A Study of the Biblical Narrative of Saul, Including Investigation of the Folktale & Proverb as Genres of Folk Narrative

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1982
A STUDY OF THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE OF SAUL, INCLUDING INVESTIGATION
OF THE FOLKTALE AND PROVERB AS GENRES OF FOLK NARRATIVE

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the Faculty of
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Ervin H. Mason, Jr.

May 1982
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A STUDY OF THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE OF SAUL, INCLUDING INVESTIGATION OF THE FOLKTALE AND PROVERB AS GENRES OF FOLK NARRATIVE

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A STUDY OF THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE OF SAUL, INCLUDING INVESTIGATION
OF THE FOLKTALE AND PROVERB AS GENRES OF FOLK NARRATIVE

Ervin H. Mason, Jr. May 1982 98 Pages

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A biblical passage from the Old Testament book of I Samuel is
studied from the perspective of narrative, folktale, and proverb. The
narrative account of Saul's becoming the first king of Israel, as depicted
in I Sam. 9:1-10:16, is examined and found to be an example of traditional
folk narrative. Using the work of Stith Thompson and Axel Olrik, the
Saul narrative yields evidence indicating it is composed of traditional
motifs and arranged in a manner reflecting traditional interpretation.
Within the larger Hebrew narrative of the I Sam. 9:1-10:16 passage there
is lodged a folktale. The folktale is found interspersed with other
narrative material composed and collected by the biblical editor. The
folktale, when singled out, is located in I Sam. 9:1-14, 18-19, 22-24;
10:2-4, 9, 14-16a. Identifying the folktale in the Saul narrative is
done by using the work of Bascom, a folklorist, and Gressman, a biblical
scholar. A proverb appears within the bounds of the I Sam. 9:1-10:16
passage in 10:10-13. After presenting several proverb definitions,
attention is focused on the biblical equivalent of a proverb--mashal.
The characteristics of proverbs are applied to the mashal about Saul and
the mashal is shown to be a traditional proverb. Working with the tools
of folklorists and biblical scholars is both necessary and instructive
when studying biblical literature from the standpoint of narrative.
INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis is the biblical narrative of the Old Testament figure of Saul. Attention is given to the anointing of Saul as King of Israel by the prophet Samuel and the transpiring of directly related events which bear upon the form and direction of this Hebrew narrative.

The purpose for the writing of this thesis is four-fold. First, I have a personal interest in the study of biblical materials. As a graduate of a theological seminary, and an ordained minister in a main-line denomination, I have spent considerable time working with biblical materials. This enjoyment has been furthered by the study of religion as it relates to the discipline of folklore. Second, there is practical value in studying a biblical text from another perspective. Examining scripture through the lens of folklore is helpful in developing a Bible study along historical and narrative lines. Third, cross-disciplinary study gives me added tools with which to research biblical materials. By pulling together the findings wrought by the application of biblical and folkloric theories I am enabled to arrive at a more thorough conclusion. Finally, by compiling the fruitful products of both disciplines I hope to encourage other scholars to make more use of both disciplines in their work.

The narrative under investigation is found in the Old Testament of the Bible in the book of I Samuel. The boundaries of the story are the appearance of Saul in chapter nine and Saul's death in chapter
thirty-one. This thesis deals with the issue of the kingship and the anointing of Saul as King as they influence the movement of the storyline. The narrowed down unit of study is I Sam. 9:1-10:16. This pericope, or unit of study, is a line of demarcation for the purpose of isolating a portion of the total Saul narrative.

All references to the text of I Samuel will come from The New Oxford Annotated Bible.¹ The translation of this textural material is the Revised Standard Version, and page references will not be provided because the verse, chapter and book placement are standard.

In chapter one I comment on the nature of narrative, citing several examples of narrative composition and usage. The chapter begins with a look at how narrative functions as a social outlet, with direct emphasis on the interplay of history and narrative. I cite evidence for the value of personal history as narrated through verbal traditions by referring to two books on oral history. Work in the area of oral history points out that "historical accuracy" is not all there is to the human story. Stories told down through the ages can provide wealthy deposits of human perceptions, accumulating rounds of descriptive information about how people understand the world they inhabit, and how stories influence the narrator as well as the audience.

The structure of narrative and the devices used to move them along also reflect the concepts of people and how they view the relationship between their world and themselves. I have used one of these devices--the motif. The dominant claim of folk narrative is not fact of objectivity but the reflection of the folk mind as it peers out

onto the world through its interpretive eyes. A motif is understood to be one unit or element in which an interpretation can be seen.

After opening chapter one with a comparison of narrative and history, I then take up the subject of poetry and history. By drawing on the work of the philosopher Aristotle I present an examination of history as fact and narrative as poetry. In keeping with Aristotle's high regard for the philosophical nature of narrative (poetry), I comment briefly about modern examples of the blending of fact and fiction, history and narrative. My reason for taking the matter of narrative in this direction is to suggest that narrative makes a natural way of living and thinking in the midst of an aggressive industrial age. There is a connection between narrative and the way we experience in everyday life. We do not encounter "reality" so much in a narrative as we give to narrative our experience.

The narratives collected from ancient cultures show how people made a vehicle for their personal and cultural life. Stories underwent a metamorphosis, which in turn allowed the people hearing and telling them to give them their own view of the world. Later oral poetry underwent a systematic change, using traditional stories for more than personal amusement or social entertainment. Out of this shifting came the epic poem with an emphasis on national pride.

The form of narrative went through some changes, eventually breaking into two kinds: empirical and fictional. When narratives became more fixed the storytellers had more freedom to concentrate on the meaning of a story rather than its factualness. Certain narratives became better for expressing a particular theme or meaning, as was the case of the epic poem. At the same time, however, excessive blending
of forms has made it near to impossible to set down clear-cut categories.

The remainder of chapter one focuses on the activity of a particular narrative, in this case, the Old Testament biblical story of Jacob. First, I tell a portion of the story of Jacob's life as it now appears in the book of Genesis, giving special consideration to Jacob's struggle with an unusual antagonist. In trying to determine if the one wrestling with Jacob is a human or an angel I put forth the contention that here is an example of a story nesting within a story. Much like a folk epic there are several sources involved in the narrating of this story. While evidence is not definite, the Jacob story is cradled in some now unidentifiable ancient tale(s) that drew life from a war between a god and a demon.

The chapter concludes on the note that the story of Jacob provides a more than adequate example of the life of a narrative, including motif, and the unending cycle of appropriation and re-appropriation.

Chapter two of this paper centers on the narrative of the man Saul, with particular attention being given to the existence of a folktale in the opening section of Saul's appearance in the story. Some background information concerning the historical and political climate during the period prior to Saul's election as king sets the stage for studying the Saul narrative as a whole. The material as we now have it in the Bible is really a collection of writings by different narrators whose material has been woven together and made into a colorful, though sometimes contradictory, body of literature. Scholars, however, have been able to sort out the various strands of material and have separated them for closer observation. One of these strands is
I Sam. 9:1-10:16. This body of material will provide the primary source for the study of the folktale about Saul.

Biblical scholarship has for some time now been working with the Bible from an understanding of the complex historical, literary, and theological factors which lie both behind and within the biblical materials. Relying on some of this work by biblical scholars, I present evidence of the scholar who has singled out the presence of a folktale in the Saul narrative. The term "folktale" is not defined, so I turn to folklore to test the accuracy of the biblical scholar's work. This chapter brings into the discussion additional information to confirm these findings by providing details gotten from those who work in the field of folk studies.

This chapter connects with the first by moving from general comment on narrative to a discussion on the forms of narrative. Narrative does not float aimlessly through time and place, or move about without order. Proof of this is found in the various genres which have been used to narrate a story. Examples of these genres are tale genres, legend genres, and true experience stories. The first item, tale genres, is the one which includes folktale; and a brief discussion of folktale will follow.

The folktale has maintained a high level of visibility because of its entertainment value and the appeal it has for speakers and listeners. Of added importance has been the freedom narrators have had in using interchangeably a body of motifs as most suited personal taste and cultural preference.

In addition to using motifs familiar in many quarters, narrators also depend on certain formulas to provide a structure in which the motifs
can be brought together. Such information indicates positively that the folktale in the hands of the folk narrator can become a finely crafted piece of literary material.

A characteristic of the folktale, besides its construction, includes the kind of reality experienced in the storyline. Some folktales differ from ordinary human experience in that they promote justice and high ethical standards as winning out regularly over evil and tragic circumstances.

Other descriptive qualities attributed to the folktale are taken up by referring to an article by William Bascom. Besides listing several of these qualities, Bascom also points out, that the folktale has an international character. His article calls for the adoption of standard terms when referring to the folktale on the basis of its presence in many different geographical locations. He emphasized that while his definitions of prose narratives (myth, legend, and folktale) are not original, he does maintain the need for universal acceptance of these definitions in order to provide a standard by which scholars may study narratives using the same tools and the same categories. A quote from one of the Grimm brothers, used by Bascom to identify the nature of a folktale, also offers help in establishing a portion of the Saul narrative as a folktale.

The work of Axel Olrik is cited at this point as a way of introducing another approach to the study of the folktale. This section indicates ambivalence toward the work of Olrik with regard to its value to the folktale. Nevertheless, there will be an extensive application of Olrik's epic laws to the Saul narrative.
Two major sources are consulted which bring the Saul narrative into contact with traditional tools used in studying folk narrative. One of the sources deals with the types of folktales that have been collected and classified. The other source is a collection of the motifs that have been identified in the folk literature. These two works clearly show a distinction between the tale type and the motifs of which a tale is composed.

Determining the tale type of the Saul narrative is a difficult task, especially in light of the context in which it now resides. When the folktale was independent of the larger framework of the God-Israel story of religious struggles, it was an ordinary tale of a common man who undertook an unusual journey. When this same tale becomes a part of a religious story reflecting the spiritual relationship between a people and their God, it becomes attached to the larger narrative of God and Israel. Despite the uncertainty of how to evaluate the tale type, an attempt is made to do so in order to establish a connecting link between folk narrative and the biblical narrative of Saul.

Somewhat easier than determining the tale type is locating the dominant motifs which are to be found. The categories of Magic, Ordaining the Future, Marvels, Society and Religion can all be found in that portion of the story where Saul becomes King of Israel. This section (9:1-13, 18-19, 22-24, 10:2-4) has been labeled a folktale. The remainder of the Saul narrative found within the whole section of 9:1-10:16 is attributed to the artful hand of the editor. By identifying these motifs in the folktale about Saul, and commenting on their use in the story, again a connection has been made between work in the areas of folklore and biblical study.
Attention is also focused on the extent to which the religious struggle of the people Israel fashioned the folk material of 9:1-10:16 into an influential factor in their religious history. The chapter concludes by making a comparison of the characteristics of the folktale and showing how these characteristics apply to the folktale in the Saul narrative.

Chapter three deals with the narrative genre of the proverb, citing first of all those definitions which are helpful in identifying proverbs. I apply the findings to a passage in the Saul narrative that has been termed a proverb (mashal) by the biblical editor. The proverb studies is "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (I Sam. 10:12). My intention is to accumulate sufficient supporting evidence to confirm the passage as indeed a proverb.

In the opening part of this chapter I bring together the definitions of proverb as set down by several scholars. The proverb definitions of Peter Farb, Alexander Krappe, Jan Brunvand, G. B. Milner, Alan Dundes, Archer Taylor, Roger Abrahams, and Nigel Barley are presented in order to establish a body of definitions of the proverb with which to test the biblical understanding of a proverb.

One most essential element of a proverb is the manner in which it mediates between two aspects of reality. The two levels of reality managed within a proverb are the particular and the general. Moving from the particular to the general thus enables a proverb to become applicable to situations of like experience. When a proverb has achieved this mediation between the particular and the general, another system of determining what constitutes a proverb comes into play. This latter system works as a metaphor which becomes an abstract social critic of an
event. One way of testing whether "Is Saul also among the prophets?" has the property of a metaphor is to determine whether it has been used in other places as such. The example offered in this chapter indicates that the phrase does indeed serve as a metaphorical agent, one which passes comment on a literary character by alluding to the biblical saying about Saul.

There are other biblical sources which further support calling the Saul saying a proverb. The Old Testament has three other books which belong to what is known as Hebrew Wisdom Literature. One of the forms of this literature is "popular proverb," and the Samuel passage is included in this specific form. Using both the sources of the folklorist and the sources of the biblical scholar allow a fuller look at the definitions of a proverb and thus enable a more accurate designation of "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

The proverb appears for the first time at the conclusion of a highly emotional and ecstatic experience of Saul while in the company of a band of prophets. Saul followed the directions of Samuel concerning the journey he went on to complete the tasks for his becoming king of Israel. At the end of the journey Saul falls in with a band of prophets and is so overcome by his whole experience that he begins to speak and act in the emotional manner of the prophets. Saul's actions are observed by some other people, and a proverb is coined. Upon observing King Saul's behavior, it is remarked by a bystander: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

The Bible contains several examples of proverbs, and as is true of most, the origin of the proverb is near to impossible to determine. This concept has pertinent value to the Saul saying, as this chapter
shows. With specific reference to the biblical tradition, proverbs are a part of the wisdom literature found in several places in the Old Testament. These proverbs are closely akin to other ancient folk sayings, many which can be found in Hebrew narrative. Several examples are listed to validate this statement, and to show there to be a connection between religious and secular proverbs.

Earlier it was stated that the origin of a proverb is nearly impossible to determine. This point is illustrated in the fact that the Saul saying appears twice in the Old Testament, with each occurrence offering its own explanation as to origin. The proverb appears at the end of two different narratives, each providing a context in which the proverb was to have sprung. Archer Taylor's contention that a proverb's beginning is shrouded in uncertainty can be supported by the dual appearances of the Saul saying, and the contradictory acts of creation.

While this proverb's origin cannot be precisely determined, there is some evidence in the whole Saul narrative (9:1-10:16) which can create a picture that draws on the similarities between the proverb-origin narratives. This activity is not totally convincing but it does open up another possibility. Trying to date one of the two proverbs ahead of the other by making comparisons with other wisdom sayings in the Old Testament is another way of finding the older Saul saying. There are certain structurally similar accounts which can be investigated to help in the dating process. These accounts are brought out in order to help in deciding which occurrence is the older.

The Saul saying is next researched on the basis of form and meaning. As to form, time is given to consider the reason the proverb itself remains the same while the narrative does not. With regard to
meaning, the discussion centers on what the proverb was supposed to have meant for the people who used it. The proverb's construction is in the form of a question, and the question is How is the proverb to be answered? With a yes or no? This paper defends the position that the answer to the proverbial question "Is Saul also among the prophets?" is no, he is not. Using the narrative of Saul, I contend that the proverb is not a positive acclamation of Saul's marvelous transformation, but is, in fact, a critical word of disbelief and opposition to Saul's lively masquerade.

