

**REDACTION CRITICISM OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS: ITS ROLE IN THE
INERRANCY DEBATE WITHIN NORTH AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM**

by

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I hereby declare that with the exception of the sources duly acknowledged in the text, this thesis is the original work of the author, and has never before been submitted to this or any other university for examination purposes.

Name

Date

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AshTJ</i>	<i>Ashland Theological Journal</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin of Biblical Research</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
<i>ChrT</i>	<i>Christianity Today</i>
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>CTR</i>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<i>DBSJ</i>	<i>Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal</i>
<i>DJG</i>	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i> [Marshall, Green, McKnight (eds)]
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ETS	Evangelical Theological Society
<i>EuroJTh</i>	<i>European Journal Of Theology</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
FC	Form Criticism
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
HC	Historical Criticism
IBR	The Institute for Biblical Research
ICBI	The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSHJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	The New International Commentary On The New Testament
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>Presb</i>	<i>Presbyterion</i>
RC	Redaction Criticism
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review & Expositor</i>
SBC	The Southern Baptist Convention
<i>SBET</i>	<i>Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SwJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TMSJ</i>	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>

<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VE</i>	<i>Vox Evangelica</i>
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WCF</i>	Westminster Confession of Faith
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

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Redaction Criticism Of The Synoptic Gospels: Its Role In The
Inerrancy Debate Within North American Evangelicalism

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SUMMARY

Evangelicals have been characterized as a people committed to the Bible with historical roots to the fundamentalists who were engaged in controversy with liberals in North America at the beginning of the twentieth century. Harold Lindsell's book, *The Battle For The Bible* (1976), led to a great deal of discussion about inerrancy among evangelicals which resulted in major conferences and the publication of a number of books and articles discussing inerrancy in the subsequent decade. The principal doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) has been from its inception a statement on inerrancy. The inerrancy debate among evangelicals took a new direction with the publication of R H Gundry's commentary on Matthew (1982). This sparked a debate concerning redaction criticism and the compatibility of using the historical-critical methodology while maintaining a commitment to the doctrine of inerrancy.

Just when the debate appeared to be dying down the publication of the results of the *Jesus Seminar* (1993) led to several responses from evangelicals. The most controversial publication was *The Jesus Crisis* (1998) which accused evangelicals and some within the ETS of embracing the same methodology as those of the *Jesus Seminar*, refueling the debate again. Consequently this debate amongst evangelicals, particularly those associated with the ETS has continued for almost two decades.

The debate has ranged over a variety of issues related to historical criticism and the study of the Gospels, including presuppositions, the Synoptic Problem, the role of harmonization, and whether the Gospels provide a strict chronology of the life of Jesus. The role of form and tradition criticism and the criteria of authenticity and whether the Gospel writers were faithful historians or creative theologians have also been points of

contention in the debate. The languages that Jesus spoke and whether the Gospels preserve the *ipsissima verba* or *vox* have highlighted the differing views about the requirements of inerrancy. The redaction criticism debate has proven to have a significant role in exposing differences in methodology, definitions, presuppositions, and boundaries among evangelicals and members of the ETS.

Key terms:

Chronology of the Gospels; Evangelical Theological Society; Evangelicalism; Harmonization; Historical-critical methodology; Historical criticism; Inerrancy; *ipsissima verba* and *vox*; Redaction criticism; Synoptic Gospels; The Synoptic Problem

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Events Leading To The Present Debate On Inerrancy

For well over a century (circa 1893 to the present¹), a battle surrounding the inerrancy of Scripture has been raging, particularly on the shores of North America. Inerrancy became the touchstone of orthodoxy in a controversy that erupted between liberals and fundamentalists, within a host of denominations and organizations, which began in the late nineteenth century and continued into the early decades of the twentieth century (Marsden 1987:214). Then the battle, swirling around the issue of inerrancy, seemed to subside for several decades. During this period, a new movement that was called "evangelicalism"² was emerging from within the ranks of fundamentalism. Evangelicalism was most closely identified in North America with the organization of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942, Youth for Christ, the crusade ministry of evangelist, Billy Graham, the start of a new seminary in 1947, Fuller Theological Seminary, and the launch of *Christianity Today* in 1956 (Hamilton 2006:33; Martin 2006:24-29; Rosell 2006:16-19; Shelley 2006:20-23). *Fundamentalism* and *evangelicalism* would continue to co-exist but often appeared as almost two separate identities, each having their own schools, publications and even denominations. Of significance to this study is the founding of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1949. This was one of the few points of contact between the two groups (Nash 1987:19-39, 68).

The differences between these two groups manifested themselves in the Evangelical Theological Society (hereafter ETS) at various times, often with painful results. The society in its original establishment set down only one doctrinal standard for its members, a commitment to inerrancy. The statement read, "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs" (Youngblood 1984:xi). Inerrancy was important to these descendants of the fundamentalists of previous decades, who had contended with liberals over the use of critical methodologies in the interpretation of Scripture. It is not surprising then to find that the *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* (1958-1968) and its successor the

1 The year, 1893, is the date that Fea (1994:184) argues for as the beginning of the confrontation between fundamentalism and modernism.

2 The original name of "neo-evangelicalism" was popularized by Harold Ockenga and was shortened to

Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (hereafter *JETS*) contained a number of articles addressing issues pertaining to inerrancy in those early decades of its existence and became a forum where the differences within the society could be addressed.

As was the case previously in the debate between fundamentalists and liberals, the use of critical methodologies was a major point of contention within the ETS. This debate continued to focus on the question of the *underlying presuppositions* of the critical methodologies and whether they were truly compatible with a commitment to inerrancy. Although all members of the ETS ascribed to inerrancy, they held to differing views concerning the compatibility and employment of these *critical methodologies*. It was in this context that fifty scholars from ten countries met in 1966 in Wenham, Massachusetts for what came to be known as the Wenham Conference. “The conference was called in hope of healing a breach that had developed between some faculty members and trustees of Fuller Seminary and the rest of North America's evangelical academic world” (Packer 1996:104).

In light of subsequent events one would have to conclude that they were unsuccessful in healing this breach. In fact the division left the academic realm and was manifested in the public realm by the publishing of a book by one of the Fuller Seminary faculty. The book was dedicated to four colleagues, who stood steadfast for inerrancy. As Harold Lindsell's, *The Battle For The Bible* (Zondervan, 1976) was to make clear, it was written to expose the denial of inerrancy within evangelicalism, including by other colleagues of Lindsell at Fuller Seminary. A year later the debate had spurred the formation of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (hereafter ICBI).

The name, ICBI, was somewhat of a misnomer since there was only one non-American council member. This council continued in existence for ten years (1977-1987) holding three summits and two congresses for scholars and church leaders. It sought to address a number of issues surrounding the inerrancy debate and produced a number of books that tackled the issues that arose from these meetings (Packer 1996:105-106).

The narrowing of the focus of the debate on inerrancy to North America is not because the debate did not reach other parts of the world, but because it was particularly in North America that it raged so fiercely. Not only did the recent history of the debate have its roots in the division within Fuller Seminary, but Lindsell's book, *The Battle For*

simply “evangelical” (Noll 1986:94; Marsden 1987:3, 6; Rosell 2006:19).

The Bible, was principally addressed to schools and denominations within North America. Also, as noted, the ICBI was not truly “international” in its council and was predominately composed of North American scholars. It was also from schools in North America that volumes were produced to address issues pertaining to inerrancy during the 1970's and the 1980's (Nicole & Michaels 1980:11; Conn 1988:9). Finally, the largest denomination in North America, the Southern Baptist Convention (hereafter SBC), was also very much at the center of the controversy on inerrancy.

As the ICBI made plans to disassemble, one might have concluded that the debate on inerrancy was seemingly over and the work done. Yet such was not the case, as a battle for control of the SBC was still being waged. Since the late 1970's conservatives were engaged in an attempt to wrestle control of the SBC away from moderates. The conservatives were concerned that the employment of the historical-critical method was accompanied by a denial of inerrancy by many professors within the seminaries (Patterson 1999:60-61, 69-72). The ICBI was an influence on the conservatives, who finally by the early 1990's gained control of the denomination, which resulted in the installation of professors committed to inerrancy and a new commentary series written by scholars who affirmed the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (Patterson 1999:69-71).

The *Jesus Seminar* formed in 1985 to provide a scholarly consensus about the historical authenticity of the sayings of Jesus, also continued the debate on inerrancy and the use of critical methodologies among evangelicals. It became apparent that some evangelicals were using the same methodology as those of the *Jesus Seminar* only with less dramatic conclusions concerning the historicity of Jesus' sayings (Thomas 1998d:15). This precipitated further interaction among members of the ETS concerning the use of critical methodologies and the role of underlying presuppositions in the late 1990's (Geisler 1999:3-19; Osborne 1999:193-210).

1.2 The Incentives for, and Importance of this Research

The ongoing debate reveals that the issues have not been resolved despite three decades of interaction. It is also apparent that at the center of the debate from the very beginning has been the use of critical methodologies. As the inerrancy debate has continued within the ranks of the ETS, the focus has particularly been on the use of

redaction criticism as opposed to an *exclusively harmonistic approach* in the study of the synoptic Gospels. The controversy over the use of redaction criticism and denials of the historicity of portions of the synoptic Gospels has led to splits within the ETS as well as the dismissal of faculty from evangelical schools. The fact that more than a decade after such events the same debate continues to arise, points to the need for further study into the issues surrounding redaction criticism and inerrancy. One would hope that such study might provide the framework for a consensus on what is and what is not compatible with a commitment to inerrancy.

It will be maintained that the concern for inerrancy is a valid one. One of the core tenets of what defines an “evangelical” is a commitment to the reliability or trustworthiness of Scripture (Tidball 1994:12). Evangelicals should maintain that commitment while always exploring the implications of existing or new methodologies for the study of Scripture within the parameters of their commitment to Scripture's trustworthiness. Packer (1996:124) sums up the interconnection for evangelicals, when he writes, “Evangelical method with the Bible is part of evangelical loyalty to the Bible, just as evangelical loyalty to the Bible is part of evangelical loyalty to Christ.” This implies that one must also understand the role of redaction criticism not simply within the parameters of inerrancy but also within the larger parameters of one's commitment to the Lordship of Christ in interpretation (Smith 1994:201-220).

A driving force in the conservative concern to regain control of the SBC was the conviction that with the loss of inerrancy there would be an accompanying loss of the gospel. This arose from the conviction that as one's view of the veracity of Scripture weakens so does one's commitment to evangelistic zeal and missionary fervour (Patterson 1999:66-67). Indeed, two primary tenets that seem to define an “evangelical” are a commitment to the Bible and a commitment to the gospel (Tidball 1994:132). Since the gospel is the central evangelical concern, it is also important that evangelicals understand the possible implications of the use of redaction criticism with regards to their commitment to the gospel.

It is important to continue to evaluate the role of redaction criticism in relationship to the doctrine of inerrancy not only with a desire to achieve a degree of understanding and harmony within the ETS, but also because it should help to sharpen the focus on both the use of *redaction criticism* and its *presuppositions*. Such study

should also prove helpful in defining more carefully what is understood by *inerrancy*. This is important since in the past history of the ETS, there was the divisive case of Robert Gundry, who maintained that he ascribed to inerrancy, yet was dismissed from the society for his adherence to a form of redaction criticism (Keylock 1984:36-38). The very fact that members of the ETS continue to practice and advocate redaction criticism after such a situation makes the issue of continued importance.

The employment of redaction criticism in the study of the synoptic Gospels is tied inevitably to issues concerning the *origins* or *sources* of the Gospels. The *Synoptic Problem* concerning the issue of gospel origins or sources has never reached any form of consensus amongst evangelicals (Black & Beck 2001:11-15). Without such a consensus, redaction criticism can continue to have a role to play in interpretation for evangelicals, if it is deemed compatible with inerrancy. If redaction criticism is deemed compatible with a doctrine of inerrancy then all rancour needs to be set aside so the evangelical community can pursue the study of God's Word employing all methods deemed compatible with inerrancy (Blomberg 1994a: 425-429).³

1.3 The Outline of the Thesis

This *first* chapter provides a brief introduction to the debate and notes some of the crucial issues involved. It also provides the rationale of the need for this study, and the importance of this research. It also explains the development of the argument the study will take in subsequent chapters.

A *second chapter* will involve an attempt to define the key concepts of the thesis such as *evangelicals*, *fundamentalists*, *evangelicalism*, and *inerrancy*. There is still an ongoing discussion of who is or is not an evangelical and recently there has been movement within evangelicalism away from some of its foundational concerns. The definition that will be used in the thesis will be presented after looking at the issues involved.

A brief overview of the rise of the neo-evangelical movement out of fundamentalism and some of their differences will also be provided in an attempt to set the parameters for a definition of “evangelical.” To define “evangelical” one must

³ The preface states all contributors “affirm the complete veracity and total authority of the Bible.” (Dockery, Mathews & Sloan 1994:xvii).

understand the changing face of fundamentalism (Fea 1994:181-199). I will maintain that *evangelicals* have historically been characterized by a strong commitment to Scripture. Historically, the roots from which evangelicalism has grown, although diverse, have included a commitment to either infallibility or inerrancy. (Hannah 1984:ix). Therefore, it will be maintained that it is historically incorrect to argue that inerrancy only became a position of the “central church tradition” since the seventeenth century under the influence of Francis Turretin (Rogers & McKim 1979:188).

Inerrancy is also a somewhat “slippery” term that has generated many definitions (Dockery 1991:86-88). After examining the various ways the term is used, a definition of the term “inerrancy” as it is understood by the author will be provided. This chapter will also examine the *relationship* of the doctrine of *inerrancy* to the *autographa* since some within the ETS desire to extend inerrancy beyond the *autographa* to the *apographa*. Redaction criticism is but one part of the historical-critical approach and so care will be taken to show how the *historical-critical methodology* arose and became a central concern in the controversy between the fundamentalists and liberals at the beginning of the twentieth century. The development of the historical background to the inerrancy debate will be examined in terms of *paradigm shifts* in biblical studies. Finally, the chapter will seek to draw together how the paradigm shifts in biblical studies, the inerrancy debate and the emergence of the evangelical movement out of fundamentalism, came together and led to the debates on inerrancy among evangelicals. The specific nature of the debate in the SBC will also be briefly discussed in concluding this historical background study of the inerrancy debate.

Chapter three will provide further *historical background* focusing specifically on the *role* that *redaction criticism* has played in the *inerrancy debate* among evangelicals in North America. After giving a brief history of the rise of redaction criticism and seeking to define it, a *history* of the *debate* concerning inerrancy and the use of *redaction criticism* among *evangelicals* in North America will be undertaken. The significant roles that were played by Harold Lindsell’s *The Battle For The Bible*, the ETS expulsion of Robert Gundry for his views on *midrash* expressed in his commentary on Matthew (1982), and the recent furor caused by the publication of *The Jesus Crisis* (Thomas & Farnell:1998), will be a few of the more significant aspects to be chronicled.

The *division* within *evangelicalism* will become clear at this point, as it becomes

apparent that there are at least *three perspectives* with regards to *inerrancy* and *redaction criticism*. Some evangelicals practice redaction criticism without a concern to maintain inerrancy. Others employ redaction criticism while trying to do so within the parameters of a commitment to inerrancy. Finally, others deny the validity and compatibility of the use of redaction criticism while holding to the inerrancy of Scripture. It will also be shown that the debate is primarily limited to North American evangelicals and has *centered* on the ETS, North American denominations, and institutions.

A *fourth chapter* will address the problem that is to be investigated. The debate has centered on the employment of critical methodologies and their underlying presuppositions. Inerrancy has been at the forefront of this debate because there have been concerns that the use of critical methodologies implies a denial of historicity. The issues of historicity are most acutely recognized in efforts to explain the dissimilarities between the various Gospel accounts. While all evangelicals agree that there is a role for harmonization, there is disagreement as to whether redaction criticism should be used to offer possible solutions in the resolving of the dissimilarities between the Gospel accounts and whether or not redaction criticism implies an actual denial of historicity, due to its underlying presuppositions.

While some attempts have been made to address the *compatibility* of the use of *redaction criticism with inerrancy* (Osborne 1976:73-86), others maintain that the use of redaction criticism implies the use of presuppositions that are inimical to inerrancy. The opponents of the employment of redaction criticism argue that redaction criticism is part of the whole hermeneutical complex known as the historical-critical methodology, which contains presuppositions incompatible with inerrancy (Lindsell 1979:296-297).

This debate therefore focuses on issues pertaining to the historical-critical method and its use by evangelicals. Various aspects related to the historical-critical methodology will come under consideration. These include not only the presuppositions underlying the historical-critical method, but also issues such as do the Gospel writers present the *ipsissima verba* or *ipsissima vox* of Jesus and does inerrancy necessitate one or the other? Are the words of Jesus in the Gospels primarily the *ipsissima verba* (Thomas 1998b:367-373), or are they primarily the *ipsissima vox* (Bock 1995:73-99)?

Another crucial issue revolves around the presuppositions employed in the use of the *criteria of authenticity*. Evangelicals have recognized numerous difficulties inherent

in this methodology particularly with regards to issues of historicity and presuppositions. Some have called for abandoning the whole concept since it is built upon critical presuppositions that are not sympathetic with a doctrine of inerrancy (Farnell 1998a:203-207). Yet, other evangelicals have tried to work within the broad parameters of the criteria of authenticity to defend the historical reliability of the Gospels (Blomberg 1987b:246-258; Stein 1991:153-187). These are some of the issues that must be addressed in setting forth the parameters of the debate.

The *fifth chapter* will deal with a *descriptive presentation* of the application of redaction criticism to *selected passages* of the *synoptic Gospels*. The interpretations of the different proponents in the debate will be presented in dealing with a select group of passages that underline the major points of disagreement in the debate, and that are often referred to by the parties in the debate. Texts, such as Luke 18:18-30 (= Matthew 19:16-29; = Mark 10:13-16) and the rich young ruler, and Matthew 4:1-11 (= Mark 1:12-13; = Luke 4:1-13) and Jesus' temptation, are a few of texts that have been discussed frequently in the debate and which will be examined in chapter five.

The *sixth chapter* will be an extensive evaluation of the *positive and negative contributions* the *various proponents* have made in their approach to the employment of redaction criticism and the inerrancy of scripture. The lack of consensus surrounding the writing of the Gospels with regards to the Synoptic Problem necessitates a clear understanding of the implications involved when seeking to address issues of historicity, harmonization, and the purposes of the Gospel writers. The significance of the languages Jesus used (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic), memorization techniques, issues pertaining to the *ipsissima verba/vox*, the genre of the Gospels and issues pertaining to chronology and the role of the writers will also be evaluated in terms of this debate.

In the *seventh chapter* a *proposal* as to how this *debate* may be possibly *resolved* will be presented. Conclusions will be drawn in an effort to respond to the vital questions being addressed in this debate. There are a number of questions to be considered arising from the debate. Is there a solution to the Synoptic Problem that establishes a solid foundation for all who engage in redaction criticism? If not, how should the disagreements be handled and is there latitude for continuing dialogue as scholars work on the Gospels from their different perspectives of the two-source theory or literary independence? Do the various proponents recognize all of the implications of their

approach for inerrancy including some of the problems arising from their approach? Does the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture necessitate the theory of literary independence? If not, does this make the employment of redaction criticism a viable methodology in the study of the Gospels?

It must also be asked if those employing redaction criticism have accepted presuppositions that are inimical to inerrancy. Is everyone employing a uniform definition of redaction criticism or have adaptations been made to make the methodology more compatible for evangelicals? Is it being employed as part of the historical-critical method, and if so, is this problematic for evangelicals holding to inerrancy? Can redaction criticism devoid of the underlying negative presuppositions to historicity be practiced within the context of the grammatical-historical methodology?

What role should one's presuppositions have within a discussion of the role of faith and the acceptance of a role for the criteria of authenticity? Does the historical-critical method place the "burden of proof" on those affirming the historicity of the Gospels and if so, is this problematic for those committed to inerrancy? Is it necessary to clarify the roles of faith and history in one's methodological approach to Scripture? What role should presuppositions play in the study of the Gospels and of Scripture? Is it necessary to be conscious of one's presuppositions and their implications for inerrancy and the Lordship of Christ, as one develops a methodology for the study of Scripture? These are some of the questions the final chapter will seek to address.

CHAPTER TWO

EVANGELICALISM AND THE INERRANCY DEBATE

This chapter will attempt to provide a definition of *evangelical* and its relationship to *fundamentalism* and the *history* of the *inerrancy debate*. Some of the various ways that *inerrancy* has been understood will then be presented and then the reasoning behind confining inerrancy to the original *autographa* will be detailed. This is significant for our study since the ETS doctrinal position states, that inerrancy applies to only the original autographs, a position maintained by virtually all evangelicals, who are committed to inerrancy.

In an attempt to set the debate on redaction criticism and inerrancy in a broader context, a brief survey of some of the historical and theological precursors to the inerrancy debate of the 1970's will be presented. There will also be a short overview of the inerrancy debate among *Southern Baptists*. There are several reasons for such a brief but special focus. The SBC is the largest denomination in North America and was engaged for a number of years in what L. Drummond called the "Inerrancy Crisis" (Hefley 1991:8). Harold Lindsell wrote as one who had ties with the SBC denomination (Hefley 1986:68) and he focused a great deal of his attention on the debates within the SBC denomination. Another reason for giving particular attention to the debate within the SBC denomination is that the denomination has been forced to think through its relationship to evangelicalism over the course of the past two decades and reach out beyond its own denominational boundaries (Dockery 1993). Finally, the conservative takeover of the SBC seminaries and the reaffirmation by these schools of inerrancy requires attention (Paige 1999:72), particularly since many of the professors at these SBC seminaries are also members of the ETS, which requires the affirmation of inerrancy.

This historical background and overview of the inerrancy debate will be considered from the perspective of changing *theological paradigms*. This historical overview of the inerrancy debate will conclude with a brief evaluation of how evangelicals responded to these paradigm shifts and how that is connected to the continuing debate on inerrancy and the use of redaction criticism by evangelicals.

2.1 DEFINING EVANGELICALISM

It has been said that, “Defining evangelicalism has become one of the biggest problems in American religious historiography” (Weber 1991:12). Evangelicalism as a movement is concerned with the spread of the gospel message of Jesus Christ. As a result, the history of evangelicalism throughout the world is tied to the spread of the gospel message throughout countries of the world.¹ Evangelicalism crosses a variety of denominational boundaries and ethnic backgrounds even within the boundaries of one nation and is often referred to in terms of a “family” or “family resemblances” (Johnston 1991:255-259). The “family resemblance” arises out of a common commitment to the gospel. This gospel commitment involves a commitment expressed in personal faith in Jesus Christ that includes recognition that the gospel is defined authoritatively by Scripture and a desire to communicate the gospel both in evangelism and social reform (Johnston 1991:261).

Weber (1991:12-13; 1993:264-265) maintains that even within the context of speaking of evangelicalism as a “family,” one needs to still identify evangelical “types” and he lists; classical, pietistic, fundamentalist and progressive evangelicals. *Classical evangelicals* are loyal to the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, while *pietistic evangelicals* also stand in the Reformation tradition but also add experiential emphases. *Fundamentalist evangelicals* incorporate elements from both these two traditions but are primarily known for their rejection of liberal, critical, and evolutionary thinking and a separatistic spirit. *Progressive evangelicals* maintain a hold on traditional orthodoxy but with a lighter touch and they maintain more of an ecumenical spirit. This “lighter touch” in terms of traditional orthodoxy, is evident in the areas of biblical inerrancy, the use of biblical criticism and certain behavioural mores. Weber (1991:14) sees the common thread of these diverse types of evangelicalism to be a movement that is concerned with spiritual renewal, which is grounded in certain shared theological convictions.

The relationship between fundamentalism and evangelicalism in North America has also been a point of considerable discussion among historians. Marsden, who has written extensively on this topic, defines fundamentalism as “a twentieth-century movement

¹ A conference at Wheaton College, Illinois on 8-11 April, 1992 entitled “Evangelicalism in Transatlantic Perspective” resulted in two volumes being published dealing with evangelicalism around the world. They were, Rawlyk, G A & Noll, M A (eds) 1993. *Amazing Grace*. Grand Rapids: Baker, and Noll, M A, Bebbington, D W & Rawlyk, G A (eds) 1994. *Evangelicalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

closely tied to the revivalist tradition of mainstream evangelical Protestantism that militantly opposed modernist theology and the cultural change associated with it” ([1977] 1995:303). Ockenga (1978:36) also defines fundamentalism similarly, stating it was a reaction to the tide of liberalism that swept through churches from 1900 to 1930 and it drew its name from the books published as *The Fundamentals* in 1909 by the Testimony Publishing Company.²

The relationship between evangelicalism and fundamentalism was the subject of a collection of articles in a 1993 issue of *Christian Scholar's Review*. Dayton (1993:12-21) reviewed Marsden's *Reforming Fundamentalism* and listed sixteen differences between Marsden's views, which he sees emerging from Marsden's Presbyterian background, and his own understanding of fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Dayton understands the rise of evangelicalism in connection with the “age of Methodism” in American life in the 1820's. Dayton readily acknowledges his own ties with the “Holiness” movement. Marsden (1993:34-40) and Sweeney (1993:48-52) acknowledge one needs to understand the influence of both of these viewpoints in arriving at a full understanding of the broad multidimensional nature of both fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Carpenter (1993:53-61) concurs that a broader perspective is needed as much of the work particularly that by Marsden, Mark Noll and Harry Stout has focused upon Presbyterians and Baptists. It should be noted though that while not exclusively relegated to these denominations, much of the conflict that arose between liberals and fundamentalists from 1900 to 1930 involved the Baptist and Presbyterian denominations particularly of the northern United States (McCune 1998:24-28).

McCune (1996b:9-34), as a self-professed fundamentalist, reviews some of the confusion over the identity of fundamentalism and its history and then defines fundamentalism as a distinct movement that has always held to certain core doctrines concerning Christ, Scripture, the way of salvation, and the doctrinal distinctive of ecclesiastical separation. When these are coupled with the practical distinctive of militancy, one has the essence of fundamentalism. Priest (2004:322-325) also lists a literal biblical hermeneutic as a defining mark of fundamentalism. Priest (2004:305) defines fundamentalism as “a movement committed to belief in and affirmation of the historic biblical doctrines essential to the Christian faith and insistent on separation from all forms

² The volumes were so popular they were reprinted in 1917 by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles.

of apostasy and ungodliness.” McCune (1996a:171-185) notes that historically fundamentalists have held to the inerrancy of the original autographs only. This is illustrated in A. C. Dixon’s confrontation with the higher critical views of W. R. Harper of the University of Chicago (Priest 1996:117-118). The effort of some fundamentalists to argue that only the King James Bible is an acceptable Bible version (Khoo 2005a:82-97; 2005b:3-19) is not embraced by all fundamentalists (Combs 1996:53). While fundamentalism also could be characterized as premillennial, this is not strictly limited to the dispensational version and there were some exceptions such as T. T. Shields. This renowned Canadian fundamentalist, held to a quasi-form of amillennialism (Stackhouse Jr. 1993:30-31; Priest 2004:330), but despised dispensational premillennialism (Priest 2005:92). McCabe (2002:3-4) provides a helpful summary,

The fundamentalist movement has been committed to a literal exposition and defense of core biblical doctrines, a militant exposure of non-biblical expressions of these truths, and an ecclesiastical separation from those who deviate from these scriptural beliefs. What sets historic fundamentalism apart from new evangelicalism is not necessarily the core doctrines, but a militant defense of these doctrines, one of which is the consistent practice of ecclesiastical separation. In short, what makes fundamentalism distinct is the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation.

There is continuing debate also over whether evangelicalism predated the eighteenth century as Stewart (2005:135-153) contends in opposition to Bebbington’s (1992:1) thesis that evangelicalism has existed in Britain since the 1730’s. Others like Hart (2004:193) argue that “evangelicalism does not exist, that it is in fact a construction of 1940’s fundamentalists that late-twentieth-century academics found especially useful for interpreting American religion.” Needless to say, not all embrace this view and it has come under critique (Brand 2004:283; Sweeney 2005:23-25). Finally, in recent years a new movement within evangelicalism has arisen called the “emergent evangelicals” or “emergent church movement” who are not wedded to inerrancy or to the authority of the Bible as past generations of evangelicals, rather their view of Scripture seems to reflect their embrace of aspects of postmodernism (Dixon 2005:259-261; Vanhoozer 2005:99-100; Bolt 2006:216-221), although one describes the movement as “a modernist form of consumerism” (Lucas 2006:91).

This study will not purport to solve the knotty problems of “definition” and specific inter-relationship between “evangelical” and “fundamentalist.” Nor will any attempt be

made to address the view of American Protestantism that views its history primarily as a two-party conflict between fundamentalists and modernists³. This study will follow the descriptive definition of evangelicalism employed by a group of historians in a recent volume on evangelicalism. They define the movement in this manner: “Evangelicals rely upon the Bible as their ultimate religious authority, stress the necessity of conversion or the new birth, are activists in their approach to religious duties and social involvement, and focus on Christ's redemptive work as the heart of Christianity” (Noll, Bebbington & Rawlyk 1994:6).⁴

If the real issue that separates fundamentalists and evangelicals is not primarily doctrinal but the issue of ecclesiastical separation, then for the purposes of this study, fundamentalists will be included as one of the types of evangelicals that Weber defined (1993:264-265) recognizing there is certainly some overlap (Marshall 1992:10). Since the focus of this study will be on issues related to inerrancy, and fundamentalists hold to the inerrancy of the original autographs, and since some have chosen to be members in the ETS (Nash 1987:19-39, 68), it seems appropriate to include fundamentalists within the broad parameters of evangelicalism in this study.

2.2 INERRANCY AND THE AUTOGRAPHA

2.2.1 Inerrancy, inspiration, and the *autographa*

Inerrancy has been understood in a number of different ways. Rather than proceed through the debates on inerrancy before providing a definition, a summary of the different positions as well as a definition of inerrancy will be provided at the outset. The author believes the definition given is a faithful reflection of and concise summary of the nineteen articles of affirmation and denial that comprise the ICBI's “Chicago Statement On Biblical Inerrancy” (1978). Dockery (1986:10-11) provides a helpful summary of nine different positions on inerrancy that can be found in evangelical and Southern Baptist circles:

³ On the “two-party” view of American Protestantism, see: Jacobsen, D & Trollinger, Jr., W V (eds) 1998. *Re-Forming The Center*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. For particular application to the fundamentalist and modernist controversy, see: Weston, W 1998. *The Presbyterian Controversy: The Triumph of the Loyalist Center*, in Jacobsen, D & Trollinger, Jr. W V 1998:109-128. Hart, D G 1998. *J. Gresham Machen, Confessional Presbyterianism, and the History of Twentieth-Century Protestantism*, in Jacobsen, D & Trollinger, Jr. W V 1998:129-149.

⁴ This should not be understood to imply that all the contributors agreed with this definition, as there is a

1. *Mechanical dictation*: This view virtually ignores the role of the human author.
2. *Absolute inerrancy*: This view denies dictation while affirming the accuracy of the Bible in every detail but doesn't take the human or historical aspects seriously.
3. *Critical inerrancy*: This view holds the Bible to be accurate in all that it affirms to the degree of precision intended by the individual author. This view makes cautious use of critical methodologies in interpretation.
4. *Limited inerrancy*: The Bible is held to be inerrant only in matters pertaining to faith and practice, salvation and where matters can be empirically verified.
5. *Qualified inerrancy*: This view by faith confesses the Bible is inerrant and makes an effort to take seriously both the divine and human authors.
6. *Nuanced inerrancy*: This view recognizes the varied types of literature in the Bible and sees inspiration as being tailored to the genre, thus seeking to take seriously both the divine and human elements.
7. *Functional inerrancy*: This view affirms that the Bible is inerrant in its purpose of bringing people to salvation and Christian growth.
8. *Inerrancy as irrelevant*: This view doesn't affirm or deny inerrancy, but views the whole issue as adiaphorous.
9. *Biblical authority*: This view holds the Bible is authoritative only as it brings a person into an encounter with God. Inspiration is denied and errors are acknowledged but considered inconsequential.

In a later writing, Dockery (1991:86-88) renamed *mechanical dictation* as *naïve inerrancy* and modified this list to six different views by dropping number 8, while combining numbers 3, 5 & 6 under the title, *balanced inerrancy*. He also provided examples of Southern Baptists, who held to each of the six views. He holds that *balanced inerrancy* is the most faithful to the biblical data. It maintains that the Bible is completely true, while employing a coherence view (the biblical truth is verified within the biblical revelation in a coherent manner) and a correspondence view of truth at appropriate places. After seeking to assess the different understandings of the interaction between the divine and human authors of Scripture, Dockery (1987:38-41) provides a definition of inerrancy and explicates his understanding of each phrase of the definition. The following definition of inerrancy provided by Dockery (1991:80) will be used:

Inerrancy – the idea that when all the facts are known, the Bible (in its autographs, that is, the original documents), properly interpreted in light of the culture and the means of communication that had developed by the time of its composition, is completely true in all that it affirms, to the degree of precision intended by the author's purpose, in all matters relating to God and His creation.

great deal of disagreement on this matter, as mentioned.

A further factor to consider in defining inerrancy is what Andrew (2002:6-7) defines as *objective* versus *subjective* inerrancy. Andrew writes

The hinge on which the debate swings is hermeneutical. There are very few inerrantists who argue for an *objective* inerrancy, in which statements in Scripture ought to be interpreted apart from their grammatical and historical contexts. For example, an *objective* inerrantist would argue that when Christ said that the mustard seed “is the smallest of all the seeds” (Matthew 13:31–32), He meant the mustard seed is indeed the smallest seed in all the world. *Subjective* inerrancy, on the other hand, emphasizes the need to understand the text from the author’s point of view. Accordingly, a *subjective* inerrantist might argue that both Matthew and Jesus intended the statement to be understood from the perspective of ancient Palestinian farmers, for whom the mustard seed is in fact the smallest seed. [my emphasis]

This author affirms the *subjective* inerrancy definition as being in line with the definition of inerrancy previously provided by Dockery. The case for the *inerrancy* of Scripture arises from the Bible’s own teaching concerning its verbal, plenary *inspiration* (Pache [1969] 1980:120; Wellum 2003:242-245). Wellum (2003:241) insists the Bible’s inerrancy is “of epistemological necessity if we affirm that Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) is ultimately the necessary and sufficient condition to warrant and justify any theological proposal.” Nicole (2002:118) argues that since the Bible repeatedly claims to be God’s Word and God cannot err, the necessary corollary is that the Scripture is inerrant as “God’s Word.”

It would take us beyond the scope of this study to argue the case for the inspiration of Scripture, which has been argued fully by many others (Custer 1968:13-60; Pache [1969] 1980; Blum 1980:39-53; Wenham 1980:3-36; Grudem 1983:19-59). The case for the inspiration of Scripture will not be argued for in this study, but rather this study will simply begin with a definition of inspiration from Young’s (1957:27) classic work.

According to the Bible, inspiration is a superintendence of God the Holy Spirit over the writers of the Scriptures, as a result of which these Scriptures possess Divine authority and trustworthiness and, possessing such Divine authority and trustworthiness, are free from error.

Wellum (2003:246) also affirms that inspiration has two biblical emphases, the Spirit’s work in and upon the human authors which results in a God-breathed text, which is commonly called the “concurvive view” of inspiration (Wellum 2003:247). It is apparent

from Young's quotation that he concludes that inerrancy is a corollary of inspiration⁵ as does Wellum (2003:249). Young (1957:55) argues that only the original copies were inspired. These are often called the *autographa* or "original autographs."

The problem in proving the inerrancy of the original autographs resides in the fact that none of these are extant. Consequently, when many people talk about inerrancy they speak of it in terms of "in the original autographs," recognizing that no single manuscript copy or translation has engendered universal acceptance or confidence (Stuart 1980:99). Even the issue of the original autographs is somewhat complicated. For instance, when one speaks of the book of Psalms, it needs to be recognized that it is a compilation of various original autographs. Thus one might need to speak of the original autograph of each separate psalm, then of the original autograph of the "book of Psalms" with its 150 psalms (Stuart 1980:111). This caution, is designed to make one aware that the concept of the "original autograph" is somewhat fluid and includes the later editorial work of probably another individual, but still under the inspiration of God (Stuart: 1980:112). Grisanti (2001:582) argues:

Within the canonical process, and subsequent to the initial writing of a biblical book or books, a God-chosen individual or prophetic figure under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit could adjust, revise, or update pre-existing biblical material in order to make a given Scripture passage understandable to succeeding generations. Those revisions, which occurred within the compositional history of the OT, are also inspired and inerrant.

Since the original autographs cannot be produced, it is apparent that the argument for their inerrancy is based upon philosophical assumptions rather than empirical data (Young 1957:86; Henry 1990:105). Why speak then of inerrancy? Henry (1990:106) replies:

To say that all talk of inerrant originals is irrelevant since we possess only errant copies overlooks an important point. There is a significant difference between a supposedly authoritative copy that is necessarily errant, and an authoritative inerrant original of which we have an errant copy. In one instance we deal with a text that is inherently fallible, and are faced at all points with the possibility of human error; in the other, we are offered an essentially trustworthy text which here and there, wherever divergences in the copies attest, some evident alteration has taken place, even if largely grammatical and not involving doctrinal revision.

⁵ Hodges (1994:99-114) provides a helpful overview of different views of inspiration by evangelicals.

Also at stake, in this discussion of the inerrancy of the original autographs, is the ethical issue of the honor and veracity of God. Since God tells us in the Bible that His Word is true and it is God-breathed or inspired (2 Tm 3:16), the presence of errors, even minor ones, in the original autographs raises issues concerning God's trustworthiness. Subsequently, the extent to which one can have confidence in the other more major matters is also affected (Young 1957:86-89; Pache [1969] 1980:135). Helm (2002:246) argues, "We cannot reject the trustworthiness of Scripture (or whatever else is the vehicle) without undermining any coherent basis for knowing that God is trustworthy."

Since we do not possess the original autographs, the possibility that portions of inspired Scripture have been lost, must be addressed. Mark 16:9-20 is an example of a text, which is debated as to its inclusion in the category of inspired Scripture. There are also indications in the NT that Paul may have written more letters to Corinth than are found in the canon and possibly a letter to the Laodiceans (Col 4:16). There are also sayings of Jesus, which are claimed to be found in sources outside the NT canon which, would need to be considered.

Do such possibilities negate inspiration and inerrancy? Actually no, rather they indicate the need to distinguish between inspiration/inerrancy and the issue of preservation. When one speaks of preservation, it is important to emphasize that the preservation of only the inspired writings is in view. One must recognize that everything a biblical writer pens is not necessarily inspired, and consequently it is possible not all of Paul's letters for example, were necessarily preserved. Jesus' words that are found outside the New Testament (assuming we could prove they were truly His) would be inerrant and trustworthy but not inspired. At issue here is our definition of inspiration, which refers strictly to what is inscripturated within the canon (Wallace 1991:45).

Since God did not choose to preserve the original autographs and rather preserved only errant copies, then those holding to the inspiration/inerrancy of the Bible, must make textual criticism an important part of their studies as they seek to determine the original autographs (Stuart 1980:106). Young (1957:57) provides a helpful illustration of this truth with a story of a letter from the President of the United States to a class which is subsequently lost and all that remains are copies of it made by the students. Nevertheless, from their copies they could determine the original wording. At issue is whether one must

have total evidence or sufficient evidence to speak of inerrancy (Belcher 1980:38). This issue will be addressed later also.

2.2.2 The relationship of the *autographa* and the *apographa*

The *apographa* are the copies of the *autographa*. Since it is argued that the *autographa* are inspired and inerrant, what about the copies, the *apographa*? A number of scholars (Letis 1990:18-30; Sandlin 1997:4-5) contend that historically the Reformed churches maintained that the *apographa* was inspired and providentially preserved by God.⁶ They argue this is the viewpoint enshrined in the Westminster Confession of Faith (hereafter WCF). They also contend that B. B. Warfield and the Princetonians introduced the concept of the inerrancy of the *autographa* (Letis 1990:32-37; Sandlin 1997:5).

This argument is flawed for a number of reasons. The primary flaw in this argument is that these writers in their defense of the *apographa* and the WCF make an indefensible and unstated division of the *apographa* into the manuscripts that lie behind the KJV and the “Received Text” and all the other manuscripts, which they often *disparage* as recent and untrustworthy. Yet the *apographa* refers to all copies not just the preferred few of these men. The desire for certainty lies behind these arguments. Sandlin (1997:5) concludes his argument in this fashion:

For the Reformation heritage, it is the preserved text in the church, not the long-lost autographs, that constitutes the infallible word of God. A single authoritative text undergirds a single authoritative theology and single authoritative dogma – *and therefore a single authoritative Christian commonwealth*. [his emphasis]

One can also question their conclusions historically. Woodbridge (1982:81-82) has argued that Whitaker (1588) in debate with the Roman Catholic scholar, Bellarmine, maintained a distinction between the pure *autographa* and copies which he possessed which may have some copyist’s errors (Woodbridge 1982:187n67). This undermines Letis’ contention that Warfield introduced the distinction between an inerrant *autographa* and errant *apographa*. The admission that Huelsemann held that only the original manuscripts were inspired (Letis 1990:25n16) is significant when one recalls that Letis is

⁶ Letis (1996:35-44) maintains that the “Ecclesiastical Text,” the text used by the Church throughout its history with unbroken usage within the Greek Church, is the true “*textus receptus*” or text received by the church. He considers the issue of an inerrant *autographa* the quest for certainty of American Fundamentalism.

following Sandeen's (1962:307-21) proposal and charging the invention of this distinction concerning the original *autographa* to Warfield hundreds of years later!⁷ Finally, Warfield ([1894] 1973:592) maintained that the WCF in speaking of Scripture being "kept pure" by God's care and providence refers to the Westminster divines' recognition that this "pure text" was to be found not in one copy but all copies of the *apographa*.

Goodrick (1988:42, 113) argues that inerrancy applies to the original autographs, while inspiration also applies to the copies (1988:62) and to translations (1988:74). Goodrick argues this because copies of the Masoretic Text and Septuagint (hereafter LXX) texts were used by Jesus and the apostles, which they referred to as γραφή. He also bases his argument on the fact that 2 Timothy 3:16 refers to all γραφή. The argument emanates from the concern that the translations found in English Bibles are not inspired if only the original autographs were inspired and there are no errorless copies. While one can understand the desire to bolster the authority of the Bible in its translated forms, this argument actually plays havoc with the historic concept of inspiration. The original autographs were considered "God-breathed" and these alone, and on that basis one could argue for inerrancy. Goodrick's argument would effectively undermine that argument as he interjects a division between inspiration and inerrancy. Dunzweiler (1986:189) speaks of the "inspiredness" of the *apographa*. "Inspiredness" was defined as 'a unique quality, inherent in the autographs in a primary, immediate, absolute sense, but also retained in the apographs in a derived, secondary, mediate, and relative sense'" (Dunzweiler 1986:189). Only the *autographa* have traditionally been considered inspired. Dunzweiler (1986:190) admits that "inspiredness" does not require inerrancy.

Does the reference to γραφή in 2 Timothy 3:16 refer to the *autographa* or the *apographa* or both? Goodrick (1982:481-82) argues that it must refer to the *apographa*. Wolfe (1990:125-127) notes that 2 Timothy 3:16 presents an unparalleled usage of γραφή in the NT, due to several factors. There are only three other anarthrous examples (Jn 19:37; 1 Pet 2:6; 2 Pet 1:20), only three other occasions where γραφή refers to all of Scripture (Jn 10:35; Gal 3:22; 2 Pet 1:20), and only one other use of πᾶς with γραφή

⁷ Sandeen's proposal has been subjected to careful historical scrutiny and shown to be flawed by, John D. Woodbridge and Randall H. Balmer, "The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment Of The Ernest Sandeen Proposal," in *Scripture And Truth*, eds. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 251-79.

(Luke 24:27). This last example though is not a good parallel since it is both plural and accompanied by the article. Thus, Wolfe rightly concludes that this phrase is somewhat unique in the NT.

One needs to recognize that Goodrick seems to make a logical/semantic mistake in his argument. He (1988:62) has in fact assumed that γραφή has the same referent/meaning in all its uses. The fact that in 2 Timothy 3:16 the *autographa* could be the proper referent/meaning for γραφή needs to be seriously considered and one not simply assume that γραφή has the same referent/meaning as in other contexts. The other unique contextual factor one must consider is the word θεόπνευστος a *hapax legomenon*. Wolfe (1990:144) concludes that γραφή in 2 Timothy 3:16 is being described in terms of its divine character, specifically, having its origin in the divine activity of God. The question one must ask concerning this “God-breathed” or “inspired” Scripture is does this description apply equally well to the *autographa* and *apographa*? Goodrick’s (1982:482) argument that the *apographa* are inspired, neuters this divine activity by equating it with the fallible, human, process of making copies of Scripture, which is not in agreement with the unique activity described in Scripture (2 Pet 1:20-21). As Young (1957:55-56) writes:

If the Scripture is “God-breathed,” it naturally follows that only the original is “God-breathed.” If holy men of God spoke as they were borne by the Holy Spirit, then only what they spoke under the Spirit’s bearing is inspired. It would certainly be unwarrantable to maintain that copies of what they spoke were also inspired, since these copies were not made as men were borne of the Spirit. They were therefore not “God-breathed” as was the original.

Goodrick’s position presents us with an inspired but errant Bible. His distinction between inspiration and inerrancy is really unsatisfactory as it fails to produce the certainty he longs for in the present Scripture translations. In the process, he draws an unbiblical division between inspiration and inerrancy and yet one wonders how this is an improvement since to argue for an inerrant Scripture he too must ultimately appeal to the *autographa*. Note how Goodrick (1982:483) concludes, “Although we must be quick to admit its absolute character is lost when we leave the autographs and turn to the Bible-in-hand, we must insist that its true character is not lost.” Bahnsen (1980:151-193) has addressed this concern and presented extensive argumentation in support of the inerrancy

of the *autographa* as a biblically supportable position, while at the same time arguing that there is no biblical support for the idea that the *apographa* is inspired or inerrant.

Should translations be called “the Word of God”? Nicole (1980:79) argues that, “Any translation is entitled to acceptance as the Word of God to the extent that it corresponds to the original.” This is a common understanding and usage.

2.2.3 The preservation of the text

When one speaks of the preservation of the manuscripts of the Bible it is necessary to address the issue of what was preserved, why they were preserved and how they were preserved. In addressing the issue of how the text was preserved it is not the mechanics of preserving parchments or animals hides that is under consideration but questions pertaining to the recognition and acceptance of certain manuscripts (books) into the canon. This can be further narrowed to a more specific issue yet. How was God’s revelation preserved from the infiltration of error or malicious tampering? White (1995:47-48) gives a nice summary of the significance of God’s chosen method of preservation:

One might well see a tremendous amount of wisdom in the way in which God worked over the years. By having the text of the New Testament in particular “explode” across the known world, ending up in the far-flung corners of the Roman Empire in a relatively short period of time, God protected that text from the one thing that we could never detect: the wholesale change of doctrine or theology by one particular man or group who had full control over the text at any one point in history. You see, because the New Testament books were written at various times, and were quickly copied and distributed as soon as they were written, there was never a time when one man, or any group of men, could gather up all the manuscripts and make extensive changes in the text itself, such as cutting out the deity of Christ, or inserting some foreign doctrine or concept. No one could gather up the texts and try to make them all say the same thing by “harmonizing” them, either. If someone had indeed done such a thing, we could never know for certain what the apostles had written, and what the truth actually is. But such a thing did not, *and could not*, happen. Indeed, by the time anyone did obtain great ecclesiastical power in the name of Christianity, texts like *P*⁶⁶ or *P*⁷⁵ were already long buried in the sands in Egypt, out of the reach of anyone who would try to alter them. The fact that their text is nearly identical to even the most “Byzantine” manuscript of 1,000 years later is testimony to the overall purity of the New Testament text.

White (1995:48) has also touched on one of the reasons why God used this method of early, wide distribution of the manuscripts (*apographa*), in order to prevent wholesale doctrinal changes. Several writers (Young 1957:61; Wenham 1994:194) have suggested that another possible reason the *autographa* was not preserved is that it may have led to an idolatrous worship of it. Stuart (1980:100-101) also notes that in discussing the reason why God did not preserve perfect copies (*apographa*) of the *autographa*, a choice was made by the copyists either between production or perfection. It would have required the better part of a lifetime to meticulously check each document as it was copied. As noted above we have no indication that inspiration attended to the *apographa* and therefore only a time consuming, laborious checking and rechecking of the copies would be able to eliminate the divergences in the copying of the *autographa*. The primary interest was to pass on copies of this revelation to others eager to read this new “Word of God.”

The need for the writings of the apostles to be distributed to other churches required the copying of the *autographa*. Originally, these copies (*apographa*) were made privately by hand since there were no scriptoria before AD 200. This of course accounts for the different readings in different manuscripts as the copiers introduced errors into the manuscripts. Metzger (1992:186-206) provides a fine overview of the various causes that contributed to the introduction of errors in the transmission of the text of the NT.

In answering what has been preserved, we can appreciate that we have a multitude of good but not perfect copies of the *autographa*. Some might complain about this situation but as Stuart (1980:111) points out, the multitude of texts even with their divergences can after careful comparison (textual criticism) give us a far greater certainty than “the credulous certification of any one text could ever do.” Harris (1968:97) argues that the facts support the Westcott and Hort dictum that not one-tenth of one per cent of the NT is in dispute and none of this concerns any doctrines of the faith. Still some might be concerned about the entrance of errors through additions to the text. The Alands (1987:56, 286-287) address this concern with what they call the *tenacity* of the variant or reading in NT textual tradition. They mean that once a variant or new reading enters the tradition it refuses to disappear and this provides an assurance of certainty in establishing the original text.

When speaking of textual purity Schnaiter (1997:113-114) reminds us that Warfield (1886:11) argued one should distinguish between this and the purity of the sense of a given message. This is the difference between purity of the wording and the thought/message. The latter can be maintained even if at times the former is not, simply because it is possible to say the same thing reliably in more than one way. Thus, even though the message remains “pure” a textual critic may refer to one text as “corrupt” or “pure” while really addressing simply the issue of wording, not meaning. The textual transmission of the message of the Bible is virtually unaffected by the many “corruptions” found in the textual tradition. In this sense, one can thankfully speak of God’s preservation of his inspired revelation, the “pure message,” while recognizing the important role of textual criticism in finding the “pure wording.”

Wallace (1991:41) maintains that any doctrine of preservation that requires the exact wording of the text to be preserved at all is wrong-headed. He (1991:41-43) makes the following arguments; that the doctrine of preservation is a recent doctrine, that there is no good exegetical support for it, and it should not be considered a “doctrine” since it is lacking biblical and historical support. This allows him (1991:43n77) to argue that a viable variant could turn up which would affect a major doctrine and yet this would not overthrow our view of God’s providential care of the text, although it would need to be reworded.

This interesting claim has two facets worth considering. Is textual criticism’s pursuit of the *autographa* burdened with a degree of “uncertainty” due not simply to indecision as to the correct variant in a text, but rather also to the possible complete “lack of evidence” for a “lost variant”? The Dead Sea Scrolls shed light on the Old Testament text in new ways, revealing that there were variants (although very few in number), not accounted for in the Masoretic text or in any of the versions (Cook 1994:184-185). What the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal then, is the simple but possibly unsettling fact, that God may have preserved a few variants of his genuine text (*autographa*) in some yet undiscovered manuscripts. This of course forces us to address the issue of certainty concerning the *autographa*. The idea that there are textual variants that are permanently lost is of course impossible to prove! This writer takes the position that God has preserved his original

text throughout the ages though some variants of it could hypothetically be in yet undiscovered manuscripts.⁸

Wallace's (1991:43n77) second argument is that a "genuine variant" of the *autographa* could be found that might throw a different light on some doctrine. This part of his argument is more problematic though, in its supposition that a "genuine variant," which contradicts an existing theological doctrine might be found. This seems problematic for several reasons. First, the basis on which it would be determined to be "genuine" is hard to fathom, since both internal and external evidence are to be considered. Secondly, the distinct possibility that this "divergent variant" was the product of an unorthodox group would need to be considered and that would argue against its genuineness. It would seem that while Wallace would be correct in arguing that a "genuine variant" could be "uncovered" at some point in history, the conclusion that it could be in contradiction to existing theological doctrine is problematic.

2.2.4 Inerrancy and historical certainty

It would be helpful to remember that when one speaks of the errors in the manuscripts that the three most common areas of distortion or contradiction between the many manuscripts are in the areas of names, dates, and numbers. These have been historically the most easily subject to distortion and corruption in copying (Stuart 1980:113). As Stuart (1980:115-116) reminds us, not only is the percentage of the original New Testament (99%) and Old Testament (95%+) words recoverable with a high degree of certainty, but no area of Christian faith stands or falls on the basis of textual studies. These percentages may even be higher now, twenty years later. One begins to wonder what percentage of certainty is expected. It can only be assumed that 100% certainty is desired, but is this reasonable?

Wenham (1994:192) states that the quest for absolute proof is based upon a misunderstanding of the nature of history, theology, and the human mind. He (1994:194) concludes that we have an inerrant *autographa* and "essential infallibility" in the copies and translations. Montgomery (1974:38) declares, "Evidence for biblical inerrancy (whether viewed from the angle of Textual Criticism or from the more general

⁸ Texts like Psalm 12:6-7, Matthew 24:35, John 10:35 seem to provide support for the concept of "preservation" although not of any specific text-type nor do these texts necessitate that the "preservation"

perspective of Apologetics) is never *itself* inerrant, but this by no means makes the inerrancy claim irrational.” Belcher (1980:38-40) notes that total evidence would demand the presence of the *autographa* and we do not expect total evidence for other doctrines such as the Trinity, creation, the incarnation, miracles, or the resurrection. Total evidence demands that we examine things on a first hand basis and this is not possible. Wallace (1991:38) rightly points out that the quest for truth is not the same as the quest for certainty. He argues that truth is objective reality, while certainty is the level of subjective apprehension of something perceived to be true. The one is true whether we believe it or not, while the other deals with our degree of conviction concerning what we perceive/believe to be the truth.

Some evangelicals hold to the inerrancy of the *autographa* and while this may seem illogical, it has been argued that this is actually the most logical position to take in light of the biblical evidence. In fact, inerrancy of the *autographa* requires that evangelicals give attention to textual criticism. There are complex issues surrounding the relationship of the *autographa* and copies and translations, but only the *autographa* should be considered inspired and inerrant. This may be troubling for some that seek a greater degree of certainty, but this only exhibits a need for a greater understanding concerning the nature of faith, history, and evidence.

2.3 PARADIGM SHIFTS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

In seeking to understand the debate concerning the inerrancy of Scripture, which lead to the publication of *The Battle For The Bible* by Harold Lindsell (1976), first an effort will be made to understand the roots of the debate by tracing some of the major philosophical and theological ideas that contributed to the debate on inerrancy. A number of scholars following the ideas of Thomas Kuhn (1970) concerning paradigm shifts have sought to apply his thesis to biblical studies and the history of interpretation. They have suggested that several major paradigm shifts have occurred in biblical studies since the fifteenth century; the Reformation marked a major paradigm shift followed by the historical-critical paradigm and more recently, since the late 1970's, a paradigm shift associated with modern literary studies.(Poythress 1988:56-63; Spangenberg 1994:1-6).

