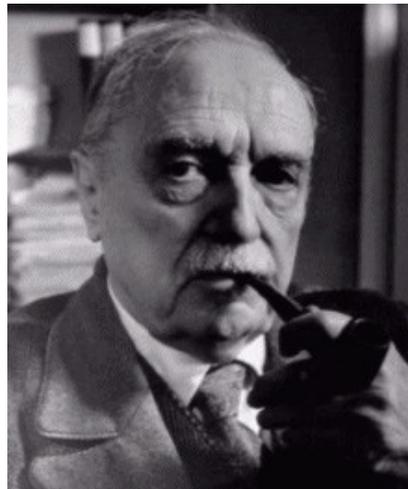


Chapter 5: The Criterion of the Tendencies of the Developing Tradition



Rudolf Bultmann 1884-1976

The criteria of the 'Tendencies of the Developing Tradition' (CDT) developed with the writings of Bultmann and the arrival of form criticism. This criteria seeks to study *'the general laws which govern popular transmission of stories and traditions'*¹ and apply them to the developing synoptic tradition.

In this way it is possible, according to proponents of CDT, to strip back the synoptic material to reveal authentic material. To understand and critique the CDT a quick detour via Bultman's *Form Criticism*² is necessary. In Chapter IV "The laws governing popular narrative and tradition" Bultmann identifies these laws as the tendency to become i) more explicit and definite ii) addition of names, iii) direct discourse over indirect, iv) the tenancy to characterise Jesus opponents.

i) More explicit and definite: As ,

narratives pass from mouth to mouth, or when one writer takes them over from another, their fundamental characterised remains the same, but the details are usually subject to the control of fancy and are usually made more explicit and definite.³

1 Bultmann "The New approach to the Synoptic Problem" 345

2 Bultmann, Rudolf Karl ; Kundzinš, Kārlis ; Grant, Frederick C.: *Form Criticism : Two Essays on New Testament Research*

3 Ibid. 32

Whenever narratives pass from mouth to mouth the central point of the narrative and general structure are well pre-served; but in the incidental details changes take place, for imagination paints such details with increasing distinctness.⁴

Bultmann uses as an example Mark 9:17 and Luke 9:38

Mark 9:17	Luke 9:38
¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my <u>son</u> to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute.	Luke 9:38 (ESV) ³⁸ And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, <u>for he is my only child.</u>

Luke has developed the tradition by adding the phrase *for he is an only child*. Bultmann also cites Mark 3:1/Luke 6:6 and Mark 14:27/Luke 20:50. Although this last example does include (see below) the addition of 'right' in Luke gospel it also shows Mark's gospel as being more descriptive as it includes the 'drew his sword'.

- ii) Addition of Names: If one the accounts of the arrest we notice that John's gospel includes the names of 'Simon Peter' and 'Malchus'.

Mark 14:47	Luke:22:50	John 18:10
But a certain one of them that stood by drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear.	And a certain one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his right ear.	<u>Simon Peter</u> therefore having a sword drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. Now the servant's name was <u>Malchus</u> .

This addition of names also appears in Mark 14:13/Luke 22:8, Mark 7:17/Matthew 25:15 and with some textual difficulties Luke 8:41/Mark 5.

- iii) Direct discourse over indirect. The tradition, according to Bultmann, has '*another characteristic trait [in] that the narrator prefers to give in direct discourse what his source gave indirectly.*'⁵

⁴ Bultmann "The New approach to the Synoptic Problem" Journal of Religion 6(1926) 345

⁵ Bultmann, Rudolf Karl ; Kundzinš, Kārlis ; Grant, Frederick C.: *Form Criticism : Two Essays on New Testament Research* 34

Bultmann cites Mark 8:32/Matthew 16:22, Mark 14:1/Matthew 26:1, Mark 14:23/Matthew 26:27, Mark 26:50/Matthew 26:50/Luke 22:48 and Mark 15:37/Luke 23:46

<p>Mark 8:32 (ESV) ³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. Mark 14:23 (ESV)</p>	<p>Matthew 16:22 (ESV) ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."</p>
<p>Mark 14:1 (ESV) ¹ It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him,</p>	<p>Matthew 26:1-2 (ESV) ¹ When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, ² "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."</p>
<p>²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it.</p>	<p>Matthew 26:27 (ESV) ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,</p>
<p>Mark: Jesus does not speak</p>	<p>Matthew 26:50 (ESV) ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. Luke 22:48 (ESV) ⁴⁸ but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"</p>
<p>Mark 15:37 (ESV) ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.</p>	<p>Luke 23:46 (ESV) ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.</p>

iv) The tenancy to characterize Jesus opponents: 'One may often observe or infer that the earliest tradition had to do with unspecified questioners, whom the later narrators transformed into ill-disposed scribes or Pharisees⁶.

