“WHY HAVE WE REDUCED THE ORAL TRADITION TO SILENCE? THE ORAL TRADITION’S ROLE IN THE FORMATION OF THE MINOR AGREEMENTS.”

Christopher J. Monaghan

Yarra Theological Union, University of Divinity

ABSTRACT

There has been an upsurge of interest recently in the role played by the oral tradition in the formation of the Synoptic Gospels. A consequence of this is that there has been a call to reset the default literary paradigm to allow room for the ongoing contribution of the oral tradition in the process of the formation of the Synoptic Gospels. While there is a theoretical acceptance of the role played by the oral tradition there has been a reticence to identify concrete instances as examples of the impact of oral tradition. This article examines four minor agreements from the passion narratives to test whether they can be more adequately explained as being due to Matthew and Luke drawing on shared traditions rather than as coincidental and independent redaction, or some other form of literary dependence.

OF RECENT YEARS DUNN HAS URGED THAT THE DEFAULT LITERARY PARADIGM in synoptic studies be reset and attention be paid once more to the role played by the oral tradition in the formation of the Gospels. In many ways this is not a new development given that the form critics were themselves concerned to plot the contours of the oral stage of the preservation and transmission of the

---

1 This article is a revised version of a paper originally presented as the Presidential Address at the Fellowship for Biblical Studies Annual General Meeting at Queens College University of Melbourne, Australia, in November 2013.

Gospel traditions. Like many questions in the area of biblical studies focus and interest in the oral tradition has ebbed and flowed. Scholars such as Gerhardsson and Kelber have made significant contributions in this area of research, and now this has been further developed by the work of Mournet, Kirk, Baum and Burkett. Admittedly, research in this area is a work in progress and further work is needed to refine methodologies and approaches. Kirk has challenged the work of Dunn, Mournet, Burkett and Baum for simplistically dividing oral and literary lines of transmission in a dualistic approach, and Gerhardsson and Dunn have respectfully crossed swords over their understanding of the role of memorisation and whether Ancient Israel can be accurately described as an oral society. Watson rightly draws attention to the on-going interaction between the oral and the literary noting that even written traditions are “re–oralized” when read and heard.

3 Dunn, “Altering the Default Setting” 47, reprinted in The Oral Gospel Tradition draws attention to the definition that Bultmann himself gave of form criticism as studying the history of the oral tradition behind the Gospels.


The default literary paradigm has also been more carefully evaluated in the light of what has been learned about compositional practices in the first century. The research of Downing, Derrenbacker, Mattila, Neville and Gregory have been useful in highlighting not only the physical circumstances under which the evangelists worked, but also the ways in which sources were incorporated into new documents. Downing and others have indicated that paraphrasing, précis, expansion and omission were, by and large, all part of the normal range of acceptable compositional activity. These studies provide a backdrop against which to better understand the range of variation that is encountered in the Synoptic Gospels and the ways written sources were treated in the period when the Gospels were formed. If written sources were treated in these ways it is not unreasonable to suppose that the oral tradition would be treated in similar fashion.

Synoptic studies have been enriched by these two areas of research. The first has provided a timely reminder not to discount the ongoing impact of the oral tradition in the formation of the Synoptic Gospels, and the second has

---


9 One of the areas of discussion regarding the oral tradition has been whether it can be characterised as stable or fluid. Discussion has ranged over a number of binary oppositions: informal and uncontrolled (Bultmann), formal and controlled (Gerhardsson) and informal-controlled (Bailey and Dunn).
provided a vantage point from which the major utilisation theories can be tested and, as Mattila would describe it, put into a credible context.\(^\text{10}\)

Neville concedes that the substance of Dunn’s call for a reset of the literary paradigm is beyond dispute, but objects that Dunn wants to have his cake and eat it too, claiming that Dunn has gone further than simply resetting the paradigm. He suggests that it is now an oral tradition hypothesis that has been supplemented by Matthew and Luke’s literary dependence on Mark and Q.\(^\text{11}\) The rejoinder can be made that while the 2DH is basically a literary model it does not exclude the possibility, or likelihood for that matter, that the oral tradition would have continued to impact on the redactional and literary activity of the evangelists.

