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CHAPTER 16

Q: The Sayings Source

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Major Issues and Directions in Recent Study of Q

Modern scholarship of the New Testament gospels has long reckoned with the possibility that prior to our written gospels (and even contemporaneous with them) other traditions about Jesus might have circulated amongst early Christ-followers. Some of these traditions may have been gathered into collections, but, if so, the fact that they have not been preserved means that they are effectively lost to us. They therefore become topics of speculation, and this has been particularly evident in source criticism of the canonical gospels. According to the Two-Document hypothesis, which has had a dominant (but not unchallenged) position in source criticism during the previous century, the earliest gospel was Mark. Matthew and Luke were both believed independently to have used Mark, accounting for much material that seems to be in common to Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Matthew and Luke, however, also share Jesus-traditions that are not found in Mark. An example of this material common to Matthew and Luke is the longer version of Jesus' temptation by Satan in Luke 4:1–13/Matthew 4:1–11 (cited hereafter as Q 4:1–13 whereby a Q text is identified by its Lukan location). This example happens to comprise both narrative and teaching material, but most of the traditions that Matthew and Luke share (which they do not derive from Mark) are *sayings* of Jesus with little narrative. So, complementary to a belief in the priority of Mark, the Two-Document hypothesis proposed that Matthew and Luke had independent access to another common source, a "lost" *sayings source* labeled "Q" (from the German word *Quelle*, meaning "source").

If such a source for traditions of Jesus' sayings did exist, then it would have considerable significance. Not only might it be important for understanding the source of many of the shared traditions found in Matthew and Luke that cannot be found in Mark, but also such a source *behind* the gospels of Matthew and Luke would have been placed closer *in time* to the historical Jesus than these gospels themselves. Would the reconstruction of this source therefore bring us also closer *in substance* to the historical Jesus than the canonical gospels that followed?

Many issues have characterized discussion of Q in the last century. Could such a collection of sayings of Jesus, with relatively little narrative content, have really existed

as a "source"? Because the reconstructions of Q generally lack any narrative of Jesus' death and resurrection in particular, is it thinkable that such a source would have had currency in the early church? Are there other, and better, explanations for how Matthew and Luke might have come to share non-Markan traditions about Jesus? While, on the one hand, the recent publication of a critical text of Q by the International Q Project has given a sense of "reality" to Q as a *document*, on the other hand growing interest in ancient orality has raised the question of whether in fact we are not really dealing with clusters of traditions that circulated and grew in an oral culture and should not be considered in a documentary way at all.

Behind such debates are found other concerns. J. S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (1987), presented a powerful case for Q having a compositional history as a document. At the earliest stage of Q there was a collection of six "wisdom" speeches that were sapiential in their mode of argument. This then expanded into a set of sayings that was more polemical and hostile in nature, particularly in its stance towards Israel. Then a final stage of redaction occurred, adding a more biographical element to the collection, with stories such as the Q temptation narrative, referred to earlier. Although Kloppenborg himself did not assert that the early sapiential strand was truest to the historical Jesus, other scholars such as Burton Mack (1993) and J. Dominic Crossan (1991) did pursue such an argument. This has had great influence on recent study of the historical Jesus, and particularly for those who argue that Jesus preached a message of the kingdom that was free of apocalyptic ideas, a kingdom that was primarily for the "present." This, it has been suggested, is precisely what one finds in the earliest stratum of Q before it became mixed with eschatological pronouncements of impending judgment.

Such views have not gone unopposed, but Q tends to remain at the heart of the controversy. In contrast to a view of Jesus as an (admittedly controversial) teacher of wisdom, R. Horsley (1991, 1999), for example, has argued for a more eschatologically oriented Jesus and also for a view of Q that gives greater recognition to a mixing of sapiential and eschatological ideas even in the earliest clusters of Q traditions, which may have been oral in any case. For Horsley the heart of the Q message focuses upon a prophetic call to local renewal, as part of a socio-economic opposition to the ruling elite, and he locates this early message of resistance in (perhaps largely oral) clusters of "Q" sayings. For some other scholars, any multi-layered compositional theory of a document Q, such as that of Kloppenborg, has another consequence. It interposes editors with particular interests between the historical Jesus and the final form of Q. Jens Schröter, for one, suggests that such compositional documentary theories give insufficient recognition to the *accurate* recollection of Jesus' teaching in the largely oral culture. Thus the ramifications of the debates about the composition and documentary character of Q are widespread.

If there did exist a document Q, gathered and edited at one or more stages and reflecting certain identifiable concerns, then one also has to consider the possible existence of "Q people" associated with this process. It is unlikely that such a process of compilation existed in a vacuum. This in turn raises questions about the social location of such "Q people." W. Arnal (2001) argues that *village scribes* may have been responsible for the composition of Q, due in part to a negative evaluation of urban areas and institutions. While Q seems to represent "low" rather than "high" culture, it nevertheless

required a compiler with some scribal skill. Thus the result of a documentary interpretation of Q is increasingly to attempt to reconstruct the social, geographical, and cultural setting of the "Q people." But even those less committed to a documentary theory of Q, such as Horsley, are often interested in this. As described above, for Horsley the social context is almost the key to his theory.