<p>In Q Luke 11:15 (ESV) ¹⁵ But <u>some of them said</u>,</p>	<p>Mark 3:22 (ESV) ²² And the <u>scribes</u> who came</p>	<p>Matthew 12:24 (ESV) ²⁴ But when the <u>Pharisees</u></p>
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6 Ibid. 35

“He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,”	down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.”	heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”
Luke 11:16 (ESV) ¹⁶ while <u>others</u> to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.	Mark 8:11 (ESV) ¹¹ The <u>Pharisees</u> came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.	Matthew 12:38 (ESV) ³⁸ Then some of the <u>scribes</u> and <u>Pharisees</u> answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.”

Having identified the laws of development it is possible to peel away the 'fancifull and imaginative' additions and come closer to the authentic material. Stein sums up the positive and negative use of the CDT.

'applied as a negative scalpel to remove the later accretions and modifications of the early tradition, but in doing so it serves also a positive function by helping in the recovery of the earlier form of the tradition, and the earlier the form the greater the possibility that we have an authentic saying or incident in the life of Jesus'⁷

Critique of CDT

CDT although popular amongst the Bultmann school is no longer used by the historical Jesus scholars in its Bultmanian form. In critiquing CDT I will be referring principally to A) E.P Sanders' *Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*, and recent developments in the the understanding of b) Oral Transmission

A) Sanders *Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*

Perhaps the most sustained critique of CDT is to be found in the doctoral dissertation of E.P. Sanders which was published in 1962 as *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*. The CDT, as developed by Bultmann, gives the impression that these laws have been established from looking at post-canonical development and from analysis within the synoptics. In his introduction Sanders lays down the gauntlet and challenges these assumptions.

⁷ Stein “The ‘Criteria’ for Authenticity,” 238 also J. Dunn *Jesus Remembered* 248' *And so the impression of each retelling as another layer superimposed upon earlier layers became almost inescapable.'*

Despite the assurance with which certain criteria are sometime used today, we must observe that, in point of fact, neither of the two assumptions are justified. That is, it is not the case that the criteria have been established by exhaustive, or even by fairly comprehensive work on the relevant literature, nor is it true that these criteria have been systematically employed in the study of the synoptic gospels⁸

In the book Sanders seeks to offer a comprehensive overview of tendencies/laws. As with his later work *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* he seeks to challenge the assumptions of the wider academic community on something which they have, by and large, been taking for granted. . It is only by offering a comprehensive, although not necessarily exhaustive overview, that one is able to speak of laws and tendencies.

'One cannot establish tendencies by citing only examples. What is needed is a thorough investigation of all the evidence, considering how many instances there are which point in each direction. Listing only some instances, all of which point in one direction, is neat, but useless and even misleading.'⁹

Sanders seeks to redress the need for a comprehensive overview by looking at the evidence for the laws/tendencies of the Tradition at a post-canonical and intra-synoptic level.

- Increasing Length (Chapter 2)
- Increasing Detail (Chapter 3)
- Diminishing Semitisms (Chapter 4)
- Direct Discourse (Chapter 5)
- Conflation (Chapter 5)

After conducting this large scale comprehensive overview of the data Sanders finds that the previously assumed rules do not hold up to the evidence. As an example of Sanders work we see in Ch 2 that the increasing length of developing tradition is in fact a myth as textual variants show that sometimes texts are added to but other times they are shortened. This is variety holds for the addition/shortening of Old Testament quotations¹⁰, addition/shortening from speeches¹¹, addition/omission of speeches¹² and addition/omission of actions. The law of 'increasing length' has, by Sanders, been weighed on the scales and found wanting in both post-canonical development and within the Synoptics themselves. Sanders offers thw

⁸ Sanders *Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition* 10-11

⁹ Ibid. 25

¹⁰ As an example: Addition/omission of Old Testament Quotations eg. + Mark 10:7 all uncs by A1 B Ps; Most minusc add '*and shall clave to his wife*', -Matthew 3:3 1Sy omits '*voice crying in the wilderness*' (Sy8)

¹¹ As an example Addition/Omission to Speeches +Matthew 5:28 2Gr '*I say to you, & do not desire*' Removal from speeches Matthew 3:12 1Gr omits '*and he will clear his threshing floor*'

¹² Addition of Speeches: Matthew 9:25 1ItVg '*he took her hand and said 'Girl arise*'
Omission of Speeches Mark 9:35 D 2It omit the saying

following conclusion at the end of his book,

'There are no hard and fast laws of the development of the synoptic tradition. On all counts the tradition developed in opposite directions. It became longer and shorter, both more and less detailed, and both more and less Semitic.....For this reason, *dogmatic statements that a certain characteristic proves a passage to be earlier than another are never justified* (Emphasis in Original) ¹³

Sanders has offered in *Tendencies of the Developing Tradition* a overwhelming critique of the form-critical laws of development, so much so that it is clear that CDT is inadequate, in its Bultmannian form, as a criteria to get back to the historical Jesus. ¹⁴. In the light of Sanders we can not simply peel back the layers of developing tradition, removing as it were detail and length to discover authentic sayings.

