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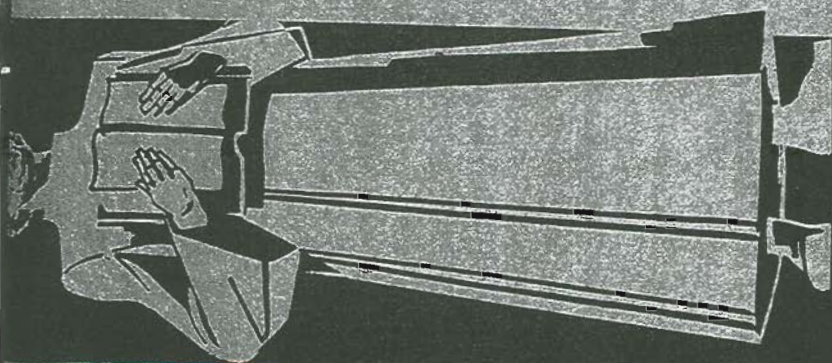
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# Redaction Criticism And Its Implications

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THOUGH THE PURSUIT of redaction criticism as a formal discipline is less than twenty-five years old its antecedents can be traced to three German scholars who flourished during the last two centuries. The first, Hermann S. Reimarus attempted to show that

Jesus was an unsuccessful political messianic pretender, that the disciples were disappointed charlatans who invented the early Christian faith rather than go back to working for a living after the debacle of the crucifixion, and that they stole the body of Jesus in order to have an empty tomb to support their story of a resurrection!<sup>1</sup>

Reimarus' main thesis was that the Gospels are not historical and that much which they contain was created after the events which they claim took place.

After Reimarus came David F. Strauss who flourished during the first half of the nineteenth century. He too called attention to the creative element in the Gospels. According to Strauss, the Gospels are largely myth and cannot be considered as historical nor can we explain away the element of the miraculous.

The third scholar considered briefly is Wilhelm Wrede. According to Wrede, throughout the Gospel of Mark the disciples are portrayed as misunderstanding Jesus and his ministry. They did not understand the parable of the sower, Jesus' power over the elements, Jesus' walking on the water, the nature and the meaning of the transfiguration, and they were completely confused at Gethsemane. The disciples consistently misunderstood Jesus' words and works. This misunderstanding represents the evangelists' conception rather than historical truth.

Throughout the Gospel of Mark, according to Wrede, Jesus' Messiahship must be kept a secret. Jesus demands silence about His identity from demons, and from the disciples about His miracles. He wishes to remain incognito. In all this no motive is ever given. Therefore, argues Wrede, the Messianic Secret is a theological concept at work in the tradition. Mark does not reflect historical actuality but the understanding of Christians after Jesus' resurrection. Wrede, therefore, made two claims: that Mark is an historicizing of non-historical material and the text represents ideas at work in the tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Redaction criticism, as we know it today, came into its own through G. Bornkamm's "Die Sturmstillung im Matthaeevangelium."<sup>3</sup>

His (Bornkamm's) remarks make it evident how far he is building on the form-critical method. He attributes to form criticism the methodical elaboration of the insight that the gospels must

be understood as *kerygma*, and not as biographies of Jesus of Nazareth; and that they cannot be fitted into any of the literary categories of antiquity, but that they are stamped and determined in every respect by faith in Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen One, both in their content and their form, as a whole and in detail. This has put an end to the fiction of the *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, as though it would ever be possible to distil out of the gospels a picture of the historical Jesus free from all the 'over-painting' added by faith. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Crucified and Risen One does not belong to a later stratum of the tradition; this faith is the place where tradition was born, out of which it has grown and through which it becomes intelligible. This faith explains the conscientiousness and faithfulness with regard to the tradition about Jesus, and also the peculiar freedom with which this tradition is modified in detail. 'The evangelists do not hark back to some kind of church archives when they pass on the words and deeds of Jesus, but they draw them from the *kerygma* of the Church and serve this *kerygma*.'<sup>1</sup>

In other words, faith gave birth to the tradition and the evangelists had freedom to modify this tradition. It is impossible to know Jesus exactly as He was but we can know Him only through the *kerygma* and the tradition of the church. This is a basic principle of redaction criticism.

The term *Redaktionsgeschichte*, translated "redaction criticism" as well as "redaction history," was coined by W. Marxsen in 1954.

Form criticism is a product of literary criticism and redaction criticism is an outgrowth of form criticism. Redaction criticism is governed by the same principles as form criticism.

According to Redlich they have six assumptions in common:

1. That before the written Gospels there was a period of oral tradition.
2. That during this period, narratives and sayings (except the passion narrative) circulated as separate self-contained units.
3. That the Gospel material can be classified according to literary form.
4. That the vital factors which produced and preserved these forms are to be found in the practical interests of the Christian community.
5. That the traditions have no chronological or geographical value.
6. That the original form of the traditions may be recovered by studying the laws of the tradition.<sup>5</sup>

Joachim Rohde, a German scholar, who has assessed the work of no less than twenty-five German redaction critics, has traced the antecedents of redaction criticism in form criticism. He is in a good position to make a judgment.

The cessation of literary publications enforced by the war led

to endeavors to pass beyond form criticism and to put fresh questions to the synoptic gospels. This opened up the possibility of emerging from a certain stagnation and attenuation of form criticism to an aesthetic consideration of the form of the text. Previously questions had been raised about the history of the *forms*; now it was the turn of the *redaction*; in other words, whereas previously attention had been concentrated on the *small units* now the *gospels as a whole* began to be examined again. For it had been recognized that the evangelists were not only *collectors* and *transmitters* of traditional material. In their work as redactors they had also to some degree to be regarded as authors in their own right. They were seen to be men who by their methods, and particularly by arranging the material with a quite definite object in view and in quite definite contexts, were attempting to express their own theology, and more than that, the theology of a quite definite group and trend in primitive Christianity. Nevertheless, the resources for presenting the particular theology of each of the synoptists were modest and each had only a limited scope. Beside the grouping of the material under definite points of view and in definite contexts, it was a matter of selection, omission and inclusion of traditional material, and modifications of it, which, although slight, were yet very characteristic.<sup>6</sup>

## I.

## MARXSEN AND THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The limits of this paper do not allow a detailed study of the works of all redaction critics though, at the conclusion, the principle common to all will be evaluated. A summary of the work of W. Marxsen on Mark and of H. Conzelmann on Luke only is presented. These German scholars are the best known and perhaps the most thorough redaction critics to date.

