

Divine Dialogue and the Lord's Prayer: Socio-rhetorical Interpretation of Sacred Texts

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BELIEVERS COMMONLY REFER TO THE BIBLE as the Word of God. This means different things to different believers, but all begin with a presupposition that the Bible, a written text, is a primary medium through which God communicates to humans. But who will decide what approach must be taken to a written text that somehow speaks for God? The first place to look for rules of interpretation, of course, is in the text itself. The New Testament contains a number of passages containing directions on how to interpret scripture (1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 22:18-19, among others). But these passages themselves are open to a variety of interpretations. So, in addition to appealing to the text itself, we always must bring some methodology to the text. Even for divine dialogue we must be content to hear with human ears. There must always be a methodology (either explicit or assumed) to read the text.

HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND THE BIBLE

Historical criticism is a dominant methodology that has developed over the past several hundred years to interpret the sacred texts of Christianity. Through the labors of hundreds of scholars, this methodology has developed into a scholarly discipline with many subdisciplines, for example, text criticism, source criticism, archeology, etc. This discipline, with its subdisciplines, has enriched our understanding of the Bible in myriads of ways. During the last twenty-five years of interpretation, however, scholars have been energetically exhibiting the limitations of

the historical-critical approach as they have been developing new methods of interpretation. In this essay I will use a socio-rhetorical methodology that builds on the achievements of the historical-critical approach in a manner that goes far beyond its boundaries. But before describing this new methodology, let us summarize some of the major milestones of the historical-critical method.

Since the Protestant reformation in the sixteenth century, it has been customary to distinguish between *eisegesis* (putting meaning "into" a text) and *exegesis* (bringing meaning "out of" a text). The words are Greek, with the prefix "*eis-*" meaning into and the prefix "*ex-*" meaning out of. Since Protestant Christians believe that faith must be based solely on scripture, *sola scriptura*, it is necessary to know what is "in" scripture and to safeguard against church tradition that is "read into" scripture. Therefore, Protestants have established a multitude of guidelines and practices to read out from texts (*exegesis*) only what is in them.

But how does anyone read out from such complicated texts only what is in them? Doesn't everyone read from their own perspective, their own point of view, their own biases? These are the questions that have evoked the spectrum of subdisciplines within the historical-critical method of interpretation.¹ Interpreters started first with the words in the text. There are over 1,400 pre-printing press manuscripts of major portions of the New Testament, and now scholars estimate that approximately 300,000 variations in wording exist among them. This word variation among texts gave rise to text criticism, the historical science of establishing the earliest wording available to us. The problem is that we have no autograph copies of any book in the Bible. The earliest complete copies we have of the New Testament were written between 300 and 325 A.D., nearly three centuries after Christ's ministry on earth. And these manuscripts are the result of copying and recopying the text many times without the benefit of a printing press, mimeograph, or photocopy machine. Every instance of copying a manuscript of any significant length produced some kind of variation from the source document until the tenth through the twelfth centuries, when unusual means were taken in some settings to produce exact replicas. And even in those centuries a high standard of replication existed only in limited locations; in other contexts exceptionally careless copying occurred in very poor handwriting.

The year 1831 is monumental in the interpretation of the New Testament, because in that year a scholar named Karl Lachmann for the first time produced a text of the Greek wording of the New Testament that was based entirely on historically scientific procedures for determining

1. See Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

the words that should be in the text. Prior to this time printed Bibles contained the wording of a "received text" (*textus receptus*) that had emerged over many centuries of copying and recopying that had produced many modifications as a result of error, "solutions" to errors without the benefit of seeing what the error actually was, adaptation to wording in other places in the Bible, addition of items a scribe thought should be there, and theological revision.² In 1831 the practice began of printing only the words that existed in the earliest texts, using complex principles of scientific historical analysis. This analysis was improved as a result of the discovery of many new Greek manuscripts during the nineteenth century, and by 1900 scholars had established an excellent "critical" Greek text of the New Testament with the use of scientific historical methods. Some important changes have been introduced during the twentieth century on the basis of additional information, but the major step forward had been achieved by the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

THE KING JAMES BIBLE, THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION,
AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

The original wording of the King James Bible in 1611, of course, did not benefit from this historical-critical work on the words in the text. One of the clearest places to see the difference between early wording and wording that resulted from modifications over the centuries is in a comparison of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. In the King James Version there are only five differences in wording between the version in Matthew and the version in Luke:

- a) Matt 6:10: *in earth, as it is in heaven*
Luke 11:2: *as in heaven, so on earth*
- b) Matt 6:11: *this day*
Luke 11:3: *day to day*
- c) Matt 6:12: *debts*
Luke 11:4: *sins*
- d) Matt 6:12: *as we forgive our debtors*
Luke 11:4: *for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us*
- e) Matt 6:13: *for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.*
Luke 11:4: *omitted*

Only one variation jumps off the page, so to speak: the presence of the

2. See Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

doxology in the Matthean version and its absence in the Lukan version. The other four variations are more subtle. The first variation is minute indeed. The inversion of earth and heaven has led to a difference between "in earth as it is . . ." and "as in heaven, so on . . ." The second variation is a little more substantial, since the Matthean version emphasizes the present day of a person's life ("this" day), while the Lukan version emphasizes God's blessings throughout each day of one's existence (day to day). The third and fourth variations appear to be much more substantial, since it is a difference between "debts" which God forgives us at the time we forgive our "debtors" (Matt.) versus "sins" which God forgives us "because" we imitate God's action by forgiving people who are indebted to us (Luke). The fifth variation concerns a doxology and "amen" at the end of the prayer, and Matthew's inclusion of them creates praise and affirmation of God both at the beginning and the end.

These variations are, on the one hand, quite limited in number. On the other hand, people could have, and still do have, extensive dialogue and debate about them. For some, a distinction between living "a day at a time" (Matt.) versus expecting God to furnish sustenance "over one's entire lifetime" (Luke) can lead to an entirely different mode of living a Christian life. Likewise, for some there is an important distinction between mutual action as God forgives our sins and we forgive our debtors (Matt.) versus God's forgiveness of our sins as a reward for our forgiveness of those indebted to us (Luke). The variation raises the issue of being saved "as a result of one's good works" (Luke) versus doing good works as a natural fruit of being a saved person (Matt.). The final variation can raise the issue whether a Christian's relation to God is so direct that it is not necessary at all times to end one's prayers with praise and affirmation of God versus the importance of a Christian's maintenance of humility in language that signifies the distance between God's holiness and every human's frailty and sinfulness. Concerning the "amen" at the end, it is an issue for some people even concerning "how" one says it. During my years as a college student I was asked by an adult Christian to agree with him that it was only proper to say "ahmen," and improper to say "aymen," since "aymen" is a vulgar, ordinary form of speech not appropriate when addressing God.

