There has been a movement which might be called "Christian romantic mythopoesis." This includes the religious fantasy of George MacDonald, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Madeleine L'Engle. According to Tolkien, "just as speech is invention about objects and ideas, so myth is invention about truth" (Carpenter 147). For Lewis, it is through myth that "we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction" (Lewis 1970, 66). The hero of his science-fiction fantasy Perelandra discovers that "the triple distinction of truth from myth and both from fact was purely terrestrial" (Lewis 1944, 144). Myth, Lewis would say, is truer than fact. Such writers, in true romantic fashion, have fused art and religion.

In summary, a number of literary artists and critics outside of conventional biblical criticism have, during the twentieth century, warmed up to biblical religion. The split that took place between religion and literature shortly after Coleridge may well be coming together in the final decades of this century. Literature would seem to be a more natural ally to religion than history, for history searches into particulars whereas literature is more concerned with universals. C.S. Lewis bluntly pointed out how the historical-critical approach of biblical critics is at odds with good literary criticism:

> Whatever these men may be as Bible critics, I distrust them as critics. They seem to me to lack literary judgment, to be imperceptive about the very quality of the texts they are reading.... These men ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the old texts; the evidence is their obvious inability to read (in any sense worth discussing) the lines themselves. They claim to see fern-seed and

can't see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight.
(Lewis 1975, 106, 111)

The 'Bible as Literature' Movement

The twentieth-century 'Bible as Literature' movement has played a pivotal role in this gradual coming together of biblical and literary criticism. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold sought to elevate poetry to the status of religion. It was only a matter of time before literary criticism would want to explore the poetic dimension of religious literature. Arnold's own Literature and Dogma (1873) was, in fact, a call for (and early attempt at) this very thing. Shortly thereafter, Richard Moulton's textbook and biblical anthology (see Chapter Seven) charted the course for this forerunner of modern literary study of the Bible.

The phrase "the Bible as Literature" began to appear soon after the publication of Bishop Robert Lowth's De sacra poesi Hebraeorum in 1753. When his lectures were translated and published in 1829, the editor, Calvin E. Stowe, repeatedly referred to "the literature of the Bible." But the name which finally stuck was taken from an 1896 collection of essays, The Bible as Literature.

During the first half of the twentieth century, literary critics believed that the Bible was either too sacred, too heterogeneous, or too crude to be considered a work of literature. As recently as 1959, Dame Helen Gardner expressed reservations about the literary study of the Bible which was then current, remarking that she valued Mark's gospel "precisely because of its lack of literary quality," i.e. as the product of honest, uneducated sincerity (Gardner 101).

Americans have been more open to this movement than Europeans. Because of the disestablishment of religion here, the American university has been an ideal setting for working out a totally nonsectarian approach to the Bible. Richard Moulton is perhaps the first to have introduced a course in 'the Bible as Literature' into a university curriculum, which he did at the University of Chicago at the turn of the century.

Individuals within the 'Bible as Literature' movement published (A) anthologies and other creative arrangements of biblical literature, and (B) literary-critical discussions of the Bible.

A. Anthologies, Abridgments, and related editorial creations.

Even though the Bible was originally an anthology of Hebrew religious literature, the longstanding sacredness of Scripture seems to have discouraged further anthologizing until the present century. There have been two motivations for such modern editing of the Bible. One has been to classify biblical texts into their respective literary forms. This concern is evident in Moulton's Modern Reader's Bible (1899) as well as James Muilenburg's Specimens of Biblical Literature (1923). The only difference among such anthologies has to do with the particular editor's system of genre classification.

The second motivation for anthologizing has been readability. Matthew Arnold's concern that Bible reading remain part of the standard educational curriculum led him to prepare a special edition of Isaiah 40-66 for children. But twentieth-century editors have gone far beyond this. Edgar Goodspeed and J.M. Powis Smith edited

The Short Bible (1933), which eliminates whole passages and rearranges books into the chronological order of their composition. According to Ernest Sutherland Bates, editor of The Bible Designed to Be Read as Living Literature (1936), the traditional length and format of the Bible are simply too forbidding for modern readers:

> The finest aesthetic qualities may be ruined by redundancy and irrelevance, and from the literary point of view the Bible is full of both. . . . Thus, one is emboldened to proclaim the final heresy--that the part is greater than the whole, and that, for literary appreciation, one wants not all the Bible but the best of it. (Bates x-xi)

Bates groups the Old Testament books into three parts: the historical books, the prophetical books, and finally "poetry, drama, fiction, and philosophy." The order of the New Testament books remains intact, except that the letters of Paul are rearranged according to their presumed dates of composition. Simon & Schuster is presently revising Bates's 1936 anthology for reissue in 1995.

