Synoptic studies: some recent methodological developments and debates

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New Testament scholarship continues to overwhelm the student who would keep abreast of its developments, as it deluges him with massive quantities of literature and a bewildering array of methods and tools. Nowhere is this problem so pressing as in the study of the synoptic gospels. This article surveys six popular but often misunderstood modern methodologies and a sampling of the most significant, recent literature in each area.[1] The order of presentation follows roughly the chronological order of the rise and/or popularity of the six disciplines.

1. Source criticism

As recently as 1964, Stephen Neill could write that the synoptic problem was one of the few settled issues of New Testament scholarship.[2] The two-document hypothesis, in which Matthew and Luke independently drew on Mark and Q as their primary sources, commanded virtually unanimous support. B. H. Streeter's more ambitious four-document hypothesis, which added M and L as hypothetical sources for Matthew's and Luke's peculiar material,[3] was less widely held but still considered quite plausible. In that same year, however, William Farmer issued a major challenge to the critical consensus with his detailed attempt to revive the Griesbach hypothesis (named after its stalwart, late eighteenth-century advocate), in which Matthew is seen as the earliest gospel writer, Luke as directly dependent on him, and Mark as the abridger or conflater of the two.[4] Farmer's work gained only a minimal following until the second half of the 1970s, but since then supporters have been emerging from the woodwork in droves, even if they still represent only a vocal minority of scholars worldwide.[5]

Several international colloquia have helped to fuel the recent resurgence of interest in the Griesbach hypothesis.[6] New synopses, in which the gospel parallels are aligned differently from the traditional left-to-right, Matthew-Mark-Luke arrangement, will further this interest,[7] as opponents of the two-document hypothesis argue that readers become unjustifiably prejudiced when they always follow synopses which use Mark as their guide for pericope division and which sandwich the Lucan and Matthean parallels on either side of him.[8] The growing concern to reopen an investigation once thought closed has encouraged others to propose a whole host of different hypotheses, invoking concepts popular a century ago, including proto-gospels,[9] an overarching, primitive *Ur*-gospel,[10] Aramaic gospels later translated into Greek,[11] variants caused by oral tradition,[12] and greater degrees of literary independence.[13] Most of these gain few adherents apart from the students of their creators, but they point to an important insight. The solution to the synoptic problem, by virtue of the complexity of the data and the complexity of the factors involved in the production of any first-century religious or historical documents, is almost certainly very intricate itself, and as a result may well be irrecoverable in many details. Nevertheless, it may still be possible to answer the three main questions to which Streeter's classic theory offered affirmative replies: Did Matthew and Luke use Mark? Did Matthew and Luke use an independent source Q? Are M and L plausible hypotheses?

The cases for and against both Marcan priority and the Q hypothesis are ably laid out in the anthology of classic articles edited by Arthur Bellinzoni.[14] Recent studies increasingly admit that Matthew's use of Mark is not as easily demonstrated as Luke's use of Mark, but this does not necessarily advance the cause of Griesbach; it more naturally suggests the rehabilitation or modification of Augustine's much older view, in which the order of the synoptics matches their order in the canon. The Griesbachians, admittedly, have scored several points; it is now more widely conceded that the argument from order (Matthew and Luke only rarely deviating from Mark in the same way at the same time) could fit in with several different models of synoptic interrelationships,[15] but the view which sees Mark as last has yet to come up with a convincing reason for his omission of all the so-called Q material. Attempts have been made to explain why, on this view, Mark alternated between Matthew and Luke for that material which he did include,[16] but the theological and stylistic features invoked are much more general and less clearly present than the redaction-critical tendencies definable via the two-document hypothesis. Moreover, the type of conflationary process involved – omission of large sections coupled with expansion of detail in passages included – stands on its head the traditional processes of literary abridgment known in antiquity.[17] And attempts to argue that Mark's roughness of style and grammar and potentially misleading historical and theological statements point to his distance from the gospel tradition rather than to his priority[18] make little sense. If Mark did not have Matthew and Luke in front of him, one could plausibly argue this way, but granted a literary interrelationship only a hack writer would replace his otherwise coherent sources with such infelicities.

Significantly, few detailed exegetical or theological studies of major sections of the synoptics have adopted Matthean and/or Lukan priority; it is easier to point out flaws in alternative theories than to make these ones work in practice.

Even a sizeable majority of studies of individual passages continue to find Marcan priority generally adequate. Those which dissent usually point out primitive features in Matthew rather than in Luke.[19] This, coupled with some renewed recognition of the *prima facie* reliability of the ancient patristic testimony, especially that of Papias,[20] may suggest a two-stage composition of the gospel of Matthew, or even of Mark, allowing for cross-fertilization of the two traditions at various stages of the gospels' development.[21] If Marcan priority needs to be modified, cross-fertilization is a more promising model to consider than conflation.

Evidence for Q has always been more ambiguous than that which favours Marcan priority. Much recent literature has been conveniently summarized in brief by H. Bigg and in detail by F. Neirynck.[22] Those who would dispense with Q overwhelmingly favour Luke's use of Matthew rather than vice versa, since primitivity is over-all more defensible for Matthew than for Luke. But attempts to explain Luke's rationale in cutting up Matthew's coherent, extended accounts of Jesus' discourses (Mt. 5 - 7, 10, 13, 18, 23 - 25) fail miserably. No-one has expended as much energy at this task as has Michael Goulder, but with each successive publication he rejects his previous theories in favour of new ones, and most rest on the flimsiest of evidence, so that it is difficult to take them too seriously.[23] On the other hand, noteworthy progress has been made in identifying consistent theological and stylistic features of Q, as traditionally understood, and of proposing plausible, if not demonstrable, *Sitze im Leben* for its formation.[24] It is quite possible that one needs to think of Q in terms of multiple recensions, multiple documents, or the confluence of oral and written traditions, but on the whole Q remains preferable to its competitors.

Even before the reopening of the synoptic problem, M and L remained the shakiest building blocks in the Streeterian edifice. It is almost certainly unreasonable to expect them to be coherent, unified documents, as if Matthew and Luke got all of their information from written sources, and then only from three. Still, meticulous studies of the distinctive language of the peculiarly Lucan material and of the extra-biblical parallels to the peculiarly Matthean material suggest that these two evangelists did rely on some kind of early source material, whether written or oral, for their distinctive elements. Stephen Farris, for example, applies detailed linguistic criteria to argue that Luke 1 - 2 largely comprise 'translation Greek' (from a Semitic source) different from that which characterizes Luke's writing elsewhere.[25] I have suggested reasons for perceiving a parable source on which Luke drew for much of his central section (9:51 - 18:14).[26] Most convincingly of all, Richard Bauckham discerns the use of the traditions behind Matthew's special material by Ignatius and other extra-biblical writers, and concludes that

> since the Apostolic Fathers knew non-Markan traditions in oral form, it is inconceivable that Matthew and Luke should not have done. Christian literature outside the Synoptic Gospels provides so much evidence of independent, varying forms of Synoptic material that the *probability* is in favour of more, not fewer, Synoptic sources.[27]

Clearly the field is wide open for much further study in synoptic source criticism, even if a modified form of Streeter's approach still remains most likely.

