

Plausibility, Probability, and Synoptic Hypotheses

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Introduction

There remains still for many engaged in the study of the early Christian movement(s), a synoptic “problem”; or “the” synoptic problem, inviting or even demanding credible, plausible solutions¹. For the majority of those interested in discerning the likely or most likely original inter-relationships in the composition of the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, there is one solution more plausible than the rest, the Two Document Hypothesis (2DH). Mark, and a “sayings collection”, Q, are taken as the bases for Matt and Luke composing independently. The main competitor hypotheses currently are Mark as composing third, conflating the other two (Griesbach); or Mark used by Matthew and both by Luke writing third (Farrer/Goulder/Goodacre).

Alan Garrow has recently joined with a handful whom he lists in imagining Matthew third, here to be designated “Mt3rd”. Mt3rd is taken to have combined (with extensive re-ordering) Mark and Luke-dependent-on-Mark, and other sources, among which is proposed *The Didache*. This reconstruction, it is argued forcefully, explains, more credibly than do other hypotheses, two striking phenomena. One is the contrast between the many passages appearing verbatim, or all but, in Matthew and Luke – unusual though any such close copying rather than paraphrasing was in their culture – alongside the many sequences with shared drifts but with

1. So, recently, A. GARROW, *Streeter’s “Other” Synoptic Solution: The Matthew Conflator Hypothesis*, in *NTS* 62 (2016) 207-226; and *An Extant Instance of “Q”*, in *NTS* 62 (2016) 398-417. For other recent and fresh proposals, J.W. BARKER, *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Gospels: A Reassessment*, in *JBL* 135 (2016) 109-121; A. KIRK, *Q in Matthew: Ancient Media, Memory, and Early Scribal Transmission of the Jesus Tradition* (LNTS, 564), London – New York, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016; E. EVE, *Writing the Gospels: Composition and Memory*, London, SPCK, 2016, also emphasising memory, but on that basis preferring Mark or Luke as the conflator. It will be argued in passing that the phenomenon of refused agreements would be impossibly hard to achieve, even by accident, and even with memory playing a major rather than subordinate part. Also recently, F. WATSON, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective*, Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, Eerdmans, 2013, here pp. 117-216. For wide-ranging discussion, see P. FOSTER et al. (eds.), *New Studies in the Synoptic Problem: Oxford Conference, April 2008. Essays in Honour of Christopher M. Tuckett* (BETL, 239), Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA, Peeters, 2011.

very few verbatim shared words or phrases. The other phenomenon is the long-standing embarrassment for the 2DH: “the minor agreements” between Luke and Matthew in their deployment of Mark, agreements which, *prima facie*, seem to indicate some sort of collusion between Luke and Matthew². I shall not discuss Garrow’s reconstruction itself in any detail, only the agreements of Luke and Mark so extensively and strangely *refused* by Mt3rd.

Alan Kirk, in support of 2DH in his *Q in Matthew*, makes a very thorough case, with detailed supportive evidence from the ancient world, for memory interacting with manuscript and oral performance in that world, with Matthew then imagined as retrieving topics from a richly absorbed, memorized “Q” and Mark to produce the puzzlingly re-ordered “Sermon on the Mount” out of “Q” taken to have reached him in the order now found in Luke. Matthew works with interlinked ideas, ideas expressed in words, with visual text accorded only an initial and then supporting role. But this survey, he allows, is only meant to render Matthew’s procedure intelligible, in a way that manipulating scrolls or even wax tablets fails to do. Lacking proven certainty, we cannot hope to achieve more than that plausible intelligibility³. James Barker, adducing *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll* and *Tatian’s Diatessaron*, has also recently proposed other examples of composition that runs to-and-fro in “micro-conflation” as 2DH has Matthew do, while himself discounting memory as a significant factor⁴.

1. *Plausibilities Argued*

What I here invite the reader to reflect on is how “credibility”, “probability”, “intelligibility”, “plausibility”, “likelihood” and so on, can be gauged *for critical comparison*, and so how, if at all, one may assess rival likelihoods, probabilities, imaginabilities, plausibilities, credibilities. For “plausible”, “of arguments, statements, etc.”, my *Concise OED* gives “specious [!], seeming reasonable, probable”. My larger and more recently published *Chambers* is very similar, starting with “likely, reasonable, seeming true”⁵. (For its origin, Latin *plaudere* is given: applaud, and, so, applause-worthy).

2. GARROW, *Streeter’s “Other” Solution* (n. 1), pp. 212-214, and 222.

3. KIRK, *Q in Matthew* (n. 1), pp. 306-309, with footnote 32.

4. BARKER, *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Gospels* (n. 1), p. 113, criticising studies by Robert Derrenbacker and the present writer. KIRK, *Q in Matthew* (n. 1), p. 307, n. 29, responds to Barker’s dismissal of memory and also joins John Kloppenborg in questioning Barker’s interpretation of “micro-conflation”. See further, below, on “unpicking”/“deconflation”.

5. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford – New York, Clarendon, 41951; *The Chambers Dictionary*, Edinburgh, Chambers Harrap, 2003.

Conventionally, probability, and so the rest, can be expressed mathematically⁶. The simplest is the 0-1 scale, from impossible, (0.0) to certain (1.0). On this scale, of course, a standard coin when tossed always has a 0.5 chance of coming to rest head up or tail up. Then a further feature of this scale is that its probabilities are, of course, not added (or two 0.5 possibilities would become a certainty). Rather are they multiplied, so two of 0.5 become 0.25; two of 0.1 become 0.01. It is then worth asking whether we could – could agree to – use this scale in measuring and so comparing proposed solutions to the Synoptic Problem, or elements of such proposals⁷. For if we were to decide we cannot, might not comparing probabilities then appear too imponderable to be useful?

To my knowledge, no one has suggested such a scale for “plausibility” among synoptic hypotheses or similar fields; but we could still ask whether it might be worth trying. “Plausible” itself is a term that has of late been influentially pressed by Gerd Theissen and others⁸. Further terms might be “compelling”, or “striking”, “remarkable”, “inclines one strongly to agree”. Yet perhaps such questions of plausibility are themselves unavoidably subjective, so what seems to one plausibly fortuitous to another appears “certainly” implausible, with no clear way to decide between them⁹.

Be that as it may, on “possibility” and “probability”, I quote from Mark Goodacre, discussing one of the “minor agreements” between Matthew and Luke, a concurrence which, as said, might seem to indicate that one of the latter copied from the other, thus obviating any need to imagine an independent source for both, e.g., the “Sayings Gospel”, Q. The passages Goodacre discusses include:

6. For a more elaborate discussion of probability, M. DU SAUTOY, *What We Cannot Know*, London, HarperCollins, 2016, pp. 44-58.

7. There are cogent essays on aspects of quantifying speech, but only in terms of patterns of stylistic repetitions. See, recently, D.L. MEALAND, *Is There Stylometric Evidence for Q?*, in *NTS* 57 (2011) 483-507; cf. Id., *Hellenistic Greek and the New Testament: A Stylometric Perspective*, in *JSNT* 34 (2012) 323-345, and much previous work; cf., older, independently, A. KENNY, *A Stylometric Study of the New Testament*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1986. But “sense”, “meaning”, “human behaviour”, are much less readily quantified, as in DU SAUTOY, *What We Cannot Know* (n. 6), pp. 53-55: “The Human Equation”.

8. G. THEISSEN – D. WINTER, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, Louisville, KY – London, Westminster John Knox, 2002; cf., much earlier, F.G. DOWNING, *The Church and Jesus* (SBT, 2.10), London, SCM, 1968, p. 189.

9. One’s hope for objectivity in such arguments is not strengthened when two specialists, Mark Goodacre and Francis Watson, can agree with each other against Q while still using presumably much the same criteria, but they reach very different conclusions on the dependence of the *Gospel of Thomas* on the Synoptic Gospels: WATSON, *Gospel Writing* (n. 1), p. 118, on Goodacre on Q; while, on *EvT*, WATSON, *Gospel Writing*, pp. 217-285, with M. GOODACRE, *Thomas and the Gospels: The Case for Thomas’s Familiarity with the Synoptics*, Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, Eerdmans, 2012.

Matt 22,27	Mark 12,22	Luke 20,32
ὑστερον δὲ πάντων	ἔσχατον πάντων καὶ	ὑστερον καὶ ἡ γυνή
ἀπέθανεν ἡ γυνή	ἡ γυνή ἀπέθανεν	ἀπέθανεν

He allows,

of course, as Neirynck says, “the coincidence of an identical substitute in Mt and Lk cannot be excluded”, but, while all things are possible, not all things are equally probable. Surely the point of the case for independent redaction is that it rests on the plausibility and not simply the possibility of both Matthew and Luke making identical changes to Mark independently of one another.

But just how “unequally plausible” is this proposed coincidence¹⁰? Goodacre then cites a further example, “the best known of all”:

Matt 26,68	Mark 14,65	Luke 22,64
λέγοντες·		λέγοντες·
προφήτευσον ἡμῖν,	προφήτευσον	προφήτευσον,
χριστέ, τίς ἐστὶν ὁ		τίς ἐστὶν ὁ
παίσας σε;		παίσας σε;

He concludes, “This is the kind of evidence that normally inclines one strongly in favor of direct literary dependence”¹¹. In favour of the independence of Matt and Luke, it has merely been imagined that the phrase was originally in the latter alone, but then was added to Matt – even though there is no extant evidence for any ancient manuscript of Matt lacking it¹².

It is assumed that the probability of Matthew and Luke concurring independently in adding such minor agreements against Mark in Markan contexts, is very low, though, it seems, it is not judged to be nil. This much Goodacre generously concedes. But just where above .0 should we place it? As said, no one as yet seems to have risked attempting any such quantification¹³. But then, if we cannot quantify, how can we judge between this and other (un)likelihoods?

