

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Lecture 11, Redaction

Criticism

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In the last session we were discussing form criticism in both the Old and New Testament, and we ended by discussing form criticism in the New Testament, and especially its development in gospel studies. And we said that form criticism emerging in gospel studies focused on or had three facets. Number one, identifying and labeling the form, such as a pronouncement story or saying or proverbial statement or something like that.

Second, isolating or analyzing the setting in life, the *Sitz im Leben*, to use the German term, the setting in life in the early church that may have given rise to the form. For example, some think that miracle stories may have arisen in the early church in the setting or context where it was necessary to defend the faith or an apologetic context. But isolating or recovering the setting in life, the setting in the early church that gave rise to the form, and then finally examining the oral transmission of the form before the period of its actual inclusion in the biblical text.

To look at another example of a form within the gospels themselves, and one area that has, in some respects, been rather fruitful when it comes to form criticism, and there's a lot we could say about this, but I'll boil it down to just a couple of points, is the parables of Jesus seem to be a fruitful area of study when it comes to form criticism, especially focusing, we said, probably the most fruitful part aspect of New Testament form criticism is focused on the first element, that is, identifying the form itself in the text and labeling that form. But parables, I think, are a fruitful example of how form criticism can work, and especially how it affects the way we interpret it. In the past, the parables have been dominated by an approach that says that we should focus on or look for the one main point that the parable teaches.

The parables are seen as a simile or a metaphor, sometimes, or labeled as a story that only communicates one single point. So the goal of the interpreter is to figure out what point was Jesus trying to get across when he taught parables. What's intriguing about that approach is that it generally goes back to a German scholar, Adolf Jülicher, who was responding to the way parables were treated up until the 19th century and 20th century, when parables, before that time, parables were frequently allegorized.

We read an extreme example a few sessions ago from St. Augustine's treatment of the parable of the Good Samaritan, where he found an allegorical meaning behind virtually everything in the parable. In reaction to that kind of interpretation, Adolf Jülicher, a German scholar whose work, unfortunately, has not yet been translated into English, but he argued that no parables only communicate one main point. So in a lot of interpretive or books on biblical interpretation or books on biblical hermeneutics that treat parables will follow this advice and suggest the goal of the interpreter is based on the historical context and based on Jesus' teaching, is to figure out what is the one main point that the parable is trying to teach.

However, recently, not so much as a result of the type of classical form criticism that we've been discussing, but recently the form of the parables has been revisited and many have suggested that the parables could be classified, actually, as limited allegories. That is, the parables are allegories in the sense that only the main features or the main characters get a second level of meaning or an allegorical meaning. Not everything.

In other words, most of the details are there just to make the story work. But at the same time, it seems that the main characters in the story get a second level of meaning or an allegorical meaning. And in many respects, is this not the way Jesus

treated the parables when he did interpret them? For example, I think of the parable of the sower where Jesus tells the parable and then he goes on and explains it for his disciples.

And he says, the sower is the one who sows the seed of the word of God. The seed is the word of God, the gospel, the kingdom. The different grounds that the seed fall on are different responses to the word.

So it even seems that that's how Jesus treated the parables. Although not everything is treated allegorically, it seems that the main points and the main characters of the parable are meant to have a deeper level of meaning, an allegorical meaning. But again, one that is consistent with the context and with the teaching of Jesus, not necessarily one that reflects later New Testament teaching, et cetera, et cetera, but meanings that are suitable for the stage of salvation history in which Jesus arrives and brings about the kingdom of God.

So for example, one way of analyzing the parables has been to see, and we'll return to this later on as well, but to see parables according to three main types. One kind of parable is what is known as a monadic parable. That is a parable that does have only one main point because it seems to have only one main character.

For example, the parable, the mustard seed, the well-known parable, the mustard seed, the main feature of that parable is the mustard seed. That's what's communicating the point. That's the feature that gets the allegorical level of meaning and everything else in the parable is just there to make the story work.