Biblical scholars take conflicting positions which indicate some disagreement concerning how to view the meaning of the proverb in I Samuel. One scholar views the proverb as a sign of the political confusion existing in Israel at the time. A second scholar concludes that the proverb is a propaganda tool used by the supporters of David to discredit Saul. These two viewpoints of the Saul proverb are both considered, along with a third point of view that sees the proverb as a device reflecting a power struggle between Saul and David. Saul is to be rejected in favor of David.

The chapter ends with the idea that the social context of the Saul proverb promotes the conclusion that the saying about Saul being among the prophets says more about his being out of character than about his character undergoing a marvelous transformation.

The conclusion of this thesis was originally to have been the setting forth of a modest proposal that the scholarly materials used by folklorists are applicable to the study of biblical materials. The use of folkloric and biblical materials in this thesis is evidence that the tools of both disciplines are not only compatible but necessary if there
is to be a thorough examination made of folk materials with biblical connections. I still maintain the importance of this statement but have been led to expand the proposal to say that the scholarly materials used by biblical scholars are also applicable to folklore scholarship.

Needed is more extensive use of both folkloric and biblical studies in working with narrative and oral material. In a small way, this thesis represents an attempt to bring this proposal to reality.
CHAPTER ONE

THE NATURE OF NARRATIVE

The Bible contains a rich collection of history and narrative. Until recently scholars studied the Bible more from the perspective of history than from the viewpoint of narrative. This is a changing, as evidenced in the writings of Hans Frei¹ and James Barr.² Bernhard Anderson notes this fact by pointing to Barr's observation that biblical theology should move from history to story. Hans Frei substantiates this shift by comparing the Bible to a realistic novel. Like a novel the Bible reveals human characters and discloses its intention through the telling of stories. To put it succinctly: "The story is the meaning."³

Elie Wiesel is quoted as having said, "God created man because he loves stories."⁴ This saying suggests an interaction of God and the ongoing affairs of human beings and, further, that this interaction is best identified in the telling of stories. Stories I want to suggest, are forms of narration by which the folk select elements of living (motifs) which best exemplify their understanding of the human

¹Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (New Haven: Yale University, 1974).


experience. When this experience is expressed in the form of oral narration it takes on an active life through human interaction. This personal interaction with the material of a narrative is one way of dealing with the subject of history and origins.

There are some, however, who believe that oral traditions are unreliable in tracing historical origins. Such people like Homer C. Hockett maintain that the historian cannot find any positive value in oral tradition. ⁵ There are, however, those who believe that "oral traditions may yield a more reliable segment of history than can be obtained from scanty, falsified, or nonexistent documentary records." ⁶ Kenneth Clarke illustrates this viewpoint by pointing to Montell's _The Saga of Coe Ridge_ as an example of how oral tradition, when properly collected, can build both a rich and reliable body of material through oral narratives. ⁷ Further support for this thesis by Clarke and Montell is found in the caustic observation of Nietzsche: "By searching out origins, one becomes a crab. The historian looks backward; eventually he also believes backward." ⁸

What I am pointing toward is the social function of narrative as a living, vital contributor to one's present state of living. Tradition cannot be condemned as passive or lifeless because as long as it is still being recalled and reworked it is also very much alive. Tradition is a

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⁷Ibid., p. 64.

process that moves through time and experience collecting new images and trimming older ones. This basic characteristic of tradition, including folk history like Uncle Bud Long, is further supported by evidence of Clarke's study. Here the life of a man continues to be remembered long after his physical death. Clarke's conclusion for this phenomenon is "that the folk developed their self-image, their aspirations and aversions, their sense of a set of social norms, by reference to models not only in their contemporary scene but also in their folk history."\(^9\)

A narrative should not be judged solely by its historical accuracy but also by the significance of its description of the world it inhabits and the influence on the people who tell it. A narrative can be an indicator of the kind of world in which it exists and the kind of people who spend time telling the story. There are incidents in life (motifs) which seem naturally to develop into an understanding of human existence (folk tradition), and as these motifs dot folk tradition they become personal or collective categories of self-definition (folklore).

There is something else about narrative that needs attention, and that is its structure. Basically, narratives are made up of motifs which persist through time (tradition) and place (universal), and which accumulate viewpoints (folk attitudes) and interpretations (folklore). Some examples of how motifs, viewpoints, and interpretations can be studied are found in Clarke's description of some tales about Uncle Bud Long.\(^10\)

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\(^9\) Clarke, "Uncle Bud Long," p. 65.

\(^10\) Ibid., pp. 45-62.
Narratives in folk literature use specific structural devices on which to move their accounts. These devices often replace historical "facts." Clarke substantiates this matter with a comment concerning the Uncle Bud stories. He says:

As the narrative moved from the matter-of-fact reports of Uncle Bud's contemporaries to the oral traditions of the younger generation, a process for selection winnowed out and emphasized the standard motifs. For the second- or third-generation narrator, precise name, time, and place become unimportant. It matters not whether the alleged events took place in this century or another. . . ."11

Besides these devices as a means of narrative structure there are the unsystematic forms in which narrative is most often found. These unsystematic forms are comparable to what Clarke labels "scattered anecdotal fragments." A folk narrative is not a polished, smoothly moving, continuous account of a principal figure or concept. Rather, a folk narrative is an accumulation of motifs which have gravitated to a figure or concept and become themselves the subject of the narrative rather than its description. In the case of Uncle Bud Long, an historical figure is the vehicle of selected motifs, some of which may or may not be directly attributable to him. Uncle Bud Long, while giving the appearance of being the main character of the tales about him, is actually not so much the source of all the motifs as their benefactor. This is not to say that folk narrative is not trustworthy in its recollection of events or historical circumstances. Folk narrative does not claim to be a repository of documented fact or objective data. Instead, folk narrative does make its claim as evidence of the "folk mind" or "folk aesthetic," and this is as worthy

11Ibid., p. 59.
of attention and consideration of any scientific study as a reflection of the subject being studied. The very presence of folk narrative in tradition is its own best proof for illuminating the human truths any study purports to offer.

Earlier in this paper I was comparing narrative and history. I should like to return to this matter in order to more fully develop a theory of narrative. In Aristotle's Poetics a contrast is set up between poetry and history. Aristotle wrote that poetry may treat what might have been and yet may be, while history must confine itself to fidelity precisely and only to what has been. He seems to be setting up the differentiation of fact (history) from narrative (poetry). In our time, however, these appears almost a collapse of the barrier between fact and fiction, history and narrative. For example, anyone who has read Norman Mailer's The Armies of the Night or his most recent The Executioner's Song knows how the author blends so well the account and his experience of the account in such a way that personal experience and historical observation come together as a novel journalism. Another example of the blending of narrative and history is Truman Capote's In Cold Blood. Capote recounts the fascination of murder and the inadequacy of our system of justice in a form of literature for which there is no existing genre, unless one wishes to label it "contemporary history." Professional historians would certainly not appreciate the connection, so perhaps those materials can be looked upon as examples of off-beat folk narrative. Whatever it is, we are presently living in a time when the frame of reference established by Aristotle is being

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revised, and the possibilities of a new kind of narrative are emerging. This new genre has even been given a name: historiography.\textsuperscript{13}

The present attempt to think and live in narrative form, however, is being challenged by runaway technology and industrialization. Human experience is subordinated to formal, critical thinking. I see it as altogether necessary to consider more seriously the valuable communication which narratives have borne in our cultural history. This is not to suggest looking back into the past in order to return to some more idyllic time. Rather, we must seek, in casting an historical glance, a clue to how narrative was created and understood.

From Gaster's \textit{Oldest Stories in the World} the concept of narrative metamorphosis is introduced through the use of very old stories that have been in circulation for centuries. The meaning of the term "narrative metamorphosis" is most simply explained as stories which are recited and conditioned by the one who recites them. Reciters of a story would adapt that story to the audience hearing it. In this way a story would undergo a process that would eventually eliminate single authorship. This process, or metamorphosis, created a new story which would acquire "the character of anonymous popular lore."\textsuperscript{14}

Narrative metamorphosis has to do with an old story of a motif, or a fragment of an old story, which has come to nest in a different cycle of stories. In narrative metamorphosis the elements of one story become material for quite a different story. Having made its way to


another environment, the story (or motif or fragment) has its tone altered and some of its details reshaped. It should also be emphasized that this narrative material from which this new story is made is hardly inert. The material itself imports a strange new tone and motif into the tradition that has appropriated it. What makes this transformation all the more remarkable is the spontaneous artfulness of an oral tradition spanning generations: an oft-told tale shaped in the retelling into a perfect new story reflective of the people that had shaped it.\footnote{Stephen Crities, "Angels We Have Hear," in Religion as Story, ed., James B. Wiggins (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 35-37.} I will illustrate this process at work in the conclusion of this chapter using the biblical narrative of Jacob found in the Old Testament book of Genesis.

Moving from this strata of tradition, it seems to me that oral poetry became the first written expression of putting order and control onto these traditional stories and narratives in oral circulation. By combining legends, folktales, and myths into oral poetry (or epic poetry) people began to bring the traditional stories into a more controlled and more purposeful form. This fateful step indicates two forces at work. One of these two forces is the assertion of the human self. The second force is the use of traditional stories as an inexhaustible source of defining oneself and one's place in the world at large.\footnote{Wiggins, Religion as Story, p. 5.}

The Song of Roland illustrates this process at work, for there is an unknown narrator asserting national pride by means of both history and folklore.\footnote{Gerard J. Brault, The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978).} The historical elements are detected in the numerous...
characters and incidents which can be traced to the time of Charlemagne. The folkloric elements surface in the area where historical references have been glossed in order to rearrange the presentation of the narrative, in this case, for the sake of Roland. The result of this combination is an epic poem which bolsters the self-image of the nation (self-assertion) via the traditional tales of heroism and myth. Tradition has not simply been preserved, but has both extended and become a part of the epic poem.

While I do not wish to spend excessive time tracing the historical route of the narrative through chronological time, I do want to refer to a book which greatly facilitates the telling of this story. Considerable attention to the emergence of narrative is given in the book The Nature of Narrative. According to the analysis contained in the book, once the impulse to impose some fabricated order upon myths had begun to find expression in the epic form, it was with considerable rapidity that storytelling branched into two distinctive types. In the broadest terms, these two types are labeled "empirical" and "fictional." Under the heading of fiction one may distinguish (1) the "romance" from (2) the didactic forms of narrative. Under the heading empirical one finds the emergence of (1) historical narrative as distinct from (2) mimetic kinds of stories. Generally speaking, the empirical narratives aimed at scientific knowing, while the fictional works gave expression to artistic knowing.  

According to Scholes and Kellogg, as the centuries passed the narrative forms assumed a kind of stationary temper so that storytellers began taking much more liberty in selecting the form to employ on given

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occasions and for specific purposes. Much of antiquity made a distinction between the form and the meaning of a narrative and for this reason, so long as the forms were relatively stable and available, could concentrate on meaning. Given the further assumption of the more or less adequate "fit" between form and reality shared by many thinkers in that time, the storyteller's primary task was to find the form of expression most appropriate for the content (or meaning) which was to be communicated. 19

I am quite aware at this point of the evident dispute between the preceding theory of narrative and the one held by Kenneth Clarke. Clarke rejects the probability of "neat little categories" and considers attempts "to pin down such distinctions as . . . . remarkably unperceptive." 20 For myself, I do not know exactly in what direction to move from this impasse. On the one hand, I accept as quite possible the distinctive categorization of narrative as a means of communication of a particularly intended meaning. That is to say, some forms are better suited for special subjects. The epic poem is the best example of this point because . . . . the form it uses is able to handle its subject matter (history) with a creative flair (narrative). On the other hand, the process through which traditional narrative travels is so multifaceted that strands of material lose their distinctive features through metamorphosis. The categories that were so recognizable in the beginning, however, merge with other categories and forms and become an artistic

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19 Wiggins, Religion as Story, p. 7.

20 Kenneth W. Clarke, "Folk Studies 571--Folk Narrative," notes handed out in class, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, Spring, 1977. (Mimeographed.)
mesh of folk literature. Instead of trying to justify either side I choose to live with the tension. As long as there is tension there will be exciting dialogue, and this dialogue produces exciting books and articles which make the study of the nature of narrative an ongoing process not unlike its subject.

I have chose to conclude this chapter with a biblical illustration of how a narrative operates. The biblical story I have selected is the narrative of Jacob wrestling with an angel, as recorded in Genesis 32. First, some background information.

Jacob had been living with his mother's family for many years, having fled from his own family because he cheated his brother Esau out of both birthright and paternal blessing. He is now returning to his native soil. During his self-imposed exile Jacob has done very well for himself. He has been successful in accumulating great wealth, evidenced especially by the large number of possessions that now follow him on his return. While on his way he learns from a messenger that his brother Esau has heard of his coming home and is making plans to meet his brother Jacob. Jacob is greatly afraid of the possible consequences of this reunion. His fear appears justified when he learns his brother is to be accompanied by 400 men. Prompted as much by his own bad conscience as by the cunning that never deserts him, he sends waves of followers on ahead bearing gifts to propitiate Esau's wrath. Sometime during that night, he sends his family and his whole company of possessions and people across the Jabbok River into his native land. He remains alone on the other side of the river.

Jacob was left alone. Then some man wrestled with him until the break of the dawn. When he saw that he could not prevail over Jacob he struck his hip at its socket, so that the hip socket was
wrenched as they wrestled. Then he said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Said the other, "What is your name?" He answered, "Jacob." Said he, "You shall no longer be spoken of as Jacob, but as Israel, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked, "Please tell me your name." He replied, "You must not ask my name." With that, he bade him good-bye there and then.

Jacob named the site Peniel, meaning, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved." (Gen. 32:24-30)  

From this remarkable event Jacob moves forward across the water to meet his brother Esau. Contrary to all of Jacob's fears, his brother rushes to meet him and embraces him and kisses him, bringing to a beautiful climax this strand of narrative.

What happened to Jacob that night on the shore of the Jabbok River plays a most influential part in the narrative of Jacob himself and of Israel. Nestled in the details of the story is something that forever colors the story of a man and a nation. That something is the antagonist who struggles with Jacob all through the night. The narrative describes this figure only as a "man." It has been traditional to call this man an angel, but this story as it now appears in Genesis does not reflect as yet a developed angeleology. In fact, the manner in which the story unravels allows the reader to see this strange narrative figure emerging from the mists of an elementally primitive and powerful story.  