Date and Place of Composition

Because the source Q is a hypothetical construction, it will be no surprise to find that ideas about its provenance are fluid. Yet the same is true for many New Testament writings that have been preserved. Whatever Q's origins, the hypothesis requires that Q was available to the writers of Matthew and Luke in the immediate post-70 period of the first century CE. Most Q scholars in fact now date Q between 40 and 70 CE, and C. Tuckett (1999) has argued that it is unwise to try to be more precise than this. B. H. Streeter (1924) located Q in Antioch around 50 CE, significantly earlier even than Mark. Because Matthew is also often located in Antioch, some decades later, Q might have been easily available to the author of this gospel. Locating Luke geographically is more difficult, but in view of Luke's self-avowed active research into sources of Jesus-traditions (Luke 1:1–4) his precise location may be of less relevance. Some scholars believe that Q was actually known to Mark, even though not much used by Mark, and if so then it must pre-date Mark. Yet it is probably preferable, and certainly more cautious, to argue that Mark may have shared a few traditions with Q, but without knowing the final form of Q. In this case, it is not necessary (on these grounds) that the *final* form of Q is placed much earlier than 70 CE.

Are there other grounds relevant to dating or location? G. Theissen (1991) has argued that the details of the Q temptation story, believed by Kloppenborg to have been one of the latest stories to be incorporated into Q, allude to the crisis created by Caligula in the early 40s. In addition he finds Q close to the ideology of Paul at several points, and also believes that Q depicts a mission to Israel that is early. Myllykoski (1996) and Kloppenborg have both challenged Theissen's arguments, however. Indeed, an increasing number of Q scholars have begun to believe that the *final* formulation of Q was very near the time of the first Jewish revolt, coming to a climax with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Kloppenborg finds the most decisive indications of this in the sayings about the abandonment of the temple in Q 13:34–5. These might have arisen any time from the early 60s to the early 70s. Because Kloppenborg believes, however, that other traditions were added to Q after Q 13:34–5, he is inclined to date the *final* form of Q slightly after the event of 70 CE. Those who judge Q to have gone through several stages of compilation must allow for some spread in the dating between the earliest and latest parts of Q. A date in the early 60s or earlier for the bulk of the Q traditions can help to explain the lack of clear evidence of concern about the Jewish war in much of the Q material, while a final form around or after 70 CE can explain traditions that seem to reflect knowledge of this event. Other arguments also come into play. A. Jacobson (1992) notes that the significant theme of the deuteronomistic tradition of the fate of the prophets is minor in later New Testament writings. Therefore its prominence in many Q sayings (see below)

is likely to be evidence of an early stage of thinking for these sayings, which, he argues, is reflected also in the relatively undeveloped Christology of much of Q.

From this brief discussion, it is clear that the tendency of Q scholars to view Q either as a composition occurring in discrete stages or as a gradually accumulating compilation means that a determination of Q's dating must account for a process extending over several decades. The date of the "final" form of Q is very dependent upon which traditions are believed – whether on compositional grounds or on the basis of their content – to be latest. Assumptions about the proximity of Q 13:34–5 to the events of 70 CE have been crucial to such a judgment.

The fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE to the Roman siege has been less critical for delimiting the *geographical* origins of Q. Discussions about location have tended to be conducted on a broader front, taking into account the kind of social context presupposed in many of the Q sayings, references to places, inherent assumptions about audience, attitudes towards temple and Torah, and the like. J. Reed, W. Arnal and others (including Kloppenborg) have proposed a Galilean setting on the basis of how the sayings in Q cohere with what we believe that we know of the situation in first-century Galilee. The presumption of an Israelite context is common virtually to all the traditions of Q. Even the sayings often considered the latest, the sayings of the temptation story, explicitly appeal to the Torah. Reed (in Kloppenborg 1995) has argued that the second layer of material in Q centers around three Galilean towns: Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida. This, combined with a negative attitude to the hierocratic features of Jerusalem, is taken to support a social location in Galilee. There are in fact few actual mentions of Jerusalem in Q. More precisely, the failure to mention significant urban centers at all – even in Galilee (Tiberias, Sepphoris) – combined with a suspicion expressed in Q of urban institutions such as marketplaces, prisons, and law courts, directs the attention of several scholars to the *villages* of lower Galilee. Such a perspective complements the theory of Arnal regarding the composition of Q by village scribes, and the arguments of Horsley (among others) for a bias towards "low" culture and local renewal. In many circles, the coherence detected between Q and social conditions of Galilee in the mid-first century CE have resulted in a shift from earlier suggestions of an Antiochene origin for Q. A high confidence in any precise location is of course impossible. A recent attempt has been made by Larry Hurtado (2003) to argue that the most likely provenance for Q may be the "Hellenists," a group of Jewish Christians who spoke in Greek. A consequence of such a theory would be to widen the readership for Q well beyond Galilee.

