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BIBLICAL LANGUAGE AND EXEGESIS – HOW FAR DOES STRUCTURALISM HELP US?[1]

JAMES BARR

Perhaps this paper should be entitled 'Confessions of a Repentant Structuralist' – and yet it seems uncertain whether the repentance is sufficiently sincere, and indeed whether the sin repented of was ever committed. For I must take some blame – or credit, as the case may be – for having introduced some concepts of structuralism to the biblical and theological scene. For how many scholars on that scene had heard of structural linguistics or the like before *The Semantics of Biblical Language* was published in 1961?[2] How many had even heard the name of Saussure? Yet if I ever became a structuralist – and I am not sure whether that is the case or not – it must have happened by accident, for I had no great experience, so far as I can recall, in the sources out of which structuralism appears to have grown. The one and only book which I can remember having read in my student days, and this before I became involved in biblical studies at all, was Jespersen's *The Philosophy of Grammar,* which, I suppose one might say, formed an introduction to the study of language on a basis something like a structuralist one. On the one hand it showed that languages can and must be seen as a system of elements co-existing at one time and interacting on one another, alongside the seeing of the elements historically on the basis of what they might have been before. On the other hand it showed the inadequacy of the traditional school grammar on which one had been brought up, with its naively conceptual base for categorization, e.g. the simple idea that a noun is 'the name of a person, animal, place or thing'. Another thing one heard about was Gestalt psychology, and the idea that one must look at the form of something as a whole rather than analyse it into different parts and measurements; the idea seemed good but I do not remember studying it beyond the general conception.

Nevertheless in the course of time I seem to have got into a position where I could be labelled as a structuralist, and I suppose the most distinguished person to have made this identification is Professor Gerhard Friedrich, who became editor of the theological dictionary to the New Testament after Kittel himself, and who once asked me, I think, whether I really 'identified myself with (the verb used was *sich bekennen zu*) the structuralist view of language as completely as it appeared from my writings'. And, to quote from a fairly recent article from his pen:[3]

> Was Barr in grosser Einseitigkeit vertritt, ist die Forderung des amerikanischen Strukturalismus, der auf kontextuelle Bindung entscheidenden Wert legt, den Wortbedeutungen aber keine Aufmerksamkeit zuwendet.

This however is an odd judgement. Looking back at *The Semantics of Biblical Language,* I do see that I quoted standard American structuralists like Bloomfield a few times, and not surprisingly, for they uncovered many aspects of language in an excellent way. But the aspect to which Friedrich alludes, i.e. the tendency of Bloomfieldian linguistics to regard semantics as lying without its purview, was exactly the opposite of my own opinion;[4] and indeed it is difficult to see how anyone who held that Bloomfieldian view would have been interested enough to attempt to write a book on semantics in biblical language.

There were, however, two other roots in the history of ideas, other than the reading of actual structuralist works, that, I think, produced in the minds of persons of my generation a certain tendency towards a nascent structuralist outlook. The first of these was a certain dissatisfaction with purely historical explanation as a statement of the meaning of texts. Some of this came from fundamentalism and that sort of thinking, which had always rebelled against the *free* historical explanation of texts – 'free' meaning an explanation that was open to results that would conflict with standard evangelical doctrines including those of biblical inspiration and inerrancy.

But this reaction did not necessarily come from that sort of dogmatically conservative position. It came also from the feeling that, even if all the critical analyses and divisions were correct, they did not furnish a proper account of the meaning of the texts. This was, I think, a difference from some of the men of an earlier generation, who had left the impression, whether they meant it so or not, that the historical analysis into circumstances and sources *was* the ultimate expression of meaning in the material. As against this sort of thing, we felt that there must be another level on which we might speak of the meaning of texts *as they are.* This is one of the foundations of the interest in structuralism in biblical studies, just as it leads also to – for instance – the emphasis on the canonical form as pioneered by B. S. Childs.[5]

