

A METHODOLOGY AND MODEL FOR TEACHING
NARRATIVE MATERIAL FROM
THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Theology
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1983

Title: A METHODOLOGY AND MODEL FOR TEACHING NARRATIVE
MATERIAL FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT
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Date: May, 1983
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A cry is going up from the pews of the land for solid teaching from the Old Testament. Narrative material in particular, which includes approximately forty percent of the first "covenant," is largely neglected--save for children's stories, illustrations and typological pursuits. Beyond the need for contextual, practical exposition of Hebraic storyline, a methodology to uncover the author's purpose of any given narrative must be developed.

The approach taken herein rests upon several presuppositions of Scripture: an inerrant, authoritative text, purposeful Scriptures--sound New Testament sanction for investigating the Old--and a correct hermeneutical approach. Handling the Biblical material as genres of literature is a key component of this study.

A detailed, saturated understanding of the uniqueness of narrative, the author who wrote it, and the particular text's purpose is needed. The select importance of Israelite historiography and flair for literary structure cannot be over-emphasized in the stylistic features of ancient writing.

Many methodologies, including form criticism, diagrammatical analysis, literary criticism and structuralism, have been found wanting in their attempts to rightly understand the Old Testament narrative writer. Since no one examination of the text seems to adequately handle a certain Scripture passage alone, an eclectic approach is most viable. Another methodology, incorporating both a wholistic and atomistic view of the text, is proposed. In looking for the theological purpose of the author, indicated by its structural markers, Scriptural narrative may be interpreted. Then to demonstrate a step-by-step process, Numbers 11 and 12 is offered as a model. The book's arrangement and purpose play a key role in opening these chapters to interpretation. Moses uses stories about the people's rebellion to add further to the land/leadership theme running throughout the book.

The implications for this study of narrative in the New Testament are "contagious." Its application for pulpit ministry can be made effective immediately. Two appendices follow on the applicational method of the twentieth century and a short review of current homiletics books.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
Master of Theology


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INTRODUCTION

A Statement of the Problem

The State of Evangelical Exegetical Methodology

Robert Gordis, responding to criticism of his new commentary on Job, writes about his method:

I preferred to concentrate primarily upon a fresh and independent study of the text, investigating Hebrew usage de novo and utilizing cognate languages and the testimony of the versions as the basis for my own exegesis. The mere repetition of earlier views scarcely constitutes creative research.¹

What a refreshing approach to the text! For too long, commentators have beaten "dead horses" by simply rehashing other's viewpoints.

The state of evangelical exegetical methodology is in such poor shape that until Kaiser, no one had ever attempted to author an exegetical theology in English. Yet here is a discipline which is at the very heart of what theological education is all about.² A methodology defines, establishes the boundaries, and anchors the rest of Biblical studies.

¹Robert Gordis, "Traumatic Surgery in Biblical Scholarship: A Note on Methodology," Journal of Jewish Studies 32 (1981):195.

²Walter C. Kaiser, Toward an Exegetical Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), p. 8.

Exegesis and homiletics must be united in a consistent methodological approach. Even seminaries have tended to isolate one discipline from the other. Emphasizing the first testament, which is the focus of this study, White explains, "The failure to use the proper exegetical method has led to misuse of the Old Testament in preaching and has inhibited its value for Christian congregations."¹

A number of problems in the pastor's study may be cited as contributing to this critical situation: (1) difficulty in understanding much of these books militates against a plan of attack. The attitude is that of Marcion, who threw the Old Testament out of his canon because all he needed to know was God's grace from the New! (2) non-proficiency in the Hebrew language also stifles study. Many church leaders have a superficial knowledge at best; and (3) the overwhelming number of critical methods applied to the text scare away many well-meaning men.

So for many, Genesis to Malachi only yields messianic foreshadowings, character studies, and illustrations. This attitude breeds contempt for the rest of the Old Testament as "a kind of theological wasteland which offers neither water nor grass to the weary pilgrim."² A methodology

¹John Bradley White, "Conversing with the Text: Old Testament Exegesis--A Part of the Pastor's Job Description," The Duke Divinity School Review 39 (1974):162.

²Herbert T. Mayer, "The Old Testament in the Pulpit," Concordia Theological Monthly 35 (1964):604.

for approaching and communicating the Old Testament text is desperately needed.

The State of Evangelical Old Testament Teaching¹ in the Churches

The Old Testament is a lost, neglected book in most pulpits today. Preachers are either afraid of the rugged religion portrayed there or they dismiss the first testament as dispensationally irrelevant. Leviticus is viewed as a trip through a bygone era. The Old Testament is relegated to historians. Outmoded institutions and customs are bypassed in a twentieth-century world. As a result, the average saint is left confused over the continuity of God's Word.

Nonetheless, the Old Testament lives! Like two segments of a play, the final act (New Testament) cannot be understood apart from the indispensable foundation of the first (Old). Unfortunately, there exists a monumental ignorance of the Old Testament itself, much less how it relates in perpetuity to the New. Those who do attempt the awesome task often find themselves the subject of Calvin's classic statement about interpreting God's Word: "Some mutilate, some dismember it, some distort it, some break it in pieces, some as I have said, keep to the outside and

¹"Teaching" in this paper is equated with what is commonly referred to as "preaching" in evangelical circles. The claim for distinctions and reemphasis follows.

never come to the heart of the matter."¹ Most of the problem can be traced to "a gap that exists between the study of the biblical text . . . and the actual delivery of messages to God's people."² Because of an insufficient, or more accurately, non-existent, methodology, the teaching of Biblical literature suffers.

A Statement of the Purpose

The Need of an Old Testament Narrative

Methodology

Texts on hermeneutics are quick to point out the various avenues available for interpreting poetry and prophecy. But when it comes to narrative, most authors' pens have run dry. In the past, liberal critics' methodology was sifted and critiqued for valuable resources. Now the time has come for an evangelical method to be proposed.

While approaches like form criticism, structuralism, and literary criticism have been rightly rejected as the sole means of interpretation, they do offer positive contributions toward a uniform system. Together with the accepted grammatical, historical, contextual, etc., hermeneutic, a part of the methodology may be outlined.

¹John Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries: The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, trans. by T. A. Smail (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), p. 314.

²Kaiser, Exegetical Theology, p. 8.

But a long-neglected aspect of understanding narrative material has been the need to determine the author's purpose for writing. Why were certain materials used and others were not? Does the arrangement of places, people, or events affect that? Each Bible book must be regarded as an entity with a specific goal. This is the complement to the former suggestion. Both will be explored below.

Pastors would do well to heed Elizabeth Achtemeier, for she says that the major task of teachers as interpreters means

keeping our libraries up to date . . . commentaries written in the early nineteen hundreds are rarely sufficient anymore! It means taking advantage of continuing education courses in Bible. . . . It means continual, daily, hard research and solid reading in the biblical field. It means fulfilling the ministry of the Word given to us, competently and faithfully.¹

The Need of Old Testament Narrative

Teaching

So often when a pastor finally gets around to teaching a narrative section, he drives listeners away. The story is many times addressed as simply a string of events which comes across as dry as dust. Others highlight psychological or relational elements to the exclusion of an overall purpose. And there are those who find types behind

¹Elizabeth Achtemeier, "The Artful Dialogue: Some Thoughts on the Relation of Biblical Studies and Homiletics," Interpretation 35 (1981):30-31.

every rock in Palestine, causing the congregation to wonder if the Israelites were not "Christians" too!

Three-quarters of the Bible is labeled as the Old Testament and a good portion of that is narrative material. Now if there is evidence of progressive revelation and the New Testament writers relied on that extensive body of literature, then does it not follow that churches need to be taught from narrative material? The above-mentioned handling of this literature is inadequate at best. It stands to reason, then, that some proposals must be outlined to stem the tide of ignorance and get on with correct teaching of narrative texts. We demand with von Rad that "the Biblical texts must be preached. . . . The biblical texts can be preached. . . . It is a churchly business that we are pursuing."¹ If local congregations are to be exposed to the whole counsel of God, and moreover understand their Bibles, a consistent diet of Old Testament narrative teaching is imperative.

¹Gerhard von Rad, Biblical Interpretation in Preaching, trans. by John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), pp. 11, 18 (emphasis his).

CHAPTER I

METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHING NARRATIVE MATERIAL FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Biblical Presuppositions that Demand the Study

No apology is made for beginning with preconceived notions of the Bible, especially when these are bolstered by the text's witness to itself. Critics have maligned such a stance, calling it "unscholarly," while approaching the Word of God with their own human presuppositions.

The following categories are by no means exhaustive and were not meant to be. Until recently, however, the Old Testament has been almost solely in the hands of liberal critics. So, such a study must have its roots soundly sunk in the foundations of inerrancy, authority, purposeful Scriptures, and hermeneutics.

Inerrancy

If the Bible only contains the Word of God or is suspect in its transmission of any errors at all, then what is the sense of such a study? Because I believe that Scripture is inerrant, further study of Scripture is deemed important.

Higher critical attacks on the Bible have concentrated heavily upon the Old Testament. Shifting from an

infallible, inerrant Bible to one the higher critics view as fallible and errant has contributed much to the decline in Biblical teaching. If Scripture is but a fine piece of literature, it has lost its ultimate value. Literature of human origin may be emotionally exhilarating but it remains man-made. Believers and even some in the world are longing for a Word from God.

In recent years it has become common to approach Biblical narrative in its final form rather than attempt to discover its "evolution."¹ The Church at large can rejoice over such a change. But does that mean the words, paragraphs, or stories are believed to be able to change lives?

Jesus Christ had a ministry that did just that. Is it no wonder, then, that He was a firm believer in the inerrancy of the Old Testament? Our Lord came to promote nothing new. He relied almost entirely on oracles held by the Jews for His instruction.

He accepted the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. References about the historical personages of Adam, Eve, and Noah were accepted as truth. Christ consistently quoted from David and believed historical accounts to be without error. The prophets were on His mind and lips as Jesus even compared His resurrection to the temporary living

¹S. Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," Vetus Testamentum 30 (1980):154.

quarters of Jonah. The Law, Prophets, and Writings, as far as Christ was concerned, made up the entire discourse of God to man until that time.

Christ's own testimony rested on an inerrant Word. When confronted by the Jews on one occasion, He claimed that the "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). At another time He declared that it would be "easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least strike of a pen to drop out of the Law" (Luke 16:17). And the classic statement in Matthew 5:19 adds the phrase "not the smallest letter" will disappear from the Law--Jesus' final word on the eternality of God's inerrant Word.

Jesus believed the Old Testament Scriptures to be the infallible, inerrant Word of God. He used it constantly with no other explanation than "it is written." Fulfillment of all that was written in Scripture was a foregone conclusion of the Lord (Matt 26:31, 51; Mark 9:12; 14:49; John 12:14; 13:18; 17:12). Whether it was law, poetry, or prophecy, Christ repeated it without hesitation. To say other than Jesus on this matter is no less than impugning His moral character. To Jesus, all of Scripture, including Biblical narrative, is without error.

Authoritative Text

If there is no Divine Author involved in the text of Scripture, to whom is the reader accountable? Because

God "exhaled" (θεοπνευστος) His Word to man, holding him responsible for the Book's content, the study of its pages is further demonstrated. Or as Livingston put it, "The authority of Scripture is intrinsic because it is rooted in the authority of the speaking, acting God."¹

Obviously, a sinful, depraved man without the saving knowledge of Christ does not care. But what about the Church? If local assemblies have no foundation on which to build their faith, they are of all men most miserable! There must be a recognition of a reliable source or standard on which to base decisions of faith and practice.

But what of the Old Testament? It seems to impose itself upon the Christian faith. "We are of a different dispensation," some cry in rejection. They ask, "What do the ancient customs of Genesis, the experience of Israel in Exodus, sacrificial institutions in Leviticus or the law codes of Deuteronomy have to do with us--twentieth-century man?" Is the Old Testament binding on the Church?² Is there

¹G. Herbert Livingston, The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), p. 266.

²This question is adequately dealt with in John Bright's book, The Authority of the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967). He includes such helpful sections as "The Old Testament in the Christian Pulpit: General Hermeneutical Considerations," and "Preaching from the Old Testament: The Principles Illustrated."

any applicational value?¹ And how should this testament be taught in the pulpits today?²

Continuity of the testaments must provide the basis for answering these difficulties. The problem of two Gods (a God of wrath in the Old and a God of love in the New), for example, still causes problems in the grass roots Christian community because the interrelatedness of the testaments has never been understood. When people begin to see that the New Testament is null and void without the Old, a new age of Scriptural enlightenment will unfold.

First, the church needs to remember that the Old Testament is purposeful and that this is stated to be so in the New. A system of interpretation, then, must be established, which provides clear guidelines to renew interest, commitment, and, most clearly, teaching of the Old Testament today. For how can the Bible fulfill its obligation of being authoritative without a procedure for understanding it?

Purposeful Scriptures

Is the Old Testament really worth studying? This is a ludicrous question if, as is stated above, the Bible is inspired, inerrant, and authoritative. Unfortunately, the

¹See Appendix One for this author's approach.

²A methodology will be proposed later in this chapter and illustrated in chapter two.

Old Testament is a closed book to many simply because it is not taught correctly, if at all.

The New Testament itself, however, cries out against such neglect. The Gospels through Revelation depend upon those preceding books for support. Consistently, quotations and allusions from the former testament are repeated in New Testament pages. Historically and theologically, the "testament of grace" is bankrupt without God's first revelation.

And as if these arguments were not enough, a number of New Testament writers explicitly confirm the worth of the Old Testament. Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11, 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 and Hebrews 12:1 are examined here to demonstrate that truly "all scripture is profitable."

Romans 15:4

After exploring the relationship between man and God with His program in Romans 1-11, Paul applies that information to daily living in the following chapters. Questions concerning Christian liberty and maturity arise in chapters 14 and 15, providing the backdrop for the author's startling assertion.

Strong Christians were to provide the leadership in building up the body. And to emphasize that, Paul quotes from the Old Testament to make his point. The $\gamma\alpha\rho$ in 15:4 makes the immediate connection to Psalm 69:9. In fact, this one reference prompts the writer to make an all

inclusive declaration: οσα γαρ προεγραφη--"for everything that was written in the past. . . ."

What a statement! Whatever was written (aorist passive) before, as found in an older document,¹ describes the Old Testament--Paul's only Scripture source. Προεγραφη is the same word used of false teachers in Jude 4, where it says, "who for a long time have been marked out (or written about) for this judgment." So the Old Testament for Paul was a "marked" book and essential for his writing.

But Paul was not the sole heir to the rights of that manuscript! "It was written for our own (ημετεραν) instruction," the verse continues. The word ημετεραν has reference to something or someone belonging to a distinct group.² Since the Jews had been given the exclusive rights to keep the oracles of God (Rom 9:4, 5) definite limits can also be observed here. The context obviously encompasses all Christians--Gentiles included (15:7-13).

¹Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt and Wilbur F. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2nd ed. revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), p. 704.

²W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, eds., A Concordance to the Greek Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), p. 432. The distinctiveness of this term is highlighted when compared to other usages: "our own tongue," Acts 2:11; "our own religion," Acts 26:5; "our own message," 2 Tim 4:15; "our own fellowship," 1 John 1:3; "our own people," Tit 3:14.

The purpose is plain: "εις . . . διδασκαλιαν."
Teaching or instruction¹ must be built solidly upon the Old Testament. Haldane concurs:

Here he makes an observation which applies generally to the Old Testament, and shows us in what manner we ought to use it. . . . The writers of the New Testament . . . refer to it as proof, and treat it as of constant use to the people of God. All that is therein written, whether history, types, prophecies, precepts or examples . . . is intended for the instruction of believers.²

Beyond this, the result is one of hope. The whole section resounds with such a guarantee based upon the acceptance of Christ (15:7). Once again, Old Testament references provide the basic background until Paul concludes, "May the God of hope fill you . . . so that you may overflow with hope" (15:13).

