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WHAT ABOUT  
THE NEW TESTAMENT?

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*Essays in Honour of  
Christopher Evans*

EDITED BY  
MORNA HOOKER AND  
COLIN HICKLING

SCM PRESS LTD  
LONDON

334 01774 2  
First published 1975  
by SCM Press Ltd  
56 Bloomsbury Street, London  
© SCM Press Ltd 1975  
Printed in Great Britain by  
Western Printing Services Ltd  
Bristol

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### *Form Criticism Revisited*

GRAHAM STANTON

FORM CRITICISM of the gospels is a stagnant discipline. This is a disturbing situation. For it quickly leads to a quite unwarranted confidence that this method of gospel criticism is not only asking the right questions of the text but is producing valid answers. The implications of form criticism have been discussed often enough in recent decades. Although numerous scholars, especially in the English-speaking world, have rejected the more radical conclusions of some form critics, most have accepted without critical discussion the main principles of form criticism. But a counsel of moderation is not enough: nearly all aspects of form criticism are overdue for serious reconsideration.<sup>1</sup>

Biblical scholars are well aware that interpretation has been and is deeply influenced by doctrinal and philosophical presuppositions. But it is all too easy to behold the speck in the eye of Augustine, Luther, Calvin or Barth, and to neglect the log in one's own eye; presuppositions cannot be dispensed with, but they must be constantly overhauled. The scholar's *methods* are also his presuppositions; they too need to be kept under constant surveillance in order to ensure that they do not lock the text rigidly into one position.

The immense difficulties which beset the path of the student of the gospels should also encourage extreme vigilance over the methods used. Christopher Evans wisely warns his undergraduate students that scholarly study of the gospels is more demanding as an intellectual discipline than any other undertaken in a modern university.

In view of the importance of form criticism for all serious study of the gospels, there has been surprisingly little debate about its funda-

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mental assumptions and axioms.<sup>2</sup> The pioneer form-critical works of Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Dibelius have become standard textbooks for both German and English speaking students.<sup>3</sup> Few books have had such a profound and lasting effect on biblical studies. Dibelius' classic has been particularly influential in the English-speaking world and is likely to remain so now that the English translation has been reprinted. Most scholars would readily agree that neither book is immune from serious criticism, yet comparable studies of the origin and transmission of the gospel traditions have not been written since.

Form criticism has led to several new phases of scholarly study of the gospels. The so-called 'new quest' for the historical Jesus arose out of Ernst Käsemann's dissatisfaction with some of the theological conclusions drawn by Bultmann from his form-critical studies. The 'new quest' led on to a vigorous and profitable debate about the criteria which may be used to isolate traditions which are indubitably authentic,<sup>4</sup> but it did not, as might have been expected, encourage a re-assessment of the basic principles of form criticism. Similarly, although redaction criticism is a logical development from form criticism and is closely related to it, it has not provoked a fresh appraisal of form criticism.<sup>5</sup> Sustained attempts to refine or replace the discipline have been few and far between.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of some vigorous attacks in the last two decades, the two-source 'citadel' of source criticism has not fallen, but its foundations have been re-examined and partially relaid; many scholars are now less confident than they were that the synoptic problem has been solved once and for all. A similar phase of debate about form criticism is long overdue, even though a general retreat is unlikely.<sup>7</sup>

In this essay we shall outline briefly some of the problems which surround several widely accepted form-critical axioms. We shall raise a number of questions and hint at few answers. But in the nature of the case that is not only inevitable but desirable.

The first premise of all form-critical study of the gospels is that behind the gospels as we now have them lie originally independent pericopae. Any reader of Mark's gospel can quickly learn to separate the individual gospel traditions from the framework in which they are set. The gospel traditions, we are frequently reminded, are like pearls on a string. This may be taken as an assured result of form-critical studies. But some of

the widely accepted corollaries are not as firmly established as is often supposed.

