

Appendix II to Lecture Part II:

19th century Quest for historical Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels

by

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I. Summary of the quest

1. Background:

A. The Rise of the Historical Criticism

Enlightenment view of history, "What actually happened"

B. Deism, an attempt to have a rationalistic "understandable" and "explainable" Christianity.

1) Reason over Faith

"Reason is the source of truth and the sole criterion of truth"

2) Tenets of Deism

a. One supreme God who is to be worshipped.

b. The Immortality of the soul

century Definition/Purpose of religion

Virtue and morality are the sum and substance of religion.

d. No Supernatural

Excludes the supernatural and the particulars about Christ that which cannot be attributed to a normal man.

e. Only Christ's Teachings are seen as important and not his person.

C. One Driving Motive: To recover the humanity of Jesus relevant to the present.

It was felt that the "Byzantine Christ" or the Christ of the creeds had become distant from humankind and therefore distant from the needs of human kind.

2. Beginning: 1774-1778

when the poet Lessing published posthumously the lecture note of Reimarus (1694-1768) "*Wolfenbittel* Fragments"

A. His arguments

1) Fundamental Discontinuity

Challenged the traditional portrait of Jesus found in the NT and the church: Gospels were not historical.

a. Difference between the Historical Jesus and Jesus in the gospels

b. Political Jesus: Blamed the Disciples

Historical Jesus: "an unsuccessful political messianic pretender"

- a) For Reimarus, Jesus has never made any messianic claim, never instituted any sacraments, never predicted his death nor rose from the dead.
- b) Disciples: Disappointed charlatans who invented the early Christian faith rather than go back to working for a living after the debacle of the crucifixion.

2) Creative elements in the tradition

a. Miracles

Presupposition: The miraculous is impossible.

b. Fulfillment of prophecies etc.

Presupposition: The true long-term prediction is impossible.

B. Raised the question, "What was Jesus of Nazareth really like?"

The Quest to find the "real" Jesus arose.

3. Rationalism as the Dominant methodology (early 19th century)

A. Schleiermacher:

1) Rationalist view but with a deeper religious feeling

2) Historicity of John but not the Synoptics

B. Paulus (1761-1854):

Attempt to unite the historical Jesus with the rational Christianity.

1) Rational explanation of the miracle stories.

a. Understand the Bible in its own historical context

b. Trance theory of resurrection

2) Emphasis upon continuity (Reimarus, Discontinuity)

3) Emphasis upon the Ethical Jesus (Reimarus, Political Jesus)

Reimarus' Jesus failed but Paulus' Jesus succeeded to be the example of righteousness which he sought to be.

C. Von Hase

1829 "Life of Jesus for students"

1) The theory of change: Change in the perception of Jesus himself: Turning point at Caesaria Philippi (Mk 8:27-33)

a. First: The coming kingdom in political and messianic terms

b. Later: He taught a more spiritual view of the kingdom which the disciples largely failed to understand.

2) Inference:

Apocalyptic outlook of earliest Christianity is mistaken, much of the material in the Synoptic gospels has been wrongly apocalypticised, and only the Gospel of John has preserved the real teaching.

4. Major turning point: New Approach

Strauss (1835, The Life of Jesus Critically Examined)

A. Point out the futility of the rationalistic approach.

1) Miracles: Myths
The miraculous in the Gospels was to be understood as non-historical myth.

2) Gospels: Un-historical
Narratives are not historical, nor is the residue after eliminating the miraculous historical.

3) Christ Myth
Projections of faith, the clothing of religious ideas in historical garb. Strauss was a rationalist and historicist influenced by Hegel and F.C. Baur.

B. Radical discontinuity

We don't know Jesus through the scripture and yet the power of his personality is still felt.

5. Liberal interpretation of the life of Jesus:

A. E. Renan: A French theologian (novelist?)

Phenomenal success of the rationalist and romantic life of Jesus (1863).

B. Harnack, Kernel and Husk Approach

1) Elimination of husk

Minimized and neglected the miraculous dimension of the Gospels and viewed it as "husk" which had to be eliminated in order to concentrate on the teachings of Jesus.

