

Yesterday I published the first of two guest posts by Mark Goodacre fellow blog member and long time colleague and New Testament scholar (at rival Duke) (Yes, we still are talking to each other here at the nearing climax of the basketball season) (Go Heels!).

Mark has devoted a good chunk of his life to exploring the Synoptic Problem, and is completely committed to the idea that Mark was the first of the three Gospels to be written, used later then, independently, by Matthew and Luke. In addition to the standard arguments that have been widely persuasive for over a century, Mark had developed a new insight from what he calls "editorial fatigue."

Yesterday he explained what it is and shows how it works with Matthew. To show that it solves the problem of both Matthew *and* Luke, of course, he needs to demonstrate with examples it from the latter as well. That's what he does here, in another passage taken from his important book The Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze.

As I indicated yesterday, Mark will be happy to answer questions you raise of him in the comments.

But to be sure about Markan Priority, we will need examples of the same thing from Luke's alleged use of Mark. We will not be disappointed. First, the Parable of the Sower and its Interpretation (Matt 13.1-23 // Mark 4.1-20 // Luke 8.4-15) present exactly the kind of scenario where, on the theory of Markan priority, one would expect to see some incongruities. The evangelists would need to be careful to sustain any changes made in their retelling of the parable into the interpretation that follows.

On three occasions, Luke apparently omits features of Mark's Parable which he goes on to mention in the Interpretation. First, Mark says that the seed that fell on rocky soil sprang up quickly because it had no depth of earth (Mark 4.5; contrast Luke 8.6). Luke omits to mention this, yet he has the corresponding section in the Interpretation, 'those who when they hear, with joy they receive the word . . .' (Luke 8.13; cf. Mark 4.16).

Second, in Luke 8.6, the seed 'withered for lack of moisture'. This is a different reason from the one in Mark where it withers 'because it had no root' (Mark 4.6). In the Interpretation, however, Luke apparently reverts to the Markan reason:

Mark 4.17: 'And they have no root in themselves but last only for a little while.'

Luke 8.13: 'And these have no root; they believe for a while.'

Third, the sun is the agent of the scorching in Mark (4.6). This is then interpreted as 'trouble or persecution'. Luke does not have the sun (8.6) but he does have 'temptation' that interprets it (Luke 8.13).

In short, these three features of the parable of the Sower show clearly that Luke has an interpretation to a text which interprets features that are not in that text. He has made changes in the Parable, changes that he has not been able to sustain in the Interpretation. This is a good example of the phenomenon of fatigue, which only makes sense on the theory of Markan Priority.

For a second example of Lukan fatigue, let us look at the Healing of the Paralytic (Matt 9.1-8 // Mark 2.1-12 // Luke 5.17-26). Here, Luke's introduction to the story of the Paralytic

(Mark 2.1-12 // Luke 5.17-26) is quite characteristic. 'And it came to pass on one of those days, and he was teaching' (Luke 5.17) is the kind of general, vague introduction to a pericope common in Luke who often gives the impression that a given incident is one among that could have been related. But in re-writing this introduction, Luke omits to mention entry into a house, unlike Mark in 2.1 which has the subsequent comment that 'Many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door' (Mark 2.2). In agreement with Mark, however, Luke has plot developments that require Jesus to be in a crowded house of exactly the kind Mark mentions:

Mark 2.4: 'And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay.'

Luke 5.19: 'Finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus.'

Continuity errors like this are natural when a writer is dependent on the work of another. Luke omits to mention Mark's house and his inadvertence results in men ascending the roof of a house that Jesus has not entered.

It might be added, as further evidence from the same pericope, that Luke has the scribes and the Pharisees debating not, as in Mark, 'in their hearts' (Mark 2.6) but, apparently, aloud (Luke 5.21). This is in spite of the fact that Jesus goes on to question them, in both Luke and Mark, why they have been debating 'in' their 'hearts' (Mark 2.8 // Luke 5.22). The latter phrase seems simply to have come in, by fatigue, from Mark.

This evidence of editorial fatigue provides, then, some strong evidence for Markan Priority. Matthew and Luke apparently re-write in characteristic ways the beginning of pericopae taken over from Mark, only to lapse into the wording of the original as they proceed, creating minor inconsistencies and betraying the identity of their source. It is just the kind of evidence one might wish for - a clear, decisive indicator of Markan Priority which will not make good sense on the assumption that Mark wrote third. It seems that we have the fingerprints on the gun.

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