While these debates may seem sufficient for nurturing faith, historical-critical investigation has shown that variations in wording of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew and Luke are much more extensive than the King James Version would lead us to believe. In the earliest Greek manuscripts available to us the Lukan version of the Lord's Prayer is much shorter than the Matthean version. The difference between the two versions produces nine, rather than five, variations:

- (1) Matt 6:9: *our father*
Luke 11:2: *father*
- (2) Matt 6:9: *who art in heaven*
Luke 11:2: *omitted*
- (3) Matt 6:10: *thy will be done*
Luke 11:2: *omitted*
- (4a) Matt 6:10: *on earth as it is in heaven*
Luke 11:2: *omitted*
- (5b) Matt 6:11: *this day*
Luke 11:3: *each day*
- (6c) Matt 6:12: *debts*
Luke 11:4: *sins*
- (7d) Matt 6:12: *as we also forgive our debtors*
Luke 11:4: *for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us*
- (8) Matt 6:13: *but deliver us from evil*
Luke 11:4: *omitted*
- (9e) Matt 6:13: *no doxology or "amen"*
Luke 11:4: *also no doxology or "amen"*

Two of the variations (5b, 6c) are based on exactly the same wording in the Greek text as the wording that produced variations b) and c) in the KJV. "Debts" and "sins" maintain the same difference in the KJV and RSV (6c), but the translators changed "day to day" to "each day" in the RSV (5b). The translators simply thought "each day" was the way we now say what the verse means rather than "day to day." The other variations that exist in the KJV (4a, 7d, 9e) are even more complex differences in wording than the KJV (based on the Greek *textus receptus*) would lead the interpreter to believe, and there are four additional important variations (1, 2, 3, 8) that historical criticism asks us to explain.

Rather than explaining the significance of the additional variations at this point, I will take them up in sections below to show how socio-rhetorical criticism explores a wide range of issues concerning language, society, culture, ideology, and theology that move beyond the boundaries of historical criticism. At this point, however, it may be well to summarize the contribution historical criticism brings to the text that interpreters use when they interpret the Bible. Interpreters who are true to the insights of historical criticism approach the words in the Lord's Prayer like an archeologist approaches material from the different stratigraphical layers and squares of a dig. The layers represent a movement from earlier to later times, and the squares represent different areas of the dig. The words of the Lord's Prayer come to us, then, in a form similar to the material from an archeological dig, and the material comes from different stratigraphical layers and different squares. One layer of the words

for the Lord's Prayer stands in common between the two squares represented by Matthew and Luke. The Matthean version shows us an expanded form of the Lord's Prayer that contains words in addition to the common layer. Finally, a scribe built a layer on the Matthean words. A display of the archeological layers and squares of words in the Lord's Prayer looks as follows:

Archeological Display of the Words of the Lord's Prayer

Our father who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy name.
 Thy kingdom come.
 Thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us *this/each day our daily bread;*
and forgive us our *debts/sins,*
*as/for we also ourselves have forgiven debtors/*every one who is indebted to us;
 and lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Code:

Both Matthew and Luke: **bold**
 Matthew: *italic*
 Luke: plain
 Scribal additions to Matthew: underline

The words printed in **bold** represent a common layer of words. There is very little variation in this layer. Matthew has "this" day where Luke has "each" day; Matthew has "debts" where Luke has "sins"; and Matthew has "as we also have forgiven our debtors" where Luke has "for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us." It is very clear, then, that the Matthean and Lukan versions of the Lord's Prayer have a close relation to each other. But what is that relation? Is the Lukan version a later abbreviated version, or is the Matthean version a later expanded version?

A majority of interpreters who follow the guidelines of historical criticism equate the earliest form of the Lord's Prayer with the wording in the common layer, except for "Lead us not into temptation," which they consider to be a secondary addition to the earliest version.³ The major

3. Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, et al., eds., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 148-50, 325-27.

dispute among historical critics recently has been whether Jesus himself or early followers of Jesus put the address to God and the four petitions together as a formal prayer. Many historical critics think early followers learned both the address to God as *Abba* (Father) and the four petitions individually from Jesus rather than in a formal prayer, because the tradition reveals strident criticism of formal prayer by Jesus. In other words, some interpreters think Jesus himself did not construct and teach a formal prayer. Rather, he regularly addressed God as *Abba*, followed by one or two short petitions. Early followers of Jesus put a series of these petitions together into a short prayer attributed to Jesus. Within a few decades early Christians expanded the prayer until it attained the expanded form we see in early Greek manuscripts.

This means that most historical scholars consider it more likely that the abbreviated version of the Lord's Prayer is earlier than the expanded version. The reasons lie both in the manuscript tradition and in broader religious tradition. One can see that the tendency was to "expand" the prayer. This is evident, first of all, from the Lukan version in the KJV, where over the centuries the Lukan version of the prayer was expanded to read almost exactly like the version in Matthew. Second, this is evident in the Greek manuscripts, where scribes added a doxology to the Matthean version of the prayer. Third, it is rare for Christians to make official prayers shorter. Religious leaders regularly expand official prayers until they perceive them to have a suitable opening, middle, and closing.

Before returning to other aspects of historical criticism, perhaps I should make a few more statements concerning the King James Version of the Bible. On the one hand, while the texts on which the KJV were based are deficient in many ways, because they perpetuate wordings of the text that developed through error, "correction," addition, and adaptation, the English in the text was an outstanding literary achievement. This achievement not only has influenced the English language from the seventeenth century to the present day, but it also transmitted some of the poetic tensions in the texts that some modern versions have lost. On the other hand, there are words in the KJV that now have a distinctly different meaning than they did in the seventeenth century. These words often lead the reader to think the text is referring to something quite different from its basic meaning. An excellent example is: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep" (1 Thess. 4:15). Most modern readers will consider this sentence in the KJV to be incomplete: the verse does not tell us what "we who are alive and remain" shall prevent "those who are asleep" from doing. And, in any case, how would it be possible for us to prevent people "who have

fallen asleep," which we know means people "who are dead," from doing something? This may take us into a debate whether it might, after all, be possible for people who are "alive in Christ" to prevent those who have died from, for example, going to hell. But if we could prevent them from going to hell, could we prevent them also from going to heaven, if, for example, we knew some terrible sin they had committed that other people did not know they had committed? But all of this debate would be quite beside the point, as some readers will know. In the seventeenth century, "prevent" meant to "go before," to "go ahead of," like a "prelude" is a "pre-playing," a playing of a musical piece "ahead of" the call to worship. In other words, the verse means that "we who are alive and remain" will not "precede" (go into heaven ahead of) those who have fallen asleep. Because the language of the KJV is so deeply loved, yet all careful readers of the text know that people will misunderstand the meaning of some very important verses in it, some people have made a new edition of the KJV to "correct" wording that will be certainly misunderstood in the twentieth century. The task of changing the wording so it would reflect the earliest wording of the texts, however, would be a task much larger than these editors would want to undertake.

It is a fascinating coincidence of history that during 1830, the year prior to Karl Lachmann's publication of the first edition of the New Testament that reconstructed the wording on the basis of historically scientific analysis of the earliest manuscripts, Joseph Smith published a text of the Book of Mormon that included the Lord's prayer in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Joseph Smith's translation, adopting the style of language of the KJV, produced the following version of the Lord's Prayer in 3 Nephi 13:9-13:

Our Father who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy name.
 (omits: Thy kingdom come)
 Thy will be done on earth
 as it is in heaven.
 (omits: Give us this day our daily bread)
 And forgive us our debts
 as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.
 Amen.

Three things are noticeable about this version of the Lord's Prayer. First, the basic text is the expanded version as it exists in Matthew 6:9-13 in the

KJV Bible. Second, the version in the Book of Mormon enacts a principle of omission (of two major statements) from the expanded version. Third, the result of omission from the expanded version creates a different nuance of emphasis in the prayer.

We will pursue these issues below in the context of the issues we have raised thus far. At this point I simply want to mention that it is unusual for a New Testament interpreter to include comments about the Book of Mormon in the context of commentary on a New Testament text. None of the standard histories of interpretation of the New Testament, written for scholars and graduate students, contain reference to the presence of wording from the New Testament either in the Quran or in the Book of Mormon, two major bodies of literature that a significant number of people consider to be sacred texts. This is an omission that the methodology of socio-rhetorical criticism is designed to correct. A major goal in the coming years must be to introduce a method of analysis that encourages people of faith to compare their own sacred texts with other people's sacred texts and to dialogue peaceably with other people about their beliefs.⁴ Any method that does not do this will be a highly deficient form of analysis and interpretation during the third millennium of our Western calendar.

To resume our discussion of historical criticism, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century scholars produced wording of the Greek New Testament that evoked a broad consensus within scholarly circles. Refinements have continued during the twentieth century, and they continue today, but these refinements are microscopic in proportion to the change in wording that occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century. As a result of the textual improvements by the beginning of the twentieth century, some scholars devoted most of their time to the production of new, more accurate translations of the New Testament into English, German, etc. Other scholars, however, saw the chance to use their text critical skills in yet another way. They began to produce intricate source analysis of New Testament texts, which revealed that writers of the New Testament did not simply write independently of one another, producing separate witnesses to the events. The author of the Gospel of Luke states in his introduction that "many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us" (Luke 1:1-2). What he does not say is that he used some of those accounts as sources for his own work, copying some of them quite closely, rearranging the order of some of them, and interweaving some of them together to produce his own account.

4. Cf. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What Is Scripture? A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

Source criticism arose as an additional subdiscipline of historical criticism. Source critics produced a conclusion toward the end of the nineteenth century that the Gospel of Mark was the earliest Gospel. They also concluded that Matthew and Luke had independently used Mark as a source, along with other sources, to produce their Gospels. The question of the source relation of the Gospel of John to these other three (synoptic) Gospels remains a disputed issue today. Indeed, the relationship of Mark, Matthew, and Luke to one another has proved to be much more complex than many at times have thought. The well known analysis of the four sources in the Pentateuch—J (Jahwist), E (Elohist), D (Deuteronomist), and P (Priestly)—come out of the same scholarly environment. In this and other ways source criticism became an important interpretive method and remains so to this day.

Other subdisciplines began to emerge in an overall context of historical-critical interpretation of the Bible. After scholars produced source criticism, they developed form criticism, which looked for the “oral forms” in which people spoke, recited, and proclaimed the anecdotes, stories, prophecies, parables, and traditions we find in our written texts. Then came redaction criticism, which identified each author’s editing (redaction) of the spoken forms and the written sources. After identifying the editorial activity, scholars drew conclusions about the theological beliefs that guided the editing. Roman Catholics only reluctantly allied themselves with this approach at first, but in 1943 Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, which made the historical method not only permissible, but “a duty.”⁵ Then in 1964 the Pontifical Biblical Commission issued *The Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels* that confirmed and described the new aids to “exegesis”: source analysis, text criticism, literary criticism, linguistic studies, and the method of form history.⁶

Thus throughout the twentieth century, until very recently, the discipline of historical criticism has dominated scholarly interpretation of the Bible. This has meant that scholars only gave serious consideration to new historical subdisciplines that developed. Any method that did not adapt to historical methodology was gradually pushed to the edges of scholarly study and excluded from “serious” interpretation of texts.

SOCIO-RHETORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

I mentioned above that historical-critical methods remained dominant until the 1970s. During that decade and the 1980s evangelical-fundamentalists began to create and enjoy a political heyday, first with a born-again Southern Baptist as president of the United States (Jimmy

5. Krentz, 2.

6. Ibid.

Carter), then with a president (Ronald Reagan) who said most of the right things to encourage right-wing Christians to think that they were the models of true patriotism. Biblical scholars also were enjoying a new day of interpretive freedom and creativity, though many people throughout the country probably did not realize this. Through vigorous interaction at regional and national meetings which were growing larger and larger in size, exciting new methods of interpretation began to arise. The attendance at the combined national meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion grew steadily during the 1970s and 1980s. Now the attendance is between 6,000 and 7,500 people each year. Presently, scholars who employ an interpretive methodology of history in tandem with theology simply have not been able to control all the disciplines of study that have developed.

During the 1970s some interpreters began to apply modern forms of literary criticism to biblical texts. In addition some, often the same people, applied a method informed by anthropology—namely, structuralism. Still others brought sociological studies to bear on the texts. Feminist criticism began to gain a strong voice, and strategies of interpretation for liberation grew out of Latin and South America. By now, African-American biblical interpretation also has developed a strong voice,⁷ and Asian-American interpretations are beginning to appear. What does this explosion in methodologies mean?

These new methods gradually have shown us that the alliance of historical-critical methods of analysis with particular Protestant and Roman Catholic theologies have produced very particular biases that benefit some people and put other people at a great disadvantage. Among other things, historical criticism has focused on politically successful male leaders throughout the history of Christianity. Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, the first woman president of the Society of Biblical Literature, confronted interpreters in her presidential address in 1987 with the male bias of the programs of research as well as the methods of interpretation.⁸ There is now a call for a method that can gather many, if not most, of the new approaches into conversation with one another. I have tried to accept my part in this task, with a method I call "socio-rhetorical criticism." The initial explanation of it as a unifying method appeared in the 1992 paperback of *Jesus the Teacher*.⁹ Subsequently, I wrote a paper and organized a forum at the national SBL meeting in 1992, where four women presented interpretive papers on the

7. See Cain Hope Felder, *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

8. Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Interpretation: De-Centering Biblical Scholarship," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988): 3-17.

9. Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

stories of the woman who anointed Jesus in Matthew, Mark, and Luke and four men responded to their work.¹⁰ Since then I have written a programmatic socio-rhetorical analysis on "Mary, Elizabeth, and the Magnificat in Luke" which has appeared in a book entitled *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*.¹¹

My conclusion is that historical-critical scholars control people's interpretation of the Bible in two major ways. First, they advance a particular account of the history of Israel, Judaism, and early Christianity that they assert to be true outside of and alongside the Bible as the Word of God. In other words, whatever particular theological beliefs a historical critic may hold, he or she establishes a control outside the text through an agreement with others that a particular account of the history of the people of the Bible is true, rather than alternative accounts. This is, of course, a very complicated matter, since a major theme of the Bible itself is a history of its people. But this reveals precisely the power of historical criticism. It engages the biblical canon at the point of its account of the history of God's people, and it reworks that history on the basis of the documents that won the battle against extinction. This creates a deeply ironic interpretive situation, since our biblical texts are the documents of the victors among Israelites, Jews, and the earliest Christians. I say "ironic," because in manifold ways the Bible addresses the situation of the underdog—the one who suffers and is despised by others. Yet the story is told by those who have won out by telling the story in this way.

A second major way historical-critical scholars control people's interpretation of the Bible is by an assertion that historical method is "beyond ideology"—that is, it works, in the final analysis, with "indisputably factual data." To clarify the problem here, we must distinguish between indisputably factual "data" and indisputably factual "meaning." It is indisputable that all of the variations in wording for the Lord's Prayer I have exhibited thus far exist in different manuscripts. This is indisputable factual "data." The question is what this data "means." Historical criticism is unsurpassed in its exhibition of indisputable factual data. No other method has ever exhibited more intricate factual details. It is not clear, however, that historical method will be the mode in which the most extensive indisputably factual details will be exhibited during the twenty-first century. The presence of huge data bases in CD Roms for computers exhibits much more data than historians tried to exhibit or even wanted to exhibit. During the next century the relation of data will

10. Vernon K. Robbins, "Using a Socio-Rhetorical Poetics to Develop a Unified Method: The Woman who Anointed Jesus as a Test Case," in *1992 Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 302-19.