Still focusing for a moment on Galilee, however, a rather different understanding of the Q tradents (the bearers of the Q traditions) has been suggested by some scholars. L. Vaage (1994), B. Mack (1993), and F. G. Downing (1992) have likened early Q tradents to an itinerant Cynic-like movement. Cynics displayed provocative counter-cultural attitudes and behaviors, and these three scholars have found important parallels between Cynics and the early aphoristic or sapiential sayings in Q. This theory has been strongly resisted, however, by several other scholars. H. D. Betz (1994) has raised doubts about whether Cynics were present at all in Galilee in the first century. Others, such as C. Tuckett (1989), have attacked the alleged parallels with Cynicism on the basis of content and dating. Because Cynics were normally associated with urban centers, which represent most strikingly the culture that the Cynics seek to subvert,

Jesus' apparent avoidance of cities in the Q tradition is considered by some scholars to be a significant difference from Cynic practices. At stake in this discussion are matters that go well beyond the location of the Q people. Can a Cynic Jesus still be a Jewish Jesus? How far removed were the earliest Christ-followers from the ideological soil of Jewish views about God and God's kingdom?

Purpose

Such questions also lead to a consideration of the purpose(s) underlying the collection of the Jesus traditions in Q. Because Q is not a narrative account and because it also appears to lack a narrative of the death and resurrection stories of Jesus, Q does not really "tell the story of Jesus" like the canonical gospels. On most reconstructions, Q is an extended collection of sayings ascribed to Jesus, many of which may have originally been isolated sayings. To discover the purpose(s) for creating a compilation with the characteristics of Q requires some recognition of Q's distinctive genre, some analysis of the principles of the arrangement of the material, and some investigation of the main themes of the material and their coherence. Furthermore, if Q was composed in clearly defined stages, then one has to reckon with the possibility that different motives or purposes are to be associated with the different compositional layers.

Some of the earliest Q scholars, such as Harnack (1908), simply understood Q as an early attempt by Christ-followers to gather sayings that originated with the historical Jesus. Its usefulness, as a document mostly composed of teaching rather than narrative, was probably to provide a kind of guide for living. It was not long, however, before other aspects of Q became points of focus, such as the purportedly distinctive Christologies reflected in Q and how far these unlocked the purpose(s) of Q. A decisive step was taken by J. M. Robinson (1971), who observed that the genre of Q was akin to wisdom collections that had antecedents in works such as *Ahikar* and *Sirach* and successors in works such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, *Pistis Sophia*, and the *Sentences of Sextus*. Not only did Jesus' teaching in Q fall on a trajectory of "sayings of the sages," but also Jesus' message was understood in Q in a rather distinctive way, as the message of divine Sophia.

But what exactly was that message? Kloppenborg has argued that a key issue is to identify what has *salvific* value in Q. Because this hypothetical source seems to lack a narrative of Jesus' death and resurrection and to contain little evidence of a passion kerygma, what exactly is "saving" for those whom Q addresses? If much of Q is sapiential in nature, then is "knowledge" in some sense salvific for Q, placing it on a trajectory leading to full-blown Gnosticism? Yet Q seems less to promote an *esoteric* message than an announcement that God's kingdom requires attitudes of radical trust in God's care. Kloppenborg (2000: 392) writes that in the formative stage of Q "the kingdom sayings ... are connected with exhortations to a countercultural lifestyle that includes love of enemies, nonretaliation, debt forgiveness, and a willingness to expose oneself to danger, all undergirded by appeals to the superabundant care of a provident God." Kloppenborg argues, against much earlier German scholarship, that the Christology of Q is subservient to this purpose, even at the later redactional stage where Son of Man statements are more evident but "remain embedded in a broader strategy of defending the ethos

of the Q group and threatening those who are seen as opponents" (2000: 392). In these later layers of Q the judgment against "this generation" comes to the fore (probably in response to the rejection of the message of the early Christ-followers by neighboring Jews), and apocalyptic tendencies accordingly become more evident as part of the defensive stance of the Q group.

There are of course many refinements and variations of such a theory. On the one hand, working from a similar stratification theory for Q, those like Mack and Vaage who support the Cynic hypothesis tend to emphasize how similar both the mission speech in Q and the subversive nature of the "sapiential" sayings are to the alternative reality advocated by Cynics, whose dominant concern was to subvert the current cultural and social order. Jesus was not to be interpreted so much as a figure standing within the epic of Israelite history but rather as a figure with a more general counter-cultural agenda. Only at later stages did Mack see Q being transformed, through secondary myth-making, into a people concerned with the prophetic and deuteronomistic history of Israel and its future apocalyptic hopes. Thus for him there seems to be not only a substantial change in purpose but also a significant change of ethos in the later stages of Q.