With specific regard to the minor agreements it is instructive to see Frans Neirynck making room for a role played by the oral tradition: “In theory I can have no objection against some influence of oral-tradition variants, some occasional dependence on a revised text of Mark, or some substitutionary Lukan dependence on Matthew.”\(^\text{12}\) Coming from a staunch advocate of the resolution of minor agreements as being the result of independent and coincidental redaction on the part of Luke and Matthew that comes as quite a concession! The nettle to be grasped is that of moving from the acceptance that the oral tradition has some theoretical role to play in explaining the formation of some minor agreements to applying it concretely to specific agreements. It is not as though work has not been done in this area and the commentaries of Luz and Bovon are noteworthy for their preparedness to entertain the possible role of the oral tradition in particular cases.\(^\text{13}\) Boring rightly judges that the oral tradition should not be avoided as a matter of principle in addressing the challenge posed by the minor agreements. At the same time he is surely correct that proponents of the Farrer Hypothesis and Griesbach hypothesis see this as special pleading on the part of those who defend the 2DH.\(^\text{14}\) This is understandable given that Goulder’s attack on the credibility of the 2H depends on that famous

---

\(^\text{10}\) Matilla, A Question 203.

\(^\text{11}\) David Neville, “The Demise of the Two–Document Hypothesis? Dunn and Burkett on Gospel Sources,” *Pacifica* 19 (2006) 78–92. See 83 for his assessment of Dunn’s basic claim and 85 for his judgement concerning Dunn sitting on both sides of the fence. Neville’s point of view is that the 2DH is basically a literary paradigm.


“irresolvable rump of small agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark, especially in the passion story.”

The work of Soards on Luke 22 and Brown’s magisterial *The Death of the Messiah* have attended to the possible role of oral traditions in the formation of the Passion and Resurrection narratives in all four Gospels. Stein explored the overlapping traditions in the Synoptics and John, taking the position that it would be highly unlikely that there would not be overlaps and incorporation in the development of the traditions about Jesus. He highlights four such overlaps within the Passion narratives.

The primary purpose of this article is to examine some concrete examples among the significant minor agreements embedded within the passion narratives to listen for that distant voice of the oral tradition so that it might be identified as such. The case to be made is that some “irresolvable” agreements can be adequately explained by expanding the 2DH to take into account the ongoing impact of the oral tradition rather some form of literary dependence. This is not a case of special pleading, of having one’s cake and eating it too, so much as imagining what Dunn’s call to reset the default paradigm could look like when applied to this particular set of agreements. At the outset it needs to be clarified that recourse to the oral tradition is not a global solution to the minor agreements, but it can help resolve a number of those that otherwise resist resolution by recourse to literary paradigms applied in an exclusive sense.

---

15 Michael D. Goulder, “Is Q a Juggernaut?” *JBL* 115/4 (1996) 667–81. See 670–71 on the role of the minor agreements in bringing down the 2DH, especially with regard to agreements in the passion narrative which can bring down the whole theory like a pack of cards. He would go so far to say that if the minor agreements are to be explained as coming from Luke’s dependence on Matthew then there would be no problem posed by the minor agreements at all. See also “Two Significant Minor Agreements (Mat. 4:13 Par.; Mat. 26:68 Par.),” *NT* 45 (2003) 365–73.


17 Robert H. Stein, “The Matthew-Luke Agreements against Mark: Insight from John,” *CBQ* 54 (1992) 482–502. He is convinced that the overlapping of traditions, either oral and/or written is not only highly probable and demonstrated by parallels found in the Gospel of John.

SOME PRESUPPOSITIONS

1. The oral tradition contributed to the formation of the Gospel of Mark and the oral tradition continued to play a role in the first century Christian communities as they preserved and adapted the Jesus tradition. Some of these traditions, incorporated into the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, are now identified as minor agreements.

2. This is a necessarily conservative approach to the identification of minor agreements that are due to the incorporation of oral traditions. There may be many instances where a shared oral tradition has been drawn upon by Matthew and Luke that are otherwise judged to be independent redaction, or as the end result of Lukan dependence on Matthew, as the Farrer Hypothesis would argue, or on a recension of Mark.

3. That there are a number of agreements in a given passage does not exclude the possibility of the impact of the oral tradition. Multiple agreements in a given passage do not always demand literary dependence as the only, or best, explanation.

