Scholarly Writing in the Theological Disciplines

Dr Annang Asumang

1

Learning Outcomes

1. Appraise the implications of socio-linguistic theoretical framework of scholarship

2. Evaluate the challenges faced by non-native English speaking scholars writing in English

3. Explain the distinctive features of scholarly writing

4. Assess strategies of developing skills in Criticality in Scholarly Writing in Theology

2

1

What is Scholarly Writing?

A Specific Way of Writing riting designed for
sp A Specific Culture dience c A Specific Goal
results of research that offers solutions to
and or responding to and questioning
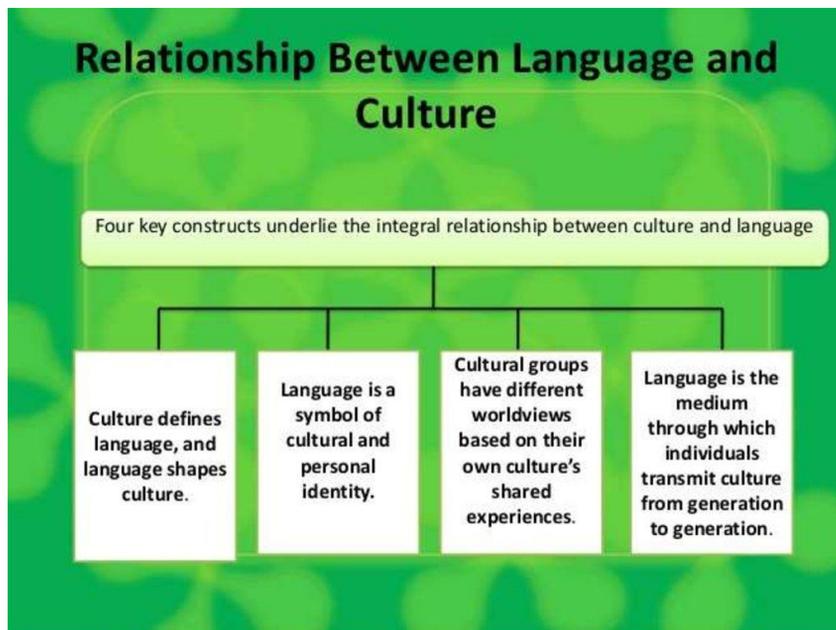various techi A Specific Language academic
discipline

3

Socio-Linguistic Framework of Communication among Scholars

Relationship Between Language and Culture

Four key constructs underlie the integral relationship between culture and language

Culture defines language, and language shapes culture.	Language is a symbol of cultural and personal identity.	Cultural groups have different worldviews based on their own culture's shared experiences.	Language is the medium through which individuals transmit culture from generation to generation.

4

Because scholars belong to a particular entity with its own culture, and largely communicate also in English, non-native English speaking scholars must appreciate the several hurdles they need to overcome in order to fully participate in that academic culture

5

Three common hurdles

1. **Native Cognition**
   - Recognize the culturally conditioned nature of their own native thoughts
   - Respectful attitudes to authority may impact integration into western academic culture

2. **English as non-Native Language**:
   - Develop English language skills to adjust/augment their cognitive skills in that language
   - Challenges of learning language in older age

3. **Western Logic:**
   - Academic culture is steeped in Western Logic
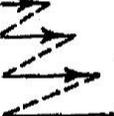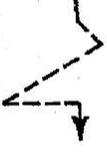   - Non Western cultures tend to have non-linear logic

6

Visual Representations of Culturally Diverse Writing Styles

English	Arabic	Oriental	Romance	Russian

Kaplan, Robert, B. "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education." *Landmark Essays on ESL Writing*, edited by Tony Silva and Paul Kei Matsuda. Hermagoras Press, 2001, pp 11-25.