John Feinberg (1989:168-179) has noted that Kuhn adopts a pragmatic theory of

be a “public” preservation constantly available throughout the age of the Church.

truth and rejects the notion of absolute truth. Kuhn also describes the shift to a new paradigm as occurring in a moment of commitment, which appears to be supra-rational or even irrational. Thus the continuity between the paradigms is often down played and the shifts are termed “revolutions” signifying something dramatically different. The paradigms discussed in this work evidence a combination of similarity and difference, thus revealing elements of continuity with the past and yet also clearly revealing new emphases or approaches which mark a divergence from the past methodology or paradigm.

These paradigm shifts do not imply that the previous methodology was completely abandoned, but rather they continue to exist, although their adherents may be reduced in numbers. Some theologians seek to merge the new paradigm with the old one under which they were operating (Spangenberg 1994:7). Thus, there are those who still seek to approach Scripture employing the Reformation paradigm, others from the historical-critical, some from the new literary approach and still others from a combination of these three paradigms. The evangelical community contains adherents to all of these diverse approaches, which as one may conclude contributes in large part to the diversity of interpretation among evangelicals and to the conflict over inerrancy.

2.3.1 The Reformation paradigm

Martin Luther's (1483-1546) polemical writings and disputations against the Roman Catholic Church played an instrumental role in the paradigm shift associated with the Reformation. The nailing of his ninety-five theses to the door of the Schlosskirche in Wittenberg in 1517 sparked the beginning of the Reformation (Rogerson, Rowland & Lindars 1988:308).

The Reformation paradigm orbits around at least four concepts; the perspecuity of Scripture, the analogy of faith, the study of the original languages, and a hermeneutical practice which sought the literal sense of Scripture (Bruce 1979:31; Spangenberg 1994:2). Some of these were continuations of the linguistic methods and historical concerns developed by the humanists, but now adapted in accordance with the theological concerns of the Reformers, who shifted the role of the Bible's authority from a supplementary role to that of the sole norm for faith and conduct (Chouinard 1986:202).

The Reformers held to the unity, harmony and inerrancy of the Scriptures due to

their foundational presupposition, the inspiration and divine authorship of Scripture (Woodbridge 1980:179-183; Preus 1984:114-140). This return to the Bible as the primary source for the Church's theology (*sola scriptura*) involved not only the rejection of the allegorical method with its fourfold meaning in favour of the historical-grammatical method, but also the rejection of the Apocrypha. Other critical historical questions were raised concerning the authorship of books like Hebrews and Song of Solomon (Gasque 1978:148).

The Reformation was considerably more than a change of direction in biblical studies, such as has been mentioned above, it also precipitated a major cultural revolution which Runia (1993:148) summarised in the following points:

1. It left Europeans with a profound crisis of authority.
2. It re-imposed upon Europeans a distinction between Christianity and culture.
3. It set in motion various social and political forces leading eventually to religious toleration in most European societies.

2.3.2 The historical-critical paradigm

The emergence of the historical-critical paradigm can be viewed in two stages. The *critical component* of the paradigm emerged during the seventeenth century, while the *historical component* emerged during the last decades of the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century (Spangenberg 1994:4).

A conglomeration of factors gave rise to the *critical* approach to Scripture following the Reformation. In the realm of science, the discoveries of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) which were followed up by Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Johann Kepler (1571-1630), and subsequently Isaac Newton (1642-1727), challenged not only the traditional scientific cosmology but also laid the foundation for a new approach to science with a methodology founded upon mathematics and experimentation. This would result in questions concerning the exact relationship between science and the Bible, and a new conviction that the world was run by natural law which the mind of man was capable of understanding (Webber 1976:204). Up until the middle of the seventeenth century, attempts were constantly made to bring the new scientific findings into accord with an infallible Scripture, but this would change with Isaac La Peyrère (1655), who was instrumental in challenging Bishop Ussher's dating of the creation at 4004 BC. He suggested instead that humans had existed as far back as 50,000 BC, and thus set off the warfare between science

and theology. Although reaction against his ideas was swift and strong, both Benedict Spinoza and Richard Simon were greatly influenced by his work (Woodbridge 1980:203, 1985:202-203).

There was also an epistemological revolution taking place as voices were being heard proclaiming new ways of knowing. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) promoted inductive study and knowledge through science. René Descartes (1596-1650) insisted that all knowledge must be based upon reason. Humanity came to stand at the center of the universe as Descartes reacted to Michel de Montaigne's scepticism and preoccupation with self (Williams 1994:36-37). In seeking to provide a universal methodology to arrive at truth capable of being applied to any discipline, Descartes formulated his principle of “universal doubt” whereby truth became linked inseparably with that which is proven or demonstrated. This raised questions concerning the value and truthfulness of the Bible (Evans, McGrath & Galloway 1986:176-77; Scholder 1990:112-120). Others such as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) were espousing rationalism but it was Benedict Spinoza (1632-77) who had a significant impact in the development of the critical study of the Bible. Spinoza, like his successors in the historical-critical field, gave reason an exalted place assuming that Scripture was accessible to impartial reason. With respect to the study of the Bible itself, he held it should be studied in the same way that nature is studied and like any other book is studied. This conception of the Bible as essentially a human document remained a primary dictum of historical-criticism. As Craigie (1978:29-30) notes, implicit in this dictum is the view that the Bible records man's aspiration for God, rather than God's self-revelation. This approach led Spinoza to the denial of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, denial of miracles, and allegations of contradictions amongst the writings of the apostles (Baird 1992:6).

The scientific and epistemological revolutions or Copernican and Cartesian revolutions as they are traditionally labelled cleared the way for the emergence of the historical-critical approach. For many the Bible was no longer a reliable guide for human history or science and its authoritative role was doubted or outright rejected.

By the end of the seventeenth century exegetes were starting to treat the Bible as any other historical document. As reason was freed from dogmatic concerns the foundation for a totally objective and free historical investigation of the Bible could take place (or at least so many thought). Now autonomous human reason would judge the Bible and its

significance for the present age, and the Bible would not simply be assumed to be an authoritative voice which spoke to the reader (Goppelt 1981:256; Chouinard 1986:204).

Semler, Michaelis and Lessing stand as pivotal figures in the development of this new approach. All three approached the Bible apart from confessional or theological concerns, which meant a rejection of the Reformation view of the inspiration and canonicity of the books of the Bible. The Bible is distinguished from revelation or the Word of God and thus historical research can be pursued rigorously while still maintaining that the Bible has significance (Kümmel 1972:63-73; Baird 1992:154).

Many scholars (Kümmel 1972:62-69; Bruce 1979:37) tie the paradigm shift associated with the historical-critical methodology to the labours of Johann S. Semler (1725-91) and Johann D. Michaelis (1717-91). G. E. Lessing (1729-81) also stands as a pivotal figure in this transition, not only for his own publications but also because of his work in publishing the Wolfenbüttel Fragments or “Anonymous Fragments” (1774ff), which were written by H. S. Reimarus (1694-1768). This proved to be the impetus for a proliferation of studies on the life of Jesus, as scholars sought to explain the historical Jesus in terms of his Jewish milieu. Goppelt (1981:258) argued that:

This hermeneutical program meant nothing short of a total break with the hermeneutical principle of the Reformation. The double negation implied --without the author being aware of it--the following: no longer *analogia fidei*, “catechism,” and no longer *analogia scripturae sacrae*, “the apostles,” but instead *analogia historica*, the “Jewish milieu.”

Lessing followed Spinoza's lead with his famous “ugly ditch” dictum where he concludes that “accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.” Alister McGrath (1994:29) delineates three elements within Lessing's account of the problem of faith and history:

1. a *chronological* ditch, which separates the past from the present; 2. a *metaphysical* ditch, which separates accidental historical truths from universal and necessary rational truths; and 3. an *existential* ditch, which separates modern human existence from the religious message of a distant past.

The “ugly ditch” is a division between two categories of truth. There are the truths of history and the truths of faith. Faith is rational and rests upon universal moral truths, which are intuitively perceived as self-authenticating and not dependant upon any historical facts (Long 1994:102-103). Lessing also asked why an event such as the resurrection of

Jesus even if it could be known with a degree of historical certainty, should be elevated to such epistemological heights. This “scandal of particularity” was better avoided and replaced with the truth(s) available to all people in all times and all places through the universal human faculty of reason (McGrath 1994:32). Stephen Neill (Neill & Wright 1988:301) aptly notes, “German theology has perhaps never quite freed itself from the influence of this judgement of Lessing.”

The dichotomy between faith and science owes much of its impetus to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). He sought to combine the best of British empiricism with the best of rationalism, producing a transcendental critique which made the human mind the ultimate source of meaning and understanding. Gruenler (1991:37) comments, “In Kant's new system of the transcendental self, the mind determines the way in which the world is perceived. The world can be known only on human terms as it appears to us, never as it is in itself.” Science cannot invade the domain of faith and faith cannot invade the domain of science. This view would characterise historical-critical studies for the next several centuries as encounter with God would be confined to the subjective realm leaving the Bible to be subjected to purely historical research according to the canons of naturalistic and rationalistic criticism (Gruenler 1991:38-40).

One of the first advocates of this historical criticism was Johann P. Gabler (1753-1826), who was one of the initial scholars to distinguish between biblical and dogmatic theology. Biblical theology discerns the universal, unchanging truths revealed in the Bible so that dogmatic or systematic theology can incorporate them into a Christian philosophy that is capable of addressing the present situation (Baird 1992:185). The earlier revelation which is not confirmed by Jesus, the apostles or by reason is of no value for dogmatic theology. Reason played such a significant role in subsequent undertakings in this field that the biblical theology produced often bore striking resemblance to the prevailing philosophy of the time (Fuller 1978:202).

Muller (1989:35) summarises the dominant directions of study in the nineteenth century that arose out of this methodology:

Baur and Strauss together point toward the great emphasis of nineteenth-century theology on history and historical methodology, particularly as focused on the issues of Christianity as a historical phenomenon and the problem of the historical Jesus. It is fair to say that these two issues, as mediated through the history-of-religions school as it developed in the nineteenth century after Baur and the “life of Jesus

Movement” and its critics in the wake of Strauss, remained the great issues of liberal Christianity. Moreover, as modified by phenomenology of religion and the more critical ground rules of NT study supplied by Schweitzer's critique of the “old quest,” Bultmann's program of demythologization, and the rise of the “new quest,” they are the issues that still confront much of liberal Christianity.

Ironically, the use of critical methods was given more credibility by its employment by evangelicals such as Fenton A. J. Hort (1828-1892), B. F. Westcott (1825-1901), and J. B. Lightfoot (1828-1889), who while employing the methodology arrived at conservative conclusions. This in turn seemed to lead to an acceptance of a more liberal criticism of the Old Testament (Cameron 1987:273; Noll 1986:64).

William Robertson Smith (1846-1894) a member of the Free Church of Scotland is reflective of this acceptance of a more critical approach to Scripture in Great Britain. Smith professed to adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith and to truly Reformation principles while employing critical methodologies to his study of the Old Testament. Smith exemplified a growing number of scholars who tried to combine an evangelical orthodoxy with the use of historical-critical methods. He was removed from his professorship at the Free Church College, Aberdeen but was not required to forfeit his status as a minister of the Church. This case reflects the lack of discernment concerning the philosophical presuppositions of the historical-critical methodology, which many thought they could employ with a strict academic detachment. It also received such publicity in Great Britain and America that it popularised the historical-critical methodology. Smith was also a precursor of those evangelicals who argue for a limitation of the infallibility of Scripture to spiritual matters (Keddie 1976:27-39; Nelson 1978:199-216; Cameron 1987:204, 262, 1994:246-249).

Noll (1986:15-31) notes that the Smith case in Scotland received significant discussion in the *Presbyterian Review* from April 1881-1883. A. A. Hodge and others of Princeton Seminary attacked Smith's views and their defense by Charles A. Briggs of Union Seminary. Briggs would eventually be suspended from the Presbyterian ministry in 1893 and Union Seminary would also leave the denomination and become independent. Satta (2005:87) notes that ironically Briggs repeatedly contended during his trial that the inerrancy of the *autographa* was a new teaching as he attempted to make it appear that his views represented the historic approach. The much publicised cases of Briggs and Smith would provide a seedbed for the increased growth of the historical-critical methodology.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the historical-critical methodology was well established in Europe and North America but it faced fierce opposition in North America from fundamentalists particularly from 1919 onward when an anti-German sentiment was fused with an anti-liberal sentiment (Fea 1994:186).

This opposition did not mean that the use of the historical-critical methodology was not still being employed by some evangelicals and this very issue lay at the heart of Lindsell's book (1976), which precipitated a point of crisis in the evangelical community concerning the doctrine of inerrancy. Lindsell argued that at the heart of the controversy over the "battle for the Bible" was the issue of the employment of the historical-critical methodology. Others such as Gerhard Maier (1977) were also criticising the historical-critical method and calling for changes. Scholars, from diverse disciplines, such as J. Muilenburg and N. Frye, were calling for an approach to the study of Scripture which focused upon the unity and style of the writings. This demanded a radical break with the prevailing historical-critical approach which was atomistic in its use of source, form and redaction criticism (Longman 1987:16-25).

2.3.3 The literary studies paradigm

While one can speak of a major shift in biblical studies associated with a study of the Bible as literature beginning in the 1970's, this should not be construed as signifying anything resembling a consensus in terms of methodology or literary approach to the Bible. For traditional literary critics the focus continues to be upon the text, examining things like plot, setting, and characterisation in a story and issues like pattern, imagery, and figurative language in poetry. Ryken (1993:61-64) delineates a number of concerns that characterise the movement in general. He believes it is governed by:

1. a desire to produce 'alternate readings' thus Harold Bloom speaks of reversing twenty-five hundred years of institutionalized misreading;
2. claims of ambiguity and indeterminate meaning such as in Frank Kermode's reading of Mark;
3. an antididacticism where it is assumed that the 'how' of the biblical writing is important but not the 'what';
4. an assumption of complexity in the writings;
5. rejection of unified or holistic readings.

Ryken (1993:64) concludes the trends fall under the format of a desecralising of the Bible, reading the Bible outside of the context of a community of faith.

Chronologically one could speak of a transition from an emphasis upon author-centered to text-centered to reader-centered literary theories (Spangenberg 1994:6). Structuralism is a text-centered approach that has impacted biblical studies. Poythress (1978:221) notes that “Structuralism is more a diverse collection of methods, paradigms and personal preferences than it is a ‘system,’ a theory or a well formulated thesis.” In reader-centered approaches the reader creates the meaning or the reader in interaction with the text creates the meaning. In biblical studies this approach is commonly practiced by what may be described as feminist readings (Loades 1998:81-94) and political readings of the biblical texts (Gorringe 1998:67-80). Evangelicals have practiced and advocated both literary criticism (Weima 2001:150-169) and discourse analysis (Black 1992:90-98; Longacre 1992:271-286; Guthrie 2001:253-271). Inerrancy is not always an issue for many involved in the literary study of Scripture as Scripture is often studied as *ahistorical* without any conclusions necessarily being drawn as to the historicity of the events.

2.3.4 Evangelicals, the inerrancy debate and paradigm shifts

After the historical-critical method made its first inroads into the North American and British realms of scholarship it began to be employed with greater frequency by scholars of different theological persuasions. The differences between British and American evangelicals in their approach to critical methodologies in the 1920's and following are reflected in the rise of fundamentalism in America and the lack of a similar movement in Britain (Noll 1986:78-90; Fea 1994:185-189).

The debate concerning the inerrancy of Scripture had its roots in the earlier debates associated with the names of B. B. Warfield in the 1880's and J. Gresham Machen in the 1930's. Packer (1980:47) argues that Dewey Beegle's (1963) *The Inspiration of Scripture* was a pivotal publication in the rise of inerrancy debates amongst evangelicals. The Wenham, Massachusetts conference in 1966 saw fifty-one biblical scholars from ten countries come together for ten days of private meetings in an effort to heal a breach that was forming between faculty and trustees at Fuller Theological Seminary. All the participants professed to be evangelicals but there was a significant division on the issue of inerrancy. Ultimately, the conference only revealed the deep cleavage that existed between the two sides (Lindsell 1976:131-132; Packer 1996:104-105).

Bernard Ramm in a 1969 article, “The Relationship of Science, Factual Statements and the Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy” argued that evangelicals should accept that there are errors in the Bible, while recognizing the Bible’s authority and sufficiency in teaching us all that we need to know for salvation and godliness (Packer 1996:103). Daniel Fuller’s 1972 article, “The Nature of Biblical Inerrancy” also argued that errors in matters of history or science were not surprising since the inspiration of Scripture pertained to keeping the writers of Scripture free from error in “revelational matters” such as the means of salvation, not in areas of non-revelational matters (Packer 1996:50-51).

In the late 1960's and early 1970's the inerrancy debate revolved around the concept of “limited inerrancy” and whether the Bible was inerrant in all that it said including on matters of history and science, or whether it was more correct to speak of inerrancy in conjunction with the purpose of Scripture, inerrant in matters of “faith and practice” only. Coleman (1979:78) did not want to restrict inerrancy to certain kinds of subject matter but suggested that infallibility is limited only “by the intention of the author and the kerygmatic nature of the biblical message.” The debate also focused upon defining the crucial terms such as inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility and their relationship to one another (Youngblood 1984).⁹

A “Conference on the Inspiration and Authority of Scripture” was held in the fall of 1973 at Ligonier, Pennsylvania. The papers from the conference were published as *God’s Inerrant Word: An International Symposium On The Trustworthiness Of Scripture* (Montgomery 1974). Yet, it was Lindsell’s two books (1976, 1979) that received the most notoriety, principally because he chose to explicitly name individuals and institutions that were denying inerrancy. The faculty at Fuller responded with a defense of their views in *Biblical Authority* (Rogers 1977). In 1977 concerns over the inerrancy issue led to the formation of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI). On October 26-28, 1978 nearly three hundred scholars and church leaders met in Chicago and produced “The Chicago Statement On Biblical Inerrancy,” with 240 of the 268 participants showing their approval by affixing their signature to the Nineteen Articles (Sproul [1980] 1996:5). Four years later, in November 1982, the ICBI called a second conference of approximately one hundred scholars and produced, “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics” (Packer 1994:134, 151). The ICBI would continue to meet for ten years before terminating

⁹ The articles that make up the volume were previously published in *JETS*.

in 1987. During that period they produced nine books and a number of tracts for the *Foundation Series* (Packer 1996:106, 242n14, 243n15).

The inerrancy debate would take on a particular historical focus with the publication of *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (1979) by Rogers and McKim. The nub of their argument, which came under severe criticism, pertains to the advent of the doctrine of inerrancy (Woodbridge 1982). Rogers and McKim (1979:235, 273) argue this doctrine developed with Francis Turretin, (who was influenced by Newton and Locke) at the end of the seventeenth century. Consequently, they (1979:200-218) also argue that the Westminster Confession of Faith does not equate biblical infallibility with inerrancy since it was composed prior to the development of the doctrine of inerrancy. Biblical infallibility as discussed by the Westminster divines therefore does not exclude “technical errors” in matters such as history, science, and geography, but rather Scripture is infallible in accomplishing its saving purpose. This view has been subjected to numerous critiques that have maintained that inerrancy is a doctrine held throughout the church even if the specific term was not employed (Barker 1980:96-107; Hannah 1984; Woodbridge 1986:241-270).

These debates on inerrancy which seemed to appear consistently among evangelicals particularly during the 1960’s and 1970’s are documented by Lindsell (1976:72-105, 122-140, 1979:70-112). Not only were church denominations and para-church groups feeling the heat of the inerrancy debates, but also theological societies. The Wesleyan Theological Society which began with a statement on inerrancy identical to that of the ETS eventually removed the statement “inerrant in the originals” in 1969 (Grider 1984:52-61; Merritt 1986:189, 194-197).

One should not conclude the debate on inerrancy was simply limited to the 1960’s or 1970’s. The Brethren in Christ denomination was debating whether to include the word “inerrant” in their doctrinal statement, as they went through the process of developing a current statement on Scripture for the denomination in the early 1990’s (Keefer Jr. 1992:3-17). The inerrancy debate was not confined to the shores of North America either, although that will be the primary focus of this study. Baptists in South Africa, not that long ago, had to address the issue of inerrancy in the Baptist Union of South Africa, due to its ties to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), particularly in the realm of theological education (Du Toit & Miller 1989:224-228; Harris 1991:79-80).

2.3.5 The inerrancy debate in the SBC

The recent debates on inerrancy that have been waged in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), are not the first debates on inerrancy that the denomination has faced. The modernists' conflict with the fundamentalists in the 1920's saw several SBC pastors actively engaged in the debate, particularly noteworthy was the controversial J. Frank Norris, who was vocal in his condemnation of the new higher critical methods and critical of some in leadership in the SBC charging them with wavering on the fundamentals. Henry Fox, professor of biology at Mercer University was dismissed in 1924, but there were few who truly deviated from the conservative position (Thompson, Jr.1982:77-82).

For Southern Baptists the inerrancy debate that would be front and center during the 1980's, had little "tremors" as early as the 1960's. Particularly significant was an article by K. Owen White in state Baptist papers entitled, "Death in the Pot." White maintained that Ralph Elliott, who taught at Midwestern Theological Seminary, had questioned the historicity of portions of Genesis in his recent commentary. It was the "noxious herb" of historical-criticism that was going to bring death. An administrator of the seminary board ordered that printing of the commentary was to cease and copies of the book were to be recalled. When Elliott refused the trustees request not to have the book published elsewhere, he was fired for insubordination" (Hefley 1986:49-50; Patterson 1999:60). C. R. Daley wrote, "If Elliott is a heretic, then he is one of many...Professors in all our seminaries know that Elliott is in the same stream of thinking with most of them, and is more in the center than some of them" (quoted in Hefley 1986:50).

Dockery (1988a:16-21) describes four groups represented in the controversy over Scripture in the SBC. He calls them fundamentalists, evangelicals, moderates and liberals. Both fundamentalists and evangelicals believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. Moderates generally prefer the term infallible instead of inerrancy. The infallibility of Scripture is "in its ability to accomplish its purposes because it will not deceive humanity about matters of salvation" (Dockery 1988a:20). Dockery (1988a:21) maintains the liberals are hard to describe and so is their doctrine of Scripture, but a common emphasis would be the elevation of the human aspect of Scripture and a de-emphasis of the divine nature of Scripture.

Leonard (1990:135) traces the growing controversy to a new organization. “In 1973 a group of fundamentalists formed the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship to monitor the SBC agencies for compliance to the 1963 Confession of Faith. They were particularly opposed to the use of the historical-critical method in Baptist schools.” He argues that Lindsell’s books (1976, 1979) became catalysts in making inerrancy a dominating issue for the fundamentalists, who sought to purge the denomination of all who did not subscribe to inerrancy.

One can read descriptions of the attempted takeover of the SBC from a moderate perspective (Leonard 1990:136-187) and conservative perspective (Patterson 1999:60-73) but the most comprehensive treatment of the events is written by J. C. Hefley, a Southern Baptist journalist, who wrote six books (1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991) on the events, and had been writing annual reports on the SBC for *Christianity Today* for a number of years.

Over one thousand people gathered May 4-7, 1987 at Ridgewood Baptist Conference Center in Ridgewood, North Carolina for the “Conference on Biblical Inerrancy” sponsored by the six seminaries of the SBC. The papers, addresses and responses were published as, *The Proceedings Of The Conference On Biblical Inerrancy 1987*. A conference the following year also sponsored by the seminaries at the same location from April 25-27, 1988 resulted in a much smaller book, *The Proceedings Of The Conference On Biblical Interpretation*. A total of eight Southern Baptists, all of whom teach at a seminary or university contributed articles touching on aspects of the controversy in the SBC and then responded to each other in *Beyond The Impasse? Scripture, Interpretation, & Theology in Baptist Life* (James & Dockery 1992).¹⁰

Many “moderates” disliked the term inerrancy but were satisfied with calling the Bible trustworthy or authoritative (Honeycutt 1986:618). Ashcraft (1987:10) complained about inerrancy, “that it requires so many qualifications that one wonders why its advocates do not change their view, or at least choose other terminology.” Ashcraft was a teacher at the SBC seminaries since 1950, and confessed that his teachers during his studies at Southern Seminary [starting in 1946] were “engaged in serious critical study of the Bible” and so he viewed the inerrancy controversy as an attempt to deny teachers the freedom to use the historical-critical method (1987:16-17).

¹⁰ There are of course many other books on the debate. Dockery (1988b:391-401) provides a review of

Interestingly, when a group of conservative SBC scholars produced a book for studying the Bible intended for beginning students in college or seminary, there was a chapter on the value of using historical criticism, including the use of redaction criticism, by Craig Blomberg (1994a:414-433). The book does not state that the authors all held to inerrancy although almost all of them had membership in the ETS and the preface states, “All the contributors affirm the complete veracity and total authority of the Bible.” It would appear therefore, that the SBC debate on inerrancy and the use of the historical-critical method was not to be viewed, at least by some, as rejecting totally the historical-critical method. Rather the concerns were over how it was being used and the conclusions being drawn from the use of the historical-critical method.

2.3.6 Summary of evangelical responses to paradigm shifts

With each paradigm shift, evangelicals would typically take one of three approaches; they would ignore the new methods, embrace the new methods or seek to combine the new methods with their existing methodology. It was therefore not uncommon to find a diversity of approaches by evangelicals to the study of Scripture, even as is the case today.

Inerrancy has been a foundational doctrine of the church from the days of the apostles, although this view has been disputed by some, particularly Rogers and McKim (1979). Inerrancy has been embraced by many evangelicals who have nevertheless employed different methodologies in their interpretation of Scripture. As in so many other areas, when one is discussing evangelicals, there is no consensus concerning the acceptance of inerrancy, or on the proper methods for interpreting Scripture.

Some inerrantists, like Lindsell, call for the complete rejection of the use of certain methodologies, such as the historical-critical methodology, while other evangelicals, who are not committed to inerrancy, will continue to use the new methodologies. What stirs the fires of the debates on inerrancy though it seems, is the use the new methodologies, by others who claim to be inerrantists.

three books appearing in 1985-86 from different sides of the debate.

CHAPTER THREE

EVANGELICALS AND REDACTION CRITICISM

This chapter will begin with a brief introduction to some of the original exponents of *redaction criticism*. A definition of redaction criticism as employed by those who might not be considered evangelicals will be presented as a summary of the origins of the methodology. At this point, an effort will be made to chronicle the *history* of the *debate* concerning *redaction criticism* among *evangelicals*. The purpose will be to highlight some of the tensions that have arisen amongst evangelicals, in North America particularly, concerning redaction criticism and inerrancy. The study will also attempt to highlight some of the important contributions in redaction criticism studies made by evangelicals, who also ascribe to inerrancy.

3.1 THE PIONEERS OF REDACTION CRITICISM

Redaction criticism arose in Germany, as an extension of form criticism studies, after World War II. Bornkamm's 1948 article, translated into English (1963b) as, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew" launched redaction criticism. The article was later combined with articles by two of his students in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Bornkamm, Barth, & Held 1963). Bornkamm argued that Matthew not only changed but reinterpreted Mark's miracle story into a paradigm of discipleship centering on the "little faith" of the disciples as a metaphor for the difficult journey of the "little ship of the church." Bornkamm's 1954 article, "Matthew As Interpreter of the Words of the Lord" which was expanded to "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew" (1963a) considered Matthew's Gospel as a whole, and argued that for Matthew eschatology is the basis for ecclesiology. Thus the church defines itself and its mission in terms of the coming judgment (McKnight 1989:153; Osborne 2001:130).

N. Perrin (1969:28) says, "If Günther Bornkamm is the first of the true redaction critics, Hans Conzelmann is certainly the most important." Conzelmann's contributions began with a 1952 article, "Zur Lukasanalyse," which was subsequently expanded and published in English as, *The Theology of St. Luke* (1960). He argued that Luke was a theologian rather than a historian.

Conzelmann maintained that the delay of the *parousia* led Luke to replace Mark's

imminent eschatology with a salvation-historical perspective comprising three stages. Stage one was the time of Israel, ending with John the Baptist; stage two, the time of Jesus (the “center of time,” *Die mitte de Zeit* the original German title); and stage three was the time of the church. Conzelmann taught that the kingdom in Luke became virtually a timeless entity, so that the *parousia* was no longer the focus. Mark’s brief interim has become an indefinite period, and the church is prepared for prolonged conflict in the lengthy period before the final judgment (Osborne 2001:131). Conzelmann’s views on the delayed *parousia* have been since rejected by many (Strimple 1995:145-146).

W. Marxsen’s *Mark the Evangelist* (English 1969) was the first publication to use the term *Redaktionsgeschichte* as a *terminus technicus* for this new scientific discipline (Smith 1993:137). Marxsen’s most significant contribution was to describe the differences between form and redaction criticism. He asserted that form-critical research has missed the third *Sitz im Leben* (after the situations of Jesus and the early church), namely that of the Evangelist (Osborne 2001:131). The studies of these men were instrumental in giving redaction criticism its initial impetus, yet, “hardly any scholars today agree with the basic theories of the early redaction critics” (McKnight 1988:88). The methodology continued to be at the fore of New Testament studies during the next two decades, with refinements being made along the way (McKnight 1989:157-164).

Collins (1987:198) states that redaction criticism is a methodology that focuses upon the editorial process. From the results of form analysis and tradition history, redaction criticism supposes seven “givens.” Collins lists these as:

1. The Synoptics are not homogeneous compositions, but collections of small units of narrative and discourse material.
2. That in the oral tradition that preceded the documentation of these units of material, only small units were handed on, such as single sayings, small collections of logia, and single stories.
3. Each of the units of material presently contained in the Synoptics had a definite oral form (and a corresponding literary form) that corresponds to a particular life situation in the early church.
4. Each of the evangelists made use of this oral tradition in the composition of his Gospel. Mark was the creator of the gospel genre, with Matthew and Luke making use of Mark and other traditional material that was known to them independent of Mark’s Gospel.
5. The Resurrection faith of the early Church shaped and molded the transmission of these units of material as well as the composite Gospels themselves.
6. The biography format is a literary construction of the evangelists, and it is methodologically illegitimate to attempt to write a life of Jesus based upon the Gospels.

7. It is likely that some of the units of material were collected into relatively homogeneous documents prior to their appropriation by the evangelists, and it is possible to discern the theological tendencies of these source documents.

Collins (1987:199) concludes that redaction criticism studies can therefore discern the proper literary characteristics of each of the synoptic Gospels as well as the particular theological viewpoint that each Gospel reflects.

Smalley (1979:181) contributed an article on redaction criticism as part of a significant volume espousing the use of the historical-critical methodology by evangelicals, entitled *New Testament Interpretation* (1979). He defines redaction criticism in a similar manner to Collins, as “the editorial work carried out by the evangelists on their sources when they composed the Gospels.” He also notes that redaction criticism can be applied to the study of the book of Acts and the book of Revelation. Smalley (1979:181) notes that one should differentiate between redaction criticism and composition criticism, since “although close together” they are strictly speaking different disciplines. He then points out how they differ. *Redaction criticism* is the study of the observable changes introduced by the Gospel writers into the traditional material they received and used. *Composition criticism* examines the arrangement of the material, an arrangement, which is motivated by the theological understanding and intention of the evangelists. Smalley (1979:181) suggested that possibly these two terms would in the future need to be carefully distinguished, but for convenience in his discussion they would both be considered under the term redaction criticism. He (1979:181) then defines redaction criticism as the “detection of the evangelists’ creative contribution in all its aspects to the Christian tradition which they transmit.” This is an important issue and distinction, particularly since Smalley stated that redaction and composition criticism are two different disciplines, yet he subsumes them both under the terminology of redaction criticism. This distinction and issue will be addressed later in this study as an attempt is made to provide a way forward in the debate concerning the use of redaction criticism.

3.2 EVANGELICALS, INERRANCY & REDACTION CRITICISM

3.2.1 The early efforts

Lindsell (1976:185-212; 1979:275-302) argued that at the heart of the inerrancy

debates both past and present, was the employment of critical methodologies in the study of Scripture, particularly the historical-critical methodology. The evangelical scholarly community was already evidencing a division into opposing factions over the issue of critical methodologies and Lindsell's analysis only brought the issues further to the fore particularly as many evangelicals were then embracing redaction criticism. The question was therefore raised as to the compatibility of redaction criticism and inerrancy.

Hodges (1998:227) suggests there were three different schools of thought with regards to the use of redaction criticism by evangelicals. Some were stridently opposed (Montgomery 1979:57-65; Thomas 1985:62), others pointed out the harmful features that necessitated it be used with caution (Erickson 1983:200-201; Johnson 1983:10), while others highlight the positive benefits associated with a careful use of redaction criticism (Carson 1983:140-141; Davids 1991:25-26, 31-33).

This study will suggest three positions taken concerning redaction criticism by evangelicals, which are slightly different than those Hodges outlines. It seems that there is not a great deal of difference between a “cautious” and a “careful” use of redaction criticism and that these reflect a similar position. Of greater significance for this study is the fact that the men listed by Hodges, would all claim to be inerrantists, since they are members of the ETS.¹ This study will therefore consider three different approaches of evangelicals with respect to the use of redaction criticism, within the parameters of the doctrine of inerrancy. *First*, there are those who oppose the use of the historical-critical method including redaction criticism and in most cases these people also affirm inerrancy. *Second*, there are those who embrace the use of redaction criticism, but do not hold to inerrancy or are unwilling to use that terminology. I. H. Marshall is a well-known evangelical scholar, who would typify this approach (Marshall 1979:132-136; Marshall 1982:65-70). *Third*, others advocate an approach that involves a careful use of redaction criticism, while also subscribing to the doctrine of inerrancy.

The debate on the use of redaction criticism has principally been a debate between the two approaches that subscribe to inerrancy. This study will not seek to ignore the contributions of those evangelicals, who embrace redaction criticism and yet do not subscribe to inerrancy (the second approach). Yet, the main focus of this study will be the ongoing debate between the two approaches that do subscribe to inerrancy, a debate that

¹ This conclusion is based upon use of the ETS membership directory.

has been continued within the ETS. Therefore, the historical overview that follows will principally focus on the contributions of these two approaches. The following survey of contributions is by no means exhaustive. It seeks to be representative of the efforts of evangelicals using redaction criticism and note efforts of particular significance to the ongoing debate.

The progenitor of evangelical redaction criticism was Ned B. Stonehouse of Westminster Theological Seminary. His two major works on the synoptic Gospels, *The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ* (1944) and *The Witness of Luke to Christ* (1951) diverged from both the liberal and evangelical studies on the Gospels of that era. His works were to go almost unrecognized for two decades. Evangelicals appreciated his strong affirmation of the inerrancy of the Gospel accounts but failed to respond to his new methodology. Stonehouse, contrary to the evangelical practice of harmonizing the Gospels, sought after the distinctiveness of each Gospel's witness to Jesus. Although Stonehouse's early approach cannot be identified precisely with redaction criticism as practiced today, it was clearly a forerunner of that methodology. He recognized that the evangelists were not simply historians but also theologians (Silva 1977:77-88; 1978:281-303).

Twenty years later the use of redaction criticism by evangelicals began in earnest with a couple of articles by Robert Stein² and Herman Ridderbos' contribution of an essay to a symposium honouring C. Van Til of Westminster Theological Seminary, in which Ridderbos discussed redaction criticism and biblical authority (1971:244-259). The most significant work though originated from the pen of I. H. Marshall in his study of the Gospel of Luke (1971). This was quickly followed by two major studies on Mark that endorsed the use of redaction criticism (Martin 1973:46-50; Lane 1974). Lane studied under Stonehouse, who was the original editor of the *New International Commentary of the New Testament* (hereafter NICNT) series and was scheduled to write the volume on Matthew.

The publication of Harold Lindsell's book, *The Battle For The Bible* sent tremors through the evangelical community, particularly in North America, as he named individuals and institutions, whom Lindsell considered were loosening their grip on an inerrant Scripture. The debate over inerrancy was also at this time raging within the ETS.

² Robert H. Stein, "What Is Redaktionsgeschichte?" *JBL* 88 (1 1969):45-56; idem, "The Proper

Consequently, those who were promoting the legitimacy of the critical methodologies, such as redaction criticism, were cognizant of the need to show how such methodologies were compatible with inerrancy (Osborne 1976:73-86). Lindsell (1976:114-115) identified George Ladd's, *The New Testament and Criticism* (1967) as one recent evangelical publication that denied inerrancy while embracing the critical methodologies.

Evangelicals continued to produce numerous studies employing redaction criticism, often bringing, from an evangelical perspective, a much needed corrective balance to the excesses of radical liberal scholarship (Carson 1978:411-29; Lane 1978:7-22; Osborne 1978:117-130; Osborne 1979a:305-322; Osborne 1979b:80-96; Morosco 1979:323-331; France 1980:83-94). A number of major studies were also produced in Great Britain at this time including I. Howard Marshall's monumental commentary on Luke (Marshall 1978; Smalley 1978). In Old Testament studies, Raymond Dillard used redaction criticism in his studies in the books of Chronicles (1980:207-218; Dillard 1981:289-300; Dillard 1985:94-107³), while Carl Armerding (1983:62) argued redaction criticism was one of many viable critical methodologies to be used by evangelicals.

Proponents of redaction criticism increased their arguments for a greater openness to the new methodology by arguing the need to recognize that inerrancy does not necessitate that the Gospel writers present the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus only the *ipsissima vox* (Guelich 1981:117-126; Hagner 1981:23-38; Osborne 1981:293-328; Turner 1983:270). Several more noteworthy books employing redaction criticism appeared in the early 1980's by some of the leading proponents of the new methodology (Stein 1981a; Guelich 1982). Silva had in an earlier article (1978:295-296) alluded to the possibility of the Gospel writers employing literary genres of a fictional or semi-historical nature. This idea was formally presented by his colleague, Robert Gundry in a paper that was to appear as a "theological postscript" in his forthcoming commentary on Matthew (1982:623-40). Donald Hagner (1981:37) expressed his concern about this view indicating that his article had been "sparked" by Gundry's presentation. The question of the historical reliability of the Gospels was moving to the forefront of evangelical debates in North America and was destined to take center stage with the publication of two Gospel studies in the early 1980's.

Methodology For Ascertaining A Markan Redaction History." *NovT* 13 (1971):181-198.

3.2.2 Pivotal publications

In 1981, *Servant and Son*, a major study by J. Ramsey Michaels of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, was published. This study sought to penetrate into Jesus' self-consciousness, and to perceive from the Gospel records Jesus' own self-understanding of his person and work. Critical methodologies were employed in the study including redaction criticism. Michaels' book was part of an ongoing debate about inerrancy and the use of form and redaction criticism among the faculty members at Gordon-Conwell, which included a presentation of papers in 1975. The debate led to the publication of the papers in a book entitled, *Inerrancy and Common Sense* (Nicole & Michaels 1980:7). Michaels (Nicole & Michaels 1980:49-70) contributed an essay to the book, entitled, "Inerrancy or Verbal Inspiration? An Evangelical Dilemma." During the next year (1982), Michaels resigned and subsequently published a one-page paper, "Why I Resigned." He professed to hold to inerrancy but felt the seminary was moving to a hermeneutical position akin to Lindsell's, which denied the legitimacy of critical methodologies (*CT* 1983:35-38; *Eternity* 1983:9, 46).

The seminary cited a number of places where Michaels spoke of discrepancies between the Gospels and of the "probability" that the event described was historical. Michaels' emphasis on Jesus' humanity seemed to bring the question of Jesus' deity into question, the committees concluded. Other controversial statements included Michaels' argument that Jesus had shared the racial exclusiveness of the Jews until his encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk 7:24-30), and that the Lord's Prayer was originally Jesus' own prayer, including the petition for the forgiveness of sins (Michaels 1981:33, 59, 163, 273). These views were felt to be inconsistent with the seminary's statement of faith and so required Michaels' resignation.

If Michaels' book caused a ripple of concern in evangelical quarters, then the publication of Robert Gundry's commentary on Matthew (1982) unleashed a tidal wave of emotion and responses. The publication of Gundry's book precipitated a flood of reviews and articles for a number of years. Gundry had previously been asked to write the volume on Matthew for the evangelical commentary series, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Nevertheless, after numerous revisions his commentary was rejected. As his views became known, he was asked to deliver a paper on Matthew's theology at a

³ The last article was submitted in 1980 but only appeared in 1985 (see: copyright page).

regional meeting of the ETS. This paper had occasioned concern and raised questions concerning the propriety of his membership within the ETS. Gundry's views and membership were the main focus at the 34th annual meeting of the ETS on December 16-18, 1982 at Northeastern Bible College, Essex Falls, New Jersey. The first major plenary session focused on a paper by Douglas Moo, of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School that called Gundry's methodology and conclusions into question. Gundry replied in a lengthy defence. Others also presented papers discussing Gundry's commentary and a number of these papers and rejoinders to them subsequently appeared in the March 1983 issue of *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, the journal of the ETS. That whole issue of the journal was given over to the discussion of Gundry's views on inerrancy and his methodology.

Although a number of members wanted Gundry dismissed from the ETS, the leadership of the ETS at the last business meeting sustained Gundry's membership. They reasoned that since Gundry affirmed the ETS's doctrinal statement⁴ and that statement did not deal with methodology, then his membership could not be questioned. While some members were pleased, others were not and the new president of the ETS, Louis Goldberg, encouraged the regional meetings to discuss what needed to be done. He appointed an *ad hoc* committee to present a recommendation at the next annual meeting in December of 1983 in Dallas (Turner 1983:283).

Ironically, 1983 was declared a national "Year of the Bible" in the United States by the joint resolution of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives on October 4, 1982 (Youngblood 1983:1-2). Little did those politicians realize how important the year 1983 would be "for the Bible" among evangelicals, particularly those in the ETS. As the year unfolded, the issue gathered attention both in the form of the circulation of petitions within the membership of the ETS to repudiate the 1982 leadership decision, and in discussions of even starting a new society if the ETS failed to act on this issue (Turner 1983:284).

The response to Gundry's book was not limited to the ETS and the March 1983 issue of *JETS* (Feinberg 1983:28-30; Moo 1983a:31-40; Moo, 1983b:57-70; Geisler 1983a:101-108; Geisler 1983b:87-94; Breckinridge 1983:117-122). Many had already heard and were aware of Gundry's new methodology, so as soon as Gundry's commentary

⁴ "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and therefore inerrant in the

appeared, a flood of reviews and responses followed especially in 1982 and 1983 (Carson 1982b:71-91; Gruenler 1982:245-251; France 1983b:31-32; Payne 1983:177-215; Scott 1985:68-82). Gundry, always ready to defend his commitment to inerrancy and his methodology, responded to his critics both in the March 1983 issue of *JETS* (Gundry 1983a:41-56; Gundry 1983b:95-100; Gundry 1983c:71-86; Gundry 1983d:109-116) and elsewhere (Gundry 1985:319-328).⁵

The criticisms of Gundry's views were fairly consistent. Some felt he should have documented his commentary more thoroughly but this was a minor criticism and the heart of the objections lay with his methodology. Most reviewers felt that his identification of Matthean redactional activity through statistical analysis was too rigid and needed to be applied with greater flexibility and caution. At the root of this objection lay another objection, Gundry's wholehearted acceptance of Markan priority and an unyielding use of Mark and an expanded version of Q as Matthew's sources. Although most of his critics held to Markan priority, they did so with a degree of caution as to the verifiability of the theory, whereas Gundry seemed to cling to it with an insupportable tenacity in the opinion of his reviewers. Although there is some value in having the statistical analyses that Gundry compiles, the result is a book, which was considered atomistic and failed to reveal the progression and unity of the Gospel. In this sense, as a redactional study, it failed to see Matthew as an "author," who assembled his material with order, unity and purpose (Carson 1982b:72, 85-91; France 1983b:32; Moo 1983a:32-36; Moo 1983b:60-64).

For most evangelicals these were practices one could live with, but what raised the eyebrows and quickened the pulses of some, was Gundry's contention that Matthew embellished his Gospel with non-historical material. This embellishment in its most dramatic form is evidenced in the nativity narratives, where Matthew's story of the visit of the magi is considered by Gundry (1982:34) a fictional embellishment, based on the historical account in Luke of the visit of the local Jewish shepherds. Matthew's redactional purpose according to Gundry was to continue the theme of Gentiles entering into the church (1982:26). Gundry also argues that Matthew pursues Mosaic typology. Thus, he (1982:34) says "he changes the sacrificial slaying of a 'pair of turtledoves or

autographs."

5 Scott in his article "Intention" on page 69 makes reference to an unpublished paper by Gundry titled, "A Response to Some Criticisms of Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art."

two young pigeons,' which took place at the presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:24; cf. Lev 12:6-8), into Herod's slaughtering the babies in Bethlehem (cf. As. Mos. 6:2-6)."

Gundry (1982:37) anticipated questions concerning Matthew's use of such material and responded to them in the following manner:

It may be asked how Matthew can put forward his embellishments of tradition as fulfillments of the OT. But this phenomenon should surprise us no more than his transforming historical statements in the OT - those concerning the Exodus and the Babylonian Exile - into messianic prophecies. We will have to broaden our understanding of "happened" as of "fulfilled" when reading that such-and-such happened in order that so-and-so prophecy might be fulfilled. Two features of Matthew's practice save him from fantasy: (1) his embellishments rest on historical data, which he hardly means to deny by embellishing them; (2) the embellishments foreshadow genuinely historical events such as the vindications of Jesus as God's Son in the resurrection and in the calamities befalling the Jewish nation after Jesus' lifetime.

It was Gundry's contention that Matthew used midrashic and haggadic techniques, which consisted of fictional or non-historical embellishments, which drew the sharpest criticism from his reviewers. Most reviewers pointed out how difficult these techniques were to define and Gundry's own failure to do so in a precise and clear manner (Carson 1982b:81-85). Partially as a result of Gundry's thesis, a spate of articles on Jewish hermeneutical practices appeared, with an entire volume (III) of the *Gospel Perspectives* series devoted to this issue (France & Wenham 1983). France (1983a:299) summarized Gundry's views with the following syllogism: (i) Midrash is unhistorical writing in the guise of history. (ii) The Gospels (or parts) of them are midrashic. (iii) Therefore, the Gospels (or parts of them) are not to be taken seriously as history. France declared that the conclusions of the studies revealed Gundry's views to be invalid since the first two premises of the syllogism were proven false.

Another major concern focused upon how Matthew's readers would distinguish the non-historical midrashic comments from the historical core of the Gospel. Other non-historical genres such as poetry and parables are easily detected as to genre (form criticism), but Gundry's method for identifying midrash would necessitate the use of source criticism similar to Gundry's usage. Gundry (1982:628) argued that the clues to spotting midrashic embellishments are: (1) vocabulary, (2) style, (3) theological emphases. Yet, his critics argued that to truly distinguish these "clues" requires that one

assume the availability of Mark and Q to Matthew's readers and the desire to make minute comparisons, a very questionable assumption (Moo 1983a:37; Cunningham & Bock 1987:157-180).

The ETS met in Dallas, Texas on December 15-17, 1983 at which the *ad hoc* committee gave its report. The committee made three recommendations: (1) A special broadly-based committee be appointed to study the complexities of the situation and make recommendations designed to meet the long range need of the Society to clarify its doctrinal statement. (2) The committee recommended the adoption of both “Chicago Statements” of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI). The one statement dealt with issues specifically related to inerrancy (Packer 1994:134-142) and the other with issues related to inerrancy and hermeneutics (Radmacher & Preus 1984:881-887; Packer 1994:151-158). They were to be viewed as interim statements meeting the immediate need for the ETS to take a clear stand on inerrancy. (3) The ETS adopt Robert's Rules of Order, Article XIII, section 75, with regard to due process for members, whose membership was being challenged. The last recommendation required a constitutional change and therefore could only be read and had to be left to the 1984 meeting for discussion and vote (Turner 1984:43).

The first two motions were defeated, and at this point a motion was made that the ETS go on record as rejecting any position that states that a biblical author materially altered or embellished historical traditions or departed from the actuality of events in writing the Bible. This was an obvious motion designed to address Gundry's membership in the ETS. After lengthy debate and a motion to table it failed, the ballot vote passed the motion 119 to 36. This was followed by another motion requesting that Gundry resign from the Society unless he could acknowledge his views to be in error. After a lengthy and intense debate the motion was called for a vote and passed 116 to 41. Gundry then spoke briefly and resigned from the ETS (Keylock 1984:36-38; Turner 1984:43-44).

3.2.3 Refining redaction criticism

Several other articles pertaining to the use of redaction criticism appeared in *JETS* at the same time as the debate on Gundry's commentary, and reflected a different and it seemed a more “acceptable” approach to the methodology than Gundry's (Carson 1982c:161-174; Stein 1983:421-30). There were also several other important studies at

this time that had a tangential relationship to the controversy surrounding Gundry's views. Two professors from Gordon-Conwell produced a book on hermeneutics that stressed the importance of recognizing literary genres in the study of Scripture (Fee & Stuart 1982) and Grant Osborne contributed a significant article on the role of genre and inerrancy (Osborne 1983:1-27; Osborne 1984a:163-190).⁶ Carson (1982a:97-100, 108) contributed an article on Matthew's christology which also touched briefly on Gundry's methodology and treatment of history. The effect of Robert Gundry's commentary on the discussion of redaction criticism was most evident in several studies that analyzed the practice and its merits (Carson 1983:119-142; Johnson 1983:3-16; Turner 1983:263-288; Turner 1984:37-45). Turner's articles examined the writings of Stonehouse, Gundry and Osborne and the relationship of their concepts of redaction criticism to inerrancy. Both Turner and Carson called for a more discerning approach to redaction criticism by recognizing some unacceptable presuppositions (Carson 1983:138-141; Turner 1983:285-286).

In 1984 there were two significant contributions by evangelicals employing redaction criticism. Carson (1984) contributed the volume on Matthew in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (replacing Gundry), and demonstrated how redaction criticism could be employed while still maintaining a steadfast commitment to inerrancy and interacting with critical scholarship on the Gospel. Grant Osborne's (1984c) reworked doctoral dissertation (done under the supervision of I. H. Marshall), was a major study from a redaction critical perspective on the resurrection narratives. Osborne provided a redaction critical analysis of each Evangelist's narrative as well as tradition studies of the "empty tomb" and "appearance" narratives. Of particular significance was the inclusion of a corrigenda, which called for the reader to understand passages which were "ambiguous with respect to the historicity and inerrancy portions of the resurrection narratives"⁷ in light of other passages which clearly affirmed the historicity and inerrancy of those portions of Scripture.⁸

Evangelicals remained divided over the use of redaction criticism and articles continued to be published from both sides of the debate (Osborne 1984b:27-42; Osborne

6 The 1984 article was a "briefer" version of the 1983 article and was responded to by Allen (1984:191-203) and Scaer (1984:205-216).

7 Pages listed are 10, 88, 105, 133, 240, 269, 294, 295.

8 Pages listed are 37-40, 45, 117, 199, 207, 260, 280 293.

1985:399-410; Johnston et. al. 1985:6-12). Osborne (1985:399) noted that for four years in a row, since 1982, redaction criticism was a major focus of debate within the ETS. The issue was brought to the attention of the general public in a special report in *Christianity Today* in which four professors of New Testament⁹ interacted on the validity of using redaction criticism (Carson et. al. 1985:55-64). The consensus was that redaction criticism is a useable tool in the interpretation of Scripture but needs to be employed with methodological care. Therefore, although evangelicals are bringing different presuppositions than liberals to the text, which affect their use of redaction criticism, it was felt that it was still appropriate and necessary to use the common terminology in order to effectively interact with current biblical scholarship (Carson et. al. 1985:60-61). Kantzer moderated the discussion and contributed a summary paper urging a cautious employment of the methodology (Kantzer 1985:65-66), while Thomas (Talbot Theological Seminary) wrote a dissenting article calling for the use of the traditional grammatical-historical method of Luther and Calvin (Thomas 1985:62).

Methodology continued to have a significant role in discussions concerning redaction criticism. Thomas continued his campaign against redaction criticism with a critique of the commentaries of Gundry, Lane and Marshall on the Gospels (Thomas 1986:447-460). Meanwhile, several studies showed the value of redaction criticism in studies beyond the synoptic Gospels. Blomberg (1986:135-174) contributed a positive endorsement of redaction criticism in an article, that argued it was “one method among many” that could be legitimately used in the interpretation of Scripture. In his article, Blomberg showed the value and limitations of harmonization, arguing that it cannot stand alone in seeking to explain differences in Scripture. Blomberg (1986:145-173) applied his eight suggested approaches for solving problems to the Synoptics, the Chronicles-King corpus, and the writings of Josephus and Arrian’s and Plutarch’s “Lives of Alexander.” Blomberg also employed redaction criticism in a study of the parables of the Gospel of Thomas (1985:177-205). Dillard (1986:17-22) continued to show the possible uses of redaction criticism in OT studies also, with reference to the Chronicler’s methodology.

Blomberg (1987b) sought to make known to laymen the “gist” of the articles contained in the six volume *Gospel Perspectives* series (1987b:xin1) in a volume entitled,

⁹ The men were D. A. Carson (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), H. Hoehner (Dallas Theological Seminary), V. Poythress (Westminster Theological Seminary) and D. Scholer (Northern Baptist Theological Seminary).

The Historical Reliability of the Gospels. That same year, Blomberg also provided a survey of recent methodological developments and debates for theological students (1987a:38-46). D. Bock (1987) contributed a major redaction criticism study dealing with Lucan christology and co-contributed an article that dealt with midrash. The article (Cunningham & Bock 1987:157-180) acknowledged that ancient writers embellished their writings with non-historical material but this did not mean it was midrash, as other methods also employed this technique. Gundry (1982:636) could compare Matthew with Plato and other ancients, but the likelihood of drawing any significant parallels is diminished by the fact that Matthew's Gospel evidences Jewish hermeneutical practices not Greek. "If Gundry insists on the presence of non-historical embellishment in the Gospel of Matthew, he ought not 'sanctify' it by associating it with a Jewish genre and calling it midrash." (Cunningham & Bock 1987:180).

Not all evangelicals were happy with the continued employment of redaction criticism and they continued to make their displeasure known. Robbins (1987:3-5) took exception to Dillard's (1988:151-164) article, "*Harmonization A Help and a Hindrance*," arguing that Dillard was compromising the inerrancy of Scripture when he spoke of the writer introducing "modifications" for theological purposes. Robbins called for Westminster Seminary where Dillard taught to take notice of the situation and act.

Other issues were capturing the attention of evangelicals and the members of the ETS by the middle of the 1980's. Bock (2002c:14) describes five different major issues or controversies that surfaced in the ETS over its five decades. He lists science and the Bible, particularly origins (1959), inerrancy and the issues related to its definition and its relationship to hermeneutics (1979), the role of historical criticism (1983), the role of women (1986) and most recently the debate concerning open theism (2001). It would probably be fair to say that while these issues had certain periods when they were debated more predominantly, they never totally disappear from debate and ongoing discussion, as articles in the journal of the ETS (*JETS*), would seem to indicate. Such has also been the case concerning the use of redaction criticism, as the "lull" from the mid-1980's resurfaced in the middle of the 1990's.

