THE HERMENEUTICS OF EVANGELICAL REDACTION CRITICISM

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The question before us is whether "evangelical redaction criticism" is a legitimate expression. To be sure, some evangelicals avow that it is not.[1] They assert that it is self-contradictory. Others are just as adamant in defending the propriety of the expression.[2]

Reasons for the great disparity between these two viewpoints are twofold. On one hand, "redaction criticism" is not clearly defined. Some see connotations arising from the discipline's historical origination and development.[3] If such a framework is part of the signification, it is impossible to exclude the radical presuppositions of redaction critics like Bornkamm, Marxsen and Conzelmann.[4] These positions are clearly inimical to an evangelical stance. Yet there are those who plead that redaction criticism can exist apart from the associations of its historical roots.[5] Their arguments indicate that the discipline itself is atheological and need not carry the implications attached to it by its originators.

The other reason for the great divergence in viewpoints about "evangelical redaction criticism" lies in differences of opinion about the meaning of the term "evangelical." For some associated with the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy an evangelical is one who can subscribe to the "Chicago Statement"

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[1] H. Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 73, 81–82, 86–87, 204–205; J. W. Montgomery, "The Fuzzification of Biblical Inerrancy," in *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (Nashville: Nelson, 1978) 220–221; H. Lindsell, *The Bible in the Balance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 308–311.

[2] E.g. W. L. Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 7; R. A. Guelich, "The Gospels: Portraits of Jesus and His Ministry," *JETS* 24/2 (1981) 125; D. A. Hagner, "Interpreting the Gospels: The Landscape and the Quest," *JETS* 24/1 (1981) 35–37.

[3] G. R. Osborne, "The Evangelical and Redaction Criticism: Critique and Methodology," *JETS* 22/4 (1979) 315.

[4] H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper, 1960); G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963); W. Marxsen, *Mark, the Evangelist* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969).

[5] Hagner, "Interpreting" 23–24; M. Silva, "Ned B. Stonehouse and Redaction Criticism. Part I: The Witness of the Synoptic Evangelists to Christ," *WTJ* 40 (1977) 78.

of 1978.[6] To others, however, an evangelical is any person who is more conservative in his beliefs than someone else, whoever that someone else may be. Such a person prefers to talk about Biblical authority rather than Biblical inerrancy.[7]

This paper is not intended to resolve what is perhaps an insoluble debate over semantics or to support a particular definition of either "redaction criticism" or "evangelical" but to examine certain hermeneutical principles being implemented under the title of "evangelical redaction criticism." These will be compared with the standard of the grammatico-historical method of exegesis and evaluated in that light.[8]

While several articles about the discipline authored by evangelicals have appeared,[9] the main thrust of our analysis is directed toward three book-length treatments of the synoptic gospels: those by Robert H. Gundry on Matthew,[10] William L. Lane on Mark,[11] and I. Howard Marshall on Luke.[12]

Evangelical redaction critics know about the impact of their methodology upon hermeneutics. Lane writes: "That redaction criticism is a valid hermeneutical approach to understanding the text of Mark and the intention of the evangelist has been assumed in this commentary."[13] Just what this impact is Lane does not fully develop. Marshall presents a more comprehensive conclusion about the matter when he says that his work on Luke "will . . . attempt to provide a theological understanding of the text, based on *historical-critical-linguistic* exegesis."[14] While implying in his discussion a difference between his methodology and that practiced in earlier times (presumably the grammatico-historical), Marshall is not explicit as to what that difference is.[15] He

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[6]"Articles of Affirmation and Denials, The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (Chicago, 1978).

[7]E.g. J. Rogers, "The Church Doctrine of Biblical Authority," in *Biblical Authority* (Waco: Word, 1977) 15–46.

[8]Article XVIII, "Articles of Affirmation and Denials, Biblical Inerrancy"; Article XV, "Articles of Affirmation and Denials, The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics," International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (Chicago, 1982).

[9]E.g. see nn. 2, 3 and 5 above.

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

[11]Lane, *Mark*.

[12]I. H. Marshall, *Commentary on Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

[13]Lane, *Mark* 7.