11. Vernon K. Robbins, "Socio-Rhetorical Criticism: Mary, Elizabeth, and the Magnificat as a Test Case," in Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight, eds., *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 164-209.

be analyzed in statistical and cybernetic modes that were not available during the last two centuries. These modes will show that "sequence" and "causal relation," the primary modes of historical analysis, give only limited insight into the "relation" of complex data.

As indicated above, my answer to the challenges of interpretation that face us today is an interdisciplinary method I call "socio-rhetorical criticism." This method merges strategies of "new historicism" and "new rhetoricism" to gain new insight into the "interrelation of data" in and among texts. The approach emphasizes at the beginning the necessity to use more than one discipline to explore texts. The social part of the method uses the full range of social scientific methods, and the purpose is to explore the full range of social and cultural dimensions in texts. The social scientific methods of anthropology and sociology, with their myriads of subdisciplines, are much more helpful for this kind of investigation than historical methods that are driven at their base by sequential perspectives and a primary interest in the people who have successfully established dominance over others throughout the centuries. My answer is to integrate historical and social analysis fully with one another. In this context social analysis becomes the overarching mode, since social aspects always are present in language. Historical aspects often are not so clearly available in language. Since historical analysis specializes in unique events and the sequential order and causation of events, in many instances there is not data in a text that enables an interpreter to enact this mode of analysis in a reliable manner. Historical criticism, then, is a more limited mode of interpretation than social forms of analysis. In fact, historical criticism is properly understood as a subdiscipline of social analysis. In certain instances only is it possible to move reliably within social analysis into a historical mode that analyzes sequential and causal aspects of human relationships. Current biblical interpretation will be revolutionized when it enacts the reality that historical analysis is a subsidiary form of social analysis and interpretation.

The rhetorical part of the method concerns the way people present themselves and dialogue with one another in social contexts. Since sacred texts confront an interpreter in the first instance with language, all social analysis of texts is integrally related to some form of rhetorical analysis. This means that, for interpreters of texts, social analysis and rhetorical analysis are interdisciplines. Rhetorical and social analysis work together reciprocally in the context of textual interpretation. In other words, no textual analyst or interpreter is able to escape language. All textual interpreters are located in a primary way in the presuppositions, meanings, and meaning effects of language. But also no textual analyst is able to escape social reasoning. Every interpretation of language presupposes social meanings and meaning effects, just as every interpretation of social

interaction presupposes rhetorical meanings and meaning effects.

This means a number of things for interpreters. We need to analyze and interpret the ways biblical texts set up their assertions and arguments. The way the texts argue deeply influences the nature of their claims to truth. It is important for us to know the weight of the metaphors and analogies. And with whom did the metaphors, analogies, and strategies of argumentation hold weight? Can we locate the social and cultural environments in which the arguments functioned successfully? Argumentation out of only one kind of social and cultural environment shows us a very limited mode of Christian argumentation and reasoning. It is necessary to juxtapose a number of Christian modes of argumentation and reasoning with one another to begin to get a clear understanding of the inner nature of Christian reasoning.

To pursue this method of interpretation, I have developed a program of analysis for people to use as they approach biblical texts. So far, college students and Ph.D. candidates have written interpretive papers using this program with excellent results. The socio-rhetorical approach serves a number of purposes. One purpose is to create an environment of interpretation that invites conversation rather than simply creates one dominating mode of discourse. This approach invites multiple voices in our texts to speak, at the same time that it invites people today to listen carefully to one another in dialogue. The overall goal here is to find a way for people of highly diverse traditions to use a form of interpretation of their own traditions that enacts an appreciative awareness of people committed to highly different traditions. Still another purpose is to analyze cultures of the body as well as cultures of the mind.¹² In other words, all people communicate consciously and unconsciously with their bodies as well as their minds. For the most part, there has been a significant separation of mind from body in biblical interpretation. Such a separation should be rare in Christian interpretation, since the doctrine of the incarnation speaks directly against it. Nevertheless, both the tradition of Plato's thought and Western versions of Enlightenment have enacted a polarity between the body and the mind¹³ that must be overcome in biblical interpretation.

THE INNER TEXTURE OF TEXTS

My way of establishing a programmatically new approach to biblical

12. See Björn Krondorfer, *Body and Bible: Interpreting and Experiencing Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992).

13. See Stephen D. Moore, "Deconstructive Criticism: The Gospel of Mark," in *New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 84-102.

interpretation is to ask interpreters lay, clergy, and scholars to indicate which of four textures of a text they are addressing most rigorously at a particular time. The first arena I have outlined is the inner texture of the text itself. The phrase "inner texture" refers to phenomena like repetition, progression, opening, closure, analogies, giving reasons, disagreeing, contradicting, praising, blaming, accusing, commanding, and the like. There are extensive rhetorical aids for this analysis, both in ancient and modern writings.

Repeated words are very good phenomena with which to begin. Careful analysis of repetition can reveal a kind of inner texture I call "repetitive-progressive texture." This is the kind of texture that results from repetition of words in the context of the progression of the discourse. A display of repeated words in the New Testament versions of the Lord's Prayer looks as follows:

Repetitive-Progressive Texture in the Lord's Prayer

Matt. 6:9			<i>our</i>	<i>heaven</i>
Matt. 6:9/Luke 11:2	thy			
Matt. 6:10/Luke 11:2	thy			kingdom
Matt. 6:10	<i>thy</i>			<i>heaven</i>
Matt. 6:11/Luke 11:3		give	us	our
Matt. 6:12/Luke 11:4		forgive	us	our
Matt. 6:12/Luke 11:4		forgive	to us	we ourselves
Matt. 6:13/Luke 11:4			us	
Matt. 6:13			<i>us</i>	
Matt. 6:13	<u>thine</u>			<u>kingdom</u>

Code:

Both Matthew and Luke: **bold**

Matthew: *italic*

Luke: plain

Scribal additions to Matthew: underline

Repeated words in the Lord's Prayer show a movement from address to God as "thy" to things we want God to do for "us," in the context of which "we" will do things for other people. It is obvious, then, that the Lord's Prayer "progresses" in an orderly manner, and repetition in the text exhibits one of the major aspects of the progression.

A close look at the repetitive-progressive texture of the Lord's Prayer in the context of the archeological layers of its words shows that the expanded prayer amplifies the opening and closure. This calls for special attention to another kind of inner texture I call "opening-middle-closing

texture." The Matthean version reveals an addition of "our" to the opening address to God, which anticipates the "our" and "us" in Matthew 6:11/Luke 11:3 and the following verses. In addition, through expansion the Matthean version creates an opening and closing for the beginning of the prayer: Our father . . . in heaven; Thy will . . . in heaven. The expansion and framing of the opening in the Matthean version removes an abruptness of speech to God before the believers make a request for themselves. In the expanded version the opening evokes a community relationship to God ("our"), identifies God's exalted place "in heaven," praises God's name as holy, welcomes God's rule, and submits willingly to God's will both for heaven and earth. Only then do the believers who say this prayer begin to make specific requests for themselves, which stand in the middle of the prayer. The Matthean version provides closure to the middle portion of the prayer ("Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil") in a manner related to the closure it provides for the opening of the prayer ("Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"). Then the line scribes added at a later time gives appropriate closure by praising God with words that repeat "thy" and "kingdom" which stand in the opening.

