

**Study Questions for
Silva, *God, Language and Scripture* and Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies***

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The study questions below do not address every important issue in the relevant books. But they do highlight some of the key points—and they allow me to help you focus on the specific matters that I want you to get from these two crucial volumes. Neither book is large (both are less than 150 pgs.), but they are some of the most valuable books that you can read to help you begin to formulate a philosophy of the biblical languages and their use in ministry. Both are broader than just NT. Silva is the broadest in that he deals with both Greek and Hebrew, but Carson includes examples of OT issues as well. You need not know Hebrew to profit from Silva, so don't let that put you off. The questions will steer you towards the material that you can handle. *Do* return to Silva after you've had a year of Hebrew and you will discover as much profit from these sections as you did from the Greek-related material this time around.

I read Silva when it was first published, which was the last year that I was in the pastorate before moving to Kansas City to begin teaching Greek. There were a substantial number of propositions with which I violently disagreed at the time. But he pricked my thinking, so I read it again. And again. I wrestled with his arguments. I resisted them. I tried to ignore some of them. But he won. I could not defend many of my previous assumptions. He introduced me to a whole new perspective on the biblical languages. I had been trained in what I sometimes call “old school” Greek, i.e., Greek with no exposure to linguistics. As we have come to understand more about language in general (note the sub-title of Silva's book), we have been able to refine our understanding of the biblical languages. Many of you will not have this battle to fight—especially if you had me for first year Greek. But if you come from a more traditional background or if you first learned Greek many years ago, you will discover a new world here—and you may well have to “unlearn” some things as I did.

Carson's volume was not as earthshaking in the sense that I had to rethink some of my basic assumptions about language, but then he is dealing with issues more explicitly exegetical, though he often enters into grammatical and linguistic issues as well, especially in ch. 2. The second edition (which you are reading) is also a significant revision of the original book and as a result it also reflects many of the same issues that you will have encountered in Silva. There is much sage advice given here. You will sense (I hope!) Carson's heart for handling the Word of God in a responsible manner. There has been an enormous amount of mishandling Scripture, both in its interpretation/exegesis as well as in its communication. (For my thoughts on the communication end of it, see <<http://faculty.bbc.edu/rdecker/documents/preach.pdf>>.) Carson will start you on the right path—a path that Dr. Arp will continue to explore with you next semester in NT506, Greek Exegetical Methods. In many ways Carson's is an ideal “bridge book” in that he addresses some of the fundamental issues of language and introduces you to the questions of exegesis.

Many of the questions ask you to summarize or evaluate specific statements in the two books. Others, however, ask you to demonstrate that you understand the issues discussed by applying them to particular texts that are not addressed in the book. Some introduce you to some important grammatical issues (e.g., Granville Sharp Rule and Colwell's Rule). A few even pick up tangential issues and direct you on a brief side trip to explore matters that I consider important enough to form a digression from the main line of the argument. They are not intended as mechanical, fill-in-the-blank questions. They expect you to think critically and evidence comprehension of the material.

The "Mounce" font is necessary to read several of the questions. It is available on the course web site. If you download it *and install it correctly*, the f. should be Greek: αβγδε.

Question numbers below prefix the chapter number. When specific page references are given (not often) in Silva's volume, both original and combined volume pages are given (e.g., 11/199 refers to p. 11 in the original vol. and p. 199 in the combined ed.).

Answers should usually consist of a short paragraph essay. One word or one sentence responses are almost always inadequate. A few questions may require several paragraphs. It will help if you try to think "outside the box"—or in this case, outside the book. How does a particular topic relate to other theological or philosophical issues? You may even find it helpful at times to read other discussions of these topics to enable your understanding of the issues—and to write a better response. (I know that's perhaps a radical thought for some: reading more than the minimum asked/assigned. It all depends on whether you're trying to figure out how to get through seminary with the least possible effort or if you are seeking an education!) You may count any such reading as part of the collateral reading for the course.

I have identified (usually) two questions in each assigned section that I consider as particularly crucial. You would be wise to spend extra time on these (while giving an adequate, if briefer, answer to the other questions). These questions are indicated by using a slightly larger, bold sans font for the question number, thus: **2.2**.

