BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

A Beginner's Handbook

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CHAPTER 5

LITERARY CRITICISM:

The Composition
and Rhetorical Style of the Text

In its broadest sense, literary criticism encompasses all questions which arise pertaining to the text itself, including i&authorship, historical-setting, and various aspects of the language and content of the text. (Many of these issues we have treated in the two previous chapters because they constitute separate tasks in their own right.)

Historically, "literary criticism" in traditional biblical studies has had a rather narrow focus referring primarily to source or documentary analysis. This attitude had its origins in the eighteenth century. When biblical interpreters became increasingly aware of difficulties in reading particular portions of the scriptures, they intuited that certain books (such as 2 Corinthians) and certain blocks of material (such as the Pentateuch) were composites of various documents. They were secondary collections of earlier smaller works. The attempts to isolate these various documents gave birth to source criticism. The tasks of separating out these sources or layers, of describing their content and characteristic features, and of relating them to one another eventually came to be designated "literary criticism."

In general literary studies, "literary criticism" denotes a broad range of topics: the compositional structure and character of a text, techniques of style, the employment of images and symbols by an author, aesthetic and dramatic effects in a work, and so on. All of these factors are involved in reading and understanding biblical texts. The Bible may be more than literature but it is certainly literature. And in this regard, the Bible should be read like any other body of literature. As with literature in general, one must read the Bible with some literary competence and discretion. We all realize that different reading conventions are operative depending on whether one is reading prose and narrative or poetry and verse. Different kinds of literature are capable of having different

kinds of meaning and supply different kinds of "information" to the reader. This means that different questions must be asked in interrogating different types of literature.

Closely related to literary criticism is rhetorical criticism. Rhetoric is one of the oldest academic disciplines. It is concerned with how a speaker advocates a position and seeks to convince an audience or reader of the validity of that position. Although originally concerned with oratory and spoken presentations, rhetoric was applicable to written texts since most ancient texts, although written, were composed to be read aloud.

Most biblical literature is what might be called "purposeful" literature. It seeks to persuade the reader about certain truths, positions, and courses of action and is thus subject to rhetorical analysis. Much biblical literature was produced for very particular situations. Paul, for example, wrote his letters to address special conditions in the life of early Christian communities. The ancient prophets as well delivered their speeches in particular historical and social contexts. These particular occasions and contexts are what can be called rhetorical situations. A rhetorical situation involves an audience, a speaker or writer, a topic or issue of mutual concern, and an occasion for communication. In a rhetorical situation, the communicator (speaker/writer) seeks to convince or persuade the audience to accept some particular interpretation or course of action.

The study of rhetoric was highly developed and discussed among the ancient Greeks. Rhetorical skills were certainly developed and cherished in Old Testament times even though we do not know how these were taught. According to Aristotle, rhetoric was the faculty for discovering the best means of persuasion. As such, rhetoric was taught in schools as involving five steps: (1) invention-the planning of a discourse and the arguments and evidence to be employed in it; (2) arrangement-the ordering of the component parts to produce an effective whole; (3) style-the choice of the means and methods for expressing the discourse; (4) memory- preparation for delivery; and (5) delivery-matters related to voice and gestures in the presentation. In written discourse, only the first three steps were involved.

Ancient rhetoric paid particular attention to the nature of proof in developing persuasive discourse. Aristotle discussed different modes of proof depending upon whether they focused on the speaker, the audience, or the discourse. These different forms centered on ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos denotes "character" and has to do with the speaker's or writer's credibility and trustworthiness. Biblical authors' use of ethi-

cal appeal can be seen, for example, in Paul's frequent autobiographical references and in the prophets' reports of their experiences. Evidence, such as the quotation of Scripture or tradition or the ever-present list in 1 and 2 Chronicles, lends credibility to the author. Pathos has to do with the feelings and reactions of the audience. Much of the imagery of the Bible seeks to appeal to the audience's emotions and feelings and thus to gain a hearing and a response. Exaggeration and hyperbole abound. Logos has to do with logical developments within the discourse. Various forms of logic, both inductive and deductive, may be found in any purposeful, persuasive text.

In exegeting a biblical text, we must be alert to the literary and rhetorical dimensions of a text. Emphasis on compositional techniques and rhetorical features aid in understanding how a writing has been developed, how its structure and style contribute to its presentation, and what- objectives the writer may have had in mind.

Literary criticism of biblical texts recognizes that a single text, passage, or pericope generally formsapart c&a-larger whole-the document of which it is a part. As a component in a larger whole, the part both contributes to the meaning of the whole and derives meaning from the sense of the whole. A passage in Romans or a narrative in Genesis, for example, can best be properly exegeted when they are viewed as components within their larger contexts. In these two cases, obviously the larger contexts are the books of Genesis and Romans. A text, however, usually has a number of literary contexts. There is, of course, the immediate context of the passage or its location between what precedes and what follows. The passage and its immediate context may be components within a larger sub-unit of a book and a book may be composed of several such sub-units. At the same time, however, even a book may be part of a larger unit or whole, that is, it may be part of a multi-book document, such as Luke-Acts or 1 and 2 Chronicles.

In attempting to understand a particular text, the exegete should seek to see the text within the structure of the major context as well as within the structure of the sub-units. Reading through an entire document, constructing an outline, and consulting the outlines given in commentaries and other works can aid in determining the general structure and style of the larger work and the compositional techniques employed in its production.

Ancient authors and collectors, like their modem counterparts, could use various compositional techniques to give structural outline to their works and to tie together various internal sub-units and blocks of mate-

rial. The structure of individual works might be based on such considerations as thematic interests, chronological schemes (most historical books), plot or plot motifs (particularly all narrative), particular apologetic or defense argumentation (many of the letters of Paul), alphabetic lines in which the successive letters of the alphabet are used to give an external arrangement to material (several of the psalms, Lamentations), speeches and summations (Deuteronomy-2 Kings, Matthew), geographical references (much of Exodus-Numbers), association of subject matter (Old Testament law codes), patterns dictated by use in rituals and worship (many of the psalms), and so on. Frequently the structure of a text may reflect the operation of several of these techniques. Often the shape of a text also reflects standard forms and genres characteristic of the author's time and thus is not the special creation of the writer. (This will be discussed further in the chapter on form criticism.)

The structuring of material was not only characteristic of books and large complexes but also of major blocks and sub-units within works. Individual component parts within a document might have their own particular structure. The text being exegeted thus needs to be considered in light of both major and minor structural complexes.

Because ancient authors and collectors often incorporated preexisting materials and sources into their works, the structure and outline of internal blocks of material may have derived from the structure of the earlier sources. Thus one can encounter multilayered structures within the same document. In a heavily. edited work like the Pentateuch, the exegete encounters both the structure of the earlier sources and the structure of the final form of the text. Ideally, a particular text can best be exegeted when its place and function can be seen within each of the layers or sources of the text. Thus a passage found in the Pentateuch can be viewed not only in terms of its present context in the final form of the text but also in terms of its context in the earlier sources (the so-called J, E, D, and P documents). In like fashion, various layers of tradition can be seen in the Synoptic Gospels. The earliest Gospel writer, probably Mark, inherited cycles of tradition which were given new meaning when combined with other materials into a gospel form. In like manner, when Mark's material was utilized by Matthew and Luke, the traditions were again given another context and became incorporated into these works with different structures and compositional techniques.

