The Q Debate since 1955

Howard Biggs

Dr Howard Biggs is a new contributor to these pages, he is a lawyer in Chester who completed his doctoral on 'Q' from the University of Sheffield.

'Q is and remains a hypothesis.' So wrote Austin Farrer in 1955 in an article, which may fairly be regarded as initiating the developments in the Q debate over the past two decades or so. Farrer's view was that Q is an unnecessary hypothesis and should be dropped. Recently, articles and studies touching on all aspects of the Q question have appeared regularly. Further, the scope of the question has broadened into the area of redaction criticism, in an effort to show Q as having particular theological motifs and interests. In this respect, it is important to recognize that studies in the theology of Q are part of the wider search for the theology of the evangelists, away from 'solutions' of the synoptic problem in purely literary terms. Nevertheless, Q regarded as an hypothesis necessary for a proper solution of the literary relationship between the synoptic gospels is still very much part of the contemporary debate. This article will take a look at Q from three angles. First, we must see how Q is faring as one of the main planks in the classical two (or four) documents solution as set out by Streeter in 1924. This will lead to a look at the revision of the hypothesis of double development with Q and seek a solution in terms of direct borrowing between Matthew and Luke, or more complex solutions involving multiple sources. Finally, we will give some account of recent attempts to establish Q as a theological document.

For an exposition of the traditional solution of the synoptic problem, one of the best available is that of W. G. Kümmel in his Introduction to the New Testament pp. 52ff. It is vital to understand that Q does not stand on its own, but alongside its twin hypothesis of the priority of Mark. Thus Kümmel sets out the reasons for accepting Markan priority before going on to the Q question (pp. 63ff.). Indeed he notes that C. H. Weisse in 1838 linked the idea of a common sources theory for Matthew and Luke to the priority of Mark, thus carrying on the line of research opened up by Schleiermacher and Lachmann. H. J. Holtzmann in 1863 took Wiesse's proposals in its fullest form to provide an important milestone in the development of the two-document hypothesis, eventually abandoning the Ur-Markus theory in favour of Matthew's and Luke's knowledge of canonical Q.

Kümmel, with admirable clarity, rehearses the reasons why Q must be a written source coped independently by Matthew and Luke and not oral tradition. 1

1. Verbal agreements. These are so close as to compel reliance upon a common written source in some instances (e.g. Mt. 3: 7–10; 7: 7–11; 11: 4–6; 12: 43–45; 24: 45–51 par). Elsewhere, such agreement is 'rather slight' (e.g. Mt. 10: 26–33; 25: 14–30 par) and Kümmel offers no explanation for the wide variations in verbal correspondence. He contents himself by remarking that 'the common vocabulary in all the sections is over fifty per cent, which can hardly be accounted for by simple oral tradition.'

2. The argument from order. This is an important line of investigation which for reasons of space it is not possible to develop and the diagram is not very helpful. The force of the case may however be gauged by referring to V. Taylor's presentation of it in his New Testament Essays;2 his arrangement of the Matthew material in five columns corresponding to the discourses. The result does indicate some clear sequences and leads Taylor to claim that 'the manifest signs of a common order in Matthew and Luke raise the hypothesis to a remarkable degree of cogency short only of demonstration'. This is extravagant and Taylor's case is slightly weakened by the omission of several passages where verbal resemblance is slight. Taylor justifies these omissions by explaining that 'if in these passages, Q and another source overlapped, it is reasonable to expect that the order of Q as reflected in Matthew and Luke may be obscured.'

3. The presence of doublets and double traditions (double traditions are verses presented by both evangelists, but in different forms; doublets are verses which one evangelist presents twice). In addition to passages like the mission charge which Luke reports twice, Luke 9 and 10, in parallel with Mark 6: 7–12 and Matthew 10 respectively, there are a string of sayings of Jesus which appear twice in Mark and Matthew, Luke, e.g. 'He who has, to him will be given' (Mt: 13: 12– Mk: 4: 25– Lk: 8: 18, cf. Mt: 25: 29– Lk: 19: 26).

Compared to this evidence of doublets and double traditions Mark presents a single doublet (Mk. 9: 35; 10: 43ff). From this, Kümmel deduces that Matthew and Luke must have used a second source in addition to Mark, the linguistic agreements demonstrating that this source was in Greek. We find a similar defence of the traditional Q in J. A. Fitzmyer's contribution in Jesus and Man's Hope,3 where he rejects A. M. Farrer's theory of Luke's dependence on Matthew. He makes the following points:

1. No reason is given for Luke failing to utilise Matthew's additions (e.g. Lk. 5: 3–Mt: 4: 18; Lk. 5: 27–Mt: 9: 9).

2. Why does Luke break up Matthew's sermons, incorporating some of it in his own sermon on the plain, and scattering the rest in different contexts in his travel narrative? However we account for Luke's redactional activity, the explanation that he has rearranged material from Matthew is the least convincing.

3. Apart from 3: 7–9, 17 and 4: 2–13 Luke never quotes Matthew's doublet, but quotes from the 'double tradition' with the same Markan context as in Matthew. If such material derives from Matthew, it is surprising that no other Q material occurs in the same Markan context, which are frequently very appropriate. Despite the widely differing contexts, Fitzmyer notes the underlying order of Q as shown by Taylor.

The difficulties in delineating the extent of Q are recognized by both writers, but such lack of agreement does not justify the abandonment of Q as a written source. But of course the problem does not end there. We have already noted that Taylor excludes certain passages from his reconstruction of Q because of the possibility that Q and another source overlapped. The extent of such overlap cannot be determined by those passages which weaken a particular hypothesis as Taylor does here. We will have occasion to refer to this again later.

Again, scant regard has been paid to the wider variations in verbal resemblance. Taylor appeals to conflation of M (special Matthean material) and Q. At different times, translation variants from Aramaic, different Q recensions, as well as Q being sometimes vacillating between an oral and written tradition, are accounted for by these variations. The problems are as difficult as ever and Kümmel is over-confident in regarding certain points as 'decisive' for the existence of a definite Q.

Attempts are made from time to time to establish the existence of Q by refusing hypotheses which seek to show direct contact between Matthew and Luke. This was Farrer's purpose in the article cited at the outset. He wrote that the hypothesis of Luke using Matthew and Mark was possible, but not compelling, and the hypothesis of a common source be considered.

