

# WHAT IS BIBLE EXPOSITION?

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## Introduction

Most seminaries today have a “Department of Old Testament Studies” and a “Department of New Testament Studies.” A few schools, like Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), additionally have a “Department of Bible Exposition.” However, one searches in vain for a clear definition of “Bible Exposition,” much less a clear articulation of the discipline of Bible Exposition. Two associations with the term “Bible Exposition” are most often made. First is the relation (and often equation) of “Bible Exposition” with some form of Bible teaching that includes present-day application.<sup>2</sup> The second is the relation (and often equation) of “Bible Exposition” with some introductory overview of the Bible or individual books of the Bible. Having existed for over 70 years, one might conclude that DTS’s “Department of Bible Exposition” has provided from its founding and history a clear articulation of the term and discipline of “Bible Exposition.”<sup>3</sup> However, the lack of clarity concerning “Bible Exposition” finds its origin in the very founding and history of the department itself.<sup>4</sup>

### *A History of the Bible Exposition Department at Dallas Theological Seminary*

Since the inception of DTS in 1924, teaching all 66 books of the Bible has played a central role in the Seminary’s curriculum. As John Hannah explains concerning the school’s founding, “the inclusion and intensification of Bible instruction at the graduate level was a new departure in theological training... Thus, each student, in addition to the study of the Bible in the original languages, was to receive an analytical and synthetic introduction to each book of the

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<sup>1</sup> I currently serve as the Bible Exposition PhD Program Coordinator at Dallas Theological Seminary. One of the first courses in the BE PhD program is BE8201 Theory, Method, and Practice of Bible Exposition. This course will serve as the outline for a text that is currently in the works. What is outlined here is an explanation of the “definition of Bible Exposition” that is articulated in that course.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Roy Zuck, who served in the Department of Bible Exposition for years, explains the difference between exegesis and exposition as follows: “What then is exegesis and exposition: Exegesis may be defined as the determination of the meaning of biblical texts in its historical and literary contexts. Exposition is the communication of the meaning of the text along with its relevance to present-day hearers.” His charts in the pages following this statement illustrates the same point. (Basic Bible Interpretation, pp. 19-20). Thus, for Zuck, Bible Exposition was equivalent to expository preaching. Yet, the Department of Bible Exposition has never been engaged in this homiletical discipline. Instead, there is a whole separate department set apart for communicating the “meaning of the text along with its relevance to present-day hearers.”

<sup>3</sup> One also searches in vain to find a definition from public materials from other theological institutions with a “Bible Exposition” department or a “Bible Exposition” degree, such as Biola, Talbot, Columbia International University, or Liberty University.

<sup>4</sup> The emphasis of my ThM. Degree was “Bible Exposition.” However, I received my PhD in Old Testament Studies. I currently serve in the Department of Bible Exposition at DTS. As a new member of the department years ago, I quickly realized that there was little agreement on what “Bible Exposition” was as a discipline. This dilemma is, at least in part, the driving force behind this paper.

Bible.”<sup>5</sup> From the inception of the Seminary in 1924 until 1965, resident faculty were joined by special “Bible lecturers” who were brought in to teach an “analytical and synthetic introduction” to the different books of the Bible.

In 1949, the “English Bible” department was created, and eventually, the program of bringing in “Bible lecturers” was discontinued in 1965 because “full-time Bible conference speakers were increasingly hard to find.” However, “Walvoord opposed the title (English Bible) because he felt that, since the institution was a graduate school, there was no place for a non-language based department.”<sup>6</sup> Apparently, the nomenclature of the department continued to be an issue for Walvoord since, in 1960, J. Dwight Pentecost was appointed the first department chairman of what would now be called the “Department of Bible Exposition.”<sup>7</sup> To fill the department’s teaching positions, the Seminary “turned to graduates in the pastorate or educational institutions.”<sup>8</sup>

### *The Confusion Concerning Bible Exposition*

In light of the preceding paragraph, a few points need to be made explicit. First, from the inception of the Seminary there was confusion concerning the distinction between the academic discipline of “Bible Exposition” and the role of the “Bible Exposition Department” at the master’s level. Thus, at the core of Walvoord’s objection concerning an “English Bible” department is the distinction between the task with which the Bible Exposition Department was assigned (i.e., teaching an analytical and synthetic introduction to each book of the Bible) and the academic discipline of Bible Exposition itself.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, it will be asserted below that the academic discipline of Bible Exposition (which is solely dependent upon the study of the Scriptures in their original languages) must undergird *any* explanation of the Bible as a whole, or

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<sup>5</sup> Hannah, John. *An Uncommon Union: Dallas Theological Seminary and American Evangelicalism*, Zondervan, 2009, 86. Emphasis on teaching all 66 books of the Bible has been a distinctive of DTS since its inception.