Doing the minimum will earn the equivalent of a 'C' grade, i.e., "average"; extra thought and effort, clear prose, etc. will merit the equivalent of a 'B'; for an 'A' equivalent, you will usually need to reflect additional reading beyond Silva's book—not for every question, but for some of the key questions due in each section. (You should realize, however, that 'A' work on one question and 'C' work on the rest will not result in an overall 'A' grade—and perhaps not even a 'B'!) And yes, I give the equivalent of 'D' and 'F' grades on these assignments as well—though I doubt that I need spell out the requirements for earning such a grade! See the class syllabus for details of the grading and how this assignment fits into the overall course grade as well as for a schedule of due dates.

Moisés Silva, *God, Language and Scripture: Reading the Bible in the Light of General Linguistics*. Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, vol. 4. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990. (Also available in the combined volume, *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, ed. Moisés Silva, 199–280 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996].)

1.1. Summarize in a short paragraph Silva’s point in his opening illustration (11–13/199–200). How is it relevant to the pastor’s preaching ministry?

1.2. What is *linguistics*? Give a definition and an explanation of purpose.

1.3. What is the value of the study of linguistics to interpreting Scripture?

2.1. Why is biblical revelation necessary to understand language?

2.2. Summarize the significance of humanity’s creation as the image of God for a biblical view of language. How is the concept of language as a “theomorphism” relevant?

2.3. What is the difference between human language/thought and animal communication/”thought”? How is this related to dominion?

2.4. How did sin affect human language and responsibility?

2.5. Of the world’s linguistic diversity, how much does the Babel account explain? What other kinds of changes do we know are *not* related to Babel?

2.6. From Silva’s discussion of what the Bible says about language, list at least a dozen ways in which sinful people *misuse* language in their rebellion against the Creator.

2.7. Evaluate this statement in light of Silva’s discussion: “Because human language is an imperfect medium, God’s truth cannot be communicated inerrantly.”

2.8. What does it mean to “live ... on every word ... from ... the Lord”?

2.9. Give a detailed response to James Barr’s comment regarding the unworthiness of writing for communicating truth (cited on 36/214 n. 19).

2.10. How would you answer those who charge evangelicals with bibliolatry because they elevate the propositional over the personal?

3.1. How is a descriptive approach to the study of language different from a prescriptive approach?

3.2. Define *diachronic* and *synchronic* as it relates to linguistic study. Which approach should be primary? Why? (You might find the introductory section for ch. 4 helpful here as well.)

3.3. Discuss the relationship between the sophistication (structural complexity) of a language and the intellectual ability and cultural sophistication of those who speak it. (Or, to put it a different way, to what extent are the cultural/scientific/philosophical achievements of a people enhanced by or limited by the language which they speak?)

3.4. What is the significance of *redundancy* and *uncertainty* in language?

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- 4.1. Suggest several ways in which Greek and Hebrew are different *as languages*.
- 4.2. What is *Attic Greek* and how was it different from other forms of Greek? Why did Attic become so important?
- 4.3. In what form of Greek was the NT written? How is this similar to or different from Attic Greek? When and where did this form originate?
- 4.4.** Why do you think that God chose to have the NT written in this form of Greek? Is it because (as many argue) that it is the most precise language available? How does it compare with Attic in this regard?
- 5.1. What is a *morpheme*?
- 5.2. What value does the study of etymology have for understanding the NT and why are etymological explanations so popular among preachers? What is “reverse etymologizing” and what is its value (if any)?
- 5.3.** What is so different about Louw and Nida’s lexicon when compared with BAGD? What is the linguistic basis for this different approach? (**Assignment:** go to the library [unless you own both] and compare these two lexicons side by side. Check enough words [perhaps the specific words which Silva uses to illustrate from Phil. 1:3–4] and compare them with Silva’s explanation so that you understand the differences. Include a summary of your observations in the answer to this question.)
- 5.4. Since *ambiguity* is such a common feature of language, how do hearers/readers ever figure out what words mean? Include in your response the significance of Silva’s quotable statement: “the reality of lexical ambiguity cannot become a pretext for overworked imagination.”
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- 6.1.** What is propositional revelation? How is it different from the concept sometimes referred to as personal revelation? Why is it important? How is it relevant to biblical interpretation?
- 6.2. Explain and illustrate how word order functions differently in English and Greek and how that affects our understanding of each.
- 6.3.** Explain the difference between a subjective and an objective genitive and illustrate it with the three genitive phrases in 1 Thess. 1:3 (του έργου της πιστεως, του κοπου της αγαπης, της υπομονης της ελπιδος). Give your reasons for your conclusion. (This ref. is not in Silva, but if you understand his explanation [p. 102/254, esp. n.3; see also 106–11/256–58, incldg. the notes], you will not have any trouble with these three examples. If you want some more help on this category, you might want to look at some of these explanations: Porter, *Idioms*, 94–95; Wallace, *Grammar*, 112–19; or the brief note in Black, *ISGTM*, 49.)

