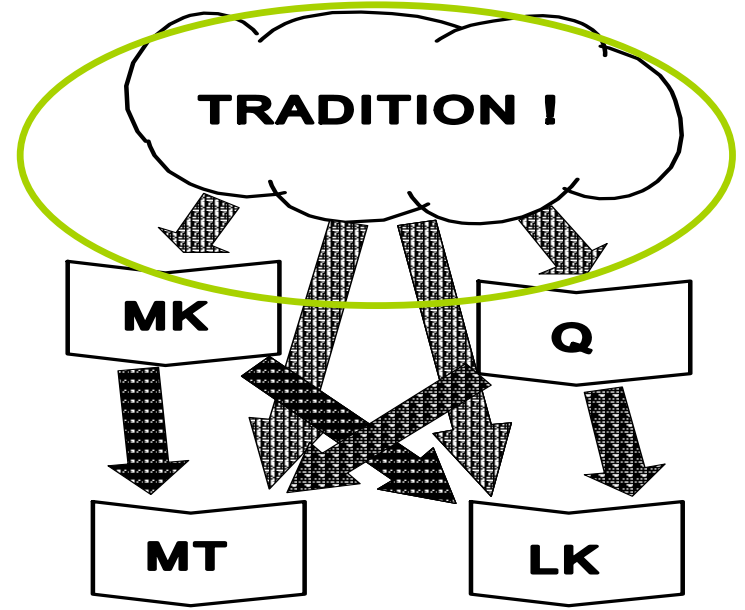


Form Criticism & Redaction Criticism

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Form Criticism



Terminology

- 'Form Criticism' is the English rendering of the German *Formgeschichte* "form history" or *Gattungsforschung* "genre research."
- Form Criticism is an attempt to analyze oral materials (or written materials that have been transmitted orally) by identifying their literary form(s) and reconstructing them in their most primitive versions.

Background of Form Criticism

F.C. Baur's reconstruction of early church history

- German prof of church history who adopted Hegel's philosophy of history, applying it to church history.
- Hegel: history is a conflict of ideas: thesis vs antithesis => synthesis
- Baur applies same to church history, as follows:

Baur's Church History

Jewish Church

- Peter
- Jews
- Jesus as miracle-worker & Messiah
- Emphasis on Law
- National salvation

Gentile Church

- Paul
- Hellenistic Gentiles
- Jesus as God of new mystery religion
- Emph on sacraments
- Individual salvation

Background of Form Criticism

David Friedrich Strauss:

- Mythical approach to Gospels
- Wrote *Leben Jesu* in 1835.
- Gospels are propoganda pieces which teach religious truth, but the events they narrate did not happen.
- Form critics, esp Bultmann, see much myth in the Gospels also.

Background of Form Criticism

Bernard Weiss & H.J. Holzmann:

- Documentary Theory of Gospels
- Popularized 2-document theory, proposed earlier by Eichhorn
- Mark & Q are the sources of Luke & Matthew
- Form Criticism sees Mark & Q as sources behind Gospels, but then tries to go behind these to primitive oral sources.

Background of Form Criticism

Old Liberal arguments over character of Jesus:

- With miracles removed, have conflicting pictures of Jesus:
 - Moral teacher?
 - Revolutionary leader?
 - Prophet of doom?
 - Charlatan?
- Which parts selected or rejected give different pictures.
- Bultmann et al hoped FC could get back to real historical Jesus.

Background of Form Criticism

Wilhelm Wrede & Julius Wellhausen:

- Skepticism
- Even Mark & Q are theological constructs.
- So we must dissolve their frameworks and look at isolated, basic sayings.
- This is what Form Criticism will later do.

Form Criticism in the Old Testament

Hermann Gunkel:

- Distinguished small units in Genesis & Psalms claimed to have circulated orally
- Units in Genesis were legends to explain the origin of names, holy sites, etc.
- Units in Psalms were worship materials for specific occasions or shrines.
- Gunkel reconstructs the life-settings.
- Bultmann tries to do the same for units he finds in the Synoptic Gospels.

