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The Gospel and narrative performance: The critical assessment of meaning-as-correspondence in D. F. Strauss and R. Bultmann

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Rice University, 1992

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THE GOSPEL AND NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE:
THE CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF MEANING-AS-CORRESPONDENCE
IN D. F. STRAUSS AND R. BULTMANN

by

ROBERT GEORGE MOORE

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ABSTRACT

The Gospel and Narrative Performance: The Critical Assessment of Meaning-as-Correspondence in D. F. Strauss and R. Bultmann

by

Robert George Moore

The concept of meaning-as-correspondence is developed and employed to demonstrate how in the modern period the meaning of a narrative is conceived as a separate entity from the narrative itself. Meaning-as-correspondence is manifest in three modes: (1) as a referent to which a narrative points, (2) as an object that a narrative describes or (3) as a content that a narrative contains. As a preunderstanding of narrative, meaning-as-correspondence eclipses the power of narrative.

The enervating effect of meaning-as-correspondence on the interpretation of the gospels is demonstrated. The work of the Mythical School, D. F. Strauss and R. Bultmann is assessed. All employed a concept of myth to the gospels which presupposed that the meaning of the gospels was a separate entity from the narrative. Members of the Mythical School conceived of meaning as an ideal or historical content. Strauss understood the gospels as mythical representations of a philosophical content which must be speculatively rendered into the language of idealism. Bultmann believed that the gospels referred to the early church's proclamation of the gospel, the kerygma.

The concept of meaning-as-performance is presented as a
way to re-conceive meaning as an event which occurs through narrative performance. The critical tools of narrative criticism are employed to understand the way gospel narratives are structured for the experience of reading/hearing. Reader-response criticism shifts attention from the objective critical plane to the pragmatic or rhetorical plane. The story of Jesus' healing of the blind beggar is used as a test case by which to contrast the methods of Strauss and Bultmann with a performative approach.
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One can see that I was never alone in the writing of this dissertation. More people believed in me than can be counted on these pages, a fact that helps me understand the Apostle Paul's paradoxical language in his letter to the Galatians:

Bear one another's burdens . . . . For each will have to bear one's own burden.

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my brother, Gordon.
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INTRODUCTION

I. Thesis Statement

The purpose of this dissertation is twofold: 1) to show how in the work of David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874) and Rudolf Bultmann (1885-1976) meaning-as-correspondence has eclipsed the experience of the gospels as narrative in Protestant theology since the Enlightenment, and 2) to offer an alternative to the presupposition that the meaning of a narrative is a separate entity which corresponds to but is not identical with the narrative itself. The identification of myth in the New Testament helped foster the rise of meaning-as-correspondence in the study of gospel narrative. Ironically, a new understanding of myth will offer a way around the problem. This dissertation argues that meaning understood as performance in the act of reading a narrative can lead to authentic engagement with gospel narratives and allow them to become a transforming force rather than mere containers of information.

II. Statement of the Problem

Meaning-as-correspondence is the name used in this dissertation for the presupposition governing the understanding of gospel narrative and its meaning since the Enlightenment. Meaning-as-correspondence represents a dualistic approach to narrative whereby meaning and narrative are separated from each other. Narrative is then conceived as
dispensable and narrative form seen as accidental to the meaning it supposedly conveys (Frei: 270). From this dualism emerges divisions of narrative and referent, narrative and content, narrative and object, narrative and description. Each of these divisions will be addressed in this introduction. In each case the meaning of a narrative is promoted to the status of an autonomous object, the correctness of which is decided on the basis of a demonstrable correspondent relationship between the narrative and a meaning ascribed to it.

A. Meaning-as-Correspondence in Gospel Criticism

In The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative, Hans Frei (1922-1988) describes how biblical narrative, including gospel narrative, has been misconstrued since the Enlightenment (Frei 1974). What this dissertation refers to as meaning-as-correspondence is labeled by Frei as "meaning-as-reference." According to Frei the presupposition of meaning-as-reference stands between the gospel and the reader and diverts the reader from the experience of the text. The task of the reader is to identify the referent to which the narrative text allegedly points (Frei: 6). Under the rubric of meaning-as-reference a narrative is thought to describe a historical event or to contain a philosophical concept, theological doctrine, or moral axiom.
For Frei, meaning-as-reference gained force only after the decline of pre-Enlightenment reading of biblical narrative. Pre-critical reading was characterized by a simultaneous literal and historical understanding of biblical stories. "The words and sentences meant what they said, and because they did so they accurately described real events and real truths that were rightly put only in those terms and no others" (Frei:1). The union of literal and historical interpretation broke apart with the Enlightenment conviction that biblical narratives do not describe actual historical events. This dissolution resulted in the separation of narrative from its meaning because the narrative was no longer thought to mean what it said. Consequently, biblical interpreters began a series of quests for the true referent or content of the gospel narratives. The dichotomy of narrative and meaning, whether understood as referent, description, object or content, manifests the more comprehensive pattern of meaning-as-correspondence.

The separation of meaning from gospel narrative was influenced by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mythology. Because mythical narratives do not conform to the laws of rationality (cause and effect, the principle of contradiction, etc.), mythologists attempted to explain the relationship of mythical language to the discourse of Enlightenment rationalism.¹ One approach was to discredit myth altogether as meaningless nonsense or outright deception. Another
approach attempted to discover a "kernel" of truth hidden in the "husk" of mythical narrative. Efforts to decipher myths reinforced the presupposition that the narratives did not mean what they said. Thus, the meaning of myths was something separate from the narrative itself (meaning-as-correspondence). Meaning could be conceived as a historical event, an intellectual idea or an affective state. The latter approaches to myth were highly influential on some rationalist approaches to biblical narratives, especially in the *Mythical School*.

Literary criticism provides a viewpoint by which to discern the effect of meaning-as-correspondence on the understanding of mythical and biblical narratives. The last three decades in biblical studies generally and gospel studies specifically have witnessed a significant rapprochement with literary criticism. There is much to be learned from literary critics about the consequences of the division of narrative and its meaning. Literary criticism can assist in identifying the historical context in which different manifestations of meaning-as-correspondence appear in the wider field of literature.

**B. Meaning-as-Correspondence in Literature Generally**

In order to understand meaning-as-correspondence in its historical context the work of M. H. Abrams is instructive. Abrams has drawn attention to four approaches to a literary
work which have dominated successively the understanding of literature in the West: the mimetic, the pragmatic, the expressive, and the objective. Mimetic theories arose in the classical Greek period and were concerned primarily with the world (the literary universe) presented by the literary work. The Roman era brought forth pragmatic theories that were interested primarily in the effect of literature on an audience. Expressive theories emerged in the age of Romanticism and viewed literature primarily as the author's self-expression. The meaning of a literary text was the feeling that the author intended to express. Finally, objective theories came to ascendancy with the age of science so that the text became an object capable of yielding to human knowing (Abrams:6-29).

Mimetic and expressive theories of literature are referential in their understanding of meaning. Mimetic theories refer to a world represented by the text. Like art generally, literature is imitation of nature or human action and implies a correspondence between a literary text and the world it seeks to imitate (Abrams 1953:8). Aristotle develops a mimetic theory of art as imitation. "It is apparent, however, that the mimetic concept--the reference of a work to the subject matter which it imitates--is primary in Aristotle's critical system" (Abrams 1953:10)³

A referential element persists in expressive theories of literary criticism but with major alterations from mimetic
theories. According to Abrams, the expressivists conceive the literary work as an effort by an author to make external that which is internal (Abrams 1953:22). That which is internal is not an image or a cognitive notion but feeling. Thus the most important question regarding literature is not its truth but its sincerity. "Does it match the intention, the feeling, and the actual state of mind of the poet while composing?" (Abrams 1953:23). Obviously the reference of literature is not to the external world; however, the element of correspondence persists even into expressivist conceptions of literary art.

The problem of meaning-as-correspondence does not disappear under the hegemony of objective theories of interpretation. The most prominent literary critical approach within the objective paradigm is formalism. The New Criticism in the years following World War II is the most commonly recognized representative of formalism (Poland:66). The formalists conceive interpretation as criticism, an analysis of a literary work whose parts, once identified, can be understood in their interrelationship (intrinsically). The literary work is an autonomous, coherent structure, i.e., its form and content are inextricably intertwined. Thus, meaning is not considered to be outside the text.

Yet, the pattern of meaning-as-correspondence is present in formalism because that which is learned from the literary text is conceived as an object knowable only by comprehending the text as an object. According to formalists, the literary
work yields its meaning in the same manner that a physical object yields itself to scientific investigation. Meaning is not a representational truth or the intention of an author. The observer attempts to bring the functions among the parts of the text into a single, harmonious whole. The meaning is not a historical event or an idea. Nevertheless, the text as object conveys a meaning to be discovered by the reader. Thus, meaning-as-correspondence persists in the objective understanding of literature epitomized by formalism.

The work of Hans Frei, a theologian with hermeneutical interests, has already identified one aspect of meaning-as-correspondence under the notion of meaning-as-reference. The works of three literary critics, Susan Sontag, Jane Tompkins and Northrop Frye, offer help in delineating three other aspects of meaning-as-correspondence in the approach to art and literature in general and narrative in particular.

Susan Sontag recognizes a lingering form/content dichotomy in formalism which effectively separates a narrative from its meaning. In her essay, "Against Interpretation," Sontag rejects the attempt to legitimate art in the scientific age by viewing it as a form through which a person can come to know a content. This move makes form into an accessory item and content (that which is learned from the form) the only essential aspect of art (Sontag:4). Directed to art, interpretation means plucking a set of elements (the X, the Y, the Z, and so forth) from the whole work. The task of interpretation is virtually one of translation. The interpreter
says, Look, don't you see that X is really--or, really means--A? That Y is really B? That Z is really C? (Sontag:5)

Sontag contrasts modern interpretive methods with older methods. The older method was respectful of the literal meaning of a text (Sontag:6). Students of the history of biblical interpretation would think of the four-fold theory of biblical interpretation in the Middle Ages whereby the meaning of a text was based on the literal meaning. Only subsequently did the interpreter move to the spiritual, allegorical and analogical levels. The modern style assumes that the text has a sub-text and thus "excavates" and "destroys" in the effort to dig "'behind' the text" for a meaning. Freud and Marx are outstanding exemplars of this approach (Sontag:7).

The main difficulty with the modern approach is that interpretation becomes a method by which to domesticate the text and force it to yield a cognitive content. The illusion is thus generated that the interpreter is active and the text passive. However, the attempt to dominate the text as a mere object of knowledge enervates the text's power as word (Sontag:9). Moreover, it is the interpreter who is weakened in this approach to the literary text. Sontag provides a clear picture of the separation of narrative and its meaning (meaning-as-correspondence) in terms of form/content dichotomy.

Jane Tompkins offers a historical sketch of literary criticism from a Reader-Response perspective that leads beyond
the modern notion of meaning as an object to be found in a literary text. Tompkins calls for a moratorium on the use of the word "meaning" since it is irretrievably wrapped up in the idea that meaning is an object located on the pages of a text or in the mind of a reader. Her concern is with the effect of the text on the reader/audience. Thus Tompkins approaches literature from a pragmatic point of view (Cf. above, Abrams' second schema of the four approaches to literary criticism).

The pragmatic viewpoint has deep roots in the Western tradition. For example, sensitivity to the effect of language was so strong in the classical period that the political impact of the poets was a threat to the republic conceived by Plato. The poets stirred the passions (Tompkins:220). Plato therefore would have banned them from the polis altogether (Cf. Ong 1982:28). Renaissance writers also recognized the effect of language upon an audience and were concerned that a literary work achieve something, i.e., the patronage of wealthy benefactor. In the period of the Renaissance the poet carried out numerous roles within society, especially in the royal court. Artists sought patronage of benefactors so that their work was characterized more as advocacy than explication. Their work was specifically performed for its effect on the audience (Tompkins:210). The satire of the Augustan Age (Pope, Swift, Dryden) also fits this pragmatic viewpoint. The poem was "a missile designed to inflict damage
on the objects of its ridicule, and to rouse public opinion against them" (Tompkins:212).

When Tompkins turns to the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, she identifies a shift that ultimately led to the understanding of a literary text as a "container of truth." With the advent of formalism, critics began to view the poem as a mediator of eternal verities instead of a prod spurring the reader toward action (Tompkins:216-17). To read was to contemplate because literature was increasingly removed from the reader's own historical circumstances and appeared as an object to be explained rather than a force with which to contend.

Tompkins' historical analysis ends with the New Criticism whose roots lie in early twentieth-century literary critics such as T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) and I. A. Richards (1893-1979). These critics and their followers viewed literature as the receptacle of an ideal untainted by the world, history and the passions (Tompkins:220). Richards saw literature's purpose as the civilizing of humanity. For Eliot poetry was an escape from emotion and the chaos and fragmentation of the "ordinary man." Literature was in serious competition with the rapidly emerging discipline of science. Scientific knowledge and language used by science vied with the poets' knowledge and literary language. In this contest the New Criticism distinguishing the language of science from that of literature argued that "the knowledge that literature
transmits . . . lies in areas that are not well-suited to scientific measurement, *e.g.*, human attitudes, feelings, and values" (Tompkins:222). Science describes by measurement, literature describes in another form of language. Each offers its own type of knowledge. Underlying this separation of scientific and poetic language is an assumption that what is described is already given in reality. This understanding of literature as an object of knowledge buried any concern over what literature does and left only the question: What does literature mean? In this view, "the text remains an object rather than an instrument, an occasion for the elaboration of meaning rather than a force exerted upon the world" (Tompkins:225).

Tompkins acknowledges that formalism maintains its hold on the field of literary criticism in spite of the recent revival of pragmatic approaches. Audience criticism and Reader-Response criticism continue to assume that the role of literary criticism is to interpret the text. The critic merely posits that the meaning of a literary work is to be found in the reader. The real evidence of revolution will occur with the realization that language does not reflect reality but is constitutive of reality. Language would be understood as a form of power.

The insistence that language is constitutive of reality rather than merely reflective of it suggests that contemporary critical theory has come to occupy a position very similar to, if not the same as, that of the Greek rhetoricians for whom
mastery of language meant mastery of the state (Tompkins:226).

In Tompkins' work the power of language takes front stage. Any effort at domesticating language is contrary to Tompkins' goal to unleash language as a power in the world. The idea that language is constitutive of reality challenges the assumption that language only reflects what already is. Language and thus narrative become an event rather than an object. Tompkins' review of Western literature leads to a rejection of meaning-as-correspondence, i.e., any conception of meaning as an object severed from the literary work itself.

Northrop Frye's stages in the understanding of language in the history of Western civilization aid in understanding the prominence of meaning-as-correspondence. He indicates three general linguistic epochs: the poetic, the metonymic and the descriptive. These shifts in understanding have altered the way in which literary works have been interpreted in each era. The problem of meaning-as-correspondence is most evident in the last phase in which the interpretation of literature became the task of describing its meaning. In the following exposition of Frye's phases of language the narrative of the Last Supper found in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 26:26-29, Mk 14:22-25, and Lk 22:15-20) will be used to illustrate the effect of the changes in the understanding of language.

The first phase is the poetic understanding of language. Language is perceived as a power, perhaps even in a magical
sense, since the force exerted by words is not distinguishable from the power of objects in the natural world. The poetic stage of language is also referred to as the metaphorical stage represented by the formula, *this is really that*. For example, in a world where the poetic understanding of language dominates, the words of Jesus at the Last Supper functioned in the early Church as a power unleashed upon the world. The metaphors, "This is my body... This is my blood," transform the hearer and the elements. These words in the context of the Eucharistic ritual meal enact the drama whereby health and wholeness are taken into the worshiper's body (Irenaeus' "medicine of immortality").

A second stage of language appears at different times and places in history, according to Frye. Language becomes separated from thought so that language is an "outward expression of an inner reality" (Frye 1982:6). This metonymic stage is characterized by the statement, *this is put for that* (Frye 1982:7). Among the earliest evidence of such a transformation is Plato (Ong 1982:80-81). The realism of Plato separated language from thought by making the former a conventional sign of the latter. Words have no innate sense of truth but are true only insofar as their usage corresponds to the ideal realm.

In the metonymic phase language corresponds to reality (the ideal realm) by analogy thus splitting reality into two parts: words and things, the self as subject and the other as
object. Thought becomes a silent, *i.e.*, nonlinguistic, communication with the ideal world which is juxtaposed with the empirical world. Language connects these two worlds. For Plato the philosophical task was to gain knowledge of the ideal world so that one might act properly in the empirical world.

In the metonymic phase of linguistic history the narrative of the Last Supper took on a meaning different from that in the poetic stage. For those reformers of the sixteenth century influenced by renaissance humanism, the formula, "This is my body. . . . This is my blood," was no longer thought to miraculously transform the bread and wine into the presence of the divine. With the new understanding of language the words of institution did not bring about a transformation of the elements or the communicant but simply called to remembrance the atoning death of Christ. The reality of divine forgiveness is signified but not brought about by the words and elements of the Lord's Supper. For the humanist, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), the bread and wine simply pointed to a heavenly reality. "This is put for that." Bread is still bread and wine is still wine.

Frye's third phase in the history of language occurred with the triumph of "Ockam's Razor." Elements whose reality could not be demonstrated rationally or empirically were excluded from philosophical discourse. Language no longer corresponded to the ideal realm but to the empirical world.
With this principle the whole world of ideas inherited from Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophy collapsed. The loss of the ideal or metaphysical world left language as a mediator between the mind and the sensual world. The truth of language was determined by its correspondence to the empirical world. *This describes that, or this equals that.* Therefore, a narrow function of language began to rule to the exclusion of other legitimate functions. Language was valued exclusively for its capacity to describe empirical reality. Thus, humanity became its own arbiter of truth, for human reason became at once the definer of reality and the judge as to whether one's own definitions of reality were accurate.

In this descriptive phase of language associated with modernity, the words of Jesus found in the synoptic account of the Last Supper became enigmatic. Their use in the Eucharist became difficult for their lack of descriptive power. "We do not understand that a meal is supposed to mediate a spiritual power to us" (Bultmann 1941:6). The words do not function in a way required by our culture which expects language to be empirically verifiable to be true.

Frye contends that the descriptive phase produced an excessively confining understanding of language. By expanding historical consciousness of the phases of language, one discovers that language has the capacity to do more than describe empirical reality. Frye suggests reclaiming the poetic, metaphorical aspects of language.
This would involve trying to think our way back to a conception of language in which words were words of power, conveying primarily the sense of forces and energies rather than analogues of physical bodies. To some extent this would be a reversion to the metaphorical language of primitive communities. (Frye 1982:17)

This dissertation will follow Frye's suggestion by examining contemporary mythology's understanding of "primitive" peoples' use of the language of mythical narrative.

From quite different perspectives and assumptions, Hans Frei, Susan Sontag, Jane Tompkins and Northrop Frye have identified a pervasive problem in the reading and interpreting of narrative texts. All share in New Criticism's prohibition against separating form from content. Frei identifies the problem as the reader's assumption that the narrative points to a referent. Sontag criticizes formalism's reduction of literature to a form containing a content. Jane Tompkins is critical of the assumption that a meaning is an object located in a text or a reader. Frye identifies the problem in an overly confined understanding of language that assumes that narrative describes an object. Meaning as referent, content, object and description are all manifestations of the same problem that this dissertation calls meaning-as-correspondence. This problem, with specific reference to gospel narratives, is what this dissertation seeks to address.

The gospels are narrative literature and share in similar qualities as sacred narratives from various cultures. Whether or not gospel and myth can be distinguished on the basis of
genre, both are narrative. This fact suggests that we can learn as much from them in their similarity as in their differences. Myths have suffered under numerous attempts to render from them a meaning with subject matter more acceptable to the explicator. This has also been the case with gospels.

It is now possible to see how gospel narratives have been eclipsed by a hermeneutical pattern dominated by meaning-as-correspondence. The gospels have been conceived as signs referring to Jesus Christ. These stories have been thought to contain concepts for dogmatic or systematic theology. Certainly in some fundamentalist groups the gospels have been reduced to objects, the knowledge of which carries salvific power. Throughout history the majority of Christians have read the gospels as descriptions of events, the knowledge of which is beneficial. The preceding literary critics have cast serious doubt on these ways of understanding gospel narrative. The concern with language as power and force is strangely similar to the gospels' own concern with transforming the human situation:

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel. (Mk 1:15)

but these [signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. (Jn 20:31)

The authors of the gospels intended to alter their audiences' course in life. Given this intention, it is time to explore their fundamental character, that is, to understand them as narrative.
The gospels have been misunderstood as narrative. The desire of some interpreters to keep myth and gospels distinct may have concealed that which they share in common: They are both narrative. Misconceptions of myth previously applied to gospel studies may have resulted in misconceptions of the gospels. The time is ripe to give mythology a hearing, especially if the irrevocable nature of myth as narrative has found acceptance.

III. Procedure

The purpose of this dissertation is to offer an alternative approach to gospel narrative that allows them to reemerge as events of power. Such an alternative can be attained only if meaning-as-correspondence with its debilitating effects on the understanding of narrative can be removed. The first task is to present clearly the presence of the presupposition of meaning-as-correspondence in the last two centuries of gospel interpretation. Chapter One is a short exposition of the work of the Mythical School at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries in Germany. The scholars of the Mythical School boldly introduced the Enlightenment understanding of myth to the study of biblical narratives. The Mythical School represents the first major coordination of a concept of myth with the understanding of biblical narrative. The presentation forms a background for understanding subsequent applications of the
concept of myth to gospel narrative. It is in the Enlightenment view of myth that a division between narrative and meaning becomes an accepted means of interpreting biblical narrative.

Chapters Two and Three will set forth the hermeneutical theories of two of the most influential interpreters of the post-Enlightenment period: David Friedrich Strauss and Rudolf Bultmann. Both scholars stand out because they attempted to apply a theory of myth in their hermeneutical theories of gospel narrative. These theologians argued for a general hermeneutic of narrative by means of which the gospels were to be understood. Strauss and Bultmann's understanding of the function of myth gave them a more critical view of narrative than was the case with approaches controlled by cultural institutions such as government, academy and Church. Strauss and Bultmann's aim was to set free the force of the gospel narratives by understanding them in a proper context of primitive narrative. They employed a concept of myth which assumed that meaning is primarily a process of establishing a meaning which corresponds to a mythical narrative. The question arises whether this assumption brought about the results actually sought by Strauss and Bultmann. The application of Enlightenment concepts of myth subjects mythical narratives to criteria foreign to their character as pre-Enlightenment narratives.
Chapter Two begins by describing the intellectual currents that fed the work of David Friedrich Strauss. Strauss' hermeneutic of gospel narrative attempted to bring about a synthesis between historical-critical method and speculative philosophy. The critical methodology to which the gospels were subjected derives primarily from the Mythical School. Strauss extended the work of the Mythical School to gospel narratives. The philosophical system engaged by Strauss is that of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). The presentation of these two realms of thought is meant to view Strauss against the background of the Mythical School and Hegel. The intention is to provide depth for understanding Strauss' thought as he attempted to put the resources of both disciplines into a fruitful relationship.

In this struggle to attain a synthesis between empirical method and Hegel's thought, Strauss applied a historical-critical method to the gospels which fundamentally denied any factual relationship between the gospel narratives and the events they report. He sought by means of a speculative approach to unlock the truth of the early Church's understanding of Jesus as the content of the gospels. Thus, he viewed the mythical representations of the gospels concerning Jesus as primitive attempts at formulating a philosophical concept according to idealism. How Strauss related form and content in gospel narratives is a key question in this analysis. An investigation of Strauss' The
*Life of Jesus Critically Examined* will demonstrate that a form/content dichotomy was the basis on which he established a correspondent relationship between gospel narratives (form) and Strauss' own understanding of their meaning (content).

Chapter Three presents Bultmann's program for demythologizing from his essay, "New Testament and Mythology." Bultmann's essay responds primarily to the problem of mythical representations that gave form to the gospels. Misunderstanding the presence of myth threatens to dissolve into myth the Church's preaching of Jesus. Accepting the historical-critical results of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, Bultmann concludes that the gospels do not even attempt to describe the historical Jesus. In contrast to their post-Enlightenment predecessors, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars were concerned with the eschatological, apocalyptic language of New Testament narratives. For Bultmann the gospels, like myth, are written expressions of an understanding of life. A major element in the gospel narratives is the understanding of revelation that they contain.

Bultmann employed an understanding of myth developed by the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (History of Religions School). This understanding of myth was based on one particular myth of Iranian origin, that of the Primal Man or Heavenly Redeemer. According to the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, this myth expressed a world picture that reflected the
experience of worshipers in the cult. The myth of the Primal Man was used by the gospel writers as a form to convey the significance of the early Church's proclamation (kerygma) of Jesus. Accepting this premise, Bultmann viewed the form of the gospels as mythical. The content, the preaching of Jesus as crucified and raised from the dead, remained a truth of revelatory significance.