Yet the means of arriving at such a finale is based partly on της παρακλησεως των γραφων--"the encouragement of the Scriptures." Των γραφων is a designation for all the parts of Scripture.³ These writings were the same as those the disciples were unable to grasp (John 20:9) and those on which the death and resurrection of Christ are based (1 Cor 15:3, 4). This is why Paul can affirm elsewhere about Old

¹BAGD, p. 192.

²Robert Haldane, Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans (Evansville, IN: The Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1958), p. 610.

³BAGD, p. 166.

Testament truth, "The words . . . were written not for him alone, but also for us . . ." (Rom 4:23, 24).

1 Corinthians 10:6, 11

The Corinthians can be characterized in a word: "headaches." These believers were haughty, proud, and generally unwilling to be taught. After demonstrating his rights as an apostle (chapter 9), Paul reminds them of their ancestors who acted similarly. He warns the Corinthians in a repetitious outline: warning of privileges (10:1-4), judgment (v. 5), the example (v. 6), and warning of sins and judgment (10:7-10), together with the example again (v. 11).

Notice in vv. 1-4 references to the cloud that led Israel (Num 9), passing through the sea (Exod 14), the incident at the rock (Num 20) and manna for food (Exod 16). A number of other circumstances are cited as well (vv. 7-10): idolatry with the golden calf (Exod 32:6), immorality with Moabites (Num 25:1, 9), snakes used for judging (Num 21:4ff.), and the incessant grumbling (Num 17:6, etc.).

The important thing to observe is that all these examples come from narrative material. Now the question is this: are these the only examples in the Old Testament narratives that could have been patterns for the Corinthians? A study of the grammar itself should adequately answer the query.

The adversative δε in verse 6 is used to give the readers a reason to take notice. But ταυτα comes first in the sentence. It is given a priority position, looking back on the foregoing verses. If taken in a generic sense, ταυτα could be inclusive of other examples beyond the scope of the preceding context, as Grosheide remarks, "at the same time the entire history of Israel."¹

The unique comment on the Old Testament comes in the word τυποι--a pattern, example, model, or standard to be kept.² In secular Greek τυποι was the impression of a seal or coin, thus an image for reproduction. It follows then that τυποι were to be rules for life or examples provided by God for our instruction.³

So God was actively involved in producing examples (εγενηθησαν) "on our behalf" (ημων) for a specific purpose (εις plus the infinitive ειναι): to stop the readers from acting like their Old Testament counterparts! The lessons of the Old Testament were "delivered in concrete terms, in

¹F. W. Grosheide, Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, reprint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 223.

²BAGD, pp. 829-30.

³Nigel Turner, Christian Words (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980), pp. 170-71.

stories which the reader could be able to recognize himself and his own circumstances."¹

Verse eleven goes even farther in answering the question posed above. Again ταῦτα δε appears, making reference back to vv. 7-10, but the verb has changed. An imperfect, συνεβαλινεν, was used to demonstrate continuous action in past time. So the idea presented is a flowing series of events that did not necessarily limit the examples to those immediately mentioned above! An instruction or warning (νουθεσιαν, see Eph 6:4 and Tit 3:10) "for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come." Morris notes that this curious expression seems to mean "the culmination of all past ages has arrived. They are completed and the lessons they teach are manifest. We should reap the fruits of the experience of those ages."²

Thus the Holy Spirit could have used other examples. Other judgments could have been listed. Generally, it can be said, then, that the whole Old Testament provides for Christian living.

¹C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 2nd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), p. 227.

²Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, reprint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 144.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

Normally taken to be Paul's last epistle, this second letter to Timothy was a final charge to the apostle's young protege. And the most famous verses are flanked by two that portray again the importance of the Old Testament:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 3:14, 15).

And if that did not catch Timothy's attention, surely the next phrase would, "πασα γραφη . . . ωφελιμος." All Scripture is useful! Πασα is a collective term translated either "whole" or "all."¹ Moule goes so far as to say that the rendering "every inspired Scripture" militates against the text and suggests the correct reading as "the whole of Scriptures."²

On the other hand, γραφη has just as much to add. This includes the total body of divine revelation.³ Van Oosterzee says:

Although the article is wanting here, nevertheless, by virtue of the connection, it is not to be doubted a moment that the Apostle is speaking decidedly and

¹BAGD, p. 631.

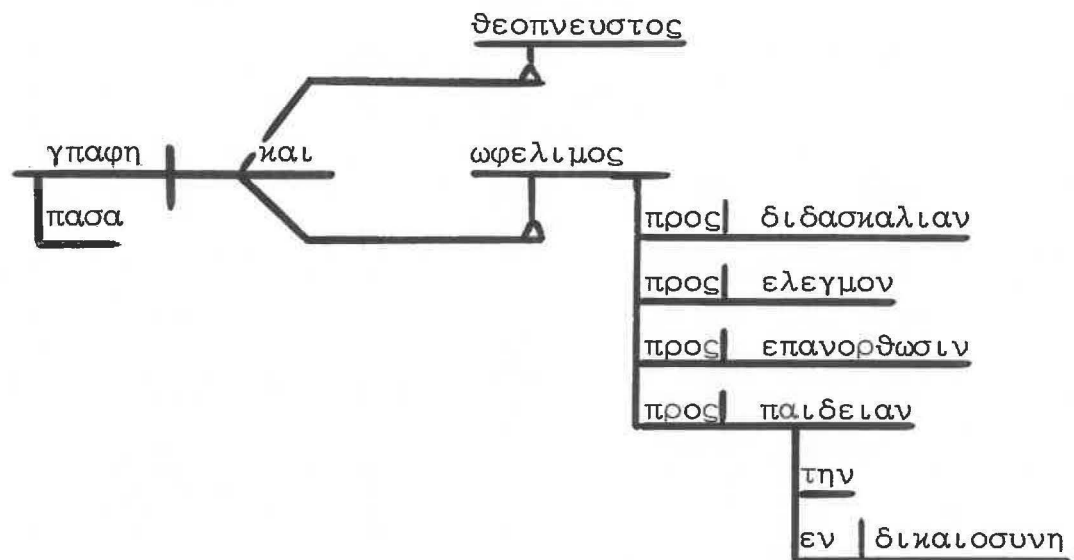
²D. F. D. Moule, An Idiom Book of the New Testament Greek (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968), p. 95.

³"The fact that Scripture equals the whole Old Testament canon is beyond question." R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon, reprint (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1964), p. 848.

exclusively of the γραφή of the Old Covenant, as of a well-completed whole.¹

The Old Testament was Paul's Bible.

Most often vv. 16 and 17 are used to support the doctrine of inspiration; but a diagrammatical analysis² of them shows a dual emphasis:



"All scripture" (πασα) is described by a compound predicate θεοπνευστος and ωφελιμος--both of equal importance.³

¹J. H. Van Oosterzee, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, volume 23: Thessalonians-Hebrews, Langes' Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 109. See also House's concise, definitive article exalting this position, "Biblical Inspiration in 1 Timothy 3:16," Bibliotheca Sacra 137 (1980):54-63.

²Although this methodology is disparaged later in this paper, its value is beneficial at times in the epistles of the New Testament.

³An outline of these verses readily falls into place based upon this arrangement:

1. The Nature of Scripture

Ωφελιμοσν is one of the many words in this section used infrequently throughout the New Testament.¹ It is defined as "useful, beneficial, advantageous or helpful."² The verb is further modified by four other functions: (1) διδασκαλιαν--teaching or instruction; (2) ελεγμον--conviction, reproof or punishment; (3) επανορθωσιν--correction, restoration or improvement; and (4) παιδειαν--upbringing attained by discipline.³

All of this, in turn, provides the impetus for purpose. Αρτιος is a term professing that one is able to meet all demands.⁴ And εξαρτιζω had an emphasis in Koine on "completion in working order."⁵

After laying all of this groundwork, then, the importance of ωφελιμος can be stated this way: (1) it can be equated with the exhaling of Scripture by God (a parallel

- A. Scripture is Inspired
- B. Scripture is Profitable
- 2. The Purpose of Scripture
 - A. Scripture Produces Maturity
 - B. Scripture Produces a Thoroughly Furnished Life

¹Θεοπνευστος, ελεγμον, αρτιος, and επανορθωσιν are hapax legomena. Ωφελιμος is used but four times while εξαρτιζω is seen twice.

²BAGD, p. 900.

³Ibid., pp. 192, 249, 283 and 603 respectively.

⁴Ibid., p. 110.

⁵J. H. Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, reprint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 222.

nominate predicate); (2) its declared function of usefulness in "all Scripture" includes the Old Testament; (3) four nouns are used in modification, detailing the essential operation of the Christian life; and (4) the purpose (ἵνα) of all Scripture being profitable is "that the man of God may be able to meet all demands and be completely equipped for all good works."

The basis of all this is founded on the Old Testament --including its narrative portions!

Hebrews 12:1

After heavy doctrinal sections emphasizing the work of Christ, the practical, daily action is expounded. "Let us therefore hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (10:23) and "you have need of endurance" (10:36, cf. Rom 15:4) lead into an explanation and definition of faith--why to keep looking forward (11:1-3, faith = hope + unseen object). Examples of this faith (11:4-40) are remembered from the Old Testament narratives.

Hebrews 12:1 then opens with a "bang"--τοιγαρουν-- "for that very reason then."¹ The term is quite uncommon² and elsewhere would be written διὰ τοῦτο or οὕτως. Standing in the emphatic position it commands the other words by

¹BAGD, p. 821.

²1 Thess 4:8 is the only other usage.

announcing "because of those Old Testament characters there is practical application."

The μαρτύρων are important. They are not so much actual spectators as witnesses who give their testimony as examples. The usage of the word throughout the epistles (10:28; 7:8, 17; 10:15; 11:2, 4 [20], 5, 39) is of one who bears witness, thus, one who testifies of a certain fact.¹

The whole emphasis is on the present state of the writer (ἡμεῖς, ἡμεῖν, ἀποθεμενοὶ [participle used as a command], τρεχόμεν and ἀφορῶντες) not of the spectatorship of the μαρτύρων as they somehow peer over the portals of heaven. The purpose of their presence is example and encouragement. And they can all be referred to on the pages of Old Testament narrative.

Hermeneutics²

Whenever one approaches the Biblical text he must remember that he comes as a foreigner, not a citizen. There are many gaps in understanding to be closed before a modern interpreter can effectively communicate the principles

¹So F. F. Bruce, "It is not so much they who look at us as we who look to them--for encouragement." The Epistle to the Hebrews, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 346. Also note the use of the term elsewhere in 1 Tim 6:12, 2 Tim 2:2 and Acts 10:41.

²The scope of this thesis is necessarily large hermeneutically. It is obvious, then, that an exhaustive treatment of every interpretive issue is out of the question. So a basic scheme will be introduced as the starting point for this paper.

of God's Word. Scott provides a concise job description in this area:

The Biblical interpreter is a sort of bicultural translator. He is charged with taking information originally conveyed in the linguistic, cultural and thought forms of the Biblical world and making them understandable and meaningful to his contemporaries.¹

As was mentioned above, there is much continuity between the testaments as well as between the Bible and the twentieth century.² But contrasts do abound. Hermeneutics attempts to bridge the following major gaps: (1) time--there is a vast different^{cc} between Abraham's day, the first century Church, and modern times. Somehow the interpreter must discover avenues whereby he can take his contemporaries in a hermeneutical "time machine" back to the Biblical periods; (2) culture--geography of the ancient world, divisions of land, inhabitants, animals, institutions, chronology, customs, laws, climate, history--all of these, and more, bypass the comprehension of most Westerners. The Occidental must learn not to expect or judge his Oriental counterpart on the basis of his own culture but strive to know the other; and (3) language--Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek are languages far different from English. Anytime one moves from one language to another, the loss of nuances and idioms is readily

¹J. Julius Scott, "Some Problems in Hermeneutics for Contemporary Evangelicals," Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society 22 (1979):67-77.

²The similarities (or continuum) involve many areas and include the same God, Scripture, faith, and program for both present and future.

apparent. Knowledge of the original language cannot be replaced.

A correct hermeneutical approach is needed to battle these difficulties. The basic method of interpretation (introduced in modern times by Keil as the grammatico-historical method¹), best suited to the nature and purpose of the Bible, is the textual, grammatical, syntactical, literal, contextual, genrial, cultural, historical, and theological method. This basic schematic can be found in most hermeneutics texts.²

There is one glaring departure from the normal listing, however. "Genrial" is a term newly coined from the word genre. It is the one piece missing from the puzzle for so long. As Anderson aptly states, "The Word of God comes to us as something written, that is, in the form of literature. This is the premise of all Biblical criticism";³ so our hermeneutic must be equipped to handle it.

For too long evangelicals have ignored or sidestepped this vital part of the interpretive process.⁴ Perhaps this

¹Kaiser, Exegetical Theology, p. 198.

²A. Berkeley Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) is one of many examples which could be consulted.

³Bernhard Word Anderson, The Living Word of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), p. 20.

⁴A recent trend distinguishing between a synchronic (literary) and diachronic (historical) should be avoided. Though literary helps often further understanding of the diachronic level, the genre must never be separated from its historical milieu.

shallow, conservative attitude produced form and literary criticism. At any rate, "the literary form of the text profoundly influences its interpretation."¹ Thompson has divided the literature of the Bible into genres and proposes methods of teaching them from the pulpit.² Included in that list is narrative, poetry, wisdom literature, law,³ apocalyptic, prophecy, gospel,⁴ and epistle. More specific categories could, of course, be named, but these will suffice.

Interpretation must do more than consider carefully the words, idioms, and relations of the elements in sentences; a text's literary mold must also be allowed to shape

¹William D. Thompson, Preaching Biblically, Abingdon Preacher's Library (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), p. 27.

²Ibid., pp. 106-15. Another work which deals exclusively with interpreting genre has just been published and is of great value. See Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982). The authors establish principles and examples for narrative in pp. 73-86.

³Initially, this study was to incorporate this genre. This author still feels, however, that there is a great amount of work to do in tapping this all but lost teaching source. The difficulties loom so large that it caused Gowan to write, "How--and whether--to preach the laws of the Old Testament presents perhaps the most difficult theological problem we shall encounter in this book" (Donald E. Gowan, Reclaiming the Old Testament for the Christian Pulpit [Atlanta: John Knox, 1980], p. 79. Wenham has an excellent section (pp. 25-39) on the importance of ritual (law) in understanding an ancient culture. Astutely, the author comments, "the sheer bulk of ritual law in the Pentateuch indicates its importance to the biblical writers," Gordon J. Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p. 26.

⁴See the conclusion on "The Implications for New Testament Narrative."

the interpretation of Scripture. Beyond that, all the other ingredients mentioned above should be added to form the correct conclusions. Congregations deserve

a square meal, rich in theological protein. Books about the Bible roll off the presses at a steady clip, but they can lead to spiritual anemia for the minister who depends on them to supply his homiletical vitamins. There is no substitute for first hand acquaintance with the inspired Word in its original text, in its original context.¹

The Uniqueness of Narrative Literature

Every type of literature is different. It can then be concluded that each should be examined by different methods. One does not, for instance, read C. S. Lewis' series, The Chronicles of Narnia, with the same interpretive approach as his work, Mere Christianity.

Likewise, the Bible has one ultimate Author. Transmitting truth, however, took variant forms.² Because of this, prophetic utterances are not the same as wisdom literature, and narrative cannot be handled in the same way poetry is analyzed. Evangelicals have lagged far behind in this effort. "Greater care must also be taken to recognize the diverse character and implications of the different literary genres of Scripture. Evangelical zeal for literal

¹Frederick W. Danker, Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study (St. Louis: Concordia, 1960), p. x.

²Note that most genealogies use perfects rather than waw consecutives. Still, some genealogies are integral parts of narratives (e.g., Ruth).

interpretation is inappropriate."¹ There are certain functional elements that set narrative in a class by itself. Its unique definition, author, purpose and use of history all contribute.