Marxsen considers it his task to investigate the material of synoptic tradition without ignoring the evangelist. His primary task is twofold: arriving at redaction *and* tradition. "Form history which bypasses the authors of the Gospels is somehow left hanging in the air." He feels that redaction criticism should have begun immediately after literary criticism, following the cue of Wrede. The *Sitz im Leben* is to be transferred from the forms to the standpoint of the redactor.

With this approach (transfer of *Sitz im Leben*), the question as to what really happened is excluded from the outset. We inquire rather how the evangelists describe what happened. The question as to what really occurred is of interest only to the degree it relates to the situation of the primitive community in which the Gospels arose.<sup>8</sup>

This is obviously very similar to the thesis of Wrede. What Marxsen is after is the sociological element in the community in which the Gospel was redacted, and the redactor's point of view of this situation. Since Marxsen believes in Markan priority he feels that Mark's only source was tradition. "We shall go back behind

Mark and separate tradition from redaction, then by way of construction, illumine and explain his composition."

In each of his four studies Marxsen begins with Mark and then compares him with the development in Matthew and Luke. This is to show the different conceptions the evangelists are supposed to have had.

Study One deals with John the Baptist. Marxsen observes that the Gospels are "passion narratives with an extended introduction." Just as the tradition before the passion must be read with the cross in mind, so the record of the Baptist must be read with Jesus in mind. The Baptist tradition in Mk. 1:2f. is in Mark a prophecy looking to the past. The desert has a theological purpose pointing to John who fulfills the prediction of O.T. prophecies. That Jesus succeeds the Baptist is a formal pattern in Heilsgeschichte. In Matthew and Luke the desert becomes a place and has local meaning. In Matthew the prophecy about John is no longer directed to the past but to the future. In Matthew, unlike Mark, the Baptist and Jesus become a temporal sequence. Luke "historicizes" John the Baptist. In Mark the Baptist is an eschatological figure but in Luke he is only a prophet who does not belong to the *basileia*, but stands before it.

In other words, Mark has composed backwards. John the Baptist is mentioned not in the interest of history nor to tell how things were but to let this tradition say something about Jesus. The geographical reference to the desert shows the Baptist as one who fulfills O.T. prophecy. Furthermore, the sequence of John and Jesus in Mark is not temporal but, theologically speaking, denotes John as forerunner and Jesus as the one who comes after. In Matthew and Luke

The material can be taken over almost without alteration; it requires only to be reshaped and combined afresh in the redaction. The outline still shines through. A comparison of the synoptic materials is a relatively simple task, as the fact of synopsis itself indicates. Nevertheless, when dealing with the evangelists we deal with men whose points of view are more disparate than a superficial comparison leads us to suppose.<sup>9</sup>

Study Two deals with the geographical situation. In this study Marxsen notes that the Gospels do not describe the life of Jesus, nor the *Sitz im Leben* of the early church, but the situation in which the redactor found himself.

Perrin succinctly summarizes Marxsen's second study and we offer his summary:

The Marcan theology reflects the situation in Galilee in the year 66 A.D. at the beginning of the Jewish War against Rome. Marxsen believes that the Christian community of Jerusalem had fled from Jerusalem to Galilee at the beginning of the war, that there they were waiting for the *parousia* which they believed to be imminent. The Gospel of Mark, claims Marxsen, reflects this situation in its theology. So, for example, the pres-



ent ending of the Gospel at 16:8 is the true ending; Mark did not intend to go on to report resurrection appearances in Galilee; the references to Galilee in 14:28 and 16:7 are not references to the resurrection at all but to the parousia. There never was, therefore, an ending to the Gospel in which Mark reported resurrection appearances in Galilee. The 'you will see him' in 16:7 is a reference to the parousia and to the future. But Mark expects this event to take place immediately, in his own day. The parousia has not yet come but it is now imminent.<sup>10</sup>

According to Marxsen, Matthew's redaction makes the conclusion of Mark's Gospel timeless and introduces a new era lasting until the end of the world. Luke, on the other hand, has eliminated the significance of Galilee and stresses rather the delay of the parousia.

Marxsen's Third Study centers in the word *euaggelion*. Again, the *Sitz im Leben* is not that of the life of Jesus, nor that of the primitive church, but the situation in which the redactor found himself.

Mark's Gospel, in the strictest sense, is the only *euaggelion*. With Matthew the word is not original and in Luke only the verb *euaggelizesthai* is used. The word (*euaggelion*) occurs in 1:1 in Mark and is to be read as an announcement and summons, not as an account of Jesus. Rohde summarizes this study of Marxsen thus:

The words in Mark 1:14.15 are in fact the beginning of the preaching of the Risen One in the evangelist's view and not a beginning of the preaching of the historical Jesus. So this preaching is not directed to Jesus' contemporaries, but to the communities in Galilee, amongst whom Mark is living and is telling them the gospel of the Risen One: 'I am coming soon.'<sup>11</sup>

Matthew, according to Marxsen, handles the concept of *euaggelion* differently. It is no longer identified with Christ but with the groups of discourses made by Jesus, placed in a framework to give the appearance of history. These discourses help us to see the situation of Matthew. Important for him were the instruction and teaching of Jesus.

