THE RELEVANCE OF 'CONTEXT' AND 'INTERPRETATION' TO THE SEMIOTIC RELATIONS OF ROMANS 5:1-11

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ABSTRACT
The paper explores the relation of 'context' and 'interpretation' within the theory of relevance. Consistent with the principle of relevance the results will be explicated in terms of contextual implications and contextual effects.

The term 'context' is understood as the historical contingent situation of the text and its readers. The term 'interpretation' is understood as the contingent representation of the text under changing historical conditions. The enquiry compares interpretations presented in the framework of structural semiotics, and socio-semiotics and the semiotics of inference.

A structural analysis interprets 'deautomated' language usage in Rm 5:1-11 as a whole. The structural perspective identifies 'hope' as central theme which unites all subordinate lines of action. The socio-semiotic analyst surveys the historical conditions of readers as 'returning exiles' in the aftermath of 'banning orders' and suffering inflicted upon them in the Rome of CE 49-54. Information newly acquired is synthesised with old information and entered into our encyclopaedical knowledge of the text.

Relevance theory provides an alternative framework for the communication theory of 'the code theorists'. Consistent with the principle of relevance, interpretation is the ongoing quest for meaning under changing historical conditions.

1 THE THESIS
1.1 It is the intention of this article to analyse the dialectics of interpretation and context in the literary critical exegesis of Rm 5:1-11. The interplay of context and interpretation will be explicated in terms of 'contextual implications' and 'contextual effects', as these terms are defined in the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1986:108-109). The study is limited to an analysis of the recent contributions to the ongoing literary interpretation of Rm 5:1-11 in a semiotic framework. In this introductory section the terms introduced here will be briefly discussed.

The term 'dialectics' requires some explication. In this thesis it refers to the interplay of the practice and theory of exegesis under changing historical conditions. The process of exegesis begins by theorising about interpretation within an histori-
Knowledge of a text is constituted by authentic interpretations given over some length of time. It is therefore subject to changing historical conditions and contexts. Interpretations are **theoretically constituted** by method. Method, as Rauche (1983: 29) explicitly states, is the truth function of knowledge. The meaning of a text is composed of interpretations methodologically constituted under changing historical conditions. An interpretation is a conceptual representation of a text from a contingent historical perspective. The changing historical reality continually provides the exegete with fresh contexts which prompt yet further interpretations. The interplay of practice and theory will, on the one hand, sharpen theoretical skills. On the other hand, interpretation is critically authenticated by **pragmatic methods** of inquiry which stimulate a critical awareness and dialogue relevant to every step of the exegetical process. New perspectives, produced by changing historical contexts, contribute directly to the polymorphous character of meaning. Our knowledge of the meaning of a text is consequently perspectival. Viewed in this way, the meaning of an artifact may be likened to a rainbow. As various layers of colour constitute a rainbow, so do many layers of interpretation constitute the meaning of a text.

1.2 'Context' in the expression 'interpretation and context' refers to the historical contingent situations of the readers and the text. The context may be a written one, as in a text, or spoken, as in an utterance. The context may be a past situation or condition, it may include expectations about the future or religious beliefs, encyclopaedic knowledge or general cultural assumptions. In the semiotic framework of Sperber and Wilson (1986:15), context is not only a linguistic or socio-cultural construct, it is also 'a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world'. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986:107), assumptions have four possible sources: perception, linguistic decoding, encyclopaedic memory, and 'information added to the memory...as a result of the deductive process itself'. Sperber and Wilson (1986:107) continue to maintain that 'assumptions derived or retrieved from encyclopaedic entries are old information, whereas assumptions de-

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2 The definition of context in the semiotics of Sperber and Wilson (1986:15) exceeds the dichotomy of 'context' and 'code' in the communication framework of Jakobson (1960:353). The latter exhibits a structural functionalism reduced to the levels of SENDER/RECEPTOR relations. Sperber and Wilson (1986:15) regard 'the set of premises used in interpreting an utterance (apart from the premise that the utterance in question has been produced)' as that entity which 'constitutes what is generally known as the context'.

3 Assumptions are defined by Sperber and Wilson (1986:2) as 'thoughts treated by the individual as representations of the world'. In relevance theory an assumption is a structured set of conceptual representations. Assumptions have four sources (Sperber and Wilson 1986:107): 'they can come from perception, linguistic decoding or encyclopaedic memory, or they can be added to the memory of the deductive device as a result of the deductive process itself'.
rived from perception or linguistic decoding, that is from input systems, are newly presented information and become old in the course of being processed'.

Assumptions lead to contextualisation. The processing of newly presented information in a synthesis of new and old information about the text and context is termed contextualisation. The contextualisation of new into a synthesis of new and old information gives rise to contextual implication and contextual effect.

Contextual implication is, as Sperber and Wilson (1986:108) rightly indicate, 'new information' in the sense that it is not derived from the context, 'it is a synthesis of old and new information, a result of interaction between the two'.

Contextual effect is 'a deduction based on the union of new information and old information'. The relevance of contextual awareness can, as Sperber and Wilson (1986:109) convincingly show, be characterised in terms of contextual effects.

1.3 The term 'interpretation' is understood to be an historical contingent representation of the text in a relevant theoretical framework. Generations of exegetes in the twentieth century provide ample evidence for the thesis that exegesis is the continuing quest for meaning under conditions ever changing with historical times. Semiotics in the twentieth century embraces the changing historical times which generated structuralism (1928 and onwards), reader-related theories (1965 and onwards) and the social theory of literature (especially the rise of socio-scientific criticism in the 1980s).

The post-modern consciousness of the ninetieth decade constantly provides us with an awareness that theories of interpretation call one another into question whilst, as human constructs, they remain controversial themselves. Changing historical conditions provide the exegete with new information which he/she processes in a synthesis with old information of encyclopaedical entries. In as much as the processing of new perceptions in synthesis with old entries produces contextual implications and contextual effects, the results will be relevant!

Simultaneously, however, our post-modern awareness renders the exegesis relative, being a human construct reduced by historical contingency. Inevitably interpretation as human construct never embraces the full significance of meaning, but must content itself with the historical postulation of a truth perspective or truth perception.

I shall proceed to discuss the interplay of the practice and theory of literary critical interpretations of Rm 5:1-11. The discussion of the interplay will be limited to the interaction of context and interpretation in the ongoing literary critical exegesis of the text.
2 THE PROBLEM

The word 'critical' in the expression 'literary critical' interpretation above, is deliberately inserted to introduce an element of caution. The text of Romans will be augmented by a variety of 'contexts' provided by the changing historical conditions of the twentieth century. These contexts include a structural semiotic framework (1915-1928 and onwards), a socio-semiotic framework (1980 and onwards), and an exposition in the framework of the theory of relevance (1986 and onwards). The progression from semiotics to the theory of relevance necessitates a critical awareness.

Relevance theory, as presented by Sperber and Wilson (1986:8), calls the 'code theory' underlying semiotics into question. The reasons for doing so will be dealt with in paragraph 6.2 below. From the outset it should be stated clearly that relevance theory does not reject or diametrically oppose code theory. Rather it attempts to achieve relevance by fulfilling the structure of coded language communication. Semiotics, structuralism and relevance theory address the subject/object relations in language and textual communication. Semiotics attempts to close the gap between the sign and its significance by decoding the message of the text. Structural semiotics attempts to close this gap by making deautomatised language usage, see par 4.1 below, the study object of literary theory. Sperber and Wilson (1986:9) maintain that the gap between the semantic representation of sentences and the thoughts they communicate cannot be filled by more coding but by inference. Sperber and Wilson (1986:3,14-15) make it very dear that relevance theory slots into code theories and supplements them. We are also not left with a choice between the two methods. Sperber and Wilson clearly state 'both the code model and the inferential model can contribute to the study of verbal communication'(p3). Although relevance theory is not a semiotic theory per se, I find it most appropriate to term the application of relevance in literary texts 'inferential semiotics'. This article applies the principles of inferential semiotics to problems in the text of Rm 5:1-11.

The three interpretations rendered within the framework of these contexts will be given in consecutive readings. A hermeneutic of literary critical dialogue, conducted in this way, guides our exegesis through the Scylla and Charybdis of functionalism and methodological pluralism.

The three consecutive readings to be given of Rm 5:1-11 will

(i) significantly manifest the polymorphous character of our knowledge of the meaning of a text.

(ii) manifest the multiple perceptions of meaning generated by changing historical contexts, preventing the exegete from slipping into a one-dimensional consciousness of knowledge comprising the meaning of any text.
(iii) prevent a methodological pluralism in interpreting the knowledge of meaning as the sum of all possible interpretations within different theories of interpretation. Theories often call one another into question or supplement one another. The results of different theoretical approaches justify independent consideration. Ongoing critical dialogue integrates confirmed results of theoretically constituted interpretations with entries of our encyclopaedic knowledge of the text.