Closely related to this kind of anthology is the abridgment. The four gospel accounts had been condensed into a single 'synoptic' as early as Tatian's Diatessaron in the second century. But in Moulton's 1895 textbook, there appears an advertisement for The Bible Abridged, edited by David Greene Haskins, and published by D.C. Heath & Co. A similar work, The Dartmouth Bible (1950), quickly became a favorite among 'Bible as Literature' instructors.

Yet another approach is to experiment not so much with the biblical text as with the format. The text of The Bible for Today, edited by John Stirling (Oxford, 1941), is the original King James Version. What is novel is the layout, introductory essays, and art work. Texts such as "the word of the Lord endureth forever" are

illustrated with a picture of a bombed out village; care for the sick is illustrated by a Red Cross nurse bringing provisions to the bedridden, etc. This is a good example of how, instead of going back in time to seek the original meaning of the text, the Bible is encouraged to speak directly to contemporary issues.

B. Literary-Critical Discussions of the Bible.

Works of criticism within the 'Bible as Literature' movement may be evaluated along two continua:

1. Analysis or Appreciation?

Early twentieth-century literary treatments tended to offer highly apologetical appreciations rather than serious textual analyses. Often they were as interested in promoting and defending a literary approach to the Bible as they were in actually carrying it out. And when they did make a serious attempt, it would generally be appreciative remarks <u>about</u> biblical literature rather than careful study of it.[2]

The problem with appreciative criticism is that it often tends toward sweeping evaluative generalizations rather than to carefully supported critical interpretation and assessment. There is also the danger of descending into sentimentalism; this happened regularly in the early part of this century.[3]

Perhaps the explanation behind such 'lite' treatments is that much of the Bible was still difficult to justify as literary writing. The art of biblical poetry had been demonstrated by Lowth two centuries earlier. But prior to Auerbach's groundbreaking work, even the most ardent promoters of the 'Bible as Literature' had very little to say about biblical narrative. And when they did venture

to comment, their remarks now strike us as hopelessly dated.[4] Those works which went beyond appreciation to actually carry out detailed textual study tended to do so from the standpoint of comparative literature, and with a classical orientation.[5] This filtering of biblical literature through a classical grid declined as the Bible began to be compared with folk literatures other than the Greek. It declined further as the literary approach became more sure of itself.[6]

2. Purist or Eclectic?

Literary purists were convinced that literary study of the Bible ought not to be combined with religious or historical-critical approaches.[7] Most writers, however, have tended toward eclecticism. While maintaining the theoretical distinctiveness of the literary approach, they nevertheless practice a blend of approaches.[8] The eclectic literary critic of the Bible will, as a rule, favor dogmatic religious interpretation or historical criticism--but not both.[9]

Breakthroughs in Genre and Narrative

The two great twentieth-century contributions to literary study of the Bible have to do with breakthroughs in GENRE (which have helped liberate biblical study from historical genre categories) and in the reading of realistic ("history-like") NARRATIVE.

Nineteenth-century critics had understood the importance of genre in recognizing that the keys to interpretation of a literary work inevitably come from a comparison with other similar works.

But what is meant by "similar?" In his 1895 textbook, Moulton adopted a neoclassical arrangement of genre categories. Books of the Bible were thus compared with classical literature. Writers in the early decades of the twentieth century tended toward a comparison with similar works of the same biblical period and cultural milieu. However, Arthur J. Culler's Creative Religious Literature: A New Literary Study of the Bible (1930) pointed out that genre categories need not be dictated by historical considerations; they can (and perhaps ought to) arise from thematic and formal criteria.[10]

Literary appreciation of biblical poetry is nothing new, and countless studies in this area will now be skipped over in order to discuss what is undoubtedly the most exciting development in twentieth-century literary study of the Bible. This is the growing appreciation for and understanding of the art of biblical narrative. During the early years of the 'Bible as Literature' movement, there was as yet little understanding of the complexity and subtlety of biblical narrative. The exception appears in an 1896 essay, "What is Art?" by the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910).[11]

Prior to Auerbach, an occasional critic would at least try to discover artistic merit in biblical narrative, even if he couldn't quite find it. In The Literary Genius of the New Testament (1932), for example, P.C. Sands offers the standard excuse for what was perceived to be a lack of literary art in the gospels. According to Sands, "the motto 'We are witnesses' imposes narrow limits upon the editor or composer of these records. In the faithful repetition of

the sayings of Jesus, and the bare recital of what the disciples claimed to have seen, there seems little scope for literary genius" (Sands 2). Nevertheless, as Sands points out, "Story-telling, even of true stories, is not a simple business. It is significant that the most popular Gospel, that of Luke, is that which shows the greatest literary qualities" (Sands 2).