The Definition of Narrative

At the outset, there must be a distinction made between prose and narrative. Law, for instance, is the record of moral and ceremonial practice. Similarly, genealogies were remembered because of the Israelites' emphasis on family ties kept for posterity and historical reasons. Both law and genealogies are classified as prose, as is narrative, but the former two are simply records whereas narrative involves story line and a story teller. Ryken goes a step further, defining narrative as "a progression of unified and meaningful events moving toward a goal."² The addition of "characters" to the equation further elaborates Long's viewpoint.³

¹Scott, "Some Problems in Hermeneutics," p. 74.

²Leland Ryken, The Literature of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), pp. 77, 78.

³"A narrative is the verbal account of a character or characters who participate(s) in a series of events which are arranged into a plot. A plot consists, minimally, of a complication which leads to some form of denouement or resolution--an ending," Thomas Grier Long, "Narrative Structure as Applied to Biblical Preaching: A Method for Using the Narrative Grammar of A. J. Greimas in the Development of Sermons on Biblical Narratives." A Ph.D. dissertation presented to Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, p. 68.

Narrative is action-packed drama in history with a purpose. Various types of story-telling illustrate this meaning. Short stories, like Ruth or Esther, portray the movement of God in human history. Samuel or Chronicles represent fact-filled information sheets displaying a theological purpose. Broad, sweeping history, called epic, is illustrated by Exodus and Numbers.¹ Encounters between various people and/or God are better named than the long applied term "saga."²

Many say narrative is the best way to demonstrate God's purposeful action in history and communicate truth.³ Such may well be the case, since much of the Old Testament's history is presented in this genre.

The Author of Narrative

Certain questions must be asked of the human penman. For instance, why did he write? Who was his audience? What were their needs?

In the hermeneutics of biblical history the major task of the interpreter is to discover the author's intent in the recording of that history. This, of course, is a general maxim of hermeneutics and applies to other

¹Thompson, Biblical Preaching, p. 106.

²This is a "code word" for Gunkel and other form critics. Gowan calls it a "type of folk literature." Gowan, Reclaiming the Old Testament, p. 35.

³Though narrative may be the simplest and "clearest," it can also be argued that poetry strikes at the heart of more difficult issues and communicates in ways prose or narrative cannot.

literary genres as well. But it is of special importance to the hermeneutics of the historical narratives.¹

So the writer's first devotion must be to his theological intention.²

Unfortunately, today those dealing with narrative material are turning their backs on the importance of this point. Even though the final form of Scripture is being studied, an existential element has crept in. Notice Tracy's subtle move from acceptance of the text as it stands to removal of authorial intent and the scholar's responsibility:

The newer developments in interpretation theory point toward the written text as the final arbiter of meaning. Once a text has been produced, it undergoes a process of distantiation from the author's intention, from the original situation in which it was formed, and whatever meaning is present is encoded in the text itself. The interpreter's task, therefore, is not to psychologize the meaning by identifying it with the speech-event of the original author's intention. Rather his task becomes the distinct one of finding methods capable of explicating the meaning of the text itself.³

Without acknowledging the author's original input into the written material, the interpreter has no hope of recovering the meaning much less the theme of the writer. Furthermore, I cannot agree with Gunn, who believes, since we live in a post-Freudian era, that it is automatically recognized that

¹Gordon Fee, "The Genre of New Testament Literature and Biblical Hermeneutics," in Interpreting the Word of God, ed. by Samuel Schultz and Morris Inch (Chicago: Moody, 1976), p. 115.

²So Ryken, Bible, p. 88.

³Quoted by Long, "Narrative Structure," p. 56.

the meaning of a text or story may arise out of the author's unconscious!¹

Could it be that the writer of Ecclesiastes, a book admittedly found in the genre of wisdom literature, was penning a theological manifesto to all his religious counterparts showing the superiority of his belief over their own?

The book of Ruth, too, has a recoverable authorial aim. Although some believe it was a "refutation of the excessive zeal of Ezra and Nehemiah that would exclude Ruth and all foreigners from God's favor,"² it was not. Others claim that the genealogical ending is a scribal concoction to please the ruler, David. But the author's intention was to record in short space the Davidic dynasty's conception through the providential ruling of God through circumstances and people.

Even Esther was not an entertaining Hebrew folklore to commemorate Jewish victory. Rather, from the opening dethronement of Vashti to the governmental advancement of Mordecai, the Spirit pressed the message on; God prevented

¹D. M. Gunn, The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 6 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), p. 88. Though dissatisfied with historical research, Gunn had to admit, "I am unwilling to circumvent the method, ignore it or reject it out of hand. It is not easy to be rid of historicism's original setting, original meaning, or author's intention without incurring, probably justly, the charge of subjectivism" (p. 15).

²Thompson, Biblical Preaching, p. 107.

the annihilation of His chosen race and the seed (i.e., the Jewish lineage) which was to fulfill God's ultimate promise to the nation--Messiah!

But how does one discover these directives of the writer? The next questions to be asked, then, are the following: Why did the author include this particular material in his book? Why was it recorded in this form (law, record, narrative, etc.)? What was the author's purpose for including the narrative?

The Purpose of Narrative

There are units of thought within narrative which contribute to the overall theme of the book. But these sections, at times comprising a few chapters, can be taught to emphasize the writer's purpose. Buswell captured this thought while writing about sin in the Old Testament. "It should be evident prima facie that the author of Genesis is not merely recounting ancient events, but is recounting ancient events for the purpose of interpreting the spiritual life and problems of mankind."¹ Too often narrative is dryly presented as simply history or offered piecemeal to the modern listener without viewing the original design of the passage.

¹James Oliver Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), p. 286.

Apart from the testament itself, an Old Testament book is the largest section of literary material. Usually, however, the book's scope or purpose is hardly ever recognized as the basis for the cohesion of the different material.¹

Major questions need to be asked concerning the text. Understanding that the Biblical narratives use repetition at times, why are some things repeated while others are not? What are the unifying narrative principles by which the storyteller has selected his material (whether it be dialogue, historical record or genealogy²)? How do the individual episodes relate to these overriding narrative principles? How does the story unfold sequentially and what is important about this ordering of events? Why are some details minimized while others are reported fully? How is the thematic meaning of the story embodied in narrative form?

¹A common fault of commentaries is the placement of an outline at the commencement of study; but, the outline's usefulness is negligible when it is not integrated with the overall theme or motive of the book.

²Some today propose that areas of Scripture (i.e., genealogy, census, etc.) have no teaching value besides a further accumulation of knowledge. Reason for such belief must ultimately stem from a lack of understanding about the purpose of Biblical writing. Each book has its own theological reason for existence. God did not record information, which He knew would be read by 20th-century believers, simply for knowledge sake! The Spirit superintended those "dry, dusty" sections of Scripture for a purpose. The aim of today's interpreter should be to persevere until he finds it.

The answers to these and other questions are supplied in the following sections on historiography and structure.

Historiography

Overwhelming evidence from Israel's surrounding neighbors leads to the conclusion that they held to a cyclical view of history¹--events always repeat themselves. This view had no ultimate goal nor future hope. Such was the plight of Israel's neighbors.

This was not the case with Israel.² God was in control of time which made up history. Recurring weekly and annual festivals provided a framework of history. Even though these (i.e., Sabbath, Passover) derived their meaning from past events, they pointed to the reality of God's acts in the past and anticipated the finale in the approaching ages.

So, Israel's historiography existed on the basis of a purpose or goal. That conception is linear. The flow of

¹For one of the many writers positing this point, see James Muilenberg, "The Biblical View of Time," Harvard Theological Review 54 (1961):225-52.

²But McCown wrongly insists, "Judaism adopted its meaning of history from its semitic environment, the first theory of history, revised it in light of its own historical experience, combined it with elements of an Indo-European conception received from Iran and passed it on to Christianity and Islam, where it is still developing." Nothing could be farther from the truth. Chester C. McCown, Man, Morals and History (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 8.

the entire Old Testament reflects this fact. History begins in Genesis as a unified movement of affairs and events starting with universals and narrowing like a funnel. Fine tuning the big picture as it goes, Israelite history takes the reader from creation to the consummation of all things-- a definite end.

There is no sharper contrast between cultures. The recurrence of cycles among other peoples leads them nowhere. That one, basic, distinctive presupposition that made Israel so different in this regard was her awareness of one, eternal, living God working out His sovereign will through history.

In ancient Israel, one God was Lord of history. History was filled with positive potentiality. It had a goal and a meaning. Temporal event was seen as an ever renewed opportunity and challenge for bringing this goal to realization. . . .¹

Some would like to relegate the Old Testament to a cycle of history. Curtis² proposes a cyclical history based on: (1) the predictions of Messianic reign that are repetitious; (2) the pattern of history in Judges that is cyclical rather than sovereignly directed; and (3) the presence of recurring weekly and annual festivals which provided a framework of history. These objections are easily dealt

¹John Simon DeVries, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 345.

²Curtis as cited in Bebbington, Patterns, in History: A Christian View (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979), pp. 46-47.

with. Different prophets were simply prompted by the same God to write about the same event (which only happened once). The pattern in Judges does not establish the foundation for cyclical history; rather, it is a simple recognition that the same attitudes, philosophies and events constantly occurred without some type of recognized leader. The narrative is clearly arranged in cyclical form to prove a theological point.

Others opt for at least a very distinctive Israelite view of history. Albrektson recognized that the Hebrews produced a historiography on a level unknown in their environment.¹ Cairns proposes that the Hebrew historian was the first to have any "real" philosophy of history.² Trompf argues that Greco-Roman historiography owes much to the Hebraic form.³ Mowinckel considers it "a well known fact" that historiography, in the proper sense of the term, developed first in Israel.⁴ Even Muilenberg, while favorably

¹Albrektson, Bertil, History and the Gods, Old Testament Series 1 (Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1967), p. 45. Although he denies the Hebrews had the concept of goal in their history.

²Earle E. Cairns, God and Man in Time (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. 62.

³G. W. Trompf, "Notions of Historical Recurrence in Classical Hebrew Historiography," in Studies in the Historical Books of the Old Testament, ed. by G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), p. 126.

⁴As cited in J. R. Porter, "Old Testament Historiography," in Tradition and Interpretation, ed. by G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), p. 126.

comparing Israel's history with other cultures, says hers is a historiography of "purpose, will and decision."¹

God was in control. One goal was expected. Man had a responsibility, in light of that goal, to live life directed by God. Thus, those who recorded history in Israel, kept these as guidelines as they wrote.²

Questions still remain. Why then, if the Hebrews understood historiography, did they not record events in order? Why did they omit so much important information? Why were the Hebrews, at least by our standards, inconsistent in their historiography, still chosen to keep the divine records?

Our forebearers in God's spiritual program were unique in their ancient community. To them time was full of content. The meaning of all of history was packed into a moment. The Egyptians and Babylonians could not unlock themselves from the circular succession of events. Their gods, prototypes of unregenerate minds, were unable to break the pattern: There was nothing to look forward to.

¹Muilenberg, "The Biblical View of Time," p. 231.

²"Biblical narrative, as has often been pointed out, does not distinguish between event and interpretation. The interpretation of the event is written into the very telling of the story." Schuyler Brown, "Exegesis and Imagination," Theological Studies 41 (1980):748.

But Israel's history depended on one, sovereign God who had a goal in mind.¹ So their life had meaning. Truly, those who worshipped Yahweh could say, "My times are in His hand" (Ps 31:15). History had meaning for them all.

This is why monarchical inclusions into the text are surprising at times. Kings, for example, is an interpretation of Israelite history from a divine perspective. Therefore, it does not include historical content that may complete the focus of major events, places or people. The Battle of Qarqar, fought in 853 B.C. and the most important chronological reference for dating Israelite kings, not to mention a decisive military confrontation for Ahab and his Palestinian coalition, is never mentioned by the author of Kings!

Omri is a ruler who is given very little "ink" (1 Kgs 16:21-28) in the Biblical account. By all rights, however, he was one of Israel's most important kings! In short, he established a very prestigious dynasty. Other historical data that may be needed to round out the reader's knowledge of the period is not neglected (three other sources are mentioned by name in 1 Kgs 11:41; 14:19 and 29); but the author's purpose is not sidestepped--a rehearsal of Israel's

¹This tangent of historiography, though it is useful in this paper's argument, is not further developed as it is not this author's primary focus.

history from God's perspective: the rise and fall of Israel's monarchy.¹

Understanding that the situation was sovereignly lifted from Hebrew hands, 20th-century readers can know that seemingly unimportant details are recorded while major events are left untouched. The answer to many questions initially posed in this section come down to this--God was in control of Hebrew historiography (i.e., the author's viewpoint, purpose, etc.) and Scriptural content (2 Sam 23:2; 2 Pet 1:20, 21).

For this reason a chronicle called the Old Testament differed from those of its neighbors.

Israel's chief interest was in her own past rather than universal history. As Samuel put it, "Hitherto the Lord has helped us" (1 Sam 7:12). Israel was steadily moving forward under God's direction. History was conceived as linear.²

Commemoration in cultic ceremonies anticipated a future purpose. To them

time was not a phenomenon that levels every human experience but something that lends its purpose and distinctiveness. Every day has its own special character.

¹See here the relevant discussion by Steven P. Lancaster, "Elijah and the Prophetic Support of Jehu's Rebellion." A Th.M. thesis submitted to Grace Theological Seminary, May, 1982, pp. 25-26, 28. Though other themes may be incidental, it does not mean that they do not have value, theologically or otherwise. For example, Saul's behavior in 1 Samuel could very well be the focus of teaching. But the purpose of the book, establishment of the Davidic dynasty, must be maintained as the main focus to demonstrate the overall flow of the book.

²Bebbington, Patterns in History, p. 46.

Every day is potentially revelatory. Every day presents a new choice, a new opportunity, a new responsibility. In each day man is at work, but God is at work too. This is the approach to time (and history) that dominates the pages of the Old Testament.¹

God's history book is interested in teaching theological lessons. Sequential events were written only as they related to the truth being taught. It is no wonder, then, that Paul wrote: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that [the purpose] through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4). Or, this warning from Israel's wilderness "hike": "Now these things occurred as examples, to [purpose] keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. . . . These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:6, 11).

Structure

Knowing that Biblical writing had a goal improves the ability of the interpreter to communicate truth from its pages. The issue of distribution of material now comes to the fore, establishing the basis for that historical purpose. So crucial is the arrangement of episodes and selection of detail from an abundance of choices that Kaiser calls them "the twin clues to meaning."²

¹DeVries, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, p. 346.

²Kaiser, Exegetical Theology, p. 205.

The authors of Scripture were masterful story-tellers. Interwoven within their narratives are mnemonic devices designed as literary hinges, tying the purpose to its parts.¹ Notice that the method proposed here for determining the structure has repetition as its key. Repetitious elements include key words, phrases, action, places, people or themes.²

Notice some examples. The book of Judges seems to be broken into two sections, the latter (Judg 17-21) almost acting as an addendum. In Judges 17 the emphasis is upon a "young Levite from Bethlehem" (v. 7). The following story is also about a Levite with a concubine from Bethlehem (19:1). And is it not interesting that the story which follows chronologically is about a family from the city of Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1, 19-22)? It is by no coincidence that this is David's hometown! Thus these books could have easily been written by a historian during David's day. What

¹Bar-Efrat's masterful article gives this area a great foundation for continued study. "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," Vetus Testamentum 30 (1980):154-73. Because his divisions are so obvious and helpful they will be followed. Another who has contributed to this area is Robert Alter in his book, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 1981), especially pp. 178-85.

