‘Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God’ (Lk 14:15): Internal and external intertextual influence on the interpretation of Christ’s parable of the Great Banquet

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ABSTRACT

A relatively broad perspective on the notion of ‘intertextuality’ is adopted which recognises both an ‘internal’ and an ‘external’ discourse dimension to this textual feature. Intertextuality is manifested by a gradient of verbal and non-verbal possibilities that may be distinguished according to the factors of ‘correspondence,’ ‘salience,’ and ‘relevance.’ These criteria are then selectively applied to the ‘Great Banquet’ parable (Lk 14:15–24), first in relation to its internal intertexts within the gospel itself. Intertextuality is then examined externally in terms of pertinent passages of Scripture and also with reference to aspects of the non-verbal ‘contextual’ setting. Attention is next shifted to a south-central Bantu world/life-view and the hermeneutical effect of pre-texts potentially generated by this milieu. The influence of a comparatively ‘literal’ Bible translation, a ‘paratext,’ on the ongoing process of interpreting this seemingly straightforward parable pericope is also considered.

1 INTRODUCTION: A ‘BLESSING’?—HOW AND FOR WHOM?

It must have been quite a surprise, that is, to hear the honoured guest suddenly blurt out, ‘Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God!’ (Lk 14:15, NIV). Of course, perhaps the utterance just sounds a bit strange or out of place to us today because we were not present there at the feast, and besides, we live in a time, place, and culture that is very different from the setting which applied then. But what did the man really mean by his words, and why did he say them in the first place? Obviously this ‘blessing’ must have signified something important because it elicited from Christ a rather long parable discourse, namely, that of the ‘great banquet’ (deipnon mega, vv 16–24). Therefore, it may be worthwhile for us to take a closer look at this exclamation and its relationship to the Lord’s following story about the ‘kingdom of God’ (basileia tou theou, v 15) just to see if there is something that we might be overlooking as we continue to hear, teach, and preach about this familiar pericope. The particular analytical ‘tool’ that we will use to
'open up' the text involves the literary critical notion of 'intertextuality' and various related concepts which will help us to dig beneath the surface, so to speak, in order to discover what possible dimensions of meaning may have impacted either directly or indirectly upon the understanding of those who were present on the scene and overheard these words. We will then return to a contemporary context to explore some of the intertextual barriers that may prevent certain people from correctly interpreting both the man's proclamation and Christ's parable. Although the perspective chosen for the latter exercise is that of current Chewa (Bantu) speakers of Zambia and Malawi, the point is more or less universally relevant: How do I understand this text and its theological as well as ethical implications? Is there something here that I may have missed about 'eating bread...[at] the great banquet'? More importantly, in the light of the implicit imperative of this parable is it likely that I will one day be present there among the 'blessed' at that heavenly feast?

2 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'INTERTEXTUALITY'?

Before one can define intertextuality, the hermeneutical key that will be used to unlock some of the latent aspects of meaning in Luke 14:15-24, it is necessary to specify the sense of its core, namely, the word 'text.' For our purposes, the following basic sociosemiotic definition will do: A text is a discrete segment of human communicative behavior, one that consists of a structured set of signs selected from a larger inventory or code, whether oral or written, verbal or non-verbal. Such a text has the capacity to convey some specifiable denotative and/or connotative meaning ('significance') within a given sociocultural setting and situation of interpersonal interaction (often referred to as the 'context'). The reason for this rather broad concept of text, which is usually limited to some form of verbal discourse, will become more apparent somewhat later. In short, it is to incorporate a few more, potential influences on the hermeneutical process within the scope of the present study of 'intertextuality' in relation to a given text of Scripture.

There are accordingly both wider and narrower explanations of the process (dynamic perspective) and/or relationship (static perspective) of intertextuality. 'Process' involves people, in particular, the cognitive action that is generated as a person 'interprets' a particular text (as defined above). 'Relationship,' on the other hand, is more abstract and refers to the diverse, but specific, connections and associations of meaning that exist between one text and another that preceded or inspired it, the so-called 'pre-text' (a diachronic viewpoint; cf 'intertext,' the synchronic equivalent). Writers on the subject of intertextuality tend to focus on either the dynamic or the static aspects of the phenomenon, though both are of course involved in its operation. The narrower notion of intertextuality more or less limits its scope to
verbal discourse, especially writing (since it has been formulated by literary critics), for example: 'Intertext refers to the location of a text within the larger linguistic frame of reference on which it consciously or unconsciously draws for meaning' (Green 1995:183).

A broader outlook with respect to intertextuality adopts a correspondingly wider semiotic framework in order to explain how one text influences another, for example, 'Intertextuality thus becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture...' (Culler 1981:103). However, there is a danger here of intertextuality losing its distinctiveness and of becoming almost synonymous with the concept of 'presupposition,' which is 'the pool of knowledge one assumes to be possessed by one's audience [or readership]' (Green 1995:185). Another danger, in addition to over-generality, is that of indeterminateness whereby certain interpreters, such as those of the 'deconstructionist' school, employ a: '...notion of intertextuality according to which literary works always and endlessly refer to other literary works, so that the boundaries of this intertextuality can never be established' (Thistleton 1992:498).

I will therefore limit the sense and hence also the application of intertextuality to specifiable, pre-existent 'texts' (again, defined as above) which an author (or text-producer) utilises, whether consciously or unconsciously, to construct the particular 'meaning-package' of the intended message that s/he wishes to communicate to a given receptor individual or group. This is an 'active' intertextuality whereby '...readers' knowledge is appealed to in order to achieve the [text] producer's goal,' though the degree of conscious 'motivation' involved is always a matter of conjecture (Hatim & Mason 1990:124, 128). This contrasts with 'passive forms of intertextuality which amount to little more than the basic requirement that texts be internally coherent (i.e. intelligible) (:124) or conformable to a certain external generic literary pattern. Ideally, the process of intertextuality is 'triggered,' so to speak, by specific 'signals' in the macro- or microstructure of a discourse which call to mind a certain pre-text that is being accessed for the sake of semantic and pragmatic expansion or enhancement.

The nature of intertextuality may be further specified for analytical purposes (and from a linguistic perspective) with respect to three principal determiners of what we might inclusively call 'significance,' namely, correspondence, salience, and relevance. 'Correspondence' refers to the degree of similarity (or contrast) between the 'present' text and its pre-text (or 'intertext') with respect to content (i.e. whether general or specific), form (lexical [topical/thematic], structure [major/minor], genre [discourse/literary
type), and function (pragmatic purpose). 'Salience' deals with function from a somewhat different viewpoint, namely, that of the 'subsequent' (as distinct from the 'original') author. The aim is to evaluate the relative importance of the pre-text to the author's current (postulated) illocutionary intention(s), rhetorical strategy, and overall communicative objective. For example, how crucial to the development of the borrower's narrative or argument is the particular passage that s/he cites or alludes to? 'Relevance' then looks at the process from the receptor's standpoint and the amount of cognitive effort (cost) that is expended in perceiving and interpreting the pre-text in relation to the ultimate practical benefit (gain) derived from this knowledge (Hatim & Mason 1990:95–96). How difficult, for example, is it to recognise an intertextual element in the text that one is reading/hearing, and how applicable is this information to the essential message in the present context of communication? As a general rule, the more correspondent, salient, and/or relevant a certain pre-text is, the greater its significance as an intertextual component of the discourse that is in the process of being transmitted and received. In the discussion of the Great Banquet parable that follows, I used these three criteria as a means of selecting for consideration from the many possibilities those instances that seemed to have the highest value, or we might say, intertextual 'potency,' at least from my subjective point of view.

There is much more that one could say about intertextuality and its 'typology' and/or 'tracing' in discourse (Hatim & Mason 1990 ch 7; cf also the essays in Fewell 1992 and the exposition in Preminger & Brogan 1993:620–22), but the preceding overview is sufficient to provide a background for the term's wider, but not unrestricted, usage in the present study. With this in mind, we may return to the pericope of the Great Banquet in order to see how several of the key facts of intertextuality, thus broadly defined, can help to uncover certain aspects of meaning (in relation to the original text) and significance (some possible contemporary implications and applications) that may not be readily apparent on the surface of the discourse. Our discussion is organised according to the following diagram of interrelated topical constituents:

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    TEXT <= Intertext
          \       /       /
         Verbal   Internal   Immediate (cotext)
         \       /           \       /
        External   Removed   Oral
                      \     /
                       Written
                      /
                  Non-Verbal (context)
                      /
            Compositional (schema)

          |
        Sociocultural (scenario)
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2.1 Delineating the textual focus (locus) of intertextuality (Lk 14:15–24)

Before we can begin to apply the concept of intertextuality as outlined above, we need to determine the particular 'text' which the former is presumed to be actively related to by way of direct citation, allusion, or some other referential influence. The textual unit that serves as the basis for our study, Luke 14:15–24, is quite clearly demarcated with respect to its outer border. The concluding boundary is defined by a major shift in scene, namely, from the house of the Sabbath day dinner (14:1, 7, 12, 15) to the road which led in the general direction of Jerusalem (14:25; cf 13:22, 17:11) on the didactic journey that delineates the central portion of Luke's Gospel, 9:51–19:44. The opening textual boundary is debatable: A strong argument could be made for locating this at the beginning of the chapter, where the episode obviously starts out with Jesus making his way to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee. However, because the segment which spans verses 1-24 appears to include three distinct parable discourses, beginning with verse 7 when '...he told them this parable' (cf a similar pattern in ch 15:3, 8, 11), I will restrict our primary textual unit to the pericope which presents the third and longest parable. This one is specifically occasioned by a certain guest's pronouncement of a messianic blessing (v 15).

