Preface

In the narrative-critical analysis of Luke’s Gospel as story, the Gospel is studied not as “story” in the conventional sense of a fictitious amalgam of “invented and imagined events”, but as “the story” which is conveyed through the medium of narration. So “story” here, is what the narrative of Luke’s Gospel has made of it. The emphasis is on the narrative-critical approach to the Gospel, and the story is perceived as the child of the narrative, achieving a dimension and identity because of the narration of it. To approach the Gospel of Luke as story is not to confer upon it the status of high art, but to call attention to the techniques employed in the formulation of the narrative design, and also to the innovative dimensions discernible in the story in Luke’s Gospel.

A comprehensive study of the narrative techniques employed in Luke’s Gospel narrative provides a refreshing perspective to the interpretation of the Gospel. There have been several studies – linguistic/theological/archaeological – on Luke’s Gospel, and most of them are masterly exercises in critical scrutiny and analysis. There is, however,
room for a study on this narrative masterpiece from the standpoint of narrative criticism, which, among other things, has for its focal point the humanity of Jesus – Jesus, the Man. As a narrative-critical approach to Luke's Gospel it lacks any close parallel, and brings about a series of new perceptions and new insights in a dissertation, that explicitly projects what is implicit in the Gospel story.

An attempt is made to activate the Gospel of Luke frozen into doctrine, and to make alive the pervasive literariness as providing a meaningful story, in short, to understand the Gospel and evaluate it as literature. A better understanding of the Gospel story is possible when it is acknowledged as a piece of art, a literary composition that lends itself to literary criticism. An intellectual assimilation of its content, the implied message, and also the manner in which it is put across, together maintain that the Gospel complies with genuine literary standards, and is suited to full-scale literary analysis.

Care has been taken to stay clear of theology, the study of God, and its definitive parameters, because a literary examination of a biblical text from a specific angle of critical perception, precludes intrusion of received inferences from a totally different discipline. Other than applying the narrative yardstick in a purely literary sense, while evaluating the efficacy
of the techniques employed, this study does not seek to give itself a theological aspect. The spiritual overtones of the Gospel are relevant only in so far as they fit in with the narrative-critical formulations. In other words, the literary techniques employed in the projection of the Gospel message, rather than the message itself, is that with which this study concerns itself. Even the references to God, his son Jesus, and the establishment of a Kingdom on earth have no theological import. Whatever is stated in regard to them is the resultant matter from the narrative-critical approach to the Gospel. If some of the views expressed in the thesis come into conflict with conventional theological perception, it should be taken as incidental and the inevitable outcome of the narrative-critical study. This study is a critical analysis of one of the books of the Bible, a book chosen for its story value and viewed as such. The entire exercise aims at an assessment based on the format of narrative criticism.

Even though God is not identified as God Jehovah in Luke's Gospel, the God of Luke's story has to be God Jehovah, because God Jehovah is the God of the Bible in its entirety, and of his elect, the chosen people all over the world who worship through Jesus, his son. Wherever the word God is used in the thesis it refers to God Jehovah only and the term Kingdom of God always means the Kingdom of God Jehovah. The thesis further views
the message of the Gospel of Luke as intended for the elect, as the narrative emphasizes it, thus eliminating its relevance to others. Further, though this study mainly deals with Christ’s human role as Jesus, the protagonist in the story, it does not in anyway dispute the divinity of Christ. The humanity attributed to Jesus makes his life on earth meaningful and efficacious and does not question his eternal Godhead as Christ. The study falls into six chapters.

Chapter I – Introduction provides an outline of background information regarding Gospel criticism, a critical review of previous investigation, a statement of the problem, and the purpose and justification of the study. The chapter throws light on the literary backdrop and the literariness of the Bible, revealed both at the level of content and form. The chapter also highlights the process of narrative criticism coming into existence as an offshoot of new criticism and getting its footing as an independent entity in the field of biblical scholarship.

