

Directionality in Luke and Matthew

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EDITORS' NOTE: It had been asked, on the Synoptic-L list, "where the current consensus on directionality is, on each of the parallel passages in Matt/Luke (sometimes called the Q passages)?" We here give our best answers, for passages not treated in **Acts-Luke** and its sequels in Alpha 1, which attempt to recover the original Travel Narrative, Lk 9:51-18:14.

The explanations are in terms of the Luke A/B/C theory, where Luke A is first, Matthew second (borrowing from Luke A), and Luke B third (borrowing back from Matthew). The brief Luke C, somewhat later, rarely figures here.

[BEFORE THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN]

Lk 3:7-9. The Preaching of John the Baptist. Condemnatory of the Pharisees ("Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"), and thus in Matthew's vein.¹ **Mt 3:7-10 > Lk B.** Luke B's extension in Lk 3:10-14 ("and there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do?") puts us back in Lukan territory – being saved. Luke's God *wants* us to be saved: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

Lk 3:16b-17. His Winnowing Fork. Better 3:17 (16b is from Mark). Another Matthean threat; **Mt 3:12 > Lk B.** Note again Luke B's upbeat addition in Lk 3:18, "With many other exhortations therefore preached he good tidings unto the people."

Lk 4:1-13. The Temptations of Jesus. Not in Q, but a rearrangement of the Markan Temptations. It puts the Jerusalem one in the last (climactic) position, in agreement with a tendency, in successive Gospels, to tell the Jesus story in Jerusalem terms.²

Lk 6:12. Went Up to the Mountain. Not in Q. To Mk 3:13, Luke A adds "to pray," and specifies a night spent in prayer before the Calling of the Twelve, emphasizing the authenticity of the Twelve. It was not until Luke C that Luke pushed evolving theology a step further by throwing his weight instead behind Paul.³

¹Matthew 5:17-18 shows a devotion to the whole Law, in contrast to the Jesus we know from Mark 10:19. Matthew also likes the *workings* of the Law, especially its condemnations. He would sit on the balcony of Hell to enjoy the screams of agony below. Of seven NT instances of "gnashing of teeth," six are in Matthew (13:42, 13:50, 22:12, 24:51, 25:30).

²See the fourth of the **Four Gospel Trajectories** in Alpha v1.

³See Brooks **Acts-Luke** in Alpha v1, and its sequels. Note that Matthew renders the second-person "you" in Luke's Beatitudes as third person: except for an irregular "when men revile **you**" in the last Matthean Beatitude. That is an example of "fatigue," where an author makes a change in his source, but *not consistently*, so that an unchanged passage occurs later on in the document. For the pattern, see the reference to Goodacre in **Acts-Luke** 152.

[WITHIN THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN]

Lk 6:17. He Came Down With Them. Luke A draws on Mk 3:7-8, a crowd which came to Jesus to be healed. He gets Jesus down from the mountain to a level place where he might thinkably address not only his disciples, but also a larger crowd. Matthew instead leaves Jesus on the mountain, which is his Scriptural way of evoking Moses receiving the Law on Sinai, and leaving the suddenly appearing crowd to cling as best they can to rocks and trees, an ongoing challenge to artists. **Lk A > Mt 5:1.**

Lk 6:20-23. The Four Lukan Beatitudes. It has been noted, even by some who otherwise see Mt > Lk directionality in the common passages, that, to quote Harnack, “There is no need of many words to prove that here St Matthew is almost everywhere secondary.” Indeed so, and we have **Lk A > Mt 5:3-4, 6, 11-12.**⁴

Lk 6:27-33. Love Your Enemies. The corresponding part of Matthew’s Sermon is Mt 5:44, 39-42, 7:12, 5:46, 5:45. Matthew makes his Sermon out of Luke’s, plus passages culled from elsewhere in Luke. **Lk A > Mt 5:44, 39-42, 7:12, 5:46, 5:45.**⁵

