

From Luke to John: Lazarus, Mary and Martha in the Fourth Gospel

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Is there a relationship between Luke's "Rich man and Lazarus" parable and John's "Lazarus" whom Jesus raised from the dead? And, what about "Mary and Martha", who are also unique to Luke and John, not related to Lazarus in Luke but his sisters in John? One hundred years ago, Benjamin W. Bacon suggested that John borrowed Luke's Lazarus, and Mary and Martha characters when composing his own accounts of the raising of Lazarus and the anointing of Jesus.¹ In 1978, C. K. Barrett still could expound a refined version of Bacon's point of view of the two Lazarus texts², but Pierson Parker had already argued that the contacts here between Luke and John were allusive and oral rather than literary³, and F. Lamar Cribbs had even asserted in complete reversal of Bacon that Luke was in fact influenced by Johannine tradition⁴. Most recently, von Wahlde flatly denies any relationship between the two Lazarus accounts⁵.

In my paper I will attempt to fill out and revive the Bacon and Barrett view by (1) showing that there is a substantial array of parallel and well-ordered elements shared by the two sets of Luke and John narratives that establish a definite literary relationship between the two; and, (2) that the directionality of influence runs from the Luke texts into John. For convenience I will subsequently abbreviate the four texts as follows:

- "LM" Luke's Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)
- "LL" Luke's Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
- "JR" John's Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- "JA" John's Anointing of Jesus (John 12:1-8)

¹ B. W. Bacon, The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate, New York, 1910; Bacon asserts that the writer of John often features narratives recast from Mark which he populates with characters from Luke "either as separate individuals or as supplementary traits in a composite" character, p. 368. On the character of Lazarus, see also Donald Foster, "John Come Lately", in The Gospels, ed. Harold Bloom, New York, 1988, pp. 140-141.

² For example, C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to John, 2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1978; regarding Lazarus, he says there are "suggestive parallels" between Luke and John, but the only parallel he cites is the "contemplated" resurrection of Lazarus, so he concludes it only "probable, though not certain...that John knew Luke", p.389.

³ Pierson Parker, "Luke and the Fourth Evangelist", NTS, vol. 9, July 1963, pp. 331-336. Of these "allusive" contacts between Luke and John, Parker asserts that "something in one will remind us of the other, where there is no topical connexion. Luke's *parable* about Lazarus recalls John's *incident* with a different Lazarus." (p. 339).

⁴ F. Lamar Cribbs, "St. Luke and the Johannine Tradition", JBL, vol. 90, Dec. 1971, pp. 422-450. In regard to the narratives presently discussed, Cribbs says "with the exception of the *mention* [my emphasis] of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (although in different contexts), there is a complete lack of any parallels between" between the respective Luke and John accounts, p. 425.

⁵ Urban von Wahlde, The Gospel and Letters of John, vol. 2, Grand Rapids, 2010, p. 485: "there is no connection between the [two] figures or accounts..."

In the following presentation I look for parallel elements from the Luke texts in both of the John texts, as the author or editor of the John 11-12 took the trouble to tie these two narratives together with a literary “hook” in each scene that specifically points the reader to the other Bethany family scene:

- JR: "it was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair whose brother Lazarus was sick" (John 11:2 referring forward to JA)
- JA: "...Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead" (John 12:1 referring back to JR).

EVIDENCE FOR LITERARY RELATIONSHIP (Parallel elements listed in Lukan textual order)

1. “Village” (κώμη)

- LM: Jesus came to a "certain village" (κώμην τινά) - Lk 10:38
- JR: the "village" (κώμης) of Mary and Martha - Jn 11:1,30

2. “Mary, Martha, sister”

- LM: "Martha and her sister Mary" - Lk 10:39
- JR: "Mary and her sister Martha", "Martha and her sister" - Jn 11:1, 5
JA: “Martha”, “Mary” – Jn 12:2-3

The named sisters “Mary and Martha” only appear in the Luke (LM) and John (JR and JA) texts, and not at all in Matthew or Mark. In John, the two are “sisters” only in the Lazarus (JR) text.