And the second force that, within Old Testament scholarship at any rate, conduced to a kind of proto-structuralism was the primary response to exactly that problem, namely the rise of Old Testament theology in its modern form, especially as it was worked out by Eichrodt in his massive and informative work, still basic to the entire subject. Eichrodt's approach can be described as a structural one, if not a structuralist one. Given the variety of history and of sources, and granting the historical development of ideas, he wanted to detach a comprehensive picture of the world of faith of the Old Testament, a cross-section through the historical development, which would distinguish the central from the peripheral and provide a base of reference for the understanding of the outlying elements. Individual elements made sense, Eichrodt thought, only through their relation to the whole; and that relation to the whole gave them a meaning that they might not have had if they were related to some other scheme, e.g. to ancient Canaanite myth or to animistic origins and the like. In this sense Eichrodt's Old Testament theology, and other works in the same pattern, were distinctly structural in style. The vast mass of highly variable detail made sense when it was seen in relation to a comparatively simple inner structure.

Later on, other types of Old Testament theology, and in particular von Rad's, seemed to repudiate that approach; yet it seems likely to remain as a central insight of the total twentieth-century approach to the subject. This understanding of biblical theology, then, formed a certain *praeparatio evangelica* for the arrival of structuralism. In what, then, did it differ from the truly structuralist understanding?

In two ways, I think. First of all, Old Testament theology of Eichrodt's kind did not use the scheme, built upon a linguistic base, that modern structuralism has made

customary. The structure was conceptual: it was a system of theological ideas, and later suffered criticism for exactly that, namely that it was too systematic. It was not a code, a sign system; it was content, and content meant conceptual content. Exactly this feature of course brought the criticism that such biblical theologies assimilated the Bible excessively to the nature of systematic theology, and not without some reason: on the other hand they could be defended on the same ground, with the argument that the Bible did in fact have a theological core and that there was no reason why this should not be disengaged and stated. And, secondly, it could be argued that this sort of theology did not really provide an adequate key to the understanding of *texts*. It said: taking the Old Testament as a whole, there is an underlying structure against which and through which you can see everything. But from this there did not seem to emerge any clear vision of a way in which one might read a particular text, e.g. the story of the Flood or of Samson and Delilah, in and for itself. The only thing you were instructed to do was to read them against the background of this comprehensive view of the world of faith of the Old Testament as a whole. It was this weakness, no doubt, more than any other factor that caused many scholars to prefer von Rad's very different, and less structural, mode of reading the texts.

In these ways, then, the Old Testament theology of the thirties and forties both prepared the way for a structural reading and left open gaps which a structuralist approach might in due time fill up. Where then is the difference? What is it that the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss or of Greimas offers that is radically new in relation to these older approaches? Perhaps, let us say, it is the adoption of the structure of *language* as the model for the structures of culture, society and literature. 'Roland Barthes once defined structuralism as a method for the study of cultural artefacts which originates in the methods of contemporary linguistics'.[6] Such a basis for the structure of the Israelite world of faith was certainly not present in the mind of Eichrodt. The model upon which his Old Testament theology was constructed was not that of linguistics, but that of more traditional theology. This is so whether or not we agree with the criticism that Eichrodt excessively made a systematic theology out of the Old Testament. For our present purposes, and whether or not that criticism is valid, we cannot doubt that he saw his structure as a theology rather than as a semiotic code.

First of all, however, we may usefully go back to a point mentioned earlier: undoubtedly one of the reasons that has attracted attention to structuralism as a framework for scriptural exegesis is the idea that it provides a way of escape from the historical problems which have been so central in much modern study. A text, it may be argued, has its meaning in itself and in its own internal relations of meaning, and not in the historical process out of which it emerged, not even in the intentions of the writer. From a structuralist point of view, therefore, it may be supposed, historical relations may be irrelevant. Thus, as suggested, one strong source of interest in structuralism, at least in the English-speaking world, has lain in the influence of a conservative background with its repudiation of modern critical perspectives and results.