Redaction criticism continued to be promoted by evangelicals as a necessary part of the historical study of the Gospels (McKnight 1988:83-95; Hagner 1991:73-96; Osborne 1991:199-224; Osborne 1992:662-669). Smith (1993:130-145) contributed an

evaluation of evangelicals and their use of redaction criticism from an “outsider’s perspective” focusing in on the approaches of Carson, Osborne and the articles that were part of the forum appearing in *Christianity Today* in 1985. Smith (1993:140-142) contends that redaction criticism tells us nothing about the historicity of the accounts and so the history versus non-history debate between evangelicals and liberals concerning redaction criticism is unnecessary. His argument is that debate about history pertains to studies like source and tradition criticism and redaction criticism was not developed to distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic. So he concludes evangelicals should not begin their discussions on redaction criticism with historical assumptions. Representative of the use of redaction criticism by inerrantists during this period, are a number of articles in the 1994 collection of essays to celebrate I. H. Marshall’s sixtieth birthday (Blomberg 1994c:75-93; Carson 1994b:128-146; Osborne 1994:147-163).

3.2.4 Voices of dissent

Others though continued to call for evangelicals to abandon the historical-critical methodology. The most surprising voice doing so was that of Eta Linnemann, a world-renowned scholar in the former West Germany, who sat under Bultmann, Fuchs, Gogarten and Ebeling, themselves world-renowned exponents of the historical-critical methodology. Linnemann ([1990] 2001b:83-141), after her conversion, repudiated her former work as “refuse” ([1990] 2001b:20) and in repentance sought to expose the faulty basis of the historical-critical theology. Another work by Linnemann (2001a:177-211) that appeared in German in 1990, questioned how “scientific” the historical-critical theology really was as a discipline. Yarbrough (1997:163-189), translated Linnemann’s books into English and provided an analysis of her contributions and the responses to them.¹⁰ Smith (1994:201-220) raised questions about the use of the historical-critical method as an appropriate methodology for those who exercise faith in Christ, and G. Maier (1994:247-306) continued his assault on the historical-critical method in a new book on hermeneutics.

In 1985 a group of scholars met to examine the historical authenticity of each of the sayings of Jesus. Their conclusions appeared in a volume edited by Robert Funk and Roy Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (1993). The

“*Jesus Seminar*” as they labelled themselves, advertised that their views reflected a consensus of modern scholarship. Such a conclusion is open to serious debate as Blomberg noted (1995:19-20) in a volume of essays by evangelicals, that responded to the conclusions of the *Jesus Seminar*. Other evangelicals also offered critiques, and some of these were intended for the general public (Blomberg 1994b:32-38; Carson 1994a:30-33; Edwards 1996:14-20). Jewish scholar, Jacob Neusner, said that the Seminar represented “either the greatest scholarly hoax since the Piltdown Man or the utter bankruptcy of New Testament studies---I hope the former.” (quoted in Hagner 1991:94n20). N. T. Wright (1995:147) also pronounced the efforts of the *Jesus Seminar* to be of no real value in the search for the historical Jesus.

In the spring of 1991, due to the enormous publicity that the *Jesus Seminar* was receiving, the *Los Angeles Times* planned to run pro and con articles about the Seminar’s findings. Robert Funk was asked to write the article in support of the conclusions, while Robert Guelich, professor at an evangelical seminary in the area, was asked to write an article critical of the Seminar’s conclusions. After the articles were submitted, someone on the staff noticed that the arguments of Guelich did not sound that different from Funk’s but rather seemed to take a somewhat similar viewpoint. Consequently, Robert Thomas was contacted and asked to write from an opposing viewpoint an article for the newspaper, which he did, and in which he addressed the issues of methodology (Thomas 1996:78-79).

Thomas and others later published a book of essays, *The Jesus Crisis: The Inroads Of Historical Criticism Into Evangelical Scholarship* (Thomas & Farnell 1998) to address the methodological problem that they felt was undermining the truth of the Scriptures. Geisler’s presidential address at the fiftieth annual meeting of the ETS on November 19, 1998, in Orlando, Florida, further fanned the flames of controversy in the ETS. He mentioned the critiques by Thomas and Farnell of fellow ETS members and gave his approval for their work (Geisler 1999:13-14). Osborne (1999:1993-210) responded that Geisler’s warnings were salutary, but his argumentation and tone were not. Osborne then responded to the volume by Thomas and Farnell (1998) and presented a defence of the use of the historical-critical method and redaction criticism. This led to a further exchange between Thomas (2000a:97-111) and Osborne (2000:113-117), as the

10 This article also appeared in Thomas & Farnell 1998:158-184.

debate on redaction criticism appears to be once again heating up.

3.2.5 The current situation

Despite the controversy that surrounded the use of redaction criticism in the 1980's many evangelicals are still committed to its validity in the explication of the Gospels. This is evident by the contributions in a recent study of Jesus' parables (Hagner 2000:102-124; Liefeld 2000:240-262; Longenecker 2000:125-147; Martens 2000:151-176).¹¹ The commitment to the historical-critical methodology is also evident in publications of The Institute for Biblical Research (hereafter IBR).

The IBR is an organization of evangelical scholars with specialities in Old Testament and New Testament and in ancillary disciplines. The Institute publishes a journal, the *Bulletin for Biblical Research* that is described as "both fully critical, yet supportive of the Christian faith." There is no position on inerrancy required for membership as in the ETS (Ellis 1994:36). Recently, the IBR established the IBR Jesus Group, which is dedicated to studying the historicity and significance of ten key events in the life of Jesus in a group environment. In light of the recent *Jesus Seminar*, one might wonder how these evangelical scholars going to proceed in studying the historicity issues? The founders of the group (Bock & Webb 2000:259) in the introduction write:

Unlike the Jesus Seminar, the Jesus Group does not vote on the specific sayings or events from the life of Jesus. Rather, each event is assessed as a complete unit. It is examined to determine the evidence for the event in question, as well as the elements that make up this event. Then, given these results, the examiner develops the event's significance for understanding Jesus' life and ministry. Sometimes ratings assessing the possibility or probability of an event or detail within it are used as a way of expressing what can be demonstrated historically. In other cases, alternative configurations of the sequencing of events are assessed. Judgments like these belong to the author of the article, not necessarily to the entire group, but they are made after interaction with the group.

The IBR goal is to publish one of the studies of the Jesus Group each year. In the first study, which considered Jesus' baptism, Webb (2000:271) refers to how Luke "downplays" the issues of Jesus subordinating himself to John and submitting to a baptism of repentance and Webb claims Matthew "adds a verbal exchange" to avoid the embarrassment caused by Mark's account. Webb (2000:272) states, "The two criteria of

¹¹ Note that only Liefeld is listed as a member of the ETS (according to the 2000 & 2001 directories).

multiple attestation and embarrassment support the conclusion with a high level of probability that Jesus was baptized by John.” Later, he (2000:278) speaks of the “historically very probable” nature of Jesus’ baptism: “This conclusion is in agreement with a number of scholars whose judgment is that this is one of the most certain things we can know about Jesus.”

It is also apparent that some evangelical inerrantists continue to see no incompatibility with such a stance and their use of redaction criticism (Emmrich 2000:267-279; Bock 2002b:189-197; Charles 2002:1-15; Steffen 2002).¹² Deppe (2000:315-322) raises the question of the proper role of harmonization in the study of Scripture and argues that redaction criticism should be employed first and that harmonization should not play a role in the exegesis of an individual passage, but only after when one is constructing a biblical theology. Other inerrantists (Tan 2001:599-614) argue that redaction criticism is a flawed methodology that should be abandoned for a return to historical-grammatical exegesis.

3.2.6 Issues arising from the debate

(1) Robert Stein’s early efforts to establish methodological guidelines for the use of redaction criticism raises a fundamental question. Do evangelicals have a well understood and agreed upon methodology that is consistently employed in the use of redaction criticism? Has there ever been a consensus on Markan redaction criticism methodology? If practioners are working with the same presuppositions concerning the relationship of the Gospels (called the Synoptic Problem, e.g. Markan priority and the use of Q) should they not arrive at the same interpretive conclusions, if there is a consistent methodology being employed by all?

(2) Michaels’ concerns with the methodology of Lindsell, as well as the studies by Blomberg, Dillard and Deppe raise another issue. What is the role of harmonization in the study of the Gospels? Is harmonization compatible with the use of redaction criticism? Do either redaction criticism or harmonization reflect a proper “reading” of the Gospels?

(3) The controversy surrounding Gundry’s use of midrash in his redaction criticism studies raised the issue of genre and inerrancy. This necessitated understanding

¹² Steffen’s article originated from his doctoral studies, see: D S Steffen, “The Messianic Banquet as a Paradigm for Israel-Gentile Salvation in Matthew” (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2001).

how inerrancy applies to different genres, and how to recognize the unique features of each genre (e.g. midrash). It also forced scholars to consider the methodology for detecting the redactional work of the Gospel writers and to recognize the presuppositional role of one's views concerning the Synoptic Problem. Does inerrancy or inspiration necessitate a certain view on the Synoptic Problem? Should one build one's exegetical study on a non-existent document (the hypothetical source Q)? How should the lack of consensus on the Synoptic Problem even after centuries of studies, affect one's approach to redaction criticism? If the disciple Matthew, was the author of the Gospel of Matthew, would he have had to rely upon Mark's Gospel or chosen to do so, or should one assume literary independence as the solution to the Synoptic Problem?

(4) Gundry's commentary on Matthew and its statistical approach to determine redactional emphases also raises another issue. Are there well-defined criteria to use to determine what is redactional and what is simply stylistic? Do the Gospels contain the *ipsissima verba* or *ipsissima vox* of Jesus? This raises the question as to what languages Jesus spoke? If Jesus did speak Greek at times then how does one determine when? Or do the Gospels only preserve the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus, and if so, then what emphasis should one give to differences in the sayings of Jesus found in the Gospel accounts? Do they reflect redactional emphases or simply stylistic changes? Even if all the Gospels agree on the wording of Jesus' saying do we really have the *ipsissima verba*? What are the implications of the doctrine of inspiration, does it demand that the Gospel's record more than the *ipsissima vox*?

(5) The *Jesus Seminar* and the response to it by Thomas and others raises other important questions also. What role does one's faith commitment to Jesus as Lord and the Bible as inerrant have upon one's hermeneutics? Does such a commitment mean that historical study is precluded? Certainly some within the IBR, who are also members of the ETS, would argue that historical study is not precluded by a commitment to Christ and an inerrant Bible. This raises the question, what specifically are the presuppositions one brings to questions of historicity? Are the presuppositions or the methodology or both, different between those employed by the *Jesus Seminar* and those of IBR Jesus Group which claims to be "fully critical, yet supportive of the Christian faith"?

(6) Smith's study raised issues about how evangelicals define the role of redaction criticism and historicity. Is historicity really supposed to be part of redaction critical

studies? Have evangelicals been arguing with each other and liberals over redaction criticism when they should have been debating the use of form and tradition criticism? Could one do redaction critical studies apart from the employment of the use of the criteria of authenticity (tradition-critical analysis)?

(7) Smalley (1979:181) and others have distinguished between composition criticism and redaction criticism. If, as Osborne (1992:667) argues composition criticism has provided a “healthy corrective” and “helps avoid excesses by looking for patterns rather than seeing theology in every possible instance,” then would it not be beneficial to consider more carefully this approach? Is part of the problem in the debate a failure to be precise in the use of terminology?

These are issues that arise from the overview of the use of redaction criticism by evangelicals. The publication of *The Jesus Crisis* (Thomas & Farnell 1998) has once again renewed the call by some evangelicals to abandon the historical-critical method and recognize that it is not compatible with inerrancy and presents a danger to the health of the church. The inerrancy debates have constantly swirled around the use of critical methodologies in the study of Scripture. Evangelicals within the SBC were concerned that the possible undermining of Scripture through the loss or denial of inerrancy could impact the proclamation of the gospel and so they acted in accordance with their concerns.

At present there has been no full scale response to *The Jesus Crisis* by those inerrantists who practice redaction criticism. There have been book reviews and some journal articles but this study will undertake to examine the arguments that have been raised against the use of the historical-critical method, and in particular redaction criticism, with the intention of seeking to clarify the issues and propose a way forward in this debate. This issue remains a contentious one within the ETS and one that deserves a fresh appraisal once again. It is also clear that the issues of this debate reflect upon the efforts of the newly formed IBR Jesus Group and so have significance for their work as well. This study will seek to address these issues by setting forth the respective viewpoints in the debate and then provide some an overview of selective texts central to the debate, before providing an evaluation of the arguments of the two sides.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRINCIPAL ISSUES IN THE DEBATE

The principal issues of the debate, surrounding the use of redaction criticism by evangelicals, will be outlined. The debate addresses issues such as presuppositions, source criticism, the role of harmonization, whether the Gospels provide a chronology of events, whether the Gospels predominately preserve the *ipsisima verba* or *ipsisima vox* of Jesus, the role form and tradition criticism should play, if any, in Gospel studies, and whether the Gospel writers were predominately faithful historians writing as independent authors or creative theologians changing their sources to provide a message that met the needs of their audiences.

The redaction criticism debate has been revived recently, particularly by Osborne's responses (1999; 2000) to the writers of *The Jesus Crisis* (1998) and to Thomas (2000a), who responded to Osborne's criticisms of *The Jesus Crisis*. Osborne (2000:113) maintains that after the contentious debates of the 1970's and early 1980's, beginning around 1985 there was a decidedly different tone in the ETS towards those holding to inerrancy, who used the historical-critical methodology. He contends that over a fourteen-year period, until the publication of *The Jesus Crisis* (1998), the orthodoxy of evangelical redaction critics was not questioned. Osborne (2000:113) wonders if the publication of that book signals "a new period of inquisition being established in which the criteria of heterodoxy are set by one group of scholars?" He (2000:113) argues that at the heart of this debate is the charge that to use the historical-critical methodology entails a denial of the historicity of the Gospel events. This chapter will present the arguments that are central to this debate.

4.1 THE ROLE OF PRESUPPOSITIONS

4.1.1 A "modified" use of historical-criticism and presuppositions

Farnell (1998b:117) argues that evangelical practitioners of redaction criticism have been careless in thinking through the presuppositions of their methodology. Farnell even goes so far as to say, "Failure to consider presuppositions and their subsequent

impact upon the interpretation of Scripture is the true scandal of the evangelical mind.”¹ Darrell Bock (2002c:17-18) in his 2001 ETS presidential address, *The Purpose-Driven ETS: Where Should We Go? A Look At Jesus Studies And Other Example Cases* outlined two very different approaches taken by ETS members to Jesus studies and the use of methodologies like redaction criticism. He began by highlighting the presuppositions of those he disagrees with, who repudiate the use of redaction criticism on the basis of the “unbelieving” presuppositions that are associated with the use of the historical-critical methodology. Bock writes:

In ETS, there are two paradigms for Jesus studies. These paradigms date back to ETS’s earliest days and precipitated the one very public departure of a member.² View one argues that different presuppositions exist between evangelicals and the historical-critical method. This difference is so severe at its base that adoption of the method inevitably leads to defection from biblical fidelity, or at least severely erodes it. This approach sees the issue of method as a strict ideological clash. The argument is that we should draw boundaries and close ranks around options that honor the very words of Jesus and an openness to constant and consistent harmonization, while rejecting calls that also see historical authenticity in those places where Jesus’ voice is affirmed as present without him being quoted exactly. A particular hermeneutical method is affirmed as consistently biblical, largely if not entirely closing off other options.

Bock is correct, that, from the early days of the ETS to the present, a number of ETS members have argued that using redaction criticism implies using a methodology incompatible with inerrancy. Kistemaker (1975:21) was one ETS member, who gave a critical evaluation of the use of redaction criticism just as the debate on redaction criticism in the ETS was starting to heat up. In an article that surveyed NT problems and projects, he wrote, “However, we should clearly understand that the redaction critic has not at all departed from the rationalistic antisupernaturalism which characterizes the work of the form critic.”³ In brief, redaction criticism is based on a negative view of Scripture.” During the same time period, Lindsell (1976) released his book, *Battle For the Bible* attacking the use of the critical methodologies and John Montgomery (1978:220-222)

¹ He is drawing a contrast with Noll’s conclusions in M. Noll “Scandal, a Forum on the Evangelical Mind,” *Christianity Today* (August 14, 1995), 21-27.

² This is a reference to the expulsion of Robert Gundry due to his use of “midrash.”

³ Kistemaker footnotes, W. A. Maier, *The Historical Critical Method as Employed in the Study of the New Testament*, *Springfielder*, 35 (1 71), pp. 26-40.

argued that redaction criticism would undermine evangelical orthodoxy. Norman Geisler (1981) wrote a volume that analyzed the philosophical roots of biblical errancy and concluded they were inimical to the doctrine of inerrancy.

As noted in chapter three, the work of the *Jesus Seminar* also drew further attention to the issue of presuppositions. Thomas (1996:103) wrote, “It is futile for evangelicals to attempt responses to this Seminar when they employ the same tainted methodology.” The concerns expressed during the earlier ETS debates on redaction criticism have not abated and recently they have been reiterated. Farnell (1998a:207) believes that evangelicals, who use form criticism and tradition criticism “operate from a similar presuppositional grid, resulting in the same type of dehistoricizing of Jesus’ words and works as the anathematized Jesus Seminar.” Farnell (1998a:216) argues form criticism (hereafter FC) was developed not simply to determine literary forms such as miracle stories, but to evaluate the historicity of the various events from the embellishments by the early church communities. This approach viewed the Gospels as the product of the Christian communities not the eyewitness reports of the apostles and others. Thomas (1998c:253-254) argues that redaction criticism (hereafter RC) is similar to the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth and the demythologizing of Rudolf Bultmann with two realms of reality, that of the observable and that of faith. According to such a view, the Gospels need not coincide with history as long as they prove beneficial to the spiritual formation of the early Christian church. The Gospel writers are principally theologians not historians and so many of the events of Jesus’ life and many of his sayings were historical fabrications of the early Christian church arising from its experience, *Sitz im Leben*.

Norman Geisler (1999:13-14) also recently took the opportunity during his 1998 ETS presidential address to reiterate his concern that critical methodologies if used by evangelicals will undermine the inerrancy of Scripture. Thomas (2000a:100) has charged that Osborne by assuming the impossibility of harmonizing the synoptic Gospels with the Gospel of John advocates a position similar to the *Jesus Seminar* of assuming non-historicity. Osborne (1999:202) argued against a strict narration of Jesus’ life in the Gospels by noting the differences between John’s Gospel and the synoptic Gospels concerning the number of Passovers and visits to Jerusalem that are recorded in their presentations of Jesus’ ministry. Thomas (2000a:100) responds to Osborne, arguing:

Besides, why base an assumption of non-harmonization on the failure of the Synoptics to mention Jesus' visits to Jerusalem unless one assumes guilt instead of innocence? John wrote his Gospel with knowledge of the other three Gospels and sought to fill in gaps they failed to cover.⁴ I do not see the non-assumption of guilt as a clear difference between evangelical HCs [Historical Critics] and the Jesus Seminar.

In his 2001 ETS presidential address Bock (2002c:18), after outlining the view of Thomas and others, proceeded to give the second view taken by ETS members with regards to the use of redaction criticism, which represents his view:

A second view argues that evangelicals can and should engage the opposition *and* their method. It should look for that method's inconsistencies *beyond* the presuppositional ones and expose the fact that even on those often suspect standards; the synthesis coming into our culture from that view can be exposed as seriously flawed. It argues that a healthy respect for Scripture and a modified use of such standards that reflects such respect is possible and valuable in appreciating how Scripture actually works and should be read. It keeps us from making the Bible do more than it intends. Intellectual honesty also may force us to acknowledge that critics have sometimes gotten things right. Even so, why should evangelicals be the only ones put on the defensive? If, in engaging in a careful use of Scripture, we can make a case for Jesus and the core of his teaching to the larger culture, then should we not pursue such a course and raise questions about the so-called "assured results of criticism" using that criticism to expose the problems of the alleged results? Our task in this second model is to present and defend the Scripture using all the means necessary to make the case. [his emphasis]

Other evangelical inerrantists affirm the value of using critical methodologies. Black and Dockery (1991:14) justify the use of critical methodologies by evangelicals stating that "To deny that the Bible should be studied through the use of literary and critical methodologies is to treat the Bible as less than human, less than historical, and less than literature."

During the early debate, Carl F. H. Henry (1979:393) addressed the role of presuppositions used in redaction criticism and wrote, "What is objectionable is not the historical-critical method, but rather the alien presuppositions to which neo-protestant scholars subject it." In his discussion of the historical-critical methodology, Henry

⁴ Thomas footnotes: Clement of Alexandria, *Hypotyposesis* 6; idem, cited by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.24.7; 6.14.7; cf. *The Jesus Crisis* 49-50, 234. See also Jakob van Bruggen for a fuller reconciliation of the synoptic Gospels with the Gospel of John regarding Jesus' presence in Jerusalem and Galilee (*Christ on Earth: The Gospel Narratives as History* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998] 98-101).

(1979:401) concludes that an evangelical can bring different presuppositions into play in using the methodology. He argues that the negative presuppositions of the critics are arbitrary and not necessary to the study of past historical events.

Osborne (1999:196) responded to Farnell's (1998a:207) claim that he and other evangelical practitioners of redaction criticism were "operating from a similar presuppositional grid" as those of the *Jesus Seminar*, by listing five differences between evangelical FC and the methods of the *Jesus Seminar*. Osborne defended his methodology and the presuppositions employed by responding with the following differences:

- (1) The Seminar considers a saying guilty until proven innocent, exactly the opposite of evangelical approaches.
- (2) For them neither the canon nor theology can be used to harmonize texts, again contrary to evangelicals.
- (3) There is little room for the supernatural in the Seminar, while there are constant articles on the validity of miracles among evangelicals.
- (4) The criteria of authenticity play a decisive role for them, while evangelicals give it only a limited role at best (see below).
- (5) Radical skepticism is the name of the game for the Seminar, but evangelicals are optimistic about the historicity of the Gospels. This is merely a sample of the many differences, but it will suffice to prove how little validity there is to Farnell's claim.

4.1.2 The "apologetic dialogue" argument and presuppositions

(Bock 2002c:18-19) in his 2001 ETS presidential address appealed to Acts 17 as an example of starting from the context of those one differs from when arguing your case with non-evangelicals. He calls this a strategy of engagement that is audience-sensitive. This expresses his apologetic and "missional mandate" that he believes should be part of the ETS purpose (2002c:11-17). He asked that the debate on redaction criticism be considered within this larger parameter following Paul's approach in Acts 17. Bock (2002c:19) suggested:

Note what this kind of open engagement allows. It allows us to put on the defensive those who are getting the bulk of public attention today, like the members of the *Jesus Seminar*. Note what leaving ourselves to the first view alone does. It often keeps us on the defensive, constantly focused on the minute details of the *Jesus* story, often at its most tangential points. There are times for such a defense, but there are times as well when the bulk of our attention should be elsewhere. Do we want to spend most of our time defending every little detail the non-conservatives bring up and spend tons of energy fighting each other about how to resolve such

differences because we as conservatives approach the solutions differently? Or do we want to spend time working together on the big picture of Jesus and his ministry and how the Bible, even when it is read as basically trustworthy, still leads to him as the answer for a perishing world? Must we insist that our culture accept our view of Scripture before coming to Jesus? Or can we argue that seeing the Jesus of Scripture in his most basic terms will help people in our culture reconsider their larger worldview which leads them to demean Scripture? I want to keep both lines of argument open.

Bock (2002c:19), in developing his argument for an “apologetical use” of redaction criticism, then appealed to Millard Erickson’s⁵ metaphor of bringing a horse to drink water. Bock (2002c:19) quoted Erickson, who said,

This means that we will need to cross the bridge to where the horse is, rather than standing on our side of the bridge and trying to coax the horse to come to us. Eventually, of course, we must bring the horse across the bridge, but that may not be possible initially. We will need to enter into the other person’s perspective, to think from his or her presuppositions.

Bock seems to allow for evangelical practitioners of redaction criticism to use the presuppositions of non-evangelicals, when employing redaction criticism for an “apologetic” purpose. Bock (2002c:19) goes on to speak of the need to expose the inconsistencies in their approach, particularly since it has “mega-problems.” This seems to be the implication of Bock’s quotation of Erickson, since Bock (2002c:20) then says:

Both approaches, one defending Scripture in detail and the other examining the alternative paradigm from within its method while keeping an eye on the big picture, have their value. But we need more of the second, not less, to engage our more diverse culture and to make sure that mission always remains a key element of our work.

When Bock speaks of using the alternative paradigm’s “method,” particularly in light of his quote of Erickson and his statement about using the other person’s presuppositions, Bock seems to open the door, under these “apologetical circumstances,” for using the negative presuppositions of the practitioner of form and redaction criticism.

Carson (1983:138-139) noted previously that if one chooses to use redaction criticism as an objective tool, particularly when in the process one employs the criteria of authenticity, one may find oneself in a situation where there are inadequate grounds to

⁵ M Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 155.

claim authenticity for a saying of Jesus. This will force the evangelical redaction critic to some difficult decisions. One could abandon their traditional conservative position or one could decide to abandon using redaction criticism with respect to questions of authenticity. Another option one might choose would be to use redaction criticism only when it supports the individual's high view of Scripture. Carson (1983:139) notes that James Barr has accused evangelicals of doing this and Carson agrees there is some validity to Barr's criticism. Like Bock, Carson (1983:139) appears to allow for using redaction criticism for apologetic purposes.

Derickson (2003:88) maintains that even this approach is flawed, and he contends it has been in vogue in the ETS for a number of years. He writes,

Nonetheless, the trend has been to adopt critical methods in order to "dialogue" with critical scholars under the assumption that their methods in and of themselves are not flawed, just their presuppositions. Additionally, only the antisupernatural presuppositions undergirding their methods should be rejected. This trend has become more and more apparent over the last decade as an attitude of "pushing the limits" of evangelicalism has grown. The question of the day seems to be: How liberal is too liberal and how much of critical scholarship's methods and presuppositions are acceptable without crossing the boundaries of evangelicalism?

Lindsell (1976:283) also previously noted this appeal to an apologetic approach or to "dialogue" during the early years of the debate. He insisted that the historical-critical method is not neutral and some (including himself) may have "played fast and loose" with the term because they wanted acceptance within academia. Lindsell (1976:283) spoke of those who were engaged in the use of the historical-critical method for an apologetic purpose but were "under the illusion that by this method the opponents of biblical inerrancy can be won over to the evangelical viewpoint." Lindsell (1976:283) felt that practical experience showed this was rarely the case, but in the process evangelicals were lending credence to a methodology, which was actually a deadly enemy of theological orthodoxy.

It is apparent that with the ETS there still remains a division over the use of redaction criticism and that one of the fundamental issues still being debated is the role of the presuppositions of those who practice redaction criticism. I H Marshall (1979:126-127), a leading evangelical scholar, who does not hold to inerrancy, made an interesting observation that reflects on the implications of presuppositions in the use of the

historical-critical methodology. In an article on historical criticism; he said, “It is certainly impossible to practice the historical method without concluding that on occasion the correct solution to a difficulty lies in the unhistorical character of a particular narrative.”

4.2 THEORIES OF GOSPEL SOURCES

4.2.1 The relationship between source and redaction criticism

The redaction criticism debate has focused of necessity on the issues of the sources of the synoptic Gospels. This has been described as the *Synoptic Problem*, which seeks to explain why the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke look so much alike and what accounts for the similarity in content, in wording and in the order of events found within them. There are a variety of theories that have originated to explain the parallels between the Gospels.

Osborne (1992:663) briefly explains the relationship between redaction criticism and *source criticism*, which tries to identify the written sources behind the Gospels and the relationship between those sources. Osborne writes:

Redaction criticism must build upon the results of source criticism, for the final results are determined in part by one’s choice of Markan or Matthean priority.... The most widely held hypothesis remains the Oxford, or four-document, hypothesis of B. H. Streeter, who taught that Matthew and Luke utilized two primary sources, Mark and Q, along with their own secondary sources (M and L). Redaction critics begin with this assumption and study the alterations which the Evangelists made to their sources. This means that redactional study is most relevant for Matthew and Luke, less so for Mark (we don’t know what sources he may have used) or John (independent for the most part from the Synoptics).

Even a cursory examination of the Synoptics will quickly reveal similarities in the accounts. Stein (1992b:784-785) lists similarities in wording (cf. Mt 19:13-15; Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18 15-17), in order of the Gospel pericopes (cf. Mt 12:46-13:58; Mk 3:31-6:6a; Lk 8:19-56), in parenthetical material, like statements, “let the reader understand” (cf. Mt 24:15; Mk 13:14), and in quotations from the Old Testament (cf. Mk 1:2; Mt 3:3; Lk 3:4). Such similarities demand some type of an explanation, which has led to the *Synoptic Problem*. The Synoptics evidence a historical progression, in recounting the life of Jesus and his ministry, which can account for some similarities, yet there are

differences in the ordering of events, which require an explanation that moves beyond historical and chronological considerations (cf. Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13).

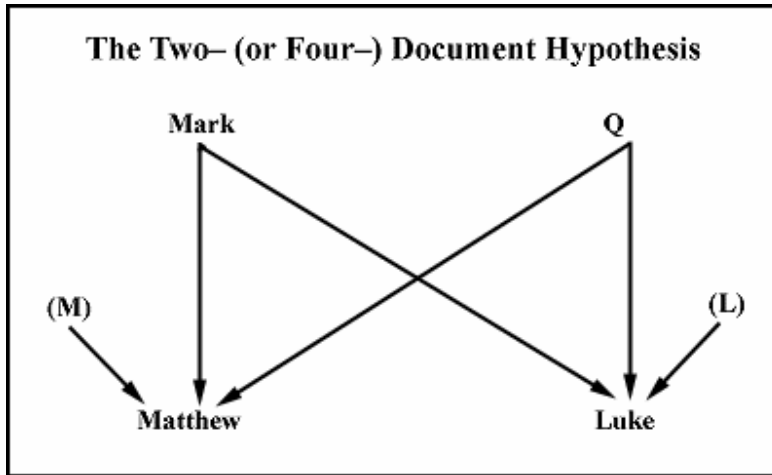
When Stein (1991:50) sought to delineate the proper methodology for employing redaction criticism in the Gospel of Mark, he recognized that it presented a more complex challenge than doing a redaction history of Matthew or Luke. The reason for this increased difficulty was because Stein believed we do not possess any of Mark's sources. He presupposed that the sources used by Matthew and Luke were more easily investigated since he held to the theory of Markan priority and believed that it was possible to construct to a "certain extent" the Q source. This illustrates how redaction criticism is dependent upon one first drawing a conclusion about the Synoptic Problem.

4.2.2 Theories concerning the sources of the Synoptics

There have been numerous theories suggested in the debate concerning the sources of the Synoptics (Black 2001; Black & Beck 2001; Thomas 2002; Thomas 2004a: 3-38) but they can be understood in terms of two broad categories. A number of theories argue for some form of *literary interdependence* upon one or more of the synoptic Gospels and other possible sources, written or oral. The other broad category pertains to those theories, which argue for the *literary independence* of the synoptic Gospels.

McKnight (1988:35-37; 2001:78-80) briefly describes the four most common explanations involving literary interdependence that he considers somewhat plausible and that have gained some type of a following. Augustine suggested that Matthew wrote first, Mark used Matthew, and Luke used Mark. Thus, the canonical order is also the chronological order. The Griesbach Hypothesis (sometimes called the two-Gospel Hypothesis) proposes that Matthew wrote first, Luke was written next and used Matthew, and finally Mark was last and used Matthew and Luke. The Farrer Hypothesis accepts Markan priority and argues Matthew was next and used Mark and finally Luke used Mark and Matthew. This hypothesis denies a role for "Q". The most popular thesis, at present, is what is known as the Oxford Hypothesis associated with B. H. Streeter. It can be described as the "Two or Four Document Hypothesis." The Oxford Hypothesis maintains that Mark wrote first and Matthew was written second and used Mark as well as another source, commonly called "Q." Finally, Luke wrote his Gospel using Mark and

Q also (see diagram below)⁶.



4.2.3 Defining the role of “Q”

The use of the term “Q” [an abbreviation of the word *Quelle*, meaning “source”] is not always consistent in scholarly writings and Stanton (1992:644) provides a helpful summary of the use of the term:

The term *Q* has been used in several ways, with resulting confusion. (1) For some scholars *Q* is simply a shorthand way of referring to non-Markan traditions shared by Matthew and Luke: *Q* traditions may have existed in a number of short written documents or collections of oral traditions. (2) Some scholars see *Q* as a cycle of oral tradition which circulated in the early church with a fairly fixed order. (3) Most recent writers assume that *Q* existed as a written document which disappeared shortly after it was incorporated by Matthew and Luke into their Gospels. They accept that with few exceptions Luke has preserved the original order of the *Q* traditions, though not necessarily the original wording.

Stanton (1992:646) after presenting five arguments in support of the *Q* hypothesis felt compelled to acknowledge:

The cumulative force of the five preceding arguments is very impressive, but the case for *Q* falls short of absolute proof. Even the strongest supporters of *Q* accept that the hypothesis is less securely established than Markan priority. However, *Q* remains a valid working hypothesis for serious study of the Gospels.

The *Q* hypothesis functions with Markan Priority as the linchpins of the Oxford

⁶ Stein, 1992b:791.

Hypothesis, which is the predominate theory employed in most redactional studies of the Synoptics. Nevertheless, a strong advocate of Markan Priority like Stein (1992b:790) states:

The reason why most scholars maintain the priority of Mark is not based on any one argument listed above. Rather, the priority of Mark is based on the entire collection of arguments. The weight of any one argument may not be convincing, but together they are quite convincing, and the best available hypothesis for explaining the Synoptic Problem is that Matthew and Luke used Mark in the composition of their Gospels. Being a “hypothesis,” absolute proof is by definition lacking, and the Synoptic Problem must always remain open to a better hypothesis if one should become available.

4.2.4 The literary independence theory

The literary independence theory had not received much attention by evangelical advocates of redaction criticism until recently, which is not surprising since it is not compatible with redaction criticism. Yet, Eta Linnemann’s, *Is There A Synoptic Problem? Rethinking the Literary Dependence of the First Three Gospels* (1992) was influential in bringing the theory to the attention of evangelicals again and this theory has found other advocates (Edgar 1998:152; Thomas 1998c:245; Farnell 2002:226-309).

One of the primary arguments used in support of literary independence appeals to the number of occasions that Matthew and Luke agree against Mark or that Matthew and Mark agree against Luke or that Mark and Luke agree against Matthew (Edgar 1998:139-140; Thomas 1998c:245; Farnell 2002:290; Thomas 2004a:11-15, 29-38). Osborne (1999:199), who rejects the independence theory, claimed there are “remarkable verbal similarities” in the Synoptics and that “[F]requently these parallels exist especially between Mark and Matthew and between Mark and Luke but rarely between Matthew and Luke.” Thomas (2000a:103) responded, “How can he say ‘rarely between Matthew and Luke’ when Matthew and Luke agree verbally 230 times against Mark’s wording in what they include, and seemingly countless times the two agree with one another in what they omit from Mark.”

The independence theory emphasizes the role of the authors as personal eyewitnesses, who relied upon their memories in writing their respective Gospels. Thus, Thomas (1998c:245) writes the Synoptics evidence “a random combination of agreements and disagreements that are explainable only through an independent use by

each writer of tradition based on personal memories of eyewitnesses.” Thomas (2000a:97-98) maintains that the similarities between the Synoptics can be accounted for by acknowledging that the writers were eyewitnesses, with sharp memories, who were able to reproduce the exact wording of dialogues and sermons. He (2000a:98) notes that one must also consider the role that the Holy Spirit’s inspiration played in recalling the events, just as Jesus had promised (John 14:26).

Thomas realizes the literary independence theory must also account for the differences between the Gospels, particularly since eyewitnesses produced the accounts. Thomas (2000a:98) argues that the different eyewitnesses could report the very same events in different but not contradictory wording. As a result, there emerged “a diversified, non-homogeneous body of tradition without definable limits from which the writers were able to draw.” Thomas (2000a:98) also proposes that the Gospel writers may even have had opportunities to exchange ideas and memories and from all of these various sources they selected the materials for their Gospels that suited their individual purposes. Thomas (2000a:98) further suggests that the independence theory finds support on the basis of the inability of the various theories of literary interdependence to arrive at a satisfactory solution to the Synoptic Problem.

Thomas (2000a:102) acknowledges that one needs to explain the difference between his proposal to the Synoptic Problem and proposals that employ redaction criticism and are based upon one of the literary interdependence theories. The first difference he articulates notes that the independence theory traces the differences in the Gospel accounts to apostolic eyewitness reports. The redaction criticism approach traces the differences in the Gospel accounts to changes made by the writers as they attempted to meet a theological need of the churches they wrote to in the late first century.

Thomas (2000a:102) posits a second point of difference between the approaches, by pointing out that many evangelicals, who employ a literary interdependence theory, suggest that the Gospel writers were “creating new material.” Thomas (1998d:23) documents the manner in which evangelicals like Hagner, Gundry, Stein, and Bruner all ascribe the origin of the exception clauses in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 to someone other than Jesus.⁷ Thus, in contrast to the independence theory that argues these are eyewitness

⁷ Thomas footnotes: Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC 33A; Dallas: Word, 1993) 123; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (2nd ed.;

reports of Jesus' actual words, Thomas (2000a:102) concludes that their redaction criticism approach means, "Jesus did not utter them, rather an early community or the Gospel writer put the words into his mouth."

4.2.5 The Markan priority theory

Osborne (1999:198) in his response to *The Jesus Crisis* (1998) conceded that the independence theory could be viable, but he felt both Linnemann and the writers in *The Jesus Crisis* went too far in their arguments for their position. In particular, Osborne (1999:198) was concerned that "they allege that anyone accepting literary dependence introduces a factor that affects the historicity of the accounts." Osborne (1999:198) maintained that if either Matthew or Luke had access to Mark's Gospel and changed the details or wording of an event or saying found in Mark, the historical veracity of the accounts was not necessarily being impugned.

Osborne (1999:98) responded further to the concern about the historical veracity of the accounts and argued that Jesus followed a well-known methodology in his teaching:

The rabbis frequently engaged in 'pearl stringing,' that is, a topical collection of sayings strung together into a single whole. Jesus did give those messages, but under the leading of the Holy Spirit Matthew or Luke were also free to attach other sayings on the same topic. This does not impugn the historicity of the sayings. The whole issue of chronology and organization into the Gospels is critical here.... Moreover, if Matthew and Luke were to use Mark and alter in some fashion Mark's wording, they were not "creating" new material that Jesus had not said. Rather, they were bringing in other nuances that Jesus had stated but Mark had not included. All three versions of a saying are historically accurate and go back to Jesus' original message; each simply highlights a different aspect of the original saying. This is true whether one holds to independence or literary dependence. Differences remain differences and need explanation whether they originated via redaction or independence. Relative to the question of the exact nature of the historical event and historicity, differences still need to be assessed and evaluated.

Osborne (1999:199) contends that extensive verbal similarity in the Gospel accounts points to a literary connection and he argues for Markan Priority. He feels that

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 90; Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (NAC 24; Nashville: Broadman, 1992) 152; Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook, A Historical/Theological Commentary: Matthew 1-12* (Dallas: Word, 1987) 191.

Markan Priority also receives strong support from the order of events where Matthew and Luke tend to follow Mark but rarely follow one another. A third argument he advances for Markan Priority revolves around the fact that Mark is shorter and more “primitive” in its wording, and Matthew and Luke use 90% of Mark and appear to “smooth it out.” He (1999:199) says “It is hard to see why Mark would make Matthew or Luke more awkward in his wording, but easy to see why they would smooth out Mark’s Greek and wording.” A final argument Osborne advances for Markan Priority, is the agreement in the Gospel accounts of what he calls “occasional side comments” (Mk 13:14 = Mt 24:15, “Let the reader understand”) Osborne (1999:199) feels it is unlikely that these type of parenthetical comments would have arisen independently.

As a defender of Markan Priority, Osborne (1999:200) recognizes there is no absolute proof for Q but he feels there are good arguments for its existence and role in the literary interdependence of the synoptic Gospels. Osborne prefers to view Q as a mixture of oral and written material. Osborne (1999:200) responded to the independence theory by briefly presenting several arguments for Q that he finds convincing. He notes the need to account for the 250 (or possibly as many as 325) verses, that are mainly *Logia Jesu* (sayings of Jesus), that are common to Matthew and Luke but not found in Mark or John. Osborne (1999:200) maintains that since John clearly indicates there were thousands of other sayings of Jesus that were not written down in the Gospels (Jn 21:25), then how does one account for the fact that two Gospels written independently of each other contain so many of the same sayings?

There are two prongs to this argument. It is argued (McKnight 1988:40; Osborne 1999:200) that the verbal agreement between some of these sayings (e.g., Mt 4:1–11; Lk 4:1–13) suggests some type of interdependence. Yet, the considerable differences in wording in other sayings (e.g., the beatitudes or the Lord’s prayer) and the different contexts in which Matthew and Luke place the material make it unlikely that Matthew or Luke were using each other. Thus, it is argued (McKnight 1988:40; Osborne 1999:200) that in light of these agreements & disagreements, a source now called Q provides the best explanation of these materials.

Derickson (2003:95) draws out several implications related to the Markan priority theory if one assumes that Matthew was an eyewitness of the life and teachings of Jesus. He says,

To defend Markan priority one *must* assume someone other than an eyewitness of Jesus' life, the apostle himself, composed Matthew and used Mark and other "traditions" as his source. Yes, some Markan prioritists argue that Matthew himself actually used Mark. But why would an eyewitness *need* or even *want* to use someone else's account? This is especially difficult to understand in light of Jesus' personal promise to Matthew and the other eyewitnesses of His ministry that the Holy Spirit would "bring to your [their] remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26). [his emphasis]

There are still other solutions that evangelicals offer to the Synoptic Problem. Breckinridge (1983:121) argued that a commitment to Markan priority would not result in an evangelical solution to the Synoptic Problem and Gundry's employment of it illustrated the pitfalls of such an approach. He called for evangelicals to embrace Matthean priority and a conservative view of Scripture. He concluded that this would necessitate three things:

(1) a clear theological commitment to inerrancy, (2) an evaluation of patristic tradition and resources, and (3) a reasonable and constructive use of form criticism. Relative to the latter, we seem to have two choices: either opt for Matthean priority and a reasonable exercise of form criticism, or accept Marcan priority and suffer the consequences of a more severe redaction criticism.

Blomberg (2001b:38) endorses the conclusions of John Wenham (1992b:9-10), who argued that literary interdependence cannot be dispensed with for three reasons: (1) the frequent agreement in order of pericopae when there is no chronological necessity for preserving the order; (2) the quick and widespread dissemination of the Gospels in the early church; (3) the improbability of the four evangelists independently inventing the same "gospel" genre. Blomberg (2001b:39) adds as an additional point, the inability of the independence theory to fully explain why the Gospels seem to mimic narrative asides. He lists Mark 2:10-11 and its parallels (Mt 9:6; Lk 5:24) as an example. Mk 2:10-11 reads, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you get up, take your mat and go home." Why then do all the accounts include the narrative aside, "He said to the paralytic" when Jesus' words could have continued uninterrupted by this "insertion."

Regardless of the interdependence theory adopted, an evangelical redaction critic must address the thorny issue of determining the redaction history of whichever Gospel is chosen as the "first" Gospel in their theory. Stein (1991:67), who embraces the Markan

priority theory, concluded that the pursuit of a Marcan redaction history was difficult but not impossible. Yet, before he developed his criteria for the methodology to determine a Marcan redaction he made this telling statement (1991:50-51),

If we could go back in time and look over the shoulder of the Evangelist to see what his sources were like (let us assume for the sake of our illustration that the sources were all written), our task would be considerably easier. Unfortunately no such possibility exists. Nevertheless it is possible, although difficult, by means of form-critical investigation to reconstruct to a certain extent the pre-Markan tradition. Having done this, we then can see how Mark joined, arranged, modified, and selected the traditions available to him. Mark has made our task more complicated, however, because he has “marcanized” the traditions, both oral and written, which were available to him. He has done this by retelling the traditions in his own words and in his own style. This is unfortunate because it makes the separation of the Marcan redaction from the pre-Markan tradition all the more difficult.

This reminds one that if one employs an interdependence solution to the Synoptic Problem, regardless of which theory is embraced, there will be unique difficulties in determining the “redaction” for the proposed first written Gospel in one’s theory. Stein’s quote also shows how clearly redaction criticism at its root is tied to form and tradition criticism methodologies and their own methodological difficulties.

One text that may support the literary interdependence theory is Luke 1:1-4. Thus, the writers in *The Jesus Crisis* (1998) devoted special attention to it in arguing for literary independence (Felix 1998:271-288). The arguments surrounding the meaning and implications of this passage for The Synoptic Problem and the debate on sources used by the Gospel writers will be examined in chapter five.

4.3 THE ROLE OF HARMONIZATION

4.3.1 Rejection of harmonization in biblical studies

The differences in details that appear between parallel passages in the synoptic Gospels have traditionally been explained in a defense of inerrancy by an appeal to the role and validity of harmonization. Yet, as noted in chapter three, some evangelicals like Michaels were very concerned about the use of harmonization particularly as employed by some like Lindsell. Gundry also eschewed any type of harmonization approach in his commentary on Matthew where he employed redaction criticism and defended his

approach. Gundry (1982:639) wrote, “The old approach of harmonizing what we can and holding the rest in suspension has seen its day, like worn-out scientific theories that no longer explain newly discovered phenomena well enough.”

As noted previously in chapter three, Deppe (2000:320-321) argues that there really should not be a role for harmonization in the exegesis of a text. Rather than employ harmonization in one’s exegesis, Deppe (2000:320-321) maintains that one must employ redaction or literary criticism first because unless one does so, one will miss the theological intent of the Gospel writer. He (2000:321) says, “We should never attempt like Tatian in his Diatesseron to make one gospel out of the four. Therefore, harmonization is not the task of exegesis but of biblical theology.”

4.3.2 The argument for a variety of harmonization approaches

Yet, Dillard (1988:153) makes a pertinent argument for the role of harmonization when he says, “The question is not ‘should we harmonize or not’ for harmonization is a virtually universal and inevitable feature of daily life.” After giving some examples from daily life, Dillard (1988:153) then draws out the implication of this for biblical studies. He writes,

One cannot a priori or simplistically repudiate harmonization of biblical data without contradicting what would be a routine and natural response to data in other areas of life. Harmonization in this sense appears to be a universal convention of human reasoning. Scholars writing from within almost any theological or critical stance in theory make allowance for harmonization in exegesis, though in practice factual difficulties are the grist from which scholars compose theories of sources, redaction, and so on, and efforts to harmonize are often dismissed with ridicule. Such facile rejection too often forgets the realities of daily life.

Dillard (1988:156) maintains that harmonization draws “its principal operating strength from its theological warrant. God is true and cannot lie, and Scriptures share in this attribute.” Thus, Dillard (1988:157) contends that it is Scripture’s divine origin and inspiration that makes harmonization a valid methodology in interpretation. Yet, Dillard (1988:157-159) rightly warns about and illustrates the cavalier manner in which some harmonizations are offered. Blomberg (1986:161) in his significant study of various approaches to harmonization drew the following conclusion:

Two fundamental conclusions, however, do merit more widespread

acceptance than they have received. First, “additive” harmonization is entirely legitimate as one among many tools for alleviating tension between Gospel parallels, but a survey of the classic “contradictions” suggests that in most cases it is not the best tool. Second, the newer branches of Gospel study (source, form, and redaction criticism), far from necessarily proving Scripture’s errancy, regularly enable the exegete to reconcile apparent contradictions in a much less contrived and artificial manner than traditional harmonization. Of course, complex problems regularly require a combination of methods, and the innovative conjunction of redaction criticism with harmonization emerges as a powerful but little-used tool for breaking down some of the most resistant barriers to belief in the accuracy of the Evangelists’ narratives.

4.3.3 Traditional harmonization and redactional harmonization

Yet, not all are ready to endorse Blomberg’s conclusions. Thomas (1998a:324-325) points to the approach of evangelical redaction critics like Marshall (1978:159-160) and Gundry (1982:15), who in their studies of the genealogies of the Gospels of Luke and Matthew (respectively) draw the conclusion that one of the accounts is unhistorical. Neither proposed that the accounts were reconcilable with the other genealogy. Thomas and Farnell (1998:66) in fact draw the opposite conclusion of Blomberg when they argue:

Historical criticism with its assumption of literary interdependence has little room for harmonizing apparent discrepancies in parallel accounts of the Synoptic Gospels. That is the inevitable result of assuming literary dependence. In fact, evangelicals who practice HC [historical criticism] have shown strong rejection for traditional methods of harmonization practiced by evangelicalism, methods such as those exhibited by the early fathers.

Thomas (1998c:258-259), later in *The Jesus Crisis* says, “Evangelical RC minimizes and in some cases absolutely denies the possibility of harmonizing parallel accounts of the same events and discourses of Jesus, and, consequently, rejects the possibility of reconstructing a continuous chronological sequence in the life of Christ.” This difference concerning the feasibility of the Gospel accounts to provide a chronological account of the life of Christ will be addressed in the next section of this chapter.

Thomas (2000a:104-105) finds Osborne’s (1999:200-201) approach to harmonization unconvincing and inconsistent. He notes that Osborne’s approach of using traditional harmonization coupled with redaction criticism to address the details of the resurrection accounts significantly differs from John Wenham’s approach despite

Osborne's claim that they are similar. Thomas (2000a:104) argues that Wenham⁸ (1992a:90-94) treats the accounts as independent of each other and does not resort to redaction criticism to explain the differences. Thomas (2000a:105) maintains that Osborne despite praise for Blomberg's work fails to note the distinctions that Blomberg makes between "additive" or traditional harmonization and harmonization using historical-critical tools.

Osborne (1999:200) reaffirmed his previous statement, that Thomas (1998c:258) had criticized, where Osborne (1985:409) wrote "we can never completely harmonize the Synoptics and John—for instance, to attain a so-called chronological 'footsteps of Jesus.'" Osborne (2000:114) again returned to his earlier comment to charge that Thomas has wrongly assumed that his statement implied non-historicity of the accounts.

When I discussed the impossibility of harmonizing the Synoptics with John, he argued that I was "assuming non-historicity" (p. 100). On what ground? My whole discussion was of the chronology of Jesus' life, not of the reliability of the four Gospels. On the basis of John's three passovers (2:13; 6:4; 12:1) one could posit a two-year ministry, but in the Synoptics it seems there is a one-year ministry (one passover and one trip to Jerusalem). In truth there is no purely chronological arrangement in any of the Gospels. This does not mean there is no chronology, just that no Gospel writer organized his material on the basis of a week one/week two or month one/month two pattern. A "footsteps of Jesus" approach is highly speculative and virtually impossible because we cannot know with any degree of certainty how to organize all the stories into a Tatian-like chronology.

Osborne (2000:114) also argues that historical errors are not involved because the Gospel writers never intended to present their material in some form of strict chronological order. He claims that such an approach is more of a modern historiographical concern than a biblical concern.

Osborne (2000:114) also responded to Thomas' criticism of his understanding of Blomberg's harmonization approaches. He acknowledged that there was a difference between traditional harmonization and redactional harmonization, and responded that he was in agreement with Blomberg that both are legitimate forms of harmonization and can and should be employed in seeking to settle seeming conflicts between accounts. Osborne (2000:114) counters that by limiting the harmonization approach to only the "additive"

⁸ He footnotes, John Wenham, *Easter Enigma: Are the Resurrection Accounts in Conflict?* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) 8, 90-94.

approach actually makes “demonstrating historical veracity all the more difficult.”

The debate on harmonization often focused on how best to handle passages such as Jesus’ encounter with the “Rich Young Ruler” (Mt 19:16-30; Mk 10:17-31; Lk 18:18-30). This text has been constantly referred to in the debate about the different forms of harmonization that should be employed by evangelicals (Carson 1983:131-137; Blomberg 1986:158-159; K Osborne 1998:289-316; Thomas 1998b:358-360; G Osborne 1999:201; Thomas 2000a:105). Lindsell (1976:174-176) in *The Battle For The Bible* proposed a harmonization solution for the Gospel accounts of Peter’s denials of Christ (Mt 26:69-75; Mk 14:66-72; Lk 22:55-62; Jn 18:15-18, 25-27). Lindsell’s solution has not won many advocates and it illustrates some of the concerns that a number of evangelicals have about the use of harmonization. Both of these pericopes will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.4 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Intricately connected to the debate about approaches to harmonization, discussed in the preceding section, are questions about whether one can establish a chronology of events in the life of Jesus. As noted previously, Osborne (1999:202) holds it is impossible to provide from the four Gospels “a strictly chronological narration of the life of Jesus.” Osborne (1999:202) argues that a strictly chronological narration of the life of Jesus was not a goal of the Gospel writers. He seeks to illustrate his argument, by focusing attention on the differences between John and the Synoptics, noting how in John’s Gospel Jesus makes several trips to Jerusalem and John records three Passovers (2:13; 6:4; 11:55 = 12:1), which Osborne believes implies at minimum a two-year ministry. Osborne (1999:202) writes that in contrast, in the synoptic Gospels, Jesus seems to only go to Jerusalem at the end of his ministry and appears to have a one-year ministry. He (1999:202) states, “Moreover, even the Synoptics differ widely at times on the order of events in Jesus’ ministry. There is no evidence anywhere of a week-by-week or month-by-month itinerary of Jesus’ life.”

Osborne (1999:202) does not deny that the Gospels do contain some chronological indicators and give some events in chronological order. Yet, he proposes that a basic principle, that one should follow, is that unless the text makes explicit some chronological indicator, then one should not presume chronological order. He gives as an

example, Jesus' "single day's ministry" in Capernaum (Mk 1:21–34), followed by the event of the next morning (Mk 1:35–38). He (1999:202) also states, "While a topical organization is usually a problem in modern biography, that method was often used in the ancient world and was hardly problematic."

Bock (2002a:17), another evangelical proponent of redaction criticism, recently has sought to provide a "portrait" of Jesus, while admitting that it is not intended to be a biography. Bock uses all four Gospels to provide a portrait of Jesus, yet his book clearly distinguishes between the synoptic portrayal (2002a:45-405) and the portrayal found in the Gospel of John (2002a:407-557). He (2002a:24) argues that the Synoptics give a portrayal of Jesus from the "earth up" while John's Gospel provides a portrayal from "heaven down." Bock (2002a:24) maintains that the Synoptics and John's Gospel are too diverse to be considered concurrently in an attempt to provide a unified portrait of Jesus' life.