²"Since themes or ideas are not stated overtly, but have to be extracted by means of interpretation, one should exercise a good deal of self-restraint and self-criticism before proceeding to the delineation of thematic or ideational structures. . . . So in order to steer clear of undue arbitrariness, themes and ideas should be borne out by the facts of the narrative as clearly and unambiguously as possible," Bar-Efrat, "Analysis of Structure," pp. 169-70.

was the purpose? Most of Judges displays the repeated failures of the leaders to show the strength of David's monarchy. Also, Benjamin is cast in a poor light in Judges, apparently a reflection on the tribe of Saul. So these sections, keyed by the place name Bethlehem, reflect the motive of the writer--the need for a strong ruler for the nation, namely, David of Bethlehem!¹

The חוללת of Isaac provides another interesting structure. Chiasm is the basis for the following:

	30:24	
	30:1-24	30:25-43
	29	31
28:10-22		32
27:1-28:9		33
26		34
25		35

¹"Repetition serves many and diverse functions in the literary composition of ancient Israel . . . (among them) ordering of the complete literary units. The repeated words or lines do not appear haphazardly. . . . It served as an effective mnemonic device. It is the key word which may often guide us in our isolation of a literary unit. . . ." James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," Journal of Biblical Literature 88 (1969):17.

The elements in these chapters are both contrasting and similar, pointing up the chiasmus:

<u>Chapter 25</u>	<u>Chapter 35</u>
Isaac is the heir	Jacob is the heir
Fraternal struggle between Jacob and Esau	No fraternal strife
The etymology of Jacob is emphasized, as he was holding onto the heel, having received his name from the action of the story	The etymology of Jacob is emphasized, showing that he received his name Israel ("one who struggles with God") from the action of the story
Birthright purchased	God conveys the blessing
<u>Chapter 26</u>	<u>Chapter 34</u>
Interruption of the context (from birthright conflict of brothers to conflict with the Philistines)	Interruption of context (from reconciliation of the brothers to conflict with the Hivites)
Jacob's fear of Philistines	Jacob's fear of the Canaanites
The "sister," Rebekah	The sister, Dinah
Potential sexual abuse	Actual sexual abuse
The lie, "she is my sister"	The deception, "if you will"
Covenant with Philistines	Contract with Hivites
<u>Chapter 27:1-28:9</u>	<u>Chapter 33</u>
Mounting tension	Declining tension
Blessing stolen	Blessing restored

Chapter 29:10-22

Jacob flees and is
frightened

Covenant guaranteed

Special revelation--dream

Chapter 32

Jacob returns and is
frightened

Blessing granted

Special revelation--theophany

Chapter 29

Jacob meets Laban

Jacob receives royal
welcome

Contract for wives

Chapter 31

Jacob leaves Laban

Jacob is pursued

Covenant for peace

Chapter 30:1-24

Human fertility (seed)

Chapters 30:25-43

Animal fertility (blessing)

And what theological purpose controls these scenes? God's covenant with Abraham is repeated to Isaac and acknowledged again and again with scenes concerning land, seed, and blessing. It is no accident that Genesis 30:24 caps the scene, "she named him Joseph." Not only is he the next in line genealogically but the author's point is clear--the line of Messiah is delivered through the intervention of Joseph.

Another instance of chiasm is brought to light in 1 Kings 18. Interpersonal relationships are emphasized as Elijah addresses

Obadiah (king's servant),
 --Ahab,
 --the people,
 --the people,
 --the prophets,
 --the prophets,
 --the people,
 --the people,
 --Ahab,
 --his own servant.

This scene, prefaced by the background of drought (18:1-6), sets the stage for Israel to reaccept Yahwism, throw down Baalism, and reestablish the covenantal blessing.¹ All of this fits in with the purpose of Kings, namely, the rise and fall of the monarchy.

Taking the book of Ruth again for an example, one notices that on either side of the story there stands genealogical information forming an inclusio. Why such an arrangement? Based on the above perspective (that the Davidic dynasty's conception was through the providential ruling of God through circumstances and people), some lives were forfeited (either voluntarily through disobedience or involuntarily through sovereign choice) so that others might meet and survive to produce the royal line.²

¹Lancaster excludes the parallelism of the servants, seemingly having nothing to say about the scene on Carmel awaiting rain (vv. 42-45). See his footnote explaining other structural points of view, pp. 11, 12.

²Bar-Efrat had the same idea in structural observation ("Analysis of the Structure," p. 157). See many other examples of structure throughout his article.

Structure is indispensable for narrative understanding. The literary abilities either of the writings or the writers are enhanced by these types of discoveries. Unity of both a book and sections within it are proven by structure; it also provides boundaries for literary units. Most importantly, "structure has rhetorical and expressive value; it is one of the factors governing the effect of the work on the reader and in addition it serves to express or accentuate meaning."¹

Inadequate Methodologies

Biblical scholarship seems to be in a quagmire of literary options. Many voices are crying to be heard. So overrun is the Biblical establishment that the situation has been called "a smorgasbord of interpretive approaches, each designed to glean the 'true meaning' of the text."²

Some of the terms which follow have floated around college and seminary halls. Few know little, if anything at all, about them. Pastors are especially intimidated and, at times, may lash out at an "unscriptural" approach to the Bible. These methods should not be judged as "black and white," the "black" ones having nothing to offer Biblical

¹Ibid., p. 172.

²James Coughenour, "Karl Barth and the Gospel Story: A Lesson in Reading the Biblical Narrative," Andover Newton Quarterly 19 (1979):97.

study. On the contrary, almost every one of these proposals has something to contribute in an eclectic arrangement.

Truth is many-sided. It may be approached from any number of angles with different emphases, highlighting different phenomena. Of course, an indepth critique of each is impossible. Yet, herein lies a very brief summary of the definition, history, and basic understanding of various methods,¹ as well as negative and positive criticism of each. It is hoped that the reader may gain an overview of the area as well as an appreciation for the possible usages of each method. Ultimately, a comparison will be made to the proposed procedure.

Form Criticism²

Made famous by Hermann Gunkel, Formgeschichte deals with the so-called folk material that served as a vehicle of oral and written tradition for the people of a certain culture. It is used to find similar units which reappear--similarity in structure, length, and tendency over against content.

¹The choices had to be limited and are admittedly arbitrary in selection. However, each does claim to some degree to have control over narrative with its respective methodology.

²One must be most cautious not to homogenize Form Criticism since there is so much diversity within its ranks. The same can be said of structuralism, literary criticism, etc.

Reading a newspaper may suffice as an example.

The modern reader immediately recognizes forms of his or her favorite editorial or gossip columnist, a fast paced article elaborating a war-torn country, statistics found on the sports page, or one-liners found in the comic section. In a similar way, a form critic can distinguish narrative, parable, law code, genealogy and poetry--a number of different forms.

What began with Eichhorn and Herder in the nineteenth century later was labeled Gattungsforschung ("research into many times") by Gunkel and Formgeschichte ("a history of forms") by one of his students (Dibelius) in the present day. Five basic tenets of form criticism have emerged after years of refinement: (1) a study of literary types; (2) a study of the history of each literary type; (3) a determination of the setting of life for each type; (4) an analysis of the structure in determination of the unit and (5) the intention of the genre.¹ In short, Tucker defines it this way:

a method of analyzing and interpreting the literature of the Old Testament through a study of its literary types or genres . . . a means of identifying the genres

¹G. Herbert Livingston, The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), pp. 231-33, and Gene M. Tucker, "Form Criticism, OT," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, supplementary volume (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), pp. 342-45. For the most comprehensive volume describing form criticism see Klaus Koch, The Growth of the Biblical Tradition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969).

of that literature, their structures, intentions and settings in order to understand the oral stage of their development.¹

Form critics have made an honest attempt to make their method a tool of exegesis. If God could use the vocabulary and culture of his audience as a vehicle of communication, why not known forms? As Wolf admits, "If form criticism is properly handled, the results can shed light on the Scriptures."²

Further positive impact of the theory includes the study of the life setting. Identification of the audience and speaker, not to mention word studies, is attractive in analysis of narrative.³

Concentration on the form rather than the origin of the document is another positive point. Attempts to identify introduction and conclusion to a literary unit by formulas repeated in other literary types may be a plausible connective device. Similarities between Samuel and Chronicles as well as other historical materials would profit from such an approach.

¹Gene M. Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), p. 1.

²Herbert M. Wolf, "Implications of Form Criticism for Old Testament Studies," Bibliotheca Sacra 127 (1970): 302.

³On this point, see Livingston, Pentateuch, pp. 239ff.

Weaknesses do surface, however. There are so many forms (i.e., hymn, blessing, legend, lament, etc.),¹ not to mention problems with the texts that form criticism applies itself to, that once again criticism against "straight-jacketing" the text can be leveled. For instance, Mowinckel perverted the Biblical context in order to impose an outside order upon the Psalms.² Such subjectivity undermines the text and relies on the ingenuity of the interpreter.

At times this methodology loses sight of the forest for the trees: to study small sections of material by themselves neglects the larger framework, namely the Biblical book. Forms are fine unless they are isolated from the scope of the book's purpose and used simply to say, "I found a form!"³

Other problems persist. The Sitz im Leben used in judging forms is not always available or agreed upon. Thus the use of a form becomes invalid when cultural and historical data are missing. Not enough may be known about Hebrew thought to say definitely that they wrote in small, literary

¹Gunkel, too, ran into this problem in completing his Old Testament Theology. See Rolf Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered," Interpretation 27 (1973):467.

²Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, trans. by D. R. Thomas (New York: Abingdon, 1967).

³See the criticism leveled by Robert Stein in "What is Redaktionsgeschichte?", Journal of Biblical Literature 88 (1969):45-56.

units. The uniqueness of the individual texts is diminished. Content must always take precedence over form, but this is reversed in form criticism. And form criticism leads to generalities by its very nature because

it is concerned with what is common to all the representatives of a genre and therefore applies an external measure to the individual pericopes. It does not focus sufficient attention upon what is unique and unrepeatable, upon the peculiarity of the formulation. Moreover, form and content are inextricably related. They form an integral whole. The two are one.¹

A major stumbling block, a reliance on oral tradition, drives many more conservatives away. Oral transmission of the text apart from writing not only calls into question the reliability of the information but circumvents God's control when linked with other presuppositions. That many Israelites contributed over many centuries to the construction of the Bible is just one of those.² To say that, "in folk literature there is little concern for authorship and individuality"³ is to have a flippant attitude toward divine control of the text. Such an attitude cannot control the believer in interpretive procedures.

¹Muilenberg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," p. 5.

²This discussion has to do with original contributions to Scripture--not text editing. Norman C. Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), p. vi.

³Tucker, Form Criticism, p. 3.

Even its advocate, Tucker, admits, "Form Criticism does not provide the key to all the puzzles of the Old Testament."¹ Yet

evangelicals should not categorically reject the entire method because of the excesses to which radicals have gone. Where there are areas of contribution, these should be explored and cautiously utilized. . . .²

Its usefulness may become apparent in the study of narrative literature in the future.

Diagrammatical Analysis

Recently, diagrammatical analysis has been employed as a basic homiletical tool at Grace Theological Seminary. A stalwart proponent of this methodology, Dr. Lee Kantenwein, believes in Biblical inerrancy, a literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic and claims that diagramming endeavors

¹Ibid., p. 83. For other critiques on the method, see Stanley N. Gundry, "A Critique of the Fundamental Assumption of Form Criticism," Bibliotheca Sacra 123 (1966):32-39, 140-49; Clark H. Pinnock, "The Case Against Form Criticism," Christianity Today 9 (July 16, 1965):12-13; Zane C. Hodges, "Form Criticism and the Resurrection Accounts," Bibliotheca Sacra 124 (1967):339-48; Marten H. Woudstra, "The Inspiration of the Old Testament," in The Bible: The Living Word of Revelation, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney, reprint (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), p. 126; and Erhardt Guttgemanns, Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series #26, trans. by William G. Doty (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979).

²Wolf, "Implications," p. 307.

"to understand, as much as possible, the thinking of the inspired writers."¹

Subjecting the text to close scrutiny is the aim of diagrammatical analysis. Syntax, sentence structure and word relationships are vital to the approach.² It presupposes an "inspired syntax" (Matt 5:18; 2 Pet 1:21) and presents a visual picture of the sentence to learn what the author communicated. Though Kantenwein admits that the method is not a "100% answer" to all the problems, he considers it to be a "major step."³

Will diagrammatical analysis profit the Old Testament narrative interpreter? Not in the least. Major weaknesses mar the method's usefulness. Ignorance of sentence word order is a costly error. Hebrew depends largely on word order for grammatical function and studies in syntax, something on which this analysis is supposed to thrive, note, "It is unfortunate that the significance of word order in Hebrew has not been fully appreciated by grammarians."⁴

¹Lee L. Kantenwein, Diagrammatical Analysis, rev. ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1981), p. 1.

²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 5.

⁴Ronald J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax: An Outline, reprint (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1974), p. 4. In Greek, normal word order is not mandatory and often provides a key to interpretation by emphasizing a certain element in the sentence moving it forward. On this point, see F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. by Robert W. Funk (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1961), pp. 248-53. Even English grammars concur ignorance of word order

Providing an interpretive approach is one thing, but when the method itself is subjective, its usefulness should be seriously questioned. Diagramming is open to a number of variations (i.e., the position of modifying words and clauses). Even in complex sentences, the complexity remains both in the sentence and diagram. "Anyone who is capable of understanding the meaning of the sentence obviously has the mental capacity to keep all those relationships afloat as he hears or reads the sentence."¹

No one interested in syntactical analysis could agree more with Kantenwein when he claims that there is "no such thing as an unimportant detail or word of the Scripture text."² But diagrammatical analysis misses the "big picture." In this method how does one verse correspond to another twenty verses removed? It is next to impossible to

"also distorts the meaning of sentences." Jeanne H. Herndon, A Survey of Modern Grammars, second edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 111. See also in this regard, Francis I. Anderson, The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch, Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 14, ed. by Robert A. Kraft (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970) and The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew (The Hague: Mouton, 1974).

¹Herndon, Modern Grammars, p. 110.

²Kantenwein, Diagrammatical Analysis, p. 7. Kantenwein does concede that expressions like "thus saith the Lord" ought not to be preached. In fact, "it is not recommended that the preacher preach minor structure to any audience. . . . The preacher will lose his congregation with detail," *ibid.*, pp. 63, 65. It is said that such statements are almost hidden from view, especially when no caution is suggested as to use of this method with certain types of literature--namely, narrative and poetry.

see integral relationships in narrative texts, much less books.

Yet even with these weaknesses the author presses on to "show how diagrammatical analysis forms a basis for outlining the Biblical text in order to derive sermonic structure . . . for preaching directly from the diagrammed text."¹ According to the method, Genesis 22:3² would have one subject (point one) and six verbs (point two with six subpoints)! An exposition of this minutia would totally distort the text, render inoperable the relationship of this sentence to the author's whole intention, require twenty years to teach through Genesis and instruct the people in absolutely nothing! Diagramming narrative is a huge, cumbersome responsibility and waste of time.

To go even farther, this methodology is an English syntactical system imposed over Hebrew. Herein lies a basic hermeneutical problem. Differences in literary technique between languages militate against the use of this type of diagramming.

Structuralism

Approaching this section, one must ask the question, "where do I begin?" Structuralism, as applied to Biblical literature, has been popular only in the past decade, yet

¹Ibid., pp. 9, 63.

²Diagrammed fully, *ibid.*, p. 40.

has flooded the hermeneutical world with great amounts of material. Many men, including Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Propp, Greimas, Patte and others have delved into this field of research. Each has drawn from the other but ultimately proposed his own methodology. Beyond this large cast of authors, those who seek to understand need a broad base of knowledge: mathematical formulas, anthropology, and mythology all clamor for attention.

Roschke asks the questions the Biblical interpreter demands to know of this topic:

Is it an example of an intellectual hype: sloppy scholarship covered by a gobbledygook prose, an overgrown mole-hill rather than a Mount Everest? And most important, does structuralism offer the church any new tools for grasping the Word?¹

If by "structuralism" its advocates further articulate the pattern, texture, arrangement or sequence of words of literary units, and if new theological and literary insights can be gained, this methodology is a welcome companion in the task of narrative interpretation. Otherwise, if the content, history or author of the book is in any way maligned or subjectively tampered with, the system, if it is such, must be scrapped.