2) Kernel: Enlightenment idea of humanism

Liberal doctrines of the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the infinite value of the human soul.

6. Death of the quest: Several reasons

A. Albert Schweitzer, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus": All subjective

Realization that the liberal Jesus never existed but was simply a creation of liberal wishfulness.

* Three major crises in which critical study was faced with a choice between stark alternatives:

a. Crisis provoked by Strauss

Either a purely historical Jesus or a purely supernatural one

b. Crisis provoked by the Tübingen school and Holtzman

Either the Synoptic gospels or John

c. Choice between Wrede and Schweitzer himself

Either an eschatological or a non-eschatological Jesus

B. William Wrede and the form critics: Where to find him?

Realization that the Gospels were not the simple objective biographies which could easily be mined for the historical information.

* Wrede, "The Messianic Secret in the Gospels"

Mark: Not as an objective reporter but as the theologian of the Messianic secret

Challenged the prevailing assumption on which the liberal picture of the historical Jesus was based, viz., that Mark's gospel was an unadorned account of the historical facts.

C. 1896 Martin Kaehler, "So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ"

Realization that the object of faith for the church throughout the centuries had never been the historical Jesus of theological liberalism but the Christ of faith, i.e., the supernatural Christ proclaimed in the Scriptures.

7. Quest dormant: during the period between the two WW
Disinterest and doubt as to its possibility

8. New Quest: 1953 Instigated by Ernst Kaesemann

A. Necessity to establish a continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith.

Kaesemann feared that the discontinuity in both theory and practice was very much like the early docetic heresy, which denied the humanity of the Son of God.

B. Availability of some historical data

The present historical skepticism about the historical Jesus was unwarranted because some historical data were available and undeniable.

C. Results: Somewhat disappointing

Enthusiasm that greeted it can be said, for the most part, to have disappeared.

9. Rudolph Bultman (1884-1976)

A. Demythologization:

1) Similar as Harnack's kernel and husk approach

Remove all the myths.

The Jesus found in the gospels was the Jesus of the gospel writers and no historical foundation may be sought in the gospels.

2) Thus, his approach is actually anachronistic.

B. His historical Jesus: Fit to his Existential theology.

10. Future of the Quest

A. Major problem: Definition of the term "historical"

1) Critical Circle: "the product of the historical-critical method"

Their world-view: Closed continuum of time of space in which divine intervention, such as the miraculous, cannot intrude. --> No continuity between the supernatural Christ and the Jesus of history, who by such definition cannot be supernatural.

2) If "historical" means non-supernatural, there can never be a real continuity between the two Jesus.

B. Need for the historical-critical method to assume an openness to transcendence, i.e., openness to the possibility of the miraculous.

II. Relationship with the origin, date, literary relationships of the Synoptic gospels

1. Relationship

A. Consensus of orthodoxy: Negation of contradiction: Continuity

Consensus of orthodoxy had been that any contradiction were only apparent, and due to our inadequate understanding. All such contradictions were capable of being harmonized.

B. Kernel and husk approach: Where and how to find the kernel?

1) Process of finding the historical Jesus: Identification of the kernel of the gospel.

a. Deism and the Study of the life of Jesus: 19th century

Study of the life of Jesus became a central issue in the 19th c as a result of the Deist assault on revealed religion and the rise of historical criticism.

b. Tool: Historical-Critical methods

When the historical-critical methods were applied to the NT, the process became one of stripping away the traditions of the early church and getting to the kernel of the gospel. This is where the impact of the quest for the historical Jesus was felt in the relation of the origin, dates and literary relationships of the synoptic gospels.

2) Historical-critical method

a. Assumption: Tradition <--- Historical Primary Data

It was assumed that these traditions were built up around some historical primary data.

b. Synoptic Problem

In seeking to identify this kernel, the question naturally arose as to what the relationship the Synoptics bore to this core of tradition and to each other. In addition, the activity of comparing the Synoptics gave rise to the natural question of the similarities and dissimilarities they bore with one another.

