

Ad Fontes Purissimi:
Is There a Place for Scripture Memorization
in Biblical Studies?

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One of the most enduring aspects of the legacy of Erasmus of Rotterdam, the famous Dutch scholar and humanist, can well be summarized by the *ad fontes* dictum. Even though he was unsurpassed both in his mastery of classical languages and in his virulent criticism of the abuses of the church, it still seems that his greatest influence on biblical studies was the passion with which he called the theologians of his day to return to the true sources of their theology, *ad fontes purissimi*. One of several such calls reveals an interest that remained constant throughout his life:

I have discovered that hitherto there have been some theologians whose previous neglect of the very reading of Holy Writ was such that they scarce could turn the pages, even of the *Book of Sentences* and in fact never touched anything but the riddles of the *Questions*. Isn't it some benefit for such persons to be recalled to the true sources?¹

This particular quotation appears in his correspondence during his fruitful stay in Cambridge between 1511 and 1514. At a time when the study of theology in most European universities consisted primarily of a blend of Thomist dogmatics and Aristotelian logic, Erasmus' vision to change the focus of theology from the subtleties of medieval logic to the writings of the New Testament, indeed, to the study of the Scriptures in the original languages, made a long-lasting contribution across the continent. His challenge eventually led the divinity schools to an appreciation for and renewed interest in the classical languages, especially the languages in which the Scriptures were written. Here is Erasmus again, bewildered by the hostile reception of his ideas from the established centers of theological studies:

¹ D. F. S. Thomson and H. C. Porter, *Erasmus and Cambridge* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1963), 196.

Or does this class of men grieve that more people are henceforward to read the Gospels and the apostolic Letters, and read them more attentively too? And are they pained by the waste of even such a short time as this upon studies to which every single moment could properly be devoted? Would they prefer a man's whole life to be spent on the trifling subtleties of the *Questions*?²

Erasmus' concern for a return to the "truest sources" was not purely theoretical; it soon manifested itself in the first published edition of the Greek New Testament in Basel, which, with all its limitations and shortcomings, stands as a landmark in the history of the text of the New Testament.³

Today, the reissuing of a similar call to those engaged in theology, whether scholars or students, for a return to the "truest source," to the Bible, might be deemed redundant, if not anachronistic, in an age with more printed Bibles than ever in the history of written texts, with more research resources and tools for the study of Bible than ever imagined, and with more divinity schools and Ph.D. specialists than ever before.

I myself would have thought that this was the case had I not spent the last fifteen years in theological education, on both sides of the lectern. The concern that led to this article is the perceived danger of a diminishing contact between the student and the text of the Scriptures. In the midst of an ever-escalating volume of secondary literature there is the real risk that the very source of theology, the Scriptures themselves, can become secondary at best, and neglected at worst.

This article proposes the discipline of Bible memorization as a way of securing intense and consistent contact with the word of God in theological education; memorization not of separate verses, not even of mere passages, but of entire books of the Bible. Indeed, for those engaged in the study of the Scriptures in the original languages, the article proposes moving one step further, memorizing the Scriptures not in a translation, as good as this enterprise might be, but in the original languages. I have used this approach with great success for the past decade, first at the Emanuel University in Oradea, Romania, and later at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

While memorization is not a new spiritual discipline, I have not yet encountered an approach to theological education based on the memorization of entire books of the Bible. In Christian academia one can safely say that Scripture memorization, while not completely absent, is certainly not a dominant presence. Furthermore, even outside the

² *Ibid.*, 195.

³ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 98ff.

established institutions for theological education, Scripture memorization, which in the past was a prominent spiritual discipline, seems today an unpopular practice. When not altogether forgotten, Bible memorization is conducted primarily via a topical approach.⁴ Scripture memorized in this fashion is seldom understood in its original literary context, and it runs the risk of conveying more the thoughts of the study aid's author than those of the biblical author. This a-contextual memorization of the Scriptures is vulnerable to the dangers associated with an atomistic study of the Scriptures, an endeavor whose problems are known all too well to students of God's word.

It should be noted at the outset that the endeavor of memorizing the large portions of Scriptures is not without precedent in Christian academia. There seems to be a constant flow of anecdotal information about several prominent exegetes who did just that. It is said that Professors C. F. D. Moule and G. B. Caird knew the entire Greek New Testament by heart, as did F. F. Bruce, who allegedly knew by heart both Testaments in their respective languages.⁵ Likewise, it is reported that Rudolf Bultmann knew the Greek New Testament by heart, as likely did many other German theologians. While this information is difficult to verify, it does seem to indicate that memorizing significant portions of the Scriptures was considered part of the theologian's trade. Unfortunately, the arrival of computers and electronic databases seems to have eroded the time-honored tradition of mastering the text of the Scriptures for oneself.

It should also be mentioned that memorization, as an indication of one's devotion to one's holy book, is not without parallels in other faiths; it is reported that millions of Muslims know the Koran by heart.⁶ Neither is memorization lacking in other academic disciplines. There are classicists who know by heart entire classical Greek texts, there are actors who recite huge portions of Shakespeare's writings, and there are musicians who store the entire corpus of Bach's *Orgelwerke* in their memories. Should the Christian scholar value the word of God less?

The proposal advanced in this paper is a commitment to memorize entire books of the Bible, with nothing less than the entire canon as a lifetime goal. Such a goal might seem unachievable to most, but when

⁴ Two of many such memorization programs are the Navigator's Topical Memorization System and the Ten Basic Steps of Campus Crusade for Christ. Both of them adopt a thematic approach to Scripture memorization.

⁵ So contends L. D. Hurst with regard to G. B. Caird, in L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (eds.), *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament. Studies in Christology. In Memory of George Bradford Caird* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), and W. Ward Gasque with regard to F. F. Bruce, in W. Ward Gasque, and L. Gasque, "F. F. Bruce, 1910-1990" *The Reformed Journal* 40 (Oct. 1990).

⁶ TV program on the Muslim faith, aired on BBC 1, UK, 1998.

one is committed to memorizing the Scriptures, several decades of disciplined memorization can achieve surprising results.⁷

This article will address several aspects pertaining to memorizing the Scriptures. First it will give brief consideration to some of the major benefits of memorizing the Bible book by book. Second, it will offer several practical guidelines in memorizing entire books or larger portions of the Scriptures. Finally, it will discuss a sampling of the results from a personal encounter with the memorized PROS GALATAS.

Why Memorize the Bible Book by Book?

This subsection addresses two distinct aspects of memorization, the practice of memorizing the Scripture and one particular approach to Scripture memorization in a book-by-book fashion.

B. Gerhardsson's significant study, "Memory and Manuscript," explores the importance given in antiquity to the memorization of classical texts, be they the works of Homer, in the Hellenistic schools, or the Torah, in pre- and post-Rabbinic Judaism.⁸ Gerhardsson contends that Judaism in New Testament times regarded highly the process of memorization and its benefits, since it gave the children "the traditional wording of the text which forms the basis of all further Scripture study."⁹ Gerhardsson's analysis makes a compelling case for memorization of the biblical text as essential for an array of aspects of religious life, from the study of Scriptures to the transmission of the text, and therefore no further consideration will be given here.

Memorizing the Scripture book by book is just one approach to memorization. The main rationale for choosing this method, besides its practicality, is the fact that the Bible itself consists of a canonical collection of originally separate writings. To memorize the Bible book by book primarily does justice to the intrinsic nature of the Scriptures, which, as we have them, are the result of a very complex process of

⁷ This article is also a tribute to the thousands of Romanian intellectuals who perished in communist prisons after the Second World War. Intellectuals from all walks of life, statesmen, politicians, historians, clerics, artists, philosophers, and scientists, were persecuted because of their unwillingness to collaborate with the communist regime. Their memoirs record that in many places an informal tutorial system sprang up in which each prisoner disciplined the others in his area of expertise. It was not unusual for a prisoner who had survived his prison term to come out with an encyclopaedic mind and with the ability to converse intelligently on several topics including philosophy, history, theology, science, arts and the like. Memorizing either the Scriptures or literature was a God-given respite in the inhuman conditions of their detention. To an entire generation so brutally annihilated goes my greatest admiration.

⁸ B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript. Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1961).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

writing, preserving, collecting and canonizing which was done on a book-by-book basis. The emphasis on the individuality of the biblical books does not and should not minimize the importance of their inter-relatedness and intrinsic unity; on the contrary, it enhances it. When Scripture is memorized in this fashion several benefits will become evident. Some of the more significant ones, with either cognitive or spiritual value are discussed below in random order.

First, memorizing an entire book gives the student a solid, thorough knowledge of the biblical text, something that cannot be achieved at this level by any other exegetical means. The primary cognitive benefit of memorization is a mastery and intimate grasp of the biblical text in its canonical form. Issues such as vocabulary and style of the author, themes deemed important by the author, the overall message of the book, the atmosphere of the writing, particular theological nuances, the structure of the argument, and many other aspects are depicted by book memorization with more ease and precision than by any other ways of exploring a book. During the memorization process, probably due to the activity of human memory, the analytic and synthetic processes of thought bring together in a unified and coherent message the apparently scattered details of the text.