To be noticed first of all is the fact that the story of Jacob struggling with the unidentified man is really only one episode in a larger story. The larger story, in this case, is the story of the people who are to be known as Israel. The Israel narrative is itself a story

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22Crities, Religion as Story, pp. 34-35.
within a story within a story. Like a nest of boxes, the stories that make up the opening books of the Bible spring from diverse origins. Biblical scholarship has uncovered the existence of numerous narrative strands that have been brought together and woven into a multi-layered narrative about the nation (Israel) and its God (Yahweh). The layers of this narrative have not been so homogenized that a perceptive reader could not detect the existence of individual stories being evident in the whole biblical narrative. These stories also are not told from a single point of view, but reflect various vantage points. At the same time, these stories "are not simply a linear procession of independent stories either." The story of wrestling Jacob nests in the larger narrative units, its significance affected by them but also projecting its strange accents into those in which it nests. The Bible is not unique in regard to the presence of nesting stories. Traditional folk epics have themselves been built up from diverse sources and shaped in the retelling. These same traditional folk epics also exhibit the reciprocal flow of energy between the overarching stories and the episodes nesting in them. Like the biblical narrative of Jacob, the folk epics still retain an independent resonance. This tension in the way a nest of stories gets told, as well as the details of the plot and characterization, gives a folk epic its distinctive narrative texture and force. It also stamps the epic as the cultural product of a particular people, whose history and complex character is reflected not only in the story that is told but in the telling (folklore as performance).24

23 Ibid., p. 35.
24 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
The story of wrestling Jacob nests in the Israel narrative, which in turn nests in the great cycle of stories about the divine promise to the Patriarchs that begins in Genesis 12. The narrative of the Patriarchs gives to the Jacob story its preconditions and outcome. Because the story of Jacob is part of a larger story its meaning is largely determined by the intent of that larger story. This is not to take anything away from the Jacob story, for the episode noted above plays an integral role in the larger story of Israel. Even more importantly, the transformation of Jacob into Israel occurs in the great cycle of stories in Genesis about the creation of heaven and earth. These nesting stories are what made Genesis so provocative, for it is by retelling these stories that the Bible seeks to establish the relationship between the Creator and the created.\textsuperscript{25}

More than likely the story of Jacob belongs to one of the most ancient strata of the Hebrew Bible. The tale of Jacob's wrestling match probably derives from a still more ancient tale that did not originate from within the tradition of biblical religion at all. The dim tale(s) that still casts its shadow on this biblical story may have told of the struggles of a forgotten hero with a river spirit, the god or demon of a sacred stream. His impatience to break free of Jacob before dawn may even suggest some sort of night demon. Whatever the case may be, the story now recorded in Genesis has completely refashioned another tale for its own purpose. This older tale has not lost its place altogether in the world of storytelling, but has been picked up and cast into a new mold and given a new home in a new narrative context.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 36.
This older tale has been used by a people called Israel and used as the means of telling the origin of their name and how they came to be. In a word, the tale has been remarkably transformed not at the hands of a theological censor determined to suppress an alien theology (and not quite succeeding), but by the spontaneous artistry of someone who called a powerful story out of oral circulation and gave it new meaning. The tale that once floated about in oral circulation has been captured and given another identity and, in turn, a people was given a new name. 26

The study of the narrative layers of wrestling Jacob goes a long way in setting the stage for the story of Saul. Just as the Jacob cycle effectively reveals more than the history of a people and their historical beginnings, so the Saul narrative reveals more than historical documentation of political upheaval and the formation of a new system of government. Similar to the existence of stands of narrative in Genesis, I Samuel, too, is a composite of literary sources brought together by an editorial hand attempting to produce an unified structure. 27

In the next chapter the narrative of Saul's becoming King of Israel will be studied with the intention of determining whether a portion of it can be isolated and categorized. Specifically, can a tale that once existed in oral tradition be located and determined to be a folktale?

26 Ibid., p. 37.

CHAPTER TWO

INVESTIGATION OF THE FOLKTALE AND THE NARRATIVE OF SAUL

During the latter part of the eleventh century Israel's amphicyonic organization came to an end. The available biblical sources which cover this period of transition are I and II Samuel and I Kings 1-11. These books cover the period of Israel's history during the transition from tribal confederacy to the rise and development of the monarchy and show the construction of the dynastic state of rue. The bulk of I Samuel was in the fixed form by the mid-tenth century B.C., it is thought, because the document known as the "History of the Throne Succession" (II Sam. 9-20; I Kings 1-2) appears to have been written only a short time after Solomon succeeded to the throne. The author of this document also used old stories of the Ark (I Sam. 4:1b-7:2, II Sam. 6) which occur in the early monastic period. It was during the years of the Philistine occupation that Samuel was the leader of Israel. He was not just a local seer (I Sam. 9) but also seems to have stood in the succession of the judges (Judges 1:1-5; 12:7-15) which included the administration of covenant law. As Samuel grew older the Philistine occupation continued to plague Israel, and despite the perpetuation of the charismatic tradition among bands of ecstatic prophets (I Sam. 10:5-13; 10:18-24) which at times engaged in Holy War (I Sam. 7:3-14), the Philistine threat could not be decisively defeated. Under such conditions it is natural to suppose that many Israelites must have realized that their case was hopeless unless stronger leadership could
It was in this climate that Saul was chosen to lead Israel. Saul's election, however, is described in three parallel narratives in I Samuel. The first one is found in I Sam. 9:1-10:16 and shows Saul being secretly annointed by Samuel in Ramah. The second account is I Samuel 11, which is the originally separate account of Saul's victory over Ammon and his subsequent acclamation by the people at Gilgal. The third strand is found in I Sam. 8:10 17-27 and has Samuel presiding over Saul's election at Mizpah. When the election of Saul is examined in close detail, a two-fold character of his election can be seen. There is first the election by prophetic designation (I Sam. 10:1-2); and second, there is the election by popular acclamation (I Sam. 11:14-15). In I Sam. 11 Saul's acceptance was sealed because of his victory over Ammon. In that victory Saul exhibited charismatic gifts as had the judges before him. When "the spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him" (I Sam. 11:6) his behavior convinced the people that he was Yahweh's designated leader, and the people brought him to the ancient shrine of Gilgal and there acclaimed him king.  

Eissfeldt, in his discernment of the various strands in the section of I Samuel dealing with Samuel and Saul, identifies the parallel strands as "L" and "J" and "E." He notes that in I Sam. 7-15 there are present two mutually exclusive presentations of the beginnings of Israelite kingship. One strand (chapter 7-8) he assigns as having a marked affinity to the Elohistic section of the Hexateuch and of the

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2 Ibid., pp. 166-68.
book of Judges. The other strand (9-15) is in many respects reminiscent of "J." According to Eissfeldt, I Sam. 12 (Samuel's farewell speech) must at one time followed directly on the choosing of Saul as king by lot (I Sam. 10:17-27), and this in turn links back beyond 9:1-10:16 to the narrative in I Samuel 8 of how the people brought to Samuel their desire for a king. The strand in I Samuel which has Elohist traits is in reality the continuation of the "E" of the book of Judges and hence, of the "E" of the Hexateuch. When the "E" material is removed from the book, the remaining passages form a chronological sequence. When we make specific application of his theory concerning Saul's beginnings, there are then two groups into which it falls: I Sam. 9-11 and 13-14. In the first group is the story of Saul seeking his father's lost asses (9:1-10:16) and continued in 11:6a; 13:3ab, 4b-5, 7b-15a. Between 10:16 and this sequel, little else occurs. The second group picks up at I Sam. 11 with the narrative of Saul's victory of the Philistines.3

A similar use of the three strand theory of I Sam. 7-12 appears as follows:

1. "E"--I Samuel 7:2-17; 8; 10:17-21ba; 12. The concern of this source is the philosophy of history, and its attitude toward the institution of monarchy is negative

2. "J"--I Samuel 9: 10:1-16. In this strand, which has a theocentric view of history, it is the Lord who sees the affliction of Israel and decides to deliver them

3. "L"--I Samuel 10:21b-11:15. This strand is called the "Lay source" and shows little interest in theology. It does, however, have a more sympathetic view toward kingship than "E"4

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As earlier, there was a strand of material that took a rather dim view of the monarchy ("E"). This source denounces monarchy as an imitation of the pagan nations. There seems to have been a neutralizing element to this negative view of monarchy though, that being the old fashioned way Saul arose as a charismatic hero (I Sam. 9).\textsuperscript{5} What we have then is a clever interweaving of sources which makes for enjoyable reading as well as historical and theological consumption. In the next section of this chapter I will attempt to untangle some of the literary and form critical threads which line this biblical narrative. One question present in the above description of I Samuel’s form, and which will have considerable bearing on what is to follow, is Why is the available literature on Saul as an individual so small? Gerhard Von Rad believes the near barren amount of material on Saul is explainable by theological reasons. The body of literature on Saul, as found in the Old Testament, includes I Sam. 9-31. This is really a substantial amount of material, but Saul appears as the chief character in only a small portion of this material. This material includes the earlier account of his crowning (I Sam. 9-11), a section including stories of his war exploits with the Philistines (I Sam. 13-15), his visit to the witch of Endor, and finally his death (I Sam. 28,31). Whe Saul and David appear together, David is the primary figure. Except for the section on his crowning by the prophet Samuel (I Sam. 9-11), there are no stories which tell of the Saul with whom Yahweh is present. As a matter of chronological history, the following unit of stories after Saul’s crowning and military victories

\textsuperscript{5} Bright, \textit{A History of Israel}, p. 168.
(I Sam. 13:2-14:46) begin with his collapse as "the anointed who slipped from Jahweh's hand." Von Rad attributes this quick resolution of Saul's rise and fall to the story-teller's perception of Saul's guilt which, as evidenced in I Sam. 14:29-30, was brought about by Saul himself.

While space has already been given to the call narratives of Saul, we have not yet exhausted the material on the historical and theological understanding of the event itself. In the early version (I Sam. 10:1-16) Yahweh directs Samuel to anoint Saul because of the political distress of Israel. The charisma of Saul was quiescent for some time following his meeting with the band of ecstatic prophets, but this dormancy period of Saul's charisma ended during the affairs of Jabesh in Gilead (I Sam. 11). Von Rad connects these two events to complete the story of Saul's conformation as king by showing how Saul's victory over the Ammonites led the militia of Israel to elect him king at Gilgal.

In the later account of Saul's anointing (I Sam. 8: 10:17-27a; and 12) the initiative comes from the people. Samuel consented to these requests but reprimanded the people for sinning against Yahweh. In this version Saul was elected by lot at Mizpah. This latter narrative reflects the unhappy experience which Israel had with its kings. It is not a simple case of one version being hostile to the monarchy and the other friendly to it. The older account is preoccupied with explaining the

7Ibid., pp. 324-25.
8Ibid., pp. 325-26.
event in the context of Yahweh's plan and the unfolding of Yahweh's saving will. The later one, drawing on the dismal experience of kings, seem monarchy as a victim of the people's political greed and a sacrifice to reasons of state. This latter view of the monarchy "Became the standard view that, because of her kings, Israel became 'like the nations' (I Sam. 8:5, 20)."9 In the older view, God wanted to take Israel's history in hand by means of his anointed; in the later, the autonomous political will of Israel is resisted by God because God is the one who has given Israel this will. The later recension was not meant to circumvent the saving word expressed in I Sam. 9:16. After the period of the monarchy ended though, the writer who stood reviewing the history of the original of the monarchy was inclined to take a different theological view. Because "it is the later which puts its theological stamp upon the final form of the whole complex of stories, the portrait of Israel's first anointed has something strangely negative about it."10 What is in fact the reality of the situation is that Saul is not the one after God's own heart. The stories about Saul are not given for their own merit. There is no intrinsic independence in the narrative about Saul. The tradition narrated in I Samuel, rather has its eye on the one who is to come. The one who is to come is David.11

Any attempt to identify the literary nature of the various strata of the first book of Samuel must include two questions: What are the traditio-historical stages of the text and who are the transmitters

9Ibid.
10Ibid.
11Ibid., pp. 326-27.
of that text? It is generally accepted by most scholars that the literary works contained in Samuel have not only been bound and wedded over the generations, but also have been "expanded by additions from written or oral traditions and, above all, have been reinterpreted."\textsuperscript{12} The character of writing in I Sam. 9-13 may be summarized as having a prophetic view of history in which prophetic interpretation lays alongside traditions of the court and people and whose major concern is the lives of Saul and David.\textsuperscript{13}

The passages concerning anointing in I Sam. 10:1-9 may be classified among those similar ones concerned with the concept of Saul as messiah (or, anointed one). The messianic theology provides the structure on which is built the entire narrative of Saul's anointing. The circle responsible for this messianic construction is ascribed to the pre-Deuteronomic transmitters. What we have, for instance, in the text 10:1-8 is the use by prophetic tradition of messianic theology. This form of having Yahweh validate his initiative shows the prophetic use of messianic theology as "a specific form of the prophetic understanding of the kingdom."\textsuperscript{14} When we single out the character of the prophetic interpretation of Saul's anointing in 10:1-8 we discover that it belongs neither to the enthronment nor to the public act of power. The consequent result of Saul's anointing by Samuel is the possession of the spirit. The concern, then, of this prophetic stratum is to show the transference of the Spirit of God. Knierim draws two conclusions


\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 22.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., pp. 29-30.
from the content of this stratum:

a. . . . The picture of the bearer of power and of the king is that of the authorized bearer of the Spirit. Now, the connection between the anointing and the charisma actually goes back to extra-Israelite ideas. . . . The prophetic layer took this picture into the concept of the typically prophetic character of the messianic office, as the context of I Samuel 10:9ff., shows.

b. The receiving of the Spirit, the display of power, and the enthronement are a consequence of the anointing. The anointing is clearly set apart from these consequences and especially stressed . . . . Neither the personality nor the display of power by the acting person establishes his right. It is exclusively grounded in a separate legal act that expressly and unambiguously proves Yahweh as the initiator.

The literary elements of I Samuel include three different strands of narrative, each one describing how Saul became king. One of the strands has Samuel as God's representative to anoint Saul. A second strand has Israel acclaim Saul king. The third strand shows God as the initiator of the anointing. Following will be a more precise categorizing of the tradition of the anointing of Saul in the I Sam. 9:1-10:16 narrative passage.