3. Mary “sitting”

- LM: Mary was "sitting-by" (παρακαθισθεῖσα) Jesus - Lk 10:39
- JR: Mary was "sitting" (ἐκαθίζετο) in the house - Jn 11:20

Julius Wellhausen commented that this clause Jn 11:20b recalls Lk 10:38-40⁶.

4. Mary “at the feet” of Jesus

- LM: Mary sat "at the feet of" (πρὸς τοὺς πόδας) Jesus - Lk 10:39
- JR: Mary fell "at the feet of" (πρὸς τοὺς πόδας) Jesus - Jn 11:32

5. Jesus is referenced as “Lord” (κύριος) in narration

- LM: Jesus = κύριος three times, twice in narration
 - Lk 10:39 - “at the feet of the Lord (τοῦ κυρίου)...”
 - Lk 10:41 - “the Lord (ὁ κύριος) said to her”
 - In Lk 10:40 Martha address Jesus as “Lord” (κύριε), but in direct speech
- JR: Jn 11:2 - “Mary who anointed the Lord (τὸν κύριον)...”

6. Martha “serving”

- LM: Martha was "serving" (διακονίαν, διακονεῖν) - Lk 10:40, as noun and verb
- JA: Martha "was-serving" (διηκόνει) - Jn 12:2

7. Martha speaks first, to Jesus, and in parallel structured complaints:

- LM: "Lord | does it not matter to you | that my sister has left me" - Lk 10:40
- JR: "Lord | if you had been here | my brother would not have died" - Jn 11:21

⁶ Wellhausen, Das Evangelium Johannis, Berlin, 1908, p. 51: “...worten, die auf Lc 10,38-42 beruhen.”

Note that there are two parts to this parallel element:

- a) Martha is the first speaker, she begins each conversation by speaking to Jesus, and
- b) Both of her statements are structured identically as a three-part complaint:
 - 1) Martha addresses Jesus as “Lord” (κύριε),
 - 2) she faults Jesus for not caring or doing something about
 - 3) a negative situation involving her “sister” (ἀδελφή) or her “brother” (ἀδελφός).

8. Mary either does not speak or she simply repeats the same words as her sister:

- LM: Mary does not speak but only listens (to Jesus)
 - JR: Mary speaks once in Jn 11:32 but only repeats the exact same words as Martha's prior complaint of Jn 11:21, with just one out of the ten words in different order:
 - Martha: 11:21 κύριε εἰ ἦς ὧδε οὐκ ἂν ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός μου
 - Mary: 11:32 κύριε εἰ ἦς ὧδε οὐκ ἂν μου ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός
- Noting this, Wellhausen concluded that Mary functions simply as a “shadow of her sister”⁷.

9. Narrative opens with “a certain”

- LL: Starts with “and there was a certain (δέ τις ἦν) rich-man”, and immediately afterward the other character is introduced as “and a certain (δέ τις) poor-man” - Lk 16:19-20
- LM: Jesus enters “a certain” (τινά) village of “a certain” (τις) woman – Lk 10:38
- JR: Starts with “and there was a certain” (ἦν δέ τις) sick-man - Jn 11:1

10. “Lazarus”

- LL: The poor-man is “named Lazarus” – Lk 16:20
 - JR: The sick-man is named “Lazarus” – Jn 11:1
- JA: Jesus comes to Bethany where “Lazarus” was – Jn 12:1

As with the sister pair “Mary and Martha”, the name “Lazarus” is distinctive to Luke and John, and is found only in Luke’s LL and John’s JR and JA texts.

11. Lazarus “died”

- LL: “it happened that the poor-man died” (ἀποθανεῖν τὸν πτωχόν) - Lk 16:22
- JR: Lazarus “died” (ἀπέθανεν) – Jn 11:14, 21, 32