<sup>6</sup> Hannah, *Uncommon Union*, 146. This is a sentiment with which I agree. This is particularly true of a PhD program in Bible Exposition. However, given the changes in graduate programs and the need for basic introductory Bible teaching at the master’s level, the teaching of the Bible in English is necessary. As this paper will make explicit, however, one must not confuse the task of the Department of Bible Exposition at the master’s level with the academic discipline of Bible Exposition.

<sup>7</sup> Another historically relevant point is that in 1960, the Department of Christian Education was also founded with Prof. Howard Hendricks as the department chairman. Prof. Hendricks began teaching a class called “Bible Study Methods.” This class walked each student through the “method” of Bible study. The steps were observation, interpretation, and application. While present-day application is a consideration of Practical Theology, the class fits well within the field of Christian education. For some reason, however, the course was positioned within the curriculum of the Department of Bible Exposition. So, the course’s focus on present-day application, along with its being placed in the curriculum of the Bible Exposition department, functioned to further confuse the exact nature of the discipline of Bible Exposition.

<sup>8</sup> Hannah, *Uncommon Union*, 146.

<sup>9</sup> An appropriate analogy would be to point out that the discipline of New Testament or Old Testament studies ought not to be equated with the teaching of first semester Greek or Hebrew. In other words, the teaching of an “analytic and synthetic introduction to each book of the Bible” from a translation of the Bible in a particular language, whether it be English or any other language, ought not be equated with the academic discipline of Bible Exposition itself.

any of the individual literary compositions contained therein (whether at an introductory level or an exhaustive one), into *any* language.

A second point of confusion that surrounds “Bible Exposition” is the relation between the discipline itself and the teaching of present-day application from each passage of the Bible. Thus, it is often the case that “Bible Exposition” is confused with “Expository Preaching” or some other form of applicational teaching from the Bible. Moreover, the confusion between the academic discipline of Bible Exposition and the issue of present-day application was made even more complicated by a “Bible Study Methods” class that was positioned in the Bible Exposition Department but was most prominently taught by Prof. Howard Hendricks, the chairman of the Department of Christian Education.

### **What is Bible Exposition?**

To clearly articulate the task at hand, a few brief observations about texts in general will be made, followed by a definition and explanation of the discipline of Bible Exposition.

#### *A General Introduction to Texts*

Before a detailed explanation of the academic discipline of Bible Exposition is spelled out, a few brief statements concerning the nature of texts should be enumerated.

1. Authors write to provide a textual response to a *specific situation* or *occasion*. In other words, texts are occasion driven.
2. Texts are an occasion driven response written by an author to *communicate* a message to an *intended reader*.
3. An author’s text communicates an *intended message*. The intended message is communicated by the transfer of specific *meaning* intended to induce an intended response in order to address a specific situation or occasion. Thus, the message of a text contains both an *intended meaning* and an *intended response* for the reader.
4. Texts are *strategically constructed* (i.e., *the author’s argument*) in order to communicate the intended message (meaning and response).
5. Differing types of strategically constructed textual responses (i.e., *different genres*, utilization of different genre specific literary devices, different rhetorical strategies, etc.) are more efficient and/or effective in communicating differing types of messages. Thus, choices of rhetoric, grammatical constructions, lexicography, and genre are strategically encoded into an author’s text in order to communicate that author’s intended message to the intended reader in order to most efficiently and effectively convey the intended meaning in order to garner the intended response.

In regard to biblical texts, biblical authors were no different.

1. Biblical authors wrote to provide a textual response to a specific situation. In other words, biblical texts were occasion driven.
2. Biblical texts were occasion driven responses written by biblical authors in order to communicate specific messages to intended readers.
3. Biblical authors messages not only communicated information, but also conveyed an intended response to that information. Thus, the message of a biblical text contained both an intended meaning and an intended response for the intended reader.

4. Biblical texts were strategically constructed in order to strategically communicate the intended message (meaning and response).
5. Differing types of strategically constructed textual responses were more efficient and/or effective in communicating differing types of messages. Thus, choices of genre, literary devices, rhetoric, grammar, and lexicography were strategically encoded by a biblical author in order to communicate that author's intended message to the intended reader in order to most efficiently and effectively convey the intended meaning in order to garner the intended response.
6. One last observation must be made about the biblical authors, and the texts that they wrote do not stand in isolation. Instead, they are all assuming the same "plot."<sup>10</sup>

### *A Definition and Explanation of Bible Exposition*

**BIBLE EXPOSITION DEFINITION:** Bible Exposition is an academic discipline within the field of biblical studies that seeks to determine and explain the *historical occasion*, *author's text*, *author's message*, and *author's argument of each literary composition in the Scriptures* as well as its relation to the *developing canonical revelation* contained therein.