As far as the compositional structure of this text is concerned, we observe a dramatic linear pattern of development which is comprised of seven discrete instances of direct speech and bounded by an inclusio of reference to 'the banquet' which provides the central topic (vv 16, 24). The parable is divided into two asymmetrical 'halves' by the 'sending out' (v 17a) and 'return' (21a) of the master's servant (A-D), 'then' (tote) by the twofold reference to the master's 'anger', both indirectly (21b) and directly (24) expressed. In his generalised chiastic reconstruction of this text, Breck draws attention to the structural significance of the centrally placed 'anger' motif, which he regards as the story's major theme (1994:178–179). Indeed, that would be the expected human reaction, but Christ's parables tend to give equal or even greater prominence to 'the unexpected,' in this instance, the subsequent display of 'amazing grace' by the host, which comes to the fore in the second half of the account. This carefully constructed sequence may be summarised in terms of major narrative developmental 'moves' as follows (S = speech; implied elements are in brackets):
| v 16 | A | INVITATION to banquet |
| v 17 | B | servant SENT out with a SUMMONS (S1) |
| v 18 | C1 | first negative RESPONSE (S2) |
| v 19 | C2 | second negative RESPONSE (S3) |
| v 20 | C3 | third negative RESPONSE (S4) |
| v 21 | D | servant’s RETURN and REPORT |

**E** master’s RESPONSE—anger!

B’ servant SENT with a second SUMMONS (S5)

v 22

C’1 [first positive RESPONSE]

D’ [servant’s return] and REPORT (S6)

v 23

B” servant SENT with a third SUMMONS (S7a)

v 24

E’ master’s RESPONSE—anger! (S7b)

One could argue that the final utterance (S7b) is Christ’s own comment on the parable just told (and hence a separate ‘speech’), but the lack of an explicit indication of the shift from ‘text’ to ‘cotext’ (with the possible exception of the use of a plural pronoun ‘you’ [humin] may well be deliberate. In other words, this may be a rhetorical device, that is, intentional ambiguity, whereby Jesus subtly identifies himself, the story-teller, with the banquet-giver, namely God.

The simple outline above with its various parallels and recursions clearly suggests the several principal metaphoric analogies (i.e., vehicle, tenor, ground) which constitute the heart of the pastoral message that Christ intended to convey by this parable (on the thematic implications of parable ‘analogies,’ see Blomberg 1990:26; Sider 1995:88-89; contra Hedrick 1994:28-35):

A—master : B—original guests = A—God : B—the professedly ‘righteous’ (cf 14:14; 15:7)

with respect to: B being ‘blessed’ with an invitation to fellowship that they expected to receive from A, that is, someone whom they all knew and should respect

A—master : B—secondary guests = A—God : B—all religious ‘outsiders’ (cf 15:1)

with respect to: B being ‘blessed’ with an invitation that they did not expect to receive from A, that is, someone whom they probably didn’t ‘know’ personally, if at all

A—original guests : B—servant = A—the supposedly ‘righteous’ : B—Christ

with respect to: A’s rude refusal to act upon the invitation that they had previously committed themselves to and which was now being delivered by B, who is a chosen messenger and representative of the host
A—secondary guests : B—servant—A—the seeming ‘outsiders’ : B—Christ

with respect to: A’s acceptance of an invitation, one which they thought they had no right to receive, due to the ‘compelling’ manner of the messenger, B

The full sense and significance of the parable is difficult to ascertain correctly when the text is considered in isolation on its own. When coupled with its ‘cotext,’ however, and under the influence of intertextuality (see below), the import and intent of Christ’s lesson becomes perfectly clear, at least with respect to the ‘original guests.’ These are the Pharisees and other religious leaders of the day who were refusing to accept both the message concerning the ‘kingdom of God’ as well as the divinely chosen messenger (contra Young 1995:144; e.g. Mt 21:45, Mk 12:12, Lk 20:19). They wanted to obtain an invitation to ‘fellowship’ with God and practice their ‘discipleship’ on their own terms, at their own time, in their own manner, and with whom they wished. The radical nature of the sort of discipleship that would establish true communion with God in his kingdom was the essence of Christ’s instruction as it is both declared and demonstrated especially in this central portion of Luke’s gospel (9:51–19:44).

On the surface of the text, an identification of the ‘secondary guests’ is not quite so straightforward. Due to the operation of intertextuality, however, there would be little doubt in the minds of Christ’s audience: It was a group made up of the spiritually deprived masses and in particular those widely regarded as being ‘lost’ religious outcasts. Indeed, the preceding discourses in Luke have been gradually building up to a much more explicit disclosure of this rejected lot (cf 5:30–31, 7:34). The revelation reaches its climax in typical dramatic, but parabolic, fashion in the story of the Two Lost Sons which is recorded in the next chapter (15:11–32). In this connection, it is interesting to note the major implication that occurs at the end of the Great Banquet parable, namely, that the second group of the substitute set of invitees (those living out in the countryside, v 23) also responded positively to the master’s call, though this is not explicitly stated. In this respect then the narrative is ‘open-ended’ since it may be presumed that other groups on the ‘outside’ might also receive the same invitation in order (purpose) to ensure that ‘[his] house should be filled’—completely! Thus each subsequent receptor-group can readily appropriate and respond to this same gracious ‘blessing’ (cf v 15b) for themselves.

There is much more to the interpretation of this parable of the Great Banquet, but greater elaboration at this point might only serve to obscure the focus of the present study. Thus the preceding comments, though exegetically inadequate, would seem to be sufficient to prepare for zeroing in now on the crucial operation of intertextuality in the generation of this text’s potential
meaning, that is, with primary reference to the particular socioreligious setting specified by the evangelist.

2.2 Internal intertextual influence from the 'immediate' and 'remote' (co)text'

The internal dimension of the referential process of intertextuality includes all those antecedent texts ('pre-texts') within Luke's gospel that play a part both in laying the groundwork and in providing material for the actual construction of the portion encompassing 14:15-24. One could of course include subsequent texts within the same document or discourse as well, chapter 15 for example, which builds upon 14 by elaborating upon the lost condition of all those invited to fellowship with the Lord and their basically twofold response to the gracious divine initiative (on the issue of 'directionality' in intertextuality, see Pyper 1993 versus Lasine 1993). But for the purpose of this exercise, I will limit my consideration to a diachronic, sequential 'reading' of the author's account, which has been written 'in an orderly sequence' (1:3, NAB) 'from the beginning' (1:3, NIV). As with any coherent, carefully formulated narrative, we observe how one pericope is made to access and sometimes also to anticipate another in the general formation of the composition, which involves a deliberate selection, arrangement, shaping, and sharpening of the textual materials (i.e., the various narrative units and their interrelationships). An immediate internal intertext would be one that occurs within the clearly defined episode of which this parable is a part (i.e., 14:1-24), while a removed intertextual precursor would be any pertinent passage that occurs prior to chapter 14 in Luke.

2.2.1 The 'immediate' range of intertextual operation (Lk 14:1-14)

It is normally an immediate intertext, one which forms part of a text's so-called 'cotext' (Cotterell & Turner 1989:16), that is of the greatest importance (or 'salience') to the overall compositional process (but not necessarily in terms also of the level of 'correspondence' manifested or 'relevance' perceived). In the present case, there is an overt, hence deliberate, connection between this text and the preceding discourse in the anaphoric transitional expression, 'Now having heard...these things...'. 'These things' refer to what 'one of those reclining with [Jesus] just heard the latter speak (v 14), that is, concerning the 'blessed one' (makarios—same word as in v 15) who 'will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous.' Christ's promise, one based on the shocking socioreligious imperative of v 13, thus serves as the intertextual 'trigger' which elicits not only his fellow guest's pious platitude (probably a sanctimonious attempt to shift the subject) but indeed the parable of the
Great Banquet as well. This parable has several other important connections with the preceding one on drawing up an appropriate ‘guest list’ (14:12–14): (a) the subject of ‘invitation’ (*kaleoo*—vv 12, 13, 16, 17, 24); (b) the contrasting two sets of invitees, rich (etc) versus poor (etc); and (c) the repeated phrase that specifies the second group—‘the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind’—in relation to grace, both divine (v 21b) and human (v 13). Intertextual *resonance* is also established via certain key terms with the first of the three parables (and its introduction), the one about the ‘seating’ arrangements at a typical banquet of the day (14:7–11)—again, with an emphasis upon the activity of ‘inviting’ (six occurrences of the stem *kale-*) with respect to one’s perceived station in life and before God.

Thus as in chapter 15, the first two shorter parables prepare the way for the dramatic ‘punch line’ that comes in the third when the ‘Pharisees and religious legal experts’ (v 3) are parabolically (i.e. by indirect analogy) put down for their hostile attitude towards Christ’s ministry to the outcasts of society, a class of ritually unclean pariahs that undoubtedly included, according to rabbinic law, the very man whom he had recently healed of dropsy (v 2; Marshall 1978:579). This unfortunate fellow had been undoubtedly ‘used’ by Christ’s opponents to provoke a religious test case that would make him look bad, even guilty of offense, before their ‘watching’ eyes (14:1–2). In this way, by means of a tense moral and theological confrontation (vv 3–6), the stage is set for the ‘catena’ (Culbertson 1995:100) or string of structurally integrated and mutually illuminating parables which follows, that is, for the Lord’s threefold discourse on the need for genuine spiritual humility (v 11), egalitarianism (v 13), and justice (vv 14, 24) in the kingdom of God.

