



**Matson, Mark A.**

***In Dialogue with Another Gospel? The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke***

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This study gives a boost to the continuing scholarly process of reinstating John's Gospel into the larger picture of the development of all four Gospels. John is no longer envisaged as a Gospel apart, somehow out of reach. Instead, Mark A. Matson seeks to show that John's Gospel was used in some form by Luke, an author who, among the New Testament writers, was central and voluminous, in fact, the most voluminous of all.

However, this study—a dissertation (Duke University, 1998; advisor, D. Moody Smith)—is not primarily about the Gospel of John. Rather, it about Luke; it “is really a study of Luke's compositional and redactional method” (19). Matson focuses particularly on the composition of Luke's passion narrative (Luke 22–24).

The work has nine chapters: an introduction, dealing especially with John's relationship to the Synoptics and with Luke's authorial method (ch. 1); a review of research on the relationship of Luke to John (ch. 2); an overview of similarities between Luke and John (ch. 3); a text-critical analysis of the Western noninterpolations (ch. 4); a review of research and a proposal of method pertaining to Luke's editorial method (ch. 5); an analysis of Luke 22–24 with an eye to the use of sources, particularly the possible use of

John (chs. 6–8); and a summary of conclusions, including a review of Luke’s work as author and suggestions for future research (ch. 9).

The method used in the initial overview of Luke-John similarities (ch. 3) is straightforward and useful. Matson divides the similarities into diverse categories (words, order, geography, facts/allusions, omissions, characters, themes). He then lists the similarities within each category, discusses them, and finally gives a general assessment of their significance. In many categories the similarities are judged impressive (see esp. 106, 117, 145, 155). Matson’s initial conclusion is that “the wide-ranging variety of the similarities, as well as their sheer number, suggests a literary relationship, not just the use of a common source or sources” (162).

The method proposed in chapter 5 (especially 259–62) is somewhat more complex, but its main steps are clear: (1) comparison of the text (Luke’s passion narrative) with Mark, noting differences, especially those of wording, content, and order; (2) comparison with other Gospel texts, including other parts of Luke, in case non-Markan features can be explained as part of Luke’s general editorial tendencies; (3) close comparison with John, especially concerning wording, order, and thought content; and (4) an explanation of Luke’s compositional practice. The discussion of method concludes with a brief list of criteria for judging literary dependence on John.

The close analysis of the passion narrative (chs. 6–8) confirms Matson’s conclusion that there is a literary relationship between Luke and John. At times Luke’s use of John is judged to be particularly strong (Luke 22:39–53, 67–68; 23:2–5, 13–25, 44–49; 24:1–43).

Matson has assembled impressive data and has been balanced in his judgments. Again and again, both in the general overview (ch. 3) and in the close analysis of the passion narrative (chs. 6–8), the similarities are such that the easiest explanation of the data—the most scientific conclusion—is that there is indeed a literary relationship between the Gospels. To that extent Matson’s work is an important contribution to Gospel studies.

However, there is need for further research, not just, as Matson indicates (446–48), into other aspects of Luke’s use of John, but also into whether the dependence is always that of Luke on John. At times—for instance, concerning Satan entering Judas (Luke 22:3; John 13:2)—one can argue strongly that the dependence is in the opposite direction.

Matson has worked with the hypothesis that Luke was last. In itself this hypothesis is plausible, and it is a welcome change from simply presupposing that John was last. But to test this hypothesis more fully and to refine it, Luke’s work needs to be examined more closely. The greatest single deficiency in this valuable study is that, despite focusing on Luke’s authorial method, it does not take sufficient account of recent literary research into Luke, including Acts, and including Luke’s use of other sources, especially the

Septuagint. In other words, Matson's research needs a broader literary context and a greater sense of the complexity of the development of Luke-Acts. However, this study is already an important resource.