Second, memorization yields great spiritual benefits, well known to those familiar with the Psalms, or with the Savior's knowledge and use of the Scriptures. One benefit in particular merits highlighting: the joy of memorizing the Scriptures. The spiritual exercise of memorization promises a level of spiritual satisfaction and inner joy that has been personally unsurpassed by any other spiritual discipline. There is nothing more thrilling than to know that ideas, which once were in the mind of the divine author, and then were passed through the channel of divine inspiration to the human author, are there in the Scriptures to be found, explored, gathered, and enjoyed. I can confidently say that for me no spiritual experience can surpass the spiritual benefit and enjoyment of Scripture memorization.

Most certainly, Scripture memorization is not an antidote for all the ailments caused by sin in our lives. It offers however the closest contact with the word and the will of the only one who can cleanse and change our lives. Even more, when one considers the great amount of idle moments in an ordinary day, memorization provides a very profitable way to fill at least some of them with thoughts of God, mined from the Scriptures, stored not on paper, nor on an electronic device, but in the mind.

A further benefit from memorization is acquiring the ability to assess critically the work of other specialists. To memorize a book does not mean to withdraw from the theological dialogue. On the contrary,

memorization is a means of entering into that dialogue with vigorous personal convictions on central issues in the scholarly debate. Memorization is particularly beneficial as preparation to face the massive volume of secondary literature. It provides the best platform to understand better the positions held, to be more able and informed as a critic, to assess more easily the arguments and the reasons why a particular position is taken. Knowing a text by heart proves to be an antidote to calm the perhaps guilty conscience of the scholar who might give priority to secondary literature over the Bible; the escalating number of studies, commentaries, and monographs easily becomes the focus of research, threatening to push aside the Bible itself. There is nothing inherently wrong in secondary literature; but does the seminarian who can devote only so many hours a week to theological studies do justice to the importance of the biblical text?

Another cognitive profit of Scripture memorization is directly related to memorizing the text in the original languages. The emphasis on studying the Scriptures in the original languages is deemed by many as the *sine-qua-non* of advanced theological studies. Seminary programs require the acquisition and proficiency in biblical languages, and most students become convinced of the importance and benefit of this endeavor for their future ministry. They embark on two or three years of assiduous work with introductory and advanced grammars, lexica, the memorization of vocabulary and paradigms, which equip them with the basics for reading, exegeting, and interpreting the Scriptures in the original languages. After memorizing a first book of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, it dawned on me that memorizing the biblical text in the original languages is far more beneficial for acquiring proficiency in biblical languages than the classical approach. Memorizing verses in the original languages automatically leads to a good grasp of vocabulary, morphological paradigms, syntactic functions and discourse style, just a few aspects which are better perceived in their natural, linguistic context, and not in the artificial context of a lexicon or manual of grammar.

I would conclude this brief list of memorization benefits with the passing remark that book memorization lends an almost inexhaustible resource for lecturing, preaching and teaching on that particular book to the delight of both the speaker and the audience. Memorization is indeed one simple tool that has the ability to explore the depths of the word of God in a way that few other approaches to Scripture can.

The Practice of Memorization

The following presentation of the praxis of memorizing the Scripture book-by-book is based on my own program of memorization, which has been in use for more than a decade now. It claims no general validity

since an approach that works for some might be completely unproductive for others. Nonetheless, this is the approach that I have used personally, and have encouraged the students in my classes to use, and so far it has proven to be successful.¹⁰ I always start by choosing one book that will become the focus of my studies for the following months. The process of memorization then comprises of four distinct phases.

Phase One

This phase is probably the most difficult of the four since it requires time, commitment and discipline, and progress may be disappointing at first. The goal of this phase is to be able to recite the entire book, with the aid of the text as needed. When I work on a book in a translation (Romanian or English) I set the goal of memorizing a chapter a day so that at the end of the first week a medium sized book (4-6 chapters) can be committed to memory. By the end of the week, the book should be recited entirely from memory, glancing at the text when needed. For longer books, splitting the book in half for the initial stage usually works best. When the two halves are mastered, the book can be reviewed as a unit. Working in Greek or Hebrew is considerably harder; I usually cover a chapter in about one to three weeks. It goes without saying that any aid to the memorization process should be used. I found for myself that sentence diagramming the text helps me best, as well as reading or reciting the text out loud.

Phase Two

For the following four to five weeks, I set the goal of reciting the book daily, in preferably one, but no more than two sittings. The goal for this phase is to be able to recite the entire book from memory, quite fluently, without any need to check the text. Obviously, dependence on the written text will diminish with each repetition of the book, and more significantly, fluency and speed of recitation improve considerably.

During this phase the first fruit of memorization will become evident. As the text is recited, each time several new aspects appear. During this phase one becomes very familiar with the main lexical stock of the book, its central ideas, its natural division into paragraphs, its atmosphere, and the style of the author. Foremost, the intratextuality of the book comes

¹⁰ My most recent trial was during a class of New Testament Survey, for which the students had the option of memorizing one epistle of their choice—Hebrews and Romans were among them. I was also able to test the approach in a Greek Exegesis on Galatians class, in which the student could have opted for memorizing the entire Greek text of PROS GALATAS. The response of most students could not have been more enthusiastic.

alive; the intricate inner tapestry of ideas, themes, motifs, and words is discerned with considerable ease and great delight.

Phrase Three

Phase three is what must be considered to be the most spectacular stage in book memorization. While the length of this phase depends on each individual, I usually spend three to four months on one book, daily reviewing it and making notes on special features. The true joy of memorizing peaks during this phase, since, as will be experienced early on, hardly an occasion of reciting the book will pass without seeing something new in the text. By now the fluency of recitation is at its peak, which shortens the time needed for the daily review of the book. This is really the phase during which I feel drawn into what seems to be a vivid dialogue with the author of the book; an author that no longer seems like a distant person who once penned the text, but a vivid presence, if the metaphorical language could be excused, infused within the text, who opens the door to perceive the complexity of his thinking, the passion, the nuance of expression, the urgency, and the relevance of his message imbedded in the written text. This is the phase of experiencing and living the joy of discovering God's truths in the written text.

After this phase, the book will be so well engraved in one's mind, that it can safely be stored in the long term memory, phase four, and start the process all over again with a different book.

Phase Four

Once the book is not reviewed daily, or weekly, it will gradually move out of the quick access memory, and the ability to recite it flawlessly, on demand, will diminish significantly. This is not necessarily an unfortunate thing; after all, it allows one to move on to the next book. It is refreshing to know, however, that with only a small effort—a matter of a couple of hours—a medium sized book can be brought back to the quick access memory at any given point after phase four.

The Outcome of Memorization—Test Case PROS GALATAS

The conclusion of this article consists of a sampling from a long list of exegetical and theological observations gleaned from PROS GALATAS, on which I worked through the stages outlined above.¹¹ Space considerations mandate brevity in both the breadth of issues addressed and depth of exploration. For the sake of a more structured

¹¹ While the following remarks have in view book memorization in the original languages, they are applicable to memorizing in a translation of choice.

presentation, the material is divided in five sections: lexical considerations, intratextuality, author's style, structure of the book, and theological insights. The classification is approximate and somewhat artificial since several of the examples discussed could feature under more than one rubric.

Most Pauline scholars will find no new material here; certainly nothing spectacular that would justify the effort needed in memorizing PROS GALATAS. After all, a computer program specialized in biblical analysis of the text could enable one to reach the same conclusions and to do so much more. I have no counter-argument to this objection, only to say that the arguments for the superiority and the benefits of memorization will be easily perceived by anyone who will engage in memorizing the book.

Lexical Stock

One of the first benefits of book memorization is an almost immediate grasp of the important lexical units employed by the author. Leaving aside conjunctions, prepositions, and other particles, which are high frequency words in any writing, the more frequently a word is employed the higher its importance in the lexical stock used by the author in conveying the message. Individual words, such as *apo stoloj* or *no moj*, or contrasting pairs of words, such as *sa rc* and *pneu~ma*, or combined noun-verb cognates, such as *pi&stij-pisteu&ein*, *cu)agge&lion- cu)aggeli&zesqai*, *xa&rij-xari&zesqai*, *qe&lhma-qe&lein*, *peritomh&- perite&mnesqai*, *e!rgon-e)nergei~n*, *zwh/-zh~n*, or antithetical concepts, such as *e)leu&qeroj-dou~loj / e)leuqeri&a-doulei&a / e)leuqerou~n-douleu&ein*, or interconnecting concepts, such as the intrinsic connection between *e)paggeli&a-e)pagge&llesqai* and *klhronomi&a-klhronomei~n* and *ui(o&j- ui(oqesi&a*, have a statistical dominance in the epistle that is easily spotted during memorization. The prominence of these lexical units is further confirmed by the fact that almost each one of these words has been the focus of intense research in Pauline theology, either with regard to PROS GALATAS, or the entire Pauline Corpus.