Once one is able to remove the individual pearls from the string, one's attention is focussed on the pearls, not the string. The framework of Mark's gospel is usually held to be secondary: it may shed light on Mark's own theological intentions, but it is of little value for the historian.

C. H. Dodd firmly rejected this form-critical assumption and claimed that Mark had at his disposal a skeleton historical outline of the career of Jesus into which he fitted the individual pericopae or groups of pericopae; the evangelist's procedure was a compromise between a chronological and a topical order.<sup>8</sup> Dodd's article has frequently been quoted by opponents of the more radical conclusions of form criticism, but his hypothesis did not win the day. Indeed, in the wake of redaction criticism, the view which Dodd rejected is held more tenaciously. Although it would be difficult to defend Dodd's argument, his interest in the origin of the Marcan framework was not misplaced.

In his detailed critical discussion of Dodd's hypothesis, D. E. Nineham asked what *Sitz im Leben* could plausibly be posited to account for the existence of a chronological outline of the life of Jesus in the early church.<sup>9</sup> As Nineham pointed out, there is no independent evidence for the existence of a chronological outline of the life of Jesus.<sup>10</sup> Nor, we may add, is there any precedent within late Judaism for Mark's apparently 'biographical' approach, with its loose chronological and topographical structure. When we look at roughly comparable rabbinic traditions such as *Pirqe Aboth* or at the *Gospel of Thomas*, we are immediately struck by the amount of *narrative* material about Jesus which is found in the traditions on which Mark drew and which the Marcan framework extends rather than contracts, as seems to have happened in some circles in the early church. Indeed, on the grounds of the criterion of dissimilarity which is so beloved of many form critics, the framework of Mark emerges with strong claims to historicity!

Mark's method of presenting material about Jesus was by no means as obvious an approach as it seems to modern readers of his gospel. Very few of the numerous attempts to find a compelling historical or theological reason for the emergence of Mark take sufficiently seriously one of the most distinctive features of his gospel: originally independent traditions have been set within a loosely 'biographical' framework.

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There seem to be only two possible avenues open. Either we must accept that Mark acted without a precedent of any kind—and continue to search for an explanation of his method—or we may consider the possibility that Mark's achievement was rather less spectacular and original. Mark was simply extending a well-established practice: early Christian communities had long been in the habit of linking together in a loose chronological and topical structure traditions about Jesus. The latter alternative is much less fashionable than the former, but for that very reason it should be pursued all the more vigorously.

But this suggestion brings us face to face with a further corollary of the form-critical axiom that behind the gospels lie originally independent pericopae. Most form critics have accepted the dictum of M. Kähler: just as the light from the sun is reflected in every drop of the bedewed meadow, so the full person of our Lord meets us in each little story of the gospel traditions.<sup>11</sup> Many pericopae do make a point which is quite independent of their present context in the gospels. But they make a much greater impact and present a fuller portrait of Jesus when set alongside other pericopae.

If each gospel pericope was considered by the early church to be completely self-contained, why were so many of them retained with details which seem irrelevant to its main point? Frequently details which appear either to be irrelevant or secondary when a pericope is considered in isolation link up with others to provide a portrait of Jesus which is striking and which is often unconventional judged by the standards of the day. Particular traits, such as Jesus' attitude to women and children, his acceptance of tax collectors and other outcasts of society, his penetrating insight or his compassion and humility, emerge clearly only when several pericopae are placed together.

How would an individual pericope have been used in the early church? Whether we think of missionary preaching, catechetical instruction, debates with opponents, or worship, it is easier to imagine that traditions about Jesus were used in groups than that they were used in splendid isolation. Such groups of pericopae would be expanded or contracted according to the circumstances; if so, summaries of parts of the traditions would arise naturally.