African cultural cognitive mode is likely networked and non-linear

17/06/2024 Daniel Institute; MASM; Dr Asumang 7

7

Challenges of Non-Native English Scholars

1. Language barriers:
   – Understanding lectures, academic texts,
   – Adequate communication with other scholars.

2. Cultural differences:
   – Difficulties adjusting to different expectations and teaching styles, as well
   – Culture Shock in engaging the social norms and values.

3. Academic writing:
   – Learning Precision especially grammar, vocabulary, and structure

4. Time management:
   – Most non-native students are adult learners with limited time
   – Many are multi-vocational

5. Confidence:
   – Psychological barriers such as self-consciousness about limitations
   – Reserved temperament may impede public expressions of views
   – Getting used (again) to criticisms may take some adjustments

17/06/2024 Daniel Institute; MASM; Dr Asumang 8

8

4

FOR AN AFRICAN WRITING IN ENGLISH IS NOT WITHOUT ITS SERIOUS SETBACKS. HE OFTEN FINDS HIMSELF DESCRIBING SITUATIONS OR MODES OF THOUGHT WHICH HAVE NO DIRECT EQUIVALENT IN THE ENGLISH WAY OF LIFE. CAUGHT IN THAT SITUATION HE CAN DO ONE OF TWO THINGS. HE CAN TRY AND CONTAIN WHAT HE WANTS TO SAY WITHIN THE LIMITS OF CONVENTIONAL ENGLISH OR HE CAN TRY TO PUSH BACK THOSE LIMITS TO ACCOMMODATE HIS IDEAS … I SUBMIT THAT THOSE WHO CAN DO THE WORK OF EXTENDING THE FRONTIERS OF ENGLISH SO AS TO ACCOMMODATE AFRICAN THOUGHT-PATTERNS MUST DO IT THROUGH THEIR MASTERY OF ENGLISH AND NOT OUT OF INNOCENCE.
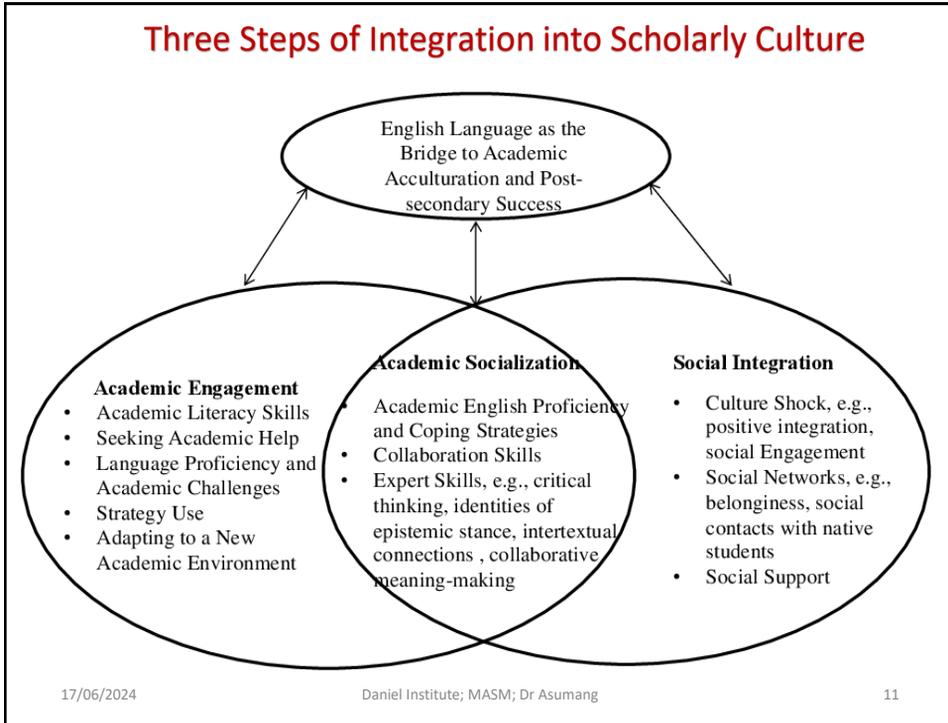
- CHINUA ACHEBE -