¹Ronald W. Roschke, "A Book Worth Discussing: Daniel and Aline Patte, *Structural Exegesis: From Theory to Practice*," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 8 (1981):99. David Jobling has reviewed and critiqued McKnight, Detweiler, and the Pattes in their books on structure. See "Structuralism, Hermeneutics, and Exegesis: Three Recent Contributions to the Debate," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 34 (1979):134-47.

A brief historical expose will first treat the main proponents and propositions of structuralism. Then the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches will be evaluated.

Ferdinand de Saussure

Referred to as the father of linguistics,¹ de Saussure's major work, Cours de linguistique generale (Course in General Linguistics) was the basis for others' work in structuralism. Saussure was the one to make a distinction between synchronic and diachronic views of language and advocated the use of the synchronic alone to the total exclusion of its counterpart.²

Though he championed the cause of word inter-relationship in literature (context) de Saussure adamantly denied any historical relationship with language, withdrawing the author and his surrounding culture from any impact on the choice of words. He operated on the level of what he called langue or code which delved beneath the consciousness of the writer to a non-historical reservoir of

¹A. C. Thistleton, "Keeping up with Recent Studies: II. Structuralism and Biblical Studies," The Expository Times 89 (1978):330.

²Vern S. Poythress, "Structuralism and Biblical Studies," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 21 (1978):226-27.

words. Thus there was a difference between the history and meaning of a term.¹

Claude Levi-Strauss

Levi-Strauss was greatly affected by de Saussure's work in linguistics. Levi-Strauss, however, applied this knowledge to the field of anthropology and more specifically, mythology. He believed that a society's myth transcended language and was more concerned with value and belief.

So the traditional methods of hermeneutics, which stressed culture and history, were replaced by a "deep structure" that attempted to tune in with a certain civilization's mindset and subconscious. Levi-Strauss finally came to the conclusion that all mythical structure was based upon binary opposites: life-death, heaven-hell, God-man, good-evil, peace-war.²

Such mythology to Levi-Strauss was timeless.³ These were world universals. All of man's thought processes were programmed into the same function. Such a methodology could then compare contemporary with ancient thought uninhibited from cultural or historical milieu.

As to Biblical material, Levi-Strauss never worked with the text independently and "expressed reservations

¹Ibid.

²Roschke, "A Book Worth Discussing," pp. 102-3.

³Thistleton, "Keeping up with Recent Studies," p. 331.

about the appropriateness of his method for such a task,"¹ though his students have done the opposite and applied it to Scripture. Such a study, it is said, has produced many binary pairs in such well known narratives as Genesis 1-3.

A. J. Greimas

One man who had opportunity to integrate insights from his structuralist predecessors (Souriau, Barthes, Propp and Levi-Strauss) was A. J. Greimas. Based extensively, however, on Vladimir Propp's work with Russian fairy tales, Greimas broke structure for narrative down into three levels: (1) deep structure--these are the binary functions proposed by Levi-Strauss; (2) superficial structure--the actions and actors playing out the deep structure; and (3) surface structure--the level at which the story is read or heard.² It is said that Greimas "envisioned" these levels.³

Strong influence was also exerted by the logical square of Aristotle⁴ using mathematical structures and the heart of Greimas' subject/object structure:

¹Hugh C. White, "Structural Analysis," in Encounter with the Text: Form and History in the Hebrew Bible, ed. by Martin J. Buss (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 48.

²Edgar V. McKnight, Meaning in Texts: The Historical Shaping of Narrative Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), p. 171.

³Long, "Analysis of Narrative Structure," p. 80.

⁴Ibid., p. 73. See also White's review in "Structural Analysis," pp. 52-57.

Addresser - - - Object - - - Addressee

Helper - - - Subject - - - Opponent

Indeed, at times, models depend on "purely logical implications and operations" rather than "linguistic investment of the terms."¹ The goal for both Greimas and his student Long was that this narrative, grammatical system be "applicable to a wide variety of narrative texts (including extra-biblical)."²

A state of flux is the condition in which this thesis finds itself today. The frustrations result in a constricted style and indefinite character of Greimas' work. There is no one volume of Greimas which "summarizes clearly and completely the current state of his thinking on narrative theory."³

Daniel Patte

An attempt to create a new narrative exegetical method by joining the structuralist systems of Levi-Strauss and A. J. Greimas has been undertaken by Patte. The reasoning for uniting the two systems exists by virtue of the fact

¹Long, "Analysis of Narrative Structure," p. 75.

²Ibid., p. 86.

³Ibid., p. 70. It was Long's attempt in his dissertation to (1) analyze basic literary dimensions in narrative, (2) use the results of that analysis to construct sermons, and (3) to provide a more effective means of preaching, pp. 54-55.

that Levi-Strauss' mythological systems are communicated through the narratives being studied by Greimas. The goal "is to find an easy method to project elements of the narrative level onto the mythological level and so discover the presuppositions which operate through the text."¹

The methodology is intricate, to say the least, but can be summarized as an attempt to discover the three strands found in all narrative: (1) main narrative--the central story which moves toward the goal; (2) interpretive levels--"branches" that extend off the main narrative but do not advance the goal; and (3) parallel narratives--discontinuities that exist at the beginning and end of each parallel.

Patte's formulations have led him to conclude that structural exegetes attempt

to uncover, for instance, the linguistic, narrative, or mythical structures of the text under consideration. Whether or not these structures were intended by the author is not a relevant question. In fact, in most instances it appears quite unlikely that the author was not aware of using such complex structures.²

Strengths

The keynote to structuralism is that it centers upon the importance of the text itself. "The discourse of the

¹Roschke, "A Book Worth Discussing," p. 103.

²Daniel Patte, What is Structural Exegesis? (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 14.

text is not to be overcome by exegesis but to be revitalized by it."¹ Likewise, Spivey hopes that structuralism may reexamine texts which have been avoided or declared irrelevant.² The need to define limits and work with a unit of material has also been stressed by Dan Via.³ And Pouillon has heralded the analysis of texts based on its elements, relationships between these elements and their arrangement in context.⁴ All of this is appreciated and concurred with by portions of this paper's proposed methodology.

Weaknesses

The subconscious thought of the author controlling inspired Scripture casts the longest shadow over structuralism. How can it be said that all human minds function the same way? Is there no difference between Occidental and

¹Ibid., p. 5. Although "It is ironic," says Roschke, "that a method which so consciously deals with the meaning of texts is so difficult to understand," in "A Book Worth Discussing," p. 109.

²Robert A. Spivey, "Structuralism and Biblical Studies: The Uninvited Guest," Interpretation 28 (1974): 143.

³Dan O. Via, Jr., Kerygma and Comedy in the New Testament: A Structuralist Approach to Hermeneutic (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), pp. 10, 11.

⁴Jean Pouillon, "Structuralism: A Definitional Essay," in Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Collection of Essays, ed. and trans. by Alfred M. Johnson, Jr., The Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series, 22 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979), p. 143. These elements, however, tend to be conceptual or schematic not grammatical or syntactical.

Oriental? Can a Russian poet provide the key for understanding the writing of Moses? The text is simply lifted from the author's hands and original intention gives way to semantic autonomy. The conscious action of the author to construct logical, verbal forms in a meaningful text, with the control of God's Spirit must produce the product of Scripture. To insist that "somewhere between the nervous system and conscious behaviour"¹ Biblical words poured onto the page would ruin interpretation, not to mention one's faith, as we know it.

Most, including Greimas and Long, would reject a God-controlled Bible outright. Scripture is a culturally conditioned product of human literary genius.² Moreover, there is a basic presupposition that all narrative prose was orally transmitted.³ Such a belief leaves room for additions and deletions that would corrupt the author's intended purpose, his chosen vocabulary and literary intent by a process of editorialism, sifting and arranging.

¹Jean Piaget, Structuralism, trans. and ed. by Chaninah Maschler (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 138.

²Long, "Analysis of Narrative Structure," pp. 159-63.

³Robert C. Cully, Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), pp. 1-32. See also Spivey, "Uninvited Guest," p. 134, "In actual practice, structuralism . . . moves behind the original plan of the author because there is not a true or earlier version of the narrative."

Then there are other structuralists who seek to point out with Via:

Structuralist analysis or criticism is not to lead the work back to its origins, to reproduce the original plan of the author, but to produce a new knowledge. Structure is applied from outside and is not derived from the book. . . . The work's meaning is not found inside it but beside it. . . .¹

Such a system defeats the purpose of revelational value either for the original or contemporary audience. Scripture is thus equated with other literary works "tinkered with" by man's hand. Thus, analysis of Russian folklore should not be allowed to enter the sacred realm of God's Word.

The goal of structuralism always seems to be grouping stories together and noting patterns which develop. Granted, this assembly of narratives has some value-- properly done and in its own place. Yet Cully claims that each short narrative by itself fails to contain much force; but somehow, a single, developed structural pattern may add "richness" impossible when approached alone!² On the other hand, Biblical students desire to interpret each story within its context as the author intended it to be.

Other contentions arise as well. Structuralism tends to eliminate the historical value of a text,³ Emphasis

¹Via, Kerygma, p. 7.

²Cully, Structure, p. 117.

³This claim of "anti-historicalism" has been vigorously contested by Via. He cautions that not all structuralists can be pressed into the same mold. Via, Kerygma, p. 4.

on extra-biblical models obscures the text.¹ Along the same line, some attempt to superimpose the analysis of one writing over another. There are differences in time, the author's intention and supernatural intention. Structuralists intimate that writers always followed a certain subconscious pattern while writing.

Though Roschke calls on the Church to invest further scholarly reflection into the matter,² structuralism rests on too much subjectivity and denial of historical context to merit much acclaim here. Real structure must remain as the analysis of parts both grammatical and semantic. Bar-Efrat's treatment of the subject remains the watershed in understanding this area.³

Literary Criticism

This particular criticism almost assumes responsibility for other similar methodologies. Comparative literary criticism, discourse analysis and source criticism could all be useful additions to literary and linguistic development. Analysts of narrative material are indebted to this methodology for its obvious strengths but must reject it on the whole as an adequate means of rightly interpreting the history and stories of the Old Testament.

¹See also Spivey, "Uninvited Guest," p. 142.

²Roschke, "A Book Worth Discussing," p. 109.

³Bar-Efrat, "Analysis of Structure," pp. 154-73.

Literary criticism does recognize that the Bible is made up of different types of literature (i.e., narrative, poetry, etc.) and must be studied within that genre. Robertson stresses the "intention of the passage in its original context."¹ It is further concerned with theme, structure and literary units together with the historical settings in which the writings occurred.²

The meaning of different stories within a book (i.e., Genesis--Joseph, Abraham, Isaac, Tamar, etc.) are dependent upon each other, reflecting not only their own completions but a part in the overall goal of the book.³

Unfortunately, the bad far outweighs the good. Literary criticism's fundamental assumption posits an initially negative response:

The Old Testament is to be viewed as "pure" or imaginative literature, and thus studied as a contemporary literary critic would investigate the plays of Shakespeare or the novels of Sir Walter Scott. The "world" which interests the literary critic is that imaginative one created by the story or the poem. . . . Furthermore, the "context" in which the Old Testament is considered is the vast body of human literature, potentially from the earliest times to the present.⁴

¹David Robertson, The Old Testament and the Literary Critic (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), pp. 1-3.

²Norman C. Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), p. vi.

³Robertson, Literary Critic, p. 7.

⁴Ibid., pp. vii, viii.

Therefore, method is left to the critic's imagination. Contemporary literature is on the same level as the Biblical text! This is not to say the Bible is non-literary. Ryken is correct in saying "that biblical literature is virtually unique and cannot be adequately studied with the familiar tools of literary criticism or compared with Western literature."¹

Lack of skill with original languages, insight into the literary milieu and lack of knowledge about ancient literary forms (e.g., the suzerainty treaty concept) also add to the concept's deficiency. Overall, literary criticism, in its emphasis on Western literature, misses the whole context of the Bible and undercuts the literary critic's own arguments. Gleaning from its strengths, the proposed methodology must reject literary criticism as a whole.

A Proposed Methodology

There are definite deficiencies in all of the above methodologies. A unifying force needs to draw them together without indiscriminately eliminating them, along with each method's strengths. One of the great weaknesses of form criticism, for example, is that it deals in depth with Bible sections but rarely with the book or author's perspective in

¹Leland Ryken, "Literary Criticism of the Bible: Some Fallacies," in Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, ed. by Kenneth R. R. Gros Lais, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), p. 30.

view. Literary criticism seems to negate the historical background. And diagrammatical analysis is too detailed and also confuses word order and emphasis so that its value in narrative is negligent.

Gene Tucker correctly pinpoints the relationship between three various disciplines (literary, form and tradition criticism) while touching on the real problem:

Each lives off the questions that have baffled the other two. Since none of the three is able to ask or deal with all of the questions that must be asked and dealt with to tell the story of the making of the Old Testament, and since all want to tell that story, their relationships are complimentary.¹

Tucker has the right idea--no one examination of the text is able to view the total picture of a Scripture passage alone.

Therefore, a need exists for a merger of these wholistic and atomistic approaches;² the "big picture" plus each "stroke of the brush" that makes it up. Thus, the proposal is to apply first of all whatever methodology³ may expose the book's meaning and then to discover the author's purpose for writing. Herein lies a two-pronged approach to narrative material for teaching purposes.

¹Tucker, Form Criticism, p. iii.

²Though the original idea was the author's, he later found Clines to agree saying, "It is a mistake to believe that we can ever manage in Biblical studies with both holistic and atomistic work." David J. A. Clines, The Theme of the Pentateuch, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 10 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), p. 9.

³This, of course, is based upon the hermeneutical statement made earlier in this chapter.

Atomistic Approach

The roots of modern, conservative exegesis can be found in Keil's "grammatico-historical" method. With such a foundation little more is needed but to apply the approach! Delimiting the boundaries of narrative, then, requires a knowledge of the vocabulary, grammar, and morphology of Hebrew syntax. Such syntactical indicators (i.e., waw consecutives, disjunctives, repetitions of verbal forms, etc.) mark the course of narrative.¹

Yet beyond the words themselves, of necessity literary units must not be forgotten. What is needed is a synthesis of varied approaches (e.g., structuralism, form criticism, etc.) to delineate a genuine literary hermeneutic. For, it must be agreed, no one method can accomplish the total interpretive task. Thus, discovery of the genre and comparison with others in the Old Testament is a necessity.

So an author's purpose is communicated through linguistic and literary style. In other words, what a text says cannot be separated from the way it is expressed and shaped. A warning of balance is well taken from Haddon Robinson: "Linguistic and grammatical analysis must never

¹D. M. Gunn in The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 6 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), pp. 119-21 proposes similar methods for the boundaries of narrative.

become an end in itself, but rather should lead to a clearer understanding of the passage as a whole."¹

An outline, then, must be established for analyzing atomistic markers. First, does the text satisfy the narrative definition? Next, what are the limits (boundaries) of the narrative's beginning and end? Are there syntactical observations that confirm these divisions? Does the narrative contain a number of sequences? Lastly, how does this narrative conform to the author's overall purpose?²

Take, for example, the narrative of David in 2 Samuel 11-12. The initial boundary is marked by a change of seasons, notably *ויהי לחשוברת השנה* (11:1). Its companion also has a disjunctive time period (*ויהי אחרי כן*, 13:1) together with an introduction of different circumstances. The sequences within the unit are marked by the entrance and exit of different characters as if they were moving on and off of a stage. David, as the main character, is noted in 11:1-5 as having an affair with an albeit minor participant (consistently referred to as "Uriah's wife," 11:3, 26, 12:10, 15). The conspiracy against Uriah takes place from 11:6-27. Nathan's encounter lasts from 12:1-14. Immediately

¹Haddon W. Robinson, Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), p. 66.

²Further explanation is forthcoming in the next section on the "wholistic approach."

following is the death of the child in 12:15-23. Two verses (12:24 and 25) mark the high point of the narrative when Solomon is born. And finally David captures Rabbah in 12:26-31.