On the other hand, for those who are more critical of Kloppenborg's stratification theory, again the purposes of Q receive different emphasis. Migaku Sato, for example, has argued (based on a different redactional analysis of Q from that of Kloppenborg) that Q is modeled on prophetic books and is largely prophetic in nature. The effect is to put greater emphasis throughout Q on issues of how Q may be "divine speech." Such tendencies are also revealed, it is argued, in the association of Jesus with John the Baptist, the significance of the Son of Man sayings, and the pronouncement of judgment against "this generation." Horsley too is inclined, as we have seen, to see prophetic and sapiential strands as mixed closely together from the start, with the result that the purpose of Q is throughout to declare a prophetic message of renewal of local Jewish communities against the interests of the ruling elite. Whilst this could be said to be "counter-cultural," it is tied closely to conditions of first-century Jewish life in Palestine. Yet, contrary to Horsley, there remain significant clusters of sayings within Q in which prophetic themes are largely absent and in which the sanction for instruction is rarely an explicit reference to God or to eschatological judgment (as argued by R. Piper).

For those who are doubtful about the documentary nature of Q at all, "the purpose of Q" looks different again. J. P. Meier, for example, questions whether a coherent theology can be reconstructed, despite the efforts of scholars such as Kloppenborg to demonstrate both consistent rhetorical patterns and a broad set of consistent themes in Q. If no coherent theology can be reconstructed, and if no particular group of tradents can be identified with the collection and transmission of the Q material, then it is virtually impossible to discern a "purpose" for Q. It is simply a disparate collection of early sayings attributed to Jesus. Perhaps Q represents simply attempts to preserve the memory of what Jesus taught, whether orally or in written form. While this is attractive to many scholars, the ultimate question will be whether it does justice to the evidence for the selection and arrangement of the Q material. If a persuasive case can be made for the theological coherence of the Q traditions (preference for certain Christological understandings of Jesus, particularly understandings of the death and vindication of Jesus, distinctive and recurring aspects of Jesus' kingdom message and

mission instructions, a distinctive motif of Jesus in relation to Sophia/Wisdom) in a way that sets Q apart from other gospel traditions, then questions about purpose or communicative intention become harder to escape. We shall return to this shortly.

Literary Genre

At first glance, Q might appear to be a loose collection of sayings attributed to Jesus, including some sayings with brief descriptive settings (*chriae*), but with little overall narrative framing and with only a few narrative accounts (in addition to the Q temptation story in Q 4:1–13, note also the healing of the centurion's servant in Q 7:1–10). As mentioned earlier, reconstructions of Q tend in particular to lack any passion narrative describing the death of Jesus. Thus the reconstruction of Q looks rather unlike any of the canonical gospels and has frequently been described as the "sayings source" or as a "sayings collection."

Underlying the larger collection "Q," several sub-collections of sayings with a particular rhetorical formulation have been identified (see Zeller 1977, Piper 1989; Kloppenborg 2000; Kirk 1998). Examples include the collected sayings on asking and receiving in Q 11:9–13 and on anxiety about material subsistence in Q 12:22–31. These include gnomic sayings and admonitions, motive clauses, and rhetorical questions, arranged as carefully formulated arguments similar to patterns typical of the "instruction" genre of the ancient Near East. The use of such argumentation and sayings drawn from everyday life persuades an audience in a way very different from (for example) prophetic threat or announcement.

These collections are, however, embedded in a larger body of material. The genre of this larger whole is more difficult to align with other instances of literature known from the period. As it stands, Q shows evidence of some limited narrative framing, which Kloppenborg (as we have seen) attributes to the secondary, redactional stage of Q when the instructions were supplemented with other sayings of a more prophetic nature. The description of genre for Q as a whole that is preferred by Kloppenborg is that of an "expanded instruction," although he also shows interest in F. Gerald Downing's arguments that "final" Q resembles *bios* literature (analogous to *Demonax*) in several respects, despite its limited interest in recording the deeds of Jesus. It is certainly true that the final formulation of Q represents a complex genre in which collections of instruction are either embedded in or were the formative stage for the growth of a larger work. Whether this is a step towards a primitive biography or simply an expanded instruction is still a matter of discussion. Other scholars like Horsley believe the genre of Q was a mixed one from the start and was not achieved developmentally. Less likely is Sato's judgment that Q was modeled upon prophetic books. There are no declarations "Thus says Yahweh" in Q. Even recognition of a theological appraisal of Jesus as in the line of the prophets is not sufficient to define the genre of Q as modeled on prophetic books.

Occasionally modern Q scholars will refer to "the Sayings *Gospel* Q." This is not an attempt, however, to suggest that Q is of the same genre as the canonical gospels, which have a strong narrative sequence and are marked biographical elements. Indeed, "gospel" is barely a proper literary category or genre in any case, for many works were

called "gospels" in early Christianity that have no distinct literary features in common. The Gospel of Luke is very different from the *Gospel of Thomas* or the *Gospel of Truth*. Those who prefer to refer to Q as a sayings gospel therefore primarily do so as a serious way of depicting it as a source of the sayings and deeds of Jesus that is able to stand on its own and to make "a theological claim."

