

HEARING THE NEW TESTAMENT

berto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, AS (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1979). The text-linguistic focus of this phenomenon has been the interest of most NT discourse analysis — cf. A. H. Snyman, "Discourse Analysis: A Semantic Discourse Analysis of the Letter to Philemon," in *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament*, ed. P. J. Hartin and J. H. Petzer, NTS (Leiden: Brill, 1991) 83-99; and David Alan Black, et al., eds., *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992).

For the more recent recognition of issues of power in their relation to discourse, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1991), and the more difficult work by Diane Macdonell, *Theories of Discourse: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). Of course, the myriad works of Michel Foucault are foundational on this issue.

Finally, on the role of sociohistorical context in the generation of discourse and its cultural products and on the potential of that discourse to subvert its context, see the programmatic work of Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1989).

10. Genre Analysis

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1. The Importance of Genre

Many contemporary students of the Bible underestimate the importance of genre analysis¹ for at least two reasons: First, there is little common knowledge of the patterned ways in which ancient peoples communicated. Second, since our own speech conventions appear so commonplace to us, we seldom reflect on the multiple forms we use in our own social interactions.

In any society, people interact with one another by using conventional, repeatable patterns of speech. Without these speech patterns, these "well-worn grooves of expectation,"² social life could not flow smoothly. When we meet or take leave of one another, for example, we utter predictable greetings and parting phrases. When we participate in a business meeting, we recognize and understand specific oral and writing forms (e.g., the

1. In *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), which I coauthored with Lyle Vander Broek, we used the term "literary form" for shorter recognizable forms like pronouncement story or miracle story and "genre" for the longer, more complex literary types like apocalypse, Gospel, and letter. In this chapter, however, it seems better not to press that distinction. Instead, I use "genre" interchangeably of any recognizable and repeatable speech pattern of sufficient length, whether oral or written. German scholars use the word *Gattung* in this way.

2. I owe this description of a speech or literary generic form to James Nieman, Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Wartburg Theological Seminary.

reading of the "minutes" followed by the chair's call for corrections or additions before approval). When we attend a service of worship, we take part in a known liturgical pattern that incorporates numerous recognizable types of material (e.g., antiphonal responses, creeds, hymns, prayers and litanies, and baptismal and eucharistic rites).

Over the years scholars have learned to identify in biblical literature such "well-worn grooves of expectation" in that literature, classifying them according to specific formal types or genres. Because of the biblical cultures' foreignness to us westerners who live in the twentieth century, this is no simple task. Even today, although we can learn the grammar and vocabulary of a contemporary language, we can still miss what is going on in a foreign country because we do not recognize the generic speech patterns. We do not know the genres the persons in the other culture employ in greeting one another, in conversing with the elderly or highly respected persons, or for responding in a classroom or a liturgical service. In the same way, when reading the NT we will not appreciate what is going on with biblical texts if we do not recognize the operative genres and their specific uses.

In NT studies, the first researchers to focus on genre forms were the form critics Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann.³ Following the lead of Hermann Gunkel's form-critical work on the stories in Genesis and on the Psalms, they sought to identify and classify the patterns of the stories and sayings material that circulated during the oral tradition before the writing of the Synoptic Gospels.⁴

3. See Vernon Robbins, "Form Criticism," in *ABD*, 2:841-44, for a concise summary of the form-critical contributions of Dibelius and Bultmann.

4. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (2d ed., Cambridge/London: Clarke, 1971), described six types of material in the Synoptic Gospels: sermon, paradigm (brief example story), tale, legend, passion story, and myth. In contrast, Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), divided the material into sayings of Jesus and narratives about Jesus. He further classified the sayings as apophthegms (brief narratives, each culminating in a saying of Jesus) and independent sayings of Jesus. He subdivided apophthegms into (1) conflict and didactic sayings and (2) biographical apophthegms, under independent sayings of Jesus he included (1) sayings representing Jesus as a wisdom teacher, (2) prophetic and apocalyptic sayings, (3) legal sayings and church rules, (4) "I" sayings such as "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners," and (5) similitudes and related forms. Bultmann's subclassifications of the narrative material included the following forms: miracle stories (with subtypes being miracles of healing and nature miracles) and historical stories and legends (which include various stories about Jesus, the passion narratives, Easter narratives, and infancy narratives).

These early form critics also conjectured about the "setting in life" (in German, *Sitz im Leben*) or social arena and the function of these sayings and stories in the early church. Dibelius suggested that the preaching of the earliest Christians was the functional arena in which these oral forms were used and preserved. Bultmann, on the other hand, argued for a multiplicity of situations including teaching and conflict settings.

The conclusions of form critics, focused solely on the shape, content, and function of oral forms, have been vital to the progress of NT study. Yet genre analysis intends to be more comprehensive in scope. Since the germinal work of Dibelius and Bultmann on the Synoptic tradition, considerable progress has been made by scholars in expanding the range and nature of analysis. For instance, they have used various methods to increase our understanding of how Jesus' sayings and parables function or how pronouncement stories or miracle stories unfold. Beyond these rather succinct forms originally investigated by form critics (aphoristic sayings, parables, pronouncement stories, miracle stories), contemporary scholars have expanded our knowledge by describing the formal features of longer literary genres such as the ancient letter, apocalypse, biography, and history. The last two have been studied with a concern for the character and function of the Gospels.

As interpreters of the NT, we engage in genre analysis whenever we seek to identify and understand the character and function of any text, whether it be short or long, simple or complex, originating in an oral or literary environment. When interpreting a lengthy NT text, we will often encounter more than one genre. When Paul dictates a letter to a community of Christians, for example, he modifies the epistolary genre known in the Hellenistic world, and he usually incorporates shorter genres such as a vice or virtue list, paraenesis (exhortation material), and liturgical and hymnic forms. In 1 Cor 11:2-34, for instance, he inserts a liturgical form that undoubtedly originated in Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper (see vv. 23b-25). Several genres are evident in the Book of Revelation, which is an apocalyptic narrative that includes both epistolary and liturgical forms. In Rev 5:1-14, for example, the apocalyptic narrative incorporates the victory song genre (vv. 9-10, 12, 13b).

