

Matthew's Use of Mark: Did Matthew Intend to Supplement or to Replace His Primary Source?*

DAVID C. SIM

*School of Theology/Centre for Early Christian Studies, Australian Catholic University, Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065, Australia.
email: david.sim@acu.edu.au*

Most scholars acknowledge Matthew's debt to Mark in the composition of his own Gospel, and they are fully aware of his extensive redaction and expansion of this major source. Yet few scholars pose what is an obvious question that arises from these points: What was Matthew's intention for Mark once he had composed and circulated his own revised and enlarged account of Jesus' mission? Did he intend to supplement Mark, in which case he wished his readers to continue to consult Mark as well as his own narrative, or was it his intention to replace the earlier Gospel? It is argued in this study that the evidence suggests that Matthew viewed Mark as seriously flawed, and that he wrote his own Gospel to replace the inadequate Marcan account.

Keywords: Matthew, Mark, supplement, replace, revision, expansion

1. Introduction

One of the more assured results of modern Synoptic criticism is that of Marcan priority.¹ The vast majority of scholars today accept with no hesitation

* This study is dedicated to the memory of Graham N. Stanton, whose work on the Gospel of Matthew continues to illuminate and inspire.

¹ The major dissenting voices are from the proponents of the neo-Griesbach or Two Gospel Hypothesis. This theory, which has its origins in the eighteenth century, holds that Matthew was written first, that Luke made use of Matthew, and then Mark both abbreviated and conflated these two Gospels. The classic defence of this hypothesis in modern times is that of W. R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (Dillsboro: Western North Carolina, 2d ed. 1976). See too his later *The Gospel of Jesus: The Pastoral Relevance of the Synoptic Problem* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994). The neo-Griesbach Hypothesis has found a number of adherents over the past few decades, but it has been most vigorously defended in recent times by a number of Farmer's former students. See in particular A. J. McNicol, ed., with D. L. Dungan and D. B. Peabody, *Beyond the Q Impasse: Luke's Use of Matthew*

the proposition that Mark was written first and that it was used as a major source by the authors of Matthew and Luke. Some dissension exists within this consensus position over the nature of the non-Markan material shared by these later evangelists. While most scholars continue to hold some version of the Q hypothesis to explain the presence of this shared material in these Gospels, a small minority maintains that Q is insupportable and that the phenomenon in question can be explained on the hypothesis that Luke used Matthew in addition to Mark.² This disagreement among Marcan priorists need not detain us further, since in this study our primary concern is Matthew's use of Mark and not his utilisation of Q or any other source.

Once it is agreed that Matthew knew and used Mark in the composition of his own Gospel, a number of obvious questions emerge: How did Matthew utilise his Marcan source? What aspects of Mark did he take over, and which elements did he edit or even omit? Why did Matthew see the necessity to expand Mark as much as he did? Matthean redaction critics have spent the best part of sixty years responding to these sorts of questions, though of course their answers have not always been in accord. But the hypothesis that Matthew used Mark raises further questions over and above his treatment of this major source. What intentions did the evangelist have for the earlier Gospel after he had completed his own narrative about Jesus of Nazareth? Was his own text written to supplement Mark, in which case he planned or hoped that his intended readers would read both Gospels? Alternatively, was it Matthew's goal to replace Mark? Did he produce and circulate his own text with the specific intention that his readers would see no necessity to consult the Marcan account once his own Gospel was available? This topic of Matthew's intentions for Mark, as opposed to his treatment of Mark, is rarely raised in the scholarly forum. This is somewhat surprising, since

(Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), and D. B. Peabody, ed., with L. Cope and A. J. McNicol, *One Gospel From Two: Mark's Use of Matthew and Luke* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002).

² For an early statement of this view, see A. M. Farrer, 'On Dispensing with Q', *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (ed. D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Blackwell, 1959) 55-88. Farrer's hypothesis was extensively reproduced, defended and extended in the many works of M. D. Goulder. Goulder's major contribution to Matthean studies is his *Midrash and Lektion in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974), which deals with Matthew's expansion of Mark without recourse to the Q hypothesis. In recent times the major defender of this view has been M. Goodacre, who rejects some of Goulder's more exotic views but still accepts the general principle that Matthew used Mark while Luke knew both of these texts. See M. Goodacre, *Goulder and the Gospels: An Examination of a New Paradigm* (JSNTSup 133; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996); Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze* (TBS 80; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001); Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002). Cf. too M. Goodacre and N. Perrin, eds., *Questioning Q* (London: SPCK, 2004).

it is surely an obvious question to pose for any author who has made extensive use of an earlier source. It is even more surprising in so far as this issue has been raised in relation to the two other later evangelists, Luke and John. In both cases there has been some debate over whether these writers were motivated to compose their Gospels to supplement or to supplant their sources. Yet, for some reason, Matthew has largely been immune from such enquiry and debate.

It is the purpose of this study to put this neglected subject into the foreground. The discussion will begin with Matthew's treatment of his Marcan source. Here we will note the evangelist's debt to Mark as well as the serious failings that he identified in that Gospel. These deficiencies include its crude language, short length, offensive features and the fact that Mark was simply inadequate to meet the very different needs of Matthew's own Jewish Christian community towards the end of the first century. Moreover, Matthew had real concerns that Mark's depiction of Jesus' mission was written from a patently Pauline perspective. All of these factors led Matthew to compose his own version of Jesus' story that corrected, expanded and updated the inadequate and incorrect Marcan account. Once he had done so, the Gospel of Mark simply had no role to play among Matthew's intended readership. In trying to replace his primary source, Matthew was not unique. It will be argued that both Luke and John were similarly motivated to replace Mark with their own Gospel narratives.

