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A COMPARISON OF THE ADULT BIBLE-STORY BOOKS
OF FULTON OURSLER AND WALTER BOWIE

By

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A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SACRED THEOLOGY
in
The Biblical Seminary in New York

New York, N. Y.
March, 1955

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem and Purpose of This Study

1. The Value and Use of Adult Bible-Story Books

J. H. Holmes says in his review of The Greatest Book Ever Written: "There still remains the question as to whether the Bible needs an intermediary of this sort." However, he goes on to say:

Meanwhile, we may be glad that one more door is opened into this field of sacred literature, and the Bible made easy and not difficult to read.¹

Thus, Holmes has put his finger on the real contribution of adult Bible-story books. This type of literature is not to replace or supplement the Bible, but to open another door whereby a few more people may come in contact with the truth of the Scriptures. Oursler himself, concerning the same book, says:

I have retold the stories of the Old Testament in this volume with the same hope which impelled me to write the story of the Gospels--that readers might be filled with a desire to read the original Message for themselves.²

2. The Problem in Choosing Good Adult Bible-Story Books

Just as in other areas of literature, there are good and bad adult Bible-story books. There are a number of factors involved in choosing one that is good. These factors quite obviously fall into two main categories--use of Biblical truth and value of literary style. Some Bible-story books may be true to the Biblical account

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1. New York Herald-Tribune Books, New York Herald-Tribune, Inc., Pub., New York, November 25, 1951, p. 20.
2. Oursler; The Greatest Book Ever Written, p. ix.

and yet be so poorly written as to lose any value that they might have had. Others may be well written and yet be so unsound Scripturally as to render them worthless. Both of these factors must be taken into account when choosing an adult Bible-story book.

3. The Purpose of This Study

Since there are a number of adult Bible-story books, the writer has chosen to study carefully those which have met with greatest public acclaim and therefore supposedly have made the greatest contribution in this field--The Greatest Book Ever Written and The Greatest Story Ever Told by Fulton Oursler and The Story of the Bible by Walter Bowie. It is the purpose of this thesis to compare and evaluate these adult Bible-story books in order to determine their individual values.

B. The Preliminary Procedures in This Study

1. Delimitation of the Field of Study

Fulton Oursler's books, The Greatest Book Ever Written and The Greatest Story Ever Told, have been the most recent and perhaps the most popular of all adult Bible-story books. Others of similar nature are hard to find. Some have included too much fiction to enable them to be called Bible-story books, others are not strictly on the adult level, and still others do not include the complete Biblical narrative. Oursler's books do not cover the full narrative, either, since The Greatest Story Ever Told includes only the life of Christ as recorded in the four Gospels, but it includes enough to allow one to make a comparison. A book of comparable acclaim is that by Walter Russell

Bowie, The Story of the Bible, and thus, the comparison between Fulton Oursler's books and Walter Bowie's book will be made.

2. Summary of Initial Findings

Preliminary studies in Fulton Oursler's books made it obvious that the two books were different in certain respects. The Greatest Book Ever Written did not appear to have the easy-flowing style of The Greatest Story Ever Told. Therefore, the writer thought it necessary to study the two books separately and make a brief comparison of the two before making any attempt to compare them with The Story of the Bible by Bowie.

Oursler follows the King James Version in his books, at times quoting directly from that Version. This, in addition to the fact that the King James is the most commonly accepted Version, impels the writer to use the King James Version as the standard for evaluating both Oursler's and Bowie's books.

C. Proposed Method of Treatment Used in This Study

The first chapter will include the study of Fulton Oursler's books, The Greatest Book Ever Written and The Greatest Story Ever Told. They are included in one chapter because together they comprise the total narrative. These two books will be treated separately since there may be characteristics that are more outstanding in one than the other. The study of each book will be broken down into two areas, Biblical exegesis and literary style.

The study of Walter Bowie's book, The Story of the Bible, will follow the same plan as that used in studying Oursler's books so

that valid and accurate comparisons can be made. This study will make up chapter two.

The third chapter will compare the relative values of Oursler's books with Bowie's book point by point and as a whole.

The first and second chapters will include only the findings of the writer. The third chapter will include, in addition to the writer's comparisons and evaluations, the evaluation of professional critics and book reviewers.

CHAPTER I

A STUDY OF FULTON OURSLER'S ADULT BIBLE-STORY BOOKS:

THE GREATEST BOOK EVER WRITTEN

AND THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

A COMPARISON OF THE ADULT BIBLE-STORY BOOKS
OF FULTON OURSLER AND WALTER BOWIE

CHAPTER I

A STUDY OF FULTON OURSLER'S ADULT BIBLE-STORY BOOKS:

THE GREATEST BOOK EVER WRITTEN
AND THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

A. Introduction

As indicated in the Introduction, the purpose of this chapter is to analyze the exposition in the two books, The Greatest Book Ever Written and The Greatest Story Ever Told, both by Fulton Oursler, on the basis of exegesis and on the basis of literary style, the two books being discussed separately since there may be qualities in each that would necessitate separate evaluations. Concerning the exegesis of Biblical truth, the writer has proceeded by considering such sub-points as: selectivity of Biblical truths, arbitrary departures from the Biblical narrative, re-creation of the Biblical narrative, and Roman Catholic influences. As to literary style, the writer has considered direction, movement, clarity, vividness, and unity. Following the analysis of each book, the results will be briefly summarized. The chapter will end with a brief comparison of the two books as a means to eventual comparison with Walter Bowie's book, The Story of the Bible.

B. An Analysis of the Exposition in The Greatest Book Ever Written

The purpose of this section is to analyze the exposition in

The Greatest Book Ever Written, both on the basis of exegesis and of literary style. As Milton S. Terry says:

The expositor builds upon the labours both of critics and exegetes, and sets forth in fuller form, and by ample illustration, the ideas, doctrines, and moral lessons of the Scripture.¹

This definition of exposition allows for the inclusion here of literary style as well as of exegesis of Biblical truth.

1. Exegesis of Biblical Truth

The value of Fulton Oursler's book, The Greatest Book Ever Written, is to be determined here on the basis of its exegesis of Biblical truth. Exegesis, according to Terry, is the application of the principles and laws of hermeneutics (the science of interpretation), "the actual bringing out into formal statement, and by other terms, the meaning of the author's words."² Exegesis, then, is a primary factor in exposition. The following sub-points will be considered as they relate to exegesis.

a. Selectivity of Biblical Truths

In writing a book of this sort, an author is placed in a difficult position; he must select portions of the narrative that are essential and omit those that are not. Obviously, the Biblical writers used this same principle of selectivity, but the Bible story writer needs to be even more selective since he cannot possibly use all of the material before him if he is also to set forth "in fuller form, and by ample illustration, the ideas, doctrines, and moral lessons of the

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1. Milton S. Terry: Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 20.
2. Ibid., p. 19.

Scripture."¹ This, then becomes one of the issues of this study-- whether or not the author selects those portions of the Biblical account which most fully and accurately portray and promote the Biblical message.

Fulton Oursler makes a real attempt to follow the pattern of Biblical truth, but sometimes the essential truths of a passage are overlooked. In his account of the Exodus, for instance, he makes no reference to the fact that it is God who hardened the heart of the Pharaoh,² though in the Book of Exodus it is mentioned ten times in the space of five chapters.³ By this omission, he leaves out the essential fact that God was operating in such a way as to prove His sovereignty to the nations.⁴ The Exodus was more than a deliverance for the Hebrews; it was also a means of making known the true God and proving the ineffectiveness of heathen gods. Oursler also missed another point which could have expressed the same truth, that is, the magicians of Pharaoh's court duplicated the first few plagues, but ended with failure and the admission that "this is the finger of God."⁵ These instances illustrate an undiscerning use of exegesis.

There are a number of places in which the specific work of God is omitted or subjugated. Gideon is given credit for the source of his strategy rather than God;⁶ and Samuel is portrayed as the originator of truths that he actually only relays to the people from

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1. Terry, op. cit., p. 20.
2. Fulton Oursler: The Greatest Book Ever Written, pp.105-112.
3. Exodus 7:13; 8:15; 8:19; 8:32; 9:12; 9:35; 10:1; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10.
4. Exodus 7:3-5; 11:7; 11:9.
5. Exodus 8:19.
6. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 180-181. Cf. Judges 7:9-15.

1.
God. Oursler sees Daniel as having a genius for dreams, which he assuredly had, but the author does not explain that it is Daniel's reliance on the Lord which enables him to interpret dreams.²

It is not a small task to include and omit facts so as to maintain the full import of the Scriptures and still produce a unified, forceful account of the Biblical narrative. The lesser facts have to be removed. Fulton Oursler does a remarkable piece of work in removing those portions that do not contribute substantially to the force of the Biblical message. He leaves out the Genesis 20 account of Abimelech and Sarah³ and the story of Tamar in Genesis 38,⁴ but plays up the character of Lot's wife,⁵ all of which aids the unified progression of the story. However, there are places where lesser facts are included which tend to detract from the story. Examples of this are the accounts of David's taking of Abinoam to wife⁶ and of the young woman who warmed David in his old age.⁷ These inclusions of unnecessary facts are rare, which indicates a real sense of discernment on the part of Oursler.

As a whole, Fulton Oursler approaches the material of the Old Testament with the sincere goal of simplifying it and yet maintaining the truth. He exhibits a good knowledge of Biblical truth and seeks to maintain it in the writing of this book. In general, he finds the core of the Biblical writer's intent and brings it out (exegesis), although

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 219. Cf. I Samuel 9:15-17.
2. Ibid., pp. 407-408. Cf. Daniel 2:19, 27-28.
3. Ibid., p. 47.
4. Ibid., p. 77.
5. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
6. Ibid., p. 252.
7. Ibid., p. 283.

there are places where the real meaning of the narrative is passed over, and rare instances where details are unnecessarily included.

b. Arbitrary Departures from the Biblical Narrative

Where the previous section has been concerned with the selectivity of Biblical truths, this section is to discuss those truths which are changed. The number of such cases is unusually great, but the overall import is correspondingly low. Most of the departures are in minor details, which fact is significant in an appraisal of Fulton Oursler's work. A total of fifty-one distinct departures were found which are of enough significance to record. There are numerous other statements that imply departure. This is an average of one definite departure for every seven pages plus those that are possible departures. "Paradise" is substituted for "Garden of Eden"¹ and "an angel" for "cherubims".² "Voice" takes the place of "God" or "Lord" in at least seventy-one places.³ There is the suggestion of temptation to idolatry in Abraham,⁴ and of lust as well.⁵ Oursler portrays Gideon as destroying the altar to Baal in the daytime, following a sermon before a great crowd, while the Bible says that he did it in the middle of the night so that he would not be discovered.⁶ Oursler also implies that it was Joseph who anticipated and prepared for the famine.⁷ There are many other similar departures, all of which are misleading in some way. Exegesis

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 9, 33.
2. Ibid., p. 11. Cf. Genesis 3:24.
3. Ibid., pp. 14, 15, et al.
4. Ibid., p. 34. Cf. Genesis 12:6-9.
5. Ibid., p. 40. Cf. Genesis 16:2.
6. Ibid., p. 179. Cf. Judges 6:25-29.
7. Ibid., p. 202. Cf. Genesis 45:4-8.

does not allow for such departures, even though the departures are in minor details.

c. Re-creation of the Biblical Narrative

One of the most vital elements in the re-telling of the Biblical stories is that of re-creation. To re-create simply and accurately, an author must be thoroughly versed in what Terry calls "historico-critical examination," which involves "the age, authorship, genuineness, and canonical authority" of the Bible, "tracing at the same time their origin, preservation, and integrity, and exhibiting their contents, relative rank, and general character and value." Oursler has done much in the way of research which has helped him a great deal in re-creating the Biblical narrative. However, there are a number of instances where his re-creations are not in accordance with sound exegesis.