In 1965, the challenge was taken up by F. G. Downing in an article4 which examined some key passages to test Farrer's proposition that Luke used Mark as a framework with which to fit material he had quarried from Matthew's additions to Mark. The passages selected are those where Matthew has apparently conflated Markan material with similar, but distinct material of his own. He considers in detail the passage from the Beelzebub controversy (Mt: 12: 22–45; Mk: 3: 20–29; Lk: 11: 14–26; 10: 6–43–45) with shorter studies of the Baptist narrative (Mt: 3: 1–4–11 par); the sending out of the twelve (Mt: 9: 37–10: 16 par), and The Synoptical Parables (Mt: 23: 24–26 par). In the case of the Beelzebub controversy, Downing notes that Luke does not use Mark where Matthew has taken him over more or less intact, but only follows Matthew where he adds new material to Mark or large sections of it. This is it is concluded that Luke did not know Matthew's use of Mark for no convincing reason can be suggested for Luke's rejection of material taken over intact from Mark. A similar pattern is found in the other passages.

Downing's treatment of Farrer must be pronounced successful in refuting the idea that Luke used Matthew in the manner suggested, but he does not thereby prove that Matthew's extra material without the Markan addition is Q or Q + M. He merely shews that on Farrer's argument, Luke has for some inexplicable reason decided to ignore pure Mark, which is most unlikely from what we know of Luke's high regard for Mark as a source.

We have already noted that the priority of Mark and Matthew's and Luke's use of Q are twin hypotheses. With regard to the former of these it has long been held as axiomatic that the order of the whole of Mark except what is peculiar

2 The Four Gospels (MacMillan).
3 ET 1975 (SCM).

* Towards the Rehabilitation of Q' NTS11 pp. 169–181.
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Attempts have made from time to time to establish the existence of Q by refuting hypotheses which seek to show direct contact between Matthew and Luke. This was Farrer's purpose in the article cited at the outset. He wrote that the hypothesis of Luke using a Q written source is not an alternative to the hypothesis of a common source be considered. In 1965, the challenge was taken up by F. G. Downing in an article in which examined some key passages to test Farrer's proposition that Luke used Mark as a framework with which to fit material he had quarried from Matthew's additions to Mark. The passages selected are those where Matthew has apparently conformed Markan material with similar, but distinct material of his own. He considers in detail the Markan Sayings controversy (Matthew 12: 22–45; Mk. 3: 20–29; Lk. 11: 14–26; 10: 6: 43–45) with shorter studies of the Baptist narrative (Mt. 3: 1–4: 11 pa); the ending out of the twelve (Mt. 9: 36ff; 10: 16 pa); and The Synoptic Parables (Mt. 25: 26–26). In the case of the Beelzebub controversy, Downing notes that Luke does not use Mark where Matthew has taken him over more or less intact, but only follows Matthew where he adds new material to Mark for larger purposes. In this it is concluded that Luke did not know Matthew's use of Mark for no convincing reason can be suggested for Luke's rejection of material taken over intact from Mark. A similar pattern is found in the other passages.

Downing's treatment of Farrer must be pronounced successful in refuting the idea that Luke used Matthew in the manner suggested, but he does not thereby prove that Matthew's extra material without the Markan addition is Q or Q + M. He merely shows that on Farrer's argument, Luke had for some inexplicable reason decided to ignore pure Mark, which is most unlikely from what we know of Luke's high regard for Mark as a source. We know that the priority of Mark and Matthew's and Luke's use of Q are twin hypotheses. With regard to the former of these it has long been held as axiomatic that the order of the whole of Mark except what is peculiar to Q was supplied by Q. However, it is argued that the whole chain of inference is based on the assumption that Mark was written after Matthew. Therefore, the priority of Q over Mark can be questioned. In conclusion, the author suggests that further research is needed to clarify the relationship between Q and the gospels.

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to him is confirmed by either Matthew or Luke and the greater part of it by both. The corollary to this is with regard to Q that a parallel passage in the triple tradition is never immediately followed by both, rather a separation or discourse common to these two alone. Streeter 8 used the phenomena of order to show not only that Mark was the best representative of the original gospel, but also that Matthew and Luke used Mark and Q independently.

The data relating to order have had a stronger influence on the two-document hypothesis and therefore on Q than any other. It is this plank in the traditional approach which has been under strong attack recently. In an article entitled ‘The argument from order and the relationship between Matthew and Luke’, 9 E. P. Sanders, following up his earlier book on The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition, 10 subjects this axiom to minute examination. He points out the difficulties, even the impossibilities, between Matthew and Luke on a point of order which cannot be attributed to their independent use of Mark and Q will raise the possibility of some contact between Matthew and Luke. Verbal markers which are found in Luke and against Mark are treated separately.

The crucial question is what constitutes an agreement in order? Earlier statements of the argument from order dealt only with full pericopes as found in Mark and Matthew. But this corresponds with the essential biographical outline of Jesus’s life. But once the question becomes the literate one of possible contact between Matthew and Luke it is clear that these arbitrary divisions are no longer relevant, even larger pericopes are broken up, small points where Matthew and Luke agree are as difficult to explain as large ones. Here is one example: Matthew 11:10 par Luke 7:27 place the idou apostoloi quotation concerning John the context of John’s question and Jesus’ testimony to him. Mark 1:1 places it in the context of John’s preaching. 11

Sanders also rejects the suggestion that in some instances where Matthew and Luke place Q material in the same place in the Markan outline, this passage was also in Q. Agreements between Matthew and Luke under these circumstances would be caused by their following the order of Q. (e.g. Mt. 17:28; Mk. 3:7-9). Sanders lists the following passages in Mark which are inexplicably unsupported by either Matthew or Luke and Luke 1:4; 11:11; 15:19; 13:33-37; 3:13-19; 6:1-6a; 4:23; 12:34; Mk. 11:25; 1:4-6; 9:41; 3:49b. 12 He then proceeds to show that the assurance with which it is usually said that Matthew and Luke were independent of each other rests on the assertion that they never agree together in such a way that it cannot be explained by reference to their independent use of Mark and Q. When we note the number of instances where they do, the assurance we have felt in the traditional hypothesis must be correspondingly weakened. 13

With this brief discussion of Sanders’s work, we have reached the point where we must examine the question of whether the revival of alternative hypotheses offers better possibilities for the solution of the synoptic problem.

It is worth noting here that there has always been an undercurrent of opposition to the two-document hypothesis by defenders of rival hypotheses which place Matthew first. 14 Early in this century E. W. Luminis and H. G. Jameson 15 sounded an alarm that the reigning two-document hypothesis ignored the fact that the Greek New Testament was an Augustinian solution, which has been given a further airing in recent years by B. C. Butler. 16 The hypothesis propounded by Augustine held that the order of the gospels was Matthew, Mark, Luke, to reflect the order of the four Evangelists. 17 When Turner in 1924 declared that ‘so long as it is supposed that there is a residue of agreements between Matthew and Luke Mark in matter taken from Mark ... so long will research into the Synoptic Problem be hampered and a final solution be delayed’. 18

The study of the minor agreements has become something of a ‘growth industry’. Recently a full-scale study of this question has appeared which makes no longer the highly specialized Griesbach hypothesis, which sees Matthew as a source for Luke with Mark using both.

