

THE "Q" HYPOTHESIS

A. Matthew and Luke's Common Material

1. Q/q = About 230 verses in common between Matt and Luke

We find about 230 verses that only Matthew and Luke share in common, not found in Mark. This material can be referred to as "Q/q".

"Q/q" = *Quelle* (German for "source")

- "Q" refers to the Hypothetical Source
- "q" refers to the material shared in common (may be written or oral)

We should keep in mind there is a distinction between "Q" and "q", but I will use Q throughout to refer to both.

2. The exact statistics:¹

- Matthew has 4,290 words that have Lukan parallels that are not in Mark.
- Luke has 3,559 words that have Matthean parallels that are not in Mark.

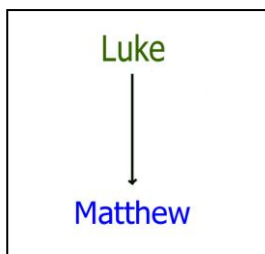
So Luke writes in a more concise or compressed fashion. For examples of Q material, see overhead chart

3. What accounts for the similarities?

Five possible explanations:

- First, Matthew used Luke (rejected)
- Second, Matthew and Luke used a common oral source (rejected; too many exact verbal agreements)
- Third, Luke used Matthew (Griesbach and Farmer; a minority view)
- Fourth, Matthew used Mark, then Luke used Matthew and Mark (Farrer and Goodacre)
- Fifth, Matthew and Luke used a common written source (most likely; called Q)

II. Did Matthew Use Luke?



If Matthew copied from Luke, that would explain the similarities. However, most scholars agree that Matthew did not use Luke.²

If Matthew copied from Luke, then we would have to explain why Matthew left out so much of Luke's special material, which scholars call "L" material

How do we explain Matthew omission of Luke's material?

¹The statistics are from Robert Stein, *The Synoptic Problem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 89.

²Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 91, n. 3.

How do we explain Matthew's omission of Luke's "L" material?³

Chapters 1-2:

- John and Jesus' birth narratives
- Mary's Song (Magnificat)
- Zechariah's Song (Benedictus)
- The dating of Jesus' birth
- Jesus in the Temple at age twelve

Chapters 9-19:

- Parable of the Good Samaritan
- Parable of the Prodigal Son
- Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

Chapter 24:

- Unique resurrection material
- Jesus' post-resurrection talk with two disciples on the road to Emmaus
- Jesus' post-resurrection teaching on the OT

The Book of Acts

III. Did Luke Use Matthew?



Did Luke copy from Matthew?

Some scholars think so,⁴ but there are several reasons for believing that Luke did not know or use Matthew.

A. Why would Luke omit the "M" material?

If Luke copied from Matthew, then we would have to explain why Luke left out so much of Matthew's special material, which scholars call "M" material.

Here are some examples of "M" material:

Chapters 1-2

- Unique genealogy
- Wise men visit the infant Jesus
- Joseph and Mary's flight to Egypt
- Herod's massacre of innocent children

Chapters 27-28

- Unique resurrection material
- Story of the guards at the tomb
- Story of the guards' report to the chief priest

³For a complete chart, see *New Testament Foundations: Jesus And Discipleship*, The Denver Catholic Biblical School Program (New York: Paulist, 1995), 83.

⁴This is the Griesbach Hypothesis, since J.J. Griesbach suggested this in 1776 and revived by William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

B. Luke lacks Matthew's additions to triple tradition

1. What is the triple tradition?
 - It is material shared in common by all three Synoptic Gospels.
 - It is the material Luke and Matthew have borrowed from Mark.
2. We find that Matthew has added some verses to Mark's material.
 - And Luke never includes Matthew's additions to Mark
 - This suggests that Luke did not know Matthew
3. For example:
 - # **T14** (A88): Sick Healed at Evening (Mt 8:16-17; Mk 1:32:34; Lk 4:40-41)
 - # **T91** (A123): Reason for Speaking in Parables (Mt 13:10-17; Mk 4:10-12; Lk 8:9-10)

In both examples, Matthew adds comments about the fulfillment of prophesy (8:17; 13:14-15) not found in Luke.