In an article by Bruce Birch, the elements of Saul's anointing are categorized as those of a folktale. Birch, borrowing the characteristics of the folktale from Gressman, outlines them as they would apply to Saul:

1. The fanciful theme--how Saul, as a young man, went to search for lost asses and found a kingdom

2. The ideal picture of a young man who excels all others in stature and appearance

3. The namelessness of the city to which Saul and his servant

15 Ibid., pp. 31-34.
4. The indefiniteness of time

5. The entire atmosphere of the story which moves in the realm of wonders rather than fact\textsuperscript{16}

These folkloristic elements are readily evident in the I Sam. 9:1-10:16 unit and indeed must have been a part of an early oral tradition that became fastened to a larger unit. In the case of I Sam. 9:1-10:16, however, the oral tradition of Saul's becoming king has been woven into the history of the monarchy. Much of the material in 9:1-10:16 does not reflect an old folktales tradition, but rather "displays a formal structure of a radically different nature and is thereby marked as stemming from a completely different setting than the folk tradition."\textsuperscript{17} Birch refers to the work of Habel\textsuperscript{18} to point out those sections in the Saul narrative which most clearly reveal a source other than folk tradition. Habel's work examines the calls of Moses and Gideon, and some other classical prophets, and concludes that call narratives are characterized by a formal literary structure. By comparing the form of the call narratives of classical prophets to the call narrative of Saul, Birch believes that within the I Sam. 9:1-10:16 unit there is a modified version of this form. Habel's listing of the major divisions of a call narrative are in this order: (1) divine confrontation, (2) introductory word, (3) commission, (4) objections,

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\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 61.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
(5) reassurances, and (6) sign. In the call of Saul they do not appear in this exact order, but it does conform to the over-all theory. Application of Habel's structure to the call narrative of Saul, with minor modification, results in the following order: (1) divine confrontation in I Sam. 9:15, (2) introductory word in I Sam. 9:16-17, (3) objection in I Sam. 9:21, (4) commission in I Sam. 10:1, (5) sign in I Sam. 10:1, 5-7a, and (6) reassurance in I Sam. 10:7b.20

The elements Habel identified as essential for a call narrative are present in the call narrative of Saul. The hand of the editor may be seen in 9:15-17, 20-21, (25-26), 27-10:1(LXX), 5-8 and 16b.21 An old folktale, beginning with Saul's search for the lost asses, may be found in 9:1-14, 18-18, 22-24, 10:2-4, 9, 14-16a.22 Central to this editor's concerns, according to Birch, are the prophetic role of Samuel as God's agent in designating and anointing and the source of Saul's authority, and the possession of the Spirit which follows this anointing.23

Two additions to the literary nature of the I Samuel narrative will be introduced at this point. The first item is an Old Testament scholar's view of the dramatic nature of the story of Saul. Von Rad conceives of the picture of Saul's fall and rejection as a personal

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21 Ibid., p. 69.

22 Ibid., p. 67.

23 Ibid., p. 68.
tragedy that bears similarity to the spirit of Green tragedy. One need
only remember that Aristotle asserts that the protagonist of a tragedy
should be "a man whose . . . misfortune is brought about not by vice or
depravity, but by some error or frailty." In sealing his own fate Saul
is victimized by hubris and eventually destroyed. Secondly, I would
like to offer the following five items as an indicator of the theological
motifs found in I Sam. 9-10. These motifs are noteworthy because they
reveal a deliberate appropriation of traditional biblical themes as part
of the narrative of Saul. These five motifs are

1. Hiddenness--there is a messianic secret in miniature to be
found in the secret anointing of Saul by Samuel. In this guise, Yahweh
takes the matter of kingship to himself. The cryptic intimation of
Samuel (I Sam. 9:20, 22, 24) lead eventually to Saul’s being anointed

2. Human insignificance--Saul is from the least of the twelve
tribes of Israel--Benjamin (see Gen. 4). He is reluctant to accept this
anointing on this account

3. Human awareness--the contrast between Saul's seeking the
lost asses and finding a kingdom underscores this motif. Divine purpose
is below the surface and not detected until afterwards

4. Oracles--the proof of Yahweh's presence is proved through the
oracles that come to pass for Saul

5. Leadership--Saul is to be a leader, not a king. He is to be a
military leader (comparative to the Judges period) and a charismatic

The nature of the narrative of Saul becoming the anointed leader
over Israel is such that a seemingly simple story is made a more complex
body of history and narrative. The narrative parts are themselves com-
plex as well, and the following discussion will provide the basis for

24 Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, p. 235.

25 William F. Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature

26 David Jobling, "Old Testament 38--Hebrew Exegesis," Louisville
Presbyterian Theological Seminary, class notes, Louisville, Kentucky,
investigating the Saul narrative and, in particular, studying the presence of a folktale living within the total story of Saul and Israel.

From the previous chapter it is apparent that narratives are adaptable to local climate and are endowed with ideas which, although persistent in their movement, are being reinterpreted by the social climate that has appropriated them. The range of material within the heading of folk narrative is large and includes all genres of oral literature in prose. The oral existence of these genres means they really never achieve conclusive formation. Still, as a means of observation, it is helpful to create some kind of order, however unstable, by which to study folk narrative. For the sake of convenience, narrative genres may be divided into folktale, legend, and true experience stories.27

In this chapter the folktale will receive specific attention, especially as it relates to the story of Saul and Samuel and Israel.

The Folktales have achieved an unusually refined state considering the diversity of origin and themes with which they have been associated. While entertainment has been a major reason for their telling, they have other purposes. Often they are regarded by their tellers as fiction. The tale is constructed from a collection of formulas which give the tale a recognizable outline that retains its shape due to the regular use of accepted conventions. These conventions are also known as "building blocks" and are largely responsible for the tale's composition and structure. The five stable formulas are types and motifs, Spring, 1974.

framework, figures of speech, formulaic verbal sequences, and repetition. 28 Types and motifs reveal certain categories which have had universal appeal in both oral and literary traditions. The Motif-Index of Folk Literature 29 explains motifs as "narrative elements" which exist within a tale type. A motif may center on a character, an action, or circumstances accompanying an action. Other terms for narrative units of a tale are incident, episode, and motif sequence. The framework of a tale is made up of stock formulas for the introduction and conclusion and for personal intrusions by the narrator. The descriptive phrases, or figures of speech, bring attention to certain characters or scenes or to the conclusion. Tales use monologues and dialogues in formulaic verbal sequence to highlight certain situations and thus can accomplish goals or provide important information. A final technique used in the tale structure is repetition. Throughout the story there may be repetition of tale actions coming in groups of three, such as a hero performing three tasks or trying to succeed in three tests. These five features provide a well-crafted piece of dramatic architecture in which the actors and actions serve more as symbols than actual flesh and blood creatures. 30

The work of André Jolles is cited by Scholes 31 as being an early attempt to bring together and describe all the simple forms of oral literature that lay beneath all the works created by humanity.

28 Ibid., p. 60.


According to Jolles, a simple form is a structuring principle of human thought as it takes shape in language. Just as people learn to speak a language, so they learn to actualize the simple forms. An actualized simple form is a verbal object like a folktale which follows a certain aesthetic order. When one of these simple forms, whether a folktale or a myth or joke, becomes concrete it may then be used by a writer to produce a deliberate and unique verbal construction of an individual. Jolles lists nine simple forms which he thought were connected to the human process of organizing the world linguistically: legend, saga, myth, riddle, proverb, case, memoir, tale and joke.32

Under the simple form tale, Julles includes the folktale. The world of a folktale is toward justice, but all the while this movement confronts tragic possibilities. The world presented by a folktale is better, more ethical, and more just than the world of the audience. In this simple form of narrative the human imagination can be overpowered by the high flight of the folktale as it soars above this worldly experience.

In Chapter One mention was made of oral poetry, or oral narrative. Using a term of William Bascom's, I now would like to introduce the phrase "prose narrative" into the discussion. Prose narrative is a category of verbal art which includes myth, legend, and folktale. These three forms are considered sub-types of the broader class of prose narrative. They are related to each other by virtue of their prose form.

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Folktales are prose narratives which are regarded as fiction, not dogma or history; they may or may not have happened; they are not to be taken seriously; they function as amusement or moral teaching; they are timeless and placeless; they are not restricted to children; they have an appropriate reputation as "fairy tale," but may include or may not such figures as fairies, ogres, deities; and folktales usually recount adventures of animals or humans. 33

There appears in the bascom article a most helpful quote from Grimm that will lend assistance to the proposition of this chapter—namely, that a portion of the Saul narrative is a folklore.

The folktale (marchen) is with good reason distinguished from legend, though by turns they play into one another. Looser, less fettered than legend, the folktale lacks that local habitation which hampers legend, but makes it more home-like. The folktale flies, the legend walks, knocks at your door; the one can draw freely out of the fulness of poetry, the other has almost the authority of history. As the folktale stands related to legend, so does legend to history, and (we may add) so does history to real life. In real existence all the outlines are sharp, clear and certain, which on history's canvas are gradually shaded off and toned down. The ancient myth, however, combines to some extent the qualities of folktale and legend; untrammelled in its flight, it can yet settle down in a local home. . . . In the folktale also, dwarfs and giants play their part. . . . Folktales, not legends, have in common with the god-myth (gottermythen) a multitude of metamorphoses; and they often let animals come upon the stage, so they trespass on the old animal-epos. . . . Divinities from the core of all mythology. 34

Even though Bascom designates the folktale as fiction, the Grimm definition makes room for the possibility of historicalness.

34 Ibid., p. 18.
The work of Axel Olrik in his article "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative,"\(^{35}\) is another source of information on the folktale. Olrik sets down laws under thirteen headings which sum up what he believes to be the rules or constraints which regulate folk narrative.

Robert C. Culley has carefully analyzed these laws and can be consulted to learn the main problems associated with them.\(^{36}\)

The laws are restricted to the kind of general observations which will apply to a number of different genres, both prose and poetry. While questions about the validity of Olrik's observations have been made, an argument by William O. Hendricks states that these same epic laws can be applied successfully to written literature. Hendricks has attempted to show that "the structural principles which underlie the composition of folklore narratives are similar—if not identical—to those that underlie literary narratives."\(^{37}\)

Despite the weight of argument against the application of these laws in determining clearly folk narrative and folktale, I will be using them to investigate the folk nature of the Saul narrative. In this way I hope to present evidence that will better establish the inclusion of the Saul narrative in the categorization of folktale.

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In his editorial introduction to Axel Olrik's article, Alan Dundes describes Olrik's essay as "an ambitious attempt to delineate some of the principal laws governing the composition of folk narrative." Olrik's paper concentrates on the world of "sage," but this term includes the form folktale. According to Dundes, the operation of these laws was such that Olrik believed the folk narrator could do little else but follow their leading. Dundes, however, strongly differs with this viewpoint and says such an approach fails to account for human participation. Dundes does suggest that investigating other folk material for these epic laws could be a profitable exercise.

The first epic law is the Law of Opening and Closing. This law states that the narrator begins with a situation of calm and then moves to excitement. At the height of the narrative's excitement a catastrophe may befall the principal character. The narrative concludes by moving from excitement to calm. The Saul narrative opens with a relatively inconsequential activity for people who live on and by the land. Some of the farm animals have strayed, and Saul and one of his servants go to search for them. They have great difficulty finding the lost asses; Saul then decides to listen to his servant and inquire in a city where a man of God lives and ask him about the lost livestock. The excitement builds further when, at the same time that Saul is looking for the man of God, Samuel is being told by God that a man will

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38 Dundes, The Study of Folklore, p. 129.

39 Ibid., p. 130.

come to him the next day to be anointed king of Israel. Saul arrives in the city and Samuel promptly invites him home for a small banquet. The next day Samuel anoints Saul. The excitement reaches its highest point when Saul, following the instructions of Samuel, meets a band of prophets and is so overcome with religious fervor that he also begins prophesying. The tale concludes with Saul speaking to his uncle about his finding the lost asses, but remaining silent about the anointing. In the Saul narrative epic law number one is neatly fulfilled.

Olrik's second epic law is the Law of Repetition, and here the intent is to bring emphasis to some detail in the story. In most instances this repetition is linked to the number three. Because this second law and the third, the Law of Three, are so intertwined in the Saul narrative I will consider both laws simultaneously. The number three is the most typical number of men and objects occurring in traditional narratives, and this number distinguishes most of folk narrative from both modern literature and reality. With regard to the Law of Repetition, there is an unusual amount of attention given to the searching for the lost asses. Saul and a servant travel to four different locations in their attempt to find their wandering animals. They are unsuccessful each time. They travel next to the land of Zuph, where Saul tells the servant he wants to go home, but the servant persuades Saul to continue into the city where a "man of God" might be able to help them. As they travel into the city they meet a group of young maidens and ask directions on how to find Samuel. When they arrive

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{41}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 132-33.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{42}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 133.}\]
inside the city they immediately meet Samuel. Samuel invites them both to eat with him then tells them the lost asses have been found. Suprisingly the story is not yet finished with the lost asses. After Saul is anointed by Samuel as king he is told he will meet two men who will tell him the asses he had been seeking have been found. The tale concludes with Saul telling his uncle about the lost asses and how they were found. In terms of the second law the story has a comical emphasis on the lost asses. Maybe I am asking too contemporary a question when I wonder if the people telling the story found humor in the fact that if it were not for the asses getting lost Saul would never have met Samuel or become king. Still, I think the irony of the whole story rests on the repetition of the details concerning the lost asses. Saul never did find the animals himself, but he somehow managed to find the way to become king.

As was earlier stated the Law of Three is woven throughout the story in conjunction with the Law of Repetition. For instance, when Samuel tells Saul the asses have been found he notes that they have been "lost three days" (9:20). After Saul was anointed Samuel tells him that three future events await him. One, he will meet two men who will tell him the lost asses have been found and that his father is worried about his son (9:2). Second, he will meet "three men going up to God at Bethel" (9:3). One of these men will be carrying three kids; one, three loaves of bread; and the third; a skin of wine. The third event will be Saul is meeting a band of prophets. After Saul carried out the plans laid down by Samuel he departed for Giheah. When Saul arrived at Gibeah three things happened: he met the band of prophets, the spirit of God fell upon him, and he prophesied. Epic laws two and
three are evident in the narrative.

The Law of Two to a Scene is the fourth epic law. This law says that the number of characters appearing at the same time is limited to two, and when more than two characters appear they may only be mute onlookers.\(^{43}\) There are two major examples of two-character scenes. The first major example is that of Saul and the servant. The story begins and ends with Saul and his companion together. Even when the servant is silent the story never loses track of the fact that Saul is never alone. The other major example is Saul and Samuel. When these two are together they are never interrupted or divided by dialogue or activity from another character. In one rather outstanding scene Samuel even instructs Saul to tell his servant to walk away from them so just the two of them could talk (9:27). In one minor example, Saul has a conversation with his uncle while the servant remains a quiet bystander. The narrative of Saul does support the Law of Two to a Scene as shown by the above-mentioned examples.

