

The Q hypothesis is a clarification for the similarities and differences between the following gospels: Mark; Luke and Matthew. The contents of these three synoptic gospels are very similar in some occasions while there are also differences amongst them. This leads to the synoptic problem: Which sources did the authors utilise while composing these gospels?

It is proposed that 'Q' could be a sayings gospel (a book containing a collection of Jesus' sayings). This Q source, along with Mark, influenced the authors of Matthew and Luke.

'Q' is derived from the German word called 'quelle' which means 'source'.

The Two Document Hypothesis is that the Gospel of Mark was crafted before Matthew & Luke at around 70 CE. Authors of Matthew & Luke used Mark alongside another source called 'Q'. The contents which are absent in Mark but are common in Luke and Matthew—for example Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 5- 7] and Sermon on the Plain [Luke 6:17-49]—could be taken from the Q source.

Piper claims that Q is just a hypothetical source, not an identifiable collection or book.¹ Q could be the source of oral traditions that were used by authors of Matthew and Luke. There is no objective evidence for Q's existence. The Q hypothesis is proposed to explain the similarities of some Non-Markan content from Matthew And Luke. Many mainstream scholars argue that authors of Matthew and Luke used this hypothetical source.

Stanton and Perrin assert that there are very similar verbal agreements between Luke and Matthew over multiple verses. This can be considered to put forward a case in favor of the Q hypothesis. In line after line comparison of these two gospels, there are sometimes very similar Greek texts which suggest that both these gospels shared the same source. For example at Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.² These similarities can not be dismissed as coincidence hence it is certain that authors of both these gospels used a common source that is not accessible today.

Q source, if discovered today, can highlight more information on the historical Jesus. It would also be interesting to see if there are any contents of Q that both Matthew and Luke ignored. Some wording of Q would most likely be similar to that of Non-Markan shared content of Matthew and Luke. Since the content they share with Mark also has similar wording, in some cases. Therefore it's likely they would have done the same for Q source.

¹ Ronald Piper, 'The Sayings Source', *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 264.

² G.N. Stanton and N. Perrin, 'Q', *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), p. 712.

There is also the possibility that authors of Matthew and Luke used different versions of Q source.

Some passages are common in both these gospels but wording differs a lot. For example Matthew 7:24-27 and Luke 6:46-49 are both about the parable of man who constructed his home on rock but the wording differs a lot.

Thus it can be argued that they had dissimilar editions of Q source.

It is claimed by several scholars that the gospel of Thomas can be seen as proof of the existence of Q source. Like the gospel of Thomas, Q source could be a sayings gospel without any description of Jesus's life. However it is said that Thomas is dependent on the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke).³

It is proposed by scholars such as Kloppenborg, J Reed, and W Arnal that Q source may have been composed in Galilee. This theory seems sound because the Galilean setting shown in 'Q' is similar to what we know about first century Galilee. The content of Q focuses on several towns of Galilee such as Bethsaida. Further to this, there is a negative portrayal of herocratic Jerusalem so when taken into account this strengthens the theory regarding Q's location being Galilee. Jerusalem is rarely mentioned in Q. Moreover, there is no mention of Galilean urban regions especially Sepphoris and Tiberias. Further to this, there is a suspicion towards urban structures such as legal courts, prisons and marketplaces. It can therefore be argued that Q source was composed by villagers. Supporting Arnal's theory about Q being crafted by village scribes. Also supports the points of many other scholars such as Horsley that highlight source Q as being biased in favor of lower culture and local renewal. The similarities in Q and society of first century Galilee have made scholars argue in favor of a Galilean origin of Q instead of the classical arguments in favor of Antiochene origin. In 2003, Larry Hurtado claimed that Q source might have been authored by greek speaking Jewish Christians known as the Hellenists.

It is impossible to prove where Q originated from. But many scholars, as discussed before, have put forward their theories on Q's origin.

Another question, apart from the origin of Q, that interests scholars is the purpose for why one would craft Q. There is no narrative of Jesus' resurrection and death, known as passion, in Q. It's likely that unlike the canonical gospels, Q is just a compilation of Jesus' sayings like the gospel of Thomas. Many reconstructions show Q as just a source of sayings.

³ John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), pp. 135-138.

Harnack, in 1904, proposed that Q was composed by early Jewish Christians to record narrations of the historical Jesus.⁴

It can therefore be said that Q's purpose was to preserve Jesus' sayings and to teach others about them. So it did not contain any narratives.

Scholars of diverse backgrounds have accepted the two document hypothesis, which includes Markan priority and Q hypothesis, for a long time. However there are still some who raise objections to the two-document, Markan priority and Q hypotheses. To tackle the synoptic problem, some scholars have proposed alternative hypotheses for example the two document hypothesis where Luke utilised Matthew...Mark then copied from both Matthew and Luke. Another group accepts Markan priority but claims that Luke used Matthew to address the non-Markan content shared by both synoptics hence removing need for Q.⁵ These alternative theories have failed to gain mainstream acceptance unlike the Q hypothesis.

The two document hypothesis fails to explain why 97% of Mark's content is either in Matthew or Luke. Why would Mark write a book in which 97% content is plagiarised? It makes more sense if Mark was written first and other two synoptics built upon it. Also when triple tradition content is read (content shared by all 3 synoptics) then it can be noticed that Matthew & Luke are improving over what Mark previously wrote. The other scenario is that Mark copied 97% of its content from Matthew & Luke but also made the quality worse by removing details. It seems less believable than Matthew & Luke using Mark alongside a Q source.

Some might argue what if there is no Q but Luke used Matthew instead? If that is the case then Luke would not ignore the Matthean expansions of Mark. In cases where Matthew and Mark share content, Luke uses the Markan version instead of the enhanced Matthean version.

Ultimately, the Q hypothesis alongside two-source and Markan priority hypotheses serve as explanations for the synoptic problem. Q source is believed to be a sayings document, similar to the gospel of Thomas. Many scholars believe the non-Markan shared content of Matthew & Luke originates from Q. This hypothesis is widely accepted by scholars but alternatives have been proposed that failed to gain mainstream acceptance.

⁴ Ronald Piper, 'The Sayings Source', *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 257-58.

⁵ G.N. Stanton and N. Perrin, 'Q', *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), p. 714.

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