The influence of neo-Kantian philosophy on Bultmann's work led him ultimately to view myth as the false objectification of experience. For Bultmann knowledge of God was an impossibility in neo-Kantian terms. God is "wholly other" than any concept about God and therefore cannot be one concept within a coherent and unified system of concepts. Bultmann's neo-Kantian epistemology led him to disqualify both mythical and scientific language as a means of expressing knowledge of God. The concept of revelation was thus a central concept in Bultmann's theology. Faith for Bultmann was not the acceptance of an obsolete mythical form nor a scientifically valid theory about God. It was the effect of the preaching event. Knowledge of the wholly other was understood by Bultmann as an effect of God's self-revelation in the world by means of the word. Chapter Three detects the effect of meaning-as-correspondence in Bultmann's understanding of the gospels as containing an understanding of existence (form/content dichotomy) and pointing to the event of the kerygma (meaning-as-reference).
Chapters One, Two and Three "fall," in the words of Hans Frei, "into the almost legendary category of analysis of analyses of the Bible in which not a single text is examined, not a single exegesis undertaken" (Frei:vii). The concern of the investigation in the second and third chapters is to discern the presence of the presupposition of meaning-as-correspondence in the hermeneutical theories of Strauss and Bultmann. Examples illustrating how meaning-as-correspondence functions in the hermeneutical approach to gospel narrative in the works of Strauss and Bultmann will be presented later in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four presents an alternative to meaning-as-correspondence by developing a concept of meaning-as-performance for understanding gospel narrative. The concept of meaning-as-performance is an effective means of circumventing the problem of meaning-as-correspondence which dichotomizes narrative and meaning. Meaning-as-performance maintains the unity of narrative and meaning by focusing on the event that occurs in the actualization of narrative. The argument begins with the assertion that a narrative is only fully itself when it is being performed. Thus, performance is interpretation. This theory contrasts with Strauss' hermeneutical method which asserted that the meaning of a gospel was an idea to which the narrative pointed. With respect to Bultmann the contrast is less severe since his
theory of gospel narrative maintained that the gospels referred to a revelatory event.

Chapter Four will argue that the meaning of a narrative is the function of a narrative in a context. A narrative means what it says and not something else. A model for meaning-as-performance is found in contemporary literary criticism which is concerned with pragmatic aspects of literature. Literature affects its audience through performance. Reading a narrative is already an interpretation according to the concept of meaning-as-performance. Supporting this argument is the concept of meaning-as-event, a literary-critical concept from the field of audience criticism (reader-response criticism). Whether in public, private or silent performance, the imagination of the audience is the target of a narrative. The reader embodies the forms of the text which invite reader/audience response. Understanding is not the discovery of a concept lying within the narrative (Strauss), nor is it the conception of a primordial experience expressed through a narrative (Bultmann). Rather, the understanding of a narrative event of the gospels is an attempt by readers to articulate their self-understanding in the wake of the experience of performance.

In conclusion the concept of meaning-as-performance will be applied to a specific gospel narrative. John 9, the story of Jesus healing a blind man, will serve as a "test case." The work of Strauss and Bultmann will exhibit how their
hermeneutical approaches to the gospels failed to engage John 9 authentically as narrative. Finally, an application of the concept of meaning-as-performance will offer an example of an approach to gospel narrative that maintains the unity of narrative and meaning.
ENDNOTES

1. In this dissertation the term "mythology" designates the study of myths while "myth" will refer to the narratives that mythologists actually study.

2. For example, Norman Petersen, Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics; Rhoads and Michie, Mark as Story: an Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel; Stephen Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels; Alan Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design.

3. Hans Frei was critical of Paul Ricoeur and David Tracy, proponents of mimetic theories in philosophical and theological hermeneutics. Frei is critical of Ricoeur whose hermeneutic theory is referential. The world expressed by the text does not refer to the empirical world "out there" but to a no less real, yet imaginary world "in there." The text offers an occasion in which the empirical world is re-described (Frei 1986:44-51).

4. The humanists also had a strong antipathy toward formal logic and turned to rhetoric as a means to counteract the dominant role of logic in the curriculum of renaissance universities (Ong 1982:149-50).

5. This is in contrast with the later notion that language of literature is constitutive of that which it presents. Cf. below p. 24.
CHAPTER I

THE ENLIGHTENMENT VIEW OF MYTH: THE SEPARATION OF NARRATIVE AND MEANING

I. Rationalism and Myth

The first task of this dissertation is to establish the pattern by which narrative and meaning were dichotomized in the ascendancy of rationalism in the West. Rationalism refers to various approaches to knowledge by means of reason, e.g. French rationalism, English deism, the Mythical School and German idealism (Blanshard: 530-531). While these rationalistic movements were not homogeneous in their approach, they were unified in their regard of reason as the principal means to knowledge. Rationalists were offended by the presence of miracles in the gospels. The depiction of these events ran counter to the newly emerging science of the day which exulted in its comprehension of the rational laws of nature and history. The new science had introduced a Newtonian explanation of the world which challenged that offered in the world pictures of the Ptolemaic universe and the Bible.

Different forms of rationalism produced various ways of handling narratives that contained events contrary to the laws of reason and nature. The French rationalists, Voltaire and Diderot, dismissed as myth (deceit) any narrative containing miracles, e.g., the gospels. These irrational depictions were thought to be the result of abysmal ignorance or outright deceit.
The deists were not content with the wholesale dismissal of narratives containing miracles. They discarded those parts that did not conform to the laws of reason. In the case of the gospels, they retained rational remnants that served to establish a natural religion (Kümmel: 55).

Not content with the "surgical" procedures of the deists, mythologists of the German Enlightenment postulated a primitive, pre-rational mentality as the origin of myth. Myth was a primitive science and philosophy the whole of which was seeking to express what should properly be formulated in the language of Enlightenment reason. The presence of miracles made the experience of gospel narrative scandalous. Primitive narratives (including the gospels) were handled as adumbrations of knowledge, road signs having no value once passed on the quest for certain knowledge (Bolle 1974:796).

Rationalism and its struggle with myth set the stage during the Enlightenment for the separation of narrative from its meaning. The category of myth was applied by the rationalists to characterize those narratives which failed the test of rationality, and miracles were an obvious sign of failure. The failure to pass the test of rationality placed gospel narratives into a general category of myth. This assignment became in the nineteenth century a major hermeneutical principle. While many definitions of myth arose, they all shared in the notion that myths originate in a pre-scientific, i.e., non-enlightened, mentality. The
belief that myth could be meaningful even though it offended the modern sensibility resulted in interpretive strategies based on the assumption that narrative was simply a shell containing a kernel of truth (Müller:132). Thus the meaning of a narrative was separate from the narrative itself.

II. Rationalistic Approaches to Biblical Narrative

The first comprehensive attempt to link the understanding of biblical narrative with the concept of myth took place in the Mythical School. The father of the Mythical School was C. G. Heyne. Heyne’s scholarly descendants applied his principles and concept of myth to biblical narratives. The most prominent names among the Mythical School are J. G. Eichhorn, J. P. Gabler, and G. L. Bauer. In the work of Heyne and the Mythical School the division between narrative and meaning is manifest.¹

A. Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812)

C. G. Heyne was a philologist, Greek mythologist and professor at Göttingen (Hartlich & Sachs:11-19). His work with classical, i.e., poetical, texts from Greek antiquity brought him to the conclusion that a distinction must be drawn between a mythical text as it exists in writing and the original myth. Labeling original myth sermo mythicus, he referred to the poetically altered versions as sermo poeticus. Heyne used this distinction to assert that poets did not
create myth. They used myths which were already present in a culture. The work of the poet could be identified by the presence of simile, trope, and allegory.

Original myth (*sermo mythicus*) was obtainable by application of a rigorous philological method which removed the conventions of the poet and identified the original myth. This was a decided advance over the previous approaches to myth which thought of myth as a consciously poetic creation. Myth, according to Heyne, was a completely pre-literary phenomenon. It was the only means of expression which primitive humanity employed. Like the philosopher David Hume (1711-1776), Heyne thought of this stage as a period of childhood in the history of humankind (Feldman & Richardson: 216).

Heyne was sympathetic to this stage and recognized it as one through which all human cultures must proceed. He saw early humanity as deficient in powers of reason and subject to fear of the destructive forces encountered in existence. The result was crude, concrete stories which had for their object the experience of primitive humanity. Consequently, Heyne believed that once original myth was recovered by means of philology it could only be understood by sympathetic recognition of the inferiority of primitive humanity. In this point, Heyne moved beyond the rationalistic treatment of myth by such Enlightenment figures as Hume (Feldman & Richardson: 216).
Heyne attempted to clarify the relationship between myth and rational approaches to the world. His observation that the poetic renderings of myth were secondary creations led to a dynamic view of human history. The poetic, literary development of mythical material could be traced chronologically. Heyne was the first to advance the thesis that myth, far from having no relationship to learning and science was, in fact, the foundation from which the philosophical and historical disciplines arose. This represented an advance over the Enlightenment thinkers who could conceive of no relationship between primitive and modern human beings because they disqualified all human expression which did not conform to the canons of discursive logic.

According to Heyne's theory of the origin of myth, primitive human beings were inferior to modern human beings because of three deficiencies of primitive humanity: lack of knowledge, inability to give expression to experience and an incapacity to gain an objective view of a situation (Hartlich & Sachs:14-15). These deficiencies reflect the Enlightenment view of the progress of human species, the nature of primitive mentality, and the absolutizing of scientific thought (Johnson:141).

Heyne saw myth as unavoidable, first, because of a deficiency of knowledge, particularly about the processes of nature and their causes. Not knowing the true causes of things, primitive humanity attributed them to an unknown
cause, the gods. Primitive humanity had no abstract concept for causality. This led to the recognition of a second deficiency: Primitive humans were severely limited in their capacity for self-expression because they had not risen above the concrete, sensual language of myth. For example, having no abstract concept for causality, primitives could speak only in terms of "begetting" or "making." Third, this limitation in self-expression prohibited them from achieving distance from the immediate world of sense impressions. Without this distance primitive humans drowned in a sea of sensation whose strength produced a fearful reaction which grew to monstrous proportions. For Heyne, this fear accounted for the bizarre properties of narratives identified as original myth (sermo mythicus).

Heyne's theory gave specific shape to his hermeneutic of myth in a scheme of classification. He divided myths into two basic categories according to their content: historical myth and philosophical myth (Hartlich & Sachs:18-19). Historical myth had for its content the depiction of an event in the past. Included in this type were etiologies such as the founding of a city and tales of great men of the past who were enveloped in the cloud of the miraculous. Philosophical myth was a narrative form containing ethical or natural speculations of primitive humanity. The most prominent examples of this class of myth would be creation stories of the gods (theogonies) and of the cosmos (cosmogonies).
Heyne's classification set up a hermeneutical task of identifying the content either by eliminating mythical accretions surrounding historical events in the case of historical myth or by isolating some moral, dogmatic or cosmological notion in the case of philosophical myths (Hartlich & Sachs:19).

Heyne approached myth as obstacle rather than opportunity (Hartlich & Sachs:102). It is an inferior expression of an inferior human intellect. Myth must be classified before it can be understood. Once an original story was established through application of philological principles, it had to be classified and further investigated in order to find its kernel, either a historical event or an idea. Once the kernel was identified, the myth in which it was found must be discarded because the myth itself is tainted by the three deficiencies of primitive humanity. Heyne's rationalistic inclination prevented him from allowing any mythical form, historical or philosophical, to remain intact. The content was the real treasure to be found in myth.

B. The Mythical School

Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752-1827), Johann Philipp Gabler (1753-1826) and Georg Lorenz Bauer (1755-1806) are the most prominent representatives of the Mythical School. This group of scholars took on the task of applying Heyne's insights to the field of biblical narrative. Eichhorn was the
first to appropriate Heyne's insistence that myth represented a universal stage in the history of humanity (Hartlich & Sachs: 22). This necessarily meant that the Hebrew people also went through this stage, and they, like the Greeks and barbarians, spoke the language of myth. Eichhorn boldly applied insights from Heyne's work on Greek mythology to the Old Testament (Genesis 1-3). Eichhorn's work was first published in 1775 under the title "Urgeschichte." Gabler edited and published a new edition of this work in 1790-1793 with Eichhorn's approval.

Although Eichhorn and Gabler accepted the supposition of a difference between the primitive and modern stages of humanity, they rejected a theory of accommodation held by other rationalists. This theory argued for the primitive nature of *homo mythicus* and attributed the origin of myth to conscious fabrication by an author. Accommodation theory interpreted the biblical narratives as though they contained a timeless truth first formulated in abstract form before it could have been expressed in the form of myth. The problem with the theory was that the author was imagined to be an enlightened writer who therefore must have used mythical form in order to be understood by his audience. Concluding that accommodation theory was false, Eichhorn and Gabler chose rather to believe that if the biblical writers lived in a primitive age they must have shared in the mythical mentality. Thus, dogmatic formulations were not hidden in biblical
narratives. Rejecting a theory of accommodation, Gabler opposed the common attempt by which dogmatics had slipped its ideas into biblical narrative under the cover of a theory of accommodation. Gabler insisted that exegesis should not depend on dogmatics; rather dogmatics should be dependent on exegesis (Hartlich & Sachs:23). While historical consciousness of mythical expressions of primitive humanity revealed a "deficiency of intellect," myth and Old Testament narrative were nonetheless thought to contain something of enduring value.

Application of Heyne’s theory of myth lead Gabler to reject allegorical interpretation of biblical narrative. Like accommodation theory allegory was another way of importing abstract ideas into narrative. By insisting on the priority of exegesis over dogmatics, Gabler undermined orthodoxy’s method of allegorically deriving dogmatic formulations from biblical stories. The biblical writers were not creating allegories. They were not taking abstract ideas and consciously putting them into narrative form (Hartlich & Sachs:23). These ancient authors lived in a mythical age and participated in a mythical mentality which Eichhorn and Gabler characterized after the manner of Heyne (the threefold deficiency of primitive humanity).

On the surface the rejection of accommodation theories and allegorical interpretation appears to offer an escape from the separation of narrative and meaning. However, the
Mythical School was unable to attain sufficient freedom from Enlightenment presuppositions about myth. A consideration of the consequences of Eichhorn and Gabler’s adoption of Heyne’s classification of myths illustrates the dilemma. Heyne’s division of myth into historical and philosophical myths assumed that something was to be found in myth: a historical event or an idea. It was this classification which seduced the Mythical School into a similar solution to that of the rationalists. Eichhorn and Gabler interpreted biblical stories as historical myth. This is especially evident in "Urgeschichte" where Eichhorn was concerned with historical accuracy in the Genesis account of a poisonous fruit while Gabler insisted on a historical tree of knowledge. Identification of particular events became an important interpretative goal.

Nonetheless, "progress" in the understanding of myth and its interpretation had taken place. Eichhorn and Gabler established the principle that a consistent interpretive approach should be applied to sections of biblical literature which were of the same mythical type. For example, Genesis 3:1-14 should not be treated as myth if Genesis 2:4-25 was to be handled as historical report (Hartlich & Sachs: 25). These two scholars also accepted Heyne’s understanding of the role of oral tradition in the process of magnification of the miraculous which occurred in the history of every mythical tradition (Hartlich & Sachs: 27-28). The problem is that a
theory of the magnification of the miraculous in the history of transmission of primitive traditions is attached to a positivistic presupposition that there must be "something" there to which miraculous elements can be attached. The temptation was to assume that the "something" was a historical event. In other words the inclination to presuppose historical myths set up the task of removing the miraculous elements. Even though Heyne had placed more importance on philosophical myths, it was inevitable that the shift in attention from Greek mythology to the Bible resulted in a concentration on historical events (Hartlich & Sachs: 34-35). Pressure to handle biblical narratives as historical myth grew stronger the closer one came to gospel narratives.

The Mythical School's understanding of historical myth fit the subsequent hermeneutical approach of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theology in Germany. The assumption was always that the primitive mind was incapable of narrating rationally the events of the Bible. Eichhorn and Gabler did evade the orthodox Lutheran approach and its reliance on accommodation theory and allegory, and they improved on several versions of the rationalistic approach, e.g., in their rejection of the deception theory of the deists. Nevertheless, the Mythical School was concerned primarily with uncovering the kernels of truth in the shroud of myth. While Eichhorn and Gabler realized that the Eden story better fit the category of philosophical myth, they treated elements in
this story as historical facts, e.g., the tree of life (Hartlich & Sachs:34). The concern over small historical details contributed to evading the text as much as the orthodox assumption that the whole story was historically factual. Eichhorn and Gabler held that a naturalistic interpretation should have priority over philosophical or moral interpretation if a naturalistic explanation of a story could, in fact, be determined (Hartlich & Sachs:64).

Relegation of biblical narratives to a mythical stage of human development removed pressure to understand them in modern terms. Biblical narratives could be understood in the context of the times in which they were created. Yet, Eichhorn and Gabler could not resist the idea that primitive humanity was attempting to accomplish a rational task without the tools of rationality. They never considered the possibility that myth and Old Testament narrative might have a function different from the one that the Enlightenment assigned to them. Eichhorn and Gabler, like Heyne, simply assumed a basic difference between a primitive and scientific mentality and sought to salvage what they could from myth (Hartlich & Sachs:21).

G. L. Bauer expanded the scope of myth interpretation in the Bible with the publication in 1802 of his "Hebräische Mythologie des Alten und Neuen Testamentes." This work was a catalogue of that which was considered to be myth in the Old and New Testaments (Hartlich & Sachs:69-87). In "Entwurf
einer Hermeneutik des Alten und Neuen Testamentes" (1799) Bauer presented a theory of interpretation that corresponded to the work of the Mythical School.

In his efforts to expand the mythical approach into the New Testament, Bauer exhibited the same residual rationalistic concerns as his colleagues Eichhorn and Gabler. His rationalistic tendency is discernible in his work on hermeneutics in which he developed a theory of how meaning is expressed. According to Bauer, the meaning of an author is the totality of representations (Vorstellungen) which an author joins together in his own words to the end that another might read and be able to think the same meaning that the author wished to express (Hartlich & Sachs:71). However, Bauer abandoned understanding myth as an unintentioned product of rationally deficient people who were dependent on oral language. For example, he invoked a limited theory of accommodation which understood Jesus as capable of abstract thinking but required him to express his ideas in the form of myth so that they might be understood by a mythical mentality (Hartlich & Sachs:74).

Bauer's reversion to an understanding of myth as an intentional product and to the employment of accommodation theory reveals the consequences of meaning-as-correspondence as a hermeneutical presupposition. The Mythical School was ruled by rationalist assumptions that narratives reporting events contrary to the scientific viewpoint must render a more
acceptable content. Myth in the gospels did not describe events properly. The interpreter simply "peeled off" mythical representations and allowed their content (idea or historical event) to stand in its original form (Hartlich & Sachs:77). The separation of form from content in the Mythical School inevitably led Bauer and other adherents of the Mythical School to think of the Jesus of the gospels as a form for the actual Jesus. However, the actual Jesus looked more and more like an enlightened philosopher. In order to be relevant to the Enlightenment mind, Jesus had to share in the same rational mentality and not in the prescientific, mythical mentality disparaged in the Age of Enlightenment.

The work of the Mythical School resulted in the dualistic hermeneutical approach characterized as meaning-as-correspondence. Because meaning was conceived as separate from the narrative itself, the search for that meaning took two forms: to find either a historical event or an idea to which the narrative referred. However, such a search resulted in the neglect of the text as a narrative, not to mention the significance of the text as it was used by particular groups of people.

III. Philosophical and Theological Opposition to Rationalism

There were opposing voices to be heard that at least indicate an uneasiness over understanding of myth as referring to historical events or ideas. F. W. J. von Schelling (1775-
1854) in his early career relied on the thought of C. G. Heyne. In his 1793 essay, "über Mythen, historische Sagen und Philosopheme der ältesten Welt" Schelling viewed myth as a container of coarse, philosophical nuggets (philosopheme) (de Vries:172). He did express doubt about the possibility of clearly distinguishing between historical myths and philosophical myths. In his later years he advocated a method which aimed at what he called a "tautegorical" interpretation which rather than subduing the myth sought only to comprehend it in its actual form (de Vries:172). In his later work Schelling reproached Friedrich Creuzer, student of Heyne, for making myth into the outward garb of truth (Feldman & Richardson:319, emphasis added).

The philosophical idealism of G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) sought to overcome this division of form and content by transcending the law of contradiction. The idealists drew on the romantic rebellion against the Enlightenment view of myth. While the latter viewed myth as a contorted view of reality, Hegel, especially in his Die Phänomenologie des Geistes, shunned the term myth, preferring the word "representation" (Lange:218). He suggested that primitive representations with their references to the miraculous constituted a stage in the human struggle to gain a self-consciousness that transcended a distorted consciousness resulting from the effort to shape the world according to human categories and conventions. Thus, representation was not a contradiction to reason but a
necessary stage in the unfolding of reason (Blanshard: 528-529).

In the theological realm supernaturalism arose in response to the rationalistic challenges to the descriptive accuracy of the gospel narratives. Supernaturalism is distinguished from orthodoxy which had developed along scholastic lines prior to the challenge of rationalism. Until then there had been little need to argue for the descriptive accuracy of the gospels or the historical foundation of faith as formulated in dogmatics. The connection between the two was assumed until rationalism questioned the validity of both assumptions. Rationalistic descriptions of the meaning of the gospels were determined by the rationalists' understanding of the laws of reason, nature, history and psychology. Consequently, these interpretations were "naturalistic" and served as a rational basis for a natural religion appropriate to the Age of Enlightenment. Naturalistic interpretations were bereft of any reference to the supernatural.

The supernaturalists were offended by the exclusion of deity as the cause of miraculous events in biblical narrative and by the neglect of orthodox dogma. Supernaturalism attempted to maintain the category of revelation as a source of knowledge in contrast to the rationalistic assertion that reason alone was adequate as a basis of knowledge. The rationalistic attempt to found religious faith on natural history gave form to the counter-effort by supernaturalism to
assert orthodoxy's view that the dogmatic teaching of the Church was founded on a supernatural history. Like orthodoxy, supernaturalism treated biblical narrative as a proof text for Church dogma; consequently, the supernaturalists attempted to block any efforts at critical examination of biblical narrative. Their confidence in the historical accuracy of biblical narratives became a tenet of faith equal to the orthodox dogma it allegedly bolstered. The supernaturalists treated biblical narrative as though it referred to actual events in history, and they insisted that the sacred history guaranteed the truth of orthodox dogma.

Thus, both rationalism and supernaturalism operated under a split understanding of scripture. Both conceived the meaning of the narrative as an extrinsic object to the narrative itself. The hermeneutical task was to secure a correspondent relationship between the narrative and the meaning to which it referred. For the supernaturalists the meaning was the events exactly as described in the sacred narratives of the Bible. For the rationalists that meaning was either rationally corrected accounts of the events recounted in biblical narrative or some philosophical or moral ideal thought to reside in the narrative. The performing of the text was not an element of their hermeneutic at all.

IV. Summary

The division of narrative from its putative meaning arose
primarily from the Enlightenment fascination with its new
dound knowledge and ways of knowing. This knowledge came into
conflict with traditional theological understanding. One
approach to biblical narrative was that of those rationalists
set on making a radical break from tradition. They judged
myth and, thus, biblical narrative as deliberate deceit or
nonsense. Another rationalist approach was that of those more
interested in rapprochement with the established culture.
They worked to show that Enlightenment ideas were contained in
these narratives and that the events reported actually
occurred although the reports themselves were distorted by the
primitive mentality reporting them. In the case of the
gospels, Jesus became a philosopher who skillfully cast these
ideas into narrative expression (allegory) in order to
accommodate the limited intelligence of the people. The
supernaturalist theologians shared in the view that the
biblical narrative referred to a meaning but argued that that
meaning was the traditional dogma of the Church legitimated by
the events described in the narrative. A fourth option,
idealism, avoided the simple division of myth and idea as
"husk" and "kernel" and recognized the element of feeling
(experience) in the formation of representations like mythical
and gospel narratives. The idealists gave consideration to
the fact that the gospels (like myth) were expressions of a
deep experience. Thus, the rationalistic approach to
narrative becomes paradigmatic of the pattern of meaning-as-
correspondence by which the meaning of a narrative is conceived as a separate object from the narrative itself. Supernaturalism adheres to this pattern in its insistence that the narrative is valued only for the events it describes and the dogma it supports.

2. This distinction forms the basis for statements that myths are literature (Bolle:xii) for the only artifacts that mythologists have to go on are written versions, *i.e.*, poetic versions of myth.

3. While Hartlich & Sachs argue that Heyne was the first to present the idea of myth as a universal form of thought (Hartlich & Sachs:4), Manuel asserts that this idea was original with Fontenelle 100 years earlier (Manuel:46).

4. Heyne’s theory of myth contrasted with that of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744 - 1803). Both shared a belief that myths must be sympathetically engaged (Feldman & Richardson:226). For Herder, however, sympathetic understanding (*Einfühlung*) of myth meant to suspend one’s attitude of superiority, especially that superiority displayed by the Rationalists of the Enlightenment (Feldman & Richardson:227). Heyne’s view of the deficiencies of primitive humanity assumed the superiority of the enlightened person over the primitive. Heyne’s critical concern for assessing the factuality of myth resulted in a concept of historical understanding different from Herder. The latter spoke in terms of "breathing the atmosphere of myth" and was indifferent toward whether it contained real history or not (Hartlich & Sachs:49). Herder believed that there was actually something there to be understood by entering the world of myth (Feldman & Richardson:224). That "something" was insight into the world and existence. In contrast, Heyne’s theory of myth did not claim that myth could add to modern humanity’s understanding of the world and life.