Thomas (2000a:105) believes that there are reasonable proposals available to harmonize Jesus' Jerusalem visits in the Gospel of John with Jesus' activities in the Synoptics, contrary to Osborne. Also, in contrast to Bock, Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003) have provided a chronology of the life of Christ that attempts to present a "unified portrait" using all four Gospels concurrently. The temptations of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13, involve a difference in the order of the second and third temptations. Therefore, this passage was used by Osborne (1999:202) to argue against a strict chronological order of the Gospel accounts. He states, "This is only a discrepancy if one demands a strict chronological order." The temptation of Jesus pericope will consequently be discussed in chapter five.

4.5 THE IPSISSIMA VERBA OR IPSISSIMA VOX OF JESUS

4.5.1 The argument for *ipsissima vox*

Several evangelicals (Hughes 1974:127-143; Porter 1993:195-235; Bock 1995:77; Porter 2000b:126-180), who have studied the languages that Jesus may have spoken, conclude that Jesus spoke Aramaic, at least some if not most of the time. Since the Gospels are written in Greek, the question naturally arises, "Do the Gospels contain the very words of Jesus?" Those holding to inerrancy provide differing perspectives as to

how to answer such a question.

Derickson (2003:101) indicates that Jesus' view of inspiration extended to the very letters of the text and its words not just its ideas or thoughts (Mt 5:18). He then explicates what he sees to be the necessary implication,

That being said, Jesus' equation must stand. Thus we hold to verbal plenary inspiration in the original autographs. How does this impact the issue of *ipsissima vox*? *Vox* does not extend historical accuracy to the very words. *Vox* is not what Jesus meant in His view of the OT Scriptures. *Vox* should not be a sufficient evangelical view of the NT.

Yet, in a volume, that addressed issues pertaining to inerrancy, Paul Feinberg (1980:301) wrote an important article on "The Meaning of Inerrancy." He made the following observation about Jesus' words and inerrancy:

Inerrancy does not demand that the Logia Jesu (the sayings of Jesus) contain the ipsissima verba (the exact words of Jesus), only the ipsissima vox (the exact voice)... . When a New Testament writer cites the sayings of Jesus, it need not be the case that Jesus said those exact words. Undoubtedly, the exact words of Jesus are to be found in the New Testament, but they need not be in every instance. For one thing, many of the sayings were spoken by our Lord in Aramaic, and therefore had to be translated into Greek... . Thus, it is impossible for us to know which are direct quotes, which are indirect discourse, and which are free renderings.⁹ With regard to the sayings of Jesus what, in light of these facts, would count against inerrancy? If the sense of the words attributed to Jesus by the writers was not uttered by Jesus, or if the exact words of Jesus are so construed that they have a sense never intended by Jesus, then inerrancy would be threatened. [his emphasis]

Feinberg (1980:472n98) notes that when we do not have the exact words of Jesus it would be helpful to indicate that we still have the *identical meaning* [his emphasis].

Bock (1995:75) argues that there are essentially three approaches taken toward the words of Jesus. He illustrates them in contemporary terminology with the words, "live," "jive," and "memorex". Those who treat Jesus' words as "memorex" hold the Gospels provide us with the exact words Jesus spoke. Bock (1995:75) contends that "jive" is illustrated by the *Jesus Seminar*, who held the Gospel writers had and took the opportunity to create sayings of Jesus. They put words in Jesus' mouth that he never said and that did not necessarily truly reflect Jesus' teaching but met the needs of the communities to which their Gospel was written. Bock (1995:77) defines "live" as, "Each

⁹ Feinberg cites, Osborne, 1976:83-85

Evangelist retells the living and powerful words of Jesus in a fresh way for his readers, while faithfully and accurately presenting the ‘gist’ of what Jesus said.”

Bock (1995:77-78) argues that the *ipsissima vox* is sufficient and lists three reasons why he feels that *ipsissima vox* is likely more prominent in the Gospels. Bock argues that since Jesus did not speak predominately in Greek this required a translation. Secondly, the Gospels on occasion only give an abbreviated form of Jesus’ much longer speeches (e.g. Sermon on the Mount) thus providing summaries of Jesus’ speeches, which may have lasted for hours. Thirdly, even the New Testament citations from the Old Testament are not always given “word for word.” Bock argues this implies that to summarize Jesus’ teaching by giving the *ipsissima vox* would be acceptable.

Wilkin (2001:3) reports, that at the 1999 annual ETS meeting in Boston, Dan Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary presented a provocative paper entitled: “An *Apologia* for a Broad View of *Ipsissima Vox*.” Wallace suggested that the NT authors followed the practice of ancient historians and he cited Thucydides as one historian who “played loose and free with his reporting” (quoted in Wilkin 2001:5). Wilkin (2001:3) believes that the practical implication of a “broad view of *ipsissima vox*” calls into question whether the NT authors were concerned about historical accuracy in terms of the speaker, the location, the date, and the precise content of what was said.

Wilkin (2001:4) argues that the inspiration of Scripture by God’s Spirit does not allow for “misreporting by human authors.” Wilkin (2001:8) declares, “The idea that the New Testament contains historical inaccuracies and yet is God-breathed and without error is ludicrous.” Wilkin (2001:7) laments that a “broad view of *ipsissima vox*” contradicts the ETS doctrinal position and he (2001:8) concludes from the debate between Osborne and Thomas that “it is apparent that these men recognize that their theological positions are not only different; they are incompatible.”

4.5.2 The argument for *ipsissima verba*

Thomas (1998b:367) writes about evangelical redaction critics, “The general impact of that field of scholarship has been on the side of assuming the gospel writers *never* reported His exact words or the *ipsissima verba* – the very words - of the Lord.” Thomas (1998b:368-369) goes on to say, “On occasions when Jesus used the Greek language—which conceivably could have been most of the time—it is quite possible that

His listeners took down what He said in shorthand or retained what He said in their highly trained memories.”

Osborne (1999:203) responded to Thomas’ presentation in *The Jesus Crisis* by arguing that even when the New Testament writers record Jesus speaking in Aramaic one cannot simply presume that the Aramaic gives the *ipsissima verba*. He notes that Jesus’ cry of dereliction is reported in Hebrew by Matthew (Mt 27:46 “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani”) while in Mark 15:34 it is reported in Aramaic (“Eloi, Eloi ...”). Osborne concludes that it is not important to determine which one might reflect the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus because both are inspired renderings. He also criticizes Thomas’ statement that Jesus usually spoke Greek, noting this is a view that would find little scholarly support. Osborne (1999:203) suggests that Thomas attributes the differences between Jesus’ sayings in the Gospels due to either an addition to or omission of Jesus’ *ipsissima verba* and they are not due to the Gospel writers paraphrasing Jesus’ words. Osborne (1999:203) writes, “Moreover, to say that virtually all the sayings in the Gospels are *ipsissima verba* is a dangerous overstatement, for inerrancy itself is at stake. Thomas demands more precision from the Gospel accounts than they can give.” Osborne (1999:203) concluded concerning *ipsissima verba* that, “Such precision is virtually impossible to demonstrate.”

Thomas (2000a:106) replied to Osborne’s criticism of his proposal that Jesus “could have conceivably used Greek most of the time” by opining that Osborne failed to recognize that he was wrestling with a difficult issue. Thomas (1998b:373) rejects the idea that the Gospels are predominately paraphrases of Jesus’ sayings, arguing that there is a need to recognize more fully the role of the Holy Spirit and that the Spirit “is capable of closer historical accuracy than just approximations of what Jesus said” (2000a:106). Thomas (1998b:373) after presenting his case for an *ipsissima verba* position, wrote, “Ancient resources are unavailable to prove absolutely one side or the other in this debate. No one has an airtight case for concluding whether they are Jesus’ very words or they are only the gist of what Jesus said.” Thomas (2000a:107) also acknowledged that literary independence does not demand one embrace an *ipsissima verba* position. Thomas (2000a:107) concluded his response to Osborne by asking, “If the Gospels contain only approximations of what Jesus said, how close must those approximations be to fall within the limits of an inerrantist view of Scripture? That is a question that evangelicals should

turn their attention to.”

In their debate, Thomas (2000a:107) and Osborne (1999:204) referred to two very similar sayings (Mt 7:7-11, Luke 11:9-13) to support their arguments concerning the *ipsissima verba* or the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus. This also reflects upon the issue of whether such sayings reflect the redactional activity of one of the Gospel writers or the faithful recordings from two different occasions and thus support for literary independence. These passages will be examined in the next chapter.

4.6 THE ROLE OF FORM AND TRADITION CRITICISM

4.6.1 The relationship of form and tradition criticism to redaction criticism

Before proceeding to the debate by evangelical inerrantists concerning the use of form and tradition criticism, it will be helpful to define and outline the basic elements of these approaches to Gospel criticism. Blomberg (1992a:243) defines *form criticism* as:

This method of analysis focuses on the individual, self-contained units of material into which the Gospels may be subdivided. It identifies the different “forms” or subgenres of literature which appear, and it attempts to describe the ways in which these forms developed during the period of time in which they were passed along by word of mouth prior to the writing of the Gospels themselves.

Dauids (1992:831) defines *tradition criticism* in the following way,

Tradition criticism or tradition history (both translations of the German technical term *Traditionsgeschichte*) refer to the study of the development of traditions, especially those about Jesus, until they were fixed in their final written form. Because of this interest in historical development, a secondary concern of this discipline has been that of determining the authenticity of a given saying or narrative, the criteria for determining such authenticity and the stages of historical development through which the tradition passed.

Dauids (1992:831) describes the way form and tradition criticism overlap.

Two other disciplines overlap with tradition criticism. The first is form criticism, which in theory focuses on the form in which various types of traditions circulated, but in practice has included the study of how such forms may have changed over time and at which period of oral transmission a given form may have arisen. When it moves from categorization to historical analysis, form criticism means the same as tradition criticism. It is because of this overlap that one cannot say when the methodology was first used in modern NT studies, for many of the

form critics were in fact doing tradition criticism.

As noted in chapter three, Smith (1993:140-142) argued that the debate by evangelicals concerning the historicity of the Gospel accounts should not focus on redaction criticism but must focus on earlier stages such as form and tradition criticism. The concerns of history, wherein one tries to determine “what happened” and “what was said” from the Gospel accounts, as they pertain to the life and teachings of Jesus, certainly underlies the use of form and tradition criticism. This is evident in the *Jesus Seminar’s* use of the criteria of authenticity in making their judgments as to what sayings of Jesus were historical and which were not historically traceable to Jesus. It is important therefore to recognize the basic assumptions employed in tradition criticism. Davids (1992:831) spells them out:

The basic assumption of tradition criticism is that the stories about and sayings of Jesus circulated as oral tradition for a period of some three decades or longer before they were written down. During this period they were shaped by the historical situation (*Sitz im Leben*) of the communities within which they circulated. By studying the differences in the various traditions one can determine: (1) which traditions actually go back to the historical Jesus (*see* Historical Jesus); (2) at which point in the oral period a given tradition actually arose; and (3) what the historical situation of the Christian community actually was.

Osborne (1992:662) describes how redaction criticism related historically and theologically to these other forms of Gospel criticism. He writes,

Redaction criticism is the third of four “schools” of criticism developed in this century to study the Gospels and other biblical narratives: *Form criticism*, which seeks the original or authentic tradition behind the final form found in the Gospels but tends to assume that the Evangelists were mere scissors-and-paste editors who artificially strung together the traditions they inherited; *tradition criticism*, a stepchild of form criticism, which tries to reconstruct the history or development of the Gospel traditions from the earliest to the final form in the Gospels but often ignores the contribution of the Evangelists; and *literary criticism*, which bypasses the historical dimension and studies only the final form of the text, assuming that the value of the Gospels is to be found apart from considerations of originating event or author. Redaction criticism originally developed as a corrective to areas of neglect in form and tradition criticism, but it functions also as a corrective to excesses in literary criticism.

4.6.2 Defining composition criticism

One other type of Gospel criticism must be noted in this discussion. As mentioned in chapter three, Smalley (1979:181) mentions that *composition criticism* [also sometimes called *composition analysis*] is often subsumed under the rubric of redaction criticism although he states they are two different disciplines.

Osborne (1992:667) mentions that the movement to composition criticism was a healthy corrective to redaction criticism. He (1992:666) includes composition-critical analysis as the last stage of the analysis of the text when doing redaction criticism. Osborne (1992:666-667) indicates that in composition-critical analysis one looks for: (1) the evangelist's structure, the arrangement of tradition material at the macro and micro level; (2) intertextual development, which addresses how the pericopes are arranged and related to one another; (3) plot, the cause-effect pattern that centers upon conflict; (4) setting and style. Setting observes how a saying or event when placed in a different context than in one of the other Gospels reveals a new theological thrust. "Style refers to the individual way a setting or story is phrased and arranged so as to produce the effect the author wishes" (1992:667). Tan (2001:600) states that redaction criticism "looks for the evangelist's theology in the redactional text after separating out redaction from tradition by means of source and form criticism." Tan defines composition criticism as seeking the patterns and emphases of the Gospel writer without identifying or separating redaction from tradition.

4.6.3 The criteria of authenticity

Scholars practicing form and tradition criticism realized they must develop some means by which to determine, which parts of the tradition actually stem from the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus and which stem from the *Sitz im Leben* of the early church communities. In seeking to determine what is a genuine or an authentic saying or act of Jesus, scholars have developed a number of *criteria of authenticity*. While there are a number of criteria that have been employed (Stein 1980:225-263), there really is no unanimous agreement among scholars, using the historical-critical approach, as to the exact number of criteria to be employed, and new criteria are still being suggested (Porter 2000b:103-237).¹⁰

Evangelical scholars have written on the criteria in many standard New

¹⁰ Porter (2000b:102) provides a chart that outlines the major criteria, when they developed, and in conjunction with what form of Gospel criticism.

Testament works. McKnight (1988:59-62) lists six standard criteria: dissimilarity, multiple attestations, coherence, Semitisms, divergent traditions, and primitive eschatology. Several evangelical scholars (Catchpole 1979:174-178; Bock 1991a:179; Hagner 1991:79-82; Davids 1992:832; Bock 1995:92-94; Bock 2002b:200-201; Gromacki 2002a:65) note that the first three are the “main” or the “big three” (Osborne 1991:205-206) criteria employed. Blomberg (1987b:247; 1992a:248) includes the criterion of Palestinian environment or language [similar to McKnight’s “Semitisms”] as one of the four “principal” and “almost universally accepted” criteria. Blomberg (1992a:248-249) briefly defines the four criteria:

- (1) The criterion of dissimilarity states that any teaching or action of Jesus which distinguishes him both from the Judaism of his day and from the early Christian church may be accepted as authentic.
- (2) The criterion of multiple attestation places more confidence in those details which are found in more than one Gospel source (e.g., Mk, Q, M, L, Jn) or in more than one form.
- (3) The criterion of Palestinian environment or language more readily accepts that which is very Semitic in style or background.
- (4) The criterion of coherence includes texts which fit well with material already authenticated by one of the other three criteria.

One should not presume that only evangelical opponents of form and tradition criticism have leveled criticisms against the criteria of authenticity. Even evangelical practitioners of form and tradition criticism have expressed criticisms and exposed some of the weaknesses of these criteria. The criterion of dissimilarity, particularly, has come under criticism. Davids (1992:832) presents three criticisms of this criterion. First, Davids notes that since Jesus was a Jew, if one disregards all of his teaching that agrees with previous Jewish tradition, then one will certainly eliminate some genuine material since it denies Jesus’ the historical, cultural and theological context of his life. Second, if this criterion is used exclusively, then it severely severs the ties between the post-Easter church and Jesus. Surely, the post-Easter church, which was comprised of Jesus’ disciples, would be expected to retain, follow, and propagate Jesus’ teaching. Third, Davids (1992:832) argues there is built-in self-contradiction to the underlying assumptions of the criterion. He says,

On the one hand, it is assumed that communities passed on tradition because it fit the life situation of the community. On the other hand, this criterion is looking for traditions which were passed on but which did not fit the life situation of any Christian community. Therefore, while this criterion can indeed point out genuine Jesus tradition, it can only point to

those traditions of such uniqueness that they indicate where Jesus stood apart from Judaism and yet (in the perception of scholars) was not followed by the early church, which blindly transmitted the tradition. Traditions of such a unique quality are rare indeed.

Gromacki (2002a:66) declares that a major problem that evangelicals have with the criterion of multiple attestation is that it ultimately rules out almost the whole of John's Gospel because the Gospel of John contains 90% unique material. It has been (Bock 1995:93; Gromacki 2002a:67) observed that the criterion of coherence also becomes difficult to use if one accepts the methods of those of the *Jesus Seminar*, who greatly limit what is considered authentic about Jesus' teaching through the criteria of dissimilarity and multiple attestation.

Dauids (1992:833) also notes that one underlying assumption of tradition criticism has been that there was a long period of oral transmission but he shows how more recent studies have undermined that basic assumption,

A number of scholars (see Ellis) have demonstrated (1) the keen interest of the post-Easter church in Jesus' teaching, including his deeds (Stanton); (2) the fact that Jesus was viewed as a teacher and thus his teachings were learned and passed on (Riesner); (3) the probability of not only the deliberate transmission of Jesus' teaching but also of its written form even before Jesus' death (Schürmann); and (4) the availability in Judaism of models for the accurate transmission of tradition (Gerhardsson). All of these factors severely limit tradition criticism's basic assumption that there was a long period of oral transmission.

Several evangelicals (Craig 1995:162-163; Gromacki 2002b:58-59) have employed the criteria of authenticity to defend the historicity of Jesus' resurrection in response to the negative conclusions of the *Jesus Seminar*. C. Evans (1993:21-33) has attempted to show how the same criteria used to establish the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus could also be employed to authenticate the miracles of Jesus. Osborne (1992:664) contends that the criterion "in and of themselves do not prove authenticity, of course, but they can demonstrate that the tradition goes back to the earliest stages and they do shift the burden of proof to the skeptic." He also acknowledges that the underlying presupposition employed was a "hermeneutic of suspicion" and the Gospel accounts were assumed "guilty unless proven innocent." Thus, the underlying presupposition of the methodology was that the Gospel accounts were nonhistorical unless shown otherwise. Blomberg (1992a:249) also agrees that the major presupposition

behind the use of the criteria of authenticity is that the Gospel traditions are inherently suspect unless good reasons can be advanced for accepting them.

Yet, some evangelicals argue that such radical historical skepticism in one's presuppositions need not be assumed. Carson, Moo, and Morris (1992:23-24) present such an argument:

As a literary discipline, form criticism entails no a priori judgment about the historicity of the material that it analyzes. Moreover, many of the assumptions on which form criticism is based appear to be valid: there was indeed a period of mainly oral transmission of the gospel material; much of it was probably in small units; there probably was a tendency for this material to take on certain standard forms; and the early church has undoubtedly influenced the way in which this material was handed down. Defined narrowly in this way, there is undoubtedly a place for form criticism in the study of the Gospels.

Osborne (1999:206) maintains that the term "tradition" does not imply a rejection of historicity by those committed to inerrancy and agrees with the four reasons Davids (1992:833) advanced in support of a more reliable process of tradition, which undermines the assumption of a long period of oral transmission. Osborne (1999:206) defended his view of the historicity of Jesus' command in the Great Commission (1976:80) and responded to criticisms by Geisler (1999:15) and Farnell (1998a:220) concerning his proposal about the development of the Great Commission. Osborne (1999:206) reaffirmed that he was not denying the historicity of events in his use of form and tradition criticism. He countered his critics' arguments by proclaiming that, "In terms of TC, a saying is not unhistorical unless the author has *created* it, that is, created it *ex nihilo*. As stated above, a paraphrase of Jesus' saying is *ipsissima vox* and just as historically viable as *ipsissima verba*" [his emphasis]. Osborne (1999:206) concludes, "In other words, a high view of Scripture turns TC into a positive tool for affirming history rather than denying it." The debate over Osborne's proposal concerning the tradition behind the Great Commission will be examined further in chapter five.

Farnell (1998a:185-186) argues that form and tradition criticism are philosophically driven disciplines that are incapable of neutrality in analyzing the biblical text and they are acutely subjective. Thomas (1998d:14-15) draws ten similarities between the methodology of the *Jesus Seminar* and the practice of evangelicals and charges that evangelicals who use historical criticism engage "in the same type of

dehistoricizing activity as the Jesus Seminar people with whom they differ.”

Interestingly, Osborne (1999:207) in responding to Thomas’ accusation acknowledged that “It is true that such things have been stated by individuals (though not the first one!) from time to time, and the danger of dehistoricizing exists.” Yet, Osborne (1999:207) countered “It is a dangerous generalization to take a few extremes and label an entire movement with the same brush.” Osborne (1999:207) counter-argued that evangelicals like Blomberg, Bock, Carson, Silva and Stein, who Thomas (1998d:16-34) charged with denying the historicity of some of the Gospel accounts, have defended both inerrancy and the historicity of the Gospels in their writings. Thomas (2000a:107) responded with a challenge to Osborne,

At this point, I must request from Osborne the same favor I have asked of other evangelicals who practice historical-critical methodology, a request that the church could legitimately make of evangelical scholars: “Please name an evangelical historical critic who has done extensive work in the Synoptic Gospels who has not as a result of that methodology sacrificed historical accuracy at one point or another.” So far, no one has been able to furnish a single name. Are we talking about “a few extremes,” or is dehistoricizing inextricably bound to HC practices? We do not question that these people have defended historicity against liberal theologians, but are suggesting they are doing so on faulty grounds because methodologically, and consequently ideologically, they are too close to those they are defending against.

Osborne (2000:116) replied to Thomas’ new challenge by naming Carson, Blomberg, and Bock. He added a caveat that the challenge be examined from the standpoint of the ETS, which “allows its members to hold to a view of literary dependence and to utilize an evangelical form of historical criticism under the umbrella of inerrancy.” Thomas (2000a:108) had also voiced his concern that “evangelical HCs do not agree among themselves about historicity of various parts of the Gospels.” He (2000a:108-109) contended,

No evangelical redaction critic can lay claim to being a final authority on such matters without excluding his fellow critics. Perhaps evangelicals need to form their own “Jesus Seminar” to vote and settle issues like this.¹¹ For those holding the independence view, that kind of vote is unnecessary, because that view holds all the Gospel reports to be historical.

¹¹ He references to Thomas 1998d:14-15.

Osborne (2000:116) noted that “disagreement is at the heart of scholarship” and that even Thomas and his colleagues do not agree on every issue or exegesis of every passage. Osborne (2000:116-117) concluded by reaffirming that he and the other evangelical historical critics were committed to the historicity of the Gospel accounts. He affirmed, “We all hold to the complete trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts. We also believe that the logic of *The Jesus Crisis* position is faulty – redaction is not unhistorical when understood properly.”

Farnell (1998a:203) claims that the criteria of authenticity “impugn the gospel record through an initial assumption of inauthenticity.” Farnell (1998a:203-207) then critiques the “Seven Pillars of Scholarly Wisdom” of the *Jesus Seminar*. Yet, it is clear that such criticism is not new and evangelical redaction critics have criticized the basic assumptions behind the criteria of authenticity (Goetz & Blomberg 1981:39-63). Blomberg (1992a:249) proposes that, “Instead of utilizing criteria of authenticity, one ought to assume authenticity and then ask if there are good reasons for denying it (e.g., irreconcilably contradictory accounts). Problems should then be examined one by one and judgments rendered.”

Blomberg (1992b:297) elucidates his argument on the need to switch “the burden of proof” to a presupposition that starts by assuming authenticity not denying it.

Notwithstanding all of the evidence in favor of the general trustworthiness of the Gospels, many critics find little they can confidently endorse because they adopt a skeptical stance on the issue of the burden of proof. That is to say, they assume that each portion of the Gospels is suspect, and reverse that verdict only when overwhelming evidence points to historical reliability. But this method inverts standard procedures of historical investigation; it applies more rigorous criteria to the biblical material than students of ancient history ever apply elsewhere. Once a historian has proved reliable where verifiable, once apparent errors or contradictions receive plausible solutions, the appropriate approach is to give that writer the benefit of the doubt in areas where verification is not possible (cf. Goetz and Blomberg). Neither external nor internal testimony can prove the accuracy of most of the details of the Gospels; the necessary comparative data simply are lacking. But the coherence and consistency of material which cannot be tested with that which can be tested goes a long way toward inspiring confidence in the remaining portions of the texts.

The Great Commission (Mt 28:16-20) was one of the original passages that was at the center of the early debates concerning redaction criticism. It addresses the use of form and tradition criticism by evangelical practitioners of redaction criticism. In particular, it

was an article by Osborne (1976) concerning the baptismal formula of the Great Commission that raised voices of concern. Thomas (2000b:51) surveys the treatment of this passage in the Christian church and concludes that some evangelicals seem to agree with “radical historical critics in raising questions about whether Jesus ever gave the Great Commission.” Thomas contends they thus compromise the historical accuracy of the Great Commission. This passage and the debate surrounding it will be considered in the next chapter.

4.7 WERE THE GOSPEL WRITERS HISTORIANS OR THEOLOGIANS?

4.7.1 The Gospel writers as faithful historians not creative theologians

Are the Gospels the records of independent witnesses to Jesus or have the Gospel writers used one or more of the other Gospels in the writing of their accounts and modified their sources for the benefit of the communities to whom they wrote their Gospels? This section focuses on the issue of whether the Gospels reflect the accounts of faithful historians or creative theologians, who redact their sources for the benefit of the early church communities.

Chapter three provided some overview of the furor that arose in conjunction with Gundry’s proposal, that Matthew employed midrash as a genre that allowed for historical embellishments. It was this proposal that had a central role in focusing attention on the role of the evangelists as historians and/or theologians. Evangelicals took notice when Gundry (1982:639), speaking of Matthew’s redaction, argued “Matthew’s style and theology show that he materially altered and embellished historical traditions and that he did so deliberately and often.” These types of comments, by one who was a member of ETS and agreed to the inerrancy of Scripture, generated intense debate concerning redaction criticism, the historical trustworthiness of the Gospel writers and the inerrancy of Scripture.

Payne (1980:97) prior to the publication of Gundry’s commentary on Matthew (1982) addressed the use of redaction criticism at that time by evangelicals. In a discussion of the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20), he warned of a tendency by some advocates of inerrancy to ascribe errors to a specific form of literary genre employed by the Gospel writers. Payne (1980:98) maintained that if an author used a “fictional form” then the author should make this fact and the reason for using the form clear to his

readers. He held that the Gospels give no indication that they are employing such a “fictional form” in the places where evangelical redaction critics were proposing the “fictional form” had been employed. This was one of the central concerns that the ETS had with Gundry’s proposals reflected in his understanding of the use of midrash by Matthew and it led to his dismissal from the ETS as noted in chapter three.

Although the dismissal of Gundry from the ETS allowed for a period of “calm after the storm” the issue concerning whether the Gospel writers functioned as theologians or historians remained unresolved. Thomas (1998c:253-254) maintains that those who employ redaction criticism have to accept its basic premises. He enumerates three characteristics of redaction criticism: (1) the Gospel writers are primarily theologians not accurate historians; (2) the events of Jesus’ life arise from ‘the fact of faith’ in the early church rather than the actual historical events; (3) the Gospels should not be considered sources for a reconstruction of Jesus’ life but are the product of the Gospel writers and only through the stringent use of the criteria of authenticity may one detect any accurate data about Jesus.

Thomas (1998c:255-257) then adds six “direct liabilities” of employing redaction criticism: (1) it rests on the faulty foundation of the two or four source theory; (2) it interjects another layer of embellishment by the synoptic writers to that of the embellishments of the early church communities; (3) the historical methodology used is contrary to normal historical study, which assumes a writer is historically accurate until proven untrustworthy; (4) the Gospel writers added embellishments and altered sayings, stories and events; (5) redaction critics operate under an “unregulated subjectivism” that consequently causes them to read their own meanings into the stories; (6) their use of the criteria of authenticity has a presuppositional bias toward non-historicity. As a result, when proponents of redaction criticism use terms like “selecting,” “arranging,” or “modification” what in essence they are doing is replacing historical interests with theological ones and when they speak of “creativity” they really mean the Gospel writer has included things that Jesus never said or that never happened.

Derickson (2003:96) maintains that if Matthew altered an inspired writing such as Mark then he in effect was altering the truth. He argues,

We also believe that when Mark penned his Gospel on the basis of Peter’s testimony, he did so inerrantly. Its original autograph was inspired. It was verbally and plenary inerrant in matters of history and fact just as much

as in faith and practice. And unless there is compelling literary evidence, falling back to *ipsissima vox* (i.e., the very voice) and allowing alteration is a denial of the author's evident intention that his readers understand it as *ipsissima verba* (i.e., the very words).

Derickson (2003:100) comments, "It is in the area of the changes made by Matthew that the problem with inerrancy surfaces. Does inerrancy allow for Spirit-inspired changes?" He (2003:101) finds particularly unacceptable that Matthew may have "corrected" Mark and he says the point of all redaction criticism is that something was *consciously* changed [his emphasis].

Osborne (1999:207) argued that, "Those holding to the independence of the Gospels could still do RC by looking at the differences and the distinctive theological emphases in both books. Both Mark and Matthew would have redacted their tradition differently." Thomas (2000a:109) responded that Osborne was actually misrepresenting the independence view. Thomas replied,

Correctly stated, Matthew and Mark reported accurate history from different perspectives. They redacted nothing, rather they reported two lines of tradition, both of which were historically accurate, not editorially slanted. The word "redacted" or "edited" suggests the introduction of subjective elements into something written by or transmitted through someone else, which was not the case. As reporters of facts, they made choices, or more properly speaking, in line with their purposes they reported what they under the inspiration of the Spirit remembered from eyewitness reports.

Thomas (2000a:109) supports the idea of these distinctions that redaction critics make between history and theology, by highlighting a quote by I. Howard Marshall in the Foreword to Osborne's book, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study* (1984). Marshall (p. 7) says the book addresses the question, "How much is theological interpretation in the Gospels true and how much actually happened?" Thomas (2000a:109) then presses his point by asking,

How else is one to understand that question? The book distinguishes between theological interpretation and what actually happened. When the book refrains from harmonizing the details that Osborne mentions such as "the time notes, the names of the women and the postresurrection appearances" (208)¹², my conclusion was that some kind of difference separated "theological interpretation" and what "actually happened." Of course, the independence view would hold that everything reported in the

¹² Osborne 1999.

resurrection accounts actually happened.

4.7.2 The Gospel writers as faithful historians and creative theologians

Darrell Bock (1994:13-14) argues that to impose distinctions on a Gospel writer, like Luke, that he is either a theologian or a historian is not faithful to the evidence of his writing. Bock maintains that the evidence reveals that Luke is a careful historian, but that does not imply that he must refrain from rearranging the material or summarizing events that he finds in the tradition in his own language. Osborne (2000:116) also rejects Thomas' (2000a:109) charge that he distinguishes "between theological interpretation and what actually happened" in his book on the resurrection narratives. He maintains that the Gospel writer has been faithful to what Jesus did and said in handling both the tradition and his redaction. Osborne (2000:116) accuses Thomas of misrepresenting his position and states unequivocally that "the literary dependence view would hold that everything reported in the resurrection accounts actually happened." He contends that Thomas unfairly represents the views of Bock, Blomberg, Carson, Silva, Stein and himself and that none of them deny that any of the elements of the Gospel resurrection accounts did not happen. Osborne (2000:117) seeks to turn the tables by suggesting that the logic employed by the writers of *The Jesus Crisis* is faulty and that they fail to understand the nature of the redaction activity of the Gospel writers and that such activity does not imply the introduction of unhistorical elements.

Osborne (1999:208) defends his commitment to the historicity of the Gospel accounts by responding that for evangelical redaction critics "redaction" means that the writer "selected from his sources and from his memory those details that he wished to highlight." The sayings and stories in the Gospels arose from what Jesus originally said and while the writer may have chosen to expand, omit, or paraphrase such activity is based on the historical events of what Jesus said or did. Osborne (1999:208-209) also replies that in his book on the resurrection accounts (1984c) he was arguing that "all the redactional changes were historical and that the authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit were selecting different details from the original historical event...".

Osborne (2000:115) affirms that he is convinced that Jesus was an "itinerant preacher" and undoubtedly taught the same material on several occasions and in several locations. This means that teaching, such as is found in Matthew 6 and Luke 11, where

Jesus teaches on prayer, could very well reflect different occasions. What Osborne (2000:115) finds problematic are attempts to explain all differences in the Gospels by appealing to different occasions to explain the differences in details. Osborne (2000:115) notes that just because events are based upon eyewitness reports that does not logically imply that it will result in identical accounts, since “each evangelist under the leading of the Spirit was free to select and highlight different aspects of the same account.”

Contrary

to Thomas’ assertions therefore, redactional changes should not be regarded as constituting a lesser degree of historical accuracy. The reason is because they still “emphasize aspects that Jesus really did do and say, but from the standpoint of the evangelists’ inspired choices.” (Osborne 2000:115). Osborne (2000:115) concludes that it is incorrect to suggest the Gospel writers were “creating new material,” for every nuance of their inspired account faithfully reflects the original situation in Jesus’ ministry.

The temptations of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13, involve a difference in the order of the second and third temptations, which evangelical redaction criticism practitioners often claim is to be attributed to the redaction of one of the Gospel writers. This passage will be discussed in chapter 5 to discern its implications for redaction criticism or whether the independence theory is the best solution in explaining the differences in the accounts. Do the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ temptation support a dichotomy between the Gospel writers as historians or theologians?

CONCLUSION

The exchanges between Thomas and Osborne have included a number of charges against each other that have reflected not only their differences but at times a striking contentiousness. Osborne (1999:210) charges that Thomas and the authors in *The Jesus Crisis* have completely rejected the use of critical tools. Thomas (2000a:110) responded that is not true and that what they reject is the use of the historical-critical tools but they still employ other types of criticism like textual criticism as part of their grammatical-historical approach.

In Osborne’s (1999:209) reply to *The Jesus Crisis* he spoke of the “extravagant charges they make against fellow evangelical inerrantists.” Osborne (1999:209-210) then went on to give three especially egregious statements made in the book about those

employing the historical-critical methodology. He began with Farnell's (1998a:222) statement that evangelical redaction critics "dance on the edge of hermeneutical and theological disaster." Blomberg (2001b:39) likewise took umbrage at the tone of *The Jesus Crisis* and said Thomas and the other contributors "would have you believe that those of us who believe in some kind of literary dependence among the Synoptics are thereby unwittingly disabled by 'satanic blindness.'"

Thomas (2000a:110) felt such warnings were justified and in support of this tone of urgency, he noted three statements that Osborne previously made in that very article (1999). Osborne (1999:207) acknowledged some misuse of the historical-critical methodology and "the danger of dehistoricizing exists," and that "some evangelical RCs go too far at times" (1999:208). Osborne (1999:209) also conceded that, "Evangelicals need continuous reminders regarding the dangers of critical tools, and we must police ourselves on these issues." Thomas implies the writers of *The Jesus Crisis* are involved in the "policing" work that needs to be done by and among evangelicals.

It is no wonder that this controversy has swirled as members of the same theological society, the ETS, and committed to the inerrancy of scripture nevertheless differ decidedly concerning how one is to approach the inerrant scripture methodologically. This chapter has illustrated the differences of methodological approach that underlie this controversy and the arguments that each side has provided in defense of their contention about the validity of their methodology. Chapter five will continue to examine the debate by looking at specific texts that are at the center of this lively and at times heated debate.

CHAPTER FIVE

SELECT PASSAGES IN THE DEBATE

In this chapter, select passages will be examined, which are chosen to illustrate and shed further light on the debate, by showing how the different parties in the debate handle specific passages. The passages selected are ones that re-occur in the debate, particularly between Osborne (1999:193-210; 2000:113-117) and Thomas (2000a:97-111), and reflect the major issues of the debate addressed in chapter four. Since the focus of this study is the debate on redaction criticism by evangelicals, in the interaction with the specific texts under discussion, the intention is to limit interaction to evangelicals and their handling of the texts. For this reason, many other commentators and studies that could be referenced will normally not be referred to in the discussion of the texts.

5.1 The Temptations of Jesus (Mt 4:1-11, Mk 1:12-13, Lk 4:1-13)

The temptations of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13, involve a difference in the order of the second and third temptations. At issue in the debate therefore, is whether the Gospels intend to preserve some form of chronology in the life of Christ and the necessity of providing some form of explanation for the differences by those, who affirm inerrancy.

Matthew has the second temptation in Jerusalem and the third on a high mountain and Luke has a reverse order ending with Jesus' final temptation in Jerusalem. This raises the question as to which one preserves the original historical or chronological order of the temptations. Some explanation needs to be provided and while it need not imply redaction criticism on the part of one of the writers that is often the solution provided by many evangelicals. For those who see a redactional purpose involved, there is also often a presumption that Matthew and Luke had access to Q and drew the temptation narrative from it (Evans 1990:63; Twelftree 1992:824-826; Hagner 1993:62; Davids 1996:454; Keener 1999:136). Bock (1994:365) though argues that the differences between Matthew and Luke are significant enough to posit two distinct but similar sources and then raises the possibility of two distinct versions of Q.

Many (Marshall 1978:167; Gundry 1982:56; Nolland 1989:177, 179; Schreiner 1989:811; Blomberg 1992c:84n79; Hagner 1993:62; Bock 2002b:193) argue that

Matthew preserves the original chronological order and that Luke has rearranged the second and third temptations for literary or theological reasons. Carson (1984:111) for instance says, “Luke reverses the order of the last two temptations for topographical reasons. Matthew’s order is almost certainly original (Schweizer; Walvoord).” Liefeld (1984:864) is less certain but expands on the topographical reason,

Luke records this temptation in the last rather than second place (cf. Matt 4:5-7). It may be that Matthew preferred to conclude with a kingdom reference. Possibly Luke wants to center on the city of Jerusalem (v. 9), which Matthew does not mention by name, because of his theme of the progression of the gospel from Jerusalem to the Gentile nations.

Kirk (1972:91n56) suggests that Luke may have put the temptation in Jerusalem last because it alone involved a public manifestation and thus was a fitting prelude to Jesus’ ministry.

Not only does the probability of a Lucan redaction lead many to affirm Matthew has the original order, but they also endeavor to support their argument from Matthew’s account. Three lines of support are advanced in arguing that Matthew’s order is more likely original. First, Matthew is considered to have the original order because there is a progression (presumably elevation is understood) from the desert to the temple pinnacle to a high mountain. Second, in Matthew, the quotes from Deuteronomy are in a tidy reverse order (Dt 8:3, 6:16, 6:13). Third, the two temptations concerning Jesus’ sonship come together in Matthew’s account and are not separated as in Luke’s account (Twelftree 1992:823). Several writers (Bock 1994:366; Wilkins 2004:159n13) while noting Luke’s change of order for theological reasons appeal to Matthew’s chronological intentions by his use of clear temporal adverbs (4:8 πάλιν, 4:10 τότε).

Even those who would not employ a redaction criticism approach to Scripture, often maintain that Matthew records the chronological order and Luke does not attempt to do so (Hendriksen 1978:232; Thomas 2000a:105-106). Thus, they too (Hendriksen 1973:228; Laney 1997:186; Thomas 2000a:105; Thomas & Gundry [1988] 2003:46c) argue that Matthew’s use of “then” (τότε, vv. 5, 11) and “again” (πάλιν, v. 8) indicates chronology while Luke’s more ambiguous “and” (καί) does not. Yet, others (Ridderbos [1950] 1987:62; Morris 1992:39n23, 71) note that τότε can be used rather loosely in Matthew (cf. 3:13).

There are some who are willing to acknowledge that Luke may preserve the original order and that it is Matthew, who has changed the original sequence. Evans (1990:65) apparently concurs that Matthew preserves the original order and Luke changes it for literary purposes. Yet, Evans (1990:68) quotes Talbert's (1982:47) argument that both Psalm 106 and 1 Corinthians 10:6-9 record Israel's temptation in the same order as Luke's account of Jesus' temptations. He thus concedes that Luke's order may be traditional and Matthew may have altered the historical sequence. Keener (1999:142) suggests that Matthew may have changed the order and that Luke is following the order of his sources exactly. Yet, Keener (1999:142n206) seems to waffle when he notes that Luke's climax with the temple is characteristic of his writing and so Matthew may preserve the original order found in Q.

Leithart (2003:2) does not try to identify whether Matthew or Luke preserve the original order but focuses on the theological significance for each writer. He notes that Luke's account functions like a recap of Israel's history:

Jesus moves from wilderness to mountain to temple, and is tempted concerning food, idolatry, and presumption. This all works extremely well as a recap of Israel's history: Israel moved from the wilderness, where they grumbled about lack of bread; to Sinai, a high mountain where they worshiped the golden calf; and later entered the land to build the temple, only to begin presuming on God's favor (cf. Jeremiah's "the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD").

Leithart (2003:2) understands Matthew's account to present Jesus as the New Moses, thus the temptation account concludes on the mountain, where Jesus is shown the world, just as Moses was shown the Promised Land. Following such a theological analysis, it could easily be argued that both Matthew's and Luke's accounts could reflect an arrangement based upon their own distinctive theological purposes.

With such differences, it is not surprising that some acknowledge that we can not know the original order. France (1985:97), while admitting that most agree with Matthew's order, says, "Explanations of the different order, on both literary and theological grounds, are as many as commentators, and all are conjectural..." Morris (1992:69-70) concurs that the differences in order have never been explained satisfactorily and the solutions are subjective estimates. He notes that if there is a common source than one or perhaps even both (Matthew and Luke) made significant alterations. Stein (1992a:145) argues that both Matthew's mountain motif and Luke's

concern with Jerusalem reflect their respective theological interests and therefore which one reflects the original order is uncertain. Davids (1996:456) suspects that Matthew is original but says it is impossible to prove conclusively.

Mark's account is brief and does not record the three temptations. One might reasonably ask how it relates to the other two accounts. Gruenler (1989:767) comments, "Mark's account is so brief as to suggest that his readers already know the details of the story, a further reason for supposing that Mark may be a contemporary with or even later than Matthew and Luke, but certainly not the earliest simply because it is so brief." Guelich (1989:37) suggests that the content and structure of the accounts in Mark, Matthew and Luke suggests the accounts are independent and could be traced back to a pre-Markan tradition.

Michaels (1981:54) employs redaction criticism and argues there are two temptation stories in the Gospel traditions. Michaels (1981:58) concludes Mark's tradition is clearly historical but that of Matthew and Luke should not be confined to a single incident in Jesus' life (1981:55). He argues that the Matthew and Luke tradition drawn from Q is historically more difficult to determine, being preserved in a pronouncement story form that likely originated from Jesus (1981:63-64). In another study of Mark's temptation account employing redaction criticism, Gundry (1993:55, 58) seeks to draw out a number of "contrasts" with the accounts in Matthew and Luke and argues that Jesus was tempted during the full forty days and did not fast but was fed by the angels during the forty days. Gundry (1993:59) suggests Mark does not record the three temptations since, "Only three temptations would look ridiculous in a marathon of forty days." Gundry evidences no concern to address the "contrasts" with the Matthew and Luke accounts in terms of historicity and inerrancy. Wessel (1984:623) argues that Mark's goal was to emphasize one continuous encounter with Satan & not simply limit it to a few temptations in the desert. In contrast, Hendriksen (1975:48) presents a harmonization of the accounts when he addresses the issue of whether it was one day or forty days of temptations. He argues that both Mark and Luke can be translated so as to agree with Matthew's account and thus place the temptations after the forty days of fasting.

5.2 The Rich Young Ruler (Mt 19:16-30; Mk 10:17-31; Lk 18:18-30)

This text is constantly raised in the debate (Carson 1983:131-137; Blomberg 1986:158-159; K Osborne 1998:289-316; G Osborne 1999:201; Thomas 1998b:358-360; Thomas 2000a:105), because it focuses attention on the value and legitimacy of the harmonization of texts and the possibility that redaction criticism provides a better means of explaining the differences between similar pericopes. Carson (1984:421) says, “Some of the differences between Matthew and Mark-Luke (cf. Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30) are so sharp (cf. vv. 16-17) that they have frequently served as tests for redaction criticism.” It also forces interpreters to consider the issue of the *ipsissima verba* or *ipsissima vox* of Jesus.

The debate centers on the fact that in Luke 18:18-19 “good” (ἀγαθὲ) modifies teacher and so Jesus’ response therefore focuses on why the young ruler calls him “good”. In Matthew 19:16, however, “good” (ἀγαθὸν) modifies “thing” & therefore Jesus’ response focuses on the more abstract “good” by saying, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only One who is good” (v. 17).

Carson (1984:422) notes that a majority of modern scholars hold that Matthew has transformed the exchange, usually arguing Matthew does so out of christological concerns, because he does not wish to risk any theological ambiguity about Jesus’ sinlessness. This is the perspective of a number of other evangelical writers also (Gundry 1982:385; Bruce 1983a:172; Hurtado 1983:155; Michaels 1992:133; Hagner 1995:555, 557; Keener 1999:474; Edwards 2002:310n29; France 2002:402). Evans (2001:96) also argues Matthew changed Mark but does not state the reasons he did so.

Several men¹ (Thomas 1982:256; K Osborne 1998:298-299; Thomas 2000a:105) argue that harmonization is the best approach. They maintain that there are three independent accounts of the conversation recorded in the synoptic Gospels and the young ruler asked more than one question. Carson (1984:422) acknowledges it is possible to achieve harmonization by mere addition (“*Good* teacher what *good* thing?” followed by Jesus giving both answers) and that later copyists of New Testament manuscripts sometimes opted for such an approach (hence KJV). But, Carson concludes such a procedure is notoriously implausible and he argues the evangelists, were far more concerned with Jesus’ *ipsissima vox* than his *ipsissima verba*.

The issue of Jesus’ *ipsissima vox* or his *ipsissima verba* also surfaces in the debate

over this passage. K Osborne (1998:298) responds to Stonehouse's (1963:109-110) argument that the infallibility of the Gospels in this pericope only requires the writers preserve the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus not the *ipsissima verba*, by saying,

If this is true, Christians have for almost two millennia been wrong to maintain "Jesus said this or that," when they really should have been saying "Jesus may have said something like this or that." The harmonization approach, by contrast, maintains that the text of the Gospels gives the actual words of Jesus, not merely a vague representation of them.

This seems a somewhat strident representation of Stonehouse's position but it clearly reveals the different conclusions that evangelicals have concerning this issue.

Carson (1984:423) suggests an approach that is not simple additive harmonization or the typical redaction critical solution centering on christology. He (1984:423) rejects the idea that the variations stem from different translations of an Aramaic report of the incident as well as the argument that Matthew adjusted the account due to christological concerns. Carson (1983:136-137) finds Jesus addressing, likely somewhat ambiguously, the young ruler's misunderstanding of "goodness" both as it applies to Jesus and to obtaining eternal life. Carson (1983:136) thus proposes as one possible solution that the young ruler's question was "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (as in Mk 10:17) and Jesus' reply was "Why do you ask *me* [with *me* emphatic] questions regarding the good? There is only one who is good, namely God" (as in Mt 19:17). Blomberg (1986:159) takes a similar approach and Osborne (1999:201) also rejects a simple additive harmonization and argues that both versions are more likely paraphrases of the original exchange.

5.3 Giving "Good gifts" / "the Holy Spirit" (Mt 7:11, Lk 11:13)

These two passages bring into sharp focus the issue of the *ipsissima verba* or the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus. The reason this is so, is because these passages (Mt 7:7-11, Luke 11:9-13) evidence significant similarities in wording. In particular, there is a great deal of agreement in wording between Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11:13 except in one significant area, where Matthew records that "the Father will give good gifts" while Luke records

1 G. Osborne mistakenly thought Kelly Osborne was a woman (1999:201).

“the Father will give the Holy Spirit.” One could argue that this reflects two very similar sayings given on more than one occasion and that accounts for the differences and thus the two passages preserve the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus (Thomas 2000a:107), or one could argue that it reflects one occasion and regardless of which account is original both Matthew and Luke properly reflect the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus (Osborne 1999:204). Harrison (1966:162) notes that beyond these two options, some would also argue that it was not Luke, but the early Church under the influence of Pentecost, who changed Matthew’s “good gifts” to the “Holy Spirit.” This option would not be embraced by many evangelicals because of concerns it raises about the authorship of the Gospel of Luke, and about the role of the early Church and its *Sitz im Leben* functioning as a “creative element” in the Gospel accounts, thereby raising concerns about the historicity of the events recorded in the Gospel accounts.

Most evangelical commentators do not see any contradiction between the accounts and so it is not a question that affects the inerrancy of Scripture. Thus, some (Geldenhuis 1951:327n10; Hendriksen 1978:614) argue the passages are reconciled by understanding the Holy Spirit to be the “good gift” *par excellence*. The difference in settings, leads Bock (1996b:1062n38) to conclude there is no need to discuss which wording is original. Marshall (1978:470) argues that it is not certain whether Matthew or Luke preserve the original wording but Matthew’s “good gifts” should be understood in a spiritual sense.

Others indicate that one of the writers has redacted the original saying of Jesus. Gundry (1982:124-125) suggests that Matthew has modified the original “Holy Spirit.” Blomberg (1992c:130) though, states that Luke uses synecdoche to replace “good gifts” with the Holy Spirit as the preeminent example of a good and perfect gift coming down from above. This implies he sees Matthew’s account as original. Others (Van Elderen 1966:116; Evans 1990:183; Stein 1992a:328, Nolland 1993a:629) also conclude that Matthew’s account is closer to Jesus’ exact words and Luke changed the more general “good gifts” found in Matthew, to the more specific “good gift” of the Holy Spirit, due to Luke’s interest in the theme of the Holy Spirit in his writings. These writers then allow for the changing of Jesus’ *ipsissima verba* [possibly recorded in one of the Gospels] in a manner that is faithful to the original meaning, so that the writer presents the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus, but in doing so, gives a specific application of Jesus’ *ipsissima verba*.

5:4 The Introduction of Luke's Gospel (Lk 1:1-4)

The debate surrounding this passage focuses upon the role of sources in Gospel studies. Since Luke's introduction seems to clearly indicate the use of sources, does this lend support to the two source theory or another dependence theory of Gospel origins, and how does this passage fit the arguments for the independence theory of Gospel origins?

Nolland (1989:5) begins his discussion of Luke's prologue with this interesting comment, "Despite Luke's careful composition, the sense of almost every element of the prologue has been disputed." It should not be surprising then that evangelicals are somewhat divided as to what conclusions one should draw from his prologue, concerning Luke's use of sources.

Many evangelical commentators on Luke's Gospel understand Luke's prologue to lend support to one of the various dependence theories of Gospel origins. Those who think Luke's prologue supports a dependence upon Mark often also maintain the probability that Luke used "Q" [in one or more forms] among his several sources (Geldenhuis 1951:25, 52; Guthrie 1970:227; Hendriksen 1978:26, 55; Marshall 1978:41; Liefeld 1984:804, 822; Schreiner 1989:802-803; Evans 1990:18; Carson, Moo, & Morris 1992:20-21; Stein 1992a:28, 63; Bock 1994:55; Bock 2002b:161-162). Stein (1983:428-429) offers a word of caution by noting that while the prologue may offer support for the idea of a dependence theory of the Gospels, it certainly does not support any specific dependence theory.

Several writers (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:20-21; Stein 1992a:67; Bock 1994:58) note how Luke 1:1-4 reveals various stages or *Sitz im Leben* in the composition of the Gospel. Stein (1983:428-430; 1992:67) identifies the initial stage as the period of the events themselves which were witnessed by eyewitnesses (1:1), who handed down the tradition about Jesus, much of it in oral form (1:2), followed by a stage when written sources began to grow (1:3-4), including Luke's writing of his Gospel. Stein says that the study of stage one is concerned with the historical Jesus and his actual words or *ipsissima verba*, while stage two involves the discipline of form criticism, and stage three involves the discipline of literary and redaction criticism. These stages together are traditionally called tradition history or *Traditionsgeschichte*.

Yet, not all scholars are convinced of any literary dependence upon one or more of the other written Gospels. Several contributors (Thomas & Farnell 1998:66; Edgar 1998:137) to *The Jesus Crisis* appeal to Felix's study of Luke 1:1-4 (1998:271-288)² in that volume, as presenting an alternative to the literary dependence viewpoint and even precluding Luke's use of one or more of the synoptic Gospels.

Felix provides an extended exegetical study of Luke 1:1-4 in developing his argument for literary independence. One of his major arguments (1998:274-276) centers on the verb, "have undertaken" (ἐπεχείρησαν) and whether Luke uses it in a neutral manner or with a negative connotation. The other New Testament uses of ἐπιχειρέω are also by Luke in Acts 9:29 and 19:13. Felix (1998:275) argues these passages indicate the verb carries a negative connotation as both describe unsuccessful attempts. He cautions that the context must determine whether the thing "undertaken" is successful or not, since "In itself, the word speaks only about an attempt, not about a successful attempt." After presenting arguments for both views, Felix (1998:275-276) concludes that Luke understands ἐπεχείρησαν to convey a negative connotation.

Thus, Luke would be indicating that the "many" (πολλοί), who had previously drawn up accounts concerning Jesus had not provided a satisfactory account [in Luke's estimation], leading him to research the story about Jesus and draw up his own reliable account. It is argued (Felix 1998:279, 282; Farnell 2002:282-283) that if Luke considered the previous accounts as in some way unsatisfactory and needing improvement, then he could not have been using one of the inspired Gospels such as Mark or Matthew. While acknowledging that deciding between the two possible views on the meaning of ἐπεχείρησαν is not easy, Felix concludes that Luke's stress upon his qualifications (v. 3) further supports the argument that Luke viewed the previous efforts as open to improvements (1998:276).

A great deal of Felix's argument for literary independence from Luke 1:1-4 depends upon his understanding ἐπεχείρησαν to have a negative connotation. It is interesting to note therefore, some of the expressions that Felix uses in describing the "previous attempts". He (1998:275) uses a very cautious expression, "a slight allusion to the insufficiency of earlier attempts," and he (1998:277) speaks of "the general reliability

² An earlier version also was published (Felix 1997).

and soundness of the previous narratives,” and that “what he and others have written comes straight from people who were directly in contact with events being reported” (1998:278).

Many (Marshall 1978:41; Stein 1983:422-423; Nolland 1989:6, 12; Schreiner 1989:805; Bock 1991b:189; Green 1997:37; Niemelä 2002:130; Osborne & Williams 2002:199) argue that ἐπεχείρησαν should not be understood as implying a negative connotation concerning the previous efforts or accounts. While other arguments are advanced for viewing ἐπεχείρησαν as having a neutral connotation, several (Stein 1983:423; Bock 1991b:189) state that the contextual key in determining whether one should or should not see a negative connotation in the verb ἐπεχείρησαν, is found in Luke’s use of “to me also” (κἀμοὶ) in verse 3. This is understood as an indication that Luke identifies his efforts with the eyewitnesses (v. 2) and the previous efforts (v. 1) and that he does not imply any negative criticism. Nolland (1989:6) argues that if Luke wanted to imply a criticism or improvement of the previous efforts he would have employed “although” (καίπερ). Felix (1998:279) could be viewed as even conceding such when he says that Luke “does not contrast himself with his predecessors, and even honors them” but he then seeks to support his claim, that the previous efforts were still unsatisfactory in some manner, by arguing that Luke understood himself to have an advantage over them in having something new to add. Yet, does the obvious point, that Luke had something new to add, necessarily imply some element of inferiority in the previous accounts and explain Luke’s use of κἀμοὶ?