2. Understanding and Identifying Genres

Before attempting to suggest a method for genre analysis of NT texts, we should explore further the character and profound importance of genre forms.

2.1 A Basic Definition of Genre

Genres are the conventional and repeatable patterns of oral and written speech, which facilitate interaction among people in specific social situations. Decisive to this basic definition are three aspects: patternedness, social settings, and rhetorical impact.

Once a genre's generalizable pattern of content and structure is established, that pattern can be conventionally repeated or modified in a significant manner. Where it is conventionally repeated, the use of the genre reinforces the expected exchange. Where the pattern is modified, its use subverts in some way the normal social interaction. For example, a young woman repeatedly writes letters to her boyfriend, beginning each letter "Dearest Eric" and closing with "All my love, Anne." Then one day Eric receives a letter from Anne that begins "Dear Eric" and simply ends "Yours truly, Anne." The modified form creates a dramatically different impact on Eric.

Normally, genres facilitate human interaction within predictable social settings. A conventional farewell is employed when parties take leave of each other, not when they meet. On the other hand, the use of a specific genre in a social setting different from what is expected alters its impact on those involved. For example, Christians expect to sing Easter hymns during the Easter season, but if they are invited to sing an Easter hymn on Christmas, this same hymnic genre will exercise quite an unusual impact on them.

In summary, then, the rhetorical impact of using a specific genre depends on both the way the genre pattern is employed and the kind of social setting in which it is used. A genre can be utilized to reinforce or to subvert the expected.

2.2 Bakhtin's Contribution to Understanding Genres

The theoretical work of Mikhail Bakhtin can help us deepen our understanding of genres.⁵ Bakhtin draws the following conclusions regarding genres:

5. Mikhail Bakhtin was born in 1895 and died in 1975. Because of the repressive Stalinist years, Bakhtin's thought was not discovered and discussed, even in his own country of Russia, until the 1950s and 1960s. For a summary of Bakhtin's thoughts about genres, see "Theory of Genres" in Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1990) 271-305.

1. *Each genre is "a specific way of visualizing a given part of reality."*⁶ In response to those theorists who suggested that a genre is simply a collection of linguistic devices and elements, the construction of constituent parts into a larger whole, Bakhtin argues that every genre is a way of seeing a specific aspect of experience. For example, a legal genre has as its perspective on experience the need to set ideal standards or to regulate human behavior or both. In contrast, a brief story tends to focus on the anecdotal quality of everyday experience. If, indeed, every genre is a distinctive way of viewing a particular aspect of reality, then it follows that one genre is not reducible to a set of data or simply transferable to another genre form. Hence, a parabolic story of Jesus cannot be transformed into an explanation of what the story means without a severe loss.

Further, since every genre involves a selective way of visualizing an aspect of reality, it combines "specific blindnesses and insights."⁷ An author's selection of a specific genre, thus, is a choice for some viewpoint and against another. For instance, to criticize a political leader, a newspaper editor might select an editorial or a political cartoon. The former functions by logic and persuasion, the latter by exaggerated humor. Or in the biblical literature, a discursive segment of a Pauline letter operates basically in an explanatory and persuasive mode, whereas the poetic lines of a hymn used by Paul in a letter function primarily in a celebrative mode.

2. *Genres emerge from repeated social interactions within specific arenas of life and are normally employed within the same or similar social contexts.* In other words, genres are socially shaped and socially located. For example, liturgical forms like hymns and benedictions develop and function within the activity of worship, legal forms within judicial settings, and wisdom forms within settings for schooling the young in traditional insights. Of course, a genre can function in a social sphere remote from its origin. The author of Revelation, for example, can use a funeral dirge form in an apocalyptic narrative (Rev 18:2-3), not the original context for its use. When this happens, the genre likely subverts normal expectations.

3. *Most cultures exhibit a rich repertoire of genres, offering a wide range of particularized visions of reality.* It follows that a variety of experiences and social interactions calls for a multiplicity of genre forms. Genres reveal the diverse, though interrelated, contexts in which people in a particular culture

6. Morson and Emerson, "Theory of Genres," 275, who note that in this basic understanding of genre Bakhtin agrees with the thinking of P. N. Medvedev.
7. Morson and Emerson, "Theory of Genres," 276.

must continually negotiate transactions and relationships — commercial, military, political, legal, familial, sexual, and cultic contexts, for example. A hymnic genre functions quite differently from a political treatise. A business contract differs from a love song. All these various genres, Bakhtin asserts, cannot be simply integrated into some theoretical system since each of them represents a specific social interaction and a distinct perspective on reality. It is the rich variety of genres in a culture that allows for creative possibilities and interplay in both speech and literature.

4. *Genres take shape over generations and even centuries*, “crystallizing” specific ways a culture comes to “see” its experiences and history.⁸ Bakhtin’s appreciation of the long-term development of a genre form prompts him to label genre as a key “organ of memory.”⁹ A genre becomes a way of transmitting previous experiences and insights from one generation to another. Because genres carry the memory of the past, they become laden with potential meaning. “Genres (of literature and speech) throughout the centuries of their life accumulate forms of seeing and interpreting particular aspects of the world.”¹⁰ The content and shape of Jesus’ story of God’s beloved vineyard in Mark 12:1-12 must have stirred emotion and pathos in hearers who were familiar with the “love song” genre in Isa 5:1-7. The Markan story, because of its connection with Isaiah 5, shapes the present experience of the hearers by recalling the past experience of Israel.

5. *Changes in “real social life” can modify a genre to such an extent that a new genre emerges*. In such a case, a reciprocal dynamic occurs. Changes in the actual social life coupled with new views of these experiences lead to “different genres of speech, social behavior, and literature,” and then these new genres “may teach people to see aspects of reality in a new way. . . .”¹¹ As a contemporary example, wedding invitations and marriage ceremonies have changed due to the shift in the social role of women. No longer, for example, is the bride normally asked in the liturgy to honor and obey her husband, and this new marriage liturgy alters peoples’ understandings of the marital relationship. In the NT, the Gospel narrative may provide an example of an innovative genre: It borrows features from ancient biography and historiography but finally presents a new mixed literary genre as a way to express the surprising quality of Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection.

6. *Major genre forms exhibit flexibility and can be used in surprising ways*. In a real sense, a genre pattern is a theoretical abstraction derived by scholars observing specific concrete examples. Concretizing the genre involves choices and even allows creativity on the part of the speaker or writer.

Genres carry the generalizable resources of particular events: but specific actions or utterances must use those resources to accomplish new purposes in each unrepeatable milieu. Each utterance, each use of a genre, demands real work; beginning with the given, something different must be created.¹²

This means that when we interpret NT texts we must analyze how, for example, a legal genre, dialogue genre, or story genre is, in fact, used. Genres significant to a culture, shaped over generations, are not inflexible vessels into which content is poured. Rather, they are supple and malleable organic forms that can be shaped to convey old insights while creating new ones. In the NT, Paul’s creative use of the epistolary form illustrates this dynamic. For example, the apostle revised the typical salutation by adding a “grace and peace” greeting and then changed the normal “thanksgiving” section by both Christianizing and expanding it.

Bakhtin’s thinking definitely enriches our understanding of the character and function of genres in a culture. Each genre is distinct and perspectival, is socially shaped and located, plays its part in a cultural repertoire of genre forms, bears cultural memory, and is both modifiable and flexible.

2.3 The Task of Identifying and Analyzing Genres

The form and shape of every portion of the NT have resulted from genre choices made by someone or some group at some point in the development of the tradition. That choice of genre, it should be obvious, is not trivial. It carries implications for the interpretive understanding of that text, including its rhetorical impact on hearers today. Hence, it is important to arrive at a process that can provide guidance for identifying and analyzing genre forms.

1. *Learning to recognize general types of literature in the New Testament*. Even a rapid reading of the NT alerts the reader to some obvious literary types. For example, a perusal of the Gospel of Matthew in the NRSV reveals a narrative style that incorporates shorter stories. Occasionally material within the larger narrative is indented, its lines presented in a parallel or

8. Morson and Emerson, “Theory of Genres,” 278.

9. Morson and Emerson, “Theory of Genres,” 280.

10. Morson and Emerson, “Theory of Genres,” 288.

11. Morson and Emerson, “Theory of Genres,” 277.

12. Morson and Emerson, “Theory of Genres,” 291.

poetic style. Numerous quotations of texts in the Hebrew Scriptures are presented in this manner. But there are other forms as well. The beatitudes in 5:3-10 repeat a paralleling pattern. The Lord's Prayer in 6:9b-13 discloses a poetic form. The NRSV's formatting of 10:34-39, with its allusion to Mic 7:6, demonstrates that many of Jesus' sayings utilize rhythmic parallelism, a chief characteristic of Hebrew poetry.¹³ Carefully shaped thought-lines in Jesus' sayings often represent synonymous or antithetical parallelism. The former, found more frequently, includes lines that express the same or similar thought in somewhat different words; the latter consists of parallel lines that voice the opposite thought. Both types of parallelism appear in Matt 10:34-39, and this cluster of Jesus' sayings can be easily lined out in the following manner to make explicit this poetic patterning:

Antithetical Parallelism

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth;
I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Synonymous Parallelism

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;
and whoever loves son or daughter more than me
is not worthy of me;
and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me
is not worthy of me.

Antithetical Reversed Parallelism (Chiasm)

Those who find their life will lose it,
and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

In addition to the narratives of the Gospels, which incorporate sayings material and other poetic units such as prayers or liturgical formulas, the

reader also discovers the narrative form in Acts and Revelation. In Revelation, however, the narrative relates an apocalyptic vision received by a seer. Even a quick look at the NRSV translation of the Book of Revelation reveals that this apocalypse incorporates a variety of other genres: letter forms (2:1-3-22), hymnic and doxological forms (4:8b, 11; 5:9-10, 12, 13b; 7:10, 12), a funeral dirge form (18:2-3), and various prophetic forms.

Turning to the Pauline writings, the reader encounters a Hellenistic letter form, including its subgenres of salutation, thanksgiving, body, exhortation (or *paraenesis*), travelogue, greeting, doxology, blessing, and benediction. The reader should sense that the Pauline letters offer a quite different genre of literature from that of the narrative worlds of the Gospels and Acts. They involve more manifestly a style of rhetorical persuasion and argumentation. Other NT writings adopt a letter form (e.g., James, 1-2 Peter) with rather different results from the genuine letters of Paul. Hebrews offers a treatise-like genre and functions as a rather sophisticated theological argument with a pronounced hortatory element.

2. *Learning to analyze the interplay between narrative and speech in the Gospels and Acts.* One useful way an interpreter can analyze smaller textual units in the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and John is to observe carefully the alternation between narration and speech in the inner development of a pericope.¹⁴ This analysis results in the following elementary classification of forms:

- *Action Story* (including most Miracle Stories): This type of story can include limited speech, but the narration of the action clearly governs the story (e.g., Mark 7:31-37).
- *Pronouncement Story*: The initial narration of action or of a person's question (often that of an opponent) prepares the way for the concluding saying of the story's protagonist (e.g., Mark 2:23-28 culminates in Jesus' final declarations in vv. 27-28).
- *Dialogical Story*: Dialogue between two characters¹⁵ dominates the story (e.g., the temptation story in Matt 4:1-11).
- *Monological Argument Story*: The speech of one character in the larger

14. For the basic categorization of stories that results from an analysis of the interplay between narration and speech I am indebted to Vernon Robbins of Emory University.

15. It is important to understand that a "group" such as the crowd or the Pharisees often serves as a single character in the Gospel stories. See Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 51.

13. See "Literary Forms in the Gospels," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy (New York: Oxford University, 1991) 398, for a brief explanation with examples of biblical parallelism.

narrative overshadows everything else. The most obvious examples appear in the Gospel of John, even though Jesus' monologues often follow question-and-answer dialogues (e.g., John 3:1-21).

- *Dialogue*: The narration is largely or completely absent and the speech of two characters appears in the form of a dialogical exchange. Little material in the Gospels and Acts represents this type, although the "Farewell Discourses" in John 13-16 are a dialogue in which Jesus' speech surpasses in importance the questions and interjections of his disciples.

- *Monologue*: The speech of one character in the larger narrative is given singular prominence. The major segments in the Gospel of Matthew devoted to the extended speech of Jesus provide examples of this type (e.g., Jesus' teachings in Matt 5:3-7:27, typically labeled his "Sermon on the Mount").

- *Citation Story*: In this type of story, a citation of a text with clear authority for the audience occupies a central place. In the Gospels and Acts these citations are almost exclusively of texts in the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., Matt 1:18-25).

3. *Learning to recognize the NT's rich and varied repertoire of genres*. At this point, it is important for the beginning interpreter of the NT to understand that repeated reading of NT writings in English translation or even a painstaking analysis of the interplay between the use of narration and speech in biblical materials will not allow one to discover all the genre forms that scholars have identified and analyzed over the years. In addition to reading and analysis, the novice in NT interpretation must also study scholarly resources that classify, describe, and provide examples of the various genres, since in many respects the Hellenistic world is alien to persons in the twentieth century.

Scholars have identified genres in the NT by studying forms in both biblical and extrabiblical literature. Many of these identified genre forms exhibit similarities with genres used in the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet it is often difficult to determine if a specific NT genre owes its patterned structure and content primarily to the Jewish tradition, to the Greco-Roman milieu, or to an interaction of these cultural worlds during the Hellenistic period. The following list of genres is catalogued under the three major sections of the NT: Pauline letters, Gospels and Acts, and other writings.¹⁶

16. This list is based on David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, IBC 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987); Bailey and Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament*, and articles in *ABD*.

The Pauline Tradition:

- letter genre
- apocalyptic speech (relating visions of the divinely revealed future)
- other apocalyptic forms
- speech forms (judicial, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric)
- encomium (form designed to praise a person)
- salutation
- thanksgiving
- creed and confession
- prayer
- hymnic form
- blessing and doxology
- greeting and benediction
- diatribe (a dialogical form with a moral purpose)
- midrashic form (use of an authoritative text for a later situation)
- paranensis (a form of exhortation)
- parennetical topoi (statements focused on particular themes and topics)
- vice and virtue lists (lists of proscribed and recommended behaviors)
- household code (or *Hausstafel*)
- chiasm (form exhibiting reversed parallelism of two or more elements)
- travelogue

The Gospels and Acts:

- Gospel genre (related to ancient biography and history)
- sayings of Jesus (involves various aphorisms, including beatitudes, woes, maxims, prophetic and apocalyptic sayings, legal sayings, etc.)
- proverb (unattributed wisdom saying)
- dialogue and monologue
- parable (including similitude, parable proper, and example story)
- revelatory speech (in John's Gospel)
- pronouncement story (variously labeled as paradigm, apophthegm, and chreia)
- miracle story (including exorcism story)
- call story (related to commissioning story)
- stories about Jesus (including infancy and passion narratives)

ment, IBC 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987); Bailey and Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament*, and articles in *ABD*.

- genealogy
- summary report
- hymnic form
- prayer
- liturgy
- midrashic form
- chiasmic form
- symposium (dinner setting for dialogue, discourse, and other forms)

Other Writings

- apocalypse
- homily
- baptismal liturgy
- treatise

4. *Identifying the Structural Features of Specific Genres.* The scholarly research leading to genre identification has proceeded in at least two ways. First, scholars have identified the "family resemblances" germane to a specific genre category. Subsequent investigation often refines and subdivides such a category on the basis of observation of elements that distinguish various types within the genre. Beginning interpreters need to familiarize themselves with the "family resemblances" that characterize a particular genre and, wherever applicable, the more sophisticated process of subdividing a genre into distinguishable subtypes. The need for such detailed knowledge is best illustrated by describing three genres, one from each of the lists noted above:

Diatribē:¹⁷ Although the word "diatribe" has come to have a negative modern meaning, it can simply mean "discourse" or a "short ethical treatise or lecture."¹⁸ The term was originally associated with the lectures and conversations employed in philosophical schools, but "the modern scholarly concept of the diatribe is most closely linked to the use of the word for the records, literary by-products, or imitations of such teaching activity."¹⁹ Thus, the diatribe was a rhetorical method used for moral-ped-

agogical purposes. The clearest examples of its use in the NT are in Romans, especially 3:1-9 and 3:27-4:2 (cf. also 6:1, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14, 19; 11:1, 19).

As Stowers notes, the diatribe style combines smoothly with Paul's epistolary style. The diatribe pursues a conversation in which the author's direct address is aimed at an imaginary "discussion partner."²⁰ The conversation normally proceeds with the imaginary partner expressing objections in the form of questions, which provide the author the opportunity to supply answers to the objections. Sometimes the questions arise from false inferences drawn from the teacher's words. The teacher can use irony and sarcasm. The diatribe form is appropriate to a variety of topics relating to morality and manner of life, and often takes on a hortatory tone.

Pronouncement Story:²¹ This term is used of a brief story that culminates in a saying (and sometimes an action) of Jesus. Such a story has two main parts, the setting for the pronouncement and the pronouncement itself, that is, "the response and the situation provoking the response."²² Often in the Synoptic Gospels, this type of story presents an antagonistic confrontation between Jesus and his opponents.