Literary and Compositional Analysis

It will be clear from the preceding sections that diverse views exist regarding the literary unity of Q and the stages of its composition. As Arland Jacobson (1992: 61) notes, because "we are dealing with traditional sayings material rather than free composition by an author, we might expect to find the kind of miscellaneous assortment of sayings that one often finds in sayings collections rather than a high degree of literary unity." Nevertheless, Jacobson himself does argue for an underlying unity in Q expressed through genre, vocabulary, themes, and redactional traits.

B. H. Streeter (1911) observed long ago that Q at the very least must have had a fixed sequence for its sayings. Even though Matthew and Luke regularly disagree about where they locate a Q saying in their respective gospels after the first few pericopes (as, for example, the Lord's Prayer appears in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount whereas in Luke it appears several chapters after the sermon), a high proportion of Q sayings are placed in the same *relative* order in Matthew and Luke. Even if it is possible that such a sequence could have been preserved in oral memory, it was not a wholly *fluid* oral memory. It must have been as firmly fixed in orality as in a written document. This then allows one to consider composition and unity.

Discussion of the literary unity of Q may be focused on either the final formulation of Q or on proposed earlier layers of composition. On the theory of Kloppenborg, it is in large part the perceived literary coherence of the formulation of the instructional material in Q that enables him to isolate this material and identify it as the formative stratum of Q. For the formative instructional material, this has been primarily done on formal grounds rather than upon identification of particular motifs or theological themes, even though there is a tendency to label his formative stratum as "sapiential" in contrast with the later redaction in which "polemical" material – such as prophecy or eschatological announcements of judgment – is more prominent. Unity is therefore identified within a *layer* of Q, even though other Q material from later stages might be quite different. Some have questioned whether all of the sayings that Kloppenborg attributes to this early layer are indeed of the type he suggests (particularly in the case of the mission sayings in Q 10:2–16), but he argues that these sayings are closer to the early stage of Q than to later stages (see below).

Several scholars, such as Lührmann (1969), Kloppenborg, and Jacobson, have found the redactional layer of Q (which is Kloppenborg's second layer) characterized by a dominant concern with the announcement of judgment, perhaps reflecting rejection of the early mission of the Q tradents by their neighboring Jews. Furthermore, the announcement of judgment against "this generation" is formulated quite specifically. It places "this generation" in a long line of those in Israel who rejected God's true mes-

sengers, the prophets, throughout Israel's history (the deuteronomistic tradition of the fate of the prophets). Even more distinctively, at times it also depicts God's true messengers as having been sent by "Sophia," or "Wisdom" (cf. Q 11:49–51, Q 7:35), thereby uniting the deuteronomistic tradition with the motif of Wisdom as the sender of the prophets. Interestingly, the motif of a personified Wisdom is not found in the collections of sapiential instruction in Q, but this may be an instance in which an early interest in wisdom admonitions developed into a perspective that associated personified Wisdom with the source of Jesus' message. The theme of opposition is of course much more pronounced in the non-instructional material, which includes the announcements of judgment by John the Baptist, the attack upon Jesus by his opponents in the Beelzebul controversy, and the eschatological woes announced against the Galilean towns and in the so-called Q apocalypse (Q 17:20ff.).

The final formulation of Q may include still further additions.

Despite the attractiveness of Kloppenborg's formulation, several scholars have serious reservations about a clear stratification of Q and too clear-cut a move from instruction to polemic. In addition to Horsley, who has been mentioned earlier, J. Schröter (1997), A. Kirk (1998), and J. D. G. Dunn (2003) have questioned the theory of compositional layers for Q. For example, Dunn suggests that whilst various clusters of Q sayings may have been used in Q communities for a variety of different purposes when they gathered, there is nothing to suggest that these clusters have not been pulled together in a *single* compositional act into what we consider to be "Q."

When taken as whole, how far does Q demonstrate a coherence of perspective? Supporters of Q have often argued that Q is not entirely a "grab bag" of traditions about Jesus. The absence of narrative relating to the death of Jesus is particularly noteworthy. An understanding of the death and vindication of Jesus is present in Q, but the death is not presented as a "sacrifice," or in redemptive or sacramental language as in some other early Christian literature. The dominant understanding in Q is that Jesus' death is in the line of the fate of the prophets, in contrast to the presence of this as a relatively minor motif in other early Christian writings. Similarly the Christology of Q makes only limited use of "Son"/"Son of God" Christology (mainly in the temptation narrative, considered late by many scholars, and in Q 10:23–4). These features have been claimed to show that the material in Q is truly "distinctive," namely that Q is identifiable as a source with interests that mark it off from the two gospels in which its material is now found. More difficult to determine is whether hostility to "this generation"/"Israel" and an occasionally favorable presentation of Gentiles might signify that a mission to Gentiles is in view in Q (favored by Lührmann [1969] and Uro [1987], and opposed by Jacobson and Horsley). If not, then this too would set Q apart from other early Christian literature in which validation of a mission among the Gentiles is frequently an important theme. Whilst this emphasis on the "peculiarity" of the perspective of Q is frequently seen as enhancing Q's identification as a real source, Hurtado (2003) has recently argued that there is no necessary connection between the two. One can accept, he argues, a form of the Q hypothesis without necessarily suggesting that it differs much from other early Christian belief. He seeks to challenge the distinctiveness of the theological and social perspectives in Q while still adhering to a form of the Q hypothesis.

