

REDACTION CRITICISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Adela Yarbro Collins

Although coined for the study of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), John Barton's definition applies to New Testament studies as well:

Redaction criticism is a method of biblical study that examines the intentions of the editors or *redactors* who compiled the biblical texts out of earlier source materials. It thus presupposes the results of source and form criticism and builds upon them.¹

He also notes that Willi Marxsen appears to have invented the term "Redaktionsgeschichte,"² which may be translated either "redaction history" or "redaction criticism." Barton pointed out that "redaction-critical analysis of OT texts is considerably older" than the term invented and applied to Mark by Marxsen.

Similarly, students of the New Testament must observe that, in practice, redaction criticism was an aspect of form criticism. For example, Martin Dibelius began by isolating and naming the main forms of the Synoptic tradition: paradigms, tales, and legends.³ After discussing analogies in other bodies of literature and the passion narrative, he turned to the phenomenon of "synthesis."⁴ Earlier in the book, he articulated the view that:

1. John Barton, "Redaction Criticism (OT)," *ABD* 5: 644-47; quotation (slightly modified) from p. 644; emphasis original.

2. Willi Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956); English edition: *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969); Barton, "Redaction Criticism (OT)," 644.

3. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Scribner's, 1935; 1st German edition 1919), chs. 3-5.

4. *Ibid.*, ch. 8.

The position taken by the evangelists in forming the literary character of synoptic tradition is limited. It is concerned with the choice, the limitation, and the final shaping of the material, but not with the original moulding.⁵

Nevertheless, he endeavored to show that the interests of the author of Mark as collector and editor "can be recognized in the biographical motives at the beginning of each section." It was Mark who "began to transform the tradition into a narrative of Jesus' work." His narrative aim can be seen in "the predominance of narrative pieces of tradition and by the 'historicizing' of complexes of sayings." The rest of the chapter entitled "Synthesis" attempts to show "how the evangelists [made] a book out of the traditions."⁶ The techniques in the case of Mark include the introduction of pragmatic and incidental remarks, the interpretation of tradition, the editing of the parables, the presentation of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus, and the construction of the messianic secret.

The other great pioneer and practitioner of form criticism, Rudolf Bultmann, proceeded in a similar way. The first major part of his book treats "The Tradition of the Sayings of Jesus." The second concerns "The Tradition of the Narrative Material." Part 3 treats "The Editing of the Traditional Material." Section A of this last major part discusses "The Editing of the Spoken Word." This discussion includes the collection of the material and the composition of speeches, as well as the insertion of the speech material into the narratives of each of the Synoptic Gospels. In section B, the editing of the narrative material and the composition of each of the three Gospels is treated.⁷

REDACTION CRITICISM EMERGES AS A DISTINCT METHOD

In 1954 Hans Conzelmann published a study of Luke. The German title, in English translation, is *The Middle of Time: Studies on the Theology of Luke*.⁸ Although Conzelmann did not use the term "redaction criticism," he declared in the introduction:

5. Ibid., 3.

6. Ibid., 223.

7. Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1968; translated from the 2nd German ed. (1931) with corrections and additions from the 1962 German supplement), 319-67.

8. Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 17; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1954). The English translation was based on the second edition of 1957: *The Theology of St Luke* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960; copyright 1961).

The first phase in the collection of the traditional material (up to the composition of Mark's Gospel and the Q sayings) has been clarified by Form Criticism. Now a second phase has to be distinguished, in which the kerygma is not simply transmitted and received, but itself becomes the subject of reflection. This is what happens with Luke. This new stage is seen both in the critical attitude to tradition as well as in the positive formation of a new picture of history out of those already current, like stones used as parts of a new mosaic.⁹

The "kerygma" is understood here as the proclamation of the early church, which focused on Jesus. Karl Ludwig Schmidt had shown clearly that "the framework of the life of Jesus" found in the canonical Gospels is not historically reliable.¹⁰ In Conzelmann's view, following C. H. Dodd, "the narrative [of Mark] itself provides a broad unfolding of the kerygma."¹¹ In contrast:

Luke defines the narrative as the historical foundation, which is added as a secondary factor to the kerygma, a knowledge of which he takes for granted (Luke i, 4). The factual record is therefore not itself the kerygma, but it provides the historical basis for it.¹²

In part 1 of the book, Conzelmann discusses the geographical elements in Luke, indicating their distinctive significance by constant comparisons with Mark and Matthew.

Part 2 of the book is devoted to Luke's eschatology. On this subject, Conzelmann famously concluded, "The main motif in the recasting to which Luke subjects his source [Mark], proves to be the delay of the Parousia, which leads to a comprehensive consideration of the nature and course of the Last Things."¹³ At the time Conzelmann wrote, it was generally accepted that apocalyptic expectation was a major factor in the origins of the early Christian movement. This conclusion was highly problematic, however, for many in the twentieth century and was dealt with in various ways by exegetes and theologians. As we look back

9. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, 12. The phrase "the Q sayings" in the English edition is an imprecise translation of *Logienquelle* in the German, i.e., "the Sayings Source" (*Mitte der Zeit*, 4; 1st ed. 1954).

10. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1919); Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, 9.

11. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, 11. Charles Harold Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936).

12. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, 11.

13. *Ibid.*, 131.

on this situation, it now seems that Conzelmann dealt with the issue by overstating the way in which the End has receded into the distant future for the author of Luke.¹⁴ The overstatement, for example, is especially clear in Conzelmann's treatment of Luke 21:32, "Truly I say to you that this generation will surely not pass away until all things happen."¹⁵ He is right that Luke's omission of *tauta* from his source (Mark 13:30) transforms the saying from a reference to the things that have just been narrated to a statement about the whole divine plan. His inference, however, that "this generation" in the Lukan version means "humanity in general," is unwarranted.¹⁶

Willi Marxsen's redaction-critical study of Mark appeared after Conzelmann's of Luke. Marxsen's work, however, had already been submitted to the Theology Faculty of the University of Kiel when Conzelmann's was published.¹⁷ Marxsen noted that the method, in his case, was inspired by Gerhard von Rad's studies of the Pentateuch. With regard to the interpretation of Mark, he saw himself as drawing upon some ideas of Ernst Lohmeyer and taking them further.¹⁸

In the introduction to his book, Marxsen contrasts the form-critical and the redaction-critical approach to Mark. He questions Bultmann's conclusion that the composition of the Gospels "brings nothing new in principle but only completes the process that was already begun by the earliest oral tradition."¹⁹ He notes that even Conzelmann considered the first phase, the collection of traditional material, to extend to and include the Gospel of Mark.²⁰ Marxsen argues, on the contrary, that the tendency of the anonymous oral tradition is toward multiplicity and diversity. It uses a saw, as it were, to cut the unity of the person and significance of Jesus into bits, into different forms with different purposes. The unity achieved by the Evangelists, first of all by Mark, is of a completely different kind from that which gave rise to the oral tradition. This literary unity implies the work of an individual, an author who works to achieve a particular goal.²¹

Marxsen argued that the form critics paid insufficient attention to the way in which the Evangelists appropriated tradition in composing their Gospels. The

14. Ibid., 131-32.

15. All translations from the Greek New Testament (NA27) are by the author.

16. Ibid., 131.

17. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (2nd rev. ed; 1959), Foreword to the 1st ed., 5. The 2nd edition is cited in what follows.

18. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*. Cf. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Galiläa und Jerusalem* (FRLANT, n.f. 34; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936).

19. My translation of Marxsen's German citation of Bultmann's *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, 8).

20. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, 8, n. 1.

21. Ibid., 9.

"form criticism of the individual units of tradition" needs to be complemented by a "form criticism of the work as a whole." In order to avoid confusion, he proposed that the latter effort be called "redaction criticism."²² He chose the name "redaction criticism" or "editorial criticism" for two reasons. There was a consensus at the time that the Evangelists were (at least) "editors." The general term would not prejudge the outcome of the method. He commented that, strictly speaking, "redaction criticism" is not a method. It is rather the bringing together of a variety of methods for the purpose of studying the editorial work of the Evangelists.²³

The focus of this "method" should be, not primarily on the "stuff," but on the "framework" (*Rahmen*) of the Gospel. The latter should be understood broadly, that is, to include the itinerary, the editorial scenes created for the older material, and the reshaping of the wording of that material, insofar as it can be determined. This "framework" should not then simply be declared "unhistorical" as the form critics often did. Rather, one should seek to define the social setting of such editorial work. This is the third "social setting" to be sought, the first being the life of the historical Jesus and the second the situation of the early community. The social situation of the Evangelists should not be conceived too narrowly, for example, as a local community. The emphasis should be on what is typical of the Evangelist's "community," on its views or perceptions, its time, perhaps also its makeup.²⁴

It is of course relatively easy (though problems remain) to study the editorial activity of Matthew and Luke on the basis of the consensus that they used a form of Mark (close to but not identical with the Gospel of Mark as we have it). With Mark the situation is more difficult. Marxsen lays two points of consensus as a foundation for his work on Mark: the Evangelist used sources; none of his sources consisted of a narrative of the life of Jesus that could be defined as a "Gospel."²⁵

In his concluding remarks, Marxsen emphasizes the importance of the endings of the Gospels for understanding their primary conceptions and aims. He interprets the orientation to Galilee in Mark 16:1-8 as signifying the imminent return of Jesus to Galilee, that is, the parousia.²⁶ Finally, he characterizes Mark as a theologian, entirely of his own "coinage," standing between Paul and the anony-

22. To be precise, Marxsen discussed "the history of individual units" (*Formgeschichte*) and "the history of the process of editing" (*Redaktionsgeschichte*).

23. *Ibid.*, 10-11 and n. 1 on p. 11.

24. *Ibid.*, 12-13.

25. *Ibid.*, 14-16.