[14]Marshall, *Luke* 13 (italics mine). G. R. Osborne calls redaction criticism a tool of the grammatico-historical method ("Round Four: The Redaction Debate Continues," *JETS* 28/4 [1985] 404, 407–408), but in practice he is struggling with the "historical" aspect of the method as he employs redactional tools. See n. 39 below.

[15]Marshall, *Luke* 13, 15.

only says that the added element is "the recognition of the primarily theological character of the books of the New Testament."[16]

It is the goal of the present study to isolate some of these differences and to evaluate them, thereby discerning what kinds of changes are made through the addition of the "critical" component to the grammatico-historical method.

I. ALTERATIONS TO WHAT HAS BEEN CONSIDERED HISTORICAL

Probably the greatest impact upon hermeneutics stemming from redaction critical presuppositions is upon historicity. There is a pronounced tendency to use various formulas to explain away apparent actuality of narrative events and quotations. No longer is the initial assumption on the side of historicity. The theological bias of the gospel writer takes precedence over this and at times negates an historical reference.

This approach places every text initially into a "suspect" category. Through analysis it is then declared to be either historical or unhistorical. The grammatico-historical approach, on the other hand, carries an initial presupposition of historicity in narrative-type literature. Only substantial evidence to the contrary can counterbalance this presupposition in favor of historicity.

Lane exemplifies this tendency toward suspicion. After saying that "there is no necessary reason why redaction criticism should lead to dehistoricizing the NT Gospel," [17] he proceeds to use it to do so in numbers of instances. He speaks of "the 'commentary character' of verse 10" when discussing Mark 2:10.[18] By this he identifies a speaker of some words that in the flow of Mark's narrative are attributed to Jesus. This commentary character is, according to Lane, a Markan invention. Jesus on the occasion of his healing miracle never said anything about the forgiveness of sins such as is found in v 10. The words are simply an editorial comment reflecting the writer's understanding of the significance of the healing for his readers several decades later.

In contrast Marshall finds no problems accepting the historicity of Luke's account of Jesus' utterance at the time of this healing.[19] Neither does Gundry in the Matthean account.[20] In the eyes of these two, critical considerations are insufficient to deny historicity. This is the usual grammatico-historical conclusion.

Yet this comparison should not be taken to indicate that Marshall and Gundry are more inclined than Lane to identify historical data in narrative

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[16]Ibid., p. 13.

[17]Lane, *Mark* 7.

[18]Ibid., p. 97. See also R. A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount, a Foundation for Understanding* (Waco: Word, 1982) 112–118. Guelich traces only three beatitudes to Jesus and theorizies that four (or five) more were added by the Christian community and one by Matthew himself. Gundry on the other hand attributes four of the eight beatitudes to Matthew's creativity (*Matthew* 69).

[19]Marshall, *Luke* 214–216.

[20]Gundry, *Matthew* 164–165.

portions. Regarding Luke 3:21–22 Marshall writes: "The case that Jesus' ministry was preceded by some kind of 'call'-experience is strong . . . , and the account may well express in concrete form the consciousness of divine calling with which he began his ministry; historical study can scarcely go beyond this possibility."[21] Marshall in this case disallows that evangelical research can assert that the events described in conjuction with Jesus' baptism were actual happenings.

Regarding the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:23–38 this same scholar opines: "At the very outset, however, the possibility of a historical record seems unlikely."[22] At one point in his discussion of this genealogy Marshall seems to revert to a more traditional grammatico-historical approach. This is when he says, "It is only right, therefore, to admit that the problem caused by the existence of the two genealogies is insoluble with the evidence presently at our disposal."[23] Yet his discussion does not withhold judgment on these difficulties until further information is discovered, as the statement might imply. It rather pronounces the genealogy to be unhistorical.

He criticizes Lane for accepting the historicity of two visits to Nazareth by Jesus instead of one: "Whatever the historical basis to the incident, Mark and Luke have brought out its significance in different ways. (The view of Lane, 201 n. 2, that *two* different visits are recorded in the Gospels is most unlikely.)"[24] In evaluating this narrative, he not only decides that the two have edited their accounts so heavily as to make one visit look like two but also questions whether either has retained more than a small fraction of what transpired during the visit. The rest of their descriptions are editorial accretions.

