

ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT EXEGETICAL PAPER

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“What is an exegetical paper?” is a question often asked by seminary students. Within this question, others are implied. What is the aim of an exegetical paper? How is an exegetical paper researched and written? Which sources and aids must be consulted? And perhaps most often implied, what do seminary professors expect from an exegetical paper? In any version, the question is fair and deserves a detailed answer, which is often not possible on the spot. This article seeks to give a more thorough answer.¹

Two limitations of scope are necessary to keep this guide manageable. First, this paper is not a step-by-step guide to exegetical method. The best resource for such is undoubtedly Gordon Fee’s, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, now in a third edition.² Needless to say, this article is a poor substitute for careful study of Fee’s guide. Rather, it is intended to be a quick refresher for those who have already taken a full introductory course on exegetical method. Second, this article seeks to be a practical guide to “essential tools” for writing NT exegetical papers. In other words, this mode asks: What are the essential elements of a good NT exegetical paper and which tools ought to be consulted for each element involved? With this aim in mind, many tools and resources are reviewed with some instruction on how to use them. The present article is divided into the following sections: preliminary considerations, general tools, exegetical tools, and tips for writing. Incorporated within the relevant sections is a bibliography with some annotations.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The following “preliminary considerations” are necessary, but the

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¹This article is specifically about the New Testament (NT) exegetical paper, rather than exegetical papers in general. While the theories and definitions might also apply to the Old Testament (OT) exegetical paper, the resources are specific to NT studies.

²Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

recommended resources do not directly aid the student in writing and researching an exegetical paper. Thus, these considerations should be addressed before writing and the resources in this section should not generally appear as supporting sources in an exegetical paper.

The Aim of the Exegetical Paper

The aim of the exegetical paper is to present the most plausible, well-supported translation, explanation and interpretation of a given passage, argued by means of rigorous research, critical judgment and accepted methods of biblical exegesis. This aim arises from the implied purpose of exegesis as an art or craft.³ Exegesis is often defined concisely as the task of “drawing out the meaning of” a biblical text.⁴ Drawing out the meaning is to determine *what* the original author said and *why* he said it, i.e. the “authorial intent.”⁵ Exegetical papers must seek to discover and to explain what the text meant for the original author and his readers. At the conclusion of an exegetical study, the student must offer the best understanding of what the biblical author intended to communicate to the first readers.

Exegetical Method

Learning the craft of exegesis is a hands-on task. Therefore, students need to practice exegesis with some regularity if they desire proficiency. Fortunately, there are resources to aid students on

³For most seminarians and pastors, the practical purpose of exegesis is by and large the sermon. Consider the “Short Guide for Sermon Exegesis” in Fee, *Exegesis Handbook*, 133-154, where he takes the student through the process of exegesis but with an eye for the sermon. Good exegesis does not guarantee a good sermon—a good sermon is more than just good exegesis—but neither can a good sermon be born without good exegesis.

⁴“Drawing out” is a fairly literal description from the root Greek word, *ejxpozomai*. Cf. M. S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of the New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 54; A. G. Patzia and A. J. Petrotta, *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 45. Exegesis stands in contrast to *eisegesis*, which suggests the opposite in that meaning is imposed on the text.

⁵Fee, *Exegesis Handbook*, 1. Limited space and scope do not allow for a discussion on the history of biblical interpretation or contemporary theoretical challenges to the enterprise of exegesis. It is in vogue to consider less important the original author or his intent. Rather the text has meaning on its own, apart from the author, or only what is read into it. Students who wish to investigate these issues of hermeneutics should consult W. W. Klein, et al., *Introduction To Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993); G. R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991); A. C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).

exegetical method. As mentioned earlier, pride of place goes to Fee's handbook. A more practical guide is Guthrie & Duvall, which offers exercises for diagramming especially. Gorman takes an "essential-elements" approach while Kaiser serves exegetical method for both testaments.

- Fee, G. D. *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. 3d ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002. [The standard on exegetical method, Fee guides the student step-by-step through exegetical procedure.]
- Gorman, M. J. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001. [Not a step-by-step approach to exegetical method, but an essential-elements guide which includes survey, contextual and formal analysis, reflection and so forth.]
- Guthrie, G. H., and J. S. Duvall. *Biblical Greek Exegesis: A Graded Approach to Learning Intermediate and Advanced Greek*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998. [A practical guide to step-by-step exegesis, yet doubles as a workbook, especially for diagramming.]
- Kaiser Jr., W. C. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*. Paperback ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. [By an OT scholar, but has NT examples and principles which apply to both testaments. A "special issues" section treats expository preaching.]

Several specialized guides to exegesis will richly repay careful study. Harris's *Exegetical Guide* series, only available for Colossians and Philemon at present, promises to be an invaluable resource for guiding students grammatically and exegetically through the entire Greek NT. Similarly, Silva's study of Galatians offers a good model for exegetical method. In a class by itself, Carson takes the student through common fallacies in exegesis and how to avoid them.

- Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996. [Probably the only guide of its kind, Carson describes common exegetical fallacies.]
- Harris, M. J. *Colossians & Philemon*. Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991. [A helpful "guide" to the exegesis of Colossians & Philemon, and a hands-on aid for learning exegetical method. Other vols. should appear in the (near?) future.]
- Silva, M. *Interpreting Galatians: Explorations on Exegetical Method*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001. [A hands-on approach using Gal.]

Other resources for mastering exegetical method or understanding the principles involved are available. Students who want to study in depth the theoretical foundations of biblical exegesis would do well to refer to some of the following resources.

- Black, D. A., and D. S. Dockery, eds. *Interpreting the New Testament*. Rev. ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001. [A set of introductory essays on exegetical method by evangelical scholars.]
- Conzelmann, H., and A. Lindemann. *Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles and Methods of N.T. Exegesis*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988. [A thorough guide by mainstream German scholars that touches on every aspect of exegesis and even offers brief introductions to each NT book.]
- Fee, G. D. *To What End Exegesis?: Essays Textual, Exegetical, and Theological*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. [A good collection of essays by Fee in which he applies exegesis in three distinct ways: textual, exegetical and theological interpretation.]
- Porter, S. E. *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*. New Testament Tools and Studies. Leiden: Brill, 1997. [A collection of learned essays on exegesis and its various facets. Highly recommended are the first two essays: "What Is Exegesis? An Analysis of Various Definitions," 3-22 and "The Basic Tools of Exegesis of the New Testament: A Bibliographical Essay," 23-44.]