In response to Felix’s argument that Luke’s presentation of his qualifications reflects his view of the inferior nature of the previous efforts, Stein (1992a:64-65) contends that giving one’s qualifications in one’s writing was a common literary practice and Stein also argues that Luke’s emphasis on his qualifications likely reflects the fact that he was not an eyewitness to the events of Jesus’ life that he records in his Gospel (v. 2). Niemelä (2002:127-133) provides further interaction with some of Felix’s other arguments from Luke 1:1-4.

In considering the implications of Luke 1:1-4 for the issue of source criticism and the various theories of literary dependence and independence, Felix (1998:281) concludes, “Neither his prologue nor any other single passage can completely resolve the

issue.” Felix (1998:283) believes that Luke used written sources (cf. v. 1) contrary to Linnemann (1992:190), who also argues for literary independence, but states that Luke only refers to oral sources. Felix’s position (1998:281), while not stating direct dependence upon any specific source like Q or L, would seem to leave open the question of Luke’s possible use of these types of written sources, which have been proposed by scholars. Felix (1998:276) does suggest that Luke may have seen Aramaic material written by Matthew, but Felix considers such material to have differed from Matthew’s Gospel written in Greek, although he does not state why he arrives at that conclusion.

In fact, while Felix (1998:282) argues against literary dependence upon the written Gospels of Matthew or Mark, he nevertheless is also willing to acknowledge that “Conceivably, Mark could have been among Luke’s ‘eyewitnesses and servants of the word’ on whose oral reports he depended.” If, one were to argue that Matthew’s Aramaic material may have had some literary connection to his subsequent Gospel in Greek and/or that Mark’s oral reports likely provided the foundation of Mark’s Gospel, both of which seem reasonable, then “literary dependence” can take on a whole different shade of meaning. The issues of course are quite complex and not solved with any simplistic solution, but according to Felix’s admission, is it not feasible that Luke may have written down notes of Mark’s oral reports and so in one sense may have possibly had the basic outline of Mark’s Gospel before it was even written and distributed by Mark? While such implications would not deny the argument for literary independence, such possibilities could reflect a dependence upon precursor forms of both Matthew and Mark by Luke that could explain many aspects of his Gospel account that at present many try to explain based upon Luke’s literary dependence upon the canonical Gospels of Matthew or Mark.

It should be noted, that even if one concludes that Luke 1:1-4 teaches that Luke used one or more of the synoptic Gospels, this does not prove or really address whether Matthew, Mark or John also did. Likewise, Felix’s argument, even if it proved that Luke did not make use of any of the other synoptic Gospels would still not address whether the writers of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark or John also followed his example or chose to use one or more of the other Gospels.

Green (1997:15) while confident that Luke used Mark and other written sources, writes, “Luke gives no hint as to whether his predecessors included one or more of our NT Gospels” (1997:38). Nolland (1989:xxix) makes the following comment about the

relationship of Luke's prologue to the question about his dependence upon other Gospel sources,

Luke does not say that he depended on any written Gospels at all; only that their existence created a precedent for what he was intending to do. Not Luke's statement about his relationship to these preexisting Gospels, but the patterns of similarity and dissimilarity between the synoptic Gospels as we have them, have convinced the world of scholarship that there is dependence, almost certainly of a literary kind, between the three Gospels.

5.5 The Great Commission (Mt 28:16-20)

This passage was one of the original passages that sparked concern over the use of redaction criticism by evangelicals. It addresses the use of form and tradition criticism by evangelical practitioners of redaction criticism. In particular, it was an article by Osborne (1976) and his interpretation of the baptismal formula of "the Great Commission" that raised voices of concern. The article was written in the "earlier days" of the debate concerning the use of redaction criticism by evangelicals within the ETS, and Osborne was writing to demonstrate how redaction criticism was compatible with the doctrine of inerrancy, using the text of Matthew 28:16-20 as an example.

Osborne (1976:80) sought to account for the fact that in the New Testament, the typical baptismal formula is simply stated as "in the name of Jesus," while in Matthew 28:19 it is a trinitarian formula. Of particular note, is the fact that the trinitarian formula is not found in the rest of the New Testament in a baptismal context (although it is found in *Didache* 7:1). In response to this unique situation, Osborne (1976:80) stated that,

It seems most likely that at some point the tradition or Matthew expanded an original monadic formula...Here we will simply point out two things: (1) Matthew was not freely composing but sought to interpret the true meaning of Jesus' message for his own days; (2) both *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox* are inspired words of God.

Osborne (1976:85) later in the article addressed the issue of history and theology, arguing the Gospels are both theological and historical, and one should not "blindly assume that redaction always involves the creation of material rather than the rephrasing of an existing tradition." As Osborne (1976:85) drew the article to a close he summarized his conclusions by saying:

In this case it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace the exact words that Jesus spoke on the mountain in Galilee. However, we can know that Matthew has faithfully reproduced the intent and meaning of what Jesus said. In fact, we can rejoice because Matthew has rephrased it in such a way that it illuminates his entire gospel and applies the meaning of Jesus' life and ministry to the present mission and responsibility of the Church.

Osborne (1978) again took up the issue of history and theology and a commitment to inerrancy, in an article dealing with the criteria for the use of *Traditionsgeschichte* as a positive tool to be used by evangelicals. He (1978:127) referred to his earlier 1976 article saying:

In another article³ we stated that the gospels were written by men who selected and shaped the traditions to present a certain theological theme. The selection and shaping process, however, did not involve creating or changing the historical data. Therefore there is no danger in a positive approach to redaction or tradition criticism.

These articles precipitated a debate (Osborne 1985:401) between Osborne and John W. Montgomery at the 1978 ETS meetings and the publication of their papers (Montgomery 1979, Osborne 1979a). Montgomery (1979:57-65) argued that Osborne denigrated the historical reliability of the portrait of Jesus found in the New Testament, and that his approach was destructive to a high christology since one could never be sure whether the words ascribed to Jesus were truly from him or stem from the later church and were placed on his lips by the Gospel writers. Montgomery also maintained that Osborne's view that the Spirit is behind both the tradition and the redaction is not really much different from the mythical approach of some like John Hick in *The Myth of God Incarnate*.⁴

Osborne (1979:311) noted the "dissatisfaction" with regard to his approach to the triadic baptismal formula and responded,

Here I would like to clarify it further by applying the implications of my second article to the first. I did not mean that Matthew had freely composed the triadic formula and read it back unto the lips of Jesus. Rather, Jesus had certainly (as in virtually every speech in the NT) spoken for a much longer time and had given a great deal more teaching than reported in the short statement of Matt 28:18-20. In it I believe that he

³ "Redaction Criticism and the Great Commission: A Case Study Toward a Biblical Understanding of Inerrancy," *JETS* 19/2 (1976) 73-86. "In it I say, 'The critic should take cognizance of the possibility that a passage is traditional but has been reconstructed to provide a particular theological interpretation of the evangelist (while remaining true to the event itself)' (p. 85)."

⁴ John Hick (ed), *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).

probably elucidated the trinitarian background behind the whole speech. This was compressed by Matthew in the form recorded. Acts and Paul then may have followed the formula itself from the commission speech, namely the monadic form.

Subsequently, Thomas (1986:451) in an article on redaction criticism noted how Gundry (1982:596) concluded concerning the baptismal formula, “Therefore Matthew seems to be responsible for the present formula.” Thomas (1986:451) then made this remark, “One would have hoped that Gundry would have taken Osborne’s revised explanation of the Matthew 28 great commission under advisement before settling upon such a conclusion about this formula.” Despite Osborne’s attempts at clarification, others (Farnell 1998a:220; Geisler 1999:15) have continued to bring the matter up, persistently noting how the methodology can lead to the very “negative dangers” Osborne warned against (1978:130).

Osborne (1999:206) again sought to address issues of historical criticism and stated, “In other words, a high view of Scripture turns TC [tradition criticism] into a positive tool for affirming history rather than denying it.” At this point in the article, Osborne then used as an example his articles on the Great Commission that several of his critics (Farnell 1998a:220; Geisler 1999:15) had taken him to task for, by noting his need to “revise” his original article. Osborne (1999:206) again maintained that he had never taught that Matthew had created the triadic baptismal formula, as he sought to clarify in the subsequent article, but which he also maintained was taught in the original article, if one read it carefully. He (1999:206) concluded this argumentation by writing,

In terms of TC, a saying is not unhistorical unless the author has *created* it, that is, created it *ex nihilo*. As stated above, a paraphrase of Jesus' saying is *ipsissima vox* and just as historically viable as *ipsissima verba*.
[his italics]

Thomas’ (2000a:102) response to Osborne’s article once again took up Osborne’s defense of his view on the baptismal formula and Thomas noted Osborne’s need to “resort to a special explanation of his own position to avoid being blamed for creating something from nothing in the Great Commission.” Thomas (2000a:103n29) also addressed his own confusion as to exactly what Osborne was saying,

Osborne’s words of explanation are still an enigma: Matthew gave “the true meaning of Jesus' message for his [i.e. Matthew's] own day,” “the intent and meaning of what Jesus said,” and “the trinitarian background

behind the entire speech” (206). If Jesus did not give the trinitarian formula for baptism as traditionally understood, how could Matthew “elucidate the trinitarian background behind the entire speech” without allowing that Jesus at some point spoke of baptism in the name of the Father and of the Holy Spirit as well as baptism in the name of the Son?

Derickson (2003:94n42) also expressed his concerns as he sought to clarify Osborne’s view. Derickson concludes,

What Osborne seems to be saying in this article, ultimately, is that whoever this “Matthew” is, he is not an eyewitness who heard those words spoken by the Lord. He received them from a “tradition” that had developed, possibly being passed on by Mark. And, he *altered* it for his own purposes, under inspiration.

To try to sum up and clarify Osborne's position, it appears that Osborne maintains that Jesus gave the baptismal formula in monadic form (“in my name”) in his commission speech to the disciples. The writer of the Gospel of Matthew gave it its trinitarian formulation found in Matthew 28:19 based upon other aspects of Jesus’ trinitarian teaching given on that occasion. Thus, Matthew 28:19 has a historical basis in the life and teachings of Jesus and is not being read back unto the lips of Jesus from a historical vantage point several decades later in the early church. Osborne argues that since the trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19 had a historical basis in the words of Jesus it was not “freely composed” by Matthew. Yet, it does not appear that Osborne intends to say that Jesus actually uttered the specific trinitarian formula either. If he did, then why would he have given the commission in the monadic form? Osborne seems to point to the conclusion, that the writer of the Gospel of Matthew, under the inspiration of the Spirit, understood the implication of Jesus’ trinitarian teaching for baptism and discipleship in composing the trinitarian formula found in Matthew 28:19.

It is instructive to consider how other evangelicals, most of whom never mention Osborne’s articles or his viewpoint explain the triadic baptismal formula. Several (Mounce 1985:277; Ridderbos [1950] 1987:555) have no problem ascribing the triadic formula to Jesus as a reflection of his teachings about the Father and the Spirit. Many others while not wanting to deny that possibility (Carson 1984:598; France 1985:415; Blomberg 1992c:432; Dockery 1992:58; Morris 1992:748; Keener 1999:717), seem to be willing like Osborne to allow for the possibility the triadic formula may have been in Hagner's words (1995:887) “a liturgical expansion of the evangelist consonant with the

practice of his day.”

Several (Carson 1984:598; Hagner 1995:888) argue “there is no evidence we have Jesus' *ipsissima verba* here.” It is also argued by some (Carson 1984:598; France 1985:415), that the church did not regard Jesus’ command as a baptismal formula that needed to be followed. This explains its absence in the book of Acts. Rather, the focus of the words was not on a baptismal formula as much as it was an indication of the union of the disciple with the three persons of the Triune Godhead. It is also suggested (Carson 1984:598; Chamblin 1989:760) that baptism in the name of the Triune God and in the name of Jesus (as found in Acts) are complementary and neither was an exclusive formula for baptism in the earliest period of the church. Wilkins (2004:955) says, “He is not so much giving a formula as he is emphasizing a theological truth symbolized with baptism.”

5.6 Peter Denies Jesus (Mt 26:69-75; Mk 14:66-72; Lk 22:55-62; Jn 18:15-18, 25-27)

In his controversial defense of inerrancy, Lindsell in *The Battle For The Bible* (1976:161-184) tackled a number of texts that opponents of inerrancy raised as examples of error in the biblical texts. Lindsell’s (1976:174-176) proposed solution for the Gospel texts that record Peter’s denial of Christ, subsequently came under severe critique by evangelicals, including some inerrantists, as an improper and excessive use of the harmonization of Gospel accounts.

The four Gospels record both Jesus’ warning of Peter and his betrayal of Jesus (Mt 26:33-35; Mk 14:27-31; Lk 22:31-34; Jn 13:21-30, 36-38) and the actual events surrounding Peter’s denial that he was Jesus’ disciple. Lindsell (1976:174-176) following the suggestion of a correspondent, J. M. Cheney⁵ argued that Peter received two different warnings about denying Jesus three times before a rooster crowed. Lindsell proposes Peter denied Christ three times before the rooster crowed the first time and then Peter denied Christ three more times before the rooster crowed a second time, since Mark 14:30⁶ indicates Jesus told Peter he would deny him three times before the rooster

5 Lindsell (1976:174) refers to private correspondence with J M Cheney in 1965, while Blomberg (1986:391n54) lists a book, J M Cheney, *The Life of Christ in Stereo*, Portland, Western Baptist Seminary Press, 1969, 218-220.

6 On the textual issues at Mark 14:68, see: Metzger (1975:115-116), France (2002:573) and Edwards (2002:430). Most conclude that the reference is to a literal rooster crowing and not a reference to the

crowed twice. Thus, Lindsell's solution involves Peter denying Jesus six times before a rooster crowed twice.

This certainly is not a traditional viewpoint concerning Peter's denials and raises the question about whether this is a proper handling of Scripture or a case of an excessive harmonization approach at work. Lindsell's approach has been criticized by a number of evangelical inerrantists as "a careless harmonization approach attempting to bring about a precision uncommon to the text" (Dockery 1995:65). Carson (1983:138) speaks of harmonization having a role but not "the simple addition of accounts" which he says was "exemplified in an embarrassing way by Harold Lindsell" (1983:380n61). Blomberg (1986:148) in his discussion of the role of harmonization comments, "Any scenario that envisions Peter denying Jesus more than three times entirely trivializes the force of Jesus' original prediction" and he then footnotes Lindsell and Cheney. Blomberg in a later writing (2001a:234), again chides Lindsell for making the minor discrepancies among the Gospel accounts of Peter's denial "notorious" with his harmonization. He concludes, "This kind of hypothesis brings more sober harmonization into disrepute, since each Gospel emphasizes Jesus' prediction that Peter would make three denials and then goes on to narrate exactly that number." Dillard (1988:159) in his article on harmonization comments, "Occasionally harmonization can become so ingenious as to undermine the very biblical authority it seeks to establish. Perhaps the most notorious example involves reconstructing the account of Peter's denial with the result that he denied Jesus six times before the rooster crowed twice." Dillard (1988:159n18) then footnotes Lindsell's solution. France (1985:371n3) says, "To make an issue of historical harmonization out of this obvious simplification is surely pedantic" and he too references Lindsell's solution.

In dealing with Peter's denial of Jesus, surprisingly some do not bother to note Mark's reference to the rooster crowing twice, and others who do mention it make no effort at harmonizing Mark 14:30, 68, 72 with the other Gospels or providing an explanation for the difference (Ridderbos [1950] 1987:487; 509; Tenney 1981:143, 172-73; Bruce 1983b: 295, 348; Hurtado 1983:239-40; Liefeld 1984:1029; Michaels 1984:244, 294; Mounce 1985:257-259; Brooks 1991:246; Morris 1992:665, 690; Stein 1992a:564; Garland 1996:567; Green 1997:774, 788; Keener 1999:635; Burge

Roman morning bugle call called the *gallicinium* that was called a "cockcrow" although Mounce (1985:259) allows for this possibility.

2000:497n32; Keener 2003:928, 1096; Wilkins 2004:868).

For those assuming Markan priority, France (1985:371) attributes Matthew's omission of Mark's "twice" to Matthew's tendency to leave out unnecessary narrative details, while Hagner (1995:776) states it would have only introduced an unnecessary complication. Nolland (1993b:1095) in commenting on Luke 22:58 states, "Luke drops Mark's mention at this point of Peter's retreat to the forecourt as well as the first cockcrow." He then suggests that "Luke's second source is likely to be visible." Nolland (1993b:1096) then accounts for Luke's single rooster crow after Peter's denial (Lk 22:61) to Lukan redaction and agreement with Matthew. Carson (1984:542) questions the textual reliability of Mark 14:30, 68, 72 noting the reference to two rooster crowings is found in only certain manuscripts. Thus, this textual solution would remove any need for harmonization. Marshall (1978:843) wonders if the other Gospel writers were possibly influenced by a different tradition than Mark employed and Bock (1996b:1786) notes the difference is odd if Luke used Mark. Blomberg (1992c:393n28) does not really try to harmonize but simply notes that in Matthew's account the first of the two rooster crowings that Mark mentions would have already occurred. In a later writing, Blomberg (2001:195n286) argues there is no contradiction for most overlook the obvious "that, if Peter denied Jesus three times before the cock crowed once, then he denied him those same three times before the cock crowed again!"

Some commentators do attempt to explain why Mark included the reference to two rooster crowings. Lane (1974:543) focuses on the rabbinic tradition that recognized three distinct times during the night that the rooster crows and suggests this stresses the relatively short time involved in Peter's denials. Others (Green 1997:788n9; France 2002:578) doubt that Mark is trying to be time specific but simply indicating that dawn was approaching. France (2002:579) believes that Mark records the two rooster crowings because he is relying on Peter as his source (so also, Geldenhuys 1951:568n8; Wessel 1984:762). Mark thus records the fullest account in terms of details that Peter remembered and it was not necessary for the other accounts to include this additional detail, particularly since a single rooster was unlikely to crow just once and then stop. Bock (1996b:1788) notes the textual difficulty at Mark 14:68 and concludes that if it is absent than having two crowings after Peter's third denial would not amount to much difference in the accounts. If Mark 14:68 is included, as Mark 14:72 would suggest, then

Bock concludes Mark has simply chosen to be more specific than the other Gospels. Some (Gundry 1993:890; Evans 2001:466) feel that Mark has recorded the second crowing of the rooster to accentuate the drama and exact fulfillment of Jesus' prediction.

Hendriksen (1975:618-19) observes that if Mark 14:68 is retained then it seems to present a problem with Matthew's report (26:34) that Peter would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crows, since Peter has only denied Jesus once at this point in Mark's account. He suggests several options as solutions, which include: (a) omitting the words of Mark 14:68, (b) recognizing that the first rooster crowing had not registered since there is no further reference to it in the text, (c) recognizing that Christ's prediction is concerning the culmination of the night period between 12 midnight and 3:00 A.M. as seems evidenced in the references found in the Gospel accounts (Mt 26:34; Lk 22:34, 60; Jn 13:38, 18:27; Mk 14:30, 72). Hendriksen (1975:619) proposes a combination of options "b" and "c" as the best solution. Carson (1991:487n38) comments that if the two rooster crowings preserved in Mark 14:30, 68, 72 are considered original, then it is simply the difference between saying "before the bell rings for dinner" and "before the second bell rings for dinner."

Lindsell did not really address the issue of the chronological arrangement of the denial pericopes in the various Gospels and the differences between them. Carson (1984:540) states that Mark (14:27-31) and Matthew (26:30-35) place the prediction of Peter's denial after the disciples leave the upper room, while Luke (21:31-38) implies it occurred before departing for the Mount of Olives, and John places it during the supper and before the farewell discourse. Carson believes that John records the historical sequence and perhaps Matthew and Mark have displaced the account to keep intact the theological coherence of the preceding pericope, thereby emphasizing the gravity of the disciples' defection and Peter's denial. Hendriksen (1978:973) suggests that it is entirely possible that Jesus started to warn Peter while the group was in the upper room and that discussion was continued afterward.

The three denials of Peter found in John 18:15-27 also differ from the synoptic Gospels in that John's Gospel weaves Peter's denials among the various interrogations of Jesus. Several writers (Beasley-Murray 1987:325; Burge 2000:497; Blomberg 2001a:235) contend that the writer does this to make a theological point. They maintain the Gospel of John draws a stark contrast between Jesus, who stands up to his questioners

and denies nothing and Peter, who cowers before his questioners denying everything. Several other commentators (Hendriksen 1953:388-394, 399-400; Morris 1995:671-73) provide a harmonistic approach between the details of John's account and the synoptic Gospel accounts. Hendriksen (1953:389-90, 399-400) maintains that Peter actually denied Jesus four times (so also Thomas & Gundry [1988] 2003:214q) or maybe more although each Gospel records only three in fulfillment of Jesus' prediction. Hendriksen suggests that John's Gospel does not record the second denial of Peter that Matthew 26:34, Mark 14:30, and Luke 22:34 record, but splits the third denial of the synoptic Gospels into two (Jn 18:25, 27). Hendriksen (1953:390) maintains there were *three and no more* [his emphasis] separate situations in which Peter denied Jesus, but this does not imply that Peter could only have denied Jesus once on each of those three occasions, as if Peter verbally denied Jesus exactly three times.

There are numerous other differences in details in these accounts that were seemingly addressed by Lindsell's simple "additive approach" but that require an explanation from those who reject Lindsell's approach. Several (Carson 1984:557-558; Evans 1990:325-329) provide outlines of some of the differences between the Gospel accounts and provide some points to consider in seeking a solution. Carson (1984:558) concludes the differences cannot be adequately accounted for on redactional grounds. Evans (1990:329) concludes that the Gospel accounts cannot even be harmonized on the basis of the materials that we have unless one is willing to take the approach of Cheney and Lindsell. He says of such an approach, "The results of this approach are unrealistic, even comical, and frequently lead to a distortion of the Gospel portraits themselves."

Bock (1996b:1779-1789) though provides an extended discussion that seeks to explain the various details of each of the Gospels in a harmonistic manner, but unlike Lindsell's attempt, Bock maintains there were but three denials. Bock (1996b:1788-89) concludes that the differences in details among the Gospel accounts are explainable in light of a public event that involved many people and reflects "variations in summarizing a large pool of information that circulated in the church." Blomberg (2001a:234) concurs that the details can be harmonized, arguing:

Nevertheless, it is completely historically credible to imagine a crowd of people huddled around a fire, seeing Peter come and go from their midst, shooting questions and accusations at him in a number of ways, so that more than three people may have accosted Peter. Once that is accepted,

and we recall the freedom ancient writers felt to paraphrase a speaker's words, there is nothing in the Gospels' accounts of Peter's denials that would have qualified as a 'contradiction' by the historiographical standards of the first-century Mediterranean world (cf. esp. Morris 1995:671-672). Peter would still have replied to his accusers only three times.

Archer (1980:65-66, 77-78), while rejecting Lindsell's harmonistic approach since it involves more than the three denials, which Jesus predicted, provides his own harmonistic solution to the problem of three denials and two rooster crowings.

5.7 Summary

The selected passages have exhibited some of the issues that lie at the heart of the debate concerning the use of redaction criticism by evangelicals. In this chapter an attempt has been made to present the differing viewpoints without seeking to draw any definitive conclusions concerning the validity of the arguments proposed. The validity of the respective arguments will be addressed in the next chapter. Yet, with that in view, it has been necessary at times to raise questions about certain views in preparation for the discussion to follow in the next chapter.

It is apparent that evangelicals on each side of this debate have chosen different methodologies in their attempts to address the differences that arise between the synoptic Gospel accounts, while some have also tried to remain faithful to the inerrancy of the Bible. In this chapter, those who employ redaction criticism and yet do not embrace inerrancy have also been considered in the discussion of the various texts so as to reflect the broad range of approaches employed by evangelicals in the study of the Gospel accounts. Texts that are debated in the discussion were chosen to illustrate both the differences in methodology as well as the various aspects of the debate.

Since there are advocates from both sides of the debate who are members in the ETS the question remains whether they have been faithful to their commitment to the inerrancy of scripture in their exegesis. The debate centers on whether inerrancy is compatible with the historical-critical methodology and the use of redaction criticism or if this methodology is incompatible with inerrancy. This chapter has sought to address the actual exegesis of texts by those who employ redaction criticism and maintain a commitment to inerrancy. An evaluation of the arguments will be undertaken in the next

chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES IN THE DEBATE

In this chapter, an analysis of the arguments of the debate that were presented in chapter four will be undertaken. The outline of chapter four will be followed and interaction with the selected texts of chapter five will also be incorporated into the analysis and discussion.

6.1 THE ROLE OF PRESUPPOSITIONS

6.1.1 A “modified” use of historical-criticism and presuppositions

Bock (2002c:17-18) outlined the two different approaches to the issue of presuppositions among members of the ETS and noted that those who see redaction criticism as an extension of the historical-critical methodology consider it to be inimical to the doctrine of inerrancy. They conclude that the employment of historical criticism implies openness to the possibility of arriving at the conclusion that certain events or sayings in the Gospels are not necessarily historical events and sayings but non-historical creations of the early church (so Chilton 1995:38-39). Thus, each text or saying being examined begins by being considered “suspect” historically and this it is maintained is contradictory to one’s commitment to the doctrine of inerrancy (Thomas 1998a:319).

Blomberg (1994a:423) after a survey of the objectives of form criticism stated, “Clearly the average Christian reader of the NT has no time for this brand of radical form criticism, and rightly so. It is based on unfounded methodological skepticism and inadequate criteria.” He (1994a:426) argued that redaction criticism arose from this situation, noting, “But when so much of form criticism’s use as a historical tool called into question the NT’s trustworthiness, it is scarcely surprising that a backlash should ensue.” Osborne (2001:129) acknowledges that redaction criticism builds upon the results of source criticism and then form and tradition criticism. It is understandable then in light of this history of the historical-critical methodology, acknowledged by evangelical practitioners of redaction criticism, why some within the ETS are so concerned that the employment of redaction criticism entails the use of presuppositions that question the reliability and trustworthiness of the NT writings. It seems fair to conclude that

historically the development of redaction criticism implied the use of the historical-critical methodology with its negative presuppositions towards the historicity of the Gospel writings.

This, of course, does not end the debate concerning presuppositions for Bock (2002c:18) in describing his support for redaction criticism wrote “It argues that a healthy respect for Scripture and a modified use of such standards that reflects such respect is possible and valuable in appreciating how Scripture actually works and should be read.” The significant and important part of this quote is the mention of “a modified use” of such standards. Those evangelical inerrantists, who practice redaction criticism, have essentially acknowledged the anti-supernaturalistic way the historical-critical method has been employed and thus argue for a “modified” use of this methodology that denies its negative presuppositions.

The degree to which that modification is necessary was described in Osborne’s (1999:196) response to Farnell’s (1998a:207) charge that he was employing similar presuppositions as those employed by the members of the *Jesus Seminar*. Long (1994:123-135) tackles the issue of whether an evangelical can be a “critical” historian and whether they can employ the historical-critical method. After discussing several different ways in which the terms “historical” and “critical” are used, Long (1994:125) summarizes:

Who then can make use of the historical-critical method? Until clarity of definition is achieved for the terms *historical* and *critical*, a firm answer cannot be given. As traditionally practiced, at least, the historical-critical method rests on certain assumptions that the “faithful” scholar, to use Halpern’s designation, will not wish to embrace. [his emphasis]

According to Long (1994:125), the particular assumptions that the “faithful” scholar would not choose to employ as does a “critical” historian are:

(1) he generally takes a critical stance toward his sources; (2) he is inclined to disregard the supernatural or miraculous in his treatment of past events; (3) he is very much aware of his own historicity and, accordingly, of the subjective and tentative character of his own historical conclusions¹

¹ Long quotes; Maxwell Miller, *The Old Testament and the Historian* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 12-13.

Long (1994:134), after noting the ways in which the terms “historical” and “critical” can be understood by historians, concludes his discussion by indicating the ways in which the historical-critical methodology may be employed by saying,

In summary, while the historical-critical method (as traditionally practiced) systematically and insistently excludes the notion of divine intervention, the method itself, if applied in the context of a theistic set of background beliefs, need not exclude talk of divine intervention...Indeed, unless theists are badly mistaken in their theism, then surely it is the denial of any place for God in the historical process that is the mark of bad history.

At the very least then, one would expect that evangelicals, who practice redaction criticism and use the historical-critical methodology, if they are using a “modified” form of redaction criticism with very different presuppositions from those which have been historically associated with the methodology, they should acknowledge that fact.

6.1.2 The “apologetic dialogue” argument and presuppositions

Derickson (2003:88) maintains that the trend among evangelical practitioners of historical criticism has been to employ the critical methods in order to “dialogue” with critical scholars. The assumption in such “dialogue” is that the methods are not the problem but the presuppositions of the practitioner using them and what is needed is for the anti-supernaturalistic presuppositions to be abandoned. Stein (1981b:130) exemplifies this, when he contends that if evangelical practitioners of redaction criticism are able to consistently show the evangelist records the authentic words of Jesus in the Gospels then this will have an apologetic role in bridging the gap between the Christ of faith and the historical Jesus. Thereby, the “burden of proof” is then, he maintains, placed upon those who reject the authenticity of the Gospel accounts.

Recently, R Alan Streett interviewed Darrell Bock and Norm Geisler in light of controversial events that were addressed at the 2003 ETS annual convention in Atlanta (Streett 2004:131-132). He asked both men the same set of questions, one of which was whether the ETS “Historical Jesus” study group in attempting to determine which events in the Gospels really happened, was engaging in a practice that undermined inerrancy. Bock (2004:137) responded that it would depend upon how the process is done. Bock answered “The reason to invest in historical Jesus studies is to come up with this kind of apologetic argument. There is terrific value in being able to show someone on the basis of

good historical reasoning that there is a lot of trace evidence in this material for these events being authentic.” Bock previously elaborated on this in greater detail in his ETS presidential address.

In his presidential address, Bock (2002c:19) argued that ETS members could employ redaction criticism as a form of apologetic dialogue and in doing so evangelicals can put those, such as members of the *Jesus Seminar*, on the defensive. He exhorted the members of the ETS

Do we want to spend most of our time defending every little detail the non-conservatives bring up and spend tons of energy fighting each other about how to resolve such differences because we as conservatives approach the solutions differently? Or do we want to spend time working together on the big picture of Jesus and his ministry and how the Bible, even when it is read as basically trustworthy, still leads to him as the answer for a perishing world? Must we insist that our culture accept our view of Scripture before coming to Jesus? Or can we argue that seeing the Jesus of Scripture in his most basic terms will help people in our culture reconsider their larger worldview which leads them to demean Scripture? I want to keep both lines of argument open.

This argument seems disjunctive since working together is possible but the issue of the correct methodology must still be addressed as it is a significant issue also. It is questionable from an apologetic stance if one can truly expose the weaknesses of another’s position without also addressing the other’s presuppositions² as Bock (2002c:18) suggests by arguing,

A second view argues that evangelicals can and should engage the opposition *and* their method. It should look for that method’s inconsistencies *beyond* the presuppositional ones and expose the fact that even on those often suspect standards, the synthesis coming into our culture from that view can be exposed as seriously flawed. [his emphasis]

Yet, Bock (2002c:19) also maintained that redaction criticism could be used with the very same presuppositions as non-evangelicals for an apologetic purpose. In this situation, one would not employ a “modified” set of presuppositions in one’s use of redaction criticism, but the traditional ones of non-evangelicals which treats the New Testament as suspect historically. Bock employed the analogy of crossing a bridge to coax a horse to cross over to the other side. He (2002c:19) stated this as “We will need to enter into the other person’s perspective, to think from his or her presuppositions.” This

² On the necessity of arguing from presuppositions in one’s apologetic approach see: Greg L Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic Readings & Analysis*. (Nutley: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1998), 461-523.

form of “dialogue” with critical scholars raises questions concerning its possibility and methodology.

Lindsell (1976:283) was right to question the “success” of such an approach in bringing the “horse over the bridge” as well as the wisdom in evangelicals being seen as endorsing such a flawed approach by their use of it. Geisler (2004:142) contends that some evangelical scholars have broadened their definition of inerrancy and employed the critical methodologies out of an unhealthy desire for the respect of non-evangelical scholars. He stated, “One member at the recent Atlanta meeting pleaded that we not vote Pinnock and Sanders out of the Society for fear of what other non-evangelical scholars might think.” Do ETS members submitting articles that employ redaction criticism in such an apologetic fashion indicate this is their purpose in their articles? If not, do they not convey the impression they are embracing this methodology or are they engaging in a certain degree of subterfuge to gain a hearing with non-evangelical practitioners of historical criticism? Certainly, some outside the evangelical circles have raised just such a question. Johnson (1997:63) writes

A more complex pattern of avoidance can be found among those professors of New Testament in conservative seminaries who have managed to combine “critical scholarship” with the demands of traditional authority. A careful reading of their publications reveals that the scholarship is “critical” in form much more than substance; the paraphernalia of the academy are used – often with considerable cleverness – to support conclusions already determined by doctrine.

Carson (1983:138-139) also notes the inconsistency of claiming to use redaction criticism as an objective historical tool if one is not also willing to allow for the possibility of one’s study resulting in a conclusion that a certain text or saying is inauthentic. This raises the issue of whether an evangelical committed to inerrancy can or does truly employ the historical-critical methodology in the same way as a non-evangelical, who is not committed to inerrancy. Regardless of whether one is using the methodology for an apologetic purpose or not, if one truly employs historical criticism as an “objective” historical tool then the possibility that one might arrive at the conclusion that an event or saying should be considered inauthentic should not be denied. This is the force of Marshall’s (1977:126-127) statement that it is impossible to practice historical criticism without concluding on occasion that the true solution is that an event or saying is inauthentic.

Consequently, it seems particularly inconsistent for one, who claims to hold to inerrancy as ETS members do, to then employ a methodology such as the historical-critical methodology and redaction criticism with the same “doubting” presuppositions as a non-evangelical, which entails the understanding and possibility that one’s study could result in a denial of inerrancy. One wonders if such ETS members can really honestly employ the historical-critical methodology with a true openness to such negative conclusions if they are truly committed to the inerrancy of Scripture.

Carson (1983:141) shares his experience with a young scholar, who regarded redaction criticism as a neutral tool and when using it the scholar maintained he did not assume the inerrancy of Scripture. Carson asks,

But the next question to ask is how many times the scholar needs to find his beliefs taught or reinforced before he can treat them as nonnegotiables. Everyone develops such nonnegotiables. Would he remain similarly “neutral” regarding certain points in christology or any and every other basic creedal point? Surely not. Then why this one?

The point here is that ETS members in signing the society’s doctrinal statement are essentially affirming the inerrancy of Scripture as a nonnegotiable, yet some claim they can for apologetic purposes employ a methodology that denies this conviction. Either they are claiming to approach the text with a degree of neutrality in their hermeneutic or they must acknowledge that their conclusions will be affected by their presuppositions. Any claim to neutrality should rightly be brought under scrutiny and rejected.

Oss (1989:230) building on Kuhn’s work defines a “model” or “framework” as the shared commitments of members of a community, such as the ETS and then notes

Frameworks (“framework” and “model” are used interchangeably in this discussion) influence the facts. They even influence how important a fact is, how facts are organized, what questions concerning the facts are important, etc. Thus there is no clear separation between fact and interpretation. Facts always exist against a background framework. The same criteria give rise both to questions and solutions. When one is dealing with any given gestalt field, then, the organization of that field depends on the organizing model that is applied to it. This is particularly true of hermeneutics.

At the heart of this “framework” lies one’s faith commitments, including one’s affirmation of personal faith in Jesus Christ and the inerrancy of the Bible, which affect one’s hermeneutic and interpretation. The concern of Black and Dockery (1991:14) that the Bible like any other book must be studied through literary and critical methodologies

needs to be addressed from within the parameters of one's framework or model. Long (1994:120-121) writes,

In other words, the individual historian's basic intellectual and spiritual commitments ("how he or she sees the world") exercise an inevitable, even "dominating," influence over which historical reconstructions will appear plausible to the historian...All of these basic beliefs influence how historians read the biblical texts and at least in part determine whether the Bible's accounts of the past appear plausible or not...Just as the historian's worldview, (or *model* of reality) influences how he or she perceives the past, so also the *model* influences his or her preference for certain *methods* of investigation and the manner in which these methods are applied. In the final analysis, the historian's *model* of reality, expressing itself through the historian's preferred *methods* of investigation, inevitably affects the historian's historical conclusions/constructions. [his emphasis]

In employing a "modified" form of the historical-critical methodology an ETS member could nevertheless retain their basic biblical and theistic convictions. Yet, Bock seems to suggest an approach which calls upon the scholar to abandon these for an apologetic purpose. Is this really possible? There is a degree of irony in this apologetic approach of ETS members. Gruenler (1991:196) argues "Knowledge begins not with doubt but with the practical posture of belief." Yet, these ETS members are willing to employ the presupposition of doubt to arrive at knowledge. Gruenler (1991:196) says of historical-critical practitioners,

Unpopular as it may seem to the objectivist critic, there can be no success in focal analysis of the gospel texts until there is first a proper subsidiary trust in the mode of "I believe": 'Only a Christian who stands in the service of his faith can understand Christian theology and only he can enter into the religious meaning of the Bible.'³ With that sentence Polanyi presents the case as clearly as it can be made.

Do these ETS members stand in the "service of their faith" by embracing the doubting presuppositions of historical criticism even for apologetic purposes? Bock seems to imply they do, but he seems inconsistent in his argument at this point.

Willitts (2005:82) argues that most scholars fail to concede the "pervasiveness and power of their subjectivity" and consequently look upon such as a curse or liability not something of value. He (2005:101) maintains that rather than considering subjectivity a virus to be eradicated, it is something that should be valued as part of our method and

³ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 281.

calls for scholars to embrace “faith-based” presuppositions, which are accountable within community. Willits (2005:104) rightly notes that all scholars are “confessional” whether in terms of tenets of the church or of something else and consequently he contends that a confessional approach to the study of Jesus is not antithetical to historical inquiry. J B Green concluded that “critical inquiry in Jesus-research has not been critical enough – that is self-critical enough” (quoted by Willits 2005:106).

6.2 THEORIES OF GOSPEL SOURCES

In the discussion concerning the Synoptic Problem in chapter four, it was clear that a number of theories have been advanced in seeking to determine the sources of the synoptic Gospels. In chapter four, it was shown that the different theories that have been advanced relate not only to those theories that maintain literary interdependence among the Gospels but that some also argue for the literary independence of the Gospels. It was also observed that the arguments for literary interdependence often incorporated the existence of an unknown document called “Q” in seeking to account for similarities and differences between the synoptic Gospels.

In addressing the contested issues of source criticism, it is important to be reminded that no theory has ever won the unified support of scholars. Nor should one naively consider that this contribution will provide a solution that will gain such support. It is beyond the purpose of this study to enter into a detailed examination of all the aspects of the arguments in support of the various theories that try to solve the Synoptic Problem, others have done so and their arguments are readily available. Bird (2005b: 162) identifies the main concerns as a scholarly pursuit of the *purpose* and *preservation* of the Jesus tradition [his emphasis]. What is debated by the opponents in the inerrancy debate is whether one of the literary interdependence theories or the independence theory, or both, can provide a proper foundation for explaining the Gospel data, and provide that explanation in conjunction with the doctrine of inerrancy.

6.2.1 The use of the hypothetical source “Q”

Any analysis of the interdependence theory will note the questionable status of Q and how this hypothetical document is made to bear a great deal of weight (Edgar,

1998:147-149). The Q hypothesis has come under scrutiny for a number of years from a number of sources. Ingolfsland (2004:12) endorses the conclusions of Goodacre⁴ in arguing against the probability of Q and notes what he considers the improbable assumptions that are required to salvage the Q theory,

(1) The fact that the number of so-called “minor agreements”⁵ range as high as the seven hundreds to over two thousand⁶ make it improbable that these are accidental.⁷ (2) It is even more problematic that, in order to salvage the theory, some Q theorists have felt it necessary to postulate textual corruption - without evidence - to account for these minor agreements. (3) Nearly fatal to the theory is the fact that some Q theorists, again, in order to salvage the theory, have found it necessary to postulate a special category of Q/Mark overlaps⁸ to account for the Matthew/Luke extensions to some of Marks stories.⁹

Further, even if one accepts Q as a source, Dunn (2005:26-28) wonders why the most obvious explanation for the Q material is ignored. Dunn (2005:27) notes that the most obvious explanation is that the Q material first emerged in Galilee and was given shape there prior to Jesus’ death in Jerusalem, and therefore reflects the impact Jesus made on the lives of his early disciples. Dunn (2005:28) summarizes:

In other words, the Q tradition reflects and bears testimony to the faith-creating impact of Jesus’ ministry. It was formulated as an expression of faith, indeed, but of the faith of the disciples that drew them into following him. As such, it takes us back not merely to the 70s or 80s when the Gospels were written, and not merely to the 40s, 50s, or 60s when the

⁴ Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q* (Harrisburg, PA : Trinity Press International, 2002).

⁵ Ingolfsland argues “Minor agreements are instances in the triple tradition in which Matthew and Luke agree with each other in wording over against the wording of Mark. These are used as evidence that Luke did in fact know of Matthew’s gospel, contrary to the two source theory which postulates that Luke did not know Matthew’s gospel, thus making it necessary to postulate a lost source, Q, to account for the much broader similarities between Matthew and Luke. Sanders and Davies note: ‘The minor agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark in the triple tradition have always constituted the Achilles’ heel of the two-source hypothesis. There are virtually no triple tradition pericopes without such agreements.’” E P Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*. (Philadelphia : Trinity Press International, 1989).

⁶ Ingolfsland quotes, Goodacre 153.

⁷ Ingolfsland states, “While conceding that ‘minor agreements do not decisively prove or disprove the independence of Matthew and Luke’, Sanders and Davies calculate the number of minor agreements to be about one thousand and conclude that ‘It is our judgment that this is too many to attribute to coincidence and similar editorial policies, and that thus we should posit some relationship between Matthew and Luke in addition to or instead of their independent use of Mark’ (Sanders and Davies, 73; emphasis theirs).”

⁸ Ingolfsland quotes, Goodacre 163.

⁹ Ingolfsland says, “Noting that the number of Q/Mark overlaps could be substantial depending on how they are counted, Sanders and Davies write: ‘The expansion of Q and the possibility that Mark knew Q shake the foundations of the two-source hypothesis. But if the agreements between Matthew and Luke are not attributed to overlaps between Mark and Q, it becomes difficult to maintain that neither Matthew nor Luke knew each other’ (Sanders and Davies 80).”

Jesus tradition was being circulated round the first churches, but to the late 20s or early 30s, to the time and mission of Jesus himself. As such, it enables us to hear, much more clearly than has regularly been assumed by Jesus researchers, Jesus himself as the first disciples heard him.

Dunn (2005:40-41, 112) also raises the question whether Q should be conceived in terms of a document or whether it more likely reflects an oral performance of the passing down of tradition. This should caution one to realize that there is an obvious danger in basing one's arguments upon something that is at best hypothetical since the strength of any argument is the foundation upon which it is built. Speculations about such a hypothetical document can and have led to theories that are even more speculative in the study of Jesus and the early Christian communities as Ingolfsland (2003:217-232) has documented. Nevertheless, the elimination or undermining of the Q theory does not settle the issue of the Synoptic Problem or even force one to embrace a theory of literary independence, since not all theories of interdependence are forced to rely upon Q as a source (Niemelä 2002b:108-109).

6.2.2 Theories of sources and the doctrine of inspiration

Stein (1992b:785) argues that literary interdependence is necessary since one cannot simply appeal to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in arguing for a literary independence view. He maintains that while that may explain the similarities between the Gospels it fails to account for their differences or explain why the Gospel of John, which is also inspired, looks so different from the synoptic Gospels. Stein (1992b:785) also posits that appeal to a fixed oral tradition underlying the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke can not "elucidate adequately the degree of similarity found in the synoptic Gospels." He contends that "a common oral tradition is not able to explain the similar editorial comments which we find" (e.g. Mt 24:15/Mk 13:14). He also argues that an even more formidable difficulty for this theory is explaining the "extensive agreement in the order of the material."

Yarbrough (1997:174) showed how Eta Linnemann sought to build her case for the literary independence of the Gospels by appealing to the Gospel writers as eyewitnesses writing under the inspiration of the Spirit. Yarbrough (1997:174) noted the different manner in which inspiration was conceived in the literary interdependence view,

Robert Stein in *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction* states that he believes in Scripture's inspiration, and that when gospel compilers edited traditions as determined through source, form, redaction, and literary criticism, those interpretations are still "divinely inspired, canonical, and authoritative." Stein, is willing to extend divine inspiration to whatever means gospel transmitters, compilers, or redactors used over the decades of gospel formation. Linnemann's arguments for eyewitness testimony are, then, unnecessary, because Stein's extended doctrine of inspiration abolishes the need for assured and direct eyewitness accounts.

This is not a completely proper reading of Stein, since Stein (1983:423) holds that Luke 1:1-4 provides such eyewitness accounts as the basis of the literary interdependence theory. Yet, Yarbrough's comment does point to the manner in which even one's concept of the doctrine of inspiration is affected or tied up with one's theory of the gospel sources. Although there are differences, it seems reasonable to conclude that neither a literary interdependence nor independence solution to the Synoptic Problem is really incompatible with the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. Stein still maintains it is the "gospel compilers" and their final compositions, that is, the specific individual *autographa* of the Gospel of Matthew, Mark and Luke, however that final product was achieved, that is considered inspired. Grisanti (2001:598) has presented a somewhat analogous situation in his study of OT books that went through a process of "updating" before reaching their canonical form. He suggests it is better to understand *autographa* as "the *final* [his emphasis] canonical form" and the changes prior to this as "inspired editorial updates." Stein's objection to the inability of the literary independence's argument concerning inspiration to explain the differences among the Gospels will be addressed in the discussion on the role of orality later in this chapter.

6.2.3 The agreements between the Gospels

Stein (1992b:785) also states that a fixed oral tradition is unable to adequately account for the great degree of similarity found between the synoptic Gospels. Yet, this degree of similarity may have been overstated. Yarbrough (1997:186) cites the study of Norman E. Reed,¹⁰ who noted the inconsistencies in percentage of agreement between Matthew and Mark by various scholars. In support, Reed lists the studies of B H Streeter with a 51% agreement, Morganthaer with 77% agreement in overall substance, and 38% if agreement is defined in terms of identical wording. Reed observes that Robert Stein

¹⁰Norman E Reed, How Much of Mark's Gospel Can Be Found in Matthew? Unpublished paper.

(1987:48) in his work, *The Synoptic Problem*, says that “97.2% of the words in Mark have a parallel in Matthew.” Reed observes that such a great divergence of figures suggests that something is awry. Reed points out that Stein’s figure is based on a dubious interpretation of Tyson and Longstaff,¹¹ who used computers to search for verbal agreements and employed three different criteria. The criteria and the figures are as follows (cited in Yarbrough 1997:186-187):

The first is *continuity*. This means “strict verbal agreement of at least two consecutive words between parallel pericopes.” Using this criterion, 3,512 of Mark’s 11,025 words agree with Matthew. Thus 32% of Mark agrees with Matthew. A second, more generous criterion is what Tyson and Longstaff call *identity*. This is defined as “strict agreement of words, but without the requirement that any of the words have to be consecutive.” Using this method, 40% of Mark’s words agree with Matthew. A third criterion is *equivalency*. This “calls for only the root or the meaning of two words to be in agreement within parallel pericopes.” Applied to all of Mark, adding the similarities found by computer search based on all three criteria, 5,357 of Mark’s 11,025 words have verbal agreement with Matthew. This is a 49% parallel between Mark and Matthew.

One wonders then how Stein arrived at his figure of 97% agreement between Matthew and Mark. Reed notes that Stein (1987:48) stated that only 304 of Mark’s words have no parallel with Matthew. Reed suggests that Stein then took the 10,721 words found in Mark that are “parallel” with Matthew and divided by Mark’s total number of words (11,025) and arrived at 97.2%. Yet, Reed rightly contends that this goes beyond what Tyson and Longstaff arrived at, which was 49% agreement (cited in Yarbrough 1997:187). Edgar (1998:137) raises the issue of the inconsistencies of many synopses since they follow no set standard, at times they ignore different contexts and consequently have unreliable criterion for making their alleged parallels. Edgar (1998:138) concludes that “No statistics describing the relationship between the synoptics can be reliable until someone establishes an accurate standard of comparison.” Edgar’s (1998:139-140) own study done in his doctoral dissertation arrived at significantly small percentages of agreements between the Gospels, which agreed with Linnemann’s (1992) study.

¹¹Joseph Tyson and Thomas Longstaff, *Synoptic Abstracts, The Computer Bible 15* (Wooster, Ohio: College of Wooster, 1978) cited in Yarbrough 1997.

Blomberg (1984:80-82) provided an analysis of fourteen Lucan parables that have been considered to have parallels in Matthew or Mark using Aland's synopsis.¹² Blomberg (1984:82) concluded the fourteen parables divided into three groups. There were eight parables which evidenced clear dependence upon a common source, four which were unclear as to whether there were any literary connections and two which clearly indicated no literary connections. Blomberg (1984:82) noted "It is remarkable how often writers who wish to illustrate the presence of irreconcilable contradictions between the Gospels appeal to the examples of the parables in these last two categories." This should make one careful to examine what exactly is being argued for in terms of agreements between the Gospels. The reduced percentages of agreement do not exclude the possibility of literary interdependence though they do seem to weaken its case.

Recently, Thomas (2004a:10) in a study of identical words in the fifty-eight triple-tradition sections in Earnest Burton and Edgar Goodspeed's, *A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels in Greek*¹³ concluded that identical words comprise only 16% as "an absolute maximum" of these sections. Thomas (2004a:10) uses the example of a teacher noting similarities between two tests and argues that this is too small a percentage for any teacher to consider a student to have copied another student's paper, so why should one suppose such a small percentage supports literary interdependence.

Thomas (2004a:15) also argues from the agreements of two Gospels against a third Gospel that,

Inductive reasoning leads to the conclusion that oral and noncanonical written tradition based on eyewitness testimony was a basis for the Synoptic Gospels because of the random way they agree and disagree with one another. No proposal of literary interdependence has provided a satisfactory and factually based explanation for how the writers could have depended on the writings of each other in penning their books when two Gospels agree against a third in all possible combinations.

In an earlier study on the agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark, Thomas (1978:112) proposed the possibility that all three synoptic Gospels drew from a layer of tradition composed of personal recollections, oral traditions, and numbers of brief written sources. At the annual ETS meeting in Toronto in 2002, Thomas presented a paper,

¹² Kurt Aland, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1964).

¹³ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947)

which was later published as his 2004a article, and Stein responded to Thomas' paper.¹⁴ Stein criticized Thomas for not comparing two Gospels at a time instead of three (Thomas 2005:8), so Thomas took up the challenge and responded with such a study.

Thomas (2005:9) decided that the degree of similarity one should look for between the two Gospels could be plausibly determined by noting how they quote from a common source, the Old Testament. Thomas' study (2005:9) revealed that comparing two Gospels in their quotes from the Septuagint produced evidence of literary interdependence of identical words at an average of 79%. Thomas (2005:10) then argued that a synoptic writer using another synoptic Gospel would have been aware of its inspired nature, as the product of an apostle or the close companion of an apostle, and so treated it with the same respect as the inspired Old Testament. Consequently, Thomas (2005:10) maintains one should expect the degree of identical words among two Gospels, one of which is interdependent upon the other, to be close to the 79% average of identical words demonstrated by the comparison of quotes from the Septuagint by two synoptic Gospels.

Thomas' study (2005:11) of the twenty nine combinations of double-tradition pericopes in Burton and Goodspeed's *Harmony* produces a 30% frequency of identical words. The fifty-eight sections of the triple-tradition when examined by all the possible combinations of two Gospels produces a 30% frequency of identical words. Thomas (2005:12) notes that even "some of the identical words come in different word orders and in different grammatical relationships, making the scarcity of identical situations even more pronounced."

There is no simple solution to the Synoptic Problem, yet literary interdependence theories have traditionally been proposed and accepted as providing the best solutions. Nevertheless, a number of studies reveal that the percentage of agreements among the synoptic Gospels is not as great as some have maintained and may be calculated at around 30% or with a more generous method of finding agreements at around 49% agreement between Matthew and Mark. As Thomas (2004a:15) has argued, any theory of literary interdependence must also provide a satisfactory explanation for why two synoptic Gospels agree against the third synoptic Gospel when it is maintained that there is a literary interdependence upon at least one of those other two Gospels by the third

¹⁴ R Stein, Robert L Thomas' 'An Inductive Approach to Discerning Origins of the Synoptic Gospels': A Response. Unpublished paper presented at Toronto, Canada, November 2002.

Gospel. Recent studies in the past few decades have also pointed to the need to consider afresh the role of orality when discussing the Synoptic Problem.

Thomas (2004a:14) notes that since Stein allows for the possibility of overlapping oral traditions this raises a very interesting question about Stein's proposal.

If one acknowledges that Matthew and Luke had access to oral traditions regarding the same episodes which they allegedly copied from Mark and if they chose to use those traditions as sources, how can anyone on an inductive basis conclude that they were not using those traditions rather than the Gospel of Mark as their sources? In other words, this explanation amounts to a tacit admission that literary interdependence is unnecessary, an interesting admission when accompanied by an admission that the Synoptic Problem remains unsolved. The two admissions amount to a virtual endorsement of the literary independence of the Synoptic Gospels.

6.2.4 The role of orality in the time of Jesus

The interdependence theory has also recently been re-examined by a number of evangelicals (Bailey 1983; [1991] 1995:4-11; Harvey 2002:99-109; Ingolfsland 2004; Bird 2005a:113-134; Dunn 2005); who argue scholars need to incorporate into their theories of sources a fuller understanding of the role of orality in the time of Jesus. Harvey (2002:99) contends that "most biblical scholars continue to examine the NT documents using presuppositions that apply more to nineteenth and twentieth-century literary/print culture than to the culture in which those documents were originally produced." Harvey (2002:101) argues that evidence points to the conclusion that the NT documents were composed during a period of dynamic interaction between orality and literacy.

Harvey (2002:101-102) cites approvingly the work of Albert Lord¹⁵ and provides a summary of his five tendencies of orality:

Albert Lord has identified five tendencies of oral expression. First, it is additive rather than subordinate. Second, it is aggregative rather than analytic. Third, it is redundant rather than concise. Fourth, it is conservative rather than creative. Fifth, it is acoustically - rather than visually-oriented. Examples of each of these tendencies may be seen in the NT documents, but it is sufficient here to note one. Anyone who has read the Gospel of Mark in the original language has been struck by the author's repeated use of the coordinate conjunction *καί*. It sometimes seems as though every independent clause begins with *καί*, while—in

¹⁵A B Lord, Characteristics of Orality, *Oral Tradition* 2 (1987) 54-62.

contrast—subordinate clauses are relatively rare. The same general observation may be made about the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke in that the syntax of those books also tends to be additive rather than subordinate.

