

CHAPTER XI

REDACTION CRITICISM

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New Testament critics in the last century were preoccupied with the sources of the Gospels, chiefly the synoptic Gospels. At the beginning of this century they turned their attention to the first stages in the history of the Gospel tradition, to the original form of the teaching of Jesus.¹ Tradition criticism, as we have seen, was a special case of form criticism. Today, in a relatively new approach to the analysis and study of the Gospels, the centre of interest in New Testament criticism is moving from source criticism and form criticism to an examination of what happened at the final stage in the composition of the Gospels. Redaction criticism (*Rédaktionsgeschichte*) has come to birth.²

These critical methods belong together, and any sharp distinctions drawn between them must necessarily therefore be artificial. They arise out of each other, and can be used to complement each other in the study of Gospel origins. It is important to recognize this as we consider redaction criticism on its own.

What is redaction criticism? The term "redaction" in Gospel criticism describes the editorial work carried out by the evangelists on their sources when they composed the Gospels.³ It has been suggested by Ernst Haenchen⁴ that "composition criticism" would better describe the study of this process. In fact, however, "redaction" and "composition" criticism, although close together, are strictly speaking different disciplines. One (redaction criticism) is the study of the observable changes introduced by the Gospel writers into the traditional material they received and used. The other (composition criticism) examines the *arrangement* of this material, an arrangement which is motived by the theological understanding and intention of the evangelists. And some scholars expand the term "composition" in this context to include the construction of wholly new sayings by the Gospel writers, which are then (so it is claimed) attributed by them to Jesus.⁵ It is possible that in the future composition criticism will need to be distinguished from redaction criticism, just as redaction criticism is currently distinguished from form criticism. But meanwhile, and for convenience, the term "redaction criticism" can be understood as the detection of the evangelists' creative contribution in all its aspects to the Christian tradition which they transmit.

Why is it necessary at all in the study of the Gospels to move beyond form criticism into redaction criticism? Since both disciplines are concerned with the editing and shaping of the tradition about Jesus, although at different stages, need they be separated? The answer to these questions is straightforward. There is an important difference between the approaches of form criticism and redaction criticism in the method used and the conclusions reached, as well as in the fact that they are concerned with different stages in the history of the Christian tradition.

Form criticism (especially in its older versions) tends to view the Gospels as collections of material which originated as independent units (an assumption that itself needs qualification), and the evangelists as little more than "scissors and paste" men who gathered these units together with a special interpretative slant in mind. Redaction criticism, on the other hand, looks at the Gospels as complete documents, and sees the evangelists as individual theologians (even "authors") in their own right. Form criticism deals with the origins of the Gospel tradition, redaction criticism with its later stages.

Redaction criticism thus builds on form criticism, in the sense that form-critical method enables us to detect the work of the evangelists themselves more clearly. The newer discipline of redaction criticism moves away from form criticism, however, in that it sets out to discover the theological uniqueness of the evangelists *in relation to their sources*. To this extent redaction criticism is not a real part of form criticism. But once the two have been separated, it is important to notice that redaction criticism does not then become simply a study of "the theology" of the evangelists.⁶ It is rather a consideration of the creative way in which these writers have handled their sources at the final stages of composition.

Any saying or narrative in the Gospels may have taken shape originally in three basic "settings" (*Sitze im Leben*): first in the teaching of the historical Jesus, then in the life of the early church, then in the thought of the evangelists.⁷ In the third setting, the Gospel writers' own understanding, a new and decisive forward movement in the transmission of the Gospel tradition becomes apparent. From the moment when the Gospels as such come to birth, the oral period of the Christian tradition fades out, and individual writers (perhaps in the context of a "school" or even church) take over from an otherwise anonymous community. By looking carefully at the individual comments of the evangelists, their editorial links and summaries, and generally at the selection, modification and expansion of the material they use (when Matthew or Luke, for example, is compared with Mark), it is possible to discover how each writer understood and *interpreted* (as well as edited) the tradition he received. This is redaction criticism.⁸ We shall consider the practice, the presuppositions and the implications of this method after a brief glance at its history.

I. How it arose

Redaction criticism came to the fore after the second world war, and is associated in the first place with the names of three prominent German New Testament scholars: Günther Bornkamm, Hans Conzelmann and Willi Marxsen.⁹ These critics worked independently of each other on the three synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Luke and Mark respectively. It was Marxsen who gave the common approach which resulted from these studies the German name of *Redaktionsgeschichte*.¹⁰

Günther Bornkamm's work on the Gospel of Matthew marks the rise of redaction criticism. As a pupil of Rudolf Bultmann, he proceeded from form-critical assumptions to the further stage of analyzing Matthew's own theological outlook and intention as this is to be discerned in his handling of traditional material. In two articles which were later included in the volume now translated as *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*,¹¹ Bornkamm set out his conclusions about the first evangelist and his work. The earlier essay¹² is a study of the episode of the stilling of the storm in Matthew 8:23–27, and attempts to show how Matthew treated the source from which he derived this pericope (Mk. 4:35–41). The new context and presentation given to the incident, Bornkamm claims, reveal the independent meaning it has for the evangelist. The miracle thus becomes to him "a kerygmatic paradigm of the danger and glory of discipleship".¹³ The other essay of Bornkamm¹⁴ deals with the construction of the discourses of Jesus in Matthew, and discusses the extent to which these are controlled by the evangelist's own understanding of the church, the end, the law, Christ himself, and the inter-relation of all four. Together, these two studies reflect Bornkamm's dominant conviction that Matthew is a distinctive redactor; an "interpreter of the tradition which he collected and arranged".¹⁵