Format and Styles

When writing exegetical papers, students must follow standards of format and style. In fact, most universities, seminaries and graduate schools have their own standards, but in North America, many of the arts and theological disciplines, including biblical studies, have for many years followed the *Chicago Manual of Style*, now on its 15th edition, and the version tailored for writing term papers and dissertations by Kate Turabian. Normally, students should consult only Turabian unless there is a style question for which it does not give an answer. Specifically for biblical studies, there is now a new standard developed by the Society of Biblical Literature in North America. The *SBL Handbook of Style* is based on the *Chicago Manual* and is designed specifically for writers and editors in biblical studies. Students writing exegetical papers will want to consult this guide for standard abbreviations to academic journals, references, commentary and monograph series, and ancient sources in relation to biblical studies.⁶ One may also wish to follow the bibliographic and citation (footnote) formats of the *SBL Handbook* rather than Turabian since the former gives specific examples of citations for biblical research. At the end of the day, the differences between the two formats are minimal. A final

⁶Exegetes should be able to identify at least the following common abbreviations: for lexical aids, BDAG; BAGD; TDNT; EDNT; NIDNNT; TLNT; for grammar, BDF; for dictionaries, ABD; ISBE; DPL; DJG; DLNT; for commentary series, AB; WBC; ICC; NIGTC; NICNT. Note that abbreviations of titles are italicized while those of series titles and authors/editors are not.

word must be said for consistency. Whether one prescribes to Turabian, *SBL* or others, one needs to be absolutely consistent with their citation and bibliographic formats. The student must follow one standard throughout and follow it meticulously.

Alexander, P. H., et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999. [Fast becoming the new standard for biblical studies research and publication in North America.]

Turabian, K. L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th ed. Chicago: UCP, 1996. [A style manual based on *CMS* for writing papers.]

University of Chicago Press Staff, *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 15th ed. Chicago: UCP, 2003. [A recent update to the standard style manual.]

Choosing the Passage

In an exegetical paper, the passage must be chosen carefully and the length should be manageable. It is impossible to do an exegetical paper of average length for a seminary course (between 15 to 25 double-spaced pages) on a passage more than ten verses. Only rarely and with good reason should a paper cover more than ten verses. Generally, an in-depth exegetical paper should be attempted on about five verses or less, or approximately one paragraph. In addition, the limits on either end of the passage should be carefully set. It is not always advisable to pick the first five verses of a chapter, neither is it always helpful to follow the paragraph divisions in the major translations.⁷ The best way to set the limits of a passage is to read the wider context several times over and while checking the Greek NT⁸ and as many English versions as possible.⁹

GENERAL TOOLS

The tools and aids found in this section should be consulted while researching and writing the exegetical paper. However, they are in general all-purpose tools, which may or may not appear as supporting

⁷The NIV, for example, gives section headings based on content which are not always helpful in exegesis.

⁸See how the editors of the Greek text (either NA²⁷ or UBS⁴) break up the paragraphs.

⁹Generally, students tend to bite off more than they can chew. This initial error often leads to either shallow exegesis or very long papers! Thus, there is wisdom in starting with a manageable text, but there is added wisdom in revising the length if it is found to be unmanageable.

sources in the final product. The student will find less and less need for these tools as they become more familiar with exegesis and the NT as a whole.

Exegetical Terminology

Exegetical terms can be so esoteric as to leave one lost in the argot. It is, however, important to be familiar with exegetical terms, even if it is merely to use the best commentaries. Thankfully, there are accessible aids. Many students will herald the small size and concise definitions of IVP's *Pocket Dictionary* series. With a broader aim yet still helpful is Soulen & Soulen. However, students who wish to master exegesis will want practically to memorize the relatively brief "Exegetical and Rhetorical Terms" appendix to Harris's *Exegetical Guide*.

DeMoss, M. S. *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of the New Testament Greek*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2001.

Patzia, A. G., and A. J. Petrotta. *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2002.

Harris, M. J. "Appendix: Exegetical and Rhetorical Terms." In *Colossians & Philemon*, EGGNT, 289-310. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

Soulen, R. N., and R. K. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. 3d ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

English Versions (Parallel and Interlinear Texts)

The student writing the exegetical paper will want to consult and use regularly the best English translations. This is because translations are more or less products of exegesis, and comparing one's results with those of the translation committees of major translations is invaluable for verifying one's results. In the first instance, students should be aware of the standard abbreviations for English versions such as KJV, RSV, NRSV, NASB, NIV, NLT, etc.¹⁰ For an introduction to English versions, students will find Kubo/Specht, Metzger, Comfort and Sheeley/Nash fascinating and essential reads that explain the origins and translation philosophies of the many English translations available today. Also an *Oxford Illustrated Histories* volume contains a section

¹⁰For a list of standard abbreviations of modern English versions, see Alexander, *SBL Handbook*, 72-73. A more comprehensive list can be found on the Internet: "English Versions," n.p. [accessed 9 August 2004]. Online: http://www.geocities.com/bible_translation/english.htm.

on “modern translations” which is a helpful presentation.

- Comfort, P. W. *Essential Guide to Bible Versions*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 2000.
- Kubo, S., and W. F. Specht. *So Many Versions? Twentieth-Century English Versions of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.
- Metzger, B. M. *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.
- Rogerson, J., ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Bible*. Oxford: OUP, 2001.
- Sheeley, S. M. and R. N. Nash. *Choosing a Bible: A Guide to Modern English Translations and Editions*. New York: Abingdon, 1999.

Various translation philosophies have produced versions of the NT that differ sometimes subtly and at other times radically. Generally, there are some versions that tend toward more literal renderings (e.g., ASV; NASB), others that tend toward freer or paraphrased renderings (e.g., LB; NLT), and still others that fall somewhere in between (e.g., NIV; RSV; ESV). In addition, there are those that represent Catholic traditions (e.g., NAB; NJB) and those that intentionally use gender-neutral language (e.g., TNIV, NRSV).

Parallel versions are useful because they place verses from several versions side by side so that the student need not have ten Bibles open on his or her desk! Oxford University Press publishes many good parallel bibles. Probably one of the best is *The Precise Parallel New Testament* because it includes the Greek text (UBS⁴) and seven of the most widely used versions. There are other parallel bibles to suit the specific needs of nearly everyone. Finally, Vaughan surveys twenty-six translations and lists the results phrase-by-phrase, verse-by-verse. Although somewhat dated, it is still useful.

- The Precise Parallel New Testament*. Oxford: OUP, 1995. [Includes UBS⁴, KJV, Rheims, AmpBible, NIV, NRSV, NAB and NASB; all 8 bibles can be read at once across two open pages.]
- The Contemporary Parallel New Testament*. Oxford: OUP, 1998. [Includes KJV, NASB, NIV, NLT, NCV, CEV, NKJV, and Message.]
- The Evangelical Parallel New Testament*. Oxford: OUP, 2003. [Includes NKJV, ESV, NLT and Message.]
- The Complete Parallel Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. Oxford: OUP, 1993. [Includes NRSV, REB, NAB, and NJB.]
- Today's Parallel Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. [Includes NIV, KJV, NASB and NLT]
- Vaughan, C., ed. *The New Testament from 26 Translations*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967. [Or for the entire Bible, *The Word: The Bible from 26 Translations* (Moss

Point, Miss.: Mathis, 1991).]