Scholars have consistently placed eleven stories in the Synoptic Gospels within this literary genre (Mark 2:1-5-17, 18-22, 23-28; 3:31-34; 10:13-16, 17-22, 35-40; 12:13-17, 18-27; 14:3-9; Luke 14:1-6), but they have used different terms for this type of story: apophthegm (Bultmann), paradigm (Dibelius), and pronouncement story (Taylor). More recently, some scholars have recovered the ancient rhetorical category "chreia" (Hock, Mack, Robbins), or have used the less technical term "anecdote" (Robbins) to refer to any kind of concise story or anecdote that attributes a notable statement or action to a specific person.²³

Because of its wide and varied use in the Hellenistic period, the chreia has significantly enlarged the working definition of what constitutes a pronouncement story so that over one hundred textual units in the Gospels and Acts are now being classified under this genre.²⁴ Yet at the same time some scholars have refined their analysis of pronouncement stories by distinguishing subtypes. For example, Tannehill has divided them into

17. See Stanley K. Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans*, SBLDS 57 (Chico: Scholars, 1981); *idem*, "Diatribe," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988) 71-84; and *idem*, "Diatribe," in *ABD*, 2:190-93. Compare also Bailey and Vander Broek, *Literary Forms*, 38-42.

18. LSJ, 416.

19. Stowers, "Diatribe" (*ABD*), 190.

20. Stowers, "Diatribe" (*ABD*), 191.

21. Compare the two articles in *ADB* on "Apophthegm" by Vernon K. Robbins (1:307-9); and "Chreia" by Ronald F. Hock (1:912-14). See also Bailey and Vander Broek, *Literary Forms*, 114-22.

22. Robbins, "Apophthegm," 307.

23. Robbins, "Apophthegm," 307-8.

24. Robbins, "Apophthegm," 308-9.

correction stories, commendation stories, objection stories, quest stories, inquiry stories, and description stories.²⁵

Apocalypse.²⁶ The Book of Revelation provides the best known Christian example of the apocalypse genre. Hanson suggests that the first two verses of Revelation mention the basic elements in this narrative genre: (1) a revelation given by God, (2) communicated through an "otherworldly mediator," (3) directed to a "human sect," (4) "disclosing future events," and (5) often including a clear note of admonition.²⁷ Apocalypse is thus the term reserved for a complex apocalyptic narrative such as the Book of Revelation, which has at its center a visionary account. But this Christian apocalypse makes use of numerous briefer genres such as letter, doxology, blessing, and victory song.

2.4 *The Relationship of Genre Analysis to Other Exegetical Methods*

As we have noted, genre analysis builds on the efforts of the form critics, who analyzed genre forms that originated in an oral tradition. Yet it also investigates genres that began as literary forms. Moreover, genre analysis benefits from an interplay with other methods described in this volume.

Because genre analysis views genre forms as essentially social phenomena, it can profit immensely from historical study that employs social-scientific perspectives (see ch. 4 above). The more we can learn about the cultural patterns and realities of the Hellenistic world, the more we will understand the biblical repertoire of genres. Further, increased awareness of extra-canonical Jewish texts (ch. 5) and Greco-Roman literature (ch. 6) can disclose a wide range of genres employed in both realms of literature, genres that frequently have their counterparts in the NT writings. A significant task, then, is to determine whether and how known genres were adapted or modified by NT communities and which of these known genres were neglected or ignored by NT authors and communities.²⁸

25. See Bailey and Vander Broek, *Literary Forms*, 115-16, for definitions and examples of these six subtypes.

26. See Aune, *Literary Environment*, 226-52; Bailey and Vander Broek, *Literary Forms*, 201-10; and Paul D. Hanson, A. Kirk Grayson, John J. Collins, and Adela Yarbro Collins, "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism," *ADB*, 1:279-92.

27. Paul D. Hanson, "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: The Genre," *ADB*, 1:279-80, here 279.

28. See, e.g., Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, LEC 7 (Philadelphia 1979).

Obviously, literary genres use the grammatical and syntactical devices of the Greek language (see ch. 8), but they also involve utterances that employ linguistic structures in larger patterns with specific perspectives on real life. Narrative criticism (ch. 12) is a comprehensive analysis that includes sensitivity to the use of incorporated genres in the Gospels or Acts or in apocalyptic narrative such as Revelation. Rhetorical criticism (ch. 13), in its analysis of an entire writing (e.g., a Pauline letter) or shorter segments, must also be aware of genre patterns. Rhetorical practices of the ancient world created or at least refined specific genres.²⁹

Since genres function as "organs of memory," they have much to do with how certain texts in the OT are used in the NT (see ch. 11). Their potential for a surplus of meaning enriches the scriptural echoes.

Liberation hermeneutics (ch. 16) and feminist hermeneutics (ch. 17) have among their concerns the ideological perspective of biblical texts. Is a specific text articulated by the perspective of the controlling class or the oppressed class? Is it perhaps told from an androcentric perspective? Since every genre offers a specific perspective on some aspect of experience, that perspective can be analyzed from its ideological slant. Feminist and liberationist approaches might be used to ask how the repertoire of biblical genres is heard and received by women and oppressed peoples.

Often in the past, theologians and ethicists have attended only to the content of texts, not their literary forms. In so doing, they have missed important clues for meaning. All study of the NT texts for theological and ethical enterprises needs to take seriously the import of the genre form of texts.

Clearly, genre analysis cannot proceed in isolation from other methods, especially rhetorical and narrative criticism. And we never encounter genre forms in abstraction, but rather always as they appear in concrete textual examples. Despite its limitations, genre analysis can prove invaluable to the interpreter of NT texts.

phila: Westminster, 1987) 174-213, for a careful discussion of Jewish literature and the development of canon.

29. Consult, for example, Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), and Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1989), for introductions to the use of rhetoric in the ancient world and its application not only to epistolary material but also to Gospel narrative texts in the NT.

3. Genre Analysis in Practice

The fruitfulness of genre analysis can only be demonstrated by examining the genre forms germane to specific NT texts. On the one hand, interpreters need to consider the genre of the entire work in which a particular text appears; on the other, they must attend to any shorter genre forms within the text itself.