Hans Conzelmann's work as a redaction critic has been concerned mainly with Luke-Acts. His book *Die Mitte der Zeit*, first published in 1954, and translated into English as *The Theology of St. Luke*,¹⁶ marks a watershed in Gospel studies and an important advance in the method of redaction criticism itself; for it is an analysis of Luke's unique role as a theologian. Perhaps Dr. Norman Perrin goes too far when he concludes that as a result of Conzelmann's work, "Luke the historian becomes a self-conscious theologian, and the details of his composition can be shown convincingly to have been theologically motivated."¹⁷ Not everyone would dismiss so easily the historical basis from which Luke writes in both his Gospel and Acts.¹⁸ But undoubtedly Conzelmann has helped us to discern Luke's special contribution to a proper understanding of the biblical history of salvation (*Heilsgeschichte*), which is presented and developed by the third evangelist in three distinct stages: the periods of Israel, Jesus and the church. The problem which Luke answers by this scheme, with its greater degree of "realized" eschatology, is alleged to be the so-called delay of the parousia.¹⁹ However we view some of Conzelmann's assumptions and final conclusions,

he has at least helped us to see more clearly than ever the extent to which history and theology, not one or the other, co-exist in Luke-Acts.

The third redaction critic in chronological order whose pioneering work in this field must be mentioned is Dr. Willi Marxsen, whose book *Der Evangelist Markus* (1959²)²⁰ contains four studies of the second Gospel which use the redaction-critical method. Like Bornkamm, and indeed Conzelmann, Marxsen accepts the method and conclusions of form criticism as a basis for his work. But once more, like them, he goes beyond this to emphasize the important contribution made by Mark himself when he collected together the independent units of the evangelic tradition and wrote them up into a Gospel as such, characterized by his own theological outlook.²¹ That outlook is seen particularly, Marxsen claims, in Mark's treatment of such features as the tradition about John the Baptist and the geographical references in his narratives. (Galilee, for example, is "obviously the evangelist's own creation".²²) Throughout, Marxsen sees the second evangelist as a theologically motivated redactor, whose doctrinal interpretations become clearer when the use by Matthew and Luke of the Marcan tradition and its interpretations is considered.

One of Marxsen's more important contributions to the whole discussion of redaction criticism is his clarification of the threefold setting of all Gospel material (in the teaching of Jesus, in the life of the early church and in the writing and intention of the evangelists), of which mention has already been made. In this as in many other ways, Marxsen laid down methodological precedents which other redaction critics have followed.²³

These three scholars, Bornkamm, Conzelmann and Marxsen, have been succeeded by others in redaction-critical studies of the synoptic Gospels. For Matthew, Bornkamm has been followed (among others) by Gerhard Barth and H. J. Held, both pupils of his.²⁴ (Two other pupils, H. E. Tödt²⁵ and F. Hahn,²⁶ have also used this method in the more general area of New Testament christology.) For Mark, Marxsen has been followed among others by the two English-speaking writers J. M. Robinson²⁷ and E. Best,²⁸ and by the Swiss scholar E. Schweizer.²⁹ And for Luke, Conzelmann has been followed by H. Flender.³⁰ Redaction criticism has not been applied so frequently to the study of St. John's Gospel as to the Synoptics, but a start has been made in the work of J. L. Martyn,³¹ B. Lindars³² and W. Nicol.³³

II. How it works

An example of redaction criticism at work may help to clarify the purpose and value of this method, as well as its results.³⁴ Before we begin, it will be useful to spend a moment longer recapitulating the principles of redaction criticism. We can then see these at work in our example.

The best way of examining the distinctive contribution of any evangelist to his sources is to investigate the precise method by which he has brought together and handled the materials available to him.³⁵ This means looking carefully at the "seams" by which the sources are joined together, the sum-

maries, modifications, insertions and omissions made, and in general the selection and arrangement of the material. It may also be illuminating to consider the evangelist's vocabulary, his theological standpoint (especially as this is discernible from his christology and his use of titles for Jesus), and finally the introduction and conclusion to his Gospel. These lines of approach will not necessarily be of equal value or yield equally important results; but together they will provide a firmly based method by which to carry out any redaction-critical investigation.

We will confine our present sample to the Gospel of Matthew, and consider in this light first the Gospel as a whole, then a pericope within it, and finally a single logion. The method of redaction criticism, we hope to show, can be used in each case for the purpose of understanding and illuminating the evangelist's approach. Each example, moreover, will reveal the way in which source criticism, form (tradition) criticism and redaction criticism belong together and can be used together in the study of the Gospels.

1. THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

One view of the problem of the four Gospels³⁶ will suggest that the writer of Matthew has composed his Gospel by editing the sources Mark, Q and M. But we can see that by the selection and arrangement of his material he has imposed his own understanding and interpretation of the kerygma on the underlying tradition with which he is working. This gives rise, for example, to Matthew's characteristic christology (Jesus as both king and servant; cf. Mt. 1:1; 12:15–21, *et al.*), his attitude towards the law (transcended and yet remaining in force; cf. 5:38f.; 5:17–20, *et al.*), and his presentation of the gospel itself (exclusive but also universal; cf. 15:24; 8:5–13, *et al.*).³⁷ In general, the evangelist works with the theme of fulfilment in mind. Evidently he writes to present Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah who has absorbed the functions of Moses and gone beyond them.³⁸ Taking full account of the character of his over-all redaction, therefore, we can hazard a guess at the position and needs of his audience. It is possible that he wrote for a cell-type Jewish-Christian group under pressure from orthodox Jews for alleged antinomianism, and that this accounts for some of the distinctive Matthean ambivalences of which we have just taken note.³⁹

2. A PERICOPE FROM MATTHEW

The same technique can be applied to one section of the first Gospel, with similarly illuminating results. Take, for example, the account of the transfiguration in Matthew 17:1–8. Source-critical analysis tells us (on one view, at least) that this comes from Mark 9:2–8. Redaction criticism reveals, by a comparison of the two narratives, the editorial changes which Matthew has made and further study may suggest the theological reasons for these modifications.

Matthew handles his Marcan source for the transfiguration individually,

and in line with the theological understanding evident throughout his Gospel. First, he presents Jesus “after the manner of Moses”.⁴⁰ For example, he alters Mark by referring to Moses before Elijah, thus making the Mosaic reference more emphatic (Mt. 17:3). He adds to the description of the actual transfiguration the detail that the face of Jesus “shone like the sun” (verse 2), recalling the appearance of Moses after receiving the law on Sinai (Ex. 34:29–35). He alone of the synoptic evangelists describes the cloud which over-shadowed the group on the mountain as “bright” (*φωτεινή* verse 5), thus reminding his readers of the Shekinah glory in the Israelite wilderness. Matthew also draws attention to the fact that after the transfiguration Jesus remains alone after Moses and Elijah have disappeared; he adds in verse 8 *avtōv* (*μόνον*) to the Marcan version. Jesus is now seen as the unique teacher (verse 5b) and also the new Moses.

But, as W. D. Davies points out,⁴¹ although the new Moses/new exodus theme is undoubtedly present here and elsewhere in Matthew, it is ultimately restrained. For Matthew sees clearly that Jesus in his uniqueness finally supersedes Moses. At the climax of the transfiguration narrative, for example, Matthew adds to the words of the *bath qol* in Mark 9:7 (“This is my beloved Son;⁴² listen to him”), the phrase “with whom I am well pleased”. This echoes Isaiah 42:1 as well as Psalm 2:7,⁴³ and reminds us not only of Matthew’s particular (servant) christology, but also of his individual soteriology, since this redaction suggests that Jesus was the one destined to bring law to the nations (as in Is. 42:4). Thus the first evangelist’s motivation in his report of the transfiguration is not merely one of reverence, despite his mention of the disciples’ “awe” immediately after the command of God to listen to his Son has been heard.⁴⁴ He writes out of a particular christological understanding, and with the needs of a particular audience in mind.

3. A SAYING IN MATTHEW

The method of redaction criticism may also be used, finally, for the examination of individual logia within the Gospel of Matthew. We may consider briefly, as one instance, the *crux interpretum* Matthew 16:16. Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi, according to Matthew’s account, reads “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Mark (8:29) has “You are the Christ”, and Luke (9:20) “(You are) the Christ of God.”

One explanation of these variations is to say that Matthew has simply expanded Mark. (This assumes, of course, that Peter did not make different confessions on the same occasion.) In that case, the expansion was either the result of a Q tradition containing both elements of the confession (Christ and Son of God), and reflected in the Lucan version, or due to a straightforward explanatory redaction on Matthew’s part.⁴⁵ Knowing his approach as we do, it need not surprise us if Matthew at such an important moment as this should heighten as well as deepen his christology, and remind his readers of the real and exalted status of the central figure in his Gospel.⁴⁶

III. *Some Presuppositions*

The critical method we have been reviewing, and illustrating in terms of Matthew's Gospel, rests on a number of presuppositions. It is important to recognize these, and to be aware of the fact that the conclusions of redaction criticism (like those of form criticism) are to some extent subjective, and should not therefore be accepted uncritically. We shall consider two major presuppositions belonging sometimes to redaction criticism.

(1) Form criticism relies, as we have seen elsewhere, on the so-called "traditio-historical" approach, which can involve two basic assumptions about the sayings of Jesus. The first is that the christology of the New Testament, including the Gospels, does not spring from the authentic teaching of Jesus himself, but from the response to Jesus made by the first Christians. The second is that the genuine teaching of Jesus preserved by the evangelists (a relatively small deposit) can be isolated from the large quantity of material created in the early church by identifying and removing the additions made to that teaching at various stages of the church's development.

