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ROUND FOUR: THE REDACTION DEBATE CONTINUES

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Many might wonder at the choice of a boxing metaphor for the title to this paper. I would argue for its viability, however, on two grounds: Paul uses boxing imagery frequently to depict spiritual discipline (e.g. 1 Cor 9:24–27), and dialogue on key issues such as this is the way by which a society maintains internal discipline in its positive sense. Moreover, this is now the fourth year in a row in which redaction criticism has been a major focus of debate within the Society (i.e. since the meeting on Biblical criticism in 1982). The issue has come to the forefront of evangelical debate because of its serious implications for the evangelical doctrine of inerrancy. Any formulation of a doctrine of Scripture must be forged in the furnace of gospel studies, for the historical and theological problems in the gospels are a major key for delineating the way Scripture treats itself. Until one has grappled with the many problem passages and seeming contradictions within the four gospels, no knowledgeable claim can be made for Biblical authenticity or authority.

My purpose in this paper is to update the current debate in terms of recent work on the topic and then to suggest a possible consensus view that interacts seriously with the problems and possible solutions. Current opinion is moving in two disparate directions: A growing number of evangelical schools are taking a moderate stance on redaction criticism, resulting in a nuanced use of the methodology in several current and forthcoming works; at the same time many remain troubled, believing that the discipline cannot be separated from the higher critical assumptions that underlie its origins. These concerns will provide the focus for this paper.

I. HISTORY AND DEFINITION

We cannot begin to define or understand the issue until we have studied the development of redaction criticism outside and within evangelicalism. Perhaps the earliest precursor of redaction criticism was Ned Stonehouse, who anticipated the later school in his studies on the synoptic gospels.[1] Redaction criticism originated in two or three articles by Gunther Bornkamm in the early 1950s, collected together with essays by his students.[2] The term *Redaktions-*

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[1]See M. Silva, "Ned B. Stonehouse and Redaction Criticism," *WTJ* 40 (1977) 77–88, 281–303.

[2]G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

geschichte was first used by Willi Marxsen.[3] Yet in reality the discipline was the stepchild of form and tradition criticism. These schools posited a series of editors or redactors who took and developed the original traditions in several stages resulting in the final canonical text. Source criticism isolated the traditions used by the evangelists, form criticism tried to get back to the original event on the basis of the "forms," and tradition criticism studied the process of changes introduced as that story or saying was altered in later communities. There was little interest in the work and theology of the final editor/redactor; redaction criticism corrected this omission.

At the outset most redaction critics accepted the basic presuppositions of their predecessors, including the paucity of historically authentic material in the final product and the series of alterations introduced as the Church added accretions to the original traditions. The majority of the early critics were pupils of Bultmann who accepted his basic conclusions. In fact in the early years redaction criticism was aligned with the "new quest for the historical Jesus," a movement begun in 1953 by Ernst Käsemann, who stated that only the existential self-awareness of Jesus is available to the historian.[4] The techniques, they believed, would unlock the theology of the evangelists but not the historical veracity of the stories.

From the outset, however, evangelicals argued against the ahistorical tendencies of redaction criticism. One of the earliest articles was by William Lane,[5] who asserted that there is a stronger balance between history and theology than the proponents allowed. In fact for Lane theology is dependent for its meaning upon history. C. F. H. Henry argued similarly.[6] The three volumes on Luke, Mark and John by I. Howard Marshall (1970), Ralph Martin (1972) and Stephen Smalley (1978) respectively countered the radical dichotomy between tradition and theology in the gospels,[7] and Lane in his Mark commentary (1974) blended history with theology in a distinct corrective to Marxsen's exaggerated claims.[8] In another early statement Simon Kistemaker noted the strong presence of theology in the gospels but emphasized the fact that this is theological history rather than created events.[9] In other words evangelicals from the beginning urged a cautious use of redaction-critical tools. They did not reject

[3]W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969).

[4]E. Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964) 15–47.

[5]W. Lane, "Redaktionsgeschichte and the Dehistoricizing of the New Testament Gospel," *JETS* 11 (1968) 27–33.

