two items (say, two apples) there are always differing components, otherwise the two items would not actually be two in number but instead one and the same item—in which case, there would in fact be no comparison at all since only one item would be under consideration. Consequently, within every comparison a contrast is invariably implied (e.g., two apples are always slightly different in size, shape, color, etc.)

A similar clarification needs to be made in relation to contrasts. If there were absolutely no points of similarity in any given contrast (say, between an apple and an orange), pointing to differences between them would be untenable since the elements under consideration would be extant on two separate planes of reality, in which case the two objects could not even be touched upon in the same breath by the same person (after all, when contrasting apples with oranges, we are at that time contrasting two pieces of fruit!) Hence, within every contrast there always exists a latent comparative relationship.

Third, the structural relationships of Recurrence and Contrast in tandem serve a singularly vital function, to wit, marking off boundaries between passages or units of thought. As can be seen in the figure below, contrasting elements segregate units one from another, whereas recurring elements signal a continuance of the same topic and thus a prolongation of the same unit of thought. Since certain properties extend over a wider range of material than do others, the structural relationship of Recurrence asserts itself in these places in relation to whichever element happens to be in question. However, when this recurring element no longer surfaces within a given passage, a contrasting element takes over and itself begins to resound. Thus, a new unit of thought begins, contrasting with that just before.
This entire process, of course, should remind us of the way Spradley’s cover terms and included terms function in cultural domains. We took note in the previous article that domains are always delineated by means of boundaries, with some items belonging inside the domain and others belonging outside.\(^\text{24}\) This boundary-marking is exactly what is highlighted by Traina. But the difference in Traina’s approach is that it comes much closer to constituting a methodology for determining just what these domains are and where they are to be outlined.

Fourth, structural laws often function jointly as compound relationships. In order to explain this point, it is perhaps best to look at an example of Traina’s methodology as found in its original habitat: in application to the biblical text. Found in Appendix C is what I have chosen to call the Structural Analysis of Nehemiah.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{24}\) Backues, “Construing Culture,” 44–47, esp. 45.

\(^{25}\) I have deliberately opted to examine this book since, as noted in the introduction to the first article in this series, Ken Tollefson has previously essayed to survey it by allowing the social sciences to yield needed cultural cues for the
One of the primary structural laws operative in this book is the compound relationship known as Comparative Causation. The building of the wall in 2:9–6:19 brings about and therefore serves as cause for the building and regathering of the community in 7:1–13:31. However, this causal movement is not the only way in which these two units seem to be linked. In a related fashion there also seems to be an implicit comparative coupling depicted in the text: the way the wall is built is tacitly likened to the way the community is built and re-established. This is especially obvious as one takes into consideration the recurring appearance of opposition\(^{26}\) which plays a notable role (or should I say anti-role) in each of the two units compared. Hence, the two relationships—Comparison and Causation—function as one overall configuration, mutually augmenting and highlighting each other.

Finally, this discussion once again leads us to Appendix B wherein several structural relationships deemed Simple and Complex are listed. Complex relationships are those composite structures consisting of a blend of other primary relationships. For instance, the simple relationship, Preparation/Realization, is immured within the complex configurations, Instrumentation, Particularization/Generalization, Interrogation, and Causation/Substantiation. In other words, each of the former contain a preparatory segment which is later realized in ensuing material. And while it certainly would not be wrong to say that each of these are examples of Preparation/Realization, it would however be less than precise. As can be seen, the complex structural relationships

\(^{26}\) I refer overtly to this recurring opposition by listing it as Structural Relationship III (Recurrence of Contrast [with Comparison]) in my breakdown. This is another example of a compound structural relationship.
Climax, Interrogation, and Pivot all also embrace their own simple relationships.

Appendix C offers an illustration of the above. The first structural relationship noted is that of Interrogation (e.g., the problem of disarray in Jerusalem in 1:1b–2:8 is solved by means of the community organization process evident in 2:9–13:31). As seen in Appendix B, the relationship of interrogation includes within it the couched simple relationships of Contrast and Causation. Therefore, in the process of analysis it is possible to direct our attention not only to the subtleties of problem-solution inherent within, but also toward the other two included relationships as well. Once again, however, designating this as merely Contrast or Causation would surely lack the precision of recognizing the fuller nexus patently at work here (i.e., Interrogation).

***

Before moving on to the next phase of the discussion, we must once again remind ourselves that this observation stage of Traina’s serves primarily as an inaugurating effort—understanding as a guess about the whole—in Ricoeur’s three-phase dialectic. What we are searching for at this point are, as we heard Traina say above, “the raw materials upon which the mind may operate in the interpretive process.” Consequently, careful observation can assist us in “becom[ing] saturated with the particulars . . . so that [we are] thoroughly conscious of their existence and of the need for their explanation.”27 This being the case, understanding or insight here must be seen as a preliminary sort gained by way of immersing ourselves in the text (and per my contention throughout this essay, in a context as well). It is the next phase (the Erklären process we explored in the prior article, or what Traina labels Interpretation) which serves to test and structure these initial guesses. However, this by no means gives us license to later discard all

27 Traina, Methodical Bible Study, 31–32.
legitimate understanding at this stage seeing as how it has been ascertained “merely” by observation. Paraphrasing Ricoeur, understanding realized during the entire hermeneutical process—first as a naïve grasp but later as comprehension (Verstehen) into which initial insights dialectically mature—pervades and thus envelops the interpretive phase as a whole (Erklären). In the meantime, interpretation serves to develop all initial observation analytically.\textsuperscript{28} And although requiring development and maturation, much of that observed at this stage will be the very thing which gives rise to comprehension in the end. For as Rosen has already pointed out, “pre-understanding, after all is said and done, is just understanding.”\textsuperscript{29}

In Traina’s methodology, this “enveloping” is accomplished primarily by means of posing interpretive questions arising out of and thus affixed to primary structural relationships. With the observational mechanism now somewhat clear, it is to this process of question identification that we now turn.