C. Luke's puts Q/q material in a different context than Matthew

Luke and Matthew place the Q/q material in different contexts.

1. Matthew arranges the q material into five blocks of material.
 - Chapters 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 23-25.
 - Each section ends with the phrase,
 - "And when Jesus finished these sayings" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1)
 - Some suggest Matthew may have been trying to compose a "New Torah" of five books
2. Luke arranges Q material into two different blocks of material
 - Luke 6:20 - 8:3 and Luke 9:51 - 18:14.
 - Luke's arrangement of Q material is not as deliberate as Matthew's
 - If Luke used Matthew, why did Luke scattered the Sermon on the Mount—considered one of the most carefully crafted sections of Matthew—all over?⁵

D. Conclusion

The point is: Luke probably did not know or use Matthew. Otherwise Luke probably would have included the "M" material, Matthew's comments in the triple tradition (e.g., Matthew's added prophecies), and the arrangement of Q material like Matthew (e.g., Sermon on Mount).

Hence, the 230 verses that Luke and Matthew have in common, it is not the result of Luke borrowing from Matthew, or Matthew borrowing from Luke.

⁵See the chart in Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 96.

Rather, the 230 verses probably comes from another *written source* (see below), which scholars have called “Q” *Quelle* (source) for over 150 years. The source is not extant (i.e., there are no copies of it have been found). It is hypothetical.

IV. Was Q/q a written source?

It is highly probable that Q was a written source. There are four main reasons.

A. Exact Verbal Agreement

The exactness of wording for the q-material suggests that Luke and Matthew borrowed from the same written source.

Class Exercise: Check the wording and order in the following:

- # **T2** (A14): John's Preaching of Repentance (Mt 3:7-10; Lk 3:7-9)
- # **T34** (A66): On Serving Two Masters (Matt 6:24; Lk 16:13)

Results for # **T2** (A14) (based on my count of the English):

- The quotation from John the Baptist has 78 words (both for Mt and Lk).
- Only three words differ
- Mt has "fruit" where Lk has "fruits"
- Mt has "presume" where Lk has "begin"
- Mt has "trees" where Lk has "tree"

Results for # **T34** (A66) (based on my count of the English):

- Matthew has 35 words and Luke 36
- Luke adds the word "servant"
- Otherwise the parallels are exact

B. Similar Verbal Agreement

However, not all of the q-material is exact, although very similar.

Class Exercise: Check the working and order in the following:

- # **T38** (A70): God's Answering Prayer (Matt 7:7-11; Lk 11:9-13)
- # **T26** (A58): Non-retaliation (Mt 5:38; Lk 6:29-30).
- # **T30** (A62): Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-13; Lk 2-4).

Results for # **T38** (A70) (based on my count of Matthew in English):

- Matthew has 102 words
- 83 are exactly the same as Luke (64 in the exact order as Luke)
- 7 words are similar to Luke's
- 12 words are different than Luke's
- Major difference:
 - Mt has the Father giving "good things"
 - Lk has the Father giving the "Holy Spirit"

C. Order of the Material

If we could show that the material that Luke and Matthew share in common is also placed in the same order for both Luke and Matthew, then it would lend support for a written document such as Q. See Table 1.⁶