2. Matthew's Treatment of Mark

The first point to establish is Matthew's precise use of his Marcan source. On any theory of Marcan priority, the conclusion is inescapable that Matthew was indebted to Mark in a number of ways. He adopted fully the Gospel genre that Mark had seemingly initiated, and followed the general Marcan story-line of a Galilean mission preceding the climactic events in Jerusalem.³ With respect to the order of events, Matthew made some changes to Mark in the first half of his narrative, but retained the Marcan order from 14.1 (cf. Mark 6.14) onwards.⁴

Matthew's debt to Mark is also evident in the fact that he included in one way or another most of Mark's content in his own depiction of Jesus' life and mission. The exact percentage of material he adopted depends upon a number of

3 R. C. Beaton, 'How Matthew Writes', *The Written Gospel* (ed. M. Bockmuehl and D. A. Hagner; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005) 116-34 (120).

4 See W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2d ed. 1907) xiii-xvii. Cf. too Beaton, 'How Matthew Writes', 120 n. 26, and W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 1991, 1997) 1.100-103. Other scholars posit that Matthew began to follow Mark's order without deviation even earlier than 14.1. U. Luz contends that this begins at 12.1; see U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, rev. ed. 2007) 4.

ambiguous and subjective factors. Matthew had a tendency to abbreviate Marcan narratives, and in some cases it is not easy to draw the line between the severe abbreviation or modification of a pericope and its complete omission. Moreover, the so-called Mark/Q overlaps present a further set of problems. It is often difficult to decide whether Marcan material has been omitted and replaced by a parallel Q tradition, or whether Matthew has used and conflated his two sources.⁵ Another factor affecting this issue is the possibility that the evangelist has dropped individual verses or whole pericopes but has then incorporated some of this material elsewhere in his Gospel. While a glance at a Greek synopsis reveals that Matthew has omitted Mark 1.1, 23–28, 35–38; 2.27; 3.19b–21; 4.21–24, 26–29; 6.30; 7.3–4, 32–37; 8.22–26; 9.29, 38–40, 48–50; 12.40–44; 13.33–37; 14.51–52, a good case can be made that certain parts of these traditions reappear in other Matthean texts.⁶ All of these considerations make it difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty the extent of Matthew's adoption of his Marcan material, but most scholars today follow the lead of B. H. Streeter and contend that Matthew has reproduced some 90% of Mark's content.⁷

While it is clear that Matthew was largely indebted to Mark in terms of genre, order and content, it is equally apparent that he was dissatisfied with his primary source in a number of ways. First of all, the language of Mark is often simple, ungrammatical and pleonastic, and Matthew took pains to rewrite and improve the Marcan text.⁸ According to Streeter, Matthew's editing and abbreviating of Mark's often cumbersome language resulted in him retaining only 51% of Mark's wording.⁹ Secondly, Matthew clearly felt that Mark was far too short and

5 See the discussion of Mark/Q overlaps in B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924) 186–91.

6 For a thorough analysis of this topic, see Streeter, *Four Gospels*, 169–72. Cf. too J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2005) 10.

7 Streeter, *Four Gospels*, 151. Cf. too D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC 33A; Dallas: Word, 1993) xlvii; B. Witherington, *Matthew* (SHBC; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2006) 3, and D. L. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) 13. Beaton, 'How Matthew Writes', 120, prefers the slightly lower figure of 80%. So too R. E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 111.

8 See the definitive discussion in Allen, *Matthew*, xix–xxxi.

9 Streeter, *Four Gospels*, 159. In general agreement with Streeter are Witherington, *Matthew*, 3; Turner, *Matthew*, 13, and A. M. Honoré, 'A Statistical Study of the Synoptic Problem', *The Synoptic Problem and Q: Selected Studies from Novum Testamentum* (ed. D. E. Orton; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 70–122 (111–15). D. Baum also concurs with a figure of 50%, but he notes that Matthew is not consistent in his retention of Marcan wording. In some traditions the verbal agreement is high, while in others it is much lower. See his 'Matthew's Sources: Written or Oral? A Rabbinic Analogy and Empirical Insights', *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (ed. D. M. Gurtner and J. Nolland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 1–23 (2–5). Other scholars calculate a much higher percentage. J. B. Tyson and T. W. Longstaff, *Synoptic Abstract* (The Computer Bible 15; Wooster: College of Wooster, 1978) 169–71, estimate that Matthew has taken over as much as 97% of Mark's wording. That

lacked detail in terms of narratives about Jesus and the teachings of Jesus. He therefore inserted the genealogy and infancy narratives at the beginning of his Gospel and the resurrection appearance traditions at the end, and he greatly supplemented the teachings of Jesus by incorporating material from Q and other sources. Thirdly, despite retaining the greater bulk of Mark, Matthew did omit a number of whole pericopes, and it must be assumed that he did so because he found these traditions either irrelevant, unhelpful or offensive. A good example here is his omission of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida in Mark 8.22–26. Matthew presumably dropped this miracle story on the grounds that he was unimpressed by Jesus' use of saliva and that he required two attempts to effect the cure; the evangelist had earlier omitted Mark 7.32–35, which also mentions spittle as a curative aid.¹⁰

Fourthly, Matthew often edited the Marcan texts he did retain either to remove offence or to correct unpalatable theological features in Mark's account.¹¹ In Mark 6.5 Jesus is unable to work miracles in Nazareth, while the Matthean parallel in 13.58 states that he did not do many miracles. Similarly, Mark 3.19b–21 maintains that the family of Jesus thought he was possessed by a demon, a sin that is later condemned as unforgiveable (3.28–30), but Matthew removes this slur on Jesus' family by omitting Mark 3.19b–21, leaving only the scribes from Jerusalem as those guilty of an eternal sin (12.22–32). In this context we should include Matthew's correction of the Marcan depiction of Jesus' attitude towards the Torah.

