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CHAPTER 4

Mark 16:9–20 as Markan Supplement

DAVID ALAN BLACK

At the outset, I must confess that I do not consider myself a textual scholar.¹ When I organized the conference that resulted in the publication of this book I did not include myself on the docket. Subsequently President Akin invited me to speak, an opportunity that led to this contribution.

Let me tip my hand at the beginning:

1. I am absolutely convinced that the Longer Ending (Mark 16:9–20)² is original based on the external evidence, and that it deserves the canonical status it has enjoyed throughout church history. I therefore have consistently preached

1. An (apocryphal?) story is told of a lady on Interstate 10 just outside Phoenix, Arizona. She was driving to her home in Charlotte, North Carolina. She stopped at the rest area and went into the rest room. The first stall was occupied so she went into the second stall. She wasn't there long before the lady in the first stall said, "Hi, how are you?" The lady from Charlotte replied, "Fine. And how are you?" "I'm fine," said the lady in the first stall. "Where are you going?" "I'm going to Charlotte, North Carolina," came the reply. There was a long pause, and then the lady in the first stall said, "Let me hang up and call you back. Some fool in the next stall is answering all my questions!" When one considers the qualifications of the other speakers at this conference, I consider myself no more than the "fool in the next stall."

2. This paper will not discuss two optional endings that in my view are highly unlikely candidates for originality: (1) the "shorter ending" (printed in the NRSV and NASB), and (2) the reading of Codex W that adds, in addition to the longer ending, an extra interpolation after verse 14.

and taught these verses as the inspired Word of God. In fact, I have even been known to go so far as to quote the Markan version of the Great Commission in public (16:15).³

2. In my judgment, the internal evidence, while interesting and controversial indeed, holds no satisfactory solution to the problem. What it does reveal is that the Longer Ending is different in some ways from the rest of the Gospel of Mark.
3. How can one best account for these differences? There's the rub, and it is at that point that I hope to make a helpful contribution to the discussion. I believe the best answer to this question is provided by taking the Synoptic Problem into account. Once again, I will show you my cards. I will argue that Mark originally ended his Gospel narrative (comprised of the actual words of Peter) at 16:8 and then later supplied the last twelve verses himself as a suitable conclusion. Of course, this view is based on a certain solution to the Synoptic Problem, a topic that will occupy a major portion of this paper.

As for the external evidence, we may be fairly sure of the following facts. First, we need not despair that we have “lost” the ending of Mark. You may feel that the Longer Ending does not belong in the Bible, but few would argue that the original reading is not to be found among the existing manuscripts. Secondly, as I mentioned above, the external evidence points to the originality of the last twelve verses. This reading is as ancient as the omission is, as the Greek witnesses, ancient versions, and patristic testimonies combine to indicate. Finally, the Longer Reading is more widespread than its counterpart in terms of geographical distribution of texttypes. As anyone knows who has read my book *New Testament Textual Criticism*,⁴ I hold that none of the texttypes is superior or inferior to the others, and that each has been preserved for our use in resolving textual issues. Why try to balance the stool on two legs when God has given us three?

3. A Google of the huge IMB Web site disclosed only four (4) references to Mark 16:15 in its entire site. In these places the verse is cited almost in passing. See, e.g., <http://www.imb.org/MissionsPartner/ttn.asp>.

4. D. A. Black, *New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994). See also the work I edited, *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

Now I suppose that when we consider the testimony of the so-called earliest and best manuscripts (Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus), we must be careful not to dismiss out of hand the shorter reading. However, as I have frequently argued elsewhere, these vaunted manuscripts are no longer to be considered “pure” in the Westcott and Hort sense,⁵ and even the editors of the *UBSGNT* have relegated the readings of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus to a footnote when they deemed it necessary.⁶ I might also note that Vaticanus actually contains a blank column after 16:8 that could possibly contain verses 9–20, suggesting that its scribe was aware of the existence of the longer reading.

As for the much-debated internal evidence, we know that the main objection to the Markan authorship of the longer reading is based on vocabulary, in particular the observation that 16 words used in this passage are not used elsewhere in the Gospel of Mark. It is often assumed that Mark was prevented by some unknown reason or other (a pogrom perhaps?) from finishing his Gospel, or else that the original ending was lost at an early date. I need not comment in detail about these arguments, since others have shown that they are overstated.⁷ My main objection to using internal data to argue for or against the originality of any disputed passage of Scripture is its highly subjective nature. My view is that the external alone is probative in places of textual variation; the internal evidence, while important, is at best corroborative.

With this in mind, let’s now have a look at a scenario that might help us to understand how the ending of Mark came down to us in both a shorter and a longer version. As I said earlier, my favored

5. For example, see my studies on Matthew 5:22a (“Jesus on Anger: The Text of Matthew 5:22a Revisited,” *Novum Testamentum* 30 [1988]: 1–8), Mark 6:20 (“The Text of Mark 6:20,” *New Testament Studies* 34 [1988]: 141–45), John 3:13 (“The Text of John 3:13,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6 [1985]: 49–66), and Ephesians 1:1 (“The Peculiarities of Ephesians and the Ephesian Address,” *Grace Theological Journal* 2 [1981]: 59–74).