Interlinear texts place lines of a literal English translation under lines of the Greek text. In addition, some interlinears may add both a literal word-for-word English definition and parsing information under each Greek word. Probably the best interlinear texts are by Marshall, Green and Douglas. Greek-English interlinear texts can be very helpful, especially for those who remember little Greek!¹¹

Green Sr., J. P. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament: With Strong's Concordance Numbers*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997.

Douglas, J. D. *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1990.

Brown, R. K. and P. W. Comfort. *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1993.

NT Introductions and Dictionaries

Any exegetical study must consider the broader context, including questions of authorship and intended audience, dating and provenance, and overall purpose and theme of any given NT book.¹² For this, students should consult the best NT introductions. Carson, Moo and Morris, and Guthrie more or less write from the evangelical perspective. A good beginner's survey to the NT is the two-volume set called, *Exploring the New Testament*. In addition, the student should also be familiar with scholarly introductions from the mainstream. Highly recommended are the introductions by Kümmel, Ehrman and Brown.

Brown, R. E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1997. [By a well-known Catholic NT scholar, offers a comprehensive introduction of the NT divided into the major corpuses: Gospels, Paul and others.]

Carson, D. A., D. J. Moo, and L. Morris. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992. [Probably the standard evangelical introduction to the NT from three evangelical scholars. While interacting with critical scholarship,

¹¹However, many instructors discourage students from using interlinear versions prematurely because they tend not to learn Greek grammar with the false hope that interlinears will provide them with everything they need to know. Furthermore, interlinears can also give the false impression that as long as one can translate a Greek text word for word (with the help of interlinears!), she or he will understand the meaning of the passage. On the contrary, only through competent exegesis can the interpreter adequately understand the meaning of the original.

¹²The student must read the given NT book straight through and several times if possible. There is simply no substitute for reading in the primary text of the NT.

- conservative conclusions are generally upheld.]
- Ehrman, B. D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 3d ed. Oxford: OUP, 2003. [Ehrman's introduction has a historical development approach, and the NT canon is addressed in the relevant sections accordingly. Although interesting and highly recommended by some critical scholars, evangelical students should use this vol. with caution.]
- Guthrie, D. *New Testament Introduction*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1990. [A standard conservative introduction now surpassed in popularity by Carson, Moo and Morris, this vol. is more comprehensive. Guthrie follows the canonical order with excursions on the Synoptic Problem, Form Criticism and the Captivity Epistles.]
- Kümmel, W. G. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1975. [For a long time, the standard NT introduction preferred by mainstream NT scholarship. Conservatives would also do well to read Kümmel carefully.]
- Wenham, D., and S. Walton. *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Gospels & Acts*. Vol. 1. Downers Grove: IVP, 2001; Marshall, I. H., S. Travis and I. Paul. *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Letters & Revelation*. Vol. 2. Downers Grove: IVP, 2002. [A solid introductory survey of the NT for beginners.]

In addition, during the past several decades, the number and quality of reference works for biblical studies have grown. InterVarsity Press publishes a dictionary series called the *Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*¹³ that is indispensable for writing exegetical papers. These dictionaries are a good place to start for information on almost anything connected to the NT, including information about biblical authors, themes, settings and scholarly trends.

- Green, J. B., et al., eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992. [DJG]
- Hawthorne, G. F., et al., eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1993. [DPL]
- Martin, R. P., and P. H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1997. [DLNT]
- Evans, C. A., and S. E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000. [DNTB]

In addition, Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias are helpful and informative. While there are good one-volume dictionaries, such as Douglas and Wood, students writing exegetical papers should consult the best multivolume Bible dictionaries, which offer in-depth, scholarly articles. Pride of place goes to the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, which is

¹³Also available is a one-volume edition: D. G. Reid, *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament: A One-Volume Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004). OT vols. also available and forthcoming.

highly rated for its thorough and up-to-date articles normally from mainstream scholars. Other recommended Bible references are the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* and the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Both offer a wide variety of topics arranged in alphabetical order.¹⁴

- Bromiley, G. W., ed. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994. [ISBE: A standard among conservatives.]
- Douglas, J. D., and M. C. Tenney. *New International Bible Dictionary*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999. [one-vol. dictionary]
- Freedman, D. N., ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992. [ABD: Probably the best scholarly dictionary/encyclopedia of the Bible.]
- Tenney, M. *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975. [ZPEB: Older yet still valuable.]
- Wood, D. R. W., et al. *New Bible Dictionary*. 3d ed. Downers Grove: IVP, 1996. [one-vol. dictionary]

Concordances

With the advent of the computer age, paper concordances¹⁵ are increasingly outdated and outdone! For those who still prefer paper over computer screens for whatever reason, there are several Greek concordances worth owning. Marshall recently revised a classic Greek concordance by Moulton and Geden, and is probably the best (and unfortunately most expensive!) at present.

- Clapp, P. S., et al., eds. *Analytical Concordance of the Greek New Testament: Grammatical Focus*, vol. 2 and *Lexical Focus*, vol. 3. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990-1991. [2 parts of a 4-vol. set, these concordance vols. focus on grammatical divisions: adjectives, conjunctions, determiners, nouns, prepositions, particles and verbs, and on lexical forms based on BGAD.]
- Kohlenberger, J. R., et al., eds. *The Exhaustive Concordance to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995. [A good and thorough concordance based on the UBS³/NA²⁶ text. A helpful index of articles, conjunctions, particles, prepositions and pronouns is found at the back.]
- Marshall, I. H., ed. *Moulton and Geden Concordance to the Greek New Testament*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002. [This revised version of a classic Greek concordance is set in a nicer Greek font than past versions and based on UBS⁴.]

However, computer programs with sophisticated search features outdo paper concordances. Some of the most recognized programs are

¹⁴Be sure to cite dictionary and encyclopedia articles individually (article title and individual author) when using them for exegetical papers.

¹⁵A Greek concordance is an index of Greek words and their occurrences in the NT.

Bibleworks, *Logos*, and *Gramcord* for Windows PCs and *Accordance* for the Macintosh. In addition to simple word searches, these programs are able to search for particular grammatical and syntactical constructions.¹⁶ For example, one could look up all the occurrences of θεός that occur in the genitive case, in a particular construction, or in only the Johannine corpus, and so on. One can quickly see the advantage of these powerful computer tools. Finally, students on a minimal budget should consider free or very inexpensive Bible programs available on the Internet: e-Sword (PC) and Online Bible (PC/Mac). However, these either do not offer the most up-to-date translations or scholarly Greek texts, or offer them for purchase even though the program itself may be free.

Bibleworks 6: A Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research. [BibleWorks, LLC, P.O. Box 6158, Norfolk, VA 23508, USA; www.bibleworks.com; (757) 627-7100; retail \$300; program is generally rated the best on the Windows OS side.]

Logos Bible Software. [Logos Bible Software, 1313 Commercial St., Bellingham WA 98225-4307, USA; www.logos.com; (360) 527-1700; scholar's silver edition retail \$1000; noted for the Libronix Digital Library system (www.libronix.com) which contains a vast digital library in addition to bibles.]