In comparison to Gundry, however, the nonhistorical findings of Lane and Marshall are mild. Writing about Matt 2:7–8 Gundry says about the author: "Matthew is not so historically concerned as to imply that Herod needed secrecy in order to forestall a spiriting away of his dangerous rival by parents and revolutionaries."[25] After reading Gundry's explanation of the narrative about the coming of the Magi, one wonders whether Matthew is historically concerned at all. Matthew has transformed the Jewish shepherds that appear in Luke 2 into Gentile Magi.[26] He has changed the traditional manger into a house.[27] For Gundry, then, the nonexistent house was where the nonpersons called Magi found Jesus on the occasion of their nonvisit to Bethlehem.

Such is the tenor of Gundry's entire treatment of the first gospel, all the

[21]Marshall, *Luke* 151.

[22]Ibid., pp. 157–158.

[23]Ibid., p. 159. See E. J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 124–125. Young represents a more traditional grammatico-historical posture of waiting for further light.

[24]Marshall, *Luke* 179.

[25]Gundry, *Matthew* 30.

[26]Ibid., p. 31.

[27]Ibid.

way to Matt 28:19, about which he comments: "Matthew edited the story of Jesus' baptism so as to emphasize the Trinity (see comments on 3:16–17; cf. 12:28); yet only Jesus' name is associated with baptism in Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 1 Cor. 1:13, 15 (cf. Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 6:11; 10:1–4). Therefore Matthew seems to be responsible for the present formula."[28] In other words, the trinitarian baptismal formula originated with Matthew, not with Jesus. One could have hoped that Gundry would have taken Osborne's revised explanation of the Matthew 28 great commission under advisement before settling upon such a conclusion about this formula.[29]

Gundry is quite plain-spoken in describing his own theory about Matthew's treatment of historic events:

> Matthew's subtractions, additions, and revisions of order and phraseology often show changes in substance; i.e., they represent developments of dominical tradition that result in different meanings and departures from the actuality of events. . . . The data of the text understood against the backdrop of ancient literary genres, not a presumption that narrative style in the Bible always implies the writing of history, should govern our understanding of authorial intent.[30]

His estimate of the traditional grammatico-historical approach is reflected in these words:

> Radical historical reductionism has caused a recoil into conservative historical positivism, i.e., a system of orthodox belief based solely on the positive data of historical experience. Such an empiricism, blended as it is with a fixation on history, tends to exclude literary possibilities that would diminish even slightly the amount of history contained in the Bible. But nobody has the right to insist that Scripture conform to standards of writing he happens to feel comfortable with and rule out those he does not.[31]

To this critic the grammatico-historical method is a reactionary and extreme position derived from subjective prejudice about the nature of narrative literary style. He sees his own position as a compromise between this extreme and the extreme of radical criticism, which sees little or no history in the Matthean account. Clearly from Gundry's perspective "historical" should not be the first presumption. Instead literary genres discovered through redaction-critical techniques should be, and "historical" is the conclusion only when these techniques are fruitless in their findings. This position is more appropriately called a grammatico-critical method of interpretation, because history is clearly secondary.

Marshall's concept of his own method is very similar to Gundry's. In discussing the narrative about the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5–25) he concludes in part that "the history of the present narrative cannot be positively

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[28]Ibid., p. 596.

[29]Osborne, "Evangelical" 311.

[30]Gundry, *Matthew* 623, 628.

[31]Ibid., p. 629.

established."[32] In the larger discussion from which these words are taken, Marshall, like Gundry, seeks for a middle ground between granting historicity to narrative sections and not granting historicity. As a result he settles upon a mixture of the historical and the nonhistorical.