12. Lazarus never speaks and is an almost completely passive character

- LL: Lazarus is almost exclusively the passive or static object of actions, he never speaks nor is he spoken to, rather he is only spoken about by others:
 - Lk 16:20 – he is “laid at the gate” (ἐβέβλητο πρὸς τὸν πυλῶνα)
 - Lk 16:21 – the dogs “lick his sores” (ἐπέλειχον τὰ ἔλκη αὐτοῦ)
 - Lk 16:22 – he was “brought by the angels” (ἀπενεχθῆναι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων) to Abraham’s bosom
 - Lk 16:23 – rich man sees Lazarus “in the bosom” (ἐν τοῖς κόλποις) of Abraham
 - Lk 16:24 – rich man asks Abraham to “send Lazarus” (πέμψον Λάζαρον)
 - Lk 16:25 – Lazarus “received...bad-things” (ἀπέλαβες...τὰ κακά) in life but now he “is-comforted” (παρακαλεῖται)
 - Lk 16:27 – rich man again asks Abraham to “send him” (πέμψης αὐτὸν)

⁷ Op. cit., p. 51.

The only two positive actions taken by Lazarus are that 1) he “longed to be filled” (ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι) with crumbs from the rich man’s table (Lk 16:21), and 2) he “died” (Lk 16:22).

- JR: Lazarus is largely the passive or static object of actions, he never speaks nor is he spoken to, rather he is only spoken about by others:
 - Jn 11:1, 2, 3, 6 – he “is sick” (ἀσθενῶν, ἡσθένει), not a grammatically passive verb form but definitely a physically passive state rather than a determined action by Lazarus
 - Jn 11:3, 5 – Lazarus is “he whom you love” (ὃν φιλεῖς), and
 - Jn 11:5 - Jesus “loved” him (ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς... τὸν Λάζαρον)
 - Jn 11:11 – Jesus speaks of Lazarus as “our friend” (ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν)
 - Jn 11:11, 12 – Lazarus has “fallen asleep” (κεκοίμηται)
 - Jn 11:14, 21, 32, etc – Lazarus “died” (ἀπέθανεν), in direct speech by Jesus (11:14), Martha (11:21), and finally by Mary (11:32); like “is sick” above, not a determined action taken by Lazarus!

JA: Lazarus still passive and silent

- Jn 12:1 – Lazarus “whom [Jesus] raised from the dead” (ὃν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν Ἰησοῦς)
- Jn 12:9 – Lazarus “whom he raised from the dead” (ὃν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν)

Again here in John, Lazarus performs only two positive actions when he 1) “came bound feet and hands” out of the tomb (Jn 11:44 - ἐξῆλθεν ὁ τεθνηκῶς δεδεμένος τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰς χεῖρας), and he 2) “reclined” at the table with Jesus, but only barely as we see him in the text merely as “one” of the group of reclining guests (Jn 12:2 - εἷς ἦν ἐκ τῶν ἀνακειμένων).

13. “lifted up his eyes”

- LL: the rich-man “lifted up his eyes” (ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ) - Lk 16:23
- JR: Jesus “lifted his eyes up” (ἤρην τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἄνω) - Jn 11:41

14. “and said, ‘Father’” begins a conversation with heaven

- LL: the rich-man “said, father” (εἶπεν πᾶτερ) Abraham - Lk 16:24
- JR: Jesus “said, father” (εἶπεν πᾶτερ) - Jn 11:41

15. “five brothers”

- LL: the rich-man said “I have five brothers” (πέντε ἀδελφούς) - Lk 16:28
- JR: John uses the word “brother” (ἀδελφός) exactly five times, each with definite article:
 - 11:2 – narratively as Mary’s “brother” (ἦς ὁ ἀδελφός)
 - 11:19 – narratively as Mary’s “brother” (τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ)
 - 11:21 – spoken by Martha to Jesus as “my brother” (ὁ ἀδελφός μου)
 - 11:23 – spoken by Jesus to Martha as “your brother” (ὁ ἀδελφός σου)
 - 11:32 – spoken by Mary to Jesus as “my brother” (μου...ὁ ἀδελφός)
- JR: John also uses “sister” (ἀδελφῆς) exactly five times, each also with definite article:
 - 11:1 – narratively Martha as Mary’s “her sister” (τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτῆς)
 - 11:3 – narratively Martha and Mary as “sisters” (αἱ ἀδελφαί)
 - 11:5 – narratively Mary as Martha’s “her sister” (τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς)
 - 11:28 – narratively Martha as Mary’s “her sister” (τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς)
 - 11:39 – narratively Martha as “the sister” of the deceased (ἡ ἀδελφὴ τοῦ τετελευτηκότος)