As important as the statistically dominant words are in appreciating the lexical stock of an author, they are not the only lexical units crucial to the message of the epistle. There are also other words that prove to be just as important even though they might not be numerically superior. Semantic importance is not intrinsically associated with the frequency of usage; words are not just to be counted, they must be weighed, to echo a textual criticism principle. I believe that memorization helps focus on these words with more precision than any other exegetical tool. For example, the key phrase, *h(a)lh&qeia tou~ cu)aggeli&ou*, while it is

used only twice in the epistle, *i#na h(a)lh&qeia tou~ eu)aggeli&ou diamei&nh| pro_j u(ma~j (2:5)*, and *ei}don o#ti ou}k o)rqopodou~sin pro_j th_n a)lh&qeian tou~ eu)aggeli&ou (2:14)*, could well sum up Paul's major theological interest in the epistle. The importance of the phrase *h(a)lh&qeia tou~ eu)aggeli&ou*, taken either as attributed genitive,¹² or genitive of content, or even expegetic genitive,¹³ to mention just a few, is inverse-proportionate to the frequency of its usage. Its semantic dominance established by the occurrences in chapter 2, is further confirmed by the other usages of the noun *h(a)lh&qeia* employed on its own, or by its verbal cognate *a)lhqeu&ein*, which surface in Paul's personal appeal in the latter chapters, *w#ste e)qxro_j u(mw~n ge&gona a)lhqeu&wn u(mi~n; (4:16)* and *ti&j u(ma~j e)ne&koyen [th~] a)lhqei&a| mh_ pei&qesqai; (5:7)*. The truth of the gospel, the truth revealed by and imbedded in the gospel, was one of the central issues at stake in Paul's corrective dialogue with the churches of Galatia.

Likewise, the phrase *ei}nai& ti*, and its various forms, is used only a few times in the epistle. It punctuates, however, the nagging concern of Paul at several junctures, either with the authority of the apostolic leaders in Jerusalem, *a)po_ de_ tw~n dokou&ntwn ei}nai& ti - o(poi~oi& pote h}san ou)de&n moi diafe&rei pro&swpon [o(] qeo_j a)nqrw&pou ou) lamba&nci (2:6)*, or with the external assault of the trouble-makers on the congregations in Galatia, *o(de_ tara&sswn u(ma~j basta&sei to_ kri&ma, o#stij e)a_n h}| (5:10)*, or with the danger of having a congregation ethnically or socially stratified and not united in Christ *ei} ga_r doki~ tij ei}nai& ti mhde_n w!n, frenapata~| e(auto&n (6:3)*. A fourth usage of the expression, likewise negative, is to be found in Paul's verdict on the inefficiency of either circumcision or uncircumcision in producing a life pleasing to God, *ou!te ga_r peritomh& ti& e)stin ou!te a)krobusti&a (6:15)*. What really is both the essence and the mark of Christianity is the inner transformation, the new creation worked out by the Spirit, *ou!te ga_r peritomh& ti& e)stin ou!te a)krobusti&a a)lla_ kainh_ kti&sij (6:15)*, which is the only reality capable of producing faith working out in love, *ou!te peritomh& ti i)sxu&ei ou!te a)krobusti&a a)lla_ pi&stij di0 a)ga&phj e)nergoume&nh (5:6)*.

The appreciation for the author's lexical preferences enhanced by memorization could also help in reaching a decision on several exegetical issues. Two examples are in order.

¹² D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 89.

¹³ Cf. Gal 5:7, *ti&j u(ma~j e)ne&koyen [th~] a)lhqei&a| mh_ pei&qesqai;*

First is the issue of the two different pronominal adjectives *allos* and *heteros*. The difference in their meaning, *allos* “another of the same kind,” and *heteros*, “another of a different kind,” could be significant in understanding the contrast set by Paul between his gospel and the so-called one of his opponents, *ei j heteron eu aggelion, os ouk estin allos* (1:6, 7). If the lexical distinction between the two adjectives is to be held in 1:6, as most commentators would agree, it should be considered the exception rather than the norm in *PROS GALATAS*. Indeed, in subsequent usages the alleged semantic divergence could not be detected. For example, only several verses later, James, the brother of the Lord, is referred to as *heteron de tw n apostolon ouk eidon mh o Ia&kwbon to n adelphon tou kuri&ou* (1:19). The fact that he is mentioned as *heteros tw n apostolon* and not as *allos tw n apostolon* should not imply that Paul considered James to be an apostle of a different kind (inferior?) to Peter. Likewise, the use of *allos* in *ewgwe poika . . . oti oude n allos fronh&sete* (5:10) and of *heteros* in *to te ei j e(auto n mon to kau&xhma ecei kai ouk ei j to n heteron* (6:4) point against maintaining a semantic distinctiveness between the two types of adjectives.

The second case touches on the distinctive way in which the author uses some lexical units. This is most evident in the peculiar use of the preposition *pro j* in Paul’s narration of the episode in Antioch, *allo ote eidon oti ouk orqopodou~sin pro j th n alh&qeian tou euaggeli&ou* (2:14). The preposition *pro j* is used only nine times in the epistle, considerably less than the dominant prepositions, *en* (41 times), *ek* (35 times) and *ei j* (30 times). While most usages in the epistle conform to the normal employment of the preposition, 2:14 has been noticed by commentators as perhaps requiring a different, somewhat unusual connotation, “according to, in conformity with,” demanded by the context. To opt away from the usual meaning of the preposition in this case, however, does seem to be neither necessary nor the best alternative, since the main meaning of the preposition *pro j*, “for,” makes quite good sense of the text. Paul’s vehement disagreement with Peter in Antioch and with the rest of the Jews was not triggered by their lack of conformity to the truth of the gospel, but rather by their failing to give an opportunity for the truth of the gospel to advance, and not be hampered; they did not come to the aid of the truth of the gospel.

It should be mentioned that another important aspect of lexical analysis for which memorization is highly effective is the area of intratextuality, to which a separate section is devoted. Memorization helps not only to compute mere statistics of the dominant words, or to appreciate the important, even if not dominant words, but also to observe their interdependence. While this phenomenon is visible first on the level

of single words, it is also noticeable in the area of semantic synonymy of phrases. For example, one can easily notice that the epistle construes the two phrases by which Isaac is described, $\omicron(\text{de_e})k\text{ th}\sim j\text{ e)leuqe\&raj di}\underline{\text{Q}}\text{ e)paggeli\&aj}$ (4:23) and $\text{to_n kata_ pneu}\sim\text{ma}$ (4:29), as virtually semantic synonyms. The semantic overlap between the two concepts e)paggeli\&a and $\text{pneu}\sim\text{ma}$, which highlight two different aspects of the patriarch's life, will prove seminal in their theological exploration in the fifth chapter of the epistle. Likewise, the sentences $\text{eu)aggeli\&zwmai au)(to_n e)n\text{ toi}\sim j\text{ e!qnesin}$ (1:16), $\omicron(\text{diw\&kwn h}(\text{ma}\sim j\text{ pote nu}\sim\text{n eu)aggeli\&zetai th_n pi\&stin h\#n\text{ pote e)po\&rqi}$ (1:23) and $\text{kai_ a)neqe\&mhn au)(toi}\sim j\text{ to_ eu)agge\&lion o\$ khru\&ssw e)n\text{ toi}\sim j\text{ e!qnesin}$ (2:2) portray Paul in a distinct but parallel fashion, implying that the expressions $\text{eu)aggeli\&zesqai au)(to\&n}$ [i.e. $\text{Xristo_n O}(\text{hsou}\sim\text{n})$], $\text{eu)aggeli\&zesqai th_n pi\&stin}$, and $\text{khru\&ssein to_ eu)agge\&lion}$ should be construed as different ways to express the same truth. Memorization gives a fuller appreciation of the flexibility of expression of the biblical author.

Intratextuality

Intratextuality can be summarily defined as a literary phenomenon in which passages within a text that present striking similarities were intended by the author to be read in light of each other.¹⁴ The following discussion focus on instances of intratextuality within PROS GALATAS, highlighting several phrases that display similarity of expression and whose reading in light of one another lead to a broader perspective on the issues addressed individually. Exploring the phenomenon of intratextuality ranks among the most profitable aspects in acquiring a fuller understanding of the book's message, as well as of the most enjoyable components of memorization. Far above any other exegetical approaches, memorization enables one to investigate and to appreciate the inner texture of ideas and themes in the book, providing not only the opportunity of acquiring a holistic picture of the writing, but also of the individual nuances which each relevant passage bears.