The suggestion that groups of pericopae lie behind Mark is not new, though there has been little agreement on the nature and extent of such earlier collections.<sup>12</sup> But if pericopae were linked together loosely in

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groups which were enlarged or abbreviated in order to meet particular needs or circumstances, we should not now expect to be able to find clear traces of such groupings behind Mark's gospel. If we did not possess Mark, should we have guessed that behind Matthew's gospel lies a lengthy connected source?

The passion narratives and the Q material offer partial parallels. Many parts of the passion narratives do make sense in isolation from the rest of the passion story, but they make a much greater impact when set within a larger context. Is it not possible that the passion narratives were used in longer or shorter versions according to circumstances? Perhaps the quest for an original 'core' passion narrative which was gradually expanded by the addition of other traditions is misplaced. Q may also be seen as a partial anticipation of Mark: the Q traditions have a loose structure; some parts were very probably grouped together before the final redaction of Q.

Folklore traditions also provide some support. In its early development as a discipline, form criticism of the gospels was deeply influenced by studies of the transmission of oral folklore traditions. The 'story' element in such traditions is always strong and ought to have made form critics wary of placing too much emphasis on the individual pericope.

Mark's achievement was considerable: the 'gospel' pattern which he developed was to influence Matthew and Luke, and possibly John. But we must also recognize that Mark did not work in a vacuum. He was partially anticipated by some early Christian preachers and teachers, for they also used groups of traditions about Jesus. Even if parts of the framework were composed by Mark himself, were they not, on the whole, modelled closely on the traditions themselves?

Form criticism and redaction criticism have been held apart too rigidly as separate disciplines. The former has concentrated attention on the individual unit of tradition, while the latter has attempted to uncover the distinctive theological perspective of each evangelist. As a result we have come to accept without demur the notion that the writing of Mark is a dramatic development within the early church: no longer are we concerned with an anonymous group and individual pericopae, but with a theologically sophisticated evangelist who has created something quite without parallel. But Mark was not the first person in the early church to group together traditions about Jesus.

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And why should we suppose that the traditions which he used suddenly ceased to be used by the communities which had treasured and used them for a long period?

Form critics have always insisted that the traditions on which Mark drew were oral and not written. Reference is usually made to Paul's use of technical terms for the transmission of oral tradition (I Cor. 15. 3ff. and 11.23); to the importance of oral tradition within Judaism generally; to the comments of Papias (c. AD 130): 'I supposed that things out of books did not profit me so much as the utterances of a voice that lives and abides' (Eus. *HE* III. 39.4). The earliest Christians are often alleged to have been illiterate or at best only semi-literate; in any case they are said to have inherited traditional Jewish suspicion and avoidance of any written documents apart from Torah.

The latter two points are open to question: literacy was very widespread in Palestine (and in the Hellenistic world generally); the Qumran and associated documents, as well as the Nag Hammadi material suggest that we have over-estimated Jewish and early Christian suspicion of writing.<sup>13</sup> The simple question, 'Why did Mark *write* his gospel?' has not been answered. The more strongly the role of oral tradition in the early church is stressed, the more difficult it becomes to account for the transition from oral tradition to Mark's comparatively lengthy and not unsophisticated document.

We do not wish to argue that written traditions existed before Mark,<sup>14</sup> but form critics have neglected to examine sufficiently carefully the relationship between oral and written tradition, and the development and use of writing in the early church. Most studies of the transmission of oral folklore traditions have been based on societies which did not have access to writing.<sup>15</sup> Should we not concentrate our search for possible parallels to the transmission of the gospel traditions on societies which had access to writing, but in which oral tradition was still very much alive?

To what extent did Mark's decision to *write* a gospel lead automatically to a change of perspective? This is a most important question which form critics have not usually stopped to ask. The transition from oral to written tradition is normally assumed to have been a natural and smooth one: the fact of writing *per se* is of comparatively little significance. Mark wrote a *gospel* from traditions about Jesus which had

long been used in close support of the preaching of the church: so argued M. Dibelius and many other form critics. The standard form-critical view can even appeal to Irenaeus, for he claimed that the evangelists set down in writing the apostolic preaching (*Haer.* III. 1.1).