Gramcord for Windows. [The GRAMCORD Institute, 2218 NE Brookview Dr., Vancouver, WA 98686, USA; www.gramcord.org; (360) 576-3000; ultimate bundle \$235; produced by the Gramcord Institute, a non-profit organization, often the best deal because of the many essential modules that come with the package.]

Accordance 6.0 for Macintosh. [Oaktree Software, Inc., 498 Palm Springs Drive, Suite 100, Altamonte Springs, FL 32701, USA; www.accordancebible.com; (877) 339-5855; scholar's core bundle retail \$200; highly rated program with a sophisticated search engine; also distributed by the Gramcord Institute.]

e-Sword. [www.e-sword.net; a free bible program for PC and the PocketPC platform.]

Online Bible. [www.online-bible.com; for PC and Mac platforms; generally free but a CD-ROM with many bibles is relatively inexpensive.]

Commentaries and Bibliographies

In an exegetical paper, it is essential for students who have first studied their verses thoroughly to consult and interact with the best

¹⁶When using computer programs to generate data, which one might use in an exegetical paper, make sure that the data is accurate. Computers rarely make mistakes, but their human operators err regularly. Double-check the generated data by verifying search parameters and repeating the search a few times. Further, one should not cite data mindlessly as if this somehow makes the exegetical arguments more convincing. In other words, the information generated by computer programs must be processed and interpreted, before it is found to be relevant and significant to the exegetical task.

commentaries. However, commentaries vary in approach, size and quality, and so students should consult some helpful guides. Carefully sifting through the resources, Carson surveys and comments on the strengths and weaknesses of many commentaries individually. Glynn's bibliographic survey goes beyond commentaries while Fee¹⁷ simply lists recommendations for each NT book.

In addition, students writing exegetical papers should consult works that more or less comment directly on the Greek text. Commentary series that have a reputation of this sort of approach are *Word Biblical Commentary* (WBC),¹⁸ *International Critical Commentary* (ICC),¹⁹ *Hermenia* (Herm),²⁰ and *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (NIGTC).²¹ Two series in particular are not based on the Greek text and yet offer good insights on the Greek (especially in the footnotes) are *Anchor Bible* (AB) and *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (NICNT). There are of course single volumes and some from lesser-known series that nevertheless ably work through the Greek text. Below is a table of recommendations for the best Greek-text commentaries in addition to recommendations by Carson and Fee.

NT	Carson ²²	Fee ²³	Greek Text ²⁴
Mt	Davies & Allison C. Keener	Davies & Allison D. Hagner	Davies & Allison ICC D. Hagner WBC
Mk	W. Lane M. Hooker	R. Guelich C.E.B. Cranfield	R.T. France NIGTC Guelich/Evans WBC
Lk	D. Bock J.A. Fitzmyer	J.B. Green I.H. Marshall	I.H. Marshall NIGTC D. Bock ('94-96)
Jn	C.K. Barrett H. Ridderbos	G.R. Beasley-Murray R.A. Brown	G.R. Beasley-Murray WBC R. Schnackerburg ('90)
Acts	C.K. Barrett	I.H. Marshall	C.K. Barrett ICC

¹⁷Fee, *Exegesis Handbook*, 174-177.

¹⁸Published by Word Books.

¹⁹Published by T & T Clark.

²⁰Published by Augsburg Fortress.

²¹Published by Eerdmans. There are other series which comment directly on the Greek text such as *Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary* (Cambridge University Press) and *Eerdmans Critical Commentary* (Eerdmans), but these are either disappointingly thin or sparsely published.

²²Carson, *Survey*, 133-134. Limited to the first two recommendations.

²³Fee, *Exegesis Handbook*, 173-177. Limited to the first two recommendations.

²⁴These are my recommendations for comment on the Greek text, limited to the two best in my opinion for each book of the NT. In some cases, one must refer to the footnotes for comment on the Greek.

	B. Witherington III	L.T. Johnson	F.F. Bruce ('90)
Ro	D.J. Moo T. Schreiner	D.J. Moo J.D.G. Dunn	C.E.B. Cranfield ICC J.D.G. Dunn WBC
1Co	A. Thiselton G.D. Fee	G.D. Fee A. Thiselton	A. Thiselton NIGTC G.D. Fee ('87)
2Co	C.K. Barrett D.E. Garland	V.P. Furnish R.P. Martin	M.J. Harris NIGTC M. Thrall ICC
Gal	F.F. Bruce R.N. Longenecker	J.D.G. Dunn H.D. Betz	F.F. Bruce NIGTC R.A. Longenecker WBC
Eph	P.T. O'Brien A.T. Lincoln	A.T. Lincoln P.T. O'Brien	A.T. Lincoln WBC H.W. Hoehner ('02)
Phil	P.T. O'Brien G.D. Fee	G.D. Fee P.T. O'Brien	P.T. O'Brien NIGTC M. Silva ('88)
Col- Phm	P.T. O'Brien J.D.G. Dunn	P.T. O'Brien J.D.G. Dunn	M.J. Harris ('91) P.T. O'Brien WBC
1Th 2Th	C.A. Wanamaker F.F. Bruce	C.A. Wanamaker E. Best	C.A. Wanamaker NIGTC F.F. Bruce WBC
Pas	G.W. Knight III I.H. Marshall	I.H. Marshall G.W. Knight III	I.H. Marshall ICC W.B. Mounce WBC
Heb	P. Ellingworth W.L. Lane	W.L. Lane H. Attridge	P. Ellingworth NIGTC W.Lane WBC
Jas	P.H. Davids D. J. Moo	P.H. Davids D.J. Moo	R.P. Martin WBC L.T. Johnson ('95)
1Pet	P.J. Achtemeier J.R. Michaels	P.H. Davids J.R. Michaels	J.R. Michaels WBC P. Achtemeier ('98)
2Pet Jud	R.J. Bauckham	R.J. Bauckham J.N.D. Kelly	R.J. Bauckham WBC
1-3 Jn	R. Schnackenberg I.H. Marshall	R.A. Brown I.H. Marshall	S.S. Smalley WBC R.A. Brown ('82)
Rev	G.K. Beale R.H. Mounce	G. K. Beale D.E. Aune	G.K. Beale NIGTC D.E. Aune WBC

Bibliographic aids guide students through the resources for exegetical study. Baker Book House publishes the *IBR Bibliographies* series,²⁵ a collection of annotated bibliographies for the study of Scripture. Most helpful for the novice exegete is volume twelve, *NT Introduction*, which lists resources for exegetical method and language, historical backgrounds and commentaries. There are other excellent bibliographic resources of exegesis. Bibliographies for exegesis are provided in Fee and Guthrie/Duvall while Glynn was mentioned above.