It is well known that Mark had a rather liberal attitude towards the ritual demands of the Torah,¹² and this is well illustrated in the tradition concerning purity in Mark 7.1–23. Mark betrayed his understanding of Jesus' teaching in this episode when he appended in v. 19b, 'thus he declared all foods clean', thereby highlighting that Jesus abrogated the Jewish dietary laws. Matthew's

high percentage is based upon their calculation that Matthew adopted all but 304 of Mark's 11,025 words. Similar views are presented by R. H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2d ed. 2001) 50–2, and D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005) 96. According to Beaton, 'How Matthew Writes', 120 n. 25, Matthew adopted 73% of Mark's words. This percentage is reached on the basis of Beaton's estimation that Matthew reproduced 8,555 of the 11,708 words in Mark. These much higher percentages reflect different approaches to the phenomenon in question. See Honoré, 'Statistical Study', 71–3.

¹⁰ So D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC 33B; Dallas: Word, 1995) 463–4.

¹¹ See Allen, *Matthew*, xxxi–xxxiii for full discussion of this aspect of Matthew's redaction.

¹² For detailed analyses of the Torah in Mark's Gospel, see W. R. G. Loader, *Jesus' Attitude Toward the Law: A Study of the Gospels* (WUNT 2/97; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997) 9–136, and more recently, B. Repschinski, *Nicht aufzulösen, sondern zu erfüllen: Das jüdische Gesetz in den synoptischen Jesuserzählungen* (FzB 120; Würzburg: Echter, 2009) 143–216.

perspective was rather different.¹³ The Matthean Jesus spells out clearly in 5.17–19 that all of the Mosaic Law without exception is to be obeyed until the *parousia*, and it is expected that his followers will obey the Torah and teach it to others until that time. It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that Matthew omitted completely the Marcan comment in Mark 7:19b. In Matthew's version of this pericope, there is no indication at all that Jesus undermined the Jewish rules regarding clean and unclean foods; the emphasis remains on the non-biblical Pharisaic practice of ritual handwashing.¹⁴ In line with his emphasis on the Torah, Matthew 'rejudaised' Mark in other ways for his Jewish Christian readership. He used the 'Kingdom of the Heavens' in preference to the 'Kingdom of God', and he employed the formula quotations to root Jesus more firmly in the sacred history of Israel.¹⁵

Fifthly, there is sound evidence that Matthew deemed Mark to be sadly inadequate for meeting the specific needs of his own community at the end of the first century. He therefore updated Mark's story of Jesus to make it more relevant to the situation of his intended readers and more helpful to meet their particular requirements.¹⁶ An obvious example of this phenomenon is the evangelist's tendency to intensify the opposition between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees, which reflects his community's own conflict with Formative Judaism.¹⁷ A second example is Matthew's major focus on eschatological matters, especially the horrific fate of the wicked, who are destined to be punished by eternal fire in Gehenna (cf. 3.7–12; 5.22; 7.19; 13.41–42, 49–50; 18.8–9; 25.41). This rather unpleasant Matthean theme can be explained by the fact that his persecuted community had embraced a Jewish sectarian perspective with a concomitant Jewish eschatological response.¹⁸

13 See the analyses in Loader, *Jesus' Attitude Toward the Law*, 137–272, and Repschinski, *Nicht auflösen, sondern zu erfüllen*, 57–141.

14 See D. C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998) 132–5.

15 Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, lxiv, and Beaton, 'How Matthew Writes', 122–3. See too the recent discussion of this theme in A. M. O'Leary, *Matthew's Judaization of Mark: Examined in the Context of the Use of Sources in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (LNTS 323; London: T&T Clark International, 2006).

16 See especially U. Luz, *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 19–28. Cf. too Beaton, 'How Matthew Writes', 123–34, and Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, lxx–lxxi.

17 For a thorough analysis of this theme, see J. A. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), and, more recently, B. Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form and Relevance for the Relationship Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism* (FRLANT 189; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000).

18 On this Matthean theme, see D. C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (SNTSMS 88; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996).

3. Matthew as a Supplement to Mark or as its Replacement?

The above discussion provides ample evidence, that despite the fact that Matthew owed a considerable debt to his Marcan source, he was none the less dissatisfied with and critical of the earlier Gospel. Having established in general terms Matthew's treatment of Mark, we may now pose a series of further questions. What did Matthew intend to happen to Mark once he had composed and circulated his own Gospel? Was it his hope that his intended readers would consult the account in Mark and then turn to his own version of the Jesus story to fill the gaps in the Marcan narrative? Or was it the case that, once Matthew had improved and updated Mark by his additions and editorial changes, he intended to replace his primary source?

It is an extraordinary state of affairs that Matthean scholarship has almost entirely neglected this whole issue. The proposition that Matthew hoped to replace Mark has been stated definitively by G. N. Stanton and R. Bauckham, but neither of these scholars provides any argumentation at all in defence of this claim.¹⁹ The contrary opinion is represented by U. Luz, who does attempt to provide some evidence for his view. Luz begins with the assertion that Matthew has written a conservative new story of Jesus based upon the Marcan account. He continues, 'In this way he makes clear that his story renarrates a *given* story. There are no indications in Matthew's Gospel...that he intended to replace the Marcan Gospel with which...he assumed at least some of his readers to be familiar'.²⁰ The logic of Luz's argument is not immediately clear, but he seems to suggest that Matthew still envisaged a role for Mark in his own community because his intended readers were already familiar with it. Yet a closer examination of the evidence, based upon Matthew's treatment of Mark, supports the position of Stanton and Bauckham and renders questionable the thesis of Luz.