5. It is instructive to surmise the shape of gospel studies had Herder been more influential than Heyne. Herder was opposed to the separation of form and content in the approach to myth and biblical narrative (Hartlich & Sachs:51)
CHAPTER II
THE TRIUMPH OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT VIEW OF MYTH IN STRAUSS:
THE CONSPICUOUS PRESENCE OF MEANING-AS-CORRESPONDENCE

I. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal how the rationalistic approach to gospel narrative, based on meaning-as-correspondence, functions in the work of David Friedrich Strauss to dichotomize gospel narrative from its putative meaning. Chapter One has shown that various forms of rationalism have handled myth and consequently the gospels as a form of narrative that 1) does not mean anything (a product of ignorance), 2) states deliberately something that is not true (a product of deceit), 3) says one thing by saying another out of a need to accommodate a primitive intelligence (i.e., allegory, which is to read a contemporary formulation back into traditional narratives), or 4) says one thing by primitive means because the abstract language of philosophy is not available (i.e., idealism, where narrative is a primitive form of the idea). Thus, there are at least four understandings of gospel narrative which could be derived from the various definitions of myth: nonsense, conscious deceit, allegory (accommodation) or a primitive idea. Each of these definitions sought a meaning that did not coincide with the narrative itself.

The problematic framework in which Strauss' work is set in the history of ideas is the challenge posed by
Enlightenment rationalism to reading the gospels in the modern world. Once form (the narrative) was separated from content (a historical event, an idea, or moral principle) a different hermeneutical pattern emerged. The reader could claim to comprehend the meaning wrapped in the narrative; however, this was accomplished by sleight of hand. In reality, the reader went beyond the text in search of its meaning. This meaning was offered in the form of an interpretation. The interpretation of the narrative served as a description of the meaning. The description of this meaning was placed in a correspondent relationship to the text. The text was seen as corresponding to a meaning (content) now transformed into a descriptive concept or proposition.

Strauss is significant for this dissertation because the division between narrative and meaning is pronounced in his thought. Attempting to form a synthesis between historical criticism and speculative philosophy, Strauss forced the tension between historical description and narrative meaning to the breaking point. As much as any other biblical scholar of the nineteenth century, Strauss pressed the question of history in the gospels and the historical basis of faith (Barth:363). The doubt concerning correspondence between gospel narratives and the events they portray had led to two predominant ways of treating the gospel texts: 1) to insist that the text and the events to which it referred were the same or 2) to admit that the narrative description and the
events were not the same and to establish by means of historical-criticism the true events to which the narratives corresponded. In both cases "the narrative 'meant'--by referring to or stating a subject matter quite distinct from itself--external occurrences, ideas, a distinctive type of primitive consciousness called mythical, or some combination of the three" (Frei: 307).

Strauss "was probably the best-known and most influential theologian of the nineteenth century, in non-theological and non-church circles" (Barth: 363; Graf: 15-23). This notoriety was primarily due to Strauss' attempt to apply a concept of myth derived from the Mythical School to the study and interpretation of the gospels. Strauss radicalized this approach by extending mythical interpretation to the gospel narratives and treating them as "representations" (Vorstellungen) of primitive Christian ideas (Hartlich & Sachs: 121; Sandberger: 151). Strauss considered himself a disciple of Hegel, one of the most prominent German rationalists albeit of a different strain than the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Although Strauss claimed Hegel as the inspiration for the radical application of the concept of myth to the gospels, the debate continues over his faithfulness to Hegel's thought (Sandberger: 15-28; Lange: 257).³

Upon the publication of the first volume of Strauss' Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet in 1835,⁴ the historical accuracy of the gospel narratives and orthodox dogma
associated with it were placed under considerable strain (Strauss 1969). The book was instantly a sensation and made the name of Strauss famous, if not infamous in European Christianity (Schweitzer:71). The English translation, The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined, was published in 1846 (Strauss 1972). It was assumed on the popular level that Strauss was seeking to prove that Jesus of Nazareth never existed. This was not the case (Strauss 1972:51). Strauss did not doubt the existence of the man, Jesus. He was, however, asserting that the representation of Jesus in the gospels was a product of humanity's myth-producing faculties (Schweitzer:80, 92). For Strauss the task of interpreting the gospels was not to demonstrate their accuracy as historical reports but to uncover the idea to which they refer.

The theological context in which Strauss sought to interject his speculative theology was dominated by the opposition of naturalism and supernaturalism. Strauss viewed the alternatives between naturalism and supernaturalism as antiquated. He formulated the problem in his "Preface" to The Life of Jesus:

The exegesis of the ancient church set out from the double presupposition: first, that the gospels contained a history, and secondly, that this history was a supernatural one. Rationalism rejected the latter of these presuppositions, but only to cling the more tenaciously to the former, maintaining that these books present unadulterated, though only natural, history. Science cannot rest satisfied with this half-measure: the other presupposition also must be relinquished, and the inquiry must first be made whether in fact, and to what extent, the ground on which we stand in the
gospels is historical. (Strauss 1972:11)
The anxieties of Strauss' orthodox opponents over this matter prevented them from understanding Strauss' purpose: to unleash the power of the idea residing in the gospel texts (Strauss 1969:49). His opponents firmly believed that his skepticism toward the historical accuracy of the gospel stories was a betrayal of the Christian faith. 6

Indeed, the effect of The Life of Jesus was to undermine the orthodoxy of the German Lutheran Church whose alliance with the political establishment presented formidable opposition to forces of change (Strauss 1983:ix-x). At stake in the reception of The Life of Jesus was the prestige of Hegelian philosophy, the official philosophy of the Prussian government (Strauss 1983:11). The government considered suppressing the publication of The Life of Jesus and requested an opinion from Berlin theologian J. A. W. Neander who counseled against its censure (Brazill:97). In the wake of the Napoleonic invasion (1806), Hegelian philosophy was useful in reestablishing the monarchy as an institution legitimated by Hegel's understanding of religion. The true religion expounded by Hegel claimed to reconcile modern, scientific thought with the dogmatic traditions of the Lutheran Church (Strauss 1983:xi). Hegel's conservative followers drew an analogy between the historical actuality of the Incarnation in one man and the need for a monarch in Christian society. Strauss' Life of Jesus countered the claims of those Hegelian
theologians whom Strauss designated "right-wing" by declaring unsound the theology erected on the foundations of an uncritical, traditional reading of the New Testament. Strauss was on dangerous political ground. According to Strauss, the transition from religion to philosophy demanded the historical-critical method even if it destroyed the supposed historical basis of the faith. The gospels refer not to historical events but to an idea in the form of a philosophical concept. With this conviction Strauss was free to employ the historical-critical method in the belief that he was boldly approaching the truth of the Christian faith.

II. Strauss' Exposure to Historical Criticism

The impulse for employing historical-critical method came from Strauss' early student days (1821-1825) at Blaubeuren under the guidance of Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860). Baur was dissatisfied with Schleiermacher's attempt to overcome the conflict between naturalism and supernaturalism by positing the identification between the Jesus of history and the ideal Christ. Schleiermacher argued from the ideal Christ as an "effect" to Jesus of Nazareth as a historical "cause." Baur insisted that the argument run in the opposite direction from the historical Jesus to the ideal Christ (McGrath: 39). Consequently, historical-criticism was a necessary part of Baur's theological method. Ultimately, Strauss distinguished himself from both Schleiermacher and
Baur by separating the historical Jesus from the Christ of faith and arriving at a negative historical-critical conclusion regarding the historical Jesus as the basis of faith (Lange: 247-248). The acknowledgment that the gospel narratives concerning Jesus were not historically accurate opened a gap between the narratives about Jesus and their meaning. The concept of myth was key to bridging that gap.

Strauss first encountered the concept of myth in the lectures of F. C. Baur who published his work, Symbolik und Mythologie oder die Naturreligion des Alterthums in 1824/25. This work was heavily influenced by the historical-critical analyses of the mythologist Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858). The concept of myth conveyed by Baur to the young Strauss was derived from the early thought of Schelling. For Baur myth was an orally transmitted tradition of a people, not the product of an individual author. The power driving myth to its expression is the idea. Myth and philosophy are different forms containing the same content (Lange: 246).

By the time Strauss published The Life of Jesus, he had oriented his own understanding of myth to the scholarly tradition of the Mythical School. The interpretive strategy of the Mythical School fit within the hermeneutical pattern of the rationalists delineated above. Non-rational elements in a mythical narrative sent the reader beyond the text in order to locate a rational or natural content for the text. To understand how Strauss engaged gospel narratives, one must
understand Strauss' relationship to the *Mythical School* (Frei: 234).

A Strauss' Relationship to the *Mythical School*

Straus' relationship to the *Mythical School* is ambivalent, both critical and approving. On the one hand, he was critical of the *Mythical School* for not defining myth purely and for limiting its application to certain portions of the gospels (Strauss 1972:59). He also noted that the interpretive efforts of the *Mythical School* were similar to ancient allegorical interpretation. However, these scholars attributed myth "to the spirit of a people or community" while the allegorists assumed divine impetus for myth (Strauss 1972:65). Both interpretive methods sought to preserve a truth contained within the hull of narrative. Strauss was critical of the *Mythical School* for its preoccupation with finding historical myths as if no philosophical myths were to be found in the gospels (Strauss 1972:59-63). For Strauss there were only philosophical or dogmatic myths (Lange: 257). The main distinction between Strauss and the *Mythical School* was his exclusive substitution of "idea" for historical event (Strauss 1972:21).

On the other hand, Strauss' criticisms of the *Mythical School* do not exclude him from its company. Strauss' definition of gospel myths used analogous imagery to that of the *Mythical School*. Eichhorn and Gabler employed the
language of "kernel" and "shell." For them the kernel was a historical event while for Strauss the mythical shell concealed a philosophical idea. Myth refers to the religious notions of a primitive consciousness. As far as the narrative text is concerned, Strauss had much in common with the Mythical School. The text was an obstacle to be overcome, i.e., the hermeneutical task was to extract the kernel (meaning) from the hull (text). An examination of the definition of myth guiding Strauss' work in The Life of Jesus will bear this out.

B. Strauss' Definition of Myth

The definition of myth which Strauss employed in the first edition of The Life of Jesus states that the myths of the New Testament are "nothing other than the clothing of primitive Christian ideas in the garb of history-like stories which are formed unintentionally in the poeticizing tradition." The definition is a simple one which gives access to the position espoused by Strauss.

Most significant is Strauss' use of the metaphor, "clothing." Taking this figure of speech seriously, one imagines the putting on and taking off of clothing. Such language, like that of "kernel" and "hull," suggests a form/content dichotomy similar to that observed in the Mythical School. The primitive Christian ideas clothed in mythical narrative of the gospels are those having to do with
messianic ideas of the Jewish people long in the making before Jesus' arrival on the scene. The expected messiah was promised by Moses; he was to be a redeemer, son of David, a prophet, and a wonder worker. A reverse logic worked in the production of myths about Jesus: Jesus was the messiah; therefore, he must have performed this and that miracle as well as fulfilled all that the scriptures predicted of him.

The myths which clothe these primitive ideas are history-like (geschichtartig). No matter how fanciful (to the enlightened mind) mythical narrative is, it is recited as a past or future event. The history-like nature of gospel narratives is no indication that they are history. None of the four canonical gospels are from the pen of an eyewitness (Strauss 1972:74). Strauss admitted that the gospels contain legends, i.e., stories of actual historical figures (Strauss 1972:61-62). Nevertheless, Strauss rejected the Mythical School's preoccupation with historical myths to the neglect of philosophical myths. He declared:

this writer applies the notion of the mythus to the entire history of the life of Jesus; recognizes mythi [myths] or mythical embellishments in every portion, and ranges under the category of mythus not merely the miraculous occurrences during the infancy of Jesus, but those also of his public life; not merely miracles operated on Jesus, but those wrought by him. (Strauss 1972:65)

Strauss rejected the naturalists' attempts to correct the stories so that they were brought in line with everyday experience. Arriving at a naturalistic version of the narrative brings the interpreter no closer to the truth
thought by Strauss to be contained in the narrative. Strauss allowed the gospel narratives to stand in the form in which they appeared. He had no intention of rearranging the texts in order to make them less scandalous to the modern age (Strauss 1972:65). His employment of the concept of myth allowed him to accept myth in the gospels as a medium expressive of something other than historical events, that is, the ideas contained in the texts. Even though the gospels were history-like, their meaning was not to be derived from proving the historical actuality of the events they portrayed.

Strauss' definition of myth reflected his understanding of the origin of myth. He believed that the ideas found in myth were not placed there by the conscious act of a poet (Strauss 1972:52). Myths were not created by individuals. This precluded any theory which would claim that myths were the product of deliberate deception on the part of a priestly caste within society in order to manipulate the people (Strauss 1972:81-82). The gospel myths traced back not to an individual writer or writers but to the "universal individual" of a culture (Strauss 1972:74). Strauss' definition of myth uses the passive voice to state that myths are "formed unintentionally in the poeticizing tradition," but the force behind the creation of myths is the idea striving toward full expression. The ability to grasp the idea contained in myth depends on abandoning the search for historical events behind them. The movement of Geist is responsible for the creation
of myths. The idea is the force at work even in the primitive consciousness.⁹

The oral transmission of myths reinforces the notion that the formation of myths was unintentioned and occurred unconsciously (Strauss 1972:73, 82, 87). Writing inhibited the growth of myth (Strauss 1972:57) while oral transmission promoted exaggeration (Strauss 1972:62). Oral transmission of tradition allowed for the transformation of mythical material into vessels for the ideas of a culture.¹⁰ Without using Heyne’s term Strauss was aware that the gospels themselves are *sermo poeticus*, myth reworked by the poet. Thus, it is not strictly forbidden to speak of intentional elements in the gospels due to the work of individual authors. However, the line between the unintentional and the intentional is very difficult to draw (Strauss 1972:82).

Strauss’ definition of myth as the clothing of primitive Christian ideas in the garb of history-like stories offers an approach to myth and consequently the gospels that is problematic in several aspects. First, the imagery of clothing the idea in the robes of myth suggests that myth is a necessary covering which must be placed over the ideas in order for humankind in the early stages of development to comprehend these ideas (the abstract concept is accommodated to the primitive mind in the form of concrete images or representations). Second, the "clothing" notion would suggest that the interpretation of myths is accomplished by disrobing
them and, thus, allowing the ideas to present themselves directly. The idea thus exposed was the motive force responsible for the creation of myths in the universal individual (thus, the need for a method to remove the outer garb of myth). Third, if the first two consequences in fact follow from his definition, then an approach to myth is suggested which separates form from content.

These three problems indicate the significant areas where Strauss may be compared to Hegel. The main problem in understanding Strauss arises out of the question of his fidelity to Hegel’s thought. In 1831 Strauss had traveled to Berlin where he intended to study with Hegel. Unfortunately, the master died of cholera within a month of Strauss’ arrival. Hegel represented an alternative to the rationalistic approach to myth and biblical narrative. The critical reaction to rationalism by romanticism hinted at future developments in German philosophy, especially idealism. The impact of idealism eventually made its way into biblical interpretation as well. While Strauss had encountered idealism through Baur’s utilization of Schelling, Strauss in The Life of Jesus engaged idealism primarily through the writings of Hegel.

III. Strauss’ Relationship to Hegel

Strauss’ reception of Hegel’s philosophy was a second major force driving his efforts to decipher the meaning of the gospels. Strauss’ relationship to Hegel is complicated. This
section demonstrates three significant ways in which Strauss misappropriated Hegel's thought. It does not assume that faithfulness to Hegel's thought would have opened Strauss' eyes to the nature of narrative and gospel narrative in particular. It will, however, show how closely Strauss leaned back on Enlightenment assumptions that contributed to the eclipse of narrative.

The three areas of concern are 1) historical-critical method, 2) the philosophical concepts of "representation" and "concept," and 3) the concepts of form and content.

A. Attitudes toward Historical-Critical Method

Hegel was ambiguous about the status of the drama of the incarnation. Were the gospel narratives descriptions of historical events and the man Jesus, or were they narrative representations of human consciousness of the divine-human relationship? Hegel's ambiguity revolved around the determination of an actual historical event. Three possibilities presented themselves: 1) The gospel accounts of Jesus are accurate historical descriptions. 2) The true history is the event in which the feeling of the divine-human relationship in the earliest Christian communities was objectified into the story of Jesus. 3) The gospels present the event in which the historical Jesus brought about the possibility of consciousness of the divine-human relationship because of his own self-consciousness as the God-Man.
In his early writings Hegel made clear that the gospels were not accurate histories of the life of Jesus. He rejected miracles and viewed the resurrection as a vision in which the disciples participated. Although he did not pronounce on this issue so explicitly in later writings, Hegel was interested in the historical Jesus only in so far as he lived in the self-consciousness of the Christian community. He could say both that the historical Jesus was not known through any historical account of him, and that Jesus was not an apparition to which the community attributed its consciousness of the divine-human relationship (Lange: 221).

For Hegel, Jesus was the Christ because he was the first instance of attainment of self-consciousness in which the divine-human relationship and its contradictions of finite and infinite were reconciled. Jesus was the God-Man, the concrete universal. As finite being he yielded completely to the infinite (the cross) not in order to become infinite but in order as a finite, human person to be reconciled with and drawn into the infinite (the resurrection). The gospel representations of Jesus need not be treated as accurate historical depictions of the man Jesus, but as true expressions of what occurred in his historical life. Consequently, the content of the gospels is the consciousness of the early Church that resulted from the manifestation of the absolute spirit in Jesus who was the pivot on which the ages turned.
Consistent with this view, Hegel did not value the historical-critical method as a hermeneutical instrument. The historical-critical method was not helpful in the work of speculative philosophy because historical criticism asked only if a narrative was historically accurate in order to reconstruct events as they really occurred. The speculative method as Hegel employed it was concerned with a different historical event: the manifestation of spirit (Geist) in the self-consciousness of humanity. This event was not one event among a chain of events in a closed system. The manifestation of spirit was the whole of history, the movement of spirit in humanity's experience of nature, the expression of that experience in concrete language (similar to myth and symbol), and the comprehension of that expression in human self-consciousness. Spirit can only fully recognize itself in the last stage of this movement. For Hegel the movement from concrete language is driven by the necessity that humanity not misconstrue the particularity of concrete language with the universality of spirit (Sandberger: 39). Yet, this particularity is not disparaged but recognized as a necessary element in the attainment of self-consciousness. The Christian religion expresses this movement of spirit in its doctrine of the triune God based as it is on the scandal of the Incarnation (Strauss 1983: 30).

The concrete language (representations) of myths and the gospels are powerful expressions, but their power does not lie
in their mediating knowledge about the historical factuality of events being portrayed. Thus, Hegel had no interest in empirical criticism of narrative. Whether or not narratives were correct from a descriptive standpoint had nothing to do with their efficacy in the dialectical movement of spirit (Lange: 222-23). In fact, to alter the concrete language of the gospels so that they conformed to the norms of empirical knowledge would enervate their power to express the divine-human relationship.

Strauss distinguished his position from that of Hegel by insisting on a place for historical-critical method in Christian dogmatics. The task of historical criticism was the destruction of the narrative "husk" in order liberate the ideal "kernel" residing therein. Thus Strauss altered the dynamic of the Hegelian dialectic by making mythical and gospel narratives into obstructions to the idea instead of avenues by which to attain it. In Strauss' thought, the power of historical-critical method destroys (vernichtet) the concrete form of narrative. By way of contrast, in Hegel's thought the content of each stage is carried up (sublated, German aufgehoben) in the movement of spirit toward self-recognition. The movement of human consciousness was empowered by the universal movement of spirit, not by the critical powers of the human mind. Historical criticism is not needed because Hegel does not seek the destruction of the concrete narrative form.
Strauss confessed that Hegel would not have approved of *The Life of Jesus*. Nevertheless, the young Hegelian remained steadfast in his conviction that his approach to gospel narratives was a logical consequence of Hegel's system (Strauss 1983:8). In *The Life of Jesus* Strauss credits Hegel for spurring him on to the critical task:

> The majority of the most learned and acute theologians of the present day fail in the main requirement for such work, a requirement without which no amount of learning will suffice to achieve anything in the domain of criticism—namely, the internal liberation of the feelings and intellect from certain religious and dogmatical presuppositions; and this the author early attained by means of philosophical studies [i.e., the philosophy of Hegel]. (Strauss 1972:lili)

Strauss' use of historical-critical methodology was not intended by him as a means to establish the theological truth concerning Jesus. Historical questions concerning the incarnation led to hermeneutical uncertainty about the role of historical-critical method in theology and dogmatics. Strauss saw the role of historical criticism as a catalyst in the movement from religion to philosophy, from faith to knowledge. Its function is purely negative since the truth it seeks to liberate is independent from the representational form which conveys it. Speculative theology has the task of establishing the truth of the Christian religion after the destruction of myth by historical-critical method. "Thus at the conclusion of the criticism of the history of Jesus, there presents itself this problem: to re-establish dogmatically that which has been destroyed critically" (Strauss 1972:757).
Strauss' employment of the historical-critical method is understandable in the context in which he worked. Against the background of rationalism and supernaturalism Strauss found it necessary to employ the historical-critical method in order to fulfill the function of a theologian. As theologian he had a responsibility to maintain the Church's understanding of its past expressions of faith in the present (Strauss 1972:39). While it may not be logical from the speculative point of view or a literary point of view to prove a narrative's lack of historical accuracy, it was necessary from the standpoint of the historical situation in which Strauss lived and worked to demonstrate what the gospels were not before he set out to demonstrate what they were. He was aware that he ran a risk of being charged with heresy by publishing the primarily historical-critical material in *The Life of Jesus* (Strauss 1972:lii).

Strauss did not attempt to rearrange the gospel texts in order to obtain more authentic forms, e.g., "original" versions or "historically accurate" versions. He sought to criticize the gospel texts in order to liberate the idea he presupposed was hidden in the narrative. This method served to identify the origin and nature of gospel myths so that they might properly be interpreted as primitive Christian ideas clothed in the history-like garb of narrative.

Because Strauss was confident that the idea was the force which created the gospel narratives, he professed a certain
"cold-blooded" objectivity towards gospel myths (Strauss 1972:lii). Strauss claimed that the mythical Christ of the gospels represents the idea of essential humanity. It is, therefore, ironic that his utilization of historical-critical insights brought him closer to historical knowledge of the Jesus of history and allowed him to ignore the historical and thematic lines which bind the Jesus of history with the Christ of faith. Strauss, for example, was among the first gospel critics to accept as fact that Jesus himself spoke and lived the language of Jewish apocalyptic.

Strauss' felt free to wield the destructive sword of historical-critical method because he assumed that the meaning of the gospels was separate from the gospels themselves (meaning-as-correspondence). This ideal meaning was not endangered by the historical criticism (Strauss 1972:lii). Thus, Strauss could comfortably produce a historical portrait of Jesus that differed from that offered in the gospels. To credit Strauss with having unleashed an avalanche of historical studies does not imply that he understood gospel narrative per se (Küng:469).

B. Representation and Concept

The terms "representation" (Vorstellung) and "concept" (Begriff) were central to Strauss' hermeneutical system. Though he claimed to have borrowed this language from Hegel, Strauss used it differently (Lange:219). The terms derive
from the Enlightenment (Sandberger: 35) where they denoted the two forms in which humanity thinks. Representations were the elements which composed the thinking of a primitive mentality. The representations ranged from a concrete, sensual object or picture (symbol) to the narration of an event or activity (myth) (Müller: 192-93). Concepts were the abstract terms which were the elements of thinking for the enlightened or modern mentality. In the Enlightenment tradition the distinction between representation and concept served to dramatize a supposed gap between primitive and scientific mentalities (Lange: 230; Sandberger: 51, 55).

For Hegel representation and concept belonged to a system of terms which aided him in expressing his philosophy of the ultimate manifestation of God in human consciousness.¹² In Hegel's philosophical vocabulary, the three conceptual pairs, "unconscious" (Unbewusstsein) and "feeling" (Gefühl), "consciousness" (Bewusstsein) and "representation" (Vorstellung), "self-consciousness" (Selbstbewusstsein) and "concept" (Begriff), played key roles. Each pair corresponded to one of the three levels of spirit: subjective spirit, objective spirit and absolute spirit (Tillich 1967: 126).

For Hegel feeling was a stage in human development characterized as unconsciousness. It was an immediate stage of experience, not limited simply to the experiences of the five senses and not to be confused with parapsychological experiences (Sandberger: 29-30). Feeling was the pre-conscious
relation of the human self to the divine (Fackenheim:120). In the early stages of humanity feeling was experienced without the possibility of symbolic expression. This situation reflected a basic condition characterized by an absence of any separation between the one who experiences and that which is experienced (Sandberger:38).

Eventually the human species learned to project this experience into concrete objects which served to evoke the feeling associated with an experience. Feeling could be portrayed by means of representations (Vorstellungen). They were pictures, symbols, and myths whose form was determined by feeling. In German the verb vorstellen literally means to "place before," and the reflexive form means "to imagine," or "to ideate" so that vorstellen can also mean "to present" or "represent", e.g., a drama. Hegel preferred the term representation and seldom used the terms symbol and myth since the concept of myth plays no significant role in his philosophy (Lange:218, 233).