Since genres exhibit considerable fluidity and flexibility, interpreters need to observe closely how the genre form is precisely executed in the text under consideration. Although the scholarly description of genres is helpful, it unavoidably involves a theoretical abstraction. In the final analysis, the interpreter's knowledge of these scholarly discussions only guides the study of the particular text by providing clues regarding the genres.

In what follows I examine three texts to determine how genre analysis produces important insights into biblical texts. The three passages are rather lengthy segments of a Synoptic Gospel (Luke 3:1-20), a Pauline letter (1 Cor 11:2-34), and a Christian apocalypse (Rev 5:1-14).

3.1 Luke 3:1-20

In the NRSV Luke 3:1-20 is presented in paragraph form except for the scriptural citation in vv. 4b-6, where the poetic form is presented in indented parallel lines. In Luke's Gospel, this narrative segment featuring John son of Zechariah in the desert follows the Lukan stories that relate the circumstances surrounding the births of John and Jesus and precedes the description of Jesus' baptism, genealogy, and temptation and the inauguration of his public ministry.

But what more can we discover about the generic character of this Lukan text? The following outline results from an analysis of the alternation between narration and speech in Luke 3:1-20:

- 3:1-6: Narration reminiscent of a prophetic call story
- vv. 1-2a: the historical context of John's prophetic call
- v. 2b: the prophetic call formula: "the word of the Lord came to John..."
- v. 3: resulting prophetic action: John preaches a baptism of repentance leading to forgiveness
- vv. 4-6: authoritative citation: quotation of the prophet's words in Isa 40:3-5 with "in the wilderness" providing a prophetic rationale for John's presence in the wilderness

3:7-9: Monological prophetic speech story

- vv. 7a: the prophet John addresses the crowds coming for baptism
- vv. 7b-9: John's prophetic message: calls for authentic repentance in light of divine judgment

3:10-14: Dialogue story in a question-and-answer format:

- prophetic speech provokes reactions
- vv. 10-11: first exchange: the crowds
- vv. 12-13: second exchange: the tax collectors
- v. 14: third exchange: the soldiers

3:15-17: Monological story: John responds to the crowds' messianic speculation

- v. 15: narrative transition
- vv. 16-17: the prophet John responds to the crowd by pointing to the activity of the "stronger one" who is coming

3:18-20: Short narrative summary

- v. 18: the prophet John preaches and exhorts the people further
- vv. 19-20: Herod's hostile reaction to the prophet's indictment

This outline shows that vv. 1-6 of this Lukan narrative section is patterned according to the features of a prophetic call story: (1) It begins with a reference to the time period for the prophet's call, (2) it includes the prophetic call formula, and (3) it ends with a summary description of the prophetic preaching, providing evidence that John has accepted his call.³⁰

Normally included in a prophetic call story is the content of the "word of the Lord" (see, e.g., Jeremiah 1). In the Lukan narrative, the authoritative citation in 3:4-6 likely plays this role of announcing God's direct speech. The quotation of Isa 40:3-5, with its synonymous parallel couplets, provides a prophetic rationale for John's presence in the wilderness, describes his prophetic role in terms of preparing the way of the Lord, and thus pictures him as the eschatological prophet anticipating the long-awaited arrival of God's salvation.

Then, in 3:7-9, the narrative employs what could be termed "prophetic speech." This monological form efficiently announces the prophet's mes-

30. See Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967).

sage of judgment, which provokes reactions from three groups: the crowds, the tax collectors, and the soldiers. These responses to the prophet's call for repentance are narrated in the form of a dialogue story that fashions the three exchanges according to a question-and-answer device. Clearly, the prophet John's preaching is having its effect, and probably in the three reactions the author intends to represent the full range of responses to John's message.

Next, 3:15-17 provides a brief narrative transition to a new topic, the crowds' messianic speculation about John. This unit is designed as a monologue story because the prophet John alone speaks. He uses antithetical lines to contrast his baptism by water with the Coming One's baptism by the Holy Spirit and fire (hints of the Messiah's judging activity).

This Lukan narrative about John concludes with a short narrative summary that describes the prophet's preaching and Herod's hostile reaction to John's indictment of the ruler. Herod's imprisonment of John prepares for the baptism, temptation, and public ministry of Jesus.

Luke thus casts this narrative about John in prophetic genres (prophetic call story, prophetic judgment-speech, etc.) and so reintroduces familiar scriptural forms laden with meaning and authority. They bear the memory of the past into the present. For two or more centuries, the Jews had experienced a cessation of the classical prophets, so that now these genres, with their claim for John's prophetic activity and message, would have had a surprising impact on a first-century audience. But the prophetic forms are applied to a changed situation. God calls John as a final prophet in the time of Roman rulers and Jewish high priests and not Jewish kings, in the wilderness of Judea along the Jordan River and not in the city of Jerusalem near the temple. Nonetheless, the genres authorize John as an intermediary between God and the people, as one who speaks God's potent word, which creates crisis for the hearers. They confer on the activity of this strange figure in the Judean wilderness, already executed by Herod Antipas, their perspective that God acts decisively to shape and reshape historical events. The genre's perspective puts the hearer's life under divine scrutiny, yet also offers new hope for divine deliverance through repentance and trust in the promised Messiah.

3.2 1 Corinthians 11:2-34

Obviously, the major form employed here by Paul is that of a letter genre. This genre permits the apostle a wide range of rhetorical options for in-

structing his hearers and persuading them to think and behave in ways appropriate to the gospel that he shared with them. In this section of the letter, Paul is responding to a number of problematic situations in the Corinthian community. The text under consideration can be divided into two topical segments, 11:2-16 and 11:17-34.