2.2.2 'Removed' internal intertextuality (*Lk* 1–13)

Space does not permit a consideration of all the potential ‘removed’ intertextual pretexts that occur prior to chapter 14, but it is helpful to point out a few of the more significant ones (i.e. in terms of correspondence and salience). Generally one would expect their ‘potency’ to decrease and their respective ‘modalities’ (denotative and connotative implications) to be modified more with a corresponding increase in ‘intertextual space,’ that is, the spatial (or temporal) distance between the two texts under examination (Hatim & Mason 1990:129). Most prominent on the list of possibilities occurs in 13:29–30 at the conclusion of Christ’s parable of the ‘narrow door.’ Here a very similar expression is used as that which introduces the Great Banquet parable, namely, one which refers to those who will ‘recline/eat bread in the kingdom of God’ (13:29/14:15). The likelihood that this is a deliberate intertextual connection is supported by a triad of important correspondences: (a) the plot dynamics of the Narrow Door text, that is, in which those who
expect to 'enter' will be turned away in the end; (b) a sharp repudiation and condemnation of the rejected group (13:27–28; cf 14:9, 24; cf 11:37–52); and (c) a statement that highlights the paradoxical, contra-worldly nature of the kingdom of God where 'the last shall be first' (13:30; cf 14:11, 21, 23; 12:2–3, 22–23, 51–53). Even the preceding report of another miraculous cure bears several notable similarities to the material that builds up to the Great Banquet parable: (a) Christ's Sabbath Day healing of a person regarded by the rabbis as being ritually impure (13:10–13); and (b) his confrontation with the religious leaders over the preceding matter, during which he defends himself with a hypothetical hyperbolic example (13:15—ox+donkey; cf 14:5—son [donkey]+ox; cf Metzger 1994:138–39).

The eschatological import of the Narrow Door pericope is reinforced at the end of the chapter (and episode) by another paradoxical saying that juxtaposes judgment and blessing (13:35). Indeed, 'blessed' (now eulogeemenos) is the Messiah 'who comes in the name of the Lord' (cf 19:38), and 'blessed' are all those who will one day fellowship together at the heavenly feast (13:29–30; 14:14–15). In contrast to this assembly of 'the saved' (13:23), are the ones whose 'house' (nation, tribe, religious community, etc) is 'left abandoned' (aphietai), that is, all those who stubbornly refused to listen to the 'prophets' (13:34a; analogous to the unmentioned servant[s] sent out with the initial dinner invitation in 14:16) and to heed the earnest appeal to be 'gathered together' in the kingdom of God (vv 13:34b–35a; cf 11:47–51). This was despite the fact that they had been given the first opportunity to 'eat and drink' at the feast (14:17) together with the Lord's chosen emissary, the Messiah (13:26; cf 20:13). Not only did the Pharisees and their ilk reject the call to attend, but they also tried to prevent others, namely the less privileged, from doing so (11:52; cf 13:14, 14:5). The many metaphoric parallels here to the behavior and fate of the obstinate invitees of the banquet parable could not be more striking (cf 14:24).

There are a number of other occurrences of the key term 'blessed' (makari-) which form a cumulative intertextual string that concludes positively in 14:15 and negatively in 23:29 (an ironic reversal pronounced by Jesus to the women of Jerusalem on his way to be crucified; cf 11:27). In addition to this calculated lexical 'correspondence,' these sayings are also significant in terms of both 'salience'—in relation to the development of Luke's theological 'argument'—and also 'relevance,' that is, to Christ's audience, especially the Pharisees and other 'godly' individuals who assumed that they were well on their way to that beatific spiritual state. 'Blessed' are those who 'believe' the promises of the Lord (1:45); who are 'poor,' 'hungry,' 'mourning,' 'hated,' and 'rejected' 'for the sake of the Son of Man' (6:20–22); who 'do not fall away on account of [Christ]' (7:23); who really 'see' what the Lord has revealed to them (10:21–24); who 'hear the word of God and obey it'
(11:28); and who are ‘watching,’ ‘ready,’ and ‘working’ when the Son of Man comes again (12:37, 38, 43—note also the association again with the eschatological banquet in v 37). Indeed, in these benedictory pronouncements, we have a handy summary of Christ’s revolutionary ‘theology’ according to Luke, a synopsis that finally appeals directly to those who were most inclined to reject it (14:13–14). And the parabolic paradox that concludes the last pericope cited (12:42–48) is ‘clarified’ in the warning at the close of the banquet scene: people who do not value their ‘invitation’ and what they have been ‘given’ in Christ will ultimately be demanded to pay the awful price of retribution, namely, expulsion from fellowship in the kingdom (12:48/14:24).

Three other situationally relevant internal pretexts help to shed some light upon the identification of the two groups of ‘alternative’ guests. Passages such as 5:29–30 and 7:34 which depict Christ’s ‘eating and drinking’ with ‘tax collectors and sinners’ as being an offense to the ‘Pharisees and religious experts’ suggest that the former group is represented by ‘the poor, crippled, blind, and lame’ of the Great Banquet parable (14:21; cf 15:1–2). Those invited from out among ‘the roads and country lanes’ (14:23), on the other hand, seem to refer to the non-Jews, or gentiles, who come from ‘east and west and from north and south’ to join in ‘at the feast of the kingdom of God’ (13:29). One more significant ‘fellowship-meal’ passage occurs later on in Luke, namely, in 22:30 during a discourse at the ‘last supper’ (vv 14–38). Here it is Christ’s ‘apostles’ who are specified as the honored guests (and note the association of this verse with another of Jesus’ perplexing kingdom sayings in v 26). The ‘twelve tribes of Israel’ whom they will ‘judge’ (kavnontes) or lead (in the manner of an OT ‘judge’; cf Acts 13:20, 24:10) may be a symbolic designation of all those who have been mentioned previously in the gospel as participants in this ‘blessed’ meal, in particular the diverse groups of ‘outsiders’ invited in 14:21–23 (cf 19:5–10). If so, this would be another case of cumulative intertextual reference.

2.3 External intertextual influence from oral or written texts

An external precursor involved in the process of intertextuality is an oral or written text that stands outside the framework of the integral composition of which the focal pericope is a part. In the case of an ancient document such as the Scriptures, it is rather difficult to pinpoint any unwritten antecedents with certainty due to the lack of concrete evidence. However, a number of passages from both the Old and New Testaments may be illuminated by relevant citations found in the oral rabbinic traditions (if used with care), which were later preserved in writing, often with certain literary adaptations (Lightstone 1985:56), in the legal collections known as the Mishnah, the two
Talmuds, the Tosefta, and various Midrashic (exegetical) compilations (Neusner 1987:106). Unfortunately, we do not have a very good example of such an intertextual analogue in the case of the Luke 14:15-24 pericope. Sider feels that 'the Palestinian Talmud story of Bar Maayan...lies behind Jesus' parable of the Great Supper' (1995:183), but the connection is tenuous at best due to its brevity. The pertinent portion consists of just a few lines of text:

[Bar Maayan] never did a meritorious deed in his life. But one time he made a banquet for the councillors of his town but they did not come. He said, “Let the poor come and eat the food, so that it not go to waste” (Sider 1995:184).

Another major problem lies in the narrative characterisation of the preceding alleged correspondent: The banquet-master, Bar Maayan, was a typical low-life publican, hardly an appropriate representative of the heavenly Host (cf Lk 1:53). Thus it is not at all surprising that the town council did not respond to his invitation because that would imply that he was their social (and moral) equal (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:365)!

The written external aspect of intertextuality, however, is much more productive in supplying potential precedents. In this case we are dealing primarily with the rest of Scripture and related discourse, possibly the other two synoptic gospels or the 'Gospel of Thomas' (though there are great problems here, see below), but much more certainly with corresponding passages in the canonical and non-canonical Jewish religious literature, whether Hebrew or Greek. An additional potential 'source' of intertextual influence is occasionally found also in earlier Greek secular writings, both documentary and non-literary, for example the Oxyrhynchus Papyri. An important gospel parallel to the Great Banquet parable of Luke 14 occurs in Matthew 22:1-14. Indeed, there are some striking general similarities, for example: a grand banquet scene, the refusal of all invited guests to attend, the superficial concern of the invitees for other affairs deemed more important, the consequent righteous wrath of the host, ultimate punishment meted out to those who were unwilling to come, a second invitation sent out to social and moral inferiors, a desire to have the feast-house filled, and a cotextual connection with the 'kingdom of God' (Lk 14:15; Mt 21:43). However, there are also numerous differences between these two pericopes in terms of both structure and narrative detail. Thus in Matthew's version we find: a wedding banquet hosted by a king for his son, several servants being sent out with the announcement who are eventually murdered, no explicit excuses given, the king's dispatch of an army to destroy both the rebels and their city, only one group of alternates invited, and the inclusion of a significant teaching on individual responsibility with the addendum about an unworthy wedding guest. But Jesus' principal objective would seem to be the same in both cases,
namely, to deliver a figuratively worded rebuke to the privileged in Jewish society over their refusal to accept his message—those who were first in line to receive it—and to offer concrete justification for concentrating his ministry among the needy and receptive masses.