(iv) suffice to show that the New Testament text manifests itself as belonging to that category of texts which Eco (1979:49 and 1984:49/50) terms 'open' texts. An 'open' text is a 'writerly' text, which, according to Barthes (1974:4) lends itself to multi-interpretability. Such texts are proverbially 'unfinished' only to be completed by readers' perspectives which authentically constitute the aesthetic object.

(v) demonstrate that New Testament interpretation exceeds one-dimensional consciousness generated by sender/recipient relations in a closed hermeneutical circle. New Testament interpretation 'spirals' its way through multiple perspectives of meaning which, such as our rainbow simily suggests, manifest the polymorphous character of meaning of the text.

3 THE TEXT

To meet the requirements of a structural analysis and an inferential-semiotic analysis, it is necessary to provide a sentence specification of Rm 5:1-11. This entails a demarcation of the text into sentences as syntactic units. The text of Rm 5:1-11 is demarcated into sentences using the criteria of the ‘Aspects’ model of linguistic theory which defines the sentence as a syntactic unit consisting of a noun phrase and a verb phrase (S = NP + VP). The further demarcation of embedded sentences may, when necessary, be numbered by a decimal point in the margin.

The frame

5:1 1 Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
5:2 1.1 δι' οὗ καὶ τὴν προσφοράν προσφέραμεν [τῇ πίστει]
1.11 εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ἡ ἐστήκαμεν
2 καὶ καυχόμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ.

The climax

5:3 3 οὖ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχόμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν,
εἰδότες ὅτι
3.1 ἡ θλίψις ύπομονήν κατεργάζεται,
5:4  3.2  ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμήν, (deleted: κατεργάζεται)
3.3  ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα. (deleted: κατεργάζεται)
5:5  4  ἡ δὲ ἐλπὶς οὐ καταισχύνει.
  4.1  ὅτι ἡ ἁγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν.

Unconditional love

5:6  5  ἐτί γὰρ Χριστὸς ὄντων ἡμῶν ἁσθενῶν ἐτί κατὰ καιρὸν ὑπὲρ ἁσθενῶν ἀπέθανεν
5:7  6  μόλις γὰρ ὑπὲρ δικαίου τις ἁσθενεῖται·
  7  ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ἁγαθοῦ τάχα τις καὶ τολμᾷ ἁσθενεῖν·
5:8  8  συνιστήσαν δὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἁγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς, ὅτι ἐτὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν Χριστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν.

The power of the resurrection

5:9  9  πολλῷ οὖν μᾶλλον δικαιωθέντες νῦν ἐν τῷ αἰματί αὐτοῦ σωθησόμεθα δι' αὐτοῦ ἀπό τῆς ὀργῆς.
5:10 10  εἰ γὰρ ἔχθροι ὄντες καταλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, πολλῷ μᾶλλον καταλαγέντες σωθησόμεθα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ.

The frame

5:11 11  οὐ μόνον δὲ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δι' οὖ νῦν τὴν καταλαγήν ἐλάβομεν.

4 A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF ROMANS 5:1-11

4.1 Historical condition

Structuralism has its origins in the turbulent years of Russian history between 1914-1930. Russian Formalists such as Jakobson (1966), Sklovskij (1966) and Eichenbaum (1965) attempted to establish literary theory as an autonomous discipline against the influence of nineteenth century positivism. After the Bolshevik revolution, Jakobson, amongst other Formalists, established himself in Prague. Hence Prague structuralism. The study object of the Prague linguists was ‘literariness’ (literarnost) vis à vis ‘literature’ in the traditional literary scholarship. The Prague linguist Havránek (in Garvin 1964:9-10) defined literariness as ‘deautomatised’ language usage (aktualisace). Mukařovsky who subscribed to Havránek’s theory,
defined poetic language usage as 'an esthetically intentional distortion of the norm of the standard' (cf Garvin 1964:9/10). Structuralism thus basically concerns itself with the relations between parts and the whole that constitute the essential unifying framework that holds a work of literature together. Mukarovsky's 'esthetically intentional distortion' becomes for Leech (1966:141) a 'unique deviation' which he then reserves for syntagmatic foregrounding. Foregrounding is the deliberate highlighting of literary language usage superimposed on the norm of standard language usage. Structuralism includes in foregrounding both syntagmatic as well as paradigmatic relations within the structure of the text. The Paris School is represented by Claude Bremond (1966), Tzvetan Todorov (1966), Roland Barthes (1974), A Greimas (1966) and Gerard Genette (1980) amongst others. A structural analysis of Rm 5:1-11 distinguishes the following features of the text as a unit:

4.2 The frame of the discourse (Sentences 1-2 and 11)
Rm 5:1-11 is the prologue to chs 5-8 as a unit. The discourse of this prologue is framed by *Sentences 1-2 and 11* which establish an *inclusio* in ancient rhetorical style. The theme of the 'frame', which unifies the prologue, is 'joy of reconciliation'. This is expressed by καυχόμεθα (S2/3) and the participle καυχώμενοι (S11). The matter of the mode of the verb καυχόμεθα has been left unresolved in the literature. Porter (1991:663/4) argues extensively that καυχόμεθα (and ἔχουμεν) should be read as a hortatory subjunctive 'let us rejoice'. Most commentaries support the view that the verb should be read as an indicative 'we rejoice'. The verb

5 A careful analysis of the rhetoric may be found in Porter (1991:655-677). Some features of the text which passed unnoticed by Porter will be highlighted here. *Sentence 11* establishes an *inclusio* which correlates with *Sentences 1 and 2* in a chiastic order:

A) In Levin's terms the sentence constituents καταλαλγην ἔλαβομεν are coupled within the chiastic parallelism to the VP εἰρήνην ἔχομεν.

B) διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ (*sentence 11*) repeats the same phrase from *Sentence 1* verbatim.

C) καυχώμενοι/καυχόμεθα (-μεν F G) L 104. 365. 630. 1241. 2464 al latt) ἐν τῷ θεῷ epitomizes *Sentence 2*.

The 'frame' which manifests *inclusio*, exhibits a chiastic structure in the parallelism symbolised as follows: *ABCCBA*

6 The argument of Porter (1991:663) that the mood of the verb καυχόμεθα is to be read as a hortatory subjunctive deals with the problem in a piecemeal fashion. Porter makes a well-founded case for frequent use of subjunctives in rhetoric. He concludes that Paul writes rhetorical diatribe and that the mode of the verb should be in the subjunctive. This is a typical example of the weakness which Sperber and Wilson (1986:9) attribute to the root of the 'code theories'. The gap between the semantic representation of sentences cannot be filled by more coding, but only by inference. The answer to the problem should be sought by what is known in *relevance theory* as 'adding an extra pragmatic level to the linguistic level of the text'. The latter principle in *relevance theory* applies to any form of ambiguity and will be
καυχώμεθα is therefore ambiguous. The variant reading of εχόμεν as a hortatory subjunctive in Sentence 1 thus comes as no surprise. A structural analysis remains undecided on the mood of the verbs.

The mediation of Jesus in facilitating 'justification', 'peace' (S1) and 'reconciliation' (S11) is prominently foregrounded by repetition of the expression διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The repetitions exhibit 'pointing formulae' which establish a causal relation in the structure of the discourse. The verbs in perfect tense in S1.1 and S1.11, that is εσχήκαμεν and ἐστήκαμεν form an alliteration. The former, εσχήκαμεν, establishes the cause or means of salvation. The latter, ἐστήκαμεν, determines the consequences: 'the grace in which we now stand'. The verb ἐστήκαμεν strengthens the verb εσχήκαμεν by retroactively confirming its consequences. The pun establishes a causal relationship between the words. The theme of joy, expressed by καυχώμεθα: 'we rejoice', facilitates a smooth transition to the content of 'the climax' (S3-4.1).

4.3 The climax (Sentences 3-4.1)
The phrase καυχώμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν in Sentence 3 parallels the phrase καυχώμεθα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης, in Sentence 2, antithetically. In the parallel the expression 'we rejoice in the glory of God' and the expression 'we rejoice in suffering' contrast one another. The contrast is made evident by use of an oxymoron which juxtaposes 'rejoice' and 'suffering'. The contrast highlights the incompatibility of God's grace, (cf the noun χάρις in S1.11). The grace of God is incomparable. It encompasses the totality of human reality: the glory as well as the suffering.

The totality of the human experience is further elaborated by the use of a rhetorical figure of speech in Sentence 3. The 'climax' which Paul uses in Sentence 3 sets the themes of suffering, perseverance, character and hope in a causal relation to one another. The 'climax' extends over three embedded sentences (S3.1-3.3) all of which exhibit zeugma as classical rhetorical device. Zeugma, or 'gapping', here focuses attention on the nouns by omitting the verb κατεργάζεται: (S3.1-3.3) 'suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character and character hope'. In discussed in par.6.31. καυχώμεθα is ambiguous because structural ambiguity results when one surface structure is derived from two different deep structures. These sentences are:

a) 'we rejoice in hope'; or
b) 'let us rejoice in hope'.

