

Objections to Luke A/B/C

Joseph Verheyden

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

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EDITORS' NOTE: These comments on Brooks **Acts-Luke** ("Luke A/B/C") were predistributed for the Alpha Christianity Seminar at the Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society meeting on 28 Mar 2014. With the respondent's permission, that exchange has been revised for this volume of *Alpha*.

JV. In the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Feast, it is shown that each in turn has a more complicated version, which is regarded as the result of messing up an original simpler and more straightforward one. For the material that falls under Luke A > Matt [the Feast Parable], it is not proven that the latter had stood in Luke A.

ABC. Q proponents would presumably say that Luke has more accurately copied the original Q parable, and Matthew has copied it less accurately. The Luke A/B/C theory would say that Luke's is the more original form of the parable, which Matthew spoiled in the process of later adapting it. *These statements are formally equivalent.* The only difference is in whether there was a Q, which is precisely the point at issue.

JV. Luke A/B/C does not envision the possibility that Matthew/Luke may have been cleaning up an original messy text. If an author can mess up things in rewriting a "good" original, he must be "capable" of also composing messy stuff of his own (which others have to clean up).

ABC. That copying or adaptation can produce inconcinnity is the oldest principle in the book. If we run it backwards, the basis on which directionality decisions are made (including those lying behind IQP) simply vanishes. Luke, operating on his own, produces coherent text. That he wrote the incoherent Parable of the Minae, hoping that a future Matthew would fix it up, is not, in our view, a literarily plausible position.

Specifically, that Parable also contains a clear indication of secondarity in the change from Matthew's three servants to ten, a change which is abandoned later when Luke after all *reverts to three servants*. This is a perfect example of what Goodacre has called "editorial fatigue." It establishes the direction Mt > Lk, and shows that in this case the simpler story (Mt) is also the original story. Left to himself, Luke is fine. It is only *when taking over material from Matthew* that his judgement is liable to falter.

JV. The Beatitudes may prove that Matthew has expanded on a text like Luke 6:20b-22, not that it *was* Luke 6:20b-22.

ABC. Same point as above. We have functionally equivalent statements: Q > Mt or Lk > Mt. Note that this and the previous example together establish bidirectionality in the common Mt/Lk material. This bidirectionality refutes the Farrer-Goulder hypothesis (FGH), which allows only Mt > Lk. The only models which acknowledge that bidirectionality are Q and Luke A/B/C. The choice between them must rest on other evidence than bidirectionality as such. We may now proceed to that evidence.

JV. If it were Luke's intention to "outdo" Matthew, how explain that he writes up a messy text on the basis of a "clean" one in Luke 19?

ABC. Again the Parable of the Minae, Lk 19:11-27. We have seen that Luke may write problematic text when he is borrowing from Matthew, and this remains a fine example. Does it conflict with Luke's Birth Narrative, a prime example of Luke trying to *outdo* Matthew? Only if Luke's Birth Narrative, as a Luke B addition, creates inconsistencies with the rest of Luke. Which it does: (1) In the Birth Narrative John is Jesus' cousin; in Luke proper, at the Baptism scene, they meet instead as strangers. (2) In the Birth Narrative, John is said to be himself the herald of God's return to Israel. But in the Gospel proper (Luke A) John instead appears as *the herald of Jesus*.¹ The presence of intrusive material thus correlates with inconcinnities in the text.

JV. Matthew and Luke B are said to share an interest in "kingship," but they do not seem to share it always at the same moment, for when Luke B finds it in the Parable of the Feast (it is assumed that Luke B not only checked Matthew for material he did not yet have, but also for such material of which he could find a different version in Matthew), he hastens to do away with it.