But Luke, maintains Marxsen, consistently avoids the noun *euaggelion*. He writes neither an *euaggelion* nor a *biblos* but rather an historicized 'life of Jesus.' Luke uses the verb *euaggelizesthai*, says Marxsen, not in the sense of Gospel preaching but only oral preaching which has the kingdom as its content.

Marxsen's Fourth Study concerns itself with Mark 13. He begins by admitting that thus far his studies are hypothetical. After eight pages of arguing about sources Marxsen begins his study of the 13th chapter with the assumption that it is the author's own composition composed of apocalyptic portions and materials from the synoptic tradition. The imminent destruction of the temple points to the time of composition. Vss. 1-4 combine the destruction of the temple and the last things.

Here as elsewhere, Mark does not give thought to utterances of the historical Jesus. It is rather the Risen Lord who speaks—

through the evangelist. That is, for Mark the gospel is the proclamation of the Risen Lord to the present. To this end he uses material offered him by the tradition.<sup>12</sup>

Vss. 5-13, maintains Marxsen, reflect the situation of the author, the situation of the primitive community 66-70 A.D. Sayings about the future begin at vs. 14. In vs. 14 the destruction of the temple is the prelude to the end. In 14b-27 the community is on the move to the mountains in Galilee. Things will get worse before the parousia. Vss. 28-32 denote the very end. Marxsen's only remark on the remainder of the chapter (which certainly does away with the imminent parousia) is as follows: "What remains to be said is hortatory (vss. 33-37). The imperative is: Watch! The community does not know the *kairos*" (vs. 33). (p. 187) From 1:14.15 to the conclusion of chapter 13 we have a great arc. The nearness of the parousia was indicated already at the beginning of Mark's work.

In his redaction of Mark, according to Marxsen, Luke separates past from future. The end is set off from historical events. The beleaguering of the city is *ex eventu*. He corrects several matters in Mark and makes a few deletions. Luke's parousia is for the whole earth, not an event in Galilee. "This generation" in Mark means an actual generation while in Luke's redaction it refers to the Jews. Luke writes a *vita Jesu* and historicizes the life of Jesus for his own situation.

But in Matthew's redaction, Marxsen affirms, chapter 24 indicates neither an imminent parousia, nor epochs of time, but rather epochs of importance. The elements of the situation immediately before the parousia have become a permanent situation. Matthew placed these elements into his missionary discourse in 10:17-21. He distinguishes between the era of salvation (chapter 10) as his own time and the era of the parousia in chapter 24 as in the future. He has driven the imminent expectation of the parousia into the background. Mark has arranged the material with one point in mind. Matthew's arrangement is nearer to the original traditional material because he has laid the different *skopoi* side by side. Mark's gospel is one sermon applied to his contemporary situation, the shaping of the missionary church. Luke, on the other hand, is an historian and purports to construct the first Church History. His purpose is to place the parousia in the distant future.

## II.

### CONZELMANN AND THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Though Conzelmann's *Die Mitte der Zeit*<sup>13</sup> was published twenty years ago, it is still considered one of the best examples of the method called redaction criticism.

Conzelmann treats Luke-Acts as one work but takes more account of the Gospel than of Acts because he can compare Luke with Matthew and Mark. There is no book with which he can compare Acts. For this reason and owing to the limitations of this paper we shall examine primarily what he says about the Gospel of Luke, according to the recognized English translation of *Die Mitte der Zeit*.<sup>14</sup>

In the "Introduction" Conzelmann states his principles and method. We quote significant sentences:

We shall, it is true, obtain no material for the picture of the Jesus of history, but we shall for the development of the understanding of Christ in the early Church. The process by which the Gospels were formed proves to be that of the filling out of a given kerygmatic framework with the narrative material about Jesus and the traditional sayings of the Lord.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> . . . Our aim is not to investigate the models and sources as such, nor is it to reconstruct the historical events.<sup>17</sup>

But it is not until Luke that this demarcation, this distinction between then and now, the period of Jesus and the period of the Church, between problems of yesterday, and those of today, becomes fully conscious. The period of Jesus and the period of the Church are presented as different epochs in the broad course of saving history, differentiated to some extent by their particular characteristics.<sup>18</sup>

In Luke however—and this is the measure of his great achievement—we find a new departure, a deliberate reflection: he confronts the problem of the interval (the delayed parousia) by interpreting his own period afresh in relation to this fact; in other words, the treatment of his main problem is the result of coming to grips with his own situation.<sup>19</sup>

Conzelmann claims that Luke-Acts was composed on the basis of a framework of Heilsgeschichte. Rohde summarizes this framework of Conzelmann thus:

Luke divides the time between creation and the world's end into three epochs: (1) the time of Israel, the Law and the prophets, which is concluded with John the Baptist; (2) the time of Jesus' earthly ministry (Die Mitte der Zeit) as the anticipation of the future salvation, characterized by the absence of Satan, the peace of God, and the realization of salvation which extends up till Jesus' passion; (3) finally, the present time, the historical epoch between the exaltation and the return of Christ, the time of the Church with temptation and persecution which it can indeed surmount, the time in which the Church is Israel as being the bearer of salvation and Jesus' ministry is continued by the spirit.<sup>20</sup>

Conzelmann also claims that the life of Jesus, according to Luke, is likewise divided into three parts. Rohde summarizes this thesis of Conzelmann thus:

In this central period of time (Die Mitte der Zeit), namely Jesus' life, we can recognize, according to Conzelmann, a tri-



partite construction to which three stages in Jesus' life and ministry correspond: (1) the time in Galilee, from Jesus' call at his baptism to be the Son of God, and the collection of witnesses to his call (Luke 3:21-9:50); (2) Luke's travel account, with the disclosure of the decision to suffer and the preparation of the disciples for the necessity of suffering (Luke 9:51-19:27).<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the third period deals with the end of Jesus' life from the entry into Jerusalem until his death (Luke 19:28-23:49).<sup>22</sup>

According to Conzelmann, the framework of Jesus' story is now neither chronological nor geographical in its nature; it is kerygmatic and is amplified by means of narrative material about Jesus and sayings of his.<sup>23</sup>

*The Theology of St. Luke (Die Mitte der Zeit)* is made up of five parts. The first deals with "Geographical Elements in the Composition of Luke's Gospel." This dwells on two themes: "John the Baptist" and "The Course of Jesus' Ministry."