4. That the ways in which an oral tradition has been incorporated into a specific Gospel can vary. This may be due to variation within the communities who preserved a tradition, and through modification in the process of redaction. This builds on Kirk’s critique of Dunn and Bailey and others.

5. If the Matthean and Lukan communities were located within close proximity (e.g. Asia Minor or Syria) it would be expected that there be some overlapping of traditions due to incorporation of oral traditions, even if they were incorporated independently.

6. The redactional activity of Matthew and Luke extends to every passage of their Gospels. This is true if Luke depends on Mark and Matthew in the FH, or Mark, Q and other materials in 2DH, or if Matthew and Luke use a recension of Mark. A consequence of this is that it makes this task necessarily conjectural since whatever is incorporated has often been shaped by the redactor’s hand.

7. If Matthew and Luke used a recension of Mark independent and coincidental redaction is not thereby excluded, nor is the impact of the oral tradition, though it would be more difficult to trace and identify.

8. If an oral tradition is used by Matthew or Luke, it does not exclude independent and coincidental redaction, since the coincidental redaction describes the means by which the tradition has been incorporated into Matthew or Luke, not the source of the tradition itself.
PUTTING SOME CONCRETE MINOR AGREEMENTS FROM THE PASSION NARRATIVE TO THE TEST

In the light of the presuppositions already stated, four minor agreements taken from the passion narratives have been chosen on the basis of three criteria.

1. There is agreement in content, but not placement, for a word or phrase that is rare in the New Testament.

2. There is a high verbal agreement in a striking detail in the same context in a passage that is considered to be Markan.¹⁹

3. There is agreement in a word that is shared with the Johannine passion narrative.

1) Criterion One: agreement in content, but not placement:


In Mark 11:11 after entering the city and the Temple late in the day Jesus departs the city for Bethany. The next day Jesus returns and cleanses the Temple after cursing the fig tree. Assuming Markan priority the Matthean narrative transposes the cleansing of the Temple to the day of Jesus’ entry into the city. The mention of Jesus lodging in Bethany comes after the Matthean report of the praise of the people and the objection of the chief priests and scribes (Matt 21:14–16). The setting for the verb in Luke is the conclusion to the eschatological discourse and the summary report of Jesus’ daily routine of teaching in the Temple and lodging on the Mount of Olives in Luke 21:37 that immediately precedes the beginning of the passion narrative. That Matthew and Luke diverge in their placement of this unique detail has prompted a good deal of discussion.

This minor agreement has been interpreted from a number of perspectives. According to proponents of the Farrar hypothesis this agreement is due to Lukan dependence on Matthew.²⁰ 2DH theorists would explain this agreement as either the result of coincidental and independent redaction, or shared dependence in an oral or written source or tradition.²¹

¹⁹ At the outset it needs to be stated that this article presumes Markan priority.
Mutual dependence on a recension of Mark has also been suggested as a possible explanation.\footnote{Ulrich Luz, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 18–25) (EKKNT 3/1–4; Zürich–Benzinger; Neukirchen–Vluyn, Neukirchener, 1997) 177, suggests a number of the minor agreements could go back to a deuteromarkan reworking of the episode. He notes the complexity in tracing the text source critically given the significant additions in the Matthean version of the episode. In 189 n. 87 he treats this verb, but not as an agreement. Emil L. Die "Minor Agreements" 252, considers that this agreement could hardly be by chance, given the rarity of the word. He believes the correspondences at some points are so great in this passage that one can/must reckon with a pre-Matthean and Lukian reworked Markan text.}

