

Looking behind the Curtain: An Introduction to the Volume

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1. Features and Conceptions connected to the Q Hypothesis

This volume contains the proceedings of the conference *The Q-Hypothesis Unveiled: Theological, Church-Political, Socio-Political, and Hermeneutical Issues behind the Sayings Source*, funded by the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), and convened by Markus Tiwald in Essen/Germany, 27–29 August 2019.

After several years in the research on the Sayings Source Q, I felt the urge to look behind the academic issues concerning Q and reflect on our scholarly assumptions on the second source that Matthew and Luke presumedly used. Thus, the focus of this conference was *not* to demonstrate the accuracy or inaccuracy of the Q hypothesis, but to highlight our scholarly projections on the “Sayings Source”. The conference aimed at a somewhat self-critical reflection on our own hypotheses and on the background matters behind these assumptions. It might be a truism that even scholars dedicated to ‘objectivity’ are not completely free from projection and prejudice. Nevertheless, we seldomly discuss the motives behind our research and rarely reflect on fashions and trends that also permeate our scholarly discourses. The discussion as to whether a second source for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke exists certainly is a thorny question in itself, but it often leads to an ideological fervour that goes well beyond what is warranted by its academic object and sometimes assumes quasi-religious dimensions, for proponents as for opponents of Q alike. Here it might be helpful to ‘look behind’ the curtain and reflect on our *theological, church-political, socio-political, and hermeneutical conceptions that lie behind the assumption of Q*. For me as an advocate of the Q hypothesis this is a matter of academic honesty. Thus in my own contribution to this volume I try to reflect my own projections and motives that set me on the Q trail. Going behind the mere discussion of Q’s plausibility allows for a glimpse at the *primum movens* of our scholarly engagement. Such reflections do not devaluate our recent work, but helps to contextualize it within the broader horizon of our presuppositions.

2. The Contributions in this Volume

2.1. *Keynote Lecture: Opting for a ‘Soft’ Q Hypothesis*

Jens Schröter, Key Issues Concerning the Q Hypothesis: Synoptic Problem, Verbal Reconstruction, and the Message of Jesus

Kindly, Jens Schröter has accepted to give the keynote lecture to this conference. His meticulous habilitation on the reception of logia-traditions in the Gospel of Mark, in Q, and in the Gospel of Thomas (*Erinnerung an Jesu Worte*, 1997) certainly was a milestone in the research of oral Jesus-traditions getting scribalized in different contexts. In his present contribution, he observes that the Synoptic problem is not only an exegetical, but also a methodological and hermeneutical task. In our attempts to resolve the Synoptic problem we are dealing only with probabilities rather than proofs. Meta-level reflections not only highlight the possibilities and limits of proposed solutions to the Synoptic problem, but also illuminate implicit agendas and interests. Schröter emphasizes that in principle the adoption of Q is useful in discussions of the Synoptic problem, but he also underlines the necessity of being aware that Q remains a scholarly hypothesis. Within Synoptic research as within the quest for the historical Jesus, the Q traditions therefore should have a similar status as the assumed pre-Markan traditions or other pre-Synoptic traditions. His idea is to suggest a moderate, thus ‘soft’ version of the Q hypothesis as a perhaps more appropriate approach to Q and the Synoptic problem. This might also be a viable option to reach out to Q sceptics. Supporting a more moderate version of the Q hypothesis thus might strengthen it in the discussion about the Synoptic problem and the quest for early Jesus tradition.

2.2. *Looking back in History: The 19th and 20th Century*

The birth of the Two Document Hypothesis (henceforth: 2DH) and thus also of Q-studies did not happen in a vacuum but was connected with political and sociological developments that deeply affected the countries and churches in the 19th and 20th century. Thus, it seems necessary to highlight the diverging contexts of confessions and nationalities in which the 2DH could emerge.

Lukas Bormann, Das Interesse an Markuspriorität, Logienquelle und Zweiquellentheorie im deutschen Protