

Guidelines for Review

Orient yourself to the use of New Testament Abstracts or Religious Index One and look for articles or books dealing with a theme of pericope of your research interest. Copy the relevant page in NTA or RI and then find the original article and read it. Take notes on the thesis, the argument, and on passages that might be worth citing. Ask yourself: does the evidence support the author's thesis? Then prepare a one page report, making enough copies for each member of the class as well as two copies for the instructor. It is agreed that other members of the class may make use of the reviews. Below is a sample of an article review:

Wayne A. Meeks

"The Polyphonic Ethics of the Apostle Paul"

Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics (1988): 17-29. October 16, 1990

Reported by K-K Yeo

Acts and Pauline I

Thesis

"The style of moral argument that Paul adopted was not so much dialectical as polyphonic. If we turn to Paul to find a paradigm of the appropriate way to do Christian ethics, we must examine not only the result of Pauline polyphony but also the process or transaction. The polyphonic character of Paul's ethical teaching is demonstrated first by examining his answer to the Corinthian Christians who asked whether they could eat meat obtained from a pagan temple (1 Corinthians 8-10) and then by reviewing Paul's own revision of that answer into a generalized paradigm for other Christians who found themselves in a different time, place, or situation (Rom 14:1-15:13)." [NTA 33 (2, 89), pp. 178-179].

Arguments

Meeks shows that there are seven voices altogether in 1 Cor 8-10 which Paul intentionally employed to engage in a community discourse ethics with the Corinthians. The first is the "we" in 8:1 and 4; the "we" being the dominant faction. After engaging dialogue with the "we", Paul makes way for the excluded, those who are "weak" in 8:7, 9, 11. Paul then uses formal and neutral voice of indicative statements to give his opinions. Such statements include "Knowledge inflates love constructs" (8:2), "but the knowledge is not in all" (8:7), "food does not commend us to God" (8:8) and so on. Then the early Christian tradition speaks and engage in dialog with Stoic pantheism. The fifth voice is Paul's own as authoritative apostle and as personal example in chapter 9. In chapter 10, Paul uses the Scripture and traditions of Israel. Finally, Paul draws to a concluding admonition in 10: 13-11:1. Meeks concludes that the effect of Paul's polyphonic technique is, "What Paul is undertaking to do in this part of his letter is not merely to secure a particular outcome in the case under discussion. It is rather to help the participants to become more competent moral agents." (p. 24)

Useful quotations

"... with the results of recent biblical criticism in mind, we contemplate the multiplicity of voices we hear in the letters of Paul." (p. 17) "... the manyness of the voices is essential to the form of communication Paul has chosen." (p. 18) "... the style of moral argument that Paul adopts is not so much dialectical as polyphonic." (p. 18) "Even in this instance where Paul has been asked to give his authoritative directive as founder and apostle, and where he speaks with full consciousness of his apostolic authority, he does so through the curious indirection of polyphony. . . . he introduces other voices, from other times and a wider community of discourse, that, when heard, alter the to-and-fro of the dispute into a much more complex conversation. . . . if we were to reduce his admonitions to rules or to ends, we would have lost something essential of that *oikodome*, that construction of moral community ..." (p. 23)

Evaluation

A penetrating and enlightening analysis into Pauline communication techniques in 1 Cor. 8-10 by means of polyphonic ethics. Such a research is a

pearl to those interested in Pauline rhetoric. Unfortunately Meeks does not seek to use the rhetorical category. Otherwise, the article could have been a masterpiece. By means of rhetorical criticism, the intended motive of using the seven voices could be analyzed to shed more light on the pericope and the whole letter.

Guidelines for Writing Exegetical Papers

1. Preliminary Research and Reflection

A. Compare several translations and check out textual variants to determine the text on which you are going to work. Greek text is to be used though translations are helpful in reflecting translators' interpretations.

B. You may decide to use one or more approaches of exegesis and hermeneutics (as shared by lecturer in the second lecture) in your paper. Make sure you know your orientation, presupposition, strength and limit of the approach you are using. None of the approach is flawless and so objective that it is absolute; none of the approach is so subjective and limitless that it is not worth trying. Since dialogue is an essential interactional and edificational process in theological enterprise, consulting others' interpretations in various articles and monographs is encouraged.

C. Study the literary context of the passage in terms of its relation to the writing as a whole; reflect on the style and content of the pericope, its literary structure and its logical development; clarify the theological and historical language of the passage.

D. Study the historical setting of the passage, taking account of the social implications, the presence of cited materials, the intention of the writer and the issues being addressed in the recipient community.

E. Gather ideas concerning the theological implications of the passage for today; search for parallel situations and issues in the modern world and reflect on the altered implications when the modern situation substantially differs from the ancient one.

2. Writing the Exegetical Paper and Hermeneutical Essay

A. Depending on the material in the pericope and the point of view adopted by the student, each paper should be organized somewhat differently; strive for a logical progression that moves from premises to conclusions, from exegetical conclusions to theological implications.

B. When a specific translation is needed to develop the point of your paper or when there are important textual variants, it might be appropriate to begin the paper with the Greek text of the pericope you are studying with proper translation rendered. Whether or not this is concluded in your particular paper, the standard elements of an appropriate title, a well-designed introduction, and a conclusion should be a part of every paper.

C. The exegetical paper should concentrate on the meaning of the text for its original audience. Since a verse-by-verse commentary is usually not conducive to developing a sharply defined thesis in a paper, it should be provided only when it is appropriate for a particular purpose. In some instances it may be appropriate to define what you perceive to be the main thrust of a passage or to develop a hypothesis about a particular aspect of a passage.

D. The hermeneutical essay can be in the form of a sermon, a detailed sermon outline, a lesson plan, an interpretive essay, or a cross-cultural hermeneutics that uses literary, theological, or ethical materials. The essay or outline should take the main thrust of the exegetical study and relate it to the modern world in a creative and thoughtful manner.

3. For style of paper, see Turabian, [A Manual for Writers of Term Papers](#) or the Chinese Manual recommended by the Seminary. For standard abbreviations of biblical, apocryphal, intertestamental, rabbinic books, Nag Hammadi tractates, and early patristic writings, please follow those listed in the "Instructions for Contributors," [Journal of Biblical Literature](#) 107 (1988): 584-587.