The fundamental question is as follows: What role could Mark have possibly played in the Matthean community once Matthew had published his own corrected, revised, enlarged, improved and updated edition of Mark? Since the evangelist was motivated to write and circulate his own story of Jesus to meet the specific needs of his post-70 Jewish Christian community, there would be no reason for his readers to continue to consult Mark when it so obviously failed to satisfy so many of their basic requirements. Surely they would have needed only Matthew's Gospel, especially as it reflected their own theology and Christology, and it directly addressed the circumstances and challenges they were facing. The complete lack of necessity for Mark comes into even sharper focus once we recall that Matthew reproduces some 90% of Mark's content.

19 G. N. Stanton, 'The Fourfold Gospel', *NTS* 43 (1997) 317-46 (341); R. Bauckham, 'For Whom Were Gospels Written?', *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. R. Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 9-48 (13).

20 Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 35 (original emphasis).

After the publication of Matthew, Mark had very little distinctive material to offer. Why would the evangelist want his readers to consult the earlier Gospel when his own text reproduced almost all of that source and often improved upon what he did retain?²¹

The questions continue when we consider Matthew's omission and redaction of certain Marcan passages. Why would he want his community to read of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida in Mark 8.22–26 when he himself thought it unworthy of inclusion? Why would he be content to have his readers learn that Jesus' power was limited in Mark 6.5 when he had rewritten that Marcan text in Matt 13.58 so as not to convey that impression? Why would he want his intended readers to learn from Mark 3.19b–21 that the family of Jesus' believed he was demon-possessed after he himself deemed it so offensive that he took considerable pains to ensure that it did not appear in his parallel account? Why would Matthew think it desirable for his community to be exposed to Mark's statement in 7.19b that Jesus declared all foods clean when he himself clearly opposed this view and omitted the offending words, and elsewhere depicted Jesus as a Law-observant Jew? Finally, why would the evangelist desire that his readers continue to read Mark when it offered them so little in terms of their immediate and pressing needs, such as their conflict with Formative Judaism? These questions are relevant in every case where Matthew has significantly edited the text of Mark, and they cast a considerable shadow of doubt over Luz's claim that the evangelist intended his Gospel narrative to supplement the earlier Marcan account that was known to his readers.

The evidence of Matthew's treatment of Mark demonstrates that the former did not write to supplement his primary source and did not intend that his text would be read in conjunction with it. On the contrary, the conclusion is inescapable that Matthew specifically composed his Gospel to render Mark redundant. There was simply no place for Mark amongst the evangelist's readers once his own narrative saw the light of day.

This conclusion that Matthew had serious concerns over Mark and intended to replace it does not sit easily with the common view in Matthean studies that Matthew viewed his major source as authoritative and largely stood in theological agreement with it. J. K. Riches remarks that Mark had considerable authority for Matthew, because he treated it '...with considerable respect and care, preserving the majority of Mark's Gospel and incorporating even quite small snippets of Marcan material into his narrative'.²² According to D. A. Hagner, 'Since Matthew takes over so much of Mark, we may expect that he shares Mark's

21 Stanton, 'Fourfold Gospel', 341.

22 J. K. Riches, *Conflicting Mythologies: Identity Formation in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000) 305. Cf. too D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 30.

theology'.²³ In similar vein, R. C. Beaton states, 'The implication is that when Matthew adopts Mark, even though adjustments are made, he embraces the Marcan tradition and theological commitments'.²⁴ J. P. Meier contends that Mark's Gospel was influential early on in Matthew's community, and became *the* Gospel for liturgy, catechesis, apologetics and polemics before Matthew decided to subject it to revision and expansion.²⁵

Perhaps the most detailed statement of this general position is that of U. Luz. In the opinion of Luz, Matthew is '...the heir of his theological fathers, Mark and Q',²⁶ though he accepts that Mark is by far the more important of these sources.²⁷ Luz goes further than the other scholars by noting a number of important points of contact between these two Gospels. Matthew adopts Mark's literary genre and so shares his source's view that the story of Jesus is also a story for the situation of the church, a point that is highlighted in their respective emphases on the disciples and discipleship. Moreover, both authors share an interest in the miracle stories, the title 'Son of God', and the conflict with Israel, although Luz acknowledges that some Marcan themes, such as the messianic secret, find no place in Matthew.²⁸

In evaluating these claims, it can be conceded at once that on many theological and Christological issues the two evangelists shared much in common. That is not unexpected. Both Mark and Matthew were Christians, followers of Jesus of Nazareth, and we would expect on the basis of this common affiliation that they shared some or even many theological perspectives. Both accepted Jesus as the Jewish messiah who proclaimed the coming or arrival of the Kingdom of God (or Heavens), who taught in parables, who performed miracles on a grand scale, who can be described with many titles of majesty (Son of God, Son of Man, Lord, and so on), who fulfilled the Jewish scriptures, who was opposed by many of his Jewish contemporaries, who was obedient to the will of God by dying on a cross, whose death had atoning implications, who was raised from the dead by God and thereby vindicated, and who would return in glory at the end of the age. These agreements are by any measure substantial and significant, and they should not be ignored or played down. They testify that Matthew and Mark shared a common Christian narrative and that the former was content to adopt and often expand these themes when they appeared in his source.