10. M. GOODACRE, *The Case against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem*, Harrisburg, PA, TPI, 2002, pp. 152-169, esp. 155; the citation here is from F. NEIRYNCK, *Goulder and the Minor Agreements* (in *ETL* 73, 1997, 84-93), citing p. 89. In fact both Matt and Luke elsewhere use ἔσχατον on other occasions, but neither ever uses it adverbially as it is here in Mark. Independent improvement is entirely plausible, as Neirynck appositely notes in the passage cited.

11. GOODACRE, *The Case Against Q* (n. 10), pp. 152-169, here 158-159.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159, citing F. NEIRYNCK, *ΤΙΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ Ο ΠΑΙΣΑΣ ΣΕ: Matt 26,68 / Luke 22,64 (diff Mark 14,65)*, in *ETL* 63 (1987) 5-47; repr. in *Id.*, *Evangelica II: 1982-1991. Collected Essays* (BETL, 99), Leuven, Peeters, 1991, 95-138. In *Goulder and the Minor Agreements* (n. 10), p. 92, Neirynck is less dismissive of conjectural reading (Matt lacking the phrase) than previously.

13. On “quantification” see above, and n. 4. I have found no hint of any such in the works cited here.

Yet how unlikely is coincidence in this prime case cited? It may be that any attempt here to make it look even a little less implausible will itself be unpersuasive. It may well be that something like the effort that follows has been proposed elsewhere and pulled to pieces, though I have found no hint of this ensuing argument in the commentaries and articles consulted. The most recent general survey that I have noted is by Steve Black which, though useful, itself suggests nothing new¹⁴. At least what follows does attempt to improve on Goodacre's judgement that such coincidence is "not impossible". Perhaps it can even be imagined as actually quite plausible, just as Kirk at much greater length suggests a plausible procedure for Matt in producing the "Sermon on the Mount" (and Garrow his Matthew in deploying Mark, Luke and *Didache*).

First, I suggest that we work with the widely agreed texts of all three synoptic gospels, rather than imagine other versions of Mark. Mark, I take it, here himself relies on oral tradition for his outline of "the Passion", an outline largely accepted by the other two, and by John, including some free-standing elements ("Entry", "Temple Disruption", "Supper", and "Gethsemane", perhaps). All four evangelists have Jewish and Roman authorities collaborating in the disposal of Jesus. They all also witness to lengthy prior Christian study of the scriptures, especially the Psalter, to provide colour at least, or even, as some aver, to provide incident.

Particularly significant in connection with this influence of scripture, it may seem, is Job 16,10-11:

ἀκίσιν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐνήλατο, ὅξεϊ ἔπαισέν με εἰς σιαγόνα, ὁμοθυμαδὸν δὲ κατέδραμον ἐπ' ἐμοί. Παρέδωκεν γάρ με ὁ κύριος εἰς χεῖρας ἀδίκου ἐπὶ δὲ ἀσεβέσιν ἔρριπέν με

He has pierced me with his eyes, he has struck me sharply on the cheek, together they have rushed upon me. For the Lord has delivered me into the hands of the wicked, he has flung me to the impious.

This passage from Job may well have figured in other scholars' analyses, but it has only very recently come to my attention, even though Mark 14,41 and Matt 26,45 (cf. Luke 24,7!) also use very similar phraseology to that of Job 16,11: ἰδοὺ παραδίδεται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν. Mark may reasonably be taken to be aware of this anticipation, and to show that others in the early communities will have known it, too.

Mark implies that he has no eyewitness testimony for the interrogations, trials, sentence. He has to rely on common experience and his scriptures. Guards would be expected to bully captives in well-known ways which can also be pictured with the help of the "palette" provided by the Psalter,

14. S.D. BLACK, *One Really Striking Minor Agreement: ΤΙΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ Ο ΠΑΙΣΑΣ ΣΕ in Matthew 26:68 and Luke 22:64*, in *NovT* 52 (2010) 313-333.

Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah (and, I would add, Job and Ezekiel). Humiliating, “dishonouring” the captive, by spitting and buffeting, has the cross as the climax of a very deliberate process. Disorientating the victim by hooding is not to my knowledge indicated in other ancient mistreatment scenes, but we do know it only too well from modern practice. The victim cannot brace or duck against assaults¹⁵. So, the bespattered captive is then portrayed by Mark as hooded: the Son of Man must (by divine necessity) be rendered helpless, δεῖ παθεῖν. Jesus has already in Mark’s narrative prophesied the coming of “the Son of Man”, and apparently identified himself with that figure. The term or title (however understood) occurs in Mark’s scriptures in Ezekiel, where one so styled is frequently ordered to “prophesy”. Although commentators on Mark seem mesmerised by the question posed in the other two accounts, there is no connection made by Mark between prophesying and the blindfolding: that is uniquely a Lucan link. In Mark a deliberately disorientated and humiliated Jesus is challenged to “perform”, to “play the foreseeing prophet”, to foretell again (compare the ἐλωῖ, ἐλωῖ ... Ἡλίαν φωνεῖ incident, later).

Then Matthew, ignoring the blindfold, does now link the abuse with the demand “prophesy!”. Jesus, a punch-bag in the *mêlé* of assaults from all sides, is challenged to identify his assailants: identify, not forecast. How was Matthew to phrase this question? The structure τίς ἐστίν ὁ is common (Matt 12,11, 22,28, 24,45, and 26,68; Mark 12,23; Luke 5,21, 7,49, 9,9, 12,42, and 20,2, where Luke actually prefers this structure to the form in Matt and Mark; and John 5,12, 12,34). “Who is it that?” places the stress of the question on the agent, rather than on the act.

What word is Matthew to use for the assault? Goodacre tells us that παῖω occurs only here in Matt and in Luke, though it has already figured in Mark’s arrest of Jesus (Mark 14,47), and appears in three other passages in the NT. It occurs quite often in the LXX, and especially significant, we may suppose, in Job 16,10-11, cited above, a passage, as argued, plausibly familiar in Matthew’s community, as it seems to have been in Mark’s.

Let us then imagine Luke coming on his own to Mark 14,65, aware already of scriptural resonances in known tellings of the condemnation of Jesus, and, at least possibly, aware of the passage from Job. Luke retains Mark’s blindfold, but himself interprets it distinctively as part of a sort of blind man’s bluff¹⁶. There is no need to import awareness of Matt’s revision of Mark: Matthew, losing the blindfold, anyway had no blindman’s bluff to suggest. Luke, guided solely by Mark, has previously displayed

15. Ill-treating the blind is against the law (Lev 19,14; Deut 27,18), as is reliance on discrepant witness.

16. Compare Luke 7,39. The analogy of “blindmans’ bluff” for this episode was proposed by D.L. MILLER, *EMHIAIZEIN: Playing the Mock Game* (Luke 22:63-64), in *JBL* 90 (1971) 309-313, with ancient examples, though not in the treatment of a prisoner. The long shot of a word-search in TLG produced nothing illuminating.

his readiness to have a prophet expected to identify a stranger (Luke 7,39) and Jesus able to read people's minds (Luke 7,40, etc.). The format of the question, τίς ἐστὶν ὁ, as noted above, is common in Luke. The παῖς is provided by Job, as was the Markan παραδίδοται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν, recalled by Luke at 24,7. Apart from the very commonplace λέγοντες there is no other echo of Matthew elsewhere in this Lucan sequence, no sign at all that Luke at this point had Matthew clearly in mind or open alongside Mark. Matthew and Luke working independently with Mark, could readily reach a similar expansion by separate routes.

There is nothing "far-fetched" in such fresh imagining. Of course, unknown to me, other reconstructions of the formation of these narratives may achieve significantly more plausible results still. The point is that a better imagining of the possible itself always remains possible.

2. *Implausible Refusals of Agreed Wording*

Be the preceding as it may, in what follows I now argue that quite fresh but very significant "implausibilities", amounting to impossibilities, emerge when solutions to the synoptic problem other than 2DH are examined in detail: if any one evangelist is imagined composing out of the other two, he (she?) has to be imagined proceeding in a manner which would seem to have a probability of zero.

Some years ago this journal published a piece of mine making just such a case in detail for Mark imagined writing third, and in perhaps unfortunately less detail, for Luke using the other two¹⁷. Here, using a more precisely defined minimum unit of composition than I there deployed, I examine Matthew as the last in line, Garrow's recently proposed solution.

One may note that, whatever the relationship between a pair of gospels as main source for a third using both (in Garrow, Mark imagined composing first for Luke to use as second), they often differ considerably, even when recounting what seems to be "the same" incident. Some distinctive sequences of their words, however, Mt3rd himself reproduces verbatim, or all but (especially from Luke only). Mark and Luke at times also agree in precise quotations from Scripture, and very often concur verbatim or all but in definitive words of Jesus (and the Baptist, and God), and in some questions or challenges responded to by Jesus. Instances of these concurrences Mt3rd in turn usually himself reproduces very closely, while

17. F.G. DOWNING, *Disagreements of Each Evangelist with the Minor Close Agreements of the Other Two*, in *ETL* 80 (2004) 445-469; repr. in part in Id., *Writers' Use or Abuse of Written Sources*, in FOSTER et al. (eds.), *New Studies* (n. 1), 523-548. EVE, *Writing the Gospels* (n. 1), p. 131, n. 14, cites the latter, but does not discuss the main argument on "refused" dual witness.

parables and other discursive utterances of Jesus, and much other narrative, he abbreviates and paraphrases. Thus there are some considerable agreements among all three: triply agreed quotations from “canonical” Scripture; and triply agreed “brief and definitive” sayings of or to Jesus (or of the Baptist or of God)¹⁸.