[6]*Jesus of Nazareth, Savior and Lord* (ed. C. F. H. Henry; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966) 1–22.

[7]I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970); R. P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); S. S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978).

[8]W. Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

[9]S. Kistemaker, *The Gospels in Current Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972) 102–103, 110, 116–119.

these tools outright, however, but rather argued that the gospels balanced history and theology and that both aspects must become part of the redaction-critical process.

The first debate within the ETS occurred between John Warwick Montgomery and myself. In a paper presented at the 1978 ETS meetings[10] Montgomery made three points about my *JETS* articles of 1976 and 1978: (1) While trying to "baptize" redaction criticism I actually denigrate the historical reliability of the portrait of Jesus; (2) the view that the Spirit is behind both tradition and redaction is not different from the myth-of-God-incarnate people who also use the Spirit to justify their mythical approach; (3) a high Christology becomes impossible due to the uncertainty as to which sayings come from Jesus and which stem from the later Church. My reply[11] was that in no instance did the evangelists create events or sayings. While they had the freedom to select or omit details and certainly paraphrased or abbreviated many sayings, all that they recorded was based upon the original events.

The debate within ETS entered a new phase with the publication of Robert Gundry's Matthew commentary.[12] The situation is so well known that we do not need to dwell upon it at length; rather, we will summarize the issues. Gundry's operating principles were twofold: (1) Matthew's "literary and theological art" can be traced to his dependence upon Mark and Q; Gundry believed that statistics can determine how Matthew altered his sources and developed his theology. (2) In the purely Matthean sections he has produced "creative midrash," which does not intend to present historical events but rather theological truths (e.g. the Magi story as a reworked shepherd story to introduce the Gentiles into the birth narratives).

A series of critiques resulted. I will summarize those presented in *Trinity Journal* (Carson), *JETS* (Moo and Geisler) and the *Gospel Perspectives III* volume on "midrash" (Bruce, France and Payne):[13]

1. Gundry is too radically dependent upon the two-document hypothesis. While most agree with the basic assumption of the priority of Mark and Q, the challenge from proponents of Matthean priority and the obvious fact that Mar-

[10]J. W. Montgomery, "Why Has God Incarnate Suddenly Become Mythical?", in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology* (ed. K. S. Kantzer and S. N. Gundry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 57–65.

[11]G. R. Osborne, "The Evangelical and Redaction Criticism: Critique and Methodology," *JETS* 22/4 (1979) 305–322, esp. 305–309.

[12]R. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

[13]D. A. Carson, "Gundry on Matthew: A Critical Review," *Trinity Journal* 3/1 (1982) 71–91; D. Moo, "Matthew and Midrash: An Evaluation of Robert H. Gundry's Approach," and N. L. Geisler, "Methodological Unorthodoxy," *JETS* 26/1 (1983) 31–39, 57–70, 87–94, 101–108; F. F. Bruce, "Biblical Exposition at Qumran," R. T. France, "Jewish Historiography, Midrash, and the Gospels," and P. B. Payne, "Midrash and History in the Gospels with Special Reference to R. H. Gundry's *Matthew*," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography* (ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT, 1983) 77–98, 99–128, 177–216. See also Gundry's responses in *JETS* 26/1 (1983) 41–56, 71–86, 95–100, 109–116.

kan priority cannot answer all the problems must make the interpreter leery of using Mark or Q in too rigid a fashion. Matthew undoubtedly used sources other than Mark and Q, including his own reminiscences, and did not edit his sources with anywhere near the rigidity Gundry posits.

2. Gundry's use of statistics is highly questionable. He derives many of his conclusions regarding Mattheanisms by compiling the percentage in which a word is used in traditional or in redactional material. However, statistics are notoriously difficult with such a small frequency of usage (often only ten to twenty times in Matthew), and Gundry never clarifies sufficiently what counts as a Mattheanism or a non-Mattheanism. Moo and Nolland[14] show how radically different the results would be if the basis of the statistics was changed to the sentence or the line.