1) Explains Supernatural Events

One infraction of exegesis is the attempt to explain supernatural events through natural means. In the Biblical account, the births of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, and Samuel are the result of God's providence and yet, in each case, Oursler explains the phenomenon as simply the result of renewed sexual interest. For example:

... there was new strength and joy in the tents of Abraham. God's promise was being made good. Over Abraham and Sarah a curious, visible change was appearing. New youth flowed into the old man's veins and beamed in Sarah's dark eyes, making her once more desir-

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1. Terry, op. cit., p. 19.

2. Oursler: The Greatest Story Ever Told, pp. vii-viii.

3. Oursler: The Greatest Book Ever Written, pp. 47, 56, 210. Cf. Genesis 21:1-2; 25:21; I Samuel 1:19-20.

able, even irresistible, to her husband. One night she lay in his embrace and conceived.¹

This may be a perfectly valid way to re-create this event, but it seems to this writer that the supernatural element is at least partially hidden by the emphasis on the natural.

Peculiarly enough, Oursler does not use this method with other supernatural events of the Old Testament. Perhaps because of the difficulty of re-creating this type of event with both accuracy and vividness, it is only in the matter of special births that his re-creations of miracles appear to be at fault.

2) Categorizes Men

Another of Oursler's tendencies is to categorize a man as either all good or all bad with no regard to the fact that sometimes a man's character will change. He does this with Saul, whom he characterizes as an egotistical "schizop²hrene" who "was born to overstep³ authority." Again, he says that Achan had never been a good man, which is in no way found in the Scriptural account.⁴

3) Includes Irrelevant Details

There are a few cases where Oursler includes facts which add little or nothing to the Biblical story. The fact that there are eight⁵ kinds of ravens in Palestine, and the fact that Daniel wrote in two⁶ different languages, are illustrative of Oursler's use of irrelevant

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 47. Cf. Genesis 21:1-2.
2. Ibid., p. 220. Cf. I Samuel 9:2; 10:1; 10:24.
3. Ibid., p. 226. Cf. I Samuel 9:2; 10:1; 10:24.
4. Ibid., p. 163.
5. Ibid., p. 318.
6. Ibid., p. 407.

facts, which, though true, contribute nothing to the re-created Bible story.

4) Includes Legends

There are a number of legends which Oursler uses. These also violate the principles of exegesis. He includes some of the riddles¹ that the queen of Sheba supposedly posed to King Solomon. The unveri-²fied legend concerning the fate of Isaiah is also related by Oursler. Another is the legend of the persecution of Abram by Nimrod:

There is a legend that one of those who made life miserable for Abram was Nimrod. Religious persecution is not a new cruelty; the great hunter wanted the youth to bow down to Ur's principal god, whose name was Sin. When Abram refused, Nimrod lifted him up and tried to hurl him into a furnace, but then the fire would not burn.³

These items of historical background are doubtful and tend to lessen the reality of the Biblical truths. By placing legends in the same category as Bible stories, Oursler in effect implies that Bible stories are little more than fiction.

5) Substantiates Biblical Truths

It should be stated here that there is nothing inherently wrong in substantiating Biblical truths. However, it must also be remembered that Oursler has "...retold the stories of the Old Testament."⁴ It was not his intent to write a commentary or a study book, but merely to retell the Bible stories in simple, modern language. As he says himself:

The book is not offered as an explanation or an interpretation...

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 305.
2. Ibid., p. 376.
3. Ibid., p. 30.
4. Ibid., p. ix.

while sometimes dramatized, the story is completely faithful to the literal statements of the text.¹

With this principle in mind, then, it appears that Oursler has unnecessarily attempted to substantiate Biblical truths.

In this regard, he mentions a number of artifacts which now reside in various museums throughout the world. These include the bricks made in Egypt during the time of the Hebrew captivity,² a carving of Jehu paying tribute to Assyria,³ the prism of Sennacherib,⁴ an Assyrian cast telling of Ezekiel's vision,⁵ and many others too numerous to mention here. There may be times when such facts are needed to expose the truth of a Bible story, but Oursler does not use these for that purpose, but rather to substantiate or prove the truth of the Biblical narrative. Therefore these parenthetical inclusions do not contribute to, but detract from the simple force and truth which is inherent in the Scriptural account.

6) Makes Applications

The habit of interjecting clauses or sentences which make Scriptural truth applicable to present situations is one of Oursler's most serious faults. The force of simple truth as illustrated by these Bible stories is impaired by such blunt references. In telling the story of Noah and the unfruitfulness of his preaching, there is the sudden and unexpected thought, "...and this should console discouraged
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clergymen..." The sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham is applied to the

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1. Oursler: The Greatest Story Ever Told, p. viii. For the fact that these two books have the same goals, see The Greatest Book Ever Written, p. x.
2. Oursler: The Greatest Book Ever Written, p. 104.
3. Ibid., p. 343.
4. Ibid., p. 371.
5. Ibid., p. 395.
6. Ibid., p. 20.

sacrifice that the modern world makes of its boys in war.¹ The concept of "Am I my brother's keeper?" is followed by, "a question which men in their folly keep on repeating today and still give themselves the wrong answer."² All these applications are quite valid in themselves. They would fit well into a sermon, but add little to the value of a Bible-story book.

These six points together would seem to make up a rather serious case against Oursler's re-creative ability. However, one should keep in mind that the most detrimental points have been chosen for purposes of illustration. The majority of Oursler's work is vividly re-created, simple yet alive, imaginative yet true to the Biblical account. In the area of historical background, for instance, Oursler makes known³ the pertinent geographical facts, habits of the people at the time in which the story occurs,⁴ and highlights the significant political and cultural movements.⁵ He also explains a number of terms which are⁶ pertinent only to a particular locale. Though at times contrary to sound exegesis, Oursler's ability to re-create is one of his strongest points.

d. Roman Catholic Influences

In general, there has been a real effort on the part of Oursler to refrain from emphasizing doctrines that are peculiar to the

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 52.
2. Ibid., p. 15.
3. Ibid., pp. 29, 152, 159, 351, 358, 394.
4. Ibid., pp. 126, 190, 196, 208, 381.
5. Ibid., pp. 93, 125, 296, 343, 358, 380.
6. Ibid., pp. 99, 111, 113.

Roman Catholic Church. There are a few terms, however, that are primarily Roman Catholic in usage. Such terms as "veneration",¹ "sanctum sanctorum",² "Canticle of Canticles",³ "invective",⁴ and "beneficent works"⁵ slip in occasionally. More serious is his terminology used in connection with visions.⁶ Concerning the happy state of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, Oursler writes:

...while there was not the beatific Vision, there did come to them habitually an instantaneous perception of the truth which in our days is only the occasional experience of saints.⁷

The doctrine of the infallibility of "the Church" is also expressed when Oursler declares that Song of Solomon is "included in the books of the Bible because it is the Church's declaration that this is so."⁸

Another Roman Catholic influence is evident in the use of the Apocrypha. Chapter 42 of The Greatest Book Ever Written is "The Singular Story of Tobias."⁹ Oursler says of it:

The story of Tobias, heroic servant of the Lord, is found in the Book of Tobias, which is included in Roman Catholic editions of the Holy Bible, known as the Douay version, but does not appear in the King James or other Protestant editions, except when included at times in an appendix, as a part of what is called the Apocrypha.¹⁰

Oursler seeks to support his use of the Apocrypha in the Epilogue, where he says:

...certain books appeared from time to time whose purpose was to

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 133.
2. Ibid., p. 293.
3. Ibid., p. 300.
4. Ibid., p. 370.
5. Ibid., p. 142.
6. Ibid., pp. 4, 340, 366, 397.
7. Ibid., p. 5.
8. Ibid., p. 300.
9. Ibid., pp. 417-422.
10. Ibid., p. 419.

encourage and maintain patriotism and faith. Written for the most part in Greek these devout, inspirational scrolls were circulated among the leaders, the subject made common knowledge, and came to be cherished as sacred. Revered, these various books were included in the Old Testament compiled in Alexandria, and known as the Septuagint. But the Palestinian Jews refused to put them in their Canon of the Scripture.

However, when St. Jerome...prepared his famous Vulgate edition of the Latin Bible he included these books with one exception, "The Prayer of Manasses"...They have been recognized as authoritative by the Roman Catholic Church. It is believed by some that St. Jerome also accepted the designation "apocrypha," or "hidden," for them, a term which implied esoteric truths for the initiated...

If we look ahead to the Epistles in the New Testament, we see that St. Paul seemed to have some parts of the Wisdom of Solomon in mind when he wrote to the Colossians and to the Romans. St. John, too, in his Gospel reflects some of the Wisdom's teaching.¹

His choice of words in the first paragraph indicate Oursler's attitude toward the Apocrypha: "devout...inspirational...scrolls...common knowledge...cherished...sacred...revered...included in the Old Testament..." Each of these terms tends to place the Apocrypha on a par with the canonical Books. Since Oursler is writing for Roman Catholics as well as for Protestants, and since he clearly shows that there is divergent opinion as to the use of the apocrypha, it might be considered permissible to use these apocryphal stories in an adult Bible-story book.² However, while he subtly tends to support their use, he gives no explanation as to why the Apocrypha is not included in the Protestant canon. Additional information of this sort would have made his inclusion of the apocryphal stories more acceptable to Protestants.

2. Literary Style

Exposition logically consists of two equally important qual-

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 451-452.
2. There is a special Roman Catholic edition of The Greatest Book Ever Written but the edition used by the writer is a general one intended for Jews and Protestants as also for Roman Catholics. Cf. Oursler, op. cit., pp. viii-x.

ities--the finding of truth and the enunciation of truth.¹ The latter of these might be more properly termed literary style, whereas the former has been called exegesis. Literary style, then, with the various sub-points as already mentioned,² will be the concern of this section.

a. Direction

Fulton Oursler expresses his purpose in writing The Greatest Book Ever Written in the Preface to that book:

I have retold the stories of the Old Testament in this volume... that readers might be filled with a desire to read the original Message for themselves...I have tried, through narrative and quotations, to give some foretaste of the water of life that rises from that deep well of Truth that is the Book of Books...God the Father is the theme...It is the story of His great plan of creation, "of man's first disobedience and the fruits thereof" beginning "in the beginning" and bringing us up to the dawn of Christmas when redemption came to the world.³

This goal is clearly seen throughout the book. Oursler follows the chronological method of organization and tells the stories in the proper relationship of extra-Biblical events as well. The hardest section of the Bible to retell is that period concerning the fall and captivity of Israel and Judah. Oursler sorts this material and retells⁴ the story as a unified whole. Oursler ends his book with an epilogue which fills in the events of the inter-Testament period. He maintains the goal of the Old Testament itself which is to make known the character of God and to prepare for the Messiah.

b. Movement

Oursler condenses or omits a great deal of the details in

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1. Ante, p. 3.
2. Ante, p. 2.
3. Oursler, op. cit., pp. ix, x.
4. Ibid., pp. 443-462.

order to maintain steady movement.¹ Although it must have been his
object to include material from all the Old Testament Books, Oursler
might have condensed the material covering the writings of Solomon,²
as well as the events occurring just prior to the death of David.³

Unnecessary exposition slows the movement in many places.⁴

Following the story of the destruction of Sodom is this paragraph:

Blocks of such salt, taken from the mountains at the southern end
of the Dead Sea region--where Sodom was--are on display today in
the Semitic Museum of Harvard University. One of them may even
be Lot's wife herself. Who knows?⁵

These interruptions impede the general movement to some extent, though
the author has succeeded in maintaining a high interest level by means
of a steady and rapid pace.

c. Clarity

This section is divided into two sub-points, conciseness and
terminology. Conciseness is concerned with the use of phrasings and
sentences, while terminology is concerned with words.

1) Conciseness

A great deal of the force of a story is lost with the use of
speculation. Oursler has a tendency to speculate. In the story of the
tower of Babel, he makes several weak guesses as to why the tower was
built⁶ and similarly, he speculates as to why Lot's wife looked back.⁷

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 127, 173-174, 291, 400-404.
2. Ibid., pp. 298-303.
3. Ibid., pp. 281-283.
4. Ante, pp. 7-11.
5. Oursler, op. cit., p. 46.
6. Ibid., pp. 26-27.
7. Ibid., p. 46.