At times, the intratextual elements are detected with ease, since they are located in close proximity. This is the case of the dual use of the phrase $\text{e)cape\&steilen o}(\text{ qeo\&j}$ in the first part of chapter four, $\text{e)cape\&steilen o}(\text{ qeo_j to_n ui}(\text{o_n au)tu}\sim$ (4:4) and $\text{e)cape\&steilen o}(\text{ qeo_j to_ pneu}\sim\text{ma tou}\sim\text{ ui}(\text{ou}\sim\text{ au)tu}\sim$ (4:6). The two sentences are almost identical in their morphology, syntax and lexical stock, and

¹⁴ In its literary aspect, intratextuality is a more complex phenomenon than it might appear from the above definition; cf. M. G. Brett, in R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (eds.), *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1990).

present the two stages of God's "sending" activity, the incarnation with its primary outcome "the adoption" (4:6a), and the indwelling of the Spirit, with its primary outcome "a new creation" (6:15). This "sending" activity of God is understood more fully when two cognate nouns are considered. First, the noun *apo&stoloj* is used in reference to Paul, *apo&stoloj ou)k a)p0 a)nqrw&pwn ou)de_ di0 a)nqrw&pou a)lla_ dia_ 0Ihsou~ Xristou~ kai_ qeou~ patro&j* (1:1), and to the apostles in Jerusalem, *e#teron de_ tw~n a)posto&lwn* (1:19). Second, the noun *apostolh&* describes both Peter's apostolic mission for the circumcised and Paul's for the uncircumcised, *o(ga_r e)nergh&saj Pe&trw| ei)j a)postolh_n th~j peritomh~j e)nh&rghsen kai_ e)moi_ ei)j ta_ e!qnh* (2:8). These two nouns draw attention to the fact that God's mission is carried out not only by the main (divine) participants, *o(ui(o_j au)tou~* and *to_ pneu~ma tou~ ui(ou~ au)tou~*, but also through the participation of human agents. God's setting aside, calling and appointing of his servants are indispensable stages that prepare and enable them to fulfill the God-given task.

Other times the intratextual elements are separated by several chapters, as in the case of the similar phrases referring to the trouble makers in Galatia, *ti&j u(ma~j e)ba&skanen* (3:1) and *ti&j u(ma~j e)ne&koyen* (5:7). In reading the two descriptive phrases together, one can decipher the primary tactics used by Paul's opponents in their attempt to win the Galatians to their side, to bewitch the eyes that behold the crucified Christ and to prevent them from obeying the truth. A fuller picture of the opponents can be traced inductively from the text itself, especially from 1:6ff., 2: 4ff., 3:1ff., 4:15ff., 5:7ff., and 6:12ff.

At times intratextuality functions on the level of lexical units, such as the recurrence of the important verb *anagka&zecin*, employed three times in the epistle. The first two occurrences are in connection with the verb "to circumcise," which very probably was the key issue of discord between Paul and his opponents in the context of the epistle, *ou)de_ Ti&toj o(su_n e)moi&, #Ellhn w!n, h)nagka&sqh peritmhqh~nai* (2:3), and *ou{toi a)nagka&zousin u(ma~j perite&mnesqai* (6:12). This pinpoints a basic requirement of the so-called gospel of Judaizers: no one can be an heir of Abraham, or become a member of God's people, outside the circumcision. The third usage of the verb *anagka&zecin* is in connection with the hapax verb *0Ioudai5zein*, which, as Paul indicates, might have been the outcome, if not a synonym for very essence of "circumcision," *ei) su_ 0Ioudai~oj u(pa&rxwn e)qnikw~j kai_ ou)xi_ 0Ioudai"kw~j zh~j, pw~j ta_ e!qnh a)nagka&zzej 0Ioudai5zein;* (2:14).

Other times, intratextuality involves an expression or even a more developed thought, such as the parallel expressions that link together the

argument of chapters 5 and 6, e)n ga_r Xristw~| QIhsou~ ou!te peritomh& ti i)sxu&ei ou!te a)krobusti&a a)lla_pi&stij diQ a)ga&phj e)nergoume&nh (5:6) and ou!te ga_r peritomh& ti& e)stin ou!te a)krobusti&a a)lla_kainh_kti&sij (6:15). Neither the circumcision nor the uncircumcision possesses functional (5:6) or ontological (6:15) effectiveness in the life of the Christian. They are a far cry from what really counts, having life in the Spirit and being a new creation.

The following examples survey three issues bound together by intratextuality, first, the relationship between Paul and his opponents in Galatia, second, the relationship between Paul and the converts in Galatia, and finally, some considerations regarding history, language and theology.

Paul and His Opponents in Galatia. The exact identity of Paul's opponents in Galatia and their argument against Paul's gospel has been debated extensively. While memorizing the text of Galatians might not necessarily take the discussion much further, it helps one in creating a profile of these opponents based on an intimate knowledge of the text, which helps at least in sorting out and evaluating solutions proposed by various scholars. Much of the information regarding Paul's opponents is processed from the texts in which Paul makes explicit mention of them, even though most of the data has to be filtered through a mirror-reading of the epistle.¹⁵

The following comments are limited only to a pair of similar phrases which underline the main accusations leveled against Paul by his opponents: ei) e!ti a)nqrw&poij h!reskon (1:10), implying that Paul stood accused by his opponents as a man-pleaser, and ei) peritomh_n e!ti khru&ssw (5:11), implying that Paul was charged with preaching circumcision. The form of these two rhetorical sentences is almost identical, the conjunction ei) followed by the temporal adverb e!ti, and a 1st singular indicative verb, an aspect that is easily detected during memorization. While memorization helps in marking out intratextuality

¹⁵ The range of descriptive language with reference to the opponents is impressive: oi(tara&ssontej u(ma~j kai_ qe&lontej metastre&yai to_ eu)agge&lion tou~ Xristou~ (1:7), ei! tij u(ma~j eu)aggeli&zetai parO o\$ parela&betae (1:9), dia_ de_ tou_j pareisa&ktouj yeudade&lfouj, oi#tinej pareish~lqon kataskoph~sai th_n e)leuqeri&an h(mw~n h\$ n e!xomen e)n Xristw~| QIhsou~, i#na h(ma~j katadoulw&sousin (2:4), ti&j u(ma~j e)ba&skanen (3:1), zhlou~sin u(ma~j ou) kalw~j, a)lla_ e)kklei~sai u(ma~j qe&lousin, i#na au)tou_j zhlou~te (4:17), ti&j u(ma~j e)ne&koyen (5:7), o(de_ tara&sswn u(ma~j basta&sei to_ kri&ma, o#stij e)a_n h} (5:10), o!felon kai_ a)poko&yontai oi(a)nastatou~ntej u(ma~j (5:12), o#soi qe&lousin eu)proswph~sai e)n sarki&, ou{toi a)nagka&zousin u(ma~j perite&mnesqai (6:12) and oi(peritemno&menoi au)toi_no&mon fula&ssousin a)lla_ qe&lousin u(ma~j perite&mnesqai (6:13).

at the level of similar sentences, it also helps in collating these sentences with two further instances of opposition in words or in deeds to Paul and his message: ko&pouj moi mhdei_j parexe&tw (6:17), and e)gw_ de&, a)delfoi&, ei) peritomh_n e!ti khru&ssw, ti& e!ti diw&komai; (5:11), both implying that Paul was, at the time of writing, the object of persecution on behalf of the “cross of Christ”.

Furthermore, the dominant verb in 5:11, diw&kesqai, is very important throughout the epistle. It is used by Paul to describe the relationship between what he calls “Judaism,” e)n tw~| Qloudai"smw~| (1:13, 14), which is the Judaism in which pre-Damascus Paul grew-up and embraced, on the one hand, and the church, on the other. Paul describes himself as a persecutor of the church of God, o#ti kaqQ u(perbolh_n e)di&wkon th_n e)kklhsi&an tou~ qeou~ kai_ e)po&rquon au)th&n (1:13), and was remembered as such by the churches of God in Judea, o(diw&kwn h(ma~j pote nu~n eu)aggeli&zetai th_n pi&stin h#n pote e)po&rqi (1:23). His conversion and commission has only set him, so to speak, at the receiving end of persecution, e)gw_ de&, a)delfoi&, ei) peritomh_n e!ti khru&ssw, ti& e!ti diw&komai; (5:11), a treatment which the trouble-makers in Galatia were trying to avoid precisely by preaching the circumcision, mo&non i#na tw~| staurw~| tou~ Xristou~ mh_ diw&kwntai (6:12). The importance of the verb, however, goes even further; it is a hermeneutical lens through which the true identity of the people of the promise and the people of slavery are to be recognized. This is the concluding argument of the allegorical piece on Abraham’s two sons, a)llo w#sper to&te o(kata_ sa&rka gennhqeij e)di&wken to_n kata_ pneu~ma, ou#twj kai_ nu~n (4:29). The identity of Abraham’s offspring, as being either the sons of the promise or the sons according to the flesh, was and continues to be directly linked with the status of the persecuted or of the persecutor.