Lk 6:37-49. Judge Not. The Matthean parallel comprises Mt 7:1-2 (“judge not”), 15:14 (“blind guides”), 10:24-25 (“a disciple is not above his teacher”), 7:3-5 (“the speck in your brother’s eye”), 7:16-20 (an expansion of “figs from thistles,” part only in the doublet at 12:33-35), 7:21 (“Lord, Lord”), and 7:24-27 (the house on rock, the end of both Sermons). Matthew keeps the head (Beatitudes) and tail (house on rock) of Luke’s Sermon and expands with other Lukan matter, plus original, and harsher, stuff of his own. **Lk A > Mt 7:1-2, 15:14, 10:24-25, 7:3-5, 7:16-21, 7:24-27.**

[AFTER THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN]

Lk 7:1-3. The Centurion Sends for Jesus. Lk 7:1a (“After he had ended all his sayings in the ears of the people”) is Luke A’s transition from the Sermon on the Plain to the next segment in Luke. Matthew generalized it as an ending formula for *all* of Matthew’s Five Discourses. Lk 7:2 begins the story of the Centurion, but the next thing in Matthew is the Healing of a Leper (Lk 5:12-16; from Mk 1:40-45). As for the Centurion, Lk 7:3 has him send to Jesus “elders of the Jews,” who in 7:4 argue that “he is worthy to have you do this for him,” whereas in Mt 8:5, the Centurion comes to Jesus himself. The general progression in Luke is from less to more acceptance of Gentiles; this passage, which respects the uncleanness of a Gentile dwelling for the Jewish Jesus, may thus be early. Then most plausibly **Lk A > Mt 8:5-7.**

Lk 7:6-10. Jesus Heals the Centurion’s Slave. In Lk, Jesus goes with the elders; in Mt 8:8-10, the Centurion, who has come out to meet him, asks for a distance healing. This (in both Mt and Lk) provokes Jesus’ comment, “Not even in Israel have I found such faith.” As part of the same story, here also **Lk A > Mt 8:8-10.**

What follows, Mt 8:11-12 ~ Lk 13:28-38 (“Many from east and west”), might be a Matthean agglomeration, but the Matthean phrase “gnashing of teeth” (Mt 8:12) in Lk 13:28 implies Luke B borrowing. Then we have **Mt 8:11-12 > Lk B 13:28-30.**

⁴For the reference, see **Acts-Luke** 152.

⁵Streeter **Four Gospels** (1924) calls Matthew’s method of composition “agglomerative,” in his Discourses generally (166f) and in the first of them, his Sermon on the Mount (249f).

Lk 7:18-19. The Question of John. This and the Matthean counterpart are nearly identical. The following Lk 7:20-21, which repeat John's question to Jesus, and contain an enabling flashback, are omitted in Matthew, most plausibly because they are narratively superfluous. Then **Lk A 7:18-22 > Mt 11:2-5**.

Lk 7:22-28. More than a Prophet. Continuing the story, still nearly identically, and presumably with the same directionality. Matthew omits Luke's explanatory note in Lk 7:29-30, here too probably for narrative economy. **Lk A 7:22-28 > Mt 11:4-11**.

Lk 7:31-35. Children in the Marketplace. This and the Matthean counterpart are nearly identical; Matthew is terser. Lk 7:31 "Wisdom is justified by all her children" sees both Jesus and John as children of God, and equally valid as teachers (compare Mk 11:15-19, retained with variations in both Mt and Lk). Mt 11:19 "Wisdom is justified by her deeds" is a non sequitur, a change that makes no sense. Lk is closer to John tradition (as with the invention of a fixed, not improvised, prayer:⁶ Lk 11:1, "as John taught his disciples," not in the Mt 6:9 parallel). **Lk A 7:31-35 > Mt 11:12-19**.

Luke's closeness to John tradition is nowhere clearer than in Luke B's lengthy treatment of the birth of John in Lk 1. Matthew copies some John material from Luke, but here in Mt 11:19, refuses to accept his equivalence to Jesus as a child of Wisdom. This is consistent with his refusal to accept the appropriateness of John's baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:14-15, says John, "I need to be baptized by *you*"). The larger picture is clearer than any one detail, but all the details are consistent with the larger picture.