Luke 16:16 is a basic passage for Conzelmann's exposition. The Baptist does *not* proclaim the Kingdom of God. This is supposed to correspond to Luke's not associating John with Judea nor with Galilee. The Baptist's locality becomes remarkably vague, in Luke, but seems to be near the Jordan River. Therefore Luke has no exact geographical knowledge and his use of localities is only symbolical. John, in general, is played down and, in particular, he does not play an important part in Jesus' baptism. Mt. 3:2 becomes impossible in Luke. John is *not* the forerunner of Christ in Luke and John's baptism falls short compared with Christian baptism with the Spirit (Acts 1:5).

To sum up (says Conzelmann), we may say that Luke employs geographical factors for the purpose of setting out his fundamental conception, and that he modified his sources to a considerable extent. This modification takes the form of a conscious editorial process of omissions, additions, and alterations in the wording of the sources. It is plain that his purpose is to keep separate the respective localities of John and of Jesus. As far as the outline of Jesus' life is concerned, it is the beginning of his own ministry that marks the *arche* not, as in Mark, the appearance of John. It is not until now that the region of Galilee is mentioned, Luke having omitted it from Mark 1:9 (p. 27).

So much for John the Baptist. With reference to "The Course of Jesus' Ministry," from Luke 4:13 to 22:3 we have the central period of Jesus' life. It is the Satan-free period, Luke's own interpretation and reflection on his sources. Since the mountain is not mentioned in the temptation account, Luke, according to Conzelmann, shows stylization of the word because for him it is the place of prayer and of secret revelations.

Luke places Jesus in Galilee for a theological purpose. What

Jesus says in the synagogue (4:18ff.) shows that for Luke salvation is now a thing of the past.

The Good News is not that God's Kingdom has come near, but that the life of Jesus provides the foundation for the hope of the future Kingdom. Thus the nearness of the Kingdom has become a secondary factor (p. 37).

Galilee has no fundamental significance for Luke. It is Judaea that has a significance of its own as a locality, especially Jerusalem as the place of the Temple. Luke has no exact idea of the country. In Luke, according to Conzelmann, the "lake" is more a theological than a geographical factor (5:1). Luke uses it to demonstrate Jesus' power. Furthermore, he places 5:12-26 in Judaea, as is shown by 4:43, and mistakenly puts Nain in Judaea (7:17).

"The plain" in Luke (6:17 is the sole occurrence in the Gospel) is where Jesus meets the people (*ochloi*). Luke, maintains Conzelmann, lets Jesus go outside Jewish territory but once (8:22), symbolic of missions to Gentiles. 9:7-9 (the Herod episode) points forward to the Passion story (23:8). This is theological symbolism. "Luke needs this motif in view of the part which Herod plays later in the departure of Jesus from Galilee and in the Passion" (p. 51). It is impossible, according to Conzelmann, to say how far the picture of Herod is historically accurate. Luke, supposedly, intentionally omits Mark 6:45-8:27 (incidentally, this passage is a real problem for source and form critics). In Luke's geographical scheme, maintains Conzelmann, there is no place for such a journey outside Jewish territory. The transfiguration (9:28-36) in Luke is supposed to be typological. The Mt. of Transfiguration foreshadows the Mt. of Olives. Luke supposedly is not interested in the geography of the mountain. 9:37-50 betrays ignorance on the part of Luke: he thinks of Galilee and Judaea as a continuous whole and Capernaum is thought of as being in the *middle* of Galilee.

Samaria lies alongside of both. Incidentally, Jerusalem is probably treated as a free *polis*, according to Conzelmann.

To this picture of the scene of Jesus' life must be added the 'typical' localities, mountain, lake, plain, desert, the Jordan, each specially employed in a way peculiar to Luke (p. 70).

To sum up, we may say that the extent of the journey report is not determined by the source material employed, but by the work of arrangement carried out by the author. It is he who stamps the 'journey' on the existing material, for his editorial work affects each group of sources, Q, Mark and the special material. The more meagre the material, the more distinct does the author's intention become. It is true that he does receive from his sources, particularly from Mark, suggestions for the drawing up of a journey, but in the elaboration and use of the motif for the arrangement of Jesus' life he is quite independent. The journey is therefore a construction, the essential meaning of which has yet to be brought out. It will not do to dismiss it by pointing out the geographical discrepancies. According to



the editorial journey references, 9:51-19:27 should be fixed as the extent of the section covering the journey (pp. 72-73).

The third epoch in Jesus' life begins, according to Conzelmann, with His entry into Jerusalem. Luke supposedly strips the story of miracles and the anointing in Bethany, and goes straight for the Passion. The scheme imposed by Luke is given in 19:37. It is consistent editorial adaptation. The geographical transition (19:28-39) is editorial revision. For our author, Conzelmann maintains, the Temple becomes the center. Jesus speaks only in the Temple, and for this reason Mark 13:3 is omitted. The Mt. of Olives is not the place of teaching, but of prayer by night. Jesus addresses the speakers of 21:5 in the Temple, says Conzelmann.

He claims that the wording of 22:1 indicates a fairly long period of time in Jerusalem.

Chapter 22:3 completes the circle of redemptive history (*Heilsgeschichte*), for Satan is now present again. Now the period of salvation, as it was described in 4:18-21, is over, and the Passion, which is described by Luke, and also by John, as a work of Satan, is beginning (p. 80).