Paul and His Relationship with the Galatians. Paul’s opening argument in 1:6-9 is a very strong denunciation not only of the Judaizers, but also of any messenger who would preach a different gospel, be he an angel, or, in the most extreme case, even Paul himself, a)lla_ kai_ e)a_n h(mei~j h@a! ggeloj e)c ou)ranou~ eu)aggeli&zetai [u(mi~n)parQ o\$ eu)hggelisa&meqa u(mi~n, a)na&qema e!stw (1:8). The stern words of the a)na&qema e!stw curse show just how serious the situation was. The reference to an angel in 1:8 is quite intriguing when read in light of Paul’s depiction in 4:12f. of the reception the Galatians have given him, w(j a!ggelon qeou~ e)de&casqe& me, w(j Xristo_n QIhsou~n (4:14). The lofty position attributed to Paul by the Galatians is not surprising in the context of the importance played by angels in the revelatory process

of the Old Covenant, o(no&moj . . . diatagei_j di@ a)gge&lwn e)n xeiri_mesi&tu (3:19).

Throughout the epistle Paul frequently refers to the Galatian believers in terms reminiscent of his own experience; there seems to be a commonality of experience which both Paul and the believers in Galatia share. They were called through grace a)po_ tou~ kale&santoj u(ma~j e)n xa&riti (1:6), just as Paul was, kale&saj dia_ th~j xa&ritoj au)tou~ (1:15). And while they are different than Paul as far as the agency of the gospel is concerned, their experience with the gospel is the same, they have received the gospel par@ o\$ parcla&bete (1:9), just as Paul has received it, pare&labon au)to& (1:12). While the language is similar, it is important to note the contrast between the two recipients of the gospel. The Galatians received it “from men,” while Paul received it “not from men.” Likewise, terms describing Paul’s mission mh& pwj ei)j keno_n tre&xw h@ e!dramon (2:2) are duplicated in similar terminology used for the Galatian believers e)tre&xete kalw~j (5:7). The reciprocal language has its fullest expression in the appeal by Paul to the Galatian believers to reciprocate towards him the same thoughts, feelings and behavior that he himself has towards them, gi&nesqe w(j e)gw&, o#ti ka)gw_ w(j u(mei~j, a)delfoi&, de&omai u(mw~n (4:12).

History, Theology, and Language. The intratextuality can be seen in several temporal clauses in the epistle. One noteworthy aspect of these clauses is the observation that Paul refers to plain historical events on the one hand, and to special revelatory events, on the other, using the same language. Thus Peter’s visit to Antioch, o#te de_ h}lqen Khfa~j ei)j @Antio&xeian (2:11), is referred to in similar fashion to that of the fulfillment of time in God’s economy, o#te de_ h}lqen to_ plh&rwma tou~ xro&nou (4:4), and the visit of James’ delegation to Antioch, pro_ tou~ ga_r e)lqei~n tinaj a)po_ @lakw&bou (2:12), is coined in identical fashion with that of the pre-faith age, pro_ tou~ de_ e)lqei~n th_n pi&stin u(po_ no&mon e)frourou&meqa (3:23). History and revelation converge linguistically in Pauline theology.

The key verse 3:28 provides one last example of intratextuality in operation. Paul lays out in this verse three pairs of contrasting entities that have been made one in Christ, ou)k e!ni @Ioudai~oj ou)de_ #Eilh_n, ou)k e!ni dou~loj ou)de_ e)leu&qeroj, ou)k e!ni a!rsen kai_ qh~lu: pa&ntej ga_r u(mei~j ei)j e)ste e)n Xristw~| @Ihsou~ (3:28). That these contrasting pairs are not merely theoretical entities for Paul or the epistle is seen plainly in the fact that the first two pairs are explicitly documented in the letter in the most palpable way. The first one, ou)k e!ni @Ioudai~oj ou)de_ #Eilh_n (3:28) is mirrored in the example of Peter, ei) su_ @Ioudai~oj u(pa&rwxn (2:14), and Titus, Ti&toj o(su_n

e)moi&, #E!llhn w!n (2:3). The second contrast, ou)k e!ni dou~loj ou)de_ e)leu&qeroj (3:28), is mirrored by the case of Abraham's two wives, two sons, and two covenants, QAbraa_m du&o ui(ou_j e!sxn, e#na e)k th~j paidi&skhj kai_ e#na e)k th~j e)leuqe&raj (4:22). The third pair, ou)k e!ni a!rsen kai_ qh~lu (3:28), while it has no explicit counterpart in the epistle, is mirrored at the level of allegorical language in Paul's reference to God's fatherhood, xa&rij u(mi~n kai_ ei)rh&nh a)po_ qeou~ patro_j h(mw~n (1:3), and to heavenly Jerusalem's motherhood h(de_ a!nw QIerousalh_m e)leuqe&ra e)sti&n, h#tij e)sti_n mh&thr h(mw~n (4:26).

Author's Style

Familiarity with the author's writing style is among the most important benefits of book memorization. Doubtless, the issues involved in charting the literary style of an author are multifaceted and would need to take into consideration a panoply of various aspects, not least the intrinsic unity of the writing, the complex relationship between an author and his amanuenses, and when the writing took place in the author's life. Even so, it seems that throughout the epistle there are some stylistic constants that could be considered as characteristics of the author's literary style. Granted, the fine line between a theologically significant detail of a text and the peculiarities of an author's style is not always easy to draw, but an appreciation for stylistic features could be a reliable guide.

The first example is the change in the number of nouns or verbs used in several places in the epistle. In the opening verse of the epistle, Paul switches from a plural noun to a singular, ou)k a)pQ a)nqrw&pwn ou)de_ diQ a)nqrw&pou (1:1). While there might be a theological reason behind this change, it could be better interpreted as a stylistic preference on the author's part than as an indication of a distinction that Paul might have made between human source and agency as far as his apostleship goes. This change in number of nouns or verbs is probably a stylistic variation operative also in the case of Paul's remarks about the trouble-makers in Galatia, when he uses a plural participle, oi(tara&ssontej u(ma~j (1:7), and a singular participle, o(tara&sswn u(ma~j (5:10). It is also evident in the description of Paul's team which evangelized Galatia, described first by means of a plural verb, eu)hggelisa&meca u(mi~n (1:8), and later as a singular verb, eu)hggelisa&mhn u(mi~n (4:13). The same phenomenon could be traced when the author deals with some theologically loaded concepts such as "the promise," to which he refers both as a plural noun, tw~| de_

QAbraa_m e)rre&qhsan ai(e)paggeli&ai (3:16), and as a singular noun, ei)j to_ katargh~sai th_n e)paggeli&an (3:17), or when he discusses the Galatians' status as adopted "sons," using both the plural o#ti de& e)ste ui(oi& (4:6), and the singular ei) de_ ui(o&j (4:7), or as "heirs," plural, as a group, kat0 e)paggeli&an klhrono&moi (3:29), and singular, as individuals, kai_ klhrono&moj dia_ qeou~ (4:7). A similar observation could be made with regard to the changes in mid-sentence from 1st plural to 1st singular, such as the one in w(j proeirh&kamen kai_ a!rti pa&lin le&gw (1:9), or mo&non tw~n ptwxw~n i#na mnhmoneu&wmen, o\$ kai_ e)spou&dasa au)to_ tou~to poihsai (2:10); or from 1st plural to 2nd plural, o#ti de& e)ste ui(oi&, e)cape&steilen o(qeo_j to_ pneu~ma tou~ ui(ou~ au)tou~ ei)j ta_j kardi&aj h(mw~n kra~zon (4:6).¹⁶

The fact that number is sometimes very important theologically is evident from Paul's treatment of "the seed" in 3:16, where he builds the case on precisely the number of the noun: kai_ tw~| spe&rmati au)tou, ou) le&gei, Kai_ toi~j spe&rmasin, w(j e)pi_ pollw~n, a)ll0 w(j e)f0 e(no&j, Kai_ tw~| spe&rmati& sou. Other times, however, the change in number might be just a stylistic variation and not carry any exegetical significance. Memorization of the text is particularly helpful in deciding between the two options for each individual case.

The second example of a possible stylistic feature is collected from Paul's use of proper names. There are several proper nouns used throughout the epistle. First, there are names of persons, such as Paul himself, Pau~loj (1:1, 5:2), or of persons associated with Paul: Khfa~j (1:18, 2:9, 11, 14), QIa&kwboj (1:19, 2:9), QIwa&nnhj (2:9), Ti&toj (2:1, 3), Barnaba~j (2:1, 9, 13), and of well-known characters from the Old Testament: QAbraa&m (3:6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18, 29, 4:22), QIsaa&k (4:28) and QAga&r (4:24, 25).¹⁷ There are proper names of geographical locations, such as those of the regions in which Paul conducted his ministry, Galati&a (1:2), QIoudai&a (1:22), Suri&a (1:19), Kiliki&a (1:19), and QArabi&an (1:17, 4:25), and of several cities QIeroso&luma (1:18, 2:1, 4:25, 26), QAntio&xeia (2:11), and Damasko&j (1:17). All these proper names pose no particular problems for exegesis. In chapter 2 however, there is a conundrum in Paul's using twice Peter's name, Pe&troj (2:7, 8) as opposed to that of Khfa~j, which he generally uses (1:18, 2:9, 11, 14). It is difficult to know the exact reason for Paul's preference for using the name Peter in these two verses. It could be a

¹⁶ The text-critical issues have to be assessed for each case, since there are variant readings that use consistently the same person.

