Chapter II

Narrative Criticism: Its Application

The text is a self-centered story world, a mirror and not a window.

(Butcher par.6)

Narrative criticism is an emergent from the new-critical approach of the secular literary concern. Absorbing the critical tenets of new criticism, it has grown into an independent school of criticism, bringing a refreshing perspective to biblical interpretation. The pertinent issues in narrative criticism distinguishing it from traditional criticism, and the preliminary ground work preceding a narrative-critical reading of Luke’s Gospel, define the scope of this chapter.

The narrative-critical movement has developed within the field of biblical studies, without an exact counterpart in the secular field. Biblical scholars consider it an independent movement which is text-centred. As the
text alone is at its centre, the scholars who are bent upon studying the text itself and not what other people have made of it, and the readers who believe that the text they have is the text meant for their spiritual assimilation, find themselves committed to reading the Bible as a narrative. The discipline narrative criticism in its present form is fairly new, and has been throwing up new concepts. Consequently, biblical scholars, the Gospel scholars in particular, are drawn towards it. Narrative criticism focuses on understanding each Gospel narrative as a complete work by itself. However, recently, quite a number of papers on the narratology of individual stories/episodes, as parts of the Gospel narratives, have also been published as the outcome of the narrative-critical approach.

Historical critics view a Gospel narrative as something that has evolved through sequential stages. Therefore, to them, the task of interpretation involves an analytical process that seeks to identify these stages, and to work backward through them in reconstructing a hypothetical pattern of the text’s origin. Obviously, the historical critics of the Gospels are interested in the traditional form that the pericopes in them had assumed, before being incorporated into the framework of the Gospel. Historical-critical research, thus, concentrates on the compositional history of the Gospel narrative, and is devoted to the definition and evaluation of materials that preceded the current Gospel narratives. However, the goal of
narrative criticism is to interpret the current Gospel narrative in its finished form, as a coherent literary whole (Powell 7).

The traditional New Testament scholars have postulated a model for the evolutionary process of development of the text as:

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Historical event
↓
Oral Tradition
↓
Early Written Sources
↓
Text
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(Powell 9)

The goal of traditional-critical analysis is to discover the process through which the narrative has come into being. The critic, obviously, seeks to trace the historical event through the early forms of the narrative. So, a model for traditional approaches to narratives emerges typically thus:

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Historical event
↑
Oral Tradition
↑
Early Written Sources
↑
Narratives
↑
Reader / Critic
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Narrative-critical approach, on the other hand, is based on the communicative model of speech-act theory proposed by Roman Jakobson. Jakobson avers that every act of communication involves a sender, a message and a receiver.

\[
\text{Sender} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Message} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Receiver}
\]

(369)

Mark Allen Powell identifies the sender with the author, the message with the text, and the receiver with the reader.

\[
\text{Author} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Text} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Reader}
\]

(9)

Narrative criticism describes the meaning of a text in terms of what it communicates between its author and its reader, while traditional criticism describes its meaning in terms of its origin and process of development. At this stage, an introductory model for narrative-critical approach may be proposed as:

\[
\text{Author} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \text{Narrative} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \text{Reader}
\]

↑

Critic
As viewed from the models, in traditional approaches the critic takes his place along with the reader, though the latter’s progressive movement beyond the text is optional. In narrative-critical approach, on the contrary, the critic takes an exclusive place, in analysing the text as it interacts with the author and the reader.

In this context, it is relevant to examine the major differences between the historical and the narrative criticism. One aspect of narrative criticism is that it emphasizes the unity of the narrative as a literary whole. The connecting threads that hold the narrative together are discerned, and the given narrative is viewed as a literary unity. Individual passages are interpreted in terms of their contribution to the story as a whole (Fowler 627). In historical criticism, on the other hand, the Gospel narratives are viewed as compilations of loosely related pericopes (passages for reading in church), and these individual units of tradition are most often the subject of analysis. In source criticism and form criticism, the sub-classes of historical criticism, attempt is made to interpret particular sayings or stories apart from their context in the Gospel narrative as a whole. Even in redaction criticism more attention is paid to the comparison of a passage with its parallels in the other Gospel narratives, than to the internal connections it may have to other passages in the same Gospel narrative.
Although one aspect of redaction criticism called composition analysis examines the manner in which units of tradition have been ordered and arranged in the work as a whole, the concern is with the unity of the theological perspective rather than with the unity of story (Moore 58).