The possibility of dependence of some sort is indicated by the rarity of the verb οὐλίζομαι in the New Testament. When making judgements regarding dependence in instances such as this the question has to be asked as to how well-attested a word or phrase is in the first century. Put simply, if Matthew and Luke wanted to describe Jesus as lodging during his sojourn in the city would this be a word they could have naturally and coincidentally used? While οὐλίζομαι is found only in these two instances in the New Testament it is used over forty times in the LXX, e.g., Judges 19:6–7; Ruth 1:16; 2 Sam 17:16; Neh 4:22, and in a range of Hellenistic texts ranging from Herodotus to Dio Chrysostum.\footnote{Hdt. 8.9; Dio Chrys. 35.16; Josephus B. J. 1.17.5.} In the light of this usage it is possible that the explanation for this is agreement is coincidental and independent redaction. This argument is weakened by the fact that there were other synonyms that could have used to describe Jesus lodging outside of the city. Luz identifies κοιτάζομαι (encamp or bivouac), μένω (lodge or stay), ἐνδιατρήσω (spend time in a place), as synonyms for οὐλίζομαι that is used by Matthew and Luke.\footnote{Ulrich Luz, Matthew 21–28: A Commentary (trans. James E. Crouch; Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005) 14 n. 85, observes that Hesychius lists some synonyms as κοιτάζομαι, μένω, ἐνδιατρήσω. While Luz does not take the observation further the existence of these synonyms provide indirect support for the possibility that Luke and Matthew are drawing on the same tradition.} This is by no means a conclusive argument that eliminates other possibilities, but it does increase the possibility that a shared oral tradition has been used given that there were other readily available options Luke and Matthew could have utilised in describing Jesus’ actions.
Given the diverging placement of this report of Jesus lodging in Matthew and Luke it is not likely that suggestions of Luke depending on Matthew will carry the day though Lukan dependence on Matthew would not, of itself, eliminate Lukan editing.25 This leaves the possibilities that Matthew and Luke drew on a shared tradition oral and/or written,26 or that the agreement is the result of coincidental and independent redaction.

That both Matthew and Luke locate the word in different settings might strengthen the argument for independent redaction, but that in itself neither proves nor disproves dependence on a shared oral tradition.27 It also needs to be recognised that even when a shared oral tradition is being drawn upon the redactor’s role of incorporation must still be accounted for. If it is conceded that a shared oral tradition is incorporated into Matthew and Luke then the diverging placement is either due to redactional activity, or the way the tradition is preserved by the local churches of Matthew and Luke.

2) Criterion Two: high verbal agreement in a striking detail:


Goulder treated this as the “most notorious of the minor agreements.”28 While some have sought to explain this agreement on the basis of textual corruption there is no pressing text critical problem with the most likely scenario being that scribes later expanded the Markan text in the light of Matthew and Luke.29

---


27 When this paper was presented David Sim suggested that the variation in placement in Matthew and Luke may well reflect how this oral tradition was incorporated and performed in their respective communities. This highlights the need for care in attributing too much to independent redaction. All of our efforts at diachronic reconstruction are inherently hypothetical and speculative but that need not lead to relinquishing the task as outmoded or hopeless, nor meaningless.

28 Michael D. Goulder, “Two Significant Minor Agreements (Mat. 4:13 Par.; Mat. 26:68 Par.),” *NT* 45 (2003) 365–73. See William David Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew III XIX-XXVIII* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997) 536, where mention is made of how Neirynck and Senior judge that this phrase did not originally belong to Matthew. The problem they point out with this scenario is that the textual tradition argues very strongly for inclusion. This means that if Matthew was expanded it occurred very early indeed. They did not come to a decision though they acknowledge Brown’s suggestion that a shared oral tradition may provide the explanation.

That a tradition other than Mark is the source of this agreement has been explained from different perspectives. Green sees Luke 22:63–64 as dependent on a pre-Lukan tradition that is non-Markan. Schneider is of the opinion that Luke and Matthew follow the same tradition, while Taylor is convinced that Luke follows a special source here.\textsuperscript{30}

Ennulat has argued that the agreement is best explained by Matthew and Luke using a recension of Mark.\textsuperscript{31} The problem with this minor agreement is that in Mark and Luke Jesus is blindfolded. Because he is blindfolded the phrase “who is the one striking you?” makes sense as a brutal exercise of power and mockery. He cannot see the one striking him and so is called to exercise his prophetic powers. The difficulty for the Matthean text is that there is no blindfold. Since Jesus can see those mocking him in Matthew their challenge is problematic. McNicol acknowledges the difficulty posed by the lack of a blindfold in Matthew and suggests that while Luke depends on Matthew the logical difficulty is resolved by the mention of Jesus being blindfolded before the demand is made that he prophesy.\textsuperscript{32} Assimilation of the agreement into the

\footnotesize


31 Andreas Ennulat, \textit{Die “Minor Agreements”: Untersuchung zu einer offenen Frage des synoptischen Problems} (WUNT II/62; Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1994) 379–81, interprets the agreements in this verse as improvements on the Markan text. In the phrase “who is the one striking you” he goes against it being unexplainable, or pre-Markan, or able to be explained as Matthean and Lukan coincidental redaction. He opts for a post-Markan, but pre-Lukan and Matthean change of the Markan text.