Luke 22:10 is supposedly the first mention of the entry into the city. (The reader should compare 19:45). A new epoch is introduced in 22:36. The time of protection is over. The beginning of the Passion means to be engaged in conflict. In Gethsemane the disciples sleep out of sorrow, an echo of sleeping at the Transfiguration. The sword is symbolical, denoting the Christian's daily battle against temptation, particularly in times of persecution. In this connection:

There is no doubt that the critics are right when they regard these speeches (9:1ff. and 10:1ff.) as influenced in their form by the circumstances of the community. Yet Luke does not see in them a picture of his own time, but of the time of Jesus, a definite period in the past—in other words, of an ideal past (p. 82).

Luke 9:1ff. and 10:1ff. are symbolical of serenity. But 22:35-38 are symbolical of conflict and persecution, the author's *Sitz im Leben*, i.e., the situation for which he is writing. Furthermore, "this is your hour" (22:53) is an allusion to the situation of the Church and its renunciation of active resistance (ca. A.D. 95, not 33).

The trial of Jesus is simply apologetical, placing the blame on the Jews, not the Romans. Conzelmann cites 23:19 and 25 and in the connection between the episodes in vss. 2-5 and 6-16. In 23:22 we have the third pronouncement of Jesus' innocence by Pilate, significant for political apologetic. The exchange of Barabbas for Jesus evokes this question from Conzelmann: "Has Luke some kind of ritual act in mind?" And in a footnote this question: "Is it something invented by Luke himself, who could not understand his source and interpreted it in his own way" (p. 87)? Concerning the trial in its entirety: "We cannot go into the historicity of the details of Luke's account" (p. 88).

For the author's *Sitz im Leben* the Crucifixion is full of the typical. The crucified Jesus is an example to the martyr who experiences a sense of God's nearness. Luke 23:50 indirectly characterizes the Jews. Vs. 52 is apologetic. Vs. 34 represents Luke's own interpretation which is that ignorance is a basis for exonerating the Gentiles for their part in the Crucifixion. In other words, Luke's revision of Mark is addressed to a later community facing persecution, for whom Jesus is a mere *example* for perseverance but it is also a message to the Romans that Rome did not kill Jesus. Such is Luke's theology of the Crucifixion, according to Conzelmann.

As to the close of the Gospel, in 24:6 "Luke is deliberately giving a different picture from Mark" (p. 93). It replaces Mark 14:28 and 16:7. The change from Mark 16:8 to Luke 24:11 "has to be seen in the light of the Lucan misunderstanding" (p. 93).

... the setting of the Ascension in Bethany in vs. 50 ... flatly contradicts the geographical reference in Acts 1:12. In view of the systematic locating of the whole course of events in Jerusalem, and in view of the consistent omission of Bethany on the one hand, and of the function of the Mt. of Olives on the other, which represents 'the' mountain in the Passion, one can scarcely fail to conclude from this closing section that Luke 24:50-53 is not an original part of the gospel. Luke's original account of the Ascension seems rather to be in Acts 1, even if it is amplified by an interpolation (p. 94).

Now to summarize the past few pages of this paper. The geographical elements in the Gospel of Luke, says Conzelmann, are clear indications that the Gospel of Luke does not tell us of the life, work, and Word of the Lord Jesus exactly as it happened but were used by a redactor about 60-70 years later for a particular situation in life. His community was facing persecution. Luke used Mark, Q, and other sources to write an "historicized" account which shows a high degree of symbolism and ignorance of detail, for the writer was foreign to Palestine and was not concerned about exact detail. The Satan-free period in Jesus' life symbolizes the time of serenity, now over for the community, and, Jesus' discourses in the Temple and His Crucifixion are mere preaching of endurance and example over the prospect of persecution now facing the Christians. Rome is quietly being told that the Jews, not Rome, were responsible for Jesus' death.

The second part is entitled "Luke's Eschatology." Incidentally, this part and the third, "God and Redemptive History," constitute the real core of Conzelmann's *Theology of St. Luke*.

We are not concerned with the eschatology of Jesus or with that of the primitive Christian community, but with the eschatological conceptions which Luke sets out, and which underlie his description of the life of Jesus and of the work of the Spirit in the life of the Church (p. 95).

Luke in fact replaces the early expectation (of the parousia) by a comprehensive scheme of a different kind (p. 96).

The idea of the coming of the Kingdom is replaced by a time-



less conception of it. Luke rightly interprets both *elelythuian* and *en dynamei* as a realistic description of the Parousia, and therefore they are excluded (p. 104).

... the coming of the Kingdom can only be proclaimed as a future fact, without any reference to when it will happen, but the nature of it can be seen now (p. 105).

The reader would do well to peruse pp. 113-136 of Conzelmann's book. These pages are typical of his method and contain what he sees as the heart of Luke's theology. According to this method Scripture does not interpret Scripture but the Gospel of Luke shows the change of theology from one Sitz im Leben to another. We have always understood the Kingdom of God as one of the *opera ad extra*, a gracious work of the Triune God which brings the lost sinner to knowledge of and faith in Jesus Christ through the means of grace, to maintain him in this faith and finally bring him to everlasting life. But, according to Conzelmann, this is completely minimized and the Kingdom has been removed from history and lies in the far distant future. According to this interpretation the people are supposedly being told to stand up under persecution and are reminded that the parousia is far away. The Kingdom is mentioned already in Luke 1:33 but Conzelmann does not accept chapters 1 and 2 because their authenticity has been questioned. This arbitrary treatment of textual criticism and sources, these exaggerations and preconceived notions, give an emaciated view of the Kingdom and a totally different picture of the Baptist and the means of grace. Much of the real picture of John, in Luke, lies in the first two chapters.

Conzelmann's exegesis of Luke 21 must be studied very carefully with the Greek testament in hand. According to him this chapter is a complete redaction of Mark 13 for a theological purpose, the delayed parousia. Moore very ably shows the hollowness of Conzelmann's interpretation not only of this chapter but also of his treatment of John the Baptist and the so-called epochs.<sup>24</sup> Moore grants that there are *emphases* in Luke but not *new* theology.