The difficulty with these and other synoptic parallel pericopes is to determine the particular direction of intertextuality: Thus is Matthew's story the precursor that Luke (and perhaps also 'Thomas') had in mind when he composed his text, or was it the other way around—or do they both derive from a common source, perhaps even different sources, or are Matthew and Luke recording two similar parables having a common theme but uttered by Christ on two separate occasions (cf Stein 1981:83–84)? Although I prefer the final option (cf Blomberg 1990:237), I cannot prove it and must conclude that it is virtually impossible in such instances to trace the line of textual descent in an incontrovertible manner, that is, based on indisputable manuscript evidence (cf Rohrbaugh 1991:138). Similarly, the use of extrabiblical Greek and Latin documents as a potential source of cross-textual influence does not offer as much help in the case of the gospels as it does for the book of Acts, to a limited extent (see Winter & Clarke 1993:chs 1–2), and especially the epistles (e.g Stowers 1986). In fact, in my reading I did not find a single sufficiently 'corresponding' passage or reference (i.e to Lk 14:15–24) from this corpus to warrant further consideration (which is not to say that one or more do not exist). I will therefore turn to the Hebrew Scriptures and related material to look for some more promising syntextual antecedents.

The central theme of 'eating at a divinely hosted banquet' that the guest next to Jesus alluded to in his exuberant 'blessing' is rather common in the Old Testament (Blomberg 1990:233). We find it in the familiar 'Good Shepherd' psalm, for example, 23:5 (cf v 2; Ezek 34:11–16) as well as in similar texts, such as the unlimited 'covenental' eating and drinking of the divine word referred to in Isaiah 55. But the pericope of Luke 14:16–24 was most likely inspired by another graphic passage from Isaiah which prophetically describes the eschatological deliverance meal hosted by Yahweh himself for 'all [his] people' (i.e 25:6–9; cf 49:6, 9–12). The noteworthy aspect of this text is the emphasis on universality: the qualifier 'all' (kol) is used explicitly five times to refer inclusively to the sum total of 'nations' (gooyim) on earth. This probable intertextual precedent would seem to support a similarly broad construal of the meaning denoted by those who were eventually summoned out from among 'the highways and byways' (14:23), i.e either the excluded folk dwelling just outside the city walls (Rohrbaugh 1991:144) or beggars and vagabonds living out in the countryside (Marshall 1978:590). In this respect, it is ironic that the pious individual who first brought up the subject of 'eating bread' (v 15) had undoubtedly limited in his own mind the ones encompassed
by his blessing to those who were patently 'righteous' (v 14) like himself, namely, the religious elite invited to the house of the 'leading' Pharisee (v 1–2). If that is true, we have here a classic instance of a 'skewed' intertextual transfer: the initial usage (in Isaiah) and its subsequent application (in Luke) do not mesh designatively. It was left to Jesus then to renew the original referentiality by means of a corrective parable.

Several pertinent intertestamental passages support the conclusion that the notion of a 'messianic banquet' was one that would not only be current in the minds of Jesus' audience but also highly relevant as well. Stein (1981:86) summarises: 'We find this metaphorical use of a supper in the Apocrypha (2 Esdras 2:38), the Pseudepigrapha (Enoch 60:7f.; 62:14), the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QSa 2:11–23), as well as in the rabbinic literature (Midrash Genesis 62:2; b. Sanhedrin 153a)'.

The interesting feature about many of these texts is their ethnocentric and exclusivistic tone: The vision of a universal gathering of distinct peoples of all kinds has definitely been lost—or worse, has been deliberately transformed to state the opposite of the plain prophetic intention. For example, this is how the Targum paraphrases Isaiah 25:6:

Yahweh of Hosts will make for all the peoples a meal; and though they suppose it is an honor, it will be a shame for them, and great plagues, plagues from which they will be unable to escape, plagues whereby they will come to their end [sic] (quoted by Bailey 1980:90).

According to the punitive reversal predicted by this passage, the gentiles will have no part in the Great Banquet of the Lord. Also excluded are all the physically imperfect in Israel, namely, anyone who is 'smitten in his flesh, or paralyzed in his feet or hands, or lame, or blind, or deaf, or dumb' (Bailey 1980:90, citing 1QSa 2). It may well have been that Christ had such negative texts and notions in mind when he delivered his own vision of the blessed fellowship of invited guests at the divine supper (cf 14:13, 21, 23). In this instance he thus restores the initial reference of the intertextual progression (or, we might say, repaired the 'kink' in its designative 'chain' of transmission, Hatim & Mason 1990:121) to the original intent of its primary Scriptural antecedent(s). At the same time he indirectly warns all similarly narrow-minded, would-be guests at the heavenly banquet (e.g. the spokesman of v 15) of the precariousness of their theological position. Could the speaker of these astonishing words not be the Christ, the chosen Servant of Yahweh foretold by Isaiah, the One commissioned to 'preach good news to the poor...freedom for the captives...[and] to comfort all who mourn' so that 'all who see them will acknowledge that they are a people [with "offspring among the peoples"] whom the LORD has blessed' (Is 61:1–2, 9; cf 11:4; 29:18–19; 42:1; 48:16; Lk 4:16–21)?
2.4 Non-verbal intertextual influence from the compositional and sociocultural context

Here we enter upon a domain that is somewhat controversial in the study of intertextuality. In brief, the issue is this: Should the process (or relationship) of intertextuality be limited to verbal communication, or is there some basis or justification for considering the possibility of a non-verbal dimension as well? I will not enter into the scholarly debate at this stage, which is a subject area of special concern to psycholinguists, but as earlier indicated I will adopt a wider perspective simply for practical purposes, namely, to permit a somewhat fuller discussion of possible influences upon past and present interpretations of the Great Banquet parable of Luke 14.

2.4.1 Generic pre-texts in the form of compositional 'schemata'

Two principal aspects of non-verbal intertextual association may be distinguished, namely, compositional and sociocultural (the latter to be considered in 2.4.2, below). Compositional 'schemata' are generic conceptual templates, models, or patterns that provide an organisational framework for the various verbal and non-verbal art-forms that are produced within a given society. Once a society becomes literate and more analytical, such schemata may be formalised and set down in writing for the purposes of instruction and evaluation (e.g. the Russian folktale, Propp 1968). But it must not be forgotten that they originate in the collective 'mind' of a people and provide the basis for their accepted forms and formats, types and techniques, with respect to all kinds of artistic production—in other words, the 'proper' (including also the 'expert' as well as an 'experimental') way of doing things. In the case of verbal art and literature in particular, the schemata are very closely related to language and hence subject to linguistic and literary investigation. Therefore, a connection with the usual (narrower) concept of 'intertextuality' comes quite naturally.

The hermeneutical importance of literary schemata (often termed 'genres' if associated with particular social contexts) would appear to be obvious, for they delineate the 'normal' structural arrangement, event or argument sequence, participant roles (if applicable), range of content, settings, and discourse functions of the various text-types included in a given corpus of literature. As such, they operate as cognitively stored models of reality and textual representation. These schemata thus serve as "ideational scaffolding" in the organisation and interpretation of experience and probably also 'influence what type of discourse we produce' (Brown & Yule 1983:247-248). As Hatim and Mason point out, 'The underlying principle of this whole process is intertextuality, our ability to recognize and produce texts as tokens of a type' (1990:169; cf: 191).
Let us consider the 'narrative' or 'story' parable, for example (for other forms of the parabolee, see Bailey & vander Broek 1992:106–108): In addition to its typical narrative features (i.e., setting, characters, point-of-view, plot [steady-state→complication/conflict→build-up→crisis/climax→resolution], etc), a fully-developed parabolic analogy frequently manifests a number of other important literary characteristics, for example: symmetry (based on patterned repetition), conciseness (the elimination of all unessential details), direct speech (for emphasis), contrast (between two major characters), surprise (incongruity or implausibility), choice (often leading to conflict), and climax (or 'end-stress'; for other attributes, see Ryken 1984:255–272; 1987 ch 3). It is not possible to further describe and illustrate all of these here (see Wendland 1996); instead, we will focus upon the particular aspects of these features for which the exercise of intertextuality on the generic level of discourse seems to be most crucial. In this respect we are not so much concerned about the 'passive' side of this process, for example, the degree to which Christ’s parables correspond to the form, content, and function of similar types of stories told by others. Rather, our interest lies in the 'active' dimension of intertextuality, that is, where he deliberately flouted or disregarded current compositional conventions as a means of emphasising the unique nature and urgent purpose of his message about the kingdom of God and its 'citizensry.' As noted above, however, such a comparative analysis is not easy to carry out due to the virtual nonexistence of any undisputed examples of other contemporaneous or prior 'parabolic' texts, whether in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek (Snodgrass 1992:594).

But in the absence of any evidence to the contrary (and for the sake of this exercise), I will simply assume that there was a current rabbinic tradition of storytelling that largely approximated the one that was later solidified in writing, probably sometime during the late first to third centuries CE (cf Culbertson 1995:xi-xiii; Bailey 1992:31–32; Blomberg 1990:58). A cross-textual comparison indicates that there are a number of important similarities between this religious corpus and parables found in the synoptic 'Christian' narrative record, for example: the frequent use of an introductory formula of aperture (e.g., 'A certain man...'-Lk 14:16), a lesser (everyday life)-to-the-greater (divine/human relationships) manner of discourse development (a fortiori argumentation), length and complexity (i.e., relatively short with only two or three main often stereotyped and contrasting characters), subject matter (common topics and imagery), and an allegorical bent based on analogy (cf Blomberg 1990:59–64).