Various factors in a document may indicate the use and incorporation of sources. Among these are (1) changes in literary style, (2) shifts in vocabulary, (3) breaks in continuity of thought or presentation, (4) the

presence of secondary linking and connecting statements, (5) changes in theological and other viewpoints, (6) duplications or repetition of material, (7) clearly defined and isolatable sub-units, and (8) chronological, factual, or other inconsistencies. Utilizing these indications, the exegete can often isolate earlier sources. As we have noted, much of nineteenth-century literary criticism focused on this isolation of sources and their dating and original historical contexts.

Biblical scholarship has sought to establish the overall literary structure of most of the biblical writings and the sources which may lie behind and be incorporated in them. As one would expect, disagreement exists over how individual works should be divided and subdivided, but discussion of these disagreements in critical introductions and other handbooks is often quite useful in providing the student with the sorts of options available. In addition, the introductory sections to commentaries on individual books often provide the student with information pertaining to literary markers within the text which indicate structural divisions and structuring techniques. These various markers in the text note such things as the beginning and ending of sections or transitions within sections. Some of these are temporal, others geographical or spatial; some are technical or formulaic while others may be subtle.

As important as it is to consult reference works, however, it is equally, perhaps more, important for the exegete who has established the larger literary unit within which the text occurs, whether it is a single book or a major division within a book, to read this larger literary unit, not once but several times. This will assist the reader in determining even more precisely how the passage being exegeted fits into the larger whole and how it functions within this whole.

Questions of literary function which the exegete should ask are: How does the particular passage function with respect to its immediate and larger context? Is it transitional, that is, does it serve as a literary bridge from one section to another? Is it climactic, that is, does it serve as the culmination of several paragraphs or sections immediately preceding it? Is it illustrative, that is, does it function to illustrate an earlier assertion? Is it extrinsic to the larger literary unit, that is, does it not fit at all into the literary context?

By asking such questions as these the interpreter is seeking to relate the passage. to its larger literary context by establishing connections within the text. Doing so is an important aspect of exegesis because clues to interpreting the passage often lie outside the passage itself and are found in its larger literary setting. For example, if one is exegeting

Luke's account of Jesus' initial sermon in Nazareth (see Luke 4:16–30), by viewing it in relation to the document as a whole, one discovers that the passage is not presented simply as another event in the ministry of Jesus, but rather as an inaugural event. Its placement at this point in Luke's account makes it crucial in the overall development of the story. Major literary and theological themes developed later in Luke-Acts are introduced at this point, yet it is only by reading the document as a whole that one can recognize how many important Lukan themes converge here as well as how they are developed elsewhere in the narrative. To cite another example, the middle section of Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapters 9-11, must be viewed in relation to the whole letter. And, one can safely say, what the interpreter finally decides about how these three chapters relate to the rest of the letter ultimately determines how the entire letter is interpreted. If, for example, the exegete concludes that these three chapters are a digression and thus only incidental to the overall contents of the letter, the letter will be read one way. If, by contrast, these three chapters are seen as the culmination of everything that has gone before in chapters 1—8, the letter will be read another way. Thus, establishing the literary function of a given text becomes a crucial step in exegeting the passage.

Questions of the literary placement and function of a passage can sometimes be formulated helpfully in another way. The interpreter can ask: What effect would it have on the document as a whole if the passage were omitted entirely? Would something be irretrievably lost? Or, would nothing substantially important be lost? What effect would it have on the document if the passage were relocated and placed somewhere "else in the document? How would this affect the overall structure and content of the document?

By asking questions about the literary placement and function of the passage, the interpreter often is able to detect certain things about the passage otherwise missed. For example, by looking at the immediate literary context, one may discover that the passage is one of a series of prophetic oracles, each of which has a particular function within a larger sequence, or one of a series of miracle stories, each of which serves to unfold some aspect of a messianic portrait. By placing the passage in its larger literary context, the interpreter will not only be better able to understand the passage in its own right, its particular nuances and distinctive content, but also the larger document as a whole. As we noted earlier, a passage both shares in the meaning of the larger literary unit and contributes to it.

By examining a passage in its relation to its larger literary context, the exegete leaves open the possibility that the author or collector sought carefully to construct the document as a whole in order to achieve maximum effect. Quite often, ancient authors employed rhetorical techniques and devices within the text itself to assist in the comprehension of the message of the text and to persuade the hearer or reader of the truth of its presentation. Because the biblical writings were written originally to be read aloud, this rhetorical dimension of the text was an important ingredient in composition. By contrast, because silent reading is more often the norm in modern times than oral reading, these rhetorical dimensions are often overlooked by the modern reader. Yet, they are extremely valuable to the exegete in understanding the biblical writings.

The Gospel of Matthew has always been noted for its balance and symmetry. The author's fondness for organizing information in groups of sevens and threes is well known. Organizing the story of Jesus in this manner certainly made it easier to remember the information, and catechetical considerations may have been one of the primary factors in determining how the book was organized. Consequently, the interpreter, for example, should allow for the possibility that the group of seven parables found in chapter 13 represents the author's arrangement rather than reflects an actual historical situation. In this instance, giving attention to the rhetoric?! or compositional aspect of the text will bear directly on historical questions.

Similarly, because ancient authors were aware of the difficulty hearers and readers had in following an extended argument or narrative, they would often supply periodic summaries throughout the narrative to assist the reader in "catching up" with the story or argument. Numerous instances of this occur in the book of Acts, for example.

Various techniques were used for structuring not only individual units but also entire documents. A frequently used structural device was known as "chiasmus," a principle of arranging materials in a symmetrical pattern where certain components would correspond to other components. In a four-part arrangement, the chiastic structure might follow an a-b-b-a pattern, where the first and fourth items corresponded to each other while the second and third items did so as well. Another such device was what is called "inclusio." This refers to the practice of restating or paraphrasing the opening and leading idea or phrase at the conclusion in order to reemphasize the point being made or the position being advocated. These devices were widely used in antiquity and are found frequently in the biblical writings.

Knowing that ancient writers often employed rhetorical techniques and devices may assist the interpreter in understanding the structure of a document. For one thing, the overall structure may be unfamiliar and incomprehensible to the modern reader because it does not easily fit into *modern* notions of sequence and organization; yet, it may fit perfectly into *ancient* notions of arrangement. A document may be perfectly symmetrical and logically sequential, provided one understands the rhetorical principle or principles upon which it was based.

Another aspect of literary criticism should also be mentioned in conclusion-literary mood. Language is often used as much to create effect as it is to convey information in a straightforward manner. Beginning exegetes often err in over-analyzing the words and phrases within a passage without detecting the more subtle ways in which the language is functioning. The phrase "You are rich!" (1 Cor. 4:8) read as a straight declarative sentence means one thing, but read as irony means quite the opposite. Similarly, biblical statements often convey a quality other than straightforward declaration. The Fourth Gospel, for example, is highly ironical both in its overall structure and in individual stories within the Gospel, and the exegete's task cannot ignore this dimension of literary mood. The mood of one text may be liturgical, in which case the language may be more poetic, less direct, and intended to elicit certain emotions rather than convey theological information. Accordingly, how one understands individual words or phrases in a highly evocative passage exuding the atmosphere of worship may differ radically from how one understands the same words or phrases within a text whose mood is fiercely polemical or apologetic. To read a piece of comedy as straightforward narrative is itself comic, and the exegete does well to be attentive to these more unspoken dimensions of the text.