Although 11:2-16 is notoriously difficult for contemporary readers to interpret, it is clear that Paul's argument seeks to persuade certain women to change their practice of praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered. To do so, he argues from Scripture by alluding to Genesis 1-2. Within his epistolary style, he thus employs another genre form. His argumentation is midrashic in character. Midrash³¹ is a term for an investigation or interpretation of a scriptural text, "a type of literature, oral or written, which has its starting point in a fixed canonical text, considered the revealed word of God by the midrashist and his audience, and in which this original verse is explicitly cited or clearly alluded to."³² The identification of midrashic argumentation is significant in the interpretation of this Pauline segment because the key to the midrashic genre is the belief that texts in the Hebrew Scriptures hold utmost authority for the community. An appeal to specific scriptural texts can establish the persuasiveness of one's argument.

Yet in some situations there can be a conflict of scriptural interpretation between two parties appealing to the same canonical text. In this passage Paul's use of the midrashic form may suggest just such a contest over the meaning of specific texts. Perhaps as a counter to the practice of certain Corinthian women who are exercising leadership roles in worship with their heads uncovered, Paul appeals in 11:8-12 to authoritative texts, Gen 1:26-27 and 2:18-23, to develop his theological case. These women may be asserting their right to behave as they do in light of their understanding of a claim in a baptismal formula that gender inequalities have been abolished in Christ (see Gal 3:27-28; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:10-11). Since this early baptismal formula, especially the form in Gal 3:27-28, intimates a new understanding of male and female in relationship to the image of God, it is possible that the women are also implicitly appealing to Gen 1:26-27. If this is the case, then Paul is here engaged in an exegetical battle over the meaning of the Genesis text.³³

31. See Bailey and Vander Broek, *Literary Forms*, 42-49; Gary G. Porton, "Midrash," *ABD*, 4:818-22.

32. Porton, "Midrash," 819.

33. Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 116-34, spells out more fully the case for this possibility.

The Corinthian women prophets are assuming one interpretation of that text, whereas in this instance the apostle Paul is pursuing another one that views the man as the "head" of the woman.

Turning to 11:17-34, Paul's words in v. 17 ("Now in the following instructions I do not commend you . . .") recall for us his commendation in v. 2 ("I commend you . . ."). Although it is obvious that the apostle is troubled about the way the Corinthians are celebrating the Lord's Supper, some attention to genre can sharpen our understanding of how Paul goes about addressing the situation.

This passage subdivides easily into three sections. In 11:17-22 Paul describes two problems that are evident when the Christians gather in one place ("house") to share their ritual meal together — namely, the division between rich and poor and the neglect of the poor by the rich. Next, in 11:23-26, Paul reminds his hearers of the essential purpose of the eucharistic meal by quoting words undoubtedly repeated during the enactment of the meal. Finally, in 11:27-34, Paul suggests solutions for the glaring disunity manifested when they gather for the Lord's Supper.

But, more precisely, what can genre analysis contribute to our understanding of this passage? Paul's use in 11:23b of the technical words for "receiving" and "transmitting" an established tradition makes clear that in 11:23b-25 he is inserting a liturgically formulated genre:

the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed
took a loaf of bread,
and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said,
"This is my body that is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."
In the same way he took the cup also,
after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me."

This short narrative, which recalls Jesus' actions and words on the night of his betrayal, is a liturgical formula developed and shaped in early Christian worship. It recalls the defining communal ritual that links their life together with the life and death of the Lord Jesus. This liturgical genre possesses the highest authority for the community since it reenacts their Lord's last supper that anticipated his ultimate sacrifice of his own body and blood

for the forgiveness of human sins. By referring to this liturgical formula, Paul appeals to the ritual activity that defines who his readers are as the new family of God. It is like quoting an oft-repeated family story that everyone knows points to the very identity of the family.

By quoting these liturgical words in his letter, Paul puts them in a new context for the Corinthians. They hear these words repeated wherever they worship together, but now they are invited to discover a fresh significance as the words are read from Paul's letter. Paul raises up this high-authority liturgical genre, so laden with poignant memories of Jesus' last supper with his disciples, including all the denials and betrayals, to prompt them to reexamine their practices associated with the meal, which contribute to their disunity.

Within the larger argument, Paul uses the familiar words used in enacting the Lord's Supper not only to critique practices of certain Corinthians when the church assembles to share the Supper, but also to provide a remedy for their disunity. As they all should understand, it is Jesus' death that makes the difference for the community. The gift of his body makes possible unity among those who represent his body as the church (cf. 10:16). Therefore, when Paul invites them to "discern the body" in 11:29, he surely implies not only their awareness of the sacramental body of Christ in the meal but also their need to acknowledge one another as members of the communal body.

Moreover, as many scholars have noted,³⁴ it seems likely that Paul adds his own explanation in 11:26 to the liturgical tradition. This addition, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes," seeks to convince the Corinthians that the character of their communal life provides a powerful proclamation of the purpose of Jesus' death: to create unity among people whose economic and social circumstances are quite different. Hence, Paul uses the form repeated in the worshipping community (11:23b-25), but he also breaks it open to new meaning by adding his word of interpretation (11:26).

3.3 *Revelation 5:1-14*

This final text represents what is central to the apocalyptic genre — a revelatory vision of the future that God has planned to a human being,

34. So, for example, Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians* (New York: Crossroad, 1987) 78.

mediated by a divine figure. Apocalyptic literature characteristically contains allegorical features, a code language that communicates more to insiders than to those not privy to the intended meaning. Here John depicts his experience as both visual and auditory: "I looked, and there in heaven was an open door. And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place hereafter'" (4:1).

Thereupon, 4:2-5:14 unfolds the first majestic vision in Revelation, that of the heavenly throne room where the destiny of human beings will be decided. The awesome vision in 4:2-11 of the One sitting on the throne (a clear allusion to God) sets the stage for the symbolic vision of Christ in 5:1-14. The reader soon discovers more than surface meaning in the details of the vision: for instance, a scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals, the lamb standing yet as if slain, its seven horns and seven eyes, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders, each with a golden bowl full of incense. The narrative itself assists the reader by explaining that the lamb's horns and eyes represent "the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (5:6) and that the bowls of incense held by the elders represent "the prayers of the saints" (5:8). In addition, the reader is invited to ponder the significance of the various numbers — four, seven, and twenty-four. Numerology plays a part in the apocalyptic genre.