16. A petition/command to raise/send back Lazarus from the dead

- LL: the rich-man twice asks Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead - Lk 16:28,30

- JR: Jesus twice thanks the Father that He always hears what Jesus asks, and then he commands Lazarus to “come forth” from the place of the dead - Jn 11:41-43 (11:22)

17. The petition is answered, either denied or granted, twice each on the basis of “hearing”

- LL: rich-man's request denied twice because “hearing” Moses is viable alternative
 - Lk 16:29 – let them “hear” (ἀκουσάτωσαν) Moses and the prophets
 - Lk 16:31 – if they don’t “hear” (ἀκούουσιν) Moses and the prophets
- JR: Jesus' request granted because the Father “hears” him, also noted twice
 - Jn 11:41 – Jesus says I thank you Father that you “hear me” (ὅτι ἤκουσάς μου)
 - Jn 11:42 – Jesus says I know that you “always hear me” (ὅτι πάντοτέ μου ἀκούεις)

18. Parallel opposing results, both involving conviction of or belief by others:

- LL: rich-man's request finally denied because "even if one would rise from the dead, they will not be convinced" (οὐδ' ἂν τις ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆ πεισθήσονται) - Lk 16:31
- JR: Jesus' request granted and "many of the Jews...having seen what he had done (raising Lazarus from the dead) believed in him" (πολλοὶ...ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν) - Jn 11:45

SUMMARY TABLE OF PARALLEL ELEMENTS (Check mark indicates John order=Luke order; NA indicates ordering is Not Applicable)

Element	Luke LM	Luke LL	Order	John JR	John JA
1. “Village”	10:38		✓	11:1 (30)	
2. “Mary, Martha, sister”	10:39		✓	11:1 (5)	12:2-3
3. Mary “sitting”	10:39			11:20	
4. Mary “at the feet”	10:39			11:32	
5. Jesus is “Lord”	10:39 (40,41)		✓	11:2	
6. Martha “serving”	10:40		✓		12:2
7. Martha speaks first	10:40		✓	11:21	
8. Mary silent/shadow	-All-		NA	11:32	-All-
9. Incipit “a certain”	(10:38,38)	16:19,20	✓✓	11:1	
10. “Lazarus”		16:20	✓	11:1	12:1
11. Lazarus “died”		16:22	✓	11:14 (21,32)	
12. Lazarus silent/passive		-All-	NA		-All-
13. “lifted up his eyes”		16:23	✓	11:41	
14. “and said, ‘Father’”		16:24	✓	11:41	
15. “five brothers”		16:28	NA	-All-	
16. Petition to raise/send back Lazarus		16:28,30	✓	11:41-43	
17. Petition denied/granted		16:29,31	✓	11:41,42	
18. Resulting disbelief/belief		16:31	✓	11:45	

Observations and preliminary conclusions about the charted evidence:

- 1. Well Ordered Array of Evidence:** The following refers to the “Summary Table of Parallel Elements” chart displayed on the preceding page. All the parallel elements are abbreviated and listed again in Lukan textual order in a single table, starting from Luke’s Mary and Martha (references in the column headed “Luke LM”) and then from Luke’s Lazarus (column headed “Luke LR”). One table cell is out of order and marked with parentheses, at element row 9 “a certain” and column “Luke LM”. I chose to combine this with the same “a certain” element in column “Luke LL” rather than making a separate row, but I have two check marks in the “Order” column to show that John’s order matches both (see ff).

The two John columns show the associated references in his Lazarus (column headed “John JR”) and Anointing (“John JA” column). In the middle is a column headed “Order”. In the Order column, the cell for each element row in which the Luke and John ordering matches contains a check mark “v”. Element rows 8, 12, and 15 contain an “-All-” annotation in one or more columns, indicating either that there is no particular reference or that there are multiple references scattered all throughout that particular text; the Order column for those three rows are marked “NA” for not applicable.