*Historical Occasion*<sup>11</sup> – Occasion is the specific historical situation that caused the author to respond via the composition of a text.<sup>12</sup> Since every literary composition in the Scriptures

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<sup>10</sup> In other words, the setting, conflict, and rising action that is introduced in the opening chapters of Genesis provide the beginning plot structure through which the rest of the Scriptures must be understood. Failure to recognize this unifying structure will inevitably result in the eisegesis of one's theological persuasions or critical approaches into the text of the Scriptures. Thus, the ongoing plot is driving each book of the Scriptures as both the canonical revelation and history itself drive toward its climax and conclusion set forth in the book of Revelation. One more note here: the "plot structure" of the Bible is not something that is to be imposed upon the Bible. Instead, it must be something that is recognized from the Scriptures themselves. Eisegesis of a plot structure is no better than any other form of eisegesis. If an overarching plot structure is to be claimed, it must be explicated (i.e., it must be demonstrated how each part or scene in the narrative contributes to the plot development. Thus, part by part, book by book, this assertion must be validated).

<sup>11</sup> It is often the case that some, but not all, of the components of the *Occasion* may be determined from the text. Thus, the expositor must be careful not to create an occasion that supports one's conclusions. Instead, the expositor must work within the textual data contained in the literary composition in order to seek to determine this information.

<sup>12</sup> It should be pointed out at this juncture that the focus of the discipline of Bible Exposition is not on the events themselves which were recorded in the literary composition of an author. Instead, our focus is on why the event itself was recorded in the *literary composition* and *its contribution to the overall message being conveyed by the author*. It should be pointed out that without exception, the event recorded within the text does not find its literary significance (i.e., conveyance of textual meaning to produce an intended response) in some historical situation that may lie behind the event recorded (in most cases even the original readers of the text would have had no access to such information), but instead in the role that the event as recorded played in the overall development of the literary composition. For example, rather than seeking to uncover what the covenant recorded in Genesis 15 might have meant to Abram or people in his day (a meaning that was most likely inaccessible to the original readers of Genesis), the more relevant question to the understanding of an historical narrative is why the author included this covenant in his narrative (i.e., how does the scene contribute to the developing plot of the narrative). In other words, the audience / reader of the narrative of Genesis is not Abram, but Israel. Thus, the literary question is, why did *Israel* need to hear about God's covenant with Abram concerning His promise and timing of giving the land to Abraham's descendants? So, while biblical texts may refer to, assume, and/or contain historical details, these textual details are being utilized within a literary composition for the purpose of communicating the author's intended message to the

was written by someone in a specific time and place, to an intended audience, and for an intended purpose, an explanation of the occasion takes into consideration the questions of who, to whom, why, when, and where and their impact on the author's message. In other words, the topic of occasion considers all aspects of why the author wrote the text.

Who? This question asks who wrote the literary composition. Sometimes, the author is clearly stated, and therefore, a high degree of certainty can be asserted. Sometimes, the author is not stated, and thus, a lower degree of certainty can be asserted.<sup>13</sup> The question of "who" wrote is often directly related to "why" the literary composition was written.

To whom? This question asks to whom the literary work was written. Sometimes, the audience is clearly stated, and a high degree of certainty can be asserted. Sometimes, the intended audience is not stated and must be inferred, and thus, a lower degree of certainty can be asserted.

Why? This question asks why the author wrote the literary work. What "situation" needed to be addressed which caused the author to respond by writing?

When? The question of "when" contains both historical and canonical considerations. When specific times are given (e.g., Isaiah 1:1 – "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah") the specific context within which the author wrote can be understood more clearly.<sup>14</sup> In addition to historical considerations, development in the progress of revelation must be taken into account as well (i.e., changes in the plot development as revealed in the Scriptures).

Where? The question of "where" has two components that need to be considered: the location of the author and the location of the audience. Sometimes these are the same. Sometimes they are different. Like all other questions of occasion, the "where" of the text can significantly affect what the author is saying and why he is saying it.