Most important of all, narrative criticism views the narrative as an end in itself. The immediate goal of the narrative-critical study is to understand the narrative in its final form. The story that is told and the manner in which it is told are given full scholarly attention. But historical criticism treats the narrative as a means to an end, and, as a result, reconstructs aspects like the life of Jesus, and the interests of the early Christians. Murray Krieger differentiates between these two approaches through an apt metaphor of a window and a mirror (3). A historical critic, hoping to learn something about another time and place, regards the narrative as a window through which to look, and discerns what is on the other side. A narrative critic, in contrast, views the narrative as a mirror and obtains insights while encountering with it. As opposed to other biblical criticisms, in narrative criticism there is no intention to look beyond the text to discern history or sources. Narrative criticism looks at the text, rather than through it. Looking at the text, the critic is not swayed by extraneous factors. The text in all its entirety bears upon the critic's subconscious, and
his response is total, unhindered by speculations of what had caused the
text to come into being. There is no need to see through the text in a quest of
whatever might have contributed to its existence. The text as it stands is
a perfect round.

The most significant difference between the historical and the
narrative critic is that the former finds certain supernatural features
problematic. To a historical critic, God speaking audibly from heaven,
fantastic miracles, human beings interacting freely with supernatural
creatures like angels and demons, and the virgin birth of Jesus do not seem
to refer to the real world. Narratives, in his view, are evaluated in terms of
their referential function. On the contrary, narrative critics deal with the
poetic function of the narratives, and they are able to appreciate the story,
apart from consideration of the extent to which they reflect rationality. It
would seem that narrative critics are interested in the contribution of these
elements to the narrative, without questioning the legitimacy of historical
inquiry (Powell 8). It is just as well that narrative critics do not concern
themselves with seeing reason in the story, for rationality is comprehended
in accordance with an individual’s notions of it. It could also be presumed
that narrative critics have no place, in their scheme of things, for historical
inquiries.
It is surmised that, if classified by secular critics, narrative criticism may be viewed as a variety of reader-response movement. However, narrative criticism focuses on ways in which the narrative determines the reader’s response, while in the reader-response criticism the reader determines the meaning. Narrative criticism is, therefore, said to view the reader as being presupposed by it, the anticipatory response of the reader being part of its literary intent. It does not wait for the reader to respond to it. It finds such a response integrated into the story itself. In a sense, to the narrative critic, the narrative not only anticipates reader-response, but fashions it as part of the narration itself. For reader-response critics, meaning is the dynamic product of the reader’s interaction with the narrative. Conversely, to a narrative critic the response of the reader is integrated into the narrative.

Further, narrative criticism may also be seen as a sub-species of rhetorical criticism. Narrative criticism is similar to rhetorical criticism in that, both are interested in discerning the effect that a work has on its reader and in explicating why it has such an effect. Nevertheless, despite similarities, narrative criticism employs the concept of the implied author and the implied reader, and interprets the narrative from their perspective. It is significant to note that this concept of the implied author and the
implied reader, as presupposed and constructed by the narrative itself, makes narrative criticism a text-centred approach (Powell 14). Narrative criticism presumes that the nature of the narration is conditioned by the implied reader’s presumed response to it. This implied reader and his responses are integral even to the fashioning of the narrative. They have a simultaneous existence.