\textit{Interpretation}

Interpretive questions are those questions arising from and based on the observations of terms, structure, general literary forms, and atmosphere whose answers will result in the discovery of their full meaning. In fact, they frame in question form the various phases of interpretation, namely, definition, reasons, and implications.\textsuperscript{30}

We now arrive at the interpretive phase proper—that which I have previously linked to the German term Erklären (i.e., “explanation as a moment of testing and structuring one’s guesses”). We heard Taylor say in our last article that this sort of explanatory phase “orders the

\textsuperscript{28} Backues, “Construing Culture,” 22.
\textsuperscript{29} Cited in Backues, “Construing Culture,” 20.
\textsuperscript{30} Traina, \textit{Methodical Bible Study}, 97.
whole and fills it out, identifying and relating its parts in ‘systems’ or ‘structures,’ in an effort to ‘verify’ or ‘validate’ the guess.”31 For Traina, a certain linking of systems and structures has, of course, already been provisionally accomplished by means of determining structural relationships during the observation phase. This should not be seen as a distortion of Ricoeur’s dialectical process, however, since a blending of tasks between the first two phases is only natural—after all, we are dealing with a dialectic here. Traina agrees, “[S]ome interpretation must enter into the observational process. For there is no clear-cut line of demarcation between the first two steps … and it is infeasible to manufacture one.”32

In fact, as we examine below the very important role played by interpretive questions in Traina’s methodology, it will become clear that these questions serve more as bridging devices.33 This is due in large part to them at once being intimately connected to the aforementioned structural relationships while at the same time serving as the framework out of which meaning can be mined. And this is exactly the nature of Ricoeur’s Erklären as it dialectically arbitrates between understanding as insight and understanding as comprehension: it must serve as “a mediation between the two stages of understanding.” All of this will be explained in greater detail below. But first we must examine Traina’s primary tool for interpretive analysis: the interpretive question.

It has already been stated that “strategically broached questions provide the key to the hermeneutical process.”34 This is no earth-shaking statement. For, by definition, questions seek answers—meaning—

---


32 Traina, Methodical Bible Study, 78. Consider also the following from Bauer and Traina: “Of course, pure observation does not exist, for all observations, especially specific and descriptive ones, involve the construing of basic sense, which is minimal interpretation. Reading itself is an interpretive process, a process of making sense” (Inductive Bible Study, 82).

33 Traina, Methodical Bible Study, 77–78.

34 Cited in Backues, “Construing Culture,” 49.
when confronted with phenomena of all kinds.\textsuperscript{35} And, of course, meaning-seeking is the \textit{sine qua non} of interpretation. Therefore, the chief task at this juncture must be to ensure that the meaning sought is that deemed most pertinent by the main persons involved, (i.e., the original communicators in the cultural scene). For questions are like arrows; once leaving the bow, they follow their own trajectory. If not aimed correctly from the beginning, the smallest of variance can lead to a good deal of discrepancy down the road.

As for Traina, he was accustomed to citing Jerome—the translator of the Latin Vulgate—who said, “you cannot know the efficacy of the antidote unless you see clearly what the poison is.”\textsuperscript{36} Not surprisingly, this mirrors Black and Metzger’s statement that we heard Spradley cite in the previous article—an ethnographer “needs to know which questions are being taken for granted because they are what ‘everybody knows’ without thinking…. [She needs] to discover questions that seek the relationship among entities that are conceptually meaningful to the people under investigation.”\textsuperscript{37} Once again, validation of trajectory! Therefore, identifying questions germane to the hermeneutical enterprise must ultimately be the chief objective of any general interpretive methodology.

It is just here that the genius of Traina’s program is most evident. For the key to identifying such questions in his system lies in hooking

\textsuperscript{35} This can be illustrated by glancing at the structural relationship of \textit{Interrogation}. As shown by this construct’s enclosed simple relationships—\textit{Contrast} and \textit{Causation}—the problem evident therein not only contrasts with the solution which follows, it also calls it forth—causes it, brings it about! See Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{36} For a more complete quote, Jerome said, “Again and again, my reader, I admonish you to be patient, and to learn what I also have learnt through patience; and yet, before I take the veil off the dragon’s face, and briefly explain Origen’s views respecting the resurrection (for you cannot know the efficacy of the antidote unless you see clearly what the poison is), I beg you to read his statements with caution, and to go over them again and again.” Jerome asserts that the flesh would be restored on resurrection as it is now to clarify Origen’s view. See \textit{To Pammachius against John of Jerusalem} (\textsc{NPNF2} 6:436).

\textsuperscript{37} Cited in Backues, “Construing Culture,” 49.
them into those structural relationships already unearthed. In other words, once structural laws operative in the text are discerned, questions can then be systematically postured based upon and drawing inspiration from these linkages. This way the interpreter is indeed more likely to locate questions emphasizing couplings between entities already conceptually meaningful to those involved in the original text or context. Those “questions being taken for granted” by the author(s) of the text will more likely take center stage.\(^{38}\)

As we have seen above, Traina lists three phases of interpretation brought on by observation. Corresponding to these are three types of interpretive questions bearing identical headings to the associated phases: definitive, rational, and implicational. We need to look at each of these one by one.