Markan text clearly occurred in the manuscript tradition some centuries later and it is not surprising that such a powerful, one might say, striking, phrase would make its way into some manuscripts. Senior acknowledges the difficulty and opts for the solution that Matthew followed the Markan source that did not have the phrase that is judged to be the result of early harmonisation of Matthew to Luke. Neirynck’s resort of arguing for a once off assimilation from Matthew to Luke is not necessary. Both can draw on an oral tradition and this is the sort of detail from the oral tradition that Luke and Matthew could have independently brought into their reworking of the Markan tradition. The suggestion of Luz, Soards and Bovon of the incorporation of an oral tradition into the Gospels of Matthew and Luke makes better sense than either Luke or Matthew depending on the other. Bovon’s suggestion regarding the influence of the oral tradition in the formation of minor agreements in the Jerusalem ministry and Passion and Resurrection narrative finds support in Brown’s The Death of the Messiah. Soards argues for Mark as Luke’s basic source, but suggests that the oral tradition has been blended into Luke 22 and combined with the Markan materials by means of Lukian redaction and composition. The agreements of Mark 14:72 // Matt 26:75 // Luke 22:62 (Peter weeping bitterly), and Mark 14:65 // Matt 26:68 // Luke 22:64 (where Jesus is challenged to identify who is striking him) are all argued as being due to the influence of the oral tradition incorporated into Markan materials. To my

34 Frans Neirynck, “ΤΙΣ ΕΞΤΙΝ Ο ΠΑΙΣΑΣ ΞΕ Mt 26,68/Lk22,64 (diff. Mk 14,65),” ETL 63 (1987) 5–47. See 27 where he suggests that the phrase is probably due to Lukian redaction of Mark, and that the major problem is the absence of the blindfolding of Jesus in Matt 26:67. See 47 where he concludes that there is a theoretical possibility that this is an instance of Matthean assimilation to Luke.
35 Ulrich Luz, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 26–28) (EKKNT 3/1–4; Zürich: Benzinger; Neukirchenen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002) 204, examines the various possibilities and excludes Mark’s Gospel having the phrase or Matthew harmonising to Luke. Griesbachians would have difficulty explaining why Mark would exclude this phrase. He cannot see that such a long addition could be attributed to independent redaction. He considers a post-Markan recension possible or the use of an oral tradition. François Bovon, Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Lk 19,28–24,53) (EKKNT, 3/3; Zürich: Benzinger; Neukirchenen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001) 341, examines the passage Luke 22:54–65 and considers the source critical options, i.e., special source, Mark, or the use of Mark with influence from the oral tradition. He argues quite comfortably for the latter option with the caveat that Luke has blocks from Mark then his special source then Mark again. See also 325–26 n. 13. Soards, The Passion According to Luke 106, judges this phrase is to be based on oral tradition.
36 Brown, The Death of the Messiah, with regard to the agreement of Mark 14:65 // Matt 26:68 // Luke 22:64 (the question “who is it that struck you”), suggests that it has come into the oral tradition from the version of blind man’s bluff well known in the Hellenistic period. In neither the episode of Peter weeping bitterly or in Jesus being asked to prophesy, is Brown convinced by text critical solutions (45, 579).
mind this is such a memorable phrase and vivid detail that it is precisely in an instance such as this that the oral tradition would make its presence felt. It is more likely that both Matthew and Luke added the phrase independently drawing on what had already become a well-formed and dominant oral tradition in the development of the passion narrative than some form of mutual dependence.