There are other places where the facts are weakened by expressions of doubt. The following is an example:

'Eat well,' some ministering angel of grace seemed to murmur to the old mystic; there was a long journey still for him to make and his legs would need strength and fuel.¹

This is a striking example when compared with the King James:

And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.²

The word "some" is used in place of "an"; the phrase "seemed to murmur" is used in place of "said". The larger part of the angel's message is changed from direct to indirect quotation.

There are other infrequent phrasings which leave the reader in doubt as to the author's meaning. For example, Oursler says, "Justice was also to be watchful over..."³ and "they had learned virtually nothing, although they had been taught a great deal."⁴ While these phrasings are rare, they do mar the effectiveness of the exposition.

2) Terminology

In consideration of the fact that Oursler has written a book for adult readers, his terminology is poor. He uses with great dexterity everything from slang to pedantism. The following are examples of slang expressions used by Oursler in The Greatest Book Ever Written:

...come uppance, duffer of a god, silly, brats, rooked, scurvey, coxcomb, popinjay, chuckle-headed, shilly-shallier, whirligig, hullabaloo, character, not caring a straw, unlucky, shilly-shally, smiles, shilly-shallying...⁵

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 325.

2. I Kings 19:7.

3. Oursler, op. cit., p. 124.

4. Ibid., p. 143.

5. Ibid., pp. 25, 29, 36, 67, 69, 72, 74, 75, 99, 107, 110, 145, 198, 229, 232, 418.

The following is a list of Oursler's pedantic expressions:

...lapis lazuli, purblind, complotted, bastinado, bedizened, aegis, anomaly, clandestine, conventicle, gigantesque, deipotent, lex talionis, reliquary, eidolon, corybantic, nepotism, amiable and ever prodigal fields, bangles, malaise, flagitious, regurgitated, contumacy, convoked, suzerain, frangible, inamorata, frumenty, evocation, supine, poltroon, euphoria, illimitable, flag-eolet, incogitable, pristine, diablerie, charnel, dilettante, maladroit, threnody, metrist, alembic, ferule, litigants, sanctum sanctorum, naos, ashlar, extirpate, orotund, lechery and nympholepsy, brummagem, acolytes, eremite, huggermugger, vassalage, fulminating, pertinacious and ineradicable, saturnalia, feckless, torpor, suzerainty, immurement, archimage, dudgeon, trice, nadir, baldachin, comity, palliating, emigres, toper, intransigence, pogrom, palaestra--summons of the discus, tocsin, appurtenances, perihelion...¹

These two extremes show the abandon with which Oursler uses words and phrases. Most of the pedantic terms are accurate and would be quite acceptable in a different type of literature. However, The Greatest Book Ever Written is a book for lay readers. The above list is not a complete list; it is a list of words and phrases in which simpler words could have been used without any loss of meaning. Both slang and pedantism are used consistently throughout the book and are detrimental to the impact of the Biblical stories.

d. Vividness

Oursler is necessarily limited in the amount of description used in any one story. The material covered is too great to allow much freedom. However, he does remarkably well in the few stories that he

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 30, 63, 75, 94, 96, 97, 97, 103, 103, 105, 110, 124, 127, 130, 131, 141, 152, 155, 160, 163, 173, 174, 176, 178, 182, 193, 205, 209, 223, 223, 230, 230, 235, 246, 252, 254, 255, 262, 273, 280, 280, 281, 288, 291, 293, 293, 294, 306, 317, 318, 320, 321, 326, 334, 346, 357, 367, 381, 386, 396, 396, 398, 408, 410, 411, 413, 413, 423, 427, 427, 434, 435, 436, 444, 447, 448, 461.

has singled out for special emphasis. The first few chapters are especially well done. His account of the garden of Eden¹ is perhaps the most vivid account in the whole book. In it, he gives a beautiful picture of the innocence of Adam, describes accurately the freedom of choice inherent in Adam and Eve, and paints a most vivid description of the Fall and the shame and punishment which followed. Other fascinating accounts which highlight the book at regular intervals are the stories of the tower of Babel,² Sarah's giving of Hagar to Abraham,³ the offering of Isaac by Abraham,⁴ Esau's selling of the birthright,⁵ the making of the golden calf,⁶ and the story of the two women who both claimed the same baby.⁷

There is a lack of direct conversation throughout the book. The Bible itself uses little enough direct conversation and yet Oursler sometimes changes that little bit to indirect conversation or narrative. Sometimes this may be necessary in order to condense the material, but more often it is an unnecessary hindrance. The story of the slaying of the firstborn in Egypt,⁸ for instance, could have been improved by more direct conversation.

e. Unity

Oursler attempts to unify the book in three ways. First, and

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 1-11.
2. Ibid., p. 27.
3. Ibid., p. 40.
4. Ibid., pp. 52-53.
5. Ibid., p. 60.
6. Ibid., pp. 130-131.
7. Ibid., p. 291.
8. Ibid., p. 110.

most important, is his recourse to predicting. Part of the time, this practice is deliberate and valuable; many of the stories end with at least a hint of how they lead into the next story.¹ The reader is thereby motivated to read on to find out what is going to happen. Some of his predictions, however, appear to be the result of impulse rather than deliberation. There are innumerable instances where foretelling does not motivate at all, and in fact, does not contribute in any way to the story. The following is an example:

...(Abraham) came down to the open place of Shechem in Samaria, where men drink to this day from the well which his grandson Jacob was one day to find.²

Or, when telling of Saul's search for a musician, this example:

Thus, thousands of years ago, wise men knew of the therapeutic power of music. It was the sagacious son of David who one day was to tell the world: "There is no new thing under the sun."³

Possibly Oursler did not intend these to be used as motivation, but in either case, they are of little value.

The second attempt to unify the book is the emphasis on the working of God. He mentions the origin of the term "Yahweh"⁴ and continually emphasizes God's character in each story. His use of the term "Voice" in place of "God" or "Lord" is inappropriate. This substitution is made whenever God is speaking directly to man, possibly to support the fact that God is not seen by man, although this seems to labor the point. "Voice" is used twenty-seven times in the first fifty pages and continues at nearly the same rate throughout the book.

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 23, 26, 28, et. al.
2. Ibid., p. 34.
3. Ibid., p. 238.
4. Ibid., p. 100.

The third attempt to unify the book, is his emphasis on Old Testament prophecies concerning New Testament truths. He quotes¹ Isaiah's prophecies of Christ² and also those of the Psalms. In the Epilogue, Oursler reviews all the Messianic prophecies that are found³ in the Old Testament. This emphasis on prophecy is a means of unifying the book with his New Testament book, The Greatest Story Ever Told,⁴ and is quite valid, since the Old and New Testaments are themselves unified in this way.

There is a general overall unity in the fact that Oursler has a definite goal and keeps moving toward it throughout the book.⁵ Lack of conciseness,⁶ sparsity of vividness,⁷ and worthless predictions,⁸ however, are detrimental.

3. Summary

Oursler's exegesis in The Greatest Book Ever Written is quite sound, although there are instances where Biblical truths have been subjugated or omitted by his selectivity of, arbitrary departures from, and method of re-creation of the Biblical narrative as well as by his inclusion of Roman Catholic influences. Exposition of the message of the Bible has been greatly aided by his literary style, especially by the direction and unity he maintains. Exposition is impaired, however, by slow movement in places, lack of conciseness, an unusual range of vocabulary, and sparsity of vividness.

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 368-369.
2. Ibid., pp. 398-400.
3. Ibid., pp. 452-461.
4. Ibid., p. x.
5. Ante, p. 14.
6. Ante, pp. 15-16.
7. Ante, pp. 17-18.
8. Ante, p. 19.

C. An Analysis of the Exposition in The Greatest Story Ever Told

As already stated, exposition consists of both exegesis and¹ literary style. The procedure here, then, is to study The Greatest Story Ever Told on these two bases.

1. Exegesis of Biblical Truth

The study of exegesis of Biblical truth as found in The Greatest Story Ever Told will follow the same pattern as that used in the study of The Greatest Book Ever Written.² The same points will be discussed, namely, selectivity of Biblical truths, arbitrary departures from the Biblical narrative, re-creation of the Biblical narrative, and Roman Catholic influences.

a. Selectivity of Biblical Truths

Even though Oursler uses only the four Gospels as the basis for The Greatest Story Ever Told, there is a great bulk of material from which to draw. He makes a conscientious effort to include all the essential truths, though he necessarily omits certain incidents. He leaves out many of the parables and many of the discourses by Jesus,³ but includes summaries of both. This technique is quite valid since he manages to include the essential truths as expounded by Jesus. It can be safely asserted that Oursler uses a great deal of discernment in selecting the essentials of the Gospel narrative for inclusion in The Greatest Story Ever Told.

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1. Ante, pp. 2-3, 13-14.

2. Ante, p. 2.

3. Oursler: The Greatest Story Ever Told, pp. 148-154, 190-193.

b. Arbitrary Departures from the Biblical Narrative

There are a number of departures from Scripture, some of them unintentional, others deliberate. Oursler's assertions that there were three wise men,¹ that Joseph's dream in Egypt was his last divinely inspired dream,² that there were no other guests in attendance when Jesus ate with Simon,³ that Jesus encouraged Mary's intellectual rebellion,⁴ and others, show that he did not sift the material of the Gospels carefully enough. Conversely, his statement that a white pigeon descended upon Jesus,⁵ and his substitution of "will draw all things" for "will draw all men,"⁶ are more deliberate changes of the Scripture. Most deliberate and most inexcusable departures, however, are his inclusions of Samuel (Barabbas) as a character running throughout the story of Jesus' life and of Annas and Caiaphas who are emphasized as principal characters in the crucifixion story. Samuel is portrayed as an acquaintance of Joseph of Nazareth who even before the birth of Christ, was a member of the Zealots and whose ideals are radically opposed to those of Jesus.⁷ During the uprising of Judas, he changes his name in order to protect himself, taking the name of Jesus Barabbas in honor of Jesus Christ,⁸ and later is caught⁹ and then freed in place of Christ.¹⁰ Annas and Caiaphas are seen as the main characters in the plot to crucify Jesus.

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 62. Cf. Matthew 2:2.
2. Ibid., p. 72. Cf. Matthew 2:22.
3. Ibid., p. 145. Cf. Luke 7:49.
4. Ibid., p. 186.
5. Ibid., p. 93. Cf. Matthew 3:16.
6. Ibid., p. 207. Cf. John 12:32.
7. Ibid., pp. 1-7.
8. Ibid., pp. 82-83.
9. Ibid., p. 212.
10. Ibid., p. 280.

The crucifixion and resurrection are seen through the eyes of these two men rather than through the eyes of the Gospel writers. Both of these departures are unnecessary and the latter especially detracts from the suffering and risen Christ as portrayed in the Gospel accounts.

c. Re-creation of the Biblical Narrative

Just as in The Greatest Book Ever Written,² Oursler shows a good knowledge of Biblical and historical background. However, much of his re-creation of the Gospel narrative is weakened through inadequate use. The following four points are especially significant.

1) Categorizes Men

An infringement of good exegetical re-creation is Oursler's practice of casting characters in molds by insignificant and unsubstantiated assumptions. A good example of this is his description of Judas:

Sallow-faced Judas slouched through the door at the farther end of the red-walled apartment and approached the two elders with graceless steps. All his life, in all that he did, there was a boorishness, an awkwardness in Judas, a maladdress and a roughness that gave to his whole manner an uncouth swagger. He was a red-bearded man with tough curly hair, thick with ringlets, and his eyes chronically swollen. The movements of his body were quick and jerky, as if his strength lay not in muscle and sinew, but in an abundance, a very torrent of nervous energy. His straw sandals squeaked on the marble floor as he made a stiff, perfunctory bow to Annas.³

In the same way, the Pharisee who asked for a sign following the feeding of the 4000, is portrayed as "a bilious fellow, chronically ill from liver trouble";⁴ both Annas and Caiaphas also suffer from physical

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 210-299.
2. Ante, p. 7.
3. Oursler, op. cit., p. 229.
4. Ibid., p. 167.