Yet, in noting the common ground between Mark and Matthew, we should never lose sight of their fundamental differences that are evident in Matthew's

23 Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, lx.

24 Beaton, 'How Matthew Writes', 120.

25 J. P. Meier, 'Antioch', R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (New York: Paulist, 1983) 12-86 (51-2). Similarly Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 50.

26 Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 41.

27 Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 24, 28.

28 Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 42.

redaction of his Marcan source. Whatever value Matthew placed on Mark, he still viewed it as an inadequate presentation of Jesus' story that required correction, improvement and expansion, and which needed to be updated to meet the needs of his intended readership. Once we acknowledge and understand the extent of Matthew's dissatisfaction with Mark on a wide variety of issues, the common view that the former largely embraced and affirmed the outlook of the latter looks decidedly shaky. This point can and should be pushed further. In the quotes of Hagner, Beaton and Luz cited above, the claim is made that Matthew substantially accepted Mark's theological perspective. While it is clear that these two Christians shared a good deal in common, as noted above, it is questionable whether they shared a similar theological position in the context of a diverse early Christian movement.

Let us return to a point made earlier. The two evangelists had completely opposing views concerning Jesus' attitude towards the Torah and, by extension, its role in the Christian community that succeeded him. The Marcan Jesus has a very liberal take on the Mosaic Law, especially its ritual requirements, and as Mark made clear in his comment in 7.19b Jesus dispensed with the Jewish dietary and purity regulations. By contrast, the Matthean Jesus declares that all the Mosaic Law, even its least components, was to be observed until the *parousia* (5.17–19), and the evangelist carefully edited his sources so that his Jesus always acts in accordance with the Torah.

This difference between the two evangelists must be viewed within a broader context. The issue of the Law's importance and relevance was hardly a minor matter in the fledgling Christian movement. It was in fact an issue that led to serious divisions in the early church, especially between the Jerusalem church and Paul. One might even state that it was the single most divisive issue in the first Christian century, as the followers of Jesus debated the place of the Sinai covenant in the light of the messiah's appearance and the crucial matter of Christian identity. The one and only meeting in the first century between the different Christian factions, the so-called apostolic council, was convened in response to this matter (Acts 15.2), and both Paul and Luke testify that the only issue under discussion was the role of the Torah in the Christian tradition. The very same problem lay behind the incident at Antioch (Gal 2.11–14), which was instigated by James attempting to impose the Torah on Gentile converts and which resulted in a public confrontation between Peter and Paul. It was again this matter alone that underlay the problems in Galatia and it perhaps features as well in the Corinthian and Philippian epistles.²⁹ We also find this issue in the post-Pauline period. It appears in the letter to the Colossians, the Pastoral

29 See Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 79–103. For a more recent and more detailed analysis, see I. J. Elmer, *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaizers: The Galatian Crisis in its Broader Historical Context* (WUNT 2/258; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

Epistles, the letter of James, and even in the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch in the early second century.³⁰

The question of the role of the Torah in the Christian movement was thus a live and extremely divisive issue throughout the first century, and Mark and Matthew were not immune from this conflict. They stood on either side of what was clearly an emotive and often polemical debate, and full weight must be given to this important disagreement between them when evaluating the theological perspectives of these evangelists. While there is no doubt that these evangelists shared a common Christian narrative, the claim that Matthew simply embraced Mark's theological agenda ignores not only their different views concerning the Law but also the importance of this disagreement within its broader Christian context. Whatever value Mark possessed in the eyes of Matthew, it was nonetheless fundamentally flawed by its representation of Jesus' teachings on the Torah. This point leads to a further consideration.

An important trend in Marcan studies is that Mark wrote his Gospel from a clear Pauline perspective and depicted Jesus as reinforcing Paul's later claims about himself and his theology.³¹ This can be inferred not simply from his agreements with Paul on the role and validity of the Torah, but from other Pauline elements in his Gospel as well.³² A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this point. As a passion narrative with an extended introduction, Mark emphasises the sacrificial death of Jesus rather than his teachings. He depicts Jesus as engaging in a (Law-free) Gentile mission which validates the later activity of Paul.³³ Both the family of Jesus and his disciples, the later powerbrokers of the Jerusalem church who opposed Paul, are discredited in various ways, which raises the question of their validity to lead the early church and to oppose Paul as they did.³⁴

30 Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 172–81, 272–82.

31 See J. Painter, *Mark's Gospel: Worlds in Conflict* (NTR; London: Routledge, 1997) 4–6; W. R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (NTT; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999) 164–9; J. Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 73–5; Marcus, 'Mark—Interpreter of Paul', *NTS* 46 (2000) 473–87; J. Svartvik, *Mark and Mission: Mark 7:1–23 in Its Narrative and Historical Contexts* (CBNTS 32; Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 2000) 344–7; Svartvik, 'Matthew and Mark', *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries* (ed. D. C. Sim and B. Repschinski; LNTS 333; London: T&T Clark International, 2008), 27–49 (30–4), and J. R. Donahue and D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (SP 2; Collegeville: Liturgical, 2002) 39–40.

32 See the list of agreements in Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 74.

33 On this point, see D. C. Sim, 'Matthew and Jesus of Nazareth', in Sim and Repschinski, *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries*, 155–72 (156–7).