Independent support for the indicative may be found in arguments by commentators such as Kasemann (1974:124), Cranfield (1975:238), Schlier 1977:140) and Wilckens (1978:286).

The climax reads as follows:

S3.1 ἡ θλίψις ὑπομονὴν κατεργάζεται,
S3.2 ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμήν. (verb deleted)
S3.3 ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα. (verb deleted)
Sentence 4 the climax builds up to the focal sentence of Rm 5:1-11. The discourse focuses on the expression ‘hope does not disappoint us’. The causal relations in Rm 5:1-11 necessitate reference to the means or agent which facilitates hope. The causal clause S4.1 (and S5-8) identifies love as the agent of the hope which will not disappoint us.

4.4 The antithesis of divine love (Sentences 5-8)
Divine love is unconditional love. The embedded Sentence 4.1 states that divine love is bestowed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. The unit Sentences 5-8 elaborates on the creative character of love. Divine love is also incomparable as Sentences 5-8 will show. Syntagmatic foregrounding contrasts divine love and human love in a chiastic antithetical parallelism. Let us examine the outer ring of this chiasm:

Sentence 5 bears witness to the unconditional sacrifice of the subject, namely Christ. While we were in weakness (ἀσθενῶν), Christ unconditionally sacrificed his life at the divinely appointed time. The significance of our ‘weakness’ (ἀσθενῶν) is narrowed down by the noun ἄσεβῶν, the ungodly, in a pun. ἁσθενῶν and ἄσεβῶν exhibit alliteration. At a time when humanity had no merit at all, Christ manifested his love in as much as He unconditionally surrendered his life. This love embraces the faithful and is in contrast to the human love in Sentences 6-7.

Let us now examine the inner ring of the chiasm:

Sentence 6 and Sentence 7 are two synonymous parallels which effect coupling in Levin's terms (1969:33). Because the inner ring realises a coupling internally, Sentence 6 and Sentence 7 also form a double chiastic parallelism. Sentence 6 states that man will hardly risk his life for a righteous person. Sentence 7 reaffirms that one might dare to risk one’s life for a good person. Both parallels maintain that human love is conditional love. Human love seeks merit in the object of its love. Human love is permeated by weakness. It demands rather than gives. Preconceived notions lead to all sorts of prejudices of which apartheid would be a prime example.

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Unconditional love as divine love, Sentences 5-8
Outer ring
A1 (S5) Χριστὸς ὄντων ἡμῶν ἁσθενῶν...ὑπὲρ ἁσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν

Inner ring
B1 (S6) μόλις γὰρ ὑπὲρ δικαίου τις ἀποθανεῖται:
B2 (S7) ὑπὲρ...ἀγαθοῦ τάχα τις καὶ τολμᾶ ἀποθανεῖν:

Outer ring
A2 (S8) {συνιστήσαι...τὴν...ἀγάπην...ὁ θεός} {‘elaboration’}
ὄτι...ἀμαρτωλῶν ὄντων...Χριστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν.
It is self-centred. It does not surrender. It doubts. Human love is incompatible with divine love. Divine love nevertheless encompasses the totality of human faithfulness. Hence S8 now returns to the outer ring and the subject of divine love.

In Sentence 8, of the outer ring, the subject of divine love completes the inclusio. Sentence 8, compared on to Sentence 5, contains a noticeable elaboration. This elaboration is contained in the expression συνίστησιν δὲ τὴν ἐαυτοῦ ἁγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς θεοῦ,... The elaboration focuses on the subject of divine love. The love of Christ in Sentence 5 is particularised as divine love. God's love is manifest in the unconditional sacrifice of Christ. As elsewhere in Paul (cf Gl 5:5; Eph 5:2 and 25), divine love is love that gives. It is love which serves and makes sacrifices, albeit to the point of death. The subject of sacrificial death is made evident by the foregrounding of ἀποθανεῖν, used four times, in sentence final position. This love is creative. It anticipates. It hopes. The rhetorical devices inevitably pose the question: from where does love derive its strength? This question is answered in the parallel statements of Sentences 9 and 10.

4.5 The antithesis of the resurrection (Sentences 9 and 10)
Extra patterning in Sentences 9 and 10 exhibits all elements of a synthetical parallelism. Both parallel statements contrast the effects of the death, ἐν τῷ σώματι διὰ τοῦ θανάτου with the resurrection of Jesus. If, as Sentence 9 indicates, the faithful are justified (S9) and reconciled (S10) by the death of Jesus, then God is able to achieve much greater results through the power of the resurrection of Jesus. The expression ἐν τῇ ζωῇ in the clause σωθησόμεθα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ is an 'elaboration'. The expression ἐν τῇ ζωῇ is the focus of Sentence 10. For Paul, authentic faith is resurrection faith (compare Rm 10:9). It is by the power of the resurrection that the faithful is able to anticipate. The power of the resurrection makes faithful humanity conscious of their destiny. Thus love generates hope.

Sentence 11 completes the frame and concludes the theme of joy. The imagery becomes more concrete. Reconciliation kindles joy. Our joy is firmly rooted in the person of Christ. Founded in his grace, we find peace and joy.

4.6 Résumé and critique
All linguistic communication is structured. It goes without saying that the contribution of structuralism is invaluable to the understanding of what language communicates. Formalism cultivates an awareness of the structural relations between the smallest unit and the totality of the text as an integrated whole. The analysis given above clearly illustrates this point. The formal method has contributed significantly to identifying the subject of 'hope' as the central theme which unites all the subordinate lines of action in Rm 5:1-11. Hope is founded in unconditional love. Divine love reconciles us with God and leads us to a destiny in harmony with God and our fellow-men. Victorious Christian living results in peace and joy. All 'deautomatised
language’ and its significance may be regarded as newly acquired information to be synthesised with known information and may be entered into our encyclopaedical knowledge of the text. Newly acquired perceptions which are in this way processed with known information in our encyclopaedical knowledge of the text, become old information.

Whilst acknowledging the importance of formalism in coming to an interpretation of the text, it must be remembered that it is historically contingent and therefore relative. Contrary to the principle of ‘ostranenie’, the meaning of a text is not the sum total of linguistic devices in the text. At most a formal analysis provides us with a one-dimensional structural consciousness of the meaning of the text. From the outset of its development in 1915-1916, formalism stood diametrically opposed to the positivism and materialism of its times. The conflict with Marxism brought the movement to an end.

Section 4 above illustrates how formalism shut itself off from extra-linguistic meaning. It took refuge within the enclosures of text-immanent relations. Formalism concentrated on the significance of linguistic devices and denied the relevance of any sociological or ideological considerations for the interpretation of the text. The literary society OPOJAZ strongly resisted ‘historical materialism’. The tendency of Jakobson and Sklovskij to oppose and even divorce art and social life drew sharp reaction from critics whose goal it was to determine the ‘sociological equivalent’ of literature. Erlich (1965:101) asserts strongly that the fundamental deficiency of formalism was its deliberate omission of or inability to provide a causal explanation of literature as a socio-historical phenomenon.

Changing historical conditions, following the Bolshevik revolution, prompted further theoretical development and possibilities of interpretation. Such changing historical conditions forced the formalists to review their earlier statement on the relationship between literature and society. The rise of social consciousness in the wake of the major wars and the liberation struggles of peoples in the twentieth century, provides us with another context accessible to the development of socio-semiotic theory. In 1928 Jakobson and Tynjanov published an essay ‘Problems in the study of literature and language’ in Matejka and Pomorska (1971:79-82). In this essay they rejected both doctrinaire formalism and the mechanical causality of the Marxists. This attempt to reformulate some tenets of formalism came too late. The Prague structuralists would later develop this new approach in socio-semiotics further.

Erlich (1965:110) describes the aftermath of Marxist critique which paved the way to a ‘sociologism’ tempered by awareness of esthetic considerations. The synthesis of sociology and formalist views led to the postulation of Medvedev’s (1928) ‘sociological poetics’. Formalism and structuralism subsequently recognised literature as a social phenomenon whilst appreciating the aesthetic values of the artifact. As indicated above the premise of a linear relation between signifier and
signified dated formalism and structuralism. In section 2, above, the post-structural semiotic view of the text is taken as point of departure. The text provides a network of references to the socio-historical context. The text engages in a dialectic discourse composed of a network of textuality. Julia Kristeva's famous concept of 'intertextuality' firmly roots the polymorphous meaning of the text in the socio-historical context of the artifact.

Socio-semiotics provide the exegete with the most adequate framework in which sociological analysis may be integrated with the interpretation of the text. Next we shall examine the contributions of the sociology of textual analysis to the extra-linguistic significance of the text.

5 SOCIO SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

5.1 Historical condition

Scroggs (1980:165) suggested that social scientific criticism (SSC) may have developed in the wake of mounting social consciousness prompted by the context of events such as the Vietnam war, student revolutions, and severe economic and political oppression in various parts of the world. The object of a socio-semiotic interpretation of the New Testament is to determine the relevance of its message for the world of our day.

