The Christian Preacher as Poet: a Method for Exposition of Narrative Portions of Scripture Based on Aristotle's "Poetics".

William Sherman Phillips Jr
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER AS POET: A METHOD FOR EXPOSITION OF NARRATIVE PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE BASED ON ARISTOTLE’S "POETICS"

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col. Ph.D. 1986

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THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER AS POET:
A METHOD FOR EXPOSITION OF NARRATIVE PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE
BASED ON ARISTOTLE’S POETICS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of Speech Communication,
Theatre, and Communication Disorders

by
William S. Phillips, Jr.
B.A., Grand Canyon College, 1962
M.Div., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1965
M.A., Texas Christian University, 1967
May, 1986
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ABSTRACT

It is the thesis of this study that Aristotle's *Poetics* provides the basis for a method of exposition that is "distinctively appropriate" for preaching upon the narrative portions of Scripture. The relationship between Aristotelian poetics and narrative exposition of Scripture is examined in terms of the following two questions: (1) How does Aristotelian poetics meet the expository or interpretive need for narrative exposition of Scripture? (2) How does Aristotelian poetics meet the exhortatory or applicative need for narrative exposition of Scripture? The following arguments are made: (1) Aristotelian poetics provides the basis for a method of narrative exposition that unifies exposition and exhortation. Therefore, it overcomes the inherent difficulty of preaching by unifying exposition and exhortation. (2) Aristotelian poetics provides the basis for a method of narrative exposition that is distinctively appropriate to narrative. Therefore, it overcomes the inherent difficulty of narrative exposition by interpreting the form as well as the content. (3) Aristotelian poetics provides the basis for a method of narrative exposition that permits the additional development of ideas drawn from the narrative by the traditional art of homiletics. Therefore,
it continues to benefit from the strength of traditional homiletics.

Although exposition and exhortation are unified in the method proposed in this study, they are treated separately for clarity of presentation. Chapter two and three show how Aristotelian poetics meets the expository or interpretive need for narrative exposition of Scripture. Aristotle's theory of poetic imitation is defined and demonstrated to be distinctively appropriate for narrative exposition in medium, objects, and manner. Aristotle's theory of the poetic life-situation is defined and demonstrated to be distinctively appropriate for functioning as the bridge between the textual situation of the Scripture and the contemporary situation of the congregation. Chapter four shows how Aristotelian poetics meets the exhortatory or applicative need for narrative exposition of Scripture. Aristotle's theory of aesthetic pleasure is defined and demonstrated to be distinctively appropriate for involving the congregation in the emotional, logical, and ethical elements inherent in the narrative portions of Scripture. The concluding chapter presents a summary of the answers found for the problems proposed in the introduction.
Harry Emerson Fosdick in his article, "What is the Matter with Preaching," criticizes the expository method of preaching for its failure to establish any connection "with the real interests of the congregation." "Only the preacher," he says, "proceeds still upon the idea that folk come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites." The remedy, he concludes, is "the project method" of preaching whose aim is the solving of some "vital, important problem" facing the congregation.\(^1\)

Fosdick's point is well made. Preaching must deal with the every day problems of people. Yet, one might question the soundness of dispensing with the expository element in preaching in order to do this. Can preaching be expository and still "establish real contact with the thinking or practical interests" of the congregation?\(^2\)

Clyde E. Fant in his book, Preaching for Today, points out that tension between exposition and exhortation is a central theme in the history of preaching. Exposition is interpretation. Exhortation is application. Preachers primarily attracted to the textual situation emphasize exposition while those primarily attracted to the
contemporary situation emphasize exhortation. The temptation is to try to resolve this tension by eliminating one of the elements. But preaching requires both exposition and exhortation. Therefore, the essential problem for preaching is how exposition and exhortation are related. Preaching based upon narrative portions of Scripture, like preaching generally, often fails to resolve the relationship between exposition and exhortation. As John A. Broadus says, in one instance the preacher "makes haste to deduce from the narrative before him a subject, or certain doctrines or lessons, and proceeds to discuss these precisely as if he had drawn them from some verse in Romans or in the Psalms thus sinking the narrative, with all its charm, completely out of sight." And in another instance he "indulges in a vast amount of the often ridiculous thing called 'word painting,' overlaying the simple and beautiful Scripture-story with his elaborate descriptions, and showing no desire, or having no time, to give us any glimpse of the lessons which the narrative teaches." Preaching based upon narrative portions of Scripture, then, often fails because it eliminates exposition by ignoring the narrative and concentrating on thoughts drawn from the narrative. It also often fails because it eliminates exhortation by being preoccupied with elaborate descriptions that not only obscure the narrative but ignore the thoughts the narrative teaches. The result, in either instance, is not preaching because it
fails to include both exposition and exhortation. And the result in the one instance is not true exposition because it obscures the narrative text rather than interprets it. Consequently, contemporary Scriptural scholarship is giving renewed attention to the need Broadus expressed a generation ago when he said "that there ought to be such a method of preaching upon the narrative portions of Scripture as should be distinctively appropriate to narrative, while yet it is preaching."  

Although Broadus does not develop a method for preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture he does make some suggestions. The method of exposition should be determined by the portion of Scripture explained. Non-narrative portions of Scripture require one method of exposition while the narrative portions of Scripture require another method of exposition. Preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture must deal with the narrative in an appropriate manner by throwing "light on the Bible picture, so as to make us see it plainly and vividly." It must also deal with the "lessons" in an appropriate manner either from "point to point" or grouped at the end of the discourse.

Several things may be concluded from these suggestions. Dealing with the "lesson" is a problem of organization not of method. The traditional art of homiletics, based on rhetoric, is appropriate for dealing with the "lessons" drawn from the narrative. It is not "distinctively
appropriate" for dealing with the narrative form. The narrative form requires an art of representation.

The search for an appropriate art of representation invites consideration of mimesis. The concept of mimesis has "stubbornly haunted our civilization" and "has again become an object of heated controversy on both sides of the Atlantic." PrePlatonic mimesis referred to the revelation of reality. In Plato and Aristotle mimesis turned into the "imitation" or representation of reality. The term has had a long history of expansion and contraction of meaning. At times it signifies human participation in divine attributes and at other times it stands for more slavish imitation of models. A discussion of the long evolution of the term is beyond the scope of this dissertation. It is sufficient to note that after a period of Romantic Reaction when poets denigrated mimesis as stultifying routine, theorists such as Errida and Heidegger have turned mimesis into relevation again. The essential "problematic of mimesis in contemporary theory" is between its nonimitative or imitative nature.\(^5\)

Whatever the ramifications and resolutions of the present controversy it would seem that the classical imitative mimesis remains a useful place to begin to find a solution to the problem of preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture. The major classical theorists, Plato and Aristotle, exhibit fundamental differences. The term
"imitation" appears in almost every dialogue of Plato. It is never separated from "the full context of life." It always involves an examination of its relation to education, morals, statesmanship, nature, or being. On the other hand, in Aristotle's writings, the term "imitation" is limited almost entirely to the Poetics. And there the art of imitation itself is examined and not in its relation to education, morals, statesmanship, nature, or being. Therefore, Richard McKeon is able to summarize that, "Whereas for Plato the term 'imitation' may undergo an infinite series of gradations of meaning, developed in a series of analogies, for Aristotle the term is restricted definitely to a single literal meaning." Thus while Plato's concept is continually negotiated anew in his words, Aristotle offers a theory of restricted scope. It is more fruitful for this analysis because it offers a stable definition of the term accompanied by a set of analytic categories suitable for textual analysis.6

The subject of the Poetics is "the art of poetry, both generically and in its species." Both genus and species exist in Aristotle's theory. However, at first glance it looks as if the generic art disappears as soon as the analysis of some of its species, tragedy and epic, begins. Actually, it continues to exist and operate through the arts of tragedy and epic. The generic art common to the arts of tragedy and epic is imitation. This study seeks to
appropriate the generic art of imitation for a method of preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture. 7

It is the thesis of this study that Aristotle's Poetics provides the basis for a method that is "distinctively appropriate" for preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture. The relationship between Aristotelian poetics and preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture will be examined in terms of the following two questions: (1) How does Aristotelian poetics meet the expository or interpretive need for preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture? (2) How does Aristotelian poetics meet the exhortatory or applicative need for preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture? The following arguments will be made: (1) Aristotelian poetics provides a basis for a method of preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture that unifies exposition and exhortation. Therefore, it overcomes the inherent difficulty of preaching by unifying exposition and exhortation. (2) Aristotelian poetics provides a basis for a method of preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture that is distinctively appropriate to narrative. Therefore, it overcomes the inherent difficulty of preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture by interpreting the form as well as the content. (3) Aristotelian poetics provides a basis for a method of preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture that permits the additional development of ideas drawn from the narrative
by the traditional art of homiletics. Therefore, it continues to benefit from the strength of traditional homiletics.

Although exposition and exhortation are unified in the method proposed in this study, they will be treated separately for clarity of presentation. Chapters two and three will show how Aristotelian poetics meets the expository or interpretive need for preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture. Aristotle's theory of poetic imitation will be defined and demonstrated to be distinctively appropriate for preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture in medium, objects, and manner. Aristotle's theory of the poetic life-situation will be defined and demonstrated to be distinctively appropriate for functioning as the bridge between the textual situation of the Scripture and the contemporary situation of the congregation. Chapter four will show how Aristotelian poetics meets the exhortatory or applicative need for preaching upon narrative portions of Scripture. Aristotle's theory of aesthetic pleasure will be defined and demonstrated to be distinctively appropriate for involving the congregation in the emotional, logical, and ethical elements inherent in the narrative portion of Scripture. The concluding chapter will present a summary of the answers found for the problems proposed in the introduction.
Notes


2 Crocker, p. 28.


"Imitation" is the English term most often used to express the Aristotelian idea of the mimetic process characteristic of fine art. Other English terms such as "portray," "depict," "picture," and "reproduce" are sometimes used. Whatever the English term used in translation the basic idea is that of making a likeness of something by means of art. Imitation is artistic representation.1

The objective purpose of the poetic art is the artistic representation of a universal truth in its appropriate form. Aristotle's reference to "persons who, by conscious art or mere habit, imitate and represent various objects" reveals the nature of the imitative process in the realization of its objective purpose. The word translated "imitate" refers to an artificial likeness. This means it is a product of man rather than a product of nature. The word translated "represent" refers to the formation of a likeness from a model. The meaning of both words can be combined in the term artistic representation. Artistic representation is the human process of making a likeness of a personal perception of an external object. There are four basic
elements to this process: the person as observer; the object that is observed; the mental representation of the object that the observer forms in his mind; and the artistic representation of the object that the observer makes.

**The Person as Observer**

The imitative process may be practiced as a "conscious art or mere habit." By "conscious art" Aristotle means imitative activity done methodically with maximum awareness of method. By "mere habit" he means imitative activity done automatically with minimal awareness of method. This notion should be compared with the opening statements of the *Rhetoric* where Aristotle adds the possibility of accomplishing the imitative process at random. Thus the imitative process may be practiced randomly with the result by chance; habitually with the result by knack; or artistically with the result by method. Aristotle is interested in a method. He believes imitation may be practiced as an art. Therefore, the person as observer must be the person as artist.

**The Object Observed**

Each individual thing has an ideal form (εἴδος) towards which it tends. The end (τέλος) of each individual thing is the realization of its ideal form in accordance with its own essence (οὐσία) or nature (φύσις). However, the ideal form of each individual thing is presently imperfectly
manifested. 4

The objects of the imitative arts are the ideal forms of human life manifested through character, emotion, and action. These ideal forms are universals. These universals are not Plato's Ideas but true types of human character, emotion, and action. 5

The Mental Representation of the Object

The mental representation of the object (some typical form of human life) is received through the artist's senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing). Through the senses some typical form of human life stamps an impression of itself upon the artist's mind. From this mental representation (φάντασμα) the artist abstracts a mental conception (νόησις) of some typical form of human life. Fine art, then starts from a mental conception (νόησις) in an objective form (φάντασμα) of some typical form (εἴδος) of human life. 6

There are some things that should be noted. The typical forms of human life are not seen as abstract ideas, but in objective, sensory manifestations. Consequently, the artistic representation actually reflects some typical form (universal truth) of human life not as it is in itself, but as it appears to the artist's senses. It is an artistic resemblance of reality. It is an illusion. It is, however, not a deception. The illusion of the imitative arts "image forth the immanent idea which can not find adequate
expression under the forms of material existence."  

**The Artistic Representation of the Object**

The final element in the imitative process is the actual making (ποίησις) of the artistic representation. This "making" requires the impressing of the mental conception (in an objective form of some typical form of human life) upon some specific matter (ὕλη). The matter of poetics is language. An artistic representation then, is a typical representation of "human life - or character, emotion, action - under forms manifest to sense."  

A theory of narrative exposition (interpretation of narrative portions of Scripture) based on Aristotelian imitation will also be a kind of imitation. The theory will not be satisfied to simply state an idea. An idea must be translated into an image. For instance, the New International Version of the New Testament states (Matt. 14:24) that the disciple's boat was "buffeted" by the waves. The word so translated originally referred to the process of rubbing gold upon the Lydian stone to determine its purity. Thus, it meant a test. It came to mean a test by torture. By New Testament times the idea of testing disappeared entirely leaving merely the idea of torture. A better translation, then, to bring out this idea of torture is that of the New American Standard Bible that states the boat was "battered" by the waves. Although this is a more exact statement of the idea, it is still only a statement.
Narrative exposition requires the imitation of the idea of torture:

Only four disciples continue at the oars. Each pull of the oar is an agony of taut muscles screaming with weariness. Peter changes his grip on the tiller, hands trembling with cold and fatigue and fear. He knows they are losing the battle with the wind - this boat-battering, line-snapping, plank-splintering, oar-shattering wind. Very soon, now, the strength of the four at the oars will fail. Then the boat, swinging side-ways to the wind, will capsize. They will perish. The seven other disciples slump in sodden, unmoving heaps, seemingly oblivious to the icy water swirling waist deep in the boat around them, sloshing back and forth a tangle of clothing, fishing nets, and pieces of broken oar. They are spent. They did not stir the last time he called them to their turn at the oars. He pleaded, threatened, mocked and finally (something he had not done in awhile) cursed them - all to no avail.

So, now, there is only the wail of the wind and the faintly heard groans of the four as they bend their backs into each stroke of the oars. No longer is there any talk; no longer the muffled moans of sea-sickness; no longer the occasional screams of fright. Now, if blue lips move, they mumble prayers into the deafening wind. For hours, now, there has been only the wind and the water and the stars darting like fire-flies over-head and the battle, always the battle, the desperate battle to keep the bow into the wind.

And what a battle! Now the boat is flung up among the stars riding the crest of a wave in the shrieking wind. Now the boat is careening down the long slope of a wave. Now the boat is in the dark canyon between waves; waves higher than the wildly swinging masthead. Now the bow is buried and the dark water is cascading over them as their bruised and bloodied fingers, numb with cold, cling frantically to gunnel and thwart. Now after what seems a time interminable, the boat heaves up its bow, shuddering as it seeks to dispel the weight of the water, and climbs toward the night sky again and the crest of another wave.