First, the definitive question. Basically, this variety takes the form of “What is the meaning of … ?” Accordingly, an identification of discrete components (i.e., terms, symbols, gestures, behavior, etc.) and their connotations is the aim here. In addition, four subsidiary questions need also to be included under this heading: the modal question (“How does … ?”), the identifying question (“Who or what is … ?”), the temporal question (“When is … ?”), and the local question (“Where is … ?”).\(^ {39}\) While appearing quite different in form to the definitive question above, these subsidiary versions are simply alternative approaches for investigating definitions. Hence, they are in fact definitive questions and, like the “What is … ?” kind, need to be broached first.

While its importance should certainly not be overlooked, the task of defining is often incorrectly seen by many a would-be interpreter as the only true goal of interpretation.\(^ {40}\) “What does it mean?” therefore becomes the rallying cry when charging headlong into the

---

\(^{38}\) As far as I can tell, this linking of interpretive questions to structural relationships is a novel contribution on the part of Traina. One finds no allusion to it in Kuist’s text.


\(^{40}\) Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*, 95.
hermeneutical campaign. But it must be emphasized that this task is not the be-all nor the end-all for interpretation. In fact, it is simply the beginning. As already alluded to above, the definitive question itself begs two additional types of questions corresponding to the next two phases of interpretation.

The rational question is that which follows the definitive. It concerns itself with the question, “Why is … ?” Corresponding to what was said earlier, it seems that it is this question which most often finds itself on the lips of children at the earliest ages. Indeed, this very fact hints at its potential, for one of the more frustrating realizations for a parent is discovering that a single “Why … ?” question can always be followed by another … and yet another … and yet another. Barring distraction or sheer mental fatigue, there simply seems no end to the process. Consequently, if employed in the hermeneutical process, the rational question can serve to continuously spiral the interpreter into a never-ending discovery of meaning. In fact, its primary intent—the discerning of intentionality on the part of the cultural actor—is sometimes thought to be the chief focus of hermeneutics.

Finally, the last type of question is the implicational one. It is intimately related to the previous two questions since it

is actually an expansion of the rational question, and its answer begins forming the bridge between interpretation and application. First comes observation, answering the question, What is here? Then follows the definitive/explanatory question: What does it mean? This question is succeeded by the question of reason: Why is this particular thing here? Finally comes the implicational question: What are the full implications of this particular thing with this particular meaning having been placed here for these particular reasons?\(^{42}\)

\(^{41}\) Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 132–33.

\(^{42}\) Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 133; cf. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*, 42
One can sense the unfolding nature of this process as the initial sorts of questions reach their culmination in the implicational question.

This type of question consists of two separate parts: (1) assumptions and (2) outworkings or outgrowths. In other words, this type of question seeks to find out (1) what sorts of things are taken for granted in order for a certain structural relationship to be operative in a particular context, and (2) what sorts of natural developments will most likely be forthcoming due to the appearance of a certain structural relationship in a particular context. A focus on the implicational question naturally gives rise to a concern for the implicit—that which is not readily apparent or discernible at first blush. While, for safety’s sake, answers to these questions should always be based upon explicit data, the interpreter nevertheless must not shy away from this type of seeming speculation. For though there is great opportunity of going awry here, there is also great opportunity for significant discovery.

As has surely become evident, the order in which these questions are posed is of considerable importance, for it is quite difficult to ask the reason for a point if one does not first know its meaning. Likewise, it is obviously a worthless task to explore the implications of something if one does not yet know its wherefores and whys. Thus, when tied to a specific structural relationship, the sequence of inquiry must be: definitive questions first, followed by rational questions, and finally rounded off by implicational ones.

Initially, Traina’s implicational question was worded something like, “What are the full implications of the structural relationships present here?” Later, Bauer and Traina helpfully divided this question into two constituent parts (assumptions and outgrowths) for the sake of clarity and precision (Bauer and Traina, Inductive Bible Study, 133–34). I will elaborate on this two-fold division just below.

Examples of each of these can be found both in Appendix C (in relation to the book of Nehemiah) and in Appendix D, where, under the heading “Traina’s Interpretive Questions Based on Each Major Relationship of Structure,” standard examples of the three types of interpretive questions are given for each of the primary structural relationships. I, of course, will employ them in the next article in my analysis of a cultural scene.
All the above is fine and good as far as it goes. However, not the questions themselves—even if interpretively culled with the utmost of finesse—but the answering of these questions is ultimately what constitutes the fruit of interpreting. Consequently, this phase would certainly be incomplete if at its conclusion we were left with nothing more than a mere catena of queries begging answers. For, while it is true that a person cannot know the antidote without first knowing the poison, it must be remembered that poison left unanswered is generally toxic.

Fortunately, arriving at answers in Traina’s methodology is facilitated by identifying what he calls Strategic Areas for each type of structural relationship. As can be seen in Appendix E, five of Traina’s eleven structural relationships exhibit distinct components which can be isolated as interpretive apertures allowing for more finely-honed observation and interpretation. The other six relationships, on the other hand, require the interpreter to select a representative example to illustrate the functioning of the relationship involved. Nevertheless, in either case these targeted portals can be utilized to answer a few choice interpretive questions which then can serve as windows into each structural law. By zeroing in upon these key points of contact, the interpreter can whet her focus and thus more readily arrive at insight into interpretive themes. In this way explanation can be built upon initial observation and thus continue in its dialectic climb through explanation toward comprehension. And as we saw above, this is the goal in the interpretive process.45 In summary, Traina offers us a means for identifying key questions—and their attending windows of opportunity that assist in answering these—both of which promise to escort us increasingly deeper into the interpretive process. However, we must remember that ad hoc question posing will not do. For, as is always true when analyzing others’ cognitive constructs, we are ever so inclined to lean upon questions of our own design rather than searching

45 In Appendix C, due to the specific constructs unearthed, representative types of strategic areas are what appear.
for actual configurations belonging to those persons centrally involved. And, of course, this is the essence of the hermeneutical circle not at its most helpful but at its most vicious. In fact, Traina’s entire process can be seen—remembering the attempts above to connect observation, “naïve grasping,” and inspiration—as “recurring to the concrete in search of inspiration” to avoid Whitehead’s fallacy of misplaced concreteness.\(^\text{46}\) In this case, that which is concrete is the world of those soaked in the context of meaning—the actual world of the (con)text in question.