However, Sanders is not totally negative in his assessment of tendencies and offers in the closing paragraph of his conclusion a nuanced continuum of tendencies.

Not Very Strong	New scenes addition of adjectives addition of nouns to proper names
Fairly Strong	New dialogues, addition of subjects genitive pronouns, addition of proper names to nouns nouns substituted for pronouns nouns added to pronouns addition of circumstances
Strong	Addition of proper names substitution of proper names for nouns and pronouns addition of miscellaneous small details addition of genitive nouns
Very Strong	Direct discourse and first person ¹⁵

As an aside we may note that Bauckham *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*¹⁶ Ch 3 offers an analysis of the addition/omission of names in the gospel tradition. In contrast to Bultmann the tradition, assuming Markan priority, 'displays an ambiguous tendency toward the elimination of

¹³ Sanders *Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition* 272

¹⁴ However, Sanders is not totally negative in regard to tendencies as he does see individual editors having their own tendency for 'we must always give room for human differences and be alert to the editorial tendencies of each particular writer' *ibid.* 272

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 275

¹⁶ Bauckham *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*

*names, which refutes Bultmann's argument,*¹⁷ After carefully studying the names in the gospel tradition Bauckham offers, amongst others, the hypotheses that names are removed from the developing tradition as these eyewitnesses were no longer needed or available.

B) CDT and Oral Transmission

An indirect criticism of the CDT is to be found in the recently published James Dunn's *Jesus Remembered* and subsequent collection of essays *A New Perspective on Jesus*. Dunn puts forth the case that the development of the gospel data has been understood by many, including Bultmann, within a literary paradigm.

The imagined process is one where each layer is laid or builds upon another. Bultmann made such play with it because, apart from anything else, he was confident he could strip off later layers to expose earlier layers. The image itself, however is drawn from the literary process of editing, where each successive edition (layer) is an edited version (for Bultmann, an edited and expanded version) of the previous edition (layer).¹⁸

Dunn wants to alter the default setting of the literary paradigm¹⁹ and replace it with that of oral transmission. In oral transmission a 'tradition is performed, not edited'²⁰ In developing an 'oral paradigm' Dunn builds upon the work of Werner Kelber²¹ and Kenneth Bailey²².

Bailey puts forward the idea, based on 30 years field research in the Middle East, of '*informal controlled tradition*' in contrast to Bultmannian school of '*informal, uncontrolled, tradition*' or the Scandinavian School of '*formal controlled tradition*'

In oral communities people gather *informally* and tell stories and the community *exercises control over the recitation*²³ Bailey recognises 'three levels of flexibility'.

- Poems and proverbs have no flexibility.
- Jokes and casual events of the day have 'total flexibility'.

17 Bauckham *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* 42

18 Dunn 'Altering the Default Setting' in *A New Perspective on Jesus* 85-86

19 Bailey *Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels* 363,

'we need to stand aloof from our inherited western cultural attitudes, and move over to a middle eastern world. We must also move back from the twentieth century to the first and try to understand the patterns of communication in the Eastern Mediterranean in the days of the apostles'.

20 Dunn *Jesus Remembered* 249

21 Kelber, Werner H.: *The Oral and the Written Gospel : The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q.*

22 Bailey "Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels" and "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels"

23 Bailey *Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels* 365

- 'Parables, entertaining stories and historical narratives' allow for some flexibility as they 'can take on the individuality, interests and vocabulary of the reciter'²⁴

This flexibility, when telling stories and historical narratives, is still controlled as '*along as the main lines of the stories are followed, the dramatic details can be expanded or summarised without triggering the community rejection mechanism*'.

If the Jesus tradition was received by an oral community, similar to that found by Bailey in the middle east, then we can expect the historical narratives to display both *flexibility* and *control* whenever they are performed. Dunn supports this view which in turn means that the gospels cannot be stripped back to authenticity for each gospel is itself a performance.

'the concept of literary layers implies increasing remoteness from an 'original', 'pure', or 'authentic' layer, the concept of *performance* allows a directness, even an immediacy of interaction, with a living theme and core even when variously embroidered in various retellings.'²⁵

Examples of Oral Transmission from Dunn *Jesus Remembered*

Dunn, using numerous examples from the gospel data, seeks to show that oral transmission makes more sense of the conformity and diversity of the Jesus tradition. To illustrate his argument we will examine two of the many examples which he gives—that of the I) centurions servant and ii) the stlling of the storm.