The traditio-historical approach is also used in redaction criticism, which (as we have seen) stems from form criticism. In this case, the same basic assumptions are sometimes made. The only difference is that the whole process is now used to investigate the additions made by the evangelists to the already interpreted tradition they received, in the final stages of writing their Gospels. And the conclusion, we are not surprised to learn, may now be that any saying of Jesus which *could* have been created by the evangelists, or shaped by them, *was* so created or shaped. It is possible to recognize the particular contribution of each Gospel writer, it is further claimed, once their own way of thinking, as distinct from that of earlier Jewish and Hellenistic Christianity, has been identified. To recover the authentic words of Jesus these different layers, beginning with the one for which the evangelists themselves were responsible, can simply be stripped off.⁴⁷

Clearly these assumptions are open to question if they are to serve as the only basis for the conclusions of the redaction critics. No one doubts that an important influence was exercised on the formation of the Gospel tradition and the final composition of the Gospels by the background of the authors as well as their audience. But the presuppositions about the basic nature of the Christian tradition and its transmission which have been mentioned are, as we have seen elsewhere, suspect.⁴⁸

(2) There is a tendency on the part of some who use the method of redaction criticism to assume that the special contribution of the evangelists can be discovered only when they depart from their received sources, or do not depend on them at all, rather than when they reproduce them without alteration. This assumption leads Norman Perrin, for one, to conclude that redaction on the part of the evangelists involves something *other* than preserving the historical tradition about Jesus. For Perrin, the "old way" of regarding a

narrative in the Gospels as historical (he uses Mk. 8:27–9: 1 par. as his main sample), is set over against a redaction-critical approach to it.⁴⁹ But the use of the Christian tradition as it stands, without editorial shaping, may be just as much an indication of the evangelist's theological outlook. In such a case we must assume that the tradition expressed his intention and understanding so clearly that alteration was unnecessary.⁵⁰ We do not need, that is to say, to equate "redaction" in the Gospels with unhistorical theologizing. It can involve the use of sources as they stand.⁵¹

IV. *Some Implications*

Provided that we are aware of the hazards inherent in the method of redaction criticism, especially when sceptical and subjective presuppositions form a starting-point, it can prove to be a very useful aid to the understanding of the Gospels. It is not intended, and should not be used, as an end in itself, or simply as an academic exercise. On the contrary when it is properly used it has many advantages, as we shall see, and some far-reaching implications for any reading of the Gospel material. Three of these must now be mentioned.

1. THE JESUS OF HISTORY DEBATE

First, redaction criticism impinges on the "Jesus of history" debate.⁵² The "new quest" for the historical Jesus has made us aware that any search for the central figure of the Jesus tradition must be allied neither to the extreme of history alone nor to that of faith alone; it must maintain a balance (as the evangelists do) between them both.

The method of redaction criticism is clearly of importance to this question of Christian origins. For we are bound to recognize that the Gospels were written from within a circle of faith, by those who in a particular first-century environment became convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God, and that he had risen from the dead. Inevitably, therefore, the evangelists reported the Jesus tradition from their own understanding, and coloured it with their own outlook.

Such a view, when honestly advanced, affects the Christian faith at its central point. Have we any reason to suppose that the evangelists' redacted version of the tradition about Jesus is at all historical? If they redacted part, could they not have redacted all of it; leaving us with a picture of Jesus which is interpretative and therefore informative, but essentially an unhistorical product of the human imagination? How do we know, in fact, that any continuity exists between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith?

The suggestion that no continuity of this kind exists largely depends for its validity on the assumption that the evangelists themselves were unaware of the distinction between history and faith, and were prepared to disregard the former completely in the interests of the latter. We are not, in fact, compelled to believe that this was the case.⁵³ If the Gospel writers were, on the

contrary, sensitive to what was historical and what was kerygmatic (as there are real grounds for supposing),⁵⁴ it is unlikely that they would have treated their traditional sources for the words and works of Jesus with anything but respect. All the more respect have been shown by the evangelists, indeed, if (as is probable) eyewitnesses were still around. These considerations lead us to the second implication of the redaction-critical method to be considered.

2. THE AUTHORITY OF THE GOSPELS

The second implication arises out of the first, and in many ways it has been anticipated. Redaction criticism has an obvious bearing on the issue of the authority of the Gospels (and indeed of the New Testament generally). If the evangelists have redacted their tradition, can we be sure that the Gospels are not (as the followers of Bultmann would say) simply products of the early church, which have been written in the light of the post-Easter situation to meet the demands and answer the questions of that day?

In answer to this important challenge, three points may be made briefly. These are in addition to the suggestions offered in the previous section in support of an historical rather than an existential approach to the Gospel tradition.