3. Gundry's generic use of midrash is even more questionable. Bruce and France show that in QL and in rabbinic midrash the type of wholesale creation of stories Gundry envisages did not occur. The creative embellishment of Biblical narratives cannot be demonstrated. Furthermore, there was a much greater period of time between OT events and Jewish midrash than between Jesus' life and the writing of the gospels. If it is difficult to find creation of accounts in Jewish writings, it is even more difficult to demonstrate such in the NT since there was so little time for such stories to develop.

4. There are no literary criteria for deciding when Matthew is writing history and when he is producing nonhistorical midrash. A literary analysis of Matthew would demonstrate that in the portions where Gundry detects midrash Matthew uses the same historical pointers as he does in his clearly historical portions.

During the 1983 ETS meetings the issue came to a head when by a 116–41 vote the Society asked Gundry to resign. One issue arising from that meeting still lingers: whether redaction criticism must of necessity borrow the nonhistorical presuppositions of the radical critics and whether, as Geisler[15] charged, such methods as exhibited by Gundry constitute a *de facto* denial of inerrancy. Many present at the 1983 meeting, while believing that Gundry's book was wrong-headed, did not accept the argument that his commentary constituted in fact a denial of inerrancy.

Evangelical works on redaction criticism continue this debate. In a recent volume[16] I argue that every pericope was based on the original events and adequately narrated them but that each evangelist selected certain scenes, omitted others, and presented quite different portraits of the resurrection appearances depending on the theological emphasis desired. Each evangelist de-

[14]Moo, "Matthew" 61–62; J. Nolland, "Recent Studies in Matthew: A Review Article," *Crux* 19/2 (1983) 27–28 (as discussed in Carson, "Gundry").

[15]Geisler, "Unorthodoxy" 90–93.

[16]G. R. Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984).

veloped his own unified composition, based on the original events but woven together into a unique contribution. Each should be studied separately. Although the historian could harmonize them into a single whole for apologetic purposes, the Biblical purpose is to interpret them as individual contributions.

David Turner[17] summarizes the events of 1983–84 and calls for a "clarification of the implications of inerrancy for the synoptic phenomena." In an earlier article[18] he had argued for the value of a careful redaction-critical approach of the type exemplified by Stonehouse and had pointed out two dangers in the current debate: doctrinal deviation (as some de-historicize the Biblical text), and a vigilante approach (as others demand their own interpretations in the name of inerrancy). I would certainly wish to underline both concerns.

Recently *Christianity Today* featured a symposium of evangelical scholars on this topic.[19] There was general agreement on several aspects—for instance, the importance of sources for redaction-critical investigation. The basic definition of redaction criticism is the discovery of how an editor worked with his sources in developing his distinctive message. The question for us: When the editor changes the source does he alter the original event or invent new material? A second agreed maxim is that we must treat the text as divinely inspired and unified in the broader sense. The scholar who expects to find errors or radical differences will do so. However, the burden of proof is upon the skeptic rather than on one who takes the trustworthiness of Scripture seriously.[20] A third point was that while the term "redaction criticism" is a red flag for many it is still the best phrase for the process. It does not have to connote the acceptance of higher-critical presuppositions. Fourth, we evangelicals need to interact with the academic community so long as it does not compromise our stand on Scripture. We have answers to the critical problems, and this generation of open scholars (as well as those who follow) needs to hear our solutions. Fifth, redaction criticism is helpful but cannot function alone. It must take its place alongside other tools like grammatico-historical exegesis and literary criticism to have value. If redaction criticism becomes an end in itself the text of Scripture will be lost in the process.

The summarizing editorial by Kenneth Kantzer[21] makes the valid point that "a legitimate use of redaction criticism endangers only false views of the divine inspiration of Scripture." For instance, it shows the inadequacy of a demand for *ipsissima verba* or the belief that every gospel story is complete in itself. Moreover, the discipline shows that the freedom of the evangelists as

[17]D. Turner, "Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism, and Inerrancy: The Debate Continues," *GTJ* 5/1 (1984) 37–45.

[18]D. L. Turner, "Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism, and the Current Inerrancy Crisis," *GTJ* 4/1 (1983) 263–288.

[19]"Redaction Criticism, Is It Worth the Risk?," *Christianity Today* 29/15 (October 18, 1985) 55–64.