The literary criticism of a biblical text, thus, focuses on the "world of the text," its composition, its structure, its style, and its mood. Numerous studies are available to assist the exegete in this type of investigation. Nothing, however, is more crucial than the ability to read a text thoroughly, closely, sympathetically, with both an eye and an ear to the internal dimensions of the text which may serve as most useful clues to understanding.

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CHAPTER 6

FORM CRITICISM:

The Genre and Life Setting of the Text

Literary criticism, as discussed in the previous chapter, focuses on the "world of the text." In that chapter, we stressed the importance of seeing a text in relation to the larger literary composition in which it is located. Form criticism, or better, genre analysis, though not uninterested in the larger literary blocks of material or even books, focuses more on the smaller literary sections or pericopes. Genre analysis is that aspect of criticism which examines the form, content, and function of a particular unit and asks whether these are definite enough and typical enough for the unit to be classified and interpreted as belonging to a particular genre. If these factors are found to occur in a recognizably similar pattern, and if definite criteria can be established by which one can identify the pattern's occurrence, the unit may be said to belong to a given genre. Knowing the genre of a text allows us to know what types of questions can sensibly be asked of the material.

Form criticism, however, is not concerned merely with identifying various literary genres and then classifying a particular passage within one of these genres, as if defining the genre with its typical features will in some magical sense provide the clue to meaning and interpretation. In addition to genre analysis and classification, form criticism is also concerned with establishing or determining the "situation in life" (*Sitz im Leben*) in which the particular genres were produced, shaped, and used. The phrase "in life" calls attention to the actual "life setting" in which forms of expression arose and were employed. This dimension of form criticism underscores the vital connection between literary genres, their particular institutional and social setting, and their total cultural background.

One benefit of paying closer attention to the genre of texts has been an increased awareness of how directly literary form and content are related

to meaning. As we noted earlier, exegesis is an everyday activity in a more general sense, and in everyday exegesis the ordinary person recognizes the relationship between form and content. We recognize that a classified ad in a newspaper belongs to a clearly defined genre with its own set of criteria and expectations. A description of property for sale in a classified ad differs radically from a description of the same property in a deed. One is an advertisement designed to sell the property; the other is a legal description designed to record accurately what has been sold. Every person recognizes that a certain amount of hyperbole and over-statement is allowed, even expected, in the former but not in the latter. Consquently, we read them with different expectations and we interpret them differently. How we understand the description of the property, in other words, is directly related to the literary genre in which the description occurs.

To extend the illustration, the modern reader also recognizes, although perhaps only tacitly, the importance of "setting in life" in interpreting a document. The life setting of a newspaper advertisement is far different from that of a legal document bound and shelved in a government complex. The life setting of advertising and selling property creates a situation which emphasizes the positive features while deem-phasizing or even ignoring the negative features. Exaggeration is a built-in ingredient of the life setting of advertising and selling and because we all know this we tend to allow for this as we interpret advertisements and sales pitches. In everyday exegesis, therefore, we recognize the inter-connectedness of what is said (content), how it is said (form), and in what setting it is said (setting in life), and we integrate all three as we understand and interpret all sorts of statements.

Form criticism of biblical texts operates with a similar set of perspectives. The exegete who is attentive to form critical concerns makes several distinct interpretive moves. In trying to understand the content of a biblical passage, or what is said in the passage, the interpreter should be alert to its genre and literary structure or how the content is arranged and stated. Once this is done, we then try to determine the life setting or the actual situation(s) in which such a text originated and developed. If we can determine this, we then try to ascertain how the text functioned in that setting. All of this in turn assists us in gaining competence in reading and understanding the content.

These two dimensions of form criticism-the classification of biblical material into various genres and the association of these genres with sociological realities in the life of ancient Israel and the early church—

have been increasingly recognized within the past century or soof biblical scholarship. In the nineteenth century, investigations of the biblical text tended to focus on historical, documentary, and literary questions in a different sense. Historical criticism had come to recognize that many biblical writings "grew" out of certain historical contexts over periods of time. Literary and documentary criticism sought especially to detect various sources upon which the final form of the biblical texts was based. These approaches, however, showed little concern for the individual literary units and specific genres within the biblical text or for the sociological soil-those typical occasions of human existence-in which they were rooted and had grown. These came into prominence as scholars sought to go beyond documentary and historical analysis in order to gain an empathetic appreciation of how the biblical materials had been utilized in ancient cultures before they became fixed in writing.

The book of Psalms proved to be one of the first blocks of biblical material to be analyzed profitably from form-critical perspectives. Consequently, the psalms came to be classified into distinct literary genres: laments (both individual and communal), thanksgivings (both individual and communal), and hymns. Other genres were also identified, but perhaps most significant was the recognition that each of the broad types of psalms followed fairly clearly definable patterns of content, mood, and structure. Equally important was the recognition that the psalms, far from being a collection of hymns, poems, and odes written by a single figure, such as David, were produced within the community of Israel to express and address its various and recurring needs. The majority of them came to be seen as the liturgical texts used in Israelite services of worship. The psalter was now seen as the song and prayer book of ancient Israel reflecting the richness and diversity of the people's life, especially its life of worship. The psalms could no longer be read as if they were part of a single genre, "the book of Psalms," for they were now seen to be connected integrally with many "life settings" within the community and worship of Israel. They not only gave expression to Israel's faith but also reflected that faith and the life which supported it. In this way, form-critical analysis of the psalms made it possible to see how integrally connected are the literary, historical, and sociological dimensions of these biblical texts.

Just as the psalms "came to life" through form-critical investigations, so did other parts of the biblical text when they were examined in similar fashion. The narratives in Genesis were no longer explored merely to ascertain their documentary sources or their historical value but were

viewed as "stories" arising out of and expressing the folk life of the people. Prophetic books, too, could no longer be read "on the flat," for they were seen to contain numerous smaller literary units, each quite often reflective of different life settings. It became necessary for the interpreter to be more refined in interpreting the prophetic material. One now had to ask more than simply whether a text was a "prophetic address," but what type of prophetic address-judgment, promise, admonition, exhortation, or what?

The New Testament writings, first the Gospels and later the letters, came to be investigated from a similar perspective. Investigations of the Gospels uncovered numerous smaller genres, such as miracle stories, pronouncement stories, parables, birth stories, to mention only a few. The epistles also revealed a wide variety of smaller genres, such as hymns, prayers of various sorts, kerygmatic or sermon outlines, and confessions. The impact on our understanding of the New Testament was as dramatic as had been the case with the Old Testament. The faith and life of the early church came to light in a new way and many dimensions of that faith and life became visible in an unprecedented fashion. The New Testament writings were seen as literary productions within which the reader could now hear early Christians worshiping (praying and singing), preaching, teaching, confessing, and defending their faith.

If historical criticism succeeds in uncovering the history of the documents and in allowing us to see their "linear life," form criticism succeeds in pointing to the sociological and liturgical dimensions underneath individual texts and allows us to see their "vertical life." The biblical writings, it was discovered, had both historical breadth and sociological depth. A given text might be one step or link within a continuous history, but it might just as well be the proverbial tip of a historical and sociological iceberg, with a substructural history and life of its own.