Chapter II – Narrative Criticism: Its Application examines the pertinent issues in narrative criticism, and provides a preliminary ground work for the narrative-critical reading of Luke’s Gospel. The distinctive feature of the narrative-critical approach, of employing the concept of the implied author and the implied reader to arrive at the meaning of the text, is
studied. The chapter then proceeds to identify the implied author as God, the implied reader as the elect, and the point of view of the implied author as enlightening the elect as to the Gospel story, which they believe to be true. The implied author and the implied reader are regarded as existing realities in the Gospel narrative interacting within the text, contrary to their abstract existence as viewed by earlier narrative-critical studies.

Chapter III – The Matrix Narrative: Primary Story sets aside the customary practice of studying a narrative in terms of drama, looking for features like setting, characters and plot, and finds the aspect of the narrative presentation of the story itself worth focusing on. The narrative act of telling the story, being the first level of mediation shared by the implied author and the implied reader, is underscored as the primary object of study, and the story is regarded as the product of the interaction of the implied reader with the narrative act, the focalizer being the implied author.

The chapter analyses the two implied story-lines running parallel in the Gospel narrative. The primary story is about the events that happen in the life of Jesus before and after the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the world. The secondary story concerns itself with the impact of the mission of Jesus on the lives of the elect. The chapter also throws light on the narrative structure of Luke’s Gospel, identifying the narrative of the
secondary story-line as Hyponarrative, embedded in the original frame narrative of the primary story-line, the Matrix Narrative.

The Matrix Narrative describes and illustrates the story of the different sacrifices made in stages by Jesus, the focus of the implied author being the tremendous effect each sacrifice has on Jesus. From his baptism to his death on the cross, Jesus is seen as giving up one thing after another, ending up finally in sacrificing his life. This chapter portrays Jesus as the representative of the elect, defeating Satan in the battlefield of temptation, and thereby making his victory over Satan meaningful for them in the Kingdom of God, to overcome Satan and lead a victorious life. The chapter presents the story of the sufferings and sacrifices of Jesus, as a manifestation of the kind of sacrificial life the elect are expected to lead and are enabled to live in the Kingdom of God, established in the midst of Satan’s Kingdom. The divine–human–divine aspect of Jesus, communicating the circularity of his entire path from heaven to earth and back to heaven is also brought out. The chapter also describes how, apart from the action-oriented sequences, the implied author mixes together the silent tales of sacrifices of Jesus which the implied reader observes non-diegetically.
Chapter Four – The Hyponarrative: Secondary Story highlights the narrative intention of the Hyponarrative, as the elect’s acknowledgement of the reality of the Kingdom of God and their apprehension of the mysteries of it, getting fulfilled through the various episodes, miracles, discourses and parables connected by different narrative techniques. The chapter attempts to analyse the thematic parallels between the narremes (action units) of the Hyponarrative and the Matrix Narrative, and to observe the silent sacrifices of Jesus in the Matrix Narrative elaborated on in the miracles, discourses, and parables of the Hyponarrative, thereby relating the elect’s perception of the Kingdom of God to the emulation of Jesus in their lives.

The chapter highlights the narrative structure of miracle–discourse–parable as the recurring pattern in most of the narremes. The chapter also shows how each narreme gains its meaning, as the implied reader observes the sequential links conjoining one narreme with the other.

Chapter V – Leitmotifs: Structural Devices makes a study of the characteristics of the Kingdom of God as brought out through the leitmotifs. The chapter mainly seeks to identify “leitmotif” as the appropriate structural device employed by the narrator, to bring to light the significant aspects of the Kingdom of God. The leitmotifs of reversal, division and
prioritizing are recognized as the dominant leitmotifs occurring in the narrative of Luke’s Gospel, expatiating upon the meaning of the Kingdom of God in Luke’s Gospel narrative.

The chapter also illustrates how each of these leitmotifs serves as a structural component, for organizing different ideas or elements of the Kingdom of God to produce a total description of it. The chapter mainly underscores “leitmotif” as the appropriate device, that has been effectively used in Luke’s Gospel narrative as an ideal complement to the narrative act.

Chapter VI – Summation summarizes in a nutshell the salient arguments made in the thesis, and discusses the contributory factors of the thesis in influencing literary criticism and Gospel interpretation, and offers suggestions for further research in the narrative-critical approach.

The text of Luke’s Gospel story is the one found in King James Version of the Bible and all quotes are from this anthology alone. The MLA Hand Book for Writers of Research Papers has been the point of reference in regard to methodology.