Related to the Law of Two to a Scene is the Law of Contrast. In this fifth law polarities exist between some of the characters, especially between the principal character and some other strong character or activity in the narrative.\(^{44}\) Specifically there is no character in the narrative set in contrast with Saul. There are only three named characters in the entire tale--Saul, Samuel, and Kish the father of Saul. All the characters, named and unnamed, seem to be assisting Saul at every point. There is a noteworthy exception to this,

\(^{43}\)Ibid., p. 134-35.

\(^{44}\)Ibid., p. 135.
however, near the end of the story. After Saul finished prophecying with the band of prophets, some of the people who knew him and his father found Saul's new-found gift of prophecy somewhat unbelievable. They wondered aloud what had come over him so strongly that a traditional proverb was coined: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (10:12). This line remains the sole example of contrast, but it is a most significant one. Everything had been going exactly as planned until this moment. This brief contrast is a preview of the eventual downfall of Saul and his rejection as Israel's king. While this epic law is not as well evidenced as some of the previous ones, nevertheless it does surface to some degree.

Another of Olrik's epic laws is the Law of Twins. This law is usually evident where the Law of Contrast is not operative. In this law two characters may appear in one role, with both appearing as insignificant without the other. If the twins should become separate, major characters then the Law of Contrast will take over.45 It would not be altogether inaccurate to say that Saul and Samuel are twins and that both occupy the same place—leader over the people of Israel. A prophet in Israel was considered God's representative and was looked to for guidance and leadership in matters religious and political. While Samuel maintains a strong place in the narrative he does have to share his authority with Saul. If Saul is to be Israel's king then Samuel must relinquish his role as sole occupant of the seat of authority. Much later, beyond the bounds of this narrative, the Law of Twins will be subordinated to the Law of Contrast. Saul will disobey an instruction

given him by Samuel and will lose his kingship because of it. There is some reason to say, given the above example, that the Law of Twins can be located in the biblical story of Saul.

The seventh epic law is the Importance of Initial and Final Position. This law states that the principal characters first appearance will coincide with the occurrence of a series of persons or things. The last person to be named will be the character for whom sympathy will be aroused in the narrative. 46 Of the laws discussed I find this one the most difficult to assess. Olrik says this law is often combined with the Law of Three. If this is so, then there is a possible connection in the opening verses of chapter nine. The chapter begins by listing the ancestors of Saul and concludes by saying that Kish was a wealthy man who had a handsome son by the name of Saul. Kish is not a principal character though. Saul, by being listed last, is the one who evokes our sympathy in the story, and in this small way, part of this law is at work. The only other possible connection with this law I see is in the three events that Samuel predicted Saul would encounter. The last event, meeting the band of prophets, was by far more consequential than knowing the whereabouts of some lost asses or receiving two loaves of bread. Following his encounter with the prophets the text says Saul was given a new heart by God(10:9). This new heart is to be understood as meaning Saul became a changed person. Except for these two strained examples this law is not a strong factor in the telling of the Saul narrative.

Folk narratives confine themselves to a single-stranded storyline. This concentration on a single plot is Olrik's Law of the Single

46Ibid., 136-37.
Strand. Folk narrative tells its story by having details and descriptions contained mostly in the dialogue.\(^{47}\) The Saul narrative appears to have two major plots. Closer examination reveals that in this biblical narrative (9:1-10:16) Saul's searching for the lost asses takes several unusual turns, but the story always finds a way to bring the searching for lost asses into focus. The dramatic details of the search are heavily carried in the dialogue, thus supporting the law's contention that such is the case in folk narrative. There are three movements in the plot: Saul looking for lost asses, Saul finding a kingdom, and Saul telling his uncle the lost asses were found. Saul's being anointed by Samuel becomes incidental in the story of Saul's search for his father's lost animals. The narrative moves from losing to finding with a stop along the way to his becoming king. The Law of the Single Strand is verifiably present here.

The Law of Patterning holds that folk narrative works at making two people or situations as similar as possible. Further, this law creates a rigid style of life where only the most essential narrative qualities are evident.\(^{48}\) The best evidence of this law is to be found in the smooth, matter-of-fact way Samuel persuades Saul to accept the appointment as the leader of Israel. There is no resistance on the part of Saul to Samuel's intentions. They are nearly one mind, agreeing that what needs to be done, finding a leader, will be done. The process of Saul's moving from the farm to the throne is described in a no-nonsense style, accomplished in a most conservative way with an economy

\(^{47}\)Ibid., p. 137.

\(^{48}\)Ibid., pp. 137-38.
of words. The pattern of similarity and essentialness is drawn taut, thus fulfilling Olrik's ninth epic law.

The Use of Tableaux is considered by Olrik as an epic law because of the powerful image it evokes via the narrated description. Folk narratives often create memorably crafted pictures that leave a deep impression because of their power to sculpture a memorable scene.⁴⁹

There are two scenes that make a memorable tableau. The first scene is the anointing of Saul by Samuel. The description is scanty but here is a remarkable moment in biblical lore. Saul was the first man to become Israel's king, and only one of three men to serve in that capacity over the whole nation. The other scene is Saul among the prophets. Here is a colorful picture of Saul having the Spirit of God come so mightily upon him that he engaged in an emotional dance of prophetic excitement. He is momentarily overcome with ecstasy over his prophetic company and over his meteoric rise to kingship. He bursts into spontaneous joy imitating the ritual of the band of prophets. Both scenes are vivid enough to be remembered as examples of the use of tableau in folk narrative.

In the eleventh law, the Logic of the Sage, the plot is moved along more by internal validity than external reality. Part of this fundamental law of internal validity means that the themes which influence the plot are often reinforced by miracle and magic.⁵⁰ The most apparent example of this law is the words of prediction spoken by Samuel to Saul. Samuel is the one invested with the unusual logic and powers

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 138.
⁵⁰Ibid.
of a sage. He is the one who has a vision of God telling him how and when to locate the man who is to be Israel's king. He is the one who twice informs Saul the lost asses had been found. Samuel is the one who relays to Saul "the word of God." And Samuel is the one who forsees the three special encounters Saul will have. The narrative begins and ends with a commonplace reality--seeking and finding lost animals. The narrative is moved swiftly along, however, by the unusual gifts of the sage-like, miracle-working prophet Samuel. The Logic of the Sage is present in Samuel.

There is an organization and structure to folk narrative that keeps the central activity headed toward a logical if not predictable conclusion. This certainty of movement is called Unity of Plot. The narrative elements work together to push the plot steadily along in a fashion that moves the story to a predictable ending.\(^5\) The underlying motivation of the Saul narrative is the explanation of Saul's route to the throne. The thematic vehicle that carries the story along, however, is the tale of Saul's seeking runaway animals belonging to his father. The narrative is decisively framed by the story of Saul setting out on a journey to recover lost asses and finally, after an exciting adventure that included his being made king, has the search ended when the animals are eventually located. The plot of the Saul tale takes an unexpected turn in the process of its being told but still maintains its unity.

Olrik's final epic law is, according to its author, the "greatest law of folk tradition."\(^5\) This thirteenth law is Concentration on a

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\(^5\)Ibid., pp. 138-139.

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 139.
Leading Character. When there is specific concentration given to a character this attention unifies the total plot of the narrative. This character, or sometimes two characters, is the thread that keeps the fabric of the story tied together. When there are two heroes included in a narrative one of the two is the formal protagonist, and the plot gravitates to his or her presence.\(^5\) Without question Saul is the hero of this biblical narrative, while the prophet Samuel plays a strong supporting role. Saul is the thread that holds the story together. He is the major participant in all the events occurring in the tale. His action moves the story from beginning to end. Most certainly Concentration on a Leading Character is visible in this folk narrative about the adventures of a strong, handsome man named Saul who went looking for lost asses and found a kingdom.

Using the "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative" as an instrument of evaluation, I conclude from the foregoing application that the biblical narrative of Saul is indeed an example of folk narrative. More specifically, the Saul narrative is a folktale, and I will proceed to support this observation by consulting Aarne's *The Types of the Folk-Tale: A Classification and Bibliography*.

The purpose for using Aarne's reference work is to identify what tales have been collected and how they are classified. By using this work I hope to determine how the tale of Saul fits into the scheme of tale classification. There are some basic questions pertaining to the investigation. Is either Saul or Samuel listed as one of the characters in a collected tale? Are there any Old Testament stories or characters

\(^5\) Ibid.,
listed in the work? Are there any tale types that resemble the tale in I Samuel? The validity of this approach is supported by the fact that a popular tale has an international character. Tales are possessed with the quality of movement, traveling from one country to another and even surmounting the barrier of language. For this reason the same tale may be found in different geographical locations.\textsuperscript{54} It is therefore valuable to have at one's disposal a listing of folktales and their classification in order to identify an individual tale type.

To answer the first question concerning the appearance of Saul or Samuel in the reference work, the answer is no. Neither name appears in the index. This omission need not be significant since, to answer question number two, there are only two other Old Testament figures listed--Noah and Solomon. It may be significant to point out that the bulk of the religious tales are related to themes and events that appear after the birth of Christ, and the two tales about Noah and Solomon both involve the devil. I also wish to point out that these two biblical tales reflect more literary handiwork than historical accuracy.\textsuperscript{55}

Only the third question remains. Are there any folktales recorded in Aarne's work that bear similarity to the Saul tale? Under Aarne's system there are three sub-groups used to make a broad classification of tales: animal tales, ordinary folktales, and jokes and anecdotes. Under the heading of animal tales there are none concerning lost asses, or animals that lead humans on a successful journey. The section on ordinary


folktales is closer in its subject matter to the narrative of Saul, but even there no tales are listed that describe how a handsome, strong young man sets out on a journey to find lost animals and finds a kingdom. The third heading contained a sub-section that could conceivably contain a similar story. Investigation proved no such tale likeness existed. The sub-section "Lucky Accidents" could very likely be the place to find such a story as Saul's, were it included. This though does have some merit, especially in the light of Birch's contention that the old folktale in I Samuel did not originally include Samuel's conversation with God about Saul's selection as God's choice for king. By removing the factor of divine interference in Saul's finding a kingdom, when all he really wanted was to find the lost asses of his father, the tale becomes a humorous story of a man who had the good fortune of stumbling quite accidentally onto a king's throne. In this way the narrative of Saul has the characteristics of a lucky accident.

Determining the tale type of the Saul narrative has not been an altogether successful attempt, but at least a connecting link, however weak, between folktale and the Saul tale has been made. Less difficult to work with is the Motif-Index of Folk Literature. Unlike the independent nature of a tale, a motif exists in tradition as the smallest element in a tale capable of an independent existence. Motifs are of three kinds: actors (gods, animals, creatures, human characters), background items (objects, customs, beliefs), and single incidents. The value of identifying the motifs found in a tale "is to display identity or

similarity in the tale elements in all parts of the world. . . ."57

Classifying single motifs rather than whole tales is more likely to produce similarities with the folk literature of the world, since narratives are composed of these simple elements.

I have chosen to approach the classifying of motifs by following the alphabetical arrangement of the Motif-Index.58 In some instances, however, I move past whole sections when there is a strong connection between motifs. The first major group reviewed was B, "Animals." Since the lost asses played such a strong role I thought that might be listed. Nothing there resembled the part of the animals in the narrative. The index indicated only one possibility of any lost asses as a motif (J2085.1), and further investigation proved that the connection was in name only.

The next attempt at locating a motif proved somewhat more fruitful. Under the major heading D, "Magic" the term "transformation" appears as the first entry. There are two transformations recorded in the biblical story. The first transformation is Saul's change in status from country boy to king. The second transformation occurs after Saul left Samuel. The text says God gave him a new heart(10:9). Motif D22, "Transformation: common man to exalted personage" fits the transformation of Saul. Saul, although coming from a wealthy family is still amazed and suprised that he should be the one to become king (9:21). Saul is changed from one who tends his father's asses into one who is to tend to the needs of the people of God. The second transformation is


58 Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature.
more inward than outward and can be assigned the motif D5, "Enchanted person." In this transformation, or enchantment, a person remains the same physically but undergoes a mental or moral change. Saul's inward transformation signifies that he was not only to be king but that he would also become a new person as well. There is another motif connected with the transformation of Saul. The inward transformation of Saul was accomplished not by a holy object or instrument by by God (D683.5, "Transformation by god (goddess)"). A case could be made, however, for viewing the anointing of Saul by Samuel as a form of transformation. I have made this designation secondary because Birch considers this verse as the work of the editor. The use of oil to anoint Saul as king is considered a religious act of consecration and is performed by the prophet Samuel, God's representative. The act of anointing symbolizes the change that God has wrought in Saul by making him king over Israel. The motif here is D1242.4, "Magic oil."

Under the major heading of D, "Magic," more motif appears in the narrative of Saul. After Saul underwent the second transformation, that of receiving a new heart, he exhibited the gift of prophecy or, as the motif is described in Thompson, he manifested the "magic power of prophecy." After he was given a new heart by God Saul met up with a band of prophets and began prophesying (10:10-11). Motif D1812, "Magic power of prophecy," correlates to Saul's prophetic activity.

Interwoven with the section in the Index on transformation is section M, "Ordaining the Future," and because of the close connection between the two I shall introduce M now rather than follow the alphabetical procedure begun earlier. Section M has as one of its sub-headings "prophecies." Saul's transformation results in the
manifestation of the act of prophecy (10:10-11). There are several motif possibilities from which to choose as being present in the Saul narrative. Because Saul was in the company of a band of prophets his prophetic gift might easily have been received from one of them (M300.0, "prophetic gift received from another prophet"). Or, it might be argued while Saul may not have been among the most notable biblical prophets such as Moses (M301.7.1, "Moses as prophet") or David (M301.7.2, "David as prophet") or Abraham (M301.7.3, "Abraham as prophet"), still he does possess for a time the qualities of prophecy and is by virtue of that included among those in the Bible as having exhibited prophetic powers (M301.7, "Biblical worthy as prophet"). On a simpler note, Saul could even qualify as a king who was a prophet (M301.17, "King as prophet"). Most important for this section is the fact that the motifs of transformation and prophecy are active in the biblical narrative of Saul and reflect the existence of traditional folk materials.