It is clear now that in 13 of the 15 elements for which order is relevant, John’s narrative order matches Luke’s line by line. All of the nine elements from Luke’s LL without exception appear in the same order in John’s JR. Only two of the eight (or nine if we add the duplicated element in row 9) items from Luke’s LM text are out of order with respect to John. But, those two, rows 3 and 4 which are both unique Mary elements, are in the proper sequence with respect to each other. Yet another feature evident from the chart is that these sequentially ordered elements are for the most part in their proper relative position within the story line; for example, elements 9-11 from the beginning of Luke’s LL are also at the beginning of John’s JR, while elements 16-18 from the end of LL are also at the end of John’s JR.

So then, our items of literary evidence do not comprise a random list of disordered correspondences, but a balanced array that is well ordered on **both** the Luke and John sides of the chart. Now, even those parallel elements that might have initially seemed rather minor take on added weight because they are part of a nearly unbroken string of matching correspondences that appear in the same ordered sequence in both Luke and John.

- 2. Variety and Complexity:** The parallel elements vary in type from simple words and short phrases, to grammatical units, to full sentence structures. In subtlety they range from obvious surface features to deeply imbedded patterns. I also observe that the parallels between John and Luke’s LL text are more complex and subtle than those from Luke’s LM text. This would be expected since Luke’s Lazarus text is longer and more complex than his Mary-Martha text.
- 3. Literary relationship:** It seems clear to me that all the preceding evidence now before us demonstrates the existence of a textual relationship that was deliberately designed, and of such a complexity that it could only have occurred on the basis of written texts. That is to say, the relationship between these Luke and John texts was literary in origin and cannot be explained by shared oral traditions.

4. **Prominence of the Lazarus narrative:** Finally, I observe that the bulk of the elements on the John side of the array table are located in his JR text, that of the raising of Lazarus. The few items that are found in John's anointing (JA) text from Luke's Lazarus (L) are the name "Lazarus" and his generally passive character. Likewise from Luke's Mary and Martha (LM) text the only items in John's JA are the names of the two women, Martha's serving role, and Mary's silence. So, on Luke's side of the chart the elements are somewhat evenly divided between his Mary-Martha and Lazarus texts (roughly 60-40 in favor of Lazarus), but on John's side the elements in his Lazarus text significantly outweigh those in his Anointing text (roughly 80-20). This would be another expected result since John would not have felt as free to insert new material into Mark's previously known Anointing text as he would in his new Lazarus account. I will return to this point when discussing directionality below.
5. **Textual Influence – Similarities with a Difference:** If Bacon was correct in suggesting that John borrowed Luke's characters to populate his texts, we then could expect to find other tell-tale traces or fingerprints of those Luke texts in John, beyond the simple use of the names themselves. Indeed, that is exactly the evidence that we have found in the discussion above.

Many have stumbled over recognizing a literary relationship between the two Lazarus texts because of contextual and other differences in the two accounts⁸. However, we are not here considering texts that purport in any way to be "parallel" accounts of the same or similar events, as we usually deal with in our gospel synopses. Of course these texts are "different", but that is beside the point. What we are looking for is evidence that one of our authors, when composing his text(s), had in mind, if not within eyeshot, the text(s) of our other author. Therefore our customary approach of listing similarities, and listing differences, and then weighing one list against the other, must be modified when we are searching for clues of textual influence. If we find a sufficient volume and variety of literary parallels, then it is the array of similarities itself that makes the "difference", not the surface dissimilarities. And in the present discussion, the fact that a nearly equal volume of textual features from two entirely separate Luke texts find strong parallels in a single John text corroborates a finding of textual influence.

EVIDENCE FOR LITERARY DEVELOPMENT AND DIRECTIONALITY (chart numbers in parentheses)

1. **(1) "Village" (κώμη)**
Luke uses κώμη 12 times, Mark 7 times, Matt 4 times, and John only 3 times. John uses it twice here (11:1, 30) and once in 7:42. This word is definitely more commonly used by Luke than John, so this item gives a slight edge to Luke > John.
2. **(5) Jesus is referenced as "Lord" (κύριος) in narration**
The respective lemma counts show that Luke uses κύριος as an appellation for Jesus much more than does John.
 - John has only one other pre-resurrection reference to Jesus as κύριος in narration besides

⁸ For example, D. A. Carson, [The Gospel According to John](#), Grand Rapids, 1991, p. 404 speaking of the fact that both stories center on a man named Lazarus who dies, he summarily dismisses further discussion saying, "Parallels beyond that point, however, are immediately swamped by differences that are far more striking."