2. Form criticism

The long overdue replacement for Rudolf Bultmann's famous text, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition,*[28] may have at last appeared, at least in programmatic form, in Klaus Berger's *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments.*[29] Berger attempts to classify not just the synoptic but all the NT materials according to form, eschewing prejudicial labels such as myth and legend, as well as remote history-of-religions 'parallels', in favour of categories based strictly on generic and rhetorical features common to the biblical texts and other Greek literature of their day. His system of classification is also much more detailed, utilizing post-Bultmannian research to enunciate and subdivide the three main rhetorical divisions of deliberative, epideictic and juridical texts. In an age when many critics have abandoned form-critical questions in favour of one or more of those discussed in the rest of this article, Berger has shown that there is much interpretive benefit to be gained from the careful analysis of a pericope's form.

Wisely, Berger avoids the pitfalls of so many earlier form-critics by not attempting to trace the tradition-history of each form or passage. He readily admits that the two tasks, though related, are separable, and that there is good reason to believe in at least a generally conservative tradition behind the transmission of the Jesus-material. The only criterion of authenticity which he will admit is that of *'wirkungsgeschichtlichen Plausibilität'*[30] (the plausibility of historical results), that is, that which makes the subsequent history of the early church understandable. It is of course this issue of historicity and criteria for authenticity which has exercised so many of the critics of form criticism.[31] The arguments supporting the trustworthiness of the gospel tradition continue to be rehearsed, along with the weaknesses of the critical reconstructions of its tradition history.[32] A few find those weaknesses so severe that they either abandon form criticism altogether or deny that a period of oral transmission of the tradition ever existed.[33] The 'guarded tradition' hypothesis of Riesenfeld and Gerhardsson, which proposed that Jesus taught his disciples in rabbinic fashion to memorize many of his teachings and narratives of his deeds, which were in turn carefully passed along to specifically designated tradents in the early Christian community, remains more defensible.[34] But the value of the rabbinic analogy is somewhat diminished due to its reliance on anachronistic, post-AD 70 parallels and to its failure to account for Jesus' uniqueness and for the differences which still remain among the synoptic parallels.[35]

Two lines of research have quite recently broken this stalemate. On the one hand, a trio of German Ph.D. theses have investigated the nature of pre-70 Jewish and Christian oral tradition and discovered that the Riesenfeld-Gerhardsson model suffers neither from anachronism nor from a failure to acknowledge Jesus' distinctiveness. P.-G. Müller examines ancient oral tradition in the light of modern speech-act theory, A. F. Zimmermann studies the role of the *didaskalos* or 'teacher' in the early church, and Rainer Riesner surveys the role of memorization in almost every form of ancient education, beginning with the most elementary levels.[36] As a result, all three agree that it is virtually inconceivable that Jesus would not have taught his disciples to learn large bodies of material by heart.

By far the most significant of these three theses is Riesner's. In addition to demonstrating the rote nature of elementary

education required of all first-century Jewish boys, Riesner provides five other key reasons why the teaching of and about Jesus would most likely have been preserved quite carefully. (1) Jesus followed the practice of Old Testament prophets by proclaiming the Word of the Lord with the kind of authority that would have commanded respect and concern to safeguard that which was perceived as revelation from God. (2) Jesus' presentation of himself as Messiah, even if in a sometimes veiled way, would reinforce his followers' concern to preserve his words, since one fairly consistent feature in an otherwise diverse body of first-century expectations was that the Messiah would be a teacher of wisdom. (3) The gospels depict Jesus as just such a teacher of wisdom and phrase over 90% of his sayings in forms which would have been easy to remember, using figures and styles of speech much like those found in Hebrew poetry. (4) There are numerous hints and a few concrete examples in the gospels of Jesus commanding the twelve to 'learn' specific lessons and to transmit what they learned to others, even before the end of his earthly ministry. (5) Almost all teachers in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds of that day gathered disciples around them in order to perpetuate their teachings and lifestyle, so however different Jesus was from his contemporaries in other ways, he probably resembled them in this respect.

On the other hand, studies of oral tradition in a variety of modern, pre-literary cultures suggest that memorization in the ancient world did not always mean what it does today. For example, A. B. Lord's pioneering study of a quarter-century ago, only recently noticed by more than a handful of biblical scholars, described certain illiterate Yugoslavian folk singers who had 'memorized' epic narratives of up to 100,000 words in length. The plot, the characters, all the main events and the vast majority of the details stayed the same every time they retold or sang the stories. Members of the community were sufficiently familiar with them to correct the singer if he erred in any significant way. Yet anywhere from 10% to 40% of the precise wording could vary from one performance to the next, quite comparable to the variation found in the synoptic gospels.[37] Lord himself suggests that this model of flexibility in wording, order, inclusion and omission of material may account for many of the variations among synoptic parallels.[38]

Werner Kelber has followed Lord further, noting his disjunction between the fluidity of oral tradition and the fixity of written tradition, and hence rejecting the applicability of the model of 'passive transmission' to the gospels as they now exist, since they clearly drew on written sources.[39] But Kelber overlooks the fact that oral traditions often continued and remained authoritative long after written accounts were produced. Lord specifically cautions that 'the use of writing in setting down oral texts does not *per se* have any effect on oral tradition'.[40] It is only when a community accepts a given written text as normative to the exclusion of all other versions that the oral-written disjunction comes into play. It is not clear that such an acceptance of the gospels as canonical predates the mid-second century. Nevertheless, several of Kelber's emphases about the active involvement of those who handed down the Jesus-tradition, selecting what seemed to them appropriate for a given audience under given social circumstances, may well account for some of the differences among the synoptic parallels.