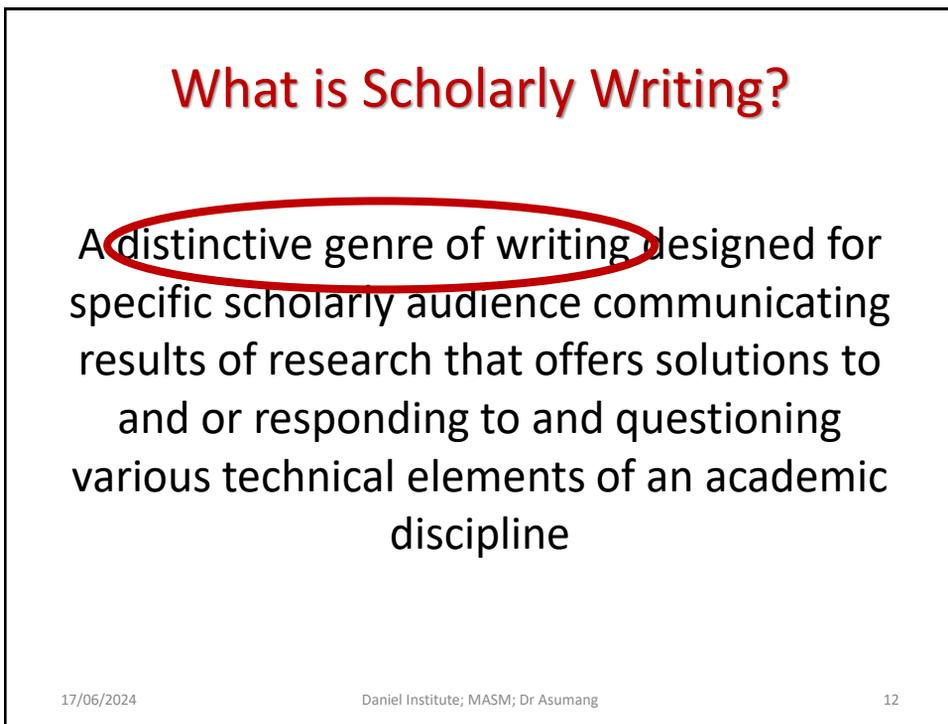17/06/2024   Daniel Institute; MASM; Dr Asumang   9

9

Lecture by Karen McKee on
Scientific Writing for non-native Speakers of English

https://youtu.be/h8zqcOQwTSA?si=PKkHawL-wJ3XojQD

17/06/2024   Daniel Institute; MASM; Dr Asumang   10

10

Three Steps of Integration into Scholarly Culture

English Language as the Bridge to Academic Acculturation and Post-secondary Success

Academic Engagement
- Academic Literacy Skills
- Seeking Academic Help
- Language Proficiency and Academic Challenges
- Strategy Use
- Adapting to a New Academic Environment

Academic Socialization
- Academic English Proficiency and Coping Strategies
- Collaboration Skills
- Expert Skills, e.g., critical thinking, identities of epistemic stance, intertextual connections , collaborative meaning-making

Social Integration
- Culture Shock, e.g., positive integration, social Engagement
- Social Networks, e.g., belonginess, social contacts with native students
- Social Support

17/06/2024   Daniel Institute; MASM; Dr Asumang   11

11

What is Scholarly Writing?

A distinctive genre of writing designed for specific scholarly audience communicating results of research that offers solutions to and or responding to and questioning various technical elements of an academic discipline

17/06/2024   Daniel Institute; MASM; Dr Asumang   12

12

Seven Categories of Genres of Scholarly Writings

1. **Research articles**:
   Typically published in academic journals.

2. **Reviews and meta-analyses**:
   – Published critical evaluations of existing research on a particular topic

3. **Book chapters**:
   – Contributions to chapters in edited volumes focusing on a topic.