[20]See S. C. Goetz and C. L. Blomberg, "The Burden of Proof," *JSNT* 11 (1981) 39–63.

[21]K. Kantzer, "Redaction Criticism: Handle with Care," *Christianity Today* 29/15 (October 18, 1985) 65–66.

Biblical authors does not impinge upon the historical reliability of what they said. As Kantzer states: "Inspiration only guarantees that such human creativity will never falsify, but will always in the end convey the message God wishes to get across to his church." In short, redaction criticism is a tool of grammatico-historical exegesis, not separate from but subsumed under the latter, applying the concept of authorial intent (so central to the other books of Scripture) to the gospels as well.

D. A. Carson[22] discusses several of these issues, quoting from the major works regarding the disjunction between tradition and redaction or between interpretation and the "brute facts" on which it is based. Two points from this article are helpful additions. Carson challenges the criteria of redaction for differentiating created narrative from transmitted narrative. Decisions are highly speculative, and we are justified when we doubt the basis, especially the criterion of dissimilarity. Carson also challenges the extent to which we can recover the *Sitz im Leben*. The problem is much more difficult than with respect to Paul's epistles, where situations are spelled out in detail. Carson states that such attempts too often degenerate "to a slightly odd form of the intentional fallacy." Too much interest in discovering the original situation behind a historical narrative leads to a hermeneutical error—i.e., a negative bias that assumes there is always a community problem being addressed by the evangelist. This is certainly erroneous because more often than not the purpose is positive, evincing historical or theological interests.

A negative appraisal of redaction criticism has recently been made by Robert Thomas, first in the position paper of the Talbot faculty in the *Talbot Review*[23] and then in *Christianity Today*.[24] He and others express concern over the ease with which many evangelicals succumb to the lure of critical methodology. Thomas detects three aspects of the definition that cannot be easily dismissed, since redaction criticism (1) separates the evangelist from his sources, (2) analyzes the redactional changes the evangelist has made in his sources in order to discover the theological purposes, and (3) centers upon the creative embellishments. There are several types of editorial activity: selectivity, arrangement, modification and creativity. The first two are viable for the evangelical, and minor modifications (e.g. the author's style) are allowed. But major modifications (such as reading later Church issues or teaching back into Jesus' ministry; wholesale creation of accounts) are clearly inimical to inerrancy. The problem is that evangelical scholars have found it difficult to remain within the allowable areas, because for Thomas and others the methodology draws one inexorably toward the more radical conclusions. When done properly the approach is little different from the time-honored techniques of the divines down through the ages. Therefore, these scholars argue, the term "redaction

[22]D. A. Carson, "Redaction Criticism: The Nature of an Interpretive Tool" (Wheaton: *Christianity Today*, 1985).

[23]W. G. Johnston *et al.*, "The Evangelical and Redaction Criticism in the Synoptic Gospels," *Talbot Review* 1/2 (Summer 1985) 6–13.

[24]R. Thomas, "Another View," *Christianity Today* 29/15 (October 18, 1985) 62.

criticism," as well as its techniques, are inappropriate for evangelicals.

These concerns are valid, and any evangelical approach must remain cognizant of such dangers. I believe, however, that they can be avoided and that any proper study of the gospels must adopt a nuanced form of redaction criticism. In fact I perceive a growing consensus. While Thomas and others are leery of the term "redaction criticism" they are not opposed to the techniques of selection, arrangement or modification so long as they do not impinge upon the historical veracity of the gospel material. Recognizing this developing consensus I am suggesting several areas where safeguards can be built into the redaction-critical process.

II. Redaction Criticism: An Evangelical Perspective

My definition of redaction criticism is similar to those mentioned above: This discipline studies the way an evangelist handles his sources and, by noting the modifications he introduces, seeks to trace his distinctive theological message. There would be general agreement with this, although several (myself included) would in practice utilize other tools (e.g. narrative criticism) as part of the redaction process.

