

REDACTION CRITICISM

The earliest form critics regarded the Synoptic writers as authors who strung together pericopes or passages with which they were already familiar (i.e. putting together the various traditions into a connected whole). But after World War II another method of enquiry developed, the analysis of the editorial work of the evangelists in relation to their sources ('redaction criticism' - *Redaktionsgeschichte*). How did the authors handle their material? Whereas form critics tended to view the evangelists as 'scissors and paste' editors who simply strung together the pericopes in a rather mechanical way, redaction critics have analysed the ways in which the evangelists arranged the material in creative ways. It is in the selection and omission of material, in the editing of units and in the connecting links that the evangelists reveal their particular theological perspective. Thus, redaction criticism assumes that the work of source criticism (identification of the 'earliest' version of a tradition) and form criticism have been done and proceeds to enquire into the use of the material by the final author of the text.

Important works include Günther Bornkamm on Matthew and H. Conzelmann on Luke. Redaction critics use two types of analysis to discover the unique perspective and theological insights of a particular evangelist:

- i) comparison of evangelist with his sources in order to identify a consistent pattern of changes to the material (e.g., 'You are the Christ');
- ii) this extends beyond the wording of individual passages and includes an analysis of the evangelist's arrangement of larger blocks of material, which reveals a distinctive perspective and insights (e.g., Matthew arranges the teaching material of Jesus into five 'blocks' of teaching).

Redaction critics examine the way in which the evangelists have altered their sources and traditions (e.g., compare Matthew and Luke with Mark). This is more problematic in the case of Mark since his sources are not available to us (and an analysis of Q material cannot refer to the source itself). In the case of Mark, critics seek to identify the evangelist's hand as redactor in the passages which link the various traditions together, particularly in the conclusions to

individual sections or general summaries. It becomes apparent that, in such cases, Mark often refers to the teaching activity of Jesus; note the 'sandwich' effect (placing one story in the middle of another - the cleansing of the Temple placed in the middle of the cursing of the fig-tree in 11:12-21, thus implying that Jesus' act in the Temple amounts to its final cursing).

Nevertheless, one must refrain from claiming that a study of an evangelist's redaction of their material is synonymous with the sum of their theology. A balance must be maintained between the alteration of sources and glimpses into certain aspects of an evangelist's theological perspective. The adoption of a tradition, unaltered, may be as important as adaptation. This is why there is now a movement away from the older approach of looking at alterations to traditions, to looking at the Gospels as entities in themselves, and how individual parts are related by the evangelist to others.