6. See, for example, John 10:18 and John 20:31. The evidence for Mark 16:9–20 is much like that for John 10:18, where Bruce M. Metzger in *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 231 writes, “A majority of the Committee judged that its external attestation was too limited in extent, representing, as it does, only a single type (the Egyptian).” To be sure, this is the exception, not the rule. Elsewhere one of our conference speakers has correctly referred to “the reluctance of the editors to deviate too far from these hypnotic MSS [Aleph and B]” (J. K. Elliott, “A Second Look at the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament,” *BT* 27 [1975]: 328).

7. See esp. Bruce Terry, “The Style of the Long Ending of Mark,” accessed at <http://matthew.ovc.edu/terry/articles/mkendsty.htm>.

solution to the problem of the ending of Mark is based on my approach to a related but separate issue: the Synoptic Problem. Since Matthew and Luke are paralleled up to Mark 16:8, it is practically certain in my view that Mark supplied the longer reading himself. But I'm getting ahead of myself. First I must show you "my" solution to the Synoptic Problem.⁸

The Four Phases in the Development of the Gospels

In a nutshell, it is this. The Holy Spirit guided first Matthew, then Paul and his companion Luke and Peter and his companion Mark, and afterwards John the apostle, to hand on to the church during their own lifetime the gospel given them by Jesus. My chief debt in arriving at this conclusion is to the late Bernard Orchard of the Gospel Research Institute, Ealing Abbey, London, whose approach is a variation of the well-known Two Gospel Hypothesis held by William R. Farmer and his circle. Although it was Dr. Orchard who originally suggested the title "Two Gospel Hypothesis" to Farmer at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting in New York some twenty years ago in order to distinguish it from the more elementary Griesbach Hypothesis, he did not realize until recently that in Farmer's *International Bible Commentary* the Two Gospel Hypothesis would minimize the significance of the patristic evidence for the apostolicity and historicity of the Gospels, evidence that in his view is crucial, and indeed a prerequisite, for any attempt in settling the Synoptic Problem. In fairness to everyone concerned and to enable other scholars to distinguish his position from the Two Gospel Hypothesis as propounded by Farmer and his colleagues, he has called it the Fourfold Gospel Hypothesis, based on a term used by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.2.8) as well as on Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* (§18), because with the support of the patristic evidence it satisfactorily demonstrates the relationships between the four accounts of the one gospel of Christ and thereby reveals the chronology of the life and Messiahship of Jesus.

In its original sense the "gospel" was not a literary product but the message of salvation that Jesus Christ brought as God's eschatological bearer of good news and that the early church understood, in keeping with the situation after Easter, as the word of salvation

8. Much of what follows is reprinted from my *Why Four Gospels?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001). Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

about Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and exalted at the right hand of God. Later this proclamation of salvation was committed to writing in books known as “Gospels,” to record and attest Jesus’ words and works, his death and Resurrection, and to present them to the acceptance of faith.

The fact that these new writings had a special and unique purpose brought with it the creation of a special literary genre.⁹ Thus Mark’s Gospel opens with the words: “The beginning of the gospel (εὐαγγελίου) of Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1), meaning that the good news of what God has done in and through Jesus Christ would now be proclaimed to all the nations (cp. Mark 13:10). While neither Matthew nor Luke begins in the same way as Mark, their basic message is identical. In Matthew Jesus proclaims “the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) of the kingdom” (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14), and in Luke the verbal form εὐαγγελίζομαι (“to proclaim the good news”) is used to describe this activity (Luke 8:1; 16:16). Although the primary message of John’s Gospel is identical to that of the Synoptics, neither the noun εὐαγγέλιον nor the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι appears. However, in 1 John (1:15; 3:11) the related term ἀγγελία (“message”) is used, which may have been the Johannine designation for what we know as the Gospel according to John.

Since the Enlightenment, biblical criticism has been engaged with the Synoptic Problem and has offered a striking number of tensions and indeed “contradictions” between these Gospels. But these investigations of the Synoptic Problem entailed and still entail the danger of obscuring the common structural elements of the four canonical Gospels. Here Christian antiquity affords a healthier perspective. Thus, for Irenaeus the fourfold canon of the Gospels represented a profoundly significant fact, foreseen and willed by God. He therefore spoke of the *tetramorphon* Gospel (*Adv. Haer.* 3.2.8)—the “tetramorphic” or “fourfold” Gospel. By this he meant that each of the four Gospel accounts, and all of them together, have a common message as documents of faith in the service of faith. The differences between them, significant though they are, do not obscure their basic message of salvation through Christ.

9. Cp. Francis Watson, *Text and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 89n7: “The title *euangelion kata*... indicates that, for their readers, the gospels did not constitute a ‘sub-type’ of an existing genre but a new genre. This would of course not be a *creatio ex nihilo*: the Gospels may employ many of the conventions of the Hellenistic *bios*, without erasing the difference implied by the substitution of *euangelion* for *bios* in their titles.”

In the Spirit-directed process of inscripturating this fourfold Gospel there were four main phases—four turning points at each of which a suitable gospel statement was found to be necessary for its proper growth.¹⁰ These stages were the following:

1. The Jerusalem Phase (Acts 1–12) under the leadership of Peter.
2. The Gentile Mission Phase (Acts 13–28) under the leadership of Paul.
3. The Roman Phase requiring joint action by Peter and Paul.
4. The Johannine Supplement.