4. **Books**:
   – Publish monographs or edited volumes that provide in-depth analyses of a particular topic

5. **Conference proceedings**:
   – Collections of papers presented at academic conferences or seminars

6. **Reports and working papers**:
   – Publications of research institutions or organizations, reporting on projects

7. **Theses and dissertations**:
   17/06/2024 Research reports by graduate students as part of their degree requirements   13

13

Distinctive Features of Scholarly Writing

1. Thesis or Central Argument driven

2. Linguistic & Technical Precision

3. Formal tone

4. Triadic Structure & Coherent Organization

5. Consistent Formatting

6. Critical Engagement with Scholars

7. Strict Attention to Citations

14

Scholarly Writing as a "thesis"

- Aim to add to Existing knowledge
  - Challenge existing knowledge or proposition
  - Clarify it
  - Apply it
  - Expand it
  - Persuade others of its validity
  - Test its validity in another context

- Writing must therefore Explicitly & Precisely declare this aim
  - "thesis"

15

Linguistic & Technical Precision

- Specificity:
  - Say precisely what is meant leaving no room for misunderstanding
  - Each word must be necessary for meaning otherwise must be discarded

- Revisions
  - Several revisions and rewriting in several drafts are needed to achieve precision

- Proof-reading
  - Asking others to read over the work highlighting not just errors in spelling and language but clauses that lack clarity
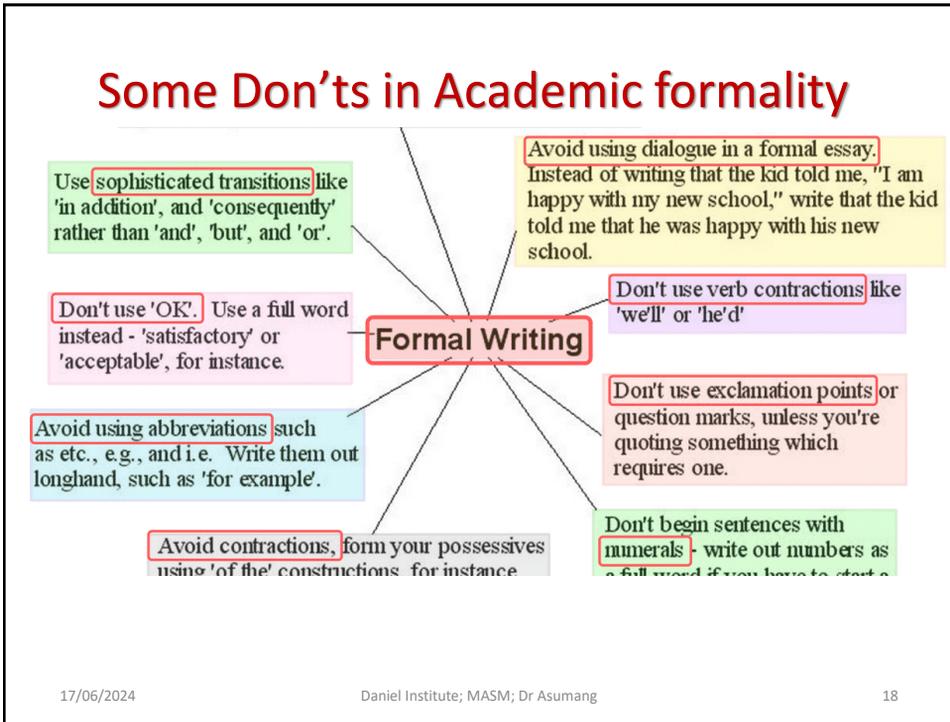
16

Formal and Informal Language

In order to write clearly and accurately you need to identify the difference between formal and informal English. Here is a list of some of the most characteristic features that differentiate formal and informal English.