However, there are also some significant differences, that is, aspects of Christ’s narrative parables that show a marked divergence from Jewish tradition in terms of both form and function. With respect to their style, for
example, the gospel pericopes manifest a dynamics and aesthetics in relation to their manner of construction that is not evident in their counterparts. In other words, Christ's parables are qualitatively distinct as purely literary creations. For instance, in the case of internal dialogue, Lightstone has observed: 'Mishnaic rhetoric in the final analysis devalues rabbinic dialogue and speech. Mishnah favors an artificial, entirely uniform and rather other-worldly language to anything that could be deemed personal, and therefore potentially moral, expression' (1985:56).

The same could be said about many of the other primary stylistic features: There is a certain formalism or artificiality present in the texts of the rabbis that tends to suppress, or at least subordinate, natural spontaneity and artistic creativity in the service of a predominantly didactic, even moralistic, functionalism. This overriding characteristic is in evidence on all levels of discourse fabrication, from the organisation of the whole down to the word-by-word diction of an individual utterance. Jesus' parables, on the other hand, display for the most part an engaging balance and symmetry coupled with a flexibility of construction on the larger levels, dramatic combinations of rhetorical tropes and figures of speech, delicate phonological arrangements including paronomasia, and a rhythmic manner of lineal composition that often approaches the 'poetic' in overall connotation, impact, and appeal, especially when communicated in their intended oral-aural medium (Culbertson 1995:21; for full-length studies on the 'poetics' of Christ's parabolic and related discourse, see Hedrick 1994, Bailey 1992, Robbins 1984, and Tannehill 1975; compare the rabbinic examples in Culbertson 1995, Young 1995, and Neusner 1987). More important perhaps than present-day scholarly comparative analyses of the disparities between the Jewish corpus and the parables of Christ is the independent evaluation of the common folk who were right there on the scene of his teaching ministry: '...the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law' (Mt 7:28b-29, NIV; cf Mk 1:22; Lk 4:32). This 'authority' (exousia; contra Culbertson 1995:1), I would submit, was not merely a matter of his external bearing or demeanor; rather, it went right to the heart of his message, namely, its underlying content and implications, reinforced by a panoply of stylistic devices and a compelling rhetorical technique.

What is the intertextual significance of formal differences such as those mentioned above? While my answer to this question is to some extent suppositional, it is supported by the biblical record, taken at its face value, and by the findings of a number of other investigators. In short, the key lies in the divergent purpose of these two sets of parables: The rabbinic method was strongly exegetical in character and served to strengthen the status quo, that
is, conventional Jewish moral precepts and religious values, especially as promulgated by the 'theologians' and teachers of the day (Blomberg 1990:66-67; Snodgrass 1992:594). Christ's parables, on the other hand, frequently subvert this convention, along with the accepted body of hermeneutical 'pretexts' that people tended to take for granted. By means of his distinctive and expert welding of form, content, and context, Jesus shocked listeners parabolically into a personal reevaluation of their tradition in relation to God's standards of 'righteousness' and his will for their lives. Thus the 'new covenant' predicted by prophets like Jeremiah (e.g. 31:31-34) is now portrayed as being inaugurated by the Lord's 'kingdom,' mediated by his messianic servant, the 'Son of Man,' who in his very person manifests the divine authority and exemplary behavior necessary to make these far-reaching (some would say, revolutionary) demands of discipleship and level of spirituality. In this way Christ effectively reinterpreted the murky intertext of a burdensome legalistic tradition which was in danger of supplanting the theology of the holy text that it had been intended to elucidate.

How then do these seemingly simple and straightforward stories effect so great a purpose? Literary history (as well as oral tradition, see below) is replete with examples of how simple rhetorical tools, in the hands of a master of verbal technique, can accomplish feats of communication that both confound the wise and enlighten the simple (Ps 19:7, 119:130; Is 29:13-14; cf 1 Cor 1:18-31). Thus Jesus' parables do not usually 'teach a lesson' overtly; instead, they encourage the audience to experience it for themselves. They promote an active mental participation in the little true-to-life drama being told and elicit a corresponding emotional and volitional response to this narrative event in the form of a personal identification with some appropriate internal character. Such empathy, if the hearer allows it to be stimulated, will inevitably provoke a decision, either for or against the point of the spiritual polemics that undergird a particular parable text, that is, the theological position proposed by Christ in opposition to that presupposed by the contemporary religious establishment, then and now. A typical story therefore confronts the listener with a closely-knit series of choices which continually contrast the 'new teaching' of Jesus (which is really the 'old teaching' of God, Mt 5:17) with a completely different intertextual tradition, namely, that which involves 'teaching human precepts as doctrines' (Mt 15:9, NRSV). The following is one way of schematising this provocative sequence of plot options (with thematic implications) for the Great Banquet parable:
It is interesting to observe several important features of the 'structure' of this binary series of narrative choices: (a) the emphasis on repeated elements that reflects some key aspects of the parable's theme, that is, the 'invitation' and the twofold possible response, 'acceptance' or 'refusal'; (b) the 'open ending' that allows for a continual 'recycling' of the thematic process (right up to the present day); (c) the non-contemporaneous, twofold fulfillment at the center, where the options overlap in that there is 'no invitation' to the 'same group,' but rather a 'punishment' for the first set of invitees (dramatically realised right at the end of the pericope in v 24); and (d) a parallel set of periodic 'surprises' that mark the particular options selected during the plot's unfolding (noted with an asterisk). The last mentioned item involves a sequence that relates in turn to the sociocultural dimension of intertextuality, a crucial hermeneutical issue that also deserves our consideration.

2.4.2 The hermeneutical importance of sociocultural 'scenarios'
Socioculturally based 'scenarios' refer to non-verbal pre-texts that relate in particular to a given people’s preferred way of doing things in accordance
with their time-sanctioned customs, institutions, and traditions. Such information is hermeneutically relevant because each *scenario* applies to, or conceptually accesses, an ‘extended domain of reference which is used in interpreting written [sic, also oral] texts, since one can think of knowledge of settings and situations as constituting the interpretive [framework] behind a text’ (Brown & Yule 1983:245). This behavioral dimension of intertextuality may be viewed as encompassing the compositional ‘schemata’ referred to above, and it is also crucial in the formation of any meaningful, contextually relevant discourse. For example, ‘one function of thematisation at the text level may be to activate a particular scenario representation for the reader [or hearer]’ (246).

We might illustrate the operation of intertextuality in this sphere of meaning generation with a brief overview of some of the chief facets of a ‘banquet scenario’ as it might have been evoked in the time, place, and culture when Christ told this parable (for a listing of the many Lukan passages that deal with the subject of ‘meals and table-fellowship,’ see Neyrey 1991:361-362). The topic of ‘food’ and all that this entails in a given society is one of its principal cultural ‘codes,’ and as such it has the potential to communicate a variety of non-verbal messages—hence also the relevance of intertextuality in the relationship between pre-text and text in this regard. As Douglas points out: ‘If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees in the hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries... Food categories encode social events’ (1975:249; cf 1993:22-23).

Rohrbaugh discusses the typical roles, ranks, and statuses connected with the ‘scenario’ that pertains to the ‘code’ of biblical meals in terms of five interrelated facets: ceremonial function, the reflection of social systems, body symbolism, reciprocity, and interpersonal relations (1991:362). Of special interest are the various ‘surprises’ and anomalies that occur in this elaborate system of coded behavior as they relate to the Great Banquet parable, that is, those points in the story where Jesus seems to deliberately play off the pre-text (part of one’s ‘pre-understanding’ or corpus of presuppositions, Thistle­leton 1992:44-46) of what would have been the standard and expected form of activity or outcome in the situation specified. As the parabolist par excellence, he does this in order to push the drama along in a new, thought-provoking, soul-searching, and hopefully decision-making direction.

A number of commentators have pointed out the importance of features that appear to manifest a deliberate reversal, exaggeration, contradiction, incongruity, atypicality, or implausibility as they impinge upon one’s interpretation of the parables of Christ (e g Ryken 1987:64; Sider 1995:123–124).
All these types of unexpectedness are thus available as 'cues' to a latent level of meaning that lies beneath the surface of the text, namely, the theological point that Jesus was trying to drive home to his audience, at least to those who were willing to suspend their 'disbelief' (and any personal antagonism towards him) in order to fully participate in the action of the parable that would lead by analogy to one or more primary moral and religious imperatives. There is a perceptible degree of narrative irony (in a broad sense) involved as well, for his hearers would (or should!) have surely recognised the obvious contradiction between text and context, that is, between the events and situations being reported in the parable (which certain 'errant' participants often seem to be completely unaware of) and the 'reality' of how things ought to have been said and done in the specific sociocultural setting depicted. The following is just a summary of some of the principal incongruities regarding a customary, ancient Middle-Eastern banquet 'scenario' which both mark the unfolding development of the story and motivate certain queries concerning the novel course along which Jesus is, for the most part implicitly, directing his listeners.

(a) That Jesus would have followed up the seemingly 'blessed' statement of a fellow diner (probably a close friend of the host judging from his apparent proximity to Christ, the honored guest; cf Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:366) with a controversial parable was undoubtedly somewhat of a surprise (Neusner claims that 'no stories were told during [a Pharisaic] meal or about it'; 1984:58). After all, was not the fellow only trying to defuse an already rather tense, potentially 'shame'-ful situation (e.g. 14:12-14; cf Bailey 1980:132-133)? But Jesus did not allow this pleasant platitude to stand. Instead, he pushed directly to the critical heart of the matter: Just exactly who are the 'righteous' (v 14) who will one day be among those 'blessed ones' invited to the heavenly feast? In the process he reveals the truth about some common, but erroneous presuppositions concerning the divine guest list! Indeed, it is not those who take their invitation and status before God for granted, but those penitent individuals who do not (14:8-11; cf 13:5; 15:7, 10, 23, 32). Thus we have another instance in Luke's gospel of a meal being used symbolically to reflect the world-turned-upside-down nature of the divine kingdom where expected human values, roles, and statuses are reversed (cf Lk 12:35-37; Rohrbaugh 1991:379).