Or the other type of parable then would be what could be called a dyadic parable. That is a parable that has two main points that correspond to two main persons or characters or features within the parable, such as the parable that Jesus tells about a

woman and a judge, a woman who goes to a judge and basically bothers the judge until the judge decides to respond to her and give her what she asked for. Those are the two main features of the parable, the two main characters that will receive an allegorical meaning.

Everything else in the parable is just there for color to make the parable work. And then finally, to move up the scale, the final type of parable could be labeled a triadic parable. And as that label implies, these parables would have three main points.

And the classic example would be a parable where you have a master and a good and a bad servant under that master, and the master will interact with both of them. Sometimes the good or the bad servant could, there could be more than one. You could have several good servants and maybe one bad servant or something like that.

But in this case, again, you will have three main points corresponding or three main allegorical meanings corresponding to the three main characters in the parable. And again, everything else is there just for color, just to make the parable and the story work. Let me give you an example from a parable that we've already referred to a couple of times, and that is the parable of the prodigal son.

And you know, perhaps you know the story well, a son who goes to his father and asks for his inheritance, his share of the inheritance. The father gives him his inheritance. The son goes off and squanders it on all kinds of loose living.

And when he runs out of money, he comes to his senses. He comes back to his father hoping that he will at least be received as a servant, if not as a son. But we said the father sees the son a long way off and runs out to greet him and hugs him, brings him back, throws this elaborate party for his son.

The parable interestingly ends though with one further character, that is the older son, who responds and questions what the father's doing and responds in jealousy because the father's treating the son in a way he does not deserve. And the parable ends there. This is a classic example of the parable of the prodigal son.

This in Luke 15, this is a example of a triadic parable. That is there are three main characters in this parable, the prodigal son, the so-called prodigal son, the younger son, the father, and then the older son. So with this method of looking at the parables, there will be an allegorical meaning associated with each of the three characters in the parable.

Again, a meaning that Jesus intended and is consistent with the history and the context of Jesus' teaching and Jesus' life. First of all, then, the father in the parable obviously stands for God who forgives those who come to him in repentance. And we talked a little bit about the historical references in the parable earlier in an earlier session.

Also, it's possible that the point is that God humiliates himself and even acts and is willing to risk his dignity when he stooped so low as to accept a sinner back who has offended him. Second, then, the young son or the so-called prodigal son, then, would stand for the sinner who comes to God in repentance and receives God's gracious acceptance. And then finally, the older son probably stands for the Pharisees who are jealous because God extends his forgiveness to people that don't deserve it.

One of the key features, again, is to put this parable in its context. If you go back to the beginning of chapter 15, Jesus is responding to the Pharisees who are accusing Jesus of associating with tax collectors and sinners. So now this parable is told in response to that.

So that the older son, who is jealous because his father, after the younger son, has treated the father in the way he has and gone off and blown his inheritance and all kinds of wild living, the older son cannot understand why the father would treat him, accept him, and treat him the way he is. The older son then clearly represents the Pharisee who is jealous because God now extends his forgiveness to those that don't deserve it. And indeed, the older son probably then represents anyone who responds in jealousy or anyone who does not respond in joy and praise whenever God extends his grace to anyone who does not deserve it.

It's kind of interesting, just as an aside, to just look at this in a little bit more detail. It's intriguing that the parable never tells us exactly what the older son did. The parable leaves you hanging with a third character.

The father ends by inviting the older son to join in the celebration, to join in the party, yet we're never told what the older son did. Did he come in or did he go back out in the fields and reject and ignore his father's provision, or his father's invitation? Perhaps the parable is open-ended intentionally in that Jesus is continually calling his readers to examine and deal with the Pharisee within them, to respond in rejoicing when God extends his grace and forgiveness to someone that does not deserve it. Everything else in the parable, the fattened calf, the ring, the purple robe, the pigs, and the food that the young son fed the pigs when he came to the end of himself, that he was in such a desperate situation he wanted to eat the food that the pigs were eating, the inheritance, the wild living, most of that is simply there to make the story work and is not to be given an allegorical level of meaning.