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intended audience. The historical details were textual "givens" that were understood by the original readers. Thus, modern concerns with the veracity of an historical event or some hypothesized cultural background or polemic that may potentially lie behind the historical actions of an ancient patriarch far removed from the purview of the original reader (i.e., the exact nature of the ANE ritual that might lie behind the covenant in Genesis 15) or some deconstructed and reconstructed hypothetical text to satisfy the modern notions of what a text can or cannot say, are not the focus of attention for the discipline of Bible Exposition. Bible Exposition is a discipline focused on the message and argument of each literary composition contained in the Bible.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that the identity of the author is integral to the communication of the message of some texts (e.g., those that rely on *ethos*) but not others (e.g., those that may rely more on *logos* or *pathos* in order to make their appeal). For example, the prophetic or apostolic authority of the author of many epistles or prophetic books is often central to the authority of the message contained therein. In narrative, however, the authoritative message is carried by the characters in the narrative, and often, the author of the narrative is not stated.

<sup>14</sup> Although it should be pointed out that even when specific dates of an event, prophecy, or vision are given (e.g., dates in Ezekiel), the question of the date of literary composition may be a different matter.

*Author's Text* – For our purposes in Bible Exposition, we will define a *text* as a biblical author's actual original words that form a strategically constructed *literary composition* written in order to 1) address a historical occasion, 2) convey a specific meaning, and 3) produce a desired response. The author's construction of his text is strategic in that he utilizes various genre-specific communication strategies (e.g., literary devices common to the selected genre, intentional grammatical constructions, intentional word usage, and rhetorical devices).<sup>15</sup>

*Author's Message* – The author's message is twofold in that it contains the intended meaning and the intended application. The author's message is communicated through a strategically constructed, genre-specific text (i.e., *Author's Argument*). In other words, an author's textual response to the *occasion* communicates an intended textual meaning in order to produce an intended response or application for the original reader.<sup>16</sup>

*Author's Argument* – The author's argument is how he seeks to achieve the textual communication of his message (intended meaning and intended application) through his strategically constructed, genre-specific literary composition. The author's first strategic decision in the textual communication of his message is his choice of genre (e.g., story or narrative, epistle, poetry, wisdom). Each genre utilizes a different set of communicative norms in order to convey the intended message. Since some genres are more efficient than others in communicating certain messages, selecting the appropriate genre is vital to communicating the intended message. Additionally, the author will utilize the various lexical choices, grammatical constructions, rhetorical devices, and literary devices common to that genre in order to communicate his message (meaning and application).<sup>17</sup> The utilization (author's act) and recognition (reader's act) of the various genre-specific literary conventions is vital to the communication of the intended message. Thus, the author's task is to "encode" the desired message into his text by utilizing genre specific literary conventions. The reader's task is to "decode" or recognize the author's intended message through the reading of the text. **The role of the expositor goes further than mere recognition to that of explanation (via validation).**

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<sup>15</sup> While an original text can be assumed, there is no extant original text of the Bible. Thus, as the *expositor* considers the *author's message* and the *author's argument* of a *literary composition* in the Bible, the textual variants must be carefully considered and weighed in light of both their external evidence (i.e., textual witnesses) and internal evidence (how the differing readings might relate to the *author's message* and the *author's argument* of the author's text). Thus, textual criticism is central to the discipline of Bible Exposition and is an essential step for the *expositor* in the process of determining the *author's message* and the *author's argument*.

<sup>16</sup> Many often refer to the categories of speech act theory (i.e., locution, illocution, and perlocution) to refer to the same concepts being presented here. While some aspects of the discussion of speech act theory align with what is being said here, other components do not (i.e., speech acts (individual statements) vs. texts (made up of many speech acts) or the categories of constative and performative).

<sup>17</sup> The lexical choices and grammatical constructions (including such considerations as discourse analysis) would be considered by most to fall within the domain of exegesis. However, the academic discipline of Bible Exposition not only evaluates the possibilities of meaning that can be communicated by these building blocks of communication but also considers their literary and rhetorical role and purpose.

*Each Literary Composition in the Scriptures* –First and foremost, it should be pointed out that the discipline of Bible Exposition is concerned with the biblical texts (i.e., the canonical literary compositions). It should further be pointed out that these biblical texts were written by particular authors to particular audiences at particular times in the progress of God’s redemptive history in order to address particular situations with particular messages.