²⁵Grand Rapids: Baker. Fourteen vols. include: 1. Pentateuch; 2. Historical Books; 3. Poetry and Wisdom; 4. Prophecy and Apocalyptic; 5. Jesus; 6. Synoptic Gospels; 7. Johannine Writings; 8. Luke-Acts; 9. Pauline Writings; 10. Hebrews and General Epistles; 11. OT Introduction; 12. NT Introduction; 13. OT Theology; and 14. NT Theology.

Bauer is up-to-date, covers the whole Bible, and ably annotates a handful of the best (in his view) resources in each category. Douglas puts together the sources recommended by the faculty of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, USA. Hagner and Fitzmyer produce excellent bibliographies as individuals.

- Carson, D. A. *New Testament Commentary Survey*. 5th ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002. [A must read for anyone writing an exegetical paper or sermon, and need solid advice on commentaries. Consult this guide before purchasing any commentary!]
- Bauer, D. R. *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003.
- Douglas, S., ed. *An Annotated Bibliography for the Bible and the Church*. 3d ed. Deerfield: TEDS Alumni Publications, 2002.
- Fitzmyer, J. *An Introductory Bibliography for the Study of Scripture*. 3d ed. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1990.
- Glynn, J. *Commentary & Reference Survey: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources*. 9th ed. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003. [An up-to-date bibliographic survey by a seminary graduate. Gives suggestions on building a personal reference library.]
- Hagner, D. *New Testament Exegesis and Research*. 4th ed. Pasadena: Fuller Seminary, 1999.
- Porter, S., and L. McDonald. *New Testament Introduction*. IBR. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.

EXEGETICAL TOOLS

Contrary to the “general tools” discussed in the previous section, the exegetical tools listed below are particular to each element of research that must be incorporated in the exegetical paper. These sources should be cited more or less directly for support of one’s exegetical arguments.

Tools for Textual Criticism

Textual criticism is important for the exegetical paper, but not all variants²⁶ are of equal exegetical value, or even exegetically significant. The process of determining which variants are significant for exegesis can be complex and only adequately learned with experience. Greenlee is a good introduction while Metzger is an excellent history of textual

²⁶“Variants” or variation units are different renderings of texts in separate manuscripts (or copies).

criticism as an enterprise.²⁷ Other good introductions and studies of text-critical theory are Ehrman/Holmes and Epp/Fee.

- Ehrman, B. D., and M. W. Holmes, eds. *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. [A vol. in honor of Bruce Metzger's 80th birthday, a thorough introduction to the state of contemporary textual criticism.]
- Epp, E. J., and G. D. Fee. *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993. [The essay by Fee, "Textual Criticism of the New Testament," 3-16, is a must read for novice exegetes.]
- Greenlee, J. H. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*. Rev. ed. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995. [Probably one of the best student introductions to NT textual criticism. Students should learn to distinguish between the four (three) major textual traditions: Alexandrian, (Caesarean), Western, Byzantine]
- Metzger, B. M. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*. 3d, enl. ed. Oxford: OUP, 1992. [A fuller treatment than Greenlee's, it is actually an excellent history of textual criticism, much of which Metzger himself lived out as a textual critic.]

Students should use one of two critical (and virtually identical) Greek NT texts: the Nestle-Aland 27th edition (NA²⁷) and the United Bible Societies 4th revised edition (UBS⁴). These eclectic versions incorporate the best and most thorough collection of manuscripts to identify the most likely original.²⁸ The textual apparatus²⁹ of NA²⁷ is more elaborate than is UBS⁴'s, which is meant for translators more than textual scholars.³⁰ However, the UBS⁴ text comes with a companion volume, which explains how the UBS committee determined the original.

²⁷ For a step-by-step process of evaluating textual variants, begin with Fee, *Exegesis Handbook*, 59-70.

²⁸ There are well over 5,000 manuscripts of varying lengths of the NT from which scholars try to determine the original autographs (or the original form).

²⁹ The textual apparatus is the footnote sections that list the manuscripts and the variants found in them.

³⁰ While NA²⁷ is more thorough and trusted by scholars, I generally recommend divinity students toward UBS⁴, unless they are planning for postgraduate degrees in NT studies. There are several reasons for this recommendation. Firstly, UBS⁴ tends to be more usable for day-to-day exegetical work for sermons and papers. Because UBS⁴ was created with translators in mind, the variants discussed have been filtered down to those that most often might affect meaning. Secondly, the UBS's textual apparatus gives a rating to each variant that corresponds to the level of certainty. These ratings are A, B, C and D, with A being most certain and D being least certain. In addition to this rating system, the editors explain their decision in a companion volume, offering a textual commentary to the UBS⁴ text. Both are highly usable and make the process of working through the Greek textually a reasonable task. Finally, UBS⁴ contains a usable Greek dictionary that more than make up for its inferior textual apparatus.

- Aland, B., et al., eds. *The Greek New Testament*. 4th rev. ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1993. [Meant for translators, the textual apparatus is selective. With the textual commentary by the USB committee, probably more accessible to pastors and students. Also has a useful Greek dictionary in the appendix.]
- Metzger, B. M. *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994. [A companion to UBS⁴, it explains why one reading was chosen among the variants for each variant.]
- Nestle, E., et al., eds. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. 27th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993. [The standard Greek text preferred by NT scholars, has a more comprehensive textual apparatus than UBS.]

For the exegetical paper, students should consult the textual apparatus of the UBS⁴ (or the NA²⁷) text, and at least make an attempt to show awareness of the variants and how the specific variant was established (whether one's own or UBS/NA's). While there are other technical sources that might be conferred with, they are normally reserved for more technical papers on textual criticism.

In addition to the standard Greek texts of the NT, those studying a pericope³¹ in the gospels should consult Aland's synopsis, preferably in the original Greek.

- Aland, K., ed. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English Edition*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1979. [Highly recommended for studies in the Gospels, the Greek is the UBS³ while the English is the RSV.]
- Aland, K., ed. *Synopsis of Four Gospels*. New York: American Bible Society, 1993.

Tools for Lexical Analysis

As students work through a text, they will encounter important Greek terms for which they will need more information. For this, they will need lexical aids. The standard Greek-English lexicon for NT studies is BDAG, now in a third edition. Good exegetical papers should consult this work initially and regularly. In addition, one may consider a translation lexicon such as Nida/Louw or a broader Greek-English lexicon such as Liddell/Scott.

- Arndt, W., W. Bauer, and F. W. Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Chicago: UCP, 2000. [BDAG: The standard lexicon for biblical Greek. If not for its exorbitant price, it

³¹A "pericope" is a short form or story unit in the gospels.

should be a part of every student's library. This new edition, published in 2000, first offers basic meanings of words generally under each entry, in addition to meanings in specific occurrences. Thus, it is useful for a quick survey of the semantic range of any Greek word.]