Representations allowed the substance of feeling to be experienced as "other" and so gave rise to consciousness, and with it, religion. Attention to these concrete objects and stories resulted in feeling and a consciousness of it. Those feelings arising from the intangible encounter with divinity were also objectified in the concrete form representations, and thus God (the gods) was also given concrete form. This particularizing of the universal becomes a problem for
humanity when a false consciousness arises that conceives the divine as though it were merely one object among other objects in the world. In the work of Hegel, representation was a middle stage between feeling and concept (Sandberger: 37-38). It was the stage in which experience was not immediate but mediated through objects and stories. Speculative philosophy was not concerned with any propositional understanding of representation; the speculative philosopher sought instead to render religious feeling expressed in the form of concrete representations into a more appropriate form.

Self-consciousness arose with awareness that the feeling produced by these representations was mediated. Representations existed solely as media through which humanity projected its fundamental experience of life. For Hegel, the power of representation was the idea which it embodied (Lange: 222). The problem was that representation bore the idea in a form which was not proper to the idea itself. The idea was universal but in representation it was expressed by reference to a particular (Sandberger: 38; Lange: 223). The temptation was to confuse a particular representation with the universal idea it expressed. True self-consciousness recognized the universal in the particular but also sought for that purer form of thinking which employed the concept (Begriff) and, thus, avoided the confusion of the universal and particular. A concept functioned by bringing idea to expression without the baggage of concrete symbols or myths.
Humanity could not begin thinking in concepts. The mediating *Vorstellung* was a necessary stage without which the movement from non-consciousness to self-consciousness, from subjective spirit to absolute spirit, from *Gefühl* to *Begriff* was impossible.  

Because of his dialectical understanding of reason, Hegel did not conceive the distinction between representation and concept in an oppositional sense. The movement of reason occurs in three stages that he called thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Reason is itself determined by the movement of the spirit as it comes to know itself in its manifestation in world history: Spirit (thesis) objectifies itself in nature (antithesis) and comes to self-recognition in the concept which is a synthesis of the apparent contradiction between spirit and nature. This cosmic movement of spirit is the foundation for the advent of self-consciousness in the human race. Humanity begins in the unconscious feeling of dependency on the divine (thesis). Consciousness of the divine arises as feeling is objectified in representations of the divine-human relationship (antithesis). Finally, in self-consciousness, humanity recognizes itself in the form of the concept of the idea of divine-human relationship (synthesis). Through this rational, dialectical movement the actual (*das Wirkliche*) is made manifest, according to Hegel.

This dialectical movement proceeds by means of negation. The thesis is at first opposed by the antithesis (the first
negation). However, the antithesis itself must be negated (the negation of the first negation) by being sublated into the form of the synthesis. Recall that feeling in the dialectical movement of reason is objectified in the form of the representation. Representation is the first negation leading to consciousness. However, the representation as a concrete form must itself be sublated in the form of the concept. The attainment of the concept is the second negation and leads to self-consciousness. The "negation of negation" leads to a synthesis that expresses a fuller truth beyond the opposition of thesis and antithesis. Reality is rational, but rational no longer means the subjection of reality to categories of reason (Verstand) operating on a mechanistic or mathematical model (Strauss 1983:28). For Hegel the rational was that which corresponded to reason as Vernunft whose model is life and history. The rational is dialectically circular and not linearly progressive.

Recognition of the dialectical movement of reason from feeling through representation to concept eliminated the perception of opposition between stages. Because feeling, representation and concept are dialectically related, movement from the stage of feeling, through representation to concept does not leave behind the first two stages or annihilate them; each is carried up or "sublated" (aufgehoben) into the next successive stage. The relation of representation to concept has both a negative and positive aspect. The negative
side is a potential confusion of the particular with the universal. Positively however, Hegel acknowledged that the concept would not have been developed had the idea not first come to expression in representation (Sandberger: 71).

Hegel understood history as the revelation of the absolute spirit (the infinite). Absolute spirit is the attainment of self-knowledge on the part of spirit which does not know itself until, as subjective spirit, it alienates or projects itself in the form of nature as objective spirit. This first negation of spirit by nature is in turn negated by the spirit's self-recognition which arises in nature in human self-consciousness. Self-consciousness occurs in the speculative arrival at the idea of the unity of spirit and nature (infinite and finite). This idea has the form of a concept by which spirit comes to full recognition of itself.

Hegel found in Christian religion the superior expression of the divine-human relationship in which the particularity of the finite is maintained in the universality of the infinite. The representation of incarnation depicts God sending the Son into the world where the Son manifests perfect individual self-consciousness of his divine origin without spurning his finitude. The cross/resurrection event evidenced this self-consciousness in that Jesus made no universal claims for his own self and thus was willing to die. The resurrection was the representation (Vorstellung) of the divine sustaining of individuality. Jesus (of history and of the gospels) became
the concrete universal, the synthesis of nature and spirit, the idea actualized in history.

Thus, the dialectical movement of spirit is a drama played out on three stages. Primary is the cosmic drama of spirit, nature and idea. The second stage is the human drama in which humanity moves from a feeling of unity with the infinite, to consciousness of this unity at the stage of Vorstellung, to self-consciousness as recognition of the unity of the divine and human. Finally, there is the Christian representation of this drama in the incarnation which leads to God being known as triune.

Strauss' use of the terms "representation" and "concept," determined his treatment of gospel narratives. A comparison with Hegel on this matter shows that Strauss cut the dialectical nerve of Hegel's system. The primary difference between Strauss and Hegel is that Strauss no longer treated representation as an intermediate stage between feeling and concept (Sandberger:157; Lange:228). Strauss made representation and concept into opposing categories (Sandberger:54-55; Lange:230). The consequence of this tendency was a disparaging treatment of representation, as though it were a hindrance to the discovery of the idea which it carries. Strauss considered representation as unnecessary once the knower had progressed beyond the primitive stage of concrete thinking to the "mature" stage of abstract thinking. In fact, Müller and Sandberger agree that Strauss misconstrued
Hegel's understanding of the relationship between religion and philosophy by misunderstanding the dialectical event of sublation (Aufhebung) as annihilation (Vernichtung) (Müller: 226-27; Sandberger: 27; Lange: 229). Strauss thereby falls back to the Enlightenment view of representation and concept.

Seeing differences between Hegel and Strauss offers a clue to Strauss' stance toward gospel narrative. In his neglect of the concept of feeling and consequent disregard of the dialectical movement from feeling through representation to concept, Strauss set at enmity the two stages of representation and concept (Lange: 228). The contradiction between representation and concept reflects the Enlightenment distinction between mythical and scientific mentalities. Assigning gospel narratives to the stage of representation was tantamount to categorizing them as myth, a category that Hegel was reluctant to use. Strauss handled the gospels as obstacles in the path to a clear knowledge of reality expressed in concepts. Hegel saw them as the path itself. Because Strauss thought that the meaning of the gospels was separate from the narratives themselves, it was an easy matter to dispense with the gospels once their meaning was clearly grasped.

The polarization of "representation" and "concept" by Strauss constitutes another element in his theoretical justification for destroying the gospel narratives as
dispensible references to the absolute idea of the unity of
God and humanity. His confidence that the absolute idea of
Christian faith was not dependent on gospel representations
justified the cold-hearted utilization of the historical-
critical method to eliminate the offensive narrative form. In
the following section the theoretical basis for Strauss'
division between narrative and meaning is seen from yet
another perspective than that of historical-critical method
and Vorstellung and Begriff.

C. The Problem of Form and Content

For Hegel form and content were inextricably related to
the extent that without form there is no content to be
grasped. Without representation the conscious subject may not
attain self-consciousness in the form of the concept of the
idea. For Hegel, the attainment of the concept of the
absolute idea was not a one time event but remained
dialectically related to the expression of the absolute idea
in the form of the representation (Sandberger: 70-71). Hegel
held that the form of thinking changes in moving from the
gospels as Vorstellungen to philosophy as the science which
brings the idea to authentic expression in the form of
Begriff. The content, however, remains the same in the
movement of the spirit from its expression in the individual,
Jesus of Nazareth, through representations of him in primitive
Christianity, through dogmatic expressions of that content,
and finally to the new expression of that content in philosophy.

When Hegel claimed that there is no content without form and that the content expressed in all the stages of the movement of spirit is always the same, he was using the term "content" in two ways. First, the assertion that there is no content without form referred to the manner in which the human mind must represent (vorsellen) or conceptualize (begreifen) the idea, i.e., by the use of concrete pictures and abstract concepts respectively. Without these representations or concepts the idea is not manifest. Second, when Hegel stated that the content expressed in the successive stages of movement of the spirit is the same, he was referring to the absolute idea itself. The first usage can be designated as "relative content" (Vorstellung or Begriff) while the second is "absolute content" (the idea).

For Hegel there is both an absolute content (the idea itself) and a relative content (the idea as it appears through forms present in the phenomenal world: feelings, representations, and concepts). While the absolute content of the idea never changes in the Hegelian system, the relative content must change as the mode of presentation changes.

Hegel knew that the mind can never possess the idea as an absolute content. The idea reveals itself, and the mind must produce corresponding expressions of the idea from forms available in the phenomenal realm. For each stage of the mind
there is a different form corresponding to the idea: feelings (non-conscious) through representations (consciousness) to abstract concepts (self-consciousness). In every instance the absolute idea must in some way be "veiled" in order to be "unveiled" in the relative content. The idea can be known only through some form appropriated from the phenomenal world. "In his [Hegel's] view myth and symbol do not cover but rather uncover religious Truth. They express content, and the content is inseparable from the form of expression" (Fackenheim:161).

Hegel's understanding of the dialectical movement of spirit made it clear that stages prior to the stage of concept are not unfortunate "hit and miss" attempts to arrive at the concept. They are necessary prerequisites. The idea reveals itself in different forms, each of which is necessary to a subsequent form. Hegel's philosophy was speculative (from speculare, "to see") because he observed representations and attempted to translate them (not the absolute idea) into philosophical concepts. The concept does not exist in the representation but is another form for the idea, a form which no longer presents the scandal of representing the universal by means of the particular. The concept is not identical to the idea in Hegel's thought. As the final form of the spirit's self-revelation, the concept is free from the alienating forms which depend on the particular in order to express the universal.
Hegel did not view philosophical translation of representation into the form of concept as something that could be done once-and-for-all. "The philosophical mediation of truth is characterized by the constant oscillation between Vorstellung and Begriff, as one is compared with the other and refined accordingly (ein Herüber- und Hinübergehen . . . von der Vorstellung zum Begriffe zum [sic] Vorstellung)" (McGrath: 33). This gave Hegel's epistemology a circular, nonlinear character. It is in the back and forth movement between representation and concept that absolute knowledge takes form. This is the process by which absolute spirit reveals itself in human consciousness.

Although Hegel ultimately was unable to handle gospel narrative properly, Frei does credit Hegel with doing "greater justice than Schleiermacher to the narrative shape of biblical stories. . . . he was able to do far greater justice than Schleiermacher to the death-resurrection sequence as the focus and climax of the gospel story" (Frei: 316-318). Such could not be said in favor of Strauss. The categories "form" and "content" offer a perspective on Strauss' hermeneutic that explains this difference.

The form/content problem first surfaced in Strauss' definition of myth as the garb covering primitive Christian ideas. Strauss' concept of idea was rationalistic. For Strauss the concept of idea is hardly distinguishable from the concept of concept. The terms representation and concept
have retreated to the Enlightenment view (cf. above: 49). In the mythical stage of consciousness the idea must be veiled in some form understandable to mythical thinking. The idea serves as content and is veiled in the form of representation (myth). This veiling is not the union of form and content in Hegel's sense, a veiling that reveals. Rather it is a veiling that conceals. In his *Defense of My Life of Jesus against the Hegelians*, Strauss confirms just this understanding of the matter.

The most important question about this for us became how the concept related to the historical components of the Bible, especially the gospels: whether the historical character belongs to the content, which since it is the same for both representation and concept, thus demands recognition by the latter; or whether the historical character is to be considered as mere form to which conceptual thought, therefore, is not bound? (Strauss 1983:3)

Representation was considered lamentable but unavoidable for the prescientific mentality. For humanity come of age the idea must be stripped of its mythical garb. In Strauss' thought there is little to distinguish the idea veiled by myth from the concept unveiled by his hermeneutic method. Accordingly, the abstract form of the concept is the same as the idea.

For Strauss ideas are immanent in history, *i.e.*, they have reference to a concrete, historical reality. Representation is viewed negatively as a veiling of the idea. The process of translating the idea from the form of representation into that of concept is a process of unveiling.
This allowed Strauss to think in referential terms in his approach to gospel narrative in a way contrary to Hegel. For Strauss the idea had historical existence, and its representational and conceptual expressions could be subjected to criticism. The validity of the philosophical concept was based on the way it corresponded with the idea to which it referred.

Strauss recognized the apparent irreconcilability between the historical-critical method represented by the Mythical School and Hegel's rejection of historical-critical analysis in his speculative system. Hegel represented a divergent approach to mythical narratives from that of the Mythical School. Nevertheless, Strauss believed that he had found in Hegel's own thought the key to a synthesis between these two antithetical methods. In reality no synthesis took place.

Strauss adopted Hegel's categories, but he forced them back into the old Enlightenment pattern which assumed meaning is created primarily by correspondence. He ignored the hermeneutical limitations involved in the subject/object split created in the rationalistic effort to subjugate a text to the laws of reason (Verstand). Strauss claimed that his capacity to receive the truth of gospel narratives was made possible by the development of rational skills (Vernunft) in his study of Hegel. However, Strauss' misappropriation of Hegel's thought, especially the concepts of representation and concept, calls this claim into question.
For Hegel the gospel narratives were a source of illumination to which he returned continually (Küng:131). He had little use for historical-critical method since it dammed up the stream of life flowing in and through the gospels as narrative (representations). With that flow thus obstructed, the philosophical concept could only be a lifeless, rarefied object. Hegel refused to speak of form separate from content. Thus, Hegel had no intent to critically destroy the gospel narratives.

Strauss on the other hand fully intended the destruction of the gospels with their claim to present a historical Jesus who is the Christ of Faith. Had Strauss adopted Hegel’s alternatives to the symptoms of meaning-as-correspondence, the conditions might have resulted in which authentic engagement with gospel narrative as narrative was possible. Instead Strauss presupposed the division between form and content, explored the descriptive validity of gospel narratives by his employment of historical-critical method, and ignored Hegel’s affirmation of narrative as a disclosure of the absolute idea in the dialectical movement from feeling to representation to concept. The consequence of Strauss’ orientation unfolded in the speculative results of The Life of Jesus.

IV. The Deification of Humanity in the Philosophical Rendering of the Myth of the Incarnation

Strauss’ attempt to develop a new hermeneutical approach to the gospels was precipitated by his dissatisfaction with
the predominant theological responses to the Enlightenment: supernaturalism and naturalism. Strauss demonstrated the dubious exegetical gymnastics of the supernaturalists (usually H. Olshausen) and the naturalists (usually H. E. G. Paulus) (Strauss 1972:liii). He offered a new definition of the gospels predicated on their mythical character and not on the natural or supernatural events they purport to describe. The result of his effort was to render gospel narratives in a scientifically palatable form.

In *The Life of Jesus* Strauss identified the gospels as philosophical myth. He characterized gospel myths by the primitive Christian idea to which they referred: Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, a wonder worker, a prophet, the Risen One, etc. For Strauss, these ideas were an expression of primitive consciousness; they did not conform to the rational laws of the empirical realm. He undertook to connect this primitive consciousness with some historical reality.

That which is rational is also real; the idea is not merely the moral imperative of Kant, but also an actuality. Proved to be an idea of the reason, the unity of the divine and human nature must also have an historical existence. . . . for if the idea have no corresponding reality, it is an empty obligation and ideal. But do we then deprive the idea of all reality? By no means: we reject only that which does not follow from the premises. (Strauss 1972:779)

Having thus rejected the gospels as histories of natural or supernatural events, Strauss divorced the mythical form from its philosophical content and set out on a quest for an ideal referent to the gospel narratives.
Division of form from content made possible the conclusion that gospel narratives say one thing but mean another. For Strauss, the gospel narratives were mere forms containing primitive ideas. On the surface gospel narratives appeared to refer to the individual Jesus as a unique union of the human and divine natures. Utilizing the historical-critical method, Strauss demonstrated that Jesus the God-Man did not correspond to any historical figure. The historical character Jesus became a Vorstellung, a mythical form containing the idea of the unity of the human and divine natures (Sandberger: 108).

The recognition that Jesus was a mythical figure spawned a crisis of meaning: to what were the gospel narratives referring if not to Christ? The critical heart of Strauss' Life of Jesus burst the bond between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the gospels. Strauss rejected the Hegelian notion of an exclusive manifestation of the idea in one historical individual (Sandberger: 111).

If reality is ascribed to the idea of the unity of the divine and human natures, is this equivalent to the admission that this unity must actually have been once manifested, as it never had been, and never more will be, in one individual? This is indeed not the mode in which idea realizes itself; it is not wont to lavish all its fullness on one exemplar, and be niggardly towards all others--to express itself perfectly in that one individual, and imperfectly in all the rest: it rather loves to distribute its riches among a multiplicity of exemplars which reciprocally complete each other--in the alternate appearance and suppression of a series of individuals. (Strauss 1972: 779-780)

Strauss was free to assign a new referent to the gospel
narratives: the idea of the unity of God and humanity.

This is the key to the whole of Christology, that, as subject of the predicate which the church assigns to Christ, we place, instead of an individual, an idea. (Strauss 1972:778-779) 17

The identification of this idea was not the end of Strauss' quest for an ultimate referent. He insisted that the idea was manifested in the historical reality of the human race: What was described on the idealistic plane actually occurs on the empirical plane; spirit subjugates nature in humanity. 18 According to Strauss, the human race:

is the child of the visible Mother and the invisible Father, Nature and Spirit; it is the worker of miracles, in so far as in the course of human history the spirit more and more completely subjugates nature, both within and around man, until it lies before him as the inert matter on which he exercises his active power. (Strauss 1972:779)

Strauss distorted the Hegelian sublation of representation into the annihilation of gospel myth. Hegel's depiction of reconciliation of nature with spirit becomes the obliteration of nature in Strauss.

Hegel's conception of the relationship between Vorstellung and Begriff called for a continual return to gospel narrative. Strauss no longer needed the narrative. He had rejected its concrete form in favor of its abstract content.

V. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to show how the
Enlightenment view of myth triumphed in Strauss' hermeneutic of gospel narrative. Strauss' attempt to synthesize the historical-critical method of the Mythical School and the speculative method of Hegel proposed a meaning of the gospel narratives that satisfied the demands of suitability to the scientific age. Strauss' hermeneutic did not arise from an understanding of the gospel narratives themselves. In fact, Strauss' theory blocked his view of gospel narrative by erecting an Enlightenment view of myth (customized through Strauss' own reading of Hegel) between the gospels and the reader. The gospels themselves disappeared behind Strauss' theory and application.

Strauss' understanding of gospel narratives as the outward garb of primitive Christian ideas reveal the symptom of meaning-as-correspondence: 1) his definition of myth was rationalistic; 2) he misunderstood Hegel's terms, "representation" and "concept;" 3) he identified the philosophical concept (Begriff) with the idea itself; and 4) he separated form from content. Strauss' "perfection of the 'Mythical' option" (Frei:245) was a cul-de-sac into which gospel studies need not return. However, persistence in the presupposition of meaning-as-correspondence leads to other paths that prove to be dead ends in the attempt to appreciate the narrativity of the gospels.
ENDNOTES

1. Myth as allegory assumes that the speaker or writer has already formulated a thought in abstract form but must then be accommodate the thought in concrete form to a less competent audience. For idealism myth as a primitive idea is a necessary stage toward the formulation of the idea philosophically. The idea may exist transcendentally but not cognitively without first coming to expression in the form of myth.

2. "Wherever a religion, resting upon written records, prolongs and extends the sphere of its dominion, accompanying its votaries through the varied and progressive stages of mental cultivation, a discrepancy between the representations of those ancient records, referred to as sacred, and the notions of more advanced periods of mental development, will inevitably sooner or later rise" (Strauss 1972:39).

3. Cf. Sandberger (15-28) for a review of scholarly opinion regarding the relationship of the thought of Strauss to that of Hegel. The opinions are not univocal as the following quotations from the literature demonstrate:

"Der Mythosbegriff, wie er der Strauß'schen Leben-Jesu-Kritik zugrunde liegt, ist frei von Hegelschen Voraussetzungen." (Hartlich & Sachs:121; cf. also 125)

"Diese Festellungen fordert energisch die Preisgabe jener in der Strauß-Literatur vielfach anzutreffenden These, nach welcher er im wesentlichen von Hegel her zu verstehen und zudeuten sei, mit dem der junge Kritiker ganz sicher nicht vor 1828/29 bekanntgeworden ist." (Müller:196; Cf. 231-232)

"Es kann ja keinen Zweifel daran geben, daß Strauß sich selbst von 1830 an als Hegelianer verstand und von Hegels Denken die entscheidenden Impulse empfing. (Sandberger:153) Er war also mit anderen Worten eigentlich von Anfang an keineswegs der linientreue Hegelianer, als der er sich selbst zunächst verstand und nach außen hin darstellte." (Sandberger:154)

"Strauss' Hegelian antecedents have comparatively little to do with his understanding and use of myth, at least as a literary-historical category." (Frei:241-243)
"Insofern hat die Forschung mit Recht lange Zeit nicht nur das Schema von Vorstellung und Begriff, sondern auch den Mythosbegriff in ziemlich geradliniger Abhängigkeit von Hegel gesehen und die Unterschiede zu diesem, die sie durchaus wahrgenommen hatte, entweder als Verfälschung Hegels oder als eine trotz allem in der Verlängerung des Hegelschen Denkens selbst liegende Konsequenz eingeschätzt." (Lange: 257)

4. The first edition of Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet was reprinted in two volumes in 1969 by the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft of Darmstadt, Germany.

5. All English quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined, edited by Peter C. Hodgson and translated from the fourth German edition by George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans). This edition is part of the Lives of Jesus Series edited by Leander Keck and published by Fortress Press of Philadelphia in 1972.


7. This is my translation of "... unter neutestamentlichen Mythen nichts Anders, als geschichtartige Einkleidungen urchristlicher Ideen, gebildet in der absichtlos dichtenden Sage, zu verstehen sind" (Strauss 1969: I 75). This definition drops out of the subsequent editions although remnants of it survive into the fourth edition translated by Eliot (cf. Strauss 1972: 81).

8. "These merely figurative expressions soon came to be understood literally (Matt. xi. 5; Luke vii. 21f.), and thus the idea of the Messiah was continually filled up with new details, even before the appearance of Jesus. Thus many of the legends respecting him had not to be newly invented; they already existed in the popular hope of the Messiah, having been mostly derived with various modifications from the Old Testament, and had merely to be transferred to Jesus, and accommodated to his character and doctrines. In no case could it be easier for the person who first added any new feature to the description of Jesus, to believe himself its genuineness, since his argument would be: Such and such things must have happened to the Messiah; Jesus was the Messiah; therefore such and such things happened to him." (Strauss 1972: 84)
9. "The inability to clearly grasp the concept of myth is revealed in the prevailing inclination to assume the presence of historical myths. This represents nothing other than a lack of confidence in the Spirit and the idea as though they were not in the position to produce narratives quite from themselves." (Strauss 1969:46; my translation)

"Es zeigte sich somit die Unfähigkeit, den Begriff des Mythus in Bezug auf die biblische Geschichte rein zu fassen einesteils in der überwiegenden Neigung zur Annahme historischer Mythen, welche nichts andres ist, als Mangel an Zutrauen zum Geist und zur Idee, als ob diese nicht im Stande wären, rein aus sich heraus Erzählungen zu erzeugen." (Strauss 1969:46)

10. Strauss' emphasis that the Gospel traditions underwent an oral stage of transmission ultimately led to the discipline of Form Criticism (cf. editor's note on page 786 for page 74.)

11. The author is aware that the essence of the Christian faith is perfectly independent of his criticism. The supernatural birth of Christ, his miracles, his resurrection and ascension, remain eternal truths, whatever doubts may be cast on their reality as historical events. (Strauss 1972:lii)


13. The question remains regarding the persistence or demise of the representation once the concept has been attained. See below.

14. "Sublate" is the English translation for the German aufheben. The concept of sublation (Aufhebung) in Hegel's thought is difficult to understand. The noun Aufhebung is ambiguous in the context of ordinary usage. The verb aufheben can mean to retain, reserve or save: Sie hat etwas Brot für Morgen aufgehoben (She saved some bread for morning). It also means to cancel: Der Schaffner hat meine Fahrkarte aufgehoben (The conductor cancelled my train ticket). It is this ambiguity between preserving and canceling that leads to an ambiguity in Hegel's use of the word in his philosophy. If the antithesis is sublated (aufgehoben) in the synthesis, the question arises as to whether the antithesis is retained or eliminated in the synthesis.
15. McGrath quotes Hegel from Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion from Werke, 1832, vol. 11, p. 26. Hartlich & Sachs are aware that Hegel was not always clear in this matter. For example they offer this quote from Hegel, "Die Mythe gehört zur Pädagogie des Menschengeschlechts, ist der Begriff erwachsen, so bedarf er derselben nicht mehr" (Hartlich & Sachs:138, quote from Geschichte der Philosophie; Werke BD. XIV, 1832, p. 287).

16. The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History is the title of Strauss' critique of Schleiermacher's The Life of Jesus (Strauss 1977).