Narrative criticism by definition cannot allow its practitioners to go beyond or outside the narrative. Presumably, the author and the reader can be only those implied by the world of the story itself. That is to say, neither the real author who wrote the narrative, nor the one who is supposed to have compiled it, is regarded as the author of the narrative. Instead, the author who is responsible for the narrative is the author implied by the narrative itself. The implied author is someone created by the story and the way it is told, the picture or image reflected in the narrative (Booth 75). The implied author, therefore, is a mere “construct” of the narrative. Thus, the implied author is neither the one who created the narrative, nor the one who shaped it, but the one whose image emerges from it. Narrative criticism assigns authorship to the one who is responsible for the narrative presentation of the Gospel.
The same can be said about the implied reader also. The implied reader is distinct from any real historical reader, in the same way as the implied author is distinct from the historical author. In other words, in the narrative-critical model of readership, the reader is neither the contemporary of the literary hero or of the author of the narrative, nor any reader who reads the narrative, but the reader is said to be present within the narrative by his implied presence along the story-line. The point is that the implied reader is also the construct of the text. This means that the clues within the narrative connect both the implied author and the implied reader, and indicate the anticipated response of the latter to the former. Narrative criticism seeks to describe how, and what, the implied author communicates to the implied reader. The role of the implied reader is to receive or comprehend, what may perhaps be called, the "implied intentions" of the implied author (Powell 5). Thus narrative criticism explores the ways in which the implied author determines the implied reader's response through the medium of the narrative, rather than the ways in which the actual reader determines the meaning. The vibrancy of the text depends on two factors: the implied author's anticipation of the implied reader's response, and the interaction between the two, woven into the tapestry of the narrative. Both exist as part of the text itself and in this way ensure its viability.
As observed already, this concept of the implied author and the implied reader in the text, moves narrative criticism away from a purely reader-centred type of criticism and makes it a more text-centred approach. The communicative model for narrative criticism as proposed by Powell is as follows:

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\text{Real Author} \rightarrow \text{Text} \rightarrow \text{Real Reader}
\]

\[
\text{Implied Author} \rightarrow \text{Narrative} \rightarrow \text{Implied Reader}
\]

The practical import of this model is that when a reader approaches a narrative, he is actually approaching the composite unit comprising implied author – narrative – implied reader together as “the text”. The text is viewed as the entire communication containing all the three components of the speech-act model: sender (implied author) → message (narrative) → receiver (implied reader), and so complete in itself. The implied author and the implied reader are diagramatically presented as appearing within the text, whereas the real author and the real reader take their place outside the text. It follows that the real reader reads the narrative as a medium of communication between the implied author and the implied reader.
It is significant to note that as the real author and the real reader are lying outside the parameters of the text, narrative critics regard them as extrinsic to the communication act that transpires within the text (Powell 19). It is further to be noted that in the story world, as the communication model presents, the implied author interacts with the implied reader away from the real author and the real reader. The implied reader solely depends on the implied author for understanding the narrative, and the implied intentions of the latter become meaningful to the former and reach their fulfilment.

Clearly, if Luke’s Gospel is studied in the narrative-critical approach, details concerning Luke – whether he was a Hellenistic Jew or a gentile, that he was a travelling companion to Paul, and that he was not an eyewitness to the events in his Gospel – are irrelevant to the understanding of the Gospel narrative. Further, the details of Luke’s sources, the previous works that summarized the life of Jesus, the forms the episodes had assumed before finding place in his Gospel narrative, and the compositional history of the text – all of which help to describe the meaning of Luke’s Gospel narrative in terms of its origin and process of development – are superfluous for an understanding of the narrative. Whatever information is needed for understanding the story is provided in the narrative itself. For
instance, the narrator in Luke’s Gospel presents Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy, and the relevant details of the prophecy are stated by the characters from memory or by the narrator.

So, if Luke is to be assumed as the real author of the Gospel narrative, along with the real reader, he takes his place outside the parameters of the text, and the meaning of the narrative is in no way affected by excluding him from the text. However, the meaning of the text cannot be construed without the direction given by the implied author to the implied reader. It suggests at once that the first step in the interpretive task, then, is the identification of the implied author, which will hopefully provide all that is needed in order to comprehend the meaning. However, the nexus formed between the implied author and the implied reader, by reason of the anticipated response of the latter influencing the implied intentions of the implied author, precludes a step-by-step identification of them. Hence, the point of view of the implied author, and the identity of the implied reader also are to be perceived in the process of identifying the implied author. The inherent features of the one help in the identification of the other and confirm their bearing on one another.

While reading the Gospel narrative, the reader inevitably forms some impression about the narrative’s point of view, based on the perspective
from which the story is told. According to M.H. Abrams, "point of view signifies the way a story gets told – the perspective or perspectives established by an author through which the reader is presented with the characters, actions, setting and events which constitute the narrative [...]") (133). Narrative critics have established in detail how each of the Gospel narratives presents the story of Jesus from its own perspective. Obviously, in the narrative-critical approach, the point of view of the narrative is also determined without reference to anything extrinsic to the narrative, as in the identification of the implied author and the reader.