Table 1

	Luke		Matthew	
1	3:7-9, 16f.	John the Baptist's Preaching	3:7-12	1
2	4:2-13	Temptation of Jesus	4:2-11	2
3	6:20-23, 27-30 32-36	Sermon on the Plain I	5:3-6, 11f., 39-42, 45-48	3
4	6:37f., 41-49	Sermon on the Plain II	7:1-5, 16-21 24-27	7
5	7:1-10	Centurion from Capernaum	8:5-13	9
6	7:18-35	John the Baptist's Sayings	11:2-19	13
7	9:57-60	Sayings on Discipleship	8:19-22	10
8	10:1-12	Missions Discourse	9:37-10:15	11
9	10:13-15, 21f.	Woes and Joys	11:21-23, 25f.	14
10	11:1-4	Lord's Prayer	6:9-13	5
11	11:9-13	On Prayer	7:7-11	8
12	11:14-23	Beelzebul Controversy	12:22-30	15
13	11:24-26	Saying on Backsliding	12:43-45	17
14	11:29-32	Against Request for Miracles	12:38-42	16
15	11:33-35	Sayings on Light	5:15; 6:22f.	4
16	11:39-52	Against the Pharisees	23:4, 23-25, 29-36	19
17	12:2-10	Summons to Confession	10:26-33	12
18	12:22-34	Cares and Treasures	6:19-21, 25-33	6
19	12:39-46	Watchfulness	24:43-51	22
20	13:18-21	Mustard Seed and Leaven	13:31-33	18
21	13:34f.	Predictions Concerning Jerusalem	23:37-39	20
22	17:22-37	Discourse on the Parousia	24:26-28, 37-41	21
23	19:11-27	Parable of the Talents	25:14-30	23

Table 2

	Luke	Matthew
1	6:40	(10:24f.)
2	10:2	9:37f.
3	10:3-12	10:9-16
4	10:16	(10:40)
5	12:2f.	10:26f.
6	12:4-7	10:28-31
7	12:8f.	10:32f.
8	12:11f.	(10:19f.)
9	12:51-53	10:34-36
10	14:26f.	10:37f.
11	17:33	10:39

⁶Table 1 corresponds to Table 6 in Stein (pg. 105) and represents Kummel's findings Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 105.

Table 2 represents Taylor's findings.⁷ Taylor looks at the "mission charge" in Matthew 9:37-10:42 and finds substantial agreement with the exceptions of 1, 4, and 8. Taylor asks: Can such agreements simply be due to chance?

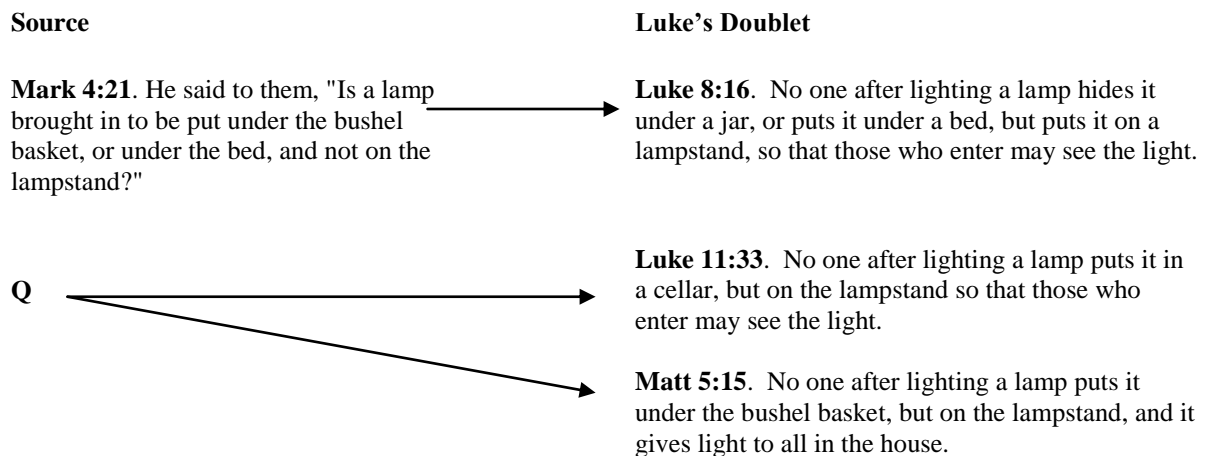
Stein thinks that the argument from order supports Q as a written document, but the evidence from order is far from convincing.⁸

D. "Doublets" in Matthew and Luke

Some believe that the appearance of "doublets" is decisive proof that Q was a written document.