¹ ailments; and Herodias is pictured as having a wartish blemish on her temple.² Portraying an evil disposition by physical defects may be psychologically practical, but certainly a more sound method, exegetically, could have been devised.

2) Includes Irrelevant Details

There are an overwhelming number of facts included by Oursler that add little or nothing to the Gospel narrative. Examples of these are the references to the obelisks of Heliopolis,³ the gods of Egypt,⁴ the school system of Nazareth,⁵ Hillel,⁶ Thedaeus,⁷ oriental religions,⁸ Essenes,⁹ the literary taste of Pilate's wife,¹⁰ and many others.¹¹

These are many in number, but in a sense they are not totally irrelevant. They contribute to an atmosphere of reality that is of value. On the basis of exegesis alone, however, these details have no vital bearing on the actual narrative.

3) Includes Legends

Though not a common procedure in The Greatest Story Ever Told, there are a few references to legends, which, because they are unreliable and non-canonical, should not be included. Oursler, in speaking of the wise men, adopts the popular legend that they were three in number,¹²

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 198, 243.
2. Ibid., p. 132.
3. Ibid., p. 71.
4. Ibid., pp. 71-72.
5. Ibid., p. 78.
6. Ibid., p. 82.
7. Ibid., p. 84.
8. Ibid., p. 89.
9. Ibid., p. 94.
10. Ibid., p. 262.
11. Ibid., pp. 97, 98, 99, 101, 106, 163-164, 234, 237, 263, 281.
12. Ibid., p. 62.

that they were kings,¹ and even supplies the traditional names.² He also includes the legend of Veronica:

There is a legend that as Jesus and His unwilling helper Simon came by the house of a girl named Veronica, she rushed from her doorway and wept at the sight of Him; she bathed His sweating face with her veil and the tradition seems deathless that an image of His face was imprinted on the silken meshes of her scarf.³

Though these may aid in the re-creation of the story, they do not conform to the grammatico-historical method of interpretation that Terry⁴ emphasizes as the only sound method.

4) Makes Applications

Oursler makes a number of applications which more logically⁵ belong to sermons. Following the account of Peter and the tribute money, Oursler makes this application:

You are not a fisherman, nor am I. Yet you have taxes to pay and so have I. Are we then to hope for gold pieces in the mouths of lake trout? No! No! What are we then to do? We are to stop scowling, stop worrying, go on working--if you are a fisherman, fish! The needed money will come from your own labor--and trust the benevolence of our loving Father, who has promised to provide for all needs of the faithful.⁶

This is an extreme example, but there are others⁷ which are equally meaningless. For instance, after Jesus performed the miracle of the draught of fishes, Oursler makes an application in this way: "'And there is a meaning to it,' whispered one fisherman to another. 'Don't get discouraged. Keep on fishing.'⁸ It is possible that these appli-

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 62.
2. Ibid., p. 65.
3. Ibid., p. 282.
4. Terry, op. cit., pp. 173-174.
5. Ante, p. 11.
6. Oursler, op. cit., p. 174.
7. Ibid., pp. 85, 126, 128, 155, 166, 167, 281.
8. Ibid., p. 119.

cations may arise directly from the Gospel narrative, but if the re-created Bible story conforms to exegetical standards, it will not need such blunt statements of application.

Oursler's categorizing of men, inclusions of irrelevant details and legends, and his making of applications all point out weaknesses in his re-creation of the Biblical narrative. Again, it must be pointed out that the most obvious and extreme examples have been chosen by the writer for purposes of illustration. On the whole, Oursler has re-created the Gospel story in a manner that indicates a sound exegetical basis. The criticisms, therefore, are not to de-value Oursler's work, but to point out areas in which his work might have been improved.

d. Roman Catholic Influences

In this book there are only minor indications of Roman Catholic tendencies. Most recurrent is the subtle elevation of Mary. She is portrayed as having a great deal more insight into the Divine plan¹ than the Scriptures warrant. Oursler also emphasizes Peter as the² founder of the Church, and explains that Jesus did not have any brothers or sisters,³ thus supporting the Roman Catholic view of the "Virgin Mary." He also states that while Jesus was on the cross "a small light shone behind His head, and that it grew more luminous as death came⁴ ever nearer." Some of these are minor points and are debatable even in Protestant circles, but they do show a tendency toward Roman Catholic doctrines. Less acceptable, however, is the inclusion of the

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 148, 281, 286.
2. Ibid., pp. 101, 168-169, 228-229.
3. Ibid., p. 147.
4. Ibid., p. 287.

¹
Veronica legend, which is primarily propagated by the Roman Catholic Church.

2. Literary Style

As has been previously stated, literary style is of equal² importance with exegesis in the exposition of the Bible. The sub-points used in the study of The Greatest Book Ever Written will also³ be used here.

a. Direction

The goal or purpose of Fulton Oursler's book, The Greatest Story Ever Told, is best expressed in his own words:

In writing anew the wonderful life of Jesus, the author has had but one thought in mind, and that was to induce readers to go to the Gospels and hear the story at first-hand.⁴

He explains his method in achieving this goal in the following way:

The book is not offered as an explanation or an interpretation. It is rather an attempt to tell, faithfully, just what the four Apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, assert to have happened in those thirty-three years of the life of Jesus. It is, further, an effort to state the believing Christian's understanding of the meaning of those years. There is no intention here to rationalize or to hunt out a symbolism. While sometimes dramatized, the story is completely faithful to the literal statements of the text.⁵

The goal is a noble one, and the method practical, but the achievement⁶ doubtful. There are too many inclusions of irrelevant details, legends,⁷ and applications,⁸ to accept his own pronouncement that "the

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1. Ante, p. 24.
2. Ante, pp. 2-3, 13-14.
3. Ante, p. 2.
4. Oursler, op. cit., p. vii.
5. Ibid., p. viii.
6. Ante, p. 23.
7. Ante, pp. 23-24.
8. Ante, pp. 24-25.

story is completely faithful to the literal statement of the text."¹

In any sincere account of the life of Christ, the reader cannot fail to gain a great deal of insight into the Divine plan of Salvation. This is true of The Greatest Story Ever Told. There are a great many helps to the understanding of the life of Christ, but the fact remains that Oursler, by his methods and techniques, hinders, to some extent, the simple truths as they are recorded in the New Testament.

b. Movement

The movement of Fulton Oursler's book, The Greatest Story Ever Told, is fairly steady and rapid. He departs from the general movement of the Gospels in several places, some of which is good. For instance, he condenses the parable and discourse sections of the Gospels without omitting any of the principal concepts of Jesus' teaching. This is a necessary thing to do in order to achieve a rapid movement of the narrative. Oursler's method of condensation is to highlight some of the important passages in detail and to mention briefly the concepts involved in the others. This technique works very well. In the chapter on parables, for instance, he explains Jesus' purpose in using parables, gives a general picture of what was taught by them and yet only relates one
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parable--the Good Samaritan. Condensation, though, is good only to a point; it must be kept somewhat within the pattern of the Gospels themselves. The following table shows that Oursler has given far more emphasis to the birth and boyhood of Christ and to His passion than the

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. viii.
2. Ibid., pp. 148-154.

Gospel writers did. While Oursler gave less than one-third of his book to Jesus' ministry, the Gospel writers gave nearly three-fourths. This is not a proper apportionment. His re-creation of Jesus' birth and boyhood moves fairly rapidly in spite of its elaboration, but the section on the crucifixion is expanded beyond the point of interest.

Table Showing Apportionments of the Life of Christ
According to the Four Gospel Writers and Oursler

	Birth & Boyhood		Ministry		Passion	
	Chapts.	%	Chapts.	%	Chapts.	%
Matthew	2	7	23	82	3	11
Mark	0	0	13	81	3	19
Luke	2	8	18	75	4	17
John	0	0	11	52	10	48
Four Gospels	4	5	65	73	20	22
Oursler	20	28	22	31	30	41

Oursler's fault is not in the condensation of the material covering the ministry of Christ, but in the over-expansion of the birth and passion narratives.

c. Clarity

This section is divided into two sub-points, conciseness and terminology. Conciseness concerns Oursler's use of phrasings and sentences, and terminology concerns his use of words.

1) Conciseness

Oursler is generally quite concise in expressing himself. There are, nevertheless, a few places where he could have improved his phraseology. For example, he mentions "many other trees tall,"¹ a phrase which is not at all clear. He opens the forty-eighth chapter with a poor phrasing of an equally poor point: "As all the world knows now, but few cared then whether they knew it or not, Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha."² These instances are rare and are partially recompensed by such concise expressions as "wholly Christian doctrine of the law of surplus service"³ and "you cannot tie up infinity with a string."⁴

2) Terminology

In his use of terminology, Oursler makes the same errors in The Greatest Story Ever Told as in The Greatest Book Ever Written.⁵ His use of slang is somewhat minimized, but there are far too many pedantic expressions. Examples of slang are:

...little dumplings, bulging eyes of a hyperthyroid victim, batted around, evil's own time of it, run at the nose, blackholly eyes, splashed and blessed, spinning of yarns, chicken heart, scotched, small fry, Jericho's turnpike, settle him, brats, hip and thigh, hobnob, square deal, crabapple face, popinjay, wah!, ninny...⁶

Examples of pedantism are:

...phantasmagoria, peristyles, inanition, roiled, blandiloquent, poniard, rapine, supine, tergiversation, indency, inchoate, gigan-

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 48.
2. Ibid., p. 194.
3. Ibid., p. 142.
4. Ibid., p. 242.
5. Ante, pp. 16-17.
6. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 49, 63, 68, 73, 78, 81, 92, 149, 162, 164, 164, 188, 199, 206, 208, 231, 246, 248, 284, 287, 288.

tesque, titanesque, burnoosed, febrifuges, chapfallen, flatulent, marplots, pursy, sybarites, voluptuaries, nympholepsy, diaphanous, eldrich, giglet, bacchante, calumniate, frippery, trumpery, be-spelled, climacteric, apogee, spindrift, factotums, twaddle, fribbling, funambulist, scrofulous, canards, argufiers, revenant, sanctum sanctorum, equivoque, in rilievo, castigation, tessellated, incandescent, commoved, fatuity, refectory, imprecation, soughing, ambivalence, churlish, mote, redolent, quillet, boudoiresque, evocation, truckle, prima facie, uxorious, candent, tapis, eructation, vulpine, cholagogue, purgative, negrillo, lustrum, tatterdemalion, vaticide, deicide, fleered, sirocco, wrack, charnel, golal, palin-genesis, parasceve...¹

Such a great range of terminology is a detriment to this type of literature. Slang expressions do not maintain the dignity of the Scriptures and pedantic expressions tend to hinder the transmission of the message.

d. Vividness

As has been pointed out, the description used in any one story² must be limited. The material covered in the Gospels is too great to allow elaboration of all the stories. The problem is two-fold. First, the stories chosen for elaboration must be those which will most effectively promote the Gospel story; second, those selected must be vividly and accurately described.

Oursler does not always choose the most pertinent stories for elaboration. One cannot help but feel that there are many stories of Jesus' ministry that could have been highlighted a bit more. The³ stilling of the storm, the feeding of the 5000,⁴ and the walking on

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 25, 58, 60, 63, 65, 69, 74, 79, 87, 90, 94, 94, 95, 103, 117, 124, 127, 127, 132, 132, 132, 132, 133, 133, 133, 133, 142, 146, 149, 151, 151, 162, 164, 164, 167, 169, 174, 177, 186, 197, 206, 208, 208, 209, 209, 216, 219, 225, 225, 234, 238, 239, 243, 248, 249, 256, 261, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 270, 272, 272, 273, 273, 279, 279, 281, 285, 285, 287, 288, 288, 291, 291, 292, 293.