This thesis (new theology) both diminishes the centrality of a salvation-history concept in the thought of Paul and of the earliest community and also exaggerates any distinctive emphasis in Luke.<sup>25</sup>

Reference has been made above to Marxsen's weak treatment of Mark 13:33-37. Conzelmann assiduously avoids this passage. A glance at the Index of his book reveals that he does not give this passage a hearing. If Marxsen and Conzelmann would simply let Mark say what he says, the entire theory of the imminent parousia in the early community and the so-called delayed parousia in the later community (in Luke) would vanish. We quote the passage in full, for it is so important:

Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Watch

therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch (RSV).

Marxsen and Conzelmann are not talking about the eschatological fervor which surfaces in all generations of Church History (cf. the Epistles to the Thessalonians) but rather that Scripture itself erred and had to be corrected. There is a great difference between these ideas.

If Marxsen and Conzelmann are to be taken seriously, the second and third Gospels do not speak directly to our present *Sitz im Leben*. For, Mark's *Sitz im Leben* lay in Galilee, ca. A.D. 66-70, and Luke's perhaps in Asia Minor (according to Rohde's assessment of Conzelmann), ca. A.D. 90-120.

Part Three of *The Theology of St. Luke* deals with "God and Redemptive History" (Heilsgeschichte). According to Conzelmann, one thrust of Luke's twin-book, his original achievement (p. 137), is political apologetic, an example of Luke's editorial composition (p. 140).

There are thus two themes side by side in the account of the Passion, the dogmatic theme of the necessity of the suffering and the 'historical' theme of the guilt of the Jews and of the innocence of the Empire, which appreciates the non-political character of the Gospel and of Jesus' Kingship (p. 140).

But there is another thrust: the relationship of the Church to Israel. This theme is never to be confused with political apologetic:

Whenever Luke refers to it (the relationship of the Church to Israel), he has a two-fold aim: to prove the legitimacy of the Church's claim in respect of redemptive history, and to call the Jews to repentance. This argument, based upon redemptive history, is never confused at any point with the arguments used in dealings with the State. In connection with the State only political and legal arguments are used (p. 142).

In studying these themes Conzelmann insists that we are not dealing with actual facts but rather with the author's intention. Only when viewed thus is the interpretation plain, Conzelmann claims. This is very important for understanding redaction criticism. Granted that some of what he says is true. For example, about Luke 4:18ff. he says: "The Messianic programme represents Jesus' career as a non-political one" (p. 139). No one should disagree with him on this point. But by that Conzelmann means that it is not necessarily as it really happened, but rather Luke's editorial use of it for political apologetic. There is a great difference when the matter is considered thus.

Acts 15 is supposed to show development of Heilsgeschichte: the Law points to a permanent separation of Jews and Christians. It is obvious, however, that the main point in Acts 15 is justification by faith alone, and that ceremonies are adiaphoral. Conzelmann



makes no mention of this nor of the distinction between ceremonial and moral law. And he sums up Luke's political attitude thus:

- a. towards the Jews: one must obey God rather than men;
- b. towards the Empire: one should render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's (p. 148).

The first is not meant for Jew alone and the meaning of the second should be obvious to us. But according to Conzelmann Luke is a propagandist for Church and Empire:

The fact that the End is no longer thought of as imminent, and the subsequent attempt to achieve a long-term agreement as to the Church's relation to the world show how closely related this question (political apologetic) is to the central motifs in Luke's whole plan (p. 149).

It is at this point at which Conzelmann speaks of Luke's framework of Heilsgeschichte, referred to above.

What does Conzelmann mean by Heilsgeschichte as presented by Luke? We offer a summary: 1. The Church must come to grips with its situation in the world in view of the delay of the Parousia; 2. Luke offers political apologetic to the Romans to remove the onus of Jesus' death from the Romans; and, 3. Luke has now transferred to the Church the concepts which were originally applicable to Israel, especially by applying the term *laos* to the Church.

Heilsgeschichte means different things to different people. Compare, for example, Bultmann and Cullmann. Conzelmann's presentation of what Luke actually says about the true historical Jesus in the Gospel and the early church in Acts can be called neither salvation nor history. He insists that we are dealing not with actual facts but rather with the author's intention. His obsession with the delayed parousia and political apologetic drowns out the person, Word, and work of Christ and also the marvelous spread of the Gospel from Asia to Europe.

Part Four of Conzelmann's book is also the title of the entire book: "The Centre of History" (*Die Mitte der Zeit*). It concerns itself with Luke's Christology and its main thesis is the framework of the so-called Satan-free period, 4:13-22:13. This portion of the book is summarized by direct quotations, from the English translation, so that the reader is in a better position to judge for himself:

It is characteristic of Luke that although he develops a Christology of his own, he is no longer aware of the original peculiarities of titles such as 'Son of Man,' etc. He has taken them over from the tradition and interprets them according to his own conceptions (p. 170).

It is strange that in Luke the angels are not subject to the authority of Christ. Here we see a significant distinction between Father and Son, which implies the latter's subordination (p. 171).

There is no mention of the co-operation of a pre-existent 'Son,' for the idea of pre-existence is completely lacking—an aspect

of Luke's subordinationism . . . God's preeminence can be seen in the curious fact that He alone has dominion over the angels (p. 173).

In any case, during his earthly life their (angels') 'service' is not necessary, because Satan is absent (fnt. 173).

The motif of Jesus at prayer, which has been stereotyped by Luke also indicates his (Jesus') subordinate position, an outstanding example being the scene in Gethsemane (p. 175).

The expansion of the kerygma and the separate stories about Jesus into a Gospel and ultimately the growth of the Gospel from Mark to Luke belong to this same development (Jesus becomes a figure in his own right, a phenomenon in redemptive history). Yet even where Jesus is the subject of a sentence, the subordination remains; a clear example can be seen in the connection between Acts x, 38a and 38b (p. 176).