E. Güttgemanns has recently launched a spirited attack on this view of the origin of the written gospels.<sup>16</sup> He asserts that form critics have mistakenly believed that there is continuity between oral and written tradition; the way back from the 'literary' form of the gospel to the individual oral traditions is much more precarious than form critics have supposed.<sup>17</sup> Güttgemanns claims that studies of folklore traditions carried out in Yugoslavia by M. Parry and A. B. Lord prove that there is a decisive difference between oral and written tradition: they belong to quite different *genres* which are not to be confused.<sup>18</sup> Mark's gospel is both more than and quite other than the sum of its parts. In short, we should concentrate our attention on the 'gospel' form, on the structure and intention of Mark, rather than continue the futile attempt to study the individual oral pericopae with our present inadequate methods; the future lies with redaction criticism, not form criticism.<sup>19</sup>

Güttgemanns' work is to be welcomed warmly; it is one of the few recent attempts to reopen discussion of basic form-critical principles.<sup>20</sup> But his attempt to drive a firm wedge between oral and written tradition is unconvincing: the work of M. Parry and A. B. Lord does not support the far-reaching conclusions he has drawn from it.

Parry and Lord sought to shed new light on the origin of the Homeric traditions: Homer is the most talented representative of a tradition of oral epic singing.<sup>21</sup> They began collecting material in the 1930s, when the Yugoslav oral epic was accessible, alive and distinguished; it has now almost completely disappeared, killed by the spread of literacy and the influence of written 'authoritative' texts. Lord's brilliant book includes a chapter on the relationship between writing and oral tradition. He repeatedly emphasizes that the use of writing in setting down oral texts does not in itself have an effect on oral tradition.<sup>22</sup> The transition from oral to written techniques is 'a process, or better the acceleration or aggravation or extension of a process that continually goes on in oral composition'.<sup>23</sup> An oral tradition dies, not when writing is introduced, but when 'published' song texts are spread among singers and begin to be thought of, not as the recording of a moment of the tradition, but as *the* song.

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The standard form-critical view associated particularly with M. Dibelius is not refuted, but finds some support from the work of Parry and Lord. There is no reason to suppose that Mark's gospel is quite other than the sum of its parts. Indeed their work provides some further points of interest for students of Mark's gospel. The introduction of writing leads to longer songs, greater thematic freedom and a frequent tendency towards episodic structure. 'When a tradition or an individual goes from oral to written, he, or it, goes from an adult, mature style of one kind to a faltering and embryonic style of another sort.'<sup>24</sup> It is perfectly possible for writing to exist side by side with oral tradition, just as it is possible for an oral poet steeped in oral tradition to write his own text. There is no reason to doubt that it was not the writing of Mark's gospel, but the later slow acceptance of Mark as a fixed and authoritative text which led to the death of oral traditions about Jesus. Matthew and Luke, after all, were able to combine written and oral traditions without difficulty.

Güttgemann's position is also undermined by such evidence as we have of the relationship of written and oral tradition in Judaism. Not surprisingly, he has paid scant attention to Jewish traditions, though they are surely at least as relevant as studies of Yugoslav oral epic poets! The Mishnah very probably reproduced collections of notes which had already been written before; 'Tannaim' continued to repeat Tannaitic texts orally long after these had been reduced to writing.<sup>25</sup> The Jewish evidence poses its own particularly difficult problems, but it ought not to be ignored.

We have been assuming, without discussion, that studies of folklore and Jewish traditions are of relevance to the student of the gospels; we must now take up briefly this most important form-critical principle. Form critics have analysed the gospel traditions according to their 'form' and have then used this analysis to trace the history of the traditions.<sup>26</sup> The formal analysis of the traditions was deeply influenced by alleged parallels in Jewish, Hellenistic or folklore traditions. The similarities are often striking, but form critics have often paid insufficient attention to the dissimilarities. The form and content of the oral traditions have often been considered separately. But form and content are interdependent; their relationship needs to be examined much more carefully.