Verbatim or all but verbatim coincidence of all three in such instances is what we would expect, in the light of current practice in the wider world: in quotations from Homer and Hesiod, and from famous philosophers or national leaders. These agreements across all three we may style “Conventionally Verbatim Shared Texts” (CVSTs). Longer, more discursive shared sequences, including parables, and even some apparently definitive sayings ascribed to Jesus, may on occasion nonetheless appear abbreviated, or paraphrased, or even extended, and diversely.

Nonetheless, the one imagined composing third, in this case, Garrow’s Matthew, will also find a large number of further agreements between the other two in these other kinds of narrative matter. These are “Unconventional Verbatim Shared Texts” (UCVSTs). And here Mt3rd appears to behave oddly, inconsistently. He looks to have *refused to include* such further common matter as it stands, or, on occasion, even refused to paraphrase it, all alongside often accepting extensive single witness verbatim. He manages to exclude the joint witness of UCVSTs almost entirely: some forty such passages on my count. And the individual extent of these UCVSTs is frequently quite considerable: yet somehow, being duplicates in his sources, they (with one sizeable and two meagre exceptions) do not reappear in Mt3rd. He is very selective in producing triple agreements.

“Why” and “how” Mt3rd might have achieved this effect we consider later and in brief, when the evidence has been adduced. For now I only suggest that he does seem very averse – oddly averse – to various kinds of concurrence in the other two, apart from, as noted, words of Scripture and some words of or to Jesus or of John or God, or challenges Jesus accepts, CVSTs. To repeat, apart from one thirty-letter instance, no full-length triple UCVSTs appear in Matt, despite the numerous double UCVSTs in Mark-with-Luke waiting to be accepted. This puzzles me, and perhaps will or should in due course puzzle the reader.

For current purposes, a “significant” or “noteworthy” amount of doubly or triply shared matter could be as little as seven letters, as in the first example above of a “minor agreement”. But, better, it might be 36, as in the second example, the most striking of the 2DH “minor agreements”: 36 letters in common, disregarding ἡμῖν χριστέ that breaks the sequence at Matt 26,68. Differing in detail from my previous study, while arguing to a similar conclusion, I shall be more parsimonious, and (with just one exception) only include dual UCVST common sequences of 30 or more

18. On quotation conventions, cf. C.D. STANLEY, *Paul and the Language of Scripture* (SNTS MS, 74), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

characters that I have been able to find. But in these I shall allow single breaks of one similarly short word within lengths of 30 or so, and slightly longer single breaks in longer shared sequences.

However, as before, I shall use Greek majuscules in my examples, for similar reasons. Majuscule *scriptio continua* emphasises the difficulty of Mt3rd's strange achievement. There is no obvious pattern of characters available, unlike that afforded us by variations above and below the line by a cursive script: αβγδεζηθικλμνυορ. It would be hard to achieve intentionally the precise exclusion of such Mark/Luke agreements in conflating majuscule texts, and less likely still to achieve it by accident: see Table 1, on Matt 21 (see below, pp. 330-331).

The argument becomes even stronger if one is persuaded by Kirk that our evangelists would have been accessing carefully and devoutly assimilated verbal sequences. As Kirk points out, mentally comparing recalled blocks of verbally expressed ideas, to integrate or deliberately unmix would be very difficult and entirely unconventional¹⁹. To avoid so many by accident of memory would seem impossible.

The survey that follows will in passing note CVSTs (words of Scripture, Jesus, John, God) shared by all three, but it will concentrate on UCVSTs, common Mark/Luke agreements missing in Matthew. And these latter will be noted in their present contexts, to show how closely Mt3rd may seem to have had both the other two texts either in view or clearly in mind. Indeed, as observed just above, their exclusion could hardly have been achieved other than deliberately, and painstakingly, and thus, very strangely. Mt3rd is happy with one or other of his prior texts, to copy verbatim or paraphrase – until they agree. There (unless it is Scripture, Jesus, John, God) he leaves them – only to resume when they part. Or so I try to show.

(In parentheses, be it allowed, it is by contrast foundational for 2DH to imagine Matthew or Luke copying from Mark verbatim words of Scripture, and verbatim summary words of Jesus, the Baptist and God, while respectively omitting many more sequences of words in Mark, paraphrasing others, and then in that mix also occasionally each accepting verbatim some strings ignored by the other and in ignorance of the other: Matt//Mark close parallels and distinct Luke//Mark close parallels. What looks like an extensive set of deliberate refusals of concurrence by any evangelist as third redacting the other two, for 2DH betokens a significant absence of collusion in Matthew's and Luke's respective deployments of Mark).

Matt 3, with refused dual UCVST 1.

In the account of John the Baptist's mission and of Jesus' acceptance of baptism, Mt3rd seems to have both his/her source texts in view, either in scrolls, or with one or both in codex form or on wax tablet(s); or,

19. KIRK, *Q in Matthew* (n. 1), pp. 146, 189, 215.

improbably, accessible side-by-side in mental recall²⁰. He accepts from Mark and Luke their agreed Scriptural quotation from Isa 40 (CVST), leaving till later also sharing the lines from Mal 3. Mt3rd nonetheless omits a shared focal sequence of 42 characters, “proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”, ΚΗΡΥΣΣΩΝΒΑΠΤΙΣΜΑΜΕΤ ΑΝΟΙΑΣΕΙΣΑΦΕΣΙΝΑΜΑΡΤΙΩΝ, common to Mark 1,4 and Luke 3,3. Yet Mt3rd accepts, all but verbatim, other matter in Mark only, John’s clothing and diet, and from Luke only, John’s challenge, “brood of vipers” (Matt 3,4.7-10). He is happy with either of his sources on its own; just not the two in collusion.

Can we propose an explanation for this particular rejection of fully visible common matter? Perhaps Mt3rd is short of space, and he had other material to choose from besides this line: this omission of common matter is just arbitrary coincidence – save that those averse to the 2DH themselves claim to despise “coincidence”. And why “save space” so consistently at the cost of shared matter in the other two, especially as Mt3rd can readily expand elsewhere (e.g., ch. 23). Perhaps he is deliberately leaving out the assurance of forgiveness here, for it to be inaugurated by Jesus? Perhaps so (although free divine forgiveness is widely celebrated in Mt3rd’s scriptures; and cf. Matt 9,7). And we are going to have to find a lot of such *ad hoc* explanations for over forty more Mark/Luke common texts “happening” to displease this redactor.

At this juncture, notice must also be taken of a contemporary cultural commonplace, a widespread insistence precisely on common witness. One may instance Quintilian on the theme at length, Trajan on anonymous accusations, canonical Deuteronomy (Deut 19,15), John 18,17, Josephus expecting Jewish conformity to be acknowledged, even the trial of Jesus in Mark (Mark 14,55-60; Matt 26,59-61)²¹. It is in this context that we may also affirm the relevance of a similar wide conviction among the historians of the period: agreed witness is universally to be preferred. On this I previously cited, among others, Tacitus, “Where the authorities are unanimous, I shall follow them”; and Arrian, “Whenever Ptolemy son of Lagus and Aristobulus son of Aristobulus have both given the same accounts ... it is my practice to record what they say as completely true”²².

20. On the flexibility that would have been afforded by wax tablets, R.A. DERRENBACHER, JR., *The “External and Psychological Conditions under Which the Synoptic Gospels Were Written”*, in FOSTER *et al.* (eds.), *New Studies* (n. 1), 435-482; but also the caution in F.G. DOWNING, *Waxing Careless: Poirier, Derrenbacher and Downing*, in JSNT 35 (2013) 388-393. On accessing parallels held in mind, see above and n. 15.

21. Quintilian, *Inst.* V. vii, *passim*, and there, e.g. V. vii. 23-25; Trajan in Pliny the Younger, *Letters* X.97; Deut 17,6; Josephus, *Ant* 4.219.

22. Tacitus, *Annals* 13.20; Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander*, I Pref. 1; cf. Plutarch, *Romulus* 3.1; *Lycurgus* 1.3; Josephus, *Apion* 1.1-46; in F.G. DOWNING, *A Paradigm Perplex: Luke, Matthew and Mark*, in NTS 38 (1992) 15-36; repr. in *Id.*, *Doing Things with Words in the First Christian Century* (JSNT SS, 200), Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, 174-197. I also cited Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.7.1, which seems to

It would be very strange deliberately to pick out agreed witness to omit, and to go to quite considerable lengths to achieve this counter-cultural end.

But is it deliberate? If there were only a very few instances, one might allow coincidence. But to imagine Mt3rd to have eliminated all but one instance of such common witness by chance, and without noticing, especially while he seems to have his eye (or mind) on using both sources, might seem likely to strain our credulity beyond breaking point. For there are a great many more examples still to be surveyed. A sceptical reader is urged to check each one (and even add more). A reader pressed for time is urged to make spot checks, and skip to the concluding section.

Matt 3 resumed, with refused dual UCVST 2.

Returning, then, to John and Jesus in Matthew's account, at Matt 3,11-17. Here Mt3rd, we may recall, has very recently reproduced much of Mark 1,4-6, and 1,6 even very faithfully. He then follows solo Luke 3,7-9, also faithfully. He then skips Luke solo on John's social ethic, and on popular expectation, Luke 3,10-16a. Then when Luke 3,16b again follows Mark 1,7 quite closely in wording and order, only adding ΔΕ, and omitting ΟΠΙΣΩΜΟΥ and ΚΥΨΑΣ, Mt3rd retains Mark's ΟΠΙΣΩΜΟΥ, along with much of the rest of Luke, but largely re-ordered. Yet in doing so he has refused a largely common sequence of 84 characters shared by Luke and Mark: ΕΡΧΕΤΑΙ ΟΙΣΧΥΡΟΤΕΡΟΣ ΜΟΥ [ΟΠΙΣΩΜΟΥ] ΟΥΟΥΚΕΙΜΙ ΚΑΝΟΣ [ΚΥΨΑΣ] ΛΥΣΑΙΤΟΝΙΜΑΝΤΑ ΤΩΝΥΠΟΔΗΜΑΤΩΝ ΑΥΤΟΥ (UCVST 2), offering instead his own paraphrase. Nonetheless he follows this by including all but word-for-word solo Luke 3,16b-17, wind and fire.