But it seems to me form criticism might help us in interpreting the parables by understanding what kind of literature we're dealing with, especially if the parables are limited allegories, that is where the main persons, the main characters in the story receive an allegorical meaning, because that's the way Jesus intended it in that

case. And that we should, based on the context and the historical situation and the life and teaching of Jesus, attempt to understand what the meaning of the parable might be, meanings associated with the three main characters, or the one main character, or the two main characters, depending on what kind of parable it is. Outside of the Gospels, form criticism has been applied, again, not quite as much as it has been in the Gospel literature itself, but form criticism has been effectively applied to other sections of the New Testament.

For example, much of Paul, one of the things you often find happening in Paul's letters, and you find this in some of the other New Testament epistles as well, is that in the exhortation or hortatory section of the letters, you will often find a list of virtues. Paul will say something such as he does in Colossians chapter 3, therefore dearly beloved is the chosen of God, put on, and he'll list a series of love, this, that, that, or put off, avoid sexual immorality, etc., etc., he'll give a list of things to be avoided. A classic example is Galatians chapter 5, and the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, where Paul simply gives a list, a running list of vices to be avoided.

The works of the flesh are these, and he lists a number, but the fruit of the Spirit are these, love, joy, peace, etc., etc., and he lists them. Again, you find a similar thing in Ephesians and Colossians and a couple places elsewhere. Most likely, Paul is drawing on a common form that is found sometimes elsewhere in Greco-Roman literature known as a vice and virtue list, which simply catalogs vices to be avoided because of their destructive behavior, especially to the community, and virtues to be embraced.

Paul obviously tailors those for his own purposes, but he may be relying on a very early form. Another interesting form that one finds is found, one finds it in 1 Peter, outside of Paul's letters, but one finds it also in Ephesians chapter 5 and in Colossians chapter 4, where Paul addresses the relationship between husbands and wives, children and parents, and then slaves and masters in both of these sections in

Ephesians and Colossians, and you find something similar in 1 Peter as well. But most likely, Paul's instructions may reflect a form, a well-known form in the first century that some have labeled a household code or the household codes.

That is, this would be, this could be an early form found in Greco-Roman literature that stipulated the proper relationships between primary persons within the typical Greco-Roman household, because the household was seen to be kind of the core unit within the Greco-Roman society that brought stability to society. So this form addressed in, reciprocally, the relationship between the three main units of a typical household, husbands and wives, children and parents, and then slaves and masters. Paul may then pick up on this form that we call the household code in order then to instruct Christians.

Obviously, the use that Paul makes of the form and the basis for the behavior would be very different than in the Greco-Roman world, but there have been suggestions that perhaps Paul is using this form for missionary purposes, or is Paul only using this form just to instruct the Christian household, or is it possible that he's using this form because he wants to demonstrate, one common explanation is Paul wants to demonstrate that Christianity is not subversive. It does not disrupt or overturn the relationships that the Greco-Roman society deemed valuable, but instead Christianity affirms that. Again, although Paul's basis for and his instructions are, in some respects, very unique and very different from the use of that form and the way those relationships would have worked out in Greco-Roman literature.

For example, the fact that Paul tells husbands to love their wives would have been, in Ephesians 5, would have been rather unique in the Greco-Roman world. So, form criticism I think is a valuable historical approach and can provide valuable hermeneutical and interpretive insight if, number one, we avoid the more speculative conclusions and sometimes the even more destructive conclusions of

form criticism, and second, when we focus on the classification and the structure and the function of the various forms in the Old New Testament. When we do that, I think form criticism can still be a very valuable tool in Biblical interpretation.

What I want to do now is move on to the next, again, historically and logically, sort of the next criticism in this triad that, again, all fall under the broader umbrella of historical criticism, and that would be redaction criticism. Redaction criticism builds on both form and source criticism that we just looked at. Form and source criticism, as we said, tends to go behind the text, the written text, to uncover the oral forms or the written sources that now emerge in the written text.