(a) First, although we now recognize the theological content of all four Gospels, it is becoming increasingly clear that theology and history belong together (as we have noticed) at all stages in the transmission of the Jesus tradition. So far from abandoning one or the other, all the evangelists apparently drew out the theological implications of the history which they recorded. This can be illustrated very easily from the contemporary debate on the Fourth Gospel, with its discovery that there is a greater element of reliable, historical tradition in John (its high theological content notwithstanding) than criticism ever previously allowed.⁵⁵

(b) Secondly, as we have seen, the redactional element in the Gospels is not necessarily opposed to the historical and traditional. Redaction can mean the use of the tradition as it stands, without any redactional editing. An example of this may be found in an early section of Mark's Gospel (2:1-3:6).⁵⁶ Form criticism tells us that here Mark has assembled originally independent units of material, the primary setting of which in the teaching of Jesus was probably unknown to the evangelist as it is lost to us. Redaction criticism then shows us how Mark has interpreted these incidents according to his own theological understanding of the person and work of Jesus. The key to this is to be found in the concept of authority; for the authority of Jesus here is constantly questioned and constantly vindicated (2:6f., 10f., *et al.*). Indeed this (a significant comment on Mark's christology) is the only link in a collection of pericopes, each of which could otherwise stand anywhere in the Jesus tradition. But while we can in this way discover Mark's specialized approach to his material, we are also made aware of the fact that his contribution lies not in altering the tradition (which mostly con-

sists of evidently primitive “pronouncement stories” suiting his theological purpose) but in combining its separate elements and providing for them a context and therefore a particular meaning.⁵⁷ The authenticity and authority of the tradition at this point are thus not diminished by the Marcan redaction, but increased.⁵⁸

(c) Thirdly, it may be suggested that in order to establish the authority of the sayings of Jesus (at least), we are not necessarily confined by the Gospels themselves to the pre-resurrection logia. The word of the risen Jesus spoken through the evangelists can still be authoritative. To this extent the editorial activity of the evangelists can be regarded as a medium of revelation rather than an obstacle to it.

As an illustration of this point, we may consider the famous saying of Jesus about divorce in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 (= Lk. 16:18; cf. Mk. 10:11f.). Only the Matthean version of this logion contains the exceptive clause *παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας* (19:9, *μη ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ*), and the question of the origin of this phrase therefore naturally arises. (Even in Paul the prohibition of divorce remains absolute; see 1 Cor. 7:10–13.)

One view is that Matthew has carried out a straight redaction, reflecting his accommodation to the Christian legislation of his day. As there was hardness of heart in Israel (Mk. 10:4f.), so there could be in the new Israel. But equally Matthew may be making explicit what was assumed by Jesus and the other evangelists, that divorce was made necessary by Jewish law when sexual irregularity was discovered among partners before or after marriage. Betrothed couples could separate when unfaithfulness was suspected, as in the case of Joseph and Mary (Mt. 1:19); and strict Hebrews insisted on divorce when marriage within the forbidden degrees of kinship was uncovered.

In any case Matthew is reporting and upholding the principle laid down by Jesus, that marriage is a God-given ordinance within creation, and therefore to be regarded as hallowed. But his explanatory redaction, we can now see, draws out for his readers both the importance of the original teaching of Jesus, and also the sole but inevitable grounds for departing from it – grounds which were already recognised and accepted by the Jews. In no case may we claim that Matthew’s redaction weakens the authority of the teaching he preserves, or departs from the mind of Christ.⁵⁹

In the light of all that has been said, it is possible to take account of the fact that the Gospel writers have redacted their basic tradition, and still come to the Gospels with confidence in their essential authority and trustworthiness. For the redaction of the Jesus tradition in accordance with the perspectives of the writers and the community surrounding them does not remove the discoverable historical basis on which that tradition rests. Nor does it prevent the post-Easter words of Christ from being heard and transmitted.⁶⁰

3. THE INTENTION OF THE EVANGELISTS

The final implication of redaction criticism for the study of the Gospels concerns the intention of the evangelists. Again, this question arises out of some of the issues already discussed in detail.

The work of redaction critics such as Bornkamm, Marxsen and Conzelmann has helped us, as we have seen, to appreciate the theological themes and concerns which motivated the evangelists when they wrote their Gospels. Just as form criticism enables us to detect the shaping of individual sayings of Jesus or pericopes about him in the course of their transmission, so redaction criticism makes it possible to uncover this process of shaping in each of the Gospels as a whole.

This point can be developed in one further direction. By examining the theological perspective of an evangelist, and the way he has selected and used his material, it is also possible to suggest why he wrote his Gospel in the first place. We have already applied this test to Matthew. The aim of the other Gospels may be similarly investigated. On the basis of a redaction-critical approach it may be guessed that Mark wrote his Gospel for would-be or present disciples, to supplement Paul's kerygma;⁶¹ that Luke's intention was the kerygmatic and didactic presentation of gospel history for the benefit of mostly non-Christian Gentile readers;⁶² and that John wrote for an audience that was in the end as wide as it could be, to enable his readers to "see" that Jesus was the Christ, the revealing and glorified Word of God, and so to live.⁶³ Broadly speaking the intention in each case is evangelistic, but redaction criticism focuses attention on the precise interpretation and therefore presentation of the kerygma by the four writers, which gives their theology its individual character.⁶⁴ In fine, we no longer need to spend time trying to "harmonize" the Gospels. Their differences, uncovered by the redaction critical approach, stand as a positive pointer to the distinctive outlook of their writers, and their unique understanding of and witness to the Jesus tradition.

V. Some Conclusions

Our discussion of redaction criticism as a method of studying the Gospels has made one point clear at least. It has both advantages and disadvantages.