3. Redaction criticism

Undoubtedly the most thriving discipline in recent years, redaction criticism picks up where form criticism and the study of the transmission of the tradition leave off. It is here that a majority of the differences among gospel parallels is most successfully accounted for. No doubt because they perceive their discipline as neither any more in its infancy nor yet on the wane, current redaction critics write less self-reflectively about their method and busy themselves more with simply analyzing the gospel texts than do practitioners of any of the other criticisms surveyed here.[41]

At the same time, important issues of definition and method require further clarification. Some extreme conservatives, mostly in North America, have rejected redaction criticism outright, often because they believe it necessarily requires an abandonment of belief in the full historicity of the gospels.[42] Such a misunderstanding stems in part from the widespread circulation of introductory texts like that of Norman Perrin, who articulated in great detail a radically sceptical position reflecting the opposite extreme of the theological spectrum.[43] On the other hand, the definition of Richard Soulen's handbook is more widely representative: redaction criticism 'seeks to lay bare the theological perspectives of a biblical writer by analyzing the editorial (redactional) and compositional techniques and interpretations employed by him in shaping and framing the written and/or oral traditions at hand (see Luke 1:1-4)'.[44] The church throughout its history has investigated these questions, even if not under the banner of current terminology or with as much critical introspection.[45] For example, the major evangelical commentaries on the synoptics by D. A. Carson, W. L. Lane and I. H. Marshall all employ redaction criticism to various degrees to yield crucial theological insight into the distinctive emphases of the three gospels without necessarily abandoning belief in their historicity.

Nevertheless, quite often redaction critics still seem needlessly sceptical of the historicity of a given portion of the gospels. This scepticism could be ameliorated if certain common but unwarranted presuppositions not inherent in redaction criticism itself were laid aside. These vitiating presuppositions are not all as well-known as the problems often attaching to form criticism, so they merit brief cataloguing here.[47] (1) Some have assumed that an author's perspective emerges only from a study of how he has edited his sources rather than from a holistic analysis of everything he includes in his work. The former often seems implied, for example in J. A. Fitzmyer's exhaustive commentary on Luke, while the latter, by way of contrast, is the explicit presupposition of C. H. Talbert's more programmatic work on the same gospel.[48] (2) Many commentators treat virtually every pair of passages with any similarity as variants of one original saying or event in Jesus' life. This leads to drastic conclusions about the freedom with which a given evangelist rewrote his sources and overlooks the possibility of apparent parallels not being genuine ones.[49] (3) Drawing conclusions about the nature of the communities which the gospel writers were addressing is a much more subjective process than many critics admit. Meeting a pressing need in his audience is not the only reason an author includes material in his work![50] (4) Many redaction-critical studies build on the unnecessarily sceptical assumptions of more radical form criticism and ignore the positive

results noted above. The two most detailed commentaries on Mark currently available, by R. Pesch and J. Gnilka, exemplify a trend to assign material to a pre-Marcan stage of the tradition without seeming willing to consider that it might also be authentic.[51] While it does not immediately follow that traditional material is historical, the probability of its reliability is at least enhanced.

(5) Some bypass the problem of redaction criticism's labelling certain passages as unhistorical by arguing that the gospel material need not be authentic to be authoritative. This view dominates that branch of redaction criticism known as canon criticism, but is not limited to it, and has infected certain evangelical circles as well.[52] Though well-intentioned, this approach makes Christian belief unfalsifiable and therefore unjustifiable. Had the first Christians adopted it, they would have had no rationale for excluding portions of the apocryphal gospels from the canon. (6) Minor grammatical and syntactical differences between parallels are sometimes invested with deep theological significance when they may only reflect the stylistic preferences of their authors. This is more a problem for specialized studies which have smaller databases with which to work, as for example in the books on the parables by C. E. Carlston and J. Drury.[53] (7) Dictional analysis, the study of the characteristic *versus* the unusual vocabulary of a given evangelist, invariably over-estimates the amount of material which can confidently be identified as redactional or traditional on linguistic and statistical grounds alone.[54] (8) Finally, and most significantly, redaction critics astonishingly continue to equate 'redactional' or 'theological' with 'unhistorical' almost by definition, despite widespread protests against this practice. As already observed, it is quite likely that the gospel writers had access to much information about the life and teaching of Jesus besides their primary written sources.

Despite these eight excesses, redaction criticism remains a valuable tool. Its abuse can be avoided, and, when stripped of the excess baggage it tends to attract, it offers insights into the emphases of the evangelists which make the differences among the gospels more understandable. At times, it can even help clear up knotty problems of harmonization where more traditional methods prove unconvincing.[55]

4. Midrash criticism

Are the gospels midrashic? The answer to this question, which has stirred up much recent controversy, depends largely on one's definition of the term. Midrash, from the Hebrew for 'interpretation', can refer to a wide variety of texts or passages. One fundamental distinction separates midrash as a genre off from midrash as one or more methods of interpretation. As a genre, midrash refers to types of exposition of the Hebrew Scriptures. These divide into three major categories: (a) the targums, (b) the more elaborate 'rewritten Scriptures' such as Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* or pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities,* and (c) the earliest Jewish commentaries beginning in the rabbinic period.[56] As methods of interpreting Scripture, midrash usually encompasses one or more of the ancient lists of hermeneutical rules handed down by the rabbis.[57]

Midrashic methods of interpretation undeniably appear in the gospels, including well-known techniques such as *qal-wa-homer,* arguing from the lesser to the greater (*e.g.* Mt. 7:11), as well as less familiar forms such as the proem or homily called *yelammedenu rabbenu* ('let our master teach us'). The latter involves a dialogue with a question, two or more scriptural quotations or allusions, exposition by means of catchwords or parables, and a concluding allusion to one or more of the initial quotations. This form of interpretation can bring order and unity, for example to the cryptic dialogue in which the parable of the Good Samaritan is embedded (Lk. 10:25-37).[58]

More controversial are those instances where midrash is invoked to explain seemingly illegitimate New Testament exegesis of the Old. A classic example from the gospels arises in Matthew 2:15, quoting Hosea 11:1: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.' Matthew appears to have turned a straightforward historical statement about the exodus into a prophecy of Jesus' flight from Herod. Less conservative scholars may simply argue that the evangelist was creating a typical midrashic play on words, somewhat arbitrarily reading a meaning which the word 'son' can have elsewhere in the OT (*i.e.* Messiah) into a passage where it clearly refers to Israel, even though modern expositors recognize the invalidity of such hermeneutics.[59] More conservative scholars often adopt a similar explanation, but combine it with a belief that the NT writers, because they were inspired, could employ methods which would be inadmissible for any other exegete.[60]