It is quite clear from this brief survey that the grammatico-historical method has become the grammatico-critical method. History is no longer the first assumption. To quote Gundry: "We must remind ourselves that taking Matthew's intent to be solely historical is as much a critical judgment (conscious or unconscious) as taking it to be a mixture of the historical and unhistorical."[33] Nonhistory is just as strong a presumption as history when redaction criticism becomes a hermeneutical maxim, whether it be because of Mark's alleged "wilderness-theology,"[34] Luke's "considerably" substantial editorial policies,[35] or Matthew's midrashic or haggadic interpretations.[36]

The initial response of the evangelical to this technique is negative. It fails by far to measure up to the standard of the grammatico-historical approach. Only evidence of the strongest type to validate these critical assumptions can change this. To this point no such evidence has appeared.

II. REJECTION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF HARMONIZATION

The evangelical redaction critic does not accept the principle of harmonization of the gospels as an accurate guide in gospel research. If an apparent discrepancy between two parallel accounts is found, his usual reaction is to explain it as a redactional change of one or both accounts. Little or no attention is given to the possibility that there may exist an explanation that will bring the two passages into agreement with each other.

Gundry summarizes this principle most succinctly when pointing out that "whatever synoptic theory we adopt—and even though we remain agnostic on the synoptic problem—somebody was making drastic changes."[37] When writing about Matthew's tendentious patterns of diction, style and theology, he states: "These patterns attain greatest visibility in, but are by no means limited to, a

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[32]Marshall, *Luke* 51. See also Guelich, *Sermon* 24–25. Guelich sees the gospels as portraits contrasted with snapshots, an uncritical approach, and abstract paintings, a critical approach. They are close approximations but not precise representations of the historical Jesus. See also Hagner, "Interpreting" 24.

[33]Gundry, *Matthew* 633. Contrast Hagner, "Interpreting" 32: "The character of the gospel tradition is such that the burden of proof should never have shifted from inauthenticity to authenticity." Terry states about the grammatico-historical perspective: "It is an old and oft-repeated hermeneutical principle that words should be understood in their literal sense unless such literal interpretation involves a manifest contradiction or absurdity" (M. S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.] 247).

[34]Lane, *Mark* 81.

[35]Marshall, *Luke* 197.

[36]Gundry, *Matthew* 633.

[37]Ibid., p. 625.

number of outright discrepancies with the other synoptic gospels."[38] Harmonization is outmoded according to this scholar: "The old method of harmonizing what we can and holding the rest in suspension has seen its day, like worn-out scientific theories that no longer explain newly discovered phenomena well enough. In Matthew we have a document that does not match even a selective report of Jesus' words and deeds."[39]

This critic is not alone in his view. After an extensive discussion of differences between Luke 5:36 and its Markan parallel Marshall writes: "Whereas in Mk. the deficiencies of Judaism cannot be mended simply by a Christian 'patch', in Lk. the emphasis is on the impossibility of trying to graft something Christian onto Judaism."[40] He leaves his readers ignorant as to which of the two emphases Jesus brought on the historical occasion and unable to judge whether Mark or Luke is responsible for changing the meaning of Jesus' words. There is also the possibility that both made editorial changes, leaving unanswered the matter of what Jesus himself said in this historical situation.

So far are they from showing any inclinations to harmonize the synoptic gospels that at times such critics seem to find delight in magnifying differences between parallel accounts. This gives them opportunity to detect different nuances in meaning that they can attribute to editorializing, thereby furnishing more grist for their mill. A typical example of this lies in the way that Marshall uses the divergence of Luke's genealogy from Matthew's to conclude that Luke's genealogy is unhistorical and Gundry uses the divergence of Matthew's genealogy from Luke's to show that Matthew's genealogy is unhistorical.[41] Neither allows for a possible reconciliation between the two.

The anti-harmonistic stance of evangelical redaction criticism does not commend the dehistoricizing tendency of that discipline because it too alienates itself from the grammatico-historical method.

III. ALLEGORIZATION AS A MEANS OF EXPLAINING DIFFICULTIES

Another hermeneutical mark of evangelical redaction criticism is its tendency to avoid harmonistic and other types of apparent difficulties by attributing to the gospel writers allegorical techniques, sometimes extremely so.