Significantly, the implied author guides the implied reader in understanding the story through devices intrinsic to the process of storytelling. Obviously, the narrator and the narratee are rhetorical devices created by the implied author, for the purpose of narrating the story. They are part of the narrative itself, part of the discourse through which the story is told. The expanded communication model for narrative criticism, as presented by Powell, is of great help in identifying the narrator and the narratee, as devices employed by the implied author to assist the implied reader apprehend the point of view of the narrative. The model is as follows:
The story, as it finally stands, has been consciously built up by the implied author for a calculated effect on the implied reader. The implied author structures the narrative, taking into account the possible extent of his capability to fashion the mindset of the implied reader. Further, without the implied reader playing his role to perfection, the narrative itself fails in its intent. As the narrative has been designed in order that the totality of its impact would be determined by the anticipated responses of the implied reader, it is absolutely essential that both the implied author and the implied reader should be on the same wavelength, and that the implied reader apprehends the text by adopting the implied author's point of view that governs the narrative. Admittedly, the implied author determines the implied reader's response, and lays out his point of view accordingly for its communication through the narrator. The role of the implied author is complete only when the message reaches the implied reader through the narrative presentation for the story.
Set against this backdrop of the aspects of narrative criticism, it would be in order now to consider the narrator and the narratee of Luke’s Gospel narrative as the narrative devices employed by the implied author. It is vital to note that the narrator claims his position as a reliable narrator through various narrative techniques. In the first place, the narrator of Luke’s Gospel like those of the other three Gospels is the third person omniscient narrator. He is able to report not only public events, but also private ones pertaining to the protagonist in solitude. The following verses illustrate this: “And he [Jesus] was withdrawn from them [his disciples] about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (22:41-42). The narrator is also entirely free to move as he wishes in time and place. That is, he is able to narrate what happens in two different places at the same time. The following verses exemplify this privilege of the narrator:

And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. (2:7,8)
Further, the narrator has privileged access to the inner thoughts and motivations of the characters he describes. In verse 2:19 the narrator seems to know Mary’s thoughts: “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart”. It follows that the narrator knows everything that needs to be known about the agents and events. As he is the omniscient narrator, his report and judgement are to be taken as authoritative.

Furthermore, the narrator’s claim to reliability is enhanced as his perceptions are spatially and temporally limited to the earthly realm. In the narrative, description of heaven and hell are offered by the characters in the stories, never by the narrator himself. Statements like those in the Old Testament, that simply declare outright whether God is pleased or displeased with someone, are not found in Luke’s Gospel narrative. Rather, if God is pleased with somebody in the narrative, the narrator reports as in verse 3:22: “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased”. The narrator does not presume to speak directly for God. This human attribute of the narrator makes him a reliable narrator.

Significantly, the narrator himself claims reliability in his prologue by stating his purpose. Luke’s Gospel narrative has a prologue of four verses:
For as much as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent The-oph'ī-lus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed. (1:1-4)

The narrator’s intention is that The-oph’ī-lus might know the “certainty of those things” of which he has already been taught. This stated purpose implicitly claims that his record is reliable and authoritative. The narrator obviously expects the reader to believe him, when he says that he has carefully consulted the contemporary sources, and he expects the reader to acknowledge his claim to reliability. Evidently, the narrator is not the first in the field. Between the “now” of the narrative and the “then” of the events which had happened, stand the many eyewitnesses and the writers who have already given their accounts of “those things”, probably the events in the story of Jesus, which are believed by many including the narratee, The-oph’ī-lus. The narrator assumes the narratee to have prior knowledge of “those things”.
Strangely enough, the narrator does not explicitly state what “those things” are. However, similar to the words those things in the first chapter, the words these things occur in the narrator’s report of the interrogative reminder of the resurrected Jesus: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory” (emphasis added), to his disciples in the last chapter (24:26). Everything about this verse makes this an epilogue. These things here indicates the process of the story of Jesus through suffering to regal splendour, and those things in the prologue remarkably refers to the same. The narrator observes that he has “perfect understanding” of the story from “the beginning”. By this he means that he has knowledge of “those things” which refer to the progress of Jesus’ life from cross to crown, from suffering to supremacy. Further, the narrator presumes to have knowledge of “all things” related to the life and teachings of Jesus, not only from the commencement of his mission, but also “from the beginning”, that is, from the time of his birth, or presumably, before his conception. Since the narrator has “perfect understanding” of all things from the very first, he feels that it will be useful if he narrates “those things” in order that the narratee might know the “certainty of those things” in which he has already been instructed.
From what has been said, it can be observed that in Luke’s Gospel narrative the narrator’s point of view is to grant enlightenment to the narratee as to the matters he believes to be true on the basis of his merits as a reliable narrator. It has become obvious that the narratee is a believer in Jesus, whom the narrator regards as one who deserves enlightenment. This attribute of the narratee serves as a clue in identifying the implied reader of the Gospel narrative. To David Gooding, the Gospels are stories told in such a way as to evoke a certain image of Jesus for a particular audience (11). Such an audience are given the title “the elect” of God by the narrator. The word elect occurs only once in Luke’s Gospel, in the verse “And shall not God avenge his own elect (emphasis added), which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?” (18:7). While assuring the elect that all the wrongs they have suffered will be set right, the narrator uses the word elect directly to explain that it is imperative that God’s elect should persist in praying. It is apparent in Luke’s Gospel narrative that “election” assures the believer of his eternal security and removes all grounds for fear and despondency.