Let us discuss these four stages in chronological order.

The Jerusalem Phase, AD 30–42 (Acts 1–12)

According to the divine plan of salvation, the Messiah was not to appear until the times and circumstances were right. Among these prerequisites were:

1. The existence of the *Septuagint*, an excellent Greek version of the sacred writings of the Jews (the Old Testament). After the Resurrection of Christ, the Septuagint became the Bible of the Christian church and a powerful instrument for conveying to the whole world the knowledge of the true God that had already been given to the Jews.
2. The *Diaspora* (dispersion) of the Jews along with their synagogues in all the main centers of the Roman Empire that had Greek as its common language, making the spread of the Jewish religion and way of life available to all educated and interested persons.
3. The *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace), which gave Christianity the opportunity to take firm root during the lifetime of the twelve apostles, whose function it was, as the principal witnesses of the Lord's life, death, and resurrection, to proclaim all that he had taught them.

These prerequisites having been met, the nascent church in Jerusalem was ready to missionize in the name of the risen Christ.

10. For a more detailed discussion, see B. Orchard, *The Evolution of the Gospels* (London: Ealing Abbey, n. d.), 1–17, to which this section is indebted.

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the 120 in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost gave them confidence to go forth and preach all they had learned from Jesus. Their first task, under the direction of Peter, was to agree on the minimum organization necessary to undertake the world mission; and the Acts of the Apostles reveals to us that from the very beginning the Jerusalem church enjoyed the good order that came from a right understanding of the mind of Christ. The twelve apostles were the supreme authority by virtue of being the eyewitnesses personally selected by Jesus to control the expansion of the church, which was a living organism entirely independent of the theocratic state of Judaism and responsible to no one but God himself. And while esteeming the temple of God because of its historical associations, they were obliged to set up their own house churches (e.g., the church in the house of John Mark's mother), where they were able to celebrate the uniquely Christian ceremony of the "breaking of bread" bequeathed to them by Jesus.

The apostles' insistence on exact adherence to their teaching about Jesus led to the immediate emergence of a fellowship (based on baptism into Christ) that distinguished them from all other citizens of Jerusalem. Jesus himself, together with his Father and his Holy Spirit—the one Triune God—was now the object of worship in the apostolic community of the church of Jerusalem. But this "alien body" of followers of Jesus had to justify its existence in the face of the fierce hostility of the unconverted Sadducees, Pharisees, Levites, and high priests.

As soon as the first wave of converts had been baptized and their instruction organized by the Twelve, their thoughts turned to the practical question of how to unify and consolidate their teaching about Jesus. The apostles realized that they had somehow to promulgate those passages of the Holy Scriptures "from Moses and all the prophets" (Luke 24:27) that Jesus had explained to Cleopas on the road to Emmaus. It also became clear to them that their main apologetic task would be to demonstrate to the Jewish authorities that Jesus had literally fulfilled all the prophecies about the Messiah. These considerations were the original motivation for the composition of the Gospel of Matthew.

The Acts of the Apostles provides us with the necessary background information to enable us to see that the Gospel of Matthew

was the ideal instrument to refute the calumnies about Jesus that the high priests were circulating. It met all the apologetic needs of the Jerusalem church in the years immediately following the resurrection when its doctrines were under attack—namely, Jesus’ ancestry as a Son of David, his being born of a virgin, his birth in Bethlehem, his commendation by John the Baptist, his miracles, his teaching with authority in the temple, his coming to fulfill the Law of Moses and not to destroy it, his suffering like the Servant of Isaiah, and finally his rejection by his own nation and his miraculous Resurrection from the dead.

All of the above facts had long been foreshadowed in the sacred writings of the Jews. How, then, was all this and a great deal more to be reduced to the compass of one commercial scroll of 30 feet (10 meters), the standard length of a book, if the disciples were to travel “light” in compliance with their Master’s explicit instructions? The assistance of the Holy Spirit was indeed necessary if the essentials of the life and teaching of a man of Jesus’ eminence were ever to be completely sketched. Christian tradition tells us that the Twelve entrusted this important work to the apostle Matthew; and so, not long after the resurrection, Matthew set to work. His purpose seems to have been to compile schematically the Master’s teachings without special regard to their chronological order, as his Gospel was meant to be a handbook for teaching and administration in the church. Perhaps the greatest problem that he faced was that of reducing the immense mass of material available to the Twelve in the form of their personal reminiscences of the Lord into a manageable quantity by deciding which stories to include and which to omit. Matthew did not take this challenge lightly; and in order to produce a work worthy of proclaiming the Lord’s glory he made skillful use of all five of the literary forms that were then the hallmark of good writing in the Hellenistic world—the proverb (or maxim), the narrative, the parable, the anecdote (known as the *chreia* or short story), and the reminiscence (the *apomnemoneuma* or longer story).