The name which is probably most familiar to students of the synoptic problem in current debate is that of John’s hypothesis or the Synoptic Problem—a critical analysis 19 sought to reopen the whole question of synoptic relationships with the aim of establishing the Griesbach hypothesis as the only one which satisfied the requirements of the data. But, anybody who reads Farmer hoping for an exhaustive discussion of Griesbach will discover that the first 200 pages are taken up with a critical history of the treatment of the synoptic problem from the 18th century to the present. Farmer then leaves his reader to get to the treatment of covering some 84 pages along Griesbachian lines including a necessarily abbreviated chapter entitled ‘Notes for a History of the Redaction of Synoptic Tradition in Mark’ (50 pages). The reader must judge for himself, but my judgment on the value of Farmer’s book lies in the fascinating historical section. Farmer skillfully, but without rancour, exposes the foibles and lack of objectivity at crucial turning points in the debate. In this writer’s view, the best two chapters are: ‘The English Endorsement and Modification of the Two-Document Hypothesis’ and 4: ‘An Analysis of Streeter’s contribution to the Two-Document Hypothesis’. In the main reasons why the Griesbach hypothesis has aroused such interest in recent years is the failure of the two-document solution to deal with the problem of the so-called ‘Minor Agreements’. These are the many instances where Matthew agreements exist only to Luke and not to Mark. Turner in 1924 declared that ‘so long as it is supposed that there is a residue of agreements between Matthew and Luke Mark in matter taken from Mark ... so long will research into the Synoptic Problem be hampered and a final solution be delayed’. 20

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It is worth noting here that there has always been an undercurrent of opposition to the two-document hypothesis by defenders of rival hypotheses which place Matthew first. Early in this century E. W. Luminis and H. G. James sounded an alarm that the reigning two-document hypothesis ignored the originality of Matthew and attempted to bring into the Eight Drastic Augustinian solution, which has been given a further airing in recent years by B. C. Butler. The hypothesis propounded by Augustine held that the order of the gospels was Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. The reasons given for this order were that Matthew is the others and that Mark was the epitomiser of Matthew. Recently, dissatisfaction with Q, fed by a growing quantity of data which seriously undermines it, has led to a considerable revival of interest in the Augustinian hypothesis. Such a revival is the Griesbach hypothesis, which sees Matthew as a source for Luke with Mark using both.

The name which is probably most familiar to students of the synthetic problem in current debate of the major arguments is that of Goyon and the Synoptic Problem— a critical analysis sought to reopen the whole question of synthetic relationships with the aim of establishing the Griesbach hypothesis as the only one which satisfied the requirements of the data. But, anybody who reads Farmer hoping for an exhaustive discussion of Griesbach will discover that the first 200 pages are taken up with a critical history of the treatment of the synthetic problem from the 18th century to the present. Farmer then leads back to his original argument in his discovery covering some 84 pages along Griesbachian lines including a necessarily abbreviated chapter entitled 'Notes for a History of the Redaction of Synoptic Tradition in Mark' (50 pages). The reader must judge for himself, the important judgment value of Farmer's book lies in the fascinating historical section. Farmer skillfully, but without rancour, exposes the foibles and lack of objectivity at crucial turning points in the debate. In this writer's view, the best two chapters are: 'The English Endorsement and Modification of the Two-Document Hypothesis' and 4: 'An Analysis of Streeter's contribution to the Two-Document Hypothesis'.

The main reason why the Griesbach hypothesis has aroused such interest in recent years is the failure of the two-document solution to deal with the problem of the so-called 'Minor Agreements'. These are the many instances where Matthew and Luke agree almost to the last word. Turner in 1924 declared that 'so long as it is supposed that there is a residue of agreements between Matthew and Luke in matter taken from Mark...so long will research into the synoptic problem be hampered and a final solution be delayed'.

The study of the minor agreements has become something of a 'growth industry'. Recently a full-scale study of this question has appeared edited by C. R. Porter. It has as its aim the collection of complete data relating to the minor agreements with an introductory essay on the way the problem has been treated in the past.

One of the interesting facts which emerges from the concerning observations is that some scholars are able to combine an acceptance of the priority of Mark with the abandonment of Q. This was Farrer's position, but he was vulnerable to attack because he was proposing a general hypothesis which was exposed at many points. But he was followed by others who looked at particular instances of agreement between Matthew and Luke. N. Turner in a contribution to the Oxford Congress of 1957 replying to an article by E. L. Bradby discusses some Markan passages produced by Bradby (Mk. 2: 26; 4: 4, 9, 19, 20; 6: 7; 8: 31, 34, 35, 36). Turner is relying upon arguments from style when he writes: 'There cannot be any other reason for that dependency to explain these apparently irrelevant transitions in style and grammar...Because these agreements are so often inconsistent with St Luke's style elsewhere, it is more likely that Luke depends on Matthew than Matthew depends on Luke'.

R. T. Simpson in his article 'The Major Agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark' discusses three passages: Mark 1: 13; 12: 28-31; 3: 22-27. As a general proposition Simpson writes: 'The more strongly we plead this case for Q and the means of explaining all those resemblances between Matthew and Luke which are not attributable to their common use of Mark, the more we undermine the theory of the priority of Mark and the more we undermine the theory of Luke's "improvements" of Mark, the more the significance of those minor agreements which are such a difficulty for the defender of Q will be enhanced'.

The crux of Simpson's argument is that in the papyrus fragments of Mark, Luke and Matthew we simply add to Mark, but also improve it, often in precisely the same way. The choice of words carried with it a value judgment, but the essential point still stands when it is noted that there is a close correspondence between Luke's and Matthew's version of the Mark passage. In fact the Q material cannot stand on its own. Simpson notes the vote face by Streeter on this point between the publication of the Oxford Studies (1911) and The Four Gospels (1924), in an article on the dependence of Mark and his conclusion that 'once this is conceded, then the case for believing that the major agreements could have been produced only as a result of St Luke's use of an edited version of Matthew becomes convincing'.