For hours, this sequence has been repeated, countless times repeated in the battle to keep
the bow of the boat into the wind. And all this time he is straining at the tiller; they are toiling at the oars. This is all they can do. They haven't the strength to advance into the teeth of the gale and to run before the wind means to be smashed on the rocks of the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

This is an attempt to artistically represent the idea of torture upon the boat as well as the resultant torture upon the disciples in the boat. Aristotle's definition of imitation provides an understanding of how such a verbal image is created. Aristotle defines imitation on the basis of three distinguishing differences: the medium, the objects, and the manner of imitation.

The Medium

The sensory arts are distinguished from the poetic arts on the basis of their medium. The sensory arts of painting, sculpture, and interpretation (the art of vocal delivery including rhapsodes, reciters, actors, singers, and orators) use color, form, and voice as their media. The poetic arts of poetry, music, and dance use rhythm, language, and harmony as their media. The poetic arts, themselves, differ on the basis of their medium of imitation. Dancing imitates by means of rhythm alone. The music of the flute, the lyre, and the shepherd's pipe imitate by means of rhythm and harmony. Epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, and dithyrambic poetry (lyric poetry in honor of Dionysus) imitate by means of rhythm, harmony, and language.¹⁰

Poetry, itself, is defined in terms of its medium. It
is imitation by means of language alone. Music and metre
are more embellishments to the language. They are
incidental not essential to poetry. Any method of narrative
exposition, then, based upon poetic imitation requires only
prose language as its medium.\textsuperscript{11}

The Object

The object of imitation is "men in action." This
includes their character, emotion, and action. Character is
the moral element in man. It refers primarily to "permanent
disposition." It is revealed through the will in the "kind
of things a man chooses or avoids." The moral quality of
character is determined by the moral quality of the purpose
prompting the choice. In order to imitate character one
must know how different types of character are manifest in
physical actions. For instance, Aristotle says, a man's
rough and reckless character is shown in the fact that he
keeps walking along as he talks.\textsuperscript{12}

Narrative exposition based upon Aristotelian imitation
will also imitate character. For instance, the New American
Standard Bible states (Matt. 14:29-30) that Peter "walked on
the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he
became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying,
"Lord save me!" Here the object of imitation is cowardice.
This is the quality of character that climaxed Peter's
wave-walking experience:

Jesus and Peter stand face to face in the midst
of the gale-tossed sea while a boatload of gawking disciples look on. A smile of quiet amusement tugs at Jesus' mouth. Then Peter decides he will have a quick look around. All is in motion, constant, chaotic, dizzying motion: around him waves leaping; above him stars tumbling; beneath him water speeding. And his gaze, once off the face of Jesus, becomes rivetted upon these affects of the storm. Fear begins to grip him. He feels the water becoming liquid about his feet, his ankles, his legs. He shrieks with terror, "Lord, save me quick!" And immediately he feels the iron grip of a muscular hand upon his wrist as Jesus, in one quick motion, swings him up across His shoulders. He had come out of the boat walking boldly like a man, but he returns slung like a lamb upon the shoulders of Jesus.

This is an attempt to artistically represent the idea of cowardice that characterizes the climax of Peter's wave-walking experience.

Emotion refers to "all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgements." Emotion, then, is a temporary feeling, occurring at any given time, that may influence man's basic disposition so as to affect his moral choice. Emotion is also accompanied by pain or pleasure. In order to imitate emotion one must know how different types of emotion are manifest in physical activities. For instance, Aeschines describes Cratylus as "hissing with fury and shaking his fists" while Homer describes an old woman burying her face in her hands as she begins to cry. A true touch, says Aristotle, because "people beginning to cry do put their hands over their eyes."13

Narrative exposition based upon Aristotelian imitation will also imitate emotion. The New American Standard Bible
states (Matt. 14:26) that "when the disciples saw Him (Jesus) walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear." Here the object of imitation is the emotion of terror.

Peter, for some unexplainable reason, turns his head glancing over his shoulder along the boat's wake. And for one demented moment he thinks he sees a Figure standing upon the water in the wake of the boat. Frantically, he draws an arm across his face to clear the deceiving mist from his eyes. He looks again. The Figure is still there, only moving now, and coming closer. A blood curdling scream pierces the wind-shriek. (Only in retrospect can Peter claim the scream as his own). The scream startles the other disciples. They stir and turn and stare with Peter intently through spume and spray at the Figure of wind-whipped clothes and streaming hair. The Figure is indistinct sometimes, amid a waste of towering waves and lost, sometimes, in the shadows of racing storm-clouds but distinct, sometimes, poised upon the waves crest with stars dancing about Its head and shoulders. They watch the Figure drawing nearer over the water. It is upborn by the waves as they rise. It does not disappear as they fall. It is carried on, on toward the boat. Finally, the Figure draws to the boats' side. Now their terror finds a voice. They become a boat-load of berserk disciples crying "It is a ghost!"

This is an attempt to artistically represent the idea of terror reflected in the response of the disciples to the sight of the wave-walking Jesus.

Action is deliberate human activity. It has an inward and outward dimension. Character and thought comprise the inward dimension. They are the two natural causes of action in its outward dimension. Character, "the habitual, the unreflective, conditioned element in man," and thought, "the reflective, self-conscious" element in man, combine to
produce overt action. Action may be defined, then, as the activity of man's character and thought in its outward expression. In order to imitate actions one must try to see them with the "vividness of an eye-witness." This is the principle of visualization. It requires imagination. It results in appropriate actions and avoids inconsistencies. Next, one should act out "his story with the very gestures of his personages." By such acting one assumes the mood of the action to be described. This is important because, natural ability being equal, the one "who feels the emotions to be described (in physical action) will be the most convincing." This is the principle of identification. It goes beyond visualization. It does not put the actions before the poet. It puts the poet in the actions. It also requires imagination.  

Narrative exposition based upon Aristotelian imitation will also imitate action. For instance, the New American Standard Bible states (Matt. 14:22) that Jesus "made the disciples get into the boat, and go ahead of him to the other side." Here the objects of imitation are the actions implicit in this statement:

"Five loaves and two fish!" was the cry first heard from the front of the well-fed crowd. Then a murmur moved through the crowd like wind upon wheat, visible to the eye. And an irresistible impulse seized the crowd as it discovered the miracle of the multiplication of the loves and fish. "Jesus is King!" some bold someone shouted. It was picked up first by one then by another. "Jesus is King!" rose the ragged cry. It became the chant of the whole crowd, an
orderly crowd fast becoming a mob. Exulting, the disciples joined in the chant, envisioning the Jewish people rallying to Him; imagining the Jewish people revolting and sweeping through the Roman legions like a scythe through ripe grain.

At this point Jesus turned to the Twelve and ordered them to get into the boat and leave. But they resisted, resisted like a rank of Roman legionnaires braced for combat, defiantly standing, momentarily, with the mob. Jesus' eyes flashed (Peter would always remember). The command came again cutting like a knife-blade. Then the Twelve gave way before the sheer force of His personality. Yet, they were angry to be sent away at this moment, His moment of triumph.

When they shoved off from shore the wind was already freshening from the northwest with the smell of a storm in it. Then, he asked himself, "Is Jesus sending us into a storm?" But when they unfurled the sail and the wind filled it with a resounding "Boom," the question became, "Why is Jesus sending us into a storm?" And even as they set their course and the boat heeled over and the water went hissing out behind, and even as the blue water became gray beneath the deepening darkness of advancing stormclouds; and even as the wind increased and the waves became foam-crested; and even as the bouncing bow sent spray flying and each jolt became teeth-jarring; and even as they lowered the sail, then, lest it be shredded and manned the oars to keep the bow into the wind as the waves swelled to great gray mountains rivaling those on the shore, even then - especially then - the question persisted, "Why did Jesus send us into a storm?"

This is an attempt to artistically represent the actions implied in the statement of Scripture.

The object of imitation, then, is men in action which includes their character, emotion, and action. However, the objects of imitation differ on the basis of character. Imitations may be of men whose moral character is higher than that of real life; lower than that of real life; or, like that of real life. Narrative exposition will imitate
character that is true to life.  

The Manner

Poetic imitation (by means of language alone) takes one of two forms: drama or narration. In drama speech is actually represented by speech and action is actually represented by action. Through speech and action the characters "enact their own story and so reveal themselves." Indeed, drama presents people "living and moving before us." In narration, however, imitation is by suggestion. The characters do not enact their own story, they are described. By language alone narration suggests the reality of people "living and moving before us." The exposition of narrative portions of Scripture will, as the examples have already shown, be in narrative form.  

Narrative imitation, itself, takes one of two forms: The narrator may speak in his own person or assume a person other than his own. The first is based upon the example of the orators. The second is based upon the example of Homer. The difference is between saying, "The story is told of the time when Peter was walking upon the water" and "Peter was walking upon the water." True imitation in narrative form requires the narrator to speak through his characters not merely about them.  

Narrative exposition based upon Aristotelian imitation will also require the preacher to speak through his characters not merely about them. Usually one of the
persons mentioned in the passage of Scripture will become the one through whom the preacher will speak. Sometimes, however, a fictitious person may be used to present the desired perspective. For instance, a Jewish point of view might be desired in a sermon on the call of Levi the Publican (Matt. 9:9):

Suppose you are a Jew. You have momentarily halted on the outskirts of Capernaum where the city makes contact with Lake Ganasereth and the main highway sweeps down from Damascus westward to the Great Sea.

As you halt, resting before you continue on your way, your attention is fixed upon the custom house. A caravan of camels is just arriving - a long line of bobbing heads, and small tasseled tails, and vast, steep rumps and swaying, bulky loads dimly seen through a choking dust and a sudden scattering and cursing as caravan and custom house crowds collide.

As the din subsides and the dust settles a publican steps from the custom house. It is Levi - the publican that is disgustingly devoted to detail. Meticulous Levi he is contemptuously called. And you can already visualize the next scene. Sure enough, he demands that the master, the merchant of the caravan, unload his cargo and open it for inspection.

You see the merchant's face flush with anger. You see his hands open and close convulsively at his sides. Yet, he complies with the wishes of the publican. For behind the publican is the power of Herod and Herod represents the awesome power of Rome.

As the merchant snaps the command to the camel drivers to unload the cargo, you glance down toward the lake and see a small fishing boat, with patched sail and worn tiller being beached upon the sandy shore. The muscular fisherman at the tiller springs easily and lightly from the boat, strides up toward the custom house, spies Levi standing by the caravan, and comes over and asks the toll on his fish.

"Just a minute!" is the curt reply of the publican as he disappears into the custom house. However, he quickly reappears with a wooden writing tablet in his hand. Then he and the
fisherman walk down toward the boat. Upon arriving at the boat the publican, taking one of the fisherman's oars, pokes distastefully at the smelly fish. Then with a short, sharp exchange of words you see the rough calloused hand of the fisherman thrust several gleaming brass coins into the soft palm of the publican.

You continue to watch the routine of Levi. As you stand there, you become increasingly aware that you hate this publican. You hate him for his meticulousness. You hate him for his arrogance. But most of all, you hate him because he is a collaborator with the oppressors of his people. He is a traitor, a turncoat, an employee of those who have brazenly trampled the ideals of his nation in the dust....

This is an attempt to artistically represent the typical Jewish response to Levi the Publican. The narrator speaks through the consciousness of an anonymous Jewish bystander at the custom house. Fictitious or not, true imitation in narrative exposition requires the preacher to speak through his characters and not merely about them.

The application of Aristotle's theory of poetic imitation to the narrative exposition of a Scriptural action suggests these steps:

1. The selection of a Scriptural action for exposition.

For instance, the New American Standard Bible states (Matt. 14:29) that in the midst of a storm on the Sea of Galilee "Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus." The first of these three actions will be sufficient to illustrate the
method—Peter got out of the boat.

2. The interpretation (exegesis) of the Scriptural action.
The interpretation of a Scriptural action requires that it be interpreted lexically, syntactically, contextually, historically, geographically, and according to the analogy of Scripture. To interpret lexically one must know the original meaning of each word, its historical development, and its usage at the time of writing. To interpret syntactically one must know the grammatical principles of the language in which the document to be interpreted was first written. To interpret contextually one must know the trend of thought in the whole document and that surrounding the passage under consideration. To interpret historically one must know the cultural circumstances calling forth the writing. To interpret geographically one must know the physical setting of the passage. To interpret according to the analogy of Scripture one must use Scripture to understand Scripture.18

The disciples are in a violent storm on the northern part of the Sea of Galilee. An
opposing wind is driving their boat toward the eastern shore called the District of Gadara or Gerasa noted for its tombs. The depth of the sea here is 750 feet. The waves may be as high as 18 feet. Peter, the leader, is probably at the tiller barking orders to the others. 19

And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking upon the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. (Matt. 14:25-29)[NAS]

The words "got out of the boat" are, in the original language, literally, "got down away from the edge of the boat." The emphasis is upon the instant of separation from the boat. When this instant of separation occurred is suggested by the word "down." Peter stepped down to the surface of the water. It would seem, then, that he left the boat when it was lifted out of the water upon the crest of a wave. How he left the boat is suggested by the repetition (twice explicitly and once
implicitly) of the word "toward" (denoting a face to face relationship). Peter's request, Jesus' command, and Peter's subsequent walk all have the directional focus toward (face to face) Jesus. Peter got in trouble when he took his eyes off the face of Jesus. It would seem, then, that Peter would have to leave the boat in a way that enabled him to keep his eyes on the face of Jesus - sitting on the side of the boat with his feet hanging over the side. But the natural way for him to leave the boat would be to turn and slide on his stomach over the side until his feet touched something solid to stand on. In this position, however, he would not be able to see the face of Jesus. Possibly, he tried the more natural way first and then had to change his method of departure.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be confident! It is I! Don't be afraid." The two verbs translated, "Be confident" and "Don't be afraid" are present imperatives. The imperative is the mood of volition. In ordinary linguistic communication the primary appeal is from intellect to intellect, but in the imperative one will address another. When
the present imperative is used, it denotes continuous or repeated action. A prohibition in the present imperative demands that action in progress be stopped. The will of Jesus addresses the will of the disciples. They are to choose to stop exhibiting one kind of emotion and start exhibiting another. The disciples are in a continuous state of fear. They are commanded, immediately, to stop being afraid and to begin a continuous state of confidence. The source of this confidence is Jesus.20

Peter's character is reflected in his wave walking experience. One instant he is on top of a wave, daring beyond his companions; the next he is shrieking with terror, "Lord, save me!" It is a picture of an inconsistent character. It is a character torn between courage and cowardice. It would seem that Peter is a coward periodically made courageous by Jesus.21

3. The analysis of the Scriptural action in order to understand the character, thought, emotion, and action it contains.

First, any actions implicit in the Scriptural action (Peter got out of the boat)
are made explicit; and secondly, all the actions are defined in terms of character, thought, and emotion.

**Implied Actions**

a. Peter gives the tiller to another disciple.

b. He turns to slide on his stomach over the side of the boat.

c. He hesitates to push himself away from the boat.

d. He hangs on as a wave washes over him.

e. He climbs back into the boat.

f. He sits on the side of the boat.

g. He looks at Jesus.

h. He pushes himself away from the boat.

**Defined Actions**

a. Peter gives the tiller to another disciple.

   **Character:** Courage
   **Thought:** In obedience to my Lord's command I can come to Him upon the water.
   **Emotion:** Confidence

b. He turns to slide on his stomach over the side.

   **Character:** Courage
   **Thought:** How shall I get out of the
boat?

Emotion: Confidence

c. He hesitates to push himself away from the boat.

Character: Cowardice

Thought: I can't do this.

Emotion: Fear

d. He hangs on as a wave washes over him.

Character: Cowardice

Thought: I'm going to die!

Emotion: Terror

e. He climbs back in the boat.

Character: Cowardice

Thought: I've got to get back in the boat.

Emotion: Fear

f. He sits on the side of the boat.

Character: Cowardice

Thought: I can't leave the boat unless I can see my Lord.

Emotion: Fear

g. He looks at Jesus.

Character: Courage

Thought: My confidence is returning.

Emotion: Confidence

h. He pushes himself away from the boat.

Character: Courage
Thought: In obedience to my Lord's command I can come to Him upon the water.

Emotion: Confidence

4. The artistic representation of the Scriptural action.

Representation

Thrusting the tiller into the hands of another disciple, Peter prepares to leave the boat. It has to be done in an instant, just as the boat begins the slide down the long wave-slope and the stern is lifted free of the water. Gripping the gunnel with both hands he turns to slide upon his stomach over the side to the surface of the water. But just as the stern is lifted and his extended legs strike a wide arc in the air, he hesitates to push himself away from the boat. The boat plunges. A wave washes over him. He hangs on for dear life, then, and sputtering clammers back aboard realizing a problem he has not anticipated. He can not leave the boat unless his gaze is fixed upon Jesus; not unless he is looking upon His reassuring face.

So now he sits balancing precariously upon the side of the pitching boat. His hands grip the gunnel. He looks at Jesus. The stern lifts free upon the crest of a wave. His hands tighten their grip. Then, in an instant of utter abandon, he opens his hands and pushes himself free and falls to certain death, falls toward the sea-bottom 750 feet below, darker than a tomb in the Gaderene hills, eager to receive his body into the ooze of its cold, cavernous depths. But No! The water's surface is solid beneath his sandaled feet!

SUMMARY

Imitation is artistic representation. Aristotle defines poetic imitation on the basis of its medium, objects, and manner. Its medium is by means of language alone. Its objects are the character, emotion, and action of men. Its manner is in dramatic or narrative form by the
assumption of a character other than one's own. Poetic imitation appropriate for preaching upon the narrative portions of Scripture is artistic representation in narrative form of the true to life character, emotion, and action of men by means of prose language alone.
Notes


3 Aristotle, Rhetoric I. 1354(a) 1-2.

4 Butcher, p. 153, 155; See Aristotle, Physics II. 2. 194a28; Physics II. 8 199a17ff; Politics I. 2. 125b32; Metaphysics IV. 4. 1015a10; On the Parts of Animals. IV 10. 687a15.


6 Butcher, pp. 124-127, 157; See Aristotle, Metaphysics VI. 7. 1032a32; On the Parts of Animals I. 1. 640a31; Metaphysics VI 7. 1032b15.

7 Butcher, pp. 127-128, 161. For Plato's "doctrine of aesthetic semblance" see Republic X. 598b; Sophist, 264c-267a.

8 Butcher, pp. 137-138, 153, 157; See Aristotle,
Metaphysics VI. 7. 1032b15.


15 Aristotle, Poetics, trans. S. H. Butcher, II. 1448a 1-6; Else, pp. 68-82.
16 Aristotle, Poetics, trans. S. H. Butcher, III. 1448a 19-24; Butcher, p. 335; Charles Sears Baldwin, Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1959), pp. 143-144.

17 Aristotle, Rhetoric III. 16. 1416b16; Aristotle, Poetics XXIV. 1460a 5-11.


CHAPTER III.

NARRATIVE EXPOSITION OF A SCRIPTURAL LIFE-SITUATION

One part of Aristotle's definition of "imitation" needs to be expanded: the objects of imitation. So far, the objects of imitation have been isolated expressions of character, emotion, and action. Specifically, since character and emotion can only be imitated when they manifest themselves in actions, the objects of imitation have been isolated actions. However, the primary focus of imitation in the Poetics is not an isolated action, but a sequence of actions. This sequence of actions is also called an "action." The same Greek word is used for "action" in both senses. Life-situation is an appropriate translation of this Greek word as it is used in its more general meaning. The life-situation (a sequence of actions) is the primary object of imitation in the Poetics.¹

The poet imitates a life-situation by making a plot. The plot is made through the arrangement of the actions forming the life-situation. The arrangement of the actions forming a life-situation is upon the basis of "dramatic" principles. These dramatic principles seem to be the result of Aristotle's application of Plato's theory of organic unity to poetic imitation. Plato states his theory of
organic unity in this way:

You will allow that every discourse ought to be constructed like a living organism, having its own body and head and feet, it must have middle and extremities, drawn in a manner agreeable to one another and to the whole.

Aristotle states his application of this theory to poetic imitation in narrative form in this way:

It should have for its subject a single action (life-situation), whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it.

This statement should be compared with his statement applying the theory to tragedy:

Now, according to our definition, tragedy is an imitation of an action (life-situation) that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude.

Therefore, for Aristotle, the organic unity of a life-situation is manifest in wholeness, completeness, and proper magnitude. These qualities are not imposed upon the life-situation by the plot. They are imposed upon the plot by the life-situation.

Wholeness

Aristotle defines "a whole" in terms of beginning, middle and end. The beginning, middle, and end does not denote a time relationship. The life-situation that is "whole" has more than mere temporal unity. It has logical unity. This beginning, middle, and end is the organic unity of Plato's "body and head and feet" applied to poetic
composition as logical unity. Organic unity has become logical unity. This logical unity is worked out on the basis of causal order. For Aristotle organic unity is logical unity worked out on the basis of causal order.\(^5\)

A life-situation is a whole if its actions are in proper order. The proper order is causal order. All the actions in a life-situation, from beginning to end, must have a cause and effect relationship. This sequence of actions in causal order makes a life-situation a whole.

This causal order is worked out on the basis of necessity or probability. Each action in a life-situation must "be the necessary or probable result of the preceding action." "Necessity" means that the cause and effect relationship between actions can be drawn with certainty. "Probability" means that the cause and effect relationship between actions can be drawn with only a probable degree of certainty.\(^6\)

When this sequence of actions in causal order is achieved, no action may be displaced or removed without disturbing the whole. For any action whose presence or absence makes no difference is not an organic part of the whole. This kind of causal order makes a life-situation a whole.\(^7\)

Such life-situations are the basis of Homer's epics. In contrast to this, the other narrative poets take their structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action
(life-situation), but a single period. 

The "single period" of historical composition contains all the actions within a given time whether they have causal connection or not. The "single period" of historical composition has temporal unity. The "single period" of historical composition has temporal unity worked out on the basis of chronological order. Therefore, the difference between the single period and the single life-situation is the difference between the chronological bond that unites the actions of an historical composition and the causal bond that unites the actions of a poetic composition.

The "single period" of historical composition may also have biographical unity. This is "all that happened within that period to one person." However, even biographical unity falls short of the wholeness required of the life-situation of poetic composition. Homer, "whether from art or natural genius", knew this; the other narrative poets did not:

In composing the Odyssey he did not include all the adventures of Odysseus—such as his wound on Parnassus, or his feigned madness at the mustering of the host—incidents between which there was no necessary or probable connection: but he made the Odyssey, and likewise the Iliad, to center round an action (life-situation) that in our sense of the word is one.9

The "single period" of historical composition (even with biographical unity) is not "a whole." Its actions are not in proper order.

A life-situation is also a whole if its actions reach a
proper (single) conclusion. A life-situation is to be "whole and complete." The two words translated "whole" and "complete" have an almost identical meaning. Still Aristotle is not being redundant. He wants to emphasize one aspect of wholeness.

For as the sea-fight at Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily took place at the same time, but did not tend to any one result, so in the sequence of events (actions), one thing sometimes follows another, and yet no single result is thereby produced.\(^\text{10}\)

The word translated "result" is from the same root as the word translated "complete." The "complete" emphasizes one aspect of the whole - the end. Therefore, the "complete" emphasizes properly ordered actions reaching their proper conclusion. Historical actions do not "tend to any one result." Neither do narratives based on a "single period" of history. The actions of a single life-situation produce a "single result." Homer's epics produce a single result because they are based on single life-situations. The narratives of other poets do not produce a single result because they are based on single periods of history.\(^\text{11}\)

**Magnitude**

A life-situation has unity if it also has a proper magnitude. Aristotle defines magnitude by limit of length. It is the limit of length between the beginning and the end. The length of the life-situation imitated must "be easily embraced in a single view." This idea of the single view is
simply the principle of intelligibility from a visual perspective. The life-situation must be easy to understand. Aristotle says that most poets violate this principle of intelligibility. They let the "single period" of history determine the length or magnitude of their composition. However, the narrative poet is not required to begin at the beginning of an historical event nor go to the end. Only Homer understood this. He knew that the Trojan War, although it had a beginning and an end (constituted a "single period" with temporal unity) was too vast for his epic. Therefore, he "detaches a single portion" that is a single life-situation having the proper length or magnitude. It is true, however, that Homer, in the Iliad and the Odyssey, clusters other life-situations around his central life-situation. The result is greater overall magnitude and less unity than Aristotle proposes for dramatic narrative. However, the fact remains that the central life-situations of the Iliad and Odyssey meet Aristotle's standards of magnitude and unity.  

Thus, the life-situation imitated by the plot must have unity. This unity consists of wholeness (which includes completeness) and proper magnitude.

**Universality**

The life-situation imitated by the plot must have universality. This is also one of the "dramatic principles" along with unity, wholeness, completeness, and magnitude.
All narrative poets but Homer overlook this principle of universality. This is because they fail to recognize the difference between history and poetry. History differs from poetry. This difference has nothing to do with the difference between prose and verse. The difference is that history expresses the particular; poetry the universal. The particular expresses how a specific person has spoken or acted in a past situation. The universal expresses how a person of the same type would speak or act in a similar situation. History is an artistic particularization; poetry is an artistic generalization.  

The poet is to relate what may happen (the universal) on the basis of probability or necessity. This law of probability or necessity is the law of causality operating on the basis of probability or necessity. It has been seen before as the manner in which the logical unity of a life-situation is worked out. The law of causality working within events is a manifestation of the cause behind all things. The law of causality has become the law of purpose or design always identified with "the better" or "the best" in nature. This is the source of the universal element in poetry.  

When the facts of history are the basis of the poet's imitation, he must relate what has happened in a way that reveals what may happen, what is possible for the same type of individual in the same type of situation at any time.
This universal possibility is based on either probability or necessity. In other words, given this type of individual in this type of situation (the poetic generalization) this cause will probably result in this effect or this cause must (necessarily) result in this effect. Therefore, in poetry "the particular case is generalized by artistic treatment." The task of the poetic art is to discern the universal in the particular and to express it in an artistic representation that makes it apparent to others. Or, as Butcher puts it: "The aim of poetry is to represent the universal through the particular, to give a concrete and living embodiment of a universal truth."\textsuperscript{15}

The narrative poet, then, imitates a single life-situation rather than a single period. The single life-situation of poetic composition has logical unity worked out on the basis of causal order. The single period of historical composition has temporal unity worked out on the basis of chronological order.

The narrative poet imitates a single life-situation by constructing a plot on dramatic principles. The arrangement of actions into an organic unity with proper magnitude and universal application is called plot-making.\textsuperscript{16}

**Types of Life-Situations**

Aristotle distinguishes two types of life-situations, serious and ludicrous. The difference is determined by the nature of the actions contained in the life-situation. A
serious life-situation contains actions of suffering. An action of suffering is a painful and destructive action. More exactly, it is a destructive action that produces pain. A ludicrous life-situation is characterized by the absence of actions of suffering. Instead, it contains actions of painless incongruity that produce humor.

Tragedy and epic are imitations of serious life-situations. Comedy is the imitation of ludicrous life-situations.

Each serious life-situation embodies a change of fortune. Upon the basis of this change of fortune a serious life-situation is divided into two parts; complication and unravelling. The complication extends from the beginning of the life-situation to the turning-point to good or bad fortune. The unravelling extends from the beginning of the change of fortune to the end.

There are four kinds of serious life-situations: simple, complex, pathetic, and ethical. A simple life-situation is one in which the change of fortune takes place without actions of reversal or recognition. A complex life-situation is one in which the change of fortune is accompanied by an action of reversal or recognition or both.

An action of reversal is one that produces a reversal of situation between two characters within the life-situation. An action of recognition is one that produces a change from ignorance to knowledge on the part of
one character concerning the identity of another character.  

A pathetic life-situation is one in which the hero's motive is that of passion. An ethical life-situation is one in which the hero's motive is ethical.  

A serious life-situation becomes tragic when it produces a particular kind of pain: pity or fear or both. Pity is produced by unmerited misfortune. Fear is produced by the unmerited misfortune of a man like ourselves. A tragic life-situation, then, contains an action of suffering that results in the unmerited misfortune of a man like ourselves.  

The application of Aristotle's theory of the poetic life-situation to narrative exposition of Scripture suggests these steps:  

I. The selection of a narrative portion of Scripture for exposition.  
   At this point only the form is important. It must be narrative in form. It must relate the happening of a connected series of actions. It is simply called the narrative.  

The Narrative  

When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John  
   2 (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),  
   3 He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.  
   4 And He had to pass through Samaria.  
   5 So He came to a city of Samaria, called
Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob
gave to his son Joseph;
6 and Jacob's well was there, Jesus
therefore, being wearied from His journey,
was sitting thus by the well. It was about
the sixth hour.
7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw
water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a
drink."
8 For His disciples had gone away into the
city to buy food.
9 The Samaritan woman therefore said to
Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask
me for a drink since I am a Samaritan
woman?"
10 Jesus answered and said to her. "If you
knew the gift of God, and who it is who says
to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have
asked Him, and He would have given you
living water."
11 She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing
to draw with and the well is deep; where
then do You get that living water?"
12 "You are not greater than our father
Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and
drank of it himself, and his sons, and his
cattle?"
13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone
who drinks of this water shall thirst again;
14 but who ever drinks of the water that I
shall give him shall never thirst; but the
water that I shall give him shall become in
him a well of water springing up to eternal
life."
15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this
water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come
all the way here to draw."
16 he said to her, "Go, call your husband,
and come here."
17 The woman answered and said, "I have no
husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well
said, 'I have no husband';
18 for you have had five husbands; and the
one whom you now have is not your husband;
this you have said truly."
19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive
that You are a prophet.
20 "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain;
and you people say that in Jerusalem is the
place where men ought to worship."
21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an
hour is coming when neither in this
mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.  
22 "You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews.  
23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.  
24 "God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."  
25 The woman said to Him, "I know that a Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."  
26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."  
27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He had been speaking with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?"  
28 So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city, and said to the men,  
29 "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"  
30 They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.  
31 In the meanwhile the disciples were requesting Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."  
32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."  
33 The disciples therefore were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?"  
34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.  
35 "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.  
36 "Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together."  
37 "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows, and another reaps.'  
38 "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."
39 And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done."
40 So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.
41 And many more believed because of His word;
42 and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world." (JN.4:1-42)NAS

II. The interpretation (exegesis) of the narrative.

The narrative must be interpreted lexically, syntactically, contextually, historically, geographically, and according to the analogy of Scripture.²⁴

III. The analysis of the narrative in order to discover a life-situation with proper unity and universality.

The narrative may be a period of history. A period of history is a sequence of actions within a specific time-span that have chronological connection. Sometimes, the narrative is also a life-situation. A life-situation is a sequence of actions within a specific time-span that have causal connection. If the period of history is not also a life-situation the life-situation is drawn from the period of history.