3) Criterion Two: high verbal agreement in a striking detail:

Mark 14:72 // Matt 26:75 ἔξελθων ἔξω ἔκλαυσεν πιστέως //

The textual tradition of this phrase in Luke 22:62 requires explanation since ἔξελθων ἔξω ἔκλαυσεν πιστέως \(\text{φου75 \text{A B D L T W Maj}}\) include the phrase, but 0171 vid ita, b, e, i, l omit it. If it could be demonstrated that the agreement was a later harmonisation of Luke’s text to that of Matthew any claims to the shared use of an oral or written tradition would be eliminated. Having examined the textual evidence Fitzmyer is convinced that there is not enough evidence to exclude the verse from the Lukan text.\(^{38}\) Comfort follows Metzger and is of the opinion that 0171 and several Old Latin manuscripts omitted the phrase by accident.\(^{39}\) Bovon would not be so sure and leans toward the view that Luke was corrupted in the light of Matthew 26:75.\(^{40}\)

Text critical matters aside, this minor agreement has been explained from a number of perspectives. Goulder agrees that the explanation for the agreement is not a text critical one suggesting that the explanation for the agreement is Luke’s dependence on Matthew.\(^{41}\) Ennulat argues charactistically for a recension, but the suggestion falters because there is not a sufficient number of similarities in this passage that might outweigh the significant amount of divergence between Matthew and Luke’s depiction of Peter’s denials of

---

38 Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV* 1465. See also Bovon, *Lukas* 344, who acknowledges that this origin of the agreement may be due to the textual tradition or oral tradition.
Jesus. While Luz considers a recension to be an option he also makes mention of the impact of the oral tradition, considering it an equally possible explanation for the minor agreement. A number of scholars have suggested that a source other than Mark lies behind the inclusion of this detail. Hawkins opined that Luke and Matthew drew on a common source, Nolland and Fitzmyer argue that this agreement provides supporting evidence for the existence of a second source for Peter's denials of Jesus. Green suggests that both Luke and Matthew share a common tradition without providing further indications of whether the source is oral or written.

To my mind this is a good example of the inclusion of a well-established element of the oral tradition that Matthew and Luke have incorporated independently. The description of Peter weeping bitterly is exactly the same, as is the placement in their respective narratives. To think that both Matthew and Luke coincidentally and independently redacted the Markan text in exactly the same way without drawing on a shared tradition is to go beyond reasonable bounds and it is understandable that Goulder would suggest Lukan dependence on Matthew as an explanation. The suggestion is not convincing for the reason that Luke and Matthew's redactional activity is strongly evident in this scene where they not only differ from Mark but from each other as well except for this striking phrase. It is this combination of factors that suggests they are drawing on a shared tradition rather than some form of literary dependence.

42 Ennulat, Die “Minor Agreements” 377–78, argues that this is clearly secondary to Mark and is to be understood as a deliberate improvement. He sees this can only be understood on the basis of a post–Markan change of the Markan text. Overall in this episode Ennulat traces the Lukan redaction of the tradition and through this reconstruction he treats the structural correspondences between Matthew and Luke that emerge. In the end it is explained on the basis of the post–Markan recension.
43 Luz, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 26–28) 213, makes it clear that the length of the phrase argues against independent redaction and sees basically two possibilities that are viable. The first is that it comes from the oral tradition (see Brown, Death of the Messiah (I) 611), or they both use a deuteromarkan recension as Ennulat suggests.
45 Green, The Death of Jesus 68.
4) Criterion Three: agreement with a detail in the Johannine passion narrative:


It is interesting to note that the verb ἐντυλίσσω is not used in the LXX and its only usage in the New Testament is with reference to the death of Jesus. This rare verb is found in both the Lukan and Matthean depictions of the burial of Jesus that are otherwise quite distinct in terms of their characterisation of Joseph of Arimathea and his actions, and there is significant variation in terms of the characterisation of Joseph of Arimathea. In Matt 27:57 he is a rich disciple, in Luke 23:50 he is a good and righteous man distinguished from others in the council by not consenting to their deeds and purpose in bringing Jesus to his death. Luke 23:53–54 also pays attention to details, such as the tomb never having been used, the temporal note that it was the day of preparation, and the role played by the women of Galilee as witnesses and in preparing the spices to be used after the Sabbath. For his part Matt 27:58–61 notes Pilate’s compliance, the fact that the tomb was Joseph’s own, that the stone was great and the role of the two Marys as witnesses sitting opposite the sepulchre.