Matt 4-7, with refused duals UCVST 3, 4, 5, and *accepted* UCVST 1.

Mt3rd then skips Luke again, a genealogy for Jesus (he prefers a longer one of his own, already entered), but picks Luke up once more at 4,1-13, where he fails to reproduce a sequence of 47 characters [UCVST 3], shared by Luke 4,1c-2 with Mark 1,13, ΕΝΘΙ ΕΡΗΜΩ ΙΗΜΕΡΑΣ ΤΕΣ ΣΕΡΑΚΟΝΤΑ ΠΕΙΡΑΖΟΜΕΝΟΣ ΥΠΟ ΤΟΥ. He nonetheless remains content to share considerable matter verbatim with solo Luke, and not just scripture and words of Jesus, in "The Temptation". Be it noted, Mt3rd is also still in touch with Mark here, with 1,13b, angels serving, and 1,14-15, a summary of Jesus proclaiming in Galilee, and then "The Call of the First Disciples": these are taken almost verbatim from Mark, so Mt3rd could have noticed commonality with the Lucan matter that he had been concentrating on. He is clearly not averse to copying precisely, just unwilling to copy where one of his sources has incidentally copied the other: the

be a mistake. However, at R.A. 1.11.1 Dionysius says that Roman tradition on origins on its own, unsupported by Greek tradition, leaves any conclusion uncertain.

UCVSTs. Unconventional verbatim shared witness is deliberately (or by repeated “accident”) avoided. So Mt3rd then, a little later, refuses the entire succeeding Markan pericope, “Exorcism in Capernaum”, Mark 1,23-28 with so much in common with Luke 4,33-37 (Mark 1,23.27c; Luke 4,32.36c): sequences of 114 and then of 35 characters, and much else similar, UCVST 4 and 5). Mt3rd later uses Mark 1,21-22, “amazement at Jesus’ teaching”, to round off his “Sermon on the Mount”, where he might have recalled the Mark/Luke shared Capernaum narrative, but seems to have preferred to shape his own brief note of “the exorcism of a dumb demoniac”, Matt 9,32-34.

However, in his reference to astounded reception, Mt3rd does manage to *include* one, just this one triple agreement, albeit emended: ΕΞΕΠΛΗΣΣΟΝΤΟ[ΟΙΟΧΛΟΙ]ΕΠΙΤΗΔΙΔΑΧΗΙΑΥΤΟΥ (Matt 7,28), 30 characters with a break of 7. He can manage this extensive one UCVST agreement, while refusing forty.

In the “Sermon on the Mount” itself, Matt 5–7, Mt3rd includes much that is similar to, on occasion, identical with matter in Luke but little even reminiscent of Markan material²³.

Matt 8, with refused dual UCVSTs 6, 7, 8, 9.

Mt3rd, as regularly observed, re-orders his Markan healings, adding in some Lucan items. Thus Mt3rd now agrees with Luke’s following of Mark 1,40-45 quite closely. Here we have words addressed to Jesus, and his response in healing touch and words spoken by him and by the leper, closely similar in all three (ΕΑΝ ... ΚΑΙ; ΕΚΤΕΙΝΑΣΤΗΝΧΕΙΡΑ; ΘΕΛΩΚΑΘΑΡΙΣΘΗΤΙΚΑΙ; ΠΡΟΣΕΤΑΞΕΝ ... ΑΥΤΟΙΣ), with just some of Luke’s changes, otherwise styled “minor agreements of Luke and Matt against Mark in Markan contexts”: ΚΑΙΛΑΟΥ, ΚΥΡΙΕ, including Luke’s omission of Jesus’ emotional responses, ΣΠΛΑΓΧΝΙΣΘΕΙΣ [ΟΡΓΙΣΘΕΙΣ] or ΕΜΒΡΙΜΗΣΑΜΕΝΟΣ. Yet, though Mt3rd seems to be following Luke in the main, he still manages to do this while refusing to take the Mark/Luke agreement as it stands, omitting an extensive sequence (41 characters) even of jointly agreed words of Jesus, presumably fully in view (or firmly in mind): (ΤΩΠΙΕΡΕΙΚΑΙΠΡΟΣΕΝΕΓΚΕ) ΠΕΡΙΤΟΥΚΑΘΑΡΙΣΜΟΥΣΟΥ (Matt 8,4a against Mark 1,44b/Luke 5,14a, UCVST 6).

Mt3rd then takes and recasts “The Centurion’s Servant”, presumably from Luke. After this he is content at Matt 8,14-17 once more to condense Mark, while refusing most of the minor agreement, Mark 1,29-38 with Luke 4,38-43. Yet at Matt 8,18-22, Mt3rd now switches to some wording very close to Luke alone. In the “Stilling of the Storm” (Matt 8,23-27),

23. Mark 9,50, on “Salt” with Matt 5,13; Mark 4,21, “Lamp”, with Matt 5,15; Mark 9,43-48; Mark 10,11-12, “Divorce”, with Matt 5,32 and 10,11; on which see now, KIRK, *Q in Matthew* (n. 1), pp. 184-224 (ch. 5).

Mt3rd then further agrees with Luke in condensing the narrative, and there even deploys some Lucan paraphrasing (ΠΡΟΣΕΛΘΟΝΤΕΣ ... ΑΥΤΟΝΛΕΓΟΝΤΕΣ and ΕΘΑΥΜΑΣΑΝΛΕΓΟΝΤΕΣ), yet, apparently aware of both, he still omits a Mark 4,41b/Luke 8,25b agreement, including ΠΡΟΣΑΛΛΗΛΟΥΣΤΙΣΑΡΑΟΥΤΟΣΕΣΤΙΝΟΤΙΚΑΙ, 34 characters (UCVST 7). He is also, of course, refusing Mark/Luke agreement on the order of events.

For the next narrative, the “Gadarene Demoniac”, Garrow’s Luke seems to have agreed largely with Mark on the space it warrants. Mt3rd rejects that shared evaluation (Matt 8,28-34), and condenses much more severely than does Luke. The latter had merely repositioned and re-written an account of the demoniac’s binding. Mt3rd retains some agreements with Mark (e.g., ΕΚΤΩΝΜΝΗΜΕΙΩΝ and ΑΠΟΤΩΝΟΡΙΩΝΑΥΤΩΝ), and follows Mark quite closely elsewhere. Even so Mt3rd changes the common wording of the demoniac’s challenge (UCVST 8): ΤΙΕΜΟΙΚΑΙΣΟΙΠΗΣ ΟΥΥΙΕΤΟΥΘΕΟΥΤΟΥΥΨΙΣΤΟΥ (37 characters, Mark 5,7-8/Luke 8,28-29 and later, at Mark 5,13/Luke 8,33 (UCVST 9), refuses ΕΙΣΗΛΘ ΟΝΕΙΣΤΟΥΣΧΟΙΡΟΥΣΚΑΙΩΡΜΗΣΕΝΗΑΓΕΛΗΚΑΤΑΤΟΥΚΡΗΜ ΝΟΥΕΙΣΤΗΝ (58 characters).

Matt 9,1-34, with refused dual UCVSTs 10, 11.

Much the same phenomenon emerges when we compare the pericope of “The Paralytic”, Matt 9,1-8. Mt3rd agrees with Luke’s introductory ΚΑΙΙΔΟΥ and ΕΠΙΚΛΙΝΗΣ, but then rejects Mark/Luke agreements, some minor ones, and some more extensive, including, e.g. Mark 2,7/Luke 5,21b (UCVST 10): ΛΑΛΕΙΒΛΑΣΦΗΜ[ΕΙ/ΙΑΣ]ΤΙΣΔΥΝΑΤΑΙΑΦΙΕΝ ΑΙΑΜΑΡΤΙΑΣΕΙΜΗΕΙΣ[ΜΟΝΟΣ]ΟΘΕΟΣ, the focal issue (57 less 8 characters). However, for the concluding words of Jesus (CVSU), there is again the expected agreement across the board, most notably Matt 9,5c-6a with Mark 2,9c-10a and Luke 5,23c-24a, some 65 characters.

In his version of “The Call of Matthew” (Matt 9,9-13, against Mark and Luke agreed, “Levi”), and the question of “Fasting” (Matt 9,14-17), Mt3rd seems to be concentrating on Mark, with nothing of Luke where the latter differs from Mark, save perhaps in the choice of sequences to summarise or to omit. He may thus have been less likely here to notice Mark/Luke agreements, of which there are quite a few (Mark 2,14.16b.20.22b; Luke 5,27b-28a.35.37b). But, significantly, these all clearly constitute leading questions to, and authoritative responses from Jesus, the kind of triple agreement (CVST) that we would usually, if now not consistently expect.

In the intercalated narratives of “Jairus’ Daughter and the Haemorrhaging Woman” (Matt 9,18-26) Mt3rd ignores or rejects ΑΥΤΟΝΚΑΙΓΥΝΗΟΥΣΑΕΝΡΥΣΣΕΙΑΙΜΑΤΟΣ (30 characters), Mark 5,25/Luke 8,43a (UCVST 11). Mt3rd accepts only the words ascribed to Jesus, ΘΥΓΑΤΗ[Ε] ΠΗΠΙΣΤΙΣΣΟΥΣΕΣΩΚΕΝΣΕ, Matt 9,22b. He does, however, agree with

solo Luke in specifying the woman's act as trusting in a touch of the fringe (ΤΟΥΚΡΑΣΠΕΔΟΥ) of Jesus' garment²⁴. If this "minor agreement" is taken to show that Mt3rd knows Luke, then he could hardly have missed a whole episode in common in Mark and Luke, announcing the girl's death, involving a number of minor Mark/Luke verbal agreements, including, here, words of Jesus (Mark 5,35-37/Luke 8,51). But all of this is omitted.