26. *Ibid.*, 142. In my view it is more likely that the allusion to Galilee concerns the resurrection appearances, which are mentioned though not narrated.

mous oral tradition, on the one hand, and the later Evangelists, on the other. In his view, it may be too much to claim that he is "the theological center of the New Testament," but he certainly deserves greater attention.²⁷

Marxsen was the pioneer in Markan redaction criticism. Norman Perrin should also be mentioned in this context. His short introduction to the method, illustrated with regard to the Gospel of Mark, is generally agreed to be a classic.²⁸

Günther Bornkamm initiated redaction critical study of Matthew. Along with two of his students, he authored the classic work on the subject.²⁹ In the introduction they accept the consensus that the first three Evangelists "were, in the first place, collectors and editors of traditions handed on to them." At the same time, the Synoptic Gospels "are documents expressing a definite, though in each case very different theology." Since the means employed by the Evangelists in conveying their theologies are modest, there is often recognizable tension between "their handling of the tradition and the theological views it is made to serve." Nevertheless, by editing, construction, selection, inclusion and omission, and by characteristic treatment of traditional material, they show themselves to be "by no means mere collectors and handers-on of the tradition." They are "also interpreters of it."³⁰ Like Marxsen, Bornkamm, Barth, and Held acknowledged the similarity of this new method in New Testament studies to the approach of Gerhard von Rad in Old Testament research.³¹

The most striking example of the studies in this volume is Bornkamm's analysis of the stilling of the storm in Matt 8:23-27.³² Mark and Luke present the story in a biographical context as a nature miracle (Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25). Matthew takes the nature miracle out of that context and places it in a series of healing miracles that present the "Messiah of deed" after the Sermon on the Mount, the presentation of the "Messiah of word."³³ In Matthew the story is still a vivid account of a miracle, yet a new motive is brought out. The Evangelist places the story before two sayings of Jesus about discipleship (Matt 8:19-22). Both are concerned with "following" (*akolouthēin*) Jesus. The simple statement (only in Matthew) that the disciples "followed" (*ēkolouthēsan*) Jesus into the boat

27. Ibid., 147.

28. Norman Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969).

29. Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963; German 1960). The English edition is cited here.

30. Ibid., 12.

31. Ibid., 12, n. 6.

32. Günther Bornkamm, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew," in Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation*, 52-57.

33. Ibid., 53.

is given a deeper and figurative meaning in this context. Bornkamm shows by a number of observations that Matthew has not only handed on the story but has interpreted it in terms of discipleship with reference to "the little ship of the Church."³⁴ The story has become "a kerygmatic paradigm of the danger and glory of discipleship."³⁵

As is the case with all other methods, the practice of redaction criticism involves a subjective dimension. For this reason redaction critics do not always agree in their results.³⁶ Joachim Rohde has defended redaction criticism as a method yet criticized many individual applications of it, for example, because of their excessive subtlety.³⁷

REDACTION CRITICISM WHEN SOURCES DO NOT SURVIVE

The Gospel of Mark is an example of a work that is most likely based on oral and written sources that do not survive as independent works. The problem in such cases is how to identify redactional activity. One approach in a case like this is to infer the author's rhetorical aims from the composition of the work: from its structure, main themes, and emphases. This is the approach taken by Perrin in the work mentioned above.

Another approach is to infer the use of a source and the ways in which the author has adapted it. For example, many scholars have argued that the passion narrative in Mark is based on a written source.³⁸ A way to distinguish source from redaction is to look for differences in style. One may ask, for example,

34. Ibid., 55.

35. Ibid., 57.

36. Carl Clifton Black, *Disciples according to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate* (JSNT Supplements 27; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

37. Joachim Rohde, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists* (London: SCM, 1968; 1st German ed. 1966).

38. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "Die literarische Eigenart der Leidensgeschichte Jesu," *Die Christliche Welt* 32 (1918): 114-16; reprinted in Meinrad Limbeck, ed., *Redaktion und Theologie des Passionsberichtes nach den Synoptikern* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), 17-20; Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 22-23, 178-80; Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 275-79; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to Mark* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966) vii, 526, 654-64. Other scholars argue that Mark composed the passion narrative in the same way as the rest of the Gospel, that is, by using short units of tradition: Eta Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte* (FRLANT 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 24-28, 44-52, 146-58, 162-63, 169-70, 173-74; Werner Kelber, ed., *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14-16* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

what parts of the passion narrative are similar to other parts of Mark that can be identified as editorial? In this regard, one may conclude that the author of Mark composed the beginning of the passion narrative, 14:1–31, by combining short units of tradition, in the same way that he composed the rest of the Gospel. From 14:32, however, through 15:38, he seems to have used a continuous written source, since the narrative in this section is much more coherent and proceeds smoothly from one incident to the next.³⁹

GETHSEMANE (MARK 14:32–42)