The next motif is found in the section F, "Marvels." When Saul and his servant were unsuccessful in finding the lost animals Saul wanted to return home. The servant convinced him to travel into a city where a man of God was living and seek his help. In the story the city is unnamed and, at first, so is the man of God. The journey of Saul and the servant has led them to an unfamiliar place where they hope to locate a man of God, whose name they do not know. The motif here is F110, "Journey to terrestrial otherworlds." Both men find themselves in a place where they must find someone who can give them directions (9:11-13). In this same section there is a sub-section that bears on the physical appearance of Saul. Saul is described in I Samuel as being more handsome and taller than any man in Israel (9:2). There are two motifs with reference
to Saul's appearance. One is F531.0.1, "Biblical worthy as giant," and the other is F531.1.0.1, "Beauty of giant." After Saul left Samuel he encountered three events that Samuel had predicted would occur. This motif can be classified as F900, "Extraordinary occurrences." Nothing more specific was listed that seemed similar to the events in the I Samuel narrative with reference to these occurrences.

Earlier I suggested, with regard to the tale type, that the story of Saul's looking for asses and finding a kingdom might be classified as "Lucky Accidents." There is a similar designation under N, "Chance and Fate" in the Motif Index. Motif N683, "Stranger accidentally chosen king," does superficially resemble the unusual experience of Saul. If the reference to God's intervening into the selection of Saul is removed as not being originally a part of the tale, then Saul's becoming Samuel's choice for king certainly appears to be a capricious choice. If the scene of Samuel hearing God's choice for king is retained, the motif would be P11.1, "Choice of kings by divine will." There are three other motifs that appear when the entire biblical narrative (9:1-10:16) is considered. Motifs P12.10, "King is superior to all in strength, beauty, largeness, etc."; P12.14, "Modesty of king," and P13.5.1, "Anointing of kings" are all visible in the story. Saul's size and appearance have been referred to earlier as outstanding. As for the motif of modesty, Saul responds to Samuel's words concerning his father's house that he (Saul) is from the smallest of all the tribes and not worthy to be spoken to has Samuel has done (9:20-21). Later, Samuel anoints Saul king over Israel, and thus the third motif is revealed.
Finally, with regard to motifs, there are a few to be found in section V, "Religion." In more than one place I have pointed out that the entire biblical narrative of I Sam. 9:1-10:16 is considered by Birch as a combination of folktale and editorial comment. When Birch's folktale stands alone it is free of religious interpretations edited and woven into the tale of Saul. Taken by itself the folktale is mostly a marvelous story about a man who became king under unusual circumstances. This is important to consider in the light of the religious motifs that have been attached to the story. Even though the folktale is older than the edited sections, both are remnants of folk tradition and are worthy of study and investigation.

The first religious motif to appear provides the underlying ground for the entire biblical story. Israel worships one God, and the story of Saul’s becoming king occurs within that particular context. This dimension of the story is motif V1.1.1, "Worship of one god." The second religious motif is located in the passage about one of the groups of people Saul will encounter. Saul is told he will meet three men near the oak of Tabor. The location of the tree and the naming of it indicates motif V1.7.1.1, "Sacred Oak." A third motif concerns the objects of food being carried by the three men near the oak of Tabor. One of the men is carrying loaves of bread and another a skin of wine. Much later Jesus, a Jew, was to make use of the bread and wine as a sacramental means of communion, borrowing from the Jewish faith an act that has roots in the Passover meal. What is most important here is that the traditional foods have religious value as well (V30, "Sacrament:). It is not unreasonable to think that eating the bread has some magic property to it (D719.9.2, "Magic power
at Passover). The final motif is also less specific than the first two but still evident. The first two people Saul met after he departed from Samuel were in a special location. They were found near Rachel's tomb, a sacred place for the Hebrew people. This sacred location corresponds to motif V113, "Shrines".

I consider the evidence of calling the biblical narrative of Saul an example of traditional folk literature overwhelmingly favorable. The application of Olrik's epic laws and the classifying of motifs in the narrative present a strong case for the designation folk literature. In a less precise way the case for classifying the story of Saul a folktale has been unevenly presented. There has been one particular situation that I have found difficult to evaluate. When I worked only with those verses labeled by Birch as folktale I discovered there were fewer epic laws and motifs available for study. When the tale is minus the hand of the editor there are considerably less stock formulas remaining. The original tale is a fundamentally simple story void of many folk elements and traditional phrases that would normally be found in folktales, an indication, for me, that the tale of Saul was originally an uncomplicated narrative reworked by a pious editor who gave the tale additional motifs and formulas. There are two tales present. More important is the revelation that the narrator chooses formulas or epic phrases to make the folktale speak relevantly to his audience. The audience of his narrator was Israel, and for him to fulfill his role as one of the earliest religion editors, he chose to remodel the tale from lucky accident to divine will.

Keeping the flow of this argument in mind there are two conclusions to be drawn. One, when the entire narrative is considered, the tale meets
Axel Olrik's definition of a folktale and increases the number of motifs present. This is true because the religious editor revamped the tale and thereby added more traditional elements to make the story accommodate the religious nature of his role as interpreter of divine will. My general observation at this point is that the simpler the tale the older it is. The more complex the tale the more it has been revised and the further away from the original tale it has moved. This is at least true of the biblical narrative of Saul.

The second conclusion is drawn from the observation of the first. If the original folktale of Saul is considered without the editor's hand, then the characteristics that define a folktale will also be reduced to a similar degree. This means that fewer laws and fewer motifs will appear in the story. This also means that identifying material as a folktale needs to be general enough to be clear but not so specific so as to be narrow. There are two sources in this paper that meet these criteria--Gressman and Bascom. Gressman lists five features of the folktale, and Bascom lists eight. I have already applied Gressman's characteristics to Saul, so now in a similar fashion I will apply those of Bascom's.

1. Folktales are prose narratives which are regarded as fiction and not considered dogma or history-- The story of Saul is shrouded in marvelous events and unusual occurrences (see # 5 of Gressman)

2. Folktales may or may not have happened-- Saul was certainly an historical figure but the story of his accidental finding of a kingdom is heavy with folk tradition (see #1 of Gressman)

3. Folktales are not to be taken seriously-- When the total surroundings of the Saul tale are considered it does create a sense of comic relief (see # 5 of Gressman)

4. Folktales function as amusement or moral teaching-- The original tale is secular in tone and forged with an ironic twist of Saul's accidental finding of a king's throne (see # 1 of Gressman)
5. Folktales are timeless and placeless--Saul journeys to an unknown city looking for the lost asses and loses all track of time while looking for them (see #'s 3 and 4 of Gressman).

6. Folktales are not restricted to children--This biblical narrative is part of the most respected body of religious material for the nation of Israel.

7. Folktales have a reputation as 'fairy tales,' but may include or may not such figures as faires, orges, and deities--In the original folktale Samuel remains an influential figure as a man of God.

8. Folktales usually recount adventures of animals or humans--The lost asses play a major role in the tale's telling but Saul is the one whose life is examined (See # 2 of Gressmen).

To an uncanny extent, Gressman and Bascom are nearly identical in the way they define the characteristics of a folktale. Most important of all is the way these characteristics apply to the Saul narrative. When attention is given to the definitions of a folktale provided by Gressman and Bascom the evidence clearly points to labeling the Saul narrative a folktale.

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CHAPTER THREE

IS "IS SAUL ALSO AMONG THE PROPHETS?" ALSO AMONG THE PROVERBS?

The major question in this chapter deals with the identification of a proverb from the book of First Samuel in the Old Testament. The subject is "Is Saul also among the prophets?". The passage appears in two different places, and with conflicting historical evidence. It is found in: I Sam. 10:12 and I Sam. 19:24.

In the first part of this chapter I will focus attention exclusively on the evaluation of proverbial structure and decide, on the basis of definitions, whether the present passage is a proverb.

The organization will be along two lines: what is a proverb? and, does "Is Saul also among the prophets?" qualify as a proverb on the basis of the characteristics of a proverb?

Peter Farb has placed proverbs with a group of strategies that include aphorisms, maxims and wise sayings. He calls this grouping "gnomic expressions."¹ There are certain characteristics which signal a gnomic expression, and they are: meaning, sound, vocabulary, and grammar. Meaning deals with basic truths about life and is usually expressed by a metaphor. Sound has to do with linguistic devices such as alliteration, assonance, and rhyme. Vocabulary includes the use of impersonal pronouns and copula verb forms such as "is" or "are". Grammatical characteristics are verb forms in the present tense, and sentence

constructions that use parallelism, symmetry, and the reversal of elements.  

Alexander Krappe defines a proverb as representing, "in its essential features, some homely truth expressed in a concise and terse manner so as to recommend itself to a more or less extended circle." He expands his definition by citing the possible ways this general truth may be expressed. The ways include literally (as in the case of hortative proverbs), hyperbolically, metaphorically, and allegorically. Krappe considers the essential features of the proverb to be "didacticism for the contents, and its conciseness for the form."

According to Jan Brunvand a "true proverb" is "always a complete sentence, never varies more than slightly in form, and usually expresses some general truth or wisdom." He also establishes what he considers to be three rules of proverb measurement: first, the proverb must be a saying, and not merely a traditional word like "fiddlesticks" or "phooey"; second, the proverb must exist in a somewhat standardized form; and third, a proverb must have had some oral vitality as distinguished from the written cliches.

G. B. Milner advances the theory that a proverb may be discerned because it is able to be viewed as having a quadripartite structure.

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2 Ibid., p. 118.


4 Ibid., p. 143.


This structure consists of two halves, each consisting of two quarters. Further, this structure employs culturally valued elements that are designated as "+" and "-", positive and negative. To be a proverb, at least structurally, it would have to adhere to this architectural blueprint.\(^7\)

While Milner labels a proverb structure with positive and negative signs, Alan Dundes uses the system of "A" and "B." Dundes conceives of proverbs as being "a fixed phrase genre where the content and texture are nearly as constant as the form," and of being "traditional expressions in which there is a 'topic' and 'comment.'"\(^8\) In another article, Dundes remarks: "The proverb may be best defined in structural terms."\(^9\) After an exhausting structural discussion he delivers his definition: "... the proverb appears to be a traditional propositional statement consisting of at least one descriptive element, a descriptive element consisting of a topic and a comment."\(^10\)

Considered to be the foremost authority on the proverb, Archer Taylor has commented upon the genre in several places. As the opening article of a new proverb journal, Taylor wrote: "As a guide to life's problems, the proverb summarizes a situation, passes a judgement, or offers a course of action... It expressed a morality suited to the common man. It is cautious and conservative in recommending the middle


\(^8\)Alan Dundes, review of Trends in Content Analysis ed. Ithiel de Sola Pool, Midwest Folklore 12, pp. 31-38.


\(^10\)Ibid., p. 970.
Taylor also says very much the same thing elsewhere but does make the following addition: "A proverb is a terse didactic statement that is current in tradition. . . .”

Roger Abrahams, bearing similarity to Milner and Dundes, posits his own binary theory of proverbs. He defines proverbs as "short and witty traditional expressions that arise as part of everyday discourse as well as in the more highly structured situations of education and judicial proceedings."

A proverb consists of a point of view and a strategy to a recurring problem. A proverb also can be distinguished by two occasions during which it attacks an ethical problem: first, a situation in which a proverb is used to direct a future activity; and second, one in which a proverb is invoked to alter an attitude toward something that has already occurred.

Nigel Barley has written two articles on the proverb that clarify previous concentration on proverbs as structures and offers his own directives to facilitate the comparison of cross-cultural material as proverb. In his first article, Barley establishes his concept of the proverb as structure by founding it on the writings of Goethe and Aristotle. Goethe understood poetry, of which proverb was a part, as


14 Ibid., pp. 117-27.
mediating between two aspects of reality, two levels of classification. Aristotle, in writing about proverbs, regarded the metaphor as the basis of the proverb. Barley combines the thought of Goethe and Aristotle and describes the proverb "as a semantic transformation mapping one distinct category onto another by embedding it in the others' position in a series of classificatory binary oppositions."15

In his other article, Barley tries to work out the problems of genre-definition by showing that there is a need to differentiate between the ethnic genre and the analytical category. In his presentation, he suggests that the focus on the proverb should not be on categories but on features and processes.16

Returning now to the I Samuel passage, can an assessment be made based upon the evidence given as to whether "Is Saul also among the prophets?" is a proverb? On the basis of applying the preceding formulas to the text I am persuaded to conclude that "Is Saul also among the prophets?" is also among the proverbs. My personal understanding of the proverb is closest to the work of Barley. Using his formula and applying it to the proverb will further justify the use of the label proverb.

In the first place, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" mediates between two aspects of reality. In the beginning, the proverb appeared only to be a jocular observation of some members of the folk toward the peculiar behavior of another. That is one level of reality--the

particular. However, when the remark was used to communicate in other situations the expression of surprise, it shifted to another level to reality—the general. As the Saul proverb came to be applied to other situations of unexpected change, the proverb not only moved toward generalization but, in the process, was transposed from a historical, singular observation into a metaphor capable of passing judgement on other historical occurrences. This brings us to the other part of Barley's system—the metaphor as the basis of a proverb.

The metaphorical basis of a proverb allows for the transposition of the proverb (situation A) to another set of circumstances (situation B). The applicable nature of "Is Saul also among the prophets?" can be substantiated by its use in a later period. Such use may be found in Sir Walter Scott's novel *Guy Mannering*, chapter 21, used there to indicate a surprising change in one of the novel's characters.

Hebrew Wisdom Literature affords further supporting evidence. The Old Testament books of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Ecclesiasticus belong to this genre. Under the major heading of Wisdom Literature is the sub-heading "popular proverb." The Hebrew term for an artistic saying is נellijיymashal. The term is used by Hebrew writers to denote the popular proverb and the artistic saying. Among the older proverbs explicitly denoted as mashal we find "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Not only is this Hebrew term found in the material in which the proverb is embedded, it is also exhibits an introductory formula: "Therefore it became a proverb" (I Sam. 12:12) and "Therefore it is said" (I Sam. 19:21), are often used to like proverbs to particular historical situations.  

One of the problems with acceptance of this passage as a proverb has been the difficulty of marking off with certainty the proverb from prose. Eissfeldt points out that "the metrical form which properly belongs to the later articulate saying... was not an absolute essential of the ancient proverb..." Another example of this early, crude proverb, one very much like the Saul proverb is "What has straw in common with wheat?" (Jer. 23:28). Although it, too, is fashioned in the form of a question, and looking much like a riddle, the answer is neither hidden nor meant to confuse. Both proverbs make a statement about life.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion I consider "Is Saul also among the prophets?" to be among the proverbs and will proceed to study it from the perspective of its origin and meaning.