5.2 A socio-semiotic reading of Romans 5:3-11
Meeks (1982) pioneered research into the composition of the Christian communities Paul served. A historical survey of the Pauline communities reveal the heterogeneous composition of the Hellenistic society. The Pauline communities were a microcosm of Hellenistic society comprising the poor and dispossessed, slaves and freedmen. Certain more 'wealthy' members of the community may have enjoyed a relatively high social standing. They were all expelled from Rome in 49 CE and possibly returned when Claudius died, or shortly before in 54 CE. They all had reason to be discontented with the Roman authorities (Rm 5:1-7). It is quite possible that the noun ὀλίγος in the expression 'suffering produces endurance' in Sentence 3 refers to this time. Their social status could perhaps be described best as that of
'returning exiles'. After 54 CE the majority of these people were 'upwardly mobile'. Meeks (1982:271) ventures the opinion that the most active and prominent members of Paul's circle were people of 'high status inconsistency'. Meeks further carefully analyses the assumptions and beliefs which integrated this community and which provided it with some social cohesion.

Meeks enumerates many beliefs important to if not unique to early Christianity. Among these beliefs Meeks (1982:271) regards the death and the resurrection of Jesus as the decisive events that united the community. For Meeks Sentence 8 contains the fundamental claim of the gospel: 'But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'. The juxtaposition of the death and resurrection frequently occurs in statements such as: 'Christ Jesus who died: indeed who was raised' (Rm 8:34a also 4:25). Nickelsburg (1993:368) observes that juxtaposition of death and resurrection follows from the Jewish tradition of the persecution and vindication of the righteous one. In Maartens (1986:76-98) a comprehensive survey is given of the Jewish tradition of the vindication of the suffering righteous servant in the Synoptic tradition with reference to the 'Son of man' as honourary title. Meeks (1982:272) shows how this juxtaposition gave rise to a pattern of statements in antithetic parallelism that occurs again and again in Paul's letters, especially in Rm 3:21-26, 5:9 and 10, 6:5-11 and 10:9. The juxtaposition of the death and resurrection necessitates consideration to the social significance of both events as contrasted in an antithesis.

5.2.1 The social significance of the cross

It is possible to distinguish some social functions of the crucifixion in early Christian communities. Highlighting these will contribute to our understanding of the social significance of the event.

5.2.1.1 Imitatio Christi

Paul often explores the metaphoric implications and effects of imitating Christ in what Meeks (1982:272) calls 'hortatory, paraenetic and argumentative contexts'. Apostolic authority is manifested in weakness rather than in overt power as Paul maintains in 2 Cor 12:5 and 10. Similarly the congregation should exhibit the spirit of humility and self-restraint called for in Phlp 2:4-11. Phlp 2:4-11 alludes to the imagery of the 'suffering righteous one', with the difference that in Phlp 2:7 Jesus is

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9 The term 'status inconsistency' originated with Lenski (1954:405) who also alternatively designated the social position of some of these members as 'low status crystallization'. The terminology will be defined and explicated in Section 5.2.13 below.

10 Semantic features of the suffering righteous one attributed to the Son of man draw heavily on the Jewish tradition found in 'suffering righteous Psalms' especially Ps 3, 5-7, 18, 22, 26-28, 31, 89, 110, 118 and 142 a o, Is 52:13-53:12, Wis 2-5, 2 Mac 7, 4 Ezra 13 and the similitudes of Enoch 37-71.
The relevance of 'context' and 'interpretation' distinguished from the suffering righteous one. Jesus is more than the suffering righteous one, He is the 'suffering servant'. Phlp 2:4-11 challenges all Christians to model their ministry on the example set by Christ. The faithful are 'suffering righteous ones'. They are expected to present themselves as 'a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God' (Rm 12:1). The juxtaposition of 'death' and 'resurrection' often occurs in passages where there is talk of suffering, as in Rm 5:3.

Stephen Barton (1982:14) concurs with Malherbe (1977) and Hock (1980) in calling for a consideration of the 'social realities of Paul's situation'. He supports Holmberg (1978) who claims that Paul, as a leader, was both in a position of authority and recognised as one having power. His authority, however, was not unlimited or universally recognised. Paul's ability to maintain his authority largely depended on his ability to persuade people to give him recognition and to broaden his appeal in the face of strong competition. Barton (1982:14) claims the theology of the cross is well suited to this task. The cross was particularly appropriate for the majority of Paul's clientele. The cross became the 'symbol of reversal' which provided supporters with access to an 'alternative source of power'. As 'symbol of reversal', the cross constituted an 'inversion of the spiritual and moral ideas and institutions of Paul's day: it turned upside down notions of honour and shame'. The cross empowered members of the lower socio-economic strata, the powerless, such as women, and even the rich. By empowering his supporters, Paul strengthened his own position. This dialectic of the reversal of values becomes evident in passages such as 1 Cor 1:26-31 and Rm 5:3-5. The *imitatio Christi* provided Paul with the conviction that grace is triumphant even at times when he is weak (1 Cor 12:10). Likewise hope is victorious even in times of suffering, Rm 5:3-5.

Meeks (1982:273) attributes the talk of suffering and persecution to the social function of enhancing group solidarity by emphasising the dangers from without. In this way the converts were given powerful models of the endurance of suffering, as in Rm 5:3. The paradox generated by the antithesis of cross and resurrection is evident in the oxymoron which juxtaposes the 'weakness' of the cross which manifests in 'power' (1 Cor 15:43). This paradox becomes a means of comfort in 2 Cor 1:3-7 and 13:4.

### 5.2.1.2 Community formation

Barton (1982:17) argues convincingly that the cross served as a potent symbol for community formation. The communal identity in the Pauline communities stood diametrically opposed to traditional Jewish conventions. The cross constituted the dividing line. Paul states unequivocally in Rm 6:3 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?' The 'outsiders' as Barton designates them, were those who rejected the crucified Christ:

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11 The noun δούλος is most significant in the expression: ἀλλὰ ἐὰν τῶν ἐκένωσεν μορφῆν δούλου λαβών...
'a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to Gentiles' (1 Cor 1:23). The cross provided the basis for an individual and community identity which was quite different from contemporary social classifications. Barton provides the following examples: The believers regarded themselves as being 'all one in Christ' (Gl 3:28), as 'sons of God' (Gl 3:26-4:7; Rm 8:14-17), as 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17) and as the 'body of Christ' (Rm 12:4-8). In Rm 10:9-11 Paul reiterates clearly that faith which identifies one with the community is resurrection faith. Resurrection faith features such a characteristic of finality which distinguishes the Christian community from outsiders.

Watson (1986:28ff) argues somewhat differently that community formation implied the creation of gentile Christian communities in sharp separation from the Jewish community. Holmberg (1986:106) is very critical of Watson's attempt to assess the whole of the Epistle to the Romans as an extended argument to persuade the Jewish Christian congregation to accept the Gentile Christian congregation. This viewpoint of Watson would necessarily imply the acceptance of Paul's interpretation of the law, the history of Israel, the work of God through Jesus and the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God.

5.2.1.3 Personal identity crisis
In section 5.2 it was noted that a significant number of the people who were converted to the Christianity of the Pauline circle had experienced ambiguities regarding their social status. Many of the prominent members of the Pauline communities suffered from what Meeks (1982:268) designates as 'high status inconsistency' or alternatively 'low status crystallization'. 'Status inconsistency' manifests itself in communities where people that are upwardly mobile achieve a social status higher than that attributed to them. Some scholars, such as Alexander (1986:70) embraced the hypothesis. Many others expressed certain reservations. Holmberg (1990:130-134) gives it the academic status of being only an interesting proposal. All those who suffer 'low status crystallization' are given their rightful place in the community. Paul was allegedly himself a victim of 'status inconsistency'.

Barton (1982:14) indicates that Paul's authority was limited primarily by the authority of the Jerusalem church and possibly also by personal inadequacies. Barton (1982:14) suggests that Paul's ability to retain his authority as a leader depended upon his ability both to persuade people to give him recognition and to broaden his appeal in the face of strong competition. The Damascus event was the turning point in his life. The cross represented the 'reversal of values' vindicating those who

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12 Schöllgen (1988:73) doubts whether Meeks adequately demonstrates the presence of 'status inconsistency' in the early communities. Elliott (1985:331) believes 'status inconsistency' can also apply to persons of downward mobility. To how many Christians in these congregations would Meek's hypothesis apply? Rohrbaugh (1984:543) detects traces of a 'sociocentrism' evident in the tendency to see things the other side of the industrial revolution as if the revolution changed nothing in our patterns of perception.
humble themselves. The encounter with the resurrected Lord, who was crucified, became Paul's 'source in tradition' which put him on a par with the leaders in Jerusalem. Rm 5:3-5 comments on the 'reversal of values': 'suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character and character hope'. The 'reversal symbol' represented by the cross empowered the supporters of Paul to surmount their 'status inconsistencies'. The strengthening of their positions would also allegedly enhance his own position of authority.