**Conclusion to Part 2:**
**Robert Traina’s Methodology**

This brief perusal of Traina’s methodology has positioned us for what comes next. Of course, I have far from exhausted its nuances. Much more could be said; in fact, much more has been said.\(^\text{47}\) Yet, for our purposes, we seem to have achieved our purpose: we are now equipped with a hermeneutical methodology originally devised with the scriptures in mind, one that also seems to have potential for interpreting a cultural scene. And from the start, of course, this has been our quest. Hence, it only remains to illustrate some of that potential in the next and final article.

\(^{46}\) Remember A. N. Whitehead’s admonition as cited in our previous article (Backues, “Construing Culture,” 25–26).

\(^{47}\) As is probably obvious, the most complete analysis of this methodology is Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study.*
## Appendix A
### Train’s Structural Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
<th>BIBLICAL EXAMPLE</th>
<th>EXPLICIT LINGUISTIC INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. PREPARATION/REALIZATION (INTRODUCTION)</td>
<td>The setting up of a scene or setting</td>
<td>The book of Job begins with a framing of the scene of events in chapters 1–2</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CONTRAST</td>
<td>Association of opposites</td>
<td>Recurring contrast between Jesus and the religious leaders in the Gospel of Mark</td>
<td>but, however, yet, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. COMPARISON</td>
<td>Association of like things</td>
<td>The book of 2 Kings is structured according to a comparison between the fall of the Northern Kingdom and the fall of the Southern Kingdom</td>
<td>like, as . . . so, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. RECURRENCE</td>
<td>Repetition of the same or similar terms, phrases, or elements. Can be in the form of: (a) Repetition (repetition of the same motifs) (b) Continuity (repetition of similar motifs)</td>
<td>“Life” in the Gospel of John</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIP</td>
<td>EXPLANATION</td>
<td>BIBLICAL EXAMPLE</td>
<td>EXPLICIT LINGUISTIC INDICATORS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CAUSATION/</td>
<td>(a) Causation involves the movement from cause to effect</td>
<td>(a) The book of Judges is characterized by recurrence of causal cycles</td>
<td>(a) therefore, so, hence, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBSTANTIATION</td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Substantiation involves the movement from effect to cause</td>
<td>(b) Psalm 1 is structured according to substantiation; v. 6 provides the basis, or the reason, for vv. 1–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) for, since, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. GENERALIZATION/</td>
<td>(a) Generalization involves the movement from the particular to the general</td>
<td>(a) The book of Acts involves a progressive geographical generalization—from Jerusalem (chs. 1–7) to Judea and Samaria (chs. 8–12) to “the uttermost parts of the earth” (chs. 13–28)</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICULARIZATION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Particularization is the movement from general to particular</td>
<td>(b) The prologue to John’s gospel (1:1–18) is particularized throughout the remainder of the gospel</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. CLIMAX</td>
<td>Movement from the lesser to greater to greatest (toward culmination)</td>
<td>The book of Revelation reaches its climax in the description of the final judgment in 20:11–22:21</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIP</td>
<td>EXPLANATION</td>
<td>BIBLICAL EXAMPLE</td>
<td>EXPLICIT LINGUISTIC INDICATORS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. PIVOT</td>
<td>A radical reversal or change of direction</td>
<td>Paul in the book of Acts is a persecutor of the Church and an enemy of Christ prior to his conversion in 9:1–19, but after this event he becomes a mighty herald of the gospel</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. INTERROGATION</td>
<td>A question or problem followed by an answer or solution</td>
<td>The book of Genesis begins with the primordial problem of sin in chs. 1–11 that is answered or “solved” by the calling of Abram and his family in chs. 12–50</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. SUMMARIZATION</td>
<td>The summation of logic or events in an extended discourse</td>
<td>The book of Joshua ends with Joshua summarizing the events of the children of Israel in ch. 24</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. INSTRUMENTATION</td>
<td>A causal movement made possible by an agent of change; a relation of ends and means</td>
<td>The gospel of John contains an explicit statement of the purpose of the gospel as means by, through (often couched in the subjunctive, e.g., “these [words] are written that you may believe.”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
Simple & Complex Structural Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMPLE RELATIONSHIPS</th>
<th>COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Preparation/Realization</td>
<td>2. a. Particularization/Generalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Causation/Substantiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Instrumentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Interrogation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PREPARATION**
- General
- Particulars
- Cause
- Effect
- Means
- End
- Problem/Question

**REALIZATION**
- Particulars
- General
- Effect
- Cause
- End
- Means
- Solution/Answer

2. a. Recurrence
   b. Causation

2. Climax
3. a. Contrast  
b. Causation

4. a. Contrast  
b. Instrumentation

4. Pivot

---

**Simple Relationships**

- Contrast
- Causation

---

**Complex Relationships**

- Interrogation
- Pivot

---

Diagram:

- Simple Relationships:
  - Contrast
  - Causation

- Complex Relationships:
  - Interrogation
  - Pivot
Appendix C
Structural Analysis of Nehemiah

I. Interrogation
Problem: The Disarray in Jerusalem (1:1b–2:8)

Interpretive Questions

Definitive Qs:
What is the meaning of the problem in 1:1b–2:8? What is the meaning of the community organization process in 2:9–13:31 as solution? What does this interrogational movement involve? What are the specific contrasting points between the problem and the solution here? How does the problem in Jerusalem in 1:1b–2:8 bring about the sort of solution found in 2:9–13:31? How does the community organization process in 2:9–13:31 flow from/solve the problem of disarray in Jerusalem as found
in 1:1b–2:8? What is the meaning of such an interrogational movement?