G. Wilson Knight's The Christian Renaissance (1933) is also devoted to demonstrating the literary nature of the New Testament. Perhaps Knight's most insightful observation is that poetry and history-writing have something in common: both are "creative abstractions from reality" (cited in Minor 334).

At first, the New Criticism had little to offer, for its original interest had been poetry. But subsequent New Critics took an interest in the workings of prose fiction. For example, Wellek and Warren's Theory of Literature (1942) includes a chapter on "The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction." Similarly, John Crowe Ransom, in an essay entitled "The Understanding of Fiction" (1950), asks to what extent the understanding of poetry may be applied to the understanding of fiction. His proposal is that "fictional analogues of lyrical moments" may be sought.

The Gospel of John received literary attention earlier than the three 'synoptic' gospels, for it least resembles historical writing. Early twentieth-century writers found a dramatic unity in the book. For example, F.R.M. Hitchcock's "Is the Fourth Gospel a Drama?" (1923), answers in the affirmative. Clayton R. Bowen's "The Fourth Gospel as Dramatic Material" (1930) asserts that John's gospel is in no sense a narrative, for it lacks a coherent plot.

Serious explorations of the literary dimension of biblical narrative began appearing in the 1940's. The work of Edward Robertson was among the first. His "The Plot of the Book of Ruth" (1941) and "Old Testament Stories: Their Purpose and Their Art" (1944) appeared in the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library. His interest in storytelling and the embellishment of facts to produce effect is essentially a rhetorical approach.

The Golden Years: The Old Testament Narrative as Literature (1947) by Brooke Peters Church anthologizes a number of the narrative portions of the Old Testament. In an effort to isolate the 'literary' qualities of each passage, it examines themes, forms, and literary techniques. It also includes a running comparison with ancient Greek literary practices.

Three insightful studies in the Gospel of Mark now arrived in quick succession. Auerbach's Mimesis (1946) maintains that Mark's characterization of Peter is one that could not have been written from within the classical tradition. According to Auerbach, Mark's revolutionary view of reality has made his writing a model for realism within the Western literary tradition.

A second study in Mark was Morton S. Enslin's "The Artistry of Mark" (1947). Enslin's analysis of the themes and structure of the gospel show conscious artistic shaping, and not mere editorial redacting.

The third study is by Austin Farrer, a theologian with literary training who continues in the symbolist/formalist tradition of T.S. Eliot. In his Bampton Lectures for 1948, published as The Glass of Vision (1948), the concluding lecture is entitled "The

Poetry of the New Testament." Here Farrer offers a literary argument in defense of the 'abrupt' ending to Mark's gospel:

> [This] is a literary debate: and if we try to defend the abrupt ending, we must do it by literary arguments. . . . The purpose of our arguments must be to show that the last line is inevitable in its finality--we must show that, so far from its being impossible for St. Mark to stop here, it would be impossible for him to go on. . . . I do not want you to be convinced that my argument is conclusive, I want to persuade you that it is the proper sort of argument for the purpose, and that it belongs to the **genre** of literary criticism.
>
> (Farrer 1948, 138-39, emphasis his)

Three years later, Farrer published a complete literary analysis of Mark's gospel, A Study in St. Mark (1951). Farrer finds the book to be a great and complex symbol of the resurrection--"whatever his [Mark's] materials or sources, he dominated them" (Farrer 1951, vi). Farrer also discusses and defends the historical sense of the gospel, although this did not successfully fend off the criticism of Helen Gardner: "As literary criticism, I cannot regard the new symbolical or typological approach to the Gospels as satisfactory" (Gardner 126).

Symbolists will find never-ending possibilities in the Book of Revelation. Such is Farrer's A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse (1949). Here is a detailed study of the literary structure, themes, and imagery of apocalyptic literature. This is a genre that even D.H. Lawrence, whose general disgust for the Bible (a result of early force-feeding) is well known, couldn't resist tackling in Apocalypse (1932).