Language and Style

If many of the sayings found in Q were in fact traditional, with some going back to Jesus himself, then it is not improbable to think of some of these sayings having originally been uttered in Aramaic. Moreover, it is reported that the early churchman Papias wrote that Matthew collected "the *logia* [sayings]" in the Hebrew language. These two factors have spawned an ongoing discussion of the original language of Q.

Yet one has to proceed carefully. The Gospel of Luke, and most probably the Gospel of Matthew, were originally composed in Greek. Q is defined as a source for these two gospels, so was the language of the "source Q" (by which we mean the formulation of Q known to Matthew and Luke) Greek or Aramaic? There may well be sayings in Q that were originally composed in Aramaic, but, if so, were they still in Aramaic when the traditions were used by Matthew and Luke? To make the matter even more complex, was there an early version of Q that was Aramaic, even if the "final" formulation of Q was translated into Greek prior to use by the writers of Matthew and Luke? Or indeed were there two distinct sources with one in Greek and one in Aramaic, as argued by Bussmann (1929)?

These questions were of particular interest in early studies of Q, but have received some renewed attention due to a recent study by Maurice Casey (2002). Casey has sought to argue that, with respect to Q, Matthew and Luke used two different Greek translations of an underlying Aramaic source, parts of which were very early. His analysis is based upon detailed study of some particular passages, where he argues that the differences in the wordings in Matthew and Luke for a given pericope derive from different translational decisions. From these observations he also seeks to reconstruct the underlying Aramaic source. As M. Black noted earlier (in 1967), these possible translation variants are the strongest evidence for thinking of an Aramaic *Vorlage* for Q. Even though few scholars have yet had the opportunity to react to the detail of Casey's work, for some decades Q scholars have sought to understand most differences in the wording of Matthew and Luke for Q sayings in terms of the editorial and theological interests of one or both of the evangelists. If this is so, then it is difficult to assert that the differences in the two gospels *must* be due to translational variants in their sources.

In addition, there have been some arguments that have sought positively to favor Q as a Greek source. The number of instances in which there is exact verbal correspondence between Matthew and Luke has often been noted. This argument is strengthened if the verbal correspondence includes some very unusual Greek expressions, where it is difficult to believe that such a Greek word or phrase occurred naturally to two independent translators of an Aramaic original. N. Turner (1969) has further argued that the Greek of Q (as known from Matthew and Luke's versions) betrays few of the expected characteristics of Greek that has been translated from a Semitic language. While some scholars would like to believe Q had an Aramaic formulation on the grounds that this would put the source closer to the historical Jesus, most Q scholars up to now have reflected the view expressed by Tuckett that even if it cannot be proven that Q was available to the evangelists as a Greek document, it is certainly more likely that this was so than theories of the Aramaic nature of such a source.

Sources and Intertextuality

In so far as Q is itself a hypothetical source, it may seem that an exploration of the sources of Q only compounds hypotheses. By reference to "sources" one normally means identifiable collections or compositions of material that existed prior to Q and which were taken up for full or partial incorporation into Q. It is difficult to identify sources in this sense. Earlier collections of sayings have more commonly been understood as early stages in the composition of Q itself rather than distinct sources used by the compilers of Q. The origins of the individual traditions that are incorporated into Q are very difficult to trace with any confidence, and in many cases the key question is whether they can be considered traditions stemming from Jesus himself. The criteria used to determine the authenticity of Jesus traditions have been the subject of considerable debate in their own right.

The Q tradents were, however, also inheritors of the traditions and texts of Israel. Despite the harshness of some of the Q sayings accusing "this generation" of killing God's true messengers, the encounter appears to be amongst those who share a Jewish heritage. There is no radical questioning of the Jewish law in Q. On the contrary, the sayings in Q 16:17–18 not only affirm the law's validity, but also seem to take a quite conservative attitude towards its interpretation. While some direct citations of scriptures are found in Q, more frequently appeal is made by allusion or reference to the epic history of Israel. For example, Q 11:29–32 refers explicitly to the story of Nineveh's repentance at the preaching of Jonah and of the coming of the Queen of the South to hear Solomon. In Q 17:26–30 examples are drawn from the days of Noah and the days of Lot. Furthermore, the key tradition of the fate of the prophets (cf. Q 11:49–51) draws upon a perspective of the epic history of Israel that is not confined to a single allusion. Even in the less polemical parts of Q, one can find occasional references to this history, as in the example of Solomon's glory cited in Q 12:27.

Direct scriptural citations are rare in Q. The most significant example appears in the Q temptation narrative, where citations from the LXX Deuteronomy 6–8 are used by Jesus in response to the Devil's testings (although the Devil cites from Psalm 91). Jacobson (1992: 88) suggests that certain Q scribes may thereby intend to present Jesus as "the faithful son who stands in contrast to the faithless generation addressed by Moses in Deuteronomy 6–8." This may also fit a wider interest, already noted, in deuteronomistic traditions. More contested is whether texts such as Luke 10:25–8 (the double commandment; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18) and Luke 4:18 (citing Isaiah 61) were originally part of Q.