To be more specific, when form-critical analysis is applied to a royal enthronement psalm, such as Psalm 2, it is as concerned with the "life setting" reflected within the psalm as it is with what is being stated within the psalm. The coronation of a king within ancient Israel is seen to have been the likely setting for which this psalm was originally formulated and in which it came to be repeated on successive occasions. Consequently, the interpreter wonders less about the explicit identity of who is being referred to or who speaks in the psalm as the "king" and "the Lord's anointed." Indeed, as it turns out, what is said in the psalm, its content, is seen to be integrally related to the life setting which gave it

birth, and the clue to understanding both is being able to recognize and appreciate its genre. Thus, form, content, life setting, and function are all interrelated and inform each other in the act of form-critical interpretation.

A miracle story from the Gospels such as the healing of the Gerasene demoniac (see Mark 5: l-20 and parallels), to take an example from the New Testament, is one episode within the overall Gospel story. We may study the narrative as depicting an event within the life of Jesus' own ministry and interpret it with a recognition of the historical setting and how this event is reported in each of the Gospels. Consequently, we take into as full account as possible the historical and social setting of the life and ministry of Jesus in analyzing the story. Accordingly, we seek to understand demon possession within first-century Palestine, how it was conceived and understood, but also the role of Jesus in the episode. Consideration may be given to how each Gospel writer used the story. At this level, the interpreter is still attempting to reconstruct the event which may have given birth to the story and to explore how each of the evangelists has employed the story.

A new dimension enters the picture when the same story is considered form-critically. Form-critical analysis of this text would begin by identifying its literary genre as a "miracle story," more specifically an exorcism. Having determined its literary form, we would then note the formal elements in the story, or its literary structure, such as the description of the demon-possessed man (verses 2–5), his encounter with Jesus the miracle-worker (verses 6–10), a description of the healing miracle itself (verses 1 1–13), the aftermath, including the impact on the crowds and a description of the healed man (verses 14-20). By analyzing the formal structure of similar miracle stories, both biblical and non-biblical, we can determine that the story exhibits a typical pattern seen in other ancient miracle stories. Once we determine this formal outline, it is possible to see how the parallel accounts in Matthew (8:28–34) and Luke (8:26–39) have either expanded or compressed certain formal features.

Besides identifying the genre of the text and analyzing its formal structure, form-critical analysis also inquires into the so-called "oral period," the time between the "original occurrence" of the episode within the life of Jesus and the time when the story was incorporated into the final form of the gospel writing. Form criticism recognizes that during this time, this story like many other such stories circulated orally within the early church. As they were told and retold in the various life

settings of preaching, teaching, and worship, they acquired a certain shape to fit the setting. Within these settings, such stories as Mark 5:1–20 acquired their present form and content, being shaped by the Christian community for its own uses.

With its recognition of the oral, preliterary period in which many of the stories about Jesus circulated, form criticism enables us to account for variations within the same story as reported in two or more Gospels. As long as interpreters worked at the literary and historical levels exclusively, it was difficult to provide a satisfactory explanation of the differences in the content and arrangement of certain episodes and teachings in the Gospels. For example, the healing of the Gerasene demoniac exhibits intriguing variations in each of the synoptic accounts. In Matthew's account, there are two **demoniacs,** whereas in Mark and Luke there is only one. Mark records the number of swine as "about two thousand," whereas Matthew and Luke omit this fantastic detail. Such variations are more easily accounted for when we recognize that the same story was told and retold numerous times on various occasions and in different settings. In this way, we see that Matthew records one version of the story as it was told in the early church, whereas Mark and Luke preserve another version of the same story.

Besides helping us to explain many of the differences we find in various accounts of the same story or saying, form-critical analysis also makes it possible to determine the ways in which the story has been shaped, or edited, in the final stage of writing. This allows us to see that the text, even in its final literary form, also possesses another "life setting," that of the author/compiler. In many instances, it is clear that this setting differs quite significantly from earlier settings in which the story or saying was used. This final "setting in life" obviously must take into account the author's own historical, geographical, and social setting, but also his literary purposes and theological interests as well. This will be discussed further in the chapter on redaction criticism, which deals more thoroughly, and intentionally, with the final form of the text and the author's literary and theological purposes.

Form-critical analysis has been especially useful in investigating and interpreting the parables of Jesus. At one time, the parables as a whole were read as if they belonged to the single genre "allegory." Form-critical analysis has enabled us not only to see that there are different types of parables, such as parables of judgment or parables of the kingdom, but that their formal structure as well as their content often provide clues to their original life setting. Consequently, when we read the parables

form-critically, we try to reconstruct the various settings in which they were used and then determine how they functioned in those settings. Often their placement in the Gospels themselves provides useful clues. For example, the parable of the lost sheep occurs in different contexts in Matthew (18:12–14) and Luke (15:3–7). In the former, it occurs in a context where proper behavior in the church is the main concern, and there it serves to remind us to care for the "little ones," probably meaning recent converts. In the latter, it occurs in a context where Jesus is disputing with Pharisees and scribes about his associating with social outcasts, the tax collectors and sinners. There it is joined with the parable of the lost coin and the parable of the lost son and serves to underscore the inestimable worth of even a single sinner. In one case the setting is catechetical, providing concrete instructions for church conduct. In the other case the setting is one of polemical controversy in which the parable functions for another purpose altogether. It is entirely possible that these two *literary* settings reflect the type of actual life settings in which the parable circulated in the early church.

Form-critical perspectives on a New Testament, especially a Gospel, text thus focus more on the stories as typical forms of expression rather than as narratives or reports about an event in the life of Jesus and seek to determine how these were used in the life of the church and shaped for its purposes. Thus form criticism allows the interpreter to understand and appreciate the role and significance of the faith and practices of the believing community in the formation of the traditions that the community would hold sacred and declare canonical.

Form-critical analysis, can, of course, be applied to entire books and certainly is not merely relevant to the oral stage of materials or to their prewritten form. For example, apocalypses, such as the books of Daniel and Revelation belong to a distinct genre. As such, they possess characteristic elements of content, form, and function. Most of the book of Deuteronomy belongs to the genre of "farewell addresses." To speak of the genre of a written work may not mean that the document is devoid of earlier materials or other genres. Apocalyptic literature often contains such genres as "vision reports" which we know from both prophetic and historical literature. Deuteronomy, although a farewell-address genre, incorporates many other genres including various forms of laws.

We should not assume that every text will lend itself to a complete form-critical analysis. Some texts may well be fresh productions in that they have no history prior to the literary setting in which they occur. Their only life setting may be that of the document itself and the situa-

tion of the author-audience in which it arose. These texts, which exhibit typical recurrent formal patterns and behind which we can see prior stages are best suitable for form-critical analysis.