It was probably mostly the powerless of the lower socio-economic strata of the Greco-Roman society that were affected. For the powerless the symbol of the cross must have been very potent. The cross gave them access to an 'alternative source of power' based on a theology that taught that the first would be last and the last would be first.

Barton (1982:15) believes that even the rich 'broadened the scope of their clientele'. The rich gained in recognition in positions of authority in the Christian communities that met in their homes.

Gl 3:27-28 also makes provision for women rendered powerless in the Greco-Roman society. Women saw a reversal in their status which rendered them positions of prominence rather than subordination. Barton (1982:17) observes that the cross provided the common ground for an individual and communal identity which diametrically opposed the social classifications of the times.

Barton (1982:18) concludes that the cross generated new symbols which constituted the foundation for believers as an alternative community. The cross as a power to save (Col 1:18) had strong cultural and social dimensions. Its structure provided the basis for 'an alternative society with its own group boundaries, social patterns, leadership structure, and moral order'.

5.2.2 The social significance of the resurrection

5.2.2.1 Divine ordination

In Rm 1:2-6, Paul, attributes to the resurrection the significance of an act of divine initiative. The existence of the community is, by virtue of a divine initiative, founded upon identification with the risen Christ. Barton (1984:68) links this sovereign act of God with the establishment of a community of believers. Paul views the resurrection as an act central to the gospel of God (Rm 1:1-4). He feels himself compelled to proclaim this gospel. According to Rm 4:16ff it is God who established a community of faithful in the Old Testament by transforming the impotent

13 Passages such as 1Cor 15:4, 'Christ was raised of the third day', circumlocutes the divine initiative taken in the resurrection of Jesus by 'divine passive'. The divine passive also becomes evident in expressions such as 'Christ...was raised on the third day'. The passive transformation, applied in derivation of this surface structure, deletes 'God' as agent of the action. The noun God is, nevertheless recoverable from the context. This is also the case in 1 Cor 15:15. The linguistic rules governing recoverability may be found in Bach (1974:100).
and infertile bodies of both Abraham and Sarah. The promise that this community of faithful would consist of Gentiles as well as Jews would ultimately find fulfilment. It is this very God who, according to Rm 4:16ff, calls into being an alternative universal community of believers. This community, Barton (1984:70) claims, is one whose 'self-understanding is mirrored in, and enlarged by its representations of the crucified and risen Christ'. That such representations brought psychological relief and sociological reinforcement to the persecuted minority societies of Christians is clear from Rm 8:31ff Phlp 3:3-11 shows, as argued by Barton (1984:70), a displacement of the symbolic world of Judaism by the symbolic world of the resurrection. Belief in Jesus'resurrection appears as Barton (1984:69) continues to show, to have contributed significantly to sanctioning the building of 'another world to live in'. This world constitutes itself as an alternative community of believers.

5.2.2.2 The theodicy of the resurrection

The resurrection served as a powerful theodicy, justifying the continuity of the community after the death of Jesus. Barton (1984:70) assumes that the death of Jesus and other community members posed a threat to the life of the early Christian society (1Cor 15:14 and 17). This community needed the assurance of the presence of its founder in order to continue. Barton (1984:70) indicates that belief in the resurrection guaranteed the presence of Jesus (Matt 28:2) and rendered Him universally available. The absence of Jesus was now interpreted as making his presence possible in yet another form namely the Holy Spirit (Rm 8:9 and Gl 4:6). From his sociological viewpoint Barton argues that the transformation of Jesus, represented by the resurrection, was at the same time the transformation of the community. Gager (1975:39) accounts for this transformation in the community from the framework of the theory of 'cognitive dissonance'. The community answered the disconfirmation of their expectations by raising the levels of missionary zeal. If turned outward towards the world. Barton (1984:70) argues that 'by so increasing Jesus' power, the community augmented its own'. Barton sees this process as a classic example of compensation by expansion. The community, by justifying the continued presence of Jesus, secured its own continuity in society.

14 Gager received wide recognition and criticism. The criticism concerns three areas: (1) Although Gager adapted his theories as Scroggs (1980:173) indicates, his primary sources remain Biblical narrative and discourse, or as Holmberg (1990:8) puts it 'faith documents'. The sociological construct built on such documents remains questionable. Harrington (1980:183) questions his use of secondary sources drawn from the social sciences and studies based on non-Christian religious movements. (2) It is particularly his use of Festinger (1964) which attracted most criticism. Judge (1980:205) questions the alleged applicability of exotic African, Australian and Melanesian religious movements and the insights they provide for Early Christianity. Best (1983:189) also questions the appropriateness of the Melanesian culture to understand a relatively sophisticated urban society in the Hellenistic world. (3) Finally, on the methodological level, Malina (1983), Elliott (1984) and Holmberg (1990:8) raise the issue of the testability of the hypotheses.
5.2.2.3 A new social and cultural order
From the outset the resurrection of Jesus was a constitutive principle in the social and cultural formation of the Roman Christian community. This belief in the resurrected Lord was strong enough to establish a distinct social and cultural order. Neyrey (1986:93), the social anthropologist, argues that belief in the resurrection constituted the core of a purity system which organised the Christian community as a distinct socio-cultural group. Neyrey traces the principles of this purity system back to Christ, the 'limit breaker', who set up new criteria for purity maps of people, places, time and destiny.

Barton (1984:72-73) argues that the binary opposition of death and resurrection in Pauline discourses established the parameters for the formation of Christianity in a new religious order. This binary opposition of death and resurrection also manifests itself in Rm 5:10. Rm 5:10 juxtaposes reconciliation through the death of Christ to salvation through the life of Christ. Adherents to the faith were transformed and established in fellowships such as the communities of Rome, Galatia or Corinth. The euphoria of the resurrection became the driving force in Paul's mission to the gentile world. Let us briefly consider how the Christ events infringed on the purity maps in Judaism.

The Christ event violated the Jewish purity maps of holiness by facilitating a transition from the dominion of the law (Rm 5:20-21 and 6:14) to the dominion of grace. As Barton (1984:73) indicates, the grace of God set up parameters which established a 'new imaginative space' which only the Christian community could inhabit. The grace of God also displaced the purity maps of people, whether in the Hellenistic society (Rm 1:18ff) or the Jewish society (Rm 2:1-4:25). A universalistic and pluralistic community is established in Rm 10:4-14. The resurrection finally also displaced the Jewish purity maps of time. Barton (1984:73) argues that the believer read his place in time in terms of Christ's place in time: 'So Christ's resurrection as an eschatological event in time past makes the future already present.'

5.3 Résumé and critique
The historical conditions discussed in section 5.1 above, the growing perception of our world as a 'global village' and its trans-cultural communication processes pose a fresh challenge to the exegete engaged in the endeavours of Biblical interpretation. The pragmatic methods of interpretation establish an awareness of the socio-cultural and anthropological significance of Biblical literature and interpretation. The socio-critical consciousness provides a corrective to the logical positivistic methods of historical critical enquiry into the meaning of the text. The socio-scientific criticism contributes significantly to our understanding of the形成 of the ancient Christian community, its values, roles and identity.

The above sociological analysis attempts to show that the cross and resurrection of Jesus, as indicated by Barton (1984:67), provide an 'alternative agenda for the
formation of individual and communal identity" which eventually led to the establishment of separate Pauline communities. Most contributions to a socio-semiotic analysis regard the cross and resurrection in the letters of Paul as belonging to the core of the gospel of St Paul. Barton, among other exponents, believes the evidence they produce is adequate to prove that the communal identity was strong and coherent enough for the formation of the early Christian community.

Admirable though this endeavour may be, the methodology of the exponents of a sociological interpretation is subject to grave misgivings. Both Dunn (1990:262) and Craffert (1993:241) question the 'undifferentiated and all-inclusive' sense in which Watson and others deal with the phenomenon of first-century Judaism. References to a 'messianic Israel' by Meeks (1982:274), or 'the traditional Jewish faith' by Raisänen (1985:546) or 'the Jewish community' by Watson (1986:19), designate first-century Jewish communities in a piecemeal fashion. Qumran, Philo, Josephus and the gospels project images of Jewish communities before 70 CE consisting of many parties and many modalities. Acts and the Pauline epistles will suffice to show that the same argument holds true for the early Christian communities. Craffert (1993:237) indicates that ideological components and sociological components of arguments are often isolated in a way that leads to confusion or a mixing of categories. Theological arguments, and often ideological arguments, are used to substantiate sociological conclusions and vice versa. Based on this reductionist view of the Jewish society Meeks proposed a separation of the Pauline communities from the synagogues. Watson (1986:38) went a step further and proposed his 'transformation of a reform-movement into a sect'. For Watson the ministry of Paul brought a complete break with Judaism. This conclusion fails to achieve any confirmation.