Simpson's analysis of the three passages cited and the conclusions drawn are not in fact equally convincing. The best evidence for Luke's knowledge of Matthew is found in the pericopes dealing with the appearance and preaching of the Baptist. As an example, Luke 3: 16-17 contains two improvements of Mark which are substantially parallel in

10 'In Defence of Q,' ExpT 68 (1956-7), pp. 315-318.
13 How Luke was written (Cambridge, 1915).
14 The origin of the Synoptic Gospels (Blackwell, 1922).
Matthew. Mark's rather clumsy phrase eγερεματισμον hymas hydati is replaced by the more stylish eγερεματισμον hymas and the saying is moved to a more emphatic position. Again the Q material in Matthew is of a parallel tradition. Thus an expansion of the Markan narrative. Simpson believes that the independent alteration of Mark in this way must be more than coincidental. More striking however is the fact that the material appended to Mark 1: 5 begins with the pronoun which refers back to the subject used to take from Mark.

Simpson's final conclusion is that 'either... Mark knew and modified Q (or even Matthew) or... Luke knew Matthew as well as Mark. In every case we have considered, it is Mark who appears to give the more primitive version and it is obvious that the simplest solution to the problem is that Luke made use of Matthew.' He is careful to say that with regard to the possibility that Mark is greatly strengthened that Matthew was one of Luke's sources rather than an original solution. However, Simpson did not consider the older view of overlapping of sources, and further, by using the original version of Mark, he ruled out the Griesbach solution. It is to this that we must briefly now turn.

The Griesbach solution to synoptic relationships can on the face of it eliminate just those difficulties which Simpson mentions for his own. The solution is that Matthew and Luke are independent two-document solution, especially of course the minor agreements. Rather less important for advocates of Mark, however is the claim that there is no need to have recourse to any theory of overlapping sources. Thus D. L. Dungan writes: 'The existence of Q has always been essential to the argument for Mark's priority—precisely because it is a two-document solution in describing Mark's method and purpose is put as follows: Mark was 'guided by the literary purpose not to deviate from the text to which his predecessors bore concurrent testimony'.

Simpson's difficulties lie in the way of accepting the Griesbach solution, but if we take seriously the evidence often presented that in this and other passages there are two separate versions, independent of each other, we are back to discussion of overlapping sources and in the present writer's opinion, the existence of an independent source drawn upon by Matthew and Luke which overlapped with Mark is still the most probable explanation of the phenomena.'

One thing at least is clear from our discussion up to this point and that is that Q is a controversial as ever. Moreover, it is probably true to say that the central question is whether we may speak of a meaningfully understood Q as a documentary source at all or whether we must rest content with the vaguer idea of Q as a strand of tradition, the origin of which can never be established—it is merely a label for common material. Some assessment of the status of Q remains to be made.

Beneath the swirling waters of controversy, it appears to us that certain factors persist rock-like which in our view tip the balance in favour of Q as a written source. Meier argues that Q was written by Matthew and Luke independently in addition to Mark.

1. The existence of common material requires some explanation. F. G. Downing has given convincing reasons why Farrer's solution is unacceptable. This has put the onus on those who wish to dispense with Q to come forward with good grounds for doing so.

2. Sir John Hawkins at the beginning of this century in his contribution to Oxford Studies in the New Testament put up the Q material into three classes. Class A—passages very probably derived from Q are almost twice as long as classes B and C put together (i.e. those passages where derivation from Q is less likely). It seems to us that between these two extremes there is an independent use of Q by Matthew and Luke when the data given by Hawkins is taken in conjunction with Luke's odd editorial policy if we wish to make Matthew Luke's source. This latter point is still a matter of debate.

3. The oral hypothesis is no longer taken seriously and Hawkins in the article mentioned suggests powerful reasons why this is so. Thus, we are concerned with some kind of literary dependence parallel and whilst the revision of the Griesbach hypothesis is welcome in that it draws attention to weaknesses in the traditional Q hypothesis, it raises too many fresh problems of its own to provide a decisively convincing alternative.

The debate is refreshing vigorous and shows no signs of abating as yet. In particular, the Baptist material poses real difficulties for traditional Q supporters. We now turn to the third main area of importance in New Testament canon, namely the question of Q as a theological work. Such an undertaking is beset with

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18 See Farrer's comment op. cit., p. 284. 'Whenever Mark undertook to conflate or combine material from one of his sources with parallel material from another, he tended to type-mark the result in the whole text, such as 1 K 2: 16-18, which he still had the material of Q already existed a close relationship of literary dependence' (p. 285).

19 See F. Neirynck: Duality in Mark (Louvain, 1972), p. 52.

20 Lohmeyer in Das Evangelium des Matthäus (Gottingen, 1967), p. 216 put forward another theory of the Markan composition which the revisers of the Griesbach hypothesis is welcome in that it draws attention to weaknesses in the traditional Q hypothesis, it raises too many fresh problems of its own to provide a decisively convincing alternative.

For an explanation of the Synoptic situation by a classification of the material as to its dependence on Matthew and Luke SNTS Monograph No. 32 (Cambridge, 1978).
Matthew. Mark's rather clumsy phrase egō ἐγώ εὐπατρίσματα ἵματα χαράδρας is replaced by the more stylish egō men (en) ἤδιτα  δαπατιότῳ εὐπατρίσματα and the saying is moved to a more emphatic position. Again the Q material in Luke is paralleled. However, this is an expansion of the Markan narrative. Simpson believes that the independent alteration of Mark in this way must be more than coincidental. More striking however is the fact that the material appended to Mark 1:5 begins with the pronoun ἦν, and reiterates Mark, and he refers back to the subject context taken from Mark.

Simpson's final conclusion is that either: Mark knew and modified Q (or even Matthew) or . . . Luke knew Matthew as well as Mark. In every case we have considered, it is Mark who appears to give the more primitive version and it is obvious that the simplest solution to the problem is that Luke made use of Matthew.58 He is careful to say that while it is possible that Matthew is greatly strengthened that Matthew was one of Luke's sources rather than offering an overall solution. However, Simpson did not consider the older view of overlapping of sources, and further, by preferring Q over Mark and the original version, he ruled out the Griesbach solution. It is to this that we must briefly turn now.

The Griesbach solution to synoptic relationships can on the face of it eliminate just those difficulties which Simpson believes are found in the other two solutions. The Griesbach view is that Matthew and Luke are independent of each other, the narratives are two separate documents, especially of course the minor agreements. Hardy less important for advocates of Luke, however is the claim that there is no need to have recourse to any theory of overlapping sources. The problem is: the difficulty in describing Mark's method and purpose is put as follows: Mark was 'guided by the literary purpose not to deviate from the text to which his predecessors bore concurrent testimony'.59

Here Simpson's difficulties lie in the way of accepting the Griesbach solution, but if we take seriously the evidence often presented that in this and other passages there are two separate versions, independent of each other, we are back to the question of overlapping sources and in the present writer's opinion, the existence of an independent source drawn upon by Matthew and Luke which overlapped with Mark is still the most probable explanation of the phenomena.60

One thing at least is clear from our discussion up to this point and that is that the Q question is as controversial as ever. Moreover, it is probably true to say that the central question is whether we may speak meaningfully of Q as a document whose contents vary at all or whether we must rest content with the vager idea of Q as a strand of tradition, the origin of which can never be established — it is merely a label for common material. Some assessment of the status of Q might make another essay.

