

the New Hermeneutic, however, "hermeneutic" really encompassed both *meaning and significance* with the emphasis falling on the latter.

b. Redaction Criticism

Redaction is one of the most recent developments in a line of historical-critical tools. It may be described as a step-daughter of Form Criticism, which itself was an outgrowth of the older literary criticism.

Literary criticism in the nineteenth century had discovered the alleged composite character of both OT and NT documents (see above, for example, the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis, p. 19). This criticism tended to treat the biblical documents as the literary product of individual personalities rather than as shared traditions of the community of faith.

In an effort to correct this situation the early 20th century saw the development by German scholars of Form Criticism. Here the emphasis fell on the identification and analysis of traditional (originally oral) forms or genres by which human existence is expressed linguistically: legends, hymns, myths, etc. The idea is that these forms arose in a particular "life situation" (Sitz-im-Leben) within the community of believers. By analyzing the form we may get insight into the life situation, which in turn will give insight into the meaning of the form. In OT studies the beginning of Form Criticism is linked with the name Herman Gunkel. In NT studies the roots go back to K.L. Schmidt, Martin Debelius, and Rudolf Bultmann.

Redaction criticism builds on the basic presuppositions of Form Criticism and is a logical extension of it. Form Criticism had tended to treat the biblical writers primarily as collectors and compilers, but much less as authors. There was little concern for the ways in which the writers *used* traditional materials. To quote Soulen again (*Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, p. 165), Redaction Criticism

"deals positively with the redactional framework into which the traditions have been placed; it therefore provides a corrective to the methodological imbalance of Form Criticism. It is the evangelist's use, disuse, or alteration of the traditions known to him that is in view, rather than the form and original setting of the traditions themselves."

We should note that the basic idea that the NT writers to some extent shaped the materials they used has been recognized by virtually all interpreters even as far back as Irenaeus (ca. 180 AD). In much of its contemporary development however Redaction Criticism builds on the rationalistic biases of Form Criticism, and so such works must be used with care. You may wish to consult here the careful study of D.A. Carson, "Redaction Criticism: The Nature of an Interpretive Tool" (Christianity Today, Inc., 1985).