Formal	Informal
• **Words of Latin/French origin** *residence*	• **Words of Anglo-Saxon origin** *home*
• **Single-word verbs** *to arise* *to mount / to board*	• **Phrasal verbs, idioms with *get*** *to get up* *to get on*
• **Formal Connecting words** *In addition, furthermore* *However, on the other hand,* *Therefore, consequently*	• **Informal connecting words** *And* *But* *So*
• **Impersonal constructions** *it is said that* *the price has been increased* *one never knows* *it can be argued*	• **Active constructions** *They say that* *they've put the price up* *you never know* *you can argue*
• **Abstract nouns** *Is happiness possible during* *unemployment?* *After clarification of the problem* *areas..*	• **Modal verbs, adjectives, clauses etc** *Can people be happy when they* *haven't got a job?* *When the bits everyone was getting* *wrong had been explained...*
• **Not ending with prepositions; use of *whom*** *To whom were you speaking?*	• **Ending with prepositions** *Who were you speaking to?*
• **Complex sentences** *The student, who was late for class,* *sprinted across the ground.*	• **Simple sentences** *The student was late for class. He* *sprinted across the ground.*
• **Use of inversions for conditionals and emphasis** *Should you require further* *information, please contact ...*	• **Inversion sometimes used for** emphasis *Only then did I realise ...*
• **No contractions in writing** *I will, we would*	• **Contractions is writing** *I'll, we'd*

17/06/: 17

17

Some Don'ts in Academic formality

Use sophisticated transitions like 'in addition', and 'consequently' rather than 'and', 'but', and 'or'.

Avoid using dialogue in a formal essay. Instead of writing that the kid told me, "I am happy with my new school," write that the kid told me that he was happy with his new school.

Don't use 'OK'. Use a full word instead - 'satisfactory' or 'acceptable', for instance.

Formal Writing

Don't use verb contractions like 'we'll' or 'he'd'

Avoid using abbreviations such as etc., e.g., and i.e. Write them out longhand, such as 'for example'.

Don't use exclamation points or question marks, unless you're quoting something which requires one.

Avoid contractions, form your possessives using 'of the' constructions, for instance.

Don't begin sentences with numerals - write out numbers as a full word if you have to start a

18

9

Structure of Scholarly Writing

- **Definition**
  - The arrangement and presentation of the content of the writing

- **Coherence**
  - Logical flow of thought

- **Signposting**
  - Precise headings following formatting styles

- **Bridging & Transitions**
  - Summaries, statements or words at beginnings and ends of sections and paragraphs bride them to logically link them

- **Triadic Structure**
  - Typical line of argumentation that clarifies the point

19

Triadic Structure of Scholarly Writing

1. **Common type**
   a. Introduction
   b. Body
   c. Conclusion

2. **Topic type (usually paragraph level)**
   a. Topic Sentence
   b. Explanation of topic Sentence
   c. Summary of paragraph

3. **Thesis type**
   a. Thesis
   b. Antithesis
   c. Synthesis

4. **Statement type**
   a. Statement
   b. Elucidation of Statement
      I. Thesis
      II. Antithesis
      III. Synthesis of Elucidation
   c. Restatement

20

Critical Writing in the Theological Disciplines

Can you Identify a triadic structure in this paragraph?

1.0 Introduction

It is widely recognized that the key distinctive difference between the undergraduate and postgraduate essay is the depth of critical analysis of the subject. And within the postgraduate levels, between the Masters and the PhD, it is the degree of depth of critical analysis which differentiates the two levels. This being the case, one would have expected that most students will be familiar from the start with what exactly is meant by the term critical analysis. This is surprisingly not the case. Not a few postgraduate essays or theses on otherwise potentially excellent subjects have failed to deliver or convince because of their inability to display adequate critical thinking or depth of critical analysis.

21

Asumang, Annang. "Modelling the gospel in joyful partnership: exemplars and the uniting theme of Philippians." *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 13.03 (2012): 1-50.