A "doublet" is repetition of the same account in the same gospel. The idea is this: Luke found an account in Mark, so he included it. Then Luke found a similar account in Q and, not wanting to omit anything important, included it also. That is, Mark and Q have similar sayings and so Luke and Matthew include both Q and Mark's saying.

Example: Luke 8:16 (from Mark 4:21) and Luke 11:33 (Q/Matt 5:15)



Other doublets:

- Luke 8:17 (from Mk 4:22) and Luke 12:2 (cf. 3-9) (Q/Mt 10:26, cf. 27-33)
- Matt 19:9 (from Mk 10:11-12) and Matt 5:32 (Q/Lk 16:18)
- Matt 16:24 (from Mk 8:34, cf Lk 9:23) and Matt 10:37-38 (Q/Lk 14:26-27)

Doublets support a common source like Q, but it does not necessarily point to a written source over an oral source.

⁷Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 107.

⁸Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 107.

E. Common Vocabulary and Style

Attempts have been made to show that q-material has the same or similar vocabulary or style, which would seem to support a written document for Q. However, Stein believes that the results have not been convincing.⁹

VI. The Contents of “Q/q”

A. Jesus-Sayings (“sayings source”)

- 1. Q primarily contains sayings attributed to Jesus,**¹⁰ with only five exceptions:
 - Three texts on John the Baptist
 - The temptation narrative
 - The story of the healing of the centurion’s servant
- 2. Q is a collection of sayings of Jesus without narrative ...** three exceptions
 - It has only one miracle story (healing of centurion’s servant)
 - It does not have a birth narrative
 - It does not have a trial/crucifixion/resurrection narratives
- 3. Q has three types or layers of sayings material**
 - Q¹ Earliest sapiential (wisdom) layer
 - Q² Prophetic redactional layer
 - Q³ Apocalyptic redactional layer

B. Wisdom Sayings — Q¹

Example of wisdom saying from Q¹: **T§33**: The Sound Eye (Lk 11:34-36; Mt 6:22-23)

The Earliest Layer of Q

Lk 6:20-b-23 (Mt 5:3-12)

Lk 6:27-30 (Mt 5: 39b-40, 42, 44)

Lk 6:31 (Mt 7:12)

Lk 6:32-33, 35b-36 (Mt 5:45-48)

Lk 6:37-38 (Mt 7:1-2)

Lk 6:39-40 (Mt 15:14; 10:24-25)

Lk 6:41-42 (Mt 7:3-5)

Lk 6:43-45 (Mt 7:16-20; 12:33-35)

Lk 6:46-49 (7:21, 24-27)

⁹Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 108.

¹⁰See the chart in Keith Nickle, *The Synoptic Gospels* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 88-89.

C. Prophecies — Q²

Have students look at # T139 (A108): Woes Pronounced on Galilean Cities (Lk 10:13-15; Mt 11:21-24).... Note: In Throckmorton, the verses are at the end of T139.

T# 139: Woes Pronounced on Galilean Cities (Lk 10:13-15; Mt 11:21-24)	
Matt 11:21-24.	Luke 10:13-15.
Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you.	Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But at the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.

D. Apocalyptic Sayings — Q³

For example, # T184 (A296): The Parable of the Flood (Lk 17:26-27; Mt 24:37-39).

T# 184: The Parable of the Flood (Lk 17:26-27; Mt 24:37-39)	
Matt 24:37-39	Luke 17:26-27
For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man.	Just as it was in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking, and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed all of them.

E. Was there a Q community?

Q was probably a handbook for an early church. Scholars argue that it was probably used as a handbook for itinerant Christian preachers in Galilee.