The use of sociological theories by Theissen, Meeks and Watson are also not beyond criticism. Various sociological theories are merged into functionalistic methods. Yet the major concern of scholars such as Craffert (1993:240) lies in the fact that first century Judaism is conceived of as a disembodied 'normative Jewish community'. Both Meeks (1982:267) and Watson (1986:38-41) present the origins of Christianity as a process of transformation from a first-century Jesus movement to a sect which Paul separated from Judaism. It goes without saying that this interpretation results in a one-dimensional separatist viewpoint. First century Judaism, however, was not a unified movement which constituted itself in any normative Judaism. Evidence provided by Nickelsburg (1986) and Craffert (1993:246) suggest that first-century Judaism was a heterogeneous 'complex and variegated phenomenon'. There was no normative Judaism from which Paul separated Christian communities. The designation of a 'sect' does not do justice to the household communities which arose spontaneously. The development of Jewish communities in the first century manifests, according to the evidence produced by Craffert (1993:245-256), a similar paradigm. Craffert (1993:258) concludes that Paul was probably, in what
he did and what he said, as mainstream as any other Jewish divine man of his time.

The discussion of the social significance of the cross and the resurrection derives the distinctive character of Christianity from the ministry of Jesus and the early Church. This fact is overlooked by Watson and others who locate the initiative for the establishment of Christian communities and finally the church, in Paul’s mission to the gentiles. Paul was not the founder of the early Christian church. Paul established the gentile mission churches. The ‘radicalism’, the ‘charismatic creativity’, the infringement of the purity maps of persons and the purity maps of places derived from the earliest Jesus-movement and the ministry of Jesus. Holmberg (1990:104) emphatically states that Jesus could not be contained in Judaism. The ministry of Jesus exceeded the purity systems of Judaism.

The sociological analysis above nevertheless provides the exegete with much ‘new information’. Results of the sociological analysis can be combined with the results of a structural exegesis. The new perspectives of the sociological analysis, which combine with the results of a structural exegesis, become ‘old information’ in the process of merging. The results of structural exegesis and socio-semiotic analysis now find their way into the encyclopaedical knowledge of the text.

6 A RELEVANCE ANALYSIS OF ROMANS 5:1-11

6.1 Historical condition
The theory of relevance, as proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986), signifies the beginning of a return to pragmatics in semiotics. This proposal comes at the peak of an era marked by high technological communication systems in the mass media. This is also an era characterised by decisive global negotiations and dialogue, for example, the settlement of the East/West nuclear arms negotiations, Arab/Israeli talks and political settlements in Africa and elsewhere. The theory is grounded in a general view of human cognition. Sperber and Wilson maintains that cognitive processes are geared to achieve the greatest possible cognitive effect as a result of the smallest possible processing effort.

The changed historical conditions of modern times offer the exegete another opportunity to close the gap between the representation of sentences and the meaning of the text.

6.2 The principle of relevance
The theory of relevance is one of communication and cognition developed in the wake of Grice’s critique of the ‘code theories’ common to most communication frameworks. Relevance theory addresses numerous shortcomings of ‘code theories’

13 A Jewish divine man, defined in the terms of Craffert (1993:259), is a teacher among first-century socio-religious groups who claimed ‘ultimate truth for his viewpoints’.
in semiotics. The most important critique of relevance theory may be summarised in the following points:

1. Relevance theory is critical of, but not diametrically opposed to the code theories in semiotics. The main point of critique which relevance theory levels against code theories is that code theory is unable to close the gap between 'the semantic representation' of sentences and the thoughts actually communicated by utterances. This 'gap' between the semantic representation of the sentence and the communicator's intentions is not filled by more coding, but by inferences. To close this gap one needs to take cognisance of context in the interpretation of utterances.

2. The second major shortcoming of the 'code theories' is that no account is given of non-linguistic properties such as the time and place of utterance, the identity of the speaker, the speaker's intentions, affecting the cognition of utterances. Sperber and Wilson (1986:10) supplement the interpretation of utterances by drawing on criteria established in the field of pragmatics, especially the pragmatics of Grice (1975 and 1978) and Searle (1980). To fill the gaps in communication between the semantic representation of the sentence and the intention of the utterance, relevance theory adds an extra pragmatic level of decoding to the linguistic level provided by the context. The extra pragmatic level of decoding may be recognised and comprehended by an inferential process. The inferential process strengthens and draws on the encyclopaedic knowledge of the text. Relevance follows in the wake of inference which fulfils the intentions of the communicator.

3. Relevance becomes manifest in ostensive-inferential communication. Relevance theory challenges the exegete to read his text again within an 'ostensive-inferential communication' framework. For Sperber and Wilson (1986:49) 'ostension' means such behaviour 'which makes manifest an intention to make something manifest. Showing someone something is a case of ostension'. It has become necessary at this point to recognise that the 'communicator' in relevance theory is the author of the written text, which of course includes Tertius as Paul's amanuensis. Assuming that the structure of Rm 5:1-11 in paragraph 4 is 'ostensive', it now becomes necessary to determine the relevance of what the structure communicates. Ostensive commu-

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16 Sperber and Wilson (1986:3) define a 'code' as 'a system which pairs messages with signals, enabling two information-processing devices (organisms or machines) to communicate.' By 'message' Sperber and Wilson (1994:4) mean a representation internal to the communicating devices. A 'signal', again, is a modification of the external environment which may or can be produced by one device and recognised by the other.

17 A semantic representation of a sentence deals with a sort of common core of meaning shared by every utterance of it.

18 According to Sperber and Wilson (1968:9), 'an utterance can generally be perceived as a realisation of the phonetic representation of a single sentence'.
communication comes with a tacit guarantee of relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986:49). Sperber and Wilson (1986:54) equate ostension and inferential communication:

Inferential communication and ostension are one and the same process, but seen from two different points of view: that of the communicator who is involved in ostension and that of the audience who is involved in inference.

Relevance to the individual is achieved when the communicator's intentions are fulfilled. The ostensive processing of new information which gives rise to a multiplication effect is what Sperber and Wilson (1986:48) call relevant information. 'The greater the multiplication effect, the greater the relevance', Sperber and Wilson (1986:48) maintain. Relevance theory relates the communicator's intention to the recognition of that intention by the recipient. Sperber and Wilson continue to say that 'the recognition of the informative intention will itself lead to the fulfilment of that intention, so that as a result of an act of communication, both the communicative and the informative intention will be fulfilled'. The fourth point which follows is concerned with the changing of the cognitive environment of the reader.

4 The fulfilment of the communicative intentions change the cognitive environment of the recipient. As Sperber and Wilson (1986:48,71 and 103) indicate, ostensive communication is relevant to an audience when it improves their overall representation of the world and thus changes their cognitive environment. The greater the contextual effect on the cognitive environment of the addressee, the greater the relevance of communication. Relevance theory thus also articulates the communication processes in reception aesthetics. Relevance theory is compatible with reception aesthetics because changing of the recipient's cognitive environment, by improving recipients' overall representation of the world, is yet another way of constituting an aesthetic object for the artifact. In both cases relevance is achieved by fulfilling the communicator's intentions or the structure of the text.

6.3 Inference and relevance in Romans 5:1-11

6.3.1 The relevance of the frame (S 5.1-2 and S11)

Relevance theory aims at bridging the gap between the semantic representation of the sentence and the thoughts communicated by the utterance. Compare the expressions 'we rejoice', καυχόμεθα 2X and καυχόμενοι in Sentences 2, 3 and 11 of Rm 5:1-11. This inclusio clearly shows the author's intention to bring joy to the addressees. Let us remind ourselves of the oxymoron which was analysed by the structural analysis in Sentence 3 'we rejoice in sufferings'. The question to be solved here is

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19 Sperber and Wilson (1986:46) define 'cognitive environment' as 'a set of assumptions which the individual is capable of mentally representing and accepting as true'.
how joy could be reconciled with sufferings. A structural analysis of paragraph 4.1 never even attempted to ask the question. This question is somewhat complicated by the reading of the verb καυχόμεθα. In paragraph 4.2 the issue of the mood of the verb was left undecided. The communicator’s intentions need to be decided. Again the structural analysis in paragraph 4.2 left us in limbo. Καυχόμεθα could either be an indicative statement of the joy which the community experiences or a hortatory subjunctive persuading the community to rejoice. The mood of the verbs ἔχουμε (S1) and καυχόμεθα (S2 and 3) requires attention prior to negotiating the issue of ‘joy’ and ‘sufferings’ in the oxymoron.