According to Lane's theory, in Mark's "wilderness-theology" lies the explanation for why Mark inappropriately called the land around Capernaum a "wilderness" (Mark 1:35).[42] This geographical inaccuracy is explained as

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[38]Ibid., p. 624; contrast Terry, *Hermeneutics* 555, 564–565.

[39]Gundry, *Matthew* 639. Osborne admits to reversing his own position on this issue to allow for harmonization, but in an apparently contradictory vein two pages later he states: "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" ("Round Four" 407, 409).

[40]Marshall, *Luke* 227.

[41]Ibid., pp. 159–160; Gundry, *Matthew* 15.

[42]Lane, *Mark* 81. See also Guelich, *Sermon* 42, 50–52. Guelich says the audience and the location of the sermon on the mount are redactional creations, not historical realities. He adds: "The Sermon on the Mount, as we know it, is ultimately the literary product of the first evangelist" (p. 33).

Mark's way of saying that Jesus found a place of solitude.

Gundry is even more radical in exercising this technique: "Moreover, in their numbers and in their following Jesus during his earthly ministry, the Jewish crowds symbolize the international church, including the many Gentiles who were later to become disciples (4:25—5:1 with 7:28—8:1; 21:8–9, 11)."[43] We are apparently to believe from this that there were no Jewish crowds, that they were a literary symbol of Matthew's pen. One cannot help wondering by what rationale Jewish crowds can be a suitable symbol for Gentile Christians.

Marshall is no different in the use of this principle:

> Jesus' message is brought first of all to the people of his home town. But when Jesus goes on to speak by implication of the preaching of the gospel and the performance of mighty works among the gentiles, Nazareth begins to take on the symbolic meaning of the Jewish nation. So the narrative takes on more than literal significance; it becomes a paradigm not merely of the ministry of Jesus but also of the mission of the church.[44]

Apparently in Marshall's eyes the latter portions of this episode could not have occurred on the occasion of Jesus' visit to Nazareth, and he averts the historical difficulty by attributing to Luke highly allegorical language. The statements did not come from Jesus.

Often the allegorical explanation of a difficulty stems from an alleged authorial theme that has been preconceived in the critic's mind. These preconceived themes are sometimes utterly fanciful so as to be incredible to all but the critic himself.[45]

This love for allegory certainly does not commend itself as a viable alternative to the grammatico-historical approach.

IV. AUTHORIAL INEPTITUDE IN EDITORIAL PROCEDURES

Another marked tendency of evangelical redaction critics is their identification of inferior editorial procedures supposedly followed by the gospel writers. The authors were human, and their inspiration by the Holy Spirit did not guard them from committing various forms of literary mistakes as they put their gospels together. These ineptitudes necessitate corrective measures prescribed by redaction-critical analysis.

In this vein Marshall, while taking issue with those who reject the historicity of Luke 1:34 by calling it a literary device, agrees with them in disallowing the verse's historicity. He only differs with them when he denies historical validity on historical and psychological grounds rather than literary ones. Regarding this Lukan editorial addition he writes: "Mary's question is puzzling, since, if the promised child is to be a descendant of David, she is already betrothed to a member of the house of David and can expect to marry him in the

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[43]Gundry, *Matthew* 8–9.

[44]Marshall, *Luke* 178; see also p. 70.

[45]E.g. Gundry, *Matthew* 14–16, 18; contrast Terry, *Hermeneutics* 163–164, 247–248.

near future and bear his child."[46] Luke is in essence accused of spoiling the smooth flow of the context by his insertion of an unhistorical question that is a literary misfit. Marshall says that he did it in the process of retelling the event "in the light of the Christian understanding of the verse"—i.e., in the light of the Christian belief in Jesus' virgin birth.[47]

Lane holds the same opinion of Mark's editorial ability. In writing about Mark 2:10–11 he says, "The thought that the Lord affirmed his dignity and function before the scribes during his Galilean ministry is in conflict both with general probability and more particularly with Mark's testimony concerning Jesus' consistent refusal to reveal himself to the scribes, priests and elders who challenged his authority (cf. Ch. 11:33). To hold that he did so in Galilee contradicts the posture he assumed before unbelief throughout his earthly ministry."[48] Mark was, in other words, incapable of presenting a consistent picture of Jesus. At times such as this he lapsed into attributing to Jesus something that did not happen during his lifetime, thereby marring the picture that Mark himself was drawing.

