Construing Culture as Composition—Part 2: Robert Traina's Methodology

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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

Introduction—A Brief History of Methodical Bible Study

> 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,

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[1] David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 94.

The Joy of Teaching Discovery Bible Study; Marylin Kunz, founder of the outreach-oriented small-group bible study series, Neighborhood Bible Studies; Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN); Joseph R. Dongell, Professor of Biblical Studies and former Director of Greek Instruction at ATS; Fredrick J. Long, Professor of New Testament and Director of Greek Instruction at ATS; David R. Bauer, Dean of the School of Biblical Interpretation at ATS; and Ralph Waldo Beeson, Professor of Inductive Bible Study, also at ATS.[2]

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.[3]

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[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."
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> 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

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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*.[5] 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.[6] 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.[7] 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.

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[5] Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study: A New Approach to Hermeneutics* (New York: Ganis & Harris, 1952; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

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

[7] Cf. James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy, *Anthropology: The Cultural Perspective*, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), 360–61 and James P. Spradley, *Ethnographic Interview* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 107–12.

> Because an inductive approach fundamentally entails the move-
> ment from evidential premises to inferences, students must be-
> come acquainted with the evidence, and this acquaintance is ac-
> complished 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.[8]

What they underscore here has long been the bedrock for Traina's
inductive approach.[9] When located within Paul Ricoeur's three-phase
dialectic we looked at in the earlier article, this observation stage con-
stitutes 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.[10] It just so happens that Kuist,
in describing the place observation played in the thinking of Jesus him-
self, 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.[11]

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[8] Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 75.

[9] Note the following directly from Traina: "Observation transcends pure phys-
ical 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 essen-
tially *awareness*" (*Methodical Bible Study*, 31, emphasis original).

[10] Lindy D. Backues, "Construing Culture as Composition—Part 1: The Nar-
rative Nature of Truth," *Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* 6 (2019): 7–54, at 19.

[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 quo-
tation 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:

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[12] Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*, 31–32.

[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

1. Principality
2. Repetition
3. Continuity
4. Curvature
5. Radiation

6. Contrast
7. Interchange
8. Consistency
9. Harmony

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."[20]

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[21]
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

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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.[22] 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.[23] 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

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[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.

Recurrence and Contrast
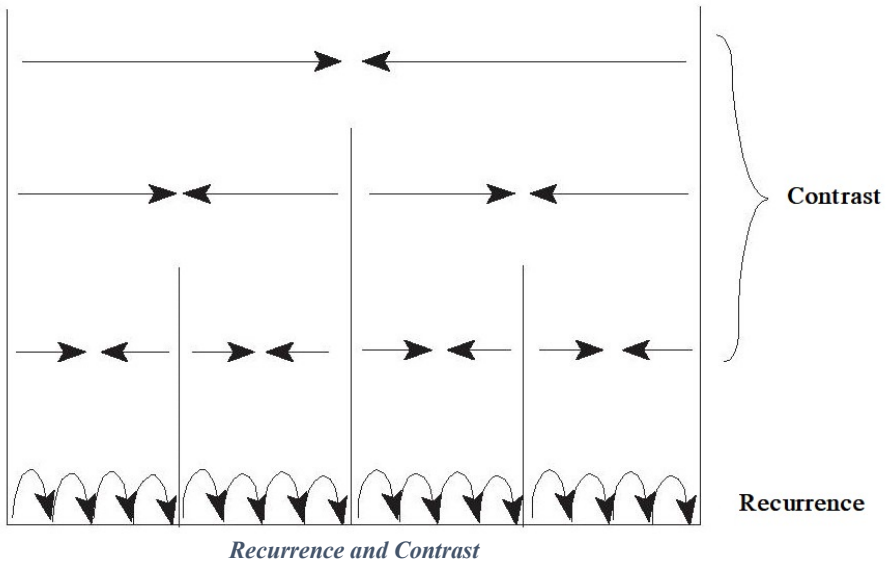
This entire process, of course, should remind us of the way Spradley's cover terms and included terms function in cultural domains. We took note in the previous article that domains are always delineated by means of boundaries, with some items belonging inside the domain and others belonging outside.[24] 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.[25]

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[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

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interpretation of the biblical text. Of course, I am doing exactly the opposite here. As an aside, it is somewhat interesting that Tollefson divides the book slightly differently than I do here; see Kenneth Tollefson, "Nehemiah, Model for Change Agents: A Social Science Approach to Scripture," *CSR* 15 (1986): 107–24. His divisions are as follows: (1) The Innovation Process (1:1–2:20); (2) The Community Development Process (3:1–7:4); (3) The Cultural Revitalization Process (7:5–10:39); and (4) The Consolidation Process (11:1–13:31).

[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).

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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

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[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.[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."[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.

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.[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

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[28] Backues, "Construing Culture," 22.

[29] Cited in Backues, "Construing Culture," 20.

[30] Traina, *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 question 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—

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[31] Cited in Backues, "Construing Culture," 21.