**Rational Qs:** Why is this interrogational movement used as it is here?

**Implicational Qs:** Assumptions:

What must be assumed for the above relationship(s) to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for the above relationship(s) to be operative?

**Outworkings/Outgrowths:**

What natural developments/implications flow from the above structural relationship of interrogation? assumptions develop from such a relationship/relationships?

---

**II. Comparative Causation**


**Interpretive Questions**

**Definitive Qs:** What is the meaning of the cause in 2:9–6:19; namely the building of the wall? What does building the wall involve? What is the meaning of the building of the community in 7:1–13:31? What does building the community involve? How does the activity of building the wall in 2:9–6:19 bring about the activity of building the community in 7:1–13:31? What is the meaning of such a causal movement? How is building the wall (2:9–6:19) compared to building the community (7:1–13:31)? What are the particular elements compared? What is the meaning of each element? What is the meaning of such a comparison? How does this comparative structure relate to the causal movement? What is the meaning of the relationship of these two structures to each other?
Rational Qs: Why is this causal movement used as it is here? Why the comparison? Why the linking of the two relationships here?

Implicational Qs: Assumptions:

What must be assumed for the above relationship(s) to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for the above relationship(s) to be operative?

Outworkings/Outgrowths:

What natural developments/implications flow from the above relationship(s)? What assumptions develop from such a relationship/relationships?

III. Recurrence of Contrast (*passim*)
(with Comparison)

Nehemiah & the children of Israel

vs.

Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, etc.

Comparison: This external conflict is compared to Israel’s recurring internal conflict (chs. 5 & 13:4ff)

Interpretive Questions

Definitive Qs: Who were Nehemiah & the children of Israel? Who were Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, etc.? How are (or over what) do these two groups differ? What is the meaning of this external conflict here? What is the meaning of its recurrence? Who are those internal parties in conflict in ch. 5 & in ch. 13? How do the parties differ from each other in each case? How does this bring about the internal conflict in each case? What is the meaning of the internal conflict in each case? What is the meaning of its recurrence in this book? How is this recurring internal conflict comparable to the
recurring external conflict cited above? What is the meaning of such a comparison?

Rational Qs: Why is the external conflict presented here? Why recurring? Why is the internal conflict presented here? Why recurring? Why are these two conflicts, the external and the internal, compared to one another here?

Implicational Qs: Assumptions:

What must be assumed for the above relationship(s) to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for the above relationship(s) to be operative?

Outworkings/Outgrowths:

What natural developments/implications flow from the above relationship(s)? What assumptions develop from such a relationship/relationships?

Strategic Areas:

I. Interrogation: Nehemiah’s prayer while in Babylon; details the disarray in Jerusalem and the nation of Israel’s complicity in it (1:5–11; representative area)

II. Comparative Causation: Nehemiah’s local networking and coalition building for wall construction as cause (2:9–20; representative area); Nehemiah’s assembling of the people & the celebration of the Feast of Booths (8:1–18; representative area)

III. Recurrence of Contrast: First occasion of opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, etc. (Chapter 4; representative area)
Appendix D

Traina’s Interpretive Questions Based on Each Major Relationship of Structure

1. PREPARATION/REALIZATION (INTRODUCTION)

   *Definitive:* What is meant by the preparatory material, and by the material for which preparation is made? How does the preparatory or introductory material make you ready for what follows?

   *Rational:* Why use this preparatory movement?

   *Implicational:* What must be assumed for this preparatory relationship to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

2. CONTRAST

   *Definitive:* What is the meaning of each of the contrasting elements? What is the difference(s) between them, and what is the meaning of this difference(s)?

   *Rational:* Why is the difference(s) stressed?

   *Implicational:* What must be assumed for this contrasting relationship to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

3. COMPARISON

   *Definitive:* What is the meaning of each of the elements compared? What is the similarity(s) between them, and what is the meaning of this similarity(s)?

   *Rational:* Why is the similarity(s) emphasized here?
**Implicational:** What must be assumed for this comparative relationship to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

4. **RECURRENTNESS**

**Definitive:** What does the recurring element mean? What is the meaning of its recurrence?

**Rational:** Why does this element present itself here? Why recurrently?

**Implicational:** What must be assumed for this relationship of recurrence to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this recurring motif? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

5. **CAUSATION/SUBSTANTIATION**

**Definitive:** What is meant by the cause(s) and by the effect(s)? How does the cause(s) result in the effect(s), or how does the cause(s) substantiate the effect(s)?

**Rational:** Why use this causal/substantiating movement?

**Implicational:** What must be assumed for this type of relationship to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

6. **GENERALIZATION/PARTICULARIZATION**

**Definitive:** What is the meaning of the general statement and of the particular statement(s)? How does the general statement illuminate the particular statement(s), and how does the particular statement(s) illuminate the general statement?
**Rational:** Why such particularization/generalization?

