

the question is more important than the answer

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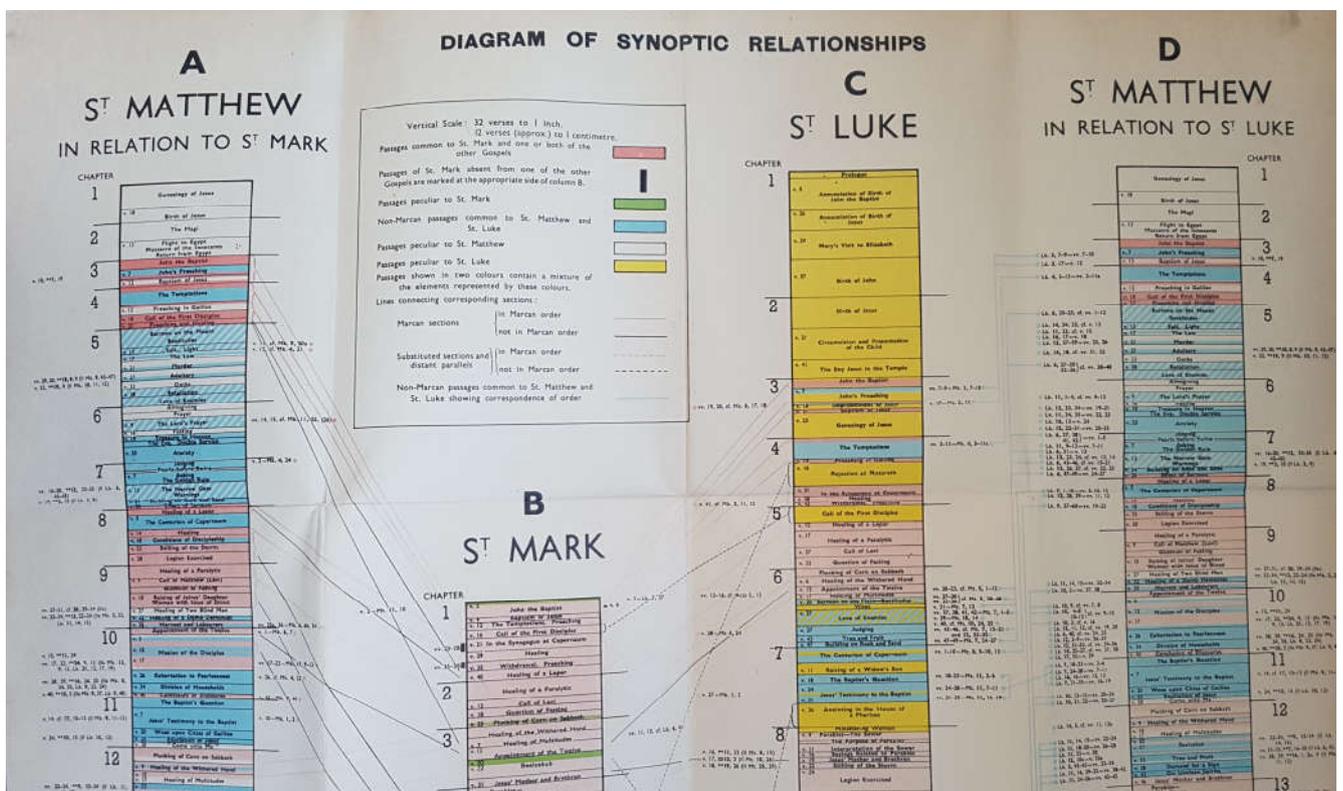
Mark, Matthew & Luke – Why So Different, Yet Similar? Allan Barr's Synoptic Relationships Diagram

Allan Barr was the Professor of New Testament Language, Literature and Exegesis at the United Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh.
His 'Diagram Of Synoptic Relationships' was published by T&T Clark in Edinburgh in 1938.

First published in 1938 (my copy is from 1976 with a revised introduction), this diagram enabled any bible reader the opportunity to see at a glance the parallels between Mark with Matthew and Luke, and also the parallel material in Matthew and Luke not found in Mark, often referred to as Q (from the German word Quelle, meaning source, although sometimes referred to as 'Sayings').

Material only found in Matthew is commonly labelled M, and similarly for Luke as L.

A part of the diagram is shown below:



It is considered to be a major step forward in Synoptic Gospel analysis, allowing similarities and differences to be clearly identified, and further inferences made with confidence.

A number of interesting facts follow from the diagram:

- Of Mark's 662 verses, 609 are found in Matthew, although condensed to 523 verses.
- In Luke only 357 verses are closely paralleled in Luke, but another 95 verses are represented, combined with other material.
- Verses discarded from Mark can be explained as tending to improve harsh and ungrammatical phrases, to remove redundancies and unessential matter or to heighten expressions of reverence for Jesus.
- 282 verses of Matthew are unique (M) and demonstrate his characteristic interest in Jesus' attitude to Jewish Law, the fulfilment of OT prophecy, the Kingdom of Heaven and life in the 'Church'.
- Luke has more unique material, some 491 verses from 1150 (with an additional 173 verses of mixed material). Unlike Matthew who merged his sources, Luke has alternating blocks of Mark, Q and L. Some scholars suggest Q and L were a proto-Luke and sections of Mark were integrated later.
- Luke's characteristics lie in Jesus' interest in the poor, the sinful, the outcasts, women and the universality of the Gospel message.
- The order of Marcan material is not consistent in either Matthew or Luke; in particular, Matthew's material is ordered in a very specific way with five sections reflecting the 'new Law' (tied in to the five books of Moses).
- Mark was probably written first (~70CE) with Matthew and Luke some ten to twenty years later, the latter using a writing substantially similar to our Mark as one of their sources.
- It is thought that the Q source was earlier than Mark.

By reading sections of each Gospel account which have been identified by this diagram as having something in common, mostly regarding source, it is possible to get a flavour of these sections of text which illuminates the thinking of the author/compiler (redactor) as to their intentions regarding the finished text.