Life-situations appear in Scripture in their entirety as general outlines, in part as one or
more scenes, or merely in a single suggestive detail. Often they are found combining all of these elements. Such is the life-situation found in John 4:1-42. This narrative contains the final scenes of the life-situation. The previous scenes are summarized in Jesus' statement to the Samaritan woman, "...you have had five husbands; and the one whom you now have is not your husband...." (v. 18). The complication is contained in this statement: the unraveling in the scenes of the narrative. The essential plot is this: A certain woman goes through five husbands and ends up living with a man who is not her husband. She is ostracized by her community. One day she comes alone to a well near her village to draw water. There she encounters Jesus who, in spite of her resistance, introduces himself to her. The introduction to Jesus turns her life around. Many in her village believe in Jesus as the Savior of the world because of her testimony.

The discovery of the life-situation begins with the division of the narrative into scenes. A scene is a sequence of actions within a specific time-span by specific characters in a specific place. Any change of characters, place, or time constitutes a change of scene.
A. Jesus making and baptizing disciples in Judea.
B. The Pharisees hearing that Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John.
C. Jesus and his disciples travelling from Judea to Jacob's well.
D. Jesus and his disciples at Jacob's well.
E. The disciples walking from Jacob's well to Sychar.
F. The Samaritan woman walking from Sychar to Jacob's well.
G. The Samaritan woman and the disciples meeting between Jacob's well and Sychar.
H. The disciples in the city of Sychar.
I. Jesus at Jacob's well.
J. Jesus and the woman at Jacob's well.
K. The disciples walking from Sychar to Jacob's well.
L. Jesus, the woman, and the disciples at Jacob's well.
M. The woman hurrying back to Sychar from Jacob's well.
N. Jesus and his disciples at Jacob's well.
O. The woman and the men in the city of Sychar.
P. The woman and the men hurrying from Sychar to Jacob's well.
Q. The woman and men with Jesus and his disciples at Jacob's well.
R. Other Samaritans traveling from Sychar to Jacob's well.
S. Other Samaritans with Jesus and his disciples at Jacob's well.

Sometimes, in order to make the process of analysis
easier, the scenes are divided into segments. A segment is a sequence of actions within a specific time-span within a scene. An action is an overt expression of character and thought. Speech is a form of action.

Scene J. Jesus and the woman at Jacob's well.

Segment 1.

Action: "Give Me a drink."

Action: "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?

Segment 2.

Action: "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Action: "Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do you get that living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

Segment 3.

Action: "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Action: "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be
thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw."

Segment 4.

Action: "Go, call your husband, and come here."

Action: "I have no husband."

Action: "You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands; and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

Segment 5.

Action: "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Action: "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Segment 6.

Action: "I know that a Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."

Action: "I who speak to you am He."

The discovery of the life-situation continues with a
single action within the scene that has engaged the emotion of the preacher. For instance, when the woman mentions the Messiah, Jesus says, "I who speak to you am He." This is an extraordinary statement in an extraordinary conversation. In spite of the intense hatred between Jew and Samaritan, in spite of the strict Rabbinic standards against greeting a woman in public, in spite of her evidently notorious immorality, Jesus introduced himself to an immoral Samaritan woman. This is the historical particularization. God, in Christ, introduces Himself to the most unlikely individual. This is the poetic generalization. This universal idea implicit in this single historical action becomes the unifying idea for the life-situation. Only actions that fall under this idea are part of the life-situation. This provides idealizational unity. However, this unity must also be expressed in wholeness, completeness, and proper magnitude. This is discovered by determining the connection of this action to the other actions that fall under the same common idea. The basic question is this: Is this action a beginning, a middle, or an end? It is an end. It is the effect of the previous action and the cause of no subsequent action. Therefore, tracing the causal connection of the previous actions reveals the life-situation in its wholeness, completeness, and proper magnitude. Although the causal connection of actions may be traced to a fuller magnitude, the proper magnitude for the unifying idea begins
with the action, "Give me a drink," and ends with the action, "I who speak to you am He." This is a life-situation. It has universality. It is the concrete embodiment of a universal truth. It has unity. It has the cohesion of a common idea. It has wholeness. It has a sequence of actions in causal order. It has completeness. It has causally connected actions producing a single result. It has proper magnitude. It has a length that is easily understood.

IV. The analysis of the life-situation in order to understand the character, thought, emotion, and action it contains.

The actions are defined. Actions are defined in terms of character, thought, and emotion.

Defined Actions

Scene J: Jesus and the woman at Jacob's well.

Segment 1:

Action: "Give me a drink."

Character: Love. Love is kind.

Kindness

is the will to save. 26
Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Sympathy

Action: "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?

Character: Cynicism. She wills to squelch a Jew.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Hate

Segment 2:

Action: "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Character: Love. Love is "not quick to take offense." 27
Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Sympathy

Action: "Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep: where then do you get that living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?

Character: Cynicism. Sarcasm. Sarcasm wills to hurt.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Outrage

Segment 3.

Action: "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Character: Love. Love "looks for a way of being constructive." 28
Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Compassion

Action: "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw."

Character: Cynicism. Insolence. Insolence wills to insult.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Superiority

Segment 4.

Action: "Go, call your husband, and come here."

Character: Love. Love "is never glad when others go wrong." 

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Compassion

Action: "I have no husband."

Character: Cynicism. Withdrawal. She wills to avoid this topic of her life.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Fear

Action: "You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands; and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

Character: Love. Love is "always glad when truth prevails."

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.
Emotion: Compassion

Segment 5.

Action: "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Character: Cynicism. Evasiveness. She wills to avoid talking about herself.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Guilt

Action: "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Character: Love. Love is "always eager to believe the best" about someone.31

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Compassion

Segment 6.

Action: "I know that a Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."

Character: Tentative trust. She wills to know if this Jew is the Messiah.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.
Emotion: Rising excitement

Action: "I who speak to you am He."

Character: Love. Love "rejoices at the victory of truth." 32

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.


After the definition of the actions explicit in the narrative make explicit the actions that are implied.

**Implied Actions**

Scene J: Jesus and the woman at Jacob's well.

Segment 1:

Action a. The woman comes walking along the path.

Action b. She sees Jesus.

Action c. She stops.

Action d. She studies Jesus.

Action e. She steps up to the well.

Action f. She sets down her waterpot.

Action g. She loosens the cord around her waist.

Action h. "Give me a drink."

Action i. She turns around to face Jesus.

Action j. "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?"

Action k. She turns her back on Jesus.

Action l. She loosens the cord around her waist.
Action m. She begins to fasten the cord around the neck of the waterpot.

Segment 2:

Action a. "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Action b. She throws back her head and laughs.

Action c. She turns to face Jesus.

Action d. She steps toward Jesus (towering over him).

Action e. "Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do you get that living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

Action f. She steps back.

Action g. She wipes the perspiration from her forehead with the back of her hand.

Segment 3.

Action a. Jesus motions toward the well. "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Action b. She leans over and looks at Jesus more carefully.

Action c. "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw."

Action d. She turns away.

Action e. She lowers the waterpot into the well.
Action f. She pulls it out.
Action g. She unfastens the cord.
Action h. She winds the cord around her waist.
Action i. She bends to lift the waterpot to her head.

Segment 4.

Action a. "Go, call your husband, and come here."
Action b. She straightens up wincing.
Action c. "I have no husband!"
Action d. "You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands; and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."
Action e. She draws back from Jesus.

Segment 5.

Action a. She points toward the ruins of the Samaritan temple.
Action b. "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."
Action c. "Woman, believe me..." She sits down opposite Jesus.
Action d. "...an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Segment 6.
Action a. "I know that a Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."

Action b. Jesus leans forward.

Action c. "I who speak to you am He."

The implied actions are defined in terms of character, thought, and emotion and combined with the defined actions of the narrative.

Scene J. Jesus and the woman at Jacob's well.

Segment 1.

Action a. She comes walking along the path.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to get to the well.

Thought: Of heat, of rest, of solitude.

Emotion: Discomfort, weariness.

Action b. She sees Jesus.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to flee.

Thought: There is a man at the well.

Emotion: Surprise

Action c. She stops.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to take stock of this unexpected situation.

Thought: Of the solitude she anticipated.

Emotion: Disappointment

Action d. She studies Jesus.

Character: She wills to identify
him.

Thought: Here is a man weary from travel.

Emotion: Resentment

Action e. She steps up to the well.

Character: Cynicism. Self-consciousness. She wills to get water.

Thought: To get water quickly and leave.

Emotion: Apprehension

Action f. She sets down her waterpot.

Character: Cynicism. Self-consciousness. She wills to get water.

Thought: To get water quickly and leave.

Emotion: Apprehension

Action g. She begins to loosen the cord around her waist.

Character: Cynicism. Self-consciousness. She wills to get water.

Thought: To get water quickly and leave.

Emotion: Apprehension

Action h. "Give me a drink."

Character: Love. Love is kind. Kindness is the will to save.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Sympathy
Action i. She turns around to face Jesus.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to squelch a Jew.

Thought: He is a Jew.

Emotion: Hate

Action j. "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?"

Character: Cynicism. She wills to squelch a Jew.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Hate

Action k. She turns her back on Jesus.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to ignore Jesus.

Thought: She's put this Jew in his place.

Emotion: Satisfaction

Action l. She loosens the cord around her waist.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to ignore Jesus.

Thought: She's put this Jew in his place.

Emotion: Satisfaction

Action m. She begins to fasten the cord around the neck of the waterpot.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to ignore Jesus.

Thought: She's put this Jew in his place.

Emotion: Pleasure
Segment 2.

Action a. "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Character: Love. Love is "not quick to take offense."

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Sympathy

Action b. She throws back her head and laughs.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to understand who this Jew is.

Thought: He is a Jewish Rabbi who thinks he is superior to Jacob.

Emotion: Incredulity

Action c. She turns to face Jesus.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to rebuke Jesus.

Thought: How dare this Jewish Rabbi place himself above Jacob.

Emotion: Outrage

Action d. She steps toward Jesus (towering over him).

Character: Cynicism. She wills to rebuke Jesus.

Thought: How dare this Jewish Rabbi place himself above Jacob.

Emotion: Outrage

Action e. "Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do you get that
living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?

Character: Cynicism. Sarcasm. Sarcasm wills to hurt.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Outrage

Action f. She steps back.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to enjoy the affect upon him.

Thought: I haven't phased him.

Emotion: Discomfort

Action g. She wipes the perspiration from her forehead with the back of her hand.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to avoid his gaze.

Thought: I am in the presence of someone superior to myself.

Emotion: Self-conscious fear

Segment 3.

Action a. "Everyone who drinks of this water (Jesus motions toward the well) shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Character: Love. Love "looks for a way to be constructive."

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Compassion

Action b. She leans over and looks at him more closely.
Character: Cynicism. She wills to understand who Jesus is.

Thought: This is the strangest man I've ever met.

Emotion: Confusion

Action c. "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw."

Character: Cynicism. Insolence. Insolence wills to insult.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Superiority

Action d. She turns away.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to dismiss Jesus.

Thought: That ought to do it.

Emotion: Satisfaction

Action e. She lowers the water pot into the well.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to leave.

Thought: Of the return walk and of the remainder of the days tasks.

Emotion: Resignation

Action f. She pulls it out.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to leave.

Thought: Of the return walk and of the remainder of the days tasks.

Emotion: Resignation
Action g. She unfastens the cord.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to leave.

Thought: Of the return walk and of the remainder of the days tasks.

Emotion: Resignation

Action h. She winds the cord around her waist.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to leave.

Thought: Of the return walk and of the remainder of the days tasks.

Emotion: Resignation

Action i. She bends to lift the waterpot to her head.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to leave.

Thought: Of the return walk and of the remainder of the days tasks.

Emotion: Resignation

Segment 4.

Action a. "Go, call your husband, and come here."

Character: Love. Love is never glad when others go wrong.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Compassion

Action b. She straightens up, wincing.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to avoid the topic of her personal life.
Thought: I don't want to talk about this.

Emotion: Shock

Action c. "I have no husband."

Character: Cynicism. Withdrawal. She wills to avoid the topic of her personal life.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Fear

Action d. "You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands; and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

Character: Love. Love is "always glad when truth prevails."

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Compassion

Action e. She draws back from Jesus.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to get the conversation off her personal life.

Thought: This man is a prophet. This conversation has been about my spiritual need.

Emotion: Fear

Segment 5.

Action a. She points toward the ruins of the Samaritan temple.

Character: Cynicism. She wills to get the conversation off of her personal life.
Thought: This man is a prophet. This conversation has been about my spiritual need.

Emotion: Fear

Action b. "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Character: Cynicism. Evasiveness. She wills to avoid talking about herself.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Guilt

Action c. "Woman believe me..." She sits down opposite Jesus.

Character: Tentative trust. She wills to trust him.

Thought: I have begun to trust him.

Emotion: I feel loved.

Action d. "...an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Character: Love. Love is "always eager to believe the best" about someone.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Compassion
Segment 6.

Action a. "I know that a Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.

Character: Tentative trust. She wills to know if this Jew is the Messiah.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Rising excitement

Action b. Jesus leans forward.

Character: Love. Love "rejoices at the victory of truth."

Thought: She is ready to receive the truth about me.

Emotion: Joy

Action c. "I who speak to you am He."

Character: Love. Love "rejoices at the victory of truth."

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.


V. The formulation of the proposition expressing a timeless spiritual truth drawn from the Scriptural life-situation. This proposition is the controlling factor in the content of the sermon.

A life-situation has been drawn from a narrative portion of Scripture. It expresses an historical particularization: Jesus introduced himself to an immoral Samaritan woman. It also
expresses a poetic generalization: God, in Christ, introduces himself to the most unlikely individual. The proposition is drawn from the poetic generalization. It may take this direction: When God, in Christ, introduces Himself to the most unlikely individual it results in that individual's life being changed. Therefore, the truth for a particular sermon might be: The most obviously needy individual, whose actions suggest strong resistance to the Gospel, may actually be ready for a life-changing introduction to the Lord Jesus Christ. Simply stated the proposition would be this: The most unlikely individual may be ready for a life-changing introduction to Christ. As is often the case, the formulation of the proposition requires an adjustment of the content of the sermon. To include the idea of the life-changing nature of an introduction to Christ in the proposition requires the expansion of the life-situation to an action that gives evidence of this change. Therefore, the previously ending action, "I who speak to you am He," becomes a middle action. The new ending action is the woman's statement to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" This action is found in
Scene 0. An analysis of this scene is required in order to understand the character, thought, emotion, and action it contains. The scene is divided into segments. The actions are defined. Implied actions are added. The additional actions are defined and combined with the defined actions of the narrative.

Scene 0: The woman and the men in the city of Sychar.

Segment 1.

Action a. The woman stops before the men.

Character: Love. Love is kind. Kindness is the will to save.

Thought: What is the best way to share my good news with these men?

Emotion: Joy

Action b. She stands out of breath.

Character: Love. Love is kind. Kindness is the will to save.

Thought: What is the best way to share my good news with these men?

Emotion: Joy

Action c. She looks into their faces as she catches her breath.

Character: Love. Love is kind. Kindness is the will to save.
Thought: What is the best way to share my good news with these men?

Emotion: Joy

Action d. "Come see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"

Character: Love. Love is kind. Kindness is the will to save.

Thought: Expressed in the words of the action.

Emotion: Joy

Segment 2.

Action a. They (men) went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

Character: Religiously inquisitive.

Thought: This could not be the Messiah, could it?

Emotion: Hope

The addition of Scene 0 to Scene J constitutes the complete plot.

VI. The artistic representation of the Scriptural life-situation utilizing the complete plot in harmony with the proposition.