It is a moot question, however, whether this is a right evaluation of the structuralist contribution. First of all, even if such a structuralist reading, independent of historical perspectives, is possible, it does not seem clear that it cannot be combined with, and mutually illuminated by, the historical perspectives which arise from a different approach. Secondly, if a structuralist reading is really independent of historical perspectives, it must be clearly stated that this is so, and that the text therefore provides *no* reliable historical information at all, just as its reading is independent of historically critical considerations. In other words, if a historically neutral structuralist reading is possible, it should be made clear that it provides no support whatever to the traditional conservative modes of understanding, just as it does not depend on support from the historically critical approach. Where structuralism has been welcomed by currents of opinion that are theologically conservative, this has often been because they were ready to read into the structuralist approach elements that derived from their own historical conservatism about the Bible. On the other hand, even apart from this, it may be that the conservative will reason thus: the historical-critical approach has been maintained largely on the grounds that it is *the one* necessary approach: but, even if one accepts the validity of historical criticism, the fact that there does exist somewhere, in structuralism or something related to it, another approach, and one that works in independence of historical questions, must mean that the claims of historical-critical reading to validity are greatly relativized.[7]

This only brings us, however, to the more important question, whether structuralism is really a non-historical method or approach in the first place. I don't think it should be accepted that it is so. The characteristic structuralist affirmation of the synchronic axis as against the diachronic axis should not be taken to mean that the diachronic axis is insignificant and may be neglected: on the contrary, it means that the synchronic axis, the understanding of relations within a culture or a system *at one time*, is essential for the understanding of the diachronic axis, the relations of change between a state at one time and a state at another. In the realm of language, which is after all the basic paradigm, this is particularly evident. The fault of much older 'historical' study was that it sought to trace through time the changes in the individual items; while the change of individual items can be seen and assessed only as part of the total structure of the language before and after. Thus the more purely 'historical' approach failed to be historical, and the synchronic view made it possible to be more fully historical.[8] Again, one main criticism of the use of etymology is: not that it is wrong in itself to seek to trace back meanings and forms of a word into the past, but that, even if this can be done, one no longer knows how it functioned, and therefore what it meant, unless one also knows – or can reconstruct – how all the other words at that time also functioned and what they then meant. And etymology as usually practised has never even attempted to do that.

But the same is true of political history and other history such as the history of theological ideas: one cannot trace, for instance, the history of the doctrine of the trinity over several centuries as if it was a stream of consciousness about the trinity in particular existing in itself. Rather, various stages of that doctrine have to be seen in the conspectus of the total configuration of church life and doctrine and society, each in a particular time. Thus the essential defence of the synchronic vision is not that it is superior to and can displace the diachronic, but that it is the essential basis for diachronic vision also. Certainly in language study it is easy to see how the purely historical vision, separated from adequate synchronic anchorage, both

in the general functioning of language and in the synchrony of this or that particular language, has in the event deeply failed to be accurately historical, and has tended to lapse into a historicism that is in fact profoundly speculative. Thus a historically-oriented structuralism is not only quite possible but is salutary and basically necessary.

Structuralism, then, cannot legitimately be pressed into the service of a historically conservative view of the Bible. On the contrary, it can with reason be argued that the basic historical-critical impulses arose from a sort of primitive structural vision. Polzin, for instance, in a recent study of structuralism in its application to biblical studies – a study which may not need to be wholly accepted, but which nevertheless remains a significant pointer – has argued that the fundamental approach of Wellhausen has a close affinity to structuralist principles:[9] 'I have little hesitation in viewing [Wellhausen's] chapter one as a good example of diachronic structural analysis'.[10] In any case, leaving Polzin and speaking for myself now, it seems to me that the basic traditional critical methods can well be seen as structural in character, and can be explained and accounted for in structuralist terms. Starting from the texts as they are, but finding difficulty in establishing intelligible structure on the basis of the present surface form of the text, the critical movement proceeds to identify structures which are present within the text but which do not appear on the surface, because they are related genetically or generatively to the text as it is. The structures so discerned then form a framework for the understanding of the main contours of the text. The basis of historical-critical reading is, and always was, the form of the text as it now stands. Unfortunately, as the critical results became more established and familiar, the perception of the existing text from which the critics had started came to be less and less evident; and for this reason, if for no other, it is salutary that people are looking today at fresh possibilities in all this area. In general, then, the structuralist perspective is not so antithetical to historical reading as has often been supposed, and it may well be thought that the two are interlinked and complement one another, with the structural vision actually forming the foundation for the best historical understanding.