3) Parallels and Dependency: Dating

The extent of parallels of the three Synoptics eventually raised this question. Were any of them dependent upon each other? If not, what was their common source? If so, which one is the *vorlage*? This last question, of course, relates to the respective dates of the gospels.

2. General critical theories in early 19th century

A. Basic trend: *Ur-gospel*

Sought to identify a common *Ur-gospel*, probably in Aramaic, upon which the Synoptics were based. Direct literary dependence of one or two of the Synoptics upon the third was not yet posited.

B. Scholars:

1) Griesbach, "Synopsis of the Greek text"

a. Priority of Matthew: According to the tradition
Eyewitness accounts of the apostle Matthew

b. His theory

Matthew

Luke

Mark

c. Absence of the teaching of Jesus in Mark

Mark deliberately omitted them for the sake of a shorter narrative.

2) Lessing's Aramaic gospel theory

a. Aramaic Matthew-->all three gospels were based on it independently.

b. Synoptic writers: Editors reworking this original gospel for the benefit of their Greek-speaking communities.

3) F. G. Eichhorn

a. Approved Lessing's Aramaic gospel theory

b. Anticipation of the Q hypothesis

Added a new and valuable observation that there must be a separate source or sources of sayings of Jesus, used by Matthew and Luke, but not by Mark.

4) J. G. Herder

a. 1797-7 Modified Lessing's view: The underlying source was not a written gospel but a relatively fixed oral tradition, which has been most faithfully reproduced by Mark.

b. Attention to the literary character of the gospels

a) Matthew adapted the tradition to show Jesus as the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies for the sake of a Jewish readership.

b) Luke presented it in a form adapted to the needs of a Hellenistic audience.

3. Markan Hypothesis: Immediate Result of Strauss' Work

A. Liberal scholars' dilemma

in their Search of the Historical Jesus

1) Felt the force of Strauss' argumentation: the gospel narratives were to a large extent the products of myth.

2) Unprepared to abandon the idea of knowing Jesus "as he actually was" and settle for a Christ myth.

B. Seized upon the newly developed the literary-critical insight Markan hypothesis

1) View: Mark was the earliest Gospel and a source used by Matthew and Luke.

2) Scholars:

Lachman (1835), Wilke and Weisse (both 1838) reached climax in 1863 with Holtzmann's *Die Synoptischen Evangelien*.

a. 1835 K. Lachmann

Mark follows most closely the original gospel used by all three.

b. 1838 C. G. Wilke

a) Possibility of dependence of Matthew and Luke upon Mark itself.

b) Hint: No necessity of postulating *Ur-gospel*

c. 1838 C. H. Weisse: Two source hypothesis

a) Primitive character of Mark: Greek style, Aramaisms, etc.

Matthew and Luke both abbreviate Mark, improving the Greek style and dropping Aramaic words which Mark occasionally includes.

b) Another sayings source

Matthew and Luke agree together when they are following Mark's words, but hardly ever agree together when they depart from his words.

If Mark is a major source for Matthew and Luke, it is also necessary to postulate a sayings source to account for the rest of their common material.

d. 1863 Holtzman: Theory of Q

a) Q: Common to Matthew and Luke but not in Mark

who gives relatively little of Jesus' teaching.

3) Working hypothesis:

It gradually became a working hypothesis, if not an accepted canon, of Life of Jesus research that Mark is:

a. Earliest and closest to the original eyewitnesses.

b. Historical source for knowledge of the ministry of Jesus.

4) Evidences

a. Lack of Theological Concern

Comparatively free from theological conceptions that influenced Matthew and Luke, the later productions.

b. Style

Vivid simplicity as the most direct representative of the first evangelic tradition. (Westcott)

5) Total Shift (end 19th century): Matthew & John --> Mark

a. Earlier: Traditional views: Reliance upon Matthew and John as the work of the apostles

a) Apostolic authorship and priority of Matthew

b) Apostolic authorship and reliable chronological framework of John.

b. Now: Reliance upon Mark, the Gospel with the historical order and the realistic narratives.

a) Discounted the historicity of John

b) Favored a two-source theory (Mark and Q) as the substratum for recovering the historical Jesus.

c) Discount the miraculous and supernatural

-->Result: A portrait of Jesus which followed Mark's general outline but focused on his moral, altruistic teaching.