Most narrative critics regard the Gospels as having reliable narrators whose points of view are in perfect accord with those of the implied authors (Powell 26). The point of view of the implied author, then, is granting the
elect enlightenment in regard to the mysterious story of Jesus, which they need and are privileged to receive. That The-oph'i-lus represents the elect community is highlighted in his depiction as a believer in Jesus, even before knowing the certainty of the Gospel truth. The-oph'i-lus, the narratee serves as the structural device for the reader to identify the implied reader of the Gospel narrative as the elect, and also for the implied author to bring to light his intention of enlightening the implied reader as to the mystery of the Gospel story. The privilege of the elect to make sense out of the Gospel of the Kingdom is brought out by the verse 8:10: “[. . .] Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand”. It is also clear from the above that God is the implied author who grants understanding to “the elect” the implied reader. As the narrator claims to have “perfect knowledge” of “all things” from “the beginning” in the prologue, one cannot help ascribing this claim to the implied author also. A moment’s reflection, will relate this attribute of having “perfect knowledge” of “all things” from “the beginning” to a supernatural being. In the context of Luke’s Gospel, the enlightenment as to the story of Jesus, the son of God, necessarily entails the implied authorship of God, the Father.
Thus, in the narrative-critical reading of the Gospel, the implied reader is neither the contemporary of the historical Jesus, nor the intended reader of the first century, nor the interested reader of the twentieth century, but the elect. God and the elect are thus identified as the implied author and the implied reader respectively, having been constructed by gathering and synthesizing the data from the Gospel. Thus both God as the implied author, and the elect as the implied reader are true constructs of the text.

Significantly, Wayne C. Booth defines the implied author as a "hypothetical entity" (73). Seymour Chatman, in drawing attention to the meaning of the implied reader puts it this way: "The counterpart of the implied author is the implied reader – not the flesh-and-bones you or I sitting in our living rooms reading the book, but the audience presupposed by the narrative itself" (149). Kingsbury describes the implied reader as the "imaginary person in whom the intention of the text is to be thought of as always reaching its fulfilment" (Matthew 38). It could be perceived that the implied author and the implied reader are regarded as abstract entities constructed by the reader on the basis of textual features.

It is comprehensible that the narrative critics have chosen to make them idealized imaginary figures, rather than existing realities interacting within the text. However, Powell seems to hold a different view:
in narrative criticism the implied reader is a hypothetical concept: it is not necessary to assume that such a person actually existed or ever could exist. To the extent that the implied reader is an idealized abstraction, the goal of reading the text ‘as the implied reader’ may be somewhat unattainable, but it remains a worthy goal nevertheless. (21)

It may be that Powell means to say that the goal of reading the text as the implied reader may be attainable if the implied reader is identified as a concrete personality. What he suggests for the implied readership can as well fit in with the implied authorship. It is not mandatory that the implied author and the implied reader should diminish into some non-existent ideal personalities. Significantly, narrative criticism has the provision for an implied author and an implied reader constructed by the text, and there is ample evidence in the narrative to accept them as existing, not as mere ideas, but as realities. It is quite reasonable to think of God as the implied author and his elect as the implied reader. They are viewed not as inferred entities, but as experienced realities and live figures existing within the territory of the narrative on the same wavelength. As a concept born of a hypothesis, the mutually complementing implied author and implied reader might pass for inferred entities. At the same time, they assert themselves as