The Anatomy of Criticism (1957) by Northrop Frye (1912-90) signaled the beginning of the end of the New Criticism. It is also

largely responsible for the sustained attention to literary theory, which began in the 1960's and continues up to the present. The Anatomy of Criticism sketched the outlines of what an archetypal approach to the Bible might resemble. Frye's disillusionment with historical biblical criticism is evident:

> The absence of any genuinely literary criticism of the Bible in modern times (until very recently) has left an enormous gap which all the new [historical] knowledge brought to bear on it is quite incompetent to fill. I feel that historical scholarship is without exception 'lower' or analytic criticism, and that 'higher' criticism would be a quite different activity... A genuine higher criticism of the Bible, therefore, would be a synthetizing process which would start with the assumption that the Bible is a definite myth, a single archetypal structure extending from creation to apocalypse. (Frye 315)

Frye does not deny that one of the purposes of the biblical literature was to record factual history. But he maintains that "even what is historical fact is not there because it is 'true' but because it is mythically significant" (Frye 325). He upholds the validity of literary study of the Bible while insisting that the Bible is not, strictly speaking, imaginative 'literature' (in the formalistic sense):

> The Bible may thus be examined from an aesthetic or Aristotelian point of view as a single form, as a story in which pity and terror, which in this context are the knowledge of good and evil, are raised and cast out. Or it may be examined from a Longinian point of view as a series of ecstatic moments or points of expanding apprehension--this approach is in fact the assumption on which every selection of a text for a sermon is based... Yet the Bible is 'more' than a work of literature... (Frye 326)

Frye's archetypal criticism finds the Bible to be a unified

whole. Howard Mumford Jones, in Five Essays on the Bible (1960), rebuts this notion. Jones holds that the Bible is an anthology of often contradictory documents and lacking in aesthetic unity. Nevertheless, its incomparable stylistic power can make us ignore these discontinuities.

Reactions Against the 'Bible as Literature' Movement

T.S. Eliot considered persons who enjoy the Bible "solely" because of its literary merit as "parasites." He expressed his position in "Religion and Literature" (1935):

> I could fulminate against the men of letters who have gone into ecstasies over 'the Bible as literature,' the Bible as 'the noblest monument of English prose.' Those who talk of the Bible as a 'monument of English prose' are merely admiring it as a monument over the grave of Christianity... The Bible has had a **literary** influence not because it has been considered as literature, but because it has been considered as the report of the Word of God. And the fact that men of letters now discuss it as 'literature' probably indicates the **end** of its 'literary' influence (Eliot 344-45, emphasis his).

Eliot's resistance here is ironic, given that his own poetry has led many a secular critic into the Bible. Moreover, the very stylistic concerns of critics such as Eliot and Richards (subtleties and shifts in tone, paradoxes, uses of wit, and irony) have won a prominent place in modern literary study of the Bible.

C.S. Lewis acknowledged that "the Bible, since it is after all literature, cannot properly be read except as literature; and the different parts of it as the different sorts of literature are" (Lewis 1958, 10). But his skepticism with regard to the 'Bible as Literature' movement is evident in a 1950 lecture, "The Literary

Impact of the Authorized Version:"

> I cannot help suspecting, if I may make an Irish bull, that those who read the Bible as literature do not read the Bible... I think it very unlikely that the Bible will return as a book unless it returns as a sacred book... It is, if you like to put it that way, not merely a sacred book but a book so remorselessly and continuously sacred that it does not invite, it excludes or repels, the **merely** aesthetic approach. You can read it as literature only by a tour de force. You are cutting the wood against the grain, using the tool for a purpose it was not intended to serve. It demands incessantly to be taken on its own terms: it will not continue to give literary delight very long except to those who go to it for something quite different.
> (Lewis 1950, 29-30, 33, emphasis mine)

Both Eliot and Lewis are careful to qualify their objection. Eliot is opposed to those who enjoy the Bible **solely** as literature; Lewis condemns the **merely** aesthetic approach.

Perhaps it is a bit surprising that religious fundamentalists have not been more vocal in opposing aesthetic study of the Bible. The reason is that fundamentalists and literary scholars are both ultimately concerned with the 'received' biblical text, i.e. the design of the largest literary units. Recall, for example (Chapter Three), how pre-critical biblical commentary exhibited considerable literary sensitivity. Passages such as Job or the gospel parables were never read as straightforward historical narration. James Barr claims that the mythical or literary mode of impact of the Bible is actually the primary (albeit unacknowledged) one. He reminds us that even in the most traditional cultures, the Bible

> furnished through use in liturgy, in art and in legend, the images and the coloring for a sort of mythology which permeated Christendom and which went far beyond the scope of the explicit doctrinal theology. In this respect, the effect of the Bible in the religious culture itself may be

