Major Elements of a Reformed Hermeneutic

1. The Holy Spirit Element
2. The Grammatical Element
3. ***The Literary Element***
4. The Historical Element
5. The Theological Element

The Literary Element

❑ *Genre:* A technical term for different types of writings or categories of literature
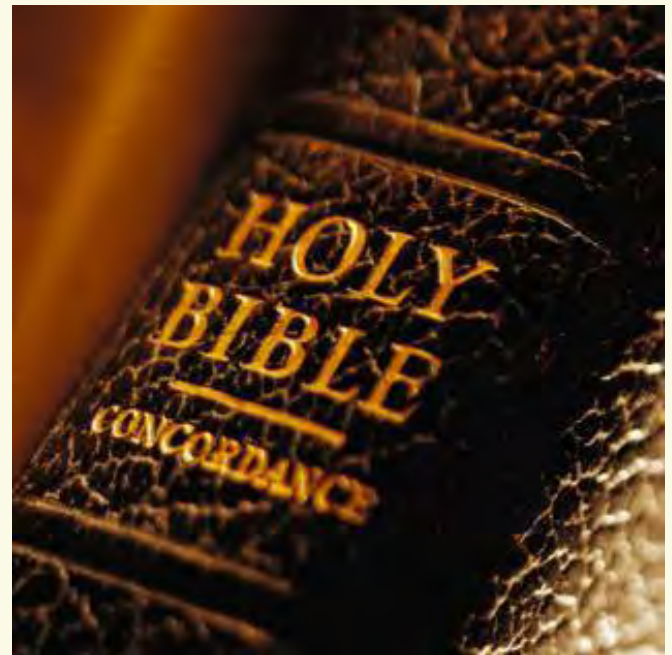
The Literary Element

Types of Genres in Scripture:

➢ History:

Genesis, Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Acts

➢ Letters:

Paul (13), John (3), Peter (2), James, Hebrews, Jude, Revelation 2-3

The Literary Element

➢ Poetry:

   Psalms, Song of Songs, much of prophetic material

➢ Wisdom:

   Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, some Psalms, James

➢ Apocalyptic:

   Revelation, Daniel 7-12, Zechariah, parts of Ezekiel, Mark 13
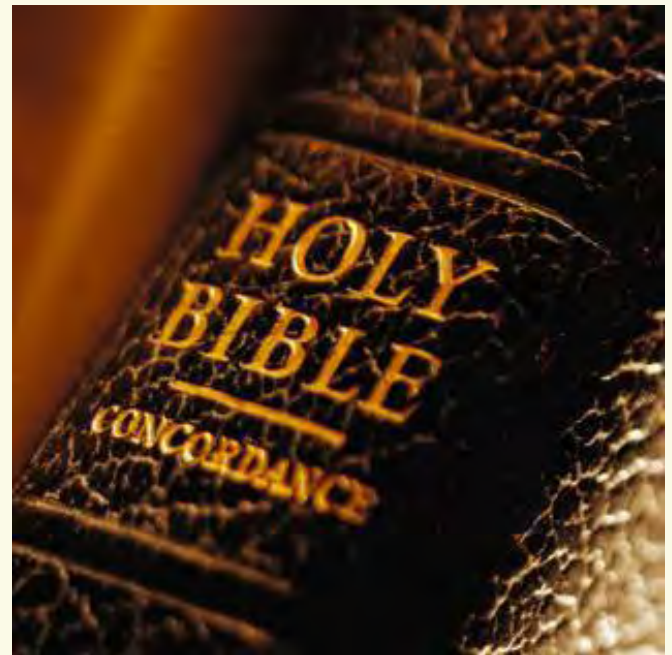
The Literary Element

➤Legal:

parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
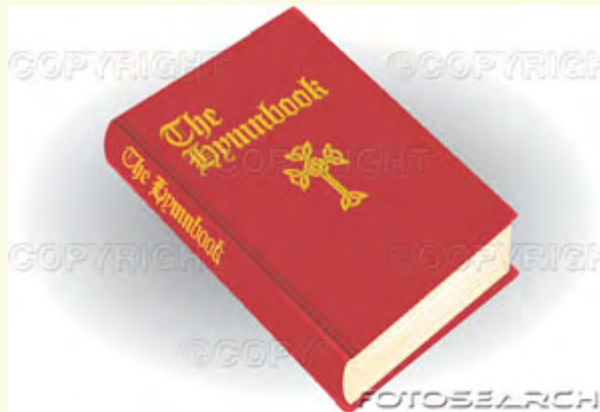
➤Gospels:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