In connection with this same passage Lane attributes to Mark an "awkward syntactical structure" which he calls "deliberate and functional."[49] It is hardly appropriate to label a writing inspired by the Holy Spirit as "awkward," whether Mark did it intentionally or not. Yet the humanness of the author is so dominant that the evangelical redaction critic scarcely notices the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the penning of Scripture.[50]

In Gundry's opinion human fatigue is a factor that explains some editorial phenomena: "At first Matthew freely rearranged his Markan materials in addition to inserting other materials (often shared with Luke). But editorial fatigue set in, so that in the latter half of his gospel he stuck close to Mark's order even when continuing to insert other materials."[51]

But fatigue is not all that he finds. Regarding Matt 3:11 he writes: "Since Matthew has avoided saying that the Pharisees and Sadducees came to be baptized, *hymas* has to be understood in his text as a general 'you' despite the uninterrupted addressing of the Pharisees and Sadducees from v. 7 onward. This inconcinnity favors that the crowds in Luke were the original addressees."[52] Matthew is so unskillful in his arrangement of the parts of his narrative that he commits a classic blunder. This literary error would have been completely hidden from his original readers who did not have Luke's gospel to

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[46]Marshall, *Luke* 69.

[47]Ibid., p. 70; contrast Terry, *Hermeneutics* 142–144.

[48]Lane, *Mark* 97.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Hagner, "Interpreting" 26.

[51]Gundry, *Matthew* 10.

[52]Ibid., p. 49. See B. B. Warfield, *Christology and Criticism* (New York: Oxford, 1929) 112–115. Warfield discusses the suggestion that Matthew "bunglingly" composed his gospel.

compare, a factor that Gundry fails to notice.

It is astounding how unwilling evangelical redaction criticism is to give the gospel writers the benefit of the doubt when a decision such as this could go either of two ways. There is much greater willingness to accept an ineptitude on the gospel writer's part in deference to a redaction-critical principle than to seek a grammatico-historical explanation.

V. DENIAL OF PERSPICUITY OR ASSUMPTION OF AN ESOTERIC READERSHIP

Of strategic importance to evangelical redaction criticism is the presence of a variety of literary signals that alert the critic to narrative portions that are not historical. Critics are not always clear as to whether these signals were evident to the original readers. In either case the assumption of their presence is another deviation from the grammatico-historical approach.

For Marshall, Luke's three mentions of time in Luke 1:26, 36, 56 constitute a clue to show the nonliterality of the delay in the announcement of Elizabeth's pregnancy that is mentioned in Luke 1:24–25.[53] Another example of a literary signal is Mark's "intercalation of one account within another" that sometimes, according to Lane, enhances the sources of opposition faced by Jesus, sometimes is designed to show a lapse of time, and sometimes sharpens a contrast.[54] By this Lane means an artificial chronological sequence has been constructed by the editor to create the impression that events happened together when actually they did not.

Gundry's work is also full of these alleged signals. As an example his comment about "the king of the Jews" in Matt 2:2 may be cited: "Since Jesus has already been introduced as David's son, Matthew expects his readers to catch such allusions; or he takes private delight in them."[55] Since Gundry holds the coming of the Magi to be a nonhappening, he attributes this statement of the Magi to Matthew's editorial creativity. "The king of the Jews" is to him a literary signal on nonhistoricity that Matthew hoped his readers would catch or else a signal that Matthew inserted for his own enjoyment.

Gundry's indecision on this point raises the issue of how evangelical redaction criticism stands regarding the perspicuity of Scripture. Were these signals incorporated with no intention of their being detected by the general readership? Or were they posed as a sort of secret code that could be broken only by the intellectually elite? In either case the convincing principle that the Bible was written to be understood by average readers, at least in general terms, is ignored. If it was designed to be a book of mysteries solvable only by a select few, we have relapsed into a gnostic situation that is quite subjective and produces an endless variety of conflicting meanings. Evangelical redaction criticism falters badly in efforts to justify this feature of its conclusions.