The use of these Greek literary forms is an important indication that Matthew composed his work in Greek.¹¹ In any case, since

11. Eusebius (*EH* 3.39.15–16) quotes Papias (ca. 60–139), bishop of Hierapolis, as follows: “This too the Elder (ὁ πρεσβύτερος) used to say: Mark, having become the recorder (ἑρμηνευτής) of Peter, indeed wrote accurately albeit not in order whatever he (Peter) remembered of the things either said or done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor was a follower of him, but later, as I said, of Peter, who used to deliver

Greek was the common language of communication throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, and with the Septuagint as the successful precedent, the Greek tongue was the obvious medium for the effective presentation of the universal gospel message.¹² However, though highly educated, Matthew shared the difficulty of anybody expressing himself in a foreign language and so betrayed his Palestinian origin in the style of the original Greek text, which contains many signs of his Semitic mother tongue and thinking.¹³

With the help of the Holy Spirit and the rest of the Twelve, Matthew then arranged the selected material in three main sections:

1. The origin of Jesus down to the opening of his public ministry in Galilee (1:1—4:17).
2. His Galilean ministry (4:18—18:35)—containing the bulk of his teaching—to which is attached a brief interlude in Transjordan (chapters 19–20).
3. All the Jerusalem events of his public mission, including the Passion, death, and Resurrection narratives (chapters 21–28).

his teachings (διδασκαλία) in the form of short stories (χρειας), but not making as it were a literary composition of the Lord's sayings, so that Mark did not err at all when he wrote down certain things just as he (Peter) recalled them. For he had but one intention: not to leave out anything he had heard nor to falsify anything in them. This is what was related by Papias about Mark's (Gospel). But about Matthew's this was said: So then Matthew composed the sayings (τὰ λόγια) in a Hebrew style (Ἐβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ), and each recorded them as he was able." On the meaning, see J. Kürzinger, "Das Papiaszeugnis und die Erstgestalt des Matthäusevangeliums," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 4 (1960): 19–38; idem, "Irenäus und sein Zeugnis zur Sprache des Matthäusevangeliums," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963): 108–15. Kürzinger explains that in the first century *dialektos* commonly meant both "language" and "style," so that the phrase in *EH* 3.39.16 could mean either "in a Hebrew language" or "in a Hebrew style," depending on the context. In the present instance, it is clear from the context that the "Elder" had been explaining some problems in the style and/or content of Mark, since it possessed neither the Jewish style of Matthew nor the normal literary style of a Greek biography such as Luke. The absence of the definite article in the phrase Ἐβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ is further support of the view taken here. Cp. *The Order of the Synoptics*, 198–99 (= Excursus 2, The Origin of the Notion of an "Aramaic" Gospel of Matthew). Origen, mistakenly thinking that Papias was referring to the language in which Matthew was written, stated that Matthew was "composed in Hebrew characters." This error was to be perpetuated by later writers.

12. Cp. M. Müller, *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996). On the most important differences between Classical Greek and the Koine of the New Testament, see D. A. Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 156–62.

13. The more common Semitic expressions that are found in the New Testament are discussed in D. A. Black, "New Testament Semitisms," *Bible Translator* 39 (1988): 215–23.

Matthew's account of the infancy of Jesus is mostly apologetic, its aim being to prove that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, and that he was the Son of David by legitimate adoption by Joseph. The main part of the teaching of Jesus is given in a series of carefully crafted sermons or discourses designed to give the reader the clearest possible idea of the way in which the Messiah, depicted as the Redeemer of the world, set out his implementation and supplementation of the old Law. Thus the great Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5–7) is constructed to give the reader the full power and beauty of the new spirit infused by Jesus into the old letter of the Law of Moses. Further teachings are arranged in a series of four additional discourses: the missionary discourse (chap. 10); the parables discourse (chap. 13); the community discourse (chap. 18); and the eschatological discourse (chaps. 24–25).

In short, then, the Gospel of Matthew was the manifesto of the mother church of Jerusalem, and it is therefore the fundamental document of the Christian faith. It was the chronicle that each of the apostles needed to take with him to his own distant field of evangelization and also the one that Paul was to take with him on his own missionary journeys and from which he appears to quote in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5.¹⁴ A savage persecution of the church, begun by Herod Agrippa I in AD 42, was the impetus for the dispersion of the apostles now possessing in the Gospel of Matthew the necessary instrument to support and confirm their preaching while at the same time preserving their theological unity. The first phase was completed, and the second phase of the church's expansion was about to begin with the mission of Paul.

The Gentile Mission Phase, AD 42–62 (Acts 13–28)

At the very beginning the apostles and their disciples had been content to preach only to Jews and "God-fearers" (pagans who believed in the truth of Judaism). But three events that occurred during the first phase were portents that laid a foundation for the expansion of what was soon to follow:

14. See B. Orchard, "Thessalonians and the Synoptic Gospels," *CBQ* 7 (1945): 377–97. For the use of Matthew in 1 Corinthians, see D. L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 139ff.

1. The dispersion of the disciples during the persecution and martyrdom of Stephen, which first brought missionaries to Antioch (Acts 11), who converted a number of pagans in that wealthy city.
2. The conversion of Paul, God's chosen vessel for the conversion of the Gentiles, on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).
3. The reception of the centurion Cornelius and his family into the church by Peter with the approval of the Jerusalem church (Acts 10—11), without the obligation to be circumcised or to keep the food and marriage regulations that prevented Jews from associating with Gentiles.