➤Parables:

Four Gospels, parable of Nathan to David (2 Samuel 12:1-4)

The Literary Element

❑Psalm 92:1-2 (Poetry: "Merismus")

"It is good to praise the Lord

and make music to your name, O Most High,

to proclaim your love in the morning

and your faithfulness at night."
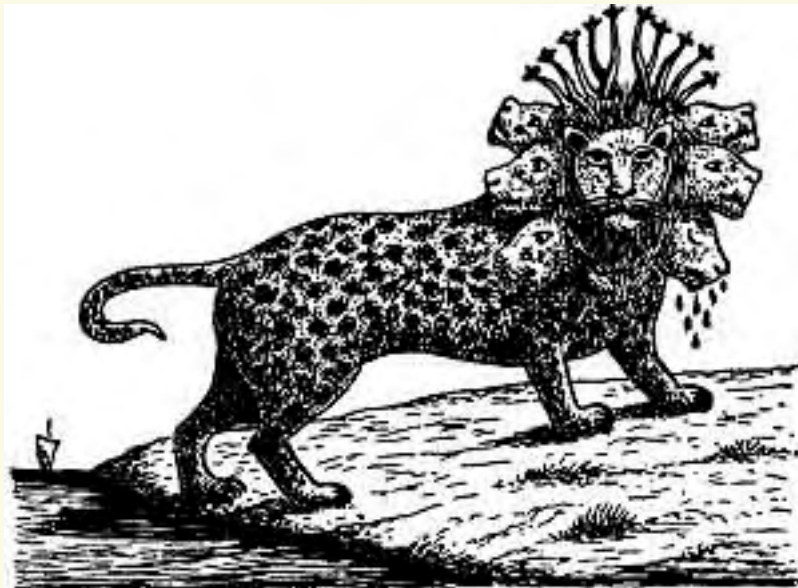
The Literary Element

❑Matthew 5:29 (Hyperbole)

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away."

The Literary Element

❑Revelation 13:1 (Apocalyptic)

"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads."

The Literary Element

❑ Revelation 13:1 (Apocalyptic)

"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads."

Elephant = ?

Noose = ?

1998

The Literary Element

❑Revelation 13:1 (Apocalyptic)

"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads."
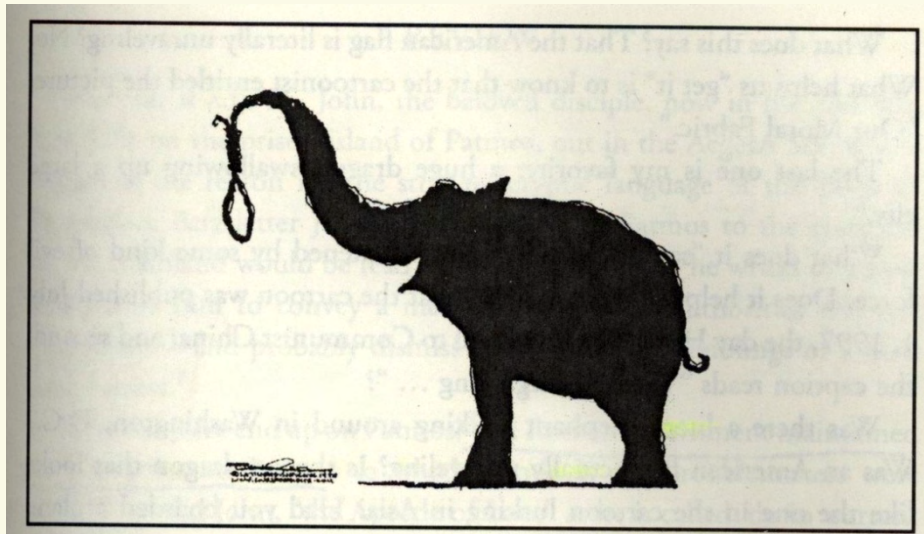
City = ?

Dragon = ?