Beneath the swirling waters of controversy, it appears to us that certain factors persist rock-like which in our view tip the balance in favour of Q as a written document whose sources were used by Matthew and Luke independently in addition to Mark.

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We now turn to the third main area of importance in New Testament studies, the concern with the question of Q as a theological work. Such a undertaking is beset w...
difficulties, not the least of which is scholarly agreement on the extent of Q. The danger of circularity is never absent. Nonetheless, the work done in this area does suggest that in broad terms the material labelled Q possesses certain distinctive characteristics. W. W. Willard in his important book *The Sayings of Jesus*24 believed that Luke preserved to a fair degree the order of Q and further that it is possible to uncover an outline of Pre-Q (and Pre-M) tradition consisting of the following elements: (1) Jesus' Preaching; (2) Mission Charge; (3) Against the Pharisees; (4) Eschatological Speech.

The consideration of Q as a distinctive theological work is of course part of the larger enterprise called 'Redaction Criticism'25 It itself a process or rather a stage in the traditio-historical study of the gospels. For a useful introduction to and survey of redaction criticism, readers are referred to J. Rohde's *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus.*26 For the purposes of this article, it is assumed that the reader is familiar with the developments in Form and Redaction Criticism and we will proceed straight to the application of Redaction Criticism to the Q text.

Reference has already been made to the work of T. W. Manson who pointed out that Q carries certain emphases. His explanation as to why Q lacked a passion account was simple—the community which used this collection already knew it. This is as relevant now in the post-Easter situation as it was in Jesus' lifetime. The logical conclusion is that the Q community is found in its use of the Son of Man title and the related statements of the nature of the disciples mission. Another point worth noting is that Tödt's treatment of Q and his point is that the expectation of the Q community is found in its use of the Son of Man title.

Tödt, who was referred to as 'the present' by the Q community, was not new to the early church. It lies in equating the Son of Man and the Q Text.

Tödt's book is a long one and we have done little more than point to its significance in relation to the 'redactional' question. That there were other communities of which he worked on may also have the same historical significance that metholodical. He does not for instance suggest anything more original than a Palestinian provenance for Q, and the idea that the Q community gathered in the name of Jesus or that its Q collection was Q in the same way it was Q.

It is worth mentioning here that W. D. Davies also presented a critique of the view that Q was preserved primarily for horatology reasons in his book *The Serfing of the Sermon on the Mount,* quite independently of Tödt. Among the reasons given for denying the horatological character of Q is the fact that, as recent studies have shown, catechesis was the New Testament's main medium of instruction. If any, parallels to Q. For example, Davies does not find it significant that Q gives the response to the question 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife?' as a question and not as a statement. He concludes that Q's answer to this question is not a response to the Pharisees' question 25 (1937).

An attempt to translate the German Redaktionserzählgeschichte.

26 SCM (1968).

27 The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition (SCM) ET, 1962.

28 Ibid., p. 247 and R. Bultmann Theology of the NT 1, p. 34.


30 The see the section on John the Baptist as an exhortation to avoid the sect of his followers (Mt: 3: 11—Lk 3: 16) but as a proclamation of the impending crisis which John had announced: 'The original form for the response to the Spirit. 11" He will baptize you with fire..." The sense of the saying is not that John's baptism is the preliminary to something better, but that it is the last chance of escaping something very much worse, namely, thecoming of judgment. Davies observes this phase of crisis through much of the Q material and concludes that the ethical teaching in Q expresses the total final demand that God lays upon men in Christ. It therefore follows that the teaching of Jesus is not just with justice be characterized as catachetical, if by catachetical is meant elementary instruction given to candidates for admission into the Church at baptism 41.

These works of Tödt and Davies mark the beginning of what was soon to become a stream of studies in which redaction-critical methods were to be brought to bear on Q. Amongst the important names in the late 60's and early 70's are those of D. Lührmann28 and P. Hoffman.29

The Lührmann approach is the distinction made by Bultmann between collecting and editing. Is it possible to discern within the Q material a purpose which goes beyond merely collecting material according to certain laws of transmission? Lührmann does this by a redactional examination of the material. The two-source hypothesis is also a way of conducting his analysis. He has it that the New Testament tradition originally consisted of independent units circulating according to local need and circumstances in an attempt to harmonize these warring traditions (formulations) at all levels of the tradition. 30 As an indication of the provenance of Q, he believes that Q presupposes the Gentile mission and that the final editing cannot be earlier than AD 50 or 60 in the Helenistic Community. As regards the form of Q, Lührmann agrees with Robinson's 'logos sophian, but not that the form of Q as such is gnosticizing.

31 Ibid., p. 369 (Citing T. W. Manson).

32 Ibid., p. 185.

33 Ibid., p. 386.

34 See also particularly J. M. Robinson 'On the Gattung of Q' in *The Future of our Religious Past—Essays in honour of Bultmann*, pp. 56-58.

35 Die Redaktion der Logiennlegte (WMA NT 33: Neutestamentliche Forschungen) (1965). See the valuable new study by D. H. Hillyer in NT (MM & S, 1979) who levels very just criticism against this view. 32

36 Die Form Von Q als Solche gnostiorsiert sein (ibid., p. 9).

37 What then of the theology of Q? Here, Lührmann believes that for the Q community the most important redactional motif is the contrast between Jesus and the disciples on the one hand and Israel on the other. The separation is absolute; for Israel the separate is only judgment. Historically, the leitmotiv is that the community continues the proclamation of Jesus, in particular the judgment. Jesus is not the one proclaimed, but on the contrary, the content of the proclamation is the community's own judgment to save his community.34 Hyario Kyrion occurs as Chrestological titles in addition to Son of Man. There are few explicit Old Testament citations but instead references, allusions to Old Testament narratives, particularly those which accompany mimatory words (Drohworten), underlining Q's purpose of admonition to watchfulness as judgment approaches.

The aim of this study is to try to answer the following questions, has any relationship to Q?