We may summarize the disadvantages as follows. (1) The traditio-critical criteria on which the redaction method normally depends are often open to question because of the assumptions involved in them. (2) It is too often presupposed that redaction on the part of an evangelist means "composition", in the sense of invention. This is unwarranted. (3) Redaction critics are at times too subtle and subjective in their approach to the Gospels, and in their assessment of the evangelists' motives and methods. This is the reason for the wide variation in their results; although this need not surprise us with a discipline still in its infancy.⁶⁵ Caution is obviously needed in the analysis of any editorial activity, particularly when, as in the

case of the Gospels, we are not always sure who the "editor" is, or the exact nature of his sources.⁶⁶

On the other hand, there are positive advantages to be gained from using this approach. (1) It treats the Gospels whole, and is a useful method for discovering the exact contribution of the evangelists to their traditions. In this way it is an extremely fruitful aid to exegesis, which helps us to perceive more clearly the evangelists' many-sided witness to Christ. (2) It also helps us to see precisely how the evangelists handled their sources, with or without shaping them. (3) We can also detect more easily by this method the intention of the Gospel writers, and see the reason for the existence of four variations on one theme; four Gospels illuminating one gospel from different stand points.

Clearly we must use redaction criticism in any serious study of the Gospels. But we must use it with care. It is not a question of redaction *or* history in the New Testament, but both. If we accept that, the method of *Redaktionsgeschichte* can be a positive aid to understanding the four Gospels, and using them intelligently for Christian preaching and teaching. By this method also further light can be thrown on the crux of the whole matter, the origins of Christianity itself.

NOTES

1. See P. Benoit, *Jesus and the Gospel*, vol. 1 (E.T. London 1973), pp. 11–45.
2. The flowering of redaction criticism was in fact anticipated long ago by New Testament scholarship in both Germany and the English-speaking world. F. C. Baur, for example, in *Das Markusevangelium nach seinem Ursprung und Charakter* (Tübingen 1851), saw Mark as a (non-historical) late compilation dependent on Luke and Matthew, written to reconcile the differences, reflected in the other Synoptists, between the Gentiles and the Jews. Early in this century W. Wrede's study of Mark, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Göttingen 1901; E.T. *The Messianic Secret*, Cambridge and London 1971), suggested that the so-called "messianic secret" in Mark was a dogmatic intrusion and not an historical account. Cf. also the latter part, on "the editing of the traditional material", of R. Bultmann's form-critical study, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen 1958³), pp. 347ff., esp. 393–400 (E.T. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, Oxford 1963, pp. 321ff., esp. 368–74). From England, the work of R. H. Lightfoot, in his famous Bampton Lectures for 1934 (published as *History and Interpretation in the Gospels*, London 1935) foreshadows redaction-critical method. We also have redaction criticism under another name, no doubt, in the work of B. W. Bacon (e.g. *Studies in Matthew*, London 1931), N. B. Stonehouse (e.g. *The Witness of Luke to Christ*, London 1951), P. Carrington (e.g. *According to Mark: A running commentary on the oldest Gospel*, Cambridge 1960) and A. M. Farrer (e.g. *St. Matthew and St. Mark*, London 1966²). See J. Rohde, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists*, (E.T. London 1968), pp. 31–46.
3. The method of redaction criticism can also be applied to the study of other parts of the New Testament, notably Acts and Revelation.
4. E. Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu* (Berlin 1968²), p. 24.
5. So N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (London 1970), p. 66. See the whole section on "Redaction and Composition", pp. 65–7.
6. Dr. Ernest Best's redaction-critical essay, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (Cambridge 1965), falls into this trap in its declared aim of "understanding the Markan theology", and by taking Mark himself to be essentially an "author and theologian" (see pp. xi f.).