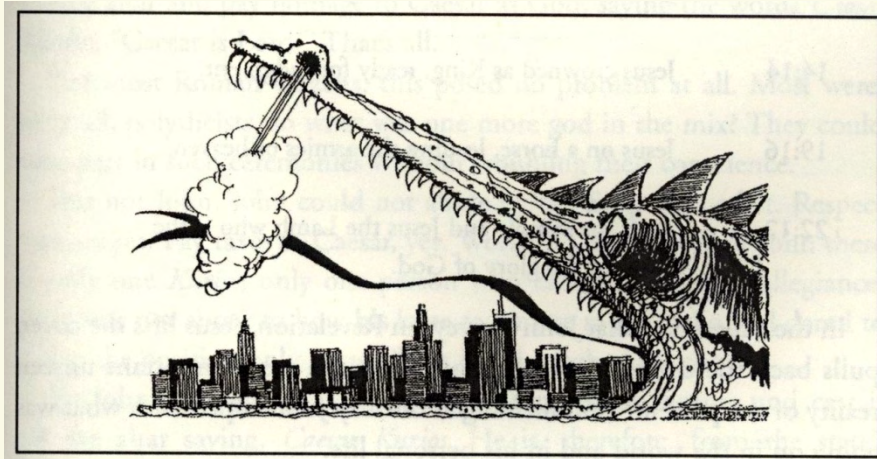"Today, Hong Kong …?
(July 1, 1997)

The Literary Element

❑Proverbs 26:4-5 (Wisdom)

"Do not answer a fool according to his folly,

or you will be like him yourself.

Answer a fool according to his folly,

or he will be wise in his own eyes."

The Literary Element

❑Luke 16:19-31 (Parable: Rich Man & Lazarus)

[19] "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. [20] At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores [21] and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. [22] The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side."

Frans the younger Francken (1581-1642)

The Literary Element

❑Luke 16:19-31 (Parable: Rich Man & Lazarus)

²³The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

Frans the younger Francken
(1581-1642)

The Literary Element

❑Luke 16:19-31 (Parable: Rich Man & Lazarus)

[25] "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. [26] And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' [27] "He answered,

Frans the younger Francken (1581-1642)

The Literary Element

❑ Luke 16:19-31 (Parable: Rich Man & Lazarus)

'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, ^{28} for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' ^{29} "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' ^{30} 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' ^{31} "He said

Frans the younger Francken (1581-1642)

The Literary Element

❑ Luke 16:19-31 (Parable: Rich Man & Lazarus)

to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Frans the younger Francken
(1581-1642)

The Literary Element

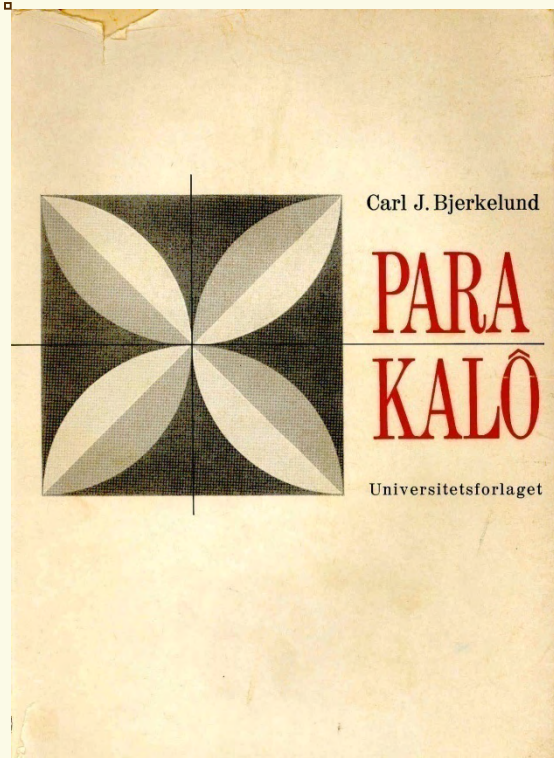❑Luke 16:19-31 (Parable: Rich Man & Lazarus)

Meaning: Wrong to make certain conclusions based on literal details of the parable

The Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus

The Literary Element

1. Literary Devices in **Letters**:
   Example: The "Appeal" Formula

Carl J. Bjerkelund, *Parakalô: Form, Funktion und Sinn der parakalô-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967).