To fill the gap between the representation of καυχόμεθα and the meaning of the text, the exegete may, in the first place, turn to the additional pragmatic level of context provided by the verb ἔχουμε (S1) in conjunction with ἐλάβομεν (S11). The syntagmatic coupling of ἔχουμε with the verb ἐλάβομεν, in a syntagmatically equivalent position in Sentence 11, provides a strong clue to the actual intentions of the author. The mood of the verb ἐλάβομεν in Sentence 11 is indicative: ‘...we have received reconciliation’. The indicative of ἐλάβομεν (S11) provides us with strong evidence for ascertaining ‘the communicator’s informative intention’ (Sperber and Wilson 1986:189). The mood of the verb ἔχουμε in Sentence 1, coupled to ἐλάβομεν in Sentence 11, should be taken as an indicative.20 The ‘communicator’s intention’ with the indicative is to assert consciousness of joy, peace and reconciliation in the cognitive environment of the community. The contextual implication of the indicative is that the community possesses joy, peace and reconciliation. Thus doing justice to the coupling of the indicatives, the probable rendering of Sentence 1 is:

‘Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (NRSV)

Secondly, a further disambiguation21 of ἔχουμε and καυχόμεθα may be founded on contextual effects and implications in the context. The use of the indicative in ἔχουμε is ‘retroactively strengthened’ by the contextual implicature of ἐσχήκαμεν ‘we have access’, in the perfect indicative (Sentence 1). If the verb ἐσχήκαμεν

20 The variant readings of the hortatory subjunctive ἔχουμεν and the indicative ἔχουμεν derive from the ambiguity of καυχόμεθα. The subjunctive is attested by the external evidence of the original handwriting of both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. The internal evidence which supports the reading of the indicative ἔχουμεν, probably reveals the author’s intentions and may be closer to the original. Levin’s coupling is a strict parallelism. The principle equivalence extends to grammatical function and form. The indicative mood of ἐλάβομεν (S12) may determine the indicative mood of the corresponding ἔχουμεν (S1). According to Sperber and Wilson (1986:190) ‘disambiguation may be retroactively strengthened by yielding an adequate range of contextual effects in an easily accessible context.’
stands in the perfect indicative, it follows logically, that consistent with the principle of relevance, the verb ἔχωμεν (Sentence 1: ‘we have peace with God’) also stands in the present indicative. There is even further contextual strengthening for the indicative. The expression ‘grace in which we stand’ (ἐστὶκαμεν, perfect indicative) also provides further independent evidence in favour of the indicative ἔχωμεν. The contextual implication and effect, stated in the indicative, make it abundantly clear that ἔχωμεν should be understood as a present indicative.

The socio-semiotic analysis mentioned in paragraph 5 above is already computed in the encyclopaedic knowledge of the text. Those social conditions now constitute the old information determining the conditions in which joy is expected to manifest. The insertion of new information (joy) in the existing known information (sufferings) is what will constitute the relevant information in Rm 5:1-11. In Sentences 1 and 2 the relevant information joy makes mutually manifest that Paul's communicative intention is to change the readers cognitive environment from one of apathy or despair to one of joyfulness. It is conceded that rhetoric pointed in this direction, but relevance theory contributes by articulating the analysis of this communicative process.

The new information to follow, comments on the subject of the justification by faith referred to in Sentence 1. Hope in Sentence 2 broadens the noun ‘faith’ by adding semantic features of (anticipation) to πίστις in Sentence 1. The verb rejoice in Sentence 2 concretises the ‘grace’ of God in which believers are established. Paul subsequently uses the rhetorical device of a climax, or chain progression, in order to compile the implications of their faith.

6.3.2 The relevance of the climax (S3-4)
In Sentence 3 the expression ‘rejoice in Suffering’ contrasts with Sentence 2 ‘rejoice in hope of the glory of God’. Hope (ἐλπίς) makes ‘faith’ (S1) more manifest even in suffering. There are two reasons why hope becomes ‘ostensively relevant’:

1) ἐλπίς broadens the noun πίστις used in S1. It is ostensive in as much as it is ‘making πίστις more manifest’.

2) Paul deliberately intends to change the ‘cognitive environment’ of the readers. The indicative mood of the verb ‘we rejoice’ states a change in mutual cognitive environment contrasting θλίψις (suffering) which represents the existing state of affairs. Hope manifests joy because God’s grace sets limits even to forces of suffering (θλίψις x2 S3-3.1).

The climax or chain progression, in S3-4.1, consists of a set of implications which articulate the accumulative effect of suffering righteousness. Suffering righteous-
ness consists of a set of assumptions about the suffering righteous one drawn from our encyclopaedic knowledge of Jewish traditions, referred to in par 5 above. By the grace of God even suffering does not remain the same. Suffering (S3.1) culminates in perseverance (ὑπομονή). Perseverance (S3.2) establishes character (δοξιμή). Character (S3.3) produces hope (ἐλπίς). This 'chain progression', as Porter (1991:665) aptly calls the device, consists of a set of contextual implications. These implications: 'suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character and character hope', are synthetic implications related by deductive rules of 'containment'. The relationship between the premisses (S3.2-3) which constitute the climax (ἐλπίς) is a relationship of entailment. Perseverance in executing the divine calling manifests the true character of the servant. Character is implicated by perseverance. Perseverance, character and hope 'entail' the servanthood of the righteous one. The deductive rules thus lead the reader to the semiotic interpretant. The faithful community as suffering righteous one is the interpretant. Faithfulness is vindicated in hope. The premisses entail one another: perseverance entails character and character hope. The climax culminates with the statement: 'Hope does not disappoint us', in Sentence 4. The contextual implication compiled into the climax improves the overall representation of the world. This representation of the world is made mutually manifest. The greater the accumulation of contextual implications, the greater the relevance.

The extra-patterning in the climax makes the author's intentions 'overt'. Sperber and Wilson (1986:60) explain that 'overt intentions' make what is communicated mutually manifest. What is mutually manifest becomes relevant. The relevant information of the climax is that the Christian community of Rome is identified with the suffering righteous one. The suffering righteous one will by grace be exalted and vindicated.

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986:61), making one's informative intentions known, is the best way of fulfilling what is thereby communicated. Intentions made 'mutually manifest' mean that the cognitive environment of both the writer and the recipients change. The mutual manifestness of this change of the cognitive environment particularises in the first person plural of the verbs καυχώμεθα in sentence 2 and 3. Communication which makes something mutually manifest has social significance. The semantic features of ὑπομονή, δοξιμή and ἐλπίς obtain a social character in the context. 22

The social significance of ὑπομονή, δοξιμή and ἐλπίς is relevant to what in par 5.1 was termed 'the high status inconsistency' of members of the community. The relevance of the climax consists in that Paul modifies the cognitive environment of the readers from one of despair and disillusionment to one of anticipation and hope. The modification of the cognitive environment is more than an objective principle

22 Sperber and Wilson (1986:61) rightly emphasise very strongly that 'mutual manifestness is of crucial social importance'.
only, it is a dynamic event. The faithful are not only recipients of grace, on the contrary, they become participants in facilitating the dissemination of the grace of God. The readers rejoice because, by God's grace, they constitute a derived source of perseverance, character and hope. This change in the cognitive environment of faithful readers does not come about because of virtue on their part. This change is purely an act of God's grace. Paul states this fact unambiguously 'we rejoice upon hope of the glory of God'.

The climax culminates in the subject of 'hope' in Sentence 4. Sentence 4 again provides a transition to the next section which logically accounts for this dynamic source of faith which empowers the believer to anticipate and hope. The creative source that enables the Roman community to project its faith into the future is divine love. Gods love is victorious. It conquers human prejudices. It facilitates the mutual manifestness of reconciliation. The relations between πίστις, ελπίς and ἀγάπη have to be determined by inference. What formerly applied to ἐλπίς, here also applies to ἀγάπη. Πίστις (S1) is by 'ostensive inference' further broadened by ἀγάπη. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986:48 and 49), ostensive inferential communication is the process by which such a noun is made more manifest. Such an ostensive inferential communication always comes with a guarantee of relevance. The social relevance of ἀγάπη which enables the believer to project faith into the future, is argued by Paul in Sentences 5-8.

6.3.3 The relevance of unconditional love (S5-8)
In Sentences 5-8 Paul demonstrates that love is creative and able to anticipate only in as much as it is divine love. The logical rules by which Paul reaches his conclusions belong to the type of rules designated as modus tollendo ponens. Modus tollendo ponens is a deductive device in relevance theory. It is a logical rule which applies to alternative statements juxtaposed in any structured form of communication. When one statement is denied, the other becomes contextually effective. Sentences 5-8 constitute an extended chiasm which contrasts: (A) divine love and (B)

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23 Following Sperber and Wilson (1986:87), this deductive inferential rule may be illustrated as follows:

**Modus tollendo ponens**

a, Input: 
(1) (A or B) 
(2) (not B) 
b, Output: A

The rule applies as follows:

a, Love is 
(1) (Divine or Human) 
(2) (not Human) 
b, Output: Divine
human love in an antithesis. The antithesis particularises the love bestowed upon the Christian community of Rome.

(A1) Sentence 5 contrasts the love of Christ to human love. While humanity had no merit to offer, Christ gave his life for the ungodly.

(B) Sentences 6 and 7 parallel human love in a sharp antithesis:

(B1) Sentence 6 states that a human will hardly die for a righteous person.

(B2) Sentence 7 strengthens the argument in Sentence 6 retroactively: a human might perhaps risk his life for a good person. Human love seeks merit in the object of its love. Human love does not sacrifice. Human love is conditional love. It demands, it takes, it does not give. The antithesis denies that this form of love, portrayed in B, is true love.