- Liddell, H. G., et al. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th rev. ed. Oxford: OUP, 1996. Or Liddell, H. G. *Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. 7th ed. Oxford: OUP, 1959. [In both full and shorter version, Liddell/Scott is useful for understanding how NT words were used in classical Greek and in non-Christian literature. However, be careful not to import blindly the information from this source into the NT. Access to this lexicon is available on the Perseus Digital Library site of Tufts University. To go directly to the Greek and Latin tools page, see <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/resolveform> (accessed on July 20, 2004).]
- Louw, J. P., and E. A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2 vols. New York: UBS, 1988. [Uses an approach based on semantic domains, helpful in understanding where words coincide in meaning. The two-volume set should be used together.]

A survey of lexical data from non-literary Greek sources is also important, especially for Koiné Greek. Some of the latest in lexical studies from Greek inscriptions and papyri are made accessible in a series called, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, presently in nine volumes. These are best approached through the scripture and word indices for each volume, and in volume five.

- Horsley, G. H. R. *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of Greek Inscriptions and Papyri* [from 1976-79]. Vols. 1-5. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. [Vol. 5 includes a cumulative index to all 5 vols.]
- Llewelyn, S. R. *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of Greek Inscriptions and Papyri* [from 1980-87]. Vols. 6-9. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997-2002. [The first 6 vols. were reprinted by Eerdmans in 2001 while vols. 7 and following continue to be published by Eerdmans.]

In addition to lexical sources, careful consultation of theological dictionaries is an essential element of NT exegetical papers because they contain in-depth discussions about the meaning and significance of important Greek terms, and often condense a vast amount of information into concise articles. The monumental ten-volume Kittel or *TDNT* is still the standard in most respects. With more concise articles is the four-volume *NIDNTT*, which is divided into theological articles under English words and word groups. The Greek-word index is helpful in volume four. In addition, *EDNT* and *TLNT* are generally shorter, but equally insightful.

- Balz, H., and G. Schneider, eds. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. [EDNT: A shorter set that is arranged alphabetically.]
- Brown, C., and D. Townsley, eds. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986. [NIDNTT: There are some very good articles in these 4 vols. Students will want to refer to the Greek word index in vol. 4 to find the desired article. An abridged single-volume edition is also available: V. Verbrugge, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).]
- Kittel, G., and G. Griedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964. [TDNT: Massive theological dictionary of important Greek terms, including an indispensable index vol. An electronic version is in the works. An abridged version is also available. Probably the first theological dictionary that student should consult next to Brown's NIDNTT. Students should be aware of the debates surrounding theological dictionaries and their diachronic (history of words) approach to word analysis (as opposed to synchronic which looks at how words are used in a single time period). J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: OUP, 1961) criticized Kittel's TDNT in this respect.]
- Spicq, C., J. Ernest, and J. D. Ernest, eds. *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*. 3 vols. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994. [TLNT: A concise 3-vol. dictionary.]

Tools for Grammatical Analysis

A good knowledge of Greek grammar³² and the best grammatical references are essential to the exegetical paper. The grammatical analysis therefore should contain a broad consultation of the best Greek grammars available.³³ The reference grammar³⁴ preferred by most scholars is undoubtedly BDF. Evangelicals are warming up to the intermediate-advanced grammar by Wallace. Also worth consulting are the reference grammars by Moulton and by Robertson, and a shorter Catholic work by Zerwick.

Blass, F., et al. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian*

³²Grammar deals with how words or word groupings are put together and relate to one another. The analysis of the inflections of words is normally called morphology and that of the interrelationships of words is called syntax. See Fee, *Exegesis Handbook*, 71-78, for methods of grammatical analysis.

³³However, there is no substitute for a basic knowledge of Greek grammar such that one is able to identify the parts of speech and begin to understand significant grammatical elements. Thus, it is virtually impossible to do adequate work in this area without first having taken a course on basic Greek grammar. The standard basic grammars are J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (rep. ed.; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1998); W. D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); and J. W. Wenham, et al., *The Elements of New Testament Greek with Audio CD Pack* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

³⁴Reference grammars cover all (or most) aspects of grammar, and are usually much longer.

- Literature*. Chicago: UCP, 1976. [BDF: A highly respected and recommended grammar for intermediate to advanced students.]
- Moulton, J. H., et al. *Grammar of New Testament Greek*. 4 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980. [Highly rated for the comparison of Greek writing styles for each NT author.]
- Robertson, A. T. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. New York: Broadman & Holman, 1934. [A big and exhaustive grammar for intermediate and advanced students. A must for serious work in Greek grammar and advanced exegetical papers.]
- Wallace, D. B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997. [A thorough and well-structured grammar for intermediate and advanced students by a Dallas Seminary professor.]
- Zerwick, M. *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples*. Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici 114. Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1963. [A shorter grammar with examples from a Catholic scholar. Companion to Zerwick/Grosvenor grammatical analysis.]

In addition to reference grammars, there are specialty grammars, which concentrate on verbs, idioms or other aspects of Greek grammar. Especially for verbs, one should consult Burton, Fanning and Porter. For Greek idioms, one should check with Porter and Moule while for prepositions, Harris's article in *NIDNTT* is a must.

- Burton, E. de Witt. *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*. London: Wipf & Stock, 2003.
- Fanning, B. M. *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*. OTM. Oxford: OUP, 1990.
- Harris, M. J. "Appendix: Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament." In *NIDNTT* 3:1171-1215.
- Moule, C. F. D. *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*. Cambridge: CUP, 1959.
- Porter, S. E. *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament: With Reference to Tense and Mood*. Studies in Biblical Greek 1. New York: P. Lang, 1989.
- Porter, S. E. *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*. Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1992.

Students who require a bit more help with grammatical analysis will be grateful for the third category of analytical aids. A companion volume to Zerwick's grammar is Zerwick and Grosvenor. The analysis is verse by verse, with significant constructions explained and keyed to Zerwick's grammar. A similar but more comprehensive approach is taken by Rogers and Rogers in the revised and expanded version of Rienecker and Rogers. Both are useful as tools to work through a passage, but Rogers and Rogers is keyed to BGAD, to most major grammars, and to general research on the exegetical issues of each verse.

- Rienecker, F., and C. Rogers. *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand

- Rapids: Zondervan, 1982. [A very useful tool for working through a Greek NT passage, keyed to various exegetical tools. Now replaced by Rogers and Rogers.]
- Rogers Jr., C. L., and C. L. Rogers III. *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998. [A revision of Rienecker and Rogers, keyed to many standard Greek references. Review the 31 pages of bibliography and abbreviations before using!]
- Zerwick, M., and M. Grosvenor. *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1974. [A helpful tool for exegesis, especially when used together with Zerwick's grammar.]

Tools for NT Backgrounds

An adequate understanding of NT backgrounds³⁵ is critical to proper exegesis. This is because original meaning cannot be separated from its real-world context—i.e., the social, political, cultural, economic and religious worlds in which the NT texts were written and first understood.

As of first importance to NT backgrounds, students should be acquainted to the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint; LXX),³⁶ the scripture of the NT writers. Essential are a critical version of the LXX (Ralpfs), a good Greek-English LXX lexicon (Lust et al.) and a LXX grammar (Conybeare).