The adjective implied in the terms implied author and implied reader indicates that they are suggestive and are not directly definitive in Luke's Gospel narrative. The point is that they are not readily available for ordinary perception. One has to read the narrative as the implied reader reads it to discover them, without which they are beyond one's observation. In the communication model for narrative criticism as posited by Powell (27) the reader takes his position outside the text, while the implied author, the narrative, and the implied reader interact among themselves. This is what Powell means when he says that as a reader one must accept the implied author's point of view, even if it means suspending one's own judgement during the act of reading. The reader is free, of course, to critique the point of view a narrative espouses. However, an initial acceptance of that point of view is essential, for without such an acceptance the story can never be understood in the first place (24). That God as the implied author speaks through the narrator of the Lukan narrative dovetails nicely with the concept of the implied author as the construct of the narrative. Admittedly, if God is identified as the implied author of Luke's Gospel, the elect as the implied reader, and enlightenment of the elect on
"the certainty" (1:4) of the Gospel story as the point of view of the narrative, the meaning of the Gospel narrative reveals itself clearly and completely.

Broadly speaking, the Bible is not only regarded as a record of how God spoke to people in the past, but also as a channel through which he speaks to people even today (Powell 98). It seems reasonable then to suppose that God speaks to his people as the implied author of Luke’s Gospel. “The Bible is the greatest book ever written. In it God Himself speaks to men” – so it is remarked in The Open Bible (17). According to Arthur S. Peake, “The Bible is the story of an unfolding vision of a gradually completed movement of the divine self-manifestation” (2). The Bible is thus reckoned to be a book through which God is speaking to men. Significantly, God does not enter the story at all in form in Luke’s Gospel narrative. It is the narrator who reports God’s words from heaven twice – after the baptism event (3:22) and after the vision event (9:35). The role played by God directly in the narrative is very little compared to his implied authorship. The narrative resounds and vibrates with a sense of God’s presence throughout. His presence is felt as the author and not as a character. Powell seems to miss the point when he considers God as a character, and does not ascribe the implied authorship of any of the Gospel
narratives to him. Conversely, Powell suggests: “God must be regarded as a figure in the story world and God’s perspective must be defined in terms of how he is depicted by the implied author” (24). For Powell, God is a character in the Gospel narratives. However, Luke’s Gospel abounds in evidence to the claim that God is the implied author and not a character in it.

To take the most obvious evidence, on behalf of God angels announce the birth of John to Zach-a-ri’as (1:13-20), and about the birth of Jesus to Mary (1:28-37) and to shepherds (2:10-14). Prophets like Zach-a-ri’as (1:28-35), Simeon (1:68-79), and Anna (2:10-14) are inspired by God to convey his message, and even ordinary women like Mary and Elisabeth are inspired by God when they utter words of thanksgiving. God conveys his message through John also (3:7-17). Further, the Old Testament verses appear now and then to convey the implied author’s message as in 3:4-6, where John is introduced as fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy, and in 4:18 and 19, where Jesus is introduced as the fulfilment of another prophecy. In all these cases, it is quite clear that God is not a character but the implied author, and his point of view is to make the implied reader, the reader-elect, base his belief on the ground of truth. As the reader reads the narrative as the elect the implied reader, he gets a proper direction to unravel the mystery of the story, and the implied intentions of the implied author are
fulfilled in him. An understanding of the concept of election would be of
great help in the apprehension of the implied meaning of Luke’s Gospel
narrative.

The doctrine of election is presently gaining ground through the
essays of Martyn Lloyd Jones in the magazine *Banner of Truth* (Lewis,
Clements, and Haslam 56). Election is believed to be the act of choice
whereby God picks an individual or a group out of a large company, for a
purpose or destiny of his own appointment (The New Bible Dictionary 11).
Election in Jesus means God’s retrieval of his people, the elect, by Jesus
from the guilt and stain of disobedience to God for a new life in the
spiritual Kingdom. The goal of election is that the elect should bear the
image of Jesus and share his victory over Satan.