(A2) Sentence 8 strengthens Sentence 5 in an analeptic relation: God shows His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Divine love is love which gives. It sacrifices. It seeks no merit in the object of love. By *modus tollendo ponens* Paul rules out human love. The inference rule draws the logical implication that the love bestowed upon believers is divine love, that is unconditional love. This love is able to reconcile friend and foe. It even reconciles the community with the Roman state authorities (Rm 13:1-10). This love is creative, it anticipates and thus generates hope. This is the love poured out in your hearts in a way which never lets you be the same again. The expression ἡ ἁγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις, in Sentence 4.1, is a statement which claims the mutual manifestness of love and reconciliation. The mutual manifestness of reconciliation is relevant in personal but also in social relations. This is the source of their mutual joy.

In Sentences 9-10 Paul penetrates the significance of the Christ event to determine the source that provides divine love with such persuasive power.

6.3.4 The relevance of the resurrection. (S9-10) Sentences 9 and 10 contrast the significance of Jesus's death (S9 and resurrection (S10). The parallelism contrasts a comparison which develops an argument progressing *a minore ad maior*. The statement in S9 ‘now that we are justified in his blood we shall be saved through him from the wrath’, belongs to the encyclopaedic knowledge mutually manifest to the writer and readers. This knowledge becomes conditional in sentence 10. In Sentence 10 the antithetical parallelism contains the encyclopaedic knowledge in the protasis ‘if we, while we were enemies, are rec-
Paul’s communicative intention by means of this antithesis is to make manifest that if the death of Jesus will suffice to reconcile us with God, God is able to do much more through the power of his resurrection. The latter, i.e., the resurrection, is the power which modifies the cognitive environment of the readers. Not only of individual readers, but it soon changes the mutual cognitive environment of the community. In the course of the first four centuries this circle would further widen to include the mutual cognitive environment of the authorities of the Roman empire and the Christian communities in the empire. This dynamic source empowers the communities, that possess divine love, ostensibly to manifest hope. Divine love which embraces human love in Sentences 5-8 manifests in contextual effects and contextual implications.

The most striking of the various contextual effects is the fact that the readers of the epistle do not become mere recipients of reconciliation and grace, but participants in reconciliation, grace and peace. The contextual effects of God’s grace manifest in the peace which the community exhibits. The relevance of God’s grace manifests in the perseverance which this community displays. It manifests also in the character which the grace of God produces. The theodicy of the resurrection comprised of such a set of premises which carried it through the struggle against mystery religions and persecutions, ending with that of the Roman emperor Diocletian in the fourth century. The ancient Christian communities saw in the tolerance of Constantine and the recognition of the Church by Theodosius the retroactive vindication of their hope which did not disappoint them. The retroactive vindication of their hope strengthened by the wider circulation of the epistles led to the final canonisation of the epistle. Canonisation is consequently the contextual effect which arises from relevance to the individual and relevance to the Christian communities. The greater the accumulation of this contextual effect, the greater the relevance of their faith. The ostensive inferential communication of God’s grace also manifests in social implications.

24 Sperber and Wilson (1986:86) explain the rule as follows:

‘The standard rule of modus ponendo ponens takes as input a pair of premisses, one a conditional and the other the antecedent of that conditional, and yields as output the consequence of the conditional:

(47) Modus ponendo ponens
Input: (I) P
(11) (If P then Q)
Output: Q’
Relevance also manifests in *contextual implications*. The unconditional love of God, which embraces this community, reconciles them with God, one another, their living conditions, albeit exposed to suffering and hostile authorities. The suffering righteous one will be vindicated by faith. The perseverance of the servant will be rewarded. Unconditional submission to the divine calling exalts the servant. By the grace of God these communities become derived sources of peace, faith, hope and love. In times of persecution and suffering they constitute a source of endurance. In conflict they manifest peace. In sorrow they comfort. To those who despair, they bring hope. They are benefactors of grace. They bring joy. This is not the consequence of their own virtue, but a sign of the power of God's grace which manifests even in human weakness. The greater the accumulation of these contextual implications, the greater the relevance of their faith.

6.4 Résumé

In *par* 6.3 above, I illustrated how relevance theory enables us to bridge the gap between the representation of sentences and the significance of the thoughts expressed by these utterances.

In *par* 6.3.1, relevance theory resolves the ambiguity of verbs such as ἐχομεν and καυχώμεθα, left unresolved by structuralism. I further demonstrated that the communicators' intention was fulfilled in the mutual manifestation of peace, joy and reconciliation.

In *par* 6.3.2, I indicated how relevance theory contributes to the process of semiosis. *Relevance and inference lead to the interpretant*. In the discussion of the 'climax', I indicated how the deductive rules of containment lead to the suffering righteous one by *entailment*.

*Par* 6.3.3 illustrated how divine love, in contrast to human love, is made mutually manifest and improves the community's representation of the world. The unconditional love of God changes their cognitive environment and reconciles them with God, their fellowmen and their hostile environment.

In *par* 6.3.4 the relevance of the power of the resurrection to the individual became apparent. The mutual manifestness of the relevance of the resurrection changes the cognitive environment of the community. This event improves their overall representation of themselves and the world. To the individual this means being empowered to overcome their 'high status inconsistency'. The contextual effects relevant to the resurrection render the community not only as recipients but as participants in the dissemination of the fruits of God's grace.

The theory of relevance provides the exegete with a framework adequate to narrow the linguistic gap between the representation of sentences and the meaning of the thoughts expressed by utterances. It also provides an adequate framework to articulate the *reception of the text* in an *aesthetic object*. It leads interpretation to the interpretant or *denotatum*. Suffice it to say that the application of relevance theory
provides the exegete with a framework which fully justifies it being designated as a ‘semiotic of inference’.

7 CONCLUSIONS

‘Interpretation’ is the quest for meaning under changing historical conditions. In this article I have chosen three semiotic contexts accessible to the interpretation of Rm 5:1-11. The choice of these contexts were made on the basis of logical implication. The text immanent interpretation of formalism needed to be supplemented by the extra-linguistic meaning derived from socio-semiotic interpretations. The knowledge that when the structure of a text is fulfilled it achieves relevance, called for an inferential-semiotic interpretation of the text. What the article hopefully achieved, is to demonstrate how structuralism is contextualised in a socio-semiotic interpretation and how a socio-semiotic interpretation is contextualised in an inferential semiotic framework.

It became evident that meaning is constituted by interpretations generated by changing historical conditions. All interpretations are contextual. That means all interpretations are given in a contingent historical context. Because interpretation is theoretically constituted in a historically contingent situation, it must content itself with providing only a perspective on meaning. These interpretations remain, as human constructs, inconclusive and even controversial in themselves. Biblical interpretation is an ‘open science’ which answers the New Testament or Old Testament text as an ‘open text’ or ‘writerly text’. New Testament interpretation may not forfeit its freedom by an act of totalitarian self-transcendence which manifests in one-dimensional consciousness of meaning. New Testament interpretation will consequently show that the meaning of the text manifests as a multiple logos.

A structural analysis, par 4 above, provided a descriptive interpretation of the relations of the whole to the units constituting the text of Rm 5:1-11. It identified the themes of joy, peace and particularly hope which unite the underlying lines of action in the text as a whole. It interpreted all forms of ‘de-automatised’ language usage, rhetoric and stylistic features. It characterised divine love as ‘unconditional love’ in binary opposition to human love. The analysis grounded in the dynamics of ‘hope’, is stated in the binary antithesis of the death and resurrection. It identifies the finality of faith as ‘hope of the resurrection’. Yet, the article does not interpret meaning in any totalitarian structural-transcendence. Relevant though structuralism may be, it is relative. The dynamics of literary critical exegesis engage in a multidisciplinary dialogue with socio-semiotic interpretation and interpretation in inferential semiotics.

A socio-semiotic interpretation, par 5 above, takes as point of departure the conflict of suffering and perseverance, divine love and human love and the juxtaposition of death and resurrection. The juxtaposition of suffering and vindication, humiliation and exaltation is elucidated by entries of the suffering righteous one in
our encyclopaedical knowledge of traditional Judaism. The community's identification with the suffering righteous one overcame its 'low status crystallization'. The leadership roles which emerge and the persuasive force of belief in the power of the resurrection transformed their house fellowships into early Christian communities, separated from the synagogues. Even at this point exegesis may also not interpret the meaning in one-dimensional social consciousness. The sociological interpretation is further contextualised in an inferential-semiotic analysis, in par 6 above.

The vindication motive improved the communities representation of the world. The triumph of grace mutually changed their cognitive environment, thus rendering this knowledge relevant. The relevance of the resurrection empowered the communities to be reconciled with their authorities, one another and their hostile environment. Vindicated by faith, they experienced peace and joy. They became benefactors of grace, faith, hope, love and joy.

Even inferential semiotics, as a human construct, will remain inconclusive. Interpretations of the past may even grow relative with time. Human contingency, subject to changing historical conditions, renders the theory of interpretation an open process. This process challenges the exegete of every generation to negotiate the text and render interpretation relevant to the changing historical conditions of the times.

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