(b) The first real surprise within the parable itself occurs in v 18 where it is reported that the invited guests 'all alike began to make excuses,' as to why they could not attend the dinner. Here it is important to remember that these people were not declining an initial invitation, for the story assumes on
the basis of the usual banquet ‘scenario’ that they had already accepted (i.e., RSVP). Rather, they were refusing to heed the actual summons, ‘everything is now ready’ (v. 17). Thus we are dealing with a double ‘call’—the first (the invitation), which could be declined, was to enable the host to determine the number of guests he would have so that the required amount of food could be prepared; the second (the summons) was to let everyone who had accepted the invitation know that the meal was about to begin (cf. Rohrbaugh 1991:141). A rejection of the latter would constitute a grievous insult to the host (Bailey 1980:95). The fact that ‘all’ the original invitees were involved was an unheard of occurrence. Is it any wonder that the Lord was deeply concerned about this development among the religious leaders and ‘elite’ of the day (and of any age)? How could he shock them into a recognition that their antagonistic attitude towards him and his message of the need for divine grace and personal repentance amounted to a ‘slap in the face’ to God and his generous invitation? Did they, in their pride, realise the awful consequences of their present antithetical course of thought and behavior (14:24, cf v. 11)?

(c) The nature of the three excuses offered is another incongruous element in the story. According to the norms of social behavior for that place and period, none of them was acceptable in the least, especially under the circumstances: ‘What all three share is an extraordinary lameness’ (Blomberg 1990:234; cf Keener 1993:230; for some specifics, see Bailey 1980:95–99). According to conventional patterns of storytelling (the so-called ‘law of triads’), which are frequently evident also in Christ’s parables, one would have expected the third invitee to have readily responded to the host’s summons (Sider 1995:130). We hear instead the most brusque refusal. Clearly, all the excuses, whether expressed or implied, that the Pharisees and other like-minded individuals were offering in response to the Messiah’s invitation to enter the kingdom of God were equally offensive and unacceptable. The same is true today. Some commentators see in these excuses the influence of a literary intertext based on the legitimate ‘holy war’ exemptions set forth in Deuteronomy 20:5–7 (for an extended treatment of this and related issues, see Swartley 1994:130–145; cf Moessner 1989:280–285). If this is true (other scholars reject this hypothesis, e.g., Stein 1981:88; Marshall 1978:588–589), Luke 14:18–20 reflects its pre-text by way of contrast, that is, proper versus improper explanations for non-participation. In any case, Christ’s point is unmistakably made by narrative means due to the invitees’ total disregard for the accepted norms of social etiquette and personal courtesy.

(d) The next major implausibility in Christ’s parable has to do with the second set of invited guests: They did not belong to the same class of this
socially stratified society; in fact, they were situated at the very bottom of the ladder! Table fellowship across social boundaries was frowned upon so much so, especially in urban areas (as Jesus’ setting would suggest), that ‘the elite...risked being cut off by families and social networks if seen in public eating with persons of lower rank’ (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:365; cf Christ’s warning in 14:26). Furthermore, by inviting such people to come dine with him, especially the street beggars and riff-raff living outside the city (v 23), the host was implicitly accepting them as social equals, a status that entailed its own responsibility, namely, the obligation to invite him to a corresponding feast in return, something that was clearly impossible for them to do (cf 14:12; Rohrbaugh 1991:140-141). There is no question that this astonishing invitation is one of pure grace (or in social-scientific terms, ‘generalized reciprocity’; Rohrbaugh 1991:385; on ‘grace’ in the parables, see Goldingay 1995:84), inexplicable to the extreme: ‘We come then to what this story is all about: a member of the [religious] elite, a host, making a break with the “system” in the most public and radical sort of way’ (Rohrbaugh 1991:145).

Even the host’s manner of inviting these social rejects is culturally unorthodox: He commands his trusted servant-messenger to simply go out and ‘bring them in’ (eisagoo) and in the second instance even to ‘compel’ (anankazoo) them to enter (vv 21, 23). This was not a matter of physical force, however (contra the footnote on this passage in the New Jerusalem Bible), but of pure verbal insistence, for the outsiders were as free as the in-group to refuse. Nevertheless, some rather strong convincing would no doubt be involved, first to overcome the polite refusals that would most surely have been the initial response to such an amazing contravention of mensal convention (Lamsa 1936:280-281). Extra effort would also be necessary to convince these outcasts that the invitation was genuine in view of their probable suspicion of someone who would dare to disregard the ‘walls’ (both literal and figurative) of the established social and religious system (Rohrbaugh 1991:144-145).

(e) Whether v 24 is a concluding ‘dominical comment’ or not, it does raise a final point of surprise in the telling of this parable: The master of the house, or more correctly here—‘lord’ (kurios, cf oikodespotees in v 21) does not allow his original invitees to get away with their insulting excuses for not attending. Their self-exclusion from the feast is now pointedly recalled, and it becomes the basis for their permanent condemnation, certainly not a very happy (or popular!) way to end a story at such a festive event. With this grim pronouncement, all the adverse associations connected with the public shame of an expulsion from food fellowship (cf 14:9; Mt 22:13)—and salvation, for
which a 'great supper [is] a standing figure' (Marshall 1978:587)—are brought to bear.

Hence the contradiction between assumption and reality is foregrounded as the guest's naive 'blessing' (v 15) is implicitly reversed and reinterpreted: 'Cursed' will be all those who refuse an invitation to the messianic feast on the Lord's gracious terms. The guests who will actually be present for the occasion are those who are of no account in the realm of this world, but who are great in the kingdom of God because they depend solely upon him for entrance. Thus Christ overturns the secure religious domain of the Pharisees (and all subsequent like-minded thinkers), one based on their assumed role and status with respect to a torah of their own making and a self-assessed standard of ritual purity. Furthermore, by telling a story which highlights God's commensality with 'sinners' (a characteristic feature of his own ministry, e g 15:1-2), Jesus 'blurs the lines separating observant and non-observant Jews, and signals non-approval of the core value of "separateness"' (Rohrbaugh 1991:384). Were any of those privileged people (economically, socially, religiously) listening there on the scene—no doubt quite uncomfortably now reclining on their couches—prepared to 'count the cost,' 'carry their cross,' and 'cast aside everything' for Christ (14:26-33)? But then the question should rather be—are we?!

3 SOME HERMENEUTICAL EFFECTS OF THE IMPOSITION OF AN 'ALIEN' INTERTEXTUALITY

Thus far we have been discussing the operation of verbal (internal & external) and non-verbal intertextuality within the framework of the original context of communication, namely, Jewish Palestine in the first century CE. What happens however when the hermeneutical setting changes? What effect does that have upon the process of text transmission and interpretation, that is, when the message is contextualised within a new sociocultural framework and 'cognitive environment' (Gutt 1991:25-26)? Obviously there is going to be a certain amount of conceptual interference. One might call it a 'competition' of sorts, or even a 'struggle' for psychological (cognitive, emotive, volitional) supremacy in the minds, hearts, and lives of most receptors: What 'reading' of a given Scripture pericope is the easiest to comprehend and which makes the most 'sense' or has the most 'relevance' to people from their 'resident' (either traditional/natural or a modified/re-indoctrinated) point of view?

Christian education (preaching and teaching) will undoubtedly have some influence in informing people about the original context and circumstances in which the various books of the Bible were first communicated, but often such instruction faces an uphill battle in the effort to displace an indigenous
outlook, which is the product of both verbal and non-verbal inculturisation on the social level and a lifetime of personal practical experience. Thus the current cultural milieu and model of existence furnishes a number of potentially ‘alien’ (as opposed to the preceding ‘affirmative’) pre-texts that push the hermeneutical process along in a somewhat different direction from that intended by the biblical author of a given pericope. The divergence in any particular instance may be quite small, but their cumulative effect may be sufficiently large enough to give receptors a completely different understanding of the passage concerned, especially in situations where the matter is confused even more due to the imposition of a Western way of looking at things. In this section we can but overview some of the problems involved in this exercise of a foreign intertextuality, namely, one that would be operative in Bantu south-central Africa (for further details, see Wendland 1987).