> considered as closer to a literary than to a directly theological phenomenon. (Barr 16)

In this century, the Italian Jewish scholar, Umberto Cassuto, has demonstrated such a literary sensitivity from a conservative orientation. His article, "The Story of Tamar and Judah" (1929, reprinted 1973), argues that Genesis 38 is an integral part of Chapters 37-50, and that this larger unit fits within the larger unity of Genesis. Cassuto also gave a famous series of lectures in which he defended the literary unity of the Torah. They were published as The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch (1941). Cassuto conceives of the Torah as a document whose very contradictions are purposeful. Whereas historical critics point to the existence of two creation stories as evidence of two contrary traditions regarding origins, Cassuto demonstrates how these differences in style and outlook point up a subtle, complex, dialectical synthesis of theological truth. Unlike most biblical criticism of his day, Cassuto's work remains fresh.

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[1] In addition to the references listed under "Works Cited," I am indebted to the following sources for information in this chapter:

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[2] For example, J.H. Gardiner, a contemporary of Moulton's, taught a course on the Bible in Harvard University's Department of English. Gardiner's book, The Bible as English Literature (1906), is basically an apologetic for integrating the King James Bible into the traditional English curriculum. A Literary Guide to the Bible (1922) by Laura Wild, Professor of Biblical Literature at Mt. Holyoke College, discusses the value of studying folklore. Similarly, Duncan Black Macdonald's The Hebrew Literary Genius (1933) continues in the Herderian romantic tradition by offering an elaborate appreciation of Hebrew art and culture. Macdonald's area of specialization was Near Eastern studies, and he provides some fascinating biblical background material. But although his work is subtitled "An Interpretation, Being an Introduction to the Reading of the Old Testament," there is little serious exegetical work here.

[3] An example may be seen in Mary Ellen Chase's popular text, The Bible and the Common Reader (1944): "The best letters ever written are in the Bible, and St. Paul is the author of them, a more vivid letter writer than even Horace Walpole or Lord Chesterfield largely because he had far more important things to say. St. Paul is never dull..." (Chase 23).

[4] For example, even though Gardiner managed to break free from

Moulton's neoclassical genre framework (even including a chapter on "The Narrative"), the only kind of narrative art he is able to point to are the "simplicity" and "depth of feeling" of the biblical writers (Gardiner 34-35). He concludes the chapter,

> For these ancient writers, whether in the Old Testament or the New, there were no subtleties: they took note only of the solid facts of life; they had no interest in inferences and modifications and other complications of thought which might be built upon them. I can bring out this difference more concretely by an example from Browning's Saul. . . . The thought of the East was essentially simple. It knew only the objective and solid facts of which man has direct sensation, and the simple and primitive emotions which are his reaction to them. It has no perception of the subtler shades and shadows of feeling in which modern writers delight... (Gardiner 81,86)

In similar fashion, James Muilenburg describes the "simplicity" of biblical literature, and that its essential quality is its "absolute sincerity" (xxviii). Mark the evangelist is said to have been "carried away by his enthusiasm. . . . He plunges into a situation without any consideration as to the form in which he is to present his material" (xxiii). Muilenburg concludes that "it was not until Greek influence made itself felt [in the New Testament epistles] that there arose any complexity of thought" (Muilenburg xxxiii).

[5] cf. Horace Meyer Kallen's The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy (1918), which contains a chapter on "The Greek Influence on Hebrew Life and Letters." The old tropes-and-figures approach also continued into this century--one example is "Merismus in Biblical Hebrew" (1952) by A.M. Honeyman.

[6] As early as 1931, Charles Dinsmore noted that

> many of the books published to promote the appreciation of the Scriptures classify their contents according to literary types. The disadvantage of this method is apparent. It is analytical and fails to communicate the total effect of the writings. The power of all great literature lies in the impression which the drama or the story as a whole makes upon the mind. (Dinsmore v)

[7] Moulton eloquently expresses this viewpoint:

> Some, indeed, will admit that the historic and the literary studies are theoretically distinct; but why, they ask, should the two not be united in practice? They ought to be united, in the sense that the complete student will undertake both. But they must not be undertaken together; for the whole method and spirit of the two are in opposition. Historic analysis must sceptically question the very details which literary

> appreciation must rapidly combine into a common impression.... It is for the interest of accuracy in both studies that their procedures be kept distinct.
> (Moulton viii)

[8] Gardiner, for example, does not completely dissociate his literary approach from aspects of traditional religion: "In all my discussion I have assumed the fact of inspiration, but without attempting to define it or to distinguish between religious and literary inspiration" (Gardiner vi).