11:2, and that is in 6:23 where “boats from Tiberias came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks”. I will deal with the interpolation question in my separate discussion of Jn 11:2 below.

- Luke on the other hand by my count has 14 pre-resurrection references to Jesus narratively as κύριος (7:13, 7:19, 10:01, 10:39, 10:41, 11:39, 12:42, 13:15, 17:05, 17:06, , 18:06, 19:08, 19:31, 19:34), which include the three already referenced here in LM. This to me is an even stronger indication of Luke > John influence than #1 above.

3. (9) Narrative opens with “a certain”

The use of the singular indefinite pronoun τις in the subject of the sentence (commonly translated in the King James Version as “a certain...”), set at the opening of a narrative or parable, is highly characteristic of Luke, but not often used by John, by my count 36 times in Luke to three times in John⁹. Luke uses this favorite pronoun 24 times to open narratives and 12 times when beginning his parables as told by Jesus.

John’s two other such uses of τις, besides here in 11:1 are in 4:46 and 5:5. The first is the story of Jesus healing the nobleman’s servant. That pericope in John, however, has definite parallels with a similar healing in Lk 7:1-10, which just happens also to open with a parallel use of τις in Lk 7:2. That leaves Jn 5:5, “a certain man” at the pool, as the single incipit use of τις in John that does not have a parallel in Luke or any other gospel. Again, I see here a definite indication of Luke > John influence.

4. (15) “five brothers”

This five-fold configuration of both “brother” (ἀδελφός) and “sister” (ἀδελφή) in John’s JR narrative that parallels Luke’s phrase “five brothers” (πέντε ἀδελφούς) strongly suggests deliberate design. I note that other than here John uses “sister” (ἀδελφή) one other time, in Jn 19:25. As far as “brother” (ἀδελφός), we see Luke using that word a total of 23 times, and John using it 14, both inclusive of the instances being discussed. As an indication that John consciously made his “brothers” and “sisters” come out to the right number, note that his last “sister of the deceased” in 11:39 is redundant, as he immediately adds her name “Martha”.

It remains to compare relative usages of the number “five” between Luke and John. This is not such a trivial matter as it might first appear, recalling, for example that one of the better known text critical questions in Luke has to do with the number “two” (δύο in Lk 10:1, 17).

- John has by my count two independent uses of the number “five”, unrelated to any parallels from the other three gospels:
 - 4:18 – the Samaritan woman had “5 husbands”
 - 5:2 – the pool of Bethzatha had “5 colonnades”
- Luke has the following five independent uses of the number “five”:
 - 1:24 – Elizabeth secluded herself 5 months

⁹ By my count, Luke uses τις 24 times at the opening of a narrative section: Lk 1:5, 7:2, 7:36, 8:27, 8:49, 9:49, 9:57, 10:25, 10:38(twice), 11:1 (twice), 11:27, 11:45, 12:13, 13:23, 14:1, 14:2, 14:15, 17:12, 18:18, 18:35, 21:2, and 23:26. He has Jesus begin a parable with τις 12 times: Lk 7:41, 10:30, 12:16, 13:6, 14:16, 15:11, 16:1, 16:19, 16:20, 18:2, 19:12, and 20:9. In contrast, John does so only these 3 times: Jn 4:46, 5:5, and 11:1.