3.1 World-view, life-style, and verbal art

Diverse cultural backgrounds will inevitably result in different scenarios and schemata for the description and interpretation of witnessed or reported events (Brown & Yule 1983:243). A people’s ‘world-view’ acts as a ‘default’ macro-scenario that governs how they perceive and understand ‘reality,’ especially with regard to their beliefs, values, opinions, felt needs, and goals in life. This culturally-specific noetic, affective, and conative frame of reference in turn influences all their behavior, both on the communal and individual level as well as in relation to the major social institutions and customs which they establish over time to organise and regulate their way of life. This includes their verbal art forms, whether oral (e.g. proverbs, riddles, songs, folktales, myths, legends, etc), written (e.g. poetry, essays, short stories, novels, newspapers), auditory (radio, cassette, and CD productions), audio-visual (video cassettes, television, movies), or electronic (CD-ROM disks, computer programs, the internet [?]). The following are a few examples involving a local rural meal celebration which illustrate some of the ways in which a central-African Bantu world-view (or to be more specific, that of the Tonga and Chewa peoples of Zambia and Malawi) may provide a cultural scenario, that is, an inherited conceptual pre-text, which variously distorts the interpretation of the Great Banquet parable of Luke 14. These are presented in summary and sequential form according to a selection of verses from this pericope. In other words, in each passage there are certain key ‘cue’ terms or phrases that would lead many people to ‘access’ a situationally-specific ‘file’ in the ‘computer bank’ of their internal ‘memory’ (or cognitive ‘hard disk’) which is rather different from that presupposed by the biblical text.
v 15: ‘Great dinners’ are not eaten either ‘sitting’ (according to a Western transculturation of the text, e.g. the *Living Bible*) or ‘reclining’ around a ‘table,’ especially in a rural setting. Rather, the guests are seated on mats, stools, chairs, or some other handy means of support, and they are arranged in small groups, certainly not according to any general system of rank or social hierarchy as would have been the case in Jesus’ time. The literal mention of ‘bread’ (*artos*) is also problematic: Not only is yeast-bread a Western import (the local ‘staff-of-life’ being *nsima* ‘stiff maize-meal porridge’), but it would also never qualify as a food that one would wish to advertise or boast about at a ‘feast.’ Rather, some sort of meat dish would serve to mark the special occasion, for example a goat or a cow.

v 16: Here we arrive at the greatest hermeneutical crux for the African: Invitations to a big feast (e.g. a wedding, initiation ceremony, harvest festival) are completely unnecessary, for everyone of a given social group who ‘belongs’ at a particular occasion will come (e.g. the two clans involved in a marriage, local elders, or even an entire village; Rev S Hachibamba, personal correspondence). There is no sort of exclusion according to social or economic class, for such restriction is not relevant (or appreciated) in Bantu society. The closest that one comes to distinct social ‘classes’ are those based on the general level of maturity, e.g. children, initiated youth [age-mates], married people, those past child-bearing age, and the immediate ancestral spirits [*mizimu*], for they too are considered to be a part of contemporary society. There is a certain restriction on participation during special rituals and invocations when only the elderly or most immediately related family members are concerned, but this is done for religious, not sociological reasons. According to African indigenous theology, God in creation distributed wealth equally for the entire human community to share according to need—a truly ‘natural’ socialism!

In this connection it is interesting to observe that the topic of ‘an invitation to a big banquet/feast’ does not appear as a motif either in the Chewa or Tonga oral narrative tradition or in their proverbial lore (e.g. Wendland 1976; S Hachibamba, p.c; cf also Lambrecht 1967; Milimo 1970). It may also be noted here that the typical folktale (or ‘story +/- choral song response,’ *nthano*—Chewa) is similar in many respects to the biblical parable in terms of both form and function, but not of course content, especially in its use of certain ‘fantastic’ and supernatural elements. However, in the plot of any story about a village festival, everyone is welcome—that is, nobody is excluded on the basis of not having received a personal invitation. If a given character does not attend, it is for another reason involving some specific social conflict, and this development will usually have something to do with the moral of the story or saying. Thus any deliberate absence from the joyous
fellowship of participating in a communal celebration is a glaring exception to the rule of accepted behavior, and it could well render the offender liable to the accusation of being a 'witch.'

v 17: The double 'calling' implied by the Lukan text too is quite foreign, particularly with reference to a specific time ('hour'). Once people know the 'day' of a certain celebration (the ‘announcement’ simply being broadcast informally by word of mouth), they will be there, whether sooner or later is not all that important. Of course, due to Western and modern commercial influence, clock-time is becoming increasingly important as a factor in everyday life, particularly in urban areas, but where major cultural occasions are concerned, the traditional temporal perspective still prevails. In fact, one reason for the 'lateness' that is often complained about by Westerners originates in social relationships: The purpose is to let certain people know that you are present without having to overtly tell them, which may cause some measure of public embarrassment.

v 18-20: As already suggested, meal celebrations are eminently communal events. Just as there are no special ‘invitations,’ so also no one really has to give an ‘excuse’ for not being present, for the assumption is that everyone will surely want to be there to enjoy the food and fellowship if at all possible. There is also a more utilitarian motive, as the Tonga people say, ‘a snake eats as it moves about’ (muzoka ulya kweendeenda). In other words, a person who does not meet and converse with others cannot really become educated, and the traditional forum for facilitating such vital social exchange is the public feast. If for some reason a person did not wish to attend a given public function (or even if s/he knew s/he could not), s/he would certainly not say 'no' in advance, before the event, for that might bring shame upon the host. Rather, any excusing would be done more or less in passing when they happened to meet afterwards, again just to restore the personal relationship that may have been damaged, or at least held open to question had one failed to attend a joint festival intended to promote social solidarity and to uphold traditional customs. On the other hand, so great is the pressure to get together that pretense is frequently more important than principle, for as the Chewa proverb goes, even ‘worthless folk look good when one is eating with them’ (achaje akoma podya nao)!

Furthermore, in Christ’s parable the excuses all sound rather strange from a Bantu perspective—though they would not seem out of place coming from an individualistic, capitalistic, time-captivated Westerner. In the first place, property—food producing ‘fields’ in particular—is not bought and sold like an ordinary item of merchandise in a traditional African setting. Instead, all
land belongs to the community and it is administered and apportioned on their behalf by the local chief or headman. Besides, the fact that this plot of ground is called a 'field' implies that the speaker already knew what it looked like, so why would he have to go 'see' it again? Secondly, no sensible Tonga farmer would purchase (or more likely, barter for) draft animals such as cattle without having first ascertained their capability to work behind a plow. Moreover, a man who was wealthy enough to own 'five yoke' of these oxen would certainly not carry out such a field test by himself. Rather, he would have a trusted 'relative-in-charge' (or nowadays, a hired ranch 'foreman') carry out this task and then make a recommendation as to whether to buy or not. And finally, why are marriage and a big meal made to sound like mutually exclusive events? They are both communal activities and thus could easily be held concurrently in a socially complementary manner, particularly in a village where all the inhabitants are probably related to one another in some way. And if this were not the case, for example in a more heterogenous community, the host would have known that so-and-so was tied up with a family wedding, and consequently he would not have informed him of his own special celebrationon that same day.

vv 21–23: As already noted, traditional African society is strongly egalitarian and associational in nature. This means that the various types of unfortunates mentioned in v 21 would not have been overlooked during the original invitation to attend a public feast. There is even a Chewa proverb that says, *ukaipa—dziwa nyimbo* 'if you happen to be ugly (or deformed in some way), know how to sing (or dance),' i.e. so that you can entertain others (and receive their approval) at such village festivals. As for the other set mentioned, those living outside the village (out in the 'bush,' v 23), this would constitute the only possible exception to a universal group invitation, for these individuals are obviously antisocial and therefore would probably be suspected of practicing 'witchcraft' (*ufiti*). Another point of potential misunderstanding occurs in the banquet master's expressed wish at the end—'*...that my house will be full,*' which would imply that he has a considerable number of people in mind. The problem is that such a large gathering would not be held *inside* someone's 'house,' but rather outside in the yard or even the village common. During the actual eating of the meal, the chief/headman and village elders will usually cram together in the host's house or hut for some privacy, but that is one of the few gestures of discrimination made in deference to local authority, especially in a rural environment.
v 24: For those who do not recognise the underlying, theological level of meaning in this parable, the statement here seems to be out of place; it belongs literally in v 21 as a verbal expression of the master's 'anger.' In any case, it also sounds a bit illogical: Surely if the first three fellows made excuses not to attend the dinner, they were not going to come. So why does the host say that he is going to 'ban' them after the fact, as it were? The deed was already done; they had by their own refusal excluded themselves from joyous public fellowship (cf Lk 15:28)!

It is clear from the preceding survey that a typical 'banquet scenario' within a traditional central African framework evokes an accumulation of inappropriate pre-texts that could skew the interpretation of Christ's parable in a significant number of places, thus placing a correct understanding of the whole in serious doubt. In fact, the entire story sounds quite foreign and consequently difficult to relate to in a meaningful, life-challenging way, as Jesus intended. The cultural incongruities are too fundamental and numerous for the bare parable to possess enough credibility to be taken seriously. Thus while the story may be interesting, it is not captivating, nor does it encourage personal mental 'participation' in the events being recounted, as was the case with Jesus' parables in their original context. Such conceptual incompatibility presents a serious barrier that needs to be overcome so that the important lesson of this pericope, one that is equally relevant in an African sociocultural setting, can be effectively communicated. That is to say, those 'religious' individuals who assume that they are 'righteous' in God's eyes and yet practice different forms of pharisaical 'separatism' in his Church (or Kingdom) had better reevaluate and reform their thinking and behavior. Otherwise, they too may end up one day being removed from the roster of 'blessed' invitees to the heavenly feast (vv 15, 24).