34 Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 188–90, 192–4. See too J. D. Crossan, 'Mark and the Relatives of Jesus', *NovT* 15 (1973) 82–105; E. Trocmé, *The Formation of the Gospel according to Mark* (London: SPCK, 1975) 120–37, and J. B. Tyson, 'The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark', *The Messianic Secret* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; IRT 1; London: SPCK, 1983) 35–43.

It is imperative to note that Matthew edits or omits all of these Pauline features of Mark. He expands the teachings of Jesus and presents a view of the Torah that stands completely against the position of Mark and Paul.³⁵ He also confines the mission of Jesus to the Jews alone (15.24; cf. 10.5–6), and depicts the risen Christ commissioning the disciples to be responsible for both the Jewish and Gentile missions in the time of the church (28.16–20; cf. 16.17–19), thus undercutting Paul's claim that he had been appointed the apostle to the Gentiles.³⁶ Moreover, Matthew substantially rehabilitates the disciples and the family of Jesus.³⁷ By doing so he not only betrays his allegiance to the tradition of the Jerusalem church, but he also corrects Mark's implication of their unworthiness to lead the early Christian movement. Just as Marcan scholarship is beginning to embrace the view that Mark was inherently Pauline, we find that Matthean scholarship is now taking seriously an anti-Pauline perspective in Matthew.³⁸

If we add this factor to the other deficiencies that Matthew identified in Mark's Gospel, then a compelling picture emerges for Matthew's motivation to replace his primary source. It lacked important narrative material concerning the birth

35 Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 207–09. Cf. too Sim, 'Paul and Matthew on the Torah: Theory and Practice', *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (ed. P. Middleton, A. Paddison and K. Wenell; London: T&T Clark International, 2009) 50–64. For other comparisons of the Torah in Matthean and Pauline thought, see R. Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives* (SNTSMS 48; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984) 7–47, and D. J. Harrington, 'Matthew and Paul', *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries* (ed. Sim and Repschinski) 11–26 (15–18).

36 D. C. Sim, 'Matthew, Paul and the Origin and Nature of the Gentile Mission: The Great Commission in Matthew 28:16–20 as an Anti-Pauline Tradition', *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 64 (2008) 377–92.

37 Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 190–2, 194–9.

38 See Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 188–211; 'Paul and Matthew on the Torah'; 'Matthew, Paul, and the Origin and Nature of the Gentile Mission'; 'Matthew's Anti-Paulinism: A Neglected Feature of Matthean Studies', *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 58 (2002) 767–83; 'Matthew 7.21–23: Further Evidence of Its Anti-Pauline Perspective', *NTS* 53 (2007) 325–43; 'Matthew and the Pauline Corpus: A Preliminary Intertextual Study', *JSNT* 31 (2009) 401–22. For further support of this hypothesis, see D. Catchpole, *Resurrection People: Studies in the Resurrection Narratives of the Gospels* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000) 43–62; G. Theissen, 'Kirche oder Sekte?: Über Einheit und Konflikt in frühen Urchristentum', *Theologie und Gegenwart* 48 (2005) 126–75 (170–2); Theissen, 'Kritik an Paulus im Matthäusevangelium? Von der Kunst verdeckter Polemik im Urchristentum', *Polemik im Neuen Testament. Texte, Themen, Gattungen und Kontexte* (ed. O. Wischmeyer and L. Scornaienchi; BZNV 170; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010) 465–90, and J. Painter, 'Matthew and John', *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries* (ed. Sim and Repschinski) 66–86 (74–5). Other scholars, however, remain unconvinced. See Harrington, 'Matthew and Paul', 24–25; J. Zangenberg, 'Matthew and James', *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries* (ed. Sim and Repschinski), 104–22 (120), and J. Willitts, 'The Friendship of Matthew and Paul: A Response to a Recent Trend in the Interpretation of Matthew's Gospel', *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 65 (2009) 1–8.

of Jesus and his resurrection appearances, it was deficient in terms of teaching material, it contained offensive pericopes, it was stylistically crude, and it did not meet the needs of Matthew's post-70 Jewish Christian community. Furthermore, Matthew clearly saw Mark for what it was, a narrative account of the mission of Jesus that was designed, at least in part, to support the activity and the theology of Paul. Such a depiction of Jesus was, for the evangelist, utterly wrong and perhaps even dangerous, since it contradicted the theology and praxis of the Jerusalem church and probably misrepresented the teaching and activity of the historical Jesus.³⁹ For all of these reasons Mark had to be replaced.⁴⁰

4. The Cases of Luke and John

It is of interest that the basic claim of this study, that Matthew intended to replace Mark, has been made of the two other later evangelists, and this point is worthy of further exploration. Beginning with Luke, we find that this evangelist sets out his purpose in writing in the prologue to his Gospel (1.1–4). Luke states that since many have undertaken to compile a narrative (about Jesus), it seems good to him also (κόμοι), having investigated everything carefully (ἀκριβῶς), to write an orderly (καθεξῆς) account, so that Theophilus might know the truth (τὴν ἀσφάλειαν) of what he has been informed. The question that concerns us is the relationship that Luke defines between his own writing and its predecessors. On the one hand, Luke's use of κόμοι appears to place his own work very much within the tradition of his sources, in which case there is no criticism at all of these earlier efforts.⁴¹ On the other hand, however, most scholars do perceive in this passage some dissatisfaction on the part of Luke with these antecedent texts. The very fact that he took the trouble to write his own account when others were available indicates that he saw them as deficient to some extent.⁴²

39 For discussion of this point, see Sim, 'Matthew and Jesus of Nazareth', 155–72.

40 Whether it was Matthew's intention to replace Mark only in his own setting or right throughout the Christian movement depends upon one's prior view of the intended readers for the Gospels. R. Bauckham has argued that the Gospels were not designed only for local communities but had open-ended readerships in mind. See Bauckham, 'For Whom Were Gospels Written?', 9–48. While Bauckham states that his hypothesis is consistent with the view that the later evangelists intended to supplement their Gospel sources or the alternative thesis that they intended to supplant them (39), he himself, as noted earlier, accepts that Matthew intended to replace Mark (13).