But now let us look at the subject from another angle and one that is more critical of the direction in which much structuralist work has developed. Let us grant the base in linguistics from which, according to many thinkers, structuralism started out – though shortly I shall raise some questions about even that. But, granting the validity of this base, the question must follow: is it really probable that a conception of structure that is valid for language – and, as we shall see, valid particularly for certain special areas of language – will also, more or less without change, be extensible so as to apply to the workings of society, the character of myth, the criticism of literature, and the understanding of religion? Can this really be so?

And let us first of all record the impression that, in the study of the Bible, in spite of a large body of theory and some often fearsome terminology, structuralist exegesis has thus far produced no large body of profound and convincing results.[11] Sometimes the results produced seem rather paltry, insubstantial, and such as could in any case have been perceived by any imaginative reader even if not possessed of the structuralist equipment upon which they are theoretically based. Dr Polzin, whose interesting observations about Wellhausen we have just quoted, has in the same book a chapter on 'The Code of the Book of Job' which is highly mathematical, diagrammatic and arcane to a degree. The story is taken as a series of 'transformations' in which, for instance, +X+Y becomes —X+Y for Job himself but +X—Y for his friends, X being the sphere of belief and Y the sphere of personal experience (p. 94); and this is a very simple instance extracted from a much more complicated representation. But when the author goes on in the next chapter to apply this algebra to the actual Book of Job, what emerges, though plausible and perhaps even probable, is not so exceptional. The book is 'about a man who has everything that life has to offer and loses it all in a brief series of disasters' (p. 102). Again:

> The message of the book centers around a conflict between God, who affirms life however cruel, and Job, who wanted death to avoid that cruelty; it is the story of how God won.
>
> In short, Job is portrayed throughout the book as a man who always recognizes the power of God and his subordination to him, and for this very reason rejects life as God has constituted it. Nowhere in the book is Job the unbeliever; rather he is the supreme realist who rejects not God but life as God has shaped it for man.[12]

Excellent, one must say: good sentiments in every way; but in what way do they differ from that which might have been conceived by any imaginative observer who was quite innocent of all knowledge of the 'code' of Job? And this is no isolated example. Structuralist expositions of parables of Jesus, or of miracle stories like his walking on the water, often leave the reader with a sense of disappointment: he asks himself, what has actually been clearly and firmly discovered here, that is different from what we might have known before ? Is structuralism really a way that will lead to a new set of powerful insights and results in biblical study, or is it rather an expression of a new outlook of scholars, who are going to express themselves in a new way but will have essentially banal things to say?

Where then is the source of this weakness? Rather tentatively and cautiously I will reassert the position already mentioned. Granting that a firm structural approach is essential to the study of language – and even here it is far from certain that structuralism is the last word – is it the case that this model can serve throughout the range of human studies, including society, culture, religion and literature? Is it not the case that when we move into (say) literature we move into another genus, so that a model based strictly on what happens in language no longer works? Moreover, the linguistic model adopted as the base for much cultural and literary structuralism is a model taken (often expressly) primarily from one particular department of linguistics, namely the phonology. In language the phonology is the most clearly and simply structured and systematic element. You have a small and closed system: a language has, shall we say, thirty phonemes, which can be defined as having certain precise contrasts as against each other, and fairly simple relations of opposition prevail. It is to this department of linguistics that structuralist theory continually appeals. See for example Culler, who quotes Trubetzkoy maintaining that the study of distinctive or differential features that make objects socially significant is closely analogous to work in phonology.[13] And thus, to use in paraphrase an example that Culler actually cites from Trubetzkoy, the difference in the length or shortness of a woman's skirt is a social sign closely analogous to the difference between *b* and *p* in English, i.e. to the difference between *bin* and *pin*.

