


## Source Criticism and the Synoptic Problem

Matthew 19:13–14 (ESV)	Mark 10:13–14 (ESV)	Luke 18:15–16 (ESV)
<p><sup>13</sup>Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people,  <sup>14</sup>but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”</p>	<p><sup>13</sup>And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them.  <sup>14</sup>But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.</p>	<p><sup>15</sup>Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.  <sup>16</sup>But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.</p>

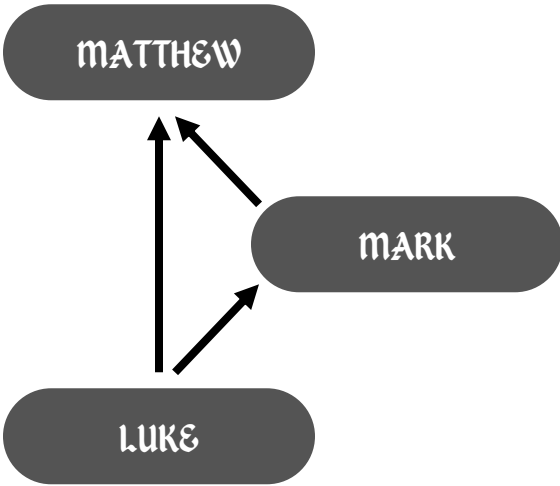
**Question?**

- 1) Are the Gospels dependent on one another?
- 2) If so, which was written first?


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## St Augustine’s Solution to the Synoptics (354CE to 430CE)



MATTHEW



MARK

LUKE

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**Did the Gospel writers use each other as sources?**

Matthew                      Mark                      Luke

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**1) So much common material**

**90% of Mark is repeated or used in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark**

**BUT,**

**As a reference, 90% of John is not duplicated in any other Gospel.**

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## 2) So much verbal agreement

While there are many differences in wording throughout the Synoptic Gospels there are also an extraordinary number of exact parallels. Including not only words, and phrases but even full sentences in not only the text of Jesus words but also in Narration text.

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## 3) So much agreement in Chronology

Even when the Gospel writers appear to not be following a proper chronology they (Mt, Mk, Lk) often present the same order.

*Mt 9:1-17; 12:1-14;*

*Mk 2:1-3:6*

*Lk 5:17-6:11*

*Mt 22:15-23:36;*

*Mk 12:13-40*

*Lk 20:20-47*

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## 4) Agreement in Parenthetical comments and Narrative Asides

Matthew 9:6 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup>But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.”

Mark 2:10–11 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup>But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—<sup>11</sup>“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”

Luke 5:24 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup>But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.”

See Also

Mt 24:15 and Mk 13:14;

Mk 5:8 and Lk 8:29;

Mt 27:18 and Mk 15:10

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## 5) Identical alterations of OT text

Matthew 3:3 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup>For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’ ”

Mark 1:2–3 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, <sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’ ”

Luke 3:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup>As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’ ”

All three follow the LXX in talking about John the Baptist – they also make the same alteration to the text – The LXX reads “make straight paths for our God” rather than “make his paths straight.” An extraordinary coincidence.

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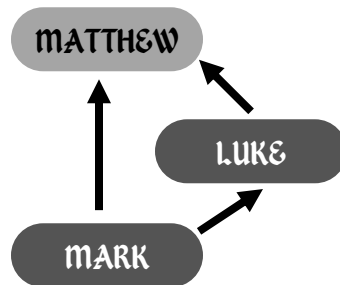
## The Goals of Source Criticism

- To identify the written sources for the Gospels (especially the Synoptic Gospels)
- To determine their relationship to one another including the order in which they were written and how they borrowed from each other.

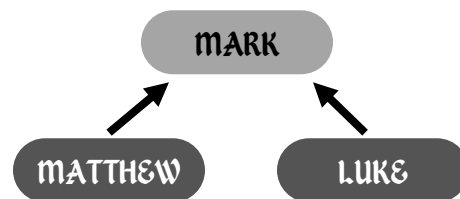


## Priority

### Matthean

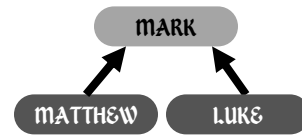


### Markian





## Markan Justification



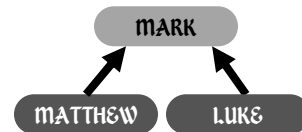
1. Although Matthew and Luke vary considerably about 93% of Mark is found in one or the other
2. If Mark is dependent on Matthew or Luke it is hard to explain why he left out so much important content
3. In the triple tradition, when Matthew and Luke differ from one another, then at least one of them will agree with Mark.

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## Markan Justification



4. Whenever Matthew or Luke differ in chronology one of them will always agree with Mark.
5. Mark has a rougher less polished Greek that is always polished by Matthew and Luke
6. Matthew and Luke often alter readings that might be taken as offensive or theologically offensive
7. Mark occasionally preserves original Aramaic words Jesus probably used.

