



Book Review



ANTONY JOHN BAPTIST, THUS SPOKE THE BIBLE: BASICS OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

Father Laurence Culas

Vicar, Little Flower Church, Vattiyookavu, Trivandrum

Email: lalujcudas@gmail.com

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.54513/BSJ.2025.71001>

ARTICLE INFO

BOOK REVIEW

Article history:

Received: 18-2-2025

Accepted: 19-3-2025

Available online 31-3-2025

Keywords:

Bible Narratives, Antony John Baptist, Thus spoke the Bible

This book was originally published in 2016 and was well-received by the student community, with the initial copies now sold out. It emerged from the author's four years of scriptural study in Rome, as well as his doctoral research in India on the Hagar episode in Genesis 16. The author now presents a revised and expanded edition of this work.

The author adopts a narratological approach to the Bible, with a particular focus on the Hagar episode in Genesis 16, aiming to create a new manual for students and readers interested in biblical storytelling. He demonstrates how narratology contributes to reading the Bible as Scripture for a community of believers. The author's goal is to explore reader-response criticism more deeply and to establish a bridge between narratology and the Historical-Critical Method.

Rather than delving into the differences of opinion among various scholars, the author's purpose is to introduce and explain the concepts and tools related to narrative criticism, offering a coherent framework for understanding the method. He also seeks to consolidate the ideas of key figures in Narrative Criticism into one accessible volume, using simple terms, examples, and applications, particularly with regard to Genesis 16.

Author(s) retain the copyright of this article ©2025 Published by VEDA Publications

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)



The book consists of seven chapters. The first chapter defines narrative criticism, outlining its merits, shortcomings and relationship to the Historical-Critical Method and other disciplines. The second chapter introduces the seven key elements of narrative criticism: real author, implied author, narrator, narration, implied reader, and real reader. The third chapter applies these elements to the Hagar episode in Genesis 16, showing how to approach the text to understand the message the implied author aims to convey.

The fourth chapter takes a holistic view of Genesis 16 and examines the various strategies the implied author uses to communicate his or her ideological perspective. The fifth chapter discusses how the plot in a narrative serves as the cohesive element that holds together the components of narrative criticism. The sixth chapter explores different types of type-scenes within narrative criticism. The final chapter proposes a novel approach to narrative criticism, integrating the concepts of Emplotment, Plot, and Explotment.

The language used is simple and direct, making the book accessible to a wide audience. Technical terms are kept to a minimum and the author strives to explain complex ideas in clear terms, often supplementing his explanations with examples from the Bible. The linguistic requirements of the text are minimal, making it approachable for readers who may not be familiar with advanced theological language.

While comprehensive in its scope, the book does not cover all areas of narrative criticism. The author draws primarily from the monographs he collected during his doctoral studies, which means the work is somewhat limited by the available literature at the time. Additionally, the methodology applied differs from that found in the SBL (Society of Biblical Literature) series, which may limit its appeal to scholars familiar with that framework.

Undoubtedly, this book is an invaluable resource for biblical studies. Antony John Baptist's contribution marks an important step in the evolving field of biblical interpretation. Adopting a new scholarly approach can be challenging and narrative criticism in its current form may initially seem as complex as the historical criticism of the past. However, the author successfully illustrates his arguments with enlightening references and explanations, making a significant contribution to the study of biblical narratives.

Bibliography: John Baptist, Antony *Thus Spoke the Bible: Basics of Biblical Narratives*, TPI, Bengaluru 2024, ISBN 978-93-95623-94-0, Pp.180.