- 7:41 – one debtor owed 5 hundred denarii and the other owed 50 denarii
- 12:6 – 5 sparrows are sold for 2 pennies
- 12:52 – in “1 house are 5 divided”, and he goes on to specify “2 against 3” and “3 against 2”, indicating an even more robust interest in the specific number “5”.
- 14:19 – the invited guest says he has bought “5” yoke of oxen

Here is another indicator of literary influence flowing from Luke to John. First, Luke exhibits a significantly stronger independent interest in the number “five”. Second, is more likely that John as author incarnated Luke’s “five brothers” into five narrative instances of the word “brother” rather than the reverse. To argue that the John text came first would mean that Luke in reading or hearing John’s account noticed the five-fold array of the word “brother” and boiled that down to a single phrase “five brothers” when authoring his story. It makes more sense to surmise that John read or heard the “five brothers” and proceeded to weave a much more complex pattern of the “brother/sister” theme into his Raising of Lazarus.

5. “Brother” and “Sister”

But, why does John take such **excessive** care to repeatedly identify his characters as “brother” and “sisters”. First, note that exactly five occurrences of each of the two words would fit in well with his having taken “sister” and “brother” from the two separate Luke texts. Second, I suggest that the reason why he keeps repeating these two words over and over is precisely because Lazarus and Mary-Martha are entirely unrelated in the prior Luke texts. Any reader of John already familiar with Luke would not expect Lazarus to be the brother of these two sisters, so it is no surprise that John would compensate with overly redundant and sometimes awkward (as in 11:2 and 11:39) repetition. That scenario is easier to envision than Luke working off John’s texts and completely obliterating such a strongly established brother-sister relationship. Thus, John’s narrative excess itself becomes another indicator of Luke > John directionality.

6. John 11:2

Many see John 11:2 as an interpolation into an earlier text¹⁰, either added by the original author or a later editor. Von Wahlde suggests that 11:2 functions only “to identify this Mary with the Mary of the anointing in 12:1-6”, and is thus “quite awkward...and treats the anointing of 12:1-6 as if it were a past event and presumes the reader knows of the account.”¹¹ Later he calls 11:2 a “forced attempt...to relate the anointing early on with Mary the sister of Lazarus”¹².

Suppose for a moment that von Wahlde is correct in this assessment of 11:2. Can we discern any reason why the author/editor left us with such an “awkward” and “forced attempt” just to

¹⁰ For example, Benjamin W. Bacon, *The Gospel of the Hellenists*, New York, Henry Holt, 1933, p. 274. Barrett, op. cit., p. 389, suggests on the other hand that 11:2 is referencing a previously narrated synoptic anointing, probably Luke 7:36-50. While not completely rejecting that 11:2 may be an interpolation, Wellhausen noted that beyond identifying this Mary of John 11 with the Mary of John 12, verse 2 also functions to identify Lazarus as the brother of Mary, in that 11:2 completes the sequence of thought begun in 11:1 “...Mary, and Martha her sister,...[and] Lazarus her brother”, *Erweiterungen und Änderungen im Vierten Evangelium*, Berlin, 1907, p. 36.

¹¹ von Wahlde, op. cit., p. 490.

¹² Op. cit., p. 535.

identify Mary of Bethany as the anointing woman, virtually a useless exercise as the reader would discover that fact shortly in the very next chapter. Why did this editor feel such urgency to insert something that was so awkward for so little utility? I suggest we consider a different scenario: what if the anointing woman in John's original version of 12:1-8 was **not** identified as Mary of Bethany, that is, what if Mary (and perhaps Martha as well) were not even part of John's original anointing at all? Then it would make some sense that the author of 11:2 would feel it necessary to prepare readers already familiar with an (anonymous?) anointing woman in the prior edition of chapter 12. If this suggestion turns out to have any validity, it would fit in well with the overall view that directionality of textual influence flowed from Luke into John.

Conclusion:

I have presented in this paper an array of literary correspondences between the respective Lazarus-Mary-Martha narratives of Luke and John along with their implications for inter-textual influence and precedence. Aside from any historical or theological considerations, I find on literary grounds that the relationship thus displayed is best understood as running from Luke into John. These correspondences are not for the most part found in the standard lists of Synoptic "parallel passages", so they have been largely invisible to scholarship. Once they are taken into account, I believe they show unmistakably in the case of these texts what Bacon, Barrett and others have previously suggested: that John knew Luke, and that he used and creatively reworked the literary material available to him there.

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