Most of the Gospel of Mark is episodic and based on short units of oral tradition, including 14:1–31. The shift to a more continuous narrative style begins with the story of the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane. Thus the pre-Markan passion narrative probably began with this story. On this assumption the element that stands out most clearly as Markan redaction is the last part of verse 41, "The Son of Man is about to be handed over into the hands of the sinners." This addition emphasizes the fact that the first part of the passion predictions is about to be fulfilled (9:31; 10:33). "The sinners" referred to are probably the chief priests and scribes who condemn Jesus to death and "the nations," in particular, the local Roman authorities, who execute him. The term "sinners" evokes certain psalms.⁴⁰

Another likely Markan addition is the remark, "He took with him Peter, James, and John," the first part of verse 33. The special role of these disciples is a Markan theme. The other passages that mention these three as singled out are probably also Markan compositions. In 5:37, they are the only ones allowed to go with Jesus to the house of Jairus. According to 9:2, only they witness the transfiguration of Jesus. In 13:3 they are singled out as the sole audience within the narrative of Jesus' apocalyptic discourse. It follows then that "Sit here while I pray" is also a Markan editorial remark, added in the process of distinguishing the three from the other disciples in the Gethsemane account.

Although threefold repetition is a common feature of storytelling, there is slight but significant evidence that the threefold return of Jesus in verses 37–41 is a Markan construction. The source had only the one return narrated in verse 37. That the second and third returns in verses 40–41 are secondary is indicated

39. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 621–27; Ludger Schenke, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte des Markus: Tradition und Redaktion in Markus 14, 1–42* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1971); idem, *Der gekreuzigte Christus* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1974).

40. Pss 35:12; 70:4; 81:4 LXX; for discussion of this part of v. 41, see Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 682.

by the use of the aorist tense in the reproof of Simon in verse 37 (*ouk ischysas*). This tense is used here to refer to a past action as a point in time. This usage suggests that the disciples will not have another chance to stay awake. In contrast, the present tense is used in verse 38 in an expression of exhortation ("Keep awake and pray"). The contrast between this reference to repeated or continuous time and the previous allusion to simple past time makes it likely that verse 38 was added at the same time as the threefold return.

The addition of the threefold return transformed the rhetorical impact of the story significantly. The narrative structure involving a single prayer and a single discovery of the disciples sleeping places the emphasis on Jesus as one who is alone and unsupported by friends yet willing to accept the suffering ordained by God. The triple return shifts the emphasis to the disciples and their inability to stay awake and watch. The new emphasis fits well with the Markan theme of the failure of the disciples. This narrative link supports the hypothesis that the Evangelist added the threefold elaboration and the command to keep awake and pray.

The end of the Gethsemane narrative in the source was probably verse 42, "Get up; let us go. See, the one who is about to hand me over has drawn near." This ending follows well on the rebuke of Peter in verse 37. Verse 35 reads, "And he went a little farther on, fell upon the ground, and prayed that, if it was possible, the hour would pass away from him." This passage is likely a secondary summary of the prayer quoted in direct speech in verse 36, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for you; remove this cup from me. But (let) not what I want (be), but what you want." If this is so, then the references to the "hour" in both verses 35 and 41 probably belong to Mark's editorial rewriting of his source.

If, as seems likely, verse 42 is the original ending of the Gethsemane account, then the Gethsemane story and the account of the arrest of Jesus were already linked in the source: "Get up; let us go. See, the one who is about to hand me over has drawn near." The exclamation *apechei* in verse 41 goes logically with the third reproof uttered by Jesus, whether it is translated "The account is closed!" or "It is enough!"⁴¹ If the triple return is secondary, then so is this exclamation.

Although Eta Linnemann has argued that the Gethsemane story circulated independently, it is hard to imagine that it ever did. The wording of the account as partially reconstructed here clearly leads to the next scene. Linnemann reconstructed the original ending as "The account is closed. The hour has come."⁴² This ending, however, leaves the audience hanging and does not result in the typically well-rounded story of the oral tradition. Nevertheless, her argument that

41. Our colloquial "That's it!" seems to fit the force of the exclamation well.

42. Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte*, 547.

the story interprets the whole passion of Jesus is insightful. In the pre-Markan passion narrative especially, but also in the Markan one, it does interpret the whole passion of Jesus as an introduction to the passion narrative proper. Mark expanded this "prelude" by composing, using individual units of tradition, and prefixing the account in 14:1–31.⁴³

THE ARREST (MARK 14:43–52)

The second scene in the pre-Markan passion narrative was an account of the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane. On the assumption of the use of a source, the passage as it stands in Mark 14:43–52 seems to contain a number of secondary expansions. One of these is the statement, "Now a certain one of those standing by drew his sword, struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear" (v. 47). Another is the incident of the young man who fled naked (vv. 51–52). Both of these passages depict reactions on the part of disciples to the arrest of Jesus, but neither incident is prepared for or followed up. The strike with the sword portrays the failure of a disciple analogous to that of Peter when he rebukes Jesus for predicting that the Son of Man must suffer. This similarity suggests that the incident in 14:47 is a Markan elaboration of the source. Likewise, the flight of the naked young man (vv. 51–52) is a vivid image of the flight of all the disciples (v. 50).