Commentaries on biblical books ordinarily provide the reader with genre classifications, but other more specialized studies also provide a more extensive set of categories. The reader, in trying to classify the passage according to genre, should ask what it is: Is it a prophetic call narrative? a prophetic oracle? a proverb? a psalm of lament? a miracle story? a letter? a hymn? and so-forth. Even if this preliminary classification is provisional, it is a necessary exegetical step since it allows the interpreter to raise the questions of form and setting. If the text is seen to be in the form of a psalm of communal lament, for example, the interpreter will then need to determine something about its life setting by asking what circumstances could have given rise to such a lament-a defeat in battle, a natural catastrophe, or what, and how such a lament was utilized in a service of worship with its various components. As the answers to such questions become clearer, understanding of the form and the content of the passage and how it is to be "read" and understood also become clearer, because all aspects of genre analysis interact with each other. For example, a psalm may initially be utterly incomprehensible, until one discovers that it is a communal lament sung by the community. The various stanzas, and how they relate to each other, that is, the form and structure will become much clearer, and the interpreter will be able to read the content of the psalm with much greater understanding. In like fashion, study of typical forms and content can lead one to grasp the typical life setting of texts.

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TRADITION CRITICISM:

The Stages Behind the Text

All cultures have traditions which one generation passes on to the next. Such traditions give expression to peoples' self-understanding, their sense of their past, their systems of belief, and their codes of conduct. Sub-groups within the larger whole may have their own special traditions. These traditions are passed down in the form of stories, sayings, songs, poems, confessions, creeds, and so on. Tradition criticism is concerned with both the nature of these traditions and how they are employed and modified in the course of a community's history.

Much of the Bible is composed of such traditions and reflects the crystallization of the traditions at a particular stage. In fact, different stages of the same tradition may have crystallized at different places and in different ways within the text. These different stages may be reflective of different chronological periods or different theological perspectives or both. (Within Judaism and Christianity, certain interpretations of biblical traditions, of course, have themselves become "traditions.")

Not every biblical text passed through stages of growth and development prior to its appearance in a biblical book, but many did. In those instances where this is clearly the case, tradition criticism offers a valuable perspective and a useful set of methodological approaches for looking at a biblical text.

Within the last two hundred years of biblical scholarship, it has been increasingly recognized that many parts of the Bible "grew" over long periods of time. In some instances this growth occurred over a period of decades, in other instances over centuries. The Old Testament reflects this type of organic development in many of its parts, but the Pentateuch provides perhaps the best example of a part of the Bible which has been formed over a long period of time. It is now widely regarded as a work which reflects multiple editorial activities and diverse chronological periods. Based on distinctive literary characteristics, such as language and style, as well as on theological perspectives discernible within the text, layers, strata, or sources have been discovered in the Pentateuch. These layers have been designated J, E, D, and P. Much of the New Testament, though composed over a much shorter span of time than the Old Testament, reflects a similar period of growth and development prior to the actual writing of the documents themselves. This is especially the case with the Gospels.

In both the Old and New Testaments, therefore, a period prior to the final literary stage of the biblical documents can be recognized. This period has come to be frequently designated the "oral period," because it is assumed to be a time in which the stories and other traditions which later came to be codified within the text circulated in unwritten form, being used and re-used within the communities of Israel and the church respectively. As they were preserved and transmitted, they took on the quality of "traditions," that is, they were thought to be valuable enough, indeed sacred enough, to be passed on from generation to generation. The term tradition, after all, simply refers to that which has been handed over, or passed along, whether sacred or not, but in the context of the Old or New Testament, it obviously denotes those stories and materials which the communities of faith regarded as sacred and normative in defining their faith and practice.

Tradition criticism, however, need not be confined to an "oral period." Traditions may be either written or oral or both. Even if a sacred tradition or story at first circulated in an oral form and was transmitted orally through several generations, after it came to be recorded it still partook of the nature of tradition. It only changed with respect to the manner in which it was handed on. The "traditioning" process thus may involve both oral and written traditions. In either case, tradition criticism is concerned with that aspect of biblical writings where growth and development have occurred. In some instances, certain biblical texts have no pre-history. They appear to have been composed by a single individual at a single point in time for a specific situation. They did not exist prior to that moment in any "pre-packaged" form, and they only exhibit the features of previous traditions to the extent that they draw in a general way on the ethos and atmosphere of the sacred communities or utilize traditional themes, patterns, or plot motifs.

In other cases, however, certain biblical texts show clear signs of growth and development. They resemble geological formations where later layers can be distinguished from earlier layers. When this is the

case, the interpreter's task is, first, to detect these layers of literary formation, and second, having done so, to determine how this has occurred and why. Above all, the interpreter engages in this tradition-critical analysis in order to understand better the final form of the text, or the text which one reads in the Bible itself.

Before looking at specific biblical examples, we should note that the process of growth and development of traditions presupposed by tradition criticism can be seen in numerous modern instances which illustrate the way in which traditional materials grow and develop. Quite frequently, one encounters different versions of the same hymn in various denominational hymnbooks. Some versions have three verses, while others might have five or six. Even the same verse may show slightly different wording from hymnbook to hymnbook. If one is trying to understand a particular version of a hymn, certain questions become obvious: Is this the original version of the hymn? Or, was there even an original version? Is this version an earlier or a later version? Is the author whose name appears at the top of the hymn responsible for it, in whole or only in part? How does this compare with a shorter version of the hymn in another hymnbook? Is the shorter version an earlier version which was expanded later, or is it a shortened form of a longer version? In such a case it becomes clear that the hymn has been "traditioned." It has originated at some point, been transmitted and modified until it now can be found in various forms.

It should also be noted that various changes one might detect within the hymn might bear further investigation. The recent concern to make the language of worship more inclusive by eliminating sexist language from many traditional hymns has resulted in numerous revisions, and such changes reflect both historical and sociological, as well as theological, interests. These concrete changes in the tradition may then be related directly to specific settings in life, and the wording of the hymn may be difficult to comprehend otherwise.

If we take the illustration a step further, suppose we find the hymn, not in a hymnal, but quoted in a sermon or an article. This would represent yet another stage in the development of the tradition, for now the actual literary setting has shifted; the literary context of the hymn is no longer "hymnbook" but "sermon." And, if the hymn is cited in order to make a theological point, or to illustrate some moral lesson, its function has also changed. If the exegete is interpreting the sermon, in the first instance, and not the hymn, then the interpretive process is extended even further. It now becomes possible to recognize (a) that a

hymn is being quoted which was produced prior to the sermon itself; it had a pre-history, as it were; (b) that a particular version of the hymn is being cited, and that it differs from other versions one knows or had discovered in other hymnbooks; and (c) that the final form of the hymn quoted in the sermon is best understood in light of the other versions that exist, and that this form will be especially illuminated if one were able to sketch in correct historical sequence how and why the hymn developed to the final form one confronts within the sermon being interpreted.

The biblical writings quite often reflect similar stages of growth which lie behind a particular text. Suppose, for example, one were interpreting the Old Testament injunction to observe the sabbath as recorded in Exodus 20:8–11. After examining the passage and noting its content and structure, one would soon discover another version in Deuteronomy 5:12–15, and more importantly that it differed in several respects. Among other things, one would quickly notice that the Exodus version is shorter by several lines. Second, with respect to the content, one would notice that the primary reason for keeping the sabbath is different in each case. In Deuteronomy, observance of the sabbath is grounded in the exodus deliverence, while in Exodus it is related to the creation of the world. Further investigation would uncover other instances in the Old Testament where brief, unelaborated injunctions to keep the sabbath occur (Leviticus 19:3).