Mt3rd then inserts without prompting from either source a healing for two blind men (Matt 9,27-31), anticipating his own version of Mark's "Bartimaeus". With it, as observed earlier, he seems to add a substitute for the Capernaum demoniac healing that he earlier rejected from the Mark/Luke largely agreed testimony (Matt 9,32-34; see above).

Matt 9,35–11,30: an Excursus on "Unpicking" / "Deconflation".

In this section of Matthew no UCVSTs seem to appear to be ignored or refused by Garrow's Matthew. What is noteworthy here, however, on the "Commissioning", and in the next section, on "Beelzebub", is the extent of "unpicking" of imagined Lucan changes to his Markan source. Not only does Mt3rd refuse Mark/Luke agreements, as noted, and as will be illustrated further, but he here also takes implausible pains to separate out the Lucan matter to include on its own, often verbatim. This is a phenomenon that I have discussed in a number of previous articles, and I will not repeat the argument here, only noting that such "deconflation" would be very difficult to achieve, and is quite unprecedented²⁵. And it is worth noting that to make such excisions from memory would be even harder than doing so from parallel texts in view.

Matt 12,1-50, with refused dual UCVSTs 12, 13, and accepted (very brief) UCVSTs 2, 3.

We return to matter in all three concerning Sabbath issues, where again there is direct speech from Jesus (CVST), extensively shared by all three: Matt 12,1-3.9-10.12b-13. Yet we should note, there is then one extensive sequence shared by Mark and Luke (with minor variations), ΑΓΑΘΟ[Ν] ΠΟΙΗΣΑΙΗΚΑΚΟΠΟΙΗΣΑΙΨΥΧΗΝΣΩΣΑΙΗΑΠΟ (39 characters,

24. On this "minor agreement": at Mark 5,31, the disciples' protest at Jesus' asking who touched him in a milling crowd, could itself seem discourteous: Matt omits it, and Luke introduces their response with a term of respect, ἐπιστάτα and rephrases it. The woman's action itself is presented already in a still more respectful light if she touches only the hem of Jesus' robe; and then his perception of a touch is itself that much more remarkable. Matthew and Luke may readily be imagined independently making this improvement. (People only touch Jesus' hem at Mark 6,56).

25. On "unpicking", see F.G. DOWNING, *Towards the Rehabilitation of Q*, in *NTS* 11 (1965) 169-181, and ID., *Compositional Conventions and the Synoptic Problem*, in *JBL* 107 (1988) 69-85, noted by GARROW, *Streeter's "Other" Solution* (n. 1), p. 216, n. 32; and see also DOWNING, *Paradigm Perplex* (n. 22), p. 194 and n. 36. The issue of "micro-deconflation" is not addressed by BARKER, *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Gospels* (n. 1).

Mark 3,4/Luke 6,9, UCVST 12). Here, at Matt 12,12, Mt3rd once more seems unimpressed by his sources' agreement, even on words of Jesus, and instead abbreviates and paraphrases Mark. Around Matt 12,15-16, Mt3rd also misses another Mark/Luke agreement, the demoniacs' standard acclamation, some 34 characters, Mark 3,11/Luke 4,41 (UCVST 13), but perhaps because he is not attending to that part of Luke.

Then on the Beelzebub controversy, Mt3rd interweaves bits of both sources for the lawyers' accusation, Mark 3,20-22/Luke 11,14-16.29. He now concentrates mainly on Luke 11 for the controversy that ensues, picking the latter up, possibly at 11,15b, but more likely at 11,17-20, for utterances of Jesus, now almost to the word. Here we have to try to imagine, as just indicated, further multiple "unpicking", with Mt3rd just adding some apparently off-the-cuff vituperation and a threat of judgement. There follows still more precise agreement of Mt3rd with Luke, on seeking for signs, and the parable of the returning evil spirit and company.

However, I have here found just two very minor further examples of *retained* joint witness, though both shorter than my proposed minimum. In Matt 12,46-50, on Jesus' family, there are two triple sequences, one, narrative, one, bystanders' speech, that do retain Mark/Luke agreement (12,46.47). Not much, but exceptions that by their paucity underline the general rule: longer triples that could be accepted are most often refused.

Matt 13,1–16,12.

Mt3rd now stays with Mark 4 for parables, just coinciding with Luke 8 on scattered stylistic "improvements". Mt3rd includes from Mark 4,25/Luke 8,18b, a gnomic saying on having and loosing (Matt 13,12), partly agreed in all three (CVST), and adds reflections from Isaiah, then runs forward to Luke 10,23-24, the blessedness of disciples, largely agreeing with Luke in v. 17. Mt3rd takes "The Mustard Seed" from Mark, with one decision on improvement shared with Luke, while being much closer to the latter on "The Leaven". Both Mt3rd and Luke re-write parables quite freely, Luke usually abbreviating more.

Mt3rd then runs forward in Mark to Jesus' rejection in Nazareth, ignoring Luke, staying fairly close to Mark, from whom he had earlier extracted the mission of the twelve, but picking up words and phrases of Herod's opinion of Jesus as the returned Baptist whose execution Mt3rd then drastically condenses from Mark. But in this he ignores the latter and Luke agreeing on the inclusion of Elijah or other prophets in the speculations, Mark 6,15-16/Luke 9,8-9.

For the feeding of the five thousand Mt3rd relies almost entirely on Mark. Here words of Jesus and his liturgically significant actions are largely in common in all three (CVST). Then Luke 9's narrative leaves Mark's, and Mt3rd continues for a while with the latter on its own, often quite closely followed, with only a scattering of Lucan matter (e.g., Matt 15,14b/Luke 6,39b).

Matt 16,13–17,27, with refused UCVST 14, 15, 16.

The three come together again with the Caesarea Philippi incident. Jesus' question on attitudes to himself, and Peter's response are very similar in all three. Mark 8 and Luke agree that Peter is not commended; Mt3rd refuses this common reticence, despite retaining from Mark alone its continuation into an explicit rebuke. While including extensive further Markan/Lucan common witness to Jesus' forecast of what he is to endure, Mt3rd refuses (Matt 16,21) their agreement that it is as Son of Man, together with words of Jesus in 53 shared characters, [ΟΤΙΔΕΙ]ΤΟΝΥΙΟΝΤΟΥΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥΠΟΛΛΑΠΑΘΕΙΝΚΑΙΑΠΟΔΟΚΙΜΑΣΘΗΝΑΙ, Mark 8,31a/Luke 9,22a (UCVST 14). But next, on discipleship, Matt 16,24-28, there is extensive CVST among all three, and also some close following of Mark solo. Yet after this there follows a refusal by Mt3rd of a shared sequence of some 38 characters (ΟΣΓΑΡ[ΕΑΝ]ΕΠΑΙΣΧΥΝΘΗΙΜΕΚΑΙΤΟΥΣΕΜΟΥΣΛΟΓΟΥΣ), and a further one of 31 (ΟΥΙΟΣΤΟΥΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥΕΠΑΙΣΧΥΝΘΗΣΕΤΑΙ), on the Son of Man's reciprocal response to rejection, Mark 8,38a,c/Luke 9,26a,b (UCVST 15, 16).

On "The Transfiguration" Mt3rd refuses Luke's expansion while adding one of his own, and stays close to solo Mark on Elijah; yet he agrees with Luke on improvements to Mark's "Healing of the Epileptic Boy", Matt 17,17a/Luke 9,41, and adds in teaching on faith from Luke 17,6. Luke has re-written much of Mark's second passion prediction; Mt3rd prefers Mark, agreeing at most on an isolated Lucan word, ΠΑΡΑΔΙΔΟΣΘΑΙ. If this is not chance, then Mt3rd still has texts of both firmly in view or at least, in mind. Yet he then diverges from both, and inserts the "Temple Tax" episode, for which we know no independent source.

Matt 18, with refused dual UCVSTs 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

For the "Dispute on Greatness", Matt 18,1-5, Mt3rd turns forward to Mark 10,15 where there is a close parallel at Luke 18,17. Perhaps unaware of this (though he is used to switching to-and-fro), he largely rephrases these words of Jesus in this Markan/Lucan agreement of 73 characters (UCVST 17). Then, back with Mark 9,37/Luke 9,48, he also refuses a further agreement of around 40 characters (UCVST 18). And that is followed by a yet more extensive refusal of common witness (UCVSTs 19, 20, 21), the entire pericope of "The Strange Exorcist", Mark 9,38-41/Luke 9,49-50, with 43, 32 and 33 character sequences verbatim.

On "Giving offense" ("causing to stumble"), "The Found Sheep", "Offenders in the Community", and "Reconciliation", Mt3rd initially follows Mark 9,42-45, to the letter in some sequences, only to switch on from where he last followed Luke, to engage at 15,3-7, "The Lost-and-Found Sheep". With this, as with other parables, he apparently feels free to re-write, even to expand. He then, we are asked to imagine, skips forward

yet again, to Luke 17. Here he adds, from no surviving source, his long parable of “The Unrelenting Slave” (Matt 18,22-35), in the conclusion recalling his own Matt 6,15 (from memory, one might well allow).

Matt 19, with refused dual UCVSTs 22, 23, 24.