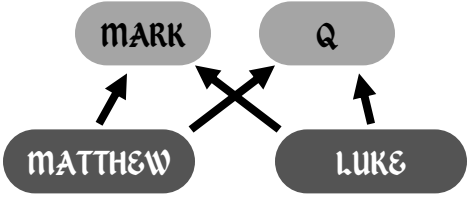
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**But Mark alone does not explain Matthew and Luke.**

- The Two source Theory




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graph TD
    MATTHEW --> MARK
    LUKE --> Q
    MARK <--> Q
  
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*But, What Is "Q"*

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**The "Q" Hypothesis, "Q", or the Synoptic Sayings Source**

1. A Figment of Scholarly Imagination
2. A Variety of Sources, Written and Oral
3. A Single Written Source
4. Evidence for an Heterodox community of Christianity.

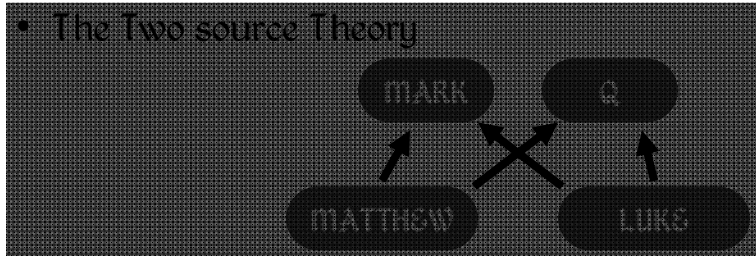
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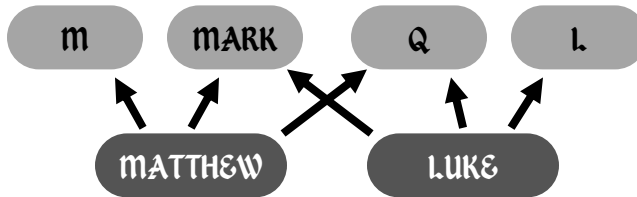


**But Mark alone does not explain Matthew and Luke.**

- The Two source Theory

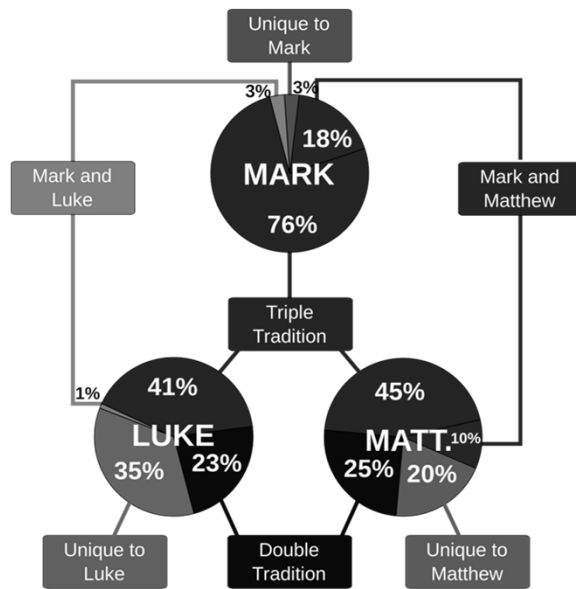


- The Four source Theory




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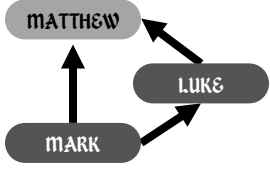


## Matthean Priority

**AKA, Griesbach Hypothesis**

**AKA, Two Gospel Hypothesis**

- Key evidence for the Matthean priority includes:
  1. Church tradition until the 19<sup>th</sup> century favored Matthew as the first gospel
  2. Strongest point in favor are agreements in Matthew and Luke against Mark in the triple tradition although there are few.
  3. Lack of physical evidence of "Q"



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## Form Criticism

- Developed in early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century in Germany
- Assumes that between the time of Jesus, and the written Gospels there was a period when the words and stories of Jesus were passed by word of mouth. The term “pericope” is used to identify each story or unity of tradition.
- A form is a mini-genre, or particular type of story like a parable, a miracle story or a wisdom story.

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## Form-Critical Categories

Form	Description	Example
Pronouncement Stories	A story which culminates in an authoritative statement by Jesus, or sometimes in a statement about the reaction of onlookers	Mark 2:1-12; Mark 3:1-6
Miracle Stories	A story which demonstrates Jesus' supernatural power and authority.	Exorcisms Mark 5:1-20 Healings Mark 1:40-45 Nature Miracles Mark 4:35-41
Sayings and Parables	A general category for all the teaching of Jesus outside of the pronouncement stories	Much of Sermon on the mount Matt 5-7 Parables in Mark 4

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## A Pronouncement Story Mark 2:15-17

The Story	<p><sup>15</sup>And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.</p> <p><sup>16</sup>And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"</p>
The Pronouncement	<p><sup>17</sup>And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."</p>