Although the heart of narrative exposition of Scripture is the artistic representation of a Scriptural life-situation, decisions have to be made as how best to present this representation. The simplest form of narrative exposition is to present the representation of the Scriptural
life-situation without explicitly stating the proposition. The intermediate form of narrative exposition is to state the proposition. This may be done at the beginning or at the end of the representation of the Scriptural life-situation. The choice, then, is between a deductive or inductive development of the sermon. The advanced form of narrative exposition is the interruption of the representation in order to deal with the lessons from point to point. The choice, in this case, is between a deductive or inductive development of each point.

The intermediate and advanced forms of narrative exposition are illustrated in the following two sermons. The first example is an inductive development stating the proposition at the end of the sermon. The second example is a deductive development dealing with the lessons from point to point in the sermon.

The Stranger At The Well

"...lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that are white for harvest." (John 4:35) NAS

Late one New Year's Eve a handful of people sit in the lobby of the old hotel that serves as the Cheyenne bus depot

Watching snow slanting across the faint glow of street lamps and swirling in the probing beams of
automobile head lights.

Sometimes, in gusts of wind, the snow hits the grimy hotel windowfront like grains of salt.

Suddenly, there is a rush of cold air.

Heads turn to see a woman enter.

She wears a short winter coat over the uniform of a waitress.

At a glance she takes in the occupants of the lobby and then hurries over to a man sitting alone.

He stands up to meet her, a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth.

"I want my money!" she says loudly.

"I told you I didn't take your money," he responds with irritation.

"You know you rolled me the other night after I passed out," she shouts.

"I want my money!"

"No."

Smack.

The cigarette flies from his mouth.

His cowboy hat spins sideways on his head.

Then with a stream of profanity and another rush of cold air she disappears into the night.

Straightening his hat, he retreats up the carpeted hotel stairs, a red hand-print clearly visible on
the left side of his face.
His cigarette smolders on the lobby floor.
A few twitters of embarrassed laughter breaks the embarrassed silence.
Finally, conversations resume.

However, one young man, a minister, continues to think about "the scene" and especially about the woman.
There was a hardness about her; about her features (that even too much make-up couldn't hide); about her voice; about her actions.
She was a woman hardened by life.
Yes, life-hardened best described her.

Yet, didn't he discern just a hint of softness, of even a once youthful loveliness?
What could bring a once lovely young woman to "the scene" he just witnessed?
Had she rebelled against her parents?
Had she sought "freedom?"
Had her blood tingled at the very thought of it?
Had she finally renounced her parents "oppressive standards?"

Had it been, then, the destructive combination of her physical beauty and her new found philosophy of "anything goes as long as you love each other"
    which yielded finally to
"Anything goes as long as nobody gets hurt"
which yielded finally to
" Anything goes?" 33

Had her relationships with men become increasingly
relationships "where body met body but where
person failed to meet person?" 34

Where her immediate need for sexual gratification was
satisfied but where her deeper need for
companionship and understanding was left
untouched? 35

Had her sexual relationships become a desperate
expression of her longing for completion,
not just sexually
but as a "total human being?" 36

Had, however, these relationships led not to
fulfillment
but to a disturbing sense of incompleteness,
of "inner loneliness?" 37

Had this been the direction of her life?
He didn't know,
but as the others in the lobby doze or talk
and as the clock ticks toward mid-night and the
start of another New Year,
he can't help thinking about this woman
and what it must be like to face this New Year
with fading hopes, alone,
in a dingy hotel room of peeling wall paper
and fly-specked windows.

One thing is sure.
If there is ever a person who needs the abundant life
Christ gives, it is this woman.
Should he try to find her?
He has two hours before his bus pulls out.
He has time.
Time to try at least.
No.
Even if he does find her she won't be in any mood to
talk about Christ.
Anyway, she is obviously too hard-boiled to be
receptive to the Gospel.
She is certainly needy but probably not ready.
No, not ready to be introduced to Christ.

Or is she?
The more he thinks of the woman the more she seems,
somehow, familiar.

In his mind he returns to a day gone by in Samaria
where the heat flows like liquid over the hills.
A woman comes swinging along the path, her water-pot
balancing gracefully on her head. 38
Beads of perspiration glisten on her forehead.
The blinding glare of the white road hurts her eyes. She has walked nearly half a mile with a heavy water-pot at noon and she is tired.39 The shade of the trees around Jacob's well promises rest and solitude.

Suddenly, she stops in her tracks, steadying the water-pot with her hand. A man is sitting against the stone wall of the well. She did not think anyone would be here at this hour. She is disappointed. She had looked forward to the rest in the shade and especially to a time alone, free from the accusing eyes of the village women. She studies the man. His chin rests on his breast. His turban is in his lap and his hair still bears the impression of where it has rested upon his head. His cloak lays across his knees leaving his muscular shoulders and arms exposed. Black rings of perspiration stain his tunic beneath his arms and a line of dark perspiration runs along the curve of his back. White lime-stone dust completely covers him, except for his hair, where his turban had rested. Here is a man utterly fatigued with travel.
For an instant she thinks the tassels at the corners of his cloak look white.

Is he a Jew?

She guessed not.

It is hard to tell, him smothered in white limestone dust as he is.

She steps cautiously to the well-curb (worn with deep furrows by the pull of ropes over the years).

Setting down her water-pot,

she reaches to loosen the cord about her waist.

"Give me a drink."

So, he is a Jew!

His Galilean accent gives him away.

Wheeling around to face him, her hands coming to rest on her hips, she lashes out with words sharp as daggers.

"How dare you, you Jew, ask a drink of me, a lady of Samaria!"

Then she turns her back on him and loosens the cord about her waist and begins to fasten it about the water-pot.

The only sound is the breeze stirring the leaves over-head.

It makes her feel good to think that she has put this Jew in his place.

Then he speaks again.
"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you,
'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him,
and he would have given you living water."

The fact that he speaks to her again angers her.
Who is this stranger anyway?
Who does he think he is?
And what is this talk about "the gift of God" and "living water?"
Is he, then a Jewish rabbi?
A Jewish rabbi who thinks he can produce something superior to Jacob?
Finding the thought incredible she throws back her head and laughs and her harsh laughter echoes down the valley.

But then outrage wins over disbelief
and turning and taking a step toward him,
she towers over him, eyes blazing,
and wagging a finger in his face, she taunts him,
"Sir, (the word drips with sarcasm) you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?"

"Is one such as you, a common Jewish rabbi, greater than our Father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself,
(something you seem incapable of doing).
She steps back to catch her breath and survey the
affect of her latest outburst upon this stranger.
His Jewish face and features remain unmoved; his clear
eyes unwavering.

Suddenly, she feels uncomfortable.
She feels like turning away to avoid his eyes.
Nervously, she wipes the perspiration form her forehead
with the back of her hand.

However, his gaze holds her as he speaks again,
"Everyone who drinks continually of this water shall
experience thirst again," he says motioning toward
the well.
"But whoever drinks once of the water I shall give him
shall never experience thirst again..."
"The fact is, the water that I shall give shall become
in him a well of water springing up to a God-like
quality of life."
The gravity of his manner and the seriousness of his
words momentarily confuse her.
This is the strangest man I've ever met.
Now he's talking about placing a well of spring water
within people.

She leans over and looks at him more closely.
Then it dawns on her.
Why he's mad!
Mad from too long in the heat.
She will humor him she concludes.
With mocking insolence she says, "All right Rabbi, give me the water."
"Save me the walk."
She does not wait for the response she knows he can not give.
She turns away.
She lowers the water-pot into the great depth of the well.
She pulls it out spilling over with water.
She unfastens the cord and winds it around her waist again.
She bends to lift the brimming-full water-pot to her head for the return to the village.
Then the command comes like a sword - thrust between a legionaire's armor plates.
"Go, call your husband, and come here."
Straightening up, she winces under the command and stiffens as if a sudden pain has caught her.
"I have no husband," she replies bluntly trying to stop a dangerous subject at once.
But the stranger's reply is devistating."You have
spoken well in saying, "a husband I do not have; for you have had five husbands; and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

She recoils as if hit by a stunning blow and grows pale as one who has seen a sudden apparition. Indeed, she has, for she has all of a sudden caught sight of herself. She has also, finally, caught sight of the stranger. He is more than he seems. He speaks about me with an insight only God can give.

All at once, certain words of the conversation become bright as pebbles fetched fresh from a brook:

"Gift of God"
"Living Water"
"Eternal life".

Why this conversation has not been about water at all! This conversation has been about my soul's thirst for God and that even the satisfaction of a woman with a man can not quench the deep inner thirst of my life. However, she does not want to face her life as it really is. She must get this conversation off herself and on to a safe religious topic.
The ruins of the ancient Samaritan temple are in full view upon the stony heights of Mount Gerizim rising before them. Pointing toward the ruins she says, "Sir, (she says it with respect now) I perceive that you are a prophet." "Our Fathers worshiped in this mountain; and you people say (in spite of herself some hostility surfaces) that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship..."

"Don't stop trusting me now, woman, (to her surprise she discovers that she has begun to trust him and there is now a tenderness in his voice - or has it always been there?) She sits down opposite him wanting to see his face now. He continues.

"An hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father." "You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews."

"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in the realm of spiritual reality; for such people the Father
seeks to be his worshipers."

"God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in the realm of spiritual reality."

How skillfully he has overcome her attempt at evasion. He has simply used it as a way to speak of the essential nature of God and of the worship that should be offered Him and at the same time exposed the fact that, although she worships, there is no reality in her worship.

Tremblingly, the truth already dawning but half her mind rejecting it, she says, "I know that the Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."

Then leaning forward and gazing into her eyes, he says with extraordinary intensity, "I who speak to you am HE!"

"What a breath-taking affirmation!" exclaims the young minister in the lobby of the Cheyenne bus depot, almost waking the man dozing next to him. But it is more than that, he thinks, as he watches the blowing snow through the window.
It is also an invitation.

It is another way of saying, "Come unto Me."

Christ has revealed Himself to her.

Now He asks her to trust Him to the point of personal commitment.

Again he opens his pocket New Testament and squints to make out, in the poor light, the account of the woman's return to the village of Sychar.

Arriving back at the village gate, without her waterpot,

she encounters a group of loitering men.

She stands, breathless, looking into the faces of her men friends, some of whom she has known in intimate embrace.

But this is a new woman who stands before them, new in her poise and purpose and power to influence them.

"Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done!"

Then avoiding a ridicule producing dogmatic statement, with the delicate touch of sheer brilliance, she muses out loud in their presence,

"Surely, this could not be the Messiah, could it?"

This brings them thronging back to see this Man for
themselves.

It is clear to the young minister

that the woman who hurries back to the village

is not the same woman at all.

Her encounter with Christ has been a life-changing

experience.

The minister desires this same kind of experience for

the woman who burst into the hotel lobby

and confronted the man in the cowboy hat.

But what was it he had thought about the woman in the

hotel lobby?

She was needy but not ready - not ready to be

introduced to Christ.

But wasn't this exactly the attitude of the disciples

toward the woman at the well -

needy, most certainly, but not ready.

And they had been wrong!

Had he been wrong about the woman in the lobby?

He wonders as he boards his bus.

He continues to wonder as the bus carries him south

into the New Year.

What if he had taken time to find her and talk with

her?

If he had met her as a friend not a critic?

If he had appealed to her worth as a person?
If he had appealed to her desire for a better life?
If he had revealed the deep inner thirst in her heart
only Christ can satisfy?
If he had introduced her to the Stranger at the Well,
the Lord Jesus Christ?

So he enters the New Year haunted by the face of a woman,
a face that for him will always be the face of the woman at the well.
And the rhythm of the buses' wheels seems to be
drumming out the words "...lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest."
And a newly discovered truth is forming in his mind which will shape his ministry in a wonderful way:
Even the most unlikely individual may be ready for a life-changing introduction to the Lord Jesus Christ.
The Art of Wave Walking

22 And immediately He made the disciples get into the boat, and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.
23 And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.
24 But the boat was already many stadia away from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.
25 And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking upon the sea.
26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.
27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."
28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."
29 And he said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.
30 But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"
31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
32 And when they got into the boat, the wind stopped.
33 And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" (Matt. 14:22-33) NAS
"And He said, 'Come!' And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus."
(Matthew 14:29) NAS

"Adventure" is a word not often heard today except in exaggerated promotion for movies or in enticements for world travel or advertisements for escapist literature or in the conversations of impractical, visionary people we disregard.

No, most people don't talk about adventure, but most people desire it.
The word "adventure" is derived from a Latin word meaning "a happening."
This suggests an unusual experience of excitement and risk.

Many people, today, are stepping out of their professions, on week-ends, into recreational sports that provide this experience of excitement and risk.
This is because, adventure is rarely a part of their profession.
They must look for "a happening" outside of their
regular, daily experience.

Unfortunately, most Christians, think they must also look for adventure outside of their regular, daily experience.

Yet, the Christian life is, by its very nature, an adventure.

It means to search beyond our own limits and to transcend our own natural abilities in the presence and power of Christ.

Today we are going to enter Christ's school of Christian living and explore the nature of the Christian adventure.

His school is presently meeting in a storm upon the Sea of Galilee.

The topic of this particular session is "The Art of Wave Walking."

This is understandable since the adventure of the Christian life is like walking upon waves.

Therefore, close attention to the art of wave walking reveals the nature of the Christian adventure.

The first step in becoming a wave walker, in experiencing the adventure of the Christian life, is having the courage to admit the end of our own
resources.

Sometimes this is a difficult step.
Christ's first disciples found it so.
You will see what I mean as we join them upon the Sea of Galilee.

Only four disciples continue at the oars.
Each pull of the oar is an agony of taunt muscles screaming with the weariness.
Peter changes his grip on the tiller, hands trembling with cold and fatigue and fear.
He knows they are losing the battle with the wind - this boat-battering, line-snapping, plank-splintering, oar-shattering wind.
Very soon, now, the strength of the four at the oars will fail.
Then the boat, swinging side-ways to the wind, will capsize.
They will all perish.

The seven other disciples slump in sodden, unmoving heaps, seemingly oblivious to the icy water
swirling waist deep in the boat around them
sloshing back and forth a tangle of
clothing,
fishing nets, and pieces of broken oar.

They are spent.
They did not stir the last time he called them to their
turn at the oars.

He pleaded, threatened, mocked and finally (something
he had not done in awhile) cursed them -
all to no avail.

So, now, there is only the wail of the wind
and the faintly heard groans of the four
as they bend their backs into each stroke
of the oars.

No longer is there any talk;
no longer the muffled moans of sea-sickness;
no longer the occasional screams of fright.

Now, if blue lips move,
they mumble prayers into the deafening wind.

For hours, now, there has been only the wind and the
water and the stars darting like fire-flies
over-head
and the battle,
always the battle,
the desperate battle

to keep the bow into the wind.

And what a battle!

Now the boat is flung up among the stars riding the
crest of a wave in the shrieking wind.

Now the boat is careening down the long slope of a
wave.

Now the boat is in the dark canyon between waves; waves
higher than the wildly swinging masthead.

Now the bow is buried and the dark water is cascading
over
them as their bruised and bloodied fingers,
numb with cold,

cling frantically to gunnel and thwart.

Now after what seems a time interminable,
the boat heaves up its bow,
shuddering as it seeks to dispel the weight of
the water, and climbs
toward the night sky again
and the crest of another wave.

For hours, this sequence has been repeated, countless
times repeated in the battle to keep the bow of
the boat into the wind.