It is thought that Q emerged as a sayings source in the 30-50 AD (so Allison), although Kloppenborg puts the final redaction at 65-70 AD. It was probably written in Galilee and used by itinerant missionaries (so Theissen). Scholars (Allison; Kloppenborg; Mach) have discerned three different layers to Q¹¹ and thus, perhaps, three different communities or three different layers of Q.

- Q¹ Earliest sapiential (wisdom) layer

¹¹ John Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*.

- Q² Prophetic redactional layer
- Q³ Apocalyptic redactional layer

VI. Second thoughts on Q/q?

A. Eta Linneman's rejection of Q

1. Eta Linnemann argues that "There is no convincing evidence for the alleged Q in Matthew and Luke."¹²

2. Linnemann's argument is:

- There are no extant manuscripts of Q
- The early church fathers never mention such a document
- She says, "The differences in order, and the percentages of identical wording, argue against literary dependence, since the differences are much higher than the similarities."¹³

3. She bases her conclusions on findings concerning exact agreements. Of 65 Q parallels, word-for-word agreement is as follows:

- 7 out of 65 (11%) have 75-100% identical words
- 15 out of 65 (22%) have 50-74.9% identical words
- 26 out of 65 (41%) have 25-49.9% identical words
- 17 out of 65 (26%) have 0-24.9% identical words

4. First response:

- Linnemann's analysis actually supports Q
- Even 25% agreement in identical words suggest copying!
- By Linnemann's count, 74% of Q-material has 25% word agreement or more.

5. Second response:

- The problem with Linnemann's analysis is that it is based on "identical words"
- In my mind, dependence can exist even if "identical words" are not found;
- Material showing fairly close content and order suggests literary dependence.

B. Mark Goodacre's *Case Against Q* (2002) and *Questioning Q* (2004)

1. Goodacre offers ten reasons for rejecting Q (<http://www.ntgateway.com/Q/ten.htm>).

a. No-one has ever seen Q

b. No-one had ever heard of Q

No ancient author appears to have been aware of the existence of Q.

But what about references to "sayings of Jesus" by second century church fathers?

¹²Eta Linnemann, "Is There a Gospel of Q," *Bible Review*, Vol XI, No. 4 (August 1995): 18-23, 42-43; esp. 23.

¹³Eta Linnemann, "Is There a Gospel of Q," 23.

c. Narrative Sequence in Q

Goodacre notes a narrative sequence in Q that matches Matt 3-11 where it departs from Mark. Luke follows Matt, thus Goodacre argues that the narrative sequence in Q fits his Mark-Matt-Luke hypothesis.

However, this does not contradict the 4-source hypothesis.

d. Occam's Razor

The British medieval philosopher Occam suggested a fine working principle: that entities should not be multiplied beyond what is necessary. How then has Q escaped Occam's razor?

However, this is not an argument against Q, only a principle that favors the elimination of Q "if all things are equal"... but not all things are equal.

e. Major agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark

Example of the Parable of the Mustard Seed. Matt and Luke follow the same order against Mark. But that does not contradict Q.

But, this is not convincing. It could be that Matt and Luke are following Q against Mark.

f. Minor agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark

Example of Matt and Luke unique spelling of *Nazara* (Matt 4:12-13; Mk 1:14, 21; Lk 4:14, 16, 31) against the typical spelling of Nazareth or Nazaret.

Again, this is not convincing. It could be that Matt and Luke are following Q against Mark.

g. Minor agreements in the passion narrative

h. The phenomenon of fatigue

"When one writer is copying the work of another, changes are sometimes made at the beginning of an account which are not sustained throughout - the writer lapses into docile reproduction of his / her source. This phenomenon of 'fatigue' is a tell-tale sign of a writer's dependence on a source. Matthew, for example, correctly calls Herod τετρααρχης ('tetrarch') in 14.1, only to lapse into calling him the less correct βασιλευς ('king') in 14.9, apparently reproducing Mark (6.26) who has called him βασιλευς ('king') throughout. Likewise, Luke re-sets the scene for the Feeding of the Five Thousand in 'a city called Bethsaida' (πολιν καλουμενην Βηθσαιδα, Luke 9.10) only to lapse into the Markan wording later, 'We are here in a deserted place' (ωδε εν ερημω τοπω εσμεν, Luke 9.12, cf. Mark 6.35).