[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.[35] And, of course, meaning-seeking is the *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."[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."[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

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[35] This can be illustrated by glancing at the structural relationship of *Interrogation*. As shown by this construct's enclosed simple relationships—*Contrast* and *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.

[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 *To Pammachius against John of Jerusalem* (NPNF² 6:436).

[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

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[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.

[39] Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*, 99; Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 132.

[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 … ?"[41] 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]

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[41] Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 132–33.

[42] Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 133; cf. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*,

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.[43] 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.[44]

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[43] 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.

[44] 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

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[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.[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.[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.

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[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

STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIP	EXPLANATION	BIBLICAL EXAMPLE	EXPLICIT LINGUISTIC INDICATORS
1. PREPARATION/ REALIZATION (INTRODUCTION)	The setting up of a scene or setting	The book of Job begins with a framing of the scene of events in chapters 1–2	*none*
2. CONTRAST	Association of opposites	Recurring contrast between Jesus and the religious leaders in the Gospel of Mark	but, however, yet, etc.
3. COMPARISON	Association of like things	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	like, as . . . so, etc.
4. RECURRENCE	Repetition of the same or similar terms, phrases, or elements. Can be in the form of: (a) Repetition (recurrence of the same motifs) (b) Continuity (recurrence of similar motifs)	"Life" in the Gospel of John	*none*

STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIP	EXPLANATION	BIBLICAL EXAMPLE	EXPLICIT LINGUISTIC INDICATORS
5. CAUSATION/ SUBSTANTIATION	(a) Causation involves the movement from cause to effect	(a) The book of Judges is characterized by recurrence of causal cycles	(a) therefore, so, hence, etc.
	(b) Substantiation involves the movement from effect to cause	(b) Psalm 1 is structured according to substantiation; v. 6 provides the basis, or the reason, for vv. 1–5	(b) for, since, etc.
6. GENERALIZATION/ PARTICULARIZATION	(a) Generalization involves the movement from the particular to the general	(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)	*none*
	(b) Particularization is the movement from general to particular	(b) The prologue to John's gospel (1:1–18) is particularized throughout the remainder of the gospel	*none*
7. CLIMAX	Movement from the lesser to greater to greatest (toward culmination)	The book of Revelation reaches its climax in the description of the final judgment in 20:11–22:21	*none*

STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIP	EXPLANATION	BIBLICAL EXAMPLE	EXPLICIT LINGUISTIC INDICATORS
8. PIVOT	A radical reversal or change of direction	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	*none*
9. INTERROGATION	A question or problem followed by an answer or solution	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	*none*
10. SUMMARIZATION	The summation of logic or events in an extended discourse	The book of Joshua ends with Joshua summarizing the events of the children of Israel in ch. 24	*none*
11. INSTRUMENTATION	A causal movement made possible by an agent of change; a relation of ends and means	The gospel of John contains an explicit statement of the purpose of the gospel as means in 20:30–31	by, through (often couched in the subjunctive, e.g., "these [words] are written that you *may* believe.")

Appendix B
Simple & Complex Structural Relationships

SIMPLE RELATIONSHIPS	COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS
1. Preparation/Realization	2. a. Particularization/Generalization
	b. Causation/Substantiation
	c. Instrumentation
	d. Interrogation

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
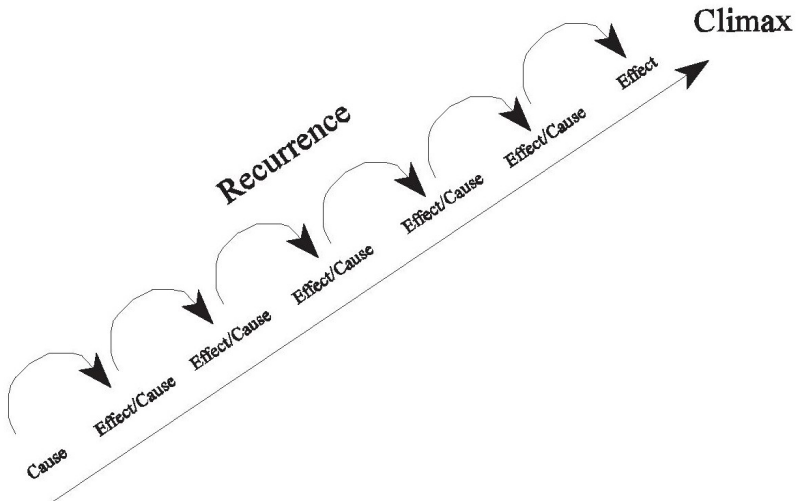
SIMPLE RELATIONSHIPS	COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS

3. Interrogation

3. a. Contrast
   b. Causation

Causation

Problem/Question ◄————— vs. —————► Solution/Answer
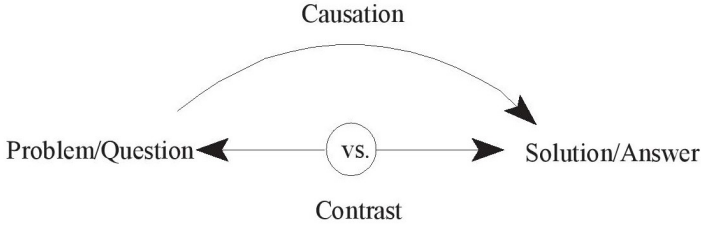
Contrast

4. a. Contrast
   b. Instrumentation

4. Pivot

Instrumentation

Means

Direction A

Direction B

vs.