In the narrative passage of I Sam. 9:1-10:16 is related the story of Saul, son of the Benjaminite Kish, a prosperous farmer who has sent his son in search of some straying asses. Weary with the search, Saul and his servant, after traversing the land of Benjamin, arrived in a town which appears to be Ramah, since it is described as the dwelling place of Samuel, the man of God.

Saul wanted to consult Samuel, whom he believes is a seer of all things, and find out from him where he may find the lost asses of his father. Samuel, in the meantime, was divinely warned beforehand that a Benjaminite whom God had appointed as King would arrive. When Saul found Samuel, he was identified in Samuel's prophetic consciousness as the divine appointee and was given the place of honor at a feast given by

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18 Ibid.
Samuel. So sure had Samuel been of the divine purpose as testified to in the depths of his spirit that he delayed the feast until the promised visitor arrived.

Saul was put to sleep on the roof, and in the morning the prophet Samuel communicated to him the divine message that he (Saul) was to be Israel's first King. Following this announcement, there was a private anointing of Saul as King by Samuel. After charging Saul with some words of responsibility and duties of Kingship, Samuel revealed to him three signs that would follow as confirmation of his divine appointment. Samuel told him that on his homeward journey, he would meet two men at the tomb of Rachel who would inform him that his father's asses had been found (sign one). He was then to change his route and go to the oak of Tabor. Here three men carrying varied provisions would supply him with bread (sign two); he was then to go on to Gibeah, where there was a holy place at which the Lord was worshipped. Saul would meet a band of prophets descending from this high place and would himself experience the same possession by the Spirit which the prophets were manifesting (sign three).

What Samuel had foretold came to pass. Saul fell in with the band of prophets at Gibeah, the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, and he was thrown into a frenzy of ecstatic utterance. Observers created a proverb (mashal) from the experience -- "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

The English translation of the Hebrew noun (mashal) is "proverb." The Hebrew noun stems from a verb which means "to be like or to compare." Its original meaning may have been "magical saying."

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19 Sheldon H. Blank, "Proverb," in The Interpreter's Dictionary
The term is also used for many different kinds of sayings, as for example the "mocking song," but it belongs primarily to the genre of popular proverb and the artistic saying.\(^{20}\)

There are several biblical examples of popular proverbs. These proverbs have no single composer but are repeated by everyone. In the case of the proverb from First Samuel, it is not attributed to any identifiable person, but only to "the people" (I Sam. 10:11). While later comment will deal with the origins of proverbs, I wish to cite here a remark of Archer Taylor concerning the beginning(s) of a proverb's history. Taylor says: "At the very beginning of a proverb's history there is obviously no question of 'communal composition,' although the acceptance or rejection by tradition which follows immediately upon the creation of the proverb is a factor in its making quite as important as the first act of invention."\(^{21}\) This observation will have pertinent meaning for this study because I will show that "the first act of invention: may become crusted over by tradition to such an extent that the proverb's meaning, in this case, has been reversed. Trying to defend I Samuel's presentation of communal composition is not possible, but the influential factors within tradition that acted upon the proverb composition can be investigated.

The biblical tradition assigns the proverb to a literary category


of practical wisdom, or that which deals with sound counsel for matters pertaining to the life of an average person. This wisdom is not legislative or judicial, requiring acceptance like some others, but is suggestive and more metaphorical than literal. The wise saying is not direct advice, but an observation of life, a vignette, a miniature drama, in which a practical lesson is implied rather than expressed. Practical wisdom arose on the lips of the people and eventually became the professional concern of literary men. The earliest reference to a class of wise men is in Jer. 19:18. The popular proverb is the standard form of folk wisdom. Such proverbs, characterized by their pithy, epigrammatic form, are occasionally quoted in the Old Testament.

Pfeiffer includes the following examples in the category of folk wisdom, as captured within the popular proverb. These are his own translation from the Hebrew and may slightly differ from other translations.

Is even Saul among the prophets? (I Sam. 10:12)  
Even as Nimrod, the mighty hunter before Jehovah. (Gen. 10:9)  
What has straw in common with wheat? (Jer. 23:28)  
Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. (Is. 22:13)  
Out of the wicked comes wickedness. (I Sam. 24:13)  
Let not the one putting on his armour boast like the one taking it off. (I Kings 20:11)  
As the mother, so her daughter. (Ez. 16:44)  
The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. (Ez. 18:2; Jer. 31:29f)

In most of these cases the text itself identifies these sayings as folk proverbs. But in addition to these, the books of Proverbs,  

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Ecclesiastes, and Ecclesiasticus, though written by professional sages, unquestionably contain ancient folk sayings or echoes thereof. The oldest popular Hebrew proverbs and Wisdom fragments imbedded in the Historical books are secular in nature.24

Examples of these secular Hebrew proverbs may be seen in I Sam. 10:12; 24:13; Jer. 23:28; 31:29; Ez. 18:2; 16:44; I Kings 20:11; Prov. 10:11 (which may be a pious elaboration of I Sam. 24:13). In the earliest parts of the Old Testament, "wisdom" merely meant native intelligence, or schrewdness (Judg. 5:29; II Sam. 13:3; 14:2,20; 20:16-22), and the term retained the connotation of professional skill even in late times (Ex. 28:3; 31:3,6; 35:26,31). In Dan. 2:12-27, as already in Gen. 41:8 and Ex. 7:11, the wise are the magicians.25

From the above descriptions and examples of proverb forms from religious sources we have established a bridge to more secular sources of proverb study. It has been shown that the categories for the proverb, and their understanding in the area of religious studies, are clearly connected to folklore studies and the categories used therein. This connection makes the study of the proverb more convenient for both the student of religion and the folklorist. It should also be pointed out, however, that Hebrew proverbs, because of their secular character, illustrate that the sacred and the secular were not always so separate. Archer Taylor's discussion of biblical proverbs is extremely interesting in addressing this point. Pertinent to our theme is his statement: "Biblical proverbs, and among them perhaps even those which we have


discussed, may have been proverbs before their incorporation into Holy Writ. My personal conclusion is that proverb study must entail inclusive research of all proverbs, regardless of context, meaning, or function.

The circumstances surrounding the origin of a proverb are, usually, characteristically hazy. Even the incidents which narrate the explanation of proverb origins are often curious and without indisputable, authenticating evidence. Archer Taylor places such origin narratives alongside the ascription of proverbs to definite persons. There are times when such a narration, like the ascription, may be founded on knowable facts, while in other cases the story has been made "ad hoc."

From the standpoint of a general observation, there is no way to determine the truth of either the narrative itself or the ascription. Certain biblical narratives, for example, may owe their existence to someone's guess at the source of a current proverb. Such is the case of the two divergent tales which record the origin of the proverbial exclamation, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

I have already cited the first tale in which the proverb occurs (I Sam. 10:11-12). The same proverb is recorded a second time in I Sam. 19:24. In the second instance, which does follow chronologically the life of Saul, we find the King threatening the life of David because the latter has become the favorite of the people (and of God, the text would have us believe), and is a threat to his (Saul) kingly throne. Saul discovers David's hiding place and sends a party of men to seize him.

27 Ibid., p. 40.
When the troops arrived at Ramah to capture David they saw a band of prophets in the midst of an ecstatic rapture. The messengers of Saul were themselves overcome with the prophetic spirit and they too prophesied. Saul was told what happened to his first party, so he sent a second, and the same thing happened to them. He sent a third party and they too fell under the prophetic influence. Saul decided he would go himself to arrest David, but on his way the spirit of God came upon him too, and he also prophesied. When he finally did locate David, he stripped off his clothes and like all the rest lay down naked all day and night. The narrative is concluded thusly: "Hence it is said, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'" (I Sam. 19:24).

There are numerous suggestions as to whether we can locate the original source of our proverb, but the conclusion is always the same: we cannot know with any certainty whether either two narratives are authentic. The duplication merely shows that no one really knew the source of the proverb. The double explanation inevitably leaves us in doubt as to which, if either, is correct. 28 Taylor agrees with the general assumption that the origin of proverbs is obscure. 29 This obscurity, he elaborates, has much to do with the acceptance and adaptation of tradition which appropriated it in the first place. He maintains that the act of invention is no more important to a proverb's life than the acceptance or rejection by the tradition which follows immediately upon its creation. 30 While I would like to pursue this matter more at length, it is not


30 Ibid.
possible since, Taylor says, "the best discussion of this difficult problem," is not available.\textsuperscript{31}

The fact that a proverb's origin is so inconclusive, however, has not deterred all scholars from drawing conclusions. One theory, to illustrate the point, is that the proverb, couched in the form of a question, was prompted by Saul's chronic madness, which itself was not unlike the prophet's trance.\textsuperscript{32} I Sam. 18:10 provides a colorful account of Saul's illness and its physical effect. There we read of Saul being possessed of "an evil spirit" which caused him to rave wildly in his house and to try and kill young David, who had been sent there to play the lyre for King Saul as a form of therapy. On a number of other occasions Saul is so described as to leave little doubt that he was subject to attacks of emotional rage, thus exhibiting characteristics most common among the psychotic. These fits of madness, when applied to the context of I Sam. 10, become the motivation behind the proverb invention. The text of I Sam. 10:12 differs noticeably from I Sam. 19:24 in that the former has a response from a man in the crowd who, upon witnessing Saul's prophetic ecstasy, asks "And who is their father?" The reference is to the prophets themselves, with the underlying intent being Saul is their father because he is the maddest of them all. It is further conjectured that the phrase "And who is their father?" is itself a proverb which in the text functions as an answer to the proverb "Is Saul also among the prophets?"\textsuperscript{33}


\textsuperscript{32} Blank, "Proverb," p. 934.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
The origin of the proverb may have taken place when someone saw the connection between Saul's madness and his religious fervor and coined the phrase we now have. It seems to me, however, that such an hypothesis, no matter how attractive or alluring, does not really satisfy Taylor's understanding of the "act of invention," nor mine.

Before leaving this section, I would like to note a comment made concerning the phrase "And who is their father?" Although evidence may not persuade everyone that this phrase is actually a proverb posing as a simple reply in the Saul narrative, it should be added that there is at least one other instance where an artistic saying, in this case a riddle, was so woven into a narrative that it lost its own individuality and became a contributor to another saying. I am referring to Samson's riddle in Judges 14. Further information on this similar literary phenomenon may be found in my paper "Samson's Riddle." 34

If I cannot uncover the proverb's origin, and both references to the proverb are questionable candidates, how can we account for the appearance of the same proverb being recorded twice, with two contradictory contexts offered as the original? It is here we will develop a theory of the proverb's meaning on the basis of its function within the context in which it appears.

The first time "Is Saul also among the prophets?" appears, it is expressly called a proverb (mashal). The way in which it is placed within the text leads me to believe the Saul narrative lends it support.

Bruce C. Birch echoes this theory by proposing that the editor

34 Ervin H. Mason, Jr., "Samson's Riddle," class paper, Western Kentucky University Folklore and Folklife Collection, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 6 February 1978.
of the book of Samuel had at hand an old independent tradition of Saul's prophesying and used his material to explain the origin of the common proverb in 10:11,12. The purpose of the old tradition was aetiological and its function was to explain the saying that had come down to him. \(^{35}\)

Another version of the common proverb, found in I Sam. 19:18-24, is quite different in the fashion in which it is presented the first time. This time the proverb is not designated as such but is introduced by what appears as a formalized expression: "Hence it is said." One would be hard-pressed to know how many undesignated proverbs are quoted in biblical literature, concealed in the text without identifiable markings. "Therefore it is said" (Gen. 10:9) similarly introduces a proverb without so naming it: "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord." Doubtless many sayings were adopted for their present context out of a fund of folk wisdom and seemed the more effective by very reason of their familiarity. Such adopted proverbs may include I Kings 20:11; Jer. 23:28; Isa. 22:13. In form, these primitive proverbs are characterized by an economy of words, more readily noted in Hebrew than in translation. They are prose with no evidence of conscious artistry but with fresh simplicity and directness. \(^{36}\)

From the previously mentioned evidence one could almost draw the conclusion that, on the basis of textural form, the second occurrence of the proverb is the older. But the way in which the proverb functions in both instances overrules the possibility of dating one ahead of the

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other. Using Taylor again, it is not so much the act of invention which determines a proverb as it is the tradition which designs the use of it. Function takes precedence over form.

Despite the frustration of our search for origins, there is at least one advantage to the dual appearance of a single proverb in contrasting circumstances: it seems to bear out the postulate that "the proverb exists in a somewhat standardized form." 37

Although our proverb cannot be precisely placed in its original setting, it still remains a fixed phrase and maintains its content and texture amidst the movement of traditional use. This remarkable resistance to external change-agents will become even more apparent when we consider that the message carried by our proverb has itself undergone several exchanges.

It is not unusual to find a proverb having more than one basic meaning, due largely to its use in a specific context and the intention of its user. Upon investigating the actual use of a proverb in context we can examine the understandings that emerge when these base meanings are socially situated. The "proverb meaning" or "proverb performance" may be defined as "that which emerges from the integration of proverbial (base meaning) and situational meaning (participant evaluation of situation plus interactional strategy)." 38 Considering that context influences performance, we can begin to unfold the several base meanings of "Is Saul also among the prophets?"


The proverb, as found in I Sam. 10:11,12, serves as a climactic element in the rich process of events in the chapter. The chapter opens with Saul's anointing as King by Samuel, travels through his initial experience with prophetic signs, which themselves only extend his anointment ritual, and concludes with the fulfillment of the signs foretold by the prophet Samuel. From the chapter's construction we are led to think that the original meaning of the saying becomes secondary to Saul's actual prophesying. Birch sees the proverb as evidence that Saul was able to bring to fruition the signs and encounters Samuel projected for him as a part of his (Saul) initiation rite (the anointing). The key to this conclusion is found in Samuel's instructions to Saul upon his meeting of the band of prophets: "Now when these signs meet you, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you." (I Sam. 10:7) What Saul did was not a simple imitation of the prophetic trance, but a response to the spirit of Yahweh. His response, therefore, is meant to confirm Saul as the Lord's anointed, the King of Israel. The question arises, then, are we to conclude that the answer to the proverb is "yes"? Actually, no. Saul is among the prophets only in connection with the schema of his anointing ritual. Saul is to be King, not a prophet. The answer to the proverb is "no" because the proverb is an exclamation of disbelief by the folk about Saul's conduct. The secular nature of the proverb is clearly evident in the proverb's disbelief concerning the transformation of Saul from farm-hand to prophet and King. This folk critique is eventually upheld by Saul's later collapse from power and from his fall from the throne of Israel.