And all this time he is straining at the tiller;
they are toiling at the oars.
This is all they can do.
They haven't the strength to advance into the teeth of
the gale and to run before the wind means to be
smashed on the rocks of the eastern shore of the
Sea of Galilee.

And all this time one question holds his mind.
Why did Jesus send us into a storm?
When they shoved off from shore the wind was already
freshening from the northwest with the smell of a
storm in it.
Then, he asked himself, "Is Jesus sending us into a
storm?"
But when they unfurled the sail and the wind filled it
with a resounding "Boom," the question became,
"Why is Jesus sending us into a storm?"

And even as they set their course and the boat heeled
over and the water went hissing out behind;
And even as the blue water became gray beneath the
deepening darkness of advancing stormclouds;
And even as the wind increased and the waves became
foam-crested;
And even as the bouncing bow sent spray flying and each
jolt became teeth-jaring;
And even as they lowered the sail, then, lest it be shredded
And manned the oars to keep the bow into the wind as the waves swelled to great gray mountains rivalling those on the shore
Even then – especially then – the question persisted,
"WHY did Jesus send us into a storm?"

Does the answer have something to do with the feeding of the multitude?
Again, he recalls the scene on the plain.

"Five loaves and two fish!" was the cry first heard from the front of the well-fed crowd.
Then a murmer moved through the crowd like wind upon wheat, visible to the eye.
And an irresistible impulse seized the crowd as it discovered the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish.
"Jesus is King!" some bold someone shouted.
It was picked up first by one then by another.
"Jesus is King!" rose the ragged cry.
It became the chant of the whole crowd, an orderly crowd fast becoming a mob.
Exulting, the disciples joined in the chant, envisioning the Jewish people railing to him;
imagining the Jewish people revolting
and sweeping through the Roman legions
like a scythe through ripe grain.

At this point Jesus turned to the Twelve and ordered
them to get into the boat and leave.
But they resisted, resisted like a rank of Roman
 legionaires braced for combat,
defiantly standing momentarily with the mob.
Jesus' eyes flashed (Peter would always remember).
The command came again cutting like a knife-blade.
Then the Twelve gave way before the sheer force of His
personality.
Yet, they were angry to be sent away at this moment,
His moment of triumph.

Why did Jesus send his disciples into a storm?

Jesus sent his disciples into the storm to reveal to
them that their own natural ability was not the
determining factor in serving Him.
This realization was necessary before they could begin
to experience the adventure of the Christian life.
This was the first principle of wave walking.
Their learning of this principle required this
experience of failure, failure at the point of
their particular strength (at least for Peter, James, and John who failed at seamanship).

So we, too, in order to learn the art of wave walking must first recognize the limit of our own human resources. Our misplaced self-reliance must be shattered before the waves liquid surface becomes solid beneath our steps.

May God give us faith.
For faith is the courage to admit the end of our own resources and to begin to experience the adventure of the Christian life, the art of wave walking.

The second step in becoming a wave walker, in experiencing the adventure of the Christian life, is having the courage to look to Jesus and trust Him only.

Let us again join the disciples upon the Sea of Galilee.

Peter, for some unexplainable reason, turns his head glancing over his shoulder along the boat's wake. And for one demented moment he thinks he sees a Figure
standing upon the water in the wake of the boat.

Frantically, he draws an arm across his face to clear the deceiving mist from his eyes.

He looks again.

The Figure is still there, only moving now, and coming closer.

A blood-curdling scream pierces the wind-shriek. (Only in retrospect can Peter claim the scream as his own).

The scream startles the other disciples.

They stir

and turn

and stare

with Peter intently

through spume and spray

at the Figure

of wind-whipped clothes

and streaming hair.

The Figure is indistinct,

sometimes, amid a waste of towering waves and lost,

sometimes, in the shadows of racing storm-clouds
but distinct,
sometimes, poised upon the waves crest
with stars dancing
about Its head and shoulders.

They watch the Figure drawing nearer over the water. It is upborn by the waves as they rise. It does not disappear as they fall. It is carried on, on toward the boat. Finally the Figure draws to the boat's side.

Now their terror finds a voice. They become a boat-load of berserk disciples crying "It is a ghost!"

But in the terror of this moment,
as the last thread of their personal strength snaps,
the ring of a familiar voice carries over the din of the gale.
It penetrates their fear-crazed minds comforting,
first, by its familiar sound and,
second, by the content of the oft repeated words,
"COURAGE! IT IS I. STOP FEARING!"

This is a Jesus they have not seen before;
a Jesus with a voice heard over a gale;
   A Jesus with muscles rippling beneath
   wind-whipped garments;
   an athletic Jesus,
   a nimble wave walker.
So, Jesus having brought his disciples to the end of
their resources revealed His presence to them and
invited them to depend upon Him.

So we, too, in order to learn the art of wave walking
must look only to Jesus.
Having brought us to the limit of our natural abilities
Jesus reveals His presence and invites us to trust
Him
as the determining factor in Christian living.

May God give us faith.
For faith is the courage to look to Jesus and trust Him
only
as the determining factor in Christian living.

The third step in becoming a wave walker, in
experiencing the adventure of the Christian life,
is realizing the capacity to perform beyond our
natural ability.
"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the
water," Peter cries.
In other words Peter is saying,
"Lord, as you commanded me to go into a storm that
defeated me, now command me to do something
utterly beyond my natural, human ability."

The amazing thing is Jesus said, "Come!"
Come and become a wave walker!
Come and taste the adventure of the Christian life!

Let us again join the disciples upon the Sea of
Galilee.

Thrusting the tiller into the hands of another
disciple, Peter prepares to leave the boat.
It has to be done in an instant, just as the boat
begins the slide down the long wave-slope and the
stern is lifted free of the water.
Gripping the gunnel with both hands he turns to slide
upon his stomach over the side to the surface of
the water.
But just as the stern is lifted and his extended legs
strike a wide arc in the air,
he hesitates to push himself away from the boat.

A wave washes over him.
He hangs on for dear life, then, and sputtering clambers back aboard realizing a problem he has not anticipated. He can not leave the boat unless his gaze is fixed upon Jesus; not unless he is looking upon His reassuring face.

So now he sits balancing precariously upon the side of the pitching boat. His hands grip the gunnel. He looks at Jesus. The stern lifts free upon the crest of a wave. His hands tighten their grip.

Then, in an instant of utter abandon, he opens his hands and pushes himself free and falls to certain death, falls toward the sea-bottom 750 feet below, darker than a tomb in the Gaderene hills, eager to receive his body into the ooze of its cold, cavernous depths.

But NO! The water's surface is solid beneath his sandaled feet! For the moment he is oblivious to wind and water except
for the sense of solidness beneath his feet. 
His one reality is the face of Jesus. 
He takes one tentative step toward Jesus. 
Then another. 
He is walking now and all the time staring into the face of Jesus. 

The thought flashes into his mind, Here I am, a rock (Peter), 
UPON the water! 
He has a sudden sense of exhilaration. 
Still the gaze of his wind-misted eyes continues to seek only the face of Jesus.

Each swaying step brings him closer to Jesus. 
Finally, they stand face to face in the midst of the gale-tossed sea while a boatload of gawking disciples look on. 
A smile of quiet amusement tugs at Jesus' mouth.

Then Peter decides he will have a quick look around. 
All is in motion, constant, chaotic, dizzying motion:
around him waves leaping; 
above him stars tumbling; 
beneath him water speeding. 
And his gaze, once off the face of Jesus,
becomes rivetted upon these affects of the storm.

Fear begins to grip him.
He feels the water becoming liquid about his feet, his ankles, his legs.
He screams with terror, "Lord, save me quick!"
And immediately, he feels the iron grip of a muscular hand upon his wrist as Jesus, in one quick motion, swings him up across His shoulders.

He had come out of the boat walking boldly like a man, but he returns slung like a lamb upon the shoulders of Jesus.

It is easy to criticize Peter for the way his wave walking experience ended. However, his experience tells us much about the nature of the Christian adventure, the art of wave walking.

It tells us that faith is the courage to venture out and perform beyond our natural abilities. It tells us that the object of this faith is Jesus. It tells us that doubt destroys this faith. Doubt is distraction.
Doubt is looking away from Jesus.
Doubt is focusing upon our
limited natural abilities.
Doubt leads to fear.
And fear overcomes faith making of the Christian
adventure merely an exercise in human failure and
foolishness.

May God give us faith.
For Faith is the courage to learn the
Christian art of wave walking.
Faith is the courage to admit the end
of our own resources.
Faith is the courage to look to
Jesus and trust Him only.
Faith is the courage to venture
out and perform beyond our
natural abilities.

Yes, the Christian life is, by its very nature, an
adventure.
It is like walking upon waves.

It means to search beyond our own limits
and to transcend our own natural abilities
in the presence and power of Christ.
Summary

The primary object of poetic imitation is a sequence of actions called a life-situation. The narrative poet imitates a life-situation by constructing a plot of it based upon dramatic principles. This arrangement of a life-situation's actions into an organic unity with proper magnitude and universal application is called plot-making. The object of plot-making in narrative exposition is a single Scriptural life-situation. The poetic method appropriate for narrative exposition is the artistic representation in dramatic narrative form of a single Scriptural life-situation by means of prose language alone.
Notes

1 Aristotle, *Poetics* VI. 1449b 24-28; VI. 1450a 16-18; VII. 1450b 24-26; IX. 1451b 27-29.


7 Aristotle, *Poetics* VII. 1451a 30-36.


10 Butcher, p. 276.


12 Aristotle, Poetics, trans. S. H. Butcher, VII. 1451a5; XXIV. 1459b 22; XXIII. 1459a 31- 1459b 7; XXVI. 1462b 2-12.

13 Aristotle, Poetics IX. 1451a 37- 1451b II.

14 Aristotle, Poetics IX. 1451a 37- 1451b11; Butcher, p. 191; Butcher, p. 151.

15 Aristotle, Poetics IV. 1451b 29-32; Butcher, p. 194; Butcher, p. 192.

16 Aristotle, Poetics VI. 1450a 4-5.

17 Aristotle, Poetics VI. 1449b 24; V. 1449a 33; XI. 1452b 10-13.

18 Aristotle, Poetics V. 1449a 31-36.

19 Aristotle, Poetics XVIII. 1455b 24-29.

20 Aristotle, Poetics XVIII. 1455b 33- 1456a2; XXIV. 1459b 8-17; X. 1452a 12-18.

21 Aristotle, Poetics XI. 1452a 22-24; XI. 1452a 29-32.

22 Aristotle, Poetics XVIII. 1455b 35; XVIII. 1456a 36.

23 Aristotle, Poetics IX. 1452a 1-3; XIII. 1453a 5-6.

Marginal References to Verbal and Idiomatic Usage:

25 Barclay, pp. 140-143.


27 I. Cor. 13:5 NEB
28 I. Cor. 13:4 Phi
29 I. Cor. 13:6 Mof
30 I. Cor. 13:6 Wms
31 I. Cor. 13:6 Knox
32 I. Cor. 13:6 Knox

34 Buechner.
35 Buechner.
36 Buechner, p. 88.
37 Buechner.
39 Weatherhead.
CHAPTER IV.

NARRATIVE EXHORTATION

The discussion so far has concerned the objective purpose of the poetic art as it relates to the narrative exposition of Scripture. The objective purpose of the poetic art is the artistic representation of a universal truth in its appropriate form. The appropriate form is the poetic life-situation. There is, however, also a subjective purpose. The subjective purpose of the poetic art is the production of aesthetic pleasure within the mind of the perceiver. The aesthetic pleasure of the poetic art is the pleasure of learning a universal truth through the recognition of its likeness within a particular life-situation. The purpose of the poetic art, then, in both its objective and subjective aspects, is the creation of aesthetic pleasure within the mind of the perceiver through the artistic representation of a universal truth embodied in a specific life-situation. The following discussion will consider the subjective purpose of the poetic art as it relates to the narrative exposition of Scripture. It is called narrative exhortation (application
Both the objective and the subjective purposes of the poetic art are achieved through the construction of the plot. Aristotle illustrates this poetic process of plot making from the usual practice of drawing the material for a tragedy from a traditional story. The traditional story must contain a life-situation (more than a mere period of history) with the proper unity and universality. The traditional story must also contain a serious life-situation capable of producing the aesthetic pleasure distinctive of tragedy: the pleasure that comes from pity and fear. This pity and fear may be aroused through the use of masks and costumes or through the construction of the plot. The use of the plot is the better way. The plot should be the agent of pity and fear and the subsequent pleasure. Simply hearing the plot stated should be sufficient to arouse the tragic emotions of pity and fear.  

The Poetic Modes of Pleasure

Aristotle's description of the construction of the perfect tragic plot reveals that the plot is the agent of tragic pleasure and that this pleasure is produced and intensified by means of emotional, logical and ethical elements inherent in the plot.

Emotional

Aristotle's theory of tragedy concerns the artistic
representation of the most tragic life-situation in the most effective manner. The perfect tragic plot portrays a hero that contributes to the production and intensification of the tragic emotions of pity and fear. His character contributes to the production of the tragic emotions. He is a man not eminently good and just. This enables the audience to identify with him and pity him as one like themselves. Fear, in turn, is produced by the portrayal of the misfortune of a man like ourselves. His position contributes to the intensification of the tragic emotions. He is a man highly renowned and prosperous. This intensifies the emotional impact of his misfortune.

In narrative exhortation the plot portrays an individual of the Scriptural life-situation who contributes to the production and intensification of the emotions inherent in the life-situation. The individual may not meet Aristotle's qualifications for the tragic hero. The emotions may not be the tragic emotions of pity and fear. The purpose of this study, as stated in the introduction, is not to impose a theory of Christian tragedy, or for that matter Christian epic, upon narrative portions of Scripture, but to appropriate principles of the generic art of imitation for the elucidation of narrative portions of Scripture. Therefore, in "The Stranger at the Well" the individual portrayed is the Samaritan woman. In "The Art of Wave Walking" the individual portrayed is the disciple
Peter. In keeping with this creative application of Aristotle's categories, the insights drawn from the Greek hero (a figure who undergoes a journey, a testing, a suffering and loss of identity, a rebirth with gifts from the blessed gods) are applied metaphorically. The Bible contains "heroic" figures only through the courtesy of metaphoric extension of the Greek ideal.4

The perfect tragic plot embodies a change of fortune that produces and intensifies the tragic emotions of pity and fear. Misfortune produces the tragic emotions. Therefore, the change of fortune is from good to bad not from bad to good. And if misfortune produces the tragic emotions, misfortune unalleviated intensifies the tragic emotions. Consequently, the change of fortune is single not double. In narrative exhortation the plot embodies any change of fortune present in the Scriptural life-situation producing and intensifying the emotions inherent in the life-situation. In both "The Stranger at the Well" and "The Art of Wave Walking" the change of fortune is from bad to good. Therefore, according to Aristotle's classification they are comedic in nature.5

The perfect tragic plot contains actions that produce and intensify the tragic emotions of pity and fear. The perfect tragic plot rests upon an action of suffering that produces the tragic emotions. This is "an action of a destructive or painful nature, such as murders on the stage,
tortures, woundings, and the like." The truly tragic action, then, is an act of physical violence. However, the act, in itself, does not have the necessary emotional quality. Alone it simply shocks. It only becomes genuinely tragic when it involves a close blood-relative:

...if, for example, a brother kills, or intends to kill, a brother, a son his father, a mother her son, a son his mother, or any other deed of the kind is done--these are the situations to be looked for by the poet.