2. Ante, p. 20.

3. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 154-155.

4. Ibid., pp. 160-161.

the water,¹ for instance, are very briefly done. On the other hand, he describes in detail Salome,² the Sanhedrin,³ Herod's rage at the secret departure of the wise men,⁴ and Joseph's mental turmoil at the knowledge of Mary's pregnancy,⁵ which are of lesser importance to the transmission of the Gospel message. These more detailed descriptions make these stories particularly vivid.

A few of Oursler's descriptions are somewhat melodramatic. Exemplary of this is his account of Simeon, from which the following excerpts are taken:

...Simeon was so decrepit that it seemed a wonder that he did not fall apart from sheer inanition and decay...the tall, ragged figure of Simeon crept nearer...he halted and lifted up his hands and croakingly thanked God. At last he groaned aloud, he could be allowed to die...his emaciated face of a thousand wrinkles came close...he gasped...sunken eyes gleamed again...he went on huskily. His bony right hand raised, the lean, misshapen forefinger pointed crookedly...Now Simeon swayed back, waving both hands haplessly...⁶

This striking description would not seem so melodramatic if all of Oursler's descriptions were of the same vein. Many are dull in comparison.

On the whole, then, Oursler has necessarily limited his descriptions in quantity and in quality. A few are over-played and a few are under-played, but the over-all effect is at least satisfactory.

e. Unity

Oursler does an excellent job of unifying the New Testament stories, using primarily the organization of the four Gospels. The

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1. Oursler, op. cit., pp. 161-162.

2. Ibid., p. 132.

3. Ibid., p. 246.

4. Ibid., p. 62.

5. Ibid., p. 41.

6. Ibid., p. 60.

story of the life of Christ is told from beginning to end with very little of the predictions that mark The Greatest Book Ever Written. The chapters are short and pointed. There are a few discrepancies, such as the reference to the feeding of the "forty thousand,"¹ but they are few and relatively insignificant.

3. Summary

Oursler's exegesis in The Greatest Story Ever Told is generally sound, this being especially evident in his good use of selectivity. In places, however, he departs from the Biblical narrative, uses unsound methods in re-creating the story, and shows certain Roman Catholic influences, all of which detract from the value of his exegesis. His literary style adds unity, conciseness, and vividness to the exposition of the Biblical narrative, but is weak in regard to direction, movement, and terminology.

D. Summary

Though Oursler's goal in both The Greatest Book Ever Written and The Greatest Story Ever Told is a most worthy one, he does not entirely achieve it. His exegesis is not always of the highest quality. At times he has missed the essential truths of a passage, sometimes departing rather arbitrarily from the Biblical narrative. His re-creations of the Biblical narrative are sometimes marred by inclusions of unsound explanations and legends, unnecessary homilies and substantiations, and an overabundance of irrelevant details. Minor Roman Catholic influences also tend to destroy the objectivity of his exegesis.

Oursler's literary style makes a positive contribution to his

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1. Oursler, op. cit., p. 237.

exposition of the Biblical narrative. He follows the organizational pattern of the Bible itself, except where he finds it necessary to condense or expand. In The Greatest Story Ever Told, the balance of the Bible is lost, due to an over-condensation of the ministry of Jesus and an over-expansion of His birth and crucifixion narratives. Clarity is maintained except in the matter of terminology, which ranges from slang to pedantism. Vividness is one of Oursler's strongest points, but he might have used it to even greater advantage, particularly in some of the miracle stories in the Gospels. The books are unified in the same way that the Bible itself is unified, with Jesus Christ, the God-given Messiah, as the core of the message.

The total effect of Oursler's work is a fast-moving, imaginative account of the Biblical narrative, weakened in part by exegetical and literary imperfections, but nevertheless, generally true to the Scriptures and vigorous in style.

For the most part, The Greatest Book Ever Written and The Greatest Story Ever Told are on a par both exegetically and literarily. Any differences in the two are certainly minor.

CHAPTER II

A STUDY OF WALTER BOWIE'S ADULT BIBLE-STORY BOOK:

THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

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A. Introduction

As already indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, the purpose of this chapter is to evaluate Bowie's book, The Story of the Bible, on the basis of Biblical exegesis and on the basis of literary style.¹ These two areas of study have been pointed out as the counter-²parts of exposition. The section on Biblical exegesis will necessarily be the larger of the two since it is at this point that the writer has found the most significant observations. The chapter will close with a brief summary of the evaluation of The Story of the Bible as a means of eventual comparison with Fulton Oursler's books in the third chapter.

B. Exegesis of Biblical Truth

Since exegesis is the "bringing out into formal statement...³ the meaning of the author's words," and since the intent of the author of a Bible-story book is to transmit the message of the Bible,⁴ the way in which such an author exegetes the Bible is of vital importance. This section, then, will study the way in which Bowie exegetes Biblical truth. Included will be the same points that were included in the study of Our-

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1. Ante, pp. vi-vii.

2. Ante, pp. 2-3.

3. Terry, op. cit., p. 20.

4. Walter Russell Bowie: The Story of the Bible, p. 12.

sler's books,¹ namely, selectivity of Biblical truths, arbitrary departures from the Biblical narrative, re-creation of the Biblical narrative, and Roman Catholic influences.

1. Selectivity of Biblical Truths

Bowie expresses the need for selectivity in his Preface to The Story of the Bible:

It will be observed that not everything which is included in the Bible is included in this book...This, of course, was inevitable. ... (To) produce everything in the Bible...would have made the book too long...The Bible itself is always there for those who wish to go to it and to get its message in completeness.²

He considers "the message" to be "the mighty pageant of the life which moves through the Bible...the pageant of the soul of man in its ascending quest for God."³ He goes on to state his method of selectivity, that is, that "minor incidents should be subordinated to major ones" so that "the figures in this pageant might stand out vividly."⁴

In accordance with this purpose, Bowie does leave out the minor instances and includes the major ones. There are a few omissions that he might well have included, though. In relating Moses' death, he makes no mention of any of the material in Deuteronomy,⁵ which is important as the motivating influence on the children of Israel. He also leaves out the account of the attempted stoning of Moses and Aaron at Kadesh-Barnea.⁶

Besides these omissions of portions of the Bible, there are

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1. Ante, p. 2.
2. Bowie, op. cit., p. 12.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 120.
6. Ibid., p. 114.

omissions of truths within the Biblical stories. One example of this is the recounting of the plagues in Egypt, in which Bowie makes no mention of the fact that the plagues did not affect the children of Israel.¹ (Of course, this would be hard to do since he explains all the plagues¹ as natural phenomena.)

Instances of omissions which might be considered major are rare, however. In general, Bowie does select those stories and truths which make the figures of the pageant stand out.

2. Arbitrary Departures from the Biblical Narrative

Bowie not only departs from the Biblical narrative, but admits it, claiming that the Biblical narrative is unreliable and therefore needs amending. He says in his Introduction that the stories which are recorded in our Bible consist of legends that only partially² reflect the truth of previous events. He says further:

Even in its most primitive books it is the record of those great spirits of our race who have been discoverers of God. Not all the pictures they drew are accurate. Not all the poetry of their superb imagination can be pressed into literal form...It does not matter...that later criticism amends the story of the Bible here and there. Science and history and archaeology, inspired by that love of truth which is the gift of God, will do that.³

In telling the story of the creation, he says:

God is pictured as like a human figure who walked in a garden, and a serpent can stand up and converse like a man. Nobody today thinks that God, and the beginning of the world, were like that; and nobody needs to think so.⁴

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1. Bowie, op. cit., pp. 90-95.
2. Ibid., pp. 18-20.
3. Ibid., p. 21.
4. Ibid., p. 26.

He goes on to compare this "naive old tale"¹ with similar creation stories of the Egyptians and Babylonians.² In speaking of the stories included in the book of Genesis, he says:

The unknown scribe who put the book of Genesis into final form used thus what others had written long before, and arranged these writings within his own frame-work.³

And as a final word before telling the stories of Genesis, he adds:

Let us listen to it not with anxious uneasiness lest it fail to conform to our later science and our developed history. Of course it will not conform; and that is the spontaneous beauty of it.⁴

Bowie continues to detract from the truths of the Old Testament accounts, including assertions that the story of Jonah is not an historical account,⁵ that Ecclesiastes does not express any religious message,⁶ that the author of the book of Esther augmented the story by a moralizing conclusion,⁷ and that the books of the Kings "must be read with discretion, for they cease to be history of an impartial kind."⁸

More specifically, Abraham is portrayed as acting on the basis of his environment and the conceptions of his own mind.⁹ God is left out of the plagues, especially of the plague of darkness, which Bowie describes as a sandstorm.¹⁰ It was Moses who determined to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, rather than God.¹¹ It was not God that wrote

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1. Bowie, op. cit., p. 26.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 25.
4. Ibid., pp. 26-27.
5. Ibid., p. 372.
6. Ibid., p. 355.
7. Ibid., p. 371.
8. Ibid., p. 255.
9. Ibid., pp. 46-47. Cf. Genesis 22:1-2.
10. Ibid., p. 95. Cf. Exodus 10:21-22.
11. Ibid., p. 96. Cf. Exodus 3:1-22.

on the tables of stone, but Moses himself.¹ There are also minor departures which are less deliberate.² He calls Mephibosheth a boy³ at the precise time that the Biblical account mentions that he had a son named Micha.³

It is obvious that Bowie's departures from the Biblical narrative are not merely coincidences or carelessness. Rather, his departing from the Biblical account is the result of deliberation based on the premise that the Biblical narrative is unsound as a literal record of historical events. Since it is the purpose of this thesis to evaluate these adult Bible-story books on the basis of Biblical truth, it becomes apparent that the method of interpretation is definitely involved. The writer agrees with Milton S. Terry that the most sound method is the grammatico-historical. Of this method, Terry says:

Its fundamental principle is to gather from the Scriptures themselves the precise meaning which the writers intended to convey. It applies to the sacred books the same principles, the same grammatical process and exercise of common sense and reason, which we apply to other books.⁴

Behind this principle is an even more basic principle, that is, that man has within his very nature the powers of interpretation:

From the first moment that one human being addressed another by the use of language down to the present hour, the essential laws of interpretation became, and have continued to be, a practical matter. The person addressed has always been an interpreter in every instance where he has heard and understood what was addressed to him. All the human race, therefore, are, and ever have been, interpreters. It is a law of their rational, intelligent, commu-

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1. Bowie, op. cit., p. 106. Cf. Exodus 24:12; 32:15-16; 34:1.
2. Ibid., p. 219.
3. II Samuel 9:12.
4. Terry, op. cit., p. 174.

nicative nature. Just as truly as one human being was formed so as to address another in language, just so truly that other was formed to interpret and understand what is said.¹

This is the basis of the grammatico-historical method of interpretation.

Its truth places a responsibility upon the expounder. As Terry says:

It behooves the expounder of God's word to see that all his principles and processes of reasoning are sound and self-consistent. He must not commit himself to false premises; he must abstain from confusing dilemmas; he must especially refrain from rushing to unwarranted conclusions...The right use of reason in biblical exposition is seen in the cautious procedure, the sound principles adopted, the valid and conclusive argumentation, the sober sense displayed, and the honest integrity and self-consistency everywhere maintained. Such exercise of reason will always commend itself to the godly conscience and the pure heart.²

Bowie admits that "somewhere in their history" the people of Israel³ gained a conception of the one God, though he apparently doesn't know how or where. Actually, the kind of God that the Israelites discovered can only be explained by the events that Bowie seeks to refute. Thus, because he has committed himself to a false premise, he has fallen into a confusing dilemma.

Bowie does not follow the principles of interpretation that are laid down by Terry, but falls into errors that Terry describes as opposing honest integrity and common sense. This has resulted in an exposition of the Biblical narrative that does not conform to the truths that are presented clearly and forcibly by the Biblical writers.