Now this may be true of women's skirts, at least so long as one sticks to the simple matter of length, which must be either shorter or longer – though it becomes much more complicated when one comes to colour and still more so when one comes to design. And this is the question as I see it. Structuralism seems to have decided that essentially *simple* oppositions are the base for social life, communication and literary meaning. Binary oppositions are much in favour, where the alternatives are 0 or 1, light or dark, up or down. Lévi-Strauss's famous 'The Raw and the Cooked' is a classic example. Not surprisingly, therefore, structuralist books and articles on the Bible can commonly be recognized, even before the reader has read a word, by the presence of *diagrams* – a line down the middle of the page, terms on one side matched by terms on the other side, arrows at decisive points leading from one side to the other. 'And Moses said' can be thus represented: from the state zero (silence) we pass to the state 1 (speech). Jesus getting into a boat is an event of the same order: one moment he is on the land (1), the next he is on the sea, which might be expressed as 0. Blinding flashes of illumination of this kind are not infrequently to be met with.[14]

Now it seems to me that – whatever the case with social life and anthropology – not very much of religion or of biblical literature lends itself to this sort of categorization. We are dealing with relations which are not simple but highly complicated, with choices which are not between one and another out of two but between a multitude of possibilities. If we affirm this, then it does not necessarily mean that we are rejecting the model of language, for it may mean simply that we are moving from one department of language, the phonology, to another. I would suspect that social, literary and religious substance is more akin to semantics and to syntax than to phonology. This is a subject that has much occupied me as a lexicographer of Hebrew. Hebrew words, like the words of any other language, have meaning through relation to the other words with which they are collocated in a phrase or longer utterance (the 'syntagmatic' dimension) and through relation with the other words which might conceivably take the place of the word we are talking about (the 'paradigmatic' dimension). In this sense contrasts, oppositions and syntactic relations are the substance of meaning and communication. But only in certain cases do these relations take the form of simple or binary oppositions, and only in certain cases can they be reduced to combinations of simple or binary oppositions. In most cases we are dealing with a continuum of vaguely related, partly overlapping, terms, and with a greatly extensible series of possibilities rather than a closed matrix. No matter how long a sentence is, you can add something more. If you take a group of words in a semantic field, e.g. the different Hebrew words for 'man', you don't find clear and simple oppositions but rather vague and fluid ones. And this is how the literature works. In certain examples of biblical Hebrew one can indeed state a very neat and simple system of contrasts, to which there may perhaps be no exception, such as this one, which I published a few years ago:[15]

But I published this expressly as an exception: most sets of terms do not fit into so neat a scheme. If we take the vocabulary of the field 'to hide', as Balentine has recently shown in an exemplary study,[16] we find about seven different primary verbs, which form not a system but a sort of loose set or collection, and they have all sorts of unsystematic and unpredictable lines of interchangeability running between one and another. Only one of them, however, is used in the phrase, 'to hide the face', which is a very important religious expression. But there is no great distance from the group that means 'hide' to a further loose grouping of words, such as the words for 'cover', or again to the words for 'turn away', which have a close relationship to the hiding (or turning away) of the face. In the original planning of the Oxford Hebrew Dictionary we had the idea of stating in each entry the other words that functioned in the same semantic field, but except in obvious cases it turned out to be too difficult to do this, not because it is hard to make a list, but because it is hard to put a clear and definite end to it. The terms which seem to fit well into a rather simple structure, like that of 'holy/unholy' and 'clean/unclean' as stated above, seem to be those that are *institutionalized:* these are terms for some distinction that is powerfully marked out and defined by institutional practices, deeply rooted in the culture and more or less universally so stated and expressed. But such terms, though they are common in the literature, do not form more than a small part of its diction. I therefore wonder whether a structuralism that is too much guided by such examples – which for certain fields, like anthropology, may be of the first importance – can really hope to deal with the character of a literature like the Old Testament. Thus, as I say, if one had to state a linguistic analogue for the structures of literature or religion, I would see it in semantics and syntax rather than in phonology.