Fairly obvious questions would occur to the interpreter at this point: How do the two versions of the same commandment in the Decalogue relate to each other? Is the shorter earlier than the longer, or is it an abbreviated later version? What accounts for the two different theological rationales which are adduced for keeping the sabbath? Were there originally two, each of which was preserved in an independent form? Or, were there originally two different settings out of which these two versions arose, each representing a different theological perspective? How are these elaborated forms of the sabbath ordinance related to the unelaborated or other forms? These are the questions tradition criticism would ask, but it would go further. It would recognize that both versions of the same commandment represent the final literary form of a lengthy process of formation and development, and based on observations of content, structure, and setting, that is, on form-critical observations, would seek to reconstruct how the tradition of the sabbath-observance injunction developed. Having reconstructed this "history of tradition," the exegete would then come back to the final form of the text in Exodus 20, since this was the original point of departure, and propose an expla-

nation interpreting this particular form, and in addition, doing so in light of its immediate literary context.

Many of the narratives of the Pentateuch have been analyzed in terms of the history of tradition. If one assumes that these narratives existed originally as independent, self-contained units then it is possible to sense some of the stages through which they developed. The figure of Jacob, for example, appears to have been initially a trickster-type character who succeeded by outmaneuvering other figures (Esau and Laban). At this level of the tradition, one would have had folktales of a type common to many cultures. When Jacob came to be identified in the stories with the community Israel and his victims with other groups (Esau = Edomites; Laban = Arameans), the tales took on a nationalistic coloration reflecting historical relationships (note that the prophet Hosea shows familiarity with and uses some of these traditions; Hosea 12). When combined with comparable traditions about Abraham, Isaac, and the tribes of Israel, the Jacob stories moved toward being part of a large theological-historical portrait of the origin and history of Israel.

One of the most widespread traditions in the Old Testament concerns the redemption from Egypt. The exodus motif and the tradition of being led out of Egypt occur in Old Testament narratives, psalms, and prophetical books. It was a tradition that could be used in various contexts-in Hosea the ruin of the nation is depicted as a return to Egypt whereas Isaiah 40-55 presents the return from exile as a new exodus.

The fullest expanded tradition in the Pentateuch is that of the wilderness, now extending from Exodus 15:22 through Deuteronomy 34. Frequently, in credal-life summaries of Israel's early tradition, the wilderness is not mentioned (see Deuteronomy 26:5–11) or else only occurs incidentally (see Joshua 24:7b). This tradition of the stay in the wilderness was developed in various ways in ancient Israel-as a time of trouble and wickedness (in most of Exodus-Numbers, Exekiel 20) or as a good time (Deuteronomy 8; 29:2–6; Jeremiah 2:2-3; Hosea 2:14–15). This twofold development and utilization of a tradition can be seen in a comparison of Psalms 105 and 106.

Within many of the historical books, the traditions about the election and choice of David, his dynasty, and his city—Zion-Jerusalem—dominate (1 and 2 Samuel; 1 and 2 Chronicles). These same traditions are integral to many psalms.

Time and again, Israel gave expression to its self-understanding and its hopes for the future by reusing and dialoguing with its traditions. When exegeting a passage influenced by or reflecting such traditions,

the interpreter can learn much from an understanding of how these traditions developed and were used.

From the New Testament, numerous examples could be adduced from the Gospels to illustrate the importance of understanding the history of traditions, but a clear example is provided by the Pauline writings. In 1 Corinthians 15: l-l 1, Paul recites a summary of the message which he had preached to the Corinthians on his initial missionary stay. It is now widely agreed among scholars that verses 3-5 consist of a pre-Pauline summary of Chritian preaching, at least one version of it. This has been established by noting that Paul refers to delivering what he had received as well as by noting the terms within this summary that are either unusual for Paul or not used by him elsewhere in his writings. The summary has a four-part structure: Christ (a) died, (b) was buried, (c) was raised, and (d) appeared. What we have here is clearly a pre-Pauline summary of the early Christian preaching which he has quoted and incorporated into this letter. He is not the author of it, only its transmitter or "traditioner." Further examination of verses 6-l 1 reveal that at some point Paul ceases to quote this earlier tradition and begins to speak his own sentiments. Exactly where this happens, whether at verse 6 or verse 7, is not clear, but certainly by the time the paragraph ends, we hear Paul himself speaking, not the tradition.

Operating from the perspective of tradition criticism, the exegete would first detect this "layered" quality of 1 Corinthians 15:1–1 1, and isolate those portions where the tradition is speaking, and separate them from the portions where Paul is speaking. Having done so, the exegete would then examine other summary outlines of the early Christian preaching, such as those in the speeches in Acts, and other places, to determine what state in the history of the tradition of this kerygmatic summary 1 Corinthians 15:3–6 belongs. Is it an extended form of the two-part summaries like one finds in Romans 8:34, or are the latter an abbreviated form? Is it earlier or later than other such summaries? How does it compare with later summary outlines of early Christian preaching, or confessions say from the late first or early second century, such as the Apostle's Creed? All of these questions, properly answered, would have the effect of sharpening one's understanding of 1 Corinthians 15:3–6. To the degree that the exegete can reconstruct the history of tradition, both prior to and after the text being studied, to that degree tradition criticism will illuminate the exegesis of the text.

After examining the final form of the tradition, that is, Paul's quotation of it in 1 Corinthians, the exegete is then prepared to interpret Paul's

use of it. Here one would seek to determine precisely where the tradition ceases and where Paul's own remarks begin. Then one would seek to determine the precise ways Paul himself interprets this tradition. Further discussion of this aspect of the text will occur in the following chapter on redaction criticism.

Tradition criticism points up an important dimension of the biblical writings which we have alluded to earlier, namely their cumulative growth, but more specifically that the biblical writings in many instances have actually taken up and incorporated earlier traditions into the biblical text itself. The biblical writings, on this showing, are seen to reflect the traditioning process, and interpreters, both ancient and modem, who confront the biblical text participate in a similar activity. What repeatedly occurs in both the Old and New Testament is something like the following: an interpreter, whether an individual or a community, inherits a sacred tradition, either oral or written, "receives the tradition" to use the technical term, repeats and interprets this tradition in light of the interpreter's own current situation, and then having done so, transmits this interpreted tradition to successors. The biblical writings both receive and interpret earlier sacred traditions, but they have also become sacred traditions, used and transmitted by the two communities of faith, Israel and the church. What they record attests the various aspects of the faith and life of both Israel and the church, and quite often how Israel and the church have participated in this process of transmission is as vital to understanding the final form of the written text as anything else. It is this dimension of the text which tradition criticism addresses.

It should be clear how dependent tradition criticism is on the previous exegetical techniques we have discussed. Quite obviously, form-critical observations are required before one can attempt to reconstruct the stages of development behind a text. Similarly, one must be attentive to both historical and literary dimensions within the text. Even textual criticism sometimes plays a vital role in establishing the history of the tradition. Tradition criticism, then, must be done in close concert with other exegetical disciplines, but in spite of its close connection with them, it nevertheless constitutes a separate discipline.

The hypothetical nature of the tradition-critical task should also be noted. Those scholars who emphasize this particular exegetical discipline are the first to acknowledge how theoretical and hypothetical is the process of reconstructing the previous history of a text by isolating distinctive forms of the text, arranging them in chronological sequence, and assessing various aspects of the stages of development. To be sure, in

some instances, this can be done with relative certainty and with a high degree of confidence; in other instances, the level of probability shades off into only possibility, perhaps even into unlikelihood. In any case, all of these reconstructive efforts are made with a view to explicating and illuminating the final form of the written text which confronts the exegete on the pages of the Bible itself. The final form of the text, then, functions as the final norm and control for all tradition-critical investigation.