In Luke the presence (of Jesus) cannot be represented by the Spirit, for as a factor in redemptive history the Spirit is allotted a definite place. One cannot, of course, infer the presence of the 'person' of Christ. It is precisely because the person is in Heaven that mediation by the name is necessary (fnt. 178).

As the community derives its understanding of Christ from the impressions it receives in its own experience, from this point of view God and Christ are so close together that the statements about the part played by the one and by the other are not sharply distinguished, for it would serve no purpose to do so (p. 179).

(The passages about Jesus praying to the Father) indicate the same two-fold relationship of Jesus to God and to the world, that of subordination and pre-eminence (p. 180).

. . . the period of Jesus appears as a redemptive epoch of a unique kind, in which the Spirit rests upon one person only. This uniqueness is underlined still more by the fact that between the Ascension and Pentecost there is an interval without the Spirit (p. 184).

We find a clear subordinationism, which derives from tradition and is in harmony with Luke's view of history. Jesus is the instrument of God, who alone determines the plan of salvation. From the point of view of the community, however, the work of Jesus seems completely identical with that of the Father (p. 184).

. . . Jesus is present in a twofold way: as the living Lord in Heaven, and as a figure from the past by means of the picture of him presented by tradition (p. 186).

. . . Luke builds up the picture of the three stages through which the course of Jesus' life leads to the goal set by God's plan of salvation. Tradition supplies the material, but the structure is Luke's own creation (p. 187).

So much for the Christology of Luke. The second part of "The Centre of History" is devoted to "The Life of Jesus." This, again, is summarized by quoting significant passages:

The account of his (Jesus') present position results from the unfolding of the actual faith which the community possesses, and the account of his future position is provided by eschatology (p. 187).

It is well known, and needs no further proof at this point, that Luke divides the ministry of Jesus into three phases. He adds to the temporal scheme a geographical scheme, which at the same time has an underlying Christological significance. The scene of manifestation, which introduces each phase, Baptism—Transfiguration—Entry into Jerusalem, is fundamental for the understanding of the three phases. (The birth story plays no part for it is only a doublet to the Baptism). p. 193

... the importance of the Baptism itself has been reduced by Luke (p. 194).

The divisions into which redemptive history falls prove that this 'today' (Lk. 4:21) does not extend into the present in which the author lives, but is thought of as a time in the past (p. 195).

The present also, standing between the 'today' and the Parousia, is a time of salvation, although in a different sense from the period of Jesus (p. 195).

... the Passion is interpreted in advance, as a gateway to glory, not as in Paul, as the saving event in a positive sense. The careful assimilation of the Transfiguration and the scene on the Mount of Olives proves that this is an example of conscious composition on Luke's part (p. 196).

The symbolism of the anointing at Bethany is missing. Instead, the situation is characterized by the reappearance of Satan (xxii, 3). Thus a new period of 'temptation' begins (xxii, 28, 40, 46). which will continue after Jesus has gone (p. 199). It (the Supper) is instituted in view of the fact that Satan is again present, and thus serves to remind the disciples both of their peril and of their protection, and it also appeals to their perseverance, which in turn is made possible by the sacrament (p. 200).

There is no suggestion (in the Passion) of a connection with the forgiveness of sins (p. 201).

It should be noted that the idea of the Cross plays no part in the proclamation (p. 201).

The fact that the death itself is not interpreted as a saving event of course determines the account given of it (p. 201).

The journey to Galilee is replaced by a prophecy in Galilee about Jerusalem. The witness-motif appears in its 'Galilean' form in xxiii, 49, and is taken up again in the editorial v. 55 (p. 202).

It (the period of the Resurrection appearances) becomes a sacred period between the times (p. 203).

The Church is not 'created' by the Resurrection, for it is created by God, not by a 'saving event' thought of as efficacious in itself—Luke does not yet go so far as this—but the Resurrection does provide the basis for its existence (p. 206).



Though Part Five, entitled "Man and Salvation: The Church" concerns itself, in the main, with the Book of Acts, we quote these significant observations:

With the decline of the expectation of an imminent Parousia, the theme of the message is no longer the coming of the Kingdom, from which the call to repentance arises of its own accord, but now, in the time of waiting, the important thing is the 'way' of salvation, the 'way' into the Kingdom (p. 227).

The actual significance of the statements concerning the blessings of salvation is connected with the eschatological delay. Just as the Eschaton no longer signifies present, but exclusively future circumstances, so also eternal life is removed into the distance. In the present we do not possess eternal life, . . . (p. 230).

. . . it is better to describe the Spirit not as the blessings of salvation, but as the provisional substitute for it (p. 230).

### III.

#### CRITICISM AND EVALUATION OF REDACTION CRITICISM

There is no doubt that redaction criticism is no improvement over the stagnation produced by literary and form criticism. The presuppositions of a philosophy of history, sources, and conditions which produced the synoptic Gospels have not changed. All that has changed is the so-called interaction of sources, tradition, and redaction for a specific Sitz im Leben in the early church.

It must be granted that not all redaction critics are so radical as Perrin, Marxsen, and Conzelmann in their assessment of the "theology" which the writers of the Gospels are supposed to have produced. For example, Dr. Frederick W. Danker, in his recently published volume on the Gospel of Luke is "milder" in comparison with Conzelmann.<sup>26</sup> But that is not the main issue. The main issue is the presuppositions of Redaktionsgeschichte and, it must be said that, Dr. Danker's presuppositions are those of Conzelmann. It is plainly evident in many places in his new book. It must be granted that there are good passages and even pages in Dr. Danker's book but for proof of the accusation just made the reader should examine Dr. Danker's exegesis of Luke 21 where such verbs as "alter," "omit," "delete," and "add," occur frequently. The commentary assumes a late date of authorship and that Luke redacted Mark and Q. It is thoroughly Conzelmannian in its presuppositions. For good reasons the literature board of the LC-MS refused C.P.H. permission to publish this volume.