The oral nature of the culture also meant that memorization was much more prevalent than it is today and speeches, reading, and even writing were done out loud (Harvey 2002:103). Bird (2005b:170) approves of Rainer Reisner's¹⁶ arguments that possibly as much as 80% of the Gospel material attributed to Jesus evidences features associated with Hebrew poetry such as parallelism and chiasmus and these are intended mnemonic devices to aid students.

Particularly, noteworthy in these studies of orality has been the work of Kenneth Bailey, who has examined the oral traditions of twentieth-century Middle Eastern culture.¹⁷ Bailey in his various writings on the Middle Eastern culture has anticipated the objections of some that it is inappropriate to read a twentieth century situation back into the first century. Bailey (1983:37) acknowledges his modern observations must not take precedence over the first century evidence. Yet, he (1983:37) argues if there is an absence of ancient evidence then one must choose whether to build one's model either from modern Middle Eastern culture or from modern western culture. He observes that modern western culture that has guided critical Gospel scholarship for the past century.

Orality has often been linked with the practice of memorization as a means of passing along the valued tradition of a culture. So a fundamental issue that must be considered in this debate is the degree to which Jews in the time of Jesus may have practiced memorization. Bird (2005a:123-127) addresses criticisms against reading later rabbinic memorization techniques back into the practices of the early Christian pre-70 AD period. Bird (2005a:126) maintains that the use of rabbinic-like terminology, the fact Jesus was called a "rabbi," the numerous Gospel references to Jesus teaching his disciples (Mk 6:7-13, Lk 9:1-6 etc.), the fact that memorization was also known and practiced in the Greco-Roman world and the presence of some mnemonic structures in pre-70 AD rabbinic materials together provide sufficient evidence to support the likelihood of Jesus' disciples memorizing some of Jesus' teachings. Bird (2005b:172) also contends that

¹⁶ Rainer Reisner, Jesus as Preacher and Teacher, in *Jesus and the Oral Tradition* (ed. H Wansbrough; JSNTSup 64: JSOT Press, 1991) 202.

¹⁷ K E Bailey, Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels, *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991) 34-54; reprinted in *Themelios* 20 (1995) 4-11. My references will be to the *Themelios* edition.

Jesus' use of rhetorical strategies like parables, antithetical parallelism, hyperbole and others, and Jesus' repetition of his teaching were intended to provide mnemonic devices to leave lasting impression on his hearers.

A number of ETS members (Harvey 2002:106-108; Ingolfsland 2004:1-4; 2006:187-197) have recently summarized and attempted to apply Bailey's work to the Synoptic Problem. Harvey (2002:106) provides a helpful summary of Bailey's contribution and his identification of three forms of oral tradition:

The first, *informal uncontrolled oral tradition*, has no identifiable teacher, no identifiable student, and no structure in which material is transmitted. It is represented by Middle Eastern rumor transmission. The second, *formal controlled oral tradition*, has a clearly identified teacher, a clearly identified student, and a clearly identified block of material which is memorized and passed on. It is represented by the memorization of the Qur'an by Muslim sheiks or the memorization of extensive liturgies in Eastern Orthodoxy. Between these two forms of transmission is what Bailey calls *informal controlled oral tradition*. It is informal in its setting— often the gathering of villagers in the evening for the telling of stories and the recitation of poetry — and there is no set teacher or specifically identified student. The transmission of the material, however, is controlled by the community using three levels of flexibility. There is *no* flexibility in the recitation of poems or proverbs, and there is *total* flexibility in the telling of jokes and casual news. Between these two poles is a level of flexibility which allows for *some* individual interpretation of the tradition. Into this latter category fall parables, stories, and historical narratives important to the life of the community. The teller is permitted a degree of flexibility to reflect his/her own style and interests, but the main lines of the story cannot be changed. Bailey concludes by noting that the Synoptic Gospels include primarily the same literary forms preserved by this sort of oral tradition.

It is argued that the synoptic Gospels are too similar to be the product of *informal uncontrolled oral tradition*, while the differences between the Gospels are too great to be the product of *formal controlled oral tradition* (Ingolfsland 2006:188) [his emphasis].

Despite some reservations about the limitations of transferring Bailey's approach to Gospel studies, it is acknowledged to provide a better proposal that is more analogous to the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus and the materials in the Gospels than previous models based upon Homeric epics or folklore from Eastern Europe (Bird 2005a:129-130; Dunn 2005:46). Even some like Blomberg (1998:55), who hold to literary interdependence, acknowledge that oral tradition could explain a lot of the similarities and differences between the synoptic Gospels. Blomberg (1998:55) stated,

I'm saying that it's likely that a lot of the similarities and differences among the synoptics can be explained by assuming that the disciples and other early Christians had committed to memory a lot of what Jesus said and did, but they felt free to recount this information in various forms, always preserving the significance of Jesus' original teachings and deeds.

Indeed if Jesus taught on a specific subject on more than one occasion, as seems highly likely, then one must consider the possibility that the minor differences in the Gospel accounts may be traceable to original oral performances by Jesus remembered by eyewitnesses and preserved in the tradition (Bird 2005b:171).

This, of course, has important implications for the study of Gospel sources and for the various theories of literary interdependence. Harvey (2002:106) applies these insights to Stein's (1987:34) arguments for literary interdependence and says,

Since first-century culture was a largely oral culture, since it is commonly acknowledged that memory skills are highly developed in oral cultures, and since some degree of oral transmission in the period prior to the writing of the Gospels is acknowledged by nearly every NT scholar, why should the probability of a common *written* source be given greater weight than that of a common *oral* source? [his emphasis]

One argument for literary interdependence, that seems decisive for some (Stein 1992b:785; Wenham 1992b:9-10; Blomberg 2001b:38), is based on the common editorial comments found in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. Harvey (2002:106-107) responded to this argument by suggesting,

The argument from agreement in parenthetical material is more difficult, but although the comments in Matt 24:15 and Mark 13:14 assume that those Gospels will be read, their presence does not demand that they stem from a common source or — if such a source is assumed — that it was written. Is it not possible that such parenthetical comments stem from a recognition in the informal controlled oral tradition that some of Jesus' statements were difficult to understand, a recognition which Matthew and Mark incorporated into their written accounts?

Yet, the argument for literary interdependence rests principally upon the agreement of materials among the Gospels and of particular and noteworthy significance is the agreement in order found among the materials in the synoptic Gospels. Harvey (2002:107-108) maintains that an understanding of orality can also account for the agreements and the agreement in order that Stein (1987) argues from:

“It is apparent,” he [Stein] writes, “that although an Evangelist may at times depart from the common order of the accounts, he nevertheless

always returns to the same order.”¹⁸ This common order points to a common source. He continues, “Memorizing individual pericopes, parables, and sayings, and even small collections of such material is one thing, but memorizing a whole Gospel of such material is something else.”¹⁹ The common source, therefore, must have been written. Is Stein’s conclusion based on agreement in order valid? His argument may be stated in terms of a logical syllogism:

Major premise: There is a common source behind the Synoptic Gospels.

Minor premise: Memorizing long portions of material in a given order is highly unlikely.

Conclusion: The common source must have been written.

When the argument is so stated, it is clear that the conclusion follows only if the minor premise holds. Does it? Evidence from a consideration of orality suggests that it does not. First, research by Parry, Lord, and others has demonstrated that members of oral cultures entrusted with the important traditions of their group are capable of internalizing and reciting epic poems of great length. Second, Bailey’s research on informal controlled oral tradition indicates that the basic flow of historical narratives which are central to the community is extremely important. Third, as Bailey also notes, although the basic flow of a narrative must be maintained, the order of scenes within that flow may be varied. Fourth, memorization in an oral culture tends to be thematic.

Dunn (2005:48) argues that a key aspect of the oral tradition was that it was communal in character, both in its performance for the community and within the community’s “horizons of expectation.” Bailey ([1991] 1995:6) refers to informal meetings that were called *haflat samara* (“a party for preservation”) and indicates that there were no teachers but those who told the stories were required to do so within strict limits. This latter point implies that the community was already somewhat familiar with the tradition so that as the performer shared the story there would be areas or gaps that the community “filled in” from its previous knowledge of the tradition. Dunn (2005:48-49) suggests this is why the New Testament epistles seem to have so little evidence of quotations from Jesus and he contends that allusions would trigger recognition of previous teaching or events in Jesus’ life.

Dunn (2005:121) maintains that the Gospels arose in an oral culture that reflects the *community’s memory* [his emphasis] as it celebrates and remembers what was important to it. Dunn (2005:22-28) contends that the early disciples’ encounter with Jesus was a faith-creating, life transforming impact that arose from witnessing Jesus’ life,

¹⁸Stein 1987:34

¹⁹Ibid, 43

teachings, miracles and particularly his death and resurrection. Dunn (2005:25-28) insists that the earliest forms of the Jesus tradition were the inevitable expression of the disciples' faith that became reflected in the Gospels through the Q tradition that is traceable back to the very time of Jesus. Blomberg (1998:56) also affirmed that the Christian community would have played an important role in intervening to make corrections if the oral tradition began to be changed, and therefore the community would preserve the integrity of the message about Jesus, an argument, which Bird (2005b:179) also supports, noting the community's repetition of the tradition guaranteed its accuracy.

Bird (2005a:130n93) shows how frequently the Gospels make reference to what the disciples remembered about Jesus. The early church understood it was responsible to remember faithfully the words and deeds of Jesus. In fact, the Gospel of John concludes with this very testimony that the author was an eyewitness, who wrote these things down as he remembered or witnessed them (Jn 20:30-31, 21:24). Bird (2005a:131), who calls his suggested paradigm, "Jesus in Corporate Memory," argues that,

What was transmitted was more than the memory, but the act of remembering itself. The memory of Jesus was cultivated in a community context in which key individuals and the group consensus determined the veracity and continuity of the memory against prior acts of remembering and in comparison with other memories of Jesus. Hence, our model is best defined as *Jesus in corporate memory*. [his emphasis]

What is also significant about Bird's proposed paradigm is that it does not require systematic memorization, since "The memory is repeated informally and the control is located within the community itself" (Bird 2005a:131). Therefore, Bird (2005a:131-133) evaluates and rebuts criticisms that the early disciples or church would have accurately remembered Jesus. Bird (2005a:131n98) is also open to considering the possibility of a "*criterion of memorability*." Such a criterion would pay special attention to sayings or stories that seem to have memorable qualities such as being either brief or clever, employing catch-phrases, or grouped in threes etc.

Dunn (2005:101n67) notes that scholars are unable to clearly distinguish between an oral and written transmission process, yet Dunn (2005:103) still feels that the two-source theory is the best way to explain certain pericopes in the synoptic Gospels, although Ingolfsland (2006:193-194) argues that Dunn's combination of orality with the two-source theory is problematic. Dunn (2005:105) admits he has doubts that the literary interdependence theories provide a sufficient way "to explain *all* [his emphasis] the data

of correlation between the Gospel traditions.” Dunn (2005:110) concludes that the triple-tradition of the empty tomb account (Mt 28:1-8; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-11) rather than reflecting the redaction of the account by the synoptic writers more likely reflects the effects of oral tradition. Dunn (2005:110) suggests

Or, bearing in mind the characteristics of oral performance, perhaps we should envisage Matthew and Luke *retelling* the story known to them from Mark, that is, retelling it in *oral* mode – as story tellers, rather than as editors – with Matthew and Luke as evidence not so much of redaction as of orality. [his emphasis]

Dunn (2005:122) reflects upon the implications orality has for Q stating “For if much of the shared Matthew and Luke material attests *oral* dependency rather than *literary* dependency, then *the attempt to define the complete scope and limits of Q is doomed to failure* [his emphasis].” Dunn (2005:123) draws out further the implications of orality for things such as redaction criticism in a perceptive paragraph:

Let me press the point more strongly. In recognizing the oral character of the early Jesus tradition, we have to give up the idea of a *single original form* from which all other versions of the tradition are to be derived, as though the “authenticity” of a version depended on our ability to trace it back to the original. In so saying, again, I do not mean that it is impossible to envisage or speak of the *originating impact* of Jesus himself. Quite the contrary. What I mean is that from the first the original impact was itself *diverse* in character. What I mean is that the form of the tradition itself was from the first *multiform*. This also means that *variation in tradition does not of itself either indicate contradiction or denote editorial manipulation*. Variation is simply the hallmark of oral tradition, how the Jesus tradition functioned [his emphasis throughout].

Dunn (2005:123) points out this also means it is ludicrous to think we can determine the character of a community from the character of the document they possessed or that the character of the community can be restricted to that reflected in one document.

One should not mistakenly think that such a challenge to the existing “default setting,” as Dunn (2005:79-89) calls the literary paradigms for the Synoptic Problem, is going to be embraced by all or even many. Barnett (2005:116) reiterates that both written and oral sources existed side by side and his preference is towards written sources underlying the writing of the Gospels. He (2005:116) critiques Bailey’s approach by arguing that the transmission of tradition was from urban Jerusalem not rural Galilee and it was not a communal orality but rather a didactic transmission of instruction from a master, Jesus, to his disciples. Barnett (2005:117n27) is also critical of Dunn’s

acceptance of Bailey's view arguing that Bailey uses a post-Islamic Arab culture for his observations while the culture of Jesus' day was Jewish, in the Hellenistic, pre-Islamic era. Further, the Jewish culture of Jesus' day was centered around the synagogue with a focus on reading the Old Testament and hearing a "sermon" (midrash). Finally, Barnett argues that Dunn's view contradicts the evidence of Luke 1:1-4 which refers to "written" traditions being "handed over."

Barnett raises some important issues, but none of them seem unanswerable. Bailey's ([1991] 1995:10) suggested approach does not really leave the transmission in the hands of the community but rather of an eyewitness of the historical Jesus. Bailey ([1991] 1995:10) argues that "The stories had to be *told* and *controlled* or everything that made them who they were was lost" [his emphasis]. Bailey ([1991] 1995:10) argues from Luke 1:2 and 4:20 that specially designated people, who were eyewitnesses had the role of passing on the tradition. Bailey ([1991] 1995:11n34) also spoke to the role of the synagogue in the early days of the church when he wrote,

We are not suggesting an early separation between the church and the synagogue....Early Hebrew Christians had accepted Jesus (at least) as their unique spiritual guide. Meeting with their fellow Jews on Saturday, they would naturally meet in a special fellowship on Sunday to recite their own unique tradition which gave content to their own special identity.

Barnett (2005:118-119) develops an argument from Luke 1:1-4 that Luke's sources were in Greek and were written sources. This passage will be discussed further below. Barnett also seeks to support his argument by examining other New Testament writings prior to the Gospels and noting evidence of the Jesus tradition that can be found in them. His (2005:125) study of Paul leads him to conclude Paul was familiar with sources that either existed or evolved as "Q," "L," and "M," which he argues were most probably in Greek and were written sources. In the book of James, Barnett (2005:132) detects the same "M," "L," and "Q" sources of the Jesus tradition, which he again feels were likely in Greek and written.

Barnett (2005:125, 132) does not really develop any substantial argument to support his claim that the sources were written but he simply states it is "probable" they were in Greek and were in written form. Apart from further argumentation to support his claim, one must question his proposed "probability." Barnett's commitment to written sources seems to be, at least in part, a reflection of his concern that some who find oral

sources behind the Gospels, in the process of their argumentation, undermine one's accessibility to the historical Jesus. Barnett (2005:136) writes,

More recent studies based on the culture of orality and communal story-telling have effectively closed off any pathway to the actual teaching of Jesus. Either way, the "real" Jesus and his teaching are seen as obscured by developments in the era after him.

Barnett (2005:136-137) further elaborates this concern and his understanding of the proper role of orality in the days following Jesus' ascension. He states,

In other words, the various theories that erode confidence in the process of transmission must be questioned, whether those of the classical form critics who assumed a fundamental corruption in transmission of the pericopes or recent hypotheses relating to oral transmission which also assume partial corruption in transmission. Regarding the latter, we repeat the evidence for orality in the NT points to a controlled *didactic* orality, not a communal orality ("by many for many"). [his emphasis]

Yet, those evangelicals, who are noted above and below, and who are arguing for a greater role for orality in the transmission of the Jesus tradition, have not evidenced a willingness to concede any "corruption in transmission" which closes "off any pathway to the actual teaching of Jesus." Rather, they demonstrate their conviction that orality can function within the parameters of a commitment to inerrancy. Barnett does not cite any sources in relation to these comments, so suffice to say, that one's presuppositions toward the Bible affect one's discussion in this area of the transmission of the Jesus tradition as well, as the *Jesus Seminar* should remind us.

In response to Barnett's concerns, one must give due weight to the role of eyewitnesses in the oral transmission of the Jesus tradition. It seems clear from the book of Acts that the original preservers of the Jesus tradition in an oral form were those who were eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus. Thus, one even find appeals to eyewitnesses to verify the truthfulness of Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor 15:6) and those proclaiming the gospel to Jews and Gentiles were principally those who were eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and resurrection (Gal 2:9).

Bauckham (2003:29) relying upon Samuel Byrskog's work,²⁰ writes that the ideal witness according to Greco-Roman historians was one who participated in the events, whether the historian, himself, or an eyewitness. Bauckham (2003:30) has proposed that

²⁰ S Byrskog, *Story as History – History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (WUNT, 123; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

the personal names recorded in the Gospel accounts were well-known figures in the Christian movement, who were eyewitnesses of the events recorded. Bauckham (2003:30) therefore argues that the “Traditions derived from them did not develop independently of them; rather they remained throughout their lifetimes living and authoritative sources of the traditions that were associated with them as individuals, not just as a group.” Therefore, as these eyewitnesses continued to tell the stories about Jesus they were acting as guarantors of the traditions (Bauckham 2003:44). In fact, Bauckham (2003:49-50) claims that the characters are named in the Gospel accounts precisely because they were well-known in the early Christian communities and could share their eyewitness testimony. This fits with the emphasis on ideal witnesses being those who participated in the events.

Bird (2005b:176) in noting that the oral traditions of Jesus’ acts and sayings were attached to specific eyewitnesses also draws out how radically different this approach is to previous approaches. He (2005b:176) echoes Bauckham in positing that “This strongly diverges from the old form-critical assumption that the identity of the eyewitnesses would have been lost in a sea of anonymity during the time the Gospels were written.” Bird (2005b:177-178) highlights the role that “imitation” of Jesus could have had on the praxis of the communities and the preserving of the Jesus tradition. Bird (2005b:178) also suggests that since there was an office of “teacher” in the early church, one can assume they too would have played a role in preserving the tradition, which may even be reflected in the *Didache*, which some (Draper 1985:269-287) have argued provides evidence of an oral tradition independent of the Gospel accounts.

The upshot of these recent studies, has led to reconsideration of the possibility, or some would argue the probability, that orality played a much greater role in the formation of the Gospels under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit than had previously been thought to have been the case. Recently, Ingolfsland (2004; 2006:193-197) has proposed another solution to the Synoptic Problem focusing on the role of orality based upon the earlier work of Bailey. Thus, more scholars are now considering literary independence solutions to the Synoptic Problem more so than previously.

6.2.5 The evidence of Luke 1:1-4

The question remains whether the Gospels themselves give clues that might solve the Synoptic Problem, particularly Luke 1:1-4. An issue previously discussed in chapter five was whether the verb, ἐπεχείρησαν, “to attempt, set one’s hand to,” has a negative connotation or not in Luke’s usage. McDonald (2004:180) argues that Luke was trying to improve Mark in the sense of providing a “more orderly account.” Whether this implies a degree of negativity towards Mark’s account is debatable. Yet, from a different perspective as inerrantists, Thomas and Farnell (1998:66) argue that “Luke himself describes his sources in the prologue of his gospel (Luke 1:1-4), a description that precludes his use of another canonical gospel...” and they then make reference to Felix’s (1998:271-288) article in the same volume. The argument, as noted in chapter five, is that since ἐπεχείρησαν carries a negative connotation about the sources, Luke must not have being make reference to another canonical Gospel, such as Matthew or Mark.

Luke uses the verb, ἐπεχείρουν in Acts 9:29 of the unsuccessful attempt to kill Paul, and ἐπεχείρησαν in Acts 19:13 of the attempts of Jewish exorcists to control evil spirits in the power of Jesus’ name. The record in Acts 19:15-16 shows the seven sons of Sceva were unsuccessful, but does this imply they had previously been unsuccessful in using the name of Jesus in the events Luke alluded to in verse 13? Thus, the usage of the verb in this context at least, is somewhat unclear as to whether it represents a negative connotation. Head (2004:36) argues there are also uses of the verb, ἐπιχειρέω in the Septuagint where it does not have a negative connotation (2 Macc 2:29; 10:15), including Ezra 7:23 where what is attempted for God is presumed to be a positive act for God’s glory. Head (2004:37-38) examines the use of the verb by historians such as Polybius, Josephus, and Diodorus Siculus and concludes that the evidence does not support the idea that what was attempted was viewed necessarily negatively by the author and so whether Luke intends a negative connotation must be supplied by the context.

As noted in chapter five, Luke’s use of καὶ μοι (“also to me”) seems to identify Luke’s efforts with those of the eyewitnesses (v. 2) and those that “many have undertaken” (v. 1) consequently arguing against a negative connotation for the previous efforts (Bock 1991b:189). Stein (1992a:64-65) is likely correct that Luke adds this note to signify that while not an eyewitness, based on his extensive research and access to eyewitnesses, he too is qualified to write on the life of Jesus.

Bauckham (2003:43) notes that the expression in verse two, οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου, (“those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word”) speaks of one group, and refers to disciples who followed Jesus in his ministry and maintained the tradition. Bird (2005b:174) concurs and writes that Luke’s expression indicates two stages of their activity, first as witnesses and then later as ministers of the word. Bauckham (2003:58) contends that the expression, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, “from the beginning,” is also used of eyewitnesses in 1 John 1:1 and in John 15:27, where it refers to the Twelve. Acts 1:22 also maintains the role of eyewitnesses in the selection of Judas’ successor, who must have been one who was with Jesus “beginning from John’s baptism.” This leads to the conclusion that at least some of the eyewitnesses are composed of the Twelve. Bauckham (2003:60) further argues that Luke has developed his Gospel with an *inclusio* by concluding with the eyewitness testimony of the women to Jesus’ resurrection (24:10), thereby reinforcing his objective as a faithful historian to have based his accounts upon eyewitnesses.

Does the eyewitness role particularly of the Twelve indicate anything specific about whether the tradition was passed on in written form or oral form? Since it could and has been argued that some of the Twelve have been historically identified as writers of New Testament documents including two of the Gospels, the possibility of a written form even from an early stage should not be discounted. Stein (1987:42) contends that, “the Lukan prologue argues for the fact that Luke, at least, used written materials in the composition of his Gospel.” Yet, Stein (1987:42-43) does not really substantiate his argument from the text of Luke 1:1-4 but rather he argues from agreement in order within the synoptic Gospels implying a common source and from his contention that memorization cannot account for this agreement.

Harvey (2002:108) responded that with regard to Luke 1:1-4 one should be open to the possibility that Luke is referring to the role of eyewitnesses passing the tradition down in oral form and it is the oral tradition not written documents that can explain the present Synoptic Problem. Therefore, he responds to Stein’s arguments (1987:42) concerning Luke 1:1-4 by arguing:

If, in oral transmission, the basic flow of narratives central to the life of a community cannot be changed, does that fact not explain why the writers of the first three Gospels always return to the same order of events? If the order of scenes within that overall flow may be varied, does that fact not

explain the presence of special “M” and “L” material as well the differences in order which *do* exist between Matthew, Mark, and Luke? Finally, if memorization in oral cultures tends to be thematic rather than verbatim, does that fact not explain the thematic grouping of some material as well as the similarities and the differences in wording which exist among the three Gospels? On an initial reading of the evidence, it seems—to me, at least—that a common oral source is at least as plausible a solution to the “Synoptic Problem” as one which is based on literary interdependence...

Barnett (2005:118) maintains that in the later 50’s of the first century the eyewitnesses that Luke refers to (Lk 1:2) “handed over” to Luke the narratives they had compiled which were almost certainly in written form. Barnett (2005:118n28) argues that Luke’s expression, “it seemed good to me also...to *write*” is governed by the phrase, “inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative” which he contends therefore means διήγησιν (“a recounting” or “narrative”) refers to written texts that Luke employed as his sources. Barnett’s concerns about the transmission of the tradition in oral form have previously been noted. Bock (1991b:189) insists that διήγησιν can mean either an oral or written account. Luke’s decision to write seems to be tied to the passing down of the tradition, whether in oral or written form, and his role in investigating it with his stated purpose being to write in an orderly fashion these things for Theophilus. It would appear that Barnett is reading too much into this word, which is not always a reference to a written source. Barnett (2005:118) acknowledges that the Qumran sect had both oral transmission and written texts existing side by side and that both were deemed handmaidens of aurality during this period.

Luke 1:1-4 seems to provide insight into the role of the first eyewitnesses in “handing down” (παρέδοσαν) the Jesus tradition, a technical word that Bird (2005b:174) maintains “implies a consciousness of the possibility of false transmission.” So, while Luke indicates that great care was taken to pass along the story of Jesus’ life from eyewitnesses, it seems the data of Luke 1:1-4 is inconclusive as to whether Luke’s sources were in an oral or written form or a combination of both. The conclusions of Green (1997:15) and Nolland (1989:xxix) that one cannot discern from Luke 1:1-4 whether Luke used one of the other Gospels, also reflects the most consistent interpretation of this passage as it pertains to the issue of the Synoptic Problem. The

issues pertaining to Luke's comment in verse three about writing "an orderly account" (καθεξῆς) will be discussed in addressing issues of chronology in the Gospel accounts.

6.2.6 Gospel sources and inerrancy

Concerning the issue of inspiration, some such as Derickson (2003:95) believe that a commitment to Markan priority brings with it a denial of inerrancy. The argument is developed in the following manner,

To defend Markan priority one *must* assume someone other than an eyewitness of Jesus' life, the apostle himself, composed Matthew and used Mark and other "traditions" as his source. Yes, some Markan prioritists argue that Matthew himself actually used Mark. But why would an eyewitness *need* or even *want* to use someone else's account? This is especially difficult to understand in light of Jesus' personal promise to Matthew and the other eyewitnesses of His ministry that the Holy Spirit would "bring to your [their] remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26). [his emphasis]

It seems reasonable to ask why Matthew if he was an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry would *need* or *want* to use Mark's account, but there are a number of underlying factors that need to be remembered [my emphasis]. One who holds to Markan priority would have to reply that Matthew did not *need* to use Mark's account but rather he *chose* to use Mark's account [my emphasis]. The real issue is *why* Matthew might *want* to use Mark's account [my emphasis].

First, it is commonly acknowledged that Mark's account provides a simple outline of Jesus' ministry in a very basic chronological order, working from Jesus' initial ministry to his death and resurrection. Although, Matthew's Gospel does not follow Mark's order rigorously, all the synoptic Gospels reflect this most "basic or bare" chronological outline, working from Jesus' birth (Matthew and Luke) or entrance into ministry (Mark) toward Jesus' crucifixion (Pahl 2006:10). It could be argued that Matthew does not really follow Mark but it simply appears that way since he is presenting his material about Jesus in this most basic chronological order just as Mark did, which would of necessity mean a degree of overlap in the two Gospels. Yet, if one assumes Matthew knew Mark, as the two-source theory maintains, then Mark provides a ready outline for Matthew to follow, which then he chose to do but not slavishly.

Second, in those areas where there is a great deal of agreement between the Gospels, we can safely assume Matthew felt the event or discourse of Jesus' life that Mark included was one that he, Matthew, *wanted* to include also in developing his presentation of Jesus [my emphasis]. Here is where Derickson's argument fails to fully acknowledge the nature of the "redaction" that he argues against. Matthew *wanted* [my emphasis] to include the pericope that Mark had already included in his Gospel, but Matthew in including the event chose to add or leave out certain details based on his own memory of the event as an eyewitness. This "redaction" is not a case of tampering with inspired Scripture, but rather this reflects Matthew's attempt to share what he saw as of particular significance in the event. Matthew's account of the event then is also an inspired record and this would certainly account in some part for why one encounters differences in details examining the same pericopes in Matthew and in Mark.

One also needs to recognize that the New Testament writers of the Gospels often employed the Septuagint in their quotes from the Old Testament. Jobes (2006:228) notes that "...the NT writers quote the Septuagint as authoritative even when it disagrees with the Hebrew text..." which has implications concerning Gospel writers making changes to "inspired" writings. While arguing that the quoting of the Septuagint does not extend inspiration to the Greek version as a whole, Jobes (2006:228) makes the following point:

Evangelical scholars need not accept the idea, as Augustine did, that God inspired all the differences between the Hebrew and its Greek translation. But instead, like the Reformers understood, divine inspiration applies only to the semantic contribution specifically made by the Septuagint quotations by virtue of becoming part of the inspired NT text as used in their specific NT context.

Jobes provides a reminder that New Testament writers felt free to make adaptations in quoting from the inspired, authoritative Old Testament but they did so under the inspiration of the Spirit for the redemptive, revelatory purposes of God in their specific context. This, by implication, would seem to mean that a New Testament writer also under the inspiration of the Spirit could use previously inspired Scripture, such as one of the Gospels, and make adaptations and that would not undermine inerrancy.

Thirdly, when one encounters instances of identical wording in Matthew and Mark it seems reasonable to argue that Matthew knew Mark's account to have captured the *ipsissima verba* or *vox* of Jesus not only accurately but exactly as Matthew wanted to express Jesus' discourse as well. The issue of the *ipsissima verba* or *vox* of Jesus will be

discussed further below. Other aspects of identical wording between the accounts found in Matthew and Mark are often a reflection of the geography, time, and people associated with the common event being recounted in the two Gospels. Matthew in essence can be viewed simply as recounting the event as it happened, which Mark had also done leading to an unintentional similarity, or from the perspective of Markan priority Matthew is viewed as deliberately using Mark's historically accurate account of the event. What is not stated, but should be remembered, is that even in pericopes where one finds identical wording it is not as if Matthew did not add or omit other details associated with the event. In other words, one does not encounter pericopes where there is 100% identical wording between Matthew and Mark. Once again, this in no way impacts negatively on inerrancy.

Fourthly, and somewhat ironically, an advocate of Markan priority could point to an argument of Thomas [below], who rejects literary interdependence, and employ Thomas' argument to support the Markan priority position. Thomas (2004a:16) reminds us that the human writers were directed in their writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Thomas (2004a:16) says,

“Randomness” is not a fit description of the combination of coincidences and disagreements in the Synoptics. The Holy Spirit had a controlling role in what the human authors wrote. He had reasons for the occasions when they agree and for the occasions when they disagree. In that sense, the combination of agreements and disagreements is not random, but God-ordained. In this life, we as humans will never comprehend the mind of God (cf. Isa 40:13; 1 Cor 2:16) and be able to detect His reasons for this mixture of agreements and differences in wording.

This argument is capable of being used by advocates of Markan priority. Although Thomas argues for literary independence, it can be said that whether the sources the Gospel writers used were oral and/or written, the Holy Spirit's work in the inspiration of Scripture produced the written Gospel accounts that God desired. Thus, in recognizing the ultimate role of the Holy Spirit, inerrancy can be maintained by ETS members, regardless of their particular solution to the Synoptic Problem, whether it involves literary interdependence or literary independence.

6:3 THE ROLE OF HARMONIZATION

6.3.1 Evaluation of different approaches to harmonization

In discussing whether there is a role for harmonization in Gospel studies, it has generally been acknowledged by those in this debate that harmonization still has a role in reconciling differences between Gospel accounts. Dillard (1988:153) noted that harmonization is “a virtually universal and inevitable feature of daily life” and Blomberg (1986:144) in studying the perspective of secular historians, noted how Garraghan’s²¹ examples from secular historians “show as many instances of ‘additive’ harmonization as of the other methods noted.” Deppe (2000:320-321) opposed harmonization but still concedes a role for it. He (2000:316) wrote that “harmonization should not play a role in exegesis of any individual passage.” Yet, later in his article Deppe (2000:321) without any further elaboration said “Certainly some harmonization is legitimate in exegesis.”

France (1986:33) noted that harmonization began as early as the second century in the church and is still employed by conservative scholars although distained by critical scholars. Typically, those who embrace inerrancy are open to harmonization while those who do not embrace inerrancy are often unconcerned about discrepancies or errors in Scripture and make no attempt to harmonize details between Gospel accounts. Yet, even evangelicals like France (1986:35) find the harmonization solution of Lindsell’s six denials of Peter as unacceptable and an abuse of the practice.

The arguments that relate to harmonization and chronology in the Gospel accounts reveal a degree of overlap since chronology is one means of potential harmonization (France 1986:35-59). At issue is whether the traditional approach to harmonization which employs the grammatical-historical methodology for exegetical, historical and apologetical uses is the only valid approach when engaging in harmonization (Thomas 1998a:323). Thomas (1998a:324) is critical of Blomberg’s proposed solutions as well as those of Grant Osborne, who also allows for redaction criticism solutions in the harmonization process (Thomas 2000:104-105). Thomas (2000:105) reiterates that “The independence view makes a clear distinction between the two types of harmonization and limits itself to traditional harmonization.” Yet, by its very commitment to the literary independence solution to the Synoptic Problem, Thomas rules out any role for redaction criticism as a means of harmonization. Since Thomas’ solution to the Synoptic Problem is not the only one an evangelical inerrantist could take, one needs to be open to the role of redaction criticism as a possible means of harmonization.

²¹ G J Garraghan, *A Guide to Historical Method*. (New York: Fordham, 1946).

Osborne (2000:114) repeatedly insists he is committed to using harmonization in maintaining a high view of Scripture and that Thomas is wrong to charge that he, Osborne, supports “non-harmonization and hence non-historicity” as Thomas alleged (2000:100). Osborne (2000:115) states that while he holds that Jesus as an itinerant preacher would have preached similar material at different times, using this to explain *all* [his emphasis] differences in details between the Gospels is not the best approach. Osborne (2000:115) contends that Thomas fails to understand the true nature of eyewitness reports and the redactional changes in the Gospels. Osborne (2000:115) argues:

Eyewitness reports do not mean identical accounts, for each evangelist under the leading of the Spirit was free to select and highlight different aspects of the same account. Redactional changes do not constitute a lower degree of historical accuracy, for they emphasize aspects that Jesus really did do and say, but from the standpoint of the evangelists’ inspired choices. Thus the evangelists are not in any sense “creating new material” for every nuance reflects the original situation.

It will be clear in the ensuing examples, that redaction criticism does not require that one sacrifice historical accuracy and so a simple “additive” approach to harmonization is not the only way one can proceed while maintaining a commitment to inerrancy.

6.3.2 The rich young ruler (Mt 19:16-30; Mk 10:17-31; Lk 18:18-30)

In the pericope of the rich young ruler, Thomas (2005:15) insists one must approach the account from the perspective of literary independence or one undermines inerrancy. Thomas (2005:15) writes:

Because of interdependence, its advocates must conjecture that Matthew altered Mark’s record of Jesus’ dialogue with the rich man (Matt 19:16-17; Mark 10:17-18)...Whatever the reason for the change, the fact remains that the Jesus of interdependence never spoke the words as given in Matthew. In contrast, the Jesus of independence allows that both accounts of the dialogue are historically accurate. Each Gospel records a different part of the conversation, so no need exists to reconcile the wording in the two passages.

Certainly, the practice of harmonizing the accounts by simply adding the various details into one account is still common and could be considered as one option in handling the synoptic Gospels (Stanley 2006:47). There are also text-critical judgments that could be considered in the pursuit of the original text (Wenham 1982:116-125) but

this is really not considered to offer a solution to the differences in the details between the synoptic Gospel accounts in this case. Thomas (1982:244-246) points to the difficulty of the two-source theory as a solution when one recognizes the agreements of Matthew and Luke in this account against Mark, which include both agreements of omission (ten) and agreements of inclusion (18). Thomas (1982:249) therefore embraces the possibility that the solution lies in recognizing the problem is not really a literary problem but an oral tradition problem. He (1982:249) therefore opts for three independent versions of the account recorded in the synoptic Gospels.

Redaction critical solutions continue to be proposed and Nolland (2005:789-790) believes that Matthew's differences from Mark are not due to christological concerns but simply that Matthew and Mark adopt different strategies in focusing the rich young man's attention on God and Jesus' relationship to God, as the only one who is good. This is a plausible solution as is the combining of approaches that are exemplified by Carson (1983:136-137) and Blomberg (1986:159).

Is Thomas (2005:15) correct in his criticism "that the Jesus of interdependence never spoke the words as given in Matthew"? Thomas' statement that Matthew records words Jesus never spoke would seem to imply that Mark's account must contain the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus or Thomas' argument would not make sense. Thomas argues that redaction critics, or advocates of interdependence, propose that Matthew has changed Mark's account or in Thomas' opinion they have "altered" or "distorted" it. If Mark's account only contains the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus, then how could Thomas know for certain that Matthew's account does not contain the words Jesus' spoke, Jesus' *ipsissima verba*? Thomas' statement would also not make sense if he held that both Mark and Matthew contain the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus. Thomas' statement therefore implies he is accepting that Mark's account contains Jesus' *ipsissima verba*. His reference to Kelly Osborne's article (1998:297-300) seems to verify this conclusion. Osborne (1998:298) unequivocally says "The harmonistic approach, by contrast, maintains that the text of the Gospels gives the actual words of Jesus, not merely a vague representation of them." In the context, Osborne's (1998:298) use of "actual words" must refer to the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, while the "vague representation" refers to the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus.

Interestingly, Thomas (1982:256-257) never addressed the issue of the order of the commands and thus Luke's different order. The command against adultery is listed

first by Jesus in Luke 18:20 but it is listed second by Jesus in Matthew 19:18 and Mark 10:19. Thus, Thomas never addresses how the different order of the commands that Jesus lists are to be harmonized from his viewpoint in accordance with the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. K Osborne (1998:310n48) gives a thorough verse by verse exegesis of the passage from Luke 18:18-23 but he relegates his discussion of this difference in order to a footnote and concludes “On the occasion, Jesus probably cited the commandments at least twice in varying orders.” Is this possible? Yes, it is possible but it seems highly unlikely and a “grasping at straws” in an attempt to resolve the issue while still maintaining the Gospels record the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. This is the exact type of harmonistic approach that many find unconvincing including evangelical inerrantists.

How else can these differences in the wording and order of the commandments be harmonized? Grant Osborne (1999:201) suggested that a simple solution lies in recognizing the redactional purpose of each writer and that they provide the *ipsissima vox*, or a paraphrasing, of the conversation between Jesus and the young ruler. This proposed solution could then apply to all of the seeming differences in the account including the order of the commands to be obeyed and the address between Jesus and the young ruler. There will be further discussion on *ipsissima verba* and *vox* below. Yet, these differences need not reflect a conscious changing of a literary source as they could feasibly reflect the types of differences that are common to oral sources. There are therefore a number of seemingly acceptable ways in which to resolve the differences between the details of the synoptic accounts.

6.3.3 Peter denies Jesus (Mt 26:69-75; Mk 14:66-72; Lk 22:55-62; Jn 18:15-18, 25-27)

In examining the account of Peter’s denial of Jesus, despite its seeming difficulties, a traditional harmonization approach that only involves three denials of Peter and includes two crowings of a rooster has been supplied by Archer (1980:66). Archer (1980:78) notes that “Eyewitness accounts of the same episode often vary in what they summarize or generalize and in what they give in detail.” Allison (2004:19) suggests that when dealing with parallel passages the solutions may be found in recognizing some of the following points:

- 1) one passage may present a summary from one point of view while another passage may present a summary from quite a different point of view;

- 2) one passage may present a summary while another passage may present a more detailed account;
- 3) one passage may present a summary of one part of the event while another passage may present a summary of quite a different part of the event;
- 4) one passage may present a summary of one event while another passage may present a summary of a similar (yet different) event (thus, the accounts may contain numerous similarities but also contain variations because of the events being different)

Many of the points that Allison raises certainly seem to be at play in the account of Peter's denials of Jesus. Bock (1996b:1782) comments that "These differences represent various ways to summarize the same event." Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:295-297) list two harmonistic options in dealing with differences among the synoptic accounts, with the first option being an appeal to Jesus' *ipsissima vox* and the second option an appeal to Jesus' *ipsissima verba*, although they do not employ those terms in their discussion. As will be discussed further in the section on the *ipsissima verba* and *vox*, not only did Jesus undoubtedly speak Aramaic but most Jews, like Peter, in this pericope likely did as well. Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:294)²² comment, "In translation a certain amount of variation is possible, even necessary; seldom, if ever, is there only one legitimate way to translate from one language into another." The significance of this observation is that one needs to recognize then that what is recorded in the Gospel texts is most likely the *ipsissima vox* of Peter and the others involved. If those involved in the events spoke Greek in their conversations at any point, then one could conjecture that possibly there is access to their *ipsissima verba*, although one would still have difficulty in definitively identifying it as such in these accounts. Each of the Gospel accounts provides a reliable summary of what was said and done on that night if we recognize the principles that one should consider as outlined by Allison (2004:19).

Each Gospel writer had the opportunity to add or omit details in the presentation of the events and each Gospel account provided only a summary of some of what was said and done not a minute by minute detailed account. Allison (2004:19) insightfully comments, "We caution against wishing that parallel accounts were more similar, because then we could charge the biblical authors with being guilty of collusion (though they pretend to have written independently of one another, they actually worked together

²² Quotes from articles in this book are from the *NIV* harmony not from the *NASB* harmony, which is also numbered beginning at page one as the two harmonies have simply been combined under one cover.

to “get their story straight”). If one also considers the possibility that oral tradition based upon eyewitness testimony underlies the various Gospel accounts and not a literary interdependence then the differences would seem explainable in a harmonistic manner.

Carson (1984:558) seems to be correct in his assessment that the differences in details cannot be adequately accounted for by simply using the methodology of redaction criticism. There are a variety of other ways in which the various details of this pericope may be brought into harmony which can involve textual criticism decisions (Carson 1984:542; Bock 1996b:1788) or by noting points of Greek grammar. Köstenberger (2004b:519n43) commenting on John 18:27 notes that if the verb ἐφώνησεν is an aorist ingressive then it could imply the rooster would crow more than once thereby making Mark’s point that the rooster crowed twice a moot point. One could also consider the manner in which the Gospel writers addressed issues of chronological arrangement, which is discussed below.

Deppe’s (2000:320-321) concern that each Gospel account be taken on its own to note its distinctive thrust is worthy of consideration and implementation in the study of Scripture. Yet, is there not a role for harmonization also in the study of Scripture since we have been provided not with one but four accounts of Jesus’ life? How do these two important emphases relate for a student of Scripture? Burge (2000:510-511) wrestles with this issue and writes,

There is always a tension in Gospel study since as an interpreter I have to choose between integrating the Johannine account into the details of the Synoptic story or reading John’s story alone from within his inner literary world. I do not believe we can avoid the first reading strategy, particularly when we have so much material in John that overlaps with the other three Gospels.

Nowhere is this more evident than in John 18–19. Our audiences (like John’s audiences) may know the rough outline, say, of Mark’s account. They may recall that it was Caiaphas who interrogated Jesus, but then are surprised to learn that in John, Annas speaks for the Jewish leaders. Inevitably, as an interpreter I must be in control of all the historical details that have shaped the story since my interest is not simply in John’s literary world, but *the historical events* that occurred in Jerusalem that Passover.

To integrate John with the other Gospels is a controversial decision, which would undoubtedly meet strong disagreement among many New Testament scholars. But it is a decision I feel I must make. *It is Jesus’ suffering and death that I pursue as a theologian, not simply John’s understanding of his death.* This means that I have to grapple with Synoptic parallels, even when merging these with John may be difficult or perhaps impossible. [his emphasis]

In a desire to have as complete a historical picture of Jesus as is possible, it is incumbent upon one to consider all the historical data that relates to any one incident in Jesus' life or teaching. This would seem to necessitate that in looking at a particular pericope concerning Jesus, one would want to know what the other historical sources available record about that event and that leads one inescapably into a harmonizing process of the Gospel accounts. Burge (2000:510) is certainly right to insist one should seek to understand the individual writer's unique contribution concerning a pericope that is common to more than one of the Gospels.

Finally, one should recognize that the differences between the Gospel accounts were part of God's divine purpose in providing, under the inspiration of the Spirit, more than one account of Jesus' life and ministry. Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:299) wisely note,

The gospel writers did not write with the idea in mind that one day someone would put together a harmony....But that would have diverted them from the direction in which the Spirit led them and radically changed the literary character of the gospels. In the process their character as gospels, four independent accounts of the good news, would have been rendered ineffective.

Instead, the church has been blessed with four Gospel accounts that require both individual study and that they be studied together to provide a unified and harmonistically fuller picture of the historical Jesus. France (1986:57) says

'Harmony' is what is created when a number of voices sing their own different parts at the same time. It is not the same as unison, where all sing the same notes. Because the voices are different there is a greater richness than in unison, but because they sing together under the direction of a single composer, what we hear is not a collection of discordant notes, but a richly satisfying harmony.

6.4 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

6.4.1 Recognizing the Gospels do not provide a '*strict*' chronology

All involved in the debate about the role of redaction criticism agree that none of the Gospels is in "strict" chronological order. That is, not every pericope is placed in "strict" chronological order in any of the Gospels so that one can read it and know that each event followed the prior event chronologically in Jesus' life. Even those who pursue

a chronological order in an attempt to provide a harmony of the Gospels concede this much concerning the Gospels. If the Gospels reflect in some ways the genre of ancient *bioi*, yet with their own distinctive features, then as Pahl (2006:10-11) indicates, the Gospels may reflect the ancient *bioi* in that while evidencing a real historical concern for their subject they did “not cover the whole life in strict chronological sequence.” Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:297) in addressing harmonization solutions and the problems related to chronology make the following point:

The fact that the gospels do not always give their material, whether of word or event, in the same order is a problem only if it is assumed that they must follow a strict and uniform chronological sequence, or if they categorically state that they will use only a chronological sequence and then proceed to violate it. The latter cannot be shown to be the case, and the former assumption is clearly inappropriate. Although a chronological arrangement might usually be expected to prevail, such is not a necessary condition of good writing. At their own discretion, authors are free to arrange materials according to subject rather than chronological sequence if that better serves their purposes. This freedom that authors may legitimately exercise creates many variations of order in the gospel.

One cannot help but notice the acknowledgement by Thomas and Gundry that writers are “free to arrange materials according to subject rather than chronological sequence if that better serves their purposes.” They also recognize this leads to “many variations of order in the gospel.” One suspects that Osborne, Bock and others who Thomas critiques would be in full agreement with these conclusions. Allison (2004:20) also writes that in matters related to chronology:

The biblical authors were free to arrange their material according to their own theological or literary purposes; thus, one passage may present a precise chronological account while another passage may be organized according to some other principle (logically, climatically, common motif, flashback).

Allison’s comment about the Gospel writers arranging their materials according to “theological purposes” would also be heartily affirmed by evangelical redaction critics.

In the previous discussion of Luke 1:1-4, it was noted that the significance of Luke’s use of *καθεξῆς* in Luke 1:3 would be considered in this discussion of chronology. “Fundamentally, this term means ‘in sequence’ or ‘one after the other,’ but it is still worth asking what sort of sequence is meant” (Green 1997:42). Luke also uses *καθεξῆς* in Luke 8:1, Acts 3:24, 11:4, and 18:23. Green (1997:43) notes the parallel use of the

word particularly in Acts 11:4 where there is a “narration” of Peter’s previous encounter with Cornelius. Green (1997:44) states,

We hear it from *Luke’s* point of view first, then from *Peter’s*, with the result that we can observe how these events are “ordered” by two narrators.²³ A comparison of the two demonstrates that “orderly” cannot refer to “adherence to chronological sequence,” nor simply “one after the other.” Rather, Peter’s “ordering” of the account is for the purpose of winning his audience over to his perspective on the events he recounts (cf. Acts 11:8). This notion of “persuasive order” fits well Luke’s own agenda, too. [his emphasis]

Stein (1992a:65) also makes reference to Acts 11:4 in his discussion of *καθεξῆς* and concludes that Luke’s reference to “order” was to “a logical rather than a chronological one.” Bock (1996a:42) mentions Luke’s relocation of the synagogue incident of Luke 4:16-30 to a much earlier stage of Jesus’ ministry than is found in Mark 6:1-6 in support of his conclusion that Luke “orders” his accounts logically, which includes some topical arrangement, rather than chronologically. France (1986:36) concurs that Luke does not indicate that he is following a chronological order and he notes that it is apparent that Matthew arranges his material thematically. France (1986:36) points out that “To observe that there is a basic agreement between the gospels on the broad outline of Jesus’ life and ministry does not require us to assume also that every event is intended to be understood as occurring in the order recorded.” Luke’s use of *καθεξῆς* then does not indicate a “strict” chronological order and there are no other New Testament passages that would support such a conclusion either it appears.

6.4.2 Chronology and the harmonization of details in parallel accounts

If the Gospels are not presenting all their pericopes in “strict” chronological order then one need not necessarily conclude there is a chronological error when assessing differences between accounts. Thus, chronology can also function as one of the means of harmonizing or reconciling parallel accounts in the synoptic Gospels. France (1986:37) proposes that one should look for clear chronological markers in the text and if they are not present then one should not assume strict chronological order but be open to the possibility that a Gospel writer placed a pericope in non-chronological order for a

²³ Green (1997:44n52) says in the footnote, “Of course, when we speak of ‘Peter’s ordering,’ we mean, ‘Luke’s ordering of Peter’s ordering,’ since, irrespective of source-critical concerns, Luke, the narrator has final responsibility for the narrative shape.”

specific purpose. France (1986:37-54) provides three examples of how one might use different approaches to harmonize chronological issues. He shows how the recognition of the presence of chronological order or the lack thereof can assist in explaining differences in chronology between Gospel accounts and even bring them into harmony.

In his first example, France (1986:37-38) employs redaction criticism in his evaluation of the pericope of the withering of the fig tree (Mt 21:18-22, Mk 11:12-14, 20-24). He argues that Matthew may have chosen a non-chronological order [he is assuming the two-source hypothesis and Mark is chronological] to emphasize the immediacy of the tree withering. Blomberg (1986:158) suggests that Matthew “telescopes” Mark’s account and gives no chronological indication of the day to which he is referring and his wording is general enough to harmonize with the historical events found in Mark’s account. France (1986:39) also considers the possibility that Matthew’s story is the original and preserves the chronological order and so one needs to explain Mark’s purposes in the change to a miracle involving two stages. France (1986:39) demonstrates Mark’s literary propensity to employ a “sandwich” technique, where one story is interrupted while another incident is related and then one concludes the original story. Others (Yang 2004:92-95; Williams 2006:508-525) have also noted Mark’s “sandwich structure” in the fig tree pericope. Mark selects this technique to emphasize in a parabolic fashion Jesus’ prophetic, messianic judgment on the temple (Yang 2004:93). Thus, in terms of the Synoptic Problem, as France (1986:37-39) suggests one could understand the story and the writer’s redaction in terms of various solutions to the Synoptic Problem.

Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:173, 175) seem to imply in the arrangement of their Gospel harmony that Matthew simply left out the chronological details that indicate that a day had passed, which Mark records. France (1986:39) is correct in arguing that “...at least one evangelist has deliberately subordinated chronological order...” for a theological purpose in presenting his account of the incident. Is there a chronological error though? France (1986:40) contends that “If either Matthew or Mark was not at this point intending to write in strict accordance with chronology, it is perverse to label non-chronological order as an ‘error’.”

France (1986:40-43) next addresses the issue of whether John records a different cleansing of the temple (Jn 2:13-22) then the account found in the synoptic Gospels (Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-19; Lk 19:45-48). He (1986:41) concludes that there was but one

temple cleansing and he maintains this does not reflect an error by John or deception of his readers, as such would be the case “only if John’s gospel were clearly presented as an account in chronological sequence of what Jesus did.” John placed the temple cleansing early in his account to highlight Jesus’ relation to “the Jews” (France 1986:55). Of course, one could also harmonize these accounts by arguing for two temple cleansings as Thomas and Gundry ([1998] 2003:50, 173-174) do in their Gospel harmony.

In his final example, France (1986:43) recognizes that it is accounts where the Gospel writers appear to clearly be writing with a concern for chronological order and in which there are discrepancies that the challenge to harmonize the accounts is greatest. He (1986:43-54) therefore takes up the challenge of examining the Last Supper pericope found in all four Gospels and the apparent discrepancy between John’s account (Jn 13:1, 18:28, 19:14) and the synoptic Gospels as to whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal (Mt 26:18; Mk 14:16, Lk 22:15). France (1986:44-47) examines the proposed solutions based on divergent calendars but finds them speculative and he (1986:47-48) judges the harmonizing attempts by Carson (1984:528-532) and Moo (1983c:321-323) as unlikely and unconvincing.

France (1986:49-50) proposes that instead of trying to see if John’s chronological statements can be brought into harmony with the synoptic chronology, one could consider if the synoptic chronology can be brought into harmony with John’s chronology. France (1986:51) proposes Jesus ate an “anticipated Passover” meal on Nisan 14 and that Mark 14:12 does not express an “explicit paschal chronology” but rather it should be understood that the killing and eating of the lambs actually fell on different “days” of the Jewish calendar. France (1986:51) argues “When therefore Mark 14:12 speaks of a meal held after dark on the same day when the lambs were killed, he *cannot* be speaking of the regular Passover meal, which was the next “day,” but must refer to the evening *before* the killing, which began the same Jewish “day” [his emphasis].

France (1986:50) also notes that none of the Gospels record any explicit mention of a lamb during the meal or in preparation. Marshall (1980:68) observed that for Jews unable to come to Jerusalem and therefore slaughter a lamb, one would have eaten a meal consisting of unleavened bread. France (1986:54) seeks to illustrate his point that this “anticipated Passover” meal could be described by the evangelists as “the Passover” by noting that many often use the term “birthday party” to refer to a celebration a day before

or after the actual day. France has sought to demonstrate another approach whereby one might maintain the reliability of the Gospel accounts while recognizing their specific indicators of chronological order. He (1986:52) provides a chart of the days and events:

<u>JEWISH CALENDAR</u>		<u>MODERN DAY-RECKONING</u>
-----	<i>Sunset</i>	
Nisan 14 (<i>Passover Eve</i>)	<i>LAST SUPPER</i>	Thursday
	<i>Midnight</i>	-----
	<i>Noon</i>	Friday
From c. 3 p.m.: KILLING OF PASSOVER LAMBS	CRUCIFIXION	
-----	<i>Sunset</i>	
Nisan 15 'OFFICIAL' PASSOVER MEAL	<i>Midnight</i>	-----
	<i>Noon</i>	Saturday
<i>Sabbath</i>		
-----	<i>Sunset</i>	
Nisan 16	<i>Midnight</i>	-----
		Sunday
	RESURRECTION	

In the debate between Thomas and Osborne, it was noted that Osborne (1999:202) maintains that unless there are explicit chronological indicators in the text, then one should not presume the text intends to preserve chronological order. France's (1986) article seems to support that basic approach. It would appear that it is by assuming chronological order in the accounts that many of the differences in parallel passages become viewed as erroneous. One should proceed with the assumption that chronological order is only significant when there are explicit indicators in the text. Osborne's (1999:202) comment about the impossibility of "a strictly chronological narration of the life of Jesus" seems appropriate. One should not disdain the efforts of those who seek to provide a harmony of the Gospels that sets forth a proposed chronology of Jesus' life, but one should recognize that it is not a certainty of "strict" chronological order.