1. *Source criticism.* At the very heart of the discipline as practiced by most is Streeter's four-document hypothesis: that Matthew and Luke utilized Mark and Q as well as other sources. This, however, is not a necessity, as exemplified by Harold Hoehner's adoption of the Griesbach hypothesis or Robert Thomas' arguments for the independence of the evangelists. Naturally the results will differ depending on whether one treats Matthew as first, independent, or dependent on Mark and Q. The major criterion is that we utilize any source-critical theory with humility and recognize the partial knowledge we possess.

I prefer Markan priority but (as stated in earlier articles) realize how much more complex the actual process was and therefore center upon differences between the gospels rather than depending on a too-rigid theory regarding the direction of the influence. Nevertheless, in order to see how an author worked with sources those very relationships must be delineated as carefully as possible. The present disarray in source-critical theory must give us pause, but the situation is not as chaotic as many intimate. A moderate form of Markan priority is a valuable tool, and while the results will differ somewhat from those achieved via a theory of Matthean priority or of independence the effort is still worthwhile. The difference is similar to that achieved by a Calvinist or Arminian, by a dispensationalist or Reformed interpretation of texts. An even closer parallel would be the interpretive results achieved by adopting the North or South Galatian theory before exegeting the epistle to the Galatians. We recognize the preunderstanding by which we approach a text and try to allow the text itself to stand behind our theory and have precedence. Nevertheless we utilize these source-critical tools.

The major a priori for the evangelical, of course, is that whatever source-critical theory we utilize we understand that both tradition and redaction are ultimately based on the original event. Too much has been written on this issue to repeat it here. Suffice it to say that nonevangelical (e.g. Barbour and

Hooker[25]) as well as evangelical scholars are suspicious of the radical disjunction between history and theology among many practitioners. There is no necessity to drive a wedge between the authenticity of tradition and redaction, and we dare not do so if we wish to maintain a high view of Scripture.

2. *Selection and arrangement.* This is one of the major areas of contention. Let us focus upon Matthew's discourse sections as a test case. Many believe that Matthew tends to collect and arrange material in his commentary. Thomas, for instance, allows this for the miracle catenae of chaps. 8-9. However, all of the discourse sections have openings and closings. Could Matthew have inserted other sayings for instance into the original sermon on the mount or the Olivet discourse? Since Matthew records that Jesus began (5:2; 24:4) and ended "all (these) things" (7:28; 26:1) there is an ongoing debate as to whether selection could in these instances include compilation of sayings from various places. A careful study of any gospel harmony will demonstrate how widely scattered the sections are in Luke, and many doubt that any theory of itinerant preaching can account for all the displacements. For instance the mission discourse of Matthew 10 contains the apocalyptic portion of 10:17–22, paralleled in Mark 13:9–13 but omitted from Matthew 24, and the sword statement of 10:34–39 combines material found in Luke 12:49–53; 14:26–27; 17:33. In light of the close connection between Matthew and Luke in the sayings section (this is behind the hypothesis of a Q collection) it seems artificial to respond to all parallels like this simply on the basis of Jesus as an itinerant preacher. The topical arrangement employed throughout Matthew points to collections of sayings. Some may be due to repetition (I for instance prefer to see the sermon on the mount in Matthew and the sermon on the plain in Luke as separate speeches), but certainly not all. I myself have little problem with the possibility that within the parameters of the individual speeches Matthew could have included others in a catenae-type collection without contradicting the opening and closure. Nevertheless the dialogue must remain open on this issue, and I would invoke Turner's caution against a "vigilante approach."

3. *Modification.* Again there is considerable difference of opinion as to what constitutes valid and invalid modification. In general we would say that any modification that produces a statement out of keeping with the original scene would be an error. But what type of modification would demand such a conclusion? Once more the text itself must decide. Everyone is aware of the many problem passages that demand some type of modification. There are slight modifications that all would accept. Such would be differences of arrangement, such as the order of the temptations in Matthew and Luke, which reverse the last two. This is no problem for the historical veracity of the temptation narratives, but we must admit two things: We cannot recover the original order, and the evangelists must have had the freedom to change the order of various scenes. No one would seriously suggest there were two temptations, both of

[25]R. Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1972); M. Hooker, "On Using the Wrong Tool," *Theology* 75 (1972) 570–581.

which would have to occur at the same time. These are relatively simple.