Contrast

Appendix C
Structural Analysis of Nehemiah

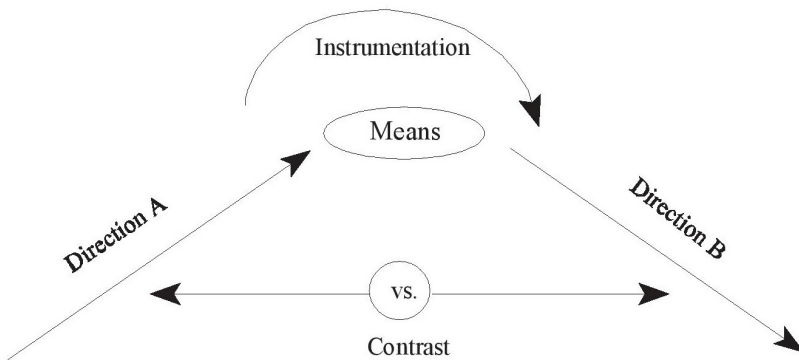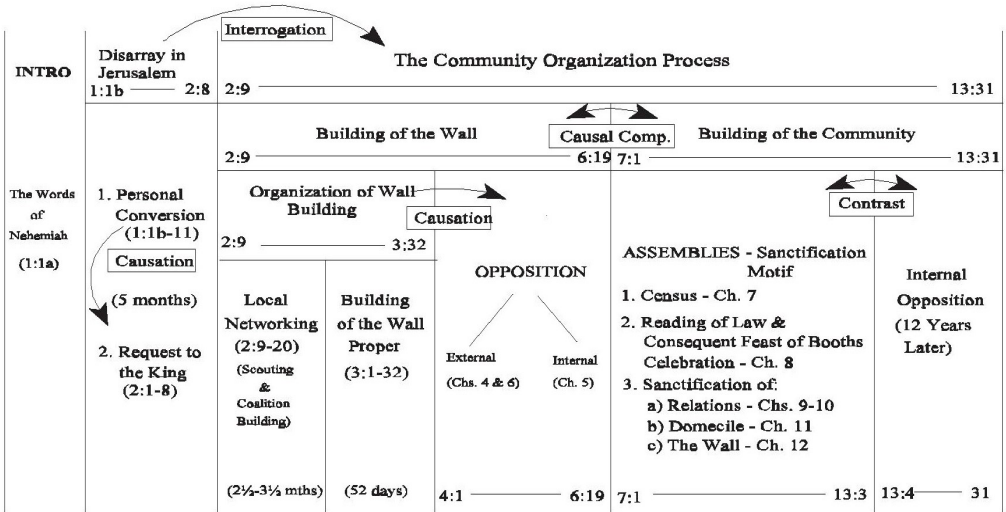|							
INTRO	Disarray in Jerusalem 1:1b —— 2:8	Interrogation			The Community Organization Process 2:9 —————————————————————————————— 13:31		

Building of the Wall 2:9 ——————————— 6:19 Causal Comp. 7:1 Building of the Community ———————— 13:31

| The Words of Nehemiah (1:1a) | 1. Personal Conversion (1:1b–11) Causation (5 months) 2. Request to the King (2:1-8) | Organization of Wall Building Causation 2:9 —————— 3:32 | | OPPOSITION External (Chs. 4 & 6) Internal (Ch. 5) | ASSEMBLIES - Sanctification Motif 1. Census - Ch. 7 2. Reading of Law & Consequent Feast of Booths Celebration - Ch. 8 3. Sanctification of: a) Relations - Chs. 9-10 b) Domecile - Ch. 11 c) The Wall - Ch. 12 | | Contrast Internal Opposition (12 Years Later) |
| | | Local Networking (2:9-20) (Scouting & Coalition Building) (2½-3½ mths) | Building of the Wall Proper (3:1-32) (52 days) | 4:1 ———— 6:19 | 7:1 ————————— 13:3 | | 13:4 —— 31 |

I.   Interrogation

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

Solution: The Community Organization Process (2:9–13:31)

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**	Building of the wall (2:9–6:19) (CAUSE) (with opposition) Building of community (7:1–13:31) (EFFECT) (with opposition)

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 recurringly? Why is the internal conflict presented here? Why recurringly? 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 similiarity(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. RECURRENCE

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

Rational: Why does this element present itself here? Why recurringly?

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?