3. Re-creation of the Biblical Narrative

Bowie's re-creations of the Biblical narrative naturally are

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1. Terry, op. cit., p. 173.

2. Ibid., pp. 153-154.

3. Bowie, op. cit., p. 105.

influenced by his method of interpretation. He seems to have two main principles which he follows in re-creating the Biblical narrative. The first is to tell the story as it occurs in the Bible, then discount it by calling it a myth. The second is to delete from the story any and all supernatural phenomena. These two procedures will be studied separately.

a. Discredits the Biblical Account

Those records of the Bible that are old enough are easily discounted by Bowie as legends. His argument is based on the supposi-¹tion that writing began no sooner than 950 B.C. He states that the Old Testament books were written years after the events and that they² are therefore colored by time and by the compilers themselves. But Bowie's date for the beginning of writing in Palestine is not in har-³mony with the Bible, nor is it in harmony with modern scientific find-⁴ings.

Legends are the primary concern of the first part of The Story of the Bible, as is indicated by the following quotations:

And various traditions grew. As we start to read the book of Genesis...we need to remember that.⁵

...no one can tell exactly where the facts leave off and the magnifying of tradition begins.⁶

The book of Joshua and the book of Judges, therefore, can be read for the sheer interest of their story without having one's religion

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1. Bowie, op. cit., pp. 18, 25.

2. Ibid.

3. Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 31:9, 19, 24.

4. Jack Finegan: Light from the Ancient Past, pp. 22, 126-127.

5. Bowie, op. cit., p. 25.

6. Ibid., p. 86.

fettered by their old forms...One's idea of God and of the ways of God, and one's estimates of the conduct proper to full-grown spiritual men are not to be shaped from these books.¹

Real history began, according to Bowie, about the time of David.²

Another method used by Bowie to discredit the Biblical account is to point up seeming discrepancies in the Biblical narrative, most of which are unfounded. He states that there are two traditions concerning Abraham: 1) that he came from Ur and 2) that he came from Haran.³ His implication is that these two accounts are contradictory, whereas the Bible clearly shows that they are not.⁴ Another contradiction, according to Bowie, is the two reactions on the part of Moses when he came down from Mt. Sinai and found the golden calf. One account tells how Moses punished the ringleaders, and the other tells of his intercession for the people.⁵ The two accounts are not contradictory, as Bowie indicates, since both could easily have happened. There are also two names given for Moses' father-in-law,⁶ two names given to Mt. Sinai,⁷ and two accounts of the ten commandments,⁸ all of which are contradictory, according to Bowie.

Both by blunt and subtle methods, then, Bowie seeks to show the inadequacies of the Biblical account. With this view, re-creation of the Biblical stories is worth very little.

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1. Bowie, op. cit., p. 125.
2. Ibid., p. 189.
3. Ibid., p. 46.
4. Genesis 11:31 and 12:4.
5. Bowie, op. cit., p. 108.
6. Ibid., p. 89.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 106.

b. Explains Supernatural Events

Most of the remaining Biblical records are weakened by the deletion of the supernatural. Bowie's interpretation of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is particularly interesting:

The region north of the Dead Sea, where those cities stood, is a region in which there are swamps where oil and pitch bubble out of the ground. A bolt of lightning set fire to this oil and pitch, and a great wind blew it upon the cities, till they were turned into flaming furnaces, and most of the people in them were destroyed.¹

Following this, is the interesting account of how Lot's wife was punished:

The flames overtook her, and the furious wind, laden with the sands of the desert and the dried salt from the shores of the Dead Sea, blew about her and covered her; and so the saying arose that Lot's wife became a pillar of salt.²

All of the miracles of the Exodus from Egypt are explained as natural phenomena.³ According to Bowie:

...people still gather what they call manna, a gum that falls from the tamarisk bushes and must be picked up before the sun rises, for after that it melts and disappears.⁴

He also explains the power of God at Mt. Sinai as a passing storm.⁵

After doing away with all these manifestations of God, Bowie makes the following statement, which indicates the value of his interpretations:

But somewhere in their history the people of Israel attained the conception that for them there was one God only, a God whom no earthly form could represent, and a God whose will was righteousness.⁶

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1. Bowie, op. cit., p. 44.
2. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
3. Ibid., pp. 97-106.
4. Ibid., p. 102.
5. Ibid., p. 106.
6. Ibid., p. 105.

The most startling of all, though, is Bowie's insistence on reducing Jesus and the miracles that surround Him to natural phenomena. In the thirty-fifth chapter, which is really an introduction to the New Testament rather than the New Testament story itself, he attempts to show that the Gospels are mixed with tradition and continues in the following chapter with the idea that Jesus' birth is surrounded with tradition, symbols, and imagery, much of which is not history. The temptation of Jesus is described as imagery, demons are explained as a form of sickness, and the stilling of the storm is explained as a natural phenomenon. The demoniac of the Gadarenes is cured by psychotherapy and the swine are frightened to their deaths in the sea in the following manner:

But before the steady eyes of Jesus and the compassion in Jesus' face, the miracle happened in the man's distracted mind and soul. ...Frightened by the noise of the madman's shouting, they (swine) set off in a violent stampede, rushed down a steep slope that ended in cliffs over the lake, and, tumbling down into the water, were choked and drowned.⁶

Bowie suggests two possibilities for the account of the raising of Lazarus: in one place he calls it a tradition, in another a parable.

Concerning the resurrection of Christ, Bowie states that the Gospel accounts are not in agreement and then adds:

It may well be that some of the details of the resurrection stories belong to tradition rather than to the first and simpler facts. Any account of a great experience is bound to be colored in different ways as it is handed on from those who first knew it to those who hear of it from them.⁹

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1. Bowie, op. cit., pp. 395-396.
2. Ibid., p. 397.
3. Ibid., pp. 413-416.
4. Ibid., p. 418.
5. Ibid., pp. 432-433.
6. Ibid., p. 433.
7. Ibid., p. 463.
8. Ibid., p. 464.
9. Ibid., p. 493.

Here, Bowie admits a "great experience," but in the next paragraph he¹ implies that the disciples "thought that Jesus was dead." He also says:

They were so sure that he was living that they did not stop to trim all their recollections into agreement; and neither did the writers of the Gospels.²

He goes on to say that the Ascension was also a tradition:

Of course the question would be asked, How had he gone; and the early church answered it with a tradition which was framed in the ideas which all men then had of the sort of world they lived in. There above the earth was the sky, and in the sky was heaven. It was to heaven, therefore, that he had gone.³

This makes the disciples deliberate deceivers, which, in turn, casts a shadow of doubt on all their work and upon the very origin of the Christian faith.

The miraculous events surrounding the early church are also marked as tradition by Bowie. He states that by the time these events were recorded, "there was a tendency to glorify the early church,"⁴ and suggests that the proper approach to the Biblical account is that "we must remember that we are reading what men in the next generation liked to think that the church was at the beginning."⁵

Besides all these specific and concrete statements that detract from the Biblical record, there are numerous implications which show Bowie's attitude toward Scriptural truth. According to Bowie,⁶ Hagar seemed to hear the voice of an angel, there seemed to be a voice

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1. Bowie, op. cit., p. 493.
2. Ibid., p. 494.
3. Ibid., p. 495.
4. Ibid., p. 496.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 46. Cf. Genesis 21:17.

speaking to Abraham,¹ Jacob believed he wrestled with an angel,² Moses is said to have laid down regulations,³ Miriam appeared to have signs of leprosy,⁴ Joshua seemed to have a revelation from God.⁵ There are many other similar phrases.

The total effect of Bowie's interpretation is to render the truths of the Bible meaningless. Concerning this type of interpretation, Terry says:

Of all the rationalistic theories the Naturalistic is the most violent and radical. A rigid application of this theory is exhibited in Paulus' Commentary on the New Testament, in which it is maintained that the Biblical critic should always distinguish between what is fact and what is mere opinion. He accepts the historical truth of the Gospel narratives but holds that the mode of accounting for them is a matter of opinion. He rejects all supernatural agency in human affairs, and explains the miracles of Jesus as acts of kindness, or exhibitions of medical skill, or illustrations of personal sagacity and tact, recorded in a manner peculiar to the age and opinions of the different writers.⁶

Terry also gives his opinion of this method of interpretation:

This style of exposition, however, was soon seen to set at naught the rational laws of human speech, and to undermine the credulity of all ancient history.⁷

If Terry's view is to be accepted, Bowie's interpretation of the Biblical stories is not in accord with sound and proper exegesis. And if his exegesis is not sound, neither is his exposition sound.

4. Roman Catholic Influences

Since Bowie is a Protestant writer, it was thought that this

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1. Bowie, op. cit., p. 46. Cf. Genesis 22:1-2.
2. Ibid., p. 65. Cf. Genesis 32:24-32.
3. Ibid., p. 104. Cf. Exodus 19-40, esp.: 19:20; 20:20; 31:18; 35:1,4.
4. Ibid., p. 111. Cf. Numbers 12:10-16.
5. Ibid., p. 127. Cf. Joshua 7:10-15.
6. Terry, op. cit., pp. 167-168.
7. Ibid., p. 168.

section would be included only as a means of comparison and contrast with Oursler's books. However, it is found that Bowie does include¹ certain material from the Apocrypha. Bowie uses this only to fill in the history of the inter-Testament period and does not state that it² is on a par with the canonical Books, although he does say that the "book of the Maccabees is one of the most heroic chronicles in all the history of Israel."³ Since the Apocrypha, though not Roman Catholic in origin, is primarily Roman Catholic in usage, it perhaps should not be used in a Bible-story book, and yet Bowie's treatment of it is not offensive from the Protestant point of view.

C. Literary Style

As already stated, literary style is of equal importance with⁴ exegesis in any exposition of the Bible. The same sub-points used in⁵ the study of Oursler's books will be used here.

1. Direction

In the Preface to The Story of the Bible, Bowie states quite clearly his purpose in writing the book:

More than once the question has been asked, "Is this story of the Bible being written for grown people or for children?" I have always answered with another question, "Which is the Bible written for, for grown people or for children?" The answer, of course, is that it is meant for both. And that is true of this book also. There are some explanatory passages which could not be expressed without the use of some words which children will not readily understand; but, similarly, there is much which children will not understand in the Bible itself. What I have tried to do is to tell the Bible story in such a way that mature and intelligent people

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1. Bowie, op. cit., pp. 377, 386-388.
2. Ibid., p. 377.
3. Ibid., p. 386.
4. Ante, pp. 2-3, 13-14.
5. Ante, p. 2.

will feel its fascination, and yet at the same time reproduce its incomparable pictures of human life in language simple enough for every child to follow and to grasp.¹

Concerning the style of the book, he says: "This book is not a para-² phrase of the Bible, but it is the story of the Bible." In introducing the New Testament stories, he says: "What we are listening to now is not a commentary on the Bible but the story of the Bible itself."³ It is evident from these statements that his intent is to write an adult Bible-story book, although, like the Bible, it is to be adaptable to children. Except for his inclination to cast doubt upon the stories of the Old Testament and of the miracles in the New Testament,⁴ Bowie succeeds in his intention; The Story of the Bible is written for adults, though much of it is not above the understanding of children.

This purpose is modified by another. When asked to write a Bible-story book, Bowie questioned the need for another Bible-story book and was told:

...but we want one from another point of view. The increasing study of the Bible and the researches of scholarship have set the Bible in a new light. We want a story of the Bible written from the perspective of the best we know to-day about its various books and their relationships, and yet a story which will keep the religious reverence which the Bible has always inspired.⁵

Thus, it is apparent that Bowie's intent is to include modern scientific findings along with the story of the Bible itself. This intent is carried out in his book, except that his "scientific findings" are little more than a method of interpretation, which has already been discussed.⁶

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1. Bowie, op. cit., p. 12.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 396.
4. Ante, pp. 40-46.
5. Bowie, op. cit., p. 11.
6. Ante, pp. 35-46.