[THE TRAVEL NARRATIVE]⁷

[AFTER THE TRAVEL NARRATIVE]

Lk 19:12-13. Parable of the Talents. Matthew has big sums (talents); Luke has small ones (minae), agreeable to their tendencies elsewhere; no directionality clue. Luke has the man not merely going a journey, but going *to receive a kingship* (protested in Lk 19:14). This superfluous detail may be an ill-considered addition to the story. If so, then **Mt 25:14-15 > Luke B 19:12-13**. See next.

Lk 19:15-24. The rest of the story. Matthew has three servants throughout; Luke starts with ten (19:13, but ends up with three (19:15-21). This is another example of fatigue; a change made initially is not sustained later. Then, more certainly than above, Luke must be later, and we have **Mt 25:14-30 > Luke B 19:11-27**.

Lk 19:26. To Him Who Has. Not in Q (it derives from Mk 4:25, with parallels elsewhere in Lk and Mt besides those considered; the whole situation is complex). This is one of the hardest sayings in the Bible, but it is not our task to expound it; merely to determine its directionality. The directionality of the story is determined by the above considerations, and this passage is included in that conclusion.⁸

⁶For the Lukan Lord's Prayer as primary, see the remark of Harnack, p197 above.

⁷As noted above, for these 39 passages see **Acts-Luke** and its sequels in Alpha 1.

⁸For what is wrong and thus secondary in this Lukan story, see **Acts-Luke** 152 (based on Goulder), and note also the opposite directionality implied by the Parable of the Feast (Beare). The bidirectionality of the Mt/Lk common material is here inescapable.

Lk 22:28-30. Will Sit on Thrones Judging Israel. In Luke, this is an extension to the Last Words of Jesus (22:21-30), and makes sense as Jesus' promise for the future. In Matthew, it is added to the Rich Man story (Mk 10:17-31; Mt 19:16-30). In the Markan original Rich Man story, Peter asks what those who have left everything and followed Jesus will get, and Jesus answers that they will receive in this life more than they lost, "and in the world to come, eternal life." Matthew inserts the additional idea of a *rulership* reward. The structure of the result in Matthew is as follows:

[Mt 19:27] Then answered Peter and said unto him, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have? [28a] And Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you,

[28b] *that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* [29a] And

[29b] everyone that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life.

The double set of rewards in the above is anomalous. The story reads better in Mark, with the note of authority absent, and with the balancing compensation spelled out (replacement of lost family and possessions, as in Job) for those who suffer for following Jesus. Luke, placing his addition in the Last Supper scene, merely has "thrones," probably because, so near to the betrayal, "twelve" is anomalous. Matthew adds "twelve," probably to match the following "twelve tribes of Israel." Such as it is, the passage is more at home in its Lukan context. **Lk A 22:28-30 > Mt 19:28b-29a.**

Concluding Editorial Comment

(2018)

The above arguments seem to us both simple and sufficient. For detecting the directionality between two related but nonidentical passages, in particular, nothing very esoteric is needed. Every reader has noticed that the personalities of Matthew and Luke, as we discern them in unique passages, are remarkably different. Matthew deals in big money; with investment banking. Luke's finances ("The Lost Coin") are those of the poor. Matthew is severe. He is the hanging judge; he likes to imagine the suffering of the damned ("gnashing of teeth" is his favorite phrase); he emphasizes that few will be saved. Luke is gentle; his stories include women. He likes salvation: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Lk 12:32). With this contrast in mind, it is not inordinately difficult to see when Luke is being characteristic, and when he is taking something over from harsh Matthew: his one "gnashing of teeth" passage (Lk 15:28 < Mt 8:12), or his cursing of the Galilean churches (Lk 10:13-15 < Mt 11:21-23). These stand out as discordant in Luke's text.

The condition for these explanations to work is the existence of more than one state of Luke, so that Luke *occupies more than one point in the Synoptic diagram*. It is this double position, both before and after Matthew, that provides a second possibility for explaining the bidirectionality of the Mt/Lk common material which is not in Mark, an explanation that does not rely on positing a conjectural outside source such as Q.