I) Centurions Servant:²⁶

Matthew 7:28, 8:5-13 (ESV)	Luke 7:10 (ESV)
<p>²⁸ And when Jesus finished these sayings.... ⁵ When <u>he entered Capernaum</u>, <u>a centurion</u> came forward to him, appealing to him, ⁶ "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." ⁷ And he said to him, "I will come and heal him."</p>	<p>¹ After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, <u>he entered Capernaum</u>. ² Now <u>a centurion</u> had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. ³ When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue."</p>

²⁴ Ibid. 366

²⁵ Dunn *Jesus Remembered* 249

²⁶ *Ibid.* 212-216

<p>8 But the centurion replied, "<u>Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.</u>" 9 For I too am a man <u>under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."</u> 10 When Jesus heard this, <u>he marveled and said</u> to those who followed him, "<u>Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.</u>" 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." 13 And to the centurion Jesus said, "<u>Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.</u>" And the servant was healed at that very moment.</p>	<p>6 And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "<u>Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.</u>" 7 Therefore I did not presume to come to you. <u>But say the word, and let my servant be healed.</u> 8 For I too am a man set <u>under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."</u> 9 When Jesus heard these things, <u>he marveled</u> at him, <u>and</u> turning to the crowd that followed him, <u>said</u>, "<u>I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.</u>" 10 And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.</p>
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This is clearly the same episode which is being edited/performed. We find '*a core of the story where the agreement is almost word for word*'; and '*details which vary on either side of the core to such an extent that the two versions seems to contradict each other.*'

This event, for Dunn, undoubtedly made a 'considerable impression on the disciples'. Matthew seeks to emphasise the centurion's faith (8:11-12,13) whereas Luke calls attention to the centurions worthiness (7:4-5, 7:7). For Dunn this presents a 'fine example of oral traditioning', for it contains flexibility in some details but '*the story's point hangs entirely on the central exchange between Jesus and the centurion; that is maintained with care accuracy.*'²⁷

We can see something of both the retentiveness of the oral traditioning process and its flexibility in allowing traditions to be adapted to bring out different emphases.²⁸

ii) Stilling of the Storm:

Matthew 8:23-27	Mark 4:35-41	Luke 8:22-25
<p>23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. 24 And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the</p>	<p>35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "<u>Let us go across to the other side.</u>" 36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with</p>	<p>22 One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "<u>Let us go across to the other side of the lake.</u>" So they</p>

27 Ibid. 215 Dunn calls attention to another version of the same story found in (John 4:46-54) which although findign agreement in eleven points of details is significantly different that we can hypothesise that this is another stream of tradition which speaks against literary dependence.

28 Ibid. 216

<p>boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and <u>woke him</u>, saying, "Save us, Lord; <u>we are perishing</u>." ²⁶ And he said to them, "<u>Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?</u>" Then <u>he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm</u>. ²⁷ And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man <u>is this, that even winds and sea obey him?</u>"</p>	<p>them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great <u>windstorm</u> arose, and the waves were <u>breaking into the boat</u>, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they <u>woke him</u> and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that <u>we are perishing?</u>" ³⁹ And <u>he awoke and rebuked the wind</u> and said to the sea, "<u>Peace! Be still!</u>" And the wind ceased, and <u>there was a great calm</u>. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "<u>Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?</u>" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "<u>Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?</u>"</p>	<p>set out, ²³ and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a <u>windstorm</u> came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. ²⁴ And they went and <u>woke him</u>, saying, "Master, Master, <u>we are perishing!</u>" And <u>he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves</u>, and they ceased, <u>and there was a calm</u>. ²⁵ He said to them, "<u>Where is your faith?</u>" And they were <u>afraid</u>, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then <u>is this</u>, that he commands <u>even winds and water</u>, and they <u>obey him?</u>"</p>
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They key points in this remain constant with the core remaining identical. Around this core '*the story could be told and retold, the details varied in accordance with the context of retelling and with any particular angle the storyteller wished to bring out*²⁹ It would be possible to argue for a purely literary connection but then the changes themselves would appear arbitrary.

'Why, for example, as literary editors would it be necessary for them to vary the description of danger of the boat being swamped (each uses different verbs) and to vary the account of Jesus sleeping and the references to the disciples' fear and lack of faith? '

If the gospels are to be understood as different oral performances, and the literary paradigm is somewhat negated, then the CDT cannot be used for the laws of transmission are dependent on purely the literary paradigm.

If Dunn and Bailey are correct then the CDT is not applicable to the gospel material as the differences can be accounted by rules of oral transmission rather than the laws of developing tradition.

CDT and Synoptic Problem:

As with the CMA the CDT relies on a particular solution to the synoptic problem. See Chapter 4 of this paper.

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