It can be seen that the implied story-line connecting God, the implied
author, and the elect, the implied reader runs parallel to the observable
story-line of Luke’s Gospel narrative from beginning to end. This implied
story-line suggests the implied meaning of the Gospel narrative while
underlining the concept of election. The implied story-line conveys God,
the implied author’s intentions for his elect, the implied reader. In Luke’s
Gospel, the elect are those people to whom God reveals himself, and
enables them to comprehend the story of the establishment of the Kingdom
of God on earth by Jesus.
Ludwig Wittgenstein offers a useful hint in his *Philosophical Investigations* for understanding the concept of election (196). He draws attention to the significance of something that at first may seem quite trivial, namely puzzle pictures. There is, for example, the page covered apparently with random lines and dots which one may suddenly come to see as the picture of a human face; or the ambiguous duck-rabbit shape which is seen either as a duck’s head facing left or as a rabbit’s head facing right. In such cases, two people or the same person at different times may perceive the same marks on paper in significantly different ways. Wittgenstein speaks of “seeing as” in the sense of seeing something as one’s mind interprets it.

If this notion is expanded into that of “experiencing as” as one reads the Gospel, the readers experience it in different ways as having different kinds of significance. One reader might consider his experience as reading under the sovereign claim of God, as the implied author and understand the Gospel as his words, whereas to most other readers, the story does not have this significance. The former goes through experiences in a characteristic and consistent way, where he could see God as the implied author and himself as the elect, the implied reader. The elect of God sees behind all this the hand of God, the implied author, gradually fulfilling a purpose. To
the eyes of the elect, the story becomes transparent owing to the focalization of God the implied author, and not simply because of his individuality as the elect.

It is important to appreciate that this “experiencing as” is not an interpretation, in the sense of a theory imposed retrospectively upon the events. It is the way in which the implied reader actually experiences and participates in these events as the implied author interacts with him. To the common reader, Luke’s Gospel may not have an especial significance. To the elect, however, there may be a dawning of a new perspective, apart from what is apparent and overt. Within the general purview, Luke’s Gospel is the story of Jesus’ teachings, miracles and sufferings; in conjunction with the reader-elect, the response takes on a revelatory character. The implied reader, the reader-elect, believes that it is precisely through this ambiguity that God has chosen to reveal himself to him.

In Luke’s Gospel the narrator uses such terms as his people and a people while referring to the elect. Zach-a-ri-as praises God “for he hath visited and redeemed his people (emphasis added)” (1:68), and to his son John, the forerunner of Jesus, he says “[. . .] thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people (emphasis added) by the remission of their sins” (1:76, 77). The
purpose of John’s birth according to the angel in verse 1:17 is “to make ready a people (emphasis added) prepared for the Lord”. Significantly, John remarks in 3:17, “He [Jesus] will thoroughly purge his [Jesus’] floor” (emphasis added). Further in Luke 4:25, God’s act of favouring a particular widow in Sar-epta to serve E-lias the prophet during a famine, though there were many widows in Israel, and in 4:27 the miraculous healing of Na-a-man the Syrian leper alone, though there were many lepers in Israel are obvious references clearly founded on the doctrine of election.

Interestingly enough, the implied reader, being the elect, believes in the existence of the Kingdom of God without applying reason, and in the Gospel narrative he is enlightened by the implied author as to the process of the establishment of the Kingdom. While speaking about the Kingdom of God, Jesus in the Gospel says, “Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein” (18:17). The implied reader enjoys the privilege of a closer affinity with the truth of the Gospel, as God the implied author reveals it to him.

The lamp parables are instances in which the implied author highlights the privilege of the elect to know the truth. The first parable is: “No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel or putteth it under a bed: but setteth it on a candle stick, that they which enter in may
see the light” (8:16). The parable explains the purpose of the lamp kept on the stand as giving light. In the same way, it is God’s intention that the truth should be revealed. The implied author is of the view that as they are the elect, no truth intended for their knowledge will be hidden from them. The lamp is placed in a house “that they which enter in (emphasis added) may see the light” (8:16), which implies that God the implied author restricts the knowledge of truth to the elect only. God Jehovah is reached by the one who alone is chosen to be reached. The explanation that follows the parable has more significance:

For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to them shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which be seemeth to have. (8:17, 18)