**Implicational:** What must be assumed for this relationship to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

7. **CLIMAX**

**Definitive:** What is the meaning of the high point of this unit? How do the preceding materials lead to this high point?

**Rational:** Why does this climactic movement appear here?

**Implicational:** What must be assumed for a climactic relationship to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

8. **PIVOT**

**Definitive:** What is the meaning of the pivotal portion? How does it serve to change the direction of the material? How does what precedes lead to it, and how does what follows flow from it?

**Rational:** Why does this pivot present itself here?

**Implicational:** What must be assumed for this pivotal movement to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

9. **INTERROGATION**

**Definitive:** What is the meaning of the question (problem) and of the answer (solution)? How does the answer (solution) resolve the question (problem)?

**Rational:** Why does such an interrogational movement appear here?
Implicational: What must be assumed for this interrogational movement to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

10. SUMMARIZATION

Definitive: What is the meaning of the summary statement? How does it summarize the materials involved?

Rational: Why such summarization?

Implicational: What must be assumed for this sort of summarization to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?

11. INSTRUMENTATION

Definitive: What is meant by the end or purpose, and what is meant by the means? How do the means serve as an instrument(s) for realizing the end?

Rational: Why does this relationship of instrumentation appear here?

Implicational: What must be assumed for this relationship of instrumentation to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for it to be operative? What natural developments/implications flow from this relationship? What assumptions develop from such a relationship?
My Journey with Inductive Bible Study

James (Jim) C. Miller
Asbury Theological Seminary
james.miller@asburyseminary.edu

Introduction

For nearly four decades, Inductive Bible Study (IBS) has provided me with a disciplined, fruitful manner for not only my study of Scripture, but for God’s examination of me through Scripture as well. What I have gleaned through patient encounters with God’s Word has shaped my understanding of God, his purposes, and the nature of life within those purposes in ways too numerable to count. In what follows, I share some of my journey with IBS across multiple decades and continents. I will do so in four parts: Introduction to IBS at Asbury Theological Seminary, IBS within my approach to teaching, the value of IBS, and where I have grown over the years.

Introduction to IBS at Asbury Theological Seminary

My introduction to IBS came indirectly through Asbury Theological Seminary alumni. After completing a BA in Biblical Studies at Oral Roberts University in the early 1980’s, I took several months off
from school before entering seminary. During that time, I served as a pastoral intern in a Christian and Missionary Alliance church near my childhood home in rural Ohio. While there I met several CMA pastors who had graduated from Asbury. Everyone raved about their experiences in IBS classes, particularly those with Robert Traina. Although a confluence of factors led me to choose Asbury for my seminary education, one important issue was the expectation that studying IBS with Dr. Traina (among others) would provide me with a practical hermeneutic for lifelong ministry.

My first experience with IBS, like that for many Asbury seminarians of my generation, came through Dr. Traina’s introductory Gospel of Mark course. I was lost from the outset. Our first assignment involved reading his nearly indecipherable (for me) *Methodical Bible Study*. We then had to conduct a full book survey of Mark. Besides learning all the new concepts in the book, we had to apply them to such a large section of Scripture that it overwhelmed me. As I recall, this future Professor of Inductive Bible Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary did not exactly distinguish himself in that course. But I was attracted by Dr. Traina’s disciplined approach and the insights into Mark’s gospel that resulted from his work. (Insights from my own work in this first course? Not so much.)

The IBS light came on for me in a second IBS course with Dr. Traina, this time on the Pauline Epistles. My progress with IBS may have stemmed from my greater attraction to the rational argumentation of Paul’s letters than to the narrative style of Mark. But it may also be that by the time I launched into my second attempt at IBS I had enough experience with applying its concepts that it was becoming easier. Either way (or some combination of both), through the application of IBS methods, Paul’s letters came alive to me in a new way.

My “enlightenment” found expression in three ways. First, I could see how each letter functioned as an entire unified argument. My interpretive experience up to this point had been to read Paul’s letters as a series of individual, disconnected arguments and exhorta-
tions. I simply read to identify what “spoke to me.” I possessed no way to put the arguments together into a single whole. Using structural relations, however, I began to see how Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians worked. I could then fit pieces of Paul’s argument into their larger literary context. Scripture spoke to me in a whole new way. I was hooked.

Second, I now had in my hands a practical means for studying Scripture. IBS showed me the extreme inadequacy of my previous ‘skills’ for reading Paul’s letters. Although I had basic working knowledge of New Testament Greek, when interpreting a New Testament text, all I could do was grab a commentary off the shelf and see what it said. No more. I was now gaining skills and concepts that guided me from first steps to following a biblical book to integrating the details into the whole. I cannot understated how this transformed not just how I engage Scripture but also the confidence with which I did so. In terms of a biblical hermeneutic, the old had passed away, behold the new had come!

Two final courses rounded off initiation into IBS at Asbury: Romans with Dr. Traina and Minor Prophets with Dr. David Thompson. Before the course on Romans, portions of the letter already made sense to me, other parts not so much. How the entirety of this most influential letter held together remained a mystery. But IBS tools in the skilled hands of Dr. Traina once again put the pieces together for me. There was more?!

Our final paper, a paraphrase of Paul’s argument through the first eight chapters of the letter, nearly killed me. Yet it forced me to think carefully and thoroughly about the text itself, the hallmark of IBS. Looking back on that assignment now, I also see Dr. Traina’s deep commitment to see his students learn. From a Professor’s perspective, such assignments not only draw moans and groans from students, they also must all be graded carefully. That takes work.