The inclusive framework of David, kingship, his army and the cities of Rabbah and Jerusalem (11:1 with 12:29-31) point to the author's purpose. David, king of Israel, chosen leader of the dynasty to follow, is himself shown to be an unfit Messiah. As the battle raged, David's usual place of leadership was occupied by Joab¹ at a time when it was usual for the king to be in that position--לעזת יצא (11:1). But the author makes up for this unfortunate behavior by announcing the birth of Solomon (12:24, 25), the next king and progenitor of the royal line.²

The prologue of Job provides yet another interesting example of structural markers. The scene changes in these two chapters set the stage for the poetry in the rest of the book. Alternately, earth (1:1-5, 13-22; 2:7-13) and heaven (1:6-12 and 2:1-7) are used for the backdrop of action. The inclusive phrases ויהי היום ויבאו בני האלהים להחיצב על יהוה

¹Notice Joab's concern that the city of Rabbah be named after him instead of his king (12:26-29)!

²Happily, Bright also came to the same conclusions though his segmentation of the narrative differed. Authority, pp. 227-28.

(1:6; 2:1) and רִיץ אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם מִעַם פְּנֵי יְהוָה (1:12; 2:7) even close off the scenes in heaven from those on earth.

More than this, the middle scene on earth (1:13-22) records four catastrophes that befall Job. The first and third are accomplished by earthly forces (1:13-15, 17) and the second and fourth by heavenly powers (1:16, 18-19). So the structure effectively tells the narrative by using the two realms that lay the foundation for an understanding of Job--though suffering takes place on earth it is not outside the plan and program of heaven.

Narrative sections (not chapters) are constantly incorporated into the author's purpose for writing. And yet "they have a life of their own as literary pieces with distinct purposes."¹ So in teaching either section mentioned above, one could teach the whole narrative, with its distinct purpose as a sermonic proposition, then tackle each sequence alone while constantly referring back to its authorial intention.

The goal of this method is also that of Muilenberg:

What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in

¹Lancaster, "Elijah," p. 24. Lancaster himself offers an example of such work as he analyzes 1 Kgs 17-19 to be the prophetic support of Jehu's rebellion and how that affected the decline and fall of the Israelite monarchy.

prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole.¹

At the same time a word of caution is exercised toward atomism. It is not unusual to discover a scholar laboring over the minutia of a unit of literature or even a single word. More emphasis must be given to a wholistic understanding of the text, whether narrative pericopes or books. Atomism and wholism must work together.

Wholistic Approach

Pastors and teachers often pay lip-service to the need for understanding the context of an entire book but often they exegete and expound passages without linking them to the author's total, overall purpose for writing. In this day when editorial intervention is taken at face value by many, the work of the author is seldom mentioned. Instead, a multiplicity of authors is assumed. But if inspiration and divine control of the human pen are believed, then greater emphasis should be placed upon the original writer's manipulation of his book. So "to banish the author as the determiner of meaning (is) to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation."²

¹Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," p. 8.

²E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Validity in Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University, 1967), p. 14.

Perhaps one of the leading villains in neglecting a whole Bible book as a unit has been the use by publishers of a chapter and verse classification of our modern English Bibles. Standing boldly upon the pages, Arabic numerals coax the interpreter into chopping the living book into scattered fragments, dealing, then, not with the whole but the parts. Even congregations steadily fed with exegetical, expositional teaching can be strangers to the life throb of Bible books "because they have never seen the drama through from beginning to end."¹

Teaching upon books of Scripture is imperative. In fact, all messages or lessons must be based upon the larger perspective. The discipline of exegeting a book verse by verse must be willing to submit constantly to the Biblical book as a whole. Anything less than this is misrepresenting God's revelatory process.

Initiating such a process, as has been restated here many times,² must be based on the writer's purpose for penning his work. Some have touched on the solution but faltered along the way. Stevenson advocates what he calls one "cardinal idea" (each book proposes one).³ However, he

¹Dwight E. Stevenson, Preaching on the Books of the Old Testament (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. ix.

²See above on "The Author of Narrative."

³Ibid., p. x.

defeats his own sound suggestion by identifying any number of outlines or main themes that could be taught. If the book has purpose, these themes and outlines ought to identify with the single thrust of the author.

David Clines takes this step even farther, declaring the whole Pentateuch to have a theme! Though he believes the theme to be a statement which best "accounts for the content, structure and development of the work," Clines finds himself at odds with belief in the author's intention.¹ Moreover, he claims that the author's theme must be decided by a trial and error observation of data. But Clines admits it is both "possible and probable that a close proximity can be approached (with regards to the author's purpose) especially with textual markers and indicators."²

Such a thesis is close to our own. A common denominator in a passage around which the structure revolves is a necessity. Yet, another step is needed. There is an inseparable link between theology and literature in narrative. As Alter insists, there must be "a complete infusion of literary art with theological, moral, or historiosophical vision."³

¹Clines, Theme of the Pentateuch, pp. 19, 21.

²Ibid., p. 21.

³Alter, Art of Biblical Narrative, p. 19.

For Christians, bridging this gap (our world from that of the Bible) requires also seeking the theological meaning of the text. To know of journeys, covenants, battles, apostles, laws and letters of the past is not enough.¹

So a theological purpose of the author is the goal of understanding "wholism." A simple methodology may then be employed: (1) read through the text in English to consolidate the thought process of the author. Repeat this as many times as necessary to erect a provisional purpose statement; (2) evaluate the statement by observing and interpreting the parts, such as the author's special use of words and concepts in the original language; for "the whole idea which the author desires to communicate guides his choice of the parts";² (3) during the study of the parts of a passage constant watch for the common denominator is needed. An interrelationship between sections of narrative and their themes' relationship to the whole is imperative. The writer's overall purpose in collecting material for history or narrative depends on the selection of episodes and how to arrange them; (4) restate the common idea into one purpose statement; (5) a redefining procedure, during which time

¹J. Julius Scott, "Some Problems in Hermeneutics for Contemporary Evangelicals," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 22 (1979):70.

²Tracy L. Howard, "The Author's Intention as a Crucial Factor in Interpreting Scripture; An Introduction," Baptist Reformation Review 10 (1981):26.

synthetic/analytic studies are being used, makes clear the theological purpose statement.¹

Thus a suggestion for teaching can be applied. Before launching out into a book study, expositionally treating each successive section, a message on the whole book would enable the people to get "the big picture" before taking up their magnifying glass for specific studies. Then teaching of whole sections within a book before teaching them part by part would offer further help. For example, Samuel as a whole should be taught on one occasion followed by the next pericope (i.e., chapters 1-8 dealing with Samuel) always relating the section themes to the one theological view of the book. In this way, even if a verse by verse approach is kept by the expositor, each minute part will be inexorably connected to the whole.

¹See here also Robinson's "big idea," Biblical Preaching, pp. 13ff. Kaiser's approach approximates and overlaps the one offered by this paper. His proposed approach to narrative material is: (1) contextually limited focusing on the sequence and arrangement of a book; (2) syntactically developed within the small parts of a passage; (3) theologically oriented with antecedent doctrine assume as a foundation; and (4) applicationally "composed of timeless principles drawn solely from the Biblical author's single truth-intention." Kaiser, Exegetical Theology, p. 209.

CHAPTER II

A MODEL OF TEACHING NARRATIVE MATERIAL FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

A proposal concerning an approach to Scripture, no matter how legitimate it may look on paper, is worthless without an example of its use. Since this pursuit deals with a great expanse of Biblical literature, namely narrative, a difficult unit has been chosen. What is the reason for this? If the methodology can be shown adequate here, its application elsewhere may be accepted more readily.

Numbers has not been the favorite preaching book of pastor-teachers down through the centuries nor is it likely to become so! Its seeming lack of theme, organized structure and understandable theology has caused its exclusion from teaching in the church. But Moses' fourth book was included in the canon, therefore it is authoritative for use in today's pulpits.

Specifically, chapters 11 and 12 begin the narrative stories in Numbers, succeeding the historical records of the first ten. Often these units have been analyzed for their information of Israelite prophecy. But as shall be shown, the author places little emphasis on that subject. The

purpose of Numbers will cast necessary light on the pericope in question.

The Arrangement of Numbers

Most of the scholarly world is in an uproar over the sequence of sections in Numbers. Barachman quips, "How law and history came to be mingled as they are in this book we may never know."¹ Noth dryly adds, "There can be no question of the unity of the book of Numbers, nor of its originating from the hand of a single author. This is already clear from the confusion and lack of order in its contents."² The literary unity of the book is recognized as one of the most difficult to understand as Hallo points out:

A literary assessment of the book . . . is extraordinarily difficult. Numbers lacks the sweep and grandeur of Genesis, the theological significance of Exodus, the legislative consistency of Leviticus, the literary unity of Deuteronomy. At first glance it hardly appears to be a "book" in its own right at all.³

Some attempt to clear the confusion by appealing to the editorial process. "Large narrative works now found in the Old Testament are agreed to be the result of literary activity, of men arranging and depositing in writing older

¹Barachman, "Preaching from Numbers," p. 68.

²Martin Noth, Numbers: A Commentary, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), p. 4.

³William W. Hallo, "Numbers and Ancient Near Eastern Literature," in The Torah: A Modern Commentary, by W. Gunther Plaut (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1979), p. xxi.

traditional materials adapted or edited to form such comprehensive works of the Tetrateuch. . . ."¹ But if Numbers was edited by men after Moses, why did they "deposit" the material in such an uncohesive, illogical form? Editorial work does not solve the problem.

Cassuto offers a good suggestion based on the association of words or phrases. Mnemonic devices were contrived, he believes, to link one section of writing to another.² He notes, for instance, that the section concerning the unfaithful wife is linked to that of the Nazarite. Numbers 5:18 contains the command, רָאשׁ הָאִשָּׁה וּפְרָעָאָה ("and he will loosen the hair of her head") while 6:5 reads, רָאשׁוֹ גָדֹל פָּרַע שְׂעָרָה ("he must let the hair of his head grow long"). Similarly, the section of vows (30:2-17) follows that of the tabernacle's feast because, as Cassuto puts it, the latter section finishes with לְבַד מִנְדְּרֵיכֶם ("in addition to your vows," 29:39). But his application is not carried over through the whole book.

As far as a division of the book itself, most all commentators hold to the traditional view of geography providing the structural indicators. The usual pattern is:

¹Gordon J. Wenham, Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Leicester and Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1981), p. 43.

²U. Cassuto, "The Sequence and Arrangement of the Biblical Sections," in Biblical and Oriental Studies, volume 1: Bible (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973), pp. 1-4.

Israel in Sinai (Num 1-12); Israel in Kadesh (13-20); and Israel on the plains of Moab (21-36).¹ Such an arrangement only lends itself to pedantic conjecture based on the outlining mentality of Western minds. Even then the divisions between sections are ambiguous.² Disagreement

confirms the impression that there are no clear indicators within the text of how the editors wished to divide the material at this juncture. For this reason, although geographical features are significant, their importance in establishing a structure should not be exaggerated.³

At this point one is liable to throw up his hands in disgust and choose another book from which to teach! Is the arrangement of the material recoverable? One stumbling-block yet stands in the way of the interpreter. This long quotation from Harrison is necessary to elucidate the matter:

While the sections could possibly be interpreted as having been assembled rather haphazardly in contrast to occidental methods and standards, it remains true that they were collected in a fashion that was neither accidental nor incongruous as far as the original compiler was concerned. . . . The needs of an oriental people were the primary consideration. . . . It should be

¹For example, see Wenham, Numbers, p. 16. Wenham does, however, link the action of the book to the two preceding and one following--a different twist.

²The separation of the last two geographical boundaries is contested by Noth who thinks 20:13 is the dividing line, de Vaux who believes it to be 22:1, and Gray who opts for 21:9. Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 195.

³Ibid.

remembered that ancient scribes generally did not distinguish between cultic, judicial, social and moral enactments as carefully as their modern counterparts, which probably goes far towards accounting for the fact that the connection between apparently unrelated sections of a book such as Numbers was more obvious to the people for whom the work was intended than for readers in a different day and age.¹

The hermeneutical wisdom of that statement goes without saying. Yet beyond this, if twentieth century teachers are responsible for even Numbers, how shall it be elucidated and applied to listening ears? There must be a link to tie all those "loose ends" together.

The Purpose of Numbers

The enigma of Numbers continues in the realm of its purpose. But the arrangement of its parts will never be understood without the discernment of the whole. Still, many have been baffled.

Barachman suggests a book approach but then concedes defeat in organizing the author's purpose and elects rather to pick up gems of truth out of what looks to be "dreary wastes."² All manner of commentators have reached much the same conclusion. Numbers was called by Noth "collections of very varied material with little inner cohesion"³ and

¹R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 619, 622.

²Barachman, "Preaching from Numbers," p. 68.

³Noth, Numbers, p. 2.

further "the least coherent of all the Torah books"¹ by LeVine. Holzinger even claims, "The book as a whole is decidedly not a delightful literary achievement."²

Snaith joins the rank of those who accept a basic geographic breakdown of the chapters.³ Such an emphasis is seconded by Gray who believes Numbers "possesses no unity of subject . . . and may be an appendix to the books of Exodus and Leviticus."⁴ Decidedly against any structural plan at all stands Dentan. "Since the book has no real unity and was not composed in accordance with any logical predetermined plan, whatever outline may be imposed upon it will have to be recognized as largely subjective and arbitrary."⁵

But even a light perusal of Numbers yields rich, purposeful results. Whole blocks of material indicate a

¹B. A. LeVine, "Numbers, Book of," in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, supplementary volume (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 634.

²As cited by Clines, Theme, p. 86.

³N. H. Snaith, ed., Leviticus and Numbers, new ed., The Century Bible (London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1967), p. 4.

⁴George Buchanan Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers, the International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1920), p. xxiii.

⁵R. C. Dentan, "Numbers, Book of," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, volume 3, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 567.

march toward the land. Numbers 1:1-10:10 recites endless detail and unusual law in preparation for the movement from Sinai. From the cloud's ascent in 10:11 to the chastisement of Midian in chapter 25, a combination of narratives and laws anticipate the crossing of Jordan, even through the death of a generation (15:2). And the final chapters of the book find Israel anxiously waiting on trans-Jordan straining to see the hill country of Judea over the wilderness mounts.

The ארץ is the subject of quite a few conversations. Moses encourages even a foreigner to join the caravan which was "setting out for the place about which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you'" (10:29). Before and after the spy mission, the land is continually promised (13:1; 14:7f., 12, 16, 22ff., 30f., 40, 42f.). After the self-imposed mission ends in failure (14:39-45) Yahweh repeatedly, albeit in a law code, guarantees the final goal of Canaan to be a surety (15:2, 18). ארץ was frequently a cause of argument (16:12ff.) and a prize withheld for disobedience (18:20; 20:12, 24).¹

A reminder of what Israel left behind, namely Egypt, is mentioned almost as a lowly second to Canaan (1:1; 3:13; 8:17; 9:1; 11:18-20; 14:13; 15:40). The foreign lands of Moab and Ammon are apportioned by the surging masses (21:24, 31, 35) while Edom is promised in the future (25:18). And

¹It is interesting that the only time Moses is shown sinning is when it relates to the punishment about not entering the land.

from chapter 26 on, the overriding theme is inheritance (26:53; 32:5, 32f.; 33:5f., 54; 34:2, 13, 17, etc.).

A few commentators have come to a similar conclusion: Numbers is concerned about ארץ. "Numbers focuses on the land of promise and Israel's journey towards it. . . . The whole book of Numbers looks forward to the occupation."¹ Ridderbos concedes, "All the laws and regulations have as their object that Israel should be prepared to live in Canaan. . . ."² And Clines, the greatest advocate of the land theme, says, "Numbers establishes from its very beginning the thematic element of the land as the end to which everything drives, and its matter and movement are consistently oriented toward that goal."³

Yet there is another thread that seems to run quite regularly through the book's major sections--that of leadership. The thrust of the census in chapters one and two is Israel's army, counted on to lead the people into the land, accompanied by the oft repeated word מְשִׁיחַ ("leader"). So

¹Wenham, Numbers, pp. 39, 43.