In verses 48–49, Jesus responds to his arrest with the remark, "You have come out to seize me with swords and clubs as you would (come out) against a robber.⁴⁴ Every day I was with you in the temple precinct teaching and you did not arrest me. But (it is occurring) in order that the scriptures may be fulfilled." This statement also seems secondary. The first part of the response reflects the situation of the Evangelist and his aim of contrasting Jesus with the revolutionaries who engaged in the revolt that led to the first Jewish war with Rome. The second part may be read as a taunt or reproach to the arresting party for not having the courage to arrest him in the temple because of his popularity with the crowd.⁴⁵ The reproach may extend also to the conspiracy to arrest him "by deceit" or "treachery" instead of openly (14:1).

43. Cf. *Ibid.*, 552.

44. Or "bandit." The word *lēstēs* was regularly used by Josephus for insurrectionists or rebels who carried out politically motivated raids and robberies. See the discussion of the Barabbas story below.

45. Cf. 11:18; 12:12. The phrase "teaching in the temple" (*en tō hierō didaskōn*) is probably redactional; cf. 12:35.

The reference to the fulfillment of Scripture at the end of verse 49, without mentioning any particular text, points to Markan redaction. We find similar statements in the sayings about the Son of Man in 9:12 and 14:21. The strong correspondence between verse 43 and verse 48 can be explained by the Evangelist's imitation of verse 43 in composing verse 48. These observations are supported by the fact that verse 50 follows well upon verse 46. The disciples' immediate response to the arrest of Jesus is to flee before they also are arrested. Verse 50 could well have been the conclusion of the arrest story in the pre-Markan passion narrative.

THE SEQUEL TO THE ARREST (MARK 14:53-72)

According to the Markan passion narrative as it has come down to us, the chief priests interrogate Jesus twice (14:53, 55-64, and 15:1). His captors also mistreat him twice (14:65 and 15:16-20a). The insertion of the denial of Peter into the trial before the Jewish council (Sanhedrin) is a typically Markan technique. These observations can be explained by the hypothesis that Mark added the denial of Peter and the trial before the Judean council to the earlier passion narrative.⁴⁶ A corollary of this hypothesis is that 15:1 was part of the pre-Markan passion narrative. It would have followed the statement in 14:53a that they took Jesus to the high priest. The remark, "all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled," in verse 53b is probably redactional, composed by Mark as an introduction to the trial before the Judean council (14:55-65). Similarly, in 15:1, the phrase "with the elders and scribes and the whole council" is probably Markan redaction. This sentence in the source may have read, "Early in the morning the chief priests took counsel, bound Jesus, took him and handed him over to Pilate."

The episode concerning Barabbas (15:6-15a) is inserted into the account of Pilate's interrogation of Jesus (15:2-5, 15b). The literary technique again suggests Markan redaction. This hypothesis is supported by the connection between Jesus' remarks at the time of his arrest and the story about Barabbas. As argued above, the Evangelist probably added Jesus' remarks in the arrest scene (14:48-49) to his source. They distance Jesus from the category "bandit" (*lēstēs*). It is clear from Josephus's work *The Jewish War* that this term was used in the first century as a designation of a kind of insurrectionist.⁴⁷ In 15:7 Barabbas is associated

46. On the secondary character of the trial before the Sanhedrin and its composition (using older traditions) and insertion by Mark, see John R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1973), 5-102.

47. Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 48-87.

with rebels (*stasiastai*), and Jesus is contrasted with him in the unit as a whole.⁴⁸ Instead of seeking mercy for "the king of the Jews," the crowd demands the release of a dangerous revolutionary. Since it was apparently Mark who added 14:48–49, it is likely that he inserted 15:6–15a as well.

THE TRIAL BEFORE PILATE (MARK 15:1–15)

Bultmann, as did others before him, argued that Pilate's question to Jesus ("Are you the king of the Jews?") and his answer ("You say so") in 15:2 are secondary additions to an early account of Pilate's interrogation of Jesus. This short dialogue, like the trial before the Judean council (14:55–64), is characterized by a later view of the death of Jesus, namely, that Jesus was executed because of his messianic claims.⁴⁹ This view, however, is not necessarily secondary with regard to the composition of the pre-Markan passion narrative. It is unlikely that, as Bultmann thought, the earliest passion narrative was a simple historical report.⁵⁰

The point of this part of the pre-Markan narrative could well have been that Jesus was crucified as the Messiah. In an outsider's language, he was executed as a royal pretender. Although Pilate's question (in an outsider's language) may be shaped by an insider's perspective, it is also possible—even likely—that the general point of the narrative reflects historical fact. If a significant number of his followers thought that Jesus was or might be the messiah and if he was attracting large crowds, Pilate would have thought it expedient to condemn him to death to preserve order. He did not technically need to charge him with a crime, but if he did, the charge of sedition would make sense in the historical context.⁵¹

Bultmann also concluded that the original account of Pilate's interrogation contained a statement of the sentence. The ending was displaced by the Barabbas story, and 15:15b ("and he had him whipped and handed him over to be crucified") is a remnant of the original conclusion.⁵² This hypothesis is not necessary. The interest of the author and tradents of the pre-Markan passion narrative may have been primarily in depicting Jesus being interrogated as the Messiah, from a Roman point of view, as a pretender to kingship (15:2) and in portraying Pilate as

48. Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 714–21.

49. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 272.

50. *Ibid.*, 275 ("a short narrative of historical reminiscence").

51. Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 636.

52. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 279. Schenke followed Bultmann in arguing that the original ending of the story has been displaced but held that v. 2 is part of the original narrative, although it was moved forward from its original position after v. 5; *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 53–54.

"handing him over" to be crucified (the latter a probable allusion to Isa 53).⁵³ The transition from verse 5 to verse 15b is rough, but it may be deliberately so. The narrative as reconstructed portrays Pilate's response to Jesus' ambiguous reply (v. 2b) and silence (vv. 4–5), as handing him over to be whipped and then crucified.

THE MOCKERY BY ROMAN SOLDIERS (MARK 15:16–20A)

Bultmann concluded that the mocking "is a secondary explanation of verse 15b (φραγελλώας [*phragellōsas*]) to which some traditional military custom lent some colour."⁵⁴ More illuminating than "military custom" are the reports about the public mockery of Agrippa I by the Alexandrian Greeks, which may have been based on popular street theater.⁵⁵ There is some repetition involved in the transitions (compare v. 15b with v. 20b), but this could just as easily be an earlier narrative device as a sign of redactional expansion.

More persuasive is Schenke's conclusion that only "that is, the governor's residence" (*ho estin praitōrion*) in verse 16 is secondary.⁵⁶ The rest of the scene follows well on the interrogation of Pilate without the Barabbas story. It picks up the important theme of the "king of the Jews" in verse 18 (compare v. 2) and then leads logically into the account of the crucifixion. All this speaks for the originality of this scene in the narrative context.⁵⁷

THE CRUCIFIXION (MARK 15:20B–32)

Bultmann considered the journey to the cross and the crucifixion (verses 20b–24a) to be part of the primitive passion narrative, which, as we have seen, he regarded as an ancient, reliably historical account.⁵⁸ Schenke, however, argued that the reference to Simon of Cyrene and his two sons (v. 21) and the translation of Golgotha into Greek (v. 22b) are later additions to the earliest narrative. These conclusions are based on the premise that Aramaic-speaking members of the

53. Alternatively, Mark added the language of "handing over," in keeping with his elaboration of Isa 53:12 LXX; Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 721.

54. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 272. So also Erich Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium erklärt* (HNT 3; 4th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1950), 161.

55. Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 636–37, 723.

56. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 54–55; Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (HTK 2.1–2; Freiburg: Herder, 1976–1977; 5th ed. of vol. 1 1989; 5th ed. of vol. 2 1991) 2.468; Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 723.

57. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 55.

58. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 273, 279.

oldest community of followers of Jesus created the earliest account of the passion in Jerusalem for that Aramaic-speaking community. A second premise is that this early narrative was later expanded with the mention of Simon and his sons, who would have been of interest to the Hellenistic-Jewish disciples in Jerusalem. The translation of Aramaic place names, like Golgotha, would also serve their needs.⁵⁹

The mention of Simon and his sons and the translation of the name Golgotha, however, do not necessarily imply that the earliest recoverable form of the narrative was composed in Aramaic and only for Aramaic speakers. It could just as well have been composed by bilingual followers of Jesus (or Christ believers) who translated Aramaic expressions for members of the audience who did not speak Aramaic. Since the arguments for judging verses 21 and 22b as secondary are not compelling, it is better to consider them part of the earliest recoverable part of the journey to the cross and the crucifixion (15:20b–24a). The brief reference to Simon and his sons may well be historical reminiscence.

Bultmann took the position that all strongly interpretive elements were later legendary elaborations of the earliest narrative. Thus he concluded that verse 24b is secondary with its depiction of the soldiers casting lots for the clothing of Jesus thereby evoking Ps 21:19 LXX. Schenke and Wolfgang Reinbold, however, included it in their reconstructions of the earliest narrative.⁶⁰ Although the portrayal of the incident is cast in scriptural terms, it is credible that it is based on a historical event.⁶¹ Verse 24b should thus be included in our reconstruction of the earliest recoverable narrative.⁶²

Bultmann and Detlev Dormeyer have identified the statement, "Now it was the third hour when they crucified him" (v. 25), as Markan redaction.⁶³ The features noted by Bultmann and Dormeyer, however, do not compel the conclusion that verse 25 is secondary.⁶⁴ Linneman's argument is the most illuminating: the

59. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 83–84, 90–92. Linneman also concluded that v. 21 is secondary for some of the same reasons (*Studien zur Passionsgeschichte*, 146).

60. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 137; Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 166.

61. Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 745.

62. For a discussion of the significance of this allusion to Scripture, see Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 745–46.

63. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 273; Detlev Dormeyer, *Die Passion Jesu als Verhaltensmodell* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1974), 194; cf. 67. Schenke takes the verse as secondary but attributes it to pre-Markan redaction (*Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 84, 92, 95). The evidence does not support such confidence about the reconstruction of a three-stage literary history of the passion narrative.

64. For critical discussion of Bultmann's and Dormeyer's arguments, see Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992; reprinted Eugene, Ore.: Wipf

schema of hours in 15:25, 33, 34 was used in the oldest account as a narrative device, as a way of noting the passage of time and moving the narrative along.⁶⁵

Bultmann considered 15:26, the comment about the inscription of the charge against Jesus, to be editorial, like 15:2.⁶⁶ As previously noted, this judgment is dependent on the conviction that any passage indicating that Jesus was executed for his messianic claims is necessarily secondary. As we have seen, there is no compelling argument why such a perspective could not have characterized the earliest passion narrative. The crucial questions are how soon after the death of Jesus did his followers conclude that he was the Messiah and how early the earliest passion narrative was written. Such questions cannot be answered with any certainty. It is noteworthy, however, that in his letters Paul speaks of Jesus as the Messiah in a way that makes clear that such a designation is already an established tradition.⁶⁷

The depiction of Jesus as crucified between two robbers or bandits (*lēstai*) evokes the description of the suffering servant in Isa 53:12 LXX. It is likely that the Evangelist added this verse for several reasons. The passage evoked is the main source of the Markan theme of the divine activity of "handing over," which involves John the Baptist, Jesus, and the followers of Jesus, to human adversaries who kill them.⁶⁸ This theme, however, also appears in the earliest recoverable version of the pre-Markan passion narrative (Mark 14:42, 44; 15:1, 10). So this reason alone would not be sufficient to establish the likelihood that Mark added this passage. Another reason is the role that "robbers" or "rebels" (*lēstai*) play in the Markan account of Jesus' time in Jerusalem and the contrast that he draws between them and Jesus (11:17; 14:48–49; 15:6–15).⁶⁹ Finally, the portrayal of Jesus as crucified between two robbers, one on his right and one on his left, reprises the request of James and John in 10:37 and Jesus' reply in 10:40. The evocation of the earlier text in the account of the crucifixion elaborates the ironic portrayal of Jesus as king that already characterized Mark's source. Jesus hangs on a cross with a placard mocking and ironically announcing his kingship, but James and John are not with him. Because of their fear of suffering and death, they abandoned him, and men who are unworthy take the places of ironic honor.⁷⁰

and Stock, 2001), 111–13.

65. Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte*, 146, 155–57.

66. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 272.

67. See Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), chapter 5.

68. Mark 1:14; 3:19; 9:31; 10:33; 13:9, 11, 12; 14:10, 11, 18, 21, 41; 15:10. On this Markan theme, see Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 223–24, 440–41, 644–45.

69. *Ibid.*, 531–32, 686, 714, 718–19, 721.

70. Mark 15:28 is probably not part of the earliest recoverable text of Mark but was added

Like the allusion to Psalm 21 LXX in verse 24b, the remark in verse 29a that the passersby derided the crucified Jesus, shaking their heads, is probably original.⁷¹ The Evangelist, however, has expanded this scene of mocking at the cross in several ways.⁷² One important way involves the introduction of the chief priests and the scribes to the scene at the cross. These two groups play a major role in the passion of Jesus according to Mark (8:31; 10:33; 11:18, 27; 14:1). Finally, Mark probably added the remark in verse 32b that those crucified with him also reviled him. If Mark added the statement that two bandits were crucified with him (v. 27), he added verse 31b as well.

THE DEATH OF JESUS (MARK 15:33–39)

As argued above, the temporal schema in 15:25, 33, 34 was part of the pre-Markan passion narrative. According to verse 33, darkness covered the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour. This portent is multivalent.⁷³ Schenke argued that the cry of Jesus in verse 34a ("Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?"), consisting of an Aramaic version of the Hebrew of Ps 22:1a, must be original because it derives from the oldest stage of the passion narrative, which was composed in Aramaic. The Greek version of the cry in verse 34b (which translated is "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?") was added very early when the account was first translated into Greek. He also argued, however, that verses 35, 36b (the bystanders' comment that he was calling Elijah and the suggestion of one of them that they wait to see whether Elijah comes) are secondary because the misunderstanding of the cry of Jesus is meant to be deliberate in the context of mockery.⁷⁴

The Evangelist probably added the discussion of Elijah in verses 35–36 since these verses continue the Gospel's Elijah theme. That theme begins with the depiction of the attire of John the Baptist, which recalls the biblical description of the physical appearance of Elijah.⁷⁵ It continues in the dialogue of Jesus with Peter, James, and John in 9:9–13.⁷⁶ If verses 35–36 are Markan redaction, then the

either to make the allusion to Isa 53:12 LXX explicit or to harmonize the Markan text with Luke 22:37.

71. On the significance of these allusions, see Yarbrow Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 749.

72. For a more detailed discussion, see Yarbrow Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 113–14.

73. For discussion of the main interpretive options, see Yarbrow Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 751–53.

74. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 99. For a more detailed discussion of Schenke's analysis of this passage, see Yarbrow Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 115–16.

75. Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 145.

76. *Ibid.*, 429–32.

cry of Jesus in verse 34 may also have been added by the Evangelist to prepare for the mockery involving the apparently deliberate misunderstanding of *Eloi* ("My God") as "Elijah." The cry must be given in Aramaic, as well as in Greek, so that the wordplay may be manifest. After the statement about the darkness, the source may simply have continued, "And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice and expired" (15:37).

Verse 38 was probably the ending of the pre-Markan account of the death of Jesus.⁷⁷ The splitting of the veil of the sanctuary is a multivalent image.⁷⁸ It does not necessarily allude to the destruction of the temple, especially not in the context of the source.⁷⁹ If it was the ending of the whole pre-Markan passion narrative, as seems likely, it must have been intended as an interpretation of the death of Jesus. The splitting of the veil of the temple signifies the opening or removal of something that normally hides the divine presence. Thus it suggests a theophany or an opening of access to the divine presence. As part of the source, it implies, at a minimum, divine vindication of Jesus in spite of his shameful death.

The conclusion that verse 38 was the ending of the pre-Markan passion narrative is supported by two main arguments. The first is that the centurion's statement in verse 39 is clearly a Markan editorial addition. Its purpose is to make the point that it is precisely the crucified Jesus who is God's son. This point expresses the heart of Markan Christology.⁸⁰ The second argument is that beginning with 15:39 or 15:40, the tightly sequential narrative style that began with 14:32 ends. From 15:40 to 16:8, the style once again becomes episodic, like the rest of Mark.⁸¹

CONCLUSION

In practice redaction criticism originated as an aspect of source criticism and form criticism. Part of the task of the source critic is to distinguish one or more sources from the editorial work of the compiler, editor, or final author. Similarly, the form critic attempts to discern passages in the Synoptic Gospels that had a

77. With Linnemann and against Bultmann and Schenke; see Yarbrow Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 116.

78. The use of the verb "split" (*schizō*) in 15:38 may be due to Mark's rewriting of his source in order to connect this event with the baptism of Jesus, where the same verb is used (1:10). Or the verb may be original in the source of 15:38 and have inspired Mark to use the same verb in 1:10 in order to link the two passages.

79. Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 759–64.

80. *Ibid.*, 764–71.

81. *Ibid.*, 626–27, 773–74.

previous life as oral units and to separate these from the editorial work of the Evangelists. Some practitioners of source criticism of the Gospels are content to reconstruct two stages: the editorial work of the Evangelist and his sources.⁸² Redaction-critical studies have even been made of sources, most notably the Synoptic Sayings Source (Q).⁸³ A number of scholars have attempted to reconstruct several stages of redaction in this source,⁸⁴ as others have done with the pre-Markan passion narrative.⁸⁵ Other scholars have argued that distinguishing more than two layers or stages of redaction is simply too speculative a process to be helpful.⁸⁶

Redaction criticism originated, in name and theory, in the 1950s.⁸⁷ From the beginning the explicit practice of "redaction criticism" included attention to the structure and main themes of the work. Such instances may thus also be called works of "composition criticism."⁸⁸ Attempts to reconstruct the author's "theology" also played at times a prominent role, as is reflected, for example, in the English title of Conzelmann's work.

As illustrated by the discussion of the pre-Markan passion narrative in the second part of this essay, it is possible, though difficult, to discern a source that does not survive independently. The main ways of doing so involve looking for differences in style, theme, and vocabulary. One must apply these methods carefully because the later editor or author may have adopted a theme or a key lexical term from the source.

82. See, for example, the excellent reconstruction of two collections of miracle stories used by the evangelist in Paul J. Achtemeier, "Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae," *JBL* 89 (1970): 265-91.

83. Dieter Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969).

84. John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Arland D. Jacobson, *The First Gospel: An Introduction to Q* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1992); Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993).

85. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 135-45; Till Ahrend Mohr, *Markus- und Johannespassion* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982), 404; Matti Myllykoski, *Die letzten Tagen Jesu* (2 vols.; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1991, 1994) 1.36-37.

86. With regard to Q, see Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), 75-82. With regard to the pre-Markan passion narrative, see Yarbrow Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 111, 115-16 (with reference to Schenke); *Mark: A Commentary*, 622 and n. 24 (with regard to Mohr); 622-23 and n. 30 (with regard to Myllykoski). See also note 63 above regarding Schenke.

87. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*; Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*; Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation*.

88. See especially Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*; and Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?*

An analogous reconstruction has been carried out with regard to the Synoptic Sayings Source (Q).⁸⁹ Such work is important for two main reasons. It gives us historical and literary information about an earlier stage of the tradition than the work of the later author. It also helps us see more clearly the aims of the Evangelists as we reconstruct their adaptations of the sources in question.

FOR FURTHER READING

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89. See especially James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, John S. Kloppenborg, and Milton C. Moreland, eds., *Critical Edition of Q* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).