However, there are more difficult problems that involve more than modification by rearrangement. For instance, in the mission discourse Matthew says to take "neither shoes nor staff" (10:10) while Mark says "take nothing except staff. . .and shoes" (6:8–9). This is a notoriously difficult passage and the explanations are legion.[26] Nevertheless some type of modification is necessary. Also, in Matt 10:37 Jesus says "he who loves father and mother more than me" while the Lukan parallel (14:26) reads "he who. . .hates not his own father and mother and wife." As a final example we might note the "rich young ruler" story, as Jesus in Mark (10:18) and Luke (18:19) asks "Why do you call me good?" but in Matthew (19:17) asks "Why do you ask me concerning what is good?"

In all three instances I am not trying to solve sticky problems but rather to suggest examples that demand a degree of freedom as the evangelists narrated their stories. Our task is to recognize such freedom and to elucidate a theory of modification that fits the facts but does not demand the addition of nonhistorical material. In my opinion the evangelists were free to stress one element or another in the complex original story and even to transpose sections. For instance in the parable of the wicked tenants Mark (12:9–10) and Luke (20:15–16) place both question ("What will the owner of the vineyard do?") and answer ("He will come and destroy. . . .") on the lips of Jesus, while Matthew (21:60–61) has Jesus ask the question and his opponents provide the answer. Some freedom is demanded by the data.

Here let me pause to answer some criticisms. The Talbot position paper (n. 23) states that redaction critics tend to deny the possibility of harmonizing accounts so as to arrive at a chronological life of Christ, and that they tend to doubt the possibility of reconstructing Jesus' theology or his exact words. I will admit that this applied to me for a while. In my original dissertation on the resurrection narratives I played down the possibility of harmonizing the accounts. However, as I reworked my thesis over a period of seven years I gradually realized not only the viability but the importance of doing so to the extent that the data allowed. I would agree with Carson (1985): "If each [gospel] document must make sense on its own—and at that point redaction criticism is correct—it does not follow that harmonization is principially invalid, but only that it should not be introduced too early as a hermeneutical tool." In the same way evangelical redaction critics do not deny the presence of *ipsissima verba*. They simply doubt that we can detect such with any degree of certainty, since most of Jesus' speeches are summarized rather than complete accounts.

4. *Redaction criticism as one tool among many.* It seems to me that many of the dangers can be avoided when redaction criticism takes its proper place in the pantheon of exegetical tools. Most of the problems occur when the discipline becomes an end in itself. The very definition above makes redaction criticism fragmentary in nature, since it centers upon the changes introduced into the

[26]See the discussions in Osborne, "Evangelical" 314; D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. F. E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8. 245.

sources by the editor. Therefore there is no true "theology of Matthew" or of Mark. Rather, there is only a series of changes. The very theory behind this, however, is suspect because it must assume that the evangelist was creative only with his own material but wooden with his tradition. The evidence from the gospels does not support this. The tradition and the redaction are woven together into a tight unit, and the theology comes from the whole and not just from the parts. Therefore the insights of rhetorical or narrative criticism, which treat the text as a coherent unit, provide a necessary corrective to the excesses and speculative nature of redaction criticism.

Moreover, both of these schools must be subsumed under the larger category of grammatico-historical criticism. Our task is to exegete or interpret the gospels, and all the hermeneutical disciplines—of which redaction criticism is but one—must be employed together.

III. CONCLUSION

Redaction criticism when seen in its proper light is not a threat but is rather a channel through which the inspired revelation of God through the four evangelists can shine ever brighter. The techniques aid greatly the task of understanding exactly what God inspired the sacred evangelists to write as they compiled, integrated and applied the Jesus stories. It would be helpful to develop a procedure for gospel research that would place redaction criticism within the process of grammatico-historical exegesis. I will use the synoptic account of the walking on the water (Mark 6:45–52 and parallels) as a test case.