The allusion to Isaiah 61 is particularly interesting in view of the significance of this text for Christological development in the New Testament. In Q, Isaiah 61 appears to be applied to Jesus with respect to his activity in "preaching the good news to the poor" in Q 7:22. The various activities attributed to Jesus in this text probably allude to a small collection of texts drawn from the LXX version of Isaiah 61:1; 29:18–19; and 35:5–6. More debated is whether Isaiah 61:1–2 has also influenced the Q beatitudes in Q 6:20–1. If similar influence is found here, then it must be very significant that at the initial articulation of Jesus' message in the Q Sermon on the Mount, the words of Isaiah are employed and that texts from the prophet Isaiah are again used to vindicate

Jesus' ministry in Q 7. In addition, Tuckett has argued that Luke 4:18 might be another indicator of such a distinctive feature of Q's Christology, but (as noted above) not all scholars are convinced that this saying was found in Q.

The use of citations from the scriptures to assign "roles," however, is also evidenced in Q. Q appears to desert the LXX for another version of texts from Malachi 3:1 and Exodus 23:20 in Q 7:27 to describe the role of John (the Baptist). The distinctive use of the "the coming one" as a description of Jesus is present in the reference to "the one who comes" in Q 13:35b. This is an unusual direct citation of LXX Psalm 117:26.

Arguments against the Existence of Q

Scholars who believe in the existence of Q do so not because of any external evidence of such a source but rather because they believe that this hypothesis is easier to accept than the major alternative hypotheses used to explain the observable phenomenon of non-Markan traditions shared by Matthew and Luke. Scholars who reject the existence of Q often point to weaknesses of the Q hypothesis, but ultimately this is not enough. Every hypothesis has weaknesses, and there is no solution to the synoptic problem that does not involve hypotheses. In the end, those who reject Q have to find a more plausible hypothesis to explain the phenomena that the Q hypothesis seeks to explain.

Generally speaking, the Q hypothesis occupies the middle ground between two main alternatives. On the one hand, there are scholars, like Michael Goulder, who argue that hypothetical sources should be postulated only when absolutely necessary. So, if it is possible to explain the similarities of Matthew and Luke (for their non-Markan traditions) without recourse to any unknown sources, then we should do so. Goulder (1989) does in fact try to apply Ockham's razor by suggesting that Luke made direct use of Matthew. In other words, the similarities of Matthew and Luke are due to the direct dependence of one gospel (Luke) upon the other gospel (Matthew). Goulder therefore accepts the task of having to explain why all the differences in the contexts observed for these shared non-Markan traditions in the two gospels are due to Luke rearranging Matthew's order of material, according to various principles. The differences in wording also have to be due to Luke altering Matthew's wording, and Luke's version of these traditions must therefore always be secondary to Matthew's. Where did Matthew obtain all of these non-Markan traditions in the first place? On the whole, according to Goulder, they are Matthew's own composition; it is not necessary to postulate any unknown source(s), although occasionally Goulder appeals to oral tradition as an additional "source." This hypothesis – that Mark was the first canonical gospel, that Matthew used Mark and little else in the way of sources, and that Luke used Mark and Matthew – provides a clear alternative to Q. Whether it is a more plausible alternative continues to be a matter of debate, but it has been recently championed by Mark Goodacre in his recent work, *The Case Against Q* (2002). There is another group of scholars who rely upon Luke's use of Matthew to explain the shared material, but who argue that Matthew was the *first* gospel written rather than Mark. For his part, Goulder defended Markan priority against advocates of the Augustinian and Griesbach hypotheses, but the latter has had a number of modern followers (including H.-H. Stoldt, D. L.

Dungan, W.R. Farmer, T. R. W. Longstaff, D. B. Peabody, and A. J. McNicol; see Chapter 15, "The Synoptic Problem," in this volume).

On the other hand, there are scholars who argue against Q for reasons completely contrary to those of Goulder. The Q hypothesis, they assert, is not too complex (by introducing unnecessarily a hypothetical source); rather, the Q hypothesis is too simple. One must reckon with the existence of *many* lost sources in order to explain synoptic relationships. Indeed, it is arguable that our canonical New Testament represents only a fraction of what must have been written by early Christians, a great deal of which has been lost. So, the argument goes, there is no *a priori* reason to oppose the idea of lost sources and probably every reason to expect that many other sources of Jesus-traditions circulated and that some of our existing gospels had earlier (now lost) versions. If the Q hypothesis struggles to explain some of the features of shared non-Markan traditions in Matthew and Luke, it is because there were other variant traditions available to the evangelists. Any peculiar difference between a common tradition in Matthew and Luke, in principle, could be attributed to yet one more (lost) hypothetical source. Relying upon a *single* hypothetical source to explain the phenomena is both ultimately unsuccessful and inherently unlikely (see, for example, Sanders and Davies 1989). One might consider radical proponents of oral tradition hypotheses to be a variation on such a position. Oral traditions and appeal to the collective memory of traditions in effect posit a kind of "multiple source" model. In response, those who support the "relatively simple" Q hypothesis argue that the detectable relative sequence of common non-Markan traditions found in Matthew and Luke and the distinctive theological emphases of these traditions are more consistent with a single common source than with a diverse set of sources.