So, primarily, form and source criticism went behind the text and attempted to reconstruct the forms and the sources. And now, redaction criticism, though, goes further, although it's based on source and form criticism and actually assumes form and source criticism. Redaction criticism assumes there were sources used and there were individual forms that the Old Testament authors or the New Testament authors utilized, but it goes further and it asks, how have these sources and forms now been combined and brought together by an author into the finished text? And what does this say about the author's intention, and the author's, especially the author's theological intention? So, putting that all together, basically, redaction criticism can be described as this.

Redaction criticism is a study of the author's theological intention by examining the way he has arranged and edited his sources, or arranged and edited his material, especially in comparison with others who have written on the same topic. So, by examining an author, especially in comparison with others who have written on the same topic, or by examining the way the author has arranged his material and has edited and utilized his sources, then redaction criticism asks, what does that say about the theological intention of the author? Again, but more broadly, one could,

again, simply utilize redaction criticism, as I said, by simply comparing others who have written on the same topic to see how they differ and how they treat that topic. For example, many of us probably use a really basic kind of crude form of redaction criticism.

Whenever we look at the Christmas story, for example, the record of the Christmas story in Luke and Matthew, and we ask, why are they different? Why does Matthew include the account of the Magi coming to visit Jesus, and why does Luke instead include the shepherds? When we start asking those types of questions, we're kind of asking the initial questions of redaction criticism. But again, redaction criticism asks the question of how has the author arranged and edited his material that he had available to him in the final text, and what does that reveal about the author's theological intention in writing the text. So redaction criticism assumes two things.

It assumes, first of all, it assumes an author, that there's an author who has produced this text, but second, it assumes the existence of sources and forms that the author has taken up and now arranged and edited in his final document. To once again give a couple of examples from the Old and New Testament, and as I've already said a number of times, my examples are weighted a little bit more heavily towards the New Testament, but to give an example from the Old Testament, one that we just mentioned, again my purpose is not to give a thorough exposition of this, but just to show what kinds of questions redaction criticism might ask, is we looked at an example of how 1 Chronicles 17, and the account of God speaking through the prophet Nathan to David in the establishment of the Davidic covenant, where God promises that he will build a house for David, he makes a covenant with David, that God will be his father, David will be his son, and that there will always be someone to sit on David's throne, a covenant that formula that became a covenant became very important later on in the Old Testament and into the New Testament as well. But we also saw that 2 Samuel chapter 7 includes the same covenant formula, almost in

exactly identical wording, and the same account of the words of the prophet Nathan to David.

And so because we have two authors recording similar language, we can ask the question, how do they differ from each other, or how have the authors utilized that account, and how does that function to indicate their theological intention? So by comparing the way that the author of 2 Samuel has recorded the account of Nathan's prophecy to David in the Davidic covenant with the way that the author of 1 Chronicles chapter 17 has recorded those same words, by looking at how they do that, how they have incorporated that and edited that and included that in their own composition, one might be able to discern the theological intention of the author. One of the interesting points has to do with in 2 Samuel 7, in the author of 2 Samuel 7's account of the Davidic covenant, we find this interesting phrase, God says, God speaking about the Davidic king, the king who would sit on David's throne, he says, when he does wrong, I will punish him, is one of the interesting phrases found in 2 Samuel 7, but it is missing in 1 Chronicles chapter 17. And so redaction criticism would ask, what might be the theological intention of this change of the author? Why might the author of 1 Chronicles 17, if we assume 1 Chronicles 17 is, or if we assume that 2 Samuel is a source for 1 Chronicles 17, one would ask, why might the author have dropped this? Or what does this change suggest about the theological intention of the author of 1 Chronicles 17? Some have suggested that this is because the author of 1 Chronicles, addressing a specific situation, is trying to portray the Davidic monarchy in the most positive light possible, to demonstrate that the heyday of Israel's existence, the golden days of Israel's existence, was under the Davidic monarchy.

And so this phrase was intentionally left out, according to some, for that reason. But the main point is to look at those texts and to ask, what might, how the authors have adapted those stories, what might that suggest about the theological intention of the

author? Again, in the New Testament, the Gospels have dominated the redaction critical scene. And this is, the Gospels have probably become logically a fruitful field for redaction criticism, because there is a literary relationship between the three.