Understandably, in the first phase the apostles were far too busy with the problems of the nascent church of Jerusalem to initiate a concerted drive to win over to Christ the Greek-speaking world of the Roman Empire; their immediate concern was quite properly their fellow Jews. However, the rapidly increasing numbers of converts at Antioch finally persuaded the Jerusalem apostles to send Barnabas there to investigate the new development, and he in turn decided to invite Paul to join him in instructing these new followers of Jesus, who were soon to be labeled "Christians" by the general public. A severe famine (AD 45–46) led the Christians of Antioch to send Barnabas and Paul on their famine relief visit to Jerusalem with a large sum to relieve the brothers' distress (Acts 11:25–30; 12:24ff). The Holy Spirit had intimated to Paul to use the opportunity to compare privately his teaching with that of the Twelve on the requirements of the church regarding the admission of Gentile converts. This was an urgent matter, as there was a powerful group of Pharisaic Christians in the mother church who wanted all converts to be compelled to submit to the full rigor of the old Law of Moses. Paul's meeting with Peter, James, and John is recorded in his letter to the Galatians (2:1–10),¹⁵ and its outcome was a comprehensive understanding between him and those whom he calls the "pillars," including an agreement to observe their respective fields of ministry and a decision not to ask Gentile converts to take on the obligations of the Mosaic Law.¹⁶

15. Cp. B. Orchard, "The Problem of Acts and Galatians," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 28 (1944): 154–74.

16. See D. A. Black, "Weakness Language in Galatians," *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (1983): 15–36; id., *Paul, Apostle of Weakness* (New York: Lang, 1984), 53–83.

Shortly after Paul's return to Antioch, the Holy Spirit called him and Barnabas to set out on their first missionary journey to the districts of southern Galatia. Paul's astounding success (cp. Acts 14–15) quickly aroused the hostility of the strict Pharisees of Jerusalem, who sent a delegation to remonstrate with him. A fierce debate then took place in Antioch, and since neither side would bend, Paul had no option but to go up to Jerusalem and argue for the freedom of the Gentiles before the pillars (Acts 15:1–6). He was, of course, certain about the outcome, since previously they had already acknowledged his complete orthodoxy. The recognition of Gentile freedom from the Law of Moses at the Council of Jerusalem (AD 49) then marked another milestone in the progress of the church (Acts 15:16–35).

During his third missionary journey Paul came to recognize the paramount need to integrate into one harmonious body the Jewish Christians with their Mosaic-Pharisaic traditions and the Greek and Roman converts. In his great letter to the Romans he had, in fact, already produced the necessary theological synthesis (Romans 9–11). His missionary experience had proved that the Gospel of Matthew, which he was faithfully using as a follow-up to his oral teaching, did not answer all the questions of his Asian and Greek converts. This made him acutely aware of the need for a presentation of the Gospel nuanced to suit the mentality of the Hellenistic world.

He was now faced with a twofold task, firstly to produce a version of Matthew's Gospel that would meet the spiritual needs of the Greek world, and secondly to make sure that the modified version would be acceptable to Peter and the other pillars. Before he came to the end of his third missionary journey Paul had chosen the man he needed for this difficult and delicate undertaking—his friend Luke, a physician, who joined him on the latter stages of his voyage back to Jerusalem. While there Paul found himself disenchanted by the reserved attitude of the elders, who looked askance at what they regarded as the too-easy terms on which Paul was admitting Greeks into the church. The Holy Spirit was now urging him to look toward Rome, and so he was longing to go there (Acts 19:21). As it so happened, Paul's hope did not materialize immediately because of his detention by the Romans for more than two years in their headquarters in Caesarea. Nevertheless, this enforced stay in Palestine turned out to be a blessing inasmuch as it provided Luke with sufficient

time to check the details in Matthew's account of the life and ministry of Jesus, to interrogate many of those who had known him some thirty years before, and to prepare a new Gospel document closely modeled on Matthew's.

Through hindsight we can determine the assignment that Luke had received from Paul by comparing the Gospels of Luke and Matthew and noting Luke's deviations. In the first place, Luke carefully followed the main structure of Matthew throughout and generally adhered to the order of its various sections and anecdotes, though he also made highly interesting changes. For example, his story of the birth of Jesus is totally different from Matthew's, which (as we have noted) was almost entirely apologetic in tone and content. Luke, however, provided a straightforward narrative that stems either directly or indirectly from Mary herself. When he came to the Galilean ministry he added certain details to each of those stories from Matthew's Gospel that he decided to adopt. Indeed, in one way or another he absorbed nearly everything that Matthew had written, and yet managed to add a good deal of extra material. This Luke did by omitting a number of stories that he regarded as duplicates (e.g., the famous Lukan omission of Matt 14:22—16:12) and by inserting into the heart of the Matthean text at the end of the Galilean ministry (cp. Matt 19:1–2) a section of no less than nine long chapters, his central section (9:51–18:14), comprising (1) the excerpts that he had extracted from Matthew's great discourses in order to lighten the content of his own version of them, and (2) additional sayings and parables that he had collected. (It is perhaps worth noting here that Luke's central section roughly corresponds with the conjectural document known as "Q," which many modern scholars consider to be one of the sources of Matthew and Luke.)