7. Among form-critical scholars, J. Jeremias in *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Zürich 1947), p. 15 (E.T. *The Parables of Jesus*, London 1963², p. 23), distinguishes usefully between the original context of a dominical discourse (in this case the parabolic teaching) and its subsequent setting. See also C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London 1936³), pp. 111–53.
8. See further R. H. Stein, "What is *Redaktionsgeschichte*?", JBL 88 (1969), pp. 45–56, for a useful historical survey, and an explanation of the method. See also on the discipline in general D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (London, 1970³), pp. 214–9; and J. Rohde, op. cit.
9. N. Perrin, op. cit., p. 25, points out that just as the work of three German theologians gave rise to the method of *Redaktionsgeschichte* after the second world war, so the work of three other German theologians (K. L. Schmidt, M. Dibelius and R. Bultmann) gave rise to the method of *Formgeschichte* after the first world war. We have already noticed, however, that this method in its final form was anticipated in the work of F. C. Baur, R. H. Lightfoot and others (see note 2).
10. W. Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus* (Göttingen 1959²), p. 11; E.T. *Mark the Evangelist* (New York and Nashville 1969), p. 21. The subsequent page references are to the English edition.
11. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. J. Held, *Überlieferung und Auslegung im Matthäusevangelium* (Neukirchen 1960; E.T. *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, London 1963) = *Tradition*. The subsequent page references are to the English edition.
12. G. Bornkamm, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew", in *Tradition*, pp. 52–7.
13. Ibid., p. 57.
14. G. Bornkamm, "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew", in *Tradition*, pp. 15–51.
15. Ibid., p. 49. See also J. Rohde, op. cit., pp. 11–13, 47–54.
16. H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Tübingen 1964²; E.T. *The Theology of St. Luke*, London 1960). The subsequent page references are to the English edition.
17. N. Perrin, op. cit., p. 29.
18. See, for example, C. K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (London 1961), pp. 9–26; also I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter 1970), esp. pp. 21–76.
19. H. Conzelmann, op. cit., esp. pp. 131f. But see S. S. Smalley, "The Delay of the Parousia", JBL 83 (1964), pp. 42–7. On Conzelmann's work generally, see J. Rohde, op. cit., pp. 154–78.
20. See note 10. For a study of Mark's theological (esp. christological) activity as a clue to the nature of "Gospel" as such, see N. Perrin, "The Literary *Gattung* 'Gospel' – Some Observations", Exp.T 82 (1970–71), pp. 4–7.
21. W. Marxsen, op. cit., pp. 18–23, et al.
22. Ibid., p. 59.
23. See further J. Rohde, op. cit., pp. 113–40; also N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?*, pp. 33–9.
24. See *Tradition*, pp. 58ff. Note also E. Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Göttingen 1973; E.T. *The Good News according to Matthew*, London 1976); J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (London 1976).
25. Cf. H. E. Tödt, *Der Menschensohn in der synoptischen Überlieferung* (Gütersloh 1963²; E.T. *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition*, London 1965).
26. Cf. F. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (Göttingen 1964²; E.T. *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, London 1969). Note also R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London 1965), for a similar theological approach in this area from beyond Germany; and cf. the useful review article of this book by I. H. Marshall, "The Foundations of Christology", in *Themelios* 3 (1966), pp. 22–34.
27. J. M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark* (London 1957).
28. E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion*.
29. E. Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Göttingen 1967; E.T. *The Good News According to Mark*, London 1971; the subsequent page references are to the English edition). Cf. also for studies in Markan redaction, D. Blatherwick, "The Markan Silhouette?", NTS 17 (1970–71), pp. 184–92; R. H. Stein, "The Proper Methodology for Ascertaining a Markan Redaction History", Nov.T 13 (1971), pp. 181–98; F. Neirynck, *Duality in Mark*:

- Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction* (Louvain 1972); R. P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter 1972), esp. pp. 84–162.
30. H. Flender, *Heil und Geschichte in der Theologie des Lukas* (München 1965; E.T. *St. Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History*, London 1967). Cf. also I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter 1972).
31. J. L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York 1968); also id. “Source Criticism and Redaktionsgeschichte in the Fourth Gospel”, in D. G. Miller and D. Y. Hadidian (ed.), *Jesus and Man's Hope*, Vol. 1 (Pittsburg 1970), pp. 247–73. Cf. also M. Wilcox, “The Composition of John 13:21–30”, in E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox (ed.), *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* (Edinburgh 1969), pp. 143–56.
32. B. Lindars, *Behind the Fourth Gospel* (London 1971); id., *The Gospel of John* (London 1972).
33. W. Nicol, *The Sēmeia in the Fourth Gospel: Tradition and Redaction* (Leiden 1972).
34. See also N. Perrin's redaction-critical analysis in *What is Redaction Criticism?*, pp. 40–63.
35. Cf. R. H. Stein, “The Proper Methodology for Ascertaining a Markan Redaction History”, loc. cit.
36. In these days of the “new look” on John, this is a more acceptable description of the inter-relation of the Gospels than “the synoptic problem”. See S. S. Smalley, “The Gospel of John in Recent Study”, *Orita* 4 (1970), pp. 42f.
37. Cf. the study of Matthew's theology in D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London 1972), pp. 60–72.
38. Cf. W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge 1964), pp. 92f.
39. So C. F. D. Moule, “St. Matthew's Gospel: Some Neglected Features”, in F. L. Cross (ed.), *Studia Evangelica* 2 (TU 87, Berlin 1964), pp. 91–9, esp. 92–4.
40. Cf. W. D. Davies, op. cit., p. 56.
41. Ibid. For this whole section, see pp. 50–6.
42. Οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ νίος μου ἀγαπητός may also mean (as in RSV^{mg}) “This is my Son, my (or the) Beloved”.
43. Cf. the *bath qol* in Mt. 3:17, at the baptism of Jesus.
44. In Mark, the mention of the disciples' reaction is made after the transfiguration and subsequent vision; in Luke, it comes after the descent of the cloud. Notice, however, the use of *Kíque* in Mt. 17:4 (Mark has *Pafféé* and Luke *Εμοτάρα*).
45. For another explanation of the conjunction of “Christ” and “Son of the living God” in Mt. 16:16, see O. Cullmann, *Petrus, Jünger-Apostel-Märtyrer: Das historische und das theologische Petrusproblem* (Zürich 1952), pp. 190–206 (E.T. *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr*, London 1962², pp. 176–91). As always when using the method of redaction criticism, the source-critical presuppositions involved (in this case, the use of Mark by Matthew) will to some extent affect the conclusions reached.
46. See further G. M. Styler, “Stages in Christology in the Synoptic Gospels”, NTS 10 (1963–64), pp. 404–6. Despite his heightened christology, Matthew does not give to this incident the same climactic significance as Mark.
47. On the other side see B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Uppsala 1961), esp. pp. 324–35. Gerhardsson argues for the place and importance of (Jewish-Christian) tradition in the primitive transmission of the Gospel material.
48. For a critique of the assumptions involved in the tradition-historical approach, see further D. Guthrie, op. cit., pp. 208–11; also I. H. Marshall, “The Foundations of Christology”, loc. cit., pp. 29–34. See also D. R. Catchpole's article in this volume.
49. N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?*, p. 40.
50. See I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, pp. 19f.
51. The dangers involved when redaction critics base their conclusions on presuppositions such as those outlined, are highlighted in Dr. Norman Perrin's work, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London 1967). Using the redaction-critical approach, Perrin formulates three stringent and questionable criteria for establishing the authentic elements in the teaching of Jesus (dissimilarity, coherence and multiple attestation), and on this foundation