Form Criticism in the New Testament

Rudolf Bultmann:

- After World War 1, applies Gunkel's methods to the Gospels, to pieces isolated from Mark & Q, as suggested by Wrede & Wellhausen.
- Claims this method can distinguish earlier materials from later, Gentile from Jewish, to determine which go back to Jesus.
- Methods have been refined since B's time & find their most avid practitioners in Jesus Seminar.

Methods of Form Criticism

What is a Form?

- Physical forms:
 - Concrete form
 - Jello mold
- Language forms:
 - A polite introduction
 - A sermon
- Legal or Financial forms:
 - Checks, deeds, wills, etc.

What is a Form?

- Literary forms:
 - A sonnet
 - 14 lines, iambic pentameter
 - Lyric
 - Fixed rhyme-scheme
 - A sonnet by Frances Ridley Havergal (1838-79)
 - A limerick
 - 5 lines, humorous
 - 3 lines (1,2,5) with 3 feet, rhyming
 - 2 lines (3,4) with 2 feet, rhyming
 - 5th line is the punch line

Assertions of Form Criticism

- Period of oral tradition
- Gospel material circulates as independent units.
- Units can be classified by form:
 - Sayings
 - Saying-stories
 - Miracle-stories
- Early church preserved & invented these.
- Materials have little value historically.
- Original version of each unit may be recovered & history traced using laws of tradition.

Procedure of Form Criticism

- Isolate the stories & sayings from their context.
- Use the laws of tradition to recover their primitive state.
 - Primitive narrative has characteristics
 - Development is indicated by markers
- For each original, decide on its source:
 - Early church
 - Jesus
 - Jews

Application of Form Criticism

Basic forms identified:

- Miracle stories
 - Structure:
 - Problem described
 - Problem solved
 - Effect stated
 - Examples:
 - Mark 1:23-27: demoniac in synagogue
 - Mark 4:35-41: Jesus stills the storm

Application of Form Criticism

- Sayings-stories:
 - A narrative with a saying as its central feature.
 - The narrative is designed to illuminate the meaning or impact of the saying.
 - General characteristics:
 - Emphasis on a saying of Jesus or one approved by him
 - Brief narrative is just sufficient to make saying comprehensible
 - Story contains some biographical interest
 - Story rounded off by the saying or by an action of Jesus

Application of Form Criticism

- Sayings-stories:
 - Bultmann sees two different types:
 - Jewish: similar to those in Rabbinic literature:
 - Someone asks Rabbi a question
 - Rabbi answers with a parable or another question
 - Mark 3:2-6: man with withered hand is healed
 - Mark 2:23-28: grain picking on Sabbath
 - Greek: as in anecdotes about Greek philosophers
 - Stereotyped formula: "When asked about..."
 - Luke 17:20-21

Application of Form Criticism

- Sayings:
 - Originally had no story with them
 - Some are now grouped together in "sermons"
 - Bultman finds 5 different kinds of sayings:
 - Proverbs
 - Prophetic or apocalyptic sayings
 - Law words
 - "I" words
 - Parables

Results for Life of Christ

- Miracle stories
 - None genuine
- Sayings stories
 - Only 2 genuine
- Sayings
 - About 40 genuine

Results for Life of Christ

- Information on personality and life of Jesus is rather scarce:
 - He lived, suffered, died
- A bit more on teaching of Jesus:
 - Saw himself as prophet sent in last hour
 - Saw coming kingdom as real & imminent, but he was wrong.
 - Real value of Jesus' teaching is that each of us is faced with "existential choice" to live either for God or for the world.

Evaluation of Form Criticism

In terms of assertions:

- Oral period not so long, nor of sort envisioned.
- Independent units, but not real circulation between event & records.
- Forms don't tell what original was like.
- Early church preserved & controlled content.
- Historical value a real concern to church.
- Method using transmission laws is suspect.