All the time he was composing, Luke kept his eye on the audience and readership for which Paul needed this Gospel, in particular on the Greeks' scientific bent, their desire to know names and dates and times, and their interest in the emancipation of women. Moreover, he made it his aim to reveal an aspect of Jesus that would impress the Gentile reader, namely by exhibiting him as a hero blessed by God, one too good for this world yet one who after his glorification was still bringing blessings to the world that he had rescued by his sacrificial death.

Luke completed his task in time to accompany Paul on the journey by sea to Rome, but there were two reasons for holding up the publication of his Gospel. In the first place, it was not a firsthand account since neither Luke nor Paul had been eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus, but was in the main a work of historical investigation; and if it was to have credibility it would need the support of an eyewitness such as Peter. In the second place, an even more serious possibility was that the publication of this manifesto for Paul's Gentile converts would result in another eruption from the Circumcision Party, which was still very active and was to remain so until the destruction of the temple in AD 70. Therefore Luke's Gospel could not be published until this peril had been defused.

The Roman Phase, AD 62–67

The situation was then as follows. The Gospel according to Matthew had been in circulation for some twenty years throughout the Christian world both inside and beyond the Roman Empire; and Paul was due to arrive in Rome as a prisoner of Caesar sometime in 61 or 62 (cp. Acts 28:30). Luke accompanied Paul, bringing with him a document that he had been compiling during Paul's detention in Caesarea, in fact a substantial adaptation of the Gospel of Matthew. Paul's former disciple Mark, however, who had left him earlier in his first missionary journey at Perga and had later gone with Barnabas to Cyprus, had since become Peter's devoted assistant (cp. 1 Pet 5:12–13). Nevertheless, the letters of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon, traditionally said to have been written from Rome during Paul's detention (which ended not later than AD 63), reveal that he remained in intimate contact with both Mark and Luke (cp. Col 4:10, 14; Phlm 24).

Paul was well aware of the importance attached by the secular Greek and Roman world to the testimony of actual eyewitnesses. But whereas the Gospel of Matthew had issued from the Jerusalem community, many of whom had known Jesus personally and could corroborate the witness of the Twelve preserved in that Gospel, neither he nor Luke had known Jesus while he walked on earth. Of course, Paul had been given a vision of the glorified Christ, but he was still dependent on the Twelve for information about his earthly life.

As far as Luke was concerned, he also had to rely entirely on the tradition he had received from the apostles and from the Gospel of Matthew, to which he added his own personal researches into the events of the life of Jesus, gleaned from material supplied to him by many surviving witnesses whom he had succeeded in interrogating (cp. Luke 1:1–4). In order to get Luke's work recognized as a true account and one worthy to be read in the Christian assembly either alongside or in place of Matthew's Gospel, Paul needed to get it endorsed by an apostolic eyewitness. Furthermore, although Paul's primary concern was to secure the publication of Luke's Gospel in the churches he himself had founded, he was also aware that once published it would inevitably find its way into the churches of the other apostles. Therefore, it was necessary for him well in advance to establish the fact that Luke had not erred in any particular and to avoid any discourtesy to the apostles affected.

At the time of Paul's captivity in Rome, Peter happened to be there as well; and as he was the prime eyewitness of the public ministry of Jesus, Paul approached Peter to ask his advice about the best procedure. Peter realized that Paul needed the public assurance that Luke's book was in complete conformity with Peter's own recollections of Jesus, and was happy to compare Luke's treatment of the events at which he himself had been a participant or had witnessed with Matthew's parallel account. Peter's plan was to give a series of speeches in the Roman location that he had designated for his weekly worship celebration. His secretary Mark helped him to prepare these talks, which were bound to excite the interest of the most influential Christians in Rome, including members of the Praetorium, the headquarters of the Roman Army and the equivalent of our Pentagon. The news that Peter was going to give a series of lectures on the life of Jesus drew a great throng. Since it was the custom for public men to have their speeches recorded by shorthand writers, Mark arranged for shorthand writers of Greek to take down Peter's words just as he uttered them.¹⁷

17. E. Randolph Richards has shown in his thesis (*The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* [Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1991], 26–29) that not only Latin but also Greek professional shorthand writers for *viva voce* verbatim recording were in regular employment in Rome at that time, so that Mark would have had no difficulty in getting Peter's words fully and accurately recorded, just as he uttered them. Cp. B. Orchard, "The Making and Publication of Mark's Gospel: An Historical Investigation," *Annales Theologici* 7 (1993), 369–93.

On the appointed days, Peter, with Mark in attendance, went to the rostrum armed with the scroll of Matthew and the new scroll prepared by Luke. That these two Gospels were originally inscribed on scrolls and not on codices is certain because they are each just about the length of an ordinary commercial scroll, that is, about thirty feet in length. A scroll was written on the inner side in narrow columns at right angles to its length. When rolled up it was tied with a cord and put into one of a series of pigeon holes that constituted the bookcase of an educated man. To handle such a scroll required both hands, the right hand unrolling and the left rolling up until the reader arrived at the particular column he wanted to refer to.