17. The quote continues,

"but an idea which has an existence in reality, not in the mind only, like that of Kant. In an individual, a God-man, the properties and functions which the church ascribes to Christ contradict themselves; in the idea of the race, they perfectly agree. Humanity is the union of the two natures--God become man, the infinite manifesting itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude." (Strauss 1972:778-779)

18. Idealism made no theological distinction between divine Spirit and human spirit.
CHAPTER III

RUDOLF BULTMANN ON DEMYTHOLOGIZING:
THE SUBTLE PRESENCE OF MEANING-AS-CORRESPONDENCE

I. Introduction

In contrast to Strauss, Rudolf Bultmann discerned the power of gospel narratives, not in reference to philosophical concepts, but in their translation into existentialist terms (Funk 1966:20). The gospel text contains an understanding of human existence, the confrontation with which precipitates the crisis of inauthentic life encountering authentic life. Thus, for Bultmann, the task of gospel hermeneutics is to explicate the existential understanding contained in the inadequate form of gospel narratives. In this way his hermeneutic approach to gospel narrative remains governed by the interpretive model of meaning-as-correspondence.

Bultmann believed that the Gnostic myth of the "Primal Man" or "Heavenly Messenger" was the basis for the narrative form of the gospels. The gospels, however, refer to a non-mythical kerygma: the event of proclamation announcing that God has acted in Jesus to redeem humanity (Ricoeur 1980:49). The hearer of the kerygma receives a personal word of address from God and thus the transition from inauthentic life to authentic life is accomplished.

The purpose of Chapter Three is to discover the character of Bultmann's hermeneutic and to demonstrate the inadequacy of its treatment of gospel narrative. The first section will
present Bultmann’s perception of the problem of myth in gospel narratives and his proposed solution of demythologizing. The second section will examine Bultmann’s appropriation of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule understanding that myth is a particular narrative form containing a religious expression of an existential attitude. The final section will consider Bultmann’s employment of neo-Kantian epistemology in his understanding of 1) myth and philosophy as objectifying language, 2) the formulation of theological statements and the kerygma, and 3) revelation as event.

II. Bultmann’s Program for "Demythologizing"

The publication and dissemination of Bultmann’s essay, "New Testament and Mythology," (1941) set off a tempest in the theological world. The controversy occurred in spite of the fact that the article itself did not represent a change or a new turn in Bultmann’s thinking (Schmithals:255). Evidence of change is found only in articles which predate this most famous one. More likely it was Bultmann’s theologically explosive use of the word "demythologizing" which caused the controversy.

Bultmann began the essay by outlining the mythical background of the New Testament (1984:1-2). Its Weltbild (world picture or cosmology) is mythical, consisting of a three-storied universe (heaven, earth and hell) populated by good and evil spirits. Miracles are commonplace. History is
controlled by these spiritual powers; in fact, this world has fallen within the sphere (aeon) of the powers of evil, and only with great tribulation will the power of the old age be broken and the cosmos come to an end, at which time the dead will rise to judgment. The fact that the New Testament writers shared in this Weltbild does not make it inherently Christian (Bultmann 1984:3).

The terms, Weltbild (world picture) and Weltanschauung (world view), should not be confused (Johnson:158). Bultmann used each term for a distinct purpose. Weltbild designated that picture of the world which is given in a particular cultural period. For Bultmann there were two primary Weltbilder of concern to the New Testament critic: the mythical Weltbild of the New Testament writers and the scientific Weltbild which dominates the modern age.

The mythical Weltbild was not a point of contention between Paul and his adversaries (Schmithals:260). This understanding of the cosmos furnished the linguistic raw materials with which the writers of the New Testament as well as other Hellenistic writers worked. Nowhere will one find a writer of the New Testament period arguing for what modern persons recognize as a mythical view of the world. Such a view was taken for granted. "No one can appropriate a world picture [Weltbild] by sheer resolve, since it is already given with one's particular historical situation" (Bultmann 1984:3). The givenness of a world picture is no less true of modern
world pictures than ancient ones. For example, the dominance of the scientific Weltbild is evident in those exegetes who seek to demonstrate the factuality of miraculous events in scientific terms.

Bultmann's recognition of the distinction between a mythical and scientific Weltbild does not mean that he assigned any soteriological significance to scientific thinking. He conceded that the scientific Weltbild in its more shallow forms can lose certain truths that are actually rediscovered in documents from the mythical age. His use of the term "prescientific" cannot be used as evidence to convict him as a rationalist in the mode of eighteenth-century rationalism which would eliminate myth altogether.

Bultmann's call to "demythologizing" was a challenge to those who would identify the mythical Weltbild with the gospel itself (Bultmann 1984:3). The true concern of faith is not the mythical form of expression but its content as a particular expression of an understanding of existence. For Bultmann the content of the New Testament was unintelligible to modern humanity because of the mythical imagery itself (Bultmann 1984:10). Still, for Bultmann this content was not an idea, but an event (Bultmann 1984:3). Bultmann insisted that persons in the modern world cannot understand myth, and he aggressively ridiculed the mythical imagery of the New Testament to make his point (Bultmann 1984:5, 8).

For Bultmann the task of interpretation was to strip away
the mythical *forms* (*Vorstellungen*) of New Testament literature in order to arrive at the non-mythical *content* of New Testament (Bultmann 1984:4, 8). The actualization of that understanding comes in preaching, an oral event whose effect is at the same time both the demand for and the gift of faith (Bultmann 1958:40). The New Testament "proclaims precisely Jesus' person as the decisive event of salvation. The truth of Christian proclamation must take on an appropriate form for modern sensibility. It talks about his person mythologically. But can this be a reason for setting the proclamation of his person aside as sheer mythology" (Bultmann 1984:13)?

Bultmann distinguished between the intent of myth and its objectifying representations. Myth seeks to speak about other-worldly powers in terms of this-worldly phenomena (Bultmann 1984:9-10). While myth's intent is to express how humans understand existence, this is done through representations of events and characters in unreal fashion, according to a false logic that clashes with the scientific *Weltbild*. Bultmann called for the removal of these representations, but he contrasted his program from that of the rationalistic effort to eliminate myth. He did not see myth as a "husk" which if removed would leave a "kernel" of truth (unlike Strauss). Myth is not to be eliminated; rather, mythical narrative is to be interpreted in the effort to grasp its understanding of existence (Bultmann 1984:12).

Myth occurs in the New Testament according to two types:
the mythical imagery of Jewish apocalyptic and the Gnostic myth of the Primal Man. Both are dualistic in their depiction of the world enslaved by the powers of evil, and both speak of redemption of humanity by God. In apocalyptic myth God destroys the powers of the old age and instates a new age. In the Gnostic myth the Son of God travels from the heavenly realm in human disguise and reveals to his devotees the knowledge of and the path to freedom (Bultmann 1984:14). The gospels do not express the understanding of life found in these two mythical types, but they use these myths to express their own existential understanding.

Bultmann presented the existential understanding of the gospels and other New Testament writings in two very brief sketches of inauthentic and authentic existence. These sketches are corroborated by the existential analysis of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Life lived outside faith is a life of care in which humanity seeks to secure its tenuous and finite existence by manipulating material things. This effort at manipulation leads to a false sense of security, for in reality the things humanity presumes to manipulate become powers that determine human life. The inauthenticity of this life is revealed in the zealous attempt to redouble the effort at securing life, now at the expense of the neighbor. "Thus arise, on the one hand, envy, anger, jealousy, and strife and on the other hand, compacts and conventions, that always already encompass each of us and guide our judgments, that
each of us again and again acknowledge, and that we each help to constitute ever anew" (Bultmann 1984:17). The inauthentic life is characterized by anxiety that life is disintegrating in spite of the manipulative efforts to secure life.

Authentic life is founded upon a trust that life cannot be secured by any human effort. Life can only be received as gift from the invisible, unknown and unmanipulable source who is experienced as love. Forgiveness is the driving force of this life because forgiveness is a turning from the past and an openness to the future. Authentic life is radical obedience to the new possibility revealed in the word of forgiveness from God. No longer captive to the transitory things of the old life, the person of faith lives on the true boundary of life. This boundary is not death but the "God who raises the dead (2 Cor. 1:9); and calls into existence the things that do not exist (Rom 4:17)" (Bultmann 1984:18). No longer attempting to secure existence, the person of faith is capable of openness to the neighbor with whom there is no striving but love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness.

For Bultmann the transition from inauthentic to authentic life is actualized only in the proclamation of God's act in Jesus Christ. Only in this kerygma does the event of revelation occur whereby a new understanding of existence takes shape in the life of faith. The preaching of the Christ event is the occasion for this transformation of self-
understanding. Philosophy would do away with the kerygma as mythical residue because it "is of the opinion that knowledge of our authenticity already gives us control over it" (Bultmann 1984:27).

The Christ event is not myth even if it is expressed by the gospels in mythical representations (Bultmann:32). Bultmann ended his famous essay by interpreting the mythical expressions of the cross and the resurrection in terms of language of personal address. The word of the cross is judgment and that of the resurrection is salvation. These two events are actually one in the word of proclamation which declares the doom of the old age and the arrival of the new. This word of address concerning the cross and resurrection is a word from God that actualizes the event of change in self-understanding, the transition from authentic to inauthentic life.

Three aspects of myth as understood by Bultmann will guide the investigation concerning the effect of meaning-as-correspondence in Bultmann’s hermeneutical approach to gospel narrative: 1) myth as eschatological imagery that is unintelligible to the modern mind now dominated by the scientific Weltbild, 2) myth as a literary form derived from a cultic situation (Religionsgeschichtliche Schule), and 3) myth as the objectifying of human experience (neo-Kantian epistemology).
III. The Gospels as Mythical Form with Existential Content

After Strauss, the historical-critical focus shifted from the question of the miraculous to the problem of the New Testament's eschatological language, which some scholars came to believe was the language of Jesus as well (Schweitzer: 93-95; cf. above p. 64). Bultmann agreed that the language of the gospel narratives' was inadequate from a descriptive point of view. On the surface they were reports of supernatural events couched in the peculiar eschatological language of Jewish apocalyptic and Hellenistic Gnosticism. Bultmann accepted the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule's notion that these forms of eschatological language contained an understanding of life.

A. Apocalyptic Eschatology and the Jesus of History

Bultmann approached the gospels as narratives which purport to give a historical report of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Bultmann worked in the awareness that the figure of Jesus in the gospels was an eschatological prophet out of the milieu of Jewish apocalyptic. As a historian, Bultmann made his own contribution to the knowledge of the historical Jesus. This knowledge, however, could not serve as the basis of faith. As a theologian, Bultmann sought to base his theology on the understanding of faith expressed in the gospels and the word of proclamation to which they referred.
Johannes Weiss (1863-1914) and Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) issued the challenge to understand the eschatological language of the gospels by first understanding Jesus himself within this linguistic world. Johannes Weiss, a prominent figure in the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule, shocked the German liberal theological establishment with the assertion that the historical Jesus was a Jewish figure who preached the kingdom of God in apocalyptic imagery. Weiss' use of parallels from Jewish apocalyptic literature exposed the discrepancy between the liberal view of the kingdom of God and that presented in the gospels. Albert Schweitzer secured the insight which Weiss had first pressed on German scholarship through his book, Vom Reimarus zu Wrede (Kümmel:238). After subjecting to scathing criticism the many "lives of Jesus" produced by German scholars who essentially had painted various portraits of Jesus in their own image, Schweitzer put forth his own view of Jesus.

Several aspects of Schweitzer's work can be observed in Bultmann's historical critical approach to the gospels. Schweitzer stressed the negative effect of eschatological language with its offensive imagery in order to refute his theological opponents' refined conceptions of Jesus and the kingdom of God (Schweitzer:398). If modern persons want to understand the historical Jesus, it must be "on the ground of a purely eschatological Messianic conception" (Schweitzer:398, 401). It is not the Jesus of dogma or a Jesus created in the
images of modern persons who comes to us as teacher and savior; rather, "Jesus means something to our world because a mighty spiritual force streams forth from Him and flows throughout time also. This fact can neither be shaken nor confirmed by any historical discovery" (Schweitzer: 399).

In response to the work of theologians like Weiss and Schweitzer, Bultmann turned to the problem of New Testament and mythology in order to interpret its strange references to the kingdom of God, the son of Man, the eschatological tribulation, the final judgment, etc. Bultmann accepted Schweitzer's radical historical conclusions. However, his theological focus shifted from the problem of historical certainty concerning Jesus' life to the literary expression of the Church's faith in Jesus.

Bultmann's book on Jesus (1926) offers an example of his early engagement with eschatological imagery in the gospels. He focused on the eschatological features of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God, but these characteristics were not in themselves the meaning of Jesus' preaching. The eschatological language of the gospels while purporting to describe the events of Jesus' life is the fantasy of a primitive mentality. The language of the gospels is the outward expression of Jesus' real meaning (Bultmann 1934:56). Bultmann gave a reason for the necessity of separating the mythological expression (form) from the real meaning (content) of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom: "This mythology ends
by abandoning the fundamental insight which gave it birth, the conception of man as forced to decision through a future act of God" (Bultmann 1934:56). The eschatological imagery expresses the picture of crisis in which humanity is continually confronted, but as myth it is unable to confront humanity with a genuine act of God that brings salvation.

The outline of an interpretive framework is manifest in Bultmann's notion of outward expression versus real meaning. Bultmann completely broke from his liberal theological heritage with its emphasis on retrieving the historical Jesus and his religious consciousness. For Bultmann the gospels do not yield the historical Jesus but an understanding of existence in response to the proclamation concerning him. Although it is possible to construct a limited portrait of the historical Jesus through historical-critical method, the results of such an effort do not confront humanity with the force of his theological significance (Bultmann 1954:69). Only the message of God's eschatological act through Jesus can bring about faith. For this reason Bultmann declared:

I have never yet felt uncomfortable with my critical radicalism; on the contrary, I have been entirely comfortable. But I often have the impression that my conservative New Testament colleagues feel very uncomfortable, for I see them perpetually engaged in salvage operations. I calmly let the fire burn, for I see that what is consumed is only the fanciful portraits of Life-of-Jesus theology, and that means nothing other than 'Christ after the flesh' (Χριστος κατα σαρκα). But the 'Christ after the flesh' is no concern of ours. How things looked in the heart of Jesus I do not know and do not want to know. (Bultmann 1966:132)
Thus, Bultmann sought to look through the form of gospel narrative to a content, i.e., the gospel writers' self-understanding expressed in response to the announcement of God's act of redemption in the crucifixion and resurrection.

B. The Gnostic Redeemer Myth and the Literary Form of Gospel Narrative

From the beginning of his academic career, Bultmann relied heavily on two scholars of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Richard Reitzenstein (1861-1931) and Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1920) (Johnson: 91-6). These scholars viewed gospel narratives as expressions of faith or existential attitudes (Bultmann 1954:246-247). Bultmann's adoption of this understanding of myth set the pattern for a form/content dichotomy in his hermeneutical approach to the gospels (Johnson: 110).

Bultmann appropriated Reitzenstein's understanding of myth as a particular soteriological narrative: the myth of the "Primal Man" or "Heavenly Redeemer." From Bousset came an understanding of this myth as it was recited within a cultic setting (Johnson: 91-93). According to Roger Johnson, Bultmann derived from the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule an understanding of myth as a "soteriological narrative recited in the context of the cult and in the form of a cosmic drama" (Johnson: 89).

The myth of the Primal Man has never been found in simple narrative form. Reitzenstein hypothesized its basic outline
from his comprehensive knowledge of Hellenistic literature. As constructed by Reitzenstein, the myth speaks of particles of light that have left their true home and have become imprisoned in the chaotic darkness of a material world. This myth speaks of the need for a god to come from the heavenly realm (which is the true home for the soul) to liberate the light and help it return to the realm to which it belongs. Bultmann recounted Reitzenstein’s version of the myth in an article entitled "Urchristliche Religion (1915-1925)."

The fundamental presupposition is a dualistic Weltbild: the divine light world and the darkness of chaos stand opposed to each other. Through a dramatic event, which may be a tragic fall or a warlike activity, a part of the light world is thrown into the darkness. The heavenly Primal Man, who somehow descends into this darkness, is overcome, captured, and divided up. Only then does it become possible for a cosmos to arise in the sphere of chaos, in which the splintered fragments of light become the cohesive or formative elements, to which the demonic powers enviously cling. For if the light particles were gathered together and freed, and Primal Man were to return again to the light world, the cosmos would return to the chaos of darkness. The light particles captured in matter (the darkness) are nothing other than human souls, whose real home is the light. Each of these bears, to some extent, the Primal Man concealed in themselves. An ambassador from the light world brings them revelation of their origin and home and teaches them about the heavenly journey and provides the necessary means for this return (the sacraments). After their death he makes it possible for them to rise again to the light world. The ambassador himself is a form parallel to that of the Primal Man. As with the Primal Man, so it also happens to him, that in his earthly appearance, he is captured and oppressed. His ascent out of this world—in which he dwells as unknown and disguised, in order to deceive the demonic powers—therefore appears as a kind of salvation. He is the saved saviour. Since the soul is the image of this Primal Man, it recognizes
in the ambassador an exact likeness of itself.  
(Bultmann 1926:100-101)

Bultmann accepted the existence of the myth of the Primal Man as a reality and applied it in the context of New Testament interpretation. He assumed that the early Church adapted the myth of the Primal Man and transformed it into the Christ myth. For Bultmann, the task of New Testament interpretation was to recognize this particular mythical form in the New Testament and to render its content meaningful through existential analysis. Thus, the historical event of God acting in Jesus is separable from the mythical form in which it is reported. For example, it was this specific narrative structure which served as the framework to which Mark applied the historical traditions concerning Jesus (Bultmann 1963:347, 371). Further, the Gospel of John "completely violated the historical tradition" in favor of the narrative structure of the Christ myth (Bultmann 1963:371; 1926:col. 505-506). Bultmann himself showed little interest in the function of this myth in the cultic context (e.g., performance) other than its expression of an understanding of existence.

Bultmann’s employment of the myth of the Primal Man from the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule was not without criticism. He sought to avert the mysticism characteristic of the school but was appreciative of the school’s effort to avoid the view that religion is an attempt to shape the world or the human personality. While Bultmann lauded this anti-idealistic
intention, he rejected the view of the Church as a community seeking to escape the world. Bultmann found in the New Testament another concept of the Church: an eschatological community that seeks to remain in the world, yet to be free of the world as a power which alienates humanity from God (Bultmann 1984:13).

Although Bultmann was not confined in his thinking to the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, form/content dichotomy is evident in his subsequent hermeneutical work. Bultmann was influenced by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who characterized texts as "expressions of life fixed in writing" (Bultmann 1984:69-72). The text has a subject matter (*Sache*) to which interpreters already have their own relationship. By placing themselves in the understanding of existence offered in a text, interpreters gain the awareness of a new possibility of life. The mythical form of gospel narratives contains the self-understanding of early Christians in response to the proclamation concerning God's act in Christ. This narrative form, based as it is on the Christ myth, now stands in the way of communicating that self-understanding. Utilizing Heidegger's existential analysis, Bultmann sought to translate the expression of life offered in the gospel narratives into language comprehensible to modern human beings.

C. Summary and Comparison with Strauss

Bultmann's understanding of the mythical imagery in and
mythical pattern of the gospels reflects the same form/content dichotomy as both the *Mythical School* and Strauss. Strauss and Bultmann both use the historical-critical method to disqualify the gospel form in the sense that what it says is not what it means: the gospels do not describe the personality and details of the historical Jesus. There are important differences between Strauss and Bultmann; however, it is appropriate to acknowledge their mutual resort to form/content dichotomy, the essence of meaning-as-correspondence.

For Strauss, the negation of the mythical form is necessary in order to arrive at the narrative's underlying philosophical idea. For Bultmann, the understanding of life contained in the myth must be translated into existential terms. For Strauss, the historical Jesus is dispensable. For Bultmann, the historical Jesus is indispensable as a person in whom God has acted. For Strauss, the content of the gospels is the idea of the unity of God and humanity. For Bultmann, the content of the gospels is their existential understanding. Strauss assumed that the very comprehension of the idea reconciles humanity to its divine nature. Bultmann insisted that faith "hears" in the word of address what God has done in the historical Jesus, and the transition to authentic life commences.
IV. Revelation: The Referent to which Gospel Narrative Points

Bultmann maintained that the narrative/mythical form of the gospels was a vehicle for communicating the understanding of existence they contain. In his effort to translate this mythical form of expression, Bultmann was strictly committed to the preservation of the non-mythical element to which the gospels referred: the kerygma. Bultmann was primarily concerned with interpreting the gospels' mythical structure and imagery without losing sight of the gospels' kerygmatic intent. For Bultmann, existentialist translation of the gospels must continue to refer to the proclamation of what God has done in Jesus as the occasion for faith.

A. Neo-Kantianism and the Status of the Philosophical Concept

Bultmann was influenced by a form of neo-Kantianism peculiar to the academic environment at Marburg in the early 1920's. Briefly stated, Marburg neo-Kantian epistemology asserted that only that which can be conceptualized meaningfully (i.e., objectified according to the laws of reason) and placed coherently in the total complex of human knowledge is true knowledge or real (Bultmann 1966:58). This understanding is consistent with Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason; however, the Marburg neo-Kantians made adjustments in Kant's understanding of Empfindung and the Ding-an-sich: perception and the thing-in-itself (transcendental object) (Johnson:44).
The Marburg neo-Kantians found fault with Kant's epistemology because his theory of perception postulated as ideals both the ground of thought and its object. The epistemological significance of this postulate is that the object of thought is "given" so that the mind creates a concept or a representation of it. According to Kant, the mind cannot know the thing-in-itself but only the mental concept of it. The object of human thought, therefore, is not the thing-in-itself but rather a new object which the mind has created. The new object necessarily conforms to the rational structure of the thing-in-itself because the mind performing the examination does so in the context of this structure.

The Marburg neo-Kantians modified Kant's epistemology so that it conformed with developments in mathematical physics at the end of the nineteenth century when scientists began producing results with little or no empirical observation (Johnson: 42). To the neo-Kantians these mathematically based advances meant that objects of thought need not necessarily be given. The mind is able to generate its own objects of thought without any previous perception of sense data. Thus, there was no need to hypothesize a transcendental mind or object to account for the possibility of knowledge. The mind is autonomous; its objects of thought come not from without but are formed (objectified) in accordance with rational principles, i.e., thought generates its own form and content.

Bultmann utilized this epistemology in his theological
works: A god postulated as an object of thought according to the rational principles of the mind is a mere product of the mind. Bultmann believed that any attempt to fit God into a rational explanation of the universe (Weltanschauung) was tantamount to atheism since it reduced God to a datum which occupies a part of a reality constructed by the mind.

For Bultmann, such a rational construction was an attempt to use finite reason to comprehend an infinite God. Although reason is relentless in its efforts to bring the universe into its grasp, it is frustrated by the proliferation of enigma resulting from any progress in its pursuit of knowledge. Unable to transcend itself, reason has no "place" in its system for God who is "wholly other" and resistant to objectification.

In Bultmann's thought both myth and science are disqualified from speaking of God since both are forms of thinking by which humanity "objectifies" experience. Myth attempts to organize its knowledge in a non-rational narrative structure while science attempts to produce a coherent system of knowledge according to rational principles. The distinction drawn by Bultmann between theological statements and kerygmatic language must be understood in this context.

B. The Theological Justification for Speaking of God

In his article "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?" (1925) Bultmann laid the foundation for his concept of
revelation within the critical limits of neo-Kantian philosophy (Bultmann 1966:53-65). Bultmann distinguished between speaking "of" God and speaking "about" God. To speak "about" God constitutes making God into an object (i.e., a concept which is then forced into a larger scheme of reality) thus contradicting the proper understanding of God: that which determines human existence (Bultmann 1966:56-7). When humans speak "about" God in an objective manner, they are no longer speaking "of" the God who determines their existence (Bultmann 1966:55). They have become the creator and manipulator of the god "about" whom they speak.

Bultmann criticized this human tendency to formulate a view of reality (Weltanschauung) and flee to it as though it could secure existence. To retreat to formulations about reality and God is to step outside of existence and flee from God; to avoid the world and the inevitabilities which attend it, e.g., decay and death. To seek security in our own formulations is idolatry, an attempt to create our own source of being rather than to "live" authentically in radical obedience to God.

If humans are to speak authentically "of" God, they can do so only to the extent they have discerned their contingent nature vis-a-vis God. Consequently, it is necessary that humanity speak both of itself and of God (Bultmann 1966:55). In speaking of God, Bultmann employed the distinctive neo-orthodox concept of God as "wholly other." The God who is
wholly other is inaccessible by human reason. God can be experienced only to the extent that God addresses humanity (Bultmann 1966:56, 57).

Humanity must speak "of" God when addressed by the God who determines their existence (Bultmann 1966:61). This "must" is not a command to articulate a human concept of God or to proliferate historically conditioned formulations of faith. It arises from God's word to humanity and results in a free act by humanity of putting itself under the divine imperative. Response to the divine "must" is pure act which according to Bultmann is true speech "of" God "since only in act are we ourselves" (Bultmann 1966:62, emphasis added).