41 So J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20* (WBC 35A; Dallas: Word, 1989) 5–6, 11–12, and L. C. A. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1* (SNTSMS 78; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993) 115–16, 133–6.

42 See, for example, F. Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 19, and B. Shellard, *New Light on Luke: Its Purpose, Sources and Literary Context* (JSNTSup 215; London: Sheffield Academic, 2002) 261–2. Cf. too Stanton, 'Fourfold Gospel', 342, and Bauckham, 'For Whom Were Gospels Written?', 13.

In addition, since he describes his own Gospel as the result of careful investigation with an emphasis on accuracy and order, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that those sources that preceded him were not characterised by these qualities.⁴³ There is here a veiled critique certainly of Mark and perhaps of Q as well.

Did Luke intend to replace Mark because of its deficiencies? The answer lies in his treatment of his Marcan source, which is even more extreme than Matthew's. While he adopted Mark's Gospel genre and generally followed that source's order of events,⁴⁴ Luke substantially altered Mark in a variety of ways. He too constantly corrected the language of Mark,⁴⁵ added a genealogy and infancy stories at the beginning of his narrative and resurrection appearance traditions at the end, and supplemented the meagre teachings of Jesus in Mark by incorporating material from Q and his special sources. Luke took over much less of Mark than did Matthew, omitting whole sections (cf. 6.45–8.26) and substituting parallel traditions from his special source material (e.g. Luke 5.1–11 and Mark 1.16–20).⁴⁶ Many of the Marcan pericopes that Matthew found offensive and so edited or omitted (Mark 3.19b–21; 6.5; 7.32–35; 8.22–26) are not found in Luke. On the estimate of Streeter, Luke reproduced only about 55% of Mark's content.⁴⁷ It is likewise clear that Mark did not suit Luke's theological programme. The Gospel of Luke was not a stand-alone work; it was designed to be read in conjunction with Acts so that the two books together would provide a unified history of the ministry of Jesus and the first generation of the Christian church.

The questions posed of Matthew above can be posed of Luke as well. What credible role could Mark have played among Luke's readers, once he had produced his own revised, improved, enlarged, and updated edition of Mark? Why would Luke want his readers to consult the original Gospel when he had omitted or substituted almost half its content? Why would he desire that they read the Marcan passages that he clearly found offensive? Why would he be willing to have them read Mark when it was deficient in so many ways as a precursor to the story of the church in Acts? In response to these questions, it must be concluded that Mark had no role at all to play in the Lucan community once Luke had composed and circulated his two-volume work. The earlier Gospel had been made redundant.

The hypothesis that Matthew and Luke desired to replace Mark with their own Gospel accounts raises a tantalising possibility. It is well known that from the

43 J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 28; New York: Doubleday, 1981) 291–2.

44 Streeter, *Four Gospels*, 161–2. Cf. too J. M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (London: Macmillan, 1930) lviii.

45 See Creed, *Luke*, lxi–lxii.

46 For further examples, see Creed, *Luke*, lviii–lix.

47 Streeter, *Four Gospels*, 160. Brown, *Introduction*, 263, gives an even lower estimate of 35%.

second century onwards Mark slipped almost into oblivion in the Christian church. It was the least cited Gospel by far and had the fewest commentaries devoted to it.⁴⁸ In the opinion of most scholars, this was a simple ‘accident of history’. Matthew and Luke together incorporated almost all of Mark’s content in their own Gospels, so Mark had very little that was distinctive or unique. Under these circumstances it was perhaps inevitable but unfortunate that the original Gospel tended to be overlooked by the Church Fathers and other writers. But it may well be the case that the initial demise of Mark in the ancient church was no accident at all. Perhaps this was the very intention of the later evangelists who were well aware of its many serious flaws.⁴⁹

We may now turn to the Gospel of John. The clear tradition of the ancient church was that John was specifically written to supplement the three other Gospels. In *H.E.* 3.24.5–15 Eusebius cites a tradition that John knew of the other Gospels and confirmed their accuracy, but he believed they lacked information about the early part of Jesus’ mission prior to the arrest of John the Baptist. He then composed his own narrative, which described that period in Jesus’ ministry. In the view of Eusebius John was motivated to supplement the Synoptic Gospels, and he designed his own account to be read alongside theirs. Another tradition cited by Eusebius but attributed to Clement of Alexandria is that John, being content that the three earlier Gospels provided the basic facts, was then moved by the Spirit to compose a spiritual Gospel (*H.E.* 6.14.7). This tradition too relates that John was written to be read in conjunction with the others.

In more recent times Johannine scholarship has pondered whether or not the author of John even knew the Synoptic Gospels. The debate on this issue has swung back and forth for a century,⁵⁰ but the theory of John’s dependence on the Synoptics now commands the assent of most Johannine scholars. Certainly John must have adopted the Gospel genre from one of the Synoptic Gospels,⁵¹

48 For full discussion, see B. D. Schildgen, *Power and Prejudice: The Reception of the Gospel of Mark* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1999) 35–81.