Peter's intention was to refer only to those incidents in the life of Jesus of which he had been an eyewitness or could personally vouch for, and therefore he would say nothing about the birth and Resurrection narratives or about the central section in which Luke had gathered a collection of Jesus' sayings. The simple fact that Peter was prepared to devote so much attention to this new work of Luke shows that he believed it to be worthy of adoption in its entirety by the church.

Peter, aided by Mark, decided to divide for his own immediate purpose the Gospels of Matthew and Luke lying before him into five parts, that is, into five discourses (*didaskalias*) of 25–40 minutes each, in the following manner:¹⁸

1. Beginning of ministry: Mark 1:2—3:19 = Matt 3:1ff; Luke 3:1ff
2. Early Galilean ministry: Mark 3:20—6:13 = Matt 5:2ff; Luke 6:20ff
3. Later Galilean ministry: Mark 6:14—10:1 = Matt 14:1ff; Luke 9:7ff
4. Post-Galilean ministry: Mark 10:2—13:37 = Matt 19:1ff; Luke 9:51ff
5. Passion narrative: Mark 14:1—16:8 = Matt 26:1ff; Luke 22:1ff

18. M. Hengel has independently concluded that the Gospel of Mark was originally delivered in the Christian assembly in Rome, and that the authority of Peter lies behind Mark's account; cp. his "Literary, Theological, and Historical Problems in the Gospel of Mark," in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. P. Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 233–34.

Further study of the text of Mark indicates that Peter delivered his recollections to his audience by word of mouth, checking with each Gospel in turn as he went along. By conscious prearrangement his disciple and secretary Mark handed him the scroll first of Matthew, and then at the appropriate point exchanged it for the scroll of Luke, thus alternately following the text first of the one then of the other, as it were “zigzagging” from one Gospel to the other.

Peter, of course, would have known the Gospel of Matthew almost, if not entirely, by heart, and therefore he tended to follow it more closely, but adding Luke’s extra details wherever he could. He also adopted Luke’s rearrangement of the early part of Matthew’s Galilean ministry. His treatment is also noteworthy for the introduction of so many vivid little details that reveal him to be an eyewitness, such as Jesus’ being asleep on the cushion in the stern of the boat (Mark 4:38) and the figure of two thousand swine who drowned themselves in the lake (Mark 5:13).

At the end of his fifth discourse Peter had covered all the main stories Matthew and Luke had in common (except for the centurion’s slave), from the baptism of John to his personal discovery of the empty tomb. There, at the conclusion of the earthly ministry of Jesus, he ended his discourses, having exhausted his reminiscences, since Paul had had his own personal visions of the risen Christ and did not require Peter’s corroboration in this respect.

Those who had listened to Peter were delighted with everything they had heard and requested from Mark copies of what he had said. The tradition relates that when Peter was shown the transcript of his discourses he “exerted no pressure either to forbid it or to promote it” (Eusebius, *EH* 6.14.5–7). This indicates that Peter saw no particular advantage in promoting his own lectures, since in Matthew there was already a complete Gospel available to his listeners. In the light of this public approbation, Paul was able to publish the text of Luke’s Gospel in the churches of Achaia and Asia Minor without further delay or question.

From the above it is clear that Peter was personally responsible for the text of our Gospel of Mark, and that it was composed not only after Matthew and Luke, but also with their aid. However, despite the fact that it was highly prized by the church as the personal reminiscences of Peter, it did not enjoy a universal circulation because it was not intended to supersede either Matthew or Luke. Indeed, it

is rarely quoted by the early fathers, and the first commentary on it dates only from the fifth century. We have seen that its process of composition was quite unlike that of Matthew or Luke, and that Peter had no intention of making it into a third Gospel.

How, then, does one explain how the last twelve verses (Mark 16:9–20), which describe the Resurrection, were added to the Gospel? For the fact is that while some manuscripts record these verses, others either omit them altogether or give a much shorter ending. The most plausible explanation is that after Mark had satisfied the immediate demand of those who wanted copies of the five discourses, which ended at Mark 16:8, the matter rested there until after the martyrdom of Peter and Mark's decision to go off to establish the church of Alexandria (AD 67–69). As an act of piety to the memory of Peter, Mark then decided to publish an edition of the text that would include the necessary sequel to the passion and death of the Master. The attentive reader will observe that these verses form a summary catalogue of references to the Resurrection stories of both Matthew and Luke, and were most likely added by Mark himself to round off the final discourse. But as the private edition of Mark, which lacked these verses, had already been in circulation for some years, the textual tradition has remained divided to this day.¹⁹

The Johannine Supplement

Christian tradition names John the son of Zebedee, the apostle and beloved disciple, as the Fourth Evangelist, and there is no solid reason to reject it. John wrote in Greek like the other Evangelists and, in fact, knew all three Synoptic Gospels, making use especially of Luke. Although the final chapter (21) seems to be an afterthought, the manuscript tradition shows that the author published the whole Gospel as one work. The date of publication, evidently from Ephesus, was possibly just before the death of John at the end of the century.

The purpose of John was to supplement in several ways the account about the ministry of Jesus provided by the Synoptic Gospels:

1. John thought it proper to set his Gospel in an eternal perspective by commencing with the heavenly existence of the Son of God (John 1:1–18).