- Rahlfs, A., ed. *Septuaginta*. 2 vols. Stuttgart: Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1959.
- Lust, J., et al., eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. 2 vols. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992, 1996. [Also consider Bernard A. Taylor, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) for help in translation of LXX passages.]
- Conybeare, F. C. *Grammar of Septuagint Greek: With Selected Readings, Vocabularies, and Updated Indexes*. Reissue ed. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.

For general background information, there are several initial aids to consult. Three highly accessible background commentaries are the *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, the *Bible Knowledge Background Commentary*, and the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. These volumes provide basic comment on background material for every chapter or paragraph of the NT and point students in

³⁵“Backgrounds” refer to the world or setting behind the NT, including social and political structures, culture, religion and economy, among other aspects. It is not so much the specific context that directly forms the reason for the NT text, e.g. the Corinthians situation that prompted Paul to write the Corinthian letters. Some refer to this as the “foreground.”

³⁶The Septuagint (or LXX) is the Hellenistic Greek translation of the OT.

the right direction.

- Arnold, C. E., ed. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002. [Many color illustrations, charts and maps make this an attractive and useful set.]
- Evans, C. A. *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew-Luke* (vol. 1) and *Acts-Philemon* (vol. 2). Bible Knowledge Series. Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 2003-2004. [A 3rd vol. appearing shortly.]
- Keener, C. S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1994. [A single vol. comments on the entire NT.]

However, research for exegetical papers should go beyond these background commentaries. A good place to begin is *DNTB*,³⁷ which has articles organized topically and alphabetically. For general backgrounds, one will also do well to consult Ferguson's *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* and encyclopedia. For literary backgrounds, Aune's dictionary is a helpful resource. The best way to approach these resources is through the indices and with some idea of which background is most relevant for one's passage. True familiarity with backgrounds can only be achieved through first-hand reading of primary texts³⁸ and for this, the only manageable resource for students is Barrett.

- Aune, D. E. *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2003. [An up-to-date and useful dictionary for understanding the literary environment of the NT.]
- Barrett, C. K. *New Testament Background: Selected Documents*. Rev. & exp. ed. San Francisco: Harper, 1995. [A standard introduction to the primary sources that are relevant to the study of the NT. Barrett adds an introduction and notes for each source. A must read for how important backgrounds are to understanding the NT.]
- Evans, C. A., and S. E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000. [In the Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship series, it contains articles for an impressive number of background topics.]
- Ferguson, E. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. [A standard introduction to the social, political, military, economic, religious and cultural backgrounds of the NT. A must read for anyone wishing to know more about NT backgrounds in general or specific aspects.]
- Ferguson, E., et al., eds. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. 2d ed. New York: Garland, 1999. [Barring the high cost, a fine reference to have on your desk for a quick look at a range of backgrounds.]

³⁷As well as *DJG*, *DPL* and *DLNT*.

³⁸A "primary text" is an ancient source such as the NT, the OT apocrypha, papyri, Josephus's works, inscriptions, etc.

Other secondary sources³⁹ are a bit more focused or simply a collection of essays on various backgrounds. An excellent set on Acts is *The Book of Acts in Its First-Century Setting*. Another admirable set on various backgrounds of the NT is the *Library of Early Christianity* edited by Meeks. For two collections of learned essays on various backgrounds, see Ferguson and Evans/Porter. For Jewish backgrounds, Scott and Fitzmyer are good places to begin. For Greco-Roman backgrounds, a good initial resource is Jeffers. Finally, study of backgrounds for exegetical papers can only be furthered in a well-equipped seminary library and with good bibliographic resources. Learn to find relevant sources for backgrounds using bibliographic resources and indices.

The Book of Acts in Its First-Century Setting. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. [AICS: There are 5 vols.: B. W. Winter & A. D. Clarke, eds., *Ancient Literary Setting* (Vol. 1; 1994); D. W. Gill & C. Gempf, eds., *Graeco-Roman Setting* (Vol. 2; 1994); B. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody* (Vol. 3; 1994); R. J. Bauckham, ed., *Palestinian Setting* (Vol. 4; 1995); I. Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting* (Vol. 5; 1996). The projected 6th vol. on the theological setting will not be published apparently.]

Library of Early Christianity. Edited by Wayne Meeks. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox. [LEC: There are 8 vols.: R. M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (Vol 1; 1988); J. E. Stambaugh and D. L. Balch, *NT in Its Social Environment* (Vol 2; 1988); J. L. Kugel, R. A. Greer & W. A. Meeks, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Vol. 3; 1988); A. J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation* (LEC 4; 1986); S. K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Vol. 5; 1986); W. A. Meeks, *Moral World of the 1st Christians* (Vol. 6; 1988); S. J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Vol. 7; 1988); D. E. Aune, *NT in Its Literary Environment* (Vol. 8; 1987)]

Evans, C. A., and S. E. Porter, eds. *New Testament Backgrounds*. Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1997. [A collection of essays.]

Fitzmyer, J. A. *Semitic Background of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. [Reprint of two collections of essays by Fitzmyer. *A Wandering Aramean*, originally published in 1979 by Scholars Press and *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, originally published in 1971.]

Ferguson, E. *Recent Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*. New York: Garland, 1999. [A fine collection of essays on various backgrounds.]

Jeffers, J. S. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999. [A learned yet readable introduction to Greco-Roman world of the NT.]

Scott Jr., J. J. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

³⁹A "secondary source" in our context is a book about a primary text such a commentary on Philemon or an essay about Roman households. Thus, all writings about the NT are considered secondary sources.

[A good introduction to intertestamental Judaism and its relevance to the NT.]

Tools for NT Theology

While the theological dictionaries have already been covered in the lexical section, a follow-up section on the tools of NT theology is necessary because exegetical papers should include research into the theological significance of a given passage, how the passage, phrase or word fits into the theology of the authors and their message(s). Evangelicals by-and-large prefer Ladd, Guthrie, and Morris, but the last is more readable while the first two are more of reference length. The addition by Marshall promises to be good. Schlatter was a conservative German scholar whose works have only recently been translated into English. From the mainstream, Caird is highly regarded. In addition, there is the NT Theology series published by Cambridge University Press on various NT subdivisions.

