

RBL 07/31/2000

Ennulat, Andreas.
Die "Minor Agreements": Untersuchungen zu einer offenen Frage des synoptischen Problems

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/62

Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994. Pp. viii + 594, Paperback, DM 178,00, ISBN 3161457757.

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Ennulat displays an impressive mastery of the secondary literature on this subject as well as a discerning grasp of the patterns linking together hundreds of Minor Agreements (=MAs) between Matthew and Luke against Mark. Originally presented to the theological faculty at the University of Bern as a doctoral dissertation guided by Ulrich Luz, his study should become one of the classic discussions of this difficult topic by Two-Source advocates (e.g., Hawkins, Streeter, Neiryck), an indispensable reference-point for all future considerations of this problem.

An interesting feature of the history of the discussion of the MAs is that their total number increases with each new investigation. Sir John Hawkins claimed to have identified over 230 minor agreements but listed only twenty-one of them as worthy of discussion (*Horae Synopticae* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1909] 208ff.). B. H. Streeter discussed considerably more (*The Four Gospels* [London: Macmillan, 1930] 295-331). F. Neiryck listed over 750 (*The Minor Agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark* [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974]). Now Ennulat finds (but does not list) roughly 1000 MAs, distributed throughout the Gospel of Mark, i.e., in *all* of the material common to Matthew, Mark, and Luke ("triple tradition").

One major reason why these numbers vary is that MAs appear or disappear depending on which Gospel text and which synopsis one uses (see the charts prepared by Neiryck in G. Strecker, *Minor Agreements* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993]). Ennulat is the first to give a visual graphic presentation of the location and frequency of the MAs he discovered, using Huck's synopsis (see Chart of Frequency, pp. 11-14).

Ennulat's major contribution to the discussion is to break with the traditional piecemeal approach in solving the problem of the MAs. Hawkins, Streeter, and Neiryck

approached the MAs by arguing that they were mostly coincidental changes and corrections of the text of Mark made by Matthew and Luke acting independently. For example, both Evangelists spontaneously and independently corrected Mark's poor Greek in precisely the same way scores of times (changing Mark's frequent historical present to the more proper aorist, substituting $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ for $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\iota$, etc.), both spontaneously abbreviated Mark's wordiness at precisely the same places scores of times, both altered Mark's ambiguous theological statements many times, and so on. Where this piecemeal approach did not work, Hawkins, Streeter, Neiryneck, and many others, resorted to more forceful measures, such as textual emendation. Ennulat does not find this approach satisfactory, because its entire credibility rests on too many happy coincidences.

Ennulat found that the MAs were distributed throughout the "triple tradition," in about equal proportions of positive agreements and negative agreements. This discovery led him to insist on a comprehensive approach. After surveying the various current comprehensive approaches (pp. 19-22), Ennulat rejects those approaches that do not apply to all of the minor agreements: textual assimilation, oral tradition, influence of Q, as well as those that had fatal flaws of one kind or another (pp. 22-32). This leaves him with a dual approach: the classic Two-Source Hypothesis modified in such a way that the minor agreements in Matthew and Luke against Mark are viewed as clues to a slightly revised version of the original Gospel of Mark independently used by each of them (pp. 32-33). As we will see in the conclusion, this dual approach reveals an internal inconsistency in Ennulat's approach.

Ennulat proceeds by dividing the MAs into four categories: (1) minor agreements that, together with a whole group of other minor agreements in the same context, very probably (*sehr wahrscheinlich*) cannot be explained by postulating a series of Matthew's and Luke's independent, coincidental, identical alterations of Mark's text, but rather indicate their independent use of the same text of a version of Mark slightly different from the one we now have; (2) minor agreements that probably (*wahrscheinlich*) were not caused by Matthew's and Luke's independent, coincidental, identical alterations of Mark's text, but instead--for other reasons--should be explained by their independent use of the same text of a version of Mark slightly different from the one we now have; (3) minor agreements that should be considered "neutral," i.e., belonging to a "grey area" (*neutrale Grauzone*) of data that can be explained as deriving either from independent, coincidental, identical alterations of Mark or from their use of the same text of Mark that differed from the one we now have; (4) minor agreements that probably did not arise (*unwahrscheinlich*) by joint copying from a revised version of Mark, but by the simultaneous, identical, and coincidental alteration of the canonical text of the Mark we now possess. Or if neither of the above approaches can explain it, then we must resort to other explanations, such as the influence of oral tradition, Q/Mark overlap, or textual corruption.

Having thus cleared the decks, the bulk of Ennulat's study consists of a detailed analysis of the "triple tradition" (pp. 35-416). Mark is divided into eight large segments and the MAs are examined to see how far they provide evidence that Matthew and Luke used a revised version of original Mark.

Ennulat summarizes his findings in the conclusion. Most importantly, of the roughly 1000 MAs he studies, he finds that 97 percent were either very probably, probably, or possibly caused by Matthew and Luke independently copying a lost, slightly different version of the original Gospel of Mark. Thus, in no more than 3 percent of the cases is he compelled to argue that the MAs were independent, coincidental, identical alterations of canonical Mark's text. In short, concludes Ennulat, "the 'minor agreements' between Matthew and Luke in the material shared with Mark clearly point to a pre-Matthean, pre-Lukan, thorough- going reworking of the [original] text of Mark" (p. 418).

The volume ends with a brief profile of the main features of this revised version of the original Mark: its linguistic characteristics (pp. 420-21), its theological tendency (p. 422), its picture of Jesus (pp. 422-25), its picture of the disciples (pp. 425-27), and its historical context (pp. 427-28).

In my judgment, Ennulat's monograph represents a brilliant step forward in the discussion of the Minor Agreements from within the horizon of the Two-Source Hypothesis. He has placed the discussion of this problem on a more scientific basis by looking for the *connections* between the myriads of tiny MAs instead of breaking them apart and treating them all as a series of coincidences. I would only add that it is inconsistent of him to not go on and, using the clues he has established, examine the *rest* of Matthew and Luke for further evidence of this revised version of Mark. Since he has uncovered massive evidence that Matthew and Luke never saw the version of Mark that was put into the NT canon, it is inconsistent to restrict the investigation to just those parts of Matthew and Luke that parallel canonical Mark. (9/96)