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[53]Marshall, *Luke* 62.

[54]Lane, *Mark* 28.

[55]Gundry, *Matthew* 27.

Gundry presents the concept that Matthew's Jewish readers were of the mentality that would be impressed by the "scrabble-like" word games that he attributes to Matthew. In describing how Matthew fictitiously substituted reigning kings first and then well-known priests into Jesus' genealogy,[56] Gundry stimulates curiosity about how thoroughly Jewish minds of the first century had been conditioned to this sort of thing. Would they be persuaded that Jesus was the promised Messiah by such unhistorical arguments as a fictional genealogy constructed according to the fancies of a writer who is given to drawing up nonexistent relationships? Jesus never taught the Jews in this manner. It is incredible that Matthew, a follower of Jesus, would have done so either. The probability is much higher that such arguments would have been ludicrous to Jewish readers of the time. That "Matthew may intend to play with . . . history for the sake of an unhistorical point"[57] would have carried no weight with Jewish listeners. Otherwise we would find evidence of such a practice elsewhere in NT teachings directed to Jewish audiences.

In fact it is still unproven that the original readers of Matthew, Mark and Luke deciphered any of the alleged codes attributed to them by evangelical redaction critics. Gundry contends that the burden of proof rests on those who say they did not decipher them. But where is his evidence?[58] Certainly it is not in the teachings of Jesus directed to some of these same Jews. The burden of proof rests on one who claims that the disciple used a technique so radically different from his Master. Jesus clearly regarded narrative style as appropriate only for pure history, as in his words about the ministry of Elijah to the widow of Zarephath and that of Elisha to Naaman the Syrian in Luke 4:26–27.

In the theological postscript to his volume Gundry argues at length that Biblical clarity does not require a Biblical writer to distinguish the historical from the unhistorical.[59] He seems to agree that there has been widespread misunderstanding of Matthew's alleged intention from the early fathers down to the present and that this misunderstanding has been universal. Gundry states: "The Spirit of Christ directed the editing, so that its results, along with the historical data, constitute God's Word."[60] But could the result of the Spirit's direction be that Christians throughout the Christian era until the present be totally ignorant of the truth that was written? Such as this is not the product of an omniscient God.

Gundry adds: "It takes only a comparison of Matthew with the other gospels to discover that even where Matthew spins out the tradition he is developing

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[56]Ibid., p. 15.

[57]Ibid., p. 636.

[58]Ibid., p. 635. Terry's concept of the grammatico-historical approach is quite different: A writer "will so speak as to convey his meaning as clearly as possible to others" (*Hermeneutics* 205). An interpreter must "never suppose that he [a writer] intends to contradict himself or puzzle his readers" (ibid.).

[59]Gundry, *Matthew* 632.

[60]Ibid., p. 640.

dominical motifs."[61] But how could the early readers of Matthew have detected this? They had no other gospels for comparison. Furthermore, how can such "spin-outs" be detected? A comparison with other gospels could be misleading because the other gospels may have been "spinning out" too. If this theory is followed through to its logical end, we would be ignorant of Jesus' life. Certainty about anything would be impossible.

VI. OTHER PRINCIPLES OF HERMENEUTICS

There is a goodly number of other principles of redaction-critical interpretation that differ from the grammatico-historical method. Space permits only bare mention of a few.

One of these is the marked tendency to see an author as the ultimate source of what is written rather than attributing sayings to historical persons in whose lips the sayings are placed.[62] At times this causes the redaction critic to put the gospel writer at odds with the meaning of Jesus' original statement.[63]

Another hermeneutical practice of evangelical redaction criticism is its proneness to ignore the historical setting in which a statement was originally made.[64] The background of a statement in history becomes almost inconsequential to the critic. The significant thing is the new surroundings into which the gospel editor has allegedly placed the saying.