1. *Study the text, looking for narrative flow.* Composition criticism is the science of reading a text. In a way this is simple inductive Bible study, and one does this on two levels: noting the place of the pericope in the narrative development of the book, and tracing narrative links in the story itself. On the first level the walking on the water miracle is intimately connected to the feeding of the five thousand, and both together continue the discipleship emphasis of 6:7–13. On the second level there are several tensive points in the story, especially as the several changes of scene between Jesus (alone, seeing the disciples, walking on the sea and about to pass the disciples, calming the storm) and the disciples (straining against the storm, thinking Jesus is a ghost and crying out in fear, their amazement and failure to understand). The contrast between the two is startling.

2. *Do a source-critical study and compare the gospels.* It is very difficult to separate the sources in Mark on the basis of the two-document hypothesis. One can detect differences, however, and here there is great help. While we do not have time to trace all, we can note the major distinction: the added scene in Matt 14:28–31, with Peter walking on the water. In similar scenes (e.g. following the feeding of the four thousand, Mark 8:2 = Matt 16:11–12) Mark also omits the positive conclusion, and I believe these are deliberate omissions on Mark's part rather than Matthean creations. The differences, however, are startling. In Matthew the scene leads to a Christological confession. Mark

contextualizes and concludes the scene at a point two-thirds through the story—namely, at the point of discipleship failure. Here we are at the heart of Mark's and Matthew's theological purposes, and this is corroborated by their editorial conclusion, with Mark 6:52 ("Their hearts were hardened") so different from Matt 14:33 ("Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the son of God'."). One could hardly find a more radically different emphasis. Both are true to the facts, but they decide to draw their theological emphasis from separate aspects—namely, discipleship failure (Mark) and Christological understanding (Matthew).

3. *Exegete the whole passage, tracing major and peripheral points.* While redaction criticism centers upon the elements added (or omitted) by the evangelist, it is the task of narrative exegesis to place those within the context of the story as a whole unit. We must remember that the story is a coherent whole, and tradition is just as important for the author's meaning as is redaction. This builds on the first point: The aspects of narrative change in the story as discovered in the inductive study of point one above are now deepened and clarified.

4. *Check the extent to which this theological point is part of a thread of teaching throughout that gospel.* It is too easy to spiritualize a point by misreading an individual context. Narrative criticism has demonstrated that meaning is part of the whole and not just the parts, and the whole of the gospel provides a control for the interpretation of individual units. In the case of Mark 6:45–52 it is quickly observable how this fits into the ongoing theology. The "hardness" theme is repeated in 8:17, and discipleship failure is one of the major themes of the gospel.

5. *Note the balance of history and theology in the passage.* Harmonization does have a place when it builds on the delineation of history and theology in the individual stories. However, it dare not be forced upon the texts or allowed to replace serious exegesis. Nevertheless it does allow us to recapture the whole picture and to trace a basic life of Christ (see Blomberg[27]). This is an important point because redaction critics often neglect Jesus in favor of the four evangelists, and this is a grave error. Both are crucial and supplement one another. God did inspire four gospels, and each is meant to be studied on its own. But I also believe that God inspired four gospels because no single book could capture all that Jesus was and meant. Each evangelist provides another picture in the kaleidoscopic portrait of Jesus, and we should also put the gospels together to attain a deeper understanding of Jesus' teaching and ministry. I agree that we can never completely "harmonize" the synoptics and John—for instance, to attain a so-called chronological "footsteps of Jesus"—but we should seek a basic picture.

Finally, I will stress once again a growing consensus regarding the viability of a nuanced use of redaction-critical techniques. To be certain, we will continue

[27]C. Blomberg, "The Legitimacy and Limits of Harmonization," in *Canon, Hermeneutics, and Authority* (ed. D. A. Carson and J. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

to quibble over the viability of the term "redaction criticism." And we must always listen to cautions regarding the dangers of the methodology so that we might avoid excesses. However, on the major point we are in agreement: God inspired each of the four evangelists to give us individual portraits of the life and ministry of his Son. Each portrait is completely true to the original historical event, yet each evangelist has been inspired to provide a different portrayal of the significance of Jesus' life. These twin aspects—history and theology—have combined to yield one of God's great gifts to his people: the four gospels.