*The Developing Canonical Revelation* – Two points must be made here. First, “history” is not the same as “revelation.”<sup>18</sup> While the biblical authors are referring to things that happened “in history,” the textual significance of those events is their relevance to the developing textual message being conveyed by the author to the intended reader. Thus, meaning is conveyed at the textual, not historical, level. Second, no part of the Bible can be understood in isolation. This is true at the exegetical level as well since no textual detail (word choice, grammatical construction, literary device, etc.) contained in a text can be adequately considered in isolation. Instead, every textual detail must be considered in light of the author’s developing literary composition.<sup>19</sup> Through this developing literary context, the author expresses his argument to achieve the communication of the message of his literary composition to his intended audience. In the same way, one of the most important components of the Scriptures must be made explicit: no individual literary composition in the Scriptures can rightly be considered in isolation apart from its relation to the developing canonical literary message of the Scriptures as a whole.<sup>20</sup> Further, it must be remembered that the uniting criteria for which the canonical books were recognized was their relation to (i.e., continuation of, contribution to, or reflection upon) the narrative plot structure that is introduced in Torah and runs the course of the Scriptures.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Much more needs to be said concerning this point. What is being articulated here is not simply the distinction between “history” and “historical narrative,” although such a distinction clearly needs to be maintained. Instead, a more specific point is being made here, which I plan to detail in future writings. In brief, the point that I intend to make is that creation and “story” are inexorably linked since both are totally dependent upon the cause-effect relationship. Historical narrative is a selective telling of the cause-effect details concerning a specific topic contained in history.

<sup>19</sup> In other words, as a communicative act progresses, meaning possibilities narrow rather than multiply. Thus, the possible meanings of a word narrow as that word is used in a phrase. The possible meanings of a phrase narrow as the phrase is used in a sentence. The possible meanings of a sentence narrow as the sentence is used in a paragraph, and so on. Thus, the issue here is not simply a part vs. whole discussion but a developing part and its relation to the developing whole.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Matthew 1:1 states, “Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ.” In order to understand this single statement, one must first know Koine Greek, have an understanding of the term “Christ,” know the significance of the promises to David, the promises to Abraham, and the relation between those two Old Testament characters, and their relation to the “Christ.” Further, this is by no means an exhaustive list. Thus, it becomes quickly apparent that a canonical understanding is necessary before one can even begin to comprehend the message of Matthew’s gospel.

<sup>21</sup> The plot structure is carried by the Old Testament narrative of Genesis through 2 Kings. The Bible’s setting is Genesis 1-2. The conflict, or inciting action, is in Genesis 3. The rising action is introduced in Genesis 4 and continues throughout 2 Kings. These books (i.e., Torah and Former Prophets) “carry” the Old Testament narrative. Other books in the Old Testament Canon “contribute to” the plot development of the Old Testament narrative (i.e., Latter Prophets and some of the Writings). Still others “contemplate” the truths contained therein (i.e.,

*The Role of the Expositor* – As stated above in our definition, the goal of the academic discipline of Bible Exposition is to determine and explain the *message (meaning and application)* of each historical literary composition (text) contained in the Scriptures as well as their relation to one another (progress of revelation) in order to determine and explain the developing canonical message (meaning and application) contained therein. In order to pursue this goal, the expositor must be able to textually validate his or her claims about the occasion, strategically constructed text, and message of any biblical text. Thus, what follows is an explanation of a path to be followed by the expositor in order to pursue the goal of Bible Exposition.

*Proposed Message Statement* – A “*Message Statement*” is an expositor’s explanation of the occasion, (intended) meaning, and (intended) application of a biblical text. A “*Message Statement*” should be presented in the form of a subject-complement sentence. The subject portion of the statement should explain the occasion (Who? To whom? Why? Where? When?), the genre-specific textual response and, the intended meaning. The complement portion of the statement should contain the intended application.

Proposed Message Statement template: “In order to address [the why, where, and when of occasion here], [author/the who of occasion here] writes a [genre of text here] to [recipient/the “to whom” of occasion here] in order to explain [meaning here] so that [recipient / “to whom” of occasion here] would [desired application here].

Example from 1 Corinthians: In order to address divisions (why) in the Corinthian church (where) which have arisen while he was in Ephesus (when and where), Paul (who) writes a letter (text and genre) to the Corinthians (to whom) in order to explain, defend, and prioritize the different roles and functions of believers in the body of the resurrected Christ until His return to defeat the enemy (meaning) so that they will act and judge in ways that will build up the body of Christ, thus receive reward, and not tear down the body of Christ, and thus suffer judgment and loss (application).”

Thus, a *Proposed Message Statement* is a subject-complement sentence that seeks to explain the occasion that caused the author to write a strategically composed and genre-specific text in order to convey particular meaning in order to achieve the desired response.