It is revealing that this phenomenon also occurs in double tradition (Q) material, and always in the same direction, in favour of Luke's use of Matthew. Take the Parable of the Talents / Pounds (Matt. 25.14-30 // Luke 19.11-27). Matthew has three servants throughout. Luke, on the other hand, has ten. But as the story progresses, we hear about 'the first' (19.16), 'the second' (19.18) and amazingly, 'the other' (ο ετερος, Luke 19.20). Luke has inadvertently betrayed his knowledge of Matthew by drifting into the story-line of his source (see further my ['Fatigue in the Synoptics'](#), *NTS* 44 (1998), pp. 45-58)."

This appears to have some validity, but more examples are needed to be of substantial weight against Q.

i. The legacy of scissors-and-paste scholarship

“Q belongs to another age, an age in which scholars solved every problem by postulating another written source. The evangelists were thought of as 'scissors and paste' men, compilers and not composers, who edited together pieces from several documents.”

However, this is not an argument against Q, but against a characterization of scholarly methods!

j. Recognizing Luke's literary ability

Belief in Q has been an impediment to the proper appreciation of Luke's literary ability, for Luke's order has traditionally been explained on the assumption that he was conservatively following a Q text. But it is not at all inconceivable that Luke should have imaginatively and creatively re-ordered material from Matthew.

Again, this is not an argument against Q, it is only an argument for appreciating Luke as a narrator. For Goodacre to talk about “re-ordering Matthew” is as easy as talking about organizing Q differently from Matthew!

2. Goodacre's position is not convincing

Goodacre's arguments are not convincing, nor is Goodacre's theory that Luke borrowed from both Mark and Matthew.

E.L. Bradby suggests a "rough-and-ready method" of testing the Farrer (and Goodacre's) hypothesis. Bradby looks at four passages found in the triple tradition: the walk through the cornfields and its sequel (Mk 2:23-3:6, Mt 12:1-21, Lk 6:1-11), the parable of the sower (Mk 4:1-20, Mt 13:1-23, Lk 8:4-15), the charge to the apostles (Mk 6:7-11, Mt 10:1-42, Lk 9:1-5), and Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8:27-9:1, Mt 16:13-28, Lk 9:18-27). In each case, Matthew has an expanded and fuller version of the pericope than does Mark, yet in no case does Luke reflect any of these Matthean additions to the triple tradition. The real issue is to explain Luke's failure to adopt the extra Matthean materials in his parallels, or at least some of them, if he has written in dependence on Matthew. Thus, contrary to Farrer and Goodacre's theory, Luke probably did not copy from Matthew.

C. The existence of Q raises theological and historical concerns

1. Q leaves out important accounts and theological motifs

The major theological concerns revolve around what Q leaves out:

- Jesus' death and resurrection
- Jesus as the Son of God
- Jesus as the sacrifice for sins
- Jesus performing miracles

If Q material represents an early form of Christianity, then that form of Christianity:

- Was more or less naturalistic
- Focused on Jesus the Sage and/or Cynic
- Did not have a crucified and resurrected Jesus

- Did not have a concept of the atonement

The danger is that Q material suggests a quite different form of Christianity. The issue concerns the nature of Christian identity itself.

2. Q suggests early Christianity was pluriform

The existence of Q suggests that the early Christian movement took different forms. James Robinson¹⁴ envisions at least two streams of Jesus traditions:

- a. One form (represented by the Synoptics) insisted telling about Jesus in narrative form emphasizing his passion and resurrection. This trajectory moved toward orthodox or canonical Christianity
- b. Another (represented by Q and Thomas) were content to simply convey Jesus' words without narrative and without a death and resurrection story. This trajectory moved toward Gnostic Christianity.