Mt3rd now resumes Mark’s order, mostly to stay with it, though including additions from Luke and elsewhere. Here, on “Marriage”, “Divorce”, and “Children” he is often accepting quite long sequences of Mark’s narrative wording, and even more of words of the Lord. At Mark 10,13-14/Luke 18,15-16, he accepts, as we would still expect (despite the inconsistencies already noted), extensive common wording for significant action and utterance of Jesus (CVST). Yet there is one passage, Mark 10,15/Luke 18,17, where Mt3rd (around Matt 19,13-15), on a return visit to the passage, yet again refuses the fully shared continuation of the pericope into the most solemn “Amen” saying of Jesus, of 73 characters (UCVST 22 = UCVST 17).

Mark 10,17-18/Luke 18,18-19, “The Rich (Young) Man”, are very similar, with only occasional divergencies in order, a word or two, one in syntax. Mt3rd feels free to change the sense agreed in the other two, with Jesus no longer objecting to being addressed as “good”, but instead being asked to play philosophical ethicist. Mt3rd nonetheless soon accepts one further double agreement (words of Jesus, Matt 19,21b, CVST), only to refuse the next shared witness, on “Difficulty for the Rich”, ΠΩΣΔΥΣΚΟΛΩΣΟΙΤΑΧΡΗΜΑΤΑΕΧΟΝΤΕΣΕΙΣΤΗΝΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΝΤΟΥΘΕΟΥΕΙΣ (Mark 10,23b/Luke 18,24), 54 characters UCVST 23). Then, at Matt 19,24, he takes bits from each source (e.g., ΠΑΦΙΔΟΣ from Mark, ΤΡΗΜΑΤΟΣ from Luke?). *Ex hypothesi*, he has both in mind or even in view. And yet he manages, around Matt 19,29-30) to omit a further stretch of joint witness in 36 characters, ΚΑΙΕΝΤΩΙΑΙΩΝΙΤΩΙΕΡΧΟΜΕΝΩΙΖΩΗΝΑΙΩΝΙΟΝ (Mark 10,30b/Luke 18,30b; UCVST 24), “Life in the Age to Come”.

Matt 20.

Mt3rd adds into his Markan framework the parable of the “Job-Seekers Hired”, taking, it seems, no notice of Luke’s variants from Mark at all for a while, while including occasional brief agreements with Mark (e.g., “The request of James and John” – Matt, of their mother – entirely omitted by Luke). Although Mark and Luke accept that there was one blind man, named Bartimaeus, on the edge of Jericho, Matt has two, un-named; and occasional brief Markan/Lucan verbal coincidence is refused (ΔΕ ... ΕΚΡΑΖΕΝ, 21, ΗΠΙΣΤΙΣ ... ΣΕ, 19; not included in my total), even though the latter assurance has been accepted on a previous occasion. Luke anyway, having, as noted, omitted the sons of Zebedee, adds “The visit to Zacchaeus”, with that then ignored by Mt3rd.

Matt 21, with refused dual UCVSTs 25, 26, 27, 28 (but short, only 23), 29, 30, 31.

Table 1

In the opening of the Entry narrative – Jesus’ instructions, followed by compliance – of the first 300 characters in Mark, around 180 are taken as they stand by Luke, with very little added (34 characters); yet despite this massive accord, Mt3rd blithely goes his own way, as he does in the shared start of the Disturbance in the Temple Court.

Mark 11,1-15	Luke 19,28-46
ΚΑΙ ΟΤΕ ΕΓΓΙΖΟΥΣΙΝ ΕΙΣ ΙΕΡΟΣ ΟΛΥΜΑ ΕΙΣ ΒΗΘΦΑΓΗ ΚΑΙ ΒΗΘ ΑΝΙΑΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟ ΟΡΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΛΑΙ ΩΝΑ ΠΟΣΤΕΛΛΕΙ ΔΥΟ ΤΩΝ ΜΑΘ ΗΤΩΝ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΛΕΓΕΙ ΑΥΤΟΙ ΣΥΠΑΓΕΤΕ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΚΩΜΗΝ ΤΗ Ν ΚΑΤΕΝΑΝΤΙ ΜΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΥΘΥ ΣΕΙΣ ΠΟΡΕΥΟΜΕΝΟΙ ΕΙΣ ΑΥΤΗ Ν ΕΥΡΗΣΕΤΕ ΠΩΛΟΝ ΔΕΔΕΜΕΝ ΟΝ ΕΦΟΝΟΥΔΕΙΣ ΟΥ ΠΩΝ ΘΡΩ ΠΩΝ ΚΑΘΙΣΕΝ ΛΥΣΑΤΕ ΑΥΤΟ Ν ΚΑΙ ΦΕΡΕΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΕΑΝΤΙΣΥΜΙΝ ΕΙΠΗΤΙ ΠΟΙΕΙΤΕ ΟΥΤΟ ΕΙ ΠΑΤ ΕΟΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΧΡΕΙΑΝ ΕΧΕ Ι ΚΑΙ ΕΥΘΥΣ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΕΛ ΛΕΙ ΠΑΛΙΝ ΩΔΕ ΚΑΙ ΑΠΗΛΘΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΥΡΟΝ ΠΩΛΟΝ ΔΕΔΕΜΕΝΟ Ν ΠΡΟΣΘΥΡΑΝ ΕΞΩ ΕΠΙ ΤΟΥ ΑΜ ΦΟΔΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΛΥΟΥΣΙΝ ΑΥΤΟΝ Κ ΑΙ ΤΙΝΕΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΚΕΙΣΤΗΚΟΤΩΝ ΕΛΕΓΟΝ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΤΙ ΠΟΙΕΙΤΕ ΑΥ ΤΟΝ ΤΕΣΤΟΝ ΠΩΛΟΝ ΟΙΔΕ ΕΙ ΠΑ Ν ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΚΑΘΩΣ ΕΙΠΕΝ Ο ΙΗΣΟ ΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΦΗΚΑΝ ΑΥΤΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ Φ ΕΡΟΥΣΙΝ ΤΟΝ ΠΩΛΟΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟ Ν ΙΗΣΟΥΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙΒΑΛΛΟΥΣΙΝ ΑΥΤΩ ΤΑ ΙΜΑΤΙΑ ΑΥΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ Ε ΚΑΘΙΣΕΝ ΕΝ ΠΑΥΤΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΛ ΟΙ ΤΑ ΙΜΑΤΙΑ ΑΥΤΩΝ ΕΣΤΡΩΣΑ Ν ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΟΔΟΝ ΑΛΛΟΙ ΔΕ ΣΤΙΒ ΑΔΑΣ ΚΟΨΑΝΤΕΣ ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΡΩ Ν ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΠΡΟΑΓΟΝΤΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΙ Α ΚΟΛΟΥΘΟΥΝΤΕΣ ΕΚΡΑΖΟΝ ΩΣ ΑΝΝΑ ΕΥΛΟΓΗΜΕΝΟΣ Ο ΕΡΧΟ ΜΕΝΟΣ ΕΝ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ Ε	ΚΑΙ ΕΙΠΩΝ ΤΑΥΤΑ ΕΠΟΡΕΥΕΤΟ Ε ΜΠΡΟΣΘΕΝΑΝΑΒΑΙΝΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΙΕΡ ΟΣΟΛΥΜΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΩΣ ΗΓΓΙ ΣΕΝ ΕΙΣ ΒΗΘΦΑΓΗ ΚΑΙ ΒΗΘΑΝΙΑ Ν ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟ ΟΡΟΣ ΤΟ ΚΑΛΟ ΥΜΕΝ ΟΝ ΕΛΑΙΩΝΑ ΠΕΣΤΕΙΛΕΝ ΔΥΟ ΤΩ Ν ΜΑΘΗΤΩΝ ΛΕΓΩΝ ΣΥΠΑΓΕΤΕ ΕΙ Σ ΤΗΝ ΚΑΤΕΝΑΝΤΙΚΩΜΗΝ ΕΝ Η ΙΣ ΠΟΡΕΥΟΜΕΝΟΙ ΕΥΡΗΣΕΤΕ Π ΩΛΟΝ ΔΕΔΕΜΕΝΟΝ ΕΦΟΝΟΥΔΕΙ Σ ΠΩΠΟΤΕ ΑΝ ΘΡΩΠΩΝ ΕΚΑΘΙΣΕ Ν ΚΑΙ ΛΥΣΑΝΤΕΣ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΑΓΑΓΕ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΕΑΝΤΙΣΥΜΑΣΕΡΩΤΑΙ ΔΙΑ ΤΙ ΛΥΕΤΕ ΟΥΤΩΣ ΕΡΕΙΤΕ ΟΤΙ ΟΚΥ ΡΙΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΧΡΕΙΑΝ ΕΧΕΙΑ ΠΕΛ ΘΟΝΤΕΣ ΔΕ ΟΙ ΑΠΕΣΤΑΛΜΕΝΟΙ Ε ΥΡΟΝ ΚΑΘΩΣ ΕΙΠΕΝ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΛΥΟ ΝΤΩΝ ΔΕ ΑΥΤΩΝ ΤΟΝ ΠΩΛΟΝ ΕΙΠ ΑΝ ΟΙΚΥΡΙΟΙ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΣ ΑΥΤΟ ΥΣ ΤΙ ΛΥΕΤΕ ΤΟΝ ΠΩΛΟΝ ΟΙΔΕ ΕΙ ΠΑΝ ΟΤΙ ΟΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΧΡΕΙΑ Ν ΕΧΕΙ ΚΑΙ ΗΓΑΓΟΝ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΙΗΣΟΥΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙΡΨΑΝΤΕΣ Α ΥΤΩΝ ΤΑ ΙΜΑΤΙΑ ΕΠΙ ΤΟΝ ΠΩΛΟΝ ΕΠΕΒΙΒΑΣΑΝ ΤΟΝ ΙΗΣΟΥΝ ΠΟΡΕ ΥΟΜΕΝΟΥ ΔΕ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΥΠΕΣΤΡΩΝ ΝΥΟΝΤΑ ΙΜΑΤΙΑ ΑΥΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΤΗ Ο ΔΩ ΕΓΓΙΖΟΝΤΟΣ ΔΕ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΗΔΗ ΠΡΟΣΘΗΚΑΤΑΒΑΣΕΙΤΟΥ ΟΡΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΛΑΙΩΝ ΗΡΞΑΝΤΟ ΑΠΑΝΤΟ Ι ΠΛΗΘΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΜΑΘΗΤΩΝ ΧΑΙΡΟ ΝΤΕΣ ΑΙΝΕΙΝ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ ΦΩΝΗΜΙ ΕΓΑΛΗ ΠΕΡΙ ΠΑΣΩΝ ΩΝ ΕΙΔΟΝ Δ ΥΝΑΜΕΩΝ ΛΕΓΟΝΤΕΣ ΕΥΛΟΓΗ ΜΕΝΟΣ Ο ΕΡΧΟΜΕΝΟΣ Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ Σ ΕΝ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ ΕΝΟΥΡΑ ΝΩ ΙΕΡΗ ΝΗΚΑΙ ΔΟΞΑ ΕΝ ΨΙΣ ΤΟ