1. 'Jesus and this generation' subdivided into:
(a) the question of John the Baptist (Lk: 7: 18-35 and 3: 7-9, 17); the Beelzebul controversy and report of the Master (Mt: 12: 24-27; 21: 23-27); discourse against the Pharisees (Lk: 11: 39-52);

Luke 7: 18-35 is given extended treatment by Lührmann, which is worth sketching as an illustration of his method and conclusions. Basically, Lührmann concludes that the rector of Q has the whole as a task, was together with Jesus and John the Baptist with the hand of the rector seen most clearly in verses 31-35. This is where he introduces the reference to 'this generation' and provides an interpretation for the parable of the children in the market place, in which Jesus' point is no longer Jesus versus John, but rather Jesus and John versus 'this generation'. Lührmann finds the same concern elsewhere in Q. Lührmann with others believes that the parable of verses 31f. probably referred to people's reactions to themselves—they liked neither his call to repentance nor his invitation to joy. Hence the application in verses 33f. to John and Jesus is secondary. It is argued that there is some discrepancy between the parables. A parable is a kind of allegory. Parables are given without interpretation and that the reference to the Son of Man and Wisdom reflects the concerns of the early Church (p. 29f.). However, the parable as parable (rather than viewing it as an
difficulties, not the least of which is scholarly agreement on the extent of Q. The danger of circularity is never absent. Nonetheless, the work done in this area does suggest that in broad terms the material labelled Q possesses certain distinctive characteristics.24 W. W. Warfield, in his important book The Sayings of Jesus25 believed that Luke preserved to a fair degree the order of Q and further that it is possible to uncover an outline of Pre-Q (and Pre-M) tradition consisting of the following elements. (1) Jesus' Preaching; (2) Mission charge; (3) Against the Pharisees; (4) Eschatological Speech.

The consideration of Q as a distinctive theological work is of course part of the larger enterprise called 'Redaction Criticism'26 itself an aspect or rather a stage in the tradition-historical study of the gospels. For a useful introduction to and survey of redaction criticism, readers are referred to J. Rohde's Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus.27 For the purposes of this article, it is assumed that the reader is familiar with the developments in Form and Redaction Criticism and we will proceed straight to the application of Redaction Criticism to Q.

Reference has already been made to the work of T. W. Manson who pointed out that Q carries certain emphases. His explanation as to why Q lacked a passion account was simple—the community which used this collection already knew it. This is as relevant now in the post-Easter situation as it was in Jesus' lifetime. The character of Q is determined by the imminence of God's reign and not by the passion kerygma. Tödt accepts the future Son of Man saying as authentic and his point is that the expectation of the Q community is found in its use of the Son of Man title and the related statements of the nature of the disciples' mission. Another point worth noting is Tödt's treatment of Q's function. He sees the function made by Bultmann between collecting and editing. Is it possible to discern within the Q material a purpose which goes beyond merely collecting material according to certain laws of transmission? Literature with such a reconstructive purpose is discernible. The two-source hypothesis is assumed as is also the form-critical axiom that the synoptic tradition originally consisted of independent units circulating according to local need and circumstance. The purpose of Q was to ensure that there were common prayer formulations (inventions) at all levels of the tradition.28 As an indication of the provenance of Q, he believes that Q presupposes the Gentile mission and that the final editing cannot be earlier than AD 50 or 60 in the Hellenistic area. As regards the form of Q, Lührmann agrees with Robinson's logion sophn, but not that the form of Q as such is gnosticising.29

24 London (1937).
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These works of Tödt and Davies mark the beginning of what was to become a stream of studies in which redaction-critical methods were to be brought to bear on Q.32 Amongst the important names in the late 60's and early 70's are those of D. Lührmann33 and P. Hoffman.34

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The aim of this study is a detailed analysis of Q passages classified under three major headings: (1) 'Jesus and this generation' subdivided into: (a) the question of the John the Baptist (Lk: 7: 18-35 and 3: 7-9, 17); the Beelzebul controversy and a sign of this time (Mt: 12: 24-31); (b) discourse against the Pharisees (Lk: 11: 39-52); (2) 'The Community' (Lk: 2: 23-29; 6: 20-49; 7: 1-10; 9: 57-60; 10: 12-13, 15-21, 24-34); (3) 'Eschatology' (Lk: 12: 39-40, 42-46; 19: 12-27; 17: 24, 26-30, 34-35, 42).

Luke 7:18-35 is given extended treatment by Lührmann, which is worth sketching as an illustration of his method and conclusions. Basically, Lührmann concludes that the redactor of Q has added together material which was associated with Jesus and John the Baptist with the hand of the redactor seen most clearly in verses 31-35. This is where he introduces the reference to 'this generation' and provides an interpretation for the parable of the Children in the Market Place, in which the point is no longer Jesus versus John, but rather Jesus and John versus 'this generation'. Lührmann finds the same concern elsewhere in Q. Lührmann with others believes that the parable of verses 31f. probably referred to people's reactions to Jesus himself—they liked neither his call to repentance nor his invitation to joy. Hence the application in verses 33f. to John and Jesus is secondary. It is argued that there is some discrepancy between the parables of Luke 7 and 16, and that the latter parables are given without interpretation and that the reference to the Son of Man and Wisdom reflect the concerns of the early Church (p. 29f.). However, the parable as parable (rather than viewing it as an

36 My translation.
allegory) fits quite well with the explanation and it cannot be ruled out that the parable had an application from the start.44

Space does not permit further comment on Lührmann's work, but since redactional studies of a postapocalyptic sort are somewhat uncertain undertakings, it is of some comfort to know that the contemporary study of P. Hoffmann referred to above supports some of Lührmann's main conclusions, particularly with regard to eschatology and the composition of Q. The motifs identified by Lührmann are undoubtedly present, but the question remains open as to whether such motifs are primary and what is their relation to other possible motifs in Q.

Before the Foremost German scene, no survey would be complete without an acknowledgment of the great commentary of S. Schulz.45 Here, we can do no more than note that Schulz takes account of recent studies in German by Tödt, Hoffmann and Lührmann. His interest is the light thrown on the development of early Christianity by a study of Q. He sees the sayings source used by Matthew and Luke as itself the product of two stages of development. The first is marked by post-Easter apocalyptic enthusiasm and the eschatological exegesis of the Fourth Gospel. The early Q is a development of this first stage, as an early Q is a development of this first stage, as an early Q is a development of this first stage. The early Q was the exalted Son of Man and expected judge. To this earlier stage are assigned the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and the injunction to love of enemies and the prohibiting of murder. The Q of the earliest Q community is regarded as a type of 'Hebrew Christianity' and attention is drawn to passages upholding the Torah and disparaging Gentiles and tax collectors. No further study of Q can safely ignore the character of the initial composition and use of Q. The scholarly work is which is by any standards monumental. But, from a conservative standpoint, its sheer massiveness makes one ask whether in the end the author has paid sufficient attention to the question of the original role of Q edition. We are back with the crucial question of criteria. This question becomes very pressing when dealing with the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus and is therefore relevant to the study of Q. Whilst Schulz does not question the absolutely stringent criteria of N. Perrin and others (dissimilarity, coherence and multiple attestation), there is always the danger that the sheer impact of Jesus himself will not be sufficient weight in his desire to locate Q in its appropriate post-Easter milieu.