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The distinctive and unique situation in which traditions about Jesus were transmitted inevitably means that parallels from other oral traditions must always be partial and must always be treated with care. Studies of traditional Jewish techniques of teaching and transmission of tradition are relevant, but the early Christians were not attempting to transmit the teaching of rabbi Jesus and to develop a 'school of interpretation'.<sup>27</sup> Hellenistic pedagogical method is relevant, but even though the intelligence and the education of the earliest Christians is regularly underestimated, they are unlikely to have been acquainted with sophisticated Hellenistic literary techniques. Study of folklore traditions is relevant, but K. L. Schmidt's famous description of the gospels as *Kleinliteratur* rather than *Hochliteratur* can be pressed too far. The gospel traditions were neither a saga nor a song-cycle honouring the memory of a long-dead hero; they were not preserved, as were most folklore traditions, by inward-looking 'conservative' communities; they are not *traditional* in the sense that the Yugoslav oral poems are.<sup>28</sup> We have no exact parallels to the gospel traditions; for even if we were to confine our attention to the transmission of other Christian oral traditions, the evidence is so much later than the gospels and so sketchy that it is of little use.

This is a counsel of warning, not of despair. The traditions about the actions and teaching of Jesus were transmitted in quite unique circumstances and this factor must be considered in analysis of their form and history. But the earliest Christian communities were always open to a variety of influences, for they were certainly not enclosed in glass cases. To what extent did the unique circumstances of the early church and the unique content of its traditions about Jesus influence the form in which those traditions were transmitted? The form critic can never hope to be in a position to answer that question with absolute confidence, but it is a question which he avoids at his peril.

Closely related to the problems which are involved in the formal analysis of the traditions is yet another form-critical assumption which needs careful scrutiny. The 'form' of the gospel traditions is usually linked closely to their use in early Christian communities. Traditions about Jesus were retained and used only in so far as they met the needs and interests of the early church.

In a sense the latter observation is a truism: it was a very long time

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before the development of the canon encouraged the Christian church to retain documents which were of little interest and which sometimes seemed to be of little direct relevance! But what were the needs and interests of the early church? Form-critical study of the gospels always involves a circular argument. The form critic must either study the traditions with a particular understanding of the early communities in mind, or he must attempt to use his analysis of the traditions to shed light on the needs and interests of the early church. M. Dibelius adopted the former alternative and R. Bultmann the latter.

The dangers are obvious, but not always heeded: it is all too easy to allow a particular view of the needs of the early church to influence judgment of the *Sitz im Leben* of various parts of the tradition, or *vice versa*. The dangers of a circular argument cannot be avoided entirely, but they can be minimized by paying close attention to evidence from outside the gospels. The epistles, Acts and Revelation give us some insights, admittedly often only partial, into the self-understanding of Christian communities. The gospel traditions belonged to the same Hellenistic communities as Paul and John.<sup>29</sup> Unless we accept that there were two 'branches' in the early church, one of which transmitted traditions about the life of Jesus, while the other, the Pauline branch, took no interest in such traditions,<sup>30</sup> such evidence as is found outside the gospels must be taken very seriously indeed.