Thus the truly tragic action is an act of physical violence contemplated or done to a close blood-relative. It is an act contrary to a man's deepest moral instincts. Anything less than this lacks the emotional potential required of a tragedy. Finally, the truly tragic action is an act of physical violence contemplated or done to a close blood-relative out of ignorance. The tragic action reaches its highest level when it is based on ignorance. Such an action (or potential action) is inherently able to produce pity and fear. The tragic emotions of pity and fear are aroused by the mere thought that a man, out of ignorance, is about to, or, has harmed a close blood-relative. This is the kind of action upon which the perfect tragic plot rests. It does not have to appear as a physical action within the life-situation, but it must be the point of reference for all the actions that do take place within the life-situation. In narrative exhortation the tragic action is broadened to become simply the significant action upon
which the sermonic life-situation rests. It is the single action that has initially engaged the mind and emotion of the preacher. It is the action that provides the unifying idea for the sermonic life-situation. It has enough emotional content to energize all the other actions of the life-situation. In "The Stranger at the Well" the significant action is the statement of Jesus, "I who speak to you am He." In "The Art of Wave Walking" the significant action is, "And Peter...walked on the water...."8

The perfect tragic plot turns upon actions of reversal and recognition that intensify the tragic emotions. An action of reversal is one that produces a reversal of situation between two characters within the life-situation. It is a change of action. This change of action is subject to the rule of probability or necessity. In the perfect tragic plot it is a change of action involving the hero. For instance, in the Oedipus, the messenger comes to cheer Oedipus and remove his fears about his mother. However, by revealing who he is, he produces the opposite effect. And in the Lyceus, Lyceus is being led off for execution. Danaus goes with him intending to put him to death. But the outcome of the preceding sequence of actions is that Danaus is killed and Lyceus saved. In narrative exhortation the action of reversal is broadened to refer to any action that produces a change in situation. In "The Stranger at the Well" Jesus' statement, "I who speak to you am He" is an
action of reversal. In "The Art of Wave Walking" Peter's "seeing the wind" is an action of reversal.9

An action of recognition is one that produces a change from ignorance to knowledge on the part of one character concerning the identity of another character. It is change of awareness. This change of awareness produces feelings of love or hate. Whatever form it might take, in the perfect tragic plot it involves the hero's discovery of the identity of a close blood-relative with whom he has been involved or potentially involved in an act of physical violence. In narrative exhortation the action of recognition is broadened to refer to any action that produces a change in awareness. In "The Stranger at the Well" all Jesus' actions are actions of recognition. Each one increases the woman's awareness of his identity. For instance, when Jesus says, "Give me a drink" she recognizes him as a Jew. When Jesus says, "You have had five husbands; and the one whom you now have is not your husband," she recognizes him as a prophet. Finally, when Jesus declares, "I who speak to you am He," she recognizes him as the Messiah. In "The Art of Wave Walking," Jesus' "walking upon the sea," and his climactic "Take courage it is I; do not be afraid" are actions of recognition.10

Actions of reversal and recognition both produce change. One produces a change in action, the other a change in awareness. Another element they have in common is
surprise. Reversal of situation and recognition "turn upon surprises." They intensify the tragic emotions through the element of surprise. The impact of the tragic emotion is intensified if the actions that produce them happen unexpectedly but logically. This is seen in the Lynceus. Danaus leads Lynceus away intending to kill him. However, Lynceus is saved and Danaus is killed. The audience does not expect this and is surprised. But the audience immediately realizes this is the logical (inevitable) outcome of the preceding actions.11

The perfect tragic plot, then, intensifies the tragic action through actions of reversal and recognition which provide unexpected change within the rigid logical (cause-and-effect) structure of the plot. What is more, the perfect tragic plot combines the action of reversal with the action of recognition raising the impact of the tragic emotions of pity and fear to an even higher intensity. In narrative exhortation actions of reversal and recognition intensify the emotions inherent in the significant action through the element of surprise. And when the sermonic plot combines actions of reversal and recognition the emotion inherent in the significant action are raised to an even higher intensity. This is especially true of "I who speak to you am He" in "The Stranger at the Well." It is the significant action of the sermonic plot as well as being an action of recognition and reversal.12
Identification

The tragic emotions of fear and pity and the subsequent tragic pleasure flow from the audience's identification with the hero. Two judgements must be made about the hero before the audience can identify with him: (1) He is like us; and (2) He does not deserve his misfortune. These two judgements require the "purification" of the tragic action. Only then is the audience free to identify with the hero and experience the feelings of fear and pity. 13

This purification is presented to the audience in the hero's recognition. Thus the hero's moment of awareness is also the audience's moment of awareness. It makes the audience aware of the purity of the hero's motive in committing (or contemplating) an act of physical violence against a close blood-relative. The man who is horrified when he discovers his mistake is one for whom the audience can say, "Here is a man like us who does not deserve his misfortune because he acted out of ignorance. 14

Although this tragic purification is a process carried forward in the plot as a whole, it is especially realized at the moment of the hero's recognition. Consequently, the recognition is the hinge upon which the structure of the perfect tragic plot turns. 15

A perfect tragic plot, then, is of a man highly renowned and prosperous (but not eminently good and just) moved (through reversal and recognition) from good fortune
to misfortune as a result of his involvement in a truly tragic action. This plot is perfect because it is most effective in the production and intensification of the tragic emotions of pity and fear.

In narrative exhortation one of the characters of the Scriptural life-situation becomes the primary character of identification for the audience. The plot is developed from this character's point of view. This is the character through whom the preacher speaks. There is, however, in narrative exhortation only one judgement the audience must make before it can identify with this character: he (or she) is like us. Although this process of identification is carried forward throughout the sermonic plot, it is especially realized at the moments of the character's recognitions. The character's moments of awareness are also the audience's moments of awareness. For instance, in "The Stranger at the Well" there are two critical moments of self-recognition for the woman:

All at once, certain words of the conversation become bright as pebbles fetched fresh from a brook: "Gift of God," "Living Water," "Eternal Life." Why this conversation has not been about water at all! This conversation has been about my soul's thirst for God and that even the satisfaction of a woman with a man can not quench the deep inner thirst of my life....How skillfully he has overcome my attempt at evasion. He has simply used it as a way to speak of the essential nature of God and of the worship that should be offered Him and at the same time exposed the fact that, although I worship, there is no reality in my worship.18

If identification has taken place, these moments of
awareness for the woman are also moments of awareness for
the audience.

Logical

The logical basis of tragic pleasure is found in the
cause and effect relationship of the actions. Each action
must "be the necessary or probable result of the preceding
action." This is the basis of the logical appeal in poetry.¹⁷

This logical (cause and effect) sequence of actions is
the intellectual foundation for the emotional appeal. It is
to make the emotional appeal, not only more intense, but
more solid by making it spring from a logical, apparently
inevitable, sequence of actions.

Although the pleasure of tragedy is primarily
emotional, it is an emotion "authorized and released" by an
intellectually determined sequence of actions. The emotion
flows freely because it is felt to be intellectually
justified. This intellectual justification is found in the
cause and effect relationship of the actions.¹⁸

The logical appeal of poetry has three major problem
areas: those related to the object of representation, those
related to the language of representation, and those related
to the correctness of representation.

The Logical Appeal and the Object of Representation

The poet being an imitator, like a painter or any
other artist, must of necessity imitate one of
three objects,—things as they were or are, things
as they are said or thought to be, or things as
they ought to be.  

If the perceiver does not understand the object of the poet's imitation it will appear illogical. The poet may be criticized for not being "true to fact" when he, like Sophocles, is imitating "men as they ought to be." The poet may be criticized for not being "higher than fact nor yet true to fact" when he is imitating things according to common opinion (what is said). This is particularly true, as Xenophanes says, of the erroneous "tales about the gods" that are by common opinion true. The poet may be criticized because his imitation is "true to fact," but a fact of history the perceiver does not know. Such is the reference in the passage from the Iliad about arms: "'Upright upon their butt-ends stood the spears.' This was the custom then, as it now is among the Illyrians." These kinds of criticisms hinder the logical appeal of the tragic plot and hinder the production of the tragic pleasure.

The object of narrative exhortation is "things as they were or are." Therefore, the preacher-poet may be criticized because his (or her) representations are not "things as they ought to be" (idealized) or "things as they are said or thought to be" (common opinion). A particular problem is the fact of history that contradicts the common opinion of the contemporary congregation. For instance, in "The Stranger at the Well" Jesus is represented as wearing a turban. The historical fact is that Jesus "probably wore
the customary white turban on his head, since no Jewish teacher of that day would appear with the head uncovered." Yet, common opinion probably doesn't think of Jesus in a turban.  

The Logical Appeal and the Language of Representation

The vehicle of expression is language, -- either current terms or, it may be, rare words or metaphors. There are also many modifications of language, which we concede to the poets. The very freedom the poet has with regard to language may hinder the logical appeal. The poet may avoid such problems by noting the "difficulties" in other poets' use of language. Therefore, the poet must be careful about the rare word, the metaphorical expression, the mode of reading a word (accent or breathing), punctuation, ambiguity of meaning, and usage of language, particularly a word that "seems to imply some contradiction." It will either help or hinder the logical appeal of his tragic plot and its subsequent tragic pleasure. This freedom of language is evident in both "The Stranger at the Well" and "The Art of Wave Walking." Each instance within each sermon must be evaluated to determine its affect upon the logical appeal of that particular sermon.

The Logical Appeal and the Correctness of Representation

There are two errors of "correctness" that affect the logical appeal of poetry: technical and artistic. A technical error results from a lack of knowledge.
Representing "a horse as throwing out both his off legs at once" or introducing "technical inaccuracies in medicine" are examples of this error. Aristotle concludes that "not to know that a hind has no horns is a less serious matter than to paint it inartistically." A technical error is less serious than an artistic error because it "is not essential to the poetry." 24

An artistic error results from a lack of ability. The poet has the proper knowledge of his subject but has "imitated it incorrectly through want of capacity." This kind of error is inherent in the poetry itself. Therefore, it is the artistic error Aristotle discusses. The basic artistic error is introducing an irrational element into the plot. An irrational element is anything opposing or exceeding the laws of nature. This undermines the logical appeal of the plot. 25

The logical appeal of the poetic art rests upon the principle that "what is possible is persuasive." Since the primary object of poetic imitation is a life-situation embodying "what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity," the poetic art is inherently persuasive. Aristotle says, "Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated." Rhetorical persuasion is a direct demonstration by argumentation of a particular truth. Poetic persuasion is an indirect
demonstration by representation of a universal truth. The rhetorical demonstration is the enthymeme. The poetic demonstration is the plot. But the plot must be free from any irrational element.  

The irrational element may be inherent in a particular action or in the relationship of actions. Irrationality in the relation of actions must be excluded. Irrational actions, themselves, should be excluded. If an irrational action cannot be excluded completely it should at least be outside of the plot. However, once the irrational action has been introduced into the plot it must be given "an air of likelihood." Then it must be accepted in spite of its absurdity. Homer does this with the landing of Odysseus on the shore of Ithaca involving the magic ship of the Phaeacians so fast that "not even a falcon wheeling downwind, swiftest bird, could stay abreast of her in that most arrowy flight through open water" and the magic slumber of Odysseus "soft and deep like the still sleep of death" and the miracle worked by Poseidon when he swam up behind the Phaeacian's ship and "struck her into stone, rooted in stone, at one blow of his palm." The absurdity is concealed by the poetic charm of his language.  

The irrational action, however, has wider scope in epic poetry than in tragedy. This is because in epic the person acting is not seen. The pursuit of Hektor by Achilleus is an example.
Achilleus was closing upon him in the likeness of the lord of battles, the helm-shining warrior, and shaking from above his shoulder the dangerous Pelian ash spear, while the bronze that closed about him was shining like the flare of blazing fire or the sun in its rising. And the shivers took hold of Hektor when he saw him, and he could no longer stand his ground there, but left the gates behind, and fled, frightened, and Peleus' son went after him in the confidence of his quick feet. As when a hawk in the mountains who moves lightest of things flying makes his effortless swoop for a trembling dove, but she slips away from beneath and flies and he shrill screaming close after her plunges for her again and again, heart furious to take her; so Achilleus went straight for him in fury, but Hektor fled away under the Trojan wall and moved his knees rapidly.... they ran for the life of Hektor, breaker of horses. As when about the turnposts racing single-foot horses run at full speed, when a great prize is laid up for their winning, a tripod or a woman, in games for a man's funeral, so these two swept whirling about the city of Priam in the speed of their feet, while all the gods were looking upon them.... But swift Achilleus kept unremittingly after Hektor, chasing him, as a dog in the mountains who has flushed from his covert a deer's fawn follows him through the folding ways and the valleys, and though the fawn crouched down under a bush and be hidden he keeps running and noses him out until he comes on him; so Hektor could not lose himself from swift-footed Peleion. If ever he made a dash right on for the gates of Dardanos to get quickly under the strong-built bastions, endeavouring that they from above with missiles thrown might somehow defend him, each time Achilleus would get in front and force him to turn back into the plain, and himself kept his flying course next to the city. As in a dream a man is not able to follow one who runs from him, nor can the runner escape, nor the other pursue him, so he could not run him down in his speed, nor the other get clear.... But brilliant Achilleus kept shaking his head at his own people and would not let them throw their bitter projectiles at Hektor for fear the thrower might win the glory, and himself come second. But when for the fourth time they had come around to the well springs then the Father balanced his golden scales, and in them he set two fateful portions of death, which lays men prostrate, one
for Achilleus, and one for Hektor, breaker of horses, and balanced it by the middle; and Hektor's death-day was heavier and dragged downward toward death, and Phoibos Apollo forsook him.  

This would be ludicrous upon the stage but in the epic poem the absurdity passes unnoticed.

Aristotle would like to exclude the irrational action altogether. To introduce it is an artistic error working against the logical appeal of the plot. However, he makes "a characteristic concession to human infirmity."

Irrational actions are acceptable if they are made to seem reasonable. Homer is the master at representing irrational actions in an acceptable manner. It is the "art of telling lies skillfully." It rests upon a kind of "fallacy" or false reasoning illustrated in the Bath Scene of the Odyssey. The disguised Odysseus tells Penelope he has entertained Odysseus in Crete. His detailed description of Odysseus is recognized by Penelope to be true. She falsely infers that, since a host knows the appearance of his guest, the disguised Odysseus who knows it has actually been the host. The fallacy is that of "reasoning rightly from a false principle." At the outset the poet is permitted to create his own environment. This environment may include irrational presuppositions such as

...imaginary persons, strange situations, incredible adventures. By vividness of narrative and minuteness of detail, and, above all, by the natural sequence of incident (action) and motive, things are made to happen exactly as they would have happened had the fundamental fiction been
fact. The effects are so plausible, so life-like, that we yield ourselves instinctively to the illusion, and infer the existence of the supposed cause. For the time being we do not pause to dispute the origin of the original falsehood on which the whole fabric is reared.

Therefore, after the acceptance of the poet’s original falsehood, plausibility is achieved, above all, by a sequence of causally connected actions. It is this careful construction of the plot that makes the irrational not only acceptable but even inevitable.