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## A Miracle Story Mark 1:23-28

The Problem	<p><sup>23</sup>And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,</p> <p><sup>24</sup>"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God."</p>
The Solution	<p><sup>25</sup>But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"</p> <p><sup>26</sup>And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.</p>
The Response	<p><sup>27</sup>And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."</p> <p><sup>28</sup>And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.</p>

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## Assessment of Form Criticism – Positive

1. The importance of Preaching the Gospel in the Early Church and rightly emphasizes the oral proclamation of the gospel in the period between the resurrection and the writing of the Gospels
2. The importance of genre identification. By identifying forms, it takes into account that the Gospels contain different kinds of material which communicate differently. I.e., a parable versus a miracle versus a pronouncement

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3. The importance of the individual pericopae. Form Criticism confirms that much of the Gospel material was originally passed down as individual units and emphasizes the legitimacy of preaching an individual pericope.

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## Assessment of Form Criticism – Negative

- Presuppositions of non historicity and an anti supernatural bias
- An Exclusively Oral Period – NOT
- Problems of classification    complex
- Subjectivity in identifying the setting in life and the transmission history.

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## Goals of Redaction Criticism

- To analyze how the Gospel writers “redacted” or edited their sources
- To discern from this redaction the theological emphasis of each writer
- To determine each author’s purpose in writing
- To identify their “setting in life” (Sitz im Leben)

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## John’s Stated Goal

- John 20:30–31 (ESV)
- <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; *(ie, He Edited their story)*
- <sup>31</sup>but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. *(ie, He had a purpose)*

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## The Method of Redaction Criticism

### > Individual Comments and Editorial Links

Matthew 3:11 (ESV)	Mark 1:7–8 (ESV)	Luke 3:15–16 (ESV)
<p><sup>11</sup>“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, ...</p>	<p><sup>7</sup>And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, ... <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water, ...”</p>	<p><sup>15</sup>As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, <sup>16</sup>John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, ...</p>

While all three portray one coming that is mightier than John, Luke’s alone mentions the peoples expectation that John may be the one. John’s response is a clear response to that question / expectation.

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## The Method of Redaction Criticism

### > Additions and Omissions of Material

Matthew 4:1 (ESV)	Mark 1:12–13 (ESV)	Luke 4:1–2 (ESV)
<p><sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.</p>	<p><sup>12</sup>The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan.</p>	<p><sup>1</sup>And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness <sup>2</sup>for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.</p>

While all three Gospels present the Holy Spirit, Luke especially places the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus – that he was full of the Holy Spirit

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## The Method of Redaction Criticism

### > Summaries

Summaries of Jesus' activities represent a good indicator of an Evangelists emphasis. / Mark 1:45 vs Luke 5:16. By comparing Luke's redaction with Mark's their themes are able to be discerned

### > Arrangements of Material

Placement of an event may dramatize an event. Many believe that Luke 4:16-30 is the same as the one in Mark 6:1-6. It is reordered forward in time in Luke to serve as an introduction to the ministry of Jesus.

### > Use of additional source material

Luke includes many miracles and parables not included in Matthew or Mark. Luke is making a special effort to show Jesus' care for the low estate, sinners, and societies outcasts. Not found in Matthew or Mark.

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## Redaction Critics

- Have generally adopted Markan priority and thus have focused their studies on the redaction of Matthew and Luke from Mark, and "Q"
- Mark is more difficult because his sources are not known and thus not available to study.

But, Mark's emphasis can be determined by his individual comments, summaries, transitions and overall arrangements of material

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## Assessment of Redaction Criticism - Positive

- It affirms that the evangelists were purposeful writers and not mere compilers of material
- Redaction criticism treats the Gospels as a whole, and corrects the narrow focus of Form criticism which only looks at individual units of tradition.
- By comparing the Gospels Redaction criticism affirms the unique theological contribution of each evangelist. It was for a purpose that the Holy Spirit inspired 4 Gospels and each has a role to play.

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## Assessment of Redaction Criticism - Negative

- Many redaction critics are too quick to call a single Gospel saying or event as created by the author, and unhistorical. Redaction does not necessarily mean creation.
- Many redaction critics are too quick to find theological significance to minor changes that may be style related or a variation in the sources. The theology of a Gospel writer must be determined from his total presentation, not from minor alterations alone. Sometimes redaction critics miss the forest because of the trees.

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## Assessment of Redaction Criticism - Negative

(cont)

- The greatest problem is the high degree of subjectivity. Redaction critics often come to radically different authorial motivations from the same data.

A good corrective to this subjectivity is to keep an eye on the whole of the Gospel story rather than only on its individual alterations.

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## Summary

The original message ...

Source criticism ...

The synoptic problem is ...

The designation of "Q", "M", and "L" ...

A Minority of scholars hold to ...

Form Criticism seeks to ...

Redaction Criticism seeks to ...

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