ABC. Luke does not like Matthew's authority focus. He takes no special pleasure in listening to the screams of the damned (Mt 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30).² As Beare has noticed, it is pre-eminently in Matthew that we meet King Jesus, the all-powerful Christus Pantocrator. Why then does Luke B sometimes adopt Matthew's king theme? Presumably for the same reason that he sometimes adopted Matthew's miracle theme (not alone in the Birth Narrative): because it was popular. Massaux has shown how quickly Matthew became the Gospel of choice in Christian leadership circles. Is it not reasonable that Luke should wish to get a bit of what was working for Matthew, to secure for his own Gospel at least a share of the future?

Luke introduces a Kingship detail when he adapts Matthew's Talents Parable, with disastrous results which have been hilariously chronicled by Goulder. Perhaps Luke thought that the image of a Returning King would evoke Jesus' return at the Last Days, or perhaps he wanted to allude to the journey of Archelaus to Rome to claim his father Herod the Great's kingdom as heir, a claim opposed by a delegation of 50 sent to Rome (Josephus Ant 17/9:1-3). Perhaps he thought both. This would merely be an example of the confusion likely to result from handling somebody else's material.

The uses of the word "king" in Luke outside the Birth Narrative and the Trial scene are exactly two:

- Lk 14:31. Example of a king going to war unprepared.
- Lk 19:38. The disciples hail "the King who comes in the name of the Lord."

Both are Luke A. Lk 14:31 makes fun of a heedless king; it does not attest a Lukan interest in Kingship. In Lk 19:38, Luke has dropped Mark's "the kingdom of our father David that is coming" (retained in Mt 21:9), presumably to avoid a conflict with Jesus' admission (Mk 12:35-37a = Lk 20:41-44) that he is *not* a descendant of David.

¹It has been plausibly suggested that Luke's Birth Narrative here draws on Baptist tradition.

²The only Lukan instance, Luke 13:28, is a Luke B borrowing from Mt 8:12.

Neither passage can be said to show a Lukan inclination toward a King motif. What Luke does show is a concern to clean up Mark's sometimes careless narrative. So Luke A, consistent with his emphasis on lowliness, has nothing going in the King department, and when Luke B, playing catch-up with Matthew, adds that detail, he royally louses up. So much for the idea that Luke A or B had "an interest in kingship." What Luke B had that Luke A did not was an interest in retaining market share.

JV. And when, apparently under the benign influence of Matthew, he finally redeems his earlier position of staunchly rejecting the possibility that the wealthy can be saved and now goes for "a more accepting attitude" (assuming there really is a contradiction here in Luke), he seems to have forgotten that he once with equal enthusiasm had argued for the opposite. A few strokes of the pen would have spared him this embarrassment.

ABC. No doubt the Lazarus story (the rich man is condemned to eternal torment) and the Zacchaeus story (the rich man may be saved if he restores ill-gotten gains and gives alms), differ importantly. The question is, why did not Luke B delete Lazarus to avoid that inconsistency? The answer is that authority texts can add, but they cannot delete and *still retain acceptance among those to whom they are already familiar*. The whole premise of an authority text is that it is a reliable resource for the reader. If part of it is later acknowledged as no longer operative, the text reduces its own credibility. Authority texts are not read once and then discarded; in their nature, they are repeated. Their audience knows them. Their familiarity is part of their authority.³

Comment

The Editors

The above queries did not touch on the proposed restoration of the Luke A version of the so-called Travel Narrative, Lk 9:51-8:14. This however is one of the chief points at which the two theories can be judged. It is required by the Q hypothesis (as by the FG hypothesis) that Luke, whatever his sources, was written *on one occasion*. Any inconsistencies in the text are thus inexplicable on the assumption of a rational author. The Luke A/B/C model provides for multiple stages of composition, and sees internal inconsistencies as changes in the strategy of the author, or as unintended artifacts of the author updating his own previous text. Luke A's "Travel Narrative" appears, on the A/B/C theory, as a heretofore unsuspected specimen of early Christian paraenesis. The convincing character of that reconstruction may perhaps be counted as evidence for the explanatory power of the Luke A/B/C model.

Works Cited

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³For one device employed by texts in dealing with their earlier states, see Brooks **Reader**.