reaches the doubtful conclusion that the parables of Jesus in their earliest form, the kingdom of God sayings and the tradition of the Lord's Prayer can be accepted as a genuine part of the dominical teaching, but little else. For a critique of Perrin's general method, and its results, see M. D. Hooker, "Christology and Methodology", NTS 17 (1970-71), pp. 480-7. The commentary by Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, important as it is, exemplifies the likelihood of subjectivity in redaction criticism. See further G. N. Stanton's article in this volume.

52. See F. F. Bruce's article in this volume.
53. Against e.g. N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 234-48.
54. See further C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Implications of Certain Features of the New Testament* (London 1967), pp. 43-81, for a positive discussion of the continuity between the Jesus of history and the Lord of faith.
55. See, *inter alios*, J. A. T. Robinson, "The New Look on the Fourth Gospel", in K. Aland (ed.), *Studia Evangelica*, Vol. 1 (TU 73, Berlin 1959), pp. 338-350, reprinted in J. A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London 1962), pp. 94-106; also S. S. Smalley, "New Light on the Fourth Gospel", *Tyn. B* 17 (1966), pp. 35-62.
56. This passage is part of a complete section of the Gospel, Mark 1:1-3:6.
57. The saying in Mk. 2:20 (with its mention of the bridegroom being taken away) is probably an exception, and may derive from a later setting. For Mark's redactional use of this verse, see R. P. Martin, op. cit., pp. 184-8. See also the treatment of this passage (sceptical, however, in the form-critical conclusions on which it is based) in E. Schweizer, op. cit., pp. 59-77.
58. It is possible that the "assembly" in Mk. 2:1-3:6 was wholly or in part pre-Markan (see V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, London 1935², pp. 177-81), in which case we cannot be sure about the redactional interests which guided this early *Sammler*. But even if the collection were pre-Markan, it is likely that Mark took it over unchanged because it fitted his interests so exactly.
59. See further on this passage D. Hill, op. cit., pp. 124f., 280f.; also R. Bultmann, op. cit., E.T. pp. 132, 148.
60. On the general issue of New Testament authority, see R. E. Nixon's article in this volume.
61. Cf. R. P. Martin, op. cit., pp. 140-62, esp. 161f.
62. As it happens, T. Schramm's study, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas: Eine Literarkritische und Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Cambridge 1971) sounds a note of caution in the use of *Redaktionsgeschichte* for discovering the intention of Luke. See also C. H. Talbert, "The Redaction Critical Quest for Luke the Theologian", in D. G. Miller and D. Y. Hadidian (ed.), op. cit., pp. 171-222.
63. Cf. S. S. Smalley, "Diversity and Development in John", NTS 17 (1970-71), pp. 289f.
64. See further, C. F. D. Moule, "The Intention of the Evangelists", in A. J. B. Higgins (ed.), *New Testament Essays* (Manchester 1959), pp. 165-79; reprinted in C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament*, pp. 100-14.
65. This is clear from the most cursory reading of J. Rohde's book, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists*.
66. Cf. C. F. D. Moule, "The New Testament", in F. G. Healey (ed.), *Preface to Christian Studies* (London 1971), pp. 50f.

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Best read: Barbour.

CHAPTER XI

REDACTION CRITICISM

- D. GUTHRIE, *New Testament Introduction* (London: Tyndale Press 1970³), pp. 214–219.
J. L. MARTYN, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper and Row 1968).
N. PERRIN, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (London: SPCK 1970). A valuable introduction, if used with care.
J. ROHDE, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists* (London: SCM 1968). An interesting survey of recent work on the Gospels, revealing the diverse nature of the conclusions reached by redaction critics.
R. H. STEIN, “What is *Redaktionsgeschichte*?” *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 45–56.

Best read: Perrin.

CHAPTER XII

HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT USES THE OLD

- R. BLOCH, “Midrash”, *Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément*, Vol. 5 (Paris 1957), cols. 1263–81.
F. F. BRUCE, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: Tyndale Press 1960).
P. BORGREN, *Bread from Heaven* (Leiden: Brill 1965).
D. DAUBE, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone Press 1956).
J. W. DOEVE, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen 1954).