These points of comparison indicate that Matthew and Luke write independently of one another and freely redact the Markan tradition developing the scene according to their own purposes and agendas. There is very little in the two versions that would argue for the shared use of a Markan recension. Even Ennulat admits the wide range of explanations for this agreement and doesn’t rate the possibility of a recension highly, though Luz does not exclude the possibility.46 Goulder notes that there are six agreements between Matthew and Luke in this verse and suggests that Luke has deliberately chosen Matthew’s verb.47 While some argue for Lukan dependence on Matthew, Streeter suggest-

---

46 Ennulat, Die “Minor Agreements” 404–8. Luz, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 26–28) 376–77, notes that there are some spectacular agreements in this passage and this is one of those cited. He suggests on 377 that different explanations are required for each instance. This agreement could be due to a recension of Mark used by Matthew and Luke (acknowledged as being Ennulat’s major thesis); cf. 377 n. 5.

47 Goulder, Luke (II) 771, sees Luke choosing to use Matthew’s verb. The reference to the tomb being new is also judged to come from Matthew. On 772–73 Goulder refers to his article On Putting Q to the Test, in NTS (1978) 218–34 (see 230ff). He notes six points of agreement with Matthew in this sentence. The agreement in the verb for wrapping is striking. He argues against Tuckett on the cumulative weight of agreements rather than redaction. McNicol, Beyond the Q Impasse 308, draws attention to the work of Goulder, Luke (II) 772–73, who notes the number of agreements of Matthew and Luke at this point. The wrapping of Jesus is particularly noted as significant.
ed that this was a possible instance of Matthew being assimilated to Luke.\footnote{Streeter, The Four Gospels 323, sees this as possible assimilation of the text of Matthew to Luke’s more dignified and more conventionally appropriate word. If this had occurred it would be more likely to be due to scribal harmonisation.} Bovon considers both a shared stylistic response on the part of Matthew and Luke to Mark and the impact of an oral tradition.\footnote{Bovon, Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Lk 19,28–24,53) 484, argues against Goulder, Luke (II) 769–73, and the suggestion of Lukan dependence on Mark. He would suggest that the agreement comes from either the same stylistic reaction on the part of Luke and Matthew or the impact of an enduring oral tradition.} In the light of the agreement of John, Matthew and Luke, Nolland at least contemplates the possibility of dependence on a source, but does not indicate whether it is oral or written.

The fact that John’s Gospel uses ἐντευκτηγμένων is striking and may indicate that all three are drawing on a shared tradition regarding the burial of Jesus. The fact that this verb is not used in the LXX could be taken as a further indication of the possibility of reliance on the oral tradition for this detail. Once again, in order for this suggestion to move from the realm of possibility to probability there is the question of whether this correspondence is coincidental in that the verb would be expected to be used in describing funerary rites, or whether the usage here is quite distinctive. Shared use of a common word such as is encountered in this instance does not exclude the possibility that Matthew, Luke and John have drawn on a shared tradition, but it is much more difficult to argue the case as forcefully as if it was distinctive. In this instance the fact that the LXX does make use of this verb adds some strength to the suggestion.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has been to take some initial steps in determining criteria that can be used in the identification of some minor agreements that can explained as due to the ongoing impact of traditions preserved orally rather than by recourse to a model of synoptic relationships that is solely, or predominately, literary in nature. It has been conservative in its approach and nominated three criteria that may be useful in identifying these traditions. The first criterion of high verbal agreement in content and placement of a striking detail or phrase indicates that the oral tradition had already located these traditions firmly within a given context. The second criterion of was that of high verbal agreement in content, but not placement. Given that the literary paradigm has to take into account variation and redaction of the sources used, it would be unfair to expect that the oral transmission of traditions would occur without a similar degree of variation or modification in performance, or that the evangelists would not be able to incorporate these traditions as they saw fit. The third criterion used was that of agreement with detail in the Johannine passion narra-
tive. This is a particularly helpful criterion given the lack of literary connection between the synoptic gospels and John.

Four minor agreements that fit these criteria have been examined to see whether these criteria can shed any light when it comes to the task of determining the possible impact of the oral tradition. The task of tracing the impact and contribution of the oral tradition is by its nature speculative but it is hoped that some steps, however faltering on a methodological level, have been taken to provide the opportunity and space for the oral tradition to find its voice once again.