Under the influence of developments such as the New Perspective on Paul, my understanding of the letter has changed somewhat
since my baptism into its argument under Dr. Traina, but only somewhat. Even where my understanding of a portion of Paul’s argument would now depart from that of my IBS mentor, I remember his interpretation well and must grapple with it thoroughly in order to justify my own. In doing so, I hope I honor his legacy of scholarship and teaching.

The second course that rounded off my IBS training was my final course at Asbury. This New Testament focused person ventured into a course on the Minor Prophets with Dr. David Thompson. The Old Testament prophets were entirely new biblical turf for me. But this was a necessary step for my growth as it forced me to apply my growing IBS skills on an unfamiliar portion of the canon. Once again, a skilled IBS mentor who laced his teaching of these books with his own unique sense of humor brought light into my darkness. The foreign to me became familiar.

**IBS Within My Approach to Teaching**

I began my teaching career at Daystar University, a fledgling Christian institution in Nairobi, Kenya in 1989. Obviously, Daystar had no IBS curriculum like that at Asbury. But I structured my teaching methods around IBS skills and concepts. For example, in a course on an individual New Testament writing such as Romans or on a collection of books such as Synoptic Gospels, I typically presented my take on the structural relations in a passage then assigned interpretive questions based on one of those structures as homework. At times we simply answered questions in small groups in class. Either way, the heart of the work involved learning and applying IBS concepts and skills.

The response to my approach was interesting in that context. The expectation, based on customs in higher education in Africa, was that a “lecturer” would do just that—lecture. Students did not know what to do with someone who not only did not lecture but who also
asked them questions. Students later told me that at first they thought I either had not prepared for class (and thus could not lecture) or that I simply did not know what I was doing. It was only as the course progressed that they realized why I was doing what I was and how much they were learning as a result.

I returned to the US and began teaching at Asbury Theological Seminary’s Florida Dunnam campus in 2008. My course load includes both IBS and New Testament exegesis courses. I often get asked how I teach these two approaches to New Testament interpretation. Most readers of this journal would find my presentation of IBS fully in line with their experience at Asbury Theological Seminary or with their knowledge of this approach to studying Scripture.

With New Testament exegesis courses, I make use of IBS concepts but employ additional exegetical approaches as well that are in-line with Asbury’s Student Learning Outcomes for exegesis courses. While I am committed to developing text-centered skills for interpreting Scripture, we will misinterpret biblical texts unless we attempt to understand them within their social-cultural context. Thus, students get a healthy dose of Jewish and Greco-Roman background in both my New Testament Introduction and New Testament exegesis courses.

I do not pit IBS and exegesis against one another. I may designate a section of a New Testament letter for study based on structural relationships, but we will also make use of the tools of social-scientific criticism or rhetorical criticism among others in our actual interpretation of the passage. I deliberately make the two approaches complementary because I see them as such. As a faculty member with a foot in both methods, I find myself perfectly placed to integrate them. I would not want it any other way.

I have also taught IBS in local churches, introducing people without formal theological education to the basics. Once I taught a series of sessions at a large church located in an area comprised mainly of retirees (common in Florida). The audience was around 60 peo-
ple, none of whom were under 65 years of age. During the first session I had introduced several basic terms and concepts of “IBS.” Afterwards an elderly woman approached me and said that she understood what I meant by “IBS,” but what that particular audience heard was “irritable bowel syndrome.” I have thought carefully about where and when I use the acronym “IBS” ever since.

The Value of Inductive Bible Study

Looking back, three bedrock commitments emerged from my initiation to IBS at Asbury Theological Seminary and they continue to shape my teaching and personal practice to this day. First, I remain firmly devoted to the text-centered approach embodied in Inductive Bible Study. I tell students in my exegesis courses that I can teach you all the “tricks of the trade,” (such as the rhetorical or social-scientific approaches I mentioned above). But if you cannot read texts well your exegetical work will remain stunted. How, for example, will you referee among different interpretive conclusions reached by commentators unless you can argue with those commentators based on your own careful, responsible reading of the text? Furthermore, how do you protect yourself from simply becoming swayed by the assumptions of others unless you possess your own skills with which to engage the text? I offer additional arguments for prioritizing text-centered approaches below.

Second, I remain dedicated to the practice of IBS as a teaching and learning tool. Through my experience as a student, I found nothing comparable to the learning generated through the hands-on labor of applying IBS practice to a particular text followed interaction with a professor’s own work on the same passage. That insight shapes my applied pedagogy to this day. Lecture remains necessary. But for forming students to hear God speaking through Scripture in a manner that can inform and sustain a lifetime of ministry, I simply know of no other comparable approach.
Third, whether we like it or not, the way we live and minister is informed by some form of a multi-faceted biblical theology. We have some way of understanding God, God’s purposes expressed through Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst that enables us to make sense of our circumstances and plot the way forward in a God-honoring manner. IBS, with its emphasis on hearing an individual biblical book on its own terms before collaborating one’s findings with that from other biblical writings, offers multiple advantages for the task of forming and growing responsible biblical theology. Consistent with the text-centered nature of IBS, I remain committed to a constructive biblical theology that allows individual biblical writers to speak in their own voice without prematurely forcing an alien theological agenda upon them.

**Where Have I Grown over the Years?**

Perhaps IBS has been so integral to the way I read Scripture for so long that I simply cannot see how my use of it has changed over the years. I can, however, identify two ways in which my use of it has grown. For one, I now conceive of teaching far more as *formation* than I ever have before. I am certain some of this development stems from reading the works of Stephen E. Fowl. His concern for forming habits and dispositions in biblical interpreters focused my thinking on this issue. But what pushed me even further was grappling with the postmodern context in which we read Scripture today. Let me explain.