Therefore, while it is true that Bowie has succeeded in writing an adult Bible-story book which is adaptable to children, it is also true that he has not altogether succeeded in writing a book¹ that conforms to scientific research.

2. Movement

Movement in a Bible-story book depends a great deal on² selectivity. Concerning this, Bowie makes a significant statement in his Preface:

It will be observed that not everything which is included in the Bible is included in this book. There are some incidents, and much more teaching, which are not even mentioned. This, of course was inevitable, and for two reasons. In the first place, to reproduce everything in the Bible, including, for example, all the long messages of the prophets, would have made the book too long; and even if this had not been true, the necessity for selection and discrimination would still have remained. The Bible itself is always there for those who wish to go to it and to get its message in completeness.³

Because he has selected the colorful stories of the Bible, and omitted the large prophecy and discourse sections, the movement of his book is lively. The book moves at a steady pace and, though not intensely captivating throughout, nevertheless maintains high interest.

3. Clarity

Both conciseness and terminology are included in this section. Clarity depends both upon the author's conciseness in the transmission of ideas, and upon his choice of terms.

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1. For example, see ante, p. 41.
2. Ante, pp. 14-15.
3. Bowie, op. cit., p. 12.

a. Conciseness

Most of Bowie's phraseology is concise and meaningful, but in a few cases, the thoughts he uses are too complicated or confused to transmit the idea clearly. Examples of this are: "At least, there was nobody else on earth so far as the book of Genesis explains how anyone had got there,"¹ "His was to be a lot than which no man could have had a harder,"² and "words that seem to sound strangely from his lips."³ Occasionally, Bowie makes a point exceptionally clear by the use of unusually fine phrases. An example of this is: "Saul's character and ruling motives had crossed a fatal watershed."⁴ Both of these extremes are rare. By far the greater part of the book is made up of common, ordinary language that is easily understood.

b. Terminology

Bowie makes several errors in his use of terminology. One of these is his use of archaic expressions. When quoting from a version of the Bible that uses archaic language, this is legitimate, but when such language is used in the telling of the story by the author, it becomes trite. Bowie tells how Abimelech captured Shechem and "sowed it with salt,"⁵ and uses such phrases as "smote them hip and thigh,"⁶ "in this wise,"⁷ "withal,"⁸ and "on this fashion."⁹ A similar error

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1. Bowie, op. cit., p. 33.
2. Ibid., p. 325.
3. Ibid., p. 439.
4. Ibid., p. 186.
5. Ibid., p. 147.
6. Ibid., p. 156.
7. Ibid., p. 191.
8. Ibid., p. 325.
9. Ibid., p. 428.

is the interchanging of "thee" and "thou" for "you."¹ This is probably due to the fact that Bowie quotes from several different versions,² and then continues to use these terms in his own text. There are also a few terms which are probably not a part of the vocabulary of the average layman. Some of these are: "greaves,"³ "internecine,"⁴ "auguries,"⁵ "coterie,"⁶ and "votaries."⁷ These are rare and do not seriously detract from the book.

4. Vividness

The vividness of The Story of the Bible is mediocre at best. In places, the author seems to rush through the story so hurriedly that there is no emotional build-up at all. One of the most disappointing accounts is the account of the crucifixion.⁸ The whole event, including the burial of Jesus, is recorded in two and one-half pages. The story is told with a dispassionate matter-of-factness that nearly obliterates the emotional impact of the event as recorded in the Gospels. The following paragraph is a sample of this:

Outside the walls of the city they went to a low hill called Golgotha, because its shape was that of a skull. The soldiers fastened the cross-beam to the upright of the cross, and nailed the hands of Jesus to it with iron nails, then dragged the cross upright and let the foot of it drop into the hole which had been dug as its socket in the hill. On the right and left of Jesus two others were crucified, men who had been condemned for robbery.⁹

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1. Bowie, op. cit., p. 28.
2. Ibid., p. 13.
3. Ibid., p. 191.
4. Ibid., p. 260.
5. Ibid., p. 279.
6. Ibid., p. 330.
7. Ibid., p. 167.
8. Ibid., pp. 485-487.
9. Ibid., pp. 485-486.

Such lack of emotion detracts seriously from the interest of the book.

There are a few places where the story is more graphic, however. The accounts of the plagues in Egypt¹ and of Boaz making the transaction for Naomi's property,² though lacking in vividness, are examples of Bowie's best efforts in this regard.

There is not a great range in the vividness of the stories; none reach a very high level, but none are exceptionally poor, either. As a whole, Bowie maintains a vividness that is best characterized as mediocre.

5. Unity

The Story of the Bible shows a definite pattern of unity. Bowie alternates between Bible quotations, narration, and exposition; these are integrated into a smooth-flowing unit, though at places the quantity of exposition over-balances the other two.³ There are two major deviations from this overall pattern. The first deviation is the resorting to the practice of commenting rather than to the telling of the story. The author uses this technique with large portions of prophetic passages.⁴ The other major deviation is the thirty-fifth chapter,⁵ which is actually a prologue rather than a part of the Biblical account. Bowie himself regards it as a prologue, for he says in the last paragraph of this chapter: "let us listen, then, to the story⁶ as the New Testament tells it..." Both of these deviations hinder the unity of the book.

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1. Bowie, op. cit., pp. 92-95.
2. Ibid., p. 167.
3. Ibid., pp. 25-26, 40, 278.
4. Ibid., pp. 302-305, 308-310.
5. Ibid., pp. 393-396.
6. Ibid., p. 396.

D. Summary

The Story of the Bible has some faults as well as some commendable qualities. Bowie's most serious fault is his improper exegesis, which is the result of improper principles of interpretation. This is manifested in his skepticism of the reliability of the Biblical account--not only of the earlier Old Testament writings, but also of the New Testament writings. His departures from Scripture, and his re-creations of the Biblical narrative also show this tendency. Commendable qualities include his selectivity of stories to be used in his book, and the literary style that he uses. He accomplishes to a fair degree his stated purpose, and writes in an easily understandable manner, though at times his stories lack a graphic quality, tending to hide the Biblical message.

Considered together, these points show that Bowie's book, The Story of the Bible, transmits the message of the Bible in part only. It is the story of man's quest for God, but the reality of God is weakened through the refutation of Divine intrusion into history.

CHAPTER III
COMPARISON AND EVALUATION
OF THE ADULT BIBLE-STORY BOOKS
OF FULTON OURSLER AND WALTER BOWIE

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A. Introduction

As suggested in the Introduction to this thesis, the purpose of this chapter is to compare the relative values of Fulton Oursler's books, The Greatest Book Ever Written and The Greatest Story Ever Told,¹ with Walter Bowie's book, The Story of the Bible. This comparison and evaluation will follow the same organizational pattern as the separate studies of each book in chapters one and two, and will culminate in a final evaluation of each.

This chapter will not only include the writer's findings and evaluations, but will also include various other criticisms by professional critics and book reviewers.

B. Comparison and Evaluation on the Basis of Exegesis of
Biblical Truth

Exegesis has been determined as the "bringing out into formal² statement...the meaning of the author's words." Since any author of a Bible-story book is thereby directly involved in exegesis, the two authors, Fulton Oursler and Walter Russell Bowie, will be compared on the basis of the exegesis of Biblical truth that is discernable in their respective books.

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1. Ante, p. ix.
2. Ante, p. 3.

1. Selectivity of Biblical Truths

An author of a Bible-story book is inevitably faced with the problem of selectivity.¹ A Bible-story book cannot include all of the material in the Bible, since to do so would be to make the book too long and would allow for no elaboration. Since both authors recognize this problem,² the extent to which each succeeds in selecting the most pertinent materials must be determined.

Both Oursler and Bowie eliminate a great deal of the Biblical material from their books. They tend to leave out the same material,³ namely, long narratives, prophecies, poetry, and discourses. Both authors condense or summarize much of this material, which proves to be a very useful procedure. Oursler completes his work with the resurrection of Christ, while Bowie includes a summary of the events recorded in Acts. Bowie, on the other hand, leaves out all of the contents of Deuteronomy.⁴

Both authors also miss some of the apparent truths involved in some of the stories, and occasionally include minor facts which could have been omitted.⁵

There is little to differentiate between Oursler and Bowie on the basis of selectivity of Biblical truths. Both authors select with discernment and arrive at approximately the same end, though there are differences of minor importance.

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1. Ante, pp. 3-4.

2. Ante, pp. 5, 36.

3. Ante, pp. 5, 36-37.

4. Ante, p. 36. Cf. Oursler: The Greatest Book Ever Written, pp. 147-149.

5. Ante, pp. 4-6, 36-37.

2. Arbitrary Departures from the Biblical Narrative

Oursler's departures from the Biblical narrative are definitely minor, the most significant being the inclusion of a fictitious character, Barabbas, in the Gospel narrative.¹ But, in spite of these minor departures, Oursler maintains the spirit of the Bible and transmits its message faithfully.

Bowie, however, deliberately departs from the Biblical narratives on the basis that they are not accurate and are in need of amending.² This attitude was found to be the result of a type of interpretation that is not sound.³ Because of false principles of interpretation, therefore, Bowie has emerged with a false exegesis and a false exposition.

There can be no doubt that Oursler, even though he departs from the Biblical narrative in minor points, is far more faithful to the literal text of the Bible.

3. Re-creation of the Biblical Narrative

Oursler has a good knowledge of historical and Biblical backgrounds,⁴ but he does fall into a number of errors in his re-creation of the Biblical stories.⁵ He submerges the supernatural in certain instances,⁶ tends to categorize men,⁷ includes irrelevant details⁸ and legends,⁹ and makes applications,¹⁰ but all of these

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1. Ante, p. 6.
2. Ante, p. 37.
3. Ante, pp. 39-40.
4. Ante, p. 7.
5. Ibid.
6. Ante, pp. 7-8.
7. Ante, pp. 8, 22-23.
8. Ante, pp. 8-9, 23.
9. Ante, pp. 9, 23-24.
10. Ante, pp. 10-11, 24-25.

together do not destroy the fact that his re-creations are generally based on sound exegesis.

Bowie's re-creation of the Biblical narrative is not sound on two counts. First, he discredits the Biblical account, calling many of them legends,¹ and casting doubt upon others.² Secondly, he explains supernatural events as natural events.³ Both of these are deliberate and extensive,⁴ and indicate Bowie's failure to exegete properly.

The way in which an author makes use of Biblical truth is pivotal in that it indicates his attitude toward the Scriptures. This fact is highly contrasted in these two authors. Oursler leaves out a few essential truths, but he still relates the Bible stories in accordance with Scripture. Concerning The Greatest Book Ever Written, J. H. Holmes, in the New York Herald-Tribune, says:

The author is primarily interested in the story, which he tells with a fine imaginative sweep. He discusses no historical problems. He enters into no critical examination of the Biblical text...Even moral judgments are avoided.⁵

Bowie, however, does not take the stories at face value, but interprets them in the light of modern criticism. M. L. Becker, reviewing The Story of the Bible in the New York Herald-Tribune, says:

Dr. Bowie writes from full knowledge not only of the Bible itself, but also of the Biblical learning which has recovered the sacred volume from the shadows of medieval superstition and dogma.⁶

Bowie attributes the Bible stories to legends and explains supernatural

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1. Ante, p. 41.
2. Ante, p. 42.
3. Ante, pp. 43-46.
4. Ante, p. 46.
5. New York Herald-Tribune Books, New York Herald-Tribune, Inc., Pub., New York, November 25, 1951.
6. Ibid., January 20, 1935.

events as natural phenomena. Dr. Erdman Harris says of The Story of The Bible:

It weaves in the critical interpretation with the telling of the Bible stories...This is the finest book of its kind in the English language.¹

"Weaving in the critical interpretation" and "recovering the sacred volume from the shadows of medieval superstition and dogma," was not the purpose Bowie set for his book. As has been pointed out,² Bowie departs from sound exegetical procedures in arriving at his conclusions. This is an unsound use of higher criticism that should not go unnoticed.