6.4. Summarize the difference between Silva and A.T. Robertson in regard to the cases. (You can find more info on each side in the following sources: Robertson, *Grammar*, 446–49; Dana & Mantey, *Manual Grammar*, 65–68; and agreeing with Silva: Porter, *Idioms*, 80–83; Wallace, *Grammar*, 32–35.) Which approach do you consider to be the most viable? Why?

6.5. Define and distinguish between the *aspect* and *time* of a verb.

6.6. “Whereas English verbs, whatever else they do, always seem to indicate time reference, a rather large number of languages around the world manage quite nicely, thank you, with verbs that do not by themselves have that reference” (112/260). [No, this isn’t a question. It’s just one of the best examples of “classic Silva”! Highlight it. Understand it. Remember it. Next question. ☺]

6.7. To what extent are aspectual choices *conscious* on the part of the speaker? Explain.

6.8. “We can feel confident that no reasonable writer would seek to express a major point by leaning on a subtle grammatical distinction—especially if it is a point not otherwise clear from the whole context (and if it *is* clear from the context, then the grammatical subtlety plays at best a secondary role in exegesis)” (115/261). “An interpreter is unwise to emphasize an idea that allegedly comes from the use of a tense (or some other grammatical distinction) unless the context as a whole clearly sets forth that idea. Whether the use of the tense contributes to that idea or whether it is the idea that contributes to the use of the tense is perhaps debatable, but no interpretation is worth considering unless it has strong contextual support. If it doesn’t, then the use of the grammatical detail becomes irrelevant; if it does, then the grammar is at best a pointer to, not the basis of, the correct interpretation” (118/265). These are good summary statements of what is known as *semantic* [or *grammatical*] *minimalism*. You will find similar statements in Carson’s book on exegesis (which you will study later this semester)—and in the prof’s dissertation (see esp. the final page of the text and the very last footnote). Again, no answer needed; just be sure that you understand the point.

6.9. Discuss and evaluate the terminology *punctiliar* when used in reference to the aorist tense.

6.10. How do the categories of *subjective/objective* relate to the category of aspect?

6.11. Study carefully the section “Paragraphs and Larger Units” (118–28/264–69) and based upon it (and any other related reading you might do; see the f.n.s for this section for suggestions) write a short essay on the importance of context in NT interpretation. (Hint: “short essay” does *not* equal one paragraph, even a long one.)

7.1. Explain and illustrate how *redundancy* in the biblical text relates to the “self-correcting” nature of textual transmission.

7.2. In light of Silva’s discussion, how would you respond to the statement, “Translation should never be interpretive”?

7.3. What is the point of the Italian proverb, “traduttore traditore”?

7.4. Provide a balanced synopsis of the two approaches to translation: formal and functional equivalence. What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of *each* approach? (Silva uses the term “dynamic equivalence” for what has come to be recognized as the more accurate term, “functional equivalence.” Do *not* use either “literal” or “dyn. equiv.” in your synopsis. If you want additional discussion of these two approaches, see Carson, *Inclusive Language Debate*, ch. 3 (which is also very relevant to the previous two questions).