The Literary Element

Example: The "Appeal" Formula

A. **Form**: 4 main parts

1. Verb "I appeal" (παρακαλῶ) or its synonym "I ask" (ἐρωτῶ) in the first person

2. The recipients of the appeal

3. Prepositional phrase indicating source of sender's authority to appeal (this element typically occurs only in official correspondence and not in private letters)

4. Content of the appeal: introduced by a "that" (ὅτι or ἵνα) clause

The Literary Element

Paul's letters: Four basic elements

Example: *Romans 12:1*

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"
1. The verb: "I appeal"
2. The recipients: "to you, brothers"
3. Prepositional phrase: "by the mercies of God"
4. The content of the appeal: "that you present …"

Other examples: Rom 15:30; 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; 4:16; 16:15-16; 2 Cor 2:8; 10:1-2; Phil 4:2; 1 Thess 4:1, 10b-12; 5:14; 2 Thess 3:14; Eph 4:1

The Literary Element

B. **Function**

- <u>Primary function</u>:

- to indicate a major transition in the text

- formula marks transition either from the end of the thanksgiving to the beginning of letter body (1 Cor 1:10; Phlm 8-9) or, as more typically happens, a transition within the body of letter (Rom 12:1; 15:30; 16:7; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Cor 10:1; Phil 4:2; 1 Thess 4:1; Eph 4:1)

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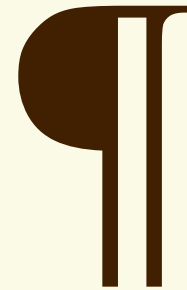
New Paragraph Sign

The Literary Element

B. **Function (cont)**

- <u>Secondary function</u>:
- appeal formula used in official correspon-
  dence when writer had a good relationship
  with recipients and confidently expected
  them to do contents of letter
- Appeal formula thus expresss a *more
  friendly, less heavy-handed tone*
- Paul uses the appeal formula in this
  nuanced manner, where his authority is
  not in question and he can make a request
  rather than a command in the confidence
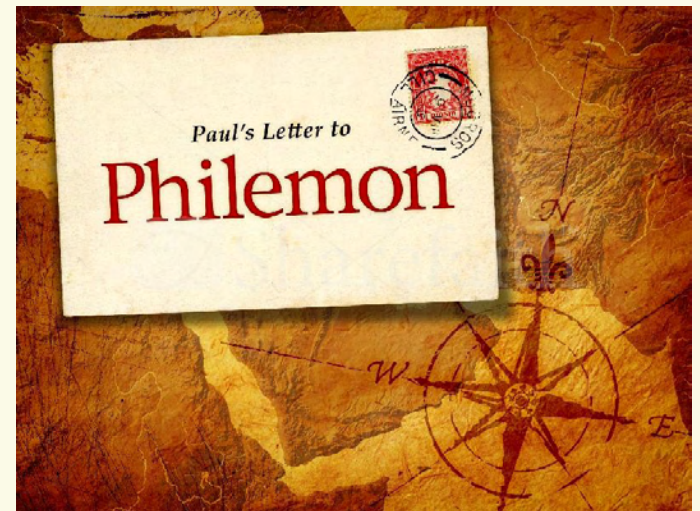 that his appeal will be obeyed

DO IT OR ELSE!

The Literary Element

C. **Appeal Formula in Philemon**

"Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and command you to do what you ought to do, more because of love I *appeal*—I, Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—I *appeal* to you concerning my child, to whom I gave birth in prison, Onesimus…" (vv 8-10)