Bultmann sought language which did not speak "about" existence and God and, therefore, did not separate humanity from life and the God who determines it. He sought language that sustains authentic existence as a continually new act. For Bultmann this was the language of personal address preserved in the gospels which, notwithstanding their exploitation of the language of myth, refer to the non-mythical kerygma. Bultmann believed that the power of gospel narratives was in the kerygma to which they referred, power which could only be realized in a sermonic context. He did not consider the possibility that the performance of gospel narratives is kerygmatic, that story proclaims.
C. Revelation as Event

In "The Concept of Revelation in the New Testament" published in 1929 Bultmann delineated the concept of revelation as an event in which humans come to authenticity (1960:58-91). While revelation is not a form of knowing (in the neo-Kantian epistemological framework), it is employed as a concept necessary to account for the larger range of human experience. Bultmann began this essay by recounting a general understanding of the word revelation: the "disclosure of what is veiled, the opening up of what is hidden." Revelation can be understood either as "a communication of knowledge by the word" or "an occurrence that puts me in a new situation as a self" (Bultmann 1960:59). Within the realm of religion revelation can be the communication of knowledge, e.g., doctrines about God; or it can be an event, "an occurrence that puts man in a new situation" (Bultmann 1960:59). Bultmann opts for the latter understanding.

Bultmann's focus on the concept of revelation was essential in light of the neo-Kantian proscription from defining God as object. Without a concept of revelation, humanity is guided only by reason. Reason is limited by death. Revelation accounts for a limit beyond death. It is death and the question it poses to humans that causes humankind to seek after revelation. But it is not a concept (Begriff) of revelation which we seek; it is the experience itself (Erlebnis).
Bultmann’s existentialist reaction against idealism is clear in his substitution of the concept of life for that of the idea. Revelation is concerned with the question of authentic life: whether life is determined by death or by that which is "wholly other." Reason is concerned with "perceptual and propositional knowledge"; it is indifferent in the quest for life (Bultmann 1960:63). To have a concept of revelation is to have knowledge of the limitations of human life and, thus, to have knowledge of the self. Although this knowledge can be conceptualized, that which determines the self can never be objectified or possessed in concepts. Thus, "one ... cannot expect the answer of the New Testament to be an opinion that one merely lights upon and can then proceed to classify in a previously prepared scheme of all the possible ideas about man’s limitation" (Bultmann 1960:63).

Humanity’s problem is not life after death; it is life ruled by death. Death is both the end of life and a constant "disturbance of the whole of life" (Bultmann 1960:71). The gospels do not attempt to master death by detachment from all anxiety about it, nor do they counsel the adoption of a concept about death. Knowing "about" death (placing it in a system of knowledge) offers no escape from or solace for its inevitability.

The event of revelation is paradoxical. It reveals life but in so doing produces death by striking at the drive to secure life inauthentically. Revelation interposes itself
between humans and their idols. So long as humanity hopes to ensure life with gods of its own making, revelation will bring death because revelation proclaims that humans have no hope of controlling life, fate and destiny (Bultmann 1960:74).

Bultmann asserts that this existential understanding of the paradoxical quality of revelation is derived from gospel narrative. He recognized revelation's enigmatic character in the gospels' presentation of Jesus. The gospels promise the full disclosure of the identity of Jesus in the future, yet at the same time obscure him in ambiguity. Jesus' miracles are construed as signs of both evil and good. His words are depicted as the stuff of both offense and hope. He went about doing signs and wonders until the religious authorities demanded a clear, unequivocal demonstration of his identity, at which point he refused to perform (Bultmann 1960:75). Bultmann's utilization of these specifics to support the above existential understanding smacks of allegory (Perrin 1976:78).

Bultmann's concept of revelation sought to prevent the reduction of gospel narrative to a manageable "content." However, to the extent that Bultmann allegorizes the narratives of gospel literature, he retreats to a form, albeit sophisticated, of meaning-as-correspondence. He speaks in referential terms by claiming that the gospels point to the non-mythical kerygma. That referent is not simply the historical Jesus, or an idea about him, but an event: the proclamation of God's act in Jesus (Ricoeur 1980:49). The
concept of revelation as event allowed Bultmann to view the gospel narratives as mere containers. Thus, in the act of proclamation myth is transformed in order to engender life in the pure act of address (Bultmann 1960:91).

When Bultmann refers to the use of gospel narrative in liturgy, he asserts that the narratives obscure a meaning that persons may only dimly discern. That meaning requires clarification in philosophical and theological terms (Bultmann 1984:161). Bultmann utilized the concepts of existentialist philosophy (Heidegger) to give expression to the depiction of authentic life expressed in the mythological language of gospel narratives. Life is objectified in mythical and existential forms in order to be revealed in its authentic character, i.e., as event (Bultmann 1984:158).? Herein lies the paradox of "the word made flesh."

What was important for Bultmann was that the Logos (Jesus) was the event of revelation. This revelation, however, has no content to be conveyed. It is event which is contemporary in the kerygma, i.e., the announcement of God's act in Jesus. God acted in Jesus and now acts through the word concerning him.

If the Revelation is to be presented neither as the communication of a definite teaching nor as the kindling of a mystical experience of the soul, then all that can be presented is the bare fact of it. This fact, however, does not remain empty. For the Revelation is represented as the shattering and negating of all human self-assertion and all human norms and evaluations. And precisely by virtue of being such negation, the Revelation is the affirmation and fulfillment of human longing for
life, for true reality. (Bultmann 1954:67-68)

When asked how a historical event can have significance of an ultimate nature 1,900 years after the fact, Bultmann replied that the word concerning this event continues the event's efficacy (Bultmann 1984:40). However, the word of which Bultmann speaks is the preached word and not the narrative word from which it springs.

D. Summary and Comparison with Strauss

The important difference between Bultmann and Strauss is the relative conspicuousness of meaning-as-correspondence in their hermeneutical theories. For Strauss the truth of the gospels was the idea which had become shrouded in myth. The hermeneutical task was to strip away these robes in order to expose the truth which they veiled. Strauss saw no need for continued engagement with the gospel text once the concept was set free from the form of mythical representation.

Bultmann also conceptualized gospel narrative in terms of a separation of form and content; however, for him that content was not an idea but an understanding of life which refers to the event of revelation. He formulated the hermeneutical task as one of translating mythical language into existentialist categories. Although he called for demythologizing the gospel narratives, he did not intend to annihilate the gospel text. He believed that modern people no longer can hear the kerygma preached in mythical terms. This
form has become a stumbling-block to hearers who, by virtue of their modern Weltbild, ask about the factuality of the events described in the narratives. Without translation of the myths into existentialist terms, modern readers find themselves faced with a choice: to believe in the factuality of the events depicted or to reject them outright. Such a choice misses the real intent of the gospels: to convey the kerygma.

Although the experience of the text is not a revelatory event, the text is a source to which the proclaimer must turn in order that the revelation be renewed. Although gospel narratives appear in a mythical form which is not accessible to modern readers, exposure to the kerygma is primarily through the Church's preaching in response to reading the gospels. Accordingly, Bultmann did not advocate either doing away with these narratives or transforming them into something more palatable to contemporary tastes. He aspired to remove the false scandal of the gospel (myth) so that the true scandal (God's act in Christ) might address the modern human condition.

V. Summary

This chapter set out to identify the pattern of meaning-as-correspondence in Bultmann's hermeneutical theory. He conceived of the meaning of narrative as an object separate from the narrative itself. For Bultmann the language of the gospels did not meet the requirement of the modern period,
i.e., the language of the gospels is not descriptive of empirical reality. At this point he diverges from Strauss by positing the importance of the historical Jesus. The mythical portrait provided is an attempt to convey Jesus' significance even if it fails to yield sufficient historical knowledge of his life and personality. Unlike Strauss' hermeneutic of annihilation, Bultmann's hermeneutic of translation attempted to preserve the content of the gospels for modern ears.

The gospels are written in mythical language; and, thus, they are "fixed expressions of life in writing" containing an understanding of existence. Bultmann's approach to the text is aimed at retrieving that understanding of existence. Bultmann accepted the particular mythical form of the Primal Man or Heavenly Messenger as the literary form employed by the gospel writers to express the content of their understanding of existence in response to the message about Jesus. Thus, meaning-as-corrrespondence, whereby the meaning of narrative is thought to be a separate object from the narrative itself, is a decided element in Bultmann's theory of interpretation.

Bultmann's neo-Kantian philosophical convictions also elevated the importance of the concept of "object" and "objectifying" for his understanding of myth. For Bultmann myth was the attempt to objectify human experience in the form of story. Similarly, the language of philosophical thought in the age of science and reason was also a form of objectifying language. Thus, speech about God in either form was invalid
because God can never be conceived as an object. The only appropriate language for speaking "of" God is in the human response to having been addressed by God. Bultmann believed that the gospels in their mythical form refer to the *kerygma*. Thus, the translation of the gospels' understanding of existence into modern understanding must preserve this *kerygmatic* reference. For Bultmann, the task of the Church is not to describe Jesus but to proclaim Jesus as the paradigmatic act of God. The gospels' references to this oral event of proclamation is the occasion of revelation. God is not objectified; rather, God speaks in the *kerygma* concerning Jesus. The revelatory event, in which the hearer moves from inauthenticity to the authentic mode of life, occurs in the tension between the listener's own self-understanding and the understanding of existence contained in the gospels.

The hermeneutical theory that Bultmann expounded intends to view gospel narrative under the same conditions of understanding as other narrative. Bultmann's goal was to bring the narrative to speech in the form of the sermon. However, he ignored the possibility that the gospels as narrative are speech. Bultmann overlooked the performative aspect of narrative. New developments in the study of myth and audience criticism have demonstrated that the written word is as capable of addressing humanity as is the spoken word. Bultmann came close to acknowledging the validity of such an
approach when he wrote in his 1950 essay, "The Problem of Hermeneutics":

What about a novel? Even the naive reader does not read merely with a curious interest in what is happening; in straining to learn what is yet to happen, the reader is moved by more than curiosity, namely, by inner participation in the fate of the hero with whom the reader has identified. The reader not only comes to know something but rather shares in the experience of something, being "gripped," with his or her affections touched and passions aroused. And is it not this that alone fulfills the author's intention? (1984:77)

In these words Bultmann himself intimated a possible direction for the future of the study of gospel narrative. However, Bultmann's battle was against all forms of objectifying language. His strategy was to separate myth as form from its message as content, to employ a particularistic use of the term myth, and to view myth as the objectification of existential understanding. These strategies made it impossible for him to conceive that the event of revelation can take place in the experience of narrative itself. In fact, the kerygma is no more threatened by its narrative expression than it is endangered by the average sermon on Sunday.
ENDNOTES

1. Unlike a Weltbild which is given, a Weltanschauung (world view) must be chosen from the various Weltanschauungen present in a culture (Johnson: 158-59). A Weltanschauung refers to the several views of reality which simultaneously vie for the allegiance of humanity. Various competing Weltanschauungen draw from a common Weltbild. For example, Bultmann spoke of the idealist and the naturalist Weltanschauungen which arise out of a modern, scientific Weltbild (1984:5). The idealist Weltanschauung argues for an anthropology in which human being is pure spirit while the naturalist argues for human being as pure nature.

2. The language of both Jewish apocalyptic and Gnostic myths are eschatological in that express crisis of humanity before God. In the Jewish milieu this crisis is precipitated by the coming of God or a representative (the son of Man) at the end of history. Gnostic myths present a crisis in terms of the sending of a revealer who supplies the necessary knowledge for the soul to migrate from the evil sphere of existence to the realm of light.

3. Johannes Weiss was Bultmann's teacher at Marburg. His book, Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes (Weiss 1971), challenged liberal theologians' domesticated view of Jesus at the end of the nineteenth century (Kümmel: 226-30). Albrecht Ritschl and his followers had interpreted the idea of the kingdom of God as an ethical achievement on the part of humankind.

4. According to Schweitzer, the historical Jesus was an apocalyptic fanatic who expected the powerful manifestation of God in history. This appearance of God would bring about the end of a history of suffering and injustice and the beginning of the rule of God. Thus, Jesus taught an "interim ethic" designed to prepare God's elect for his imminent return. Schweitzer believed that Jesus sought to coerce the irruption of the kingdom by going to Jerusalem where his suffering would bring God's direct intervention (Schweitzer: 330-397).

5. In a quotation from II Corinthians, often associated with Bultmann, Schweitzer declared to his scholarly colleagues, "If we have known Christ after the flesh yet henceforth know we Him no more" (Schweitzer: 401, 403).

6. "The revelation has happened once and for all in the total historical appearance of a man, in such a way that on the decision for or against him hangs the decision over life and death for all men and for all time. The consequence is that it is not possible to record individual sayings of Jesus, as
the warnings and invocations, the threats and the injunctions of the prophets had been recorded; for his proclamation can only be proclamation of the single fact of his coming, of the coming which is the eschatological event" (Bultmann 1971:252).

7. This understanding of the dialectical movement of human spirit was reintroduced to Bultmann by Hans Jonas, a student of Bultmann and Heidegger. In "New Testament and Mythology" Bultmann credits Jonas with having furnished an example of how existential analysis of myth is to be executed (Bultmann 1984:15). Bultmann refers to Jonas' work Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, Die mythologische Gnosis, Vol I. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934. Johnson quotes from an earlier publication by Jonas which indicates the relationship of existential analysis to the idealist dialectic. Johnson also notes that this is the first known use of the German word for demythologize, entmythologisier:

All of this corresponds to the fundamental structure of Geist itself: it interprets itself in objective forms and symbols. That it is thus symbolized is essential to Geist and dangerous at the same time. In order to come to itself, it necessarily takes this detour by way of the symbol, in whose enticing confusion of problems it tends to lose itself, by making the substitution of the symbol for its own being absolute, thus moving far from the original source of the symbol. Only in a later critical reformulation, after a creative traversing of that detour, may a demythologized consciousness also approach, now in a conceptually direct manner, the original phenomenon concealed in this disguise. (Quoted in Johnson:220; from Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem: ein philosophischer Beitrag zur Genesis der christlich-abendländischen Freiheitsidee. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930, p.68).

Bultmann says of the relationship between objective historical language and the language of personal address that they "must be characterized as 'dialectical', insofar as the one is never given without the other" (Bultmann 1984:158)

To compare with Hegel's conception of the dialectical movement of Geist see above pp. 59-66.
CHAPTER IV

THE REEMERGENCE OF GOSPEL NARRATIVE
AND MEANING-AS-PERFORMANCE

I. Introduction

This chapter will argue that the meaning of a gospel narrative is an event which occurs in the performance of that narrative. As used herein, performance of narrative will imply "a saying," i.e., a speech act performed in order to move an audience to some state or action (Palmer:14-20). In this analysis the meaning of a narrative will be disclosed, not as an object (content, referent, description) separate from the narrative itself, but as an event inextricably bound to and arising from the performance of the narrative. Thus, the presupposition that meaning occurs in narrative performance bypasses the assumption that meaning is a function of correspondence and enables the reemergence of narrative as a transformative force.¹

The concepts of myth employed both by Strauss and Bultmann distracted them from the narrative character of the gospels. Strauss believed that narrative was a deficient form of thought, that is, a medium that referred to reality indirectly. He attempted to eliminate the coarse, mythical language of the gospels in order to distill the truth which they contained in the immediate form of the philosophical concept. Bultmann also conceived of gospel narrative as myth. His goal was to translate gospel narratives into the language
of address, *i.e.*, the event of the sermon. In their attempts to render the gospels into new forms, Strauss and Bultmann evaded the gospels as narrative. The task for this dissertation is now to make a case for the gospels as narrative that avoids the approach of Strauss and Bultmann.

Section II will develop the concept of meaning-as-performance. Section III will contrast the approaches to gospel narrative by Strauss and Bultmann with an example of an approach guided by the concept of meaning-as-performance and employing the tools of narrative criticism. The test case will be John 9, the Healing of the Blind Beggar.

**II. Gospel Narrative and Meaning-as-Performance**

Narrative is only fully itself when it is being performed in the imagination of the reader/audience. In this dissertation the words "audience" and "reader" are used almost interchangeably. Strictly speaking "audience" would refer to any person or persons hearing the performance of a text. An individual who reads aloud is thus both performer and hearer. A case can be made that a silent reader "hears" his/her performance. However, because some persons reading silently may in fact bypass aurality altogether, a reader may respond to a text exclusively through the visual faculty. This dissertation is not concerned exclusively with private reading or public reading as much as it is concerned with meaning as the function of a narrative being performed in a particular
context. In fact, with the contemporary realization that reality is socially constructed, private reading (visual or aural) is never an absolutely individual experience.

The premise that a narrative is only fully itself when it is being performed is predicated upon the modern linguistic understanding that the meaning of an utterance is its function in a specific context. J. L. Austin's distinction between constative and performative aspects of language challenges what appears to be a common sense understanding that a statement is a description of some state of affairs or facts and is either true or false. Such statements are constative, and as such they are subject to verification. However, much of what human beings say is not constative. Language does not always describe, report, refer or propose. Statements are often nonsensical with respect to verifiability. Human beings accomplish much; they perform deeds with words. For example, "I will" in a wedding ceremony or "I swear . . ." in a court of law or "I promise to pay" in a lending institution are performative utterances. Austin and Searles have made literary theorists aware that "to say something is to do something" (Austin:120).

Austin makes distinctions among three aspects of a speech act:

We first distinguished a group of things we do in saying something, which together we summed up by saying we perform a locutionary act, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional
sense. Second, we said that we also perform *illocutionary acts* such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, etc., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform *perlocutionary acts*: what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading. (Austin:108)

As Austin progresses in his investigation of speech acts, he proposes that locutionary acts are derivative of illocutionary acts rather than the other way around. Language is not primarily constative; rather, it is performative. Philosophers have focused on the locutionary, the utterance without respect to context. "Once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act" (Austin:138).

In assigning priority to the performative aspect of language over the constative Austin finds that the difference between the two depends on whether the hearer focuses on the locutionary act or the illocutionary act. A constative utterance is in reality the result of concentration on the locutionary aspect of a speech act. Thus, a simplistic "notion of correspondence with the facts" allows for a consideration of the statement without respect to a situation or context. Concentration on the illocutionary aspect of an utterance diminishes the question of truth or falsehood in terms of correspondence with the facts in favor of the question what does language do? (Austin:144-145).
Reader-response criticism has addressed the performative aspect of narrative (the novel) through the concept of meaning-as-event (Fish: 70-77, Rosenblatt: 6-21, and Iser: 125-129; and Fowler 1991: 47-58). Two prominent reader-response critics, Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish, have been influenced by the speech-act theories of John L. Austin and John R. Searle (Cf. Iser 1978: 54-62; Fish 1980: 97-111, 197-245). Although a narrative purports to be a report on events and characters, narrative performance is more appropriately understood as a speech act seeking to accomplish a goal.

Narrative texts are written in order to be performed. This simple assertion is often ignored in the contemporary setting where individuals are the quiet users of literature.

Walter Slatoff complains to his fellow literary critics:

One feels a little foolish having to begin by insisting that works of literature exist, in part, at least, in order to be read, that we do read them, and that it is worth thinking about what happens when we do. Put so blatantly, such statements seem too obvious to be worth making, for after all, no one directly denies that readers and reading do actually exist; even those who have most insisted on the autonomy of literary works and the irrelevance of readers' responses, themselves do read books and respond to them, and many of them make their livings by wrestling with the phenomena which occur as literary works and the minds of students impinge on one another. Equally obvious, perhaps, is the observation that works of literature are important and worthy of study essentially because they can be read and can engender responses in human beings. (Slatoff: 3)

In an age dominated by objectivism the misunderstanding may arise that a narrative is real merely because it is inscribed on paper, bound between covers and sitting on a library shelf
(Fish 1980:43). As demonstrated in Chapters One, Two and Three, such misperception is facilitated by the domination of the interpretive model of meaning-as-correspondence. If the meaning of a narrative is an object, the narrative itself can also be viewed as an object independent of its actualization in the act of reading.

It is likewise disconcerting to have to insist that gospel narratives were written in order to be performed. Gospel narratives have served as an integral part of Christian worship for approximately eighteen centuries. From Sunday to Sunday Christian congregations have heard these narratives as they were being performed in the context of the liturgy. Unfortunately, as scripture increasingly came to be understood as a treasure trove containing concepts or doctrines, the performance of the text became perfunctory, a reverent nod to the Book before one came to the real matter of Christian faith: the sermon. Because of the increasing historical distance between the gospel stories and contemporary persons, the sermon has often been viewed as the genuine event. This situation has persisted into the present to the degree that some forms of Christian community do not necessarily perform the gospels at each service of worship. In the latter types of congregations the pressure to deify "the Book" grows stronger in inverse proportion to the extent of its performance in worship.

The concept of meaning-as-performance is essential for
overcoming the grip which meaning-as-correspondence has had on the use of gospel narratives. Strauss understood narrative as an attempt to lay out a philosophical concept. This notion is highly referential and assumes that language is essentially propositional and cognitive. Bultmann understood narrative texts as fixed expressions of life in writing; consequently, the purpose of a text is to express an understanding of existence. Meaning-as-performance, however, views narrative as an event in which form and subject matter are inseparably embodied in the act of performance. Like any narrative, gospels appeal to the imagination of the audience and are constitutive of human experience.²

A. Meaning-as-Performance

According to Alla Bozarth-Campbell performance of literature is the primary meaning of interpretation, i.e., interpretation is a psycho-physical act (Bozarth-Campbell:1). Only in the enactment of the narrative work energized through the body of the interpreter does the work become fully itself. The imagery here is not of two monads, text and body, that simply interact. Rather, there is a transaction between a dynamic audience and a dynamic text in which it is impossible to identify who is the subject and who is the object, what is the stimulus and what is the response (Rosenblatt:16-17).

"Performance" means "form coming through" (Bozarth-Campbell:2). The concept of form in the definition of
performance should not be confused with the concept of "form" in the dichotomy of form and content. Meaning-as-performance is the embodiment of narrative in the imagination of the reader. The performance of narrative demands the "compenetration" (Rosenblatt) of reader and narrative. This event is concerned not with the audience's grasping an idea but with their participating in a transformative event.

The use of the term "perform" is deliberate for its connotation of the dramatic spectacle. Those preoccupied with the cognitive-propositional aspects of language, e.g., Strauss, will find the action of the drama a hindrance to the goal of rendering concepts. For Bultmann the mythical drama is offensive to modern humanity's scientific world picture and does not meet the qualification for language appropriate for speaking of God, i.e., personal address. The notion of drama implies a fully physical acting out of the narrative, but this need not occur in the world of platform, stage, and props. The imagination is as fine a stage as ever conceived.

One objection to such a conception of interpretation is that many modern people read silently. Bozarth-Campbell suggests that there is no such act as silent reading since the performance of literature always involves the faculty of hearing.

Whether interpretation is private or public, . . . the human act of interpreting literature always involves performance. To my way of thinking and as a direct result of my own experience, the written word only becomes real when it is physically spoken and heard within the human body and by the human
ear. Even the private reader engages in a physical act of taking in the words from the external page, of actually inviting them into the body through the eyes, after which the aural functions of the brain immediately come into play. We have medical evidence of this phenomena, for patients following certain kinds of throat surgery are told to refrain from any type of reading, since even during supposedly "silent" reading the throat muscles move along with those of the eye, perhaps in atavistic memory of the time when words were only uttered and never plastered in print, or perhaps in response to the simple need of the human organism to translate language from sight to sound. (Bozarth-Campbell:1-2)

While Bozarth-Campbell’s understanding of performance is well taken, it is not necessarily true that aural faculties must be activated in the performance of literature. In a culture in which sight has come to dominate the consciousness of individuals, the need for vocal articulation may not be as necessary as Bozarth-Campbell claims. For this dissertation the act of silent reading still represents embodiment, the envisioning of form offered by the text and "fleshing" it out in the imagination of the reader. 6

Bozarth-Campbell’s attention to the vocal articulation of a text should not, however, be completely dismissed. The gospels were in all likelihood written in order to be read publicly. 7 Nevertheless, other persons do read the gospels privately, a circumstance where the reader is both performer and audience. This private performing of the narrative has been the subject of study by reader-response critics concerned primarily with private reading. Some critics argue that the text is given but that a narrative work does not exist until
it is ideated in the mind of the reader (Iser 1981:83; Rosenblatt:12-14). Other critics assert that even the text of a narrative does not exist until it is created in the act of reading (Fish 1980:175-179). It is not the intention of this thesis to resolve this dispute by elevating oral speech above writing. Rather, the concern of this thesis is to facilitate the reemergence of gospel narrative—whether read aloud or silently, privately or publicly.

When the meaning of the gospels is conceived as an event in which the audience's perspectives are re-oriented, performance is interpretation (Aichele:49-50). Criticism (explanation) becomes subservient to the performance of the narrative text and is employed to assure that the narrative receives a competent hearing. The ultimate goal of a hermeneutic based on meaning-as-performance is to assist contemporary readers in perceiving and appreciating the transformative force of narrative performance.

The four gospels of the Christian canon are narrative texts, and their value lies in their narrative character. To the extent one speaks of the meaning of the gospels, one should speak in terms of meaning derived from experiencing the narrative. The a priori assumption that narratives refer to or contain one particular meaning may, in fact, be symptomatic of a human pathology that prevents persons from participating in the world of narrative.