Charles Dinsmore, in The English Bible as Literature (1931), claims to be undertaking a literary approach:

> The Bible in recent times has passed through two distinct phases and is entering upon a third. There was a period when it was regarded as an infallible authority, the divine element was emphasized and the human overlooked; then came the age of the critic with his eager search for authors, dates, and documents; his main contentions have been established, his battle is losing its heat and absorbing interest. Now we are entering upon the era of appreciation. (Dinsmore v)

Nevertheless, the questions that are important for Dinsmore are frequently historical in nature: "In Part I, the author tries to answer the question how a people so insignificant in numbers and political importance could write a literature so significant" (Dinsmore vi). He also remains open to dogmatism: "If the increasing movement, beginning with our first parents and culminating in Christ and the Church, is a manifestation of the Divine Will, then the author of the book is God" (Dinsmore 15).

[9] Duncan Macdonald claims that his literary treatment should be less offensive to religious readers:

> I am well aware that this book will be strange and even repellent to two very different classes of readers. To the specialist in Old Testament criticism it will seem unscientific and even visionary, and to the worthy people for whom their Bible is still Sacred Scripture and the Word of God it may well seem destructive of their basis for eternal truth and even frivolous. To these last let me say that I am far nearer their position than they may at first think, and that the specialist may quite possibly classify me and my book as reactionary. The truth, I think, is that while all precise doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy--in any degree at all--have for me gone by the board, I have come more and more to recognize an eternal purpose in the history of the Hebrew people and a unique guidance behind them and in them. He who has once accepted the theistic position and realizes what it means will have little difficulty in taking this further step. I have therefore tried to show the Hebrew people expressing their innermost self--and selves--in

> their literature and to bring out very clearly that in the end this forces us back to the fact of Jehovah and His choice of them as His own peculiar people.
>
> (Macdonald xvii)

George Sprau's Literature in the Bible (1932) has equally high regard for religion, even if Sprau can't say anything good about the hermeneutics of its leaders:

> [T]he church has permitted the Bible to fall into the hands of little-minded clergymen and has given the sanction of authority to their stupid and ignorant attempts at interpretive criticism. There is no dogmatism like the dogmatism of the ignorant, and when ignorance is invested with authority, its power is supreme. . . . Literature and religion are nearly related, both reflecting the highest order of human experience coming from the realm of thought, emotion, and imagination that exalts man above the beast and reveals his kinship with the divine. Literature and religion are so delicately and intricately woven together in the contents of the Bible that it transcends all other books in the richness of artistic and spiritual values.
>
> (Sprau 14,21)

For other writers, there is less religious sympathy and greater affinity with historical-critical approaches. During the early years of the movement, a course in 'the Bible as Literature' meant, as often as not, a heavy dose of historical-critical study of the Bible. One finds that early 'literary' treatments of the Bible are frequently little more than warmed-over higher criticism. Such is The Bible as Literature: An Introduction (1914) by Irving Francis Wood, Professor Emeritus of Religion at Smith College, and Elihu Grant, Professor of Biblical Literature at Haverford College. These authors were thoroughly trained in historical biblical criticism--and it shows.

[10] David Robertson illustrates this new 'literary' understanding of genre:

> There is no a priori literary reason for preferring one context [for determining genre] over another. One critic may wish to study biblical hymns in the context of the ancient Near East, another may choose all hymns in the Western literary tradition from Moses to Harry Emerson Fosdick. To those who have approached the Bible from an historical perspective, the former may seem the obviously superior choice, but from a standpoint within literary criticism such a value judgment cannot be defended.
>
> (Robertson 9-10)

[11] Commenting on the Joseph story, Tolstoy discusses the universality of biblical art and comments on how biblical realism is implicit rather than explicit:

[The plot is] accessible alike to a Russian peasant, a Chinese, an African, a child, or an old man, educated or uneducated; and it is all written with such restraint, is so free from any superfluous detail, that the story may be told to any circle and will be equally comprehensible and touching to every one. . . .

The author of the novel of Joseph did not need to describe in detail, as would be done nowadays, the blood-stained coat of Joseph, the dwelling and dress of Jacob, the pose and attire of Potiphar's wife, and how, adjusting the bracelet on her left arm, she said, 'Come to me,' and so on...

("What is Art?" in Tolstoy 19:490-491)

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