¹⁷ It is noteworthy that Sarah's name is not mentioned explicitly, nor that of Ishmael. Paul prefers to refer to these using descriptive language and not their proper names, h(e)leuqe&ra (4:22, 23, 30), and o(e)k th~j paidi&skhj (4:22, 23).

purely stylistic change with no hidden motive; however, it could be a change that reflects Paul's preference to preserve a received or well-known tradition. Thus in 2:7, 8 he chooses to use the name Peter because this was the name traditionally associated with the *primus inter pares* apostle of the Lord, and his apostolic mission to the Jewish people, a tradition which is confirmed by the Synoptics. When Paul refers to Peter's apostolate to the Jews, he preferred to leave the tradition unchanged and thus to use the name traditionally associated with this apostolic mission of Peter. The preference to stay within the limits of a historical tradition is probably operative also in the cases where scriptural tradition is concerned. This seems to be the case in chapter 4, which explores the quotation from the Greek version of Isaiah 54:1. Paul consistently uses the noun *te&knon*, (4:25, 28, 31) in accordance with the Greek text of the quotation from Isaiah 54:1 (LXX): *o#ti polla_ ta_ te&kna th~j e)rh&mou ma~llon h@ th~j e)xou&shj to_n a!ndra*, even though outside of this context, he uses exclusively the noun *ui(o&j* and its cognates (3:7, 26, 4:5, 6, 7). The same preference for preserving a scriptural tradition could explain the use of two different names for Jerusalem, *QIerousalh&m* in 4:25, 26, in the context of the Septuagintal tradition of Abraham and his two sons, and *QIeroso&luma*, the Hellenistic rendering used by Paul in the historical accounts of his post-conversion trips to Jerusalem (1:17, 18, 2:1).

Structure

The exercise of memorizing a book yields considerable results in understanding the structure of the epistle. Reviewing the text over and over again gives one a sure grasp not only of the natural divisions in the text but also of the logic behind their sequence.¹⁸ The present article explores only two examples that pertain to the structure of the book, which were noticed in the early stages of memorization.

The first case is the chiastic arrangement in the first major division of the book, 1:6–2:14, which consists of a historical narrative rehearsing the events leading up to and following Paul's Damascus event. It seems that the record of Paul's post-conversion history is presented in several segments, which could be partitioned into five episodes. The introduction to each episode follows a chiastic arrangement,

¹⁸ As far as PROS GALATAS is concerned it would be difficult to improve on the work of Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), who explored the structure of the epistle along the lines of Greco-Roman rhetorical discourse, and while not all commentators agree with the precise layout of his proposal or with some presuppositions, it will continue to be the standard for any further research on the structural analysis of the epistle. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 58.

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|---------------------|--|
| o#te de& . . . | (1:15) followed by a 3rd singular verb |
| e!peita meta& . . . | (1:18) followed by a 1st singular verb |
| e!peita . . . | (1:21) followed by a 1st singular verb |
| e!peita dia& . . . | (2:1) followed by a 1st singular verb |
| o#te de& . . . | (2:11) followed by a 3rd singular verb |

This example is not meant to endorse the overall chiasm on the level of the entire epistle proposed by Bligh.¹⁹ It is simply an observation that helps to partition neatly the literary record of the historical events in the life of the author. Noteworthy is the threefold use of the adverb e!peita, embedded in the inclusio formed on the temporal particle o#te. There are two similar ways in which Paul reports periods of elapsed time, e!peita meta_ e!th tri&a (1:18), and e!peita dia_ dekatessa&rw n e)tw~n (2:1). The difference between the two expressions, while perhaps strictly stylistic, could be significant in the way the “fourteen years” of 2:1 might be calculated, not from the first trip to Jerusalem, but rather from the point of conversion. The importance of this aspect is well known in deciding for an early or a later date for the epistle.

The second case is that of inclusio, the literary device often used by writers to signal division within the structure of text, which can be seen several times in the epistle. Needless to say, memorization detects this literary device quite easily and while inclusions do not offer precise guidance in the overall structure of the book, they do help considerably in delimiting the stages of argument within the book. Three examples from PROS GALATAS suffice. First, in 3:1-5, after the opening sentence, the text is bracketed by two similar expressions, e)c e!rgwn no&mou . . . h(@ e)c a)koh~j pi&stewj; (3:2) and (3:5). This inclusio marks the transition paragraph from the thesis exposition 2:15-21, to the defending argument of the thesis 3:6 ff. Second, in the midst of the theological argument of chapter 3 Paul returns to particular points in the thesis exposition by using almost identical phrases: they are the confirmation that no one is to be justified on the basis of the law, o#ti de_ e)n no&mw| ou)dei_j dikaiou~tai para_ tw~| qew~| dh~lon (3:11), which answers to the earlier usage ei)do&tej [de_] o#ti ou) dikaiou~tai a!nqrwpoj e)c e!rgwn no&mou e)a_n mh_ dia_ pi&stewj QIhsou~Xristou~ (2:16) and, the act of justification on the basis of faith, i#na e)k pi&stewj dikaiwqw~men (3:24), which answers to the earlier expression i#na dikaiwqw~men e)k pi&stewj Xristou~ (2:16). In the same way, the grouping of three lexical elements, “to receive,” “spirit,” and “faith” in e)c e!rgwn no&mou to_ pneu~ma e)la&bete h(@ e)c

¹⁹ J. Bligh, *Galatians in Greek* (Detroit: 1966).

a)koh~j pi&stewj: (3:2), and in i#na th_n e)paggeli&an tou~ pneu&matoj la&bwmen dia_ th~j pi&stewj (3:14), may well indicate the presence of an inclusion intended by the author.

Theological Issues

The fifth aspect of memorization presented in this article comes under the broad heading of theological issues, since it is in grasping the whole message of a book, the theology of a book, or that of a biblical author, that memorization is supremely helpful. If there is one aspect in where memorization leaves its impact, surely it is in the area of biblical theology. Memorization helps the exegete to go beyond an atomistic understanding of the biblical text to a holistic understanding of the writing, and implicitly of its author, which is unrivaled by any other methods of exegetical probing. Due to space constraints, the following remarks will address only three aspects, the corporate identity of believers, the meaning of the phrase a)poka&luyij QIhsou~ Xristou~, and the hotly debated phrase, pi&stij Xristou~.

u(mei~j ei{j e)ste. First is a brief observation of the usage of the numeral “one,” which is central for Paul’s argument at several junctures. Noteworthy are the verses in which the author explores the consequences for the corporate identity and unity of the believers, following their adoption in Christ (3:26, 27), ou)k e!ni QIoudai~oj ou)de_ #Ellhn, ou)k e!ni dou~loj ou)de_ e)leu&qeroj, ou)k e!ni a!rsen kai_ qh~lu: pa&ntej ga_r u(mei~j ei{j e)ste e)n Xristw~| QIhsou~ (3:28). The frequent change in number and person throughout the epistle points to the intricate balance between individual and group aspects of the faith, both as far as the identity and the responsibility of the people of the covenant go.