The French have not been idle in the field of Q

\* See Jeremiah Parables, pp. 160-162.
\* See Spruchquelle der Evangelisten—Zurich, Theologischer Verlag (1972).

studies and we must now look briefly at some recent contributions in French. To maintain continuity, we start with a most useful article by M. Devisch in a volume published in 1972 on Matthean questions.46 He comments on a somewhat provocative and uncertain undertakings, it is of some comfort to know that the contemporary study of P. Hoffmann referred to above supports some of Lührmann's main conclusions, particularly with regard to eschatology and the composition of Q. The motifs identified by Lührmann are undoubtedly present, but the question remains open as to whether such motifs are primary and what is their relation to other possible motifs in Q.

Before the Foremost German scene, no survey would be complete without an acknowledgment of the great commentary of S. Schulz.45 Here, we can do no more than note that Schulz takes account of recent studies in German by Tödt, Hoffmann and Lührmann. His interest is the light thrown on the development of early Christianity by a study of Q. He sees the sayings source used by Matthew and Luke as itself the product of two stages of development. The first is marked by post-Easter apocalyptic enthusiasm and the eschatological exegesis of the Fourth Gospel. The early Q is a development of this first stage, as an early Q is a development of this first stage, as an early Q is a development of this first stage. The early Q was the exalted Son of Man and expected judge. To this earlier stage are assigned the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and the injunction to love of enemies and the prohibiting of murder. The Q of the earliest Q community is regarded as a type of 'Hebrew Christianity' and attention is drawn to passages upholding the Torah and disparaging Gentiles and tax collectors. No further study of Q can safely ignore the character of the initial composition and use of Q. The scholarly work is which is by any standards monumental. But, from a conservative standpoint, its sheer massiveness makes one ask whether in the end the author has paid sufficient attention to the question of the original role of Q edition. We are back with the crucial question of criteria. This question becomes very pressing when dealing with the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus and is therefore relevant to the study of Q. Whilst Schulz does not question the absolutely stringent criteria of N. Perrin and others (dissimilarity, coherence and multiple attestation), there is always the danger that the sheer impact of Jesus himself will not be sufficient weight in his desire to locate Q in its appropriate post-Easter milieu.

The French have not been idle in the field of Q

\* See Jeremiah Parables, pp. 160-162.
\* See Spruchquelle der Evangelisten—Zurich, Theologischer Verlag (1972).

similarity of form. In our view, this question requires more detailed attention before we can accept Kümmel's conclusion that 'the Gospel of Thomas can teach us nothing about the origin and the literary character of Q'.47

The French, it seems go in for solutions of the synthesis which can only be called elaborate, dealing in multiple sources. All that is possible here is a glance at one of the more involved, not to say eccentric, schemes described by P. Benoist and M. E. de Prott.48 This gives an outline of the pre-history of the Q text as a distinction-section commentary on the working out of the theory in practice. The complexity can best be illustrated by referring the reader to the review in JTS 25 p. 485 where an amazing diagram of interrelationships is presented.

Before drawing the threads together, we must mention the recent book by J. A. T. Robinson, Redating the New Testament49 as insofar as it bears upon the question of Q. This book is worth reading as a brilliant tour de force, challenging as it does, many sacred cows in the matter of relative dating. Bishop Robinson is found to be at many points a surprising ally of the conservative cause.

In fact, the whole New Testament was completed by ad 70, which means, of course, that so far as the synoptic gospels are concerned, the time span for gestation and acceptance as source material is drastically reduced. The following chapters will extract will, I hope, what the appetitive: 'My conclusion is that we must be open to seeing that the most primitive state of the triple ... tradition is not consistently or exclusively to be found in any one gospel, to which we must then assign another source, but beyond, the whole discussion was (as well as oral) tradition, underlying each of them, which is sometimes preserved in its original form by Matthew, sometimes by Luke, though most often I would judge by Mark. Hence the importance of the case for the priority of Mark, which is nevertheless oversteated when this document is itself regarded as the foundation document of the other two. The gospels as we have them are to be seen as parallel, though by no means isolated developments of common material for different spheres of the Christian mission, rather than a series of documents standing in simple chronological sequence.46

44 Kümmel Introduction p. 76. See also M. J. Suggs, Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew's Gospel (Har.


He sees Q then as a collection of sayings (rather than stories) but insofar as the gospels grew out of and with the needs of the communities, one must be prepared to allow for cross-fertilization between the on-going traditions.

To conclude this review of Q in recent debate, the following points emerge:

1. The 'fundamental solution' proposed by Streeter, although not abandoned, is under considerable strain. We are witnessing the curious situation, in which, on the one hand, literary criticism is used exclusively to undermine Q, and on the other, large edifices of theological construction are being erected on the assumption that Q is an 'assured result'. This phenomenon demonstrates the inconclusive and indeed circular nature of Q studies. In this writer's view, a Q hypothesis is still the best explanation of the large body of common material in Matthew and Luke, but the indeterminate scope and content of the "hypothetical source Q" remains a major problem.

Further, such problems as the minor agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark mean that the Griesbach challenge cannot be dismissed as a temporary aberration.

2. Although it is difficult to detach from the solid achievements of practitioners of the theology of Q, this writer feels some disquiet at some of the results. Lührmann for example stresses the Q distinction between Jesus (and John the Baptist) and 'this man,' and in so doing Lührmann reflects this situation of the Q community in its proclamation of judgment. The style of the proclamation is thus a community formulation and does not necessarily tell us anything vital about the historical Jesus. Yet in so far as we, indeed visualize the kind of community delineated here by Lührmann and others, where in Lührmann's words 'continuity between Jesus and the Church is provided in eschatology and not in the nature of the gospel community' it is which concerns itself with judgment and not with the saving events of the kerygma?

3. The third and final point arises directly out of the second. Devisch drew attention to studies like that of A. B. Polag who makes a distinction between the theology of the source and the theology of the editor who utilises the source. The identification of theological 'fault lines' (as Devisch calls them) is a very risky business, especially when we are working towards the supposed earlier form of a tradition, upon which late editors have


studies and we must now look briefly at some recent contributions in French. To maintain continuity, we start with a most useful article by M. Devisch in a volume published in 1972 on Matthean questions.88 *Le document source de Matthaei. Problématique Actuelle* is in itself a sound reviewing of existing redactional studies of Q dealing with method, theology and Sitz-im-Leben. Devisch identifies with great clarity the dangers of textual identification, stressing in particular the motif identified by Lührmann is undoubtedly present, but the question remains open as to whether such motifs are primary and what is their relation to other possible motifs in Q.