[8 = Appendix]

8.1. Silva discusses a half dozen reasons why an individual preparing for ministry should study the biblical languages. Summarize these reasons and then select at least two and discuss them in greater detail.

8.2. Explain the implications of seminary education dropping or reducing the biblical language requirements in terms of anti-intellectualism.

Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

I.1. What should be the relationship between a “high view” of Scripture (i.e., inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word of God) and the practice of exegesis? Or, to ask it in a different way, how should your bibliology affect (& perhaps “effect”!) your exegetical method?

I.2. What is “critical exegesis” (or: critical thought/interpretation) and why is it essential to properly handle the Word of God?

I.3. Explain the significant value of *distanciation* and *fusion* in the interpretation of Scripture. (See also p. 104.)

1. 1. Explain the role of etymology in determining the meaning of a word in the Greek NT.

1.2. What is a *semantic anachronism*? Explain and illustrate with the word *δουνομίς*.

1.3. What caution/s must be observed when appealing to classical Greek usage of a word to determine its meaning in the NT?

1.4. Why do you think that the Mickelsons’ appeal to the unknown meaning “source/origin” for *κεφαλή* in 1 Cor. 11? What theological issue is at stake here and how does the Mickelsons’ argument fit into it? (You might want to browse their article [see the f.n. in Carson]—or even the two articles by Wayne Grudem that address the other side of the issue: *TrinJ* 6 ns (1985): 38–59 and appendix 1 of *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, ed. Piper & Grudem, 425–68.)

1.5. Evaluate Carson's suggestion for the meaning of ὕδατος και πνευματος in Jn. 3. (You can consult his excellent commentary if you want more explanation.)

1.6. Summarize the "linkage of language and mentality" fallacy. (I hope that you have noticed how often Carson cites Silva's *Biblical Words and Their Meanings*; it is an important book that you really ought to read!)

1.7. Discuss the diachronic evidence for the meanings of the "love" word group in Greek and suggest how that information affects our understanding of the (synchronic) use of ἀγαπ- and φιλ- in the NT.

1.8. Summarize fallacy #10 that Carson discusses.

1.9. Why is Richard's argument for the rejection of authority as part of headship invalid?

1.10. *Explain* the five uses of εἶμι that Carson discusses.

1.11. Carson's discussion of *illegitimate totality transfer* is rather brief, though it is very important—and also very common. (Silva's discussion that Carson f.n.s is more extensive.) Discuss the ramifications of *i.t.t.* for the Amplified Bible. (And if you've never read one, take a look before you speak!)

1.12. What is the danger of appealing to the meaning of a Hebrew word as determinative of the meaning of a Greek word in the NT?

1.13. Develop and illustrate Carson's point in fallacy #15 using either δικαιωω or καλεω. (You'll need to use a concordance and find some specific examples to do so.)

1.14. Define the terms *sense* and *reference*.

1.15. Why do so many preachers use "word studies" so much and what is the potential danger of that approach?

2.1. How does *entropy* affect a language and what are the implications of that for commentaries written before the discovery of the papyri (and for some written afterwards!)?

2.2. Summarize the "minority position" regarding *tense* advocated by Carson (and by Porter, et al.—and by your prof!).

2.3. Explain the most common kind of abuse suffered by the aorist tense at the hands of many interpreters.

2.4. How do we know what force a particular tense carries in any particular instance? Explain and illustrate.

2.5. Distinguish between *semantics* and *pragmatics*. (This is a very important distinction. For the diligent: see my dissertation, p. 30, esp. n. 43; in the published form, this is p. 13.)

2.6. In your previous study of Greek you have been introduced to the broad category of *deliberative subjunctive*. Delineate the three subtypes/uses of the subjunctive that fall under this heading.

2.7. What are the grammatical issues involved with the use of the middle voice of $\pi\alpha\upsilon\omega$ in 1 Cor. 13:8? What are your conclusions in this regard?