6.4.3 The temptations of Jesus (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13)

As noted in chapter five, the point of interest in this pericope revolves around the different order of the temptations of Jesus by Satan in the accounts of Matthew and Luke. This account of Jesus' temptation is significant because it does not allow for a simple chronological harmonization. That is, one cannot resort to claiming that the event may have happened on more than one occasion. That type of "solution" would then require that Jesus faced six temptations from Satan and it would resemble the harmonistic solution of Lindsell to Peter's denials of Jesus that many find objectionable. Consequently, in this pericope it is apparent that one of the Gospel writers has deliberately chosen not to present the temptations in chronological order and so has changed the order for purposes germane to his Gospel presentation.

Differences in wording between the accounts can be explained by a simple recognition that the accounts likely preserve the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus not his *ipsissima verba*. Twelftree (1992:823) presents three arguments for Matthew as preserving the original or chronological order. His first argument based on progression, from desert to mountain top is not explained in any detail, and remains unclear and unsubstantiated. His (1992:823) second argument for chronological order is that Matthew preserves Jesus' quotations from Deuteronomy (8:3, 6:16, 6:13) in a tidy reverse order. Why this should indicate chronological order is unclear. It could just as easily be argued that Matthew has changed the chronological order of the temptations to put the quotations from Deuteronomy in this tidy order. Twelftree's (1992:823) third argument that Matthew preserves the two sonship temptations together that Luke has separated is also unconvincing. How can one be certain that Matthew has not deliberately put them together to highlight this issue and that Luke actually preserves the original or chronological order? None of these arguments are convincing or conclusive.

Others (Laney 1997:186; Thomas 2000a:105) argue that there are chronological markers in Matthew's text (τότε vv. 5, 11, πάλιν v. 8) but there are no such chronological markers in Luke's text, so Matthew must preserve the chronological order. Nolland (2005:1058) commenting on Matthew's use of τότε in 26:14 says "τότε is however, such a flexible word that its use tells us little about when Matthew wants us to picture the action here to be happening." If that is true in that account of this "flexible" word, then why should it be considered a chronological indicator in Matthew 4:5? "Matthew is very fond of τότε ("then") and uses it for various purposes" (Nolland 2005:1110). Nolland

(2005:168, 407, 489, 888, 1112, 1167, 1253) indicates that τότε with a historic present (“says”) is employed to indicate emphasis or climax. It is also a favorite connector of Matthew to join pericopes (Nolland 2005:682, 690, 797n122) and Matthew uses it to transition to a fresh or new story (Nolland 2005:715, 783, 965, 994, 1181). Nolland (2005:162) never mentions τότε as a chronological marker but in the temptation account he considers it a link to the previous material in Matthew 4:1 and as an indicator of emphasis when used with the historic present (“says”) in verse ten (2005:168). Matthew often uses πάντων also simply as a linking word between pericopes (Nolland 2005:166, 566, 568) and within pericopes (Mt 4:7, 8; 26:42, 43), but not as a “clear” chronological marker (Nolland 2005:166, 1103). In fact, Matthew adds the words “a second time” in Matthew 26:42, which clearly signals that πάντων is not functioning independently to indicate chronological sequence.

As noted previously, others (Ridderbos [1950] 1987:62; Morris 1992:39n23) also contend that Matthew uses τότε loosely and so one cannot rely on this for certainty about the chronological order. One must consider the significance of the fact that Matthew portrays Jesus as victorious on the mountain top after his temptations and then ends his narrative (28:18-20) with Jesus on a mountain top victorious over death through his resurrection. This suggests the possibility that Matthew could have deliberately chosen to reverse the chronological order of the temptations to highlight Jesus’ victories at the beginning and end of Jesus’ ministry. This possibility is strengthened by Matthew’s inclusion of Jesus’ declaration, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (28:18). Thus, the very thing Satan tempted Jesus to obtain by idolatrous worship Jesus obtained by faithful obedience to his heavenly Father functioning like an *inclusio* for the entire Gospel.

Nolland (2005:161n21) considers Luke most likely to have changed the order of the temptations but confesses “certainty is not possible because the order favoured by the respective Evangelists fits their redactional concerns.” Others (France 1985:97; Morris 1992:69-70; Stein 1992a:145; Davids 1996:456) concur that there can be no certainty about whether Matthew or Luke preserve the chronological order of Jesus’ temptations. As noted in the conclusion of the discussion on harmonization, it seems that one should agree with Osborne (1999:202) that it may be impossible to compose “a *strictly* [my emphasis] chronological narration of the life of Jesus,” at least with absolute certainty.

The Gospel writers felt free to change the chronological order of events in Jesus life in accord with their literary and theological purposes. Their decisions to make such changes whether viewed from the perspective of redaction criticism or in their use of oral sources does not imply a lack of concern for the historicity of the events nor does it deny in any way the doctrine of inerrancy. Finally, one also must recognize that no specific solution to the Synoptic Problem is required to address these chronological differences. Rather, one must simply acknowledge that either Matthew or Luke chose to pursue a non-chronological presentation in this pericope.

6.5 The *ipsissima verba* or *ipsissima vox* of Jesus

In the discussion of this issue in chapter four, it became clear that with respect to the reliability and trustworthiness of Scripture, some (D E Green 2001:49-68; Wilkin 2001:3, 7; Derickson 2003:101) voice the opinion that only the *ipsissima verba* view can provide one with historical accuracy that is commensurate with the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. Yet, Feinberg (1980:472n98) insists that the *ipsissima vox* provides one with “the *identical meaning* of Jesus’ words” [his emphasis].

6.5.1 Evaluating three arguments in support of *ipsissima vox*

Bock (1995:77-78) raised three points to support the *ipsissima vox* position. First, he mentioned that since Jesus did not speak predominately Greek, a translation of his words from Aramaic to Greek would have been required and consequently one then has the *ipsissima vox* not the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:294) also appeal to the validity of *ipsissima vox* in the translation of Jesus’ original sayings by the biblical writer from Aramaic into Greek. They write

At times the evangelists may even have deemed it more suited to their purposes to depart from a strictly literal translation of what Jesus said. So long as what Jesus intended is faithfully represented in language that accurately and effectively communicates to the intended readership, they cannot properly be faulted for this. Sometimes a more free translation may have been employed in reporting what Jesus said, for occasionally free translation can communicate the impact of what was originally said with gestures, intonation, and expression better than a verbatim account.

While it is assumed that Jesus' first language was Aramaic (Porter 2000b:134; Barnett 2005:113) it is also generally acknowledged that Jesus was "productively multilingual" as Porter (2000b:133-134) defines Jesus linguistic capabilities. Many scholars (Hughes 1974:142-143; Porter 1993:204; Thomas 1998b:368-369; Farnell 2002:289; Barnett 2005:113) hold that Jesus could speak Greek and some would argue that even some of Jesus' *ipsissima verba* are found in the NT (Hughes 1974:143; Porter 1993:224).

There are also those (Thomas 1998b:368-369; D E Green 2001:67-68; Farnell 2002:289; Thomas 2004:198), who argue that Jesus spoke predominately in Greek and consequently the Gospels provide the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus not simply on occasion in a few words as Porter (2000b:208) suggests but regularly except for on a few occasions (Thomas 2004:202). Thomas (2004:202) contends that the instances where the Gospels record and translate Aramaic or Hebrew words support the idea that Jesus customarily spoke Greek in his ministry. Thomas (2004:202) remarks concerning John 20:16 "This was one of those exceptional cases when someone addressing Christ or speaking about Him did so in Hebrew (or Aramaic) rather than Greek."

What support do these men provide to substantiate their claim that Jesus spoke predominately in Greek in his ministry? Thomas (2004:198) says, "Some scholars now hold that Greek was the primary language spoken in Israel by Jesus." Thomas (2004:198n171) footnotes Porter's article (1993:204) and Farnell's article (2002:288-289), but one should note that Farnell (2002:289) also refers to Porter's (1993:204) article. Just before stating that the primary language spoken by Jesus in his ministry was Greek, Thomas (2004:198) indicated "the flat assertion must be that no one in modern times knows with certainty what language Jesus spoke most of the time." Yet, Thomas proceeds with a conviction Jesus did speak Greek predominately in his ministry.

What does Porter say, since, Farnell also appealed to him? Porter (1993:204) notes the arguments for Greek as the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire and that no contemporary scholars argue that Greek was the only language Jesus spoke. After indicating that Greek was in widespread use by likely a majority of Jews in Palestine, Porter (1993:204) concludes Greek "may well have been a language of Jesus *at least on occasion*" [my emphasis]. Porter concludes the article by saying "whereas it is not always known how much and on which occasions Jesus spoke Greek, it is virtually certain that

he used Greek at various times in his itinerant ministry.” This hardly seems like a ringing endorsement in support of Thomas’ view.

Porter (2000b:208) studied eight passages he thought might provide evidence of Jesus’ use of Greek according to a set of criteria he developed. His study led him to conclude that at best he could only prove that a minimal numbers of words were spoken by Jesus in Greek. Porter (2000a:77) would not therefore concur with Thomas’ conclusion but rather Porter believes that Jesus “undoubtedly taught in Aramaic.” Porter (2000a:77-87) recognizes that Aramaic was still influential in Palestine in Jesus day, while insisting that Greek was also exercising influence over a variety of people.

More recently, Porter (2004:45) proposed that “The preponderance of evidence is that in fact Jesus clearly did speak Greek, the only question being how much and on what occasion.” Porter (2004:48-49) suggests two more New Testament passages that he considers may reflect Jesus speaking in Greek and one is the Sermon on the Mount. This might lend greater credence to Thomas’ argument but Porter operates from within the historical-critical paradigm and is looking to develop acceptable criteria to judge whether the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus is present or not. Thomas, who disdains the historical-critical paradigm, operates from a very different methodology. Porter’s criteria for detecting the Greek words of Jesus will be considered further below.

Thomas (2004:199), in critiquing Bock’s argument claims that the distinctions in the Greek synonyms for “love,” “know,” “sheep” and “feed” in John 21:15-19 validate Jesus’ use of Greek, since these types of distinctions would not be possible if Jesus spoke Aramaic or Hebrew on this occasion. While this argument seems plausible, why could the writer of John’s Gospel not provide these distinctions from a conversation in Aramaic if he gives the *ipsissima vox* of the conversation? One has to also consider whether these different Greek synonyms are intended to reflect a particular point Jesus was making with subtlety or whether they simply reflect the writer’s stylistic pattern in the Gospel. One must conclude that Thomas’ claim that Jesus spoke predominately Greek remains unsubstantiated, particularly since Porter, his primary source, does not affirm that Jesus spoke predominately Greek in his ministry.

The second argument that Bock (1995:77-78) produced in support of *ipsissima vox* appealed to the fact that Jesus would certainly have spoken for longer periods than any of our Gospel accounts record thereby implying the writers have abbreviated Jesus’

sermons or speeches. Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:295) concur that one is not required to have a verbatim reproduction of Jesus' words,

Rather the issue is, Do the words of the evangelists that report what Jesus said faithfully represent what Jesus in fact said; and, apart from verbal differences, are the reports of what Jesus said as given by the different evangelists consistent with one another in meaning? If the answer is Yes, then their accuracy cannot be impugned....It sometimes would be impossible to repeat every word and phrase. What one does expect to be reproduced from an ordinary discussion are the striking or important statements, the leading thoughts, the major divisions or topics, and the general drift of discussion, including transitions from one topic to another. Although different reports are expected to agree on these matters, it is also expected that there will be differences in details, reflecting the interests and purposes of the reporters.

Pahl (2006:11) discusses the genre *bioi* and its use of features of Greco-Roman historiography noting that recorded speeches were rarely of the speaker's *ipsissima verba* but rather they tried to retain the *ipsissima vox*. Pahl feels this must be reflected to some degree in the Gospels since he contends Jesus certainly taught in Aramaic. D Green (2001:56-59) disputes the idea of using Greco-Roman historians to provide a standard and model for the Gospel writers arguing rather that Jewish historiography derived from the Old Testament tradition provides the historical tradition of the Gospel writers. Thus, a Jewish historian, like Josephus, is more representative of the approach of the Gospel writers than a Greek historian like Thucydides.

Interestingly, in their Gospel harmony, Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:297) conclude that both Jesus' *ipsissima vox* and *verba* or a combination of the two are acceptable ways of understanding and harmonizing the words of Jesus contained in the Gospel accounts. In arguing for Jesus' *ipsissima verba* they ([1988] 2003:296) refer to situations where Jesus' conversations or speeches were in Greek. Therefore, Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:296) would agree with Bock that no Gospel account likely records the entirety of Jesus' speech nor would even a combination of the synoptic parallel accounts record the entirety of what Jesus said on a particular situation. Consequently, the Gospel accounts only provide us with a selection from a much longer discourse. Thomas (2004:199) thinks the Gospel writers omitted "parenthetical-type portions" of Jesus' speeches, things that did not add or subtract or alter the meaning of his discourse.

Yet, in contrast to Bock, Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:296) do not appeal to *ipsissima vox* as the only possible solution to the differences in the Gospel pericopes.

Rather, they suggest that on occasion Jesus repeated some of his teaching in the same message. They ([1988] 2003:296) maintain then, that when Greek was used in conversations this repetition by Jesus reflects his *ipsissima verba* preserved by more than one Gospel writer. Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:296) provide several examples in support of their argument:

A sample of this may be seen in the first Beatitude. Matthew relates, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3), and Luke writes, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20). Jesus probably repeated this Beatitude in at least two different forms on the occasion of his Sermon on the Mount. If so, he used the third person once, the second person another time, and referred to the kingdom by two different titles. Also, in one case he qualified the poverty with the addition “in spirit,” and in the other he did not. Because we know that neither gospel records the whole sermon, this explanation is quite plausible.

This is also the manner in which D Green (2001:59-66) responded to the examples that Bock (1995:84-851) presented in arguing the Gospels often contain the *ipsissima vox* not the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. It will prove instructive to examine Green’s response as it demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of the position that argues the Gospels contain Jesus’ *ipsissima verba*. D Green (2001:59-61) disposes of Bock’s arguments from the temptation accounts of Jesus and the miracle accounts in Matthew 8-9 by acknowledging that there are chronological issues involved in these examples but Green recognizes that they do not directly address the issue of Jesus *ipsissima vox*. Or, one might conclude that Bock did not show in his argument a direct connection between the chronological problems and the issue of *ipsissima vox*.

D Green does address three examples that Bock (1995:86-88) did provide, which were the words from heaven at Jesus’ baptism (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22), Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13, 20; Mk 8:27-30; Lk 9:18-21) and the questions by the high priest at Jesus’ trial (Mt 26:63; Mk 14:61; Lk 22:67). In the first example, D Green (2001:62) notes the heavenly words are addressed in both the second person (Mark and Luke) and third person (Matthew) and Bock’s suggestion that Matthew provides the *ipsissima vox* of the heavenly voice. D Green (2001:63) dislikes this lack of historical accuracy and claims “Bock has Matthew putting words on the lips of the Father that He never actually spoke.”

D Green's solution is an "additive" harmonization approach which has the Father speak to Jesus in the second person (Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22) and to the witnesses in the third person (Mt 3:17). Green would claim the Gospels preserve the *ipsissima verba* in all three accounts. There is though one significant aspect to Green's argument that he did not address and that potentially undermines his whole case. D Green did not demonstrate how he knows that the Father spoke to Jesus in Greek. Unless the Father spoke in Greek to Jesus, then this pericope does not provide the *ipsissima verba* but rather the *ipsissima vox* of the Father. Of course, one cannot say what language the Father spoke and since this is unanswerable one must look at other examples in addressing this issue, while noting that this verse does not provide definite proof for either view.

The second example in D Green's response to Bock's article centers on the pericope of Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah. D Green (2001:64) appeals to Porter's arguments (1993:229-235) that this conversation was in Greek and to the possible wordplay on Peter's name in Greek. Porter's conclusions though are hardly reflective of a scholarly consensus on this issue. Wilkins (2004:562) reflects those who see an Aramaic conversation taking place between these two Jews, Jesus and Peter, and how the conversation can be understood,

In Aramaic, almost certainly the language Jesus spoke on this occasion, the same word (*kepha'*) would have been used for both "Peter" and "rock." Translating it into Greek, Matthew would naturally use the feminine noun *petra* for "rock," since it is the most common and closest equivalent to *kepha'*. But when it came to recording the wordplay in Greek, Matthew had to use the less common masculine noun (*petros*) in the first half of the wordplay, for he would not refer to Peter with a feminine noun. Nevertheless, the use of the two different Greek words does not change the basic meaning of the wordplay, for *petros* and *petra* were at times used interchangeably. In essence Jesus is saying: "You are Rock, and on this rock I will build my church."

How though does D Green reconcile the differences in wording in the Greek texts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke if the conversation was in Greek as Porter suggests? He again resorts to the "additive" principle of harmonization. D Green (2001:64) writes

Matthew and Mark both record Peter's use of the emphatic pronoun $\sigma\upsilon$ (*sy*) as he says, "You are the Christ." One can almost picture Peter with his index finger pointing at Jesus, and with conviction saying, "I know who You are – you are the Christ, the Christ of God! You are the Son of the living God!" [his emphasis]

There is another part of this conversation that Green also must address and that is Jesus' questions to the disciples that are recorded differently in each of the Gospel accounts. D Green (2001:63) responds by suggesting that "each writer gave a *precise* not an *exhaustive* account of the conversation" [his emphasis]. He (2001:64) then allows that Jesus asked his question repeatedly in a variety of ways to heighten the disciples' attention and force them to focus on Jesus' identity. In other words, Jesus must have repeated his question at least three times to account for the variations found in the three synoptic Gospels. One detects shades of Lindsell's approach.

The solution to finding the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus in the Gospel accounts according to D Green (2001:65) is to simply recognize that the Gospel writers preserve faithfully "different parts of a larger whole." This could be a plausible solution, if not a very palatable one for many, in support of the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus but *only if* [my emphasis] the conversations were in Greek. Yet, if the conversations were in Aramaic then what the Gospels provide is a reliable preservation of the *ipsissima vox* of Peter and Jesus. One simply does not know what language Jesus and Peter conversed in on that occasion, so the issue cannot be decided definitively in support of either position.

As one might suspect by now, in the third instance where the high priest questions Jesus, D Green (2001:66) again argues the accounts provide "only a part of the larger portion of the inquest." This "additive" approach seems really quite unassailable, as in most cases one would only be required to say that Jesus repeated something three or less times and that would cover the differences between various Gospel accounts. Of course, on a rare occasion in preserving the *ipsissima verba* one might need to argue that Jesus or someone else repeated their words four times as in Jesus' giving the cup pericope (Mt 26:27-28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). Likewise, one might argue that Peter's "first" denial of Jesus preserves the *ipsissima verba* as he repeats his denial four times (Mt 26:70; Mk 14:68; Lk 22:57; Jn 18:25). Naturally, in that case, it would seem curious that each of the synoptic Gospels goes on to record "two" further denials of Jesus before the rooster crows as evidence of Jesus' prophetic words to Peter that he would deny him [Jesus] "three" times before the rooster crowed. One assumes the response from those arguing for preservation of the *ipsissima verba* then would be that Jesus was speaking of three different "occasions" when Peter would deny Jesus even if it involved speaking the

denial many more than a “literal” three denials.²⁴ Yet, all of this is predicated on the unproven assumption that the original conversations were in Greek. It is not surprising then that Osborne (1999:203) cautioned “Moreover, to say that virtually all the sayings in the Gospels are *ipsissima verba* is a dangerous overstatement, for inerrancy itself is at stake.”²⁵

Osborne (1999:203) was right to challenge Thomas’ conclusion that Jesus may have spoken Greek most of the time and that virtually all the statements in the Gospels are Jesus’ *ipsissima verba*. It seems in many ways a strange argument since Jesus was a Jew, who self-consciously professed his ministry was to the Jews (Mt 15:24). It is the normal custom for people to predominately speak in their native tongue not in a secondary language they may have acquired. This is particularly true in the company of others who share that same native tongue. It is possible that Jesus and some or maybe even all the disciples could speak Greek. Yet, Jesus and his disciples were Jews and Aramaic was likely the native tongue of all of them, and their interaction in much of the Gospels is with those who are described as Pharisees, scribes and the chief priests. These were fellow Jews, who were committed to Judaism and its ways, as their disputes with Jesus clearly show, so why would one presume their conversations were conducted in Greek? D Green’s solutions to support the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus are too facile. Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:295) acknowledged the Gospels contain the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus, and Bock’s argument from Jesus’ language supports it.

Bock’s (1995:78) third argument in support of *ipsissima vox* pertains to the manner in which the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, which is not word for word even when one makes allowance for translation from Hebrew into Greek on those occasions when the New Testament writer did not quote from the Septuagint version. Allison (2004:20) makes the following points about New Testament citations,

- 1) when New Testament authors cite the Old Testament, their citations may be: exact/nearly exact; paraphrases; general summaries; allusions
- 2) the New Testament authors’ citations of the words/sayings of Jesus do not contain the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus (at least in most cases; several exceptions are found); rather, they contain the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus

²⁴ It appears in order to provide the *ipsissima verba* in all the Gospel accounts of Peter’s “three” denials, one would need to propose possibly nine denials by Peter (Mt 26:70=Mk 14:68=Lk 22:57=Jn 18:25; Mt 26:72=Lk 22:58; Mt 26:74=Mk 14:71=Lk 22:60) or only eight if Mt 26:74 is an abbreviated form of Mk 14:71. Maybe with some ingenuity this number could be further reduced, but the point is clear.

²⁵ See Appendix A: “Why Jesus Would Only Have Spoken Once” which argues that this pursuit of Jesus’ *ipsissima verba* through an “additive” harmonization approach does not serve inerrancy well.

3) the biblical authors were free to cite extra biblical sources (e.g., *The Assumption of Moses*; *1 Enoch*, Epimenides the Cretan; *Phainomena* by Aratus) as well as biblical sources

The New Testament writers in handling the inspired Old Testament text as noted above in the discussion of “Gospel sources and inerrancy” (6.2.7) were led by the Spirit and had the freedom to make inspired interpretations and adaptations in their use of the Old Testament including often quoting from the uninspired Septuagint text instead of the Hebrew text. If they had the freedom to handle the inspired Old Testament in this manner it is not inconceivable that they felt the freedom to provide Jesus’ *ipsissima vox*, particularly when that represented translating his Aramaic speech into Greek, which was similar to how they were required to handle the Old Testament in quoting it for their readers. Evangelicals confess that this handling of Scripture was done under the inspiration of God’s Spirit and consequently does not undermine inerrancy.

Wilkin (2001:8) rightly objects to attempts to allow the concept of *ipsissima vox* to be a means for allowing historical inaccuracies in the New Testament while still proclaiming the New Testament is inerrant. This seems to resemble Gundry’s approach of employing genre, his understanding of “midrash,” as a means to affirm inerrancy while affirming errors in the New Testament. Thomas (2000a:107) asked with regards to *ipsissima vox* how close approximations have to be to fall within the limits of an inerrantist view of Scripture? The answer is to remember as Feinberg (1980:301) stated that the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus means the “exact voice” and so as he says,

If the sense of the words attributed to Jesus by the writers was not uttered by Jesus, or if the exact words of Jesus are so construed that they have a sense never intended by Jesus, then inerrancy would be threatened.

In chapter five there was a discussion of Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11:13 and how these very similar statements relate to the *ipsissima vox* or *verba* of Jesus. In that discussion a variety of solutions were proposed that brought the verses into harmony by suggesting redaction by either Matthew or by Luke or by proposing they were spoken at different times in different contexts. The discussion reminds one that while there are solutions for the differences that arise between similar sayings of Jesus, it seems difficult to detect with certainty Jesus’ *ipsissima verba*. Snodgrass (1992:596) goes so far as to say “However, any attempt to identify the *ipsissima verba* (the exact words) of Jesus is naïve at best.” Tan (2001:612) declares “Even when all three Gospels agree on the wording of a

saying of Jesus, we cannot be confident that the parallel agreement in wording goes directly back to Jesus' *ipsissima verba*, a common oral tradition, or literary dependence upon Mark." One can and should be content with the knowledge that the Gospels preserve Jesus' *ipsissima vox* as the historically trustworthy "voice of Jesus."

Thomas (2004:203) seems to unfortunately tie the inerrancy of Scripture to embracing the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, which necessitates embracing his underlying assumption that most of what Jesus spoke was in Greek. His use (2004:203-207) of A A Hodge, B B Warfield, C H Spurgeon, J Gresham Machen and J I Packer as supporters of his view is at best misleading. None of the quotes Thomas produces from these men are focused on the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, but rather these "heroes from the past" are addressing issues of inspiration, inerrancy, and their commitment to verbal inspiration.

Perhaps, Thomas confuses the concept of verbal inspiration with Jesus' *ipsissima verba*. Thus, Thomas (2004b:193) takes to task Poythress and Grudem because they hold to the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus yet argue against translating a generic "he" as a plural "they" in Matthew 16:24 as in the *New International Version Inclusive Language Edition* (NIVI).²⁶ Thomas (2004b:194) contends they are inconsistent to argue for such specificity in translation if the original words in the New Testament text only contain the "general content" or *ipsissima vox* of what was Jesus spoke. Yet, the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus is not required in the argument advanced by Poythress and Grudem as they hold that the *inspired* [my emphasis] New Testament Greek text records a generic "he" and so faithful translation of it should seek to maintain it when translating into another language such as English. One can hold to the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture and hold the Gospels provide the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus. It is the words recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that ETS members affirm are inspired and inerrant. Whether they reflect the *ipsissima verba* or *vox* of Jesus really should not matter, if one believes they are truly "God-breathed" and the "exact" words God wanted to give to his people in accordance with his divine purposes in providing an inerrant Scripture.

Certainly, at an earlier date Thomas was willing to acknowledge a valid role for *ipsissima vox* as seen in his Gospel harmony. Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:297) concluded that in discussing the words of Jesus in the Gospels that both the *ipsissima vox*

²⁶ V Poythress and W Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000) 117.

and *verba* are acceptable approaches in maintaining a commitment to inerrancy. They comment:

Whether we have an accurate summary of what Jesus said or the very words he spoke is difficult for us to determine at this point. It may very well be that we have some cases of both. The important thing is to recognize the Holy Spirit's part in inspiring what was written so as to guarantee an accurate report.

This seems to be the proper conclusion one should draw concerning the Gospel presentation of the words of Jesus. Kantzer (1985:66) provides a fitting summation:

If inspiration demands that the Gospels always give us the exact words of Jesus, we would find ourselves in serious trouble. But clearly this is not the case. The Gospels tell us what Jesus said, but they may tell it in his exact words translated very literally into Greek, or they may tell only part of what he said, or they may summarize what he said in wholly different words that still convey the truth of what Jesus really said. The point is that the biblical authors always tell the truth. If they say Jesus said something, he really did say it, whether or not we have the exact words he used.

6.6 THE ROLE OF FORM AND TRADITION CRITICISM

6.6.1 Evaluation of the criteria of authenticity

In the discussion of form and tradition criticism in chapter four, it was apparent that while some evangelicals are supportive of using these tools as part of their exegetical approach, others found them laden with faulty presuppositions that made them undesirable and not a suitable replacement for the more traditional grammatical-historical methodology. Davids (1992:831) provided an overview of the presuppositions of tradition criticism and many of these have been challenged as was shown in that chapter.

The development of criteria to attest the authenticity of tradition being passed on from Jesus' or the early church communities' *Sitz im Leben* has been a point of debate for many years. It was noted in chapter four that there are three criteria that many evangelicals accept as significant and useful in seeking to determine the authentic words or deeds of Jesus. The most significant criteria are dissimilarity, multiple attestation, and coherence. Yet, as Davids (1992:832) rightly noted, there is a built-in self contradiction in the underlying assumptions of the criteria. Bird (2006a:207-211) points out that the criterion of dissimilarity has been modified and even abandoned by some since the problems with it are manifold, which he outlines. While noting that the dissimilarity

criterion has virtually been abandoned in relation to Jesus and Judaism, Bird (2006a:210) also notes that continuity between Jesus and the early church is now more widely acknowledged, which also undercuts the criterion of dissimilarity. Gromacki (2002a:66) noted that the criterion of multiple attestation by its very nature renders virtually the whole Gospel of John as suspect. Dunn (2005:57-78) provides another recent trenchant critique of the flaws of the criteria of authenticity and the “quests for the historical Jesus.”

Some evangelicals still promote the value of the historical-critical approach (Evans 2004:25-26), while others recognizing its weaknesses are calling for the development of new criteria in light of further insight into the genre of the Gospels, studies on the language of Jesus, and the social and cultural environment of Jesus (Porter 2004:42-54). Porter (2000b:126-237) has proposed three new criteria related to language which he calls; the criteria of Greek language and its context, the criterion of Greek textual variance, and the criterion of discourse features. Porter (2000b:158-208) concludes after applying his criteria to eight possible NT texts that the results are minimal in terms of the authenticity of words of Jesus that he can determine. The fact that most New Testament scholars still believe that Jesus taught primarily in Aramaic not Greek will likely mean Porter’s criteria will not gain strong support.

Bock (2002b:203), who is generally supportive of using various criteria in tradition criticism does note that

One should remember that failure to meet the criteria does not establish a text’s inauthenticity, because the criteria cover only a limited amount of assessment factors. The problem with many critics’ use of this material is that they claim to prove too much by these criteria. In other words, these criteria serve better as a supplemental argument for the authenticity than as criteria that can establish authenticity.

Blomberg (1992a:249) argued that one should assume the authenticity of the Gospel records and the “burden of proof” should be switched from that of suspicion to that of reliability until the Gospel records were proven unreliable (1992b:297). Bird (2004:8n10) concurs and notes how the intentionality of texts, the circulation of the Jesus tradition very soon after Jesus’ death in conjunction with the testimony of eyewitnesses, and the polemical nature of the gospel have resulted in more scholars leaning towards the assumption of authenticity. Craig (1998b:17) provides five reasons he feels one should assume the authenticity of the Gospels:

1. There was insufficient time for legendary influences to expunge the historical facts. 2. The Gospels are not analogous to folk tales or contemporary “urban legends.” 3. The Jewish transmission of sacred traditions was highly developed and reliable. 4. There were significant restraints on the embellishment of traditions about Jesus, such as the presence of eyewitnesses and the apostles’ supervision. 5. The Gospel writers have a proven track record of historical reliability.

Head (2001:275-276) comments that form criticism has always been open to the criticism that it fails to take the role of eyewitnesses seriously because it does not fit its theory. More recently the study and recognition of the role of orality has led to a renewed appreciation for the role that eyewitnesses had in preserving the tradition of Jesus as was noted previously. Head (2001:287) contends that the eyewitnesses who saw, heard and participated in the events of Jesus’ life (Lk 1:1-4; Jn 20:30-31, 21:24; 1 Jn 1:1-4) were considered the “ideal” eyewitnesses and biographies written by “non-professional” historians generally were produced by people who had a personal acquaintance with the subject (2001:294).

S Freyne posits, “Either we accept that the early followers of Jesus had some interest in and memory of the historical figure of Jesus as they began to proclaim the good news about him or we must abandon the process entirely” (quoted in Bird 2006b:308). Dunn (2005:55) expressed his conviction that Jesus’ impact upon the lives of the disciples is expressed in the oral tradition that underlies the Gospel accounts. Bird (2005a:131) speaks of this as a “living memory” disseminated by eyewitnesses. Bird (2005a:131) suggests embracing a “criterion of memorability” in the search for the historical Jesus. In all of this, it would seem that an evangelical would also want to incorporate into the discussion the role of God’s inspiration of eyewitnesses in providing a divinely produced, historically reliable witness to Jesus’ person and ministry.

R T France (quoted by Craig 1998a:5) supports the basic contentions of Craig and others who recognize the value of eyewitnesses, of having historical documentation provided by four records (Gospels) and written so soon after the events. France states:

At the level of their literary and historical character we have good reason to treat the Gospels seriously as a source of information on the life and teaching of Jesus.... Indeed many ancient historians would count themselves fortunate to have four such responsible accounts [as the Gospels], written within a generation or two of the events, and preserved in such a wealth of early manuscript evidence. Beyond that point, the decision to accept the record they offer is likely to be influenced more by

openness to a supernaturalist world view than by strictly historical considerations.²⁷

France discerns correctly that one's "openness" to the worldview of the supernatural plays a decisive role in one's evaluation of the biblical record.

Willitts (2005:96) contends that if the Gospels are not viewed as trustworthy at the level of generality then one cannot judge whether individual traditions did or did not come from Jesus. The point simply is that if the tradition was not able to maintain the "big picture" then there can be no degree of assurance about the details. D C Allison comments, "It is precarious to urge that we can find the truth about Jesus on the basis of a few dozen sayings deemed to be authentic if those sayings are interpreted contrary to the general impressions conveyed by the early tradition in its entirety" (quoted by Willitts 2005:96-97). Willitts (2005:102) regards the principle of moving from the general to the specific to be the right methodology and consequently the determination of the authenticity of individual traditions is not possible without first establishing the historical context. He (2005:103) sums his point up by stating "The point, however, is that the debate must centre not on the authenticity of this or that saying but in the validity of the portrait of Jesus that is the result."

Bird (2006b:309) compares the task of historical research about Jesus to a painting.

It is a task which demands a variety of artistic/scholarly depth in being able to paint both a landscape (Judaism and the early church) as well as a portrait (Jesus), and superimpose the latter inside the former without distortion or anachronism. The task then is to construct a portrait of Jesus that has more historical color than other explanations of his person and mission.

Bird (2006a:201) remarks that many proponents of form criticism proceeded with an assumption that since the Gospels provide the life setting of the early church, one was only able to detect a "whisper" of the voice of the historical Jesus in the Gospels. Willitts (2005:107) asks, "Can we really separate the authors from their traditions? Can we really distinguish the author's historical point of view from the story they narrate?" Willitts (2005:107) observes that the criterion cannot be applied neutrally and so it is unrealistic to think the criterion can somehow act as a neutral arbiter between competing viewpoints. Tan (2001:599) asks "Did the authors ever intend for their conveyed meanings to be

²⁷ R T France, *The Gospels as Historical Sources for Jesus, the Founder of Christianity. Truth* 1 (1985): 86.

divined by means of an attempt to go back to their sources?” Is it really possible to separate the “historical Jesus” from the “Jesus of faith”?

Tan (2001:607) discusses the inability to detect Mark’s sources and the lack of reliable criteria to distinguish Mark’s style from that of his sources that preclude detecting Mark’s redactional work. This applies also to the inability to reconstruct Matthew and Luke’s sources as well, and the detection of their redaction. Regardless of one’s solution to the Synoptic Problem, it becomes impossible to know if the Gospel writers were relying on common oral traditions or literary sources and which literary sources, and at which points in the composition of their Gospel they may have used one or more sources.

Tan (2001:607) considers the detecting of the “why” of a modification of a source to present a further problem that introduces a degree of further subjectivity to the endeavor, even if one could detect the sources employed and adapted. It is precisely this failure to distinguish tradition from redaction with any certainty that has led some to seek other approaches to the study of the Gospels, in particular, to examine a Gospel as a “whole unit” and not try to detect sources and redaction behind the completed literary product. Since one cannot reconstruct the tradition of the oral period or identify literary dependence and the motivations behind modifications of sources, redaction criticism rests upon questionable assumptions (Tan 2001:612). Carson (et al. 1985:7-I) also finds this problematic, as he explains,

Even if you have a source you know is a source, and you can see the changes, how do you weigh the importance of those changes? It is still subjective. Too much concentration on that question can lead you away, rather than toward, the text as a finished product.

The difficulties of discerning source and tradition are illustrated in the discussion in chapter five, concerning Osborne’s teaching on the Great Commission. Osborne (1976:80) contended that Jesus gave the baptismal command in a monadic form and Matthew then later “expanded” the tradition to a triadic form based on Jesus’ teaching on that occasion. If Matthew gave the theological implications of Jesus’ teaching on the Trinity on the occasion of the Great Commission then this does not seem incompatible with inerrancy even if one does not have Jesus’ *ipsissima verba*. Yet, Osborne (1976:80) cannot prove that Jesus did not give the baptismal formula in a triadic formula. The fact that a triadic formula is not found elsewhere in the New Testament does not prove

whether the tradition behind the Great Commission was in a triadic form or not. One cannot separate tradition from redaction if the tradition is not known with any certainty.

Willitts (2005:104-108) enumerates four presuppositions related to tradition criticism and the quest for the “historical Jesus” that he finds problematic. He (2005:104) considers the typical scholarly view that a confessional approach to Jesus studies is antithetical to historical inquiry as both unwarranted and unrealistic. Willitts (2005:104-105) contends that a lack of clarity also exists in the use of the phrase “the historical Jesus” with different objects in view since the phrase seems to carry “the baggage of earlier critical scholarship” as some try to find the “*uninterpreted* Jesus” [his emphasis]. Despite the acknowledged weaknesses of tradition criticism, scholars continue to employ it thinking they can be “bias-free” even though the “tools alone do not get us back to the sayings and deeds of Jesus” (Willitts 2005:106). Thus, Willitts (2005:107) questions the real value of tradition criticism arguing

It is true that criteria when used positively can *corroborate* a given tradition’s authenticity. But, that conceded, what still is the usefulness of this kind of argument, given that one can demonstrate just about any tradition within the Gospels fits into the diversity of Second Temple Judaism? When we have come to believe its authenticity and then apply the criterion, one might argue for an ‘apologetic’ utility, but will it really convince anyone who is not already sympathetic to a conservative viewpoint? [his emphasis]

Finally, Willitts (2005:108) questions the “positivist pretensions of nineteenth-century historicism that ignores the realities of selectivity and narration in every historical account.” He (2005:108) maintains the Gospels should not be regarded as unreliable historical witnesses and so he concludes that he thinks the best approach to historical Jesus studies is an approach that

(1) deals *seriously* with the complex, but complementary, portraits of the canonical Jesus – without discounting out of hand information from non-canonical sources – and (2) places that construct plausibly within its first-century Jewish context, is as close to the ‘historical Jesus’ as we can ever come. [his emphasis]

Others would concur, such as Osborne (1984b:28) who argued,

There is no basis for continuing the gulf between the gospels and the historical Jesus. Recent work on both the oral transmission and note-taking techniques provides a strong basis for the basic reliability of the gospel records.

Dissatisfaction with the use of source, form, and redaction criticism (Gromacki 2001:129-130) has prompted some to pursue a more literary approach in the study of the Gospels. Wiema (2001:150) indicates the traditional methods of source, form, and redaction criticism are being replaced by

a new criticism that emphasizes the literary character of the biblical text and finds the key to meaning in the form and structure of the writing rather than its use of possible sources, the reconstruction of its hypothetical historical context, or the perceived intention of its author.

The recognition that one cannot detect the sources or the tradition underlying the Gospels with any degree of certainty has led to doubts about the usefulness of the whole pursuit of the historical-critical method (Guthrie 1986:19; Tan 2001:603). Willitts (2001:103) argues that “studies that do not rest on a particular solution to the Synoptic Problem are to be preferred over those that do.”

6.6.2 The merits of composition criticism

In chapter four, some of the basic principles of *composition criticism* or *compositional analysis* were outlined by Osborne (1992:666-667). It will become apparent that this approach is more in harmony with an evangelical commitment to inerrancy than redaction criticism.

Composition criticism examines the arrangement of the materials in a Gospel, which is motivated by the theological intention of the writer (Smalley 1979:181), and one would also want to add another motivation is the author’s literary style. Smalley (1979:181) is correct to maintain that composition criticism should be distinguished from redaction criticism and that not all practitioners accept that it includes the “construction of wholly new sayings by the Gospel writers, which are then (so it is claimed) attributed by them to Jesus.”²⁸ Tan (2001:610-11) maintains scholars should be more careful in their use of terminology and differentiate between redaction and composition criticism since they have significant differences in both theory and practice.

The inability to truly detect with any certainty the sources behind the synoptic Gospels effectively undermines redaction criticism’s attempt to separate an author’s redaction from the tradition he used in his Gospel. The inability to distinguish between the degree to which oral tradition is reflected in the Gospels and whether there is any

²⁸ Smalley refers to N Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (London, 1970), p. 66.

literary dependence at work between the Gospels, and if so, which Gospel is dependant upon which other one or ones, makes redaction criticism a subjective practice that can produce no exegetical certainties. Tan (2001:608) comments,

Precisely at the point of the limits of our knowledge, composition criticism thrives where redaction criticism fails. Since composition criticism looks at perceivable patterns and emphases in the existing text without needing to differentiate redaction from tradition or to divine the author's unexpressed motivations in the use and modification of (hypothetically reconstructed) sources, it stays within the confines of verifiable, scientific study of extant evidence. Specifically, it points to the evidence in the text and observes that such and such a pattern or emphasis is present.

A literary approach like composition criticism does not undermine the historicity of the events just because it is not able to adjudicate on historical matters (Tan 2001:609).

Stein (1991:18) declares that redaction criticism does not really seek the “whole theology of the Evangelists but rather that which is unique to them.” In contrast, composition criticism focuses on the “whole theology” of the Evangelists by recognizing that the theology of the Gospel is discernible not by looking for seams, insertions or modifications as in redaction criticism, but in recognizing that the complete Gospel exhibits the final literary and theological presentation of the evangelist. Tan (2001:609) suggests two differences between composition criticism and redaction criticism related to the “product” and the author:

composition criticism 1) conceives of the Gospels as unified narratives with a single coherent story, perspective, and theology in qualitatively different ways than redaction criticism and 2) presupposes a qualitatively different level of mastery of material in the evangelists' composition of their Gospels.

Tan (2001:611) contends that since composition criticism is principally a synchronic method one must be wary of making historical judgments based upon one's compositional analysis. At the same time, Tan also notes that since redaction criticism is principally a diachronic method one must be careful in making judgments about the evangelist's full theology particularly since the evangelist would have presumably been in agreement with the theology of the sources he employed, unless the evangelist was incompetent, inconsistent or disingenuous. This aspect of determining the evangelist's theology will be discussed further in the next section.

Redaction criticism is laden with subjective judgments in its reliance upon source, form, and tradition criticism which are all subject to their own issues of criticism and uncertainty. The result is an uncertain foundation that cannot bear the exegetical weight it is asked to carry, leaving the methodology collapsing and abandoned by more and more practitioners. Composition criticism may not be appealing to those who are striving to find the “historical Jesus” and in the eyes of some will be viewed as nothing more than a return to the historical-grammatical method, which they long ago abandoned. Yet, for evangelicals and for those committed to inerrancy, composition criticism provides a methodology that is sound and by which careful study of the Gospels can be conducted in a fruitful manner (Tan 2001:614).

Composition criticism provides a positive approach for the study of the Gospels by evangelicals who embrace inerrancy. Yet, the question of the historicity of Jesus cannot be side-stepped even if one rejects the principles of the historical-critical method as flawed. In the next section, the relationship between history and theology will be examined and how this relates to the study of the historical Jesus.

6.7 WERE THE GOSPEL WRITERS HISTORIANS OR THEOLOGIANS?

6.7.1 The Gospel writers as faithful historians and theologians

In chapter four the debate about whether the evangelists are to be viewed as faithful historians and creative theologians was broached. Thomas (1986:449) charged that redaction criticism impacts upon the historicity of the Gospel accounts in a negative manner. He argues that in redaction criticism the Gospel writer’s theological bias takes precedence over history inevitably placing every text into a “suspect” category with regards to historical reliability.

Thomas (1998c:258) also contends that in redaction criticism the writers “shape their gospels creatively by radically altering historical narratives and putting on Jesus’ lips words he never spoke.” Thomas has more than the concept of the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus in view, rather he points to how some evangelicals assign some of the Beatitudes to Matthew and not to Jesus (1998d:26-27). This creativity is of a non-historical nature from Thomas’ perspective. One of those Thomas (1998d:26) charges with this approach is Hagner (1981:33), who says

But do the evangelists ever go beyond working creatively with the tradition and actually create material out of thin air, so to speak? This is widely held by radical critical scholars and for a good portion of the totality. We argue, to the contrary, that conservatism here is the most proper attitude.

After providing reasons in support of this conclusion, Hagner (1981:33) then elaborates further on the possible creativity of the evangelists

If the evangelists were able to work creatively with the tradition, may they not have been able to create their own? The possibility must surely be said to exist. But if the evangelists ever do create, they never create *ex nihilo* – that is, they never record material that stems only from an isolated third time frame. They do not, so to speak, work in a vacuum. They are writing theological history, and their theologizing never goes on in isolation from the historical tradition. Therefore in the last analysis creativity of every kind in the gospels stands in continuity with what Jesus actually said and did.

Hagner attempts to keep the “creativity” of the evangelists tied to historical events and words related to Jesus. Interestingly, he (1981:33) does allow for the “possibility” that Christian prophets after Jesus’ resurrection spoke words that are found in the Gospels, arguing that “owing to the intrinsic difficulty of proving such claims, one must rest content with the suggestion of possibility.” Yet, recognizing it is virtually impossible to prove such claims, Hagner (1981:33) opines that the sayings which critical scholars find “intolerably anachronistic” are likely explainable by the creative work of the Gospel writers on their historical tradition. Hagner seems ambiguous in his approach as he tries to maintain a historical connection to the tradition emanating from Jesus, while allowing for possibilities of creativity. Other evangelicals (Osborne 1978:129; McKnight 1988:91) are forthright in maintaining that redaction criticism should not be viewed as implying the creation of sayings of Jesus.

In essence, this resort to claiming the words of Christian prophets made their way into the accounts of the Gospels reflects the idea that the Christian communities impacted the shape of the Gospels. Evans in defining reaction criticism speaks of “the manner in which the respective evangelists and their communities edited the written traditions” (quoted in Bock 2002b:189). Blomberg (1987b:38) rightly warns of the subjectivity involved in drawing conclusions about the communities which the Gospels were addressing. He insists that scholars need to recognize that not every difference between the Gospels or every passage in the Gospels addresses some relevant need in a church

community. Thus, what is often described as redaction by the evangelist should not always be construed as an indicator of a theological motive (McKnight 1988:91). How does one detect the effect of a community on the tradition underlying the Gospels since as previously noted it is difficult if not impossible to separate the tradition from the redaction. Since one also does not know with any certainty the actual sources used by the writer and at what points the writer relied on sources or wrote as an eyewitness a further layer of subjectivity is entered into the methodological equation.

In fact, sometimes the difficulty in speaking of an evangelist's theology is even overlooked. Even if one could detect the editorial activity of the evangelist, this does not necessarily imply one truly knows *why* [my emphasis] the evangelist is making a change theologically. Tan (2001:607-608) perceptively lists a number of factors which make it difficult to ascertain the theology of the Gospel writer

This limitation of knowing “what” but not “why” leads to an important caveat. It is not so much the distinctive theology of the evangelist, but the verifiable datum of the perceivable emphases of the evangelist that is discoverable. First, we have a limited corpus and thus the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke probably do not fully represent the theologies of their respective authors. Second, the composition of a coherent narrative involves many complex considerations that may determine the highlighting of certain elements and the relative de-emphasizing of others, perhaps in the service of an overarching emphasis. Hence, some emphases (or de-emphases) may or may not reflect the relative importance of certain theological ideas in the author's full belief system.²⁹ Third, the jump from describing what is emphasized to speculating over the theological framework behind the author's expressed emphasis is a foray into the interpretation of mind acts — unless the author reveals his thinking, only a mind reader should venture into the enterprise. Fourth, with any given emphasis in the Gospels, we cannot be certain whether it is the evangelist's own peculiar emphasis, that of a particular source, or that of the oral tradition. Thus, making the inference from a perceivable emphasis in a text to a distinctive theology of the author is a hazardous leap of logic.

The relationship of theology to historicity for those in the ETS came to the fore, when Gundry argued for the creative redaction of the writer of Matthew's Gospel that appeared to undermine the historicity of the Gospel accounts. Gundry's lack of a precise definition of midrash and the failure to provide criteria for distinguishing such midrash from other historical narratives in Matthew's Gospel was problematic (Osborne

²⁹ Tan (2001:607n45) writes “This distinction holds for any theological literature that is occasional in nature. Only a full-fledged tome on systematic theology stands clearly as an exception.”

1985:402). Without some clear textual indicators that a different genre is being employed, a reader is left clueless to pick up such subtleties. To argue from the two-source theory that these theological changes are detectable is simply indefensible since Gundry's two-source theory is unproven and Matthew's readers would not have known about or had access to such sources (Moo 1983a:34, 37). The lack of evidence to support this use of genre to determine issues of non-historicity simply fails to convince (France 1983a:292; Osborne 1983:26; Blomberg 1987b:49). In light of Gundry's constant references to Matthew's redaction, one should remember that the decision that something is redactional is "a conclusion regarding style not history" (McKnight 1988:90).

It was not surprising that Thomas (1986:450) seemingly sarcastically commented, "For Gundry, then, the nonexistent house was where the nonpersons called Magi found Jesus on the occasion of their nonvisit to Bethlehem." Farrow (1987:214n36) notes the irony that Gundry would propose that Matthew would invent events and dialogue when John writes that if everything about Jesus were written down the whole world could not contain the volume of books (Jn 21:25). The Gospels' emphasis on recording at least some of these words and events seems to undermine the need to add non-historical events to the story about Jesus. As Carson (1982b:80-81) also notes it is hard to envisage Matthew as an eyewitness to the events of Jesus' ministry, as Gundry maintains, so slavishly following his sources with the degree of redactional activity that Gundry supposes. Carson (1982b:81) asks "Is Matthew capable of writing history only when he is copying someone else?" Turner (1983:280) also questions why a "note-taking eyewitness had to resort to such a heavy dependence upon Mark and Q and upon a non-historical genre." The seeming incongruity of the proposal is that "in Gundry's view, Matthew evidently could not find sufficient significance in history, so he had to write fiction in order to meet his church's needs" (Turner 1983:281).

As was noted in chapter four, evangelicals like Osborne (2000:116) and Bock (1994:13-14) argue that the Gospel writers were always faithful historians in their redactional changes for theological purposes. One simply cannot separate theology absolutely from history in the Gospels simply because there is no such thing as "uninterpreted" history. Bird (2006b:308) points out that attempts to "peel off the layer of theology from history" cannot be accomplished because there is no foolproof means of distinguishing between tradition, composition and redaction in a given pericope. A

second reason Bird enumerates is that history and theology are so interwoven in the narrative substructure that to try to extract history from theology would cause the literary “masonry to collapse on the interpreter.” This means one must discover history *through* theology (Bird 2006b:308) [his emphasis].

Evangelicals who believe in inerrancy need to recognize the role of God’s revelation in history. Tan (2001:613) reminds interpreters that God’s revelation in history portrays “two distinct phases of divine inspiration involved in the Gospel materials.”

The first phase involves the historical acts and speeches from Jesus himself. The second phase comes in the evangelists’ selective reports and interpretations of the first phase of inspiration.³⁰ The first phase is inaccessible except as filtered through the second phase. Thus, evangelical interpreters of Holy Scripture would do well to focus on the final form of the canonical Gospels.

Thus, the “historical Jesus” of divine revelation or inspiration, as Tan speaks of, can only be known by divine revelation, which is found in the Gospel accounts. Since evangelicals believe this second phase of revelation is “God-breathed” or inspired revelation in written form, one can be confident that access to the historical words and deeds of Jesus have been provided and preserved by God in God’s Word. In light of this conclusion, it will be helpful to consider a different methodological approach to the Gospels than that of the historical-critical method which has sought to separate history from theology.

6.7.2 A different methodology for handling the Jesus tradition

It has been argued that the historical-critical method does not provide a satisfactory methodology and for those committed to inerrancy there needs to be another approach to the study of the Gospels. Composition criticism was commended as a positive way to study the Gospels. Porter (2004:108) makes this telling confession about his own involvement with historical criticism,

However, I am unconvinced that all these proposed results are necessarily correct, nor am I sure that New Testament studies has really gained much when it ends up doubting more than it affirms regarding the historical Jesus. The scholarly guild may think that it knows more, but whether the person in the pew is benefited by such knowledge (if it is knowledge) is doubtful. Thus, despite whatever benefits it may have, historical criticism

³⁰ Tan (2001:613n60) “This second phase of divine inspiration ensures that the evangelists’ selective report and interpretation is historically and theologically inerrant and achieves the divine purpose for the inscripturation of their particular Gospels.”

is not to my mind, the means by which we best do theology, nor is it the hermeneutical key to understanding Scripture in a contemporary context.

Green (2005:438) addressing the interplay between history and theology asks,

In theological method, is the Bible's role best construed as historical foundation? Does this sort of theological method not reduce the theological significance of texts to what can be made of them through the application of the historical-critical method? That is, does not theological exegesis begin with the presumption that what is before us is *sacred* text rather than (simply) *ancient* text, with the result that, from this perspective, the historical-critical paradigm misconstrues from the outset the object in view?...What are we to make of the problematic theological presupposition of this hermeneutic – namely, its failure to take seriously that *the church is one*? [his emphasis]

Certainly, this concept of the oneness of the church and its “sacred” text has implications for the theology found in other parts of the New Testament outside the Gospels. It would seem to imply a common theology which would imply one should be able to find a common christology or understanding of the historical Jesus in the New Testament that is consistent with that found in the Gospels.

Cameron (1994:251-252) comments on the change that has occurred in the area of historiography,

In the nineteenth century a new historiography came to be applied to Holy Scripture, the secular history-writing which had proved so successful in recovering other ancient civilizations. Yet the very reason for its success elsewhere was the ground of its problematic here; its development was on firmly naturalistic principles, in which the analogy of the present experience was considered to be compelling.

So how does one do historiography that includes the supernatural both in revelation and in the acts of God in history particularly in the person of Jesus of Nazareth? One can also ask, how one even knows of this supernatural work apart from the supernatural revelation of this God in Holy Scripture, which is provided by divine inspiration? Can one begin to know Jesus apart from the historical revelation, which interprets Jesus, which God has provided through inspired writers in the New Testament? Should not one approach theological exegesis and the study of the Gospels with the presumption that what is before us is “sacred” text as suggested by Green (2005:438)?

History cannot be separated from interpretation or theology as the historical-critical method has tried to do unsuccessfully. Thus, G B Caird has said of the historical-

critical method that “the first error has been to assume that the Jesus of history was a different person from the Christ of the Church’s faith” (quoted in Willitts 2005:70). All history is written with a purpose and is written selectively and so the Gospels are written both as a selective history and from a particular point of view. Willitts (2005:70) comments,

Thus, even before we look into the Gospels for historical information a theological move has already been made on the part of the evangelist; as M Bockmuehl has argued, we cannot go back “far enough to find a Jesus of history who is not already a Jesus of the interpreter’s faith or unbelief.”³¹

Typically, in doing historical study one would pursue knowledge of one’s subject by examining the historical sources closest in time to the subject, but this has generally been overlooked in the study of the historical Jesus. The first evidence of the “Jesus of the interpreter’s faith” appears to be found in the writings of the apostle Paul in his early letters to Christians in Thessalonica, Corinth and Galatia.