Before the Forum German scene, no survey would be complete without an acknowledgment of the great commentary of S. Schulz.89 Here, we can do no more than note that Schulz takes account of recent studies in German by Tödt, Hoffmann and Lührmann. His interest is the light thrown on the development of early Christianity by a study of Q. He sees the sayings source used by Matthew and Luke as itself the product of two stages of development. The first is marked by post-Easter apocalyptic enthusiasm, the second by systematic eschatological intensification of the Torah. Jesus was the exalted Son of Man and expected judge. To this earlier stage are assigned the Beatitudes, the Lord’s Prayer, the injunction to love of enemies and the prohibition of divorce. The early Q community is regarded as a type of ‘Hebrew Christianity’ and draws attention to passages upholding the Torah and disparaging Gentiles and tax collectors. No future study of Q can adequately ignore this important work which is by any standards monumental. But, from a conservative standpoint, its sheer massiveness makes one ask whether in the end the author has paid sufficient attention to the question of how the literary form of Jesus himself is seen. We are back with the crucial question of criteria. This question becomes very pressing when dealing with the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus and is therefore relevant to the study of Q. Whilst Schulz does not mention (it is perhaps under the absurdly stringent criteria of N. Perrin and others) (dissimilarity, coherence and multiple attestation), there is always the danger that the sheer impact of Jesus himself will not be given sufficient weight in his desire to locate Q in its appropriate post-Easter milieu.

The French have not been idle in the field of Q similarity of form. In our view, this question requires more detailed attention before we can accept Kümmer’s conclusion that ‘the Gospel of Thomas can teach us nothing about the origin and the literary character of Q’.89

The French, it seems go in for solutions of the synoptic problem which can only be called elaborate, dealing in multiple sources. All that is possible here is a glint at one of the more involved, not so eccentric, schemes described by P. Benoit and M. E. Chevallier.90 This gives an outline of the pre-history of the Thomas source as a distortion of Thomistic commentary on the working out of the theory in practice. The complexity can best be illustrated by referring the reader to the review in JTS 25 p. 485 where an amazing diagram of interrelationships is presented.

Before drawing the threads together, we must mention the recent book by J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*91 as far as it bears upon the question of Q. This book is worth reading as a brilliant tour de force, challenging as it does, many sacred cows in the matter of relative dating. Bishop Robinson is found to be at many points a surprising ally of the conservative cause.92

He is right, however, in thinking that the entire New Testament was completed by AD 70, which means of course, that so far as the synoptic gospels are concerned, the time span for gestation and acceptance as source material is drastically reduced. The following extract will I hope, whet the appetite: ‘My conclusion is that we must be open to seeing that the most primitive state of the triple tradition is not consistently or exclusively to be found in any one gospel, to which we must then assign a higher degree of reliability’,93 Robinson shows that Q as written (as well as oral tradition), underlying each of them, which is sometimes preserved in its original form by Matthew, sometimes by Luke, though most often I would judge by Mark. Hence the danger in the case of the priority of Mark, which is nevertheless overstated when this document is itself regarded as the foundation document of the other two. The gospels as we have them are to be seen as parallel, though by no means isolated developments of common material for different spheres of the Christian mission, rather than a series of documents standing in simple chronological sequence.94


92 Robinson’s vision has had a mixed reception and Devisch is among those who find it untenable. He points to certain differences between Q and Thomas as refraining any connection between them. He points out (rightly) that Thomas has no Christology, where Q does, but when he says that Q, actually is not a gnostic writing where the resuscitated Christ, placed outside the world and of time, reveals the gnostics’95 he is not understanding Robinson correctly. Thomas, according to Robinson, represents a movement away from the synoptic Jesus towards the esoteric Jesus, and outwardly there is a
Book Reviews


I have had cause to study the Samson story in Judges 13–16 from various angles. I recall as a student labouring over anthropological tales, floating traditions, and the contributions of the book of Ruth. How then must I approach this story as part of my devotional study of scripture. I have studied Pirke Avot; but the original Galician–Austrian–Maguschak–Ginsburg’s dissection of the story’s historical value merely on the grounds that you can’t separate a character’s marital relationship with an ‘ideal’ woman, nor can you separate Samson’s experience of the power of physical attraction, sexual lust, and ultimate love.

Chapter three studies Samson’s riddles in the light of the communal character of his marriage. ‘He’ once again riddles ‘them’ to the ‘lion of the village’ must be in first success with the female sex, first in bodily strength, cause of the woman is that she is courted for brawling, and first in mother wit’ (p. 99, quoting Budd in HDB).

Chapter four considers the ‘tragic dimension’ to the story of Samson and the other characters in the story. They make their own decisions, but they are involved with forces much bigger than themselves and somehow play parts in a drama that they didn’t understand. The story reflects the complexity of human events (p. 125) and Samson differs little from classic tragic heroes who cannot turn their backs upon their family, although they know it will destroy them (p. 127). Yet the story also keeps breaking into comedy, alternating between the ludicrous and the whimsical.

Coming finally to the explicit religious perspective of the story, Professor Crenshaw describes Samson as the anti-hero whose real failure is the broken Nazirite vow. Thus, the story’s actual hero is Yahweh himself. ‘He alone can bring Israel once and for all time, for he does not sleep on Delilah’s knee. Neither theme of a broken vow nor even conflict between bodies is central. The narrative attachment adequately characterizes the Samson saga. Important as they are, these themes point beyond themselves to the mystery of the divine counterpart for a barren woman and a fallen hero’ (p. 135).

I have chosen to discuss with Professor Crenshaw. He warns against psychologizing (p. 23), of which he agrees with Marjorie Nicholson in that story of John Milton that Samson Agonistes is guilty (p. 146). But is not a fair amount of Professor Crenshaw’s study of the characters poorly developed. This section can be very complexly, ‘systematically detached from the reductions’; in other words, the evangelists are as far as possible, and the pragmatists who admit the boldness of a man who can so openly flout the customs of his community.

The result of the discussion is quickly told. Jesus’ aim was to ‘extricate us from the Baptist set out to gather the remnants of Israel defeated by the Gentiles, and to bring the Baptist’ (p. 119), and Jesus took up his mantle. Meyer’s stress through the book is the Baptist’s return to the religious intension. It was Israel, not individual Israelites, he came to call. His call brought division in Israel’s response to him, and so the realistic aim of his mission was to call together the remnant for readiness, for the imminent judgment of Israel through the statement of the Gentiles’"