One example must suffice. For some time now many scholars have followed R. Bultmann's lead and claimed that a number of sayings attributed to the historical Jesus in the gospels originated as sayings of the risen Christ speaking to the church through early Christian prophets. This may well have happened. But such evidence of prophetic activity as we have from outside the gospels does not suggest that the influence of Christian prophets was as pervasive as is often supposed. The epistles and Acts indicate that the apostles, not early Christian prophets, were the leaders of the communities; 'another group, however important, can hardly have possessed the authority to speak in the name of the risen Lord and have such declarations accepted.'<sup>31</sup>

We do have some evidence from outside the gospels which can partially avoid circular arguments, but the form critic must frequently acknowledge that our knowledge of the early church is limited.<sup>32</sup> Gaps in our knowledge must not be filled by our own understanding of the nature and role of the church.<sup>33</sup>

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The relationship between the 'form' of a given tradition and its *Sitz im Leben* in the early church cannot be determined as easily and as confidently as some form critics have supposed. Judgments about the *Sitz im Leben* of a pericope have often differed considerably. But there are more important reasons for caution. Recent research into oral tradition points to a much more flexible situation. Almost every 'form' of oral tradition may be used in a wide variety of ways. Similarly, any given situation can utilize very different forms.<sup>34</sup>

There is evidence from within the New Testament itself which confirms this principle. The christological hymns which are quoted in the Pauline or post-Pauline epistles have survived only because they were found to be useful in a secondary paraenetic setting; the same 'form' of tradition has more than one *Sitz im Leben*.<sup>35</sup> The Pauline epistle is a distinctive literary *genre*; it was found to be useful in very different circumstances in the post-Pauline period; in the Pastoral Epistles the *Sitz im Leben* has changed while the *genre* has remained constant.<sup>36</sup>

Hence the form critic cannot be confident that his observation of a change in the form of a pericope suggests a new *Sitz im Leben*. Nor can he assume that similar forms of traditions were used in the same way in the early church. It is very probable that gospel traditions were used in a wide variety of settings and circumstances with little or no change in their form being necessary.

The long-standing debate about historicity continues. In the last few years the tide of opinion has swung firmly behind a more moderate approach than that usually associated with the earlier form critics. Three factors have been particularly influential. The work of H. Riesenfeld and B. Gerhardsson was attacked vigorously: there are serious weaknesses in their similar positions. But their work has served to remind us that even though the early church did not proclaim Jesus the rabbi, traditions about Jesus were transmitted for some time in a Jewish milieu which took tradition seriously. The debate about the appropriate criteria which may be used to isolate authentic traditions has shown how absurd it is to maintain that the only indubitably authentic traditions are those which can be paralleled neither in contemporary Judaism nor in the early church. But perhaps the most important factor has been the work of H. Schürmann, a scholar whose

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writings are not yet widely known in the English-speaking world. He has argued that the origin of some of the gospel traditions is to be located not merely within the life of the primitive church, but in the community life and missionary preaching of the disciples *before* Easter.<sup>37</sup> Schürmann has opened a new phase in the debate about the ultimate origin of the gospel traditions; he has done so not by rejecting form criticism, but by using several form-critical principles in a fresh and illuminating way.

Our comments on the historicity of the traditions have deliberately been very brief. But we do not mean to suggest that this is an unimportant issue or that it is so intractable that little or nothing can usefully be said. All too often debates about historicity have distracted attention away from discussion of the central axioms of the form-critical method. Some agreement about the limitations and possibilities of the discipline itself must precede any fruitful debate about the historicity of the traditions.

A number of form-critical axioms have been touched on.<sup>38</sup> Few can be shown to be false, but the optimism and confidence of some scholars is ill-founded. As we have hinted more than once, the evidence often does not allow us to be certain; new evidence is unlikely to be forthcoming. On the other hand, such evidence as there is has not always been scrutinized sufficiently rigorously. Form criticism is a most useful tool; it is unlikely that a replacement for it will ever be found. But it is a blunt tool which urgently needs resharpening.

## NOTES

1. For a useful but uncritical exposition of form criticism, see E. V. McKnight, *What is Form Criticism?*, Fortress Press 1969.

2. There are notable exceptions which prove the rule: H. Riesenfeld, 'The Gospel Tradition and its Beginnings', *Studia Evangelica* I (TU 73), 1959, pp. 43-65; B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, Lund 1961; T. Boman, *Die Jesus-Überlieferung im Lichte der neueren Volkskunde*, Göttingen 1967; E. Güttgemanns, *Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, Munich, 2nd ed. 1971.