22

Modelling the Gospel in Joyful Partnership: Exemplars and the Uniting Theme of Philippians

Annang Asumang[1]

Triadic Structure

Abstract

Most interpreters now recognize the literary unity and integrity of Paul's letter to the Philippians. This consensus has however made the question of the letter's uniting theme a matter of urgent inquiry for biblical scholars and preachers alike. Even here, significant advances have of late been made; but questions remain. The aim of this article in the light of this progress is threefold. It will first evaluate some of the key proposals for the letter's uniting theme. Secondly, it will propose that 'modelling the gospel in joyful partnership' best represents the uniting theme of Philippians. And thirdly, it will demonstrate that Paul extensively employs positive and negative exemplars to illustrate this theme in each section of the letter. The article concludes by highlighting the contribution of Philippians to current reflections on New Testament ethics.

23

---

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the problem

Tremendous strides have been made towards resolving several of the hitherto uncertain introductory questions with regard to Paul's letter to the Philippians (Bockmuehl 1997:20–35; Fee 1995:1–15; Fowl 2005:8–12; Garland 2006:178–182; Hartog 2010:475-503; Hawthorne 1983:xl–xliv; O'Brien 1991:3–39; Silva 2005:1–36; Still 2011:1–12; Witherington III 2011:1–30). Therefore, it is appropriate to summarise these consensuses as a way of setting the background for the present investigation.

1.2. The problem

Thesis

1.3. Evaluation of some proposals

Antithesis

1.4. The present proposal
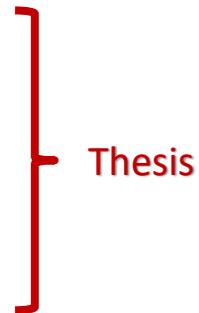
Synthesis

24

A Triadic Micro-structural Argument

A few interpreters have argued for a chiastic structure for Philippians (e.g. Heil 2010; Porter and Reed 1998:213–231; Luter and Lee 1995:89–101), so that idea cannot be completely ruled out. However, most interpreters accept and use a linear literary structure which largely follows the apostle's albeit flexible epistolary conventions.

This structure has 1:1–11 as the introduction, 1:12–26 as Paul's narrative introduction, 1:27–30 as the main proposition, 2:1–11 as the call for unity, 2:12–18 exhortation on obedience, 2:19–30 as travel plans and missionary report, 3:1–21 as polemics against doctrinal opponents, 4:1–9 as specific exhortation towards harmony in the fellowship, 4:10–20 as thanksgiving note, and 4:21–23 as conclusion. I shall now take each section in turn.

25

Using Microsoft Word for Formatting Theses

26

13

Distinctive Features of Scholarly Writing

1. Thesis or Central Argument driven

2. Linguistic & Technical Precision

3. Formal tone

4. Triadic Structure & Coherent Organization

5. Consistent Formatting

6. Critical Engagement with Scholars

7. Strict Attention to Citations

27

Criticality

The ability to evaluate and analyze scholarly information in a rigorous discursive manner questioning assumptions, testing evidence, identifying biases, and considering multiple perspectives in order to develop a well-reasoned argument or conclusion.