The latter view, though, much like the approach of canon criticism noted earlier, could theoretically be employed to justify any exegesis of Scripture, however fanciful, so long as it was performed by an inspired author. There are numerous other possible explanations for the unusual uses of the OT by the NT that should be tested first before recourse be made to anything so drastic. Some of these include use of a different text-type (non-Masoretic Hebrew, LXX, targums), especially where there is reason to believe the Masoretic text may not be the most reliable;[61] use of a later text-type current in the first century, when the point the writer is making does not depend on the distinctive form of that variant text;[62] typological exegesis (probably the best explanation of Mt. 2:15);[63] use of the word 'fulfil' (*plēroō*) with a broader semantic range than is normal in English;[64] insufficient appreciation of the full meaning of an OT text in its larger context;[65] and possibly even *sensus plenior.*[66]

The other storm-centre of recent midrash criticism revolves around the issue of whether or not an entire main section of the gospels or even a whole gospel is midrashic in genre. Thus Luke has been seen as following a sequence of parallels in the book of Deuteronomy for the outline of his central section, or a series of texts from Kings and Chronicles in the earlier chapters.[67] Even more ambitious is Robert Gundry's notion that Matthew is a midrash on Mark and Q, fictitiously embellishing his two sources with unhistorical material which his audience would have recognized as such due to its peculiar nature.[68]

Here at least two points need to be distinguished. First, to refer to any of these portions of the gospels as midrash is to use the term more broadly than the ancient Jews would have permitted. Strictly speaking, midrash as a genre is limited to obvious paraphrases, elaborations or interpretations of specific OT texts, not just possible, vague parallels which only a minority of commentators perceive.[69] The modern use of

the term midrash to refer to fictitious events set in the era of the gospel writer (*i.e.* portions of the life of Jesus) also stands on its head the typical Jewish usage, in which midrashic writings largely left contemporary events untampered with (not least because they were more easily investigated) but altered the interpretation of the OT narratives and prophecies to make them match current events more closely.[70] Second, regardless of the terminology, it is not clear that most of the authors of these hypotheses have created convincing cases; several thoroughgoing critiques are readily available.[71] Nevertheless, midrash criticism may have occasionally unearthed OT backgrounds for certain individual passages in the gospels,[72] and Gundry's type of hypothesis should at least alert exegetes to an often-overlooked principle: the superficial appearance of a text as a historical narrative offers no guarantee that the author of that narrative was employing an entirely historical genre. Only a detailed study of the text and a wide diversity of possible parallels in other literature of its time can prove decisive.

5. Social-scientific methods

Dissatisfaction with the limitations of the various branches of historical and literary criticism already discussed is leading growing numbers of biblical critics to experiment with methods borrowed from the social sciences. The synoptics, usually in conjunction with larger portions of Scripture, have thus been interpreted through the grids of modern economic,[73] psychological[74] and anthropological theories.[75] By far the most plentiful, however, are sociological studies of the rise of Christianity.[76] These range from fairly traditional studies of the historical beginnings of the Jesus-movement, which merely seek to highlight its social nature in contrast to modern Western Christianity's overemphasis on individualism, all the way to fairly radical revisionist portraits of Jesus and his disciples as wandering, homeless charismatics.[77]

All of these studies provide fresh perspectives on largely overlooked dimensions of the background and meaning of various gospel texts. Equally often, however, the methods employed mask important presuppositions which lead to a reductionistic analysis of the biblical material. One of the most common of these is the antisupernaturalism inherent in much modern social science, but there are important exceptions. Howard C. Kee and Gerd Theissen, for example, have both eschewed the historical questions about 'what happened' in connection with Jesus' miracles in order to concentrate on the functional questions of how these synoptic narratives affected their first audiences and the communities which came to believe in them.[78] The results of such studies may in some cases make the historicity of the miracle stories more defensible; in others they may render such questions irrelevant or suggest that the gospel writers were not intending to write history at all at certain points.[79] Ironically, E. M. Yamauchi points out that even as biblical scholars are at last learning about modern developments in the social sciences, many sociologists are regaining an appreciation for the need to ask the historical questions and are toning down the more radical theories which the New Testament critics are embracing.[80]

6. Other literary criticisms

Other scholars who have been dissatisfied with the questions and answers supplied by the more traditional historical-critical methods have advocated the introduction, and in some cases the substitution, of purely literary-critical issues and tools. In many North American universities one can almost speak of a complete paradigm shift from interest in the gospels as historical documents to interest in them as literary narratives.[81] In the 1960s and '70s this shift often began via a focus on structuralism, broadly defined as a formalist preoccupation with the text apart from questions of historical background, context, or authorial intent. In some instances the rise of 'Bible as literature' courses led to the analysis of scriptural 'surface structures' — identifying the roles of a story's main characters, the plot, tone, theme, motifs — in short the standard type of criticism long since applied to fictitious literature such as novels or short stories. Major works of this kind of 'narrative criticism' applied to the gospels are now at last becoming popular, usually without involving any necessary presumptions for or against historicity. Thus, for example, J. D. Kingsbury distinguishes between the fully developed 'round' characters of Jesus and the disciples in Matthew and the monolithic, 'flat' characters of the Jewish leaders and the crowds in order to highlight the role of conflict in the developing story-line of this gospel.[82] Leland Ryken is one of the few evangelicals who has written extensively on the Bible as literature; and his work deserves far more attention than it has received. No interpreter of the parables, for example, can afford to ignore his refutation of the traditional parable-allegory disjunction.[83]

One specialized branch of formalist literary analysis is rhetorical criticism, in which no-one has excelled as much as George Kennedy. Kennedy's most recent work, for example, includes an analysis of the Sermon on the Mount which perceives in it a logical structure which closely follows the rules for ancient deliberative rhetoric. Knowing that his views fly fully in the face of the critical consensus, Kennedy considers in the light of the practices of ancient rhetoricians that this carefully knit unity might well represent an abbreviated form of a single, original discourse which Jesus spoke, perhaps more than once in varying forms (thus accounting for Luke's Sermon on the Plain):

> Matthew's version might thus represent what was remembered from several occasions and not what Jesus said verbatim at any one delivery, but in the same sense it could represent a relatively full version of what he was remembered as saying at one period of his ministry.[84]

The term structuralism itself is usually reserved for a more esoteric form of study of the 'deep structures' of a text — the underlying and more fundamental features which allegedly form the basis of all narratives, for example, the functions, motives and interaction among the main characters and objects in a narrative and, most notably, the types of oppositions and resolutions that develop as the text unfolds.[85] Not too long ago many initiates into this kind of structuralism were heralding it as the only valid tool for literary analysis, and promoting it as an ideology inherently bound up with dialectic philosophy, determinism and atheism.[86] But while much methodological discussion arose, and numerous sample texts were studied, most notably Jesus' parables, few concrete exegetical insights arose that could not have been gained by other means and by employing more familiar terminology. As a result its popularity has waned. Where it is still promoted, it is usually put forward as one method among

several,[87] and attention has turned somewhat away from the gospels to the writings of Paul, perhaps in hopes of still proving it valuable. Nevertheless one may read with profit Sandra Perpich's largely successful, though obtusely worded, attempt to combine the techniques of structuralism with the best of another nearly defunct movement, the 'new hermeneutic', in exegeting the parable of the Good Samaritan.[88]