3. Q does not nullify Paul

Some of Paul's letters predate Q (1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians)

- These letters reveal a crucified, resurrected, atonement delivering Christ
- Perhaps Q reveals an important part of early Christian beliefs, but it is obviously not the whole picture.

4. Q does not overshadow other (oral) tradition

Non-Q material emerged out of oral tradition contemporaneous with Q. When we consider Paul and oral tradition, the minimal portrait of Christ, presented by Q, is only part of the picture. Placing too much emphasis on Q as a source for the historical Jesus or the character of the early Jesus movement is misleading (the Jesus Seminar?).

VII. Should we affirm a Q document?

If Luke used Matthew, or if Matthew used Luke, we do not need a Q/q hypothesis.

However, the answer is **“Yes” if we accept Markan priority and the five arguments for Q as a written source**: exact verbal parallel in the double tradition, close verbal parallel, similar order in the double tradition, the existence of doublets (Mark and Q have similar sayings and Luke and Matthew include both), and possibly similar styles

Stein states that the hypothesis has its problems, but the alternative hypotheses—that Luke used Matthew or Matthew used Luke—has far greater problems.¹⁵

Still, we must remember that

- There is no trace of Q except in Luke and Matthew.

¹⁴ James M. Robinson, “Jesus from Easter to Valentinus (or to the Apostles’ Creed)” in *JBL* 101 (1982): 5-37.

¹⁵ So Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 110.

- There is no reference to such a document in early church document

VIII. Gospel of Thomas and Q

1. The Gospel of Thomas is a “sayings source”

Like Q, Thomas appears to be a “sayings-source” composed of 114 sayings. Because it is a sayings source, it has been compared between Q and Thomas. The sayings in Thomas are similar to wisdom traditions found in Egypt and Mesopotamia as reflected in Prov 22:17—24:22.¹⁶

The sayings focus on Jesus, who appears as the living one (the risen one?), who has laid aside all earthly form. Jesus is presented as revealer, who imparts the secret of his origin. He explains this secret to the disciples and His heavenly form is recognizable only to the elect.

So, the question is does Thomas shed light on Q and vice-versa?

2. Dating of *Gospel of Thomas*

- The *Gospel of Thomas* was discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Egypt
- First published in 1959
- Didymos Judas Thomas originally wrote the Gospel in Coptic.
- The oldest extant manuscript of the Gospel (Codex II) is dated to about 400 A.D.
- Dispute about its earliest date: mid-2nd century? or mid-1st century?

3. Comparing Thomas and Q

There has been divided opinion about whether Thomas knew or drew on the Synoptic Gospels.

a. Some scholars believe that Thomas borrowed and then redacted sayings from the Synoptic Gospels. Thus some date Thomas as late as 150 CE.

b. Others believe that Thomas contains Jesus traditions independent from the Synoptic Gospels and, because of its similarity with Q-source, Thomas can be dated to about the same time as Q—55 to 65 C.E.¹⁷

The Gospel of Thomas

Th 3

Th 6 (Q6:31)

Th 13 (no precedent in synoptics)

Th 22 (no precedent in synoptics)

¹⁶ James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 71-113.

¹⁷ James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (2003): 164-5 states that where “Thomas differs markedly from the consensus of the Synoptic tradition in terms of particular motifs, the likelihood will usually be that the Synoptic tradition is closer to the earliest remembered sayings of Jesus than is the *Gospel of Thomas*.” However, Dunn also says that it must remain open whether Thomas preserved an earlier version of sayings than the Synoptics. Helmut Koester dates it prior to 62 AD.

Th 26 (Q 6:41-42)

Th 34 (Q6:39)

Th 43 (Q6:43)

Th 54 (Q6:20)

Th 58

Th 59b

Th 68

Th 78 (Q7:24-25)

Th 92, 94 (Q 11:9-10)

Th 95 (Q:34a)

Th 108

Th 113