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 ΒΑΛΛΕΙΝ ΤΟΥΣ ΠΩΛΟΥΝΤΑΣ ΛΕ
 ΓΩΝ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΓΕΓΡΑΠΤΑΙ ΚΑΙ ΕΣΤ
 ΑΙ Ο ΟΙΚΟΣ ΜΟΥ ΟΙΚΟΣ ΠΡΟΣΕΥΧ
 ΗΣ ΥΜΕΙΣ ΔΕ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΕΠΟΙΗΣΑΤΕ
 ΣΠΗΛΑΙΟΝ ΑΝΙΣΤΩΝ

The reader is invited to spot in the above the following UCVSTs so as to know what Mt3rd is going to avoid:

ΕΛΑΙΩΝΑ ΠΕΣΤΕΙΛΕΝ ΔΥΟ ΤΩΝ ΜΑΘΗΤΩΝ ΛΕΓΩΝ ΥΠΑΓΕΤΕ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ
 ΚΑΤΕΝΑΝΤΙΚΩΜΗΝ ΕΝ ΗΙ ΕΙΣ ΠΟΡΕΥΟΜΕΝΟΙ
 ΕΥΡΗΣΕΤΕ ΠΩΛΟΝ ΔΕ ΔΕΜΕΝΟΝ ΕΦΟΝΟΥΔΕΙΣ ΟΥ ΠΩΝ ΘΡΩΠΩΝ ΕΚ
 ΑΘΙΣΕΝ

ΟΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΧΡΕΙΑΝ ΕΧΕΙ

ΚΑΙ ΕΙΣ ΕΛΘΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΙΕΡΟΝ ΗΡΕΑΤΟ ΕΚ ΒΑΛΛΕΙΝ ΤΟΥΣ ΠΩΛΟΥΝΤΑΣ

(This last is rather easier to spot in the columns as set out here.)

In Matt 21,1-17, the “Entry” story, although, as often, Mt3rd allows himself occasional very short agreements with Luke against Mark (e.g. ΗΓΓΙΣΑΝ, ΛΕΓΩΝ, ΕΡΕΙΤΕ), he refuses agreements of the other two: ΕΙΣ ... ΟΡΟΣ, 31 characters (Mark 11,1a/Luke 19,28b-29a, UCVST 25); ΕΛΑΙΩΝ ... ΚΑΤΕΝΑΝΤΙ, some 60 characters, though with a tense change and two short omissions (Mark 11,1b-2a/Luke 19,29b/30a, UCVST 26); ΕΥΡΗΣΕΤΕ ... ΕΚ ΑΘΙΣΕΝ, 54 (Mark 11,2b/Luke 19,30b, UCVST 27); ΟΚΥΡΙΟΣ ... ΕΧΕΙ, 22 (Mark 11,3b/Luke 21,32b,

UCVST 28), with his two sources agreeing almost to the letter. In fact, in the opening of the narrative – Jesus’ instruction followed by its compliance – of the first 300 characters in Mark, around 180 are taken as they stand by Luke, with very little added (34 characters); yet despite this accord, Mt3rd blithely goes his own way, or so we are to imagine.

On “Disturbing the Temple Court” Mt3rd agrees with Luke against Mark in having Jesus disrupt the Temple salespeople immediately on entering the city, even though he ignores Luke 19,39-44, Jesus’ prediction of its fall. Among the details of the disruption he rephrases the start ΚΑΙ ... ΠΩΛΟΥΝΤΑΣ (49 characters agreed by Mark 11,15a/Luke 19,45, UCVST 29), while taking letter for letter the rest of Mark only, 11,15b (92), yet then rejecting the plot in both Mark and Luke, again with a largely common sequence (Mark 11,18a/Luke 19,47b, 34 characters with one omission, UCVST 30).

The “Cursing of the Figtree” and its interpretation follow Mark alone. For the question of authority posed to Jesus Mt3rd accepts Markan/Lucan agreement (CVST), as we would still expect; so, too, the reaction to Jesus’ counter question, extensively, with very little variation, and then Jesus’ own final response, letter for letter (40). Mt3rd adds in his “Two Sons” parable. On the “Rebellious Tenant Farmers”, Matt 21,33-45, Mt3rd again accepts common Markan/Lucan reporting of words of Jesus, and the scriptural quotation is largely followed, though Luke cuts the latter short. Nonetheless, Mt3rd refuses the Mark 12,12b/Luke 20,19b agreed account of the assessment of the parable’s intention (40 characters, with one transposition, UCVST 31).

Matt 22, with refused dual UCVSTs 32, 33, 34, 35.

For “The Marriage Feast”, Mt3rd switches some way back in Luke (Luke 14,16-24), but largely re-writes it (or has a distinct oral source), before returning for a while to Mark’s and Luke’s shared controversy series. In the question of “Taxation” he follows Mark quite closely, if with transpositions, but then choses to paraphrase 43 characters shared by Mark 12,14c/Luke 20,21c-22a (ΑΛΛΕΠΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ ... ΕΞΕΣΤΙΝ; UCVST 32). On the issue of “Resurrection”, Mt3rd accepts the common posing of the question, but then refuses two common sequences that follow in its continuation (Mark 12,19b.19c-20a/Luke 20,28b.29a: ΕΓΡΑΨΕΝ ... ΑΠΟΘΑΝΗΙ, and ΙΝΑ ... ΠΡΩΤΟΣ; 34 and 91 characters, though with one addition by Luke; UCVST 33, 34). When the question is finally posed, Mt3rd refuses a further sequence of 30 characters (ΓΥΝΗ ... ΓΥΝΑΙΚΑ; UCVST 35; Mark 12,23b/Luke 20,23b) while immediately accepting 47 of Mark alone, and staying close to Mark for the scriptural quotation. Mark and Luke offer very similar versions of “The Command to Love God” (Deut 6,4), but Mt3rd prefers a shorter variant, while then following solo Mark’s version of Lev 19,18. On “David’s Son”, the verse of Ps 110 is the same in all three.

Matt 23, with refused dual UCVSTs 36, 37, 38, 39.

Here yet again Mt3rd is copying verbatim from each of the others on their own, but refuses verbatim common witness. He has, or has had Mark in view or at least in mind, on “the Great Commandment”, and on “David’s Son”. Then in his “Woes against the Pharisees and the Scribes” (Matt 23,1–24,51), Mt3rd is combining oddments from similar invective in Luke only, addressed, he agrees with Luke, “to the disciples” ΤΟΙΣΜΑΘΗΤΑΙΣ (in Mark, “a great crowd”), together with a very little more of such denunciatory material Luke shares with Mark: words of Jesus (CVST), which, despite inconsistencies, we may still have come to expect Mt3rd to conserve. For sure, words of Jesus on “places of honour, best seats”, ΠΡΩΤΟΚΑΘΕΔΡΙΑΣ ... ΚΑΙ, Matt 23,6b, Mark 12,39a, Luke 20,46b, 33 letters, are in common in all three. Yet immediately preceding words of Jesus, on “scribes in long robes”, ΑΠΟΤΩΝ ... ΑΓΟΡΑΙΣΚΑΙ (74 letters in common, shared by Mark 12,38b/Luke 20,46a, with one inversion, ΦΙΛΟΥΝΤΩΝ added in Luke; UCVST 36) are omitted, as are a further 90 immediately following in both, on “devouring widows’ houses”, Mark 12,40/Luke 20,47, ΟΙΚΑΤΕΣΘΙΟΝΤΕΣ ... ΚΡΙΜΑ, UCVST 37). This invective, with further very occasional words Mt3rd shares with Luke, mainly from back in Luke 11, culminates in matter Mt3rd also takes from Luke only, but elsewhere: the “Lament over Jerusalem” (Luke 13,34–35), an entire pericope, comprising some 300 letters agreed save for one change of tense, one of order, and one preposition.

Mt3rd is clearly still content, here as elsewhere, to share matter with Luke on his own, and all but verbatim, and, though much less often, matter taken verbatim from Mark. But he is nonetheless, and oddly as ever, very reluctant to accept matter, even some words of Jesus, that Luke shares with Mark, and in what next follows, he omits an entire common pericope, “The Widow’s Mites” (ΛΕΠΙΤΑ), which Luke 21,1–4 includes in an abbreviated form which nonetheless retains extensive verbal agreements with Mark: Jesus’ assessment of the widow’s giving, ΛΕΓΩ ... ΕΒΑΛΕΝ (Mark 12,43/Luke 21,3, 44 letters, UCVST 38), and his belittling of the parsimony of the rich, ΠΑΝΤΕΣ ... ΕΒΑΛΕΝ (Mark 12,44/Luke 21,4, 100 characters in Mark (UCVST 39).