*Proposed Argument Exposition* – The role of the expositor is not only to understand and explain the *Author’s Message* (presented in the form of a *Proposed Message Statement*) but also to understand and explain “how” the author set out to achieve the communication

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predominately Wisdom Literature). The nomenclature of “carry, contribute, and contemplate” comes from Jason Coke, a current PhD student in the BE program at DTS. That the unified plot structure that drives and guides the subject matter of the Bible is only now being “rediscovered” is the unfortunate result of the departure from Bible reading brought about by the modern era. Modern biblical “apologetic” and “scholarly” concerns such as the veracity of the historicity contained in the Bible, the Bible’s adherence to modern conclusions concerning scientific knowledge, or hypothetical compositional history or a book of the Bible, take the focus away from the textual nature of the Bible itself.

of that message (i.e., the *Author's Argument*, presented in the form of a *Proposed Argument Exposition*).

The reasons for this approach are threefold. First, an Argument Exposition requires the expositor to account for the textual details (i.e., genre and genre-specific components, utilization of literary devices, employment of rhetorical strategies, lexical choices, and grammatical constructions) present in the author's text, which were strategically utilized to communicate the message in response to the occasion. Failure to explain the details contained in an author's text and how they contribute to the author's message (intended meaning and intended application) in order to address the occasion is a failure to validate one's exposition.<sup>22</sup> Thus, an Argument Exposition demonstrates the correlation between the expositor's claims about the author's text and the author's text itself. Second, when two expositors compare competing Argument Expositions, it can be determined where and why the two agree and / or disagree. In other words, each exposition can be compared to the other, and both can be evaluated in light of the Author's text. Third, an Argument Exposition is a necessary step between exegesis (consideration of possible meanings that could be intended through a particular textual detail) and theological statements derived from the text. In other words, a discussion about "possibilities of the author's intended meaning" must be followed by a "validation of the author's intended meaning" before one can come to justifiable (or validated) theological conclusions.

### **The Position and Task of Bible Exposition**

As explained above, the position and task of the academic discipline of Bible Exposition must rightly be situated in between that of exegetical method and exegetical considerations and that of systematic conclusions. The chart below seeks to illustrate the position and task of Bible Exposition.

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<sup>22</sup> A valid argument exposition (accounting for the literary features of a text) demonstrating how the author constructed the entirety of his text in order to achieve his proposed message statement does not, in itself, prove the veracity of an expositor's claims. However, an inability to validate one's proposed message statement and argument exposition does disprove at least some aspects of the expositor's claims. Thus, validation dramatically increases the probability of veracity. In other words, simply enumerating the interpretive options of a particular issue or passage and then choosing the option that best aligns with one's personal theology or interpretive community (exegesis) without demonstrating how that interpretive issues or passage fits into the overall purpose of the author's text (exposition) is an invalid interpretive approach and thus has limited value.

### The Position and Task of Bible Exposition

New Testament / Old Testament Studies >	Bible Exposition >	Systematic/Historical Theology >	Practical Theology
Texts>	Text>	Exegesis >	Exposition >
Canonization	T.C.	Consideration	Comprehension>
Aware	(External)	Historical Grammar	Explanation
Assumed	Aware	Lexicography	Sentence to part
Utilized	Utilized	Genre	Part to section
WHICH TEXT?	WHAT IS THE TEXT?	Textual Context	Section to book
		Cultural Context	T.C. Internal
		Aware	Practiced
		Utilized	WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN?
		WHAT COULD THE TEXT HAVE MEANT?	
			Biblical Theology >
			Comprehension>
			Explanation
			Book to other books
			Book to whole
			Practiced
			HOW DID/DOES THE TEXT RELATE TO THE CANON?
			Systematic/ Theology>
			Systematization
			Categorization
			Systematization
			Pre-Requisite to WHAT CAN WE SAY ABOUT GOD, HIS PLAN, AND HIS CREATION FROM THE TEXT?
			Historical Theology>
			Systematization
			Categorization
			Relation
			Past Understanding
			Past Systematization
			Past Application
			Pre-Requisite to WHAT HAVE PEOPLE SAID ABOUT GOD, HIS PLAN, AND HIS CREATION FROM THE TEXT?
			Practical Theology
			Present Day
			Application
			Pre-Requisite to HOW DOES THE TEXT RELATE TO LIFE TODAY?

*Texts* – The discipline of Bible Exposition is aware of the historical discussion of canonicity of both the Old Testament and New Testament books and assumes its conclusions concerning which texts are to be considered in the task of Bible Exposition.