In studying the Gospels, one encounters great debate about the sources of the Gospels, uncertainty concerning their date of composition, and the audience addressed. As well, one encounters a genre which is primarily historical and biographical and which is written from the bias of a follower of Jesus. Whether that bias is congruent with historical reality or not one cannot immediately ascertain (Barnett 1997:40). Consequently, Barnett (1997:40) argues the point of entry for historical inquiry into the life of Jesus should be with the apostle Paul.

Barnett (1997:41-43) provides three reasons in support of this approach. First, he notes that Paul’s letters are the earliest written sources about Christianity and Jesus, with the letter to the Thessalonians being dated around AD 50. Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians and Corinthians appear to be the first written documents referring to Christianity and emerge only about twenty years after the life of Jesus. Secondly, these letters have early as well as broad manuscript attestation, with little in terms of variations in matters of theological significance. Thirdly, Barnett (1997:42) reminds one that the letters are not evangelistic tracts or consciously written histories rather they address Christians and their local situations. In these letters, we know the author, the approximate date of writing, the place the letter was sent to, a reasonable degree about the cultural

³¹ Markus Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1994), 23.

background and somewhat of the occasion or purpose in the writing of the letter. Thus, we have a much more established historical context in analyzing what they may indicate about the historical Jesus. What historically connected Jesus to the early churches?

Barnett (1997:127) declares

The percussive impact of Jesus the Teacher, risen from the dead, had historically demonstrable consequences. These include the proclamation of Jesus and the creation of gathered communities of believers, both Jewish and Gentile.

A study of these first epistles of Paul clearly evidences that Paul had taught the Christians about Jesus in the churches he established. The information that is gleaned from Paul's letters is of an "incidental" nature, given freely, which is not systematic or sequential and only selective (Barnett 1997:56). The letters of Paul, James and others reveal authors and audiences who had shared convictions about Jesus, whom some of them had actually seen and heard. The brevity of time between the life of Jesus and these letters undermines the concern of development and provides the most historically plausible information about Jesus of Nazareth. Barnett (1997:57-58) provides a list of fifteen points of historical information about Jesus that can be gleaned from a few of the Pauline letters and that information provides a historical overview of Jesus' life from his birth to his resurrection. This information about Jesus derived from Paul's epistles provides a historical framework with which to assess the various ways in which Jesus is portrayed in Jesus studies. Barnett (1997:57) comments:

Does historical connection between Jesus of Nazareth and the proclaimed Christ matter theologically, as opposed to historically? Most assuredly it does. His uniqueness and universal applicability are jeopardized by any attempt to cut the knot that ties them together. The proclaimed Christ is the self-same person, the Nazarene, the man of Galilee. The Christ was Jesus, the proclaimer, who on account of his messiahship and sonship, through his resurrection, became the proclaimed.

This historical information about Jesus in the letters of Paul acts in a corroborating manner for evaluating the historical reliability of the Jesus presented in the Gospels.

Barnett (1997:63-83) notes that five historical figures are mentioned in Luke 3:1-2 who provide the historical context for the life of Jesus and whose lives intersect with Jesus' life. The historical details about John the Baptist, Herod the tetrarch, Caiaphas and Annas the high priests, and Pilate the Roman prefect found in the Gospels and the book of Acts can be compared with non-biblical sources like Josephus, Philo, and other

sources. Such a comparison reveals not simply the social, religious, and political setting in which Jesus lived but how the Gospels reliably portray Jesus in his ministry and intersection with these men in a way congruent with this verifiable historical context.

It is not just historical details about Jesus that can be gleaned from the letters of Paul, James, Peter, and John that are important but also the theology of the early Christians and what they believed about Jesus. “The Jesus who was followed before Easter was worshipped by those same people after Easter” (Barnett 1997:91). The Pauline letters demonstrate that the historical Jesus of Nazareth is directly continuous and therefore congruous with the “Christ of faith” (Barnett 1997:91).

Any attempt to understand Jesus must account for the exalted view of Jesus held in the churches of Jerusalem and Judea to be historically credible. The New Testament letters reveal “the faith” or belief and practices of the early Christians which owe their impetus and character to Jesus (Barnett 1997:95). It is apparent from Paul’s letters that the early Christians embraced a theology that can only be identified with the person and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Barnett (1997:95-102) points to the unique address of God as *abba* by a Jew like Paul, Paul’s preaching of Jesus as “the Son of God” which corresponds with the Gospel traditions, and frequent references to the “kingdom” or “kingdom of God” a theme central in Jesus’ teaching reflected in the Gospels. The use of “the Christ” almost certainly reflects Jesus’ own messianic consciousness, while the tradition that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3) reflects reshaping of the Servant of the Lord prophesy (Isa 52:13-53:12) likely by Jesus during the Last Supper (Barnett 1997:99). The prayer life of the early church and prayers to Jesus (1 Cor 16:22) reflect imitation of Jesus’ life and his exalted status in the early churches. The citation of Old Testament Scriptures such as from Psalm 110 may have been influenced by Jesus’ use of these Scriptures (Barnett 1997:100-101). Barnett (1997:101) concludes

The scattered data from the letters of Paul serve to establish a goal by which a profile of Jesus can be established...The letters do not set out to be biographical in regard to Jesus. But from these sources we catch a glimpse of one whom we see in much greater detail in the gospels. We see enough in the letters to encourage us to believe that the gospels have got Jesus right. Someone fitting the portrayals in the gospels left the imprint we find in the letters of Paul and the other letters of the New Testament.

The four Gospels also are each individual historical sources for knowing the historical Jesus that can be compared with one another. In areas where one can identify that two or more of the Gospels record a similar situation, comparison highlights that even where distinct traditions seem at work such as in Mark and John the details point to credible and reliable traditions witnessing to Jesus. Even the comparison of the synoptic Gospels with each other, working from whatever solution to the Synoptic Problem, reveals that the writers were sober and restrained producing responsible biographical works (Barnett 1997:105-106). One should also not discount that a judgment about the historical reliability of the Gospels was made by those closest in time to the Gospels in the recognition of the four canonical Gospels as part of the New Testament canon. This historical judgment in the early church included rejecting other gospels as not historically reliable witnesses to Jesus (Metzger 1987:165-174; Bruce 1988:257-269). The very identity and nature of the church today witnesses to the continued belief throughout the ages to the historical reliability of the presentation of Jesus found in the four canonical Gospels (van Inwagen 2003:107).

Barnett (1997:30-35) also provides a brief overview of a few of the details that one might learn about Jesus from non-Christian sources. This testimony from those who did not embrace the claims of Jesus also provides a historical perspective on Jesus of Nazareth which can be compared to that found in the Gospel accounts. There is debate on the reliability of some of the material found in the various writings of Jewish and Roman historians and sources (Harris 1985:343-368; Twelftree 1985:289-341; Evans 1992:364-368; Blomberg 1987b:196-201). Yet, Yamauchi (1998:115) contends that historical evidence about Jesus from non-Christian sources can tell us that Jesus was a Jewish teacher, believed to have performed healings and miracles, some people believed he was the Messiah, he was rejected by Jewish leaders, crucified under Pontius Pilate, his disciples believed he was still alive and they spread beyond Palestine growing in numbers with a great many of them in Rome by AD 64, and men and women from various social classes worshiped Jesus as God. When this historical information is compared with the Gospel accounts of Jesus, the agreement in the broad overview of Jesus' life is clear adding further evidence for the reliability of the Gospel presentations concerning the historical Jesus.

The impact of Jesus' resurrection was an event of epic magnitude and coupled with the promised coming of Jesus' Spirit, the Spirit caused Jesus' words and works first to be "remembered" and then written as the eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry began to die (Barnett 1997:110, 137). Rather than proceeding with a methodology which begins with doubt or suspicion about the authenticity of the events recorded in the Gospels, one should proceed with a degree of confidence in the reliability of the Gospels.

The methodology for doing historical study provides its own set of challenges but the approach suggested is consonant with methods of historiography (Long 1994:171-194). When the Gospels are compared with the New Testament letters and the historical information about Jesus outside the New Testament, the historical reliability of the Gospels is established by a realistic historical methodology. The Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures of the New Testament period are also the historical background against which comparisons can and must be made as one seeks to understand the historical Jesus and Paul (Enns 2006:210-217). Certainly there are some historians of ancient history who consider the New Testament a credible historical source to consider along with classical sources in their studies (Nobbs 2006:285-290).

6.7.3 History and theology and the role of faith

Porter (2004:107) acknowledges that the differences among scholars is certainly a reflection of the "inevitable fact that every interpreter is positioned and situated historically, theologically, ideologically and so forth." Porter (2004:107) suggests one recognize there are no completely objective interpreters and that one's interpretation is based to a large extent upon one's presupposition and predisposition. He says, "In that sense, theology precedes exegesis, and hermeneutics dictates criticism" (2004:107).

Wolters (2004:190) speaks of how historical criticism was a product of the Enlightenment "aided and abetted by the influential epistemological split between fact and value, knowledge and belief." The rise of postmodernism has resulted in the exposing of the ideological character that underlies historical criticism. Wolters (2004:191) assesses biblical criticism in terms of four basic paradigms related to the relationship between "nature" and "grace". "Nature" reflects life and the world outside of salvation in Jesus and "grace" speaks of life and the world redeemed by Christ. Grace

therefore is opposing, supplementing, flanking, or restoring nature. Wolters (2004:192) contends that grace enters nature like medicine to restore it. He states,

This would mean an approach to biblical criticism which would openly, and from the outset, bring its religious commitment to the God of the Bible into the academic arena and unashamedly forge a Christian way of doing biblical criticism which would in many ways be at odds with mainstream biblical criticism. I would see this as but one facet of the broader task of doing integrally Christian scholarship.

The Gospels were written to lead people to faith in a historical person, Jesus of Nazareth (Jn 20:30-31) and so any study of the Gospels that ignores this foundational purpose of the Gospels is bound to be flawed. “Faith, then is a response to the word of God; it is not a response to history, or to historical reconstructions *per se*” (Barnett 1997:110). The New Testament witness and the witness of experience maintain that the Holy Spirit’s regenerating activity in the life of a Christian is a self-authenticating act of God (Jn 1:13, 3:8), that transforms one’s affections and allegiances via conversion (Piper 1979:83; Barnett 1997:110). Green (2004:397) maintains that faith has a central role in one’s approach to Scripture arguing,

If Scripture’s subject and flow is God, infleshed in Jesus Christ, active powerfully and formatively through Word and Spirit, then Yahweh’s purpose determines the shape of this narrative and calls upon readers to choose sides. That is, engaging with this narrative involves us in a formative and decision-making process...If previously, the task was one of *application*, now the task is [sic] one of *conversion*. To put it somewhat differently, let us ask the question, “What separates the contemporary reader from understanding and learning from the ancient texts of the Bible?” Scientific exegesis has answered singularly with reference to the historical rift. Theological exegesis focuses elsewhere, on the degree to which we share the theological claims of the biblical text and in terms of our willingness to “stand under” the Scriptures – that is, with reference to our practices of engaging with Scripture in the context of our commitment to live faithfully before the God to whom the Scriptures witness. [his emphasis].

J Green (2001:317) writes, “historical criticism assumes what no one can assume – namely, that there exists in scholarly inquiry a ledge of neutrality on which to stand to engage in biblical interpretation.”

The effect of faith on one’s presuppositions and approach to the historical reliability of the Gospels has been dramatically illustrated in the life and career of Eta Linnemann. Keefer, Jr (1998:1-2) explains the intellectual impact of conversion upon her

She could no longer endorse an approach to Scripture which called Christ into question. If the accepted scholarly norms denied the Lord who had saved her, she would have to choose between an academic system and loyalty to Christ....She realized that being a Christian meant a revolution of the mind. From this point on, all questions of truth would have to begin with the framework of Scripture.

The reality of conversion can change one's intellectual approach to Scripture and its historical reliability. Evangelicals who embrace a theology of conversion have consequently been very concerned with the authority and historical reliability of the Bible. This is a fundamental presupposition associated generally with evangelicals but especially for those who are part of the ETS. ETS members profess that they are committed to an inerrant Bible which entails a commitment to its authority over their life and mind as the final standard by which to judge matters of history and theology.

Summary

In this chapter it was argued that some within the ETS are arguing that they can employ even the "doubting" presuppositions of historical criticism for an apologetical purpose in the "service of their faith." This seems both inconsistent and a failure to recognize the pervasive force of presuppositions upon one's approach.

In the discussion of the Synoptic Problem it was argued that embracing any one of the many solutions to the Synoptic Problem is not incompatible with inerrancy as some ETS members claim. To argue that literary dependence in some way undermines the doctrine of inerrancy is a failure to properly define and understand inerrancy and the doctrine of inspiration. No-one can provide "the" solution to the Synoptic Problem and it is unwise to rule out any possibilities as incompatible with inerrancy when we do not know what sources God's Spirit moved the writers to employ.

Evangelicals and those in the ETS see a role for harmonization but many disdain an "additive" harmonization approach when it begins to resemble Lindsell's approach in handling Peter's denials of Jesus. Even if one does not embrace redaction criticism, a careful analysis through composition criticism of the literary structure of the various Gospels, and their special arrangement of material, like Mark's "sandwich technique," will often provide a solution to the apparent discrepancies. It was noted that redaction criticism was unable to "harmonize" the accounts of Peter's denials of Jesus.

The debate about chronology within the Gospels recognized that the Gospel writers arranged the events of Jesus' ministry in their Gospels according to their literary and theological purposes. A solution to these chronological issues is also not dependent upon a particular solution to the Synoptic Problem. It is best to acknowledge that unless there are distinguishable chronological markers in the text one should not simply assume the pericopes are arranged chronologically. As to whether one can provide a chronology of the life of Jesus from the four Gospels, it was suggested that one must always recognize that it is not a "strict" chronology.

The discussion about the *ipsissima verba* or *vox* of Jesus concluded Jesus may have spoken Greek but not predominately so that it is unlikely that a great deal of his actual *ipsissima verba* is preserved in the Gospels. Nevertheless, this should not be a matter of concern for evangelicals as inspiration and inerrancy do not require the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus simply the *ipsissima vox*. An "additive" harmonization approach to support the argument for Jesus' *ipsissima verba* was found problematic and could prove detrimental rather than supportive of the doctrine of inerrancy. The verbal inspiration of Scripture only requires the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus.

Form and tradition criticism are methods that have been justifiably criticized, modified or even abandoned and that the criteria of authenticity really fail to achieve their intended purpose. Consequently, redaction criticism rests upon a foundation of subjective methods that undermines its ability to detect the underlying tradition with any certainty. Evangelicals should recognize that composition criticism differs from redaction criticism and provides a methodology for studying the Gospels consistent with inerrancy.

The Gospel writers composed their works as both reliable historians and careful theologians. To try and separate history from faith in the study of the historical Jesus is not only wrong-headed but truly impossible, since there are no "uninterpreted facts." The Gospel writers recorded their historical accounts of Jesus' life from their "faith perspective" as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. In the study of the Bible one must recognize its role as inspired or "sacred" text and "to stand above the Bible" to critically judge it is a fundamentally improper approach since it is "God-breathed" revelation (2 Tim 3:16). One cannot stand somehow "objectively" outside one's own worldview and presuppositions to analyze the historical Jesus and to think one can is sadly to be naïve and uncritical in the truest sense.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Redaction criticism has been at the center of a debate amongst evangelicals, particularly those associated with the ETS. The debate flared up during the 1980's, then resurfaced again in the latter part of the 1990's and has continued on into the present. The redaction criticism debate has proven to have a significant role in exposing *differences* in *methodology, definitions, presuppositions, and boundaries* among evangelicals and members of the ETS.

The redaction criticism debate clearly revealed the *differing methodologies* employed by evangelicals including those committed to inerrancy within the ETS. Some within the ETS employ the historical-critical methodology while others employ the traditional grammatical-historical methodology. This highlighting of the different hermeneutic and methodologies was significant because some within the ETS maintain that the historical-critical approach is not consistent with an affirmation of inerrancy. The publication of *The Jesus Crisis* (1998) raised the awareness of these differences in methodology amongst evangelicals and those within the ETS. Thomas (1996:105) seems to allow no room for the practice of the historical-critical methodology, saying "The methodology therefore has no place in evangelical scholarship." Both the Gundry case and the *Jesus Seminar* brought the methodological issues front and center, precipitating a lively debate amongst ETS members. The ensuing tensions were clearly due to different methodologies which remain and which reflect differing viewpoints about the presuppositions one can or should employ and whether such presuppositions are in accord with the doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

The debate also displayed the necessity and failure at times to carefully *distinguish* between *two classes* of evangelicals employing redaction criticism. One group maintains inerrancy, while the other group does not, and frequently in *The Jesus Crisis* (1998) this important distinction was not noted. Consequently, all evangelical practitioners of redaction criticism were lumped together in the critique, at times giving a misleading impression concerning those practitioners of redaction criticism who do embrace inerrancy (Bock 2000:234).

The writers of *The Jesus Crisis* (1998) also seem to proceed with the methodologically flawed assumption that *literary independence* is required as the

solution to the *Synoptic Problem* if one is going to maintain *inerrancy*. This debate demonstrated that one can maintain a commitment to inerrancy while embracing differing theories about the Synoptic Problem. The debate exposed the vital role that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit plays in properly accounting for both the similarities and disagreements among the synoptic Gospels, regardless of one's theory about the Synoptic Problem.

Despite the rhetoric found in *The Jesus Crisis* (1998) that there was little difference in *methodology* between the *Jesus Seminar* and the practice of redaction criticism by *members* of the *ETS*, this debate helped to clarify the differences in methodology. The fundamental difference is noticeable in the area of the criteria of authenticity and the evangelical inerrantists' approach of assuming the authenticity and historicity of the sayings and acts of Jesus until proven unreliable, which is foundationally different than the methodology of the *Jesus Seminar*.

The debate underlined the *subjectivity* of the *conclusions* drawn by redaction critics. This subjectivity arises from the inability to truly discern the Gospel sources, whether oral, written or eyewitness and the consequent impossibility to separate the tradition from the redaction. Even when one believes that one can detect the sources according to one's theory of the Synoptic Problem, the ability to detect the "why" of the redaction from the "what" is often not recognized for its subjective nature either. The difficulty in detecting the theology of the Evangelist or the early church community from the redaction has not often been truly recognized. Redaction criticism builds on a questionable foundation that does not provide the assured results it proposes to deliver.

The redaction criticism debate was also instrumental in bringing to light the *differing definitions* that were being employed for "*inerrancy*." Gundry insisted he believed in inerrancy yet others considered his use of redaction criticism and midrash to imply historical errors in the Gospel accounts and this led to his dismissal from the ETS. Geisler (2004:140) contends that even two decades later, Pinnock and others in the ETS embrace an "inerrancy of intention" view which allows for historical errors and which is contrary to the understanding of inerrancy of the original founders of the ETS who held to an "inerrancy of fact" position.

The misunderstanding of the *meaning* or at least the implication of *inerrancy* was also manifest in the discussion of the *ipsissima verba* and *vox* of Jesus. It became

apparent from this debate that some like Thomas, Farnell, and D Green make a strong link between inerrancy and the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. This constitutes what this writer would consider to be an unnecessary desire for the preservation of the “exact words” of Jesus in the Greek texts of the Gospels, which is not required to maintain the inerrancy of Scripture. The preservation of the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus is compatible with the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. The debate also pointed out the potential undermining of the doctrine of inerrancy in the “overuse” of the “additive” harmonization approach employed by D Green in an effort to preserve the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus.

After such a lengthy debate one might suspect that the issue of the *definition* and meaning of *inerrancy* would be *resolved*, but such is not the case. In fact, the redaction criticism debate served to expose areas where further discussion and study were required. Thus, there has been continuing discussion about the definition of inspiration and inerrancy (McGowan 2003), the relationship of inerrancy to concepts of truth and speech act theory (Caneday 2004; Vanhoozer 2005) and truth and foundationalism (Groothius 2004; Moreland & DeWeese 2004). Some have even wondered if a “new inerrancy war” (Enns 2006b:326) may be brewing with regard to recent discussions about inerrancy and difficulties related to how evangelicals handle the Old Testament (Enns 2003; Beale 2006a; 2006b; Carson 2006:18-45; Enns 2006a; Enns 2006b, Beale 2007; Enns 2007).

Inerrancy is a fundamental doctrine embraced by many evangelical denominations and so it will continually remain the subject of discussion and debate as it has within the ETS. The foundational connection for an evangelical between one’s faith in Jesus and the Bible is nicely summed up by Helm (2002:246), who argues “We cannot reject the trustworthiness of Scripture (or whatever else is the vehicle) without undermining any coherent basis for knowing that God is trustworthy.” Macleod reminds evangelicals that “Christ still speaks, and speaks eloquently; but only in Scripture, the living, life-giving word.”

The redaction criticism debate also led to the recognition that *differing definitions* of “*redaction criticism*” were also at times at work. Evangelicals were “modifying” the methodology to deny the negative assumptions concerning the authenticity of Jesus’ sayings that were traditionally part of the historical-critical methodology. There was also a failure to carefully distinguish between the differences of methodology and purpose in redaction criticism and composition criticism. Thus, composition criticism, which is fully

compatible with the doctrine of inerrancy, was not distinguished from redaction criticism, with its more questionable ties to inerrancy, by some evangelicals.

The redaction criticism debate uncovered the essential *role of presuppositions* in one's methodology. ETS members like Bock claimed they could employ the presuppositions of non-evangelicals in using the historical-critical methodology for an apologetic purpose. This seems to misunderstand the manner in which presuppositions work as part of one's framework or worldview and value system. It seems to move inerrancy from a non-negotiable truth commitment and raises the question as to the legitimacy of claiming to accept inerrancy, by signing the doctrinal statement for the ETS each year, while also claiming one can proceed by denying inerrancy and employ the historical-critical method with the recognition it might lead one to deny the historicity of an event or saying of Jesus. Both evangelical and non-evangelical scholars have rightly questioned the "true commitment" to the historical-critical method by evangelical inerrantists who seem to "use the tools" but whose conclusions seem to always support an evangelical conclusion.

The participation of ETS members in the "Jesus Group" of the Institute of Biblical Research is another example of the failure to critically evaluate how one's presuppositions are at work as these evangelical scholars, a number of whom claim to embrace the inerrancy of Scripture, engage in an "assessment of the historicity and significance of ten key events in the life of Jesus" (Thomas 2005:30n83). Bock (2004: 137) responded that this does not undermine inerrancy since "It depends on how the process is done." Yet, he never explains how the process is to be done so that it does not undermine inerrancy. This writer believes Bock and others need to explain how one can logically profess inerrancy and then question the historicity of the events recorded in what one claims to be an inerrant Bible. For this writer, something seems incongruent in such an approach and it appears to be one's commitment to inerrancy.

Bird (2006a:303) critiques Willitts approach as reducing debate to "competing forms of pre-understanding rather than situating discussion primarily in textual study." Bird (2006a:303) speaks of presuppositions being like fences one can peer through not dungeons and notes that there is "a hermeneutical spiral whereby one's reading of historical texts is influenced by presuppositions, but one's presuppositions are in turn shaped, challenged, undone or renewed by the very act of reading texts." While one can

concur with much of what Bird says, the point still remains that at some point one draws a conclusion about the Bible and its historical reliability and trustworthiness or its lack of trustworthiness. This was Carson's (1983:141) point about inerrancy becoming a "nonnegotiable" in one's theology like the deity of Christ or the virgin birth. Cameron notes how one's faith presuppositions must function. "For the conservative theologian, Scripture must remain – as Gerhard Ebeling has characterised the tradition - 'a special *historia sacra* or *scriptura sacra* in the ontological sense as a self-evident intellectual presupposition influencing his method of research"¹ (Cameron 1994:256).

Bock's (2002c:19) "apologetic" argument for using the presuppositions of a non-evangelical as discussed in his analogy of leading the horse across the bridge to the "evangelical side" seems questionable. While recognizing there are different approaches to apologetics, this writer contends the role of each person's presuppositions needs to be considered and what apologetic methodology is truly consistent with biblical teaching and consequently Bock's suggested approach seems problematic from an apologetic perspective.²

This debate has directed attention to the *need* to clarify *boundaries*³ for an entity like the ETS (Bock 2002c:10; Lemke 2003:114-116) while maintaining a degree of latitude towards those who differ in areas of methodology or theology. At the time of the expulsion of Gundry from the ETS several members voiced their opinion that the ETS needed to address how one defined or understood "inerrancy" in relation to hermeneutical methodologies (Feinberg 1983:30; Geisler 1983b:87-94). Turner (1983:286) suggested the ETS adopt the ICBI's 1978 "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy." At the 1983 ETS annual business meeting the membership defeated a motion to adopt the two "Chicago Statements" [on inerrancy and hermeneutics] of the ICBI (Turner 1984:43). This failure to address the meaning of "inerrancy" and therefore the boundaries of the ETS has played a role in subsequent debates within the ETS.

In 1990 at the ETS annual meeting in order to maintain its "evangelical" distinctive, members voted to include a statement on the Trinity because non-Trinitarians were joining (Youngblood 1991:2; Grudem 2003:352). The 2001 ETS annual meeting even took as its theme, "Defining Evangelicalism's Boundaries." More recently the issue

¹ Cameron refers to: Ebeling (1963:47).

² One could consider the arguments of Bahnsen (1998:420-424).

³ Grudem (2003:340) defines "boundaries" as "doctrinal statements that are enforced by an organization."

of “open theism” led to a vote on the ETS memberships of Clark Pinnock and John Sanders (Borland 2004:170; Köstenberger 2004a:1-2; Streett 2004:131-132) and again a motion that the ETS clarify its definition of inerrancy (Borland 2004:172). At the 2006 ETS annual business meeting a by-law⁴ was passed by a 91% margin to clarify the meaning of inerrancy.

While the passing of this by-law is viewed as commendable by this author, the question remains whether it can function as a sufficient “boundary” for the ETS. In Bock’s (2002c:15n22) presidential address at the 2001 annual meeting he stated that if the ETS desired to adopt a fuller creed it should look to the historic creeds of the early church. Hart (2004:150-151) contends that inerrancy was intended to provide a theological base from which to gather a large number of evangelicals thereby providing them identity and clout but it has proven to be divisive and unable to hold together such a diverse movement as evangelicalism. Van Nestle (2004:74-81) concurs that the ETS statement on inerrancy is insufficient to function as “the boundary” for the ETS. In correspondence with Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians they acknowledged they could affirm the ETS statement. Van Nestle (2004:78-79) argues that modern day Docetists and Pelagians could also affirm the ETS doctrinal statement bringing into question the “evangelical” nature of such a limited boundary statement. He proposes the ETS adopt the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF) doctrinal statement. Grudem (2003:352) concurs that a longer doctrinal statement is needed “to keep the ETS from becoming different from what it has always been.”

The Gundry situation revealed this necessity of establishing a boundary for the meaning of inerrancy related to the historicity of the Gospel events. Yet, for all the rhetoric of the authors of *The Jesus Crisis* it is important to note that at no point did the authors ever file charges against other ETS members that they criticized in their book for denying the inerrancy of Scripture or the historicity of the events.

In some respects this has not always been a civil scholarly debate amongst evangelicals and members of the ETS, but at times the tone has been ratcheted up with

⁴ The by-law reads, “For the purposes of advising members regarding the intent and meaning of the reference to biblical inerrancy in the ETS Doctrinal Basis, the Society refers members to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978). The case for biblical inerrancy rests on the absolute trustworthiness of God and Scripture’s testimony to itself. A proper understanding of inerrancy takes into account the language, genres, and intent of Scripture. We reject approaches to Scripture that deny that biblical truth claims are grounded in reality.”

terminology that reflects warfare. Osborne (1999:209) calls this an “egregious approach” noting

Farnell says that evangelical HCs “dance on the edge of hermeneutical and theological disaster” and demands that everyone “categorically reject historical-critical methods” and embrace “the grammatical-historical approach.”⁵ All evangelical HCs already embrace that method. (2) Hutchison says that “a warning of its dangers needs to be sounded to all those whom God has called to pulpit ministry.”⁶ It is clear that those in this book are going to war, and dialogue is no longer possible. (3) Thomas concludes the book by calling for the church to raise “her voice against the enemy who already has his foot in the door,” language that virtually accuses evangelical HCs of satanic influence (note the singular “his”). Such radical charges divide evangelicals and make unity in the church (John 17:20–23) impossible.

(Bock 2002b:20) contends that within the ETS a spirit of scholarly acceptance that allows time for internal reflection and for the give-and-take of different views needs to prevail.

This seems appropriate but as each party participates in their “give-and take” it is incompetent upon the differing parties to strive to make sure they are operating with clearly defined terms in their discussions. In the redaction criticism debate it has become apparent that at times people proceeded without clearly defined definitions of the terms they and their opponent were employing. It is inevitable that misunderstanding and disagreement will arise under such circumstances. It is argued that each party in the debate needs to consider or re-consider fundamental issues like definitions and presuppositions that underlie their differing methodologies. This writer contends that the grammatical-historical approach is compatible with inerrancy but so too is a “modified” use of redaction criticism when employed with presuppositions concerning the historical reliability and trustworthiness of Scripture. Nevertheless, redaction criticism is a flawed methodology even when used in a “modified” form by evangelicals, who would be better served to study the Gospels using composition criticism.

This writer would propose evangelicals abandon redaction criticism and consider a different methodology that is similar to the grammatical-historical approach. The basic components of such a proposed methodology would consist of a *critical*, *compositional*, *canonical*, and *comparative* approach in the study of the synoptic Gospels. Such an approach would hopefully avoid the subjectivity presently associated with redaction

⁵ Farnell (1998a:222).

⁶ Hutchinson (1998:351).

critical studies. One reason this would be true is because it would not necessitate a solution to the Synoptic Problem with its subjective foundation and conclusions.

A *critical* approach is being defined as one that addresses issues related to the historicity and reliability of the Gospels. The basic approach to the historicity of the Gospels was outlined in chapter six, and this writer commends the methodology of Barnett, which should lead to the conclusion that the Gospels are trustworthy historical sources for knowledge about Jesus. A *critical* approach will also necessitate the determining of the *autographa* through textual criticism, which was discussed in chapter two.

The next stage in the methodology would be to apply a *compositional analysis* to the Gospel being studied. The nature of compositional analysis was discussed in chapters four and six. Such a study would focus attention on the literary structure, techniques, and vocabulary of the specific Gospel, while noting the development of the plot and related themes. Unlike redaction criticism, issues of interdependence and sources would not be considered. The issue of the historicity of the Gospel pericopes also would not be considered under this approach, having already been addressed in the *critical* approach, or stage one of the methodology.

The third stage in the methodology would be a *canonical* approach. In this stage, one would examine other portions of the canonical Bible, particularly the other Gospels to see what *additional* historical data they supply concerning the pericope being studied. This stage is principally designed to provide the fullest historical picture of the event under consideration in the study of a pericope. The literary context within another Gospel would be noted but at this stage there is no need to harmonize the corresponding pericopes from the different Gospels, but simply to gather all the historical data from the sources. This would seem to be similar to the harmonization process in that one seeks to cull all the historical details possible from all the historical accounts. Yet, one is not trying to account for or reconcile any differences in details or wording at this stage.

In the final stage of the proposed methodology, one would undertake a *comparative* study of the data gathered in the *canonical* stage with the data found in the *compositional analysis* of a pericope in the specific Gospel being studied. Thus, if one was studying Luke, the data found in the other parallel Gospel accounts that Luke does not record would be noted and compared to the data that Luke does record. Unlike

redaction criticism where one must begin with a solution to the Synoptic Problem to ascertain whether there was borrowing or redaction, a solution to the Synoptic Problem is not required in this approach. In this sense, it functions more like the independence solution to the Synoptic Problem, but in reality it simply leaves the question unaddressed, as a question which is impossible to solve. Thus, in this approach one compares the details of Luke's pericope with the details of the "full historical event" in the life of Jesus as represented by all the historical details found in all the Gospel accounts or Bible.

The underlying presupposition is that the writer has acted as a *historian* and *theologian* and selectively chosen only some of the historical data from the "full historical event" of Jesus' life. The data selected was obviously chosen in accordance with the specific purposes of the Gospel being composed. It is recognized that one might argue that a Gospel writer possibly did not have access to "all" the historical details of the "full historical event" recorded in an individual pericope. In such a case, this could account for the absence of some historical details in the writer's pericope and make drawing comparative conclusions in this stage somewhat suspect. Yet, if one accepts the traditional historical testimony concerning the authorship of the Gospels, then in the case of the Gospels of Matthew and John one is dealing with eyewitnesses who had access to the "full historical event." In the case of Mark, if he is writing his account based upon Peter's recollections, then he also writes based on an eyewitness source, Peter, who had access to the "full historical event" in Jesus' life. In the study of Luke's Gospel, one must simply be content to acknowledge that Luke made careful investigation into the life of Jesus (Lk 1:1-4) and note Luke's own unique contributions to the historical account of Jesus' life as evidenced in the birth narratives. Certainly, one would be tempted to argue just from that historical research that it would be very likely that Luke also had access to the "full historical event" as he recorded select events from Jesus' life.

Working from these presuppositions, one could then through a comparison of the data a writer selected from the "full historical event" draw some possible insights into the writer's purpose. One suspects these would align with the conclusions already drawn from the compositional analysis previously undertaken in stage two of this approach. This would seem to be somewhat similar to redaction criticism except one is not looking for changes or redaction but rather the selectivity of material and how it relates to purposes already discerned in the compositional analysis of the Gospel. Also at this stage,

if one sought to account for the differences in details or wording between the pericopes in the Gospels, rather than simply embracing the traditional harmonistic approach one would be better to begin with a careful compositional analysis of each Gospel as offering the more likely solution to the differences.

This approach is fully compatible with the doctrine of inerrancy, while avoiding the subjectivity that surrounds approaches like redaction criticism, due to its necessity of building on a proposed solution to the “insolvable” Synoptic Problem. This approach like redaction criticism seeks to discern the distinct purposes of each Gospel and not blend them together in a harmonistic manner that overlooks their divinely inspired distinctive purpose. Yet, while striving to uncover the distinctiveness of each Gospel it also recognizes the benefits of having four Gospels which give us a fuller and richer historical presentation of Jesus of Nazareth.

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APPENDIX A

Why Jesus Would Only Have Spoken Once In Performing Miracles

The “additive” approach to harmonization seems difficult to refute since in an effort to support the concept that the Gospels contain the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus one can simply “add” another repetition of the words to account for each difference between the parallel Gospel accounts. Most would acknowledge that Jesus may very likely have said things in similar ways on more than once occasion and in such a case there is little difficulty accepting that as a logical solution. Yet, when it is apparent that the Gospels are recording the same occasion and incident and one resorts to a solution that requires the repetition of words several times to account for all the possible differences in Jesus’ words then this taxes one’s credulity.

In an effort to address this issue, the miracles of Jesus will be examined. This study will focus on those miracles where there is a record of Jesus’ words that shows a connection to a miracle event. This study is assuming the historicity of the miracle events as recorded in the Gospel accounts. The focus is to detect a pattern or paradigm between the words of Jesus and the resulting miracle. In establishing a relationship between the divine power associated with Jesus’ words and his miracles, the question as to whether Jesus would ever have spoken similar but repeated words in the actuation of his miracles will be considered and applied to the *ipsissima verba* and *vox* issue. To begin, only those miracles that are found in a single Gospel will be studied and some conclusions will be drawn from these miracle accounts that may be applied to the parallel accounts of Jesus’ miracles that are found in more than one Gospel.

By first examining the miracles found in only one Gospel, one can temporarily attempt to set aside the thorny issue of the Synoptic Problem. While recognizing that whatever the solution to the Synoptic Problem is that underlies each Gospel, in the case of these particular miracles, only one Gospel writer chose to record the words of Jesus and so whatever adaptations the writer may be making, it does not bear upon the words of Jesus since they are not found in one of the other Gospel accounts. In contrast, when examining the accounts where miracles are reported in more than one Gospel, one is always faced with the difficult, and some might argue impossible, task of trying to determine which writer may have adapted or modified the words of Jesus in some small

or significant way for theological or literary purposes. Other words of Jesus or of other participants in the miracle accounts will not be examined, only the precise words of Jesus that are recorded as resulting in a miracle.

In examining the words of Jesus in the miracle accounts found in only one Gospel, obviously there is no need to “harmonize” the words of Jesus since there is only one record, and the “additive” principle of harmonization is inapplicable. What this study seeks to discern is whether any of the miracle accounts provide instances where Jesus spoke more than once to accomplish his miracle. If there are no examples of Jesus speaking more than once to accomplish his miracles then one can see clearly the intimate relationship between Jesus’ spoken word and the resulting miracle. If this can be established, then it sets a paradigm that should control the manner in which one addresses the *ipsissima verba* or *vox* issues in parallel “miracle” accounts where Jesus’ words are not identical and one might attempt to harmonize the differences with the “additive” harmonization principle.

1. MIRACLES RECORDED IN ONE GOSPEL ACCOUNT

The first part of the study will proceed in three sections, looking first at eleven “healing” miracles that are found in only a single Gospel. Secondly, there are four accounts where Jesus exercised a miracle related to “nature” that are found in only one Gospel and they will be examined. The final section will examine the two accounts found in only a single Gospel that show Jesus “raising someone from death to life.” The first part of this study then only includes those passages of Jesus’ healing miracles which Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003) regard as not having a parallel.¹

1.1 “Healing” miracles recorded in one Gospel account

In considering healings of Jesus found in only one Gospel, the texts to consider are Matthew 9:27-31; 9:32-33; Mark 7:31-37; 8:22-26; Luke 13:11-13; 14:1-4; 17:11-19;

¹ The list of miracles is drawn from two sources, *The NIV Study Bible*. K Barker (ed), (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 1596 and Blackburn (1992:551). Both of these works fail to list John 9:1-11 and Blackburn also does not include Luke 5:4-11.

22:50-51²; and John 4:46-54; 5:1-9; 9:1-7. In Matthew 9:27-31 Jesus responds to the request of two men and says, “According to your faith will it be done to you” (v. 29)³ and Jesus touched their eyes and the two blind men were healed. Jesus’ words were effective in this healing and he only spoke once. In the Matthew 9:32-33 account of the driving out of a demon-possessed man there is no record of Jesus speaking. In healing the deaf and partially mute man in Mark 7:34, Jesus says, “Ephphatha!” and Mark records that the man’s ears were opened and he was able to speak plainly. Complete healing accompanied a single word from Jesus.

In Mark 8:22-26 a blind man is brought to Jesus and after spitting on the man’s eyes and putting his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?” The man could see but apparently his vision was blurred so Jesus put his hands on him a second time and he then saw everything clearly. It is not recorded that Jesus spoke to him in doing this miracle. A number of commentators (Guelich 1989:434; Garland 1996:313) rightly note that the apparent reason for the two phase healing is because it is an acted parable.

Witherington’s (2001:238) comments are to the point:

The miracle visually demonstrates the spiritual malady of the disciples. But note that it, unlike others, occurs in two stages, and so too in what follows in 8:27ff. The disciples’ understanding of who Jesus is and his ministry likewise occurs in two stages. The placement of this particular miracle here is not accidental, but rather a visible parable of what was, and what was to come in the psyche of the disciples.

This miracle then does not provide a further example of Jesus speaking as part of the healing and the two-stage healing is to be understood as an exceptional act to illustrate the disciples’ two-stage healing of spiritual blindness.

In Luke 13:12, on a Sabbath Jesus calls a woman who was crippled forward before all the people in the synagogue. As they watch, he says to her, “Women, you are set free from your infirmity.” Luke records that after Jesus placed his hands on her she straightened up immediately. Jesus spoke once and in conjunction with his touch there was complete healing. Luke 14:1-4 records another Sabbath healing in the house of a

² The account of Peter cutting of the ear of the servant of the high priest is found in all four Gospels but only Luke records Jesus’ healing miracle.

³ All quotations are from the *NIV Study Bible*. K Barker (ed) 1985. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

prominent Pharisee. Jesus touched the man but Luke provides no record that Jesus spoke to him, but Luke does indicate the man was completely healed of his dropsy.

Jesus' healing of ten lepers is recorded in Luke 17:11-19. They cried out to Jesus and he responded, "Go, show yourselves to the priests" (v. 14). Luke notes that as they went they were cleansed of their disease. Luke portrays Jesus speaking only a few words and only once and all were immediately healed. Only Luke 22:50-51 records Jesus' healing of the ear of the high priest's servant but no words are noted in connection with the healing.

John 4:46-54 locates Jesus in Cana and he was asked to come to Capernaum to heal the dying son of a royal official. Jesus told the man, "You may go. Your son will live" (v. 50). The father headed home and found his son had begun recovering at the exact time Jesus has spoken the "healing word" to him. In John 5:1-9, Jesus approaches a paralyzed man and inquires whether he would like to be healed. When the man responds lamenting his need of assistance, Jesus commands him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk" (v. 9). Jesus speaks but once and healing takes place immediately. In John 9:1-7, Jesus spits on the ground and applies mud to the eyes of a man born blind. After applying the mud to the man's eyes, Jesus tells him, "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam" (v. 7). John informs his readers that when the man did so he went home seeing.

Of the eleven miracles of "healing," which have no parallels in any of the other Gospels, seven of them record words that Jesus spoke in conjunction with his healing ministry. In all seven of these cases, healing was immediate and there is no indication in any of the accounts that Jesus ever spoke more than once in accomplishing the healing.

1.2 "Nature" miracles recorded in one Gospel account

The four miracles of Jesus demonstrated in relationship to "nature" will be examined. The miracles are found in Matthew 17:24-27, Luke 5:4-11, John 2:1-11 and 21:1-11. The miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth (Mt 17:24-27) transpires in accord with Jesus' command to Peter to cast a line and open the mouth of the first fish caught and Peter will find the money required to pay the tax (v. 27). Jesus' words to Peter therefore have an unmistakable connection to the miraculous provision. Jesus is not required to tell or explain to Peter more than once the "means to the miracle."

In Luke 5:1-11⁴ there is recorded a miraculous catch of fish that occurs as Peter obediently follows Jesus' command to, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch" (v. 4). The miraculous power inherent in Jesus' words becomes evident as their nets become so full that the boats began to sink (v. 7). Luke records Jesus giving this command but once and the remarkable miracle accompanied his command.

John provides an account of Jesus at a wedding in Cana (2:1-11) and in response to a need for more wine Jesus instructs the servants to "Fill the jars with water" (v. 7). After the master of the banquet tastes the liquid drawn from the jars, he exclaims this is the best wine that has been served at the wedding. John reveals that Jesus simply speaks to the servants once, they obey Jesus' order, and immediately the people experience the benefits and joy of Jesus' miracle.

The Gospel of John also records a miracle pertaining to the disciples catching fish (21:1-14) that occurs after Jesus' resurrection. The disciples were having no success in their fishing endeavor when Jesus, who they have not yet recognized from the boat, tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat (v. 6). When they do they enjoy an incredibly large catch of fish causing them to recognize Jesus was present.

In all four of these "nature" miracles, which are each recorded in a single Gospel account, it is apparent that Jesus' words result in miraculous provisions. The miracles happen immediately and each account records Jesus but speaking his commands once and his words lead to the predicted result. This agrees with what was demonstrated in the first section concerning Jesus' words and their miraculous consequences.

1.3 "Raising the dead" miracles recorded in one Gospel account

There are two miracles found in only one Gospel where Jesus "raises someone from the dead" and they are recorded in Luke 7:11-15 and John 11:1-44. Luke 7:11-15 describes a widow whose son has died and Jesus' ensuing compassion for her. Jesus approaches the dead body and speaks to the lifeless corpse. Jesus' words, "Young man, I say to you get up!" (v. 14) bring the man to life immediately to the wonder of all present.

⁴ In their harmony, Thomas and Gundry ([1988] 2003:57) place this event parallel to Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20 in the text. Yet, they ([1988] 2003:57nf) note that they differ from A T Robertson's arrangement in this particular instance and see it as a separate account.

The other example of Jesus raising someone from the dead is the famous account of the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11). Jesus arrives at the home of Lazarus' sisters several days after Lazarus' death. Jesus approaches the tomb of his dear friend and after the stone is rolled away Jesus prays. As mourners watch him, Jesus calls out in a loud voice, "Lazarus come out" (v. 43) and the dead man revived to life waddles out of the grave.

Both examples demonstrate Jesus' spoken word bringing men to life. Jesus speaks only once and the dead are raised to life. The results of the study reveal that there were seventeen miracles of Jesus found in a sole Gospel account, and in thirteen of these accounts the Gospel writer recorded words of Jesus in conjunction with the miracle performed. Of the thirteen examples where Jesus spoke and a miracle resulted, there is not one example of Jesus needing to speak a second time or repeat his words to accomplish the miracle. This then establishes a paradigm concerning a connection between Jesus' spoken word and his miracles.

2. MIRACLES RECORDED IN PARALLEL GOSPEL ACCOUNTS

There are eighteen other miracles that are attested to in more than one Gospel (Blackburn 1992:551), and based upon what has been seen so far one would not expect that Jesus would have to speak more than once to accomplish his miracles in these instances. The eighteen accounts will be examined to see whether the previously noted "paradigm" is applicable to these miracle accounts.

2.1 Parallel miracle accounts where one Gospel records Jesus' words

There are twelve "healing" miracles found in more than one Gospel,⁵ there are five "nature" miracles and one "raising of the dead" miracle.⁶ An examination of these eighteen miracles reveals that in six of these accounts there are no words recorded by Jesus in connection with the performance of the miracle (Mt 8:14-17 par. Mt 9:19-22

⁵ Since in all but once instance Matthew has a record of the miracle, the initial reference in the text will simply list the reference in Matthew and the abbreviation for consulting parallel accounts (par.).

⁶ Barker (1985:1596).

par.⁷ Mt 12:22 = Lk 11:14; Mt 14:15-21 par. Mt 14:25 par. Mt 15:32-38 par.). In four of these miracle accounts, with parallels in other Gospels, only one Gospel records words of Jesus related to his miracle (Mt 8:5-13 par. Mt 8:23-27 par. Mt 8:28-34 par. Mt 17:14-18 par.). Each of these will be now considered to see if they conform to the “paradigm” between Jesus’ words and miracles.

In the account of the healing of the centurion’s servant (Mt 8:5-13 par.) only Matthew recounts Jesus words, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would” (v. 13). Matthew 8:13 notes that the servant was healed at that very hour establishing the connection between Jesus’ words, that were spoken but once, and immediate healing. Each of the synoptic Gospels records Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat with his disciples when a storm arose (Mt 8:23-27 par.). In these parallel accounts, only Mark 4:39 mentions Jesus words, “Quiet! Be Still!” that caused the wind to subside and the water to become calm. It appears that Jesus was not repeating his command but actually rebuking first the wind and then the waves as indicated in the parallel accounts (Mt 8:26; Lk 8:24). Jesus addresses one stern word to the wind and one to the water and immediately they obey and the storm is over and all is calm. This fits the paradigm of Jesus’ powerful miracle-inducing speech.

The healing of the demon-possessed men in the region of the Gadarenes (Mt 8:28-34 par.) shows Jesus in conversation with demons, who plead with Jesus to let them inhabit a herd of swine nearby. Only Matthew (8:32) records Jesus’ word of permission, “Go!” and immediately the swine rush to their death and Mark (5:15) and Luke (8:35) note the healing of the man previously possessed with the demons named, Legion, fully dressed and in his right mind. Matthew (8:33) records the townspeople report what had happened to the two men implying their miraculous healing. Jesus speaks one word and the men are immediately and miraculously released from their oppressive bondage.

All three synoptic Gospels recount a man pleading with Jesus to heal the man’s son, who was demon-possessed (Mt 17:14-18 par.). Mark 9:25 preserves Jesus’ rebuke of the evil spirit, “You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” Matthew 17:18 notes the boy was healed from that very moment that

⁷ In the account of the healing of the bleeding women, her healing takes place through a touch of Jesus’ garment (Mk 5:29; Lk 8:44) and Jesus’ words in Matthew 9:22 affirm she was healed due to her faith so Jesus’ words are not the “means” of healing as is usually the case.

Jesus rebuked the evil spirit. In looking at four instances of parallel accounts where only one Gospel records words of Jesus that effect a miracle, it is evident that the paradigm remains true. Jesus speaks once and a miracle is actualized immediately.

2.2 Parallel miracle accounts where multiple Gospels record Jesus' words

There are eight parallel Gospel accounts recording a miracle of Jesus that also provide words of Jesus that were associated with a miracle. In one case the exact same words of Jesus are recorded in each Gospel (Mt 8:2-4 par.). Jesus is asked by a man with leprosy whether he is willing to heal him and in all three synoptic Gospels (Mt 8:3; Mk 1:41; Lk 5:13), Jesus responds positively saying, θέλω, καθάρισθητι: (“I am willing, . . . Be clean!”).

There are also then seven parallel Gospel accounts where the words of Jesus related to his miracle are not identical (Mt 9:1-8 par. Mt 9:18-19, 23-25 par. Mt 12:9-14 par. Mt 15:21-28 par. Mt 20:29-34 par. Mt 21:18-22 par. Mk 1:23-26 par.). In several instances the differences are very minor with one word different or a slight change in word order (Mt 12:9-14 par. Mk 1:23-26 par.). Rather than examine all the remaining passages and their differences, Jesus' healing of the paralyzed man (Mt 9:1-8 par.) will be considered and some conclusions will be drawn from it.

Jesus had a paralyzed man lowered into his presence from the roof above and he pronounced the man's sins were forgiven. Some present murmured and so Jesus to demonstrate his authority to forgive sins provided a demonstration of his divine power and authority by healing the crippled man. All three synoptic Gospels provide similar but not identical wording from Jesus (Mt 9:6; Mk 2:11; Lk 5:24) as one can see:

Matthew 9:6: Ἐγερθεὶς ἄρον σου τὴν κλίνην καὶ ὕπαγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου. *NIV:* “Get up, take your mat and go home”

Mark 2:11: Σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε ἄρον τὸν κράβαττόν σου καὶ ὕπαγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου *NIV:* “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”

Luke 5:24: Σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε καὶ ἄρας τὸ κλινιδιόν σου πορεύου εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου. *NIV:* “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”

It is apparent from the Greek texts that there are numerous identical words, yet it is also obvious that none of the three verses is identical with even one of the other two

Gospels. There are differences in the verbs, ἐγερθεῖς, ἔγειρε, ἄρον, ἄρας, ὕπαγε, and πορεύου, and in the different words translated “mat” by the NIV (κράβαττόν “mattress or pallet” and κλινίδιόν “pallet or stretcher”).

One observes that all three Gospels note that the man immediately rose up and walked after Jesus spoke to him (Mt 9:7; Mk 2:12; Lk 5:25). Jesus’ words, that each of the Gospels provide, were effective to heal the man according to each Gospel account. Nevertheless, the words in the three Gospels do not agree precisely and yet it would be ludicrous to employ the “additive” approach to harmonize Jesus’ words for one simple reason. Those arguing for inerrancy maintain that each Gospel is inspired and inerrant and presents Jesus’ words, whether they are his *ipsissima verba* or *vox* and that when Jesus spoke those words they actuated an immediate healing. This is part of what one means by the inerrancy of texts like Matthew 9:6, Mark 2:11 and Luke 5:24. That is they make a truth claim about a historical act of Jesus. Consequently, one cannot use the “additive” harmonization approach in considering the miracles of Jesus without undermining the inerrancy of Scripture.

If the words Matthew, Mark, and Luke record from Jesus’ lips produced a healing then what is one to conclude? Was the man healed three times or was he healed once with three accounts of his healing and of Jesus’ words, with each account reflecting slight differences in Jesus’ words? This example reveals the problematic nature of using the “additive” harmonization approach. Yes, it can be argued that the inspired words of Jesus found in the Gospels are but “part of the whole” conversation that may have been spoken. Yet, in the miracle accounts it should become clear that this argument is not as supportive of inerrancy as one might imagine when employed with an “additive” harmonization approach in an effort to argue that each Gospel provides Jesus’ *ipsissima verba*.

The “paradigm” demonstrates that in the records of Jesus’ miracles when Jesus spoke miraculous things happened immediately and Jesus never repeated his words to accomplish the miraculous events. Thus, in all three synoptic Gospels a healing accompanies Jesus’ words. Even if the words Jesus spoke do not reflect major differences they do reflect differences that must be explained by an appeal to Jesus’ *ipsissima verba* or *vox*. The only way to “harmonize” these three different accounts according to the “paradigm” is to recognize at least two or maybe all three Gospel accounts provide the

ipsissima vox of Jesus. The reason for this is that historically one day in Capernaum Jesus spoke once to a crippled man [maybe Jesus' exact words are recorded in Matthew or in Mark or in Luke] and when he did the man rose, took his bed and walked away healed.

The “additive” harmonization approach would actually undermine the inerrancy of the Scriptures in this example. If in order to have the *ipsissima verba* recorded in all three Gospel accounts [allowing the unproven assumption that Jesus spoke Greek on the occasion] one must have Jesus speak or repeat all three statements from each Gospel then one creates a strange situation. The paralytic man could not be healed by Jesus' words found in Matthew and then be paralyzed instantly and need to be re-healed again by Jesus' words in Mark or Luke, for that would simply mean the paralytic was not healed the first time and that would mean Jesus' words were not powerful to heal. If Jesus was not able to heal the man, then Jesus' argument that he had the authority to forgive the man's sins were unproven. That is a significant price to pay if one were to employ the “additive” harmonization principle to support the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. Ironically, then the very attempt to preserve the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus and the doctrine of inerrancy could undermine inerrancy!

One needs to also honestly reckon with the possibility that even in the first example considered in this section where Jesus speaks to the man with leprosy that one might not have the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. Even though all three Gospels record the exact same words of Jesus (Mt 8:3; Mk 1:41; Lk 5:13), θέλω, καθάρισθητι: (“I am willing,...Be clean!”), one cannot be absolutely certain these Gospels contain the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus since he may have spoken to the man in Aramaic or Hebrew. Or as Tan (2001:612-13) notes, possibly these words reflect a common oral tradition that arose when the traditions were translated into Greek or it could reflect *the ipsissima vox* of Jesus and the literary dependence of the other two Gospels using that source which contained Jesus' *ipsissima vox*, such as Mark in the two-source theory.

In conclusion, appeals to Jesus' *ipsissima verba* that would employ an “additive harmonization” approach and require that Jesus must have repeated words that resulted in his miracles are questionable in light of this study. This study supports the conclusion that one can and must consider that some of Jesus' words in the Gospels reflect his *ipsissima vox* if one desires to support the doctrine of inerrancy. The danger of repeating

a harmonistic approach similar to that of Lindsell appears quite possible when one approaches the synoptic Gospels by arguing for the necessity of the *ipsissima verba* to maintain the doctrine of inerrancy.