Most gospel scholars who keep up with the new literary criticisms, however, have all but abandoned structuralism in favour of the so-called poststructuralist movements. In the last few years a torrent of poststructuralist studies of the gospels has been unleashed and there are no signs of its diminution. Poststructuralism gathers together a loosely connected collection of methods which usually share at least one common belief: the meaning of a text resides neither in the author's intention (as in traditional historical and literary criticism) nor in the text studied autonomously (as in formalism and structuralism) but in the mind of the reader or, most commonly, in the product of the interaction of the text and the reader.[89]

The most avant-garde and abstruse form of poststructuralism calls itself 'deconstruction' and endorses the process of 'generating conflicting meanings from the same text, and playing those meanings against each other'[90] to show how all language ultimately self-destructs or contradicts itself. Its ideological ancestor is a Nietzschean nihilism and its most prolific contemporary spokesman, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida.[91] J. D. Crossan illustrates a kind of deconstruction applied to the gospels when he argues that, although they highlight Jesus' teaching in parables about God, they advocate belief in Jesus as the 'Parable of God' — God's own self-communication. The texts actually undermine the perspectives they assert.[92] Or again, with the parable of the prodigal son, Crossan discovers an allegory about interpretations of the world. The father stands for reality, the older brother for realism in interpretation, and the prodigal for the one who abandons the search for realism. Thus the inversion of the two sons' roles at the end of the parable proves that 'he who finds the meaning loses it, and he who loses it finds it'.[93]

Less esoteric and more widespread is the practice of reader-response criticism, which seeks to assess the meaning of a text for a reader at various stages of the reading process. Instead of focusing only on the text as a whole, it stresses how the reader's perception of meaning changes depending on the amount of a text he has read, and depending on the nature of the sequence of that text's episodes.[94] Robert Fowler, for example, suggests that Mark has created the story of the feeding of the 5,000 (Mk. 6:30-44) on the model of the feeding of the 4,000 (Mk. 8:1-10), and arranged the two accounts in his gospel into a sequence which would highlight the irony of the disciples' failure to understand how Jesus could provide food for the multitudes (Mk. 8:4).[95] Frank Kermode proves less restrained in his reader-response interpretation of the secrecy motif in Mark's gospel. Taking Mark 4:11-12 at face value as a statement of its author's desire to hide the true meaning of the parables, Kermode extrapolates to construct a paradigm for the meaning of the entire gospel which the reader is free to create for himself and which Kermode accomplishes by a sort of 'free-association' with literary parallels as far removed from the world of the gospels as James Joyce's *Ulysses*.[96]

Consistent poststructuralism of course leads to solipsism: one can affirm no objective meaning for one's own work while denying it to everyone else. For Derrida this is no problem: he does not write as if he wishes to be understood! But the majority of less extreme reader-oriented interpreters sooner or later betray this inconsistency. The most helpful are those who eschew both the intentionalist and the affective fallacies but offer a more holistic model, seeking the locus of meaning in a text, but with special attention to the clues that the author has left in the text which disclose his intentions or purposes and which reveal the types of audiences or readers to whom the text was addressed.[97] Anthony Thiselton goes one step further and combines the insights of reader-response criticism with the philosophical school known as 'speech-act theory'. Thus instead of talking about what the text meant *versus* what it means, or about meaning *versus* significance, Thiselton prefers to distinguish the unchanging cognitive truth claim of a passage with the variable action which it generates or accomplishes through its articulation. The reader therefore both does and does not create the meaning of a text, depending on which dimension of meaning is involved. The polyvalent nature of the parables, not surprisingly, has left them as prime candidates for many of the first forays of gospel critics into poststructuralism.[98]

7. Conclusion

Every one of the six disciplines surveyed offers rich rewards for those who will take the time to master them and patiently sift the wheat from the chaff. Each has at times wrongly been put forward as the single most important approach to gospel studies, and all have gained a certain measure of disrepute because of invalid presuppositions, inconsistent applications, or spurious conclusions which can obscure their value. Modern critics must be eclectics, however, drawing widely from wherever historical and exegetical insight may be gained, but scrupulously avoiding too fond an attachment to the latest scholarly fashion. If there is one lesson to be learned from recent criticism, it is that today's assured results do not remain assured for very long, and that specific methods stay in fashion scarcely longer than styles of clothing. But the perplexed student of the gospels profits as little from ignoring all the recent developments of scholarship as from appearing in public in obviously outmoded dress. Successful interaction with the modern world, whether in society or academia, requires awareness of the latest trends and a willingness both to reject that which is bad and to cling fast to that which is good (*cf.* Rom. 12:9).

[1] It should be emphasized that this article is necessarily selective in its coverage of synoptic studies. The focus of the article is on literary and historical questions rather than, for example, on questions of theology and application, important though these are. For another recent 'state of the art' report, focusing solely on questions of prolegomena, source and form criticism, see E. Earle Ellis, 'Gospels Criticism', in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien,* ed. Peter Stuhlmacher (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), pp. 27-54.
[2] Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University, 1964), p. 339.
[3] B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924; New York: Macmillan, 1925).
[4] William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1964).
[5] Most notably Bernard Orchard, *Matthew, Luke, and Mark* (Manchester: Koinonia, 1976); T. R. W. Longstaff, *Evidence of Conflation in Mark?* (Missoula: Scholars, 1977); H.-H. Stoldt, *History*

and Criticism of the Marcan Hypothesis (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Macon: Mercer, 1980).

[6] William O. Walker, Jr. (ed.), *The Relationships among the Gospels* (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1978); Bernard Orchard and T. R. W. Longstaff (eds), *J. J. Griesbach: Synoptic and Text-Critical Studies 1776-1976* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978); William R. Farmer (ed.), *New Synoptic Studies* (Macon: Mercer, 1983); C. M. Tuckett (ed.), *Synoptic Studies* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984).

[7] Bernard Orchard, *A Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (Mercer: Macon, 1982; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983); Robert W. Funk, *New Gospel Parallels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

[8] Bernard Orchard, 'Are All Gospel Synopses Biased?', *TZ* 34 (1978), pp. 149-162; David L. Dungan, 'Theory of Synopsis Construction', *Bib.* 61 (1980), pp. 305-329.