The proverb in chapter ten of I Samuel functions as a word of opposition to Saul, not a word of support for him. This editorial technique is used in at least one other place in the Saul narrative, and it is found in the same chapter as the proverb. The placement of this second word of opposition is located in the concluding verses where Samuel is explaining further the duties of kingship to Saul in the presence of all the people. When he finishes and everyone disperses for home "some worthless fellows" are overheard to say "How can this man save us?" (I Sam. 10:27). My personal contention is that the proverb, like these last words of mockery, is used by the editor as evidence of the disfavor of Saul by some of the people to discredit his divine initiation into the kingship of the nation of Israel. The narrative is pro-David, and the editor uses the material both to discredit Saul and to enhance the person of David.

The proverb's meaning, swayed by the overarching context of Saul's failure to live up to expectation, serves as a negative taunt in its appraisal of Saul. The proverb seems initially to be indicative only of the skepticism of some of those who saw or heard about this series of fantastic events. What appear to be an innocent remark becomes a deeply cutting slur which prefigures the disaster of Saul's kingship. The editor's intention becomes known through his use of the proverb.

The original meaning and setting of the saying is the subject of two recent studies with quite different conclusions. Victor Eppstein

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posits the theory that the proverb arose out of a difference of opinion concerning the roles of prophet and king during the time when the nation was undergoing a shift in government rule. Up to this time, prophets were the leaders of the people, and they acted as the charismatic chieftains, like Samuel, during this period. The proverb seems to be expressing a doubt in the historical tradition of Israel as to whether Saul was in truth the last of the judges or exclusively the first of the kings. The conclusion of Eppstein is that the proverb was originally an expression of confusion as to whether Saul was continuing the prophetic tradition of Samuel or beginning an entirely new form of leadership based on the concept of monarchy.

There was significant conflict between these two systems of government, as seen in the contradictory bits of information in First Samuel concerning these two forms. The conflict was three-pronged: the people wanted "a king to govern us like all nations" (I Sam. 8:5); Samuel wanted the nation to follow the pattern of prophets and judges as they then were; and God willed that the people be obedient to him, which included having no other gods before them. This "no other gods" may also include kings. Finally, Samuel yielded to the people's demands and, after seeking the will of Yahweh, set up the system under which a king was to reign. It would be difficult to determine the correctness of Eppstein's theory. One can only remark that it does reflect accurately the turmoil and chaotic circumstances that surround the shift from charismatic chieftans (prophets and judges) to monarchy.

In the other article, John Sturdy concludes that the narrative

41 John Sturdy, "The Original Meaning of "Is Saul Also Among the
offered as proof for the existence of the proverb is legendary and was actually subsequent to the proverb. It is quite likely that the answer to the question would be "no," says Sturdy. The answer is clear--Saul is no prophet. Sturdy conjectures that the proverb represents Davidic propaganda against Saul. He bases this proposal on the incidents which picture Saul as trying to have David killed, or to kill David himself, because David is a definite threat to his kingship. This conflict is further accentuated by noting that first the people have moved their support from Saul to David (I Sam. 18); and second, even Samuel sides with David (I Sam. 19).

The position put forth by Sturdy, that the proverb represents Davidic propaganda against Saul, is also the subject of a these by Edward McCurley. 42 Here once more we find evidence to indicate that the editor of the books of Samuel, known as the Deuteronomist, uses the proverb as a device to highlight the power struggle between Saul and David. The propaganda underscores Saul's inadequacy as a ruler and makes David's ascension to the throne seem even more necessary in the light of his predecessor's failings. The 19:24 repetition, according to McCurley, seems to echo the piteous plight of a man whose intentions may have been good but who falls victim to the harsh judgement of the Deuteronomistic theologian.

There is another line of thought pertaining to the meaning of our proverb. To raise the question of whether Saul, the man of standing,


would likely have been connected with these low, ill-behaved prophetic bands is to assume a later critical attitude toward such prophetic bands, as in the story of Micaiah and the false prophets in I Kings 22. This reasoning attributes the proverb to a sharp, critical accusation against Saul because of his association with this band of prophets. The fact that Samuel uses this group as a sign may, however, suggest that he was their leader, their father. Actually, Samuel does appear as leader of the group in Chapter 19. It seems unlikely that anyone would regard as low value an institution so closely connected with Samuel. The proverb, then, is probably not an attempt to judge Saul as too refined or kingly to be affiliated with a prophetic band.

In summary, what conclusive thought can be set forth? The two biblical passages present two solutions as to the origin of the proverb, intending to explain why "Is Saul also among the prophets?" became a proverb, and how. While there are two possibilities for the proverb's act of invention, there is no record of the proverb in performance. It has already been shown how many different interpretations of the proverb are possible. The texts, as a matter of fact, deal with an expression that, at the time of its creation, was only an off-handed, critical observation and not yet a proverb. There is no application of the proverb anywhere in the Bible. There are two explanations of the proverb's origin, but no biblical example of its performance.

I have attempted to analyze the social context from which the proverb sprung in an effort to establish its use. Helpful in this regard

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is the work of Heda Jason. 44 Jason gives three aspects in which the relations between proverb and society may be explored: (a) the application of a proverb by members of the society; (b) the intention of the proverb by the way it addresses the listener; and (c) the proverb's function within the social context in which it is employed. Jason's work has particular relevance to our subject in that it discusses the use of the proverb in certain social situations, that is, its application, which is our present dilemma with our own proverb. On the basis of all the foregoing exegesis, the following conclusions are offered.

I consider the proverb in I Sam. 10:11,12 to be voicing a note of surprise at so sudden and unexpected a transformation of Saul. From the evidence presented, there seemed to be no reason to explain Saul's conversion from a wandering farm-boy of the smallest tribe in Israel to King over the nation. It seems that this cultural background investigation by the people all but eliminated the divine action taking place in the prophesying by Saul, as pointed out by Birch. The narrative to which the proverb is attached (Saul is being obedient in his anointing process) moves so rapidly from country-boy to national king that it yields a whirlwind image of Saul's transformation and makes the observation a natural conclusion. On a more theological level, Hebrew thought has a distrust for the unpredictable or the accidental. Israel saw herself as the elect, the chosen people of God, and she viewed destiny as fixed, or at least, not unexplainable. This mindset would to some extent account for the attitude of skepticism toward such an

unusual turn of events. Another expression which captures this viewpoint is found in Jer. 13:23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?"

In I Sam.19:24, however, the social context of the proverb warrants a different application. In this case, the proverb characterizes Saul as being more out of place than suprisingly transformed. I draw this conclusion because by the time the proverb appears here, Saul is near to losing his throne to David, and his prophesying among the prophets is more like a caricature of Saul as more emotionally unbalanced that divinely inspired. His presence among the prophets, naked in the sun, and carrying on ectastically, makes Saul the victim of his own emotionalism. References to being out of place or out of one's element may also be present in the proverb from Jer. 23:28: "What has straw in common with wheat?"

The story of Saul is a tragedy whose whole truth may never be known. While "Is Saul also among the prophets?" has traveled through tradition as a proverb with an unfavorable viewpoint toward social behavior, the proverb remains more a political weapon than historical fact. The folk can be harsh critics of their own, but in the hands of some, their wisdom can be cruelly applied. Such is the case with the proverb about Saul and the prophets.
CONCLUSION

This thesis has been to an extent an experiment in the dual use of the academic tools of folklorists and biblical scholars. I have tried to approach the study of a story from the Bible both as biblical narrative and folk narrative, making use of sources developed by scholars in the fields of folklore and religion, with the intention of arriving at some common ground. I believe I have succeeded in demonstrating that the tools of two different disciplines can be combined in a productive manner.

The four purposes of this paper have been consistently considered throughout this theses. I have satisfied my personal quest to further my study of biblical materials in conjunction with the discipline of folklore. I have accumulated a great deal of material and notes for future use as I prepare to teach classes and small groups in the study of biblical stories. I am not better acquainted with another method of studying biblical narratives, mainly with regard to locating the nucleus of a narrative and the meaning derived from it by the teller and the audience. And I hope I have made a contribution to the fields of biblical and folk studies that will serve as an example of how both disciplines can draw on and learn from the other.

In the research for this paper I discovered that some biblical scholars have already been working successfully with the resources available to folklorists. Jean Calloud uses Vladímar Propp's Morphology of the Folktale to investigate the narrative structures of

Robert C. Culley draws heavily on the studies of folklorists Daniel J. Crowley, Linda Degh, Ruth Finnegan, Albert B. Lord, Axel Olrik, Pierre Maranda and Elli Kongas Maranda to make some cross-disciplinary applications to biblical study. Culley relies on the research findings of these scholars of folklore to provide evidence for the connection between oral transmission and biblical texts.\footnote{Culley, Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative, pp. 1-68.} Two other books, by Lewis\footnote{Brian Lewis, The Sargon Legend: A Study of the Akkadian Text and the Tale of the Hero Who Was Exposed at Birth, American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series, no. 4 (Cambridge, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1980).} and Sasson,\footnote{Jack M. Sasson, Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).} are further examples of religious studies supported through reliance on the academic materials of folklore. The journal Semeia has contained articles in the field of biblical narratives for some time and has included the materials of folklore and folklife scholars, such as Dan Ben-Amos, as support.\footnote{Dan Ben-Amos, "Themes, Forms, and Meanings: Critical Comments," Semeia 3 (1975): 128-32.} These references clearly show that the scholarly materials used by folklorists are applicable to the study of biblical materials. My own research supports the compatibility of folkloric and biblical methods and materials in a study of a text from the Bible.

At this point, a question arises concerning the extent to which
folklorists examine the material of biblical narratives and study the texts from the viewpoint of their own discipline. To what extent are folklore scholars utilizing the methods and research tools of biblical scholars in their work with religious and non-religious narrative materials? I do not intend to investigate the entire history of folk studies and biblical studies as they have related to each other or used each others research tools. My intention is merely to raise the question once again, since at an earlier time the question was posed by Derek Brewer before the Folklore Society in England at its centenary celebration.6

In his presentation before that body Brewer stated the need for biblical scholars and folklorists "to look over the fence at the other" in order to better utilize folklore scholarship and biblical narratives.7 I heartily concur in this statement but wonder to what extent the opposite might be true. That is to say, how might a folklorist use scholarly studies and research material of a biblical scholar? It appears to me that Brewer may only be calling for the folklorists to raid the literary treasures of biblical sources for the sake and security of their own discipline rather than having a reciprocal agreement. I note in his article that Brewer lightly chastises biblical scholars for not making "quite as much use as they might have done of folklore scholarship," but points out to folklorists that their failure has been in not paying more attention to biblical narratives.8

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7 Ibid., p. 37.

8 Ibid.
Are the scholarly methods and material of a biblical scholar not applicable to the work of a folklorist? I do not think Brewer purposefully intends to state his case in this fashion, but he does present his argument in such a way that the question of reciprocity is not answered clearly.

In defense of Brewer he does utilize one of the research tools biblical scholars use to study biblical texts, and that is form criticism. My regret, however, is that he consults only two biblical studies to make and support his case, and, for this reason, he incorrectly states that form criticism applies only to the study of the gospels. 9 Aside from this innocent oversight he does accurately point out that the essence of form criticism is to make observations about the kinds of literature (including oral traditional narrative) out of which the various units (the traditional story included) of the Bible are composed. Brewer would have had a fuller understanding of form criticism had he consulted a work that gave particular treatment to the subject. Such a work might have been Gene Tucker's *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* 10 or Edgar McKnight's *What Is Form Criticism?* 11 Despite these minor weaknesses I think he makes a valid point by calling for the two disciplines of folklore and biblical study to combine their resources in the future as a means of strengthening the scholarly work of both fields.

Even as this paper nears conclusion there is a lingering

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9Ibid.


question. In several articles and books concerned with the structure and content of biblical narratives, I found that a thorough and detailed study could be done on traditional material without relying on the findings of folklore scholarship. For instance, when Tucker set about to consider the narrative genres of myth, folktale, saga, legend, novelette, and historical narrative, he consulted Hermann Gunkel rather than a scholar in the field of folklore. Why? Is it because Gunkel treats biblical narratives more directly than others and therefore is more easily utilized? Or is it that he relies upon primary German sources that lay beneath much of the work done in oral narrative, whether by biblical scholars or folklorists. How influential are the primary sources of German scholarship on the terminology and definitions used by the folklorists? Stated another way, when Brewer calls upon biblical scholars to make greater use of folklore scholarship is he asking that the interpretive expansion of primary sources done by folklorists be more accepted by those in the field of biblical studies? The manner in which these questions are answered, as well as the questions and answers they generate, will have a great amount of bearing on the future relationship of folklore scholarship and biblical studies.

I do not wish to end this paper on a note of academic curiosity, instead I shall conclude by stating my enjoyment over the experiment Brewer carried out in his address. He tests the theory that folklore scholarship can be applied to biblical material by considering the gospel as folktales. He concentrates specifically on the Passion.

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narrative from Mark 14:1-15:47 and treats it as an oral narrative.  

As I applied Olrik's epic laws to the Old Testament story of Saul, Brewer applies them to the Passion story in the synoptic gospels. He concludes his brief study by arguing in favor of classifying the gospel accounts of the Passion of Jesus as traditional narrative that bears striking similarity to other traditional narratives throughout the world.  

Brewer draws a second conclusion, one that has bearing on the study of Saul. He says the gospel narratives "have a very strong anti-folkloric element" that reflects a departure from traditional forms, especially with regard to the patterns of heroism and success, but that in the gospels "there is also a continual effort on the part of the writers, on the part of the tradition, to invoke or create power and glory." This is precisely the same kind of editorial addition made in the Saul narrative. The religious editor took the folktale and gave it an interpretation that relied upon an understanding of the divine will of God. What Brewer says is true of the gospel writers is true of the Old Testament writer of I Samuel as well--namely, that the act of interpretation is characteristic of traditional narrative and reflects comment on inner meaning.  

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15 Ibid., p. 51.  

16 Ibid., p. 52.
In a summary statement that could easily be applied to the Saul narrative Brewer says this about the work of the gospel writers in composing the gospel stories:

Each reading that any person gives is new life to the verbal realization, and each reading is itself a new version, related to but different from, former versions. With the additions and the omissions, the elaborations, the relationalisations, and so forth, one of the chief characteristics of traditional story is that the story is always bigger than any individual interpretation.\(^\text{17}\)

I conclude this thesis by stating that the tenacity and capability of the Saul narrative, in surviving the omissions and elaborations of a religious editor, speak strongly for its durable quality. The motifs that have endured time and interpretation also reflect the nature of traditional narrative. The story of Saul is, in many ways, the story of traditional narrative as it moves through time and place, always changing yet always remaining the same.

\(^{17}\text{Ibid.}\)
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