So one can specifically ask then, what might, when you compare Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the way they have edited their sources, the way, or the way they have told the story and how it differs from each other, what might that reveal about, what might that reveal about their theological intentions? Of one, one very interesting example, when you compare Matthew chapter 21, and Mark chapter 11, and Luke chapter 19, all three of these were texts, all three of these texts record the events surrounding Palm Sunday, that is the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem. All three of these record that event. But it's interesting when you compare them, Matthew has two significant changes.

Although again, they are recording the same event, and it occurs in the same order in the narrative, and the same actors and participants, etc. And very similar wording. Yet there are some significant differences when you compare the three accounts.

When you look at them, Matthew has the most interesting differences. And I won't talk about maybe some of the differences Mark and Luke have and what that might say about their intention, but I want to focus on Matthew. Matthew has two things that interesting features that you do not find in Mark or Luke.

First of all, Matthew mentions, and again, this is the story of Jesus riding in on a colt on the so-called Palm Sunday that we celebrate into Jerusalem. But Matthew, unlike Mark and Luke, Matthew mentions both a donkey and a colt. Whereas Mark and Luke only mention a colt, Jesus riding on a colt.

Matthew mentions both a donkey and the colt. Second, along with that, Matthew also quotes an Old Testament prophecy from Zechariah chapter 9 and verse 9, which also does not occur in Luke or Mark's account. So in Matthew chapter 21 and verses 4 and 5, Matthew says, this took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet.

And now he quotes Zechariah 9.9, say to the daughter of Zion, see your king comes to you gentle and riding on a donkey on a colt, the full of a donkey. Notice Zechariah 9.9 seems to suggest the occurrence of two animals, a donkey and its colt. And so what Matthew seems to have done is Matthew mentions both the donkey and the colt, unlike Luke and Mark.

And it's not that Luke and Mark didn't know that if there was a donkey or didn't think there was one, and Matthew's making this up. It's simply that probably Matthew is emphasizing the donkey and the colt to demonstrate and to make this account consistent with the Old Testament prophecy. Because one of Matthew's major themes, although the other, Mark and Luke are interested in fulfillment of the Old Testament as well, Matthew, more than the other, demonstrates the key features going all the way back to chapters 1 and 2, where over and over again, key movements in the life of Jesus in his early childhood, starting with his birth, were seen as fulfilling key Old Testament texts.

Now, Matthew does that over and over again. And here, where Mark and Luke do not include a quotation, Matthew makes clear, Matthew wants to make clear that this event was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophetic texts, as he has done throughout his gospel. And for that reason, Matthew also includes both the colt and the donkey in the story, because he's trying to make clear that this event is the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy.

So by comparing Matthew, Mark, and Luke's account of a similar story, and by looking at this difference in the way Matthew has edited it, and how he has arranged it and utilized it in his own narrative, one can begin to see Matthew's theological intent. That even more than Luke and Mark wanting to stress the Old Testament prophetic fulfillment of this event, and including the colt and the donkey, shows that this narrative aligns with and is a fulfillment of the Zechariah 9-9 text. One other example that we've already referred to, although it's not clear that Matthew or Luke necessarily depend on each other, but they may be dependent on a common story that lies behind this, especially since neither of them would have been present, I don't think, during these events, is Matthew and Luke's record of the Christmas story, an account that we said does not occur anywhere in Mark.

Mark jumps right into John the Baptist, the emergence of John the Baptist, and the adult life of an early ministry of Jesus. Matthew and Luke both include an account of Jesus' birth, a well-known account of the Christmas story. But as we've already mentioned, it's interesting when you compare these stories to note the differences.

A couple of key differences. Number one, one of the things you find in Matthew that you don't as much in Luke, although in some in the earlier chapters, especially Luke chapter one, you do find specific allusions to and references to the Old Testament. But Matthew, as we've already seen in chapters one and two, wants to make clear that Jesus' life, his early childhood, his birth and early childhood, the events and movements surrounding that, are all seen as fulfillment of Old Testament texts.