The words in the longer versions of the prayer, then, use words in the shorter versions as touchpoints for constructing a majestic opening, middle, and closing for the prayer. The short version, which opens with a one-word address followed by two short statements, moves climactically to "Thy kingdom come" at the end of the opening. Then the prayer moves through a series of requests to its conclusion: give us, forgive us, lead us not, and deliver us. The expanded version embeds the four requests between a more majestic opening that emphasizes "heaven" and a conclusion that provides a rationale for everything that precedes it in the prayer. The expanded version, as a result, has an eloquent flow from beginning to end that is not present in the shorter version. Careful analysis of inner texture in a context of an archeological understanding of the words in the text can allow a reader to see the relation of New Testament texts to one another in a fuller manner. For those who believe that the words in the Bible exhibit God's revelation, a look at the relation of expansion to abbreviation is an "inside view" into the process of revelation itself in the context of history.

The version of the Lord's Prayer in the Book of Mormon establishes a somewhat different emphasis. With the absence of "Thy kingdom come" and "Give us this day our daily bread," the prayer receives even a greater emphasis on "heaven" in the opening followed by a special focus on forgiveness of debts and debtors and on the relation of "we/us" to God in the middle:

Our Father who art in **heaven**,
 Hallowed be *thy* name.
Thy will be done
 on earth as it is in **heaven**.

And *forgive us our* debts,
 as *we forgive our* debtors.
 And lead *us* not into temptation,
 but deliver *us* from evil.

For *thine* is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.
 Amen (3 Ne. 13:9-13).

This version of the prayer in the Book of Mormon emphasizes "our," the first word on the lips of the believer, with four succinct, parallel statements in the middle. The balanced and brief form of the middle statements underscores the relation of the believer to God and positions debts and indebtedness at the center of a person's relation to God and other people. In this context the contrast between heaven and earth is even greater than in the Matthean version, since the speaker moves more quickly from the statements about "heaven," "thy name," and "thy will" to "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever" at the end. In other words, abbreviation of the expanded version provides greater focus and emphasis on the believer's special relation to God, to heaven, and to debt and indebtedness.

Analysis of the inner texture of a text, then, exhibits the special nature of the text itself as written and spoken language. As we have seen, shorter and longer versions of a text often create significantly different emphases in meaning and meaning effect. Socio-rhetorical criticism begins with this kind of special focus on the wording of the text itself for the purpose of gaining initial entrance into meanings and meaning effects of the language on its own terms.

THE INTERTEXTURE OF TEXTS

The second arena of interpretation is intertexture. Intertexture is the interaction of texts, both oral and written, with one another. Many texts existed in the environment where the Lord's Prayer was created and spoken. The Lord's Prayer used words and phrases that occur in these other texts. One body of texts from which New Testament texts use language is found in the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. Many New Testament texts interact with Hebrew Bible texts by "reciting" them, for example Luke 4:4, which reads:

Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread

alone.” This response by Jesus recites Deuteronomy 8:3 verbatim. The effect of this recitation is to bring words from the Hebrew Bible into Jesus’ speech. In rhetorical terms the verse has become a “chreia” attributed to Jesus, which means that the verse is now something poignant, memorable, and useful that Jesus said. This, of course, has Christianized the verse. Instead of remembering the words as something Moses said, Christians now remember them as something Jesus said.

The Lord’s prayer does not “recite” Hebrew Bible texts. Rather, it puts words from statements and prayers in the Bible and contemporary Jewish literature and worship in a special context, again a context of the speech of Jesus. This is “recontextualization” of words from other written and oral texts.¹⁴ Recontextualization of words in Jewish culture occurs throughout the Lord’s Prayer. The end result of the recontextualization is “reconfiguration” of the thought and action the words evoked in other contexts.

Direct address to God as Abba, the Aramaic word for Father, in Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, and Galatians 4:6 as a prayer statement, suggests that “Father” rather than “our Father” was characteristic of Jesus’ early followers and probably derived from Jesus himself. A Jewish text contemporary with Jesus entitled Sirach (Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira) addresses God as Father without either the pronoun “our” or the article “the” (Sirach 23:1; 23:4; 51:10; cf. Wisdom 14:3).¹⁵ Moreover, another contemporary Jewish text says this about the righteous man: “He proclaims the final end of the righteous as blessed and boasts of having God for his father” (Wisdom of Solomon 2:16). Direct address to God as “Father” seems to be especially characteristic of Jews who adopted aspects of Jewish “wisdom” tradition. Other dimensions of these Jewish wisdom texts, as we will see below, also are recontextualized in the Lord’s Prayer.

“Hallowed (holy) be Thy name” has a close relation to the opening of the third benediction: Holy art Thou, and awe-inspiring is Thy Name.¹⁶ It has precedents in Isaiah 29:23 and Ezekiel 36:22. This seems not to be characteristic of Jesus’ own address to God. The earliest version of the Lord’s Prayer available to us, however, shows early Christians including this clause as they opened the prayer.

“Thy kingdom come” contains a distinctive way of referring to “God’s rule,” namely, as coming. Other Jews of the time referred to the

14. Vernon K. Robbins, “Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures: A Response,” in *Orality and Textuality in Early Christianity*, ed. Joanna E. Dewey, *Semeia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, forthcoming).

15. See Hal Taussig, “The Lord’s Prayer,” *Forum* 4/4 (1988): 32, 36.

16. Jakob Josef Petuchowski and Michael Brocke, eds., *The Lord’s Prayer and Jewish Liturgy* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 36.

establishment, maintenance, or endurance of God's kingdom, but not its "coming."¹⁷

"Give us this day our daily bread" adopts an attitude toward God that is best described as a "Jewish cynic" mode of life. Cynics were called by God to go to all people and teach them freedom from desires within themselves and fears from other people and the universe that regularly enslaves them. As they travelled around, they slept outside, using the tunic they wore as a protective blanket, and they lived off of whatever food "came their way" through begging, finding fruit on trees, etc. Jesus appears to have adopted a similar approach to life. The difference was his perception of God, which came from the Jewish traditions into which he was born and raised. It appears that the Lukan "each" day has softened the stark dependence of the believer "this day." The Lukan wording appears to refer to an ongoing relation of the believer to table fellowship "each day" (day to day) in households of believers wherever they travelled.

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" was Jesus' way of enacting the beatitude "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20) in the context of the coming of God's kingdom. The sixth benediction opens with: "Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned against Thee."¹⁸ If it was one of the prayers in the synagogue during the early part of the first century, it has been recontextualized and reconfigured in the Lord's Prayer. In this instance the Lukan wording which juxtaposes "sins" and "debts" appears to be the result of interaction with the sixth benediction that either was being used throughout the first century or had developed sometime during the century.

"And lead us not into a test" is a better translation of the final line in the early form of the Lord's Prayer than "into temptation." This line recontextualizes a topic in Jewish literature contemporary with Jesus. The three verses in Sirach that refer to God as Father without "our" or "the" exhibit the range of issues in the topic of testing¹⁹:

Father and master of my life, do not abandon me to their whims, do not let me fall because of them (Sirach 23:1).