3.2 A literal Bible translation

Another sort of alien intertext that often gets in the way of a meaningful transmission of the biblical message is an old, literal, missionary-led translation in another language. The combination of an unnatural style of speaking with strange cultural practices may evoke in people's minds an alternative 'schema' or 'scenario' that provides a different and frequently misleading hermeneutical perspective on the original text of Scripture. Such a translation, a 'paratext' in many respects, may represent an 'interference factor' of considerable magnitude in the interlingual transmission of the Word of God. It constitutes a significant obstacle that must therefore be 'factored into' any mission strategy in which it is the principal and 'accepted' means of gospel communication (cf Wendland 1995:273–277). The following examples
selected to illustrate this point are taken from the 1922 Nyanja Union Version (Buku Lopatulika [BL]), arranged according to verse number from Luke 14.) A comparison is sometimes made with the new, meaning-centered translation into Chichewa (Chipangano Chatsopano [CC], published in 1977 also by the Bible Society of Malawi):

v 15: ‘And when one of them who was leaning on his food together with him heard these things...’ (BL). In this instance it may be a good thing that the antecedent of ‘him’ is ambiguous (i.e. not clearly referring to Christ), or the scene evoked by this particular rendering would sound even more ridiculous. CC simply states ‘who was eating with them,’ which is an idiomatic reference to a fellow diner at a common meal. The word used for ‘bread’ (mkate) is an indigenous term that originally referred to a scone-like pastry made from maize meal, banana, and honey. This term is currently being rapidly replaced by the English loanword buledi, which is a less acceptable choice because it introduces a probable anachronistic element into the text.

v 16: Due to the lack of any explicit noun subjects (a literal reproduction of the Greek), the ambiguity of reference in BL continues from the preceding verse. It is therefore implied that the one who told the subsequent parable was the person who was lying in his food!

v 17: The word used in BL for ‘servant’ (doulos) is strictly speaking a ‘slave’ (kapolo). It is rather difficult to see any underlying reference to the Messiah sent by God (the banquet-master) in this term due to its negative connotations. On the other hand, CC’s mnyamata (‘youth, boy’) sounds too colloquial. Much better than both of these alternatives in this context would be mtumiki ‘servant, delegate.’

v 18: The Greek contraction apo mias is conveyed in BL by a corresponding idiom, but unfortunately the wrong one, i.e. ‘with one heart’ (ndi mtima umodzi), that is, with a ‘spirit’ of great harmony and cooperation (cf the correct expression in CC: mmodzi-mmodzi ‘one after the other’). The literalistic ‘I am obliged to go out’ of BL implies that he is speaking inside some sort of building, which is probably not the case. His final apology sounds stilted and unnatural, ‘I ask you, allow me that I might not arrive.’ Much more idiomatic and appropriate to the speech setting is CC, which curtly but still politely states: ‘Sorry, I won’t be coming’ (pepani, sindiwera).

v 20: The redundancy of the original Greek, ‘I have married a woman’ (BL), is not only a foreign-sounding expression in Nyanja, it may also imply that a non-sanctioned, or even illicit, marriage is involved because this ‘woman’ does not even have a proper name.

v 21: The language used in BL, ‘Get outside quickly!’ (exelthe tacheoos) makes it appear as if the master is just as angry at his ‘slave’ as he is at the people
who refused his meal summons. Simply ‘Go...’ (CC) is sufficient to accurately convey this command.

v 22: The translation of BL indicates that the conversation of the preceding verse is continued. But now the dialogue does not make sense since the slave seems to suggest that he has already carried out his master’s order, that is, without even being told! Thus the implicit interval of time and action needs to be marked explicitly in the text, e.g. with just a single word in the CC: ‘After he had returned from there...’ (Atabwererako, i.e. from his mission).

v 23: People would wonder about what kind of ‘garden plots’ (minda) the people of that day farmed, for the Nyanja version implies that they were situated out by ‘roads’ and ‘highways’ as well—certainly not a very promising location, and dangerous too!

v 24: BL is definitely a male chauvinistic translation, for it suggests that ‘men’ (amuna) only were (and will be) invited to the Lord’s great feast.

Examples such as the preceding, and the BL along with similar Bantu ‘King-James’ versions are full of them, may sound humorous in back translation to another language, but it is a sobering thought indeed to realise that these renderings have been, and are being, understood literally in many a Nyanja-speaking cultural and religious context. This would surely indicate that not only is a meaning-based version, such as the CC, a desirable alternative, it is in fact an urgent necessity.

4 CONCLUSION: ON THE EXEGETICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF INTERTEXTUALITY

‘Intertextuality,’ the influence of one semiotic ‘text’ upon another in the production of meaningful messages, is a factor that cannot be either relativised or ignored during the analysis of any consequential communication event. As has been suggested, such an association may be deliberate or unconscious (artistic?), author-intended or alien, in relation to a composition that is verbal or non-verbal, oral or written. With particular reference to the Christian Scriptures, this process (or relationship) first of all concerns the activity of exegesis, that is, the effort to understand what the original author was trying to say to his intended audience/readership (or get them to do) in their surrounding sociocultural setting and interpersonal situation. All semantically and pragmatically ‘salient’ pre-texts must be discovered and evaluated in terms of their degree of ‘correspondence’ to a certain passage under study and their potential ‘relevance’ to the first as well as any subsequent receptor constituency. This is all part of a thorough and comprehensive hermeneutical strategy which aims to determine as accurately as possible the denotative and
connotative meaning conveyed by the biblical text, both directly and by implication.

Now the exegetical aspect of interlingual communication is hard enough to carry out in a satisfactory manner, but the next step is even more difficult to perform adequately. This is to transfer the SL meaning-package, still closely tied to its original setting, to an entirely new and different context, namely, that of the RL and culture. Here is where the intended message comes under all sorts of pressure from the operation of an external intertextuality, that is, the accidental but no less significant influence from pretexts which are 'residing' naturally and already 'active' in the current sociocultural and religious milieu. Such indigenous local attraction must first be discerned and then deflected wherever possible so that the biblical message is not distorted or denied in its present environment. A naive, unbounded 'receptor-response' approach, i.e. that any 'reading' is valid as long as it is somehow meaningful to the interpreter, simply will not do, as the preceding examples of semantic skewing should have indicated. Thus I would maintain that the texts of Scripture do not 'properly have multiple meanings, meanings as much created by their interpreters as their authors' (Culbertson 1995:49, emphasis added). I have personally seen far too many instances of the unfortunate effects of such 'negative communication' (i.e. contrary to even the broadest possible construal of the scope and sense of the original text) to regard this as a laissez-faire matter of individualistic interpretation. To be sure, it is the nature of parabolic communication to give 'each listener an opportunity to project himself (sic) into the story,' but that is not the same thing as claiming that 'the listener's response creates the message' (:119). Hirsch's important, but much maligned distinction between 'meaning' (with an emphasis on the total SL context) and 'significance' (with a focus on the contemporary RL setting) is, in my opinion, still a useful notion to uphold in this regard (1967:103–126; cf Osborne 1991:2–3).

How might this principle apply in practice to the specific field of Bible translation? First of all, the preparation of a semantically-corrrespondent, functionally equivalent translation should be a top priority for the Christian community in all languages where one does not yet exist. Many misinterpretations result simply because people cannot understand what the biblical text is saying due to the stylistic unnaturalness of the only version that they have access to. Therefore, the linguistic forms of Greek (and Hebrew) must be changed in any RL in order to convey the intended import and impact of the original message. In the words of the insightful twelfth century Jewish scholar, Yehuda ibn-Tibbon:

At times a translator will need to transfer an idiomatic expression which presents itself in one language, into a comparable idiom which resembles or approximates it
in the language into which he is translating...[thus being] faithful to capture the intent of the author' (in Culbertson 1995:189).

The modern translation specialists Hatim and Mason make the same point from a discourse-linguistic perspective and with special reference to the presence of intertextuality in literature 'and the contribution it makes to the host text':

The translator in according priority to [functional] intentionality, will also make adjustments in the light of the fact that different groups of text users bring different knowledge and belief systems to their processing of texts' (1990:137).

This brings up a second and related point, namely, the need to anticipate the activity and effects of alien schemata and scenarios in the interpretation of Scripture. The goal is to counteract or compensate for this undesirable influence in the translated text, to the extent that such conceptual 'reconstruction' is feasible utilising the resources available within the medium involved. Textual intervention of this nature is not really an option; it is rather an obligation that communicators must assume along with their commitment to convey the Word of God meaningfully in another language-culture. If, for example, a literal translation of Luke 14:15 suggests to some people that the primary referent is the rite of 'holy communion,' or the 'Lord's supper,' then the intended sense has been displaced. This is a wrong 'reading' which can and should be put right, directly in the translation if possible, but if not, then in an explanatory footnote. We should not allow the potentially misleading intertext of a formal-correspondence version to overly complicate the process of Scripture transmission today. It may well be true that 'translation is the art of the best possible failure' (Ciardi 1963:3), but it behooves those who are currently engaged in this activity to do what is possible to keep the level of failure to a minimum, and to facilitate comprehension wherever possible through the judicious use of extratextual aids, for example cross-references, section headings, topical introductions, a glossary of key terms, illustrations, diagrams, maps, et cetera—and ultimately a full 'study Bible' or, if working in an electronic medium, an interactive 'hypertext' production.

A final observation may be in order: we all—Bible scholars, students, clergy, and laity alike—need to cultivate and command a more complete intertextual 'field of reference' with respect to both the total contextual background of the Scriptures and also the contemporary setting in which we are living and working. In other words, we must work at expanding the inventory of corresponding, salient, and relevant pre-texts which we have access to and are conversant with so that we can more readily recognise the presence and consequence of intertextuality in relation to the biblical texts.
that we happen to be examining. How then do we accomplish this goal? Undoubtedly our Lord's own personal advice on the matter is the most helpful: 'Search (ereunaoo) the Scriptures...' (Jn 5:39). And a good example to follow in this regard would be none other than that of those early Berean Christians who 'searched (anakrinoo) the Scriptures daily...' (Ac 17:11). The ultimate goal is that one day we too will be among those about whom it is written, 'Blessed (makariot) are those who are invited (kekleemenoi) to the wedding supper (deipnon) of the Lamb!' (Rv 19:9).

WORKS CONSULTED


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