A second difference is that Matthew records the visit of the Magi to Jesus, probably a year or maybe even almost two years after his birth. By the time the so-called wise men or Magi come to visit Jesus, he's clearly not in the stable anymore. Now Jesus is, he's actually called a boy in Matthew, and the Magi find him in this house, no longer in the stable.

So the events of Matthew chapter two probably happen a year or two after the birth of the events of Luke chapter two. But it's interesting, Matthew has the Magi coming to visit Jesus, where Luke has the shepherds coming to visit Jesus. And Matthew seems to know nothing about, or at least says nothing about the shepherds coming to see Jesus, and Luke says nothing about any Magi coming to see Jesus.

One suggestion is one of them, perhaps Matthew invented the story of the Magi to replace the shepherds. But is it possible though that both events did occur, but Matthew and Luke are simply being selective in what they record and how they record the event to be in line with their main theological intention. So for example, Matthew is very interested in emphasizing Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, emphasizing the royal status of Jesus, which he does in the first chapter with that long genealogy linking Jesus back to both Abraham and David.

So Matthew is interested particularly in the Jesus' royal status as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. And so he portrays Jesus as having a very royal reception. Although the royalty in Jerusalem, King Herod, doesn't bother to go out his back door to see Jesus, you have other dignitaries, wealthy dignitaries coming from quite a long ways to visit Jesus and to bring him rather expensive gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, typical gifts that one would give important people, such as royalty.

So Matthew has crafted his story to emphasize the royal reception of Jesus as King and as Messiah. Furthermore, Matthew seems to be interested more than any of the other Gospels in the Gentile reception of the Gospel. And we'll return to this later, but actually by having the Magi come and visit Jesus, Matthew is emphasizing that the Gospel is not just for Jews, but for Gentiles.

Remember Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1 begins by saying this is the genealogy of Jesus, the son of Abraham and son of David. By calling Jesus the son of Abraham, it was through Abraham in Genesis 12 that God would eventually bless all the nations of the earth. Now as the son of Abraham, Jesus now is received at the very beginning of the narrative by Gentiles.

So Matthew has crafted his story. There's some other things Matthew is doing, and we'll return to this text later on when we talk about the use of the Old Testament in the New. There's some other things going on in the story, but Matthew is crafting his story redactionally to emphasize the Gentile reception of Jesus, but also the royal reception that Jesus receives as the King of the Jews, as the Messiah.

Whereas Luke, Luke has more of a humble, Luke has Jesus being born and raised in a very humiliating and in a very humble environment. So it's fitting for Luke who, when you read the rest of the gospel, and this is an important feature of redaction criticism to examine when I look at how an author uses his source, to look at patterns throughout the entire book. One of the patterns you see in Luke is that Jesus ends up being the savior and often goes out to out the outcasts of society.

He's caught hanging around with people like tax collectors that, although very wealthy, were seen as, you know, most people were hostile to them. You have, for various reasons, you have Jesus associating with disgusting Samaritans. You have Jesus touching and healing people like lepers with the disease of leprosy.

You have Jesus associating with all kinds of people out in the margins, the disgusting of society. Luke's version of the Christmas story fits this perfectly. By having Jesus born in a disgusting stable, which would kind of probably have been like a lean-to on a house that where you'd have kept animals, but also other things like feed troughs, a manger.

By having Jesus born in that kind of environment, and by having shepherds come and visit Jesus, probably the lowest on the socioeconomic totem pole, Luke is trying to portray Jesus, consistent with the rest of his story, as coming to those who are a very humble origin, who are the ostracized, the outcast of society. So Matthew and Luke have clearly structured their Gospels, but also the Christmas story, they have edited and arranged and recorded it in a way that clearly gets across their theological intent. So by examining these two Gospels that refer to the same story and give an account of the same story, it's instructive to see the changes they make, or how they differ, and what that might say about the theological intent of the two authors.