Having recognized that the case against Q ultimately has to be coupled with the proposal of a more plausible alternative hypothesis, one must nevertheless give some attention to a few of those areas where scholars have suggested that the Q hypothesis itself is flawed. These may be briefly summarized as follows.

1 In Markan material where Q influence is not generally posited (such as the passion narrative), one sometimes finds "minor agreements" of Matthew and Luke against Mark. If such agreements can occur without the influence of Q, then is Q necessary to explain the other agreements and does this not drive us towards some other hypothesis, such as direct use of Matthew by Luke? The more numerous such "minor agreements" outside the boundaries of Q are, the more telling the case against Q. In response, advocates of the Q hypothesis tend to explain these "minor agreements against Mark" in a variety of ways. In some cases, they could be due to independent (but coincidentally similar) attempts by Matthew and Luke to alter something difficult in Mark. In other cases, they could be due to the result of early corruptions of the texts of Matthew or Luke by later scribes who tried to harmonize the gospels. Some Q scholars would even widen the normal boundaries of Q in order to incorporate such instances within the Q hypothesis. The debate hinges upon the persuasiveness of each of these defensive explanations and the number of instances that remain inexplicable by Q supporters.

2 Differing reconstructions of the extent of Q, alluded to above, have also been seen to be a weakness of the Q hypothesis. Because Q is a hypothetical source, the boundaries of which sayings might have been included in Q and which might have been excluded are inevitably unclear. Recently, the International Q Project has published a reconstruction of Q based upon a "minimal Q" (*The Critical Edition of Q*; see Robinson et al. 2000). This work has also sought critically to assess the most likely wording and order of Q passages. While this may begin to create a greater consensus about the extent of Q, it sometimes serves to articulate the degree of uncertainty. Thus it will be unlikely to end debate.

3 Contrary to Q adherents who appeal to distinctive theological themes that characterize Q, Goodacre (2002: 70) has argued that "Q" is no more than a "'Luke pleasing' re-working of Matthew's non-Markan material." In other words, the theory that Luke directly used Matthew is as adequate to explain the characteristics of this shared material, when isolated, as any theory of a distinctive hypothetical source. If there is a theological coherence to the Q material, it is allegedly because the material coheres with Lukan theology.

4 Earlier criticism of the Q hypothesis sometimes focused on the implausibility of a sayings source of the kind represented by Q, partly based on the absence of analogous examples. The *Gospel of Thomas* and numerous other sayings collections from the ancient Near East, however, demonstrate that there is no *a priori* objection that can be raised to the genre of Q. A more recent criticism based upon the genre and structure of Q, however, has been formulated by Goodacre. He notes that Q reveals narrative properties from the John the Baptist sayings in Q 3 up to Q 7:35 (the sayings about Jesus and John the Baptist), but thereafter the narrative features fall away. Thus parallels in genre sometimes drawn between Q and the *Gospel of Thomas* fail to do justice to Q's difference from the *Gospel of Thomas*, because the *Gospel of Thomas completely* lacks narrative structure. Furthermore, Goodacre argues that even if Q were on a trajectory towards a biographical genre, it is still difficult to explain the uneven nature of the narrative elements in Q on the basis of the Q hypothesis. He argues that it is easier to appreciate on the theory that Luke used Matthew, because the narrative elements in their shared non-Markan material appear where Matthew is known to have reworked the narrative of Mark (Matthew 3–11), and they bear purportedly Matthean characteristics, but these elements do not appear in the parts of Matthew used by Luke where Matthew is indistinguishable from Mark (Matthew 12–25).

5 The absence of reference to the events of the death and resurrection of Jesus has also been sometimes offered as a criticism of the Q hypothesis, on the basis that such an omission would be unthinkable for an early Christian document about Jesus. Q proponents have been at pains to stress that such a presupposition is applied with difficulty to a collection of sayings material. Moreover, several texts show how Q was aware of Jesus' fate and interpreted that fate in terms of "the fate of all of God's envoys and the righteous" (Kloppenborg 2000: 373). This might have led naturally to an expectation of Jesus' vindication, although for Q this is more clearly expressed in terms of his role in future

judgment than by direct reference to Jesus' resurrection. Ultimately this debate hinges upon the extent of diversity that scholars attribute to early kerygmatic formulations, and how far such diversity is "unthinkable."

Throughout the preceding discussion, it has been shown that the Q hypothesis continues to be a fertile area for debate. As indicated at the start of this essay, however, it is not just a debate over points of detail with little real significance. A great deal of relevance to our understanding of Jesus and earliest Christianity rests upon the hypothesis that one adopts for depicting that relationship between the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Annotated Bibliography

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