*Text* – While the individual “texts” of the Scriptures have been decided at the level of canonicity, the determination of the original “text” of those texts is not a settled issue. An expositor cannot adequately determine and explain an author’s message and argument of a literary composition without the actual words of the author. Thus, this step takes into account the question of textual criticism. While the discovery and evaluation of external evidence (i.e., the discovery and evaluation of various textual witnesses) is not included within the discipline of Bible Exposition, the results of such research are of particular interest to the discipline of Bible Exposition in that they impact the discussion concerning the internal evidence of variant readings and their potential impact on the developing argument of an author’s text. Thus, keen awareness of important external evidentiary factors and their potential impact on internal evidentiary possibilities is of utmost importance to the discipline of Bible Exposition.<sup>23</sup>

*Exegesis* – Through exegesis in the original language, the possibilities of meaning can be raised at the word, phrase, and sentence level. Thus, the issues of grammatical construction, lexical meaning, discourse analysis, and the like, which constitute the building blocks of meaning, must be considered and evaluated in any valid exposition of a biblical text.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> It should also be pointed out that minor textual variants with a low probability of being the original reading do not occupy a high level of import to the academic discipline of Bible Exposition.

<sup>24</sup> While some may find this distinction between what constitutes exegesis and exposition too sharp (a criticism with which I may agree since we are certainly dealing with a continuum of recognition in the message development of the author), some distinction must be made since all too often exegetical possibilities are then mitigated by either

Failure to account for the details of a text is a failure to validate one's exposition of the author's message and argument. However, failure to understand the author's message and argument and how the details of the text contribute to the author's overall purpose is a fundamental failure to understand why an author wrote and thus renders any exegetical conclusions susceptible to being arbitrary and indiscriminate decisions based upon personal preference.

*Bible Exposition* – As stated above, the focus of the academic discipline of “Bible Exposition” is on the Bible. It is on each individual literary composition that makes up the Bible as well as the progressive revelatory relationship between the individual literary compositions that make up the whole of the message of the Bible.

*Biblical Theology*<sup>25</sup> – While the discipline of Bible Exposition begins in the exegetical details at the word, phrase, and sentence level and seeks to understand and explain the message and argument of each book of the Bible from each literary composition's developing argument, one quickly realizes that the books of the Bible are related to each other. However, the exact nature of the relation between books is not always the same. The task of explaining the relation of the books of the Bible to each other as well as each book's relation to the developing message of the Bible as a whole is the discipline of Biblical Theology.<sup>26</sup>

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theological conclusions or preference to certain higher critical approaches. The common occurrence in both exegetical seminary courses and exegetical commentaries alike is that after the exegetical options are identified, the preferred interpretation is guided by the personal preferences of the interpreter (i.e., membership to a certain theological camp or preference for a certain higher critical approach) rather than the actual developing message and argument of the author.

<sup>25</sup> As there is grey area in the continuum between exegesis and exposition, so also is there a grey area in the continuum between “Bible Exposition” and “Biblical Theology.” Moreover, I am not a particular fan of the term “Biblical Theology” since it has been used in differing and competing ways. What I have in mind here is the relationship and revelatory development in meaning between the books that carry the narrative plot structure of the Bible, the books that contribute to that narrative plot structure, and the books that contemplate upon the narrative plot structure.

<sup>26</sup> Some books build upon another, others are dependent upon another, while still others share a more distant relation. The revelatory backbone of the Bible is carried by a plot structure revealed the narrative books that constitute the Torah and Former Prophets. The setting, conflict and the beginning of the rising action of the narrative are introduced in the Book of Genesis. That rising action continues in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings up until the exile. In other words, these books build upon one another in the developing plot structure of the Bible. The rest of the books in Hebrew Bible either contribute to and / or reflect upon this narrative as the storyline continues through the exile and return. Thus, the Latter Prophets assume the developing storyline presented in Torah and the Former Prophets and offer either explanation or further revelation pertinent to the development of the plot contained in that narrative. Moreover, the books contained in the “Writings” section of Hebrew Bible either contribute to or contemplate the narrative contained in Genesis through 2 Kings. The storyline continues in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These are four narratives that are positioned in the same place in the biblical story. Each tell of the Promised Messiah's appearance, ministry, rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection. Yet each narrative was written for a different purpose and therefore contain a different message. The two-part work of Luke / Acts additionally explains the gospel going out to the Gentiles through the ministry of the Apostle Paul. During the time in between Christ ascension and anticipated return and the consummation of the story (prophesied in the Book of Revelation), letters were written in order to address specific situations that had arisen in the church which required an apostle's attention.