19. Cp. W. R. Farmer, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

2. While Matthew assumes Jesus to be the Messiah (Matt 1:1), he does not explain that Jesus asserted his claim at the commencement of his ministry at the cleansing of the temple because his plan was to place all the Jerusalem activities of Jesus in the last sections of his Gospel (Matthew 21–28). John makes it clear that Jesus staked his claim in categorical terms at the beginning (John 2:1–25).
3. John alone makes it clear that the public ministry of Jesus extended over two years (three Passovers) and possibly longer, and that only part of it was spent in Galilee. The Galilean ministry was really an interlude forced upon Jesus by the hostility of the high priests. Nonetheless, John records that Jesus made some four visits to the Holy City to bring about the recognition of his Messiahship before the final visit that resulted in his passion and death.
4. John alone records that during those visits a number of intimate dialogues took place that uniquely reveal the mind and heart of Jesus and his relationship to his Father and to the Holy Spirit.

To sum up, it is John's intention to confirm and deepen the faith of his readers in Jesus as the consubstantial Son of God, and thereby to ensure that by their faith they may obtain eternal life (20:30). The forerunner of Johannine thought is clearly the world of Jewish thought, and not Gnosticism with its timeless dualism of substance.²⁰ Nevertheless, the whole Gospel is permeated by a quiet but unmistakable polemic against Judaism, particularly against those Jews who deny that Jesus is the Son of God and of heavenly origin.

Conclusion

Matthew is the fundamental Gospel and the most important, but each was written and published in response to a particular need of the church in a particular historical situation. The real significance of Mark lies in the fact that it was Peter's guarantee that Luke was fit to be read beside Matthew in the churches of both Peter and Paul. Mark is therefore to be viewed as the bridge between Matthew and Luke, that is, as an enabling document for Luke to be used

²⁰ See D. A. Black, "El Grupo de Juan: Helenismo y Gnosis," in *Origenes del Cristianismo*, ed. A. Piñero (Cordoba: Ediciones el Almendro, 1991), 303–23.

freely in all the churches to which the authority of Peter, the chief eyewitness, extended; and it stands as a recognition of the equality of the Gentiles in all the churches.

We are now also able to see why the church from a very early date, perhaps as early as the second century, placed Mark's Gospel between those of Matthew and Luke. For by doing so, it signaled the church's acceptance of the tradition that the principal function of Mark was to introduce Luke to the Christian public and to confirm its equality with Matthew. The middle position of Mark had nothing to do with the chronological order of the Gospels, for Luke was written before Mark was even thought of; but its publication was delayed until its merits had been approved by Peter, who actually spoke the words that Mark recorded for him and for the church.

Thus we may sum up the relationships between the Gospels as follows:

1. Matthew was composed to meet the urgent needs of the primitive church of Jerusalem (the church set up by Peter and the original apostles), which needed a manifesto defending its integrity and its right to exist in the earliest days.
2. Luke was written at the request of Paul to meet the urgent need of his churches to have their own manifesto to prove their full equality with Jewish Christians.
3. Mark was the result of the collaboration of Peter and Paul to make sure that the spiritual and doctrinal unity of the universal church was not impaired as a result of the appearance of Luke beside Matthew in the churches of both.
4. The Gospel of John made it clear that the primary objective of Jesus throughout his public ministry was the winning over of the spiritual authorities in Jerusalem.

As for the Longer Ending of Mark, we need not doubt that it is part of Holy Scripture, even if it is Mark's supplement to Peter's account of the life of Jesus.

A Non-Academic Postscript

The longer ending of Mark reminds us that Mark's Gospel is highly evangelistic. Its message is "the gospel," as 1:1 reminds us, and it is integrated by the Person of whom it speaks. It gives believ-

ers of all ages a commission that is factual and inescapable—“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (16:15). Jesus calls us to deny the comforts and pleasures we take for granted every day. His disciples saw how he refused the things they cherished—physical pleasure, popular approval, prestige—and accepted willingly the things they sought to escape—poverty, humiliation, sorrow, even death. In ministering to the sick, comforting the sorrowful, and preaching the gospel to the poor, Jesus showed us no service was too small and no sacrifice too great when it is done in his name.

If Acts 1:8 is any guide, missions ought to take place locally (Jerusalem), regionally (Judea and Samaria), globally (uttermost parts of the earth), and (we might infer from the mention of Samaria) cross-culturally. Thus, dividing our missions efforts into “North American” and “international” seems a false dichotomy. Every Christian ought to be a North American missionary. And every one of us ought to be an international missionary. The key is a love for the lost, wherever they live. Perhaps it is time to consolidate various missions boards that focus on specific regions or peoples into one global missions entity that would foster church planting locally, regionally, and throughout the world by supporting the efforts of local congregations. Once our lives catch on fire with the love of Jesus, we will inevitably be on mission.

Let us make every one of our churches a Great Commission congregation and forget the methods. Our Lord Jesus is not a system. He’s a Person, and evangelism is simply bringing another person to face with this Person. If you become radical about the gospel, you’ll be radical about everything else in your life. It takes no special training or education. The early Christians were uneducated nobodies, ignorant fishermen. Even an educated man like Paul wasn’t impressed with book learning. Let us not shy away from being so thrilled with Jesus that we appear to be drunk to others. When confronted with the Person of Jesus Christ, we can respond in no other way.