Matt 24–25.

Mt3rd returns to Mark for the prediction of “The Temple’s Destruction”, but, as noted just above, has omitted Mark’s lead into it, the widow’s generosity, with some sizeable sequences shared with Luke. The words Jesus ascribes to “The False Claimants” (Matt 24,5) are shared by all three evangelists, as are his foretellings of conflicts (CVST). For what follows Luke mostly differs from Mark, and Mt3rd has much earlier brought some of the Markan matter forward (Matt 10,17–21), often adopting it quite closely. He returns to his Temple sequence with Mark 13,14–20, where just some

words of Jesus on “Family Disruption”, found in common in the other two, are included here (Matt 24,5.7a.9b, CVST). Jesus’ “Warning to Flee” and his “Lament for the Pregnant” (Matt 24,16.19) are shared by all three, as are the “Signs in the Heavens” and “The Arrival of the Son of Man” (Matt 23,29.30b) and the summary and assurance (Matt 24,31-33). The need for “Watchfulness” and “The Faithful Servant” (Matt 24,37-51) is brought back from Luke 17 and 12, with some close following.

There is no Markan matter in Matt 25, though there are some quite lengthy sequences reproduced from Luke word for word.

Matt 26, with refused dual UCVSTs 40, 41.

In “The Passion” Luke largely goes his own way, and Mt3rd prefers to follow Mark, often quite closely. “The Preparation” has all three together, especially in some words of Jesus; yet even there, (Matt 26,17-19) Mt3rd misses the male water-carrier ΤΩΙΟΙΚΟΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΙ ... ΟΠΟΥ (Mark 14,13b/Luke 22,10b, 51 characters, UCVST 40), and misses what the disciples are to ask ΥΜΙΝ ... ΑΥΤΩΙ (59 in Mark 14,14b, 64 in Luke 22,11, slightly re-ordered, UCVST 41). There seems to be no further Markan/Lucan doublet to be missed or accepted by Mt3rd.

Conclusion

I have adduced forty-one “refused dual UCSVTs”, agreements of Mark and Luke ranging from 30 characters up to over 100 (with one noted exception of just 23), all missed by or not taken up by Mt3rd, together with just one 30-character UCVST actually accepted by Mt3rd, together with two much shorter than my (arbitrary) standard. (If I had allowed myself to include missed sequences of 13 or even of 17 characters, I would have had a list much longer than the forty-one adduced.)

I have already proposed dismissing coincidence as an explanation. “Matt as third collator”, like other hypotheses rejecting the 2DH, is supposed to relieve us of appeal to coincidence. To miss half-a-dozen or so by coincidence might seem acceptable. To include only one, plus two small bits, and yet miss all of the other forty-one “by coincidence” seems to me completely implausible. Mt3rd has both texts in front of him, or available to him, even if he often relies on memory. On this hypothesis, as has been pointed out, he can (from memory, most likely) bring minor bits of one source into his version mainly of the other. With that keen attention, mainly to Mark, but constantly aware of Luke, he could hardly have failed to notice this common matter. Indeed, as argued, we would expect him to look for it, and value it. But he does not.

Yes, it might have been possible for someone less attentive to miss some of these dual agreements. I have suggested, Mt3rd can be taken to have allowed one “full” one in, as well as two much shorter than my

standard. But, by chance to have missed all of my forty-one others seems to me to lack any plausibility at all. Mt3rd has to be taken to be copying or paraphrasing from one or both, usually, it would seem, with both in view or clearly in mind, yet *time and again succeeding in stopping short when they agree, only then to resume as usual when they part*.

Of course, had Mt3rd actually wanted to miss dual UCVSTs, then with both the texts before him, he could physically have done it, painstakingly. I must allow that it would have been physically possible, even if still quite difficult, time consuming. But why? In the light of current conventional preference for common witness, it would have been absurd. And in the light of his own attention to each individual source, it would have been quite out of character. To repeat, he is quite content on occasion to copy precisely – but hardly ever where his sources agree in general narrative, or even in some of the words ascribed to the Lord.

The probability of this phenomenon occurring, the likelihood of at least forty-one refusals of dual UCVST agreements occurring by chance *or* deliberately, must be judged simply nil, zero, zilch.

Along with my previous “Disagreements of Each Evangelist with the Minor Close Agreements of the Other Two”, I hope, then, I have shown that any hypothesis which has one of the three evangelists working with the other two runs into the same vicious inconsistency. Any hypothesis that has the third author painstakingly excising matter shared by the other two in fact has a zero probability, and a hypothesis that has a zero probability cannot stand against one that seems weakened merely by including some coincidences accorded varying (unquantified) degrees of unlikelihood. The zero probability hypothesis is, from the start, excluded from any competition with one agreed to be possible.

At least one may say, with such as Goodacre, 2DH does not lead to absurdities, only to more or less plausible coincidences. 2DH may indeed have, in the minds of some, probability close to zero: but at least, it does not fall off the scale, which is what Matthew, or Mark, or Luke as third redactor of the other two each clearly does. It is always possible to render what might appear collusive agreements plausibly coincidental (as I have tried to in two instances above). It does not seem possible to make multiple excisions of dual agreements in primary sources in any way plausibly imaginable at all.

On 2DH, there can be no accusation of deliberate or frequent coincidental refusal of common witness by Matt or by Luke. Neither has a “Markanized” text of the other to influence their use either of Mark itself, or of Q. They will agree on scriptural quotations and often on succinct and definitive words of Jesus, the Baptist and John (CVST), as they do on any hypothesis; but will make their own selections elsewhere of Q and Mark to cite verbatim, or paraphrase, or omit. Some of these may in fact coincide, but their coincidence is purely chance, not prompted by the other, and is rare. They are both intending to improve on general narrative

elements in Mark, and what counts as “improvement” in the culture they share, will often coincide. The range of options for improvement by such writers is not large; some “coincidences” of inclusion or omission were very likely to occur.

The upshot is simple: 2DH (Matt and Luke independently using Mark and Q) is possible, even though it comes in “complausible” varieties of reconstruction. And perhaps even their occasional “surprising” coincidences can be made to seem somewhat more plausible, higher up the probability scale than some sceptics allow. But any of the three synoptic evangelists as a redactor regularly excluding extensive common witness while using the other two is totally implausible, quite impossible to imagine coherently, it has here been argued. The impossible is ruled out. Only a possible solution, albeit of varyingly judged plausibility, is worth considering at all. That is, obviously, 2DH.

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ABSTRACT. — Scholars assert their reconstructions are possible, probable, plausible. Even Matthew and Luke quite independently agreeing against Mark in Markan contexts is agreed by sceptics to be possible, if not really plausible. Can “possibility” or “plausibility” be quantified? Perhaps our judgement between hypotheses is inescapably subjective. However, if some proposed reconstruction can be shown to be impossible, then any that are merely possible surely hold the field, alone or “complausible” with others. One evangelist writing third (whether Mark, Luke, or recently, from Alan Garrow, Matthew) turns out willing to paraphrase or often copy verbatim – or all but – *single* matter from the other two, while assiduously avoiding forty or so extensive sequences of the verbatim *agreed* witness of the other two. Only the hypothesis of Matthew and Luke independently using Mark and “Q” (2DH) avoids such an arguably impossible reconstruction.

APPENDIX

TABLE OF UNCONVENTIONAL VERBATIM SHARED TEXTS, UCVSTs IN MARK AND
LUKE BUT ABSENT IN MATTHEW

1. Mark 1,4/Luke 3,3
2. Mark 1,7/Luke 3,16b
3. Mark 1,13/Luke 4,1c-2
4. Mark 1,23/Luke 4,32
5. Mark 1,27c/Luke 4,36c
6. Mark 1,44b/Luke 5,14a
7. Mark 4,41b/Luke 8,25b
8. Mark 5,7-8/Luke 8,28-29
9. Mark 5,7-8/Luke 8,28-29
10. Mark 2,7/Luke 5,21b-22
11. Mark 5,24a-25/Luke 8,43a
12. Mark 3,4/Luke 6,9
13. Mark 3,11/Luke 4,41
14. Mark 8,31a/Luke 9,22a
15. Mark 8,38a/Luke 9,26a
16. Mark 8,38c/Luke 9,26b
17. Mark 10,15/Luke 18,17
18. Mark 9,37/Luke 9,48
- 19, 20, 21. Mark 9,38-41/Luke 9,49-50
22. Mark 10,15/Luke 18,17, Mt3rd's second visit to this passage
23. Mark 10,23b/Luke 18,24
24. Mark 10,30b/Luke 18,30b
25. Mark 11,1a/Luke 19,28b-29a
26. Mark 11,1b-2a/Luke 19,29b/30a
27. Mark 11,2b/Luke 19,30b
28. Mark 11,3b/Luke 21,32b
29. Mark 11,15/ Luke 19,45
30. Mark 11,18a/Luke 19,47b
31. Mark 12,12b/Luke 20,19b
32. Mark 12,14c/Luke 20,21c-22a
33. Mark 12,19b/Lk. 20,28b
34. Mark 12,19c-20a/Luke 20,29a
35. Mark 12,23b/Luke 20,23b
36. Mark 12,38b/Luke 20,46a
37. Mark 12,40/Luke 20,47
38. Mark 12,43/Luke 21,3
39. Mark 12,44/Luke 21,4
40. Mark 14,13b/Luke 22,10b
41. Mark 14,14b/Luke 22,11