But fundamentally I do not feel sure that these relations should be analogical at all. Even within linguistics syntax is not built upon a structure analogical to that of phonology; and literature, which is *used language* and not just language (*parole* as against *langue* in Saussure's terms: German is not the same thing as German literature) stands on a different level from language, just as syntax stands on a different level from phonology. Language and culture are thus not symmorphous. It is of course easy to point to *some* elements in both which *may* be symmorphous: these are often our institutionalized terms just referred to. Again, it might be significant if it should prove to be true that all languages form their sets of colour terms in the same order – and it has recently been ably argued that Hebrew fits into this pattern – and that this order is related to fundamental physiological and social universals in man.[17] There may, then, indeed be cases of such symmorphousness, but that proves nothing, for one would have to show that such symmorphousness prevails all along the line, and this is what cannot be proved, for there are great amounts of contrary evidence.

One other instance in the realm of religion: it may be that Dumézil might be right in his reconstruction of Indo-European mythology as based on a tripartite scheme, with a structure of the three great gods related to the three classes, in India the *brahmana,* the *kṣatriya* or warrior class, and the *vaiśya* or farming class.[18] This account has often been set forth as an example of how structuralism might provide a good account of a mythology.[19] This may be so. But in the Semitic world I find it difficult to believe that the pantheons had this simple structured shape; consider what we know of Ugarit, or of Philo of Byblos and his picture of Phoenician

religion.[20] If in fact the reality is not structured but is a loose collection, or is lop-sided, haphazardly shaped, then too simple a structuralist approach will misrepresent it.

In conclusion I turn to a further question. Let us suppose that a fully structuralist approach to scripture should come to prevail: in what way will its results relate to theology? Though I have argued that structuralism and historical perspective are not contradictory, let us imagine the extreme case, that we in our structuralist future, rejecting the historicist past, more or less ignore historical questions and read the Bible as a text with its meaning in itself, as it stands, seeking to identify the codes and structures with which it operates. How will such a reading relate to Christian theology? The question is a relevant one, for quite apart from structuralism there are plenty of experts in literary criticism who have strong views on how the Bible should be understood and who are not backward in telling biblical scholars that they, through their almost total ignorance of literature and literary criticism, are going about things in the wrong way, their interest in historical origins and historical meanings being a major part of that wrong way. Certainly not all these men and women of letters would admit to being structuralists, and many of them are doubtless rather unfavourable to structuralism. Nevertheless the advent of structuralism on the scene of biblical studies is likely to merge to a large extent with that general current of literary opinion, so that each will derive some support from the existence of the other.

Now it seems to me clear that such a structural and literary reading of the Bible is a possibility, and indeed a viable possibility. It might also – by accident – fit in with certain currents in theology and correct certain misunderstandings which our critical practice has inflicted on theology. Nevertheless I doubt whether such a structural reading could provide the understanding of the Bible that theology needs: because, while such a reading might fit with the nature of the Bible as a literature, it does not therefore and for that reason alone fit with the nature of the Christian faith as a religion. The Christian faith, as a religion, is not purely an understanding of the Bible: rather, it is a relation to really existing persons, a relation which is communicated, enriched and controlled through the Bible. The reading of the Bible in relation to that extra-textual actuality seems to be a necessity for faith, and therefore for theology; but if extra-textual persons and events are thus essential for theology, then the addition of a historical element, which must in fact be a critical historical element, is also essential. Thus the structuralism that worked purely on the level of the Bible as a text would be ambiguous in its relation to theology and the codes that it uncovered might be the codes of biblical society rather than the lineaments of the affirmations of the faith. In fact, where literary critics make judgements upon biblical exegesis and seek to influence it, which in itself may be entirely right and wholesome, I think they are commonly using their literary expertise, which may be fully admirable and salutary in itself, as a vehicle into which they read something quite else, which literary procedure neither entails nor requires – namely, their own sets of religious convictions.