One such text stands at the heart of Paul’s argument in chapter 3, in which he explicitly builds on the grammatical number of the noun involved, a singular as opposed to a plural, ou) le&gei, Kai_ toi~j spe&rmasin, w(j e)pi_ pollw~n, a)llo w(j e)lle(no&j, Kai_ tw~| spe&rmati& sou, o#j e)stin Xristo&j (3:16), and further down, o(de_ mesi&thj e(no_j ou)k e!stin, o(de_ qeo_j ei{j e)stin (3:20). The best illustration within PROS GALATAS of the dynamics between the “many” and the “one” is offered by Paul in his remarks about the Law being fulfilled in “one” command. Paul is in unison with several of his contemporaries when he states that o(ga_r pa~j no&moj e)n e(ni_ lo&gw| peplh&rwtai, e)n tw~| QAgaph&seij to_n plhsi&on sou w(j seauto&n (5:14). The key word in this verse is the same numeral ei{j. This one command is representative of the entire set of laws and

regulations of the Torah, the “one law” that sums up “the many,” the one that fulfills the Law in its entirety. And the principle was operative not only in the Old Covenant, as the reader of 5:13ff. might think, but also in the New Covenant, as is explicitly outlined later in the epistle in the summary phrase *pi&stij di0 a)ga&phj e)nergoume&nh* (5:6).

a)poka&luyij 0Ihsou~ Xristou~. The discussion of this example revolves around the famous genitive construction *di0 a)pokalu&yewj 0Ihsou~ Xristou~* (1:12). The phrase could be construed either as a subjective genitive, “through the revelation given by Jesus Christ” (with . . .) or as an objective genitive, “through the revelation which has Jesus Christ as its object,” with (. . .). The decision between the two grammatical options is indeed difficult because both ideas find support within the epistle. Even seasoned exegetes such as F. F. Bruce seem to be less than consistent about the meaning of the phrase. In the NIGTC commentary, Bruce favors the objective genitive reading, “that *0Ihsou~ Xristou~* here is an objective genitive is rendered most probable by the wording of vv. 15f.: God ‘was pleased to reveal his Son in me’.”²⁰ However, in his useful paraphrased rendering of the Pauline epistles, he translates the phrase as a subjective genitive, “It was not from men that I received it [the Gospel] or learned it; it was a direct revelation from Jesus Christ.”²¹

In favor of the objective genitive stands the context immediately following, 1:15ff., in which Paul reminds the Galatians, in an autobiographical note, of God’s revelatory act toward him, a revelation that had as its object the person of His Son, *o#te de_ eu)do&khsen [o(qeo_ j] . . . a)pokalu&yai to_ n ui(o_ n au)tou~ e)n e)moi_* (1:15,16). In light of this paragraph, *di0 a)pokalu&yewj 0Ihsou~ Xristou~* (1:12) must be read as God’s revelation to Paul, which had as its object the person of Jesus Christ.

In favor of the subjective genitive, however, stands the context immediately preceding, *gnwri&zw ga_r u(mi~n, a)delfoi&, to_ eu)agge&lion to_ eu)aggelise_ n u(p0 e)mou~ o#tti ou)k e!stin kata_ a!nqrwpon: ou)de_ ga_r e)gw_ para_ a)nqrw&pou pare&labon au)to& ou!te e)dida&xqhn a)lla_ di0 a)pokalu&yewj 0Ihsou~ Xristou~* (1:11, 12). The thrust of these verses is Paul’s determination to dismiss any possible allegation from his opponents that he had received the gospel through human agency or instrumentality. The message he proclaims was received through direct and unmediated divine revelation,

²⁰ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 89.

²¹ F. F. Bruce, *An Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul* (Palm Springs: Ronald N. Haynes Publishers, 1981), 21.

and hence a subjective genitive makes more sense. It would be indeed unusual to have the first part of the sentence dealing with matters of agency of revelation, only to abruptly change in mid sentence to matters of revelation's object. In light of the immediately preceding paragraph, *diŃ a)pokalu&yewj ŃIhsou~ Xristou~* (1:12) could be construed more correctly as a subjective genitive; Jesus Christ was the agent providing the revelation, the subject (grammatically speaking) of the verb "to reveal." While memorization did not play a determinant part in opting for the subjective genitive interpretation, it did help in confirming the validity of this choice, by encouraging the reading of 1:12 in light of the first verse of the epistle, *Pau~loj a)po&stoloj ou)k a)pŃ a)nqrw&pwn ou)de_ diŃ a)nqrw&pou a)lla_ dia_ ŃIhsou~ Xristou~ kai_ qeou~ patro&j* (1:1), which delineates the unique agency of Pauline apostleship, divine as opposed to human.

pi&stij Xristou~. The third case is the interpretation of the much debated phrase *pi&stij Xristou~* within the theology of Galatians. Although quite late for its first usage in the epistle, *nu~n eu)aggeli&zetai th_n pi&stin h#n pote e)po&rqi* (1:23), the group *pi&stij–pisteu&cin* ranks among the most important theological aspects in Pauline thought, not only on account of its statistical dominance (the noun 22 times, the verb 4 times), but also because of its role in the argument of the epistle. Among the most noteworthy aspects related to "faith," one should first include the range of connotations given in Pauline usage. Limiting the perimeter of investigation only to *PROS GALATAS*, "faith" is used to connote a message to be proclaimed, *nu~n eu)aggeli&zetai th_n pi&stin* (1:23), roughly equivalent with the noun "gospel," *to_ cu)agge&lion o\$ khru&ssw e)n toi~j e!qnesin* (2:2), or with the "good news about Christ," *i#na eu)aggeli&zwmai au)to_n e)n toi~j e!qnesin* (1:16). It is also employed to connote the doctrinal tenets of the church, the theological reason for Paul's pre-conversion persecution, *th_n pi&stin h#n pote e)po&rqi* (1:23), especially when this verse is read in light of Paul's autobiographical note, *e)di&wkon th_n e)kklhsi&an tou~ qeou~ kai_ e)po&rquon au)th&n* (1:13). "Faith" is also used as an identity indicator which demarcates between believers and non-believers, *e)rgazw&meqa to_ a)gaqo_n pro_j pa&ntaj, ma&lista de_ pro_j tou_j oi)kei&ouj th~j pi&stewj* (6:10). Quite important is also the use of "faith" to designate a (new) age in the history of Salvation, the age of "faith" to supersede the age of "law," most clearly evident in two sentences, *pro_ tou~ de_ e)lqei~n th_n pi&stin u(po_ no&mon e)frourou&meqa sugkleio&menoi eij th_n me&llousan pi&stin a)pokalufqh~nai*, (3:23) and *e)lqou&shj de_ th~j pi&stewj ou)ke&ti u(po_ paidagwo&n e)smen* (3:25). The most

significant use in the epistle, however, is that which construes “faith” as synonymous with the act of believing/trusting. This meaning dominates the usages in the epistle, and is found especially in prepositional clusters, dia_pi&stewj, e)k pi&stewj, e)n pi&stei, as well as in the verbal occurrences.

This article will address only one aspect with regard to “faith,” the meaning of the kernel phrase pi&stij Xristou~, whose meaning has been hotly disputed in recent years.²² There is really no need to rehearse in detail the arguments for taking pi&stij Xristou~ either as an objective genitive or as a subjective genitive. The key verse for this debate is Galatians 2:16, which is one example of Paul’s launching into a diatribe by stating a thesis followed by further clarifications, to pave the way for engaging in the actual diatribe. The verse is neatly divided in four segments:

- 2:16a ci)do&tej [de_] o#ti ou) dikaiou~tai a!nqrwpoj e)c e!rgwn
no&mou
e)a_n mh_ dia_pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~,
2:16b kai_h(mei~j ei)j Xristo_n QIhsou~n e)pisteu&samen,
2:16c i#na dikaiwq~men e)k pi&stewj Xristou~ kai_ou)k e)c
e!rgwn
no&mou,
2:16d o#ti e)c e!rgwn no&mou ou) dikaiwqh&setai pa~sa sa&rc.

The verse can be set in the following chiasmic arrangement:

- A (2:16a) ou) dikaiou~tai (negative passive verb)
B (2:16b) e)pisteu&samen (1st plural verb)
B’ (2:16c) dikaiwq~men (1st plural verb)
A’ (2:16d) ou) dikaiwqh&setai (negative passive verb)

²² The bibliography for tracing this debate is very extensive. Some of the key participants include G. Howard, “On the ‘Faith of Christ,’” *HTR* 60 (1967), 459-65; L. T. Johnson, “Romans 3:21-26 and the Faith of Jesus,” *CBQ* 44 (1982), 77-90; M. D. Hooker, “PISTIS XRISTOU,” *NTS* 35 (1989), 321-42; J. D. G. Dunn, “Once More, PISTIS XRISTOU,” in *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers*, (ed. David J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1991) 730-44; R. B. Hays, “PISTIS and Pauline Christology: What is at Stake?” in *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers*, (ed. David J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1991), 714-29; D. A. Campbell, “Romans 1:17—A Crux Interpretum for the Pi&stij Xristou~ Debate,” *JBL* 113 (1994), 265-85; B. W. Longenecker, “Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenant Community: Galatians 2.15-21 and Beyond,” in J. D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1996), 75-97; B. Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); and R. B. Matlock, “Detheologizing the PISTIS XRISTOU Debate: Cautionary Remarks from a Lexical Semantic Perspective,” *NovT* 42 (2000), 1-23.

This chiasmic arrangement has a less important value for the argument, since it is only one of several possible structures for this verse. Similar arrangements can be found if other lexical units (faith or law), or morphological units (nouns, verbs, or prepositions) are chosen as the determinant elements. The chiasm, however, is helpful in highlighting the semantic structure of the verse. The verse gravitates around two principal clauses, an indicative clause $h(mei\sim j\ ei)j\ Xristo_n\ \underline{Q}Ihsou\sim n\ e)pisteu\&samen$ (2:16b) and a subjunctive one, $i\#na\ dikaiwqw\sim men\ e)k\ pi\&stewj\ Xristou\sim\ kai_ou)k\ e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou$ (2:16c), linked to the former by supplying the reason for “we believed in Christ Jesus.” These two main sentences are supported by the other two sentences, $ei)do\&tej\ [de_]\ o\#ti\ ou) dikaiou\sim tai\ a!nqrwpoj\ e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou$ $e)a_n\ mh_ dia_ pi\&stewj\ \underline{Q}Ihsou\sim\ Xristou\sim$ (2:16a) which provide a further theological basis for 2:16b and a scriptural basis $o\#ti\ e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou\ ou) dikaiwqh\&setai\ pa\sim sa\&rc$ (2:17b) for the main two sentences.