The Literary Element

2. Literary Devices in **Hebrew Poetry**: Example: Inclusio

- *inclusio* (sometimes referred to as "bracketing" or "envelope structure"): the repetition of a key word, phrase or sentence at the beginning and ending of a literary unit, thereby functioning as bookends and marking the boundaries of that unit
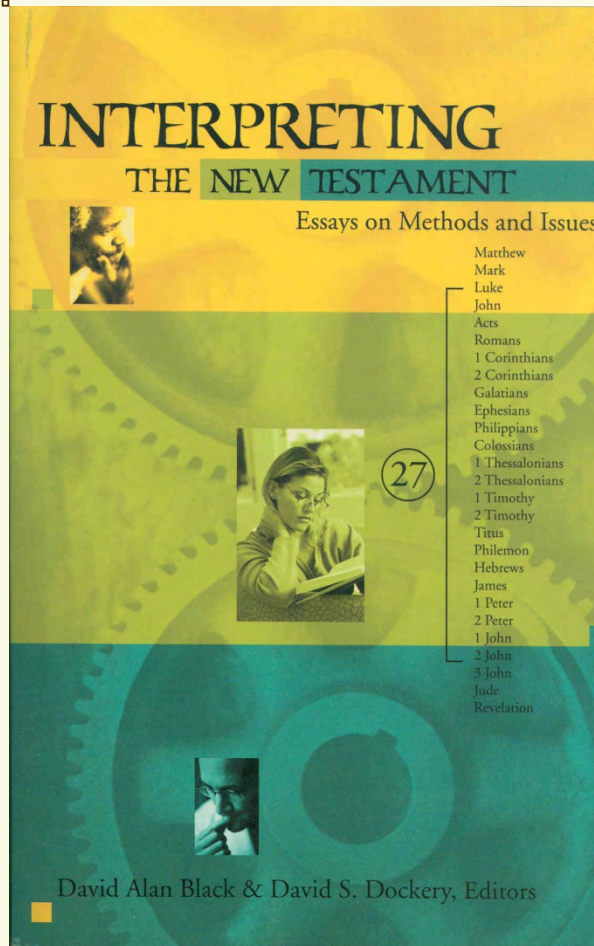
The Literary Element

2. Literary Devices in **Hebrew Poetry**:
   Example: Inclusio

Psalm 118:1-29

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
        his love endures forever" (verse 1)

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
        his love endures forever" (verse 29)

The Literary Element

Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "Literary Criticism," in *Interpreting the New Testament. Essays on Methods and Issues* (eds. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001) 148-167.

The Literary Element

Common Convictions of Literary Criticism #1:

- ❖ an appreciation for the sophisticated artistry and aesthetic quality of the text

- ❖ recognizes that the Bible is the result of conscious composition, careful patterning, and the strategic use of literary conventions prevalent in its day

- ❖ thus literary approach to scripture is necessary

The Literary Element

Common Convictions of Literary Criticism #2:

❖ a preoccupation with the form of the text

❖ concern not just on content of the text (*what* is said) but also on form of the text (*how* it is said)

❖ concern w/genre & how it impacts interpretation

❖ concern with identifying the various literary conventions used by a biblical author and under-standing what function these conventions have

The Literary Element
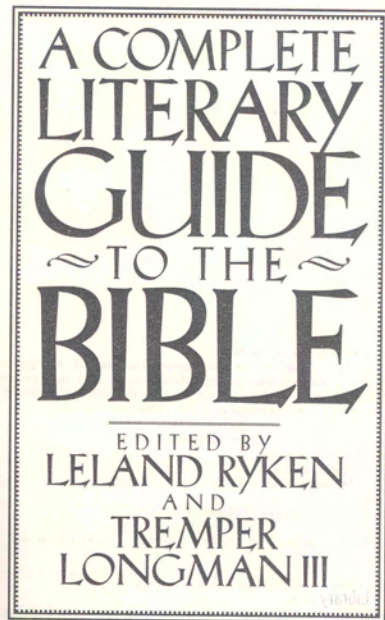
"We cannot fully comprehend the 'what' of New Testament writers (their religious content) without first paying attention to the 'how' (the literary modes in which the content is embodied)."

Leland Ryken, "The Literature of the New Testament," *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (eds. L. Ryken and T. Longman; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 367

The Literary Element

Weima's slogan:

"Form *supplements* but does not *supplant* content."

The Literary Element

Common Convictions of Literary Criticism #3:

❖ concern with treating texts as finished wholes

❖ *contra* liberal scholars who are preoccupied with various sources lying behind biblical text and how author redacted these sources

❖ *contra* conservative scholars who are pre-occupied with each individual part of text (e.g. verse-by-verse commentary) and thus "miss the forest for the trees"

The Literary Element

Common Convictions of Literary Criticism #4:

❖ exhibits an ahistorical orientation

❖ the historical uncertainties surrounding the author, sources, social context and readers of biblical text cause some modern interpreters to ignore historical questions and instead concentrate on literary features of the text

❖ example: treatment of individual Psalms