- Caird, G. B. and L. D. Hurst. *New Testament Theology*. Oxford: OUP, 1994. [Caird's work was posthumously completed and edited by Hurst. Rated highly, Caird's approach is centered on salvation as God's divine plan. Interesting is the last section on the "theology of Jesus."]
- Ladd, G. E. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993. [Ladd takes a canonical approach, working through the major witnesses of the NT, section by section.]
- Guthrie, D. *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1981. [Guthrie's approach is thematic, covering a host of traditional themes (God, Christ, Salvation, etc.) and working through the major sections: Synoptics, Johannine, Pauline, Hebrews, Petrine and Revelation.]
- Marshall, I. H. *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004. [Much anticipated for a solid approach to NT theology.]
- Morris, L. *New Testament Theology*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990. [Shorter than most, Morris gives concise descriptions of the theology of the major NT witnesses.]
- New Testament Theology*. Cambridge University Press. [These shorter vols. are highly accessible, but uneven in quality and coverage. U. Luz, *Matthew* (1995); W. Telford, *Mark* (1999); J.B. Green, *Luke* (1995); D.M. Smith, *John* (1995); V.P. Furnish, *1 Corinthians* (1999); J. Murphy-O'Connor, *2 Corinthians* (1991); J.D.G. Dunn, *Galatians* (1993); K.P. Donfried and I.H. Marshall, *Shorter Pauline Letters* (1993); A.T. Lincoln and A.J.M. Wedderburn, *Later Pauline Letters* (1993); F.M. Young, *Pastoral Letters* (1994); B. Lindars, *Hebrews* (1991); A. Chester and R.P. Martin, *James, Peter, and Jude* (1994); J. Lieu, *Johannine Epistles* (1991).]
- Schlatter, A. *The Theology of the Apostles: the Development of New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. [An older NT theology by a German scholar. Many of Schlatter's works have only recently been translated into

English.]

There are other specialty theologies of the NT that focus either on individual authors or on specific aspects of NT theology. Space does not allow for a comprehensive list. However, a sampling of some of the most significant is presented below.

- Dunn, J. D. G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. [Fast becoming a standard textbook for Pauline theology. Dunn is known for his “New Perspective” on Paul.]
- Hays, R. B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethic*. San Francisco: Harper, 1996. [An up-to-date and comprehensive introduction to NT ethics.]
- Ridderbos, H. *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*. Paperback ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. [A detailed and learned study of Paul’s theology by a Dutch scholar, this English translation is difficult to read.]
- Schreiner, T. *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2001.
- Wright, N. T. *Christian Origins and the Question of God*. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1996-2003. [Vol. 1: *The NT and the People of God*; Vol. 2: *Jesus and the Victory of God*; Vol. 3: *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Vols. 4 and 5 forthcoming.]

TIPS FOR WRITING

Once the student has consulted the essential tools and properly understood and processed the findings, he or she is ready to write the exegetical paper. However, good writing (or thinking!) must be learned and takes hard work. Without adequate writing ability and concentrated effort, it is impossible to write good exegetical papers. Again, there are helpful resources to aid the student. Even a casual read from any of the following resources will help. However, students who have little experience or confidence in writing research papers for one reason or another should consider these aids more carefully.

- Zinsser, W. *On Writing Well, 25th Anniversary: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. San Francisco: HarperResource, 2001. [A classic guide, the student will benefit immensely from reading part 1: Principles.]
- Booth, W. C., et al. *The Craft of Research*. 2d ed. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing and Publishing. Chicago: UCP, 2003. [An immensely helpful guide to research and writing, students should especially read the sections entitled, “Asking Questions, Finding Answers” and “Making a Claim and Supporting It.”]
- McCoy, F. N. *Researching and Writing in History: A Practical Handbook for Students*. Berkeley: U. of Cal. Press, 1974. [A short and manageable step-by-step guide to writing term papers, consult esp. pgs. 68-95 for writing.]

Howard, V. A., and J. H. Barton, *Thinking on Paper*. New York: William Morrow, 1986. [A highly accessible guide to thinking on paper and writing well.]

In this final section, several practical tips are suggested particularly for writing exegetical papers that merit high marks.

(1) *Work from the Greek text*. Papers that reflect little or no direct study of the Greek are not exegetically satisfactory. There must be evidence that the student has grappled with the original language. Of course, this does not mean that one should string together quotations of Greek verse. Rather, using the essential tools aforementioned, work through the grammatical, lexical and textual data and show that one has considered the original language, which is essential to understanding the author's original intent.

(2) *Ask and answer*. The purpose of any research paper is to ask the proper question and to answer that question. If one does not have a question, the paper has no purpose and therefore not worth writing or reading. In an exegetical paper, the main question is already present: What did the text originally mean? Or how is the passage best interpreted given the historical and cultural distance between modern reader and ancient writer and his text? However, the student must formulate relevant sub-questions based on the details of exegesis, such as questions of words, grammar, theology and so forth, and while interacting with the secondary sources. Furthermore, answering the questions posed is essential to the task. As the student writes, he should constantly reflect upon whether or not he is satisfactorily answering the questions set forth or implied in his presentation.

(3) *Disagree and argue*. Many students have difficulty evaluating the arguments of scholars because they have an unrealistic view of the ability (or infallibility!) of scholars. They tend to think that academics must know better and so students and laymen should not disagree with them. However, scholars are only human and the best of them often make poor judgments or work from flawed frameworks (with bad presuppositions or assumptions), all of which must be critically evaluated. Therefore, students should not be afraid to disagree with the scholars. Still, students must offer credible and solid reasons for their disagreement and argue their point with supporting evidence. This is critical for the well-written exegetical paper.

(4) *Be fair-minded*. Students often tend to be too emotive when writing exegetical papers on problem texts especially. Emotion is

essential to a good sermon but it is distracting in an exegetical research paper. It is not wrong to deal with emotional issues in biblical interpretation such as the women's issues (1 Cor 14:34; 2 Tim 2:12) or the millennium issue (Rev 20), but too much emotion gives the impression that one's conclusions were determined more by sentiment than by the evidence. Furthermore, be careful to avoid overstating the significance of one's supporting arguments and conclusions. Students should learn to be even-handed when evaluating the positions of other interpreters and learn to criticize their argumentation and evidence rather than their traditions or persons.

(5) *Read widely.* An exegetical paper is a particular type of research paper and as such, one must consult as many sources as possible. Students must spend the time and effort to read often and broadly when researching for an exegetical paper. Showing that one has read widely lends credibility to one's arguments and conclusions. In essence, the overall purpose of this present article is help students read with sufficient breadth to write high-quality exegetical papers.

(6) *Be meticulous.* Good exegetical research papers must be meticulous, being careful to get the details correct in all respects. This begins with good English style, but also covers proper citations and formats. At the heart of meticulousness is consistency. Careless mistakes and inconsistencies take away from the credibility of the paper and its conclusions.

(7) *Revise.* Good writers regularly contend that there is no good writing but only good *re-writing*. Thus, they promote the importance of revising what one has written. Much of the meticulous consistency encouraged above is achieved when one revises. Once the research and writing is completed, the student will do well to reread and revise several times.

Finally, seminary students who take the time to write excellent exegetical papers will learn how to interpret the NT at a deeper, more sophisticated level. They will learn how to evaluate translations, commentaries and other learned sources. And what they learn will be remembered long after lectures and examinations have been forgotten. Hence, when they become busy pastors, they will be better equipped to be careful about their sermon preparation because of the experience of writing thorough exegetical papers. The hope of this article is that seminary students would learn to handle the New Testament as the Word of God with confidence and competence. *Soli Deo gloria.*