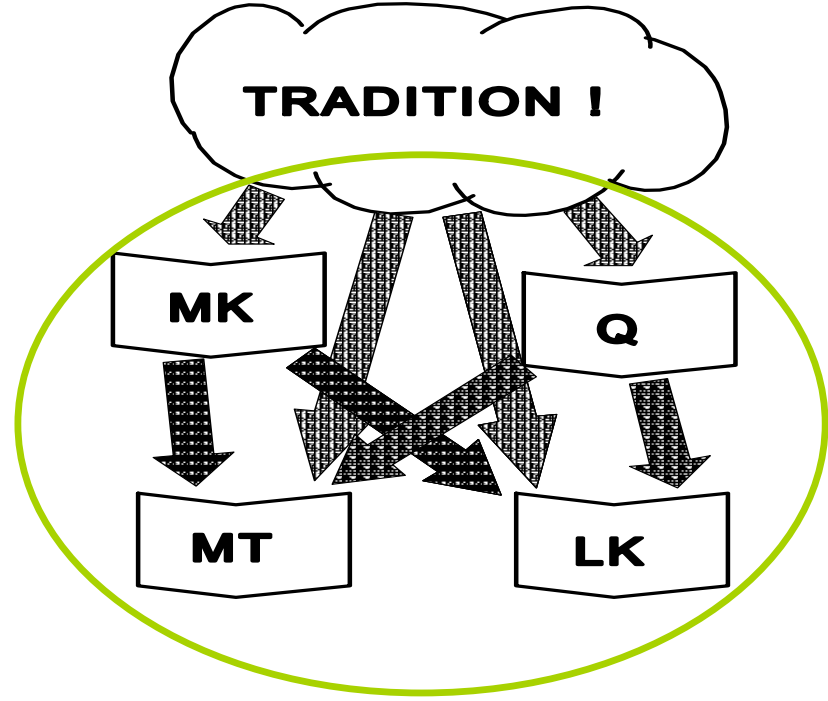
Evaluation of Form Criticism

Some positive lessons:

- The Gospel material is the sort we would expect from real events.
- Form criticism is hyper-skeptical.
- Form criticism shows we have no tradition of a non-messianic, purely human Jesus.



Redaction Criticism



What is Redaction Criticism?

- Redaction
 - Activity of a redactor
- Redactor
 - Synonym for 'editor'
- Redaction Criticism
 - Study of the activity of redactors
 - Here in the biblical text
 - Especially the Synoptic Gospels

History of Redaction Criticism

- Synoptic problem & source criticism
- Historical reliability of the Gospels
- Form criticism
- Redaction criticism
 - Bornkamm on Matthew (1948ff)
 - Conzelmann on Luke (1954)
 - Marxsen on Mark (1956)
 - Later spread into:
 - Study of Q and John
 - Evangelical circles

Methods of Redaction Criticism

- Select a Gospel or document (say Q, M, L, Proto-Mark) for study.
- Compare differences w/ parallels in the other Gospels.
- Discover which differences are the work of redactor of *your* Gospel.
- Deduce redactor's theological motivation.
- Reconstruct redactor's *Sitz im Leben* (life-setting).

Some Results of Redaction Criticism

- In liberal circles
 - We know little about Jesus.
 - But lots about various Xn sects!
- In conservative circles
 - Much more restrained, but beginning to see idea that not all narrative historical
 - For Gundry, Matthew becomes a kind of *midrash* – an imaginative retelling of events to make theological point

Evaluation of Redaction Criticism

Some favorable comments:

- Gospel writers did select materials.
- A detailed study of this material is bound to produce valuable insights.
- Gospel writers did emphasize various features of Jesus' ministry.
- These emphases do give us insight into the theological concerns of the Gospel writers.

Evaluation of Redaction Criticism

Some serious problems:

- Some results are alarming:
 - Rejection of recorded details
 - Generation of hypothetical details
 - Addition of genre "historical fiction"

Evaluation of Redaction Criticism

Some Serious Problems:

- Some methods are suspect:
 - Sand foundation fallacy
 - Explanation fallacy
 - Dissertation fallacy
 - Argument from silence fallacy
 - Psychoanalytic fallacy
 - Intellectual snobbery fallacy

Conclusions on Redaction Criticism

- Not an argument for anti-intellectualism
 - We are to love God with all our mind.
- Rather a call for a sober assessment of human abilities
- And for a fear of God:
 - Who takes the wise in their craftiness (1 Cor 3:19)
 - Against whom there is no wisdom, understanding nor counsel (Prov 21:30)

The End

May you handle God's word with
reverence and fear!