The task of appreciating the narrative nature of the
gospels and experiencing the power of that narrative has been thwarted in the modern period by what Heidegger referred to as the "Enframing" (das Ge-stell). The epoch of Enframing characterizes a mode of perception that seeks to "totalize" the world in order to control and dominate it. With Enframing the world is no longer itself a subject; rather, in the gaze of the imperial "I", the on-looker seeks to place before (vorstellen) himself the world as object. This "placing before" is the manifestation of will to power, a grandiose drive to avoid the anxiety of existence by controlling a world now reduced to a representation (Heidegger: 36-49, Cf. Levin: 53-69).

It is no coincidence that in the age of the Enframing the power of narrative has been subdued. The subject/object split of Enframing separates text and reader and results in the division of narrative and meaning (Frei: 11). This division is a logical consequence of an interpreter who is driven to dominate a narrative text subjecting it to his own perception of self and world. For Frei the understanding of narrative requires an entirely different posture. He cites Erich Auerbach approvingly as the latter describes the experience of the Old Testament narratives:

We are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history . . . Everything else that happens in the world can only be conceived as an element in this sequence; into it everything that is known about the world . . . must be fitted as an ingredient of the divine plan. (Auerbach: 15; quoted in Frei: 3)
Biblical narrative does not seek to give a picture (representation) of the world over which a dispassionate subject disposes; rather, biblical narrative offers a potential event in which the reader/audience moves from one context to another by means of an experience structured in narrative.

In the modern period of biblical scholarship the effort to domesticate gospel narratives is revealed in the sequence of critical approaches that have prevailed until the present. The rise of the historical-critical method represented the first great assault of the autonomous ego on the gospels. The consequences of this movement were to atomize the narratives pericope by pericope in order to subject them to historical analysis and verification. If the narrative accounts were incompatible with the world of the modern critic, it was assumed that the narrative was seeking to express a meaning beyond ostensive historical reference or description.

Subsequent critical methodologies continued the pattern by which the meaning of gospel narratives were separated from narrative itself. Form criticism offered a method by which to interpret gospel narratives in the context of their historical-social setting. This method continued to atomize the gospels into parts in the interest of establishing a history of the tradition and the communities associated with it. Redaction criticism arose as an effort to discover how at one stage of the transmission of the tradition the narrative parts were arranged and brought to order under the hand of an
editor with a specific purpose. The theology of the evangelist was the controlling factor and constituted the meaning of the narrative although the many narrative parts still offered glimpses into the historical settings prior to the redaction. Ultimately composition criticism explained the gospels as unified narratives from the pens of full-fledged authors who, unlike redactors, wove the gospels into whole narrative fabrics governed by a theological perspective (Moore: 4-7).

While redaction and composition critics spoke of the theological unity of the gospels, narrative criticism has entered the world of gospel studies speaking of narrative unity.¹⁰ Drawn from the insights of such narratologists as Seymour Chatman, Gerald Prince and Gérard Genette (Moore: 51-55), narrative criticism is concerned with the elements of biblical narrative and with the structuring of those elements, i.e., the relations among the parts of the text. Thus, narrative criticism offers an "intrinsic" approach to gospel narratives. This shift in focus is, in fact, a revolution in traditional gospel scholarship in which the ways of producing meaning from the interaction with the narrative were by "extrinsic" approaches, e.g., historical, biographical, doctrinal, philosophical and/or sociological.

Narrative critics refer to the elements and structure of narrative as "story" and "discourse." Story is the "what" of the narrative. It consists of events (actions and happenings)
and existents (characters and settings) and their arrangement (plot) (Chatman:19). Discourse is the "how" or "rhetoric" of the narrative, i.e., the way the story is communicated to the reader/audience. Story and discourse form the basis for explaining the unity of a narrative (Moore:8, Rhoads and Michie:5).

A narrative expresses "a closed and self-sufficient world with its own integrity, its own imaginative past and future, its own sets of values, and its own universe of meanings" (Rhoads and Michie:4). The significance of the narrative world is realized over against interpretive efforts that seek to supply further elements to the narrative from outside the narrative itself. For example, historical-critical scholars might add information to a gospel narrative from other historical sources. Furthermore, it is common for readers of one gospel to import details from another gospel and thus illegitimately alter the narrative world. Narrative criticism stands against this corruption of the narrative world. Thus, the unity of each gospel narrative is appreciated from the perspective of the inter-relationship of the formal features of that narrative.

To the extent that narrative criticism is concerned only with a unified narrative and autonomous story-world, it is confined to formalism (Moore:10-11). Although Powell would conceive of narrative criticism as a mild form of reader-response criticism, narrative critics tend to be less
concerned with the pragmatic aspects of narrative and more concerned with objective aspects (Powell:16). Thus, "narrative criticism, even where it shades over into reader-responses [sic] criticism, tends to hold strongly (if implicitly) to the view that the gospel text has a primary, recoverable meaning: what its author intended" (Moore:12).

The attempt by narrative critics to establish a unified narrative is suspect. Non-biblical literary critics on whom narrative critics rely are much more concerned with the "gaps," inconsistencies and outright contradictions made manifest in narrative critical investigations (Moore:53).

Critics discontent with explanations of semantic relations among narrative parts are escaping the restrictions of formalism and investigating the dynamic relationship between narrative and reader/audience. This pragmatic concern leads to a shift in focus: from the narrative as object to the narrative as event. New Testament scholars are gleaning from contemporary literary criticism significant insight about narrative, meaning and performance. These critics are developing reader-response approaches to the gospels that are concerned with the meaning of a narrative as an event which occurs in the performance of that narrative (Cf. Fowler 1991).

When gospel critics enlarge their enterprise to consider the role of performance, their attention turns to the performer. New critical tools are required that enable readers and critics alike to describe and communicate their
experience of a narrative as it is performed. The temporal
dimension of the act of reading becomes prominent along with
the role of expectation and memory. People select narratives
because they have attached a certain significance to them.
Persons have memories of past narrative performances and,
consequently, expectations of future performances. Memory and
expectation are not, however, the meaning of the narrative.

The nature of the experience constituted by the gospels
has been the subject of much discussion. Many critics contend
that the language of the gospel narratives is parabolic (Cf.
Kelber 1983:120-121). Parabolic narratives re-orient by
disrupting the habitual perceptual pattern of the
reader/audience (reorientation by disorientation). Werner
Kelber identified the definitive characteristic of parable in
the Gospel of Mark as the overturning of expectation (Kelber

B. Understanding as Audience Response

This dissertation began by recalling the rationalistic
assumption that myth was either nonsense or a primitive
expression of ideas. The separation of meaning from mythical
narrative allowed the rationalists to insert their
philosophical concepts into the narrative. Strauss was
confident that the gospel myths about Jesus referred to the
philosophical truth of the unity of God and humanity.
Bultmann rejected idealist philosophy and its concepts.
However, he insisted that the task of hermeneutics was to translate the mythical imagery of the gospels into the language of existential philosophy so that their expression of life might be understood by modern persons.

The concept of meaning-as-performance views understanding as an effect of the narrative experience. The gospels function to suspend the habitual patterns of individual and social existence, not to supply a philosophy of existence that may be taken over from the text. The performance of the gospels offers the occasion for the audience to experience a new perspective on herself and her world. Thus, the goal in the performance of narrative is to produce in the audience a game in which the audience plays with the forms that the narrative offers. This game is designed ultimately to confound the audience's habitual patterns of perception so as to spur it on to abandon an old frame of reference in the search for a new one. The narrative supplies the spur. The consequent new self-understanding is engendered in the experience of the narrative and depends on the language and cultural context.

In the performative moment the text is actualized offering the audience an opportunity, not to lose themselves and then return to their context, but to gain a new standpoint different from their immediate context so as to see the world "as it is" (Iser 1978:230). The task appears to be one of defamiliarizing the familiar (Schneidau:267). The human
enterprise of formulating knowledge is an effort in the opposite direction: to familiarize the unfamiliar (Iser: 43). Gospel narrative gives persons new eyes not in order to see something new but to see what is in a new way. The Gospel of John offers the experience of one blind beggar engaged by the Son of man: "One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9: 25).

III. Applications to John 9

In Chapters One, Two and Three the hermeneutics of meaning-as-correspondence were revealed in the interpretive theories of Strauss and Bultmann to gospel narratives. To demonstrate how meaning-as-correspondence affects Strauss and Bultmann's interpretation of gospel narrative, a test case will be presented. Their interpretive approaches will be applied to John 9, a story which, according to Raymond Brown, is of the highest artistic quality (Brown 1966: 376). Thereafter will follow a presentation of the same story in terms of a hermeneutic of meaning-as-performance, to illustrate the difference between interpretations derived from meaning-as-correspondence and interpretations based on meaning-as-performance.

The healing of the blind man in John 9 is preceded by events and discourse having primarily to do with the identity of Jesus. In 7:1-52 the Jews were seeking a way to kill Jesus, a Messianic character whose own brothers did not
believe in him. Jesus amazes the Jews with his teachings in the temple and asserts his authority to heal on the Sabbath in spite of the Jewish tradition claiming that Moses forbade healing on the Sabbath. The crowd wonders if the authorities secretly believe Jesus to be the Christ and therefore accept his discourse. The crowd is impressed by Jesus' miracles and his teaching, but they are divided as to whether he is a prophet or the Messiah.

John 8:12-59 is a collection of discourse units which continue the question of Jesus' identity. He is the light, a judge, the one sent from God. Speaking in metaphor and irony, Jesus gives witness to himself. Traditional titles, like "Son of God" and "Christ" are not used while "Son of Man" is employed ironically: when they lift him up (crucify the Son of Man), they will know him. This knowledge of Jesus is not conceptual or theoretical; rather, it is paradoxical and liberating. "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (v. 32). The Jews respond by claiming that they are free because they are sons of Abraham, but Jesus is a son of the devil, a Samaritan! Jesus asserts preeminence over Abraham, "Before Abraham was, I am" (58b) and the Jews respond by picking up stones to kill him. Jesus eludes his enemies, and the story proceeds to a new scene.

The text of John 9 is included here in entirety.
A. John 9:1-41 RSV

1As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. 2And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3Jesus answered, "It was not that the man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. 4We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. 5As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. 6As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, 7saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

8The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" 9Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." 10They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" 11He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." 12They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

13They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. 17So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

18The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, 19and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was
born blind? How then does he now see?" He answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be the Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age, ask him."

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you." He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped him. Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." Some of
the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, "Are we also blind?" "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

B. Strauss: Explicit Meaning-as-Correspondence

The narrative text of John 9 suffers under the analytical procedure of Strauss. The most revealing aspect of Strauss' treatment of the story is that all his effort goes into refuting the historical value of the text and ridiculing the naturalists' attempt to redeem a valid historical remnant from the text (Strauss 1972:449-452; cf. 413-415). While Strauss' treatment of the miracle narratives in the gospels was highly detailed, his method in the Life of Jesus is very simple in design. This method began with examples of supernaturalistic interpretation which attempted to repudiate the historical reliability of the gospel accounts. After refuting the supernaturalists, he then turned against the rationalistic/naturalistic renditions which for the most part attempted to establish a scientifically reliable account of events as they actually occurred. His final move was to assert the validity of the mythical explanation of the gospel narrative in question.

The introduction to the chapter on miracles in the Life of Jesus establishes clearly the rationale behind the mythical approach to the miracle narratives. The primitive idea that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah included in it the notion
that the Messiah was a second Moses. Moses was understood according to the model of a prophet. The national legends about Moses and the prophets attributed great miracle working power to these figures. The Old Testament itself established what kinds of miracles the Christ would perform. Prominent among the types of miracles was the supplying of food and drink by Moses, Elisha’s restoring sight to the Syrian army (II Kings 6), and Elijah even restoring the life of the widow’s son (I Kings 17). Most significant was the prophecy from Isaiah 35:5-6:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.

According to Strauss this prophecy was most influential in establishing the ideal that the Messiah would heal the blind, lame and dumb (Matthew 11:5). Because the Old Testament established an expectation that the Messiah would be a wonderworker, the earliest Christian confessions that Jesus was the Messiah resulted in narratives about him performing miracles.

Strauss doubted that these miracles actually occurred and viewed them as the result of faith in the resurrection of Jesus. The apostolic preaching (except for two instances) and the apostolic epistles do not mention miracles. The Synoptic Gospels retain traditions that portray Jesus as refusing the demand by the Pharisees to give signs of his status as Messiah (Mark 8:12; Matthew 12:39, 16:4; and Luke 11:29). Jesus
declares, "Truly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation" (Mark 8:12). The same gospels give accounts of the healing of a blind and mute demoniac in the presence of the Pharisees (Matthew 12:22, Mark 3:20, Luke 11:14). Strauss draws the alternatives sharply:

This then is the question: Ought we, on account of the evangelical narratives of miracles, to explain away that expression of Jesus, or doubt its authenticity; or ought we not, rather, on the strength of that declaration, and the silence of the apostolic writings, to become distrustful of the numerous histories of miracles in the gospels? (1972:415)

Strauss preferred the second alternative: distrust of the historical accuracy of the miracle accounts.

In his interpretation of John 9 Strauss omits an example of supernaturalistic interpretation and moves straightaway against the rationalists. He avers that the rationalistic efforts to explain the healing are hampered by the statement that the man was blind from birth, a condition more difficult to reverse. Strauss marveled at the courage of the rationalists who nonetheless offer suggestions that the man was not completely blind. Jesus commands the blind man to go to the pool of Siloam, but nothing is said of obtaining someone to lead the blind man there. Presumably the man could see adequately to get around. The method of the healing reported in the narrative also was exploited by the rationalists. Jesus' statement, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night comes, when no one can work" (9:4), is taken to mean that Jesus intended some kind of
medical or surgical procedure requiring daylight. Clay and spittle could have served as medicines or offered the occasion for Jesus to rub on the eyes or otherwise remove something from them. Also, the command to wash in the pool of Siloam was interpreted as a type of therapy over time and not an instant cure.

Strauss refuted each of the naturalistic explanations for the healing offered by the rationalists. The allusion to working while it is day before night comes could not be intended as an effort to do something while sunlight allowed. This ignores verse five which indicates clearly that light means the presence of Jesus while night means his departure. For Strauss the cure is instant. Verse 7, "So he went and washed and came back seeing," cannot mean that the blind man washed for several weeks the way some rationalists would have it. Strauss quips:

... it is just as if the words veni, vidi, vici, were translated thus: After my arrival I reconnoitered for several days, fought battles at suitable intervals, and finally remained conqueror. (1972:450)

Of course, Strauss was not arguing for the factuality of the healing story; on the contrary, he was going with the story in the effort to reveal that it is the product of a primitive Christian consciousness. After all, if the healing in John 9 is purported to have occurred in Jerusalem before many witnesses, why is it not remembered in the synoptic tradition?

The fact that the account does not come from a personal
witness adds to the argument that it is not historically factual. Strauss stirred the theological world with his assertion that the author of John was neither an apostle nor an eyewitness. Because the narrator misinterprets the name of the pool of Siloam to fit the story, Strauss states:

The eye-witness would have had enough of important matters in the miracle which he had beheld, and the conversation to which he had listened; only a remote narrator could fall into the triviality of trying to extort a significant meaning from the smallest accessory circumstance. (1972:451)

Thus, Strauss rejected the supernaturalist Olshausen's claim that the Gospel of John was of apostolic origin.

For Strauss, the magnification of the miraculous element in John 9 serves the dogmatic purpose of the evangelist, to establish Jesus as Messianic wonder-worker with reference to the prophetic role-models of Hebrew scripture. The Gospel of John has fewer miracle stories than Matthew, Mark or Luke; nevertheless, John's narratives exaggerate the circumstances. For example, in John 9 the sending of the blind man to Siloam activates the memory of the prophet Elisha sending Naaman the leper to wash in the river (II Kings 5). The spittle and clay were a common part of magical cures. The discourse material regarding the Pharisees' examination of the blind man and his parents confirms the life-long blindness of the man and his cure. These are indications of a dogmatic intention of the evangelist and thus disprove the historical factuality of the narrative. Having critically established that the form of the gospels was mythical and that the gospels seek to present
Jesus according to the messianic ideal of the Hebrew prophets, Strauss stops.

Strauss insisted on the annihilation of the narrative because the description of the miraculous it contained did not correspond with a "scientific" world view of cause and effect operating in a closed system (Strauss 1972:39). Strauss felt himself suited to the task of annihilating the mythical form because he was confident that the truth of the Christological dogma, the unity of humanity and God, was secure. This truth need only find a new home in a proper philosophical form.

For Strauss, it was imperative that the narrative shell and its kernel (the primitive idea of Jesus as Messiah) refer to a historical reality. He identified the meaning of the miracle narratives with the idea of the unity of God and the human race. This idea corresponded to the gospel narrative of Jesus as the Son of God, yet was completely independent of the unacceptable mythical form that contained it. Philosophical description took up where myth left off in order to formulate a philosophically verifiable account of the idea of the unity of God and humanity.

C. Bultmann: Implicit Meaning-as-Correspondence

Bultmann’s treatment of John 9 is found in his commentary, The Gospel of John (1971), wherein he manifests the implicit presence of meaning-as-correspondence. For Bultmann, this gospel is an attempt to convey an understanding
of existence; accordingly, the task of interpretation is to
delineate the particular johannine existential understanding.
Throughout his commentary Bultmann asserts that the gospel
narrative is attempting to express a concept of revelation
(Bultmann 1971:344, 354, 355). With respect to the narrative
in John 9, Bultmann undertakes to unify the narrative under
the single theme, "The Light of the World." This theme of
light—whether in the form of the blind man seeing light or
the Pharisees refusing to see it—is symbolic of revelation.
Each section of the commentary on the John 9 is interpreted by
Bultmann so as to establish this theme.

The first section, verses 1-7, narrates the account of
the miracle itself. In verse 5 Jesus refers to himself as the
light of the world. He is the revealer, the one sent by God.
The symbolic name of the pool (Silóam means "the one sent")
raises the story to an allegory of the revealer and thus
sustains the concept of revelation: "As the blind man
receives the light of day through the water of Silóam, so
faith receives the light of the revelation from Jesus, the
'emissary'" (Bultmann 1971:333). The next section in which
the crowd is amazed and confused by the healing refers to the
"astonishing and unpredictable nature of the event of
revelation" (Bultmann 1971:334).

Then follow three interrogations by the authorities: one
of the healed man, a second of his parents, and a third of the
man again. The first questioning (vss. 13-17) reveals that
Jesus had healed on the Sabbath thus breaking the law of Moses. This causes a schism among the authorities: Some say he is a sinner because he failed to uphold the legal tradition while others discern in the healing that Jesus has divine power. Unable to resolve this conundrum, the authorities seek to disprove the miracle by claiming the man had not in fact been blind from birth. The cross examination of the parents (vss. 19-23) contributes little to the concept of revelation. It does, however, confound the attempt by the authorities to claim that the man had not been born blind. It also operates to disclose to the audience the agreement among the authorities to excommunicate anyone who confesses that Jesus is the Messiah.

The inquisition of the healed man for a second time (vss. 24-34) is filled with irony. The authorities ask for a second account of how the miracle took place. The man feigns naivete and asks if they seek further evidence of the miracle because they want to be Jesus' disciples. They retort that they are disciples of Moses and accuse the man himself of being one of Jesus' disciples. The man then proceeds to instruct them according to the Mosaic tradition asserting that anyone doing so great a sign as the healing of a man blind from birth must be sent from God. The authorities are incensed at the impudence of a person born blind, i.e., a sinner, attempting to instruct them. They thus commit themselves by admitting that the man who now sees had been blind. They then
excommunicate from the synagogue the man born blind, not because he had confessed Jesus as Messiah, but because his ability to see signified Jesus as God's messenger.

According to Bultmann, these three scenes augment the concept of revelation. The evangelist "seeks to portray the struggle of darkness against the light, and to show the sacrifice which is implied in the decision of faith" (Bultmann 1971:335). As the story continues, Bultmann collects further elements for a concept of revelation. Jesus' disclosure of his true identity, the Son of man, to the formerly blind man results in a confession of faith (vss. 35-38)—an event which, but for the fact that he has already been excommunicated, would have resulted in his excommunication! The self-disclosure of Jesus teaches that "whereas man's experience would remain obscure to him without the intervention of the spoken word, so too the word itself is only intelligible because it reveals to man the meaning of his experience" (Bultmann 1971:339).

The narration of events ends in paradox with a short controversy scene between Jesus and the Pharisees (vss. 39-41). "For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." The Pharisees overhear Jesus and ask if they then are indeed blind. Jesus answers that they demonstrate their blindness in claiming that they see and they remain in their blindness as long as they continue to make such a claim.
This is the paradox of the revelation, that in order to bring grace it must also give offence, and so can turn to judgement. In order to be grace it must uncover sin; he who resists this binds himself to his sin, and so through the revelation sin for the first time becomes definitive. (Bultmann 1971:341-342)

Bultmann then extended the story beyond the boundaries of John 9 by importing discourse material from various locations throughout the gospel text: 8:12, 12:44-50, 8:21-29, 12:34-36 and 10:19-21. These pericopes relate to the theme, The Light of the World. Bultmann found their original settings to be problematic and attributed their placement in the received text to the work of an ecclesiastical redactor. Having found a more suitable home for these discourses under the theme of light, he continued to accumulate more evidence for the concept of revelation. It is clear that Bultmann's search for a concept of revelation dominates his effort to understand the gospel generally and the narrative in John 9 specifically.

Bultmann's commentary on John 9 renders the narrative into an allegory of the narrative and the concept of revelation. For Bultmann, the understanding of existence expressed in the narrative offers a concept of revelation but is not itself an event of revelation, i.e., the kerygmatic appeal of proclamation is absent. It appears, however, that Bultmann did not discover the concept of revelation in the narrative. Rather, Bultmann finds in the narrative what he is predisposed to find; thus, he attempts to make the narrative yield a content which he believes he already knows.
Bultmann's rearrangement of the gospel by which the story of the blind man is extended in the interest of a concept of revelation is suspicious. Kásemann criticized Bultmann for assuming that a purified concept (einem geläuterten Begriffe) of revelation guides the narrative in demythologizing both Gnostic and Jewish apocalyptic myth (Kásemann:196-200). Constructing such a concept is particularly useful from the perspective of meaning-as-correspondence if one is confident that the meaning of a narrative is hidden in the narrative and that the investigator will recognize it when he finds it. Thus, not surprisingly, when Bultmann finishes rearranging the text and mining it for its hidden wisdom, he declares himself successful in finding that which he originally sought: a concept of revelation.

The narrative of the Gospel of John is more than an allegory depicting the way the word sets humanity free from an old mode to a new framework of existence. The question arises whether a reader of the Fourth Gospel can expect something other than a concept of revelation. Is it possible that revelation can take place in the performance of the narrative? An approach to John 9 from the perspective of meaning-as-performance will demonstrate that narrative may be used as a means to constitute experience as opposed to only expressing an understanding of existence such as that found in a concept of revelation.
D. Meaning-as-Performance: The Unification of Narrative and Meaning

The presupposition of meaning-as-correspondence separates meaning and narrative. To assume that the text is a representation of some object, content or referent is to ignore the main reason for the existence of a narrative text: to be performed. Meaning-as-correspondence is overturned through an approach to narrative whereby meaning is conceived as event rather than historical or ideal object. The concept of meaning-as-performance stresses the event-character of meaning so that the focus of interpretation moves from what a text says to what a text does. This focal shift calls for an appreciation of what happens in the act of reading/hearing a narrative. Reading is a temporal experience. Even as a narrative has a beginning, middle, and end, so must a reader begin, progress, and finally come to the end of the narrative text.

Narrative criticism within the field of biblical studies makes relevant the discussion of a division between form and content albeit on an entirely different plane. New Criticism taught that form and content are inseparable; yet, even the New Criticism fostered the notion of meaning as a content separable from the form. Narrative criticism conceives of form and content differently. Every narrative is the form (discourse) by which a content (story) is presented to a reader/audience by way of narration. The narrative form or discourse may also be referred to as the narrative rhetoric.
Narrative discourse is the way in which a story is told in order to have an effect on the reader/auditor.

Like the Oedipus story among the Greeks, the Jesus story has been "discoursed" in different ways in order to effect varied experiences among audiences (Chatman:43). Narrative discourse (rhetoric) is the way a narrative is structured so as to render an experience by which the audience may come to share in the point of view of the implied author. The perspective of the audience that results from hearing the narrative cannot be equated with any content presented by a narrative text. For example, the Gospel narratives present Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the son of Man, the Lord, the logos or the savior of the world. However, it is clear that faith is more than an intellectual assent to a title such as Lord (Cf. Mt 7:21-24). Each gospel story offers the opportunity for a perspective on life that is an alternative to the audience's habitual way of perceiving the world.

In order to fully comprehend the method and effect of shifting the focus from what a narrative says to what it does, an analysis of John 9 is presented. The investigation will begin by considering the narrative content (story) consisting of narrative settings, characters and events as presented in the Gospel of John. Thereafter will follow a consideration of the narrative form (discourse), i.e., the way the events are arranged (plot) for communication between narrator and audience. Finally, a Reader-Response assessment of the
narrative experience will be applied in order to confirm the event character of meaning.

1. The Story

The geographical setting of the story is Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, in the vicinity of the temple, the heart of Jewish piety. The temporal setting is a sabbath day. The spatial setting alternates between "outside" and "inside" the assembly of the Jewish authorities who symbolize established Jewish religion.