²N. H. Ridderbos, "Numbers, Book of," in The New Bible Dictionary, ed. by J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 900.

³Clines, Theme, p. 87. This author's purpose for Numbers was developed before reading Mr. Cline's good work where he too noticed the covenant relationship with emphasis on the land in Numbers. This is an extension of the Pentateuch theme, based on Gen 12:1-3, which promises land, seed, and blessing for Abraham's nation.

too was the religious authority mustered in those following chapters (3 and 4). The camp, the dwelling place of Israel's "commander-in-chief," Yahweh, had to be cleansed for the troop to move with God's help (Num 5).¹ Nazarites, spiritual heads in God's eyes, are explained in chapter 6. Offerings to Yahweh in Numbers 7 are lifted up by הנשאים. Supernatural elements of direction (9:15-23) and human instruments were both essential in the movement process leading the people. Camp divisions and foreign "eyes" round out the elements of leadership (10:11-34) in the first pericope.

Chapters 11-25 provide an almost non-stop rebellion against the status quo authority--Moses and Yahweh. Time and again the voices of העם cry out in objection to them. Even foreign powers attempt to stop the irresistible movement of Israel (Num 21-25). But after the complaining and forty years² was completed Joshua succeeds Moses (27:12-23) to finish the job--leading the people into Canaan.

So the flow of the Pentateuch progressed purposefully. Genesis reminded the Israelites of their "roots," how they were chosen and preserved by God to be His unique

¹Notice also the anticipation of grain and oil (5:15, 18, 25, 26) and wine, grapes, and raisins in chapter six (vv. 3, 4, 15)--a look toward the land.

²Notice the historiography of the book. Little time is given to address the "wilderness wandering"--an obvious exclusion from the author's text because the emphasis is on movement toward the land.

theocratic nation. Exodus demonstrated God's covenant loyalty by redeeming His people. Leviticus emphasized the theme of holiness because Israel was to be "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Thus, this writer's purpose of Numbers follows: "to enumerate the records, laws and events that anticipated the promised fulfillment of the 'landedness' for the covenant people of God while laying the foundation of both human and Divine leadership for the journey and the future government of Israel."

This was not simply a sequential record of the wilderness journey. Numbers "advances significant theological questions."¹ Perhaps it was for those reasons Ellis' comment is so insightful.

The reader may be puzzled by the mixture of legislative and historical matter found in the book, but if he recollects that most biblical works were written primarily to teach (without detriment, however, to their basic historical value), he will look beyond the numbers tabulated, the laws listed, and the episodes narrated, to the teaching of the author. The cut and dried numbers, the divisions of duties, taxes, and allotments of land, plus the emphasis given in the narrative section (ch. 10-22) to the establishment of a hierarchy of authoritative leaders, will convince the reader that the author was intent in his own way on teaching the Israelites the necessity of being a closely knit community, subject to the authority of its God-given leaders.²

¹J. Kenneth Kuntz, The People of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Old Testament Literature, History and Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 54.

²Peter F. Ellis, The Men and the Message of the Old Testament (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1963), p. 41.

Numbers 11 and 12

So how does this section of narrative relate to the book's purpose as a whole? Often these chapters are chosen to teach something about Israel's prophetic base. יִחְנֹבֵאוּ ("they prophesied") is quite often taken to mean "ecstasy." The only one to do any detailed work on Numbers 11 and 12 was David Jobling; but his methodology reflects some of the structural weaknesses of Greimas, et al. and produced fragmentary results.¹

Notice the evidence, however, for a land/leadership linkage in authorial intent. The section is broken into three separate incidents: 11:1-3;² 4-35 and 12:1-16. At the end of each of these a geographical location is named (Taberah, 11:3, Kibroth Hattaavah, 11:35, Hazeroth, 11:35; 12:16 and the Desert of Paran, 12:16).³ The camp was moving, its destination was ahead.

Then, seemingly two incidental events are recorded. First, the judgment for loathing quail was brought by God.⁴

¹David Jobling, The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Three Structural Analyses in the Old Testament, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 7 (Sheffield, JSOT, 1978), pp. 27-62.

²The first three verses are broken from the rest by means of the waw disjunctive וַאֲחֵפֶסֶת.

³The first and last names are not listed in Israel's "diary" (Num 33:16-18).

⁴An interesting word play is repetitious in these chapters using אָכַל. It is used both for consuming food and retribution of God by consuming the camp (11:1) and Miriam's

If Yahweh had kept His promise of punishing Israel for a whole month (11:20), a great time loss would result in the progress toward **הארץ**. Yet God reversed Himself by dealing a blow in subtraction of life (11:33, 34) rather than sacrificing the camp movement.

Again, in chapter 12, punishment is meted out against Miriam (vv. 10-15). With such a leprous condition, the prophetess' stay outside of the camp should have been two weeks (Lev 13:1-8) but God overruled His own command and shortened the sentence to seven days (12:14, 15). As it was, the delay cost Israel time in reaching their destination. But the point is this: those details were included in the story because they had to do with the people reaching the land.

Although Canaan is the goal, rejection and recognition of authority is the central theme of these chapters. The people reject God's leadership by complaining (11:1). But when judgment falls, Israel **שָׁעַק** ("cries out") to Moses, their leader.

Another incident follows that causes Moses to throw up his hands and Yahweh to respond with sympathetic help.

flesh (12:12). See also 11:5, 13, 14, 18 (5), 19, and 21. Also note perhaps a structural link between the stories of leadership and quail marked by the term **רוּחַ** in 11:17, 25 (2), 26, 29 with 11:31. Another connection for the whole narrative section (Num 11-14) may be the "different **רוּחַ**" of Caleb (14:24) with the **רוּחַ** here. Also Caleb and Joshua are singled out from a group as are Medad and Eldad--perhaps an authorial device.

Herein lies a difficult account concerning prophecy. Seventy זקנים were to be recruited from among the people based upon their leadership and respect.¹ Then Yahweh promised, "I will take from the Spirit which is upon them" (11:17, cf. v. 25). With that they ויחנבאו.

Now the critics, based upon a number of arguments not directly observed from this section of Scripture, step in at this point and identify the scene as a prophetic, ecstatic experience. To them the seventy were wildly flailing their bodies about the camp in conjunction with revealing some type of revelation from or petitions to Yahweh.² Engnell consolidates the position, "the phrases 'to be seized by Yahweh's Spirit' or 'hand' . . . reflect the ecstatic experience."³

Of course, ANE parallels are cited to conclude automatically that Israel must have had a similar mode of prophecy. Balaam, in Numbers 24, is often cited as proof. Lindblom is convinced that since "we are in possession of literary documents which gave evidence of the existence of

¹Were these the same elders of Exod 24:1 that visited Mt. Sinai with Moses? And what differences of duty existed between them and their counterparts in Exod 18:21, 25?

²Note Robinson's description of such a wild scene based wholly on conjecture in his Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel, The Studies in Theology Series (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1950), p. 31.

³Ivan Engnell, "Prophets and Prophetism in the Old Testament," in A Rigid Scrutiny (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1969), p. 146.

such prophets in different parts of the Ancient Near East."¹
Israel is included by association.

Comparative religion experts further state that the Numbers 11 incident is anachronistic anyway. Since Israel was dependent upon the Canaanites for their prophetic modes, surely this section ascribed to Moses was added later.²

נבא and its etymology, however, are the ecstasy advocates' best hope. Though controversy rages, some contend the denominative verb is from a Hebrew root meaning to "bubble up," "boil forth," thus, "to pour forth words, like those who speak with fervor of mind."³ From this basis, then, comes the view that Hebrew prophets (i.e., Num 11) were raving madmen when dominated by Yahweh's spirit.

Such a stance is tenuous at best and impossible at worst. Etymologically נבא is obscure and undeterminable.

¹J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), p. 57. Such an incident involving an Egyptian is often cited--in this case by R. B. Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 49-50.

²Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, volume 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 99. The view is more clearly stated, "The Hebrews were deeply influenced by the Canaanite religion having taken over their form of worship, temples and clergy." Alfred Halidar, Associations of Cult Prophets Among the Ancient Semites (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wikells Boktryckeri AB, 1945), p. 92. See also Johs Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, volume 3, reprint (Copenhagen: Branner og Korh, 1973), p. 111.

³Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, s.v., "נבא," by Leonard J. Coppes, pp. 544-45.

Albright's view that the term comes from the Akkadian "to call or announce" in the passive sense of one called by God is well accepted by most.¹ And the usage in this context nowhere attempts to give the impression that ecstasy is taking place at all.

Moreover, the text explicitly points out that *יהוה ויאצל מן הרוח . . . ויתן על שבעים*. This was divine direction over against any artificially induced emotional state. There was a direct distinction apart from any contrived emotional state. The seventy did not stimulate themselves unnaturally (as is reminiscent of the ostentatious exhibition recorded in Scripture--1 Kgs 18).

It follows, then, that for the comparative religion approach, what was true in one culture has to be true for a geographically close counterpart, is not necessary. In fact, it is harmful to the Biblical sources. If Canaanite material is taken at face value, so should Israel's history recorded in the Bible.² No records can be cited which prove a Hebrew behaved as a mantic prophet.

¹Though Freeman's thinking that נבא is from an unknown Semitic root is also favorable. See An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets (Chicago: Moody, 1968), pp. 37-39.

²Robert Wilson reminds the users of comparative material that there are certain guidelines to follow when comparing with the Biblical text. Among them, "the interpreter must allow the biblical text itself to be the controlling factor in the exegetical process." Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), pp. 15-16.

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 13 and 18 (not to mention Lev 19:26, 31 and 20:6, 27!) specifically made a clear distinction between Hebrew prophecy and the practices of their ungodly neighbors. Israel was constantly warned not to succumb to the pagan influences generated throughout the Near East. Balaam can be counted among these ranks. Israel's prophets were unique and independent from the dominant force of other cultures' ecstasy.

The Spirit, so often alluded to as some supernatural power by proponents of ecstasy,¹ was God's. The identifying pronominal suffix on וְיָהוָה in v. 29 indicates Yahweh was in charge.

This is verified by the fact that God wanted the seventy to assist Moses in official leadership roles. Such functions prohibited ecstatic display. Isbell insists this scenario meant anything but ecstasy saying, "In their function as administrative officials there would have been a premium placed upon sobriety of judgment and clear communication with the populace, which are the exact opposite of ecstatic frenzy."²

¹Lindblom insists, "The spirit is always substantial dynamic, a force emanating from Yahweh; the spirit is always sent by Yahweh and runs Yahweh's errands." Prophecy, p. 57.

²Charles Isbell, "Origins of Prophetic Frenzy and Ecstatic Utterance in the Old Testament World," Wesley Theological Journal 11 (1976):70.

Other major difficulties loom large if prophecy equals ecstasy in Israel: (1) the denial of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch,¹ (2) undermining of Scripture would result if the Word is only a by-product of babbling men and (3) a question mark is placed over the divine origin of the Scriptures.

Petersen concludes, after considerable deliberation, "Ecstasy can hardly be an essential or even regular feature of Israelite prophetic performance."² Another contemporary voice concurs, "I conclude that possession trance is not an element of Israelite prophecy, and figures in a history of Israelite prophecy only marginally in certain discussions. . . ."³ There is little evidence ecstasy in Numbers 11 much less Israelite prophecy as a whole ever existed.⁴

¹See Lindblom, Prophecy, pp. 100-2.

²David L. Petersen, The Roles of Israel's Prophets, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 17 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), p. 30.

³Simon B. Parker, "Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel," Vetus Testamentum 28 (1978):285. Cf. also Isbell's conclusions, "Origins," pp. 74-75 and H. H. Rowley, "The Nature of Old Testament Prophecy in the Light of Recent Study," in The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament, second ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 95-134.

⁴In an honest attempt to answer the question "what were the seventy specifically doing anyway?", the late Leon Wood submitted a proposed understanding of וִיחַנְבְּאוּ (v. 25). First Chronicles records the use of נָבֵא verbally but with a different context. David's singers are said to have

One thing is certain, the context points to the purpose of the prophesying though not specifically to the action that took place among the seventy. Emphasis ought to be laid on the confirmation of a divine appointment that God had promised Moses. These men were to act as aids to Moses, organizers and repeaters of Moses' instructions.¹ Whatever else is meant, "it is clear that prophecy is here functioning as an integral part of the Israelite social structure and that it serves to legitimate political offices."² They were appointed and sent by God to prophesy.³

Real difficulty comes to the interpreter when deciding the Spirit's role in Numbers 11. Certainly it can be said that the elders were brought under the control of God's Spirit (v. 29) to accomplish their task. For God to make

"prophesied, using the harp in thanking and praising the Lord" (25:3, cf. vv. 1 and 2). What is Wood's conclusion? The seventy elders in Numbers 11 were simply praising the Lord. Leon J. Wood, The Prophets of Israel (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 62-63.

¹Note the terms describing the men in v. 16--זקנים and שטריף. The former term denotes older men of a particular social class known by their beards with legal competence in the community. An aura of respect surrounds them. Translated "record keeper" or "official" שטר is better understood by its use in Joshua 1:10, 11 where those are called to lead and instruct. William Holladay, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 91, 367.

²Wilson, "Early," p. 12.

³Note this prerequisite to those God condemns in Jer 14:14; 23:32; 28:9 and 29:9.

someone His prophet is essentially giving that man or woman His Spirit.¹

This is the pinnacle verse of the story for a number of reasons: (1) Joshua believes Moses' leadership is in jeopardy; (2) Joshua, himself the next leader of Israel, is brought into the discussion here when he rarely appears anywhere else; and (3) Moses' response set the tone of the nation's need. He was not referring to נְבִיאִים in the classical sense but simply the state of the prophet--controlled by God's Spirit.²

Such enabling and empowerment was elsewhere known in the Pentateuch. Bezalel, architect of the tabernacle accoutrements, was "filled with the Spirit" for his work (Exod 31:3; 35:31). So as to wreak havoc for the king of Edom, Balaam was manipulated by the Spirit and told what to say (Num 24:2). And Joshua was blessed with the spirit of wisdom in Deut 34:9 (other frequent occurrences are described in Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; etc.). Overall it can be said that the Spirit's role in the Sinai on

¹Richard Averbeck, "Minor Prophets: O.T. 342." A syllabus taught at Grace Theological Seminary, January, 1982, p. 46.

²This observation has far reaching influence. Gen 6:3, Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17 and Gal 5:16 are all examples of this linkage between רוּחַ and בָּשָׂר. It is no surprise, vis-a-vis this discovery, that "flesh" (11:4, 18) is carried to the people via a רוּחַ (11:31).

that day of the quail was an authentication of the person's authority or message.¹

The obvious antithesis between *לוח* and *בשר* shows all too well the nation's problem, then. The unified narrative demonstrates the point of the story. It was a historical crisis in which Yahweh's instruction is challenged, and that bottlenecking in the person of Moses, in every sense Israel's leader. So the extensive discussions of "prophecy" and "Spirit" are related to the central analysis of structure in this passage.

Numbers 12 carries the leadership theme through another incident. When Miriam and Aaron complain about Moses' privileges and authority, God puts them in their place.

In the teaching of these sections, one must always remember to relate them to the author's purpose for both the book and this unit.

¹See Wilson's comments and the Spirit's work in "Prophecy and Ecstasy in Ancient Israel," p. 331. See also George Von Graningen, "The Sons of the Prophets," Vox Reformata 33 (1979):25.

CONCLUSION

An Application to Pulpits for Today

An abundance of narrative material exists in the Old Testament. Its sheer volume alone demands our attention. If the popular notion that Old Testament narrative is "the easiest to preach"¹ stands true, then why is this literature so neglected? Though Bible stories are the most well-known by the average congregation they are perhaps, the least understood.