Father and God of my life . . . do not leave me a prey to shameless desire (Sirach 23:4).

Do not desert me in the days of ordeal (Sirach 51:10).

17. Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 57-67.

18. Petuchowsky and Brocke, 36.

19. Taussig, 36.

Testing can occur as the result of the whims of other people, desires within oneself, or circumstances in one's environment (war, persecution, earthquake, drought).

The expansions of the early form of the Lord's prayer recontextualize words both from Hebrew scripture and the benedictions of the Jewish synagogue. Isaiah 63:16 refers twice to God with second person singular "thou" and addresses God as "our father." But the context in Isaiah is not a prayer. During the first century the fifth benediction in "The Eighteen (or Seven or Nine) Benedictions" in the synagogue service begins: "Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned against you."²⁰ Scholars are not certain that this was one of the benedictions at the beginning of the first century, but it is part of the Palestinian version that developed during the first two centuries. Its existence calls attention to the expansion of the address in the Lord's Prayer to "our Father." Probably some early followers of Jesus, who continued to worship in synagogues until a decade or more after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 A.D., added the pronoun to evoke a more respectful form of address to God.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" has an interesting relation to another contemporary Jewish text:

But as his will in heaven may be, so he will do (1 Macc. 3:60).

In Christian circles, this sentiment appears in a prayer chreia attributed to Jesus:

Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee;
remove this cup from me;
yet not my will, but Thy will be done (Mark 14:36).

The presence of this chreia in the Gospel of Mark appears to have influenced the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer. This addition provided a balanced beginning and ending for the opening of the prayer, and it placed "Thy kingdom come" emphatically in the center of it, as mentioned in the previous section.

"But deliver us from evil (or "the evil one")" appears to be an addition of a parallel line characteristic of Jewish poetic speech. It repeats the last line of the early form of the prayer in a form that gives poetic closure to the prayer.

The doxology that was added by a scribe to the Matthean version (and finally to the Lukan version) probably recontextualizes a well-known doxology from scripture:

20. Petuchowski and Brocke, 55.

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty . . . Thine is the kingdom, O Lord (1 Chron. 29:11).

The New Testament versions of the Lord's Prayer, then, exhibit a deep intertextual relation to Hebrew Bible texts and prayer texts being used in the synagogue during the first century. We will pursue some of the implications of this use of language below.

In the context of the thick intertextual relation of the New Testament versions of the Lord's Prayer to first-century Jewish and Christian texts, the absence of two clauses in the version of the Lord's Prayer in the Book of Mormon attracts special interest. The first clause absent from the prayer is "Thy kingdom come." In a quick survey of the concordance to the Book of Mormon, Krister Stendahl found "no single passage where the terms 'kingdom of God,' 'kingdom of heaven,' or 'kingdom' are used in the typical synoptic way of 'the coming of the kingdom.'"²¹ The reason, he suggested, is that a distinction between the kingdom of God as present and the kingdom of heaven as future does not significantly inform "the kingdom-language of the Book of Mormon."²² Using section 65 of the Doctrine and Covenants as his guide, Stendahl suggests that the sacred texts of Latter-day Saints presuppose that "the kingdom of God . . . is already established on earth," that its mission is "going forth upon the earth," and that "the kingdom of heaven is the consummation and is to come."²³ Stendahl's analysis of the intertexture between the Book of Mormon and section 65 of the Doctrine and Covenants, then, suggests a nineteenth-century presupposition that the kingdom of God had already come on earth. This presupposition would make it natural to omit the clause "Thy kingdom come" from the Lord's Prayer.

Stendahl found it harder to explain the omission of "Give us this day our daily bread." We will make some suggestions in the sections that follow. For the present let us simply observe that the intertexture of a sacred text with other texts contemporary with it brings additional meanings and meaning effects to the language in the text. Some literary critics would argue that these additional meanings derive from "outside" the text under investigation. But we must be very careful about such a polarity between what is "inside" and "outside" of a text. Since all interpreters are "outside" of texts, every observation about something inside a text has some kind of "outside" location. Analysis of "inner texture" is guided by an outside system of understanding about texts that draws at-

21. Krister Stendahl, "The Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi in the Book of Mormon," in Krister Stendahl, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 106-107.

22. *Ibid.*, 107.

23. *Ibid.*

tention to certain aspects of language rather than others. Analysis of intertexture, in contrast, is guided by an outside system of understanding about texts that are important to bring into an environment of comparative analysis. Historical critics regularly have drawn strict boundaries of "canon" and "near canon" for interpreting biblical texts. These boundaries have excluded the Quran and the Book of Mormon from comparative analysis, even though both of these bodies of literature have been deeply influenced by biblical text. Socio-rhetorical criticism extends the boundaries of canon and near canon for interpretation of biblical literature. It is time to analyze the intertexture of biblical texts not only in relation to select Jewish and Christian traditions one would like to be dominant but also in relation to Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and other traditions among whom we must learn to live in an affirming manner during the third millenium of the Western calendar.

THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE OF TEXTS

The third arena calls for exploration of the social and cultural texture of the text. Here the interpreter analyzes three subarenas: (a) social response to the world, (b) social systems and institutions, and (c) cultural alliances and conflicts.

Bryan Wilson's typology of sects provides a good beginning place for analyzing the social response to the world in the discourse.²⁴ Wilson's typology contains six kinds of social responses: conversionist, thaumaturgical, gnostic, utopian, revolutionist, and reformist. Most religious discourse interrelates two or three kinds of social response to one another, creating a configuration distinctive to itself.

The New Testament versions of the Lord's Prayer feature at the center a thaumaturgical response to the world. In the context of threats to well-being, the believer petitions God for special attention, not only including forgiveness but also daily bread and exemption from natural, human, and personal afflictions and testings. The discourse presupposes that it is possible for people to experience the extraordinary effect of the supernatural on their lives. It defines believers in relation to wider society by affirming that normal reality and causation can be suspended for the benefit of special and personal dispensations.²⁵

The thaumaturgical response in the Lord's Prayer is not intensely focused on the individual, however, but is moderated at the outset by a revolutionist view. A revolutionist response to the world presupposes that

24. Bryan Wilson, "A Typology of Sects," in *Sociology of Religion*, ed. Roland Robertson (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 361-83.

25. Vernon K. Robbins, "Interpreting Miracle Culture and Parable Culture in Mark 4-11," *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 59 (1994): 59-82.

the world is so bad that someone has to change it, either God or God's people as the agents of God's work. In the opening of the prayer the believer prays for God's rule to come to change the world. The point of view is that God's presence in the world is not a threat, since it is the enemies of God who will suffer when God approaches. The believer expresses confidence in being an associate of God's action as he or she requests God's rule to present itself in full force.

The revolutionist response, in turn, is moderated by a conversionist response. Conversionist discourse, like revolutionist discourse, considers the outside world to be corrupted. But the basis of its corruption is evil within humans. If people can be changed, then the world will be changed. The Lord's Prayer sounds a conversionist response as the believer promises to forgive his or her debtors in the context of God's forgiveness of the one who prays. The conversionist dimension of the prayer is amplified in the expanded version, as the believers emphasize submission of their will to God, God's place in heaven versus theirs on earth, the desire to be delivered from all evil, and the willingness to praise God's kingdom, power, and glory forever.