[9] *E.g.* Robert C. Newman, 'The Synoptic Problem: A Proposal for Handling Both Internal and External Evidence', *WTJ* 43 (1980), pp. 132-151; Malcolm Lowe and David Flusser, 'Evidence Corroborating a Modified Proto-Matthean Synoptic Theory', *NTS* 30 (1984), pp. 25-47.

[10] A possible but not necessary implication of David Wenham's provocative reconstruction of a source for Jesus' eschatological discourse which is longer than any of the current synoptic forms and which contains almost all of what they do (*The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1984]. *Cf.*, more generally, Philippe Rolland, 'Les Evangiles des premières communautés chrétiennes', *RB* 90 (1983), pp. 161-201.

[11] Esp. Frank Zimmermann, *The Aramaic Origin of the Four Gospels* (New York: KTAV, 1979).

[12] Esp. Rudolf Laufen, *Die Doppelüberlieferungen der Logienquelle und des Markusevangeliums* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1980); *cf.* more briefly, following targumic analogies, Bruce Chilton, 'Targumic Transmission and Dominical Tradition', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 1, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), pp. 21-45; and *idem*, 'A Comparative Study of Synoptic Development: The Dispute between Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums and the Beelzebul Controversy in the Gospels', *JBL* 101 (1982), pp. 553-562.

[13] *E.g.* J. M. Rist, *On the Independence of Matthew and Mark* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978); Charles H. Dyer, 'Do the Synoptics Depend on Each Other?', *BSac* 138 (1981), pp. 230-245.

[14] Arthur J. Bellinzoni, Jr. (ed.), assisted by Joseph B. Tyson and William O. Walker, Jr., *The Two-Source Hypothesis: A Critical Appraisal* (Macon: Mercer, 1985).

[15] *Cf.* Malcolm Lowe, 'The Demise of Arguments from Order for Markan Priority', *NovT* 24 (1982), pp. 27-36; and C. M. Tuckett, 'Arguments from Order: Definition and Evaluation', in *Synoptic Studies*, pp. 197-219.

[16] *E.g.* W. R. Farmer, 'Modern Developments of Griesbach's Hypothesis', *NTS* 23 (1977), pp. 283-284; T. R. W. Longstaff, 'Crisis and Christology: The Theology of Mark', in *New Synoptic Studies*, pp. 373-392; D. L. Dungan, 'The Purpose and Provenance of the Gospel of Mark according to the Two-Gospel (Owen-Griesbach) Hypothesis', in *ibid.*, pp. 411-440.

[17] C. M. Tuckett, *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis* (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), pp. 41-51; and, as demonstrated even by the most detailed study on behalf of the conflation theory, Longstaff, *Evidence of Conflation*, pp. 10-42. Roland M. Frye, 'The Synoptic Problem and Analogies in Other Literatures', in *The Relationships among the Gospels*, p. 285, finds partial parallels to this phenomenon in medieval western Europe but cites no evidence that such procedures existed in the first-century world of the NT.

[18] *E.g.* Pierson Parker, 'The Posteriority of Mark', in *New Synoptic Studies*, pp. 67-142; William R. Farmer, *Jesus and the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), pp. 111-134.

[19] *E.g.* Lamar Cope, 'The Argument Revolves: The Pivotal Evidence for Markan Priority is Reversing Itself', in *New Synoptic Studies*, pp. 143-159; Phillip Sigal, 'Aspects of Mark Pointing to Matthean Priority', in *ibid.*, pp. 185-208.

[20] *E.g.* A. C. Perumalil, 'Are Not Papias and Irenaeus Competent to Report on the Gospels?', *ExpT* 91 (1980), pp. 332-337; R. Glover, 'Patristic Quotations and Gospel Sources', *NTS* 31 (1985), pp. 234-268; Anthony Meredith, 'The Evidence of Papias for the Priority of Matthew', in *Synoptic Studies*, pp. 187-196.

[21] See esp. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 609-622, a position somewhat in tension with, but more promising than, the midrashic interpretation (see below) which informs the bulk of his commentary.

[22] Howard Bigg, 'The Q Debate since 1955', *Themelios* 6.2 (1981), pp. 18-28; F. Neirynck, 'Recent Developments in the Study of Q', in *Logia*, ed. J. Delobel (Leuven: University Press, 1982), pp. 29-75.

[23] *Cf. e.g.* M. D. Goulder, 'The Chiastic Structure of the Lucan Journey', *TU* 87 (1964), pp. 195-202; *idem, The Evangelists' Calendar* (London: SPCK, 1978), esp. pp. 95-101, 146-155; *idem*, 'The Order of a Crank', in *Synoptic Studies*, pp. 111-130. The only one of these studies which is defended in detail is the second one; for a thoroughgoing refutation of it see Leon Morris, 'The Gospels and the Jewish Lectionaries', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (1983), pp. 129-156; and Craig L. Blomberg, 'Midrash, Chiasmus, and the Outline of Luke's Central Section', in *ibid.*, esp. pp. 229-233.

[24] In addition to the research surveyed in the articles noted above (n. 22), see esp. Arland D. Jacobson, 'The Literary Unity of Q', *JBL* 101 (1982), pp. 365-389; John S. Kloppenborg, 'Tradition and Redaction in the Synoptic Sayings Source', *CBQ* 46 (1984), pp. 34-62; R. Hodgson, 'On the Gattung of Q: A Dialogue with James M. Robinson', *Bib* 66 (1985), pp. 73-95.

[25] Stephen C. Farris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985); but note the cautions in my review of this book in a forthcoming issue of *EQ*.

[26] Blomberg, 'Luke's Central Section', pp. 233-247.

[27] Richard Bauckham, 'The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels: Problems and Prospects', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 5, ed. David Wenham (1985), p. 377; refining the work of J. Smit Sibinga, 'Ignatius and Matthew', *NovT* 8 (1966), pp. 263-283.

[28] Oxford: Blackwell; New York: Harper & Row, 1963 (German orig. 1921).

[29] Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1984.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[31] For an important methodological analysis, see Robert H. Stein, 'The Criteria for Authenticity', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 1, pp. 225-263 (but see n. 52 below). *Cf.* also Stewart C. Goetz and Craig L. Blomberg, 'The Burden of Proof', *JSNT* 11 (1981), pp. 39-63.