*Systematic Theology* – Only after the arduous process of expositing each book of the Bible and their relation to one another in order to comprehend the totality of the revelation contained therein can one justifiably speak about God and His relation to His creation.<sup>27</sup>

*Historical Theology* – Throughout the history of God’s redemptive history, the redeemed people of God have not always believed the same things. It is true that beliefs in the church have changed throughout time. It is also true that at any one given time in Church history, not all in the redeemed community have agreed. Thus, historical theology is an integral part of understanding not only what we believe today in our particular community of faith, but why we believe it.

*Practical Theology* – The truth of the matter is that each of us finds present-day application in our particular brand of theology. Pentecostals have one particular set of beliefs that drive the particulars of their application while those in the Five Point Calvinist camp have another. This is true throughout Christendom. So, while one may appeal to a particular Bible verse as “proof” of one’s beliefs and application, the truth is that such an appeal is made because that particular person believes (or has been taught) that that verse makes his or her case. In order to claim valid, or justifiable, present-day application(s), one’s application must be obtained from a justifiable, or valid theology.<sup>28</sup> As argued above, a valid theology must be based upon the academic discipline of Bible Exposition.

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<sup>27</sup> A couple of points ought to be made here. People can and do make all kinds of statements about God and His relation to His creation. They will even quote Bible verses. The question, however, is whether or not those statements are true. Some will appeal to their particular camp of theological persuasion, others may even appeal to “orthodoxy” or some doctrinal statement. Yet, the fact remains that those appeals are hollow if they do not in fact represent the truth(s) revealed in Scripture. Thus, the contextual validity of such claims must necessarily be demonstrated from the text(s) of Scripture. The academic discipline of Bible Exposition is the necessary process between exegetical method and theological claims.

<sup>28</sup> Validity in interpretation is not the same as veracity in interpretation. However, inability to validate one’s interpretation substantially lowers the probability of veracity in interpretation. Conversely, validity (or correspondence) in interpretation, particularly when the process of validation has been done book by book over the whole of the canon of Scripture, dramatically increases the probability of veracity in interpretation.

## Examples of Genre, Literary Structures, Literary Devices, and Rhetorical Devices<sup>29</sup>

### Narrative

#### Narrative Structure

Setting  
 Conflict  
 Rising Action  
 Climax  
 Falling Action or Resolution  
 Dénouement

#### Narrative Literary Devices and Strategies

##### Plot Development

- Scenes
- Backstory
- Chekhov's gun
- Cliffhanger
- Dramatic Irony
- Flashback
- Foreshadowing
- Frame Story
- Framing Device
- Juxtaposition
- Narrative Hook
- Perspective
  - Audience Surrogate
  - First-person narration
  - Third-person narration
    - Omniscient narrator
    - Limited narrator
- Plot Twist
  - Eucatastrophe
  - Poetic Justice
- Style
  - Allegory
  - Imagery
  - Typology
  - Personification
  - Anthropomorphism
  - Symbolism

##### -Characterization

- Flat Characters

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<sup>29</sup> Several things must be mentioned at this point. First, we need a working list of dependable and widely accepted definitions regarding literary genre, genre specific literary devices, genre specific grammatical constructions (in both Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic), rhetorical strategies, and lexical meanings. Second, we need agreed upon language and definitions regarding how we talk about the academic discipline of Bible Exposition. Both of the aforementioned issues need to be introduced in BE5101 and utilized throughout each students training. The highest level of this training would be in the Bible Exposition PhD program.

-Round Characters

Grammatical Constructions in Narrative Literature

Hebrew  
Aramaic  
Greek

Epistles

Epistolary Structure  
Epistolary Literary Devices and Structures  
Logical Strategies  
Rhetorical Strategies  
Grammatical Constructions in Epistolary Literature

Wisdom Literature

Wisdom Structure  
Wisdom Literary Devices and Structures  
Logical Strategies  
Rhetorical Strategies  
Grammatical Constructions in Wisdom Literature

Poetic Literature

Poetry Structures  
Poetry Literary Devices and Structures  
Logical Strategies  
Synonymous Parallelism  
Antithetical Parallelism  
Climatic Parallelism  
Rhetorical Strategies  
Grammatical Constructions in Poetic Literature

Prophetic Literature

Prophecy Structures  
Prophetic Literary Devices and Structures  
Logical Strategies  
Symbolism  
Typology  
Rhetorical Strategies  
Logos  
Ethos  
Pathos  
Grammatical Constructions in Prophetic Literature