Adopting the present methodology will best render the text while illuminating the listener's knowledge and perception of the neglected Old Testament narratives. The teacher should be warned, however, that "it takes skill to use narrative. And (one) will have to work hard to master this elusive craft."²

Whatever the unit of Scripture being handled its intention should be stated, communicating one essential truth in each message. The best way to accomplish this is with a "truth statement"--a capsulized, one sentence summary

¹Thompson, Biblical Preaching, p. 106.

²Ronald E. Sleeth, "The Future Shape of the Pulpit," Perkins Journal 30 (1977):40. Planning ahead in one's teaching schedule is assumed. Much time must be expended by this method over a number of weeks and months. Reading a book through 50 times is no mean feat but will exhibit a world of difference in understanding the flow of a Bible volume.

of that section's purpose which may then be integrated into the book's purpose. Thompson concurs, "The preacher-interpreter seeks the theological function or functions of each pericope to discover how God may want to use it in a preaching event."¹ And Fee has a word of practical assistance:

Try to discover what is plainly intended by the biblical author--this intention usually lies close to the surface and needs only a little insight into grammar or history to become visible. Very often it lies right on the surface and the expert misses it because he is too prone to dig first and look later. At this point the nonexpert has much to teach the expert.²

The most beneficial way of approaching narrative in a weekly teaching schedule, then, would be book studies.³ The basic idea is to form the logical units of thought in order. Thus, the entire book ought to be taught in one message.⁴ The first section of a book is next instructed

¹Thompson, Biblical Preaching, p. 113.

²Fee, "Genre of New Testament," pp. 126-27.

³Though others are not ruled out entirely (biographical, thematic, etc.) the proposed method lends itself best to this type of instruction. In research, one must work both from the top and from the bottom--as one works from the bottom, the larger structure is understood and conversely the larger structure gives significance to the smaller parts. But again, the purpose is for people to understand the whole then the parts.

⁴Selection of texts that seem to set forth the central message of a book should not be a variation of this procedure. On this suggestion see Barachman, "Preaching from Numbers," p. 57. One may wish to begin by teaching the whole Bible in one message, followed by the Old Testament in another and finally its own distinct groups separately (i.e.,

separately. A breakdown of that section into paragraphs or legitimate units of the author's thought may then be examined. After one section has been completed the one following is to be handled in the same fashion. Repeated, periodic review of the "bird's-eye view" of the book is essential to demonstrate the progression of movement, keeping the people in touch with the original purpose for writing.

The following schematic provides an illustration:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Purpose/Intention</u>
1	Genesis	To remind Israel as a nation about mankind's roots, its need for redemption, the God who they serve, the covenant He made with them as a people and the line of descendants who were preserved to carry on the race.
2	Genesis 1-11	To record the beginning of creation, man, the fellowship between Creator and creature, the dramatic disobedience causing a fissure in that relationship and the effects of sin upon the human race.
3	Genesis 1-2:4	Etc. . . .

Such a methodology will provide the vehicle needed to "recreate the scene"¹ of narrative material. Probably

Pentateuch, History, Poetry, Wisdom and Prophets). Establish the Divine Author's theological purpose then those of His human penmen. Thus, even when teaching a paragraph of material, constant allusion to the overall theme of the Bible, then its testaments, can show the correlation of parts to the whole.

¹Historical details often become dry when simply listed categorically in the introduction to a message. Bringing the character and circumstances alive for the listener

for the first time people will begin to see how the "forest" of a Bible book relates to the "trees," of its various parts. In so doing, God's total program of the ages will unfold, no longer hidden from view. The teaching of Old Testament narrative is critical for just such an understanding.

The Impact of the Old Testament Narrative
Upon the New Testament

The implications for this methodology in the New Testament are exciting. All of the Gospels and Acts lend themselves to similar examination. For many years, Bible teachers have recognized the purposes of the Gospels. For instance, Matthew's theme revolves around a demonstration to the Jews that Jesus was Messiah.

As in Old Testament narrative, chronological order is not always followed. Details between the biographical writers of Christ do not always match either--an interesting correspondence to Kings and Chronicles. A variety of material incorporated together (i.e., short stories, record

means integrating people with events showing the emotion and pathos of a scene. The art of narrative novels has recently added a new dimension to this essential part of teaching. Gini Andrews' book, Esther: The Star and the Scepter (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), is by far the best example of the movement. One perusal of her bibliography tells the whole story! For a critical review of this "novel" technique, on the other hand, see John E. Skillen, "Trying to Add Flesh to Scripture's 'Bare Bones,'" Christianity Today 5 (March, 1982):32-33.

[a listing of disciples, etc.], law [i.e., Matt 6-9], genealogy [i.e., Matt 1], miracles, parables, discourses, etc.) is much the same technique as that of the first testament authors.

Even Acts is an important treatise in this regard. As historical narrative it has long been regarded as simply a chronicle of the early church. Fee has proposed a more tenable suggestion:

Although Luke's broader intent may be a moot point, it is a defensible hypothesis that he was trying to show how the church emerged as a chiefly Gentile, worldwide phenomenon from its origins as a Jerusalem-based, Judaism-oriented sect of Jewish believers, and that the Holy Spirit was ultimately responsible for this phenomenon.¹

Thus Cornelius' importance, and the narrative in which he appears (Acts 10), is that he was the first fruit of the evangelization of the Gentiles. Once again, as in the Old Testament, chronology and "important" historical events are subverted to theological goals.

The correlation of narrative material between the testaments should come as no surprise. The Old Testament Jews were the instruments of God for writing² in both halves of Scripture. The Old Testament was the body of revelation

¹Fee, "Genre of New Testament," p. 115. His sections in this article on the Gospels and Acts are excellent for understanding the literature of narrative.

²Admittedly Mark and Luke were both Gentiles; but each was tremendously influenced in his writing by Jews (Peter and Paul respectively).

on which the New would be written. New Testament authors relied extensively on the Old in every way--including its style of composition.

APPENDIX ONE

AN APPLICATIONAL APPROACH OF OLD TESTAMENT
MATERIAL FOR THE TWENTIETH
CENTURY BELIEVER

This methodology and its model of narrative are all well and good. But what then is the consequence for the believer today? The applicational value of the whole Bible for the Church is necessary to synchronize the approach of this paper and its practical worth for the expositor. Anything less than the practical emphasis of Scripture for the twentieth century believer leaves God's Word, and especially the Old Testament, dry and of no relevant value.

A common modus operandi for paralleling first testament truth with the present world has been typology. Major advocates, such as Arthur Pink,¹ have greatly influenced the minds of both teachers and "laymen" even to the present.

Typology understands much Old Testament revelation to prefigure suitable counterparts in the New Testament.²

¹Arthur W. Pink, The Interpretation of the Scriptures, reprint (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974).

²Many argue on the basis of progressive revelation that continual reciprocity between the testaments is an admissible hermeneutic. To overshadow the historical, contextual and cultural evidence of a passage with unwarranted, unverified (without New Testament support) typology, however, rapes the Old Testament text of its original meaning. One cannot, for example, take a cartload of Galatians and

A common example is Abraham's offering of Isaac in Genesis 22 as a prototype of Christ's sacrifice. Granted, the similarities are there and, to a degree, legitimate types can be verified based upon the New Testament evidence.

On the other hand, men are prone to extremes. "Hyper-typers" abound, labeling every warm body and inanimate object in their expository path as a direct correspondence to Christ, Pauline doctrine or apocalyptic events. Sad indeed is the case when Naomi is found to be "back-slidden" while Ruth performs as a "model" Christian! Unfortunately, this practice has not changed much since the turn of the century. "The fancy that to discover some type or prediction of Christ where nobody else had seen one before was to honour Christ and confound his enemies . . . has been more guilty of rendering sermons on the Old Testament artificial and unreal."¹

"dump" it in Genesis! Abraham was not allowed the privilege of revelational clarification found in the N.T.; so, his situation must be interpreted based on his epistemological reservoir--not Paul's. A far better handling of Genesis 22, aside from as well as including the above proposal, would direct the attention of sacrifice away from "types" and toward "illustrations." Instead of a direct correspondence, a foreshadowing or example may better explain the relationship of Old with New.

¹G. A. Smith as cited by Robert Davidson, "Biblical Classics, Part 5: George Adam Smith: Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament," Expository Times 90 (1979):102.

If insistence on understanding the Old Testament text in its own overall context is embraced then the application ought to be drawn directly from it. This course of action presses demands upon the interpreter: work in the original language discerning the author's emphasis, based on repetition of words or phrases, emphasis on key sentences and recognition of important ideas are necessary.

Two types of applicational procedures immediately present themselves in the Old Testament. One is imperatival truth. These direct injunctions are, for the most part, found in the law codes and prophetic oracles.

The second, utilized in narrative literature, is known as principle truth.¹ In the recording of theological history, the relationships between God and men and humans with each other are rehearsed, leaving behind timeless truths for all who read the Scripture. The teacher must base his application upon the author's purpose of the book and the particular section he is explaining. In other words, the practical highlights for daily living should be found in the exegesis of the text.²

¹The author first developed this thought while laboring over suggestions for correct Bible teaching. See Eckel, "Sensus Plenior." Walter Kaiser has now popularized this approach calling it "principalization" in his book Exegetical Theology, especially pp. 150-63.

²Virkler concurs, "In order for our application of the text (through principalization) to be valid, it must be firmly grounded in, and consistent with the author's

Numbers 12 may prove the pattern. Miriam and Aaron were jealous of Moses' leadership position. Attempting to cover the real reason for such an attitude they found an artificial one claiming Moses ineligible to direct Israel (12:1). Knowing his unwillingness to defend himself (12:3) God intervened (12:4) on Moses' behalf both lecturing the envious parties on Moses' unique role (12:6-8) and physically judging one to make the point clear (12:10). In light of the prevalent leadership theme, Numbers 12 demonstrates the lack of confidence together with the jealousy of another in an authority position. "Respecting God's Appointments" summarizes the theme of the passage and lays a foundation for vital principles to be driven home to the listeners. Of course applications must be sought out within the purview of the text though are not limited to the general theme. In other words, one interpretation is drawn from a passage though many applications may implicitly present themselves.

This approach¹ to Scripture recognizes contextual elements, structural arrangements and the author's purpose

intention." Henry A. Virkler, Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), p. 221.

¹A weakness of Kaiser's most excellent volume, Exegetical Theology, is that it fails to deal effectively with this practice of application. The few instances that demonstrate how application works (pp. 23, 131, 235), if followed to their logical extreme, could recommend that a commentary might well replace the preacher! Application is not simply drawing out the meaning of the text but correlating it with the needs of man today.

for writing. Principle truth (as imperatival truth) does justice to the original Old Testament narrative while bridging the gap between millenia. Truly "biblical preaching occurs when listeners are enabled to see how their world, like the biblical world, is addressed by the Word of God and are enabled to respond to that word."¹ Though customs and thought patterns change, man's relationship with His Creator and himself have not, allowing Scripture to teach lessons universal in scope.

¹Thompson, Biblical Preaching, p. 10.

APPENDIX TWO

A SHORT REVIEW OF HOMILETICS BOOKS

Until recently,¹ volumes on homiletics have done anything but help the pastor preach. Granted, much is said, and rightly so, on the study techniques, delivery and spiritual development (i.e., the Holy Spirit's control) of a message. But the mechanics of illuminating the "big idea" from a unit of Scripture is woefully neglected.

Take, for example, Merrill Unger's book, Principles of Expository Preaching. A definition of this "biblical" communication is explained as a method that expounds the Scriptures as a coherent and coordinated body of revealed truth.² Grammar, context, historical background and figurative language are claimed to be important in that process.³

¹John R. Stott in Between Two Worlds (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) zeroes in precisely where the "action is." Incorporated within approximately thirty pages (pp. 213-45), Stott defines, demonstrates and practices the hermeneutically correct procedure of choosing a text, discovering its original meaning and then message for today, isolating its dominant thought and arranging the sermon accordingly. Of course, Robinson's work, which has already been referred to herein, masterfully takes the reader from start to finish in building a biblical message.

²Merrill Unger, Principles of Expository Preaching, reprint (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), pp. 32-37.

³Ibid., pp. 118-85.

But nowhere is the frustrated preacher taught how to begin with the text and present his discovery in the sermon!

James Braga has the same problem.¹ For instance, the proposition in a message is "a simple declaration of the subject which the preacher proposes to discuss, develop, prove, or explain in the discourse."² The Scriptural base has vanished! Divisions of the sermon, then, "grow out of the proposition."³ Braga presents a theory of homiletical organization, attempting only afterwards to apply a Biblical text in demonstration of how the system works. The message must always be brought from the text, with the author's original intention, then directed to the twentieth-century audience. Fitting the Bible to a system, as we hope is unconsciously advocated by these two instructors, is simply putting the cart before the horse.

An outgrowth of this unfortunate practice is the dichotomy between a textual, topical, and expository sermon.⁴ A well done expose of this phenomenon has been contributed by Thomas Long and is included in its entirety

¹James Braga, How to Prepare Bible Messages, reprint (Portland: Multnomah, 1980).

²Ibid., p. 92 (emphasis mine).

³Ibid., p. 112.

⁴For example, see Braga's section on this, pp. 3-65.

below both for its critique and because Long's thesis is not readily available:

Needless to say, it will not be advantageous to give attention to homiletical "cookbooks" that do not provide a theoretical framework for the practices which they advocate. One examination of biblical preaching which contains much helpful advice but is almost devoid of any coherent theoretical statement about the nature of biblical preaching is James W. Cox's A Guide to Biblical Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976).

In addition, the traditional homiletical distinctions among the various "types" of sermon-text relationship, namely, expository, textual, and topical, are not found to be of much value. An altogether typical description of these types can be found in Clarence S. Roddey's article, "The Classification of Sermons" in Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), pp. 58-62. In Roddey's treatment a topical sermon is defined as a sermon in which "the topic of subject is the dominating factor in the sermon's development" (p. 58). In other words, the sermon obtains its theme from the text, but develops it without regard to the "outline" of the text. A textual sermon is one "in which both the topic and the divisions of development are derived from, and follow the order of the text" (p. 59), and an expository sermon is defined as a textual unit "more than four verses long" (p. 59).

The problem with these classifications is that they do not deed function to provide meaningful distinctions among various sermon types. At the outset, the line between an "expository" and a "textual" sermon is already blurred beyond recognition, since, by definition, they are the same kind of sermon except for the altogether arbitrary designation of the number of scriptural verses upon which the two types of sermons are based.

Moreover, the distinction at stake between a "topical" sermon and a "textual" sermon seems to be that the topical sermon gleans only its theme or motif from the text, while the textual sermon adopts not only the theme of the passage but also the order of development (the structure, in traditional homiletical thought) from the text. If it is so that a "topical" sermon gets the suggestion of a subject, and nothing more, from a scriptural text, then it cannot be said to bear any meaningful relationship is one of linguistic coincidence. If it is true, however, that to qualify as a topical sermon the meaning of the text must somehow influence the content of the sermon, then a "textual" sermon becomes

simply a series of brief topical sermons which the sermon crafter chooses to arrange according to the pattern he believes to be present in the text.

Another definition of a "topical" sermon (let us call the above-mentioned use of "topical" Topical I and this new usage Topical II) that has been advanced is that a Topical II sermon treats a biblical topic or idea, such as "justification," "righteousness," or "poverty," employing in the process a number of texts which bear upon this main topic. If, however, the sermon employs those texts in such a way as to be related to them in any meaningful way, then a Topical II sermon is functionally equivalent to a series of brief Topical I sermons.

All of this is only to say that whatever heuristic value these traditional designations may have, they do not serve to discriminate between functional text-sermon relationship. Indeed, Andrew Blackwood in The Preparation of Sermons (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), from which Roddey's definitions are derived, notes that "these labels fit poorly. Sometimes they overlap and cause confusion" (p. 101).¹

To conclude, all messages should be expository (interpreting the truth from a Bible unit based on sound hermeneutical practices), textual (explaining the main idea of a passage found in its context) and topical (relating all parts to the whole thrust of the text chosen). In short, Biblical teaching is letting the text speak for itself.

¹Long, "Narrative Structure," pp. 23-25, fn. 54.

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