[32] Among the more recent and less well-known are René Latourelle, *Finding Jesus through the Gospels* (New York: Alba, 1979), pp 143-198, an unfortunately poor translation of a much better French original; Hugo Staudinger, *The Trustworthiness of the Gospels* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981), esp. pp. 1-33; and Wolfgang Schadewalt, 'Die Zuverlassigkeit der synoptischen Tradition', *ThBeitr* 13 (1982), pp. 201-223.

[33] Thus, respectively, Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Candid Questions concerning Gospel Form Criticism* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979); and Walter Schmithals, 'Kritik der Formkritik', *ZTK* 77 (1980), pp. 149-185.

[34] See, originally, Harald Riesenfeld, 'The Gospel Tradition and Its Beginnings', *TU* 73 (1959), pp. 43-65; and Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Lund: Gleerup, 1961). Gerhardsson has replied to his critics on numerous occasions; see esp. *The Origins of the Gospel Traditions* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

[35] For a critique of and survey of reaction to this 'Scandinavian school', see Peter H. Davids, 'The Gospels and Jewish Tradition: Twenty Years after Gerhardsson', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 1, pp. 75-99.

[36] P.-G. Müller, *Der Traditionsprozess im Neuen Testament* (Freiburg: Herder, 1982); A. F. Zimmermann, *Die urchristlichen Lehrer* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984); Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981).

[37] Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1960). *Cf.* the studies of native African oral tradition by Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study of Historical Methodology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Chicago: Aldine, 1965).

[38] Albert B. Lord, 'The Gospels as Oral Traditional Literature', in *The Relationships among the Gospels*, pp. 33-91.

[39] Werner Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), drawing heavily on the work of Walter J. Ong. Ong's

work is nicely summarized in his *Orality and Literacy* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

[40] Lord, *Singer of Tales*, p. 128.

[41] Current research into the theologies of the individual evangelists is thoroughly surveyed in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. W. Hasse and H. Temporini, series 2, vol. 25.3 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1985), pp. 1889-1951, 1969-2035, 2258-2328. A forthcoming issue of *Themelios* will also be surveying this research, so attention here is restricted to questions of method.

[42] The debate is well chronicled in D. L. Turner, 'Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism and the Current Inerrancy Crisis', *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (1983), pp. 263-288; and *idem*, 'Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism and Inerrancy: The Debate Continues', *GTJ* 5 (1984), pp. 37-45.

[43] Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969; London: SPCK, 1970).

[44] Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Guildford: Lutterworth; Richmond: John Knox, 1977), p. 142.

[45] Moisés Silva, 'Ned B. Stonehouse and Redaction Criticism', *WTJ* 40 (1977-8), pp. 77-88, 281-303, for example, demonstrates how a prominent American evangelical scholar in the 1940s anticipated the questions of German scholarship of a decade later and had already dealt with them in a constructive but conservative fashion. Had his work been given more notice by both fundamentalists and radicals, some of the polarization of more recent years might have been reduced.

[46] D. A. Carson, 'Matthew', in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), pp. 1-599; William L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1975); I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

[47] For a more thorough critique see esp. D. A. Carson, 'Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool', in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Leicester: IVP, 1983), pp. 119-142.

[48] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2 vols (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981-5); Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

[49] The most extreme example is Gundry, *Matthew*, but *cf.* also Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Oxford: Blackwell; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981). Of course conservatives have often overestimated the number of problems that can be resolved by appealing to the repetition of sayings or events in Jesus' life. For one small sample set of passages, I have proposed a mediating and more objective approach; see Craig L. Blomberg, 'When Is a Parallel Really a Parallel? A Test Case: The Lucan Parables?', *WTJ* 46 (1984), pp. 78-103.

[50] Among the more balanced recent assessments of the purposes of Matthew, Mark and Luke and the needs of the communities to which they wrote are G. N. Stanton, 'The Gospel of Matthew and Judaism', *BJRL* 66 (1984), pp. 264-284; Ernest Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983), pp. 21-36; Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982); though none of these is willing to accept the traditional authors and dates for the synoptics.

[51] Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 2 vols (Freiburg: Herder, 1976-7); Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 2 vols (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener; Zurich: Benziger, 1978-9).

[52] From the perspective of canon criticism, see esp. Brevard Childs, *The New Testament Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster; London: SCM, 1984); from an evangelical perspective, *cf.* Stein, ' "Criteria" for Authenticity', p. 229.

[53] Charles E. Carlston, *The Parables of the Triple Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); and John Drury, *The Parables in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1985).

[54] *E.g.* Joachim Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); E. J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978); and Gundry, *Matthew*. More briefly, *cf.* even Bruce D. Chilton, 'An Evangelical and Critical Approach to the Sayings of Jesus', *Themelios* 3.3 (1978), pp. 78-85.

[55] For examples, see Craig L. Blomberg, 'The Legitimacy and Limits of Harmonization', in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Leicester: IVP, 1986), pp. 139-174.

[56] R. T. France, 'Jewish Historiography, Midrash, and the Gospels', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, pp. 99-127. *Cf.* Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), pp. 5-78.

[57] *Cf.* Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 19-50; with Jacob Neusner, *Midrash in Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

[58] E. E. Ellis, 'How the New Testament Uses the Old', in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 205-206.

[59] A remarkably comprehensive catalogue of allegedly midrashic uses of the OT in the NT, including this one, appears in Alejandro Diez-Macho, 'Derás y exégesis del Nuevo Testamento', *Sefarad* 35 (1975), pp. 37-89.

[60] *E.g.* Richard N. Longenecker, 'Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?', *TynB* 21 (1970), pp. 3-38.

[61] See esp. Moisés Silva, 'The New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Text Form and Authority', in *Scripture and Truth*, pp. 147-165.

[62] See esp. Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986).

[63] On typology, *cf.* Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); and Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1981).

[64] Editor's note to R. Schippers, ' $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\delta\omega$ ', in *NIDNTT*, vol. 1, p. 737. *Cf.* Brevard S. Childs, 'Prophecy and Fulfillment', *Int* 12 (1958), p. 267.

[65] The hallmark of Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), pp. 51-52, but he appeals to this type of explanation too often and too monolithically.

[66] See esp. Douglas J. Moo, 'The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*', in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, pp. 179-211; most defences of this theory are less nuanced or convincing.

[67] On the former, originally C. F. Evans, 'The Central Section of St. Luke's Gospel', in *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), pp. 37-53; and more recently elaborated in John Drury, *Tradition and Design in Luke's Gospel* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976); on the latter, *cf.* L. T. Brodie, 'A New Temple and a New Law: The Unity and Chronicler-Based Nature of Luke 1:1 - 4:22a', *JSNT* 5 (1979), pp. 21-45; *idem*, 'Towards Unravelling Luke's Use of the Old Testament: Luke 7:11-17 as an *Imitatio* of 1 Kings 17:17-24', *NTS* 32 (1986), pp. 247-267.