Appendix III to Part II:
Form criticism and Redaction criticism

1. Origins:
Predecessors, Inception, and Leading Proponents

A. Timing

Both paralleled one another in their development
Both were inaugurated after inactivity of WWII.

B. Background of Form Criticism

1) 19th century Quest for the historical Jesus created a chasm between Jesus and the gospels.

a. Discontinuity

The Gospels tell about the church's thoughts, not about Jesus.

b. Failure of the source criticism

The source criticism could not get behind Mark and Q: 20-30 years gap.

2) Wrede: Attack against Mark

Even Mark, the oldest gospel, is not without a theological bias, thus opening the way for both Form Criticism and Redaction Criticism.

3) Gunkel and Wellhausen: Applied Form Criticism to the OT

4) Wellhausen: Turned to the NT and developed the three axioms for Form Criticism.

a. The material for the gospels originated as oral tradition in small units.

b. It was brought together in various ways.

c. From this, we can gather information about the early church as well as about Jesus.

5) By 1920, Schmidt, Dibelius and Bultmann applied Form Criticism to the NT

6) Dibelius and Bultmann: Different process

a. Constructive Approach

Dibelius started with the setting in the early church and traced it back to the gospel itself.

b. Analytical Approach

Bultmann started with the text as we have it, and traced the prior traditions.

C. Background of Redaction Criticism

1) Bornkamm:

1948, wrote an article on Matthew's reordering of Mark's material.

2) Conzelmann

Like Wrede against Mark, Conzelmann argued that Luke was a theologian not an historian.

a. The delay of the parousia led Luke to replace the imminent eschatology of Mark.

b. Luke considered the kingdom timeless, no longer focusing on the parousia.

3) Marxsen

a. Coined the term "*Redaktionsgeschichte*" in 1956.

b. Individual redactor

a) Noted anti-individualistic sociological theories do not explain the redaction, which counteracts the fragmentation expected in anonymous transmission of material.

b) It "cannot be explained without taking into account an individual, an author personally who pursues a definite goal with his work." i.e., a community does not write a gospel, an author does.

2. Comparison

A. Goal

1) Form Criticism:

Concerned with breaking down gospels into smaller units and asks about the origin of the units.

a. Get behind the sources (Source Criticism) and describe how the oral sources ("tradition") were affected as they were handed down.

b. Especially, how the church, Jewish and Gentile, affected the tradition--What they creatively added to what Jesus actually taught.

c. Then, reverse the process.

2) Redaction Criticism:

Looks at the larger units and the whole and asks about the purpose of the formation of the larger units. (Marxsen)

a. To understand why the items from the tradition were modified and connected as they were.

b. Identify the theological motifs at work in the composition.

c. Identify the theological point of view of the author.

B. Method: Based upon Mark

1) Comment:

a. Both are historically oriented (diachronic).

b. Marxsen

a) Form Criticism cannot explain Mark's creation of a new form: Gospel, and how Matthew and Luke make use of Mark's idea.

b) Against Form Criticism's two, Redaction Criticism has three

Sitz im Leben:

1. Life of Jesus

2. Life and the work of the church
3. Work and purpose of the evangelist

2) Form Criticism

a. Identify individual units: the stories and sayings--e.g., Mk 2:18-20 (Why don't fast?)

b. Classify each unit according to its form (McKnight counters that "mixed" forms are possible.).

a) Classes

Pronouncement stories, parables, speeches, miracle stories.

b) Sub-classes

Sayings (Matthew 5:17, 18, 20): "I have come" saying, "amen" saying, entrance saying.

e.g., Mk 2:18-20 is a narrative, including a saying of Jesus posed as a question.

c. Identify the one *Sitz im Leben* in the early church of that form.