Scholars recognize that the center of gravity in biblical interpretation has moved in recent decades. At one point, it was thought that the key to understanding a biblical writing lay in the background between the text. In other words, to understand the Gospel of Mark, we needed to understand who Mark was, his supposed relationship to the Apostle Peter’s testimony, when Mark wrote, to whom he wrote, etc. On that basis could grasp why the gospel was written and how it should be interpreted. But much of that information is lost to history.
As a result, scholars disagree on basic “behind the text” issues. How then does one understand Mark?

If we lack access to Mark and/or Peter, we do have the text of the Gospel of Mark itself. In time, scholars migrated to text-centered methods such as narrative criticism. In these approaches, meaning is found in the text. Historical questions are legitimate; they just are not the concern of narrative critics. I count IBS among text-centered approaches (though its relationship with its text-centered relatives would need further definition).

Yet, in our so-called postmodern era we have come to realize that we cannot erase ourselves from the interpretive process. As human beings we come to scripture with pre-existing interpretive frameworks that shape our understanding of biblical texts. At one time it was common to think that there was such a thing as a neutral, objective interpreter; we now know that such an idea is a pipedream. In its extreme forms, there is no meaning in the text. Meaning is only found in front of the text, in the interpreter herself.

Here is the problem. If we hold a high view of Scripture, we believe that God speaks to us through the biblical writings. In other words, the interpretive momentum runs from the text toward us. But the truth we now recognize in our postmodern context is that we can never remove ourselves from the interpretive process. The interpretive momentum also runs from reader toward the text. How then can we prevent our interpretive biases from cutting off our ability to hear God speak to us through the text by our predisposition to hear only what we want to or are able to hear?

My response to this dilemma can be summarized in three points. First, and briefly, one of God’s good gifts to us is the ability to become aware of our own interpretive biases. What pet doctrine do I seem to find everywhere in Scripture? One way to learn our own biases lies in reading Scripture with people from other cultural backgrounds or theological traditions. The differences that emerge will likely result from our varied interpretive frameworks.
Second, if we cannot remove ourselves from the interpretive process (and we cannot), then we must pay greater attention to the shape of the commitments we bring when we engage Scripture. In other words, we must be formed as responsible, reliable readers of biblical texts. This is a large, complex discussion that can only be addressed separately. But the point remains: few issues may be more significant than how we are formed as interpreters. Well-honed biases, habits, and dispositions that direct us well position us to hear God speak through the text. If we once learned the interpretive frameworks that we use to understand Scripture, we can also further shape, relearn, or acquire new frameworks altogether.

Third, and here is where IBS comes in, one necessary check on our interpretive impulses lies in a text-centered approach to reading Scripture. A well-practiced inductive approach ties us to the text and will not let us go. We must deal with the evidence in the text in a thorough, holistic manner. In doing so we resist the tendency to simply find what we are already comfortable in finding in Scripture. For this reason, I regard the ability to use inductive approaches to Scripture as a critical element in the formation of a biblical interpreter.

If I have come to see IBS much more in formational terms over the years, I have also framed what we talk about as the “appropriation” of Scripture within a more missional perspective. I realize “missional” is a current buzzword of which people may be tired, but I have no investment in this specific term. I do believe, however, that it points to something fundamentally biblical—that Scripture as a whole tells the story of God’s purposes for creation that are carried out through people called to be God’s own.

My frustrations with typical approaches to what we usually call “application” are two. For one, they tend to be individualistic when Scripture more often addresses the community of God’s people. And I also find too many formulations of this task too undirected or open ended. They ask, “What is God saying to me?” But they offer no fuller biblical guidance toward God’s concern for what God might saying.
Within a missional framework, Scripture is understood to equip God’s people to participate in God’s mission (or purposes). A missional hermeneutic asks questions like: What does this passage tell us about God and God’s mission? How does this passage equip us to participate in what is doing by God’s invitation and enabling? In other words, Scripture is heard first as an address to God’s people. Only then do we have some direction for what to listen for as we engage the text, direction that is consonant with the grain of the Bible as a whole.

One advantage within a missional approach for appropriating Scripture lies in its understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in biblical interpretation. Traditionally, the work of the Spirit was understood solely in informational terms. The Spirit inspired the biblical writers to communicate certain ideas. The Spirit now inspires us to understand those same ideas.

Within a missional approach, a fundamental component of biblical interpretation lies in how we embody what we find in Scripture. In other words, our responses to what we learn themselves constitute interpretations. Thus, given the purposes of Scripture (i.e., to understand God and God’s mission, and to become equipped to participate in that mission by God’s enabling), interpretation must consist of more than just getting the right information. It necessitates embodied responses. But if the Spirit empowers our participation in God’s mission, we can expect to see the power of the Holy Spirit at work among us and through us as we prayerfully attempt to follow God faithfully in God’s mission.

A missional approach to appropriation not only offers guidance for the task, it also expands how we understand the work of the Holy Spirit the process. I must add, however, that appropriation itself builds upon careful, deliberate engagement with the biblical text.
Conclusion

When I first enrolled at Asbury Theological Seminary in the mid-1980’s, little did I know the transformative effect that experience would have upon my life and ministry through the decades to follow. That impact has been felt primarily through the tools and sensitivities I acquired for reading Scripture under the tutelage of Drs. Robert Traina and David Thompson. The words that I (and others who teach using IBS approaches) have heard repeatedly from students over the years apply equally to my own life, “IBS taught me to slow down and listen to Scripture carefully.”