Still the introduction of an irrational action into a plot violates the correctness of the poetic art. This is true even when it is made to seem reasonable. Yet this error is justified because it results in the creation of wonder. There is a wonder inherent in intellectual discovery. It depends upon the rational. It is a manifestation of the desire to know. Poetic satisfies the desire to know how and why men act. There is a wonder inherent in the discovery of such knowledge. However, there is another kind of wonder required in tragedy (and presumably also in epic) that depends upon the irrational. Consequently, the poet, paradoxically, must violate one of the rules of his art by introducing an irrational action into the plot in order to produce one of the requirements of his art: the pleasure of the wonderful. However, it is not justified if the same wonder can be produced without violating the correctness of the poetic art. The creation of wonder, then, sometimes justifies the violation of poetic
correctness. Yet, there remains a difference between tragedy and epic in the application of this principle. Tragedy, unlike epic, cannot tolerate even the irrationality of an action such as the pursuit of Hektor. It is limited to what can be successfully placed upon the stage. Still, even if such an action could be successfully staged, the wonder it produces is not justification enough for its inclusion in tragedy. In tragedy wonder must contribute to the tragic pleasure. Therefore, "tragic wonder" must rest only upon the irrational element inherent in the tragic action itself: the thought that anyone would consider or commit an act of physical violence against a close blood-relative. And it should find heightened expression through the plot where the fearful and pathetic actions are made to happen unexpectedly but logically. It should, in turn, find its most "startling effect" in the "startling discovery" or recognition by the hero that he has planned or performed an act of physical violence against a close blood-relative.\[31\]

The two errors of correctness, technical and artistic, also affect the logical appeal of narrative exhortation. A technical error is more serious than an artistic error because accurate Scriptural knowledge is essential to the integrity of expository preaching. Still, an artistic error must be avoided. The basic artistic error is introducing an irrational element into the plot. The principle for
avoiding problems related to the irrational is this: artistic representation of emotion, action, and character must be true to human nature generally and to the life-situation specifically. In narrative exhortation the miraculous, such as the wave walking of Jesus and Peter, are not related to the problem of the irrational. They are reasonable according to the analogy of Scripture. The Scriptural presupposition is that the historical continuum has been rent by the interference of God in Christ resulting in the "miracles" recorded in Scripture.  

In narrative exhortation wonder also contributes to the production and intensification of aesthetic pleasure. Rational wonder goes beyond intellectual knowledge of how and why men act to an intellectual knowledge of how and why God acts culminating, often, in an experimental knowledge of God Himself. Irrational wonder rests only upon the irrational element inherent in the Scriptural life-situation itself: the thought that anyone would consider or commit an act contrary to the character of God. This wonder finds heightened expression in the recognition by a Scriptural character that he or she has planned or performed an act contrary to the character of God. This wonder finds its most startling effect in the startling discovery of God's grace.  

**Ethical**

Character, according to Aristotle, is the manifestation
of moral purpose in speech and action. The character of the hero contributes to the production of the tragic emotions and subsequent tragic pleasure. However, every expression of character within the plot must do the same. In order to do this every expression of character must adhere to the principles of goodness, propriety, true to lifeness, and consistency.

In respect of Character there are four things to be aimed at. First, and most important, it must be good. Now any speech or action that manifests moral purpose of any kind will be expressive of character: the character will be good if the purpose is good. This rule is relative to each class. Even a woman may be good, and also a slave; though the woman may be said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless. The second thing to aim at is propriety. There is a type of manly valour; but valour in a woman, or unscrupulous cleverness, is inappropriate. Thirdly, character must be true to life: for this is a distinct thing from goodness and propriety, as here described. The fourth point is consistency: for though the subject of the imitation, who suggested the type, be inconsistent, still he must be consistently inconsistent. Any violation of these principles of character undermines the ethical basis of tragic pleasure. The artistic representation of character must be true to human nature generally and to the life-situation specifically.

Character, like action, must rest upon probability or necessity.

As in the structure of the plot, so too in the portraiture of character, the poet should always aim either at the necessary or the probable. Thus a person of a given character should speak or act in a given way, by the rule either of necessity or of probability; just as this event should follow
that by necessary or probable sequence.\textsuperscript{35}

The agent of poetic pleasure is the plot. The plot embodies three modes of pleasure: emotional, logical, and ethical. Poetry, in terms of its subjective purpose, may even be defined as the faculty of observing in any given life-situation the available means of pleasure.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Summary}

The subjective purpose of the poetic art is the production of aesthetic pleasure within the mind of the perceiver. The aesthetic pleasure of the poetic art is the pleasure of learning a universal truth through the recognition of its likeness within a particular life-situation. This pleasure is produced and intensified by means of emotional, logical and ethical elements inherent in the plot. Since both the objective and the subjective purposes of the poetic art are achieved through the construction of the plot there is no tension between exposition and exhortation. The poetic method appropriate for preaching upon the narrative portions of Scripture is artistic representation in dramatic narrative form of a Scriptural life-situation by means of prose language alone for the purpose of aesthetic pleasure.
Notes


2 Butcher, p. 209; Aristotle, *Poetics*, XIV. 1453b 22-26; XXVI. 1462b 12-14; XIV. 1453b 10-11; XXIII. 1459a 17-21; Butcher, p. 238; XIV. 1453b 1-14.


4 Aristotle, *Poetics* XIII. 1453a 5-12.


8 Else, p. 383; Above, p. 69; Above, p. 84.

9 Aristotle, *Poetics* XI. 1452a 22-29; Above, p. 69;
Above, p. 84.

10 Aristotle, *Poetics* XI. 1452a 29; 1452b 3; Above, p. 64, 67, 69, 80, 81.

11 Aristotle *Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher, XI. 1452b 9-10; IV. 1452a 1-4; Above, p. 92.

12 Above, p. 69.


14 Else, p. 438.

15 Else, p. 439.

16 Above, pp. 68,69.


18 Else, p. 449.


1460b 8-11.


1460b 33-1461a 4.


1460b 11-13.


1460b 15-23; 30-33.

1460b 15-23; 30-33.

16; trans. S. H. Butcher, IX. 1451a 38-39; Aristotle,

Butcher, XXIV. 1460a 27-1460b 2; Homer, *Odyssey*, trans.

28 Aristotle, *Poetics* XXIV. 1460a 11-18; Homer, *Iliad*,

1460a 18-26; Homer, *Odyssey* XIX. 164-260; Butcher, pp.
172-173, 178.

30 Butcher, p. 173.

31 Aristotle, *Poetics* XXIV. 1460a 11-18; XXV. 1460b
24-30; *Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher, IX. 1452a 1-11; X.
1452 16-21; *Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher, XIV. 1454a 4;
*Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher, XVI. 1455a 17.

32 A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*
(Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963),
pp. 6-10.

33 Rudolf Bultmann, "The Question of Wonder," in *Faith*
and *Understanding*, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith (New

34 Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher, XV. 1454a
16-28; Above, pp. 13-17.


CHAPTER V.
CONCLUSION

The history of preaching involves the history of the tension between exposition and exhortation. Exposition is interpretation. Exhortation is application. Preaching requires both exposition and exhortation. The essential problem for preaching is how exposition and exhortation are related. Preaching based upon narrative portions of Scripture, like preaching generally, often fails to resolve the relationship between exposition and exhortation. It often fails because it eliminates exposition by ignoring the narrative and concentrating on thoughts drawn from the narrative. It also often fails because it eliminates exhortation by being preoccupied with elaborate descriptions that not only obscure the narrative but ignore the thoughts the narrative teaches. The result, in either instance, is not preaching because it fails to include both exposition and exhortation. And the result in the one instance is not true exposition because it obscures the narrative text rather than interprets it. Narrative exposition, then, often fails for want of a proper method. Aristotle's Poetica provides a basis for a method of exposition that is "distinctively appropriate" for preaching upon the narrative
portions of Scripture. It overcomes the inherent difficulty of preaching by unifying exposition and exhortation. It overcomes the inherent difficulty of narrative exposition by interpreting the form as well as the content. It continues to benefit from the strength of traditional homiletics.

**Narrative Exposition of a Scriptural Action**

Imitation is artistic representation. Aristotle defines poetic imitation on the basis of its medium, objects, and manner. Its medium is by means of language alone. Its objects are the character, emotion, and action of men. Its manner is in dramatic or narrative form by the assumption of a character other than one's own. Its practice requires an understanding of the imitative process; a basic understanding of character traits and common emotions; knowing how the various types of character and emotion are manifest in physical actions; and capacity for imaginative visualization and identification with prospective scenes in order to represent their actions. Poetic imitation appropriate for preaching upon the narrative portions of Scripture is artistic representation in narrative form of the true to life character, emotion, and action of men by means of prose language alone.

The application of this theory to the exposition of a Scriptural action involves these steps:
1. The selection of a Scriptural action for exposition.

2. The interpretation (exegesis) of the Scriptural action.

3. The analysis of the Scriptural action in order to understand the character, emotion, and action it contains.

4. The representation of the Scriptural action.

**Narrative Exposition of a Scriptural Life-Situation**

The objective purpose of narrative exposition is the artistic representation of a universal Scriptural truth in its appropriate form. The universal truth of narrative exposition is typical human life manifest through character, emotion, and action within a Scriptural life-situation.

The primary object of narrative exposition is a Scriptural life-situation. The poet-preacher represents a life-situation by making a plot of it based upon dramatic principles. This results in the arrangement of a life-situation's actions into an organic unity. This unity is manifest in wholeness, proper magnitude, and universality. Narrative exposition is the artistic representation in dramatic narrative form of a single Scriptural life-situation by means of prose language alone. It overcomes the inherent difficulty of narrative exposition by retaining the unity of form and content. The application of this theory to the exposition of a Scriptural life-situation involves these steps:
1. The selection of a narrative portion of Scripture.

2. The interpretation (exegesis) of the narrative.

3. The analysis of the narrative in order to discover a life-situation with proper unity and universality.

4. The analysis of the life-situation in order to understand the character, emotion, and action it contains.

5. The formulation of the proposition expressing a timeless spiritual truth drawn from the life-situation.

6. The representation of the life-situation utilizing the plot in harmony with the proposition.

**Narrative Exhortation**

The subjective purpose of narrative exposition is the production of aesthetic pleasure within the mind of the perceiver. The aesthetic pleasure of narrative exposition is the pleasure of learning a universal Scriptural truth through the recognition of its likeness within a particular Scriptural life-situation. This pleasure is produced and intensified by means of emotional, logical, and ethical elements inherent in the sermonic plot. The pleasure produced is that distinctive of the particular Scriptural life-situation.

**Emotional Mode of Pleasure**

The sermonic plot portrays an individual of the Scriptural life-situation who contributes to the production
and intensification of the emotions inherent in the life-situation. It embodies any change of fortune present in the Scriptural life-situation producing and intensifying the emotions inherent in the life-situation. It rests upon a significant action that produces the emotions inherent in the life-situation. It turns upon actions of recognition and reversal that intensify the emotions inherent in the life-situation. In the sermonic plot the emotions inherent in the Scriptural life-situation and the subsequent aesthetic pleasure flow from the perceiver's identification with one of the characters of the Scriptural life-situation. The plot is developed from this character's point of view. This is the character through whom the preacher speaks.

Logical Mode of Pleasure

The basis of the logical appeal in narrative exhortation is the cause and effect relationship of the actions in the Scriptural life-situation. However, the logical appeal of narrative exhortation has three major problem areas: those related to the object of representation, those related to the language of representation, and those related to the correctness of representation. A particular problem related to the object of representation is the fact of history that contradicts the common opinion of the contemporary congregation.

These two errors of correctness, technical and artistic, also affect the logical appeal of narrative
exhortation. Unlike Aristotle's secular poetic, a technical error is more serious than an artistic error because accurate Scriptural knowledge is essential to the integrity of expository preaching. Still, as in Aristotle's poetic, an artistic error is significant and ought to be avoided. The basic artistic error is introducing an irrational element into the plot. The principle for avoiding problems related to the irrational is this: artistic representation of emotion, action, and character must be true to human nature generally and to the life-situation specifically. In narrative exhortation the miraculous, such as the wave walking of Jesus and Peter, are not related to the problem of the irrational. They are reasonable according to the analogy of Scripture. The Scriptural presupposition is that the historical continuum has been rent by the interference of God in Christ resulting in the "miracles" recorded in Scripture.

In narrative exhortation wonder also contributes to the production and intensification of aesthetic pleasure. Here the Aristotelian concept of wonder is expanded for in a sacred context rational wonder goes beyond intellectual knowledge of how and why men act to an intellectual knowledge of how and why God acts culminating, often, in an experimental knowledge of God Himself. Irrational wonder rests only upon the irrational element inherent in the Scriptural life-situation itself: the thought that anyone
would consider or comit an act contrary to the character of God. This wonder finds heightened expression in the recognition by a Scriptural character that he or she has planned or performed an act contrary to the character of God. This wonder finds its most startling effect in the startling discovery of God's grace.

**Ethical Mode of Pleasure**

Every expression of character within the sermonic plot must contribute to the production and intensification of the emotions inherent in the Scriptural life-situation and the subsequent aesthetic pleasure distinctive of that particular life-situation. In order to do this the artistic representation of character must be true to human nature generally and to the Scriptural life-situation specifically.

The agent of aesthetic pleasure is the plot. The plot embodies three modes of pleasure: emotional, logical, and ethical. Narrative exhortation is the faculty of observing in any given Scriptural life-situation the available means of pleasure.

The poetic method appropriate for preaching upon the narrative portions of Scripture is artistic representation in dramatic narrative form of a Scriptural life-situation by means of prose language alone for the purpose of aesthetic pleasure.
Weaknesses

The method of narrative exposition developed in this study may have these weaknesses:

1. Poetic preaching may require more sustained attention from the congregation than traditional homiletics based on rhetoric. Therefore, it may be best utilized along with point to point rhetorical development of the lessons.

2. Poetic preaching may not be readily acceptable to congregations used to the traditional homiletical method. Therefore, congregations may need to be educated to accept it.

3. Poetic preaching may influence the preacher to adopt a manuscript delivery. Therefore, the preacher may need to be cautioned against turning the practical art of preaching into a fine art.

4. Concepts such as "wonder" "pleasure" "mimesis" "pleasure" and the "hero" are expanded when Aristotle's Greek vocabulary is placed in a sacred context. Aristotel's wonder (the desire to know finite relationships) is humbler than Christian wonder which seeks to know ultimate questions. The Greek hero was an antiquated concept that Aristotle refurbished from the feudal and heroic periods; it has no strict hebraic counterpart. Thus such terms must sometimes be applied imaginatively rather than literally.

Suggestions For Further Study

This study needs to be followed by other studies:

1. The problem of the narrative exposition of Scripture needs to be addressed by individuals with other interpretations of the Poetics.

2. The problem of the narrative exposition of Scripture needs to be addressed by individuals who will expand Aristotle's insight with information from major modern disciples such as psychology.
3. There needs to be an investigation of the possibilities for utilizing the principles of Aristotelian poetics in secular rhetorical situations especially those requiring epideictic.

4. The problem of the narrative exposition of Scripture needs to be addressed by individuals familiar with contemporary narrative theory.


Lionel Crocker, ed. *Harry Emerson Fosdick's Art of Preaching: an Anthology*. Springfield, Illinois:


Richard A. Jensen. *Telling the Story: Variety and*


James Wiggins, ed.  Religion as Story-Literary and

VITA

William Sherman Phillips, Jr. was born in Brainerd, Minnesota. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Grand Canyon College in Phoenix, Arizona in 1962. He received his Master of Divinity degree in Theology from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas in 1965. He received his Master of Arts degree in Speech from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas in 1967. He is presently pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Helena, Montana. He is married to Laura Jean Pust Phillips and has two children, Will and Heather.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: William S. Phillips, Jr.

Major Field: Speech

Title of Dissertation: The Christian Preacher As Poet: A Method For Exposition Of Narrative Portions Of Scripture Based On Aristotle's Poetics

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

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