e.g. Mk 2:20 teaches that fasting is based on Jesus' death--the narrative and the question are from Jesus' own day.

d. Reconstruct the history of the tradition, i.e., the analysis of the change during the transmission.

a) Rules of change in transmission

1. Tendency to expand

2. To elaborate and clarify details

3. To reduce semitisms

b) Criteria (4) To assess the authenticity of what is said about

Jesus

Criterion of dissimilarity (since Strauss, Busset): Jesus' authentic words are those that are dissimilar to the OT, and not needful for the early church.

e.g. Mk 2:18-19a is Jewish (fasting, a wedding feast), but modified with joy in the presence rather than waiting for the future (Mark's imminent eschatology). Yet, there is no faith in Jesus' resurrection in it, nor an interpretation of Jesus' mission that arose in turn (Mark's messianic secret). Thus, 18-19a comes from Jesus; Mk 2:20 ("the day will come...") is an expansion added by the church.

3) Redaction Criticism

a. Start with Source Criticism and Form Criticism (use a Synopsis).

a) Note: Redaction Criticism works better for Matthew and Luke than Mark, since Mark is the original against which change can be seen.

b) Marxsen says to note the altered points of view of Matthew and Luke in order to see what is typical of Mark.

c) Also, Form Criticism offers suggestions on how to recover the history of the sources of Mark.

b. Look at the process of formation of the final product; the interaction between an inherited tradition and a later interpretive point of view.

a) Ask why the changes were made in each pericope; redactional or stylistic?

b) Seek patterns in the changes and in the selection of material that may indicate the theological point of view of the whole book (this is a circular process and continues).

e.g. Mark

1. Emphasizes Jesus' death

2. Has the theme of discipleship failure (Mk 4:38, 40). Note the "hardened heart" passages, and the contrast between the passion predictions and the failure.

3. Imminent eschatology

4. Messianic secret

c) Note carefully what the author writes in the seams

e.g. the concluding observation in 3:6.

d) Note the significance of emphasis, or arrangement of materials.

e.g. Note that in Mk 2:1-3:6 several stories of conflict with authorities have been arranged together, ending with Mk's concluding statement that the Pharisees began plotting to kill. We cannot understand why anyone else would group these stories together and add that seam, but we can understand why Mark would: Jesus' death was an important theme for him.

c. Consider the church setting that led to these changes.

C. Presuppositions

1) Both: Markan priority

	Form Criticism	Redaction Criticism
Evangelist	Collector of traditions	Author

2) Form Criticism

a. Oral tradition

a) There was a period of oral tradition before things were written down.

b) Material originally circulated in small units (Dodd challenged this.).

c) Close parallels can be found in ancient European cultures.

d) Like those, the gospels are not historically accurate.

e) The original units can be recovered through above "rules" and "criteria."

f) Each unit had one function in the Sitz of the church, in the life, worship, preaching, apologetics (Dibelius saw only preaching). This is the reason for their preservation (e.g., Mk 2:18-20 against fasting).

g) The smallest units have definite forms which can be defined and studied. Each units have definite function.

Opposition (McKnight): It is illogical to say that the form determines its context--that something with an apologetic context could not have arisen in the life of Jesus.

h) The main purpose of these forms was the church, not the life of Jesus

b. The community created the gospels.

Opposition(McKnight): McKnight notes that the presence of apostles and eyewitnesses would have curtailed the creative activity of the church. Jesus' method of teaching emphasized memorization, not creativity. Note also that this denigrates the input of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, as well as the eyewitnesses; Dodd: cf. Acts 10:37-43 "You know..."

c. The creative influence of the community can be recognized according to certain formal characteristics.

d. Each "writer" had a theological purpose which overshadowed historical accuracy. e.g., Mark's eschatological emphasis.

3) Redaction Criticism

a. Shares most of the Form Criticism above.

a) Note the greater reliance on the presupposition that the evangelists were creative.

b) Note again the assumption that the motive of the writer can be discerned, and that the meaning resides in this.

c) The assumption of Markan priority is held dogmatically.

b. "Community" does not explain it. There was an individual writer.