49 It is tempting to speculate that the fate of Q could have been analogous to the early demise of Mark. Given the existence of Q as a single and cohesive source or text and its subsequent disappearance from history, there is nothing to preclude the possibility that Matthew and Luke, again independently of one another and for their own individual reasons, believed that this source too needed to be revised and replaced. If that was their intention, then they were more successful in this instance than in the case of Mark. Mark’s apostolic connections with Peter prevented it from sliding completely into obscurity, but Q presumably had no such associations to protect it from that fate.

50 See the fascinating historical review of this issue in D. M. Smith, *John Among the Gospels: The Relationship in the Twentieth Century* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2d ed. 2001).

51 D. M. Smith, ‘John and the Synoptics and the Question of Gospel Genre’, *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (ed. F. van Segbroeck et al.; BETL 100; Leuven: Peeters, 1992) 1783–97.

and the case for Mark is the strongest.⁵² If we assume that John did have access to Mark, then it is clear that he has completely revised and utterly transformed this particular source. The length of Jesus' mission is extended to three years, much more of the action takes place in Judea and Jerusalem, and there are significant differences in chronology. The most profound discrepancies, however, reside in the unique content of John and the nature of that material. Much of the Gospel, especially prior to the Passion narrative, has no Marcan (or Synoptic) parallel. The Johannine miracle stories have few Marcan counterparts and they serve an entirely different function. Moreover, the teaching of Jesus in John is largely unique. While the Marcan Jesus proclaims the arrival of the Kingdom of God, the Johannine Jesus focuses mostly on his own status and mission. He is aware of his own pre-existence as the Word of God (1.1-18), and he testifies to his identity through the many 'I am sayings' in the Gospel (e.g. 6.35; 10.14; 11.25). It hardly needs saying that John's rich symbolism, high Christology and sophisticated theology far transcend anything in Mark.⁵³

The questions posed of Matthew and Luke are just as applicable to John. What role could Mark have played in the Johannine community once John had produced his own revised, enlarged, improved and updated edition of Mark? Why would he have been eager for them to consult the earliest Gospel after he himself had used it so sparingly, omitted much of it and replaced those traditions with very different material from independent sources? What possible purpose could have been served by the Johannine community reading Mark's primitive theology and inferior Christology when his own spiritualised and profoundly theological account was available? John's transformation of Mark was so drastic and so complete in almost every respect that it is nigh on inconceivable that he believed that Mark could have made any meaningful contribution to his readers alongside his own Gospel narrative. While some scholars continue to support the Patristic tradition that John did indeed compose his Gospel to supplement the others,⁵⁴ it is difficult to disagree with the work of H. Windisch who argued long ago that the evangelist saw little theological or Christological value in his predecessors and was motivated to replace them with his own superior account.⁵⁵

52 See the careful analysis in R. Kieffer, 'Jean et Marc: Convergences dans la Structure et dans les Détails', *John and the Synoptics* (ed. A. Denaux; BETL 101; Leuven: Peeters, 1992) 109-25.

53 R. Schnackenburg, 'Synoptische und Johanneische Christologie: Ein Vergleich', *The Four Gospels* (ed. van Segbroeck et al.) 1723-50.

54 So R. Bauckham, 'John for Readers of Mark', *The Gospels for All Christians* (ed. Bauckham), 147-71, and T. M. Dowell, 'Why John Rewrote the Synoptics', *John and the Synoptics* (ed. Denaux) 453-7.

55 H. Windisch, *Johannes und die Synoptiker: Wollte der vierte Evangelist die älteren Evangelien ergänzen oder ersetzen?* (UNT 12; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1926). In agreement with Windisch is M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM, 1989) 193-4 n. 8.

This discussion of Luke's and John's intentions for Mark helps to contextualise the prior discussion of Matthew. That evangelist's attempt to supplant Mark stands in agreement with Mark's other early interpreters who also viewed that Gospel as seriously flawed and in need of replacement. This not to say that these three writers identified the same failings in Mark, though it is true that Matthew and Luke shared a number of similar concerns, but each of them believed that the original Gospel was at the very least an inadequate prototype of the Jesus story that had exceeded its use-by-date.

5. Conclusions

The intention of this study has been to raise a neglected issue with regard to Matthew's use of Mark. Did Matthew intend to supplement his primary source or to replace it? While he took over Mark's Gospel genre and a large percentage of the Marcan content, Matthew's redaction and expansion of Mark reveal his deep dissatisfaction with that text. Mark was too short. It lacked details about Jesus' birth and resurrection and it did not adequately represent the teachings of Jesus. Moreover, it was grammatically crude, contained offensive traditions and, most importantly, was Christologically and theologically suspect. Its Pauline features were of particular concern to Matthew, who took great pains to edit or omit them. Mark was also not especially relevant for the evangelist's Jewish Christian community in the difficulties it faced at the end of the first century. Such a Gospel needed to be replaced, and Matthew undertook this task by composing an enlarged, revised and updated account of Jesus' story that was Christologically and theologically acceptable and relevant for the challenges facing his community. Once Matthew had produced and circulated his own Gospel, there was simply no need for Mark's inferior narrative.

In treating Mark in this manner, Matthew was no different from Luke and John. Both of these evangelists also identified serious shortcomings in Mark and each of them attempted to make Mark redundant by composing their own Gospel accounts. It is a fact of history that Matthew (and Luke and John as well) enjoyed initial success in his (their) bid to eradicate the Gospel of Mark, but ultimately the original Gospel survived and eventually found its way into the Christian canon. That Mark sits within the New Testament amidst the other Gospels and right next to the Gospel of Matthew is, in view of the argument presented in this study, more than a touch ironic.