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CHARTER 8

REDACTION CRITICISM:

The Final
Viewpoint and Theology

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As used in biblical exegesis, redaction criticism refers to that form of interpretation whose primary focus is the editorial stage(s) that led toward or produced the final written form or composition of a passage, the final stage(s) of the tradition, as it were, that has become crystallized in written form.

This may appear strange to the beginning exegete who sees this as fairly self-evident. Is not the exegete's task to interpret the text as it lies open before the reader waiting to be understood? Is it not the final written form, and not some earlier draft of a passage which after all has been canonized and calls for interpretation? Has not interpretation of the final text always been the basic concern?

To put the exegete's task this way does make redaction criticism appear to be doing the obvious. This would be the case if other considerations were not in the picture. Redaction criticism presupposes the insights and perspectives of tradition criticism and form criticism. One of its basic operating assumptions is that many biblical texts have a pre-history and that this pre-history can be detected and reconstructed in many instances with a reliable degree of certainty. Moreover, it draws on the findings of these other disciplines which have detected and demonstrated the various ways in which a given story or tradition changes as it is transmitted from person to person or from generation to generation or from one documentary form to another. Given these changes in the form, content, and function of materials the interpreter is concerned not only to pinpoint such changes but to account for them. Even more, the sensitive interpreter wants to know how these changes affect and illuminate the meaning of the story or tradition in its latest form or version.

Another way of making the same point is to observe that some biblical

texts do not readily lend themselves to redaction-critical analysis. If it is impossible for the interpreter to detect previous traditions underlying a text, or if a text appears not to be taking up a previous biblical tradition or text and reinterpreting it, in these instances, try as one may, one cannot demonstrate that an author or editor has redacted anything. At the most, one can only posit that the text has been written by an author, not inherited, interpreted, and transmitted in a modified form.

In those instances where a given text clearly reflects the use of previous traditions, texts, or stories, redaction criticism can be a valuable exegetical discipline. The Gospels provide some of the best examples of such instances, because here, quite often, the same event, episode, or saying is reported, even in two, three, or four different versions. In addition, Gospel criticism has made it possible to place the four Gospels along a historical continuum. Although there will never be universal agreement that Mark was the earliest Gospel, and that both Matthew and Luke used the Gospel of Mark as one of their sources, this theory explains the evidence as well as any other, and in the opinion of the majority of scholars, better than any other.

Given these assumptions, one can examine a story or saying of Jesus in Mark, let us say, then examine the same story in either Matthew and Luke, and on the basis of these investigations pinpoint the precise ways in which they have redacted Mark's version of the story. One of the indispensable tools for doing redaction criticism of the Gospels is a synopsis. Several good synopses are readily available, but they all have one thing in common: they arrange the accounts of the Synoptic Gospels (in other instances all four Gospels) in parallel columns, making it possible for the reader to compare the various versions of an episode or teaching, noting both differences and similarities. The synopsis should not be confused with another exegetical tool, the harmony, even though both types of work are arranged in similar fashion. Unlike a synopsis, a harmony of the Gospels seeks to harmonize the various stories into a single, coherent story. The attempt is to produce a single Gospel, as it were. A synopsis, by contrast, makes no conscious attempt to harmonize the Gospels nor to underscore the differences for that matter. It is so constructed, taking seriously the indisputable fact that in the New Testament canon we have four Gospels not one, as to lay these accounts side by side, making it possible for the reader to see them together. The term "synopsis" itself means "seeing together."

The one part of all four Gospels which exhibits the greatest uniformity is the Passion Narrative, the account of the final days of Jesus. Here,

perhaps better than anywhere else, it becomes indisputably clear that Matthew and Luke have followed Mark, using his account of the passion as their basic outline. Consequently, one can establish the history of the tradition in at least two stages with respect to almost every episode. Once this is done, redaction criticism then seeks to interpret an episode in Matthew or Luke in light of the way they have edited or redacted Mark.

The scene describing Jesus' death on the cross (Matthew 27:45–56; Mark 15:33–41; Luke 23:44–49; see John 19:17–37) may serve as an example. Reading each of the accounts carefully, the interpreter notes that each account has its own distinctive profile. None of the three, in fact, is identical. Matthew's account is longer than Mark's, Luke's is conspicuously shorter. Matthew, therefore, has redacted Mark by expanding it, Luke by abbreviating it. Specific points are also quite different. According to Matthew, after the death of Jesus there occurred, besides the tearing of the temple veil, an earthquake resulting in tombs being opened and saints being resurrected. This occurs in neither Mark nor Luke. Luke, in contrast to Matthew, omits certain features of Mark's account, most notably the cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Instead of this, he records the final words of Jesus on the cross as being, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" These last words of Jesus are recorded in none of the other Gospels. Another important difference occurs with respect to the confession of the Roman centurion standing guard at the crucifixion. Matthew follows Mark in recording his confession as "Truly, this was the Son of God!" Luke's account of the confession is completely different: "Certainly this man was innocent!"

Redaction criticism, rather than trying to harmonize these differences into a single story, seeks instead to let each account speak for itself. It also seeks to make sense of the distinctive features of each account in light of two considerations: (a) how the later versions of Matthew and Luke compare with the earlier version of Mark and (b) how the distinctive features of each version relate to the theological perspective and message of the Gospel in which it occurs as a whole.

With respect to the former, a redaction-critical analysis of Luke seeks to explain Luke's omission of the cry of dereliction. It not only makes the comparison with the earlier tradition, but also tries to account for the changes by asking why. Why does Luke omit this cry of dereliction? Because he found it offensive theologically? Because he found it less significant than the more comforting statement, "Father, into thy hands

I commit my spirit"? Similarly, the redaction critic asks why the centurion's confession is worded differently in Luke. Did Luke simply alter *the* form of the confession which he had before him in Mark? Did he have access to another tradition of the centurion's confession which focused on Jesus' innocence rather than his divinity, and did he choose to record this alternative tradition?

At each stage, the redaction critic, interpreting Luke's account of the death of Jesus on the cross, seeks to interpret the form of the text before the reader, the final written form, over against an earlier written form as seen in Mark. Above all, the redaction critic recognizes a distinction between what is being said *in* the text and what is being said *through* the text. What is being said *in* Luke's version of the death of Jesus is that Jesus died with final words of hope and confidence on his lips, rather than words of desperation, and that the impact of his death on a pagan soldier was to confirm his innocence, nothing else.

What is being said *through* this account can be established by asking whether these particular motifs are recurrent elsewhere in Luke's Gospel. The redaction critic seeks to determine whether Luke's handling of this particular episode is in any sense typical of how he tells the story of Jesus and the church as a whole. In both respects, this turns out to be the case. With respect to the former, the redaction critic discovers that de-emphasizing the agony of the cross and suffering of Jesus is indeed thoroughly typical of Luke's Gospel. To omit the cry of dereliction, it turns out, is completely in keeping with Luke's portrait of Christ throughout his Gospel. The christology of this episode is thoroughly congruent with Luke's christology as a whole.