A distinctive configuration of thaumaturgical, revolutionist, and conversionist response to the world, then, characterizes the Lord's Prayer.²⁶ The prayer does not adopt a singular focus that creates an obsession with miracle, destruction of the present world, or focus entirely on the inner spirit of people. The request is for God to be active in a manner that nurtures people's bodies as well as their minds, eradicates evil and oppression by renewing the world, and works symbiotically with humans who offer the resources of their own lives and spirits to others.

As mentioned in the section above, the version of the Lord's Prayer in the Book of Mormon appears to presuppose that God's kingdom has already come on earth. This places special responsibility on believers for the "going forth" of the kingdom on the earth. In social terms this means a removal of "revolutionist" response in the prayer. In its place stands a "utopian" response to the world. The goal of the believer is to change the entire social system on earth to one that is benevolent and peaceful.²⁷ This utopian response works symbiotically with a "conversionist" response to the world, an optimism that if everyone in the world would have a change of heart, evil itself would be eradicated from the world. This confidence, in turn, pushes the "thaumaturgical" response, which is at the center of the New Testament versions, far into the background. The believer's responsibility is not simply to rely on God's special dispensations from day to day. The spectacular, special dispensations have already

26. James A. Wilde, "The Social World of Mark's Gospel: A Word about Method," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1978 Seminar Papers. Volume II* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 47-67.

27. See Robbins, "Interpreting Miracle Culture."

occurred in the past. Now it is the believer's responsibility to live in God's kingdom frugally and benevolently. The blessings of God are already here if believers will simply claim them and live responsibly with them.

The central place of utopian and conversionist responses to the world in the Book of Mormon version of the Lord's Prayer, then, overrides the revolutionist and thaumaturgical social response at the center of the New Testament versions. This, I suggest, is the context for the omission of "Give us this day our daily bread." The social dynamics of the Book of Mormon suggest that one's daily bread is near at hand if one lives responsibly in God's world to claim it by earning it. One should not depend on God's "miraculous intervention" for one's daily bread. Rather, a change of heart linked with a commitment to an alternative social system lies at the center of this version of the prayer.

Another way to probe the social texture of the Lord's Prayer is to analyze its participation in social systems and institutions. Perhaps the most noticeable system, articulated in the first word of the early form of the prayer, is the patronage system of the Mediterranean world. The usual result of a client's approach to a patron in the manner expressed in the Lord's Prayer is a contract that defines the terms of the relationship. It is rare for a client to approach a patron for any other reason than to request some kind of goods or service. To receive these benefits, the client offers a positive challenge to the patron in terms of one or more requests. Since the patron's identity is embedded in the benefits he is able to offer, he readily provides goods and services to clients whom he perceives will respond in appropriate ways. Since the client is in no way equal to the patron, there is no pretense to equality in the manner in which the client reciprocates to the patron. The client is not able to give the same kind of goods and services. But the client can give to the patron one of the most highly prized gifts in Mediterranean society—honor. The addition of the doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer amplifies the honor it bestows on the divine patron God. The Matthean version had already moved in this direction, however, with its respectful address of God as "our" Father, its reference to God's location in heaven, and its open declaration of submission to God's will. But if the expanded version clearly bestows honor on God, the heavenly patron, in what way does the early version bestow honor?

The early version bestows honor, first, by evoking a social system of purity with the statement "Holy be Your name." With this statement the believer evokes a boundary that sets the name of the patron apart from all other names. Honor is deeply embedded in a name. The name of Caesar calls forth power and glory; the name of God calls forth holiness that sets it apart from all earthly power and glory. Thus, through a purity sys-

tem that sets some things apart from others as "holy," the early version bestows honor on the name of God. Second, the early version bestows honor by inviting the rule of God as king. Submission to the will of God as king is already implicit in "let Thy kingdom come"; the expansion of this statement with "let Thy will be done" simply makes explicit something that was implicit in the early version of the prayer. In addition, the requests to give bread, forgive, and lead not into testing bestow honor through recognition that the patron has these services to offer. The early version of the prayer, then, is already embedded in a social system of honor, and it bestows honor on the patron in a special way by evoking a purity system that sets God's name apart as holy.

Analysis of the Lord's Prayer can move yet a step further by exploring the nature of cultural alliances and conflict in its discourse. There are four basic kinds of culture: dominant, subculture, counterculture, and contraculture.²⁸ A study published by Joseph Heinemann made the following assertion about the Lord's Prayer: "It is clear beyond all doubt that those words of Jesus are directed against the prayer of the synagogue, and against fixed, statutory public prayer in general. In its place, he prefers a simple prayer conforming to the tradition of popular private prayer."²⁹ If Heinemann's statement is accurate, the Lord's Prayer contains contracultural discourse. Contraculture discourse is a reaction against a dominant culture, subculture, or counterculture. Scholars may differ whether the activities in Jewish synagogues represented dominant culture in Galilee or a subculture or counterculture in the eastern Roman empire during the early part of the first century. If, however, the Lord's Prayer was pitted against prayer practice in the synagogue, it would be functioning contraculturally in relation to it. The nature of contraculture discourse is to invert values of the culture to which it is reacting, and Heinemann's statement proposes that the prayer inverts the importance of public and private prayer.

It is good, however, to press the issue a bit further. Believers who use contracultural discourse have "more negative than positive ideas in common."³⁰ If the Lord's Prayer functioned contraculturally, it was deeply embedded in Jewish culture, presupposing its major values but inverting certain behaviors to differentiate the believers who spoke it from others

28. See Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetoric and Culture: Exploring Types of Cultural Rhetoric in a Text," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 447-67.

29. Joseph Heinemann, "The Background of Jesus' Prayer in the Jewish Liturgical Tradition," in Petuchowski and Brocke, 89.

30. Keith A. Roberts, "Toward a Generic Concept of Counter-Culture," *Sociological Focus* 11 (1978): 124, citing Margarete Bouvard, *The Intentional Community Movement: Building a New Moral World* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1975), 119.

in the synagogue. Most of the beliefs would be shared in common among all participants, but the believers who said this prayer would be distinguishing themselves by inverting some of their behaviors.

An alternative would be that the prayer functioned subculturally. A subculture attempts to fulfill truly or fully the central values of the culture in which it is embedded. In this instance the function of the prayer would be positive—it would express a way of fulfilling the values of the synagogue more authentically than other synagogue participants actually fulfill them. The expanded version of the Lord's Prayer, especially when the doxology is added, moves the prayer decidedly toward subcultural discourse. In the expanded form the prayer addresses God with the respect of other Jews, declares the holiness of God's name, and the believers as a community express full submission to God's rule and will. The subcultural nature of the discourse manifests itself not only in the distinctive manner in which these believers refer to God's kingdom "coming," but also in their confidence that God will bestow forgiveness on believers in response to their offering of forgiveness of the debts other people owe them. This statement would imply that God's grace enables them to actually do works of righteousness in a context where believers in the dominant culture say these things but do not actually do them (Matt 23:3).