A further mark of this school of thought is its de-emphasis of the role of eyewitnesses.[65] If he endorses the traditional authorship of the three synoptic gospels, and some do not, the evangelical redaction critic is not swayed by Matthew's direct access to material from his own memory (or written notes). For some reason he is presumed to have blotted all this from his mind and depended on Mark and traditional material instead.

An additional technique is not to be limited to one interpretation of a given passage.[66] The gospel writers are seen to have intended more than one meaning at times. This type of imprecision seems to be closely akin to the willingness to attribute to Jesus' words meanings that he did not originally intend.

Another feature that is observable is an unwillingness to allow that Jesus

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[61]Ibid.

[62]E.g. parenthetical statements and rhetorical questions came from Mark, not Jesus (Lane, *Mark* 27); the words of Matt 2:5–6 are Matthew's, not the scribes' (Gundry, *Matthew* 29).

[63]Both Gundry (*Matthew* 91) and Guelich (*Sermon* 206–209) see Matthew not only adding to what Jesus said but even going so far as to contradict Jesus' teaching on divorce (cf. Matt 5:32).

[64]E.g. the sayings of Luke 6:43–45 come from a different setting, so their original purpose is uncertain (Marshall, *Luke* 271); Jesus' people are Jews and Gentiles, not just Jews as Jesus' historical setting would have required (Gundry, *Matthew* 23–24); contrast Terry, *Hermeneutics* 231.

[65]E.g. Matthew conflated a number of scattered Markan phrases (Gundry, *Matthew* 63); contrast Terry, *Hermeneutics* 557–558.

[66]E.g. Matthew adds *ph* to Asa's name to produce a secondary allusion to the psalmist Asaph (Gundry, *Matthew* 15); contrast Terry, *Hermeneutics* 205.

may have repeated himself on different occasions.[67] Jesus never used the same or similar words twice. The impression that he did is the result of the shifting of his single utterances into various contexts by the theological editors in order to serve their own purposes.

Finally, evangelical redaction criticism has as yet devised no means for controlling the subjective whims of the critic.[68] The subjectivism is seen not only in the fanciful extremes to which some interpreters go but also in their radical disagreement with one another.[69] The controls of the grammatico-historical method—i.e., the principles of grammar and the facts of history—are lost in this newer approach.

VII. CONCLUSION

This completes the survey that has compared the hermeneutics of evangelical redaction criticism with the grammatico-historical method of exegesis. It is quite evident that the two systems are incompatible with each other. The two view historicity differently, and this difference is reflected in their varying approaches to harmonization and allegorization. The two views of history also necessitate differences of perspective regarding authorial capability and the readership's ability to comprehend. Beyond this there are other miscellaneous incompatibilites relating to the ultimate source of what is written, ignoring of historical settings, de-emphasis of the roles of eyewitnesses, single versus multiple interpretations, repetitions of Jesus' sayings, and the exclusion of subjectivism in interpretation.

The above analysis contradicts the opinion of some evangelicals regarding the compatibility of evangelical redaction criticism with grammatico-historical exegesis.[70] Yet the obvious facts of the case make it obligatory for those who see redaction criticism as a legitimate tool of the grammatico-historical method to produce some examples of redaction-critical methodology that do not fall into the pattern of incompatibilities cited in this discussion. Until they do, the verdict must remain "either . . . or," not "both . . . and."

[67]E.g. Matthew relocates an eschatological parable into Matt 6:22–23, thereby giving a different meaning (Gundry, *Matthew* 113). See also M. Silva, "Ned B. Stonehouse and Redaction Criticism. Part Two: The Historicity of the Synoptic Tradition," *WTJ* 40 (1978) 291–292; Warfield, *Christology* 108–110. Warfield favors allowing that Jesus repeated various sayings.

[68]E.g. the offering of two turtledoves or two young pigeons in the temple is transformed by the theological editor into Herod's slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem (Gundry, *Matthew* 34–35); contrast Terry, *Hermeneutics* 203.

[69]E.g. see nn. 4, 7–8 above.

[70]E.g. K. S. Kantzer, "Redaction Criticism: Handle with Care," *Christianity Today* 29/15 (1985) 12-I.