To sum up, then, if structuralism means that we see human life as a network of relations, where things have meaning not in themselves but as they stand within that network, then this seems to me to be fundamentally right, and for theology very important. Whether, however, all that has been set forth as structuralist interpretation should therefore count very high in our esteem is another matter. The fact remains that structuralist interpretation of the Bible is as yet far from having to its credit anything comparable with the great body of material and insights that the older philological and historical study has provided.

1. A paper read in King's College on 26th February 1980, in the course of a series of seminars on the general subject of structuralism.
2. Edmund Leach's articles on biblical subjects, which made the public aware of structuralism in another sense, appeared mainly later in the 1960s.
3. G. Friedrich, "Begriffsgeschichtliche" Untersuchungen im Theologischen Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament', *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* (Mainz Academy of Sciences) 20, 1976, 151-77; quotation from p. 174.
4. Bloomfield himself did not actually maintain this view in such stark terms, but his inflnence led in this direction: see, for example, R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (London: Longmans, 1967), pp. 208, 220.
5. Leach states the position admirably: 'this kind of analysis rests on a presumption that the whole of the text as we now have it *regardless of the varying historical origins of its component parts* may properly be treated as a unity. This contrasts very sharply with the method of orthodox scholarship'. So in 'The Legitimacy of Solomon', in M. Lane, ed., *Structuralism: a Reader* (London: Cape, 1970), pp. 290f.
6. So Jonathan Culler in D. Robey, ed., *Structuralism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 21; his entire essay is on 'The Linguistic Basis of Structuralism'.
7. It should perhaps be added that there is no real or inner affinity between structuralism and the rather conservative religious trends that tend to cherish it for these values. In fact structuralism can be, and often is, rather atheistic, and as contemptuous of traditional religion as it is of accepted biblical scholarship. This does not alter the fact that *within biblical scholarship* structuralism may have considerable appeal for the more pious and conservative mind.
8. Examples such as Saussure himself, and Dnmézil (see below), illustrate how deeply much work that turned out to be structuralist was rooted in, and arose from the assumptions of, the older historical-philological sort of research.
9. R. M. Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, and Missoula, Scholars Press, 1977).
10. Polzin, ibid., p. 148.
11. The work that is likely to occur to the mind of the informed reader as the most profound and comprehensive specimen of biblical exegesis on a more or less structuralist basis yet produced is Paul Beauchamp's *Création et séparation* (Paris, 1969); see my short notice in the *Book List* of the Society for Old Testament Studies, 1973, p. 33. But it would be unwise to place too much emphasis on this work for two reasons: firstly, because it is devoted to the first chapter of Genesis, which might well be the most obviously 'structuralized' piece of writing in the entire Bible and which invites explanation along the lines of structure, opposition and separation in a way that scarcely applies to other texts; secondly, because Beauchamp himself did not consider his book to be really structuralist at all, although it contained certain sections that were 'related to structural analysis' – see his 'L'Analyse structurale et l'exégèse', *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 22, 1972 (Uppsala Congress Volume), 113-128, and on this point p. 117n.
12. Polzin, ibid., pp. 104f.
13. Culler in Robey, op. cit., p. 23.
14. Sometimes these very simple categorizations can be understood if one concentrates on the point that they represent *structures* upon which meaning is based but not actual *meanings;* but if this is so then one must say that many writings give the impression, perhaps unintentionally, that the detection of these structures *is* the detection of meanings.
15. 'Semantics and Biblical Theology', in *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 22, 1972, 11-19, quotation from p. 15f.
16. S. E. Balentine, *The Hidden God: the Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1983).
17. See Athalya Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplementary Series, 21, 1982).
18. See G. Dumézil, *Les Dieux des Indo-Européens* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952).
19. Cf. E. Haugen, 'The mythical structure of the ancient Scandinavians: some thoughts on reading Dumézil', in M. Lane, *Structuralism: a Reader* (London: Cape, 1970), 170-83.
20. Cf. my 'Philo of Byblos and his "Phoenician History",' *Bulletin* of the John Rylands University Library 57, 1974-5, 17-68, with literature there cited, plus the more recent works of Troiani, Baumgartner, and Attridge and Oden.