The drama of ch. 5 begins with the seer's observation of the scroll, sealed with seven seals, in the right hand of the One seated on the throne (5:1) and the appearance of a mighty angel who voices the decisive question, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" (5:2). When apparently no one in the entire cosmos is worthy to do this, the seer himself becomes a direct participant in the throne scene. As he weeps on hearing the sad news, one of the elders addresses him by announcing that it is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who is worthy to open the seals. But at this point in the vision, there is great irony. The "Lion" is none other than the Lamb, slain yet standing. It is the Lamb who goes to the One on the throne to take the scroll.

This action provides the dramatic climax for the vision. The Lamb's action prompts the introduction of a victory song genre into the apocalyptic narrative. The "new song" (cf. Isa 42:10) acclaims Christ, the Lamb, as the One worthy to open the scroll of judgment because he alone accomplished redemption by his death:

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slaughtered

and by your blood you ransomed for God
saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;
you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God,
and they will reign on earth.

"You are worthy . . . because of . . . (what you have accomplished)" suggests a pattern for a victory song that could have been used in the ancient world to ascribe honor and praise to gods, conquerors, heroes, and rulers. In the ancient Greek world the term *hymnos* implied a song of praise to a god or some extraordinary human figure whose accomplishments altered the condition of life for the masses.³⁵

In 5:11-12 the chorus is expanded. Now the angels, living creatures, and elders join in the victory song until "myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands" are "singing with full voice":

Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered
to receive power and wealth and wisdom
and might and honor and glory and blessing!

This majestic song to Christ is characterized by a sevenfold (complete) ascription of praise. But even this is not the end of praise. Finally, the chorus is expanded to include all who have voice to praise; the unimaginable is described as all creatures in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea gather up the praise of ch. 4 with that of ch. 5. This universal chorus sounds forth a fourfold praise to God and to the Christ:

To the One seated on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might
forever and ever!

"Amen" is added by the four living creatures, and the elders worship.

These song genres of adulation and praise, situated as they are in the throne room, might have prompted Christians in Asia Minor to recall adulation directed to earthly rulers, especially the Roman emperor. But they would have to conclude that no earthly emperor could compare to their crucified Christ, in whose praise the entire universe breaks forth. For the first-century audience of Revelation, probably caught in conflict with Roman imperial power, these victory songs must have exercised a powerful

35. See M. Alfred Bichsel, "Hymns, Early Christian," *ABD*, 3:350-51.

and lasting effect. This breathtaking worship, with its soaring victory hymns that end the chapter, celebrates the crucified Christ as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19:16) even in the midst of their struggle with the power and demands of the Roman Empire.

Songs and hymns build communal solidarity, particularly for a Christian community under pressure. A victory song in praise of God and Jesus Christ offers a needed perspective to persecuted worshippers: It is not earthly rulers but Jesus, the Lord of lords, who possesses the ultimate power and is to be feared. When Christians fear the worst from evil rulers and experience their own impotence to defend themselves, hymns and songs ("We Shall Overcome," for instance) have amazing power to engender in them hope in God and perseverance under pressure.

4. Suggestions for Further Reading

Within the last decade, an increasing number of books have focused on NT genres. All this research is indebted to the much earlier work of form critics, for example, Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (2d ed., Cambridge/London: Clarke, 1971); Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); and Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (2d ed., London: Macmillan, 1935).

A relatively short book by Amos N. Wilder (*The Language of the Gospel* [New York: Harper and Row, 1964]) did much to spark renewed interest in the various modes and genres of NT speech. Wilder analyzed the use of dialogue, story, parable, poem, and myth. Until recently Mikhail Bakhtin's germinal work on genres was largely unknown to the western world. For a helpful analysis and summary of his thought on the nature and function of genres, see Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, "Theory of Genre," in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaic* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1990) 271-305.

Various recent volumes offer comprehensive treatments of NT genres. David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, LEC 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), discusses the major literary genres: the Gospels in light of ancient biography and historiography, letters, and apocalypse. Aune has also edited a volume (*Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* [Atlanta: Scholars, 1988]) that includes essays by different authors on the following genres: chreia, household code, ancient Jewish synagogue homily, diatribe, ancient Greek letter,

Greco-Roman biography, and Greek novel. James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), provides definitions of over thirty literary forms, examples of their use in the NT, and comments regarding the value of genre recognition for interpretation. The most comprehensive survey in German of the variety and use of genres in the NT is Klaus Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament," *ANRW*, 2.25.2:1031-1432. Finally, for up-to-date articles on genres (apocalypse, apophthegm, aretology, beatitude, biography, blessing and curse, call story, chreia, dialogue, diatribe, epistle, genealogy, Gospel, historiography, homily form, household code, [early Christian] hymn, infancy narrative, letter, logion, midrash, miracle, myth [and mythology], [Hebrew] narrative, [Greek and Latin] novel, oracle, parable, parenthesis and proreptic, thanksgiving, virtue and vice list, and woe), see *ABD*.

See George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984), for the work of a classicist who introduces the reader to ancient rhetoric and its use in analyzing texts in the NT. Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, in *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1989), demonstrate how knowledge of the ancient chreia is helpful in interpreting the pronouncement stories in the Gospels and Acts.

John Dominic Crossan's work on aphorisms has notably advanced understanding of the sayings of Jesus (*In Fragments: The Aphorisms of Jesus* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983]). A comprehensive analysis of Jesus' parables according to structure and function is done by Bernard Brandon Scott in *Hear Then the Parable* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). Gerd Theissen's *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) provides a comprehensive investigation of the NT miracle stories. Finally, for treatments of epistolary literature of the Hellenistic world, including the Pauline letters, see William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, GBS (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), and Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in the Greco-Roman World*, LEC 5 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986). For other secondary works on the various genres in the NT, see the selected bibliographies in the volumes by Aune and Bailey and Vander Broek and in the relevant articles in *ABD*.