The crux here, of course, is the meaning of the phrase $e)k\ pi\&stewj\ Xristou\sim$ in 2:16a, which could be translated either as “faith in Christ,” if construed as an objective genitive, or “faith(fulness) of Christ,” if construed as a subjective genitive. Prior to memorizing PROS GALATAS, I leaned slightly toward the objective genitive interpretation, but without a great deal of personal conviction. After memorizing the epistle, I have clearly and decidedly positioned myself within this camp, and construe the phrase $pi\&stij\ Xristou\sim$ as an objective genitive. The following reasons were determinant and each one was affected by the memorization of the text.

Argument from Style. The first argument is essentially stylistic: 2:16b functions as a synonymous parallelism to 2:16a, in which the sentence $ei)j\ Xristo_n\ \underline{Q}Ihsou\sim n\ e)pisteu\&samen$ corresponds to and restates the phrase $dia_ pi\&stewj\ \underline{Q}Ihsou\sim\ Xristou\sim$ from 2:16a. This seems to be the most natural reading of the verse and to reject this argument on the basis of superfluous or pleonastic duplication would be against the very nature of parallelism. Furthermore, it would go against Paul’s typical flexibility in expressing the same truth, in the same context, in more than one form. Scores of examples from Galatians can be adduced to support this affirmation. In discussing the curse under which those who want to be justified through the “works of the Law” enter, Paul makes the following two remarks, $o\#soi\ ga_r\ e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou\ ei)si\&n,\ u(po_kata\&ran\ ei)si\&n$ (3:10), and $o\#ti\ de_ e)n\ no\&mw|_ou)dei_j\ dikaiou\sim tai\ para_ tw\sim| qew\sim| dh\sim lon$ (3:11). It seems very obvious that the phrases $e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou$ in 3:10 and $e)n\ no\&mw|$ in 3:11 are set in synonymous parallelism: to be $e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou$ amounts to seeking to be justified $e)n\ no\&mw|$. The same phenomenon can be seen

in 3:18, ei) ga_r e)k no&mou h(klhronomi&a, ou)ke&ti e)c e)paggeli&aj: tw~| de_ QAbraa_m diQ e)paggeli&aj kexa&ristai o(qeo&j. The two expressions, e)c e)paggeli&aj and diQ e)paggeli&aj, clearly refer to the one and only way in which the inheritance was given to Abraham; it was given by God through a promise, diQ e)paggeli&aj, and therefore it came about on the basis of that promise, e)c e)paggeli&aj, lit. “out of the promise,” as the result of a promise. The need to clarify a statement by restating the same truth in a slightly modified way, involving necessarily a stylistic variation, cannot be denied to any author. In light of this quite evident phenomenon in PROS GALATAS, the more reasonable reading of 2:16 is to construe 2:16c as a restatement of 2:16b. In other words, “we also believed in Christ” is restating in verbal form the same truth which the phrase “righteousness on account of faith in Christ” states in nominal form. One can go even so far as to contend that 2:16c was necessary precisely in order to avoid reading 2:16b as a subjective genitive.

The same argument could be formulated against charging Paul with pleonastic repetition in 3:22, another important verse in the pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~ debate. This verse could be divided in the following way:

- 22a a)lla_ sun&kleisen h(grafh_ ta_ pa&nta u(po_ a(marti&an,
- 22b i i#na h(e)paggeli&a
- 22b ii e)k pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~
- 22b iii doqh~| toi~j pisteu&ousin

It is often argued that e)k pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~ (3:22b ii) must refer to “the faithfulness of Christ,” or else the end of the verse, doqh~| toi~j pisteu&ousin, (3:22b iii) would be an unnecessary addition. Contrary to being superfluous, the addition stands as another example of Paul’s habit of restating a truth in a different syntactical form, without altering its meaning. The ones believing, toi~j pisteu&ousin (3:22b iii), are the ones to whom the promise was given on the basis of their faith in Christ, e)k pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~ (3:22b ii).

Abraham Believed—the Faith of Abraham. An even stronger argument against the subjective genitive reading of pi&stij Xristou~ is adduced from a different expression used by Paul to convey the idea of faithfulness. The proponents for the subjective genitive usually demand the reading “faithfulness of Christ” on the basis of grammatical antecedents, i.e. the clusters in which pi&stij is the *nomen regens* does seem to favor statistically the subjective genitive, “faith/faithfulness of.” In PROS GALATAS, however, Paul makes use of a different syntagm when he wants to highlight the faithfulness of a person. When Paul refers

to “the faithfulness of Abraham,” he does not use the prepositional form $\epsilon\kappa \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega \tau\omega \alpha\beta\rho\alpha\mu$, but rather the adjectival form, $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega \tau\omega \alpha\beta\rho\alpha\mu$ (3:9). If Christ’s faithfulness were the meaning of $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ in Paul’s usage, one wonders why the expression $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$, or its equivalents, is never used in the epistle. The example of Abraham’s faithfulness is also illuminating because of the similarity of expression when Paul refers to Abraham’s faith in God, $\tau\omega \alpha\beta\rho\alpha\mu \epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\alpha\mu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma \tau\omega \kappa\epsilon\omega$ (3:4)²³ and to the believers’ faith in Christ, $\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon \tau\omega \theta\epsilon\omega$ (2:16).

Absolute Usage. The last argument for an objective meaning of the phrase $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ pertains to the absolute usage of the phrase $\epsilon\kappa \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$. *PROS GALATAS* employs this prepositional phrase quite frequently in contexts in which there is no immediate reference to Christ. The most noteworthy occurrences of this phrase are in chapter three, $\epsilon\gamma\omega \kappa\alpha\iota \sigma\kappa\epsilon\tau\epsilon \alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha \omicron\upsilon\tau\iota \omicron\iota\epsilon\kappa \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$, $\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota \upsilon\iota\omicron\iota\epsilon\kappa \epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma \tau\omega \alpha\beta\rho\alpha\mu$ (3:7), and $\omega\sigma\tau\epsilon \omicron\iota\epsilon\kappa \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega \epsilon\upsilon\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota \sigma\upsilon \tau\omega \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega \tau\omega \alpha\beta\rho\alpha\mu$ (3:9), and finally $\omega\sigma\tau\epsilon \omicron\kappa \tau\omicron\mu\omicron\upsilon \pi\alpha\iota\delta\alpha\gamma\omicron\upsilon\gamma\eta\sigma\alpha\iota \mu\omega\upsilon \gamma\epsilon\gamma\omicron\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\varsigma \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$, $\iota\sigma\tau\alpha \epsilon\kappa \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega \delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\omega\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma$ (3:24). To press for a subjective genitive reading in these cases would render the expression completely ambiguous since it is contextually non-referential. Yes, it is important to uphold with Hays the idea of Christ’s faithfulness at the foundation of NT Christology and soteriology,²⁴ but that position must be built on a different foundation than the debatable rendering of $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ as a subjective genitive.

Conclusion

Book memorization is potentially one of the greatest spiritual and academic disciplines for a Christian scholar or student. Memorizing books of the Bible in translation, or better yet, memorizing them in the original languages will prove to be an invaluable exercise with guaranteed dividends for the mind and the soul. It offers the greatest avenue for understanding the Scriptures, which must remain the foundation of all theological enterprises. Memorization is indeed one way of insuring that Erasmus’s dictum *ad fontes* will not go unheeded.

Scripture memorization will never render theological research or dialogue unnecessary. As was the case in ancient Judaism, text memorization is the starting point for theological reflection and not an

²³ The format $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ plus the dative is noteworthy as a Septuagintalism, otherwise Paul would have probably used the verb $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ plus the preposition $\epsilon\iota\sigma$ plus the accusative.

²⁴ R. B. Hays, “PISTIS and Pauline Christology: What is at Stake?” in *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers* (ed. David J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1991), 714-29.

end in itself. Even after the biblical text has been mastered, a considerable task awaits, as Professor Hengel reminded the scholars in a recent address.²⁵ What memorization does, however, is to guarantee that the theological construct is not built merely upon familiarity with the biblical text, but rather on a deep and thorough understanding of it. The results of a theological education based on such a superlative knowledge of the text will not fail to produce substantial results.

²⁵ Martin Hengel, "What is the next horizon for evangelical scholarship?" A lecture delivered at Tyndale House, Cambridge, England, 2002, available on the web at <http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk>.