It is perfectly plain that truth will definitely be revealed to “whosoever hath” the privilege of being the elect. In verses 12:2, Jesus cautions the elect against anxiety to know the truth, “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known”. The implication is that the elect need not despair at the inadequacies in their knowledge of truth. In his own time, God will reveal every facet of truth which he wants the elect to make their own.
In the parable of the soils (8:4-15), the seeds sown yield a rich harvest only from the responsive soil. God’s elect, those who have been chosen to bear fruit, are the fertile soil mentioned in this parable. The seeds falling along the path are trampled on and the birds of the air eat them up. Those falling on rock come up, but the plants wither because they have no moisture. Other seeds fall among thorns, which grow up with them and choke the plants. Still other seeds which fall on good soil come up and yield a crop, a hundred times more than sown. In the parable, the implied author focuses on four different reactions to the Gospel. One is the immediate thwarting of any effect at all by Satan himself. The second is that when the Gospel is superficially received it is never allowed to take root, and when temptation comes it exposes the reception as having been shallow and rootless. The third is that the word of God is listened to with some seriousness, but before one resolves to receive it and obey it, it is lured away by earthly cares or the riches and pleasures typical of this life and comes to nothing. The only response that is of any use is when the elect having received the Gospel, hold it fast in faith and bring forth fruit of enduring value.

According to Darrel L. Bock the focus of the parable is on the soils. The basic truth at the back of the parable, of the implied author, is the
diversity of response, though not because of a variation in the teaching of Jesus. It is all a matter of soil, the heart of the hearer (230). As the verse goes on to explain: “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (8:15), it is obvious that the “heart” refers to the heart of the elect. Being the elect of God, they are enabled to obey his word. It is equally true, nowhere does the narrator openly say that the truth is meant for the elect only, but it is implied. When the disciples ask Jesus what the parable means, the question seems to express their need for clarification as to whether the enlightenment on truth depends on man’s will or God’s will. What emerges from Jesus’ explanation is that people’s response depends on “their election”.

In this context it is pertinent to recall the verse “wisdom is justified of all her children” (7:35) in the Gospel narrative. While analysing the reason for some people rejecting John’s preaching, it is pointed out that wisdom, by all means, will be accepted by the children of wisdom, implying the elect. Paul also seems to hold a similar view. According to him “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Corinthians 2:14). Paul makes it clear that the
important prerequisite for discerning the spiritual truth of God is "the election".

Since it has been assumed that God is the implied author and that the text contains his message, one is perfectly justified in stating that one who receives the message ought to be a man whom God intends to communicate with. Further, the tenor and import of the message, imparting understanding of the process of Jesus establishing God's Kingdom in man's heart, necessitates a human receiver singled out for the purpose. Thus identifying the implied reader as belonging to a clan, an exclusive human community makes the Gospel narrative more meaningful.

At this juncture, it is especially relevant to note Powell's displeasure with narrative criticism. According to him, the scholars who use narrative criticism to bring out the poetic meaning of the Gospel narratives, have to reckon with a gulf between the story world of the narrative and the real world of the reader, and even when a reader has come to understand what a story means, the significance of its meaning for real life remains to be determined. To Powell, the ultimate task of biblical interpretation requires gifts and insights that are not provided by the interpretive discipline itself (100). This comes very near to stating that the idealized implied reader takes the narrative to an ideal world which is well out of reach for most of the human community.
The gulf, Powell indicates here, seems to exist because of the idea of abstract construct of the implied author and the implied reader as propounded by the narrative critics. The suggestion to consider the implied author and the implied reader as concrete constructs, already proposed and explicated in the previous pages, allays Powell’s fears, and negates the presence of any such gulf between the Gospel narrative and the reader. This alternative theory of concretized implied author and implied reader significantly offers a pragmatic solution to determine the significance of the story’s meaning for real life. As God, the implied author, communicates to the elect, the implied reader, making his presence felt in the narrative, the meaning of the Gospel story for real life is rightly construed. The point of view of God, the implied author, stems from the presumption that the implied reader is his elect. The narrator states his point of view in general terms, so that in the orderly presentation of the narrative, the reader who identifies himself with the implied reader will have access to the two parallel implied story-lines namely the primary story and the secondary story. The original narrative of the primary story is called the Matrix Narrative, and the embedded narrative of the secondary story is called the Hyponarrative. The following chapter highlights the Matrix-Narrative aspect of the Gospel.