There are seven characters in the story of the blind beggar. Jesus appears at the beginning and end of the narrative. He has already been established as the Word made flesh who was with God and was God and who is the true light that illuminates all. His many signs attest to his status as the Son of God. He created the world although the world and his own people rejected him. The blind beggar and his parents first appear in chapter 9. The beggar is the narrative's only dynamic character in that he is the only player who changes in his orientation toward Jesus as the story progresses. The disciples are mentioned only at the beginning of the narrative and serve to introduce the theme of sin and suffering. The neighbors are common people who, unlike the authorities, are understandably impressed with the healing of the blind beggar. The Pharisees (and the Jews from whom they are difficult to distinguish as characters) represent hardened unbelief and
have already threatened to kill Jesus. After the healing takes place no more than two characters are found "on stage" at one time which according to Martyn conforms to ancient dramatic convention (Martyn:26).

The story begins with an exchange between the disciples and Jesus on the relationship between sin and blindness. The disciples want to know whose sin caused a man's blindness, the man’s or his parents’? Jesus’ response bypasses either choice and thereby undercuts the assumption that the physical circumstances of a person’s life have anything to do with sin. "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him" (v.3). Jesus declares himself the light of the world as he makes a paste of clay and spittle and applies it to the man’s eyes. On Jesus’ instructions the man goes to the pool called "Sent" to wash, and he returns seeing. The miracle prompts confusion among the neighborhood with some neighbors affirming and others denying that the man who now sees is the same man who was blind. Their deliberations result in ambiguity since the healed man is, in fact, the same but also very different. The neighbors ask the man how Jesus effected the healing and then ask where Jesus is. The beggar responds, "I do not know."

The crowd ushers the man before the Pharisees who have already failed to apprehend the identity of Jesus (7:45). However, the miraculous healing affords the Pharisees opportunity to accuse Jesus of breaking the Mosaic law against
performing work on the sabbath. The Pharisees cross-examine the beggar; but, no matter what tack they pursue, they are unable to secure the facts in order to make a case against Jesus. They first attempt to prove that Jesus is a sinner. By its nature the charge of healing on the Sabbath assumes that a healing did, in fact, take place. The declaration by some of the Pharisees that Jesus is not from God produces a division because some realize that if the miracle did occur then Jesus could not be a sinner. The Pharisees ask the healed man, "What do you say about him...?" He responds, "He is a prophet."

The Jews then summon the parents of the man. They interrogate the parents, asking them to confirm whether the allegedly healed man was their son and, if so, to explain how it is that he can see. The parents confirm that the man is their son but refuse to offer any explanation as to how he can now see.

The authorities then recall the beggar and explicitly acknowledging the healing, demand that he give the credit to God alone. They insist that Jesus is a sinner. The authorities ask the man to repeat what happened in the healing. He responds by asking if they are wanting to become Jesus' disciples. Rebuking the man, the authorities declare themselves disciples of Moses and condemn Jesus for healing on the sabbath. The man ridicules the obstinacy of the Jews and declares that Jesus must be sent from God because God does not
listen to sinners. He states that no one since the world began has healed a man blind from birth. The authorities cast him out.

Having found the healed man, Jesus openly confirms that he is the Son of man. The healed man confesses his trust in Jesus whom the man worships. Jesus then declares his mission, to bring sight to those who are blind and to make blind those who see. The story concludes with certain Pharisees who have overheard this mission statement, asking, "Are we also blind?" (v.40). The question is not answered directly. Rather, Jesus responds indirectly by stating that the authorities are guilty because they claim that they see.

2. The Discourse

The story (content) of the narrative has been presented, and the plot, the story-as-discoursed, must now be presented (Chatman:43). A primary way to distinguish between story and plot is that story has a fixed chronological order while plot may rearrange that order to affect or persuade the reader. For example, plot in the Gospel of John is concerned with the revelation of the true identity of Jesus (Moore:49). The proper understanding of Jesus' identity is communicated to the audience through Jesus' own words and through the narrator explicitly and implicitly.

There are various points of view given in the text of John 9, but one point of view dominates all the others, that
of the narrator. In the Gospel of John the narrator shares the point of view of the implied author. The narrator is a character in John's narrative although he is not a character in the story. The audience is compelled to relate to him as a person. He is intrusive, repeatedly interjecting his knowledge and opinion into the narrative and instructing the audience on what to think. He is trustworthy, i.e., the reader can rely on the information supplied by the narrator.

The perspective and bias of the narrator is revealed at the very beginning of the Gospel of John. In the prologue to John the narrator reveals that Jesus is the pre-existent logos who is from God. The narrator's point of view is that Jesus is determinative for humanity's ultimate well-being. The reader is implicitly advised that all perspectives which conflict with the narrator's perspective on Jesus are to be rejected. The narrator's point of view is presented as the normative or evaluative point of view for the reader.

Changes of the audience's viewpoint occur through both direct and indirect commentary by the narrator. In John 9 there are four instances of direct commentary: verse 7, verse 14, verse 18 and verses 22-23. One dramatic signal helpful in recognizing and distinguishing direct commentary from indirect or direct discourse is the lack of uptake or response by any of the characters to what is said. It is the audience who is the intended beneficiary of such commentary.

The first example of direct commentary is in verse 7
where the narrator translates the name of the pool of Siloam as "Sent." Jesus says to the blind beggar, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." The phrase "which means Sent" is directed to the audience of the narrative. The audience already knows that Jesus is "the one sent" (e.g., 1:1-18; 3:16-21; 5:36-38; 6:38-39; 9:4). Consequently, this narrative aside helps to maintain a higher or allegorical level of meaning to the story as that of the blindness of humanity who must go to Jesus in order to see and know the truth. Such a two level interpretation starts subtly in verse 1 where in the Greek text the word for "man" is anarthrous, i.e., Jesus saw "humanity" blind from birth. As the light of the world Jesus was sent by God to give sight to all humanity.

The second instance of direct commentary is verse 14 where the narrator reveals to the audience that the healing of the blind beggar took place on the sabbath. Until this point in the story the narrator withheld information regarding the temporal setting of the miracle. The effect is analeptic, i.e., the reader is compelled to go backwards in story time in order to re-evaluate the significance of the healing. It is subtly transformed from a marvelous event by one sent from God to a catalyst for conflict with the representatives of the religious establishment. Jesus is sent by God. The narrator's direct comment to the audience is the vehicle for complicating the narrative and revealing the reason for the ensuing conflict.
The third direct comment, verse 18, is an expository statement by the narrator which introduces the scene and offers an inside view of the thoughts of the Jewish authorities. The material orients the audience as to the reason why the authorities call the beggar's parents. This comment on the story constrains the audience to conclude that the authorities do not believe that a healing has occurred (Culpepper:18-19).

In verse 22 the narrator offers his fourth direct commentary in which he explains the behavior of the beggar's parents and reveals once again analeptically an event that took place before the healing occurred. By giving an inside view of the psychological state of the beggar's parents, the narrator's commentary reveals his omniscience. The parents refuse to answer the questions of the Jewish authorities for fear that they will be accused of having confessed Jesus to be the Christ. This fear, the narrator then reveals, is founded on the fact that the Jewish authorities had decided that they would exclude from the synagogue anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Christ. The parents confirm that their son who was blind now sees, but they will have nothing to say about the one who did the healing. Thus, an inability to recognize and acknowledge God's acts is presented as the price for remaining "inside" the synagogue.

These four direct comments by the narrator add to the drama of the narrative by reinforcing the evaluative point of
view by which the audience may assess the actions of the characters in the story. They establish audience expectations and occasion re-evaluations of the events of the story. Explicit commentary reveals much about the narrator's point of view, but more is communicated through implicit commentary.

The theme of sin forms a frame or inclusio for the story by revealing the community's belief that a person's suffering is caused by sin. The disciples assume that the man is blind because of either his own or his parents' sin. They presume to perceive the situation well. Ironically some of the Pharisees believe that Jesus is a sinner because he relieves suffering. The Jews, convinced for various reasons that Jesus is a sinner, insist that the blind man distance himself from Jesus by giving glory to God alone. Of course, the audience already knows that Jesus and God are one (1:1; 5:18). Paradoxically the authorities' assertion that Jesus is a sinner exposes a blindness that is, in fact, unbelief attributable to their sin!

The narrative is driven by the conflict between two points of view: belief and unbelief in Jesus' identity (Culpepper:97). The beggar becomes an exemplar of belief while the authorities manifest unbelief. The relationship between the beggar and the authorities develops inversely. The authorities sink deeper into blindness (unbelief) while the beggar develops progressively toward sight (faith). In verse 11 the beggar calls Jesus a man, in verse 17 he refers
to Jesus as prophet, and in verse 33 he confesses that Jesus
is sent from God. Finally, in verse 38 the beggar confesses
that he believes in Jesus. As he more and more clearly takes
on the quality of a true believer, he more and more incurs the
suspicion, hostility and rejection of the authorities.

The narrator uses the symbolism of light to communicate
to the reader that life and enlightenment are associated with
Jesus. Jesus identifies himself as the light of the world (v.
5) and thus claims status of revealer and illuminator. Jesus' claim agrees with the narrator's exposition in chapter 1.
"The prologue links logos, life and light so powerfully that
the cluster dominates the symbolic system of the entire
narrative" (Culpepper:190). As the light of the world Jesus
brings sight to the blind. The symbolism of light is further
employed in this story to distinguish between the forces of
belief and unbelief. The symbolism of "day and night"
reinforces the narrator's silent communication of the
evaluative point of view.

There is a strong element of repetition in the story. An
account of the event is given three times. Verses 6-7 give
the original account of the healing. The occurrence of the
healing is recounted to the neighbors in verse 11 and to the
Pharisees in verse 15. Verses 19 and 26 evoke the
recollection of the event by asking the parents and the beggar
respectively how Jesus healed the man. The authorities ask
the parents to give an account of how their son could now see.
They refuse to answer out of fear that they would be expelled from the synagogue. The fact that the beggar can see is referred to numerous times (vs. 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 21, 25). By means of this repetition the narrator emphasizes the healing itself and thrusts the event before the consciousness of the audience who must reevaluate further events in light of the healing (Powell:39-40).

An examination of spatial perspective is relevant in accounting for the experience of the audience. The narrator is omnipresent and consequently able to report events from every scene. Little information is given regarding the exact location of these scenes; however, one aspect of spatial perspective is outstanding: The events transpire either "outside" or "inside." Scenes 1 and 2 occur outside of the temple. The meetings between the authorities and both the beggar and his parents (scenes 3 and 4) occur inside the ranks of Jewish authority. Jesus seeks the beggar after the authorities throw him out. Thus, the final enlightenment of the beggar takes place outside Jewish institutions. The narrator thereby subtly communicates that one must be outside the Jewish community if one wants to be on the inside with Jesus since to be inside with the authorities means to remain outside of Jesus' sphere.

The principal means by which the narrator communicates the identity of Jesus in John 9 is through irony, made manifest in silent or implicit commentary (Duke:117-126, 43-
94). D. C. Muecke offers a highly respected delineation of the basic characteristics of irony (Muecke:19-20; Cf. Culpepper:166-167, Duke:13). Irony is a two-level process by which appearance or a lower level is juxtaposed to reality or a higher level. Irony operates from an element of innocence or unawareness on the part of the ironist or his victim.

The narrative of John 9 presents this two-level structure. On the superficial level Jesus appears to be an offender of the Mosaic Law while on a higher level he is from God. The prologue has informed the reader of the overarching irony of the narrative: "The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (1:9-11).

The first hint that all is not what it appears to be is offered by the opening discussion regarding the connection between sin and blindness. The disciples' question presupposes that blindness is the result of sin. Jesus' answer moves to a higher perspective by identifying the blindness as an opportunity for God. This opposition between appearance and reality becomes more distinct in the confrontation between the beggar and the Pharisees. The dilemma is introduced by the analepsis of verse 14 which belatedly announces to the audience that Jesus had healed the beggar on the sabbath. The Pharisees are now divided between
those who think the timing of the healing is a confirmation that Jesus is a sinner (not from God) and those who are uncertain about how to interpret the timing of this marvelous event. This uncertainty is, however, the highest estimation Jesus gains from the authorities. Granting that the man has indeed been healed, the Pharisees ask him about Jesus' identity. As counterpoint to the Pharisees' uncertainty the beggar confesses that Jesus is a prophet.

The position of the Pharisees hardens at which time they begin to be referred to merely as "the Jews" (v. 18). They reverse their admission that the blind man, in fact, had been healed. Their summons of the parents represents a fruitless effort to unmask the miracle worker by discrediting the occurrence of a miracle. The parents will not participate. The narrator interjects an explicit comment referring to Jesus as the Christ and thus brings to the audience's consciousness the fact that the authorities are not what they appear to be, i.e., representatives of God, and are blind to Jesus' true identity.

The authorities' opposition to Jesus crystallizes in the fifth scene wherein the beggar is recalled and pressured to take sides with them against the sinner who gave him his sight. In so doing they insist that the man reject Jesus by giving God all the glory. The opposition between appearance and reality is unequivocal. The subsequent discourse by the beggar does give God the glory albeit ironically (Duke:78).
Until now the beggar has been truly naïve about Jesus’ identity. Now his speech is consciously ironic and must be veiled by feigned innocence. The authorities have already declared Jesus a sinner. The account of the healing (Cf. vs. 7, 11, and 15) is now reduced to the simple formula, "one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." Having already declared Jesus to be a sinner, the authorities respond obdurately with the question, "How did he open your eyes?" The response of the beggar is conspicuously ironic. "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?" The audience cannot help but see the humor in the beggar’s feigned naivete toward the authorities. Despite his pretended innocence, the Jews berate the man and accuse him of being a disciple of Jesus.

The authorities profess their allegiance to Moses, and declare that they do not know where Jesus comes from. The man responds incredulously if not with biting sarcasm (local irony). His words cast in bold oppositional relief his growing faith in Jesus to the obstinate blindness of the established leaders. "'Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him'" (vs. 30-31). Whether the Jews detect the sarcastic irony or not, they will not allow themselves to be taught by someone whom
they, like the disciples, perceive to be a sinner. The narrative comes to a climax as the Jews cast the man out.

Then follows in two scenes the denouement of the narrative. The significance of the healing and its consequences in the life of the beggar are clarified in a second encounter between Jesus and the man. There are three parallels between scene 1 and scene 6. First, scene 6 returns the narrative to the original spatial orientation: The blind man is outside the temple and outside the synagogue. Second, in both scenes Jesus spies the blind man and moves unsolicited to his aid. Finally, Jesus gives sight to the man, physical sight in scene 1 and spiritual sight in scene 6. The irony of these events lies in the fact that sight is given outside the province of the Jewish leadership which claims to know God but is blind to whom Jesus really is.

The ironical aspects of scene 6 bring to full light the identity of the healer. Just prior to this revelation the man addresses Jesus as lord (κυρίε). The RSV conceals the ambiguity of this usage by translating κυρίε as "sir" in verse 36. The same word, however, is used in verse 38 and is translated by the RSV as "Lord." The ambiguous use of κυρίε gives rise to the irony of identity whereby one character unknowingly addresses another character accurately (Duke: 123). Jesus' reply to the beggar's request to reveal the identity of the Son of man facilitates the full revelation, "You have seen him and it is he who is speaking to you" (v. 37). The man
addresses Jesus once again with the name κυρίε, "Lord, I believe."

The ironic structure of the narrative is completed in scene 7 with a paradoxical declaration, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." With this announcement the opposition between reality and appearance is completed. The uncertainty among the Pharisees stiffens into the flagrant opposition of the Jews, "We know that this man is a sinner" (v. 24). The beggar’s characterization of Jesus begins as "the man Jesus" and finishes with "Lord." Without mitigating the fact that Jesus performed the miracle on the sabbath, the narrator confirms that Jesus is not a sinner. This declaration results in the authorities who had indicted Jesus being exposed as people incapable of recognizing God. Until verse 35 the authorities have been judges over the situation, but the irony of events as they have transpired places Jesus in the judgment seat. The unanswered question of the Pharisees, "Are we also blind?" implies who it is who cannot see.

The narrative use of the rhetorical question is another means by which the narrator communicates to the audience the ideological or evaluative point of view. The unanswered question receives no answer in the story, but demands a response on the discourse level. The audience cannot leave the question unanswered (Fowler 1991:132). Verse 40 is not
the only instance of an unanswered question in John 9. The Pharisees’ question in verse 17 is intended to guide the audience to the solution to the dilemma created by Jesus’ healing on the sabbath. "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" In verse 34 the authorities ask the man, "and would you teach us?" They do not wait around for an answer. While they are throwing the beggar out, the reader is formulating an affirmative response.

3. Meaning-as-Performance

John 9 is susceptible to being transformed into a description of an event (history), a content (Strauss’ Christological dogma of the unity of the divine and the human) or a referent (Bultmann’s understanding of the kerygma). The employment of any of these interpretive models would result in the story being understood as an object which the narrative is attempting to express. The meaning of the narrative might be "Jesus is the Christ (Son of man, the Son of God, the Lord)," or the paradoxical declaration of verse 39 might be ascertained as the meaning. The preceding exposition, however, has shown that the story has been structured (plotted) not simply to say something but to do something to the reader/audience. The perception of the narrative as a form to be mined by the expositor for a content does violence to this goal. Not only does John 9 tell its readers about Jesus who gives sight to the blind and makes blind those who
can see, it allows them to experience this.

The rise of the beggar and the fall of the authorities constitutes a reversal of outcomes at both the story and discourse level. In the narrative performance, i.e., in the temporal experience, the audience has a commanding view of all characters and events. They "see" what is happening and why it is happening. Before the audience can themselves claim enlightenment, they are confronted with the unanswered question of the Pharisees, "Are we also blind?" and the words of Jesus. He asserts that if the Pharisees were blind they would not be sinful; however, their claims to have sight leave them in a state of sin, i.e., not of the truth.

The words of Jesus apply with equal intensity to the audience as to the Pharisees. "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." In the narrative the unanswered question invites the audience to complete the exchange by declaring (at least internally), "Yes, you are blind!" No sooner do they exercise judgment about the unsympathetic Pharisees than the words of Jesus echo back threatening to ensnare the audience. Can they claim that they see? If so, does this not immediately place them in the same predicament as the Pharisees?  

The author of the Gospel of John wields an ironic pen with skill and regularity. He does not, however, seek to supplant one set of "certain certainties" with another. Through the performance of the narrative the audience comes to
know who Jesus is—not as an object as though the Word made flesh was a representation (Vorstellung of logos) but as an event known by its effect.

IV. Conclusion

This dissertation began by introducing the problem of meaning-as-correspondence. The term meaning-as-correspondence was coined to account for the various strategies by which the meaning of narrative is detached from the narrative itself. Hans Frei analyzed the approaches to biblical narrative in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He found that German scholars, working in the wake of the Enlightenment, assumed that the meaning of biblical narrative was an object to which the narrative referred. The modern insistence on seeking a meaning in narrative that is separate from the narrative itself deprives the narrative of force and power. Northrop Frye suggested that a solution to this problem might be found in a re-appropriation of the understanding of poetic language epitomized in myth.

Chapters One, Two and Three investigated approaches to gospel narrative that employ a concept of myth. Chapter One found that Enlightenment rationalism forced biblical scholars to assume that the narrative does not mean what it says. Consequently, the narrative depictions were said to mean something else: either they were inept descriptions of historical events or primitive expressions of ideas. In
either case these primitive narratives required the illumination of rational thought in order to expose their real meaning. The Mythical School's renderings of the gospel narratives were naturalistic interpretations acceptable to Enlightenment sensibilities. Thus, meaning-as-correspondence dominated the hermeneutic efforts of the rationalists to discover the single true meaning of the text.

Chapter Two turned to David Friedrich Strauss, the most famous nineteenth-century theologian linked to gospel narrative and myth. Strauss defined myth as an expression of primitive ideas in history-like narrative. He rejected all attempts at discovering historical kernels in the shells of myths. He employed a historical-critical method, the whole task of which was to destroy the historical credibility of the gospel narratives in the confidence that the idea to which they referred would remain unharmed. Strauss believed that the destruction of the mythical form signaled the opportunity for the human race to take up the abstract, conceptual language of philosophy and thereby come to know itself in its unity with absolute spirit. Humanity had outgrown myth. The true faith had outgrown Jesus who, after all, was the mythical representation of the unity of God and the human race. Myth was no longer needed to grasp this idea through the detour of gospel narrative. Philosophy in its abstract concepts could grasp the idea directly.

Chapter Three examined Rudolf Bultmann's use of myth to
decipher the meaning of the gospels. Bultmann’s program of
demythologizing the gospels was driven by the conviction that
gospel imagery is fundamentally mythical. The Religions-
geschichtliche Schule had taught Bultmann that the form of the
gospels was taken from the Gnostic myth of the Heavenly
Messenger. According to Bultmann, the gospel writers used
this form to express an understanding of revelation as an
event in which humanity comes to authentic understanding of
itself.

Bultmann assumed that the translation of the gospels’
mythical imagery into modern understandable language would
allow their kerygmatic referent to stand out. The language of
the gospels refers to the event of faith which can only occur
in the language of proclamation. Bultmann maintained the
form/content dichotomy characteristic of meaning-as-
correspondence by his conception of gospel narratives as
containers of an understanding of life. He believed that
gospels refer to the Christian proclamation as an event of
ultimate consequence for human well being.

In Chapter Four meaning-as-performance was presented as
the means of overcoming the deficiencies inherent in meaning-
as-correspondence. The concept of meaning-as-performance
asserts that a narrative is only fully itself when it is being
performed. Thus, the meaning of a narrative is its use in a
context. The performance of gospel narrative is presented for
play upon the stage of the imagination, not in order to place
a concept in the mind but to agitate and disrupt the audience's habitual mode of being. Gospel narratives provoke a change of perspective, i.e., they are parabolic. They do not present an understanding of existence that the audience might comprehend. Rather, the gospels offer an occasion in which the audience may reevaluate their own self-understanding in response to the event of performance. Having presented Strauss and Bultmann's approach to the story of "Jesus and the healing of the blind beggar," the chapter ended with a Reader-Response description of the reading experience.
ENDNOTES

1. "We treat words primarily as records in need of interpretation, neglecting all too often a rather different hermeneutic, deeply rooted in biblical language that proclaims words as an act inviting participation" (Kelber 1983: xvi).


3. Cf. J. Louis Martyn (1979) for his explanation of John 9 as a two-stage drama. While he does not believe that the narrative is meant to dramatize a theological point of view, he does think in expressivist terms that the story "reflects experiences in the dramatic interaction between the synagogue and the Johannine church" (Martyn: 37). William R. Domeris has argued that the Gospel of John may be compared fruitfully with Greek tragedies in their use of certain dramatic techniques (Domeris 1983). Gilbert G. Bilezikian has argued that the Gospel of Mark closely approximates Greek tragedy whose very strength lies in the depiction of action (Bilezikian: 53). While the explication of Mark as tragedy does not adequately convey Mark's construction as narrative, this does not obstruct the appreciation that the form of tragedy known throughout the Hellenistic world had an effect on narrative composition. Pelikan's comments on gospel narrative and tragedy are germane.

"The Cross was foolishness to the Greeks, who knew of Oedipus . . . . It is not offensive to be told a tragedy, it is downright thrilling to hear of heroic suffering. . . . But when the gospel comes to tell us that our suffering is well deserved, and that only by the innocence of the Saviour can our guilt be removed--this is too much to take (Pelikan 130).

4. Note Jaroslav Pelikan's comments regarding Greek dramatic art.

It is strange that early Christianity, with its profound sense of tragedy and redemption, should have paid so little attention to Greek tragedy and so much to late Greco-Roman philosophy. Greek tragedy embodied the best that Greece was able to discover about the paradox of human life in its relation to the ultimates under which it is lived. (Pelikan: 119)
5. Familiarity with silent reading has not been the prevailing situation. Silent reading was rare in antiquity as evidenced in an allusion by Augustine to his shock at having witnessed his mentor Ambrose reading a manuscript without moving his lips! (Cf. Ong 1982:117-138) for a discussion of hearing-dominance yielding to sight-dominance.

6. Gilbert Ryle is most famous for the rejection of mind/body dichotomy in Chapter One of The Concept of Mind, "Descartes' Myth" (Ryle:13-25). The imagination and its mental images are not "ghosts within a machine" (Ryle:19).

7. Thus Bilezikian states that "the Gospel was written not to be read silently but to be heard publicly" (Bilezikian:119). Furthermore, "the Gospel like tragedy, seems to have been intended for oral presentation" (Bilezikian:113).


9. Hans Frei's work on The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative may be viewed as a chronicle of the growing influence of the Enframing over biblical narrative.

10. For an account of the rise of Narrative Criticism see Moore:3-13. Powell offers a brief overview of the Narrative Criticism as it has developed in the biblical field (19-21).

11. For a recent survey of this fruitful exchange between literary criticism and gospel criticism see Stephen Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

12. On defamiliarization see Schneidau, pp. 267-271. Schneidau quotes Ezra Pound who in turn quotes an unknown Russian who exclaims, "I see, you wish to give people new eyes, not to make them see some new particular thing" (Schneidau:269).

13. This development in the performance of John 9 would appear to contradict Culpepper who states that the reader of the Gospel of John never falls victim to irony (Cf. 179).

14. According to Muecke the use of irony "is characteristic of, though by no means confined to, a society with a more or less 'closed ideology,' that is a society whose values are more or less established, whose members, as a body, are 'assured of certain certainties.'" (Muecke:120)
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