On the basis of exegesis, Oursler's work is found to be far superior to Bowie's. Bowie's disregard for the reliability of the Scriptures is due to a false principle of interpretation.² This is a far more serious fault than Oursler's, since Bowie's error permeates his whole book, whereas Oursler's books are relatively sound, exegetically.

4. Roman Catholic Influences

Oursler uses a number of terms which are Roman Catholic in usage³ in spite of the fact that he has written for both Roman Catholics and Protestants.⁴ Most offensive to Protestants is his inclusion of the Apocryphal accounts, especially the story of Tobias, of which he makes a whole chapter.⁵ It has been seen that Oursler makes a special effort to

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1. Testimonial included on the jacket of The Story of the Bible.
2. Ante, p. 39.
3. Ante, pp. 11-12.
4. Ante, p. 13.
5. Ante, p. 12.

give the Apocrypha equality with canonical Books,¹ which is in direct
opposition to his stated purpose.² Bowie, on the other hand, uses facts
from the Apocrypha to fill in the historical events of the inter-Testa-
ment period and makes no attempt to claim equality with the canonical
Books.³ Since this is a Bible-story book, this Apocryphal material
might well have been omitted, but it is nevertheless far more acceptable
than Oursler's presentation of it.

C. Comparison and Evaluation on the Basis of Literary Style

The works of Fulton Oursler and Walter Bowie will be compared
and evaluated on the basis of the points used in the study of the lit-
erary style of the separate books.⁴

1. Direction

Oursler's purpose for both The Greatest Book Ever Written
and The Greatest Story Ever Told is that his readers might be impelled⁵
to go to the Bible itself through the reading of his books. In his
Old Testament book, he points forward to Christ the Messiah; and in his
New Testament book, he emphasizes the life of Christ. Bowie's inten-
tion is to reproduce in modern language the stories of the Bible that⁶
they might have meaning for modern readers. These two goals are quite
similar. Neither author seeks to replace or improve the Bible itself.
Both exclude some Biblical material and include some non-Biblical

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1. Ante, pp. 12-13.
2. Ante, p. 14.
3. Ante, p. 47.
4. Ante, p. 2.
5. Ante, pp. 14, 26.
6. Ante, pp. 47-48.

material, and neither is entirely true to the Biblical narrative in matters of exegesis.¹ Bowie, however, has a secondary purpose--to include modern scientific findings so that the Biblical narrative takes on new life.² In this he is only partly successful, since much of his "scientific findings" is merely interpretation.³ On the whole, both authors achieve their purposes.⁴

2. Movement

Both Oursler and Bowie have omitted large sections of the Biblical narrative,⁵ which, as Bowie says, is "inevitable."⁶ In the process of selecting and omitting, both authors have kept intact the essentials of the Biblical narrative and thus have succeeded in maintaining a rapid pace without sacrificing Biblical truth. In The Greatest Story Ever Told, however, Oursler over-expands the birth and crucifixion narratives at the expense of the events of Jesus' ministry.⁷ Edgar Blake, however, says in the San Francisco Chronicle concerning The Greatest Story Ever Told:

In his modern language life story of Jesus, Fulton Oursler follows closely and reverently the chronicles of the four Apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The narrative moves at a good pace...⁸

This is a fair estimate of Oursler's books, although extraneous material

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1. Ante, pp. 36-47.
2. Ante, p. 48.
3. Ante, pp. 35-46, 48.
4. It should be stated here that Bowie no doubt achieved his second purpose, although he did not achieve what he said was his purpose. The problem is actually in the defining of "scientific findings," in which the writer takes issue with Bowie. See ante, pp. 35-48.
5. Ante, pp. 14-15, 27, 36, 49.
6. Ante, p. 36.
7. Ante, pp. 27-28.
8. San Francisco Chronicle, April 17, 1949, p. 22.

sometimes impedes the movement.¹ Bowie also follows the narrative of the Bible, but his interjections concerning the critical approach retard the natural pace of the book.² Both authors maintain a fairly rapid and steady movement.

3. Clarity

This section will compare and evaluate Oursler's and Bowie's books on the basis of conciseness and terminology.

a. Conciseness

Oursler and Bowie both use phrases that are not clear, but these instances are rare in each case.³ Oursler's tendency to speculate,⁴ especially in The Greatest Book Ever Written, detracts from the conciseness of his books. Both authors, however, have written in a smooth-flowing manner that adds greatly to their books.

b. Terminology

Oursler's books include a great deal of slang and pedantism,⁵ both of which are detrimental. Concerning The Greatest Story Ever Told, Riley Hughes, in the Saturday Review of Literature, says:

The battle of idiom, that pitfall of so many an historical novelist, plagues Mr. Oursler and is responsible for more than one unsure touch.⁶

Bowie's work is free from slang, and pedantic terms are rare.⁷ Bowie

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1. Ante, p. 15.

2. Ante, pp. 41-42.

3. Ante, pp. 15-16, 29, 50.

4. Ante, pp. 15-16.

5. Ante, pp. 16-17, 29-30.

6. Saturday Review of Literature, Norman Cousins, editor, Saturday Review Associates, Inc., New York, N.Y., February 19, 1949.

7. Ante, p. 51.

does, however, resort to archaic expressions at times.¹ This is probably the result of his familiarity with versions which use archaic language. On the whole, Bowie's work is far superior to Oursler's in the matter of terminology.

4. Vividness

While neither Oursler nor Bowie write with consistent vividness, yet both at times can be quite poignant.² Chad Walsh says of Oursler's The Greatest Book Ever Written: "At times it evokes a deep tenderness and there are touches of unconscious poetry."³ And of The Story of the Bible, M. L. Becker says:

His style is rich, poetic, vivid, reverent, yet without a trace of sanctimoniousness. Its narrative value is of a high order--no dull summary of facts, no verbose paraphrase of the classic text, but throughout an original, dramatic and frequently eloquent rewriting of the ancient story.⁴

This seems to be a rather exalted opinion of this book,⁵ although there are places where vividness is more pronounced. Oursler more frequently achieves eloquence,⁶ and generally maintains a higher level of vividness.

5. Unity

Oursler's books and Bowie's book both follow the organizational pattern of the Bible and are therefore unified to nearly the same extent

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1. Ante, pp. 50-51.

2. Ante, pp. 17-18, 30-31, 51-52.

3. New York Times Book Review, New York Times Co., Pub., New York, N.Y., December 2, 1951.

4. New York Herald-Tribune Books, New York Herald-Tribune, Inc., Pub., New York, N.Y., January 20, 1935.

5. Ante, pp. 51-52.

6. Ante, p. 18.

as the Bible itself. Extraneous material plagues both Oursler and
¹
Bowie, and yet interest is seldom lost. The following statement concerning The Story of the Bible could also be said of Oursler's books:
"It can be read with unflagging interest, if not at one sitting, yet
²
as another book of special appeal is read, continuously."

D. Summary

It has been found that both authors have had to resort to selecting parts of the Biblical narrative to include in their respective books, and both succeed in selecting the most pertinent stories. Though both authors depart somewhat from the Biblical account, Bowie's work is greatly influenced by the critical method, which leads him to pass off many of the truths of the Bible as legends and the miracles as natural phenomena. This false interpretation of the Biblical record has further resulted in a false re-creation of the Biblical events, so that in this area, Oursler is superior. Both authors make some mention of the Apocrypha, though Bowie's use of this material is much more acceptable from the Protestant point of view. Oursler includes other minor Roman Catholic influences as well. On the basis of over-all Biblical exegesis, Oursler must be considered the superior. He has weak points in his exegesis, but all of them together are not as detrimental as Bowie's weakness in the use of a false principle of exegesis.

It has further been found that in the matter of literary style, Oursler and Bowie are nearly equal. Both show purpose and drive

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1. Ante, pp. 18-20, 52.
2. Living Church, December 22, 1934.

toward that purpose, and a fair degree of unity. Oursler has maintained a higher degree of vividness than Bowie, but has been less effective in the area of terminology.

Since the two authors are nearly equal in literary style, then, their relative values must be judged on the basis of Biblical exegesis. Oursler's use of exegesis is not without faults, but it is of a far higher quality than Bowie's. Therefore, Oursler's books are of greater relative value.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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It has been pointed out that the purpose of adult Bible-story books is not to replace or relegate the Bible to a secondary position, but to motivate readers to go to the Bible itself for first-hand information. Thus, adult Bible-story books have a place in the area of Christian literature. The problem is in knowing what books are of real value in this field. Within the field of adult Bible-story books, the books of Fulton Oursler and Walter Bowie were found to be very popular. Therefore, it has been the purpose of this thesis to compare and evaluate the adult Bible-story books of these two authors.

It was decided to divide the study into three chapters: the first to include a study of Oursler's books, the second to include a study of Bowie's book, and the third to include a comparison and an evaluation of the books of both authors.

The first chapter was divided into two sections so as to study each of Oursler's books separately. In these sections, the exposition of each book was analyzed on the basis of Biblical exegesis and on the basis of literary style. Analysis on the basis of Biblical exegesis was divided into: selectivity of Biblical truths, arbitrary departures from the Biblical narrative, re-creation of the Biblical narrative, and Roman Catholic influences. Analysis on the basis of literary style was divided into: direction, movement, clarity, vividness, and unity. In this chapter it was found that Oursler uses a great deal of discretion in selecting portions of the Biblical narrative for use in his books. He departs from the truths of the Bible in

minor points, but is generally sound in exegesis and therefore in harmony with the Biblical account. His re-creations suffer from a number of intrusions into the Biblical narrative. There are a number of places which indicate tendencies toward Roman Catholic doctrines, most serious of which is his use of the Apocrypha. This is a major criticism of his work. Concerning literary style, Oursler is weakest in the area of terminology, since he includes everything from slang to pedantism. Had Oursler been more careful in his use of terminology, both his books would have been immeasurably improved. He achieves his stated purpose, and his unity is good, although it is interrupted at times by extraneous material. Movement is fairly rapid and steady. Vividness is of a high caliber. The first chapters of each of his books are the most vivid, with only occasional eloquence thereafter. Oursler's most serious faults, then, were found to be the intrusions of extraneous material and his poor use of terminology.

The second chapter dealt with Bowie's book, The Story of the Bible. The organization of this chapter followed the same pattern as that of the first chapter. Bowie has selected his material discerningly, but his method of exegesis caused him to fall into serious departures from the Biblical record. Many of the Biblical stories are dismissed as legends and many of the supernatural events are explained as natural. His re-creations of the Biblical narrative also suffer from this type of exegesis. He makes mention of the apocrypha, which is primarily Roman Catholic in usage, but does not treat it in a way that is offensive to Protestants. His literary style is generally good. He achieves his stated goal, his sentences and words are well chosen, and his book is unified quite well. There is a serious lack of vividness in places,

although there are a few fairly vivid accounts. Movement is sometimes hindered by extraneous details, but is generally rapid and steady. Bowie was found, then, to have a fairly high quality of literary style, but to be seriously at fault in his exegetical approach.

In comparing the works of these two authors in the third chapter, it was found that these books are of about equal quality in selectivity, direction, movement, and unity. Oursler's books were found to be weaker in respect to Roman Catholic influences and terminology, while Bowie's book was weaker in departures from Biblical truth, re-creation of the Biblical narrative, and vividness. Oursler's faults were found to be quite serious, and yet, Bowie's were even more so since his misuse of exegesis resulted in a Bible-story book that is not in harmony with the Bible.

With the foregoing summary in mind, the writer has little choice but to recommend Oursler's books above Bowie's book. While The Greatest Book Ever Written and The Greatest Story Ever Told are not all that might be desired, they are nevertheless superior to The Story of the Bible, since the latter, because of its assumptions that the Bible is unreliable, tends to undermine the faith of its readers. The imperfections of Oursler's books, great as they are, never detract from the fact that the Biblical account is wholly reliable and worthy of an exalted position as the Holy Word of God.

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