[68] In addition to his commentary (see n. 21), *cf.* his four short clarificatory articles in debating Norman L. Geisler and Douglas J. Moo in *JETS* 26 (1983), pp. 41-56, 71-86, 95-100, 109-115, and his reply to Julius Scott in 'On Interpreting Matthew's Editorial Comments', *WTJ* 47 (1985), pp. 319-328.

[69] See esp. Gary G. Porton, 'Midrash: Palestinian Jews and the Hebrew Bible in the Greco-Roman Period', in *Aufstieg und Niedergang*, series 2, vol. 19.2 (1979), pp. 103-138; *idem*, *Understanding Rabbinic Midrash* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1985); and Renée Bloch, 'Midrash', in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, ed. William S. Green (Missoula: Scholars, 1978), pp. 29-50.

[70] F. F. Bruce, 'Biblical Exposition at Qumran', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, p. 87. *Cf.* F. G. Downing, 'Redaction Criticism: Josephus' *Antiquities* and the Synoptic Gospels (I)', *JSNT* 8 (1980), pp. 46-65; and Richard Bauckham, 'The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum of Pseudo-Philo and the Gospels as "Midrash" ', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, pp. 33-76.

[71] *E.g.* Philip S. Alexander, 'Midrash and the Gospels', in *Synoptic Studies*, pp. 1-18; Philip B. Payne, 'Midrash and History in the Gospels with Special Reference to R. H. Gundry's *Matthew*' in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 3, pp. 177-215.

[72] Here no-one has been as prolific as J. D. M. Derrett (*Law in the New Testament* [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970]; *Studies in the New Testament*, 4 vols [Leiden: Brill, 1977-86]); while a number of his proposals rely on very tenuous suggestions concerning OT background to the NT, several others are reasonable and may shed light on some of the more puzzling teachings of Jesus.

[73] Most celebrated is Fernando Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981); revised and popularized by

Michel Clévenot, *Materialist Approaches to the Bible* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985).

[74] See esp. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1981; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Wayne G. Rollins, *Jung and the Bible* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983).

[75] Esp. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981; London: SCM, 1983).

[76] Well surveyed by Derek Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983 [= *The Social Context of the New Testament: A Sociological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984)]); and E. M. Yamauchi, 'Sociology, Scripture and the Supernatural', *JETS* 27 (1984), pp. 169-192.

[77] See *e.g.*, respectively, Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress; New York: Paulist, 1984); and Gerd Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus* (London: SCM [= *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress)], 1978).

[78] Howard C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1983); Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

[79] For elaboration, see Craig L. Blomberg, 'New Testament Miracles and Higher Criticism: Climbing Up the Slippery Slope', *JETS* 27 (1984), esp. pp. 434-436.

[80] Yamauchi, 'Sociology', p. 188.

[81] For overviews of these movements, see esp. Norman Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); and E. V. McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

[82] Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). For works of a similar genre, see R. A. Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story*.

[83] Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), pp. 199-203. Over-all this book is a reworking and simplification of *idem, The Literature of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974).

[84] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1984), p. 68.

[85] See esp. Daniel Patte, *What is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976). *Cf.*, more briefly, Carl Armerding, 'Structural Analysis', *Themelios* 4.3 (1979), pp. 96-104; and A. C. Thiselton, 'Structuralism and Biblical Studies: Method or Ideology?', *ExpT* 89 (1978), pp. 329-335.

[86] As pointed out by Robert Detweiler, 'After the New Criticism: Contemporary Methods of Literary Interpretation', in *Orientation by Disorientation,* ed. Richard A. Spencer (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1980),

p. 13. *Cf.* Vern Poythress, 'Philosophical Roots of Phenomenological and Structuralist Literary Criticism', *WTJ* 41 (1978), p. 166.

[87] See esp. Raymond F. Collins, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Garden City: Doubleday; London: SCM, 1983), pp. 231-271; Elizabeth S. Malbon, 'Structuralism, Hermeneutics, and Contextual Meaning', *JAAR* 51 (1983), pp. 207-230; Brian Kovacs (ed.), 'A Joint Paper by the Members of the Structuralism and Exegesis SBL Seminar', in *SBL 1982 Seminar Papers,* ed. Kent H. Richards (Chico: Scholars, 1982), pp. 251-270.

[88] Sandra W. Perpich, *A Hermeneutic Critique of Structuralist Exegesis, with Special Reference to Luke 10:29-37* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

[89] James L. Resseguie, 'Reader-Response Criticism and the Synoptic Gospels', *JAAR* 52 (1984), p. 322. *Cf.* D. S. Greenwood, 'Poststructuralism and Biblical Studies: Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy',* in *Gospel Perspectives,* vol. 3, pp. 263-288.

[90] T. K. Seung, *Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (New York: Columbia University, 1982), p. 271. As with structuralism, simple introductions are hard to find, and the nature of the movements being described has much to do with this. But two valiant attempts are Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983); and Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

[91] For a sampling of Derrida's own writing, along with sympathetic critiques and applications to NT texts, see the entire issue of *Semeia* 23 (1982).

[92] J. D. Crossan, *The Dark Interval* (Niles, IL and Harlow: Argus Communications, 1975).

[93] *Idem, Cliffs of Fall: Paradox and Polyvalence in the Parables of Jesus* (New York: Seabury, 1980), p. 101. For a survey and critique of Crossan's works, see Frank B. Brown and Elizabeth S. Malbon, 'Parables as a *Via Negativa:* A Critical Review of the Work of John Dominic Crossan', *JR* 64 (1984), pp. 530-538.

[94] At length, *cf.* Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard, 1980); more briefly, Robert M. Fowler, 'Who Is "The Reader" in Reader-Response Criticism?', *Semeia* 31 (1985), pp. 5-23.

[95] *Idem, Loaves and Fishes* (Chico: Scholars, 1980).

[96] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard, 1979). The gospel of Mark has so far proved most conducive to reader-response criticism, with its abrupt transitions, apparent doublets, intercalations and uncertain ending.

[97] See esp. Norman R. Petersen, 'The Reader in the Gospel', *Neotestamentica* 18 (1984), pp. 38-51; H. Frankemölle, 'Kommunikatives Handeln in Gleichnissen Jesu', *NTS* 28 (1982), pp. 61-90.

[98] Anthony C. Thiselton, 'Reader-Response Hermeneutics, Action Models, and the Parables of Jesus', in *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics,* with Roger Lundin and Clarence Walhout (Exeter: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 79-113.