So in both the Old and New Testament, when an author does rely on demonstrable sources or forms that he has taken up in his own work, or when two authors write on the same topic, it's instructive to ask how they differ from each other, and how they have arranged and utilized their material, and what that might say about the theological intention of the authors. Again, at the end of the day though, that must be, redaction criticism must be tested by looking at the entire Gospel to make sure that the conclusions one draws with how the author may be editing certain sections is consistent with what seems to be going on in the entire Gospel. And what is intriguing because of that, redaction criticism actually begin to give way to another criticism that I'm not going to spend a lot of time on, but known as composition criticism, looking at the entirety of the Gospels and how they were put together, for example.

So redaction criticism can be a valuable tool in helping us uncover the author's theological intention by looking at the way that the author has adapted and arranged his material, edited his material, to communicate his theological point. And so again, redaction criticism is another method of criticism that when shorn of its negative presuppositions, earlier some practitioners of redaction criticism said any time that

the author was introducing changes to his sources or trying to communicate theologically is the author must not have been interested in history. But when divorced from those negative assumptions, redaction criticism can help us come to grips with the theological meaning and intention of the text.

Now a discussion of redaction criticism where the author seems to now play a more primary role than it did with form and source criticism in that we're not so much interested in going behind the Old New Testament text and recovering the sources and forms, but we're asking what we're assuming that an author now has taken those forms and sources and arranged them in a text. Redaction criticism begins to focus more on the author and so raises the question of the author's intention. So I want to move then still under the broader umbrella of historical criticism, examine the issue of author's intention and look at author-centered approaches to interpretation.

So part of historical criticism then is the author who produced the text, the author who wrote the text. And so author's intention is an attempt to uncover what most likely was the intention of the author in producing and writing this text as found in the study of the document itself. One of the main persons that kind of sparked interest in author's intention that we already spent a little bit of time discussing but we'll reintroduce him briefly is Friedrich Schleiermacher who as sort of a product of the Enlightenment but in reacting to that, reacting to the merely rationalistic approach to interpretation that emphasized the power of human reason and scientific discovery, Schleiermacher emphasized empathy with the author in interpreting a biblical text.

That is according to Schleiermacher the goal of interpretation was to recover the past act of the author and to actually put oneself in the mind of the author. One could actually empathize with and identify with the author and to recover his true

intention. So according to Schleiermacher, author's intent was primarily understood in psychological terms.

And again we hear sometimes we hear something similar today when we're told in courses or textbooks on biblical interpretation that the interpreter should attempt to put him or herself in the shoes of the author or try to put yourself in the place of the author and understand what they were attempting to communicate. Though most today would perhaps distance themselves from Schleiermacher's approach, especially his more psychologizing approach to uncovering the author's intent, most would still see the author's intention as an important step in interpretation. And indeed for some time it was seen as the primary goal of interpretation.

In most hermeneutic and most biblical interpretation type textbooks will somewhere state that the goal is ultimately to recover the meaning that the author intended. The correct meaning of a text is the meaning that the author intended to communicate. So for example, these are just a series of quotes from a handful of hermeneutics or biblical interpretation textbooks.

I won't mention the author of the textbook, but I've just surveyed a number of them to give you flavor. And most of these are fairly recent. These are not ancient works.

Most of these are all of these have been written since or at least revised since the year 2000. So for example, one textbook says, the author or editor intended to communicate a message to a specific audience to accomplish some purpose. Our goal is to discover that meaning of the text in those terms.

That is in terms of what the author is trying to communicate to a readership in a certain historical context. Or here's another one. Exegesis is the attempt to hear the word as the original recipients were to have heard it.

To find out what was the original intent of the words of the Bible. It's interesting this explanation doesn't mention the author, but again, it assumes that there's an intended meaning in the text that the author was trying to communicate that is what we are to go after and to recover. Here's another one.

The last one I'll give is the meaning of the text is what the author consciously intended it to say. And again, this is just representative of what a number of biblical interpretation or hermeneutics textbooks suggest. So the correct meaning of a text, whether an Old Testament text, or a New Testament text, is the meaning that the human author would have intended to communicate and convey to the original readers.