With respect to the second motif, the innocence of Jesus, the redaction critic examines the rest of the writings of Luke, both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, to determine whether this too is a typical, recurrent theological interest, and this also turns out to be the case. Looking at the immediate literary context, the passion narrative itself, the redaction critic discovers that Luke more than any of the other Gospel writers underscores the innocence of Jesus throughout the passion narrative. He consistently redacts particular episodes in this direction, either by additions, expansions, omissions, or abbreviations (see Luke 23:4,14–15, 20, 22, 41; also Acts 3:13–14).

What is being said *through* the story turns out to be consistent with other features of Luke's message as a whole: a serious miscarriage of justice was done to Jesus, the innocent prophet, who died confident that he would be vindicated as God's righteous prophet. By noting carefully

these distinctive features of Luke's account of the death of Jesus, the redaction critic thus allows the text to speak in its own behalf, concentrating on what is being said *in* the story, but also tries to assess the theological message being articulated in this particular version, trying to ascertain what is being said *through* the story.

In some instances within the Gospels, the interpreter may not be as confident in sketching a history of the tradition behind a text, but it should be noted that establishing a genetic relation between traditions is not always necessary for redaction criticism to occur. For example, if one reads a single story in three or four different versions, even if one cannot place them in a chronological sequence and demonstrate that one has depended on the other, comparing each of the accounts will nevertheless reveal distinctive features of each. Such comparisons, if carried out thoroughly and perceptively, will allow the interpreter to see any given account in much sharper profile. At the very least, then, the interpreter can note these distinctive characteristics, and try to correlate them with similar features within the document as a whole, and thus still try to articulate how they reflect the theological outlook or message of the writer or document. Thus, in one sense, redaction criticism depends heavily on the insights and results of tradition criticism and form criticism, but not in every case.

What is important for the beginning exegete to keep in mind is that the text being studied may exhibit editorial features, clear and distinctive enough to provide important clues leading to a deeper understanding of the passage. Whether these are uncovered by comparing this final version with an earlier version from which it was drawn, or whether these are detected by more general comparisons, either with other biblical versions of the same story, or even with non-biblical versions of a similar story or saying, matters little. What matters is for the interpreter to let the text speak its full message, not a message obscured by reading other versions into it, or by harmonizing other versions with it. This caveat should be taken with full seriousness, because many readers of the Bible have inherited a homogenized, single version of the Gospel story, like Christmas scenes which homogenize Luke's and Matthew's birth stories; this single version succeeds in effectively blocking the message of the individual evangelists.

Redaction criticism, in particular, has called the attention of modern readers to this often obscured aspect of the Gospels, although the ancient titles ascribed to each Gospel in the second and third centuries sought to underscore this distinction. The "Gospel *according* to …" was their way of calling attention to the distinctive theological messages of each

Gospel. Consequently, we are now in a much better position to speak of the "theology" of Matthew, even if "Matthew" is now a more shadowy figure than he was once believed to be. Each of the Gospels, to be sure, is anonymous, yet each Gospel reflects a distinctive, definable theological outlook as it seeks to relate the story of Jesus in its own manner.

Redaction criticism served as a healthy corrective to certain trends within both tradition criticism and form criticism as they came to be preoccupied, if not obsessed, with the smaller literary units and sub-units within each Gospel. By contrast, redaction criticism emphasizes the wholeness of the Gospels, their literary integrity, and seeks to see not simply the individual parts, but what they were saying when arranged together as a single whole. Consequently, the redaction critic is never satisfied to analyze a single literary sub-unit or pericope in and of itself, but rather, having done so, to relate it to the larger whole. In this, redaction criticism shares the concern of literary criticism which we discussed earlier, but unlike literary criticism, recognizes the pre-history of the text as noted by form criticism and stresses the theological perspective of the unit in light of the whole.

To this point, our discussion has focused exclusively on New Testament examples, but redaction criticism applies equally well to Old Testament texts. The term "redaction criticism" is used less often, however, in biblical exegesis of Old Testament texts. The term was actually coined by a New Testament scholar in the 1950s, and in this instance, was first emphasized as an exegetical technique in New Testament studies, and later applied to Old Testament studies. The techniques discussed in the previous chapters were almost always developed in exactly the reverse, first being pioneered by Old Testament scholars and later applied and refined by New Testament scholars.

It would be a serious mistake, however, to leave the impression that redaction criticism as an exegetical technique is less than thirty years old. As a matter of fact, biblical scholars have for a long time recognized that the various biblical writings exhibit distinctive theological "tendencies" or portray very clearly defined theological messages. It has also been recognized that these have to be taken into account when reading the biblical documents. It has long been noted that the various editors responsible for the final compilation of the Pentateuch displayed clearly defined theological outlooks and that these were seen to be consistent within certain blocks of material. Similarly, the outlook of the Chronicler has been well known and used to account for the difference in the

way certain stories and traditions from Samuel-Kings are interpreted in this work. David, for example, is portrayed in a far more realistic fashion in 1 and 2 Samuel than in 1 Chronicles. The Chronicler reinterpreted these earlier stories and repainted the portrait of David and his time to present both in an idealistic light. The two resulting portraits are noticeably different, a difference that has long been obvious to scholars. Thus, from this perspective, one could say that redaction criticism is not a new methodology but simply a more self-conscious form of an older type of criticism which has developed in light of form and tradition criticisms.

If we take an example of this older form of criticism and contrast this with a redactional-critical perspective, we can see something of the difference resulting from this greater self-consciousness. Scholars have long noted that in 1 Samuel 8-12 there are two basic attitudes (and probably sources) related to the origin of the monarchy. One is pro-monarchy (9: l-10: 16; 11: 1-15) and the other is anti-monarchy (8: l-22; 10: 17-27; 12:1–25). Most older interpreters were content to point out these differences, to work on their possible connections with other sources, and to try to associate the different views with different historical periods or groups. Redaction criticism, however, carries the issues further and asks such questions as: What are the consequences of the manner in which these materials have been redacted in their final form? What significance is there to the fact that the pro-monarchy materials have been "enveloped" and intersected with anti-monarchy materials? From such questions, one can see that obviously the anti-monarchy materials have been given dominance so that the final form of 1 Samuel 8-12 has been redacted to place qualifications on the historical institution of the monarchy. Redaction criticism, however, would further note that 1 Samuel 8—12 forms part of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel and brings this phenomenon into the picture. In 1 Samuel 1: l-10 and 2 Samuel 22: 1—23:7, one encounters three poems on kingship which have been redacted into their present location. These poems, again in "envelope" fashion, tend to modify the restrictions placed on kingship in 1 Samuel 8-12 but do so in idealistic and "messianic" terms. In describing the theology of kingship found in 1 and 2 Samuel, all of these, but especially the redactional activity, would need to be considered.

Opportunities to apply redactional perspectives appear throughout the Old Testament. For example, what significance is there to the fact that the Pentateuch (with its laws) ends before the people enter the land? Was the material redacted in this way to stress the torah (the law) as the element constitutive of the society? Was 'it to address a community in

"exile" away from the land? Or to emphasize that obedience to the law is prerequisite to possession of the land? What significance has the redacted form of the prophetical books? What impact does the association of all the material in the book of Isaiah, from such diverse periods, have on the reading of a text in Isaiah?

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