28

Learning how to disagree constructively is an indispensable skill in scholarship
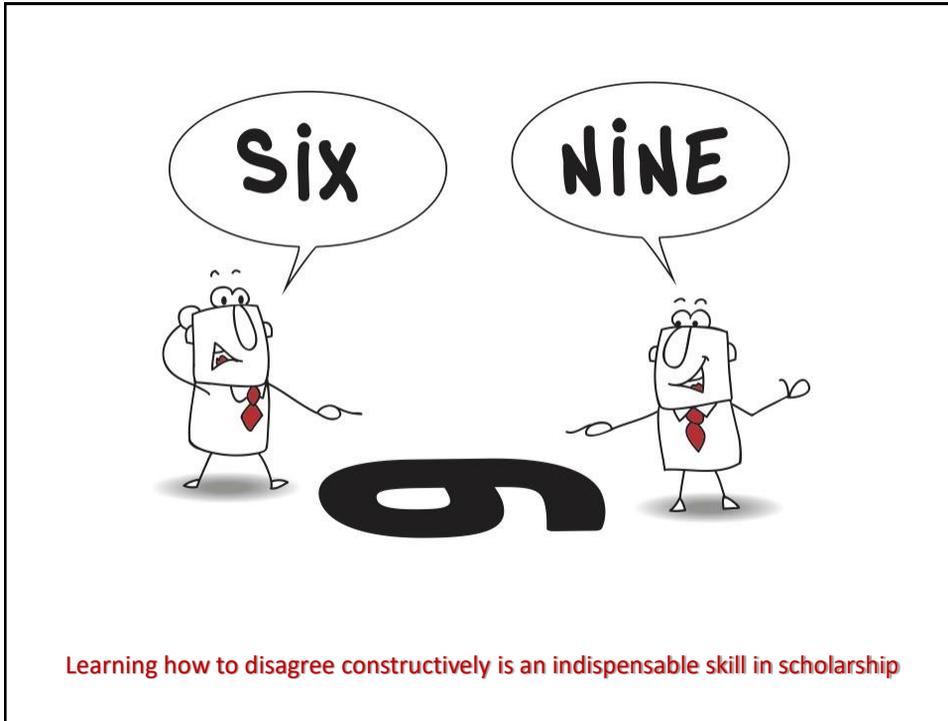
29

Five Minimum Elements of Criticality

1. Clear statement of the claim

2. Fair explanation of the basis and methodology behind the claim

3. Insightful assessment of the claim, whether (a) correct, (b) wrong, or (c) partially correct and why

4. Reflections on the claim

5. Additional defence or statement of alternative or modification of claim

30

Using Reflectivity in Critical Writing

- Deliberative, balanced and carefully chosen vocabulary

- Self-critical anticipation of objection

- Interested in implications & methods in arriving at conclusions and not just the conclusion

- Generosity in admitting some merit in evaluation of the argument

31

John's Gospel was written by John the son of Zebedee

Even though there is no direct indication in the text, the indirect evidence may suggest that the traditional view that the writer, 'the beloved disciple' is more likely John the son of Zebedee is correct

32

I disagree with R's position on authorship of Genesis

While elements of R's objections to the traditional view of Mosaic authorship of Genesis may have cogency, they overall fail to completely convince.

33

How will you critically engage scholar "K"'s statement below [with which you agree] on increased immorality in Kenyan society:

"the Church has failed to address the moral degeneration of the youth in society and must bear a fair share of the blame for the current moral crisis in the country"

Option one in Criticality is to ask for Evidence of moral degeneration even if you instinctively believe the scholar is correct:

"Though K does not offer empirical evidence to support the view that there is moral degeneration in Kenyan society, there are other indications that he may be correct, such as...."

Option 2 in Criticality is to ask for more evidence of the Church's culpability

"K's assertion that the Church must bear a fair share of the blame for the moral crisis may well be justified, but this requires further analysis as to why the Church may have failed in the first place".

34

How will you evaluate the following Statements by Two Students on the Genre of Acts of the Apostles

Student A: "I agree with most conservative writers that Acts is a historical monograph and thus is reliable in terms of the historical details it describes".

Student B: "I agree with most conservative writers that Acts is a historical monograph and thus is reliable in terms of the historical details it describes, even though this does not mean that Luke did not seek to express this history so as to fulfil his theological and apologetic agenda".

35

[Making Arguments in Theses by Badenhorst](https://youtu.be/LVyrcGxn8TY?si=-XRj5bITJvxulZS1)

https://youtu.be/LVyrcGxn8TY?si=-XRj5bITJvxulZS1

36

Summary

1. Appraised the implications of socio-linguistic theoretical framework of scholarship

2. Evaluated the challenges faced by non-native English speaking scholars writing in English

3. Explained the distinctive features of scholarly writing

4. Assessed strategies of developing skills in Criticality in Scholarly Writing in Theology

37