2.8. Evaluate the claim the Phil. 2:1–2 should be translated, “since...” due to the grammatical construction present in that verse. (Carson does *not* cite this verse. It would be helpful if you found a commentator who *did* argue for this translation and then evaluate his comments in light of Carson’s discussion.) See also:

<<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/1class.htm>>

2.9. Are $\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ποιμενας και διδασκαλους in Eph. 4:11 and του μεγλου θεου και σωτηρος in Titus 2:13 valid examples of the Granville Sharp rule? Why or why not? It is highly recommended that you do some reading on this subject: Dan Wallace, either his *Grammar*, 270–90, or key parts of his dissertation (in BBS library), “The Article with Multiple Substantives....” There was also a relevant article in our Seminary journal by Baker: *JOMAT* 1.2 (1997): 38–46.

Other helpful, relevant online resources include the following:

<<http://www.dbts.edu/Sentinel/SPRING97.PDF>>

<<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/sharp.htm>>

<<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/gsharp.htm>>

<<http://www.bible.org/docs/theology/christ/grk.htm>>

2.10. Evaluate this statement: “Colwell’s rule clearly states that a definite predicate nominative ... *never* takes an article when it precedes the verb ... as in John 1:1” (Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 75 n. 31). You will find considerable additional help in Wallace’s *Grammar*, 256–70. See also: <<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/topics/colwell.htm>> and <<http://faculty.bbc.edu/rdecker/documents/colwell.pdf>>.

3.1. Carson has a very useful (if compact!) summary of logic (pp. 87–89). What he doesn’t address (because it isn’t necessary for his purposes) is the relationship of *God* to the laws of logic. So I think it would be appropriate for you to think about it yourself—and tell me what you think! Is God bound by the laws of logic? If so, is there something “higher” than God? Or is God not bound by such laws? If so, may he act illogically? Or may his revelation contain illogical truth? Or... [Some resources: Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *Every Thought Captive*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1979 (see esp. pp. 23–26); Greg Bahnsen, “Ready to Reason,” ch. 25 of *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. R. Booth, 109–15. Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media, 1996; and Thomas A. Thomas, “Hermeneutics and Logic,” *Theology in Perspective*, 5 [1982]: 7–8, available online at <<http://faculty.bbc.edu/rdecker/sub/logic.htm>>.]

3.2. Since this chapter takes us a bit further afield from Greek as such, I’ll not give specific questions for your response (other than the one general one above). I do, however, expect that you will read it carefully. There is much sage counsel here.

4.1. Carson's summary of the "new hermeneutic" is quite good for a brief synopsis. It may well be your first introduction to such matters. It is extremely important and deserves your thoughtful consideration. You *will* face it constantly in ministry—increasingly in the commentaries, etc. that continue to roll off the presses as well as in assumptions that your people will pick up at the university or the media. These assumptions are increasingly pervasive. This really isn't a question (as I'm sure that you've noticed!), but a strong encouragement/plea to "pay attention here!" I'd encourage you to do some additional reading in this area. See esp. the sources in nn. 2 and 4 (pp. 125, 128); I'll let you count up to 50 pgs. from these specific sources as part of your collateral reading. (If you decide to sample Carson's *Gagging of God*, read ch. 1—which is a good overview of the issues covered by this exceeding valuable book.)

4.2. What is the role and value of historical theology in interpreting the NT?

4.3. What are the possible values and limits of historical reconstruction in interpreting the NT?

4.4. Summarize what Carson sees as one of the major problems with the more radical forms of redaction criticism of the NT.

5.1. Summarize some of the potential problems when exegetical arguments are based on statistical data regarding the frequency of vocabulary usage.

5.2. Carson poses a question without pursuing an answer. The essence of the question is, how do we know if any narrative event is to be treated as normative for Christian conduct? There is much narrative, of course, in the OT, but also in the NT—particularly the Gospels and Acts. Just because Moses, e.g., did such and such, does that provide any normative guidance for what we should do? Or does it just tell us what he did in a particular situation? Or, because Paul followed a particular course of action, are we bound to do the same? I attempted to address one issue of church government from this perspective in my first published article (*GTJ* 9.2 [1988]: 257–77). So, summarize your own thoughts at this point to Carson's question: May we take any narrative paradigmatically?