So the goal of interpretation then is to try to uncover this through an analysis and study of the text. One tries to determine what the author was trying to in producing the text. What was the author trying to communicate? So the goal then is not so much to recover what the contemporary reader makes of this text, but historically, what did the historical author try to communicate? And in most of these hermeneutical textbooks, by sound methods and rules of application, or by application of sound methods and rules of interpretation, one can arrive at the intended meaning.

That is the meaning of the author was attempting to communicate and intending to communicate. But one question, I want to raise a couple of questions. And one of them is, why is author's intent deemed necessary? Why is it seen to be such an important goal to achieve an interpretation? And then also on the flip side, raise the

question, what are some of the objections to author's intention? Why have some objected to the author's intent as the main goal of interpretation? And then finally, we'll try to put things together and draw conclusions.

Is the author's intention still a valid goal in interpretation? And how do we think about that? So first of all, why has author's intention been seen as such an important goal? Why such an emphasis on author's intention? I've simply listed a number of reasons, and there could be others. But first of all, is simply the fact that texts are created by authors. Even today, authors write to communicate.

Authors write generally to communicate something, and they write to be understood. And so the assumption is that the biblical authors, the Old New Testament as we have it, is the product of authors attempting to communicate something that can be understood by its readers. And therefore, it's a worthy and valid and necessary goal to uncover the author's intention.

So texts don't just appear, and they don't just emerge. And usually, authors don't write to confuse or to miscommunicate, although they might do so accidentally. Or sometimes you might have some authors intentionally writing to confuse and miscommunicate.

But authors generally communicate to be understood. And therefore, the goal of interpretation is what meaning was intended by the author. A second reason why some deem the author's intention to be such an important endeavor in biblical interpretation is the author's intention is what arbitrates between conflicting interpretations.

So the correct interpretation of a text is that which the author intends to communicate. So out of all the proposed meanings, especially when the conflicting

meanings is the interpretation that fits the author's intention, is the interpretation to be preferred. Number three, related to this a little bit, is that author's intention grounds meaning.

That is, meaning is not open-ended. Meaning is not a free-for-all. But it's author's intention that keeps interpretation from running amok, from becoming a free-for-all or an anything-goes.

Interpretation is limited to what the author could have intended. It's grounded in the author's intention. So when I read in the book of Ezekiel about the battle of Gog and Magog, is how we understand that battle and those terms must be grounded in what the author was intending to communicate.

A fourth one is author's intention then, and this kind of relates to interpretation more broadly, but author's intention in interpretation is seen on as a foundation for good theology. So that the correct interpretation of a text is grounded in the author's intention and that is foundational for theological reflection and formulation. In other words, theology depends on good exegesis, which depends on the stable meaning of the text grounded in the author's intention.

A fifth factor is the fact that we are dealing with inspired scripture. If the Old New Testament texts that we have are the inspired word of God, then it's necessary to uncover the meaning that the authors intended, both the human author and the divine author. If this is God's communication to humanity, if this is inspired word of God, there must be some meaning, some intention in the text that I can get at and I can recover.

So the fact that these scriptures are inspired seem to suggest the validity of author's intention as the goal and the fact that the human author's intention is the only

access we have to God's intention to communicate to us. And then finally, sort of related to the first one, but finally, arguments to the contrary are self-defeating, some would say. That is, those that would argue that one cannot know an author's intention or that the author's intention is unnecessary or irrelevant intend for their articles and books about this to be understood.

So to try to argue that one can't understand an author's intention assumes that others who read my article will understand my intention to communicate that. So based on that, the conclusion is that the goal of interpretation then is to recover the author's intended meaning. What was the author trying to communicate? And usually through the application of sound principles of interpretation, looking at the historical background, the broader context, the meaning of the words, etc., in that period of time, all of this, and what we can know about the author and his readers, all of this will help to arrive at a reasonable reconstruction of the author's intention.

But having said this, the next question to ask is, why have some rejected the author's intention? And is the author's intention still a valid goal of interpretation? We'll look at those questions in the next session.