Still another alternative would be for the Lord's Prayer to function counterculturally. A counterculture is "concerned with the rejection of explicit and mutable characteristics of a culture" with which it has a deep relation. A counterculture is an alternative miniculture which is "interested in creating a better society, but not by legislative reform or by violent opposition to the dominant culture." The theory of reform is to provide an alternative and to "hope that the dominant society will 'see the light' and adopt a more 'humanistic' way of life."³¹ Moreover, a counterculture "sustains itself over more than one generation, making provisions for both sexes and a wide range of age groups, influencing people over their entire life span, and developing appropriate institutions to sustain the group in relative self-sufficiency" (at least twenty-five years).³²

Perhaps the seeds of countercultural discourse reside especially in the Lukan version of the Lord's Prayer. The prayer in this form is distinctive. It addresses God directly as "Father" without the pronoun "our" or the phrase of honor "who art in heaven." With the brief opening "Father, hallowed by thy name, thy kingdom come," the prayer embeds a recognition of God's holiness in a context characterized by the distinctive address of Jesus directly to God as "Abba" and Jesus' distinctive reference to God's kingdom as "coming." In the context of this distinctiveness the

31. Roberts, 112, quoting Milton M. Gordon, "The Subsociety and the Subculture," in *Subcultures*, ed. D. Arnold (Berkeley, CA: Glendessary Press, 1970), 155.

32. Roberts, 113.

prayer petitions bread throughout one's lifetime ("each" day) and articulates a spiritual understanding that God forgives "sins" as the context for their action of forgiving people their indebtedness concerning material goods. Herein, then, lies the makings of a counterculture: distinctive discourse supported by distinctive reasonings that can draw its own boundaries within any culture from generation to generation.

I suggest that the version of the Lord's Prayer in the Book of Mormon continues the countercultural tradition. In the context of the early nineteenth century the revelation to Joseph Smith nurtured a system of behavior that his followers considered to be a significant alternative to behavior in the dominant culture. The emphasis on the "revelational" quality of the texts that guided believers introduces a third social response alongside the utopian and conversionist orientations, what Wilson calls a gnostic, manipulationist response. In Wilson's typology a gnostic, manipulationist response is based on special revelation that shows a person how to live successfully in the world, how to "manipulate" one's life successfully. According to this perspective, the version of the Lord's Prayer in the Book of Mormon is a portion of special revelation from God designed to aid the believer in living successfully in the world. Special tasks of the believer, according to this revelation, reside in the responsibility for the "going forth" of the kingdom on earth.

THE IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE OF TEXTS

A fourth arena of texture is ideological. Ideology is "an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions and values, not necessarily true or false, which reflects the needs and interests of a group or class at a particular time in history."³³ This integrated system proceeds from the need to understand, to interpret to self and others, to justify, and to control one's place in the world. Ideologies are shaped by specific views of reality shared by groups—specific perspectives on the world, society, and humanity, and on the limitations and potentialities of human existence.³⁴

A special aspect of ideology in our present world concerns the relation of individuals to groups. This leads to a spectrum as follows:

- (a) private, individual orientation;
- (b) small group orientation;

33. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 14.

34. John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981; rpt. pap. ed., with new introduction; subtitle changed to *A Social Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 268.

- (c) orientation toward a local institution;
- (d) orientation toward a historic tradition;
- (e) orientation toward multiple historic traditions throughout the world.

Most interpreters presuppose that Christians should think of their relation to God in terms of submission to a patron deity—an intimate, personal Godfather. Interpreters regularly consider it unthinkable that God should be perceived in any other than “fatherly” terms, because the evidence is so strong that Jesus himself addressed God with the special term “Abba.” Dominant interpretation, then, advances an ideology that the transcendent deity of Christians should be perceived through masculine imagery associated with fathers.

The text itself exhibits a dynamic of change as it functioned in different contexts, and different ideological nuances accompany the differences in form. The earliest version may advance the interests of followers of Jesus who want to continue to participate in Jewish synagogue worship but want a distinctive identity as they do so. These believers invert the value placed on synagogue prayer by saying a “private” prayer even when they are in the synagogue, and they let the rest of the participants in the synagogue know that they say this prayer when they are alone as well as when they are together with others. This would enact a “small group” ideology with a tendency toward individualism.

The Matthean version, in contrast, may advance the interests of followers of Jesus who want to be understood as a special “group” within God’s covenant who fulfills God’s righteousness better than any other believers in the God of Israel. Their discourse is distinctive, but its special emphases are embedded in speech that is every bit as respectful to God as the speech of other Jews. Addressing God as “Our father who art in heaven” and expanding other parts of the prayer, then, advances the interests of followers of Jesus who present themselves as the “truly authentic” members of God’s covenant and define others in the context as people who say many of the same things but do not really enact the values they proclaim. This version represents a small group ideology moving toward ideology focused on a local institution.

The Lukan version may contain yet a different ideological orientation. Believers who want to be understood as specially chosen to carry out the promises of the God of Israel, as people who are given a new spirit and new language to carry God’s message to all people, maintain a version of the prayer that does not accommodate traditional forms of speech in the synagogue. They say a prayer that opens with a distinctively intimate address to God and special interest in God’s kingdom, they express confidence that God’s blessings will sustain them from gen-

eration to generation as they go into all the world, and they seek forgiveness of their sins as they engage in loving acts to those in the communities in which they live. This version is part of an orientation toward a tradition with local representation throughout the Mediterranean world.

The version in the Book of Mormon combines the local orientation of Matthean ideology with the orientation toward tradition in Luke and Acts. Individual reward is based on responsible action toward community and tradition. One's own self-interests are best served through praise and submission to God and a willingness to forgive and to accept forgiveness.

The focus on God as father in all the versions raises significant ideological and theological issues. Is there an ideological texture here that presupposes that the fullest expressions of God's deity and grace are manifested in masculine imagery? Theologically, everyone knows that human language is extremely limited in its ability to articulate the unlimited nature of God's being and action. Will this text be used theologically to limit human language to masculine terms to describe God's power within all of creation to nurture life, to redeem and inspire people to loving action, and to create special environments where people escape the worst testings and afflictions of the world? Or do the creative, sustaining, and redeeming energies of God transcend either male or female categories? If so, how can this occur?

Christian community throughout the world is constituted by individuals and groups located in hundreds of different environments within God's creation. Certain groups and communities will want a strong male God to protect, nurture, and save them. Other groups perceive God to be a creator, nurturer, and redeemer who transcends male qualities and embodies female lifegiving powers that are merciful, nurturing, and sustaining. Will this prayer be used to limit the perceptions of God to male images? Will it be used to limit the clergy to males? Will words attributed to Jesus be used to force people to think of God in ways that exclude female images? Scripture itself uses female images to describe God's action, and Jesus speaks of Wisdom (a female principle) as working among God's people. Dialogue is built into the written text itself, and humans regularly enter this dialogue to seek God's will. But we do not only open the text; we close it off with our decisions about what it means. We have no choice but to work with meanings; this is the only way humans can think. But every human meaning is far removed from the incomprehensible purposes of the divine. For this reason, the dialogue will always continue. For whenever we think we know the final word, there is another statement within the text itself that challenges our limited understanding of God's ways and will for the world.

CONCLUSION

The Lord's Prayer comes to us as a dynamic biblical text. Embedded in its discourse are the seeds of subcultural, counter-cultural, and contracultural Christianity. Socio-rhetorical analysis asks us to investigate biblical texts in their dynamic contexts, dialoguing with them to explore the presuppositions in our texts as well as in our own bodies and minds. The goal of socio-rhetorical criticism is to move beyond unexamined positions of political domination into a mode of interaction that invites people into cooperative research, dialogue, conversation, and interpretation. We need methods that encourage teamwork and that inspire people to bring their presuppositions out into the open as much as possible to put them on the table, so to speak, as they work together. Socio-rhetorical criticism is an attempt to establish a framework for those who would like to try a more programmatic approach to this kind of biblical scholarship and interpretation.