3. R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, first published 1921; 8th ed., Göttingen 1970. (The *Ergänzungsheft*, 4th ed. 1971, includes a discussion of recent literature by G. Theissen.) ET, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 2nd ed., Blackwell 1968. M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, first published 1919; 6th ed.,

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Tübingen 1971; ET, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 1934; reprinted by James Clarke, 1971.

4. See, for example, H. K. McArthur, 'A Survey of Recent Gospel Research', *Interpretation* 18, 1967, pp. 39-55; N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, SCM Press 1967; M. D. Hooker, 'On Using the Wrong Tool', *Theology* 75, 1972, pp. 570-81; R. S. Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels*, SPCK 1972, pp. 14ff.; W. O. Walker, 'The Quest for the Historical Jesus: a Discussion of Methodology', *ATR* 51, 1969, pp. 38-56.

5. See J. Rohde, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists*, SCM Press 1969, and R. H. Stein, 'What is Redaktionsgeschichte?', *JBL* 88, 1969, pp. 45-56. Redaction criticism also needs careful reappraisal. See C. J. A. Hickling's interesting discussion of Marcan redaction criticism in *Religious Studies* 10, September 1974, pp. 339-46. On Luke, see G. N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*, Cambridge University Press 1974, pp. 31ff.

6. W. G. Doty has assembled a thorough bibliography and has discussed the history of form criticism: 'The Literature and Discipline of New Testament Form Criticism', *ATR* 51, 1969, pp. 257-321. The cynic might suggest that preoccupation with the history of a scholarly discipline is a sign of its stagnation.

7. As examples, see W. R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem*, Macmillan 1964; D. L. Dungan, 'Mark—the Abridgement of Matthew and Luke', *Jesus and Man's Hope* I, ed. D. G. Buttrick, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary 1970, pp. 51-97; A. Gaboury, *La Structure des Évangiles Synoptiques*, Leiden 1970; D. Wenham, 'The Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower', *NTS* 20, 1974, pp. 299-319.

8. C. H. Dodd, 'The Framework of the Gospel Narratives', *ExpT* 43, 1931-2, pp. 396-400; reprinted in a collection of Dodd's essays, *New Testament Studies*, Manchester University Press 1953.

9. D. E. Nineham, 'The Order of Events in St Mark's Gospel—an examination of Dr Dodd's Hypothesis', *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. D. E. Nineham, Blackwell 1955, pp. 223-39. Cf. C. F. D. Moule's comments in *JTS*, NS 7, 1956, p. 280ff.

10. Nineham dismisses too readily Dodd's appeal to the speeches in Acts, though he correctly concludes that Acts 10.37-41 and 13.23-31 afford only the most limited support to the historicity of Mark's order: *ibid.*, pp. 228ff.

11. *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (originally 1896), ET Fortress Press 1964, p. 81. Cf. G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, ET Hodder 1960, p. 25.

12. For a thorough recent discussion (though with largely negative results) see H. W. Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium*, Göttingen, 1971.

13. We urgently need a full-scale study of the extent of literacy and of the uses to which writing was put in Judaism and Hellenism in the first century AD. Although B. Gerhardsson's *Memory and Manuscript* is sub-titled *Oral and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, his comments on written tradition are brief. But see G. Widengren, 'Tradition and Literature in Early Judaism', *Numen* 10, 1963, pp. 42-83; C. H. Roberts, 'Books in the Graeco-Roman world and in the New Testament', *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol. I, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, Cambridge University Press 1970, pp. 48-66.

14. But see R. H. Gundry's defence of this possibility, *The Use of the Old Testament in St Matthew's Gospel*, Leiden 1967, pp. 182ff.