Everyone has presuppositions about the source of Scripture. And the presuppositions of redaction criticism and of Lutheranism cannot be combined:

There are too many unpredictable factors (in form and redaction criticism). Moreover, the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit over the tradition *finds no place in this conception [italics our own]*.<sup>27</sup>

In an attempt to reconcile Redaktionsgeschichte and inspiration Perrin makes this interesting observation (in a footnote):

We have spoken of Mark throughout as a self-conscious—one might even say cold-blooded!—editor, redactor, and author. We should perhaps stress the obvious fact that this is simply a scholarly convenience as we discuss what he did, and it is not meant to prejudge any questions with regard to inspiration, sense of have 'the mind of the Lord,' view of the tradition and its relationship to Jesus, etc. But before any such questions can be discussed, it is essential to be clear as to what Mark in fact did, and to determine this is, in part, the purpose of redaction criticism.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, it is assumed by Redaktionsgeschichte that the presuppositions of this method must supercede and take precedence over any other view of the source of the Gospels, including the views of Scripture itself.

Before we speak of inspiration in particular, something needs to be said about sources. Inspiration, of course, does not preclude sources. Thucydides and Polybius are taken at face value concerning their sources. But not Luke. In their superior wisdom the redaction critics often consider Luke 1:1-4 either as unauthentic (despite the clear evidence of textual criticism) or as a passage which is not to be taken seriously:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a *narrative of the things which have been accomplished* among us, just as they were *delivered to us* by those who *from the beginning were eyewitnesses* and ministers of the Word, it seemed good to me also, *having followed all things closely* for some time past, to write *an orderly account* for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you many *know the truth (asphaleia)* concerning the things of which you have been informed (Lk. 1:1-4, RSV).

This passage neither confirms nor denies Mark as a source for Luke. The word "narrative" cannot be pressed into service for the many so-called forms. Luke speaks of things "which have been accomplished," not history mixed with fiction of a "mere whisper of the life of the historical Jesus" (Lightfoot). They were *delivered to Luke* (*paradidomi*, cf. I Cor. 15:3 which becomes meaningless for Barth and Bultmann), not passed on from Sitz im Leben to Sitz im Leben and finally written down for a so-called "theological" purpose at a late date. There were *eyewitnesses* right from the beginning (cf. I Cor. 15:5) who vouched for what actually happened. Luke followed all these things closely. He cannot be accused of disinterest in or disregard for geography, history, sequence of events or detail. He wrote "an orderly account," which can be understood both chronologically and topically. And, last, but not least, his specific purpose is *certainty (asphaleia)*, a very strong word in the original which means, literally, *unslippingness*. This one word alone does away with *exaggerated* symbolism, contradiction, and deliberate re-writing, all so typical of redaction criticism.

It should be clear from a study of Marxsen and Conzelmann that redaction criticism gives the Gospels a thrust which is primarily, if not solely, an ethical one rather than a sanctifying (in the broader sense) thrust. And this leads to a confusion of not only the Kingdom of grace and the kingdom of power, but also of the Invisible and Visible Church. This means, finally, that disavowal of the *formal* principle of Scripture leads inevitably to disavowal of the *material* principle thereof. The two, in the final analysis, stand or fall together.

And, finally, it should be abundantly clear that Marxsen and Conzelmann do not allow Scripture to interpret Scripture except in those cases in which such interpretation buttresses their theses. But close examination of even those cases often shows faulty exegesis, half-truths, or exaggerations.

In the well-known *Report of the Synodical President*, a summary of the "Synodical Position" and "Other Positions" concerning the Historical-Critical Method is given.<sup>29</sup> According to this Report it is maintained by "Other Positions" that:

The historical-critical method may be employed if the following controls, or 'Lutheran presuppositions,' are followed: The Scriptures are God's Word; God's Spirit will aid us to hear Him speak; the Gospel is a hermeneutical principle; anything cutting down the authority of the Gospel is prohibited; confessional subscription will guard us from denying such things as the resurrection; good scholarship is an effective control.<sup>30</sup>

This statement of "Other Positions" says nothing about the historicity of the Scriptures and this is very crucial. It says nothing about inspiration. It says nothing about conflicting theologies. It says nothing about the current obsession with source analysis. But all of these are involved in the current historical-critical method. If it is true that "good scholarship is an effective control," what ails Bultmann, Bornkamm, Marxsen, and Conzelmann?

Carl F. H. Henry sounds this warning:

If evangelical Protestants do not overcome their preoccupation with negative criticism of contemporary theological deviations at the expense of the construction of preferable alternatives to these, they will not be much of a doctrinal force in the decade ahead.<sup>31</sup>

The Missouri Synod has a rich heritage of "preferable alternatives." It should pursue these preferable alternatives with the deepest of humility and the utmost of courage in Jesus Christ and His Word, in a scholarly, vigorous, and alert fashion, but not at the expense of "corrective scholarship" falsely so called.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Norman Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 4.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-13, Summary of Reimarus to Wrede.
3. *Wort und Dienst, Jahrbuch der Theologischen Schule Bethel* NF 1, 1948, pp. 49-54.



4. Joachim Rohde, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 11.
5. Donald Guthrie, *The Gospels and Acts*, New Testament Introduction (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p. 191.
6. *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.
7. Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969).
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
10. *Op. Cit.*, p. 38.
11. *Op. Cit.*, p. 124.
12. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, p. 170.
13. Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit*, (Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1953).
14. Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).
15. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
20. Rohde, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists*, p. 157.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
24. Arthur Lewis Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), pp. 84-88.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
26. Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age According to St. Luke*, (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1972).
27. Guthrie, *Op. Cit.*, p. 191.
28. *Op. Cit.*, p. 51.
29. *Report of the Synodical President to The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, St. Louis, 1972.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
31. Carl F. H. Henry, "Cross-Currents in Contemporary Theology," *Jesus of Nazareth: Saviour and Lord*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), p. 9.