15. See, for example, the influential study of Jan Vansina, *De la Tradition Orale: Essai de Méthode Historique*, Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium

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1961. Most of the evidence on which he draws comes from societies without writing.

16. E. Güttgemanns, *Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, Munich, 2nd ed. 1971. Somewhat surprisingly, Güttgemanns does not refer to the Irenaeus passage, even though he strongly criticizes Dibelius' 'preaching' theory.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 78ff.

18. See especially A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Harvard University Press 1960.

19. Güttgemanns uses the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure in an attempt to break new ground in gospel criticism.

20. As yet it has not received the attention it deserves; this is partly because the use of modern linguistics takes most New Testament scholars into new and difficult terrain. But see the critical review-article by H. Thyen, 'Positivismus in der Theologie und ein Weg zu seiner Überwindung?', *EvTh* 31, 1971, pp. 472-95.

21. With Güttgemanns' use of the work of scholars primarily interested in Homer, we have once again a cross-fertilization of New Testament and classical studies.

22. *The Singer of Tales*, pp. 124ff.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 132ff.

25. J. Kaplan, *The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud*, Bloch Publishing Company 1933, pp. 272ff. Cf. also the article 'Mishnah' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem 1971.

26. T. W. Manson's often-quoted attack on form criticism does not do justice to the form critic's attempt to use his analysis of the traditions to reconstruct their history. Manson claimed that 'a paragraph of Mark is not a penny the better or the worse for being labelled "Apophtegm" or "Pronouncement Story" or "Paradigm"' ('The Quest of the Historical Jesus—Continued', *Studies in the Gospels and the Epistles*, ed. M. Black, Manchester University Press 1962, p. 5).

27. Cf. W. Wiefel, 'Vätersprüche und Herrenworte', *Novum Testamentum* 11, 1969, pp. 105-120.

28. Cf. the concluding words of A. B. Lord's book: 'Yet after all that has been said about oral composition as a technique of line and song construction, it seems that the term of greater significance is traditional. Oral tells us "how", but traditional tells us "what", and even more, "of what kind" and "of what force".' *The Singer of Tales*, p. 220.

29. Cf. E. Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, SCM Press 1969, pp. 40f. and 49.

30. This view has been suggested by several scholars. See, for example, U. Wilckens, 'Hellenistisch-christliche Missionsüberlieferung und Jesustradition', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 89, 1964, cols. 518ff.

31. D. Hill, 'On the Evidence for the Creative Role of Christian Prophets', *NTS* 20, 1974, p. 274. The same point is made by F. Neugebauer, 'Geistsprüche und Jesuslogien', *ZNW* 53, 1962, pp. 218-28.

32. Cf. F. G. Downing, *The Church and Jesus* (SBT 2.10), 1968.

33. In particular our notion of what 'preaching' should be today can easily be read back into the New Testament. It would be very instructive to investigate the debates about the nature and role of the church which took place in the first two decades of this century; the first form critics' understanding of the primitive church may well have been influenced by contemporary discussions. I owe this point to Dr. H. Willmer.

34. H. Kuhn, 'Zur Typologie mündlicher Sprachdenkmäler', *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte* 1956, Heft 5, Munich 1960, p. 21.

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35. R. Deichgräber, *Gottes hymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit*, Göttingen 1967, pp. 190ff.

36. W. G. Doty, 'The Literature and Discipline of New Testament Form Criticism', *ATR* 51, 1969, p. 307.

37. 'Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition', *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, eds. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae, Berlin 1962, pp. 342-70. Schürmann's main arguments have been accepted by a number of scholars. See especially E. Trocmé, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, SCM Press 1973; the main thesis of Trocmé's book may be seen as a considerable extension of Schürmann's view.

38. Two further widely accepted form-critical axioms need reconsideration: the early church was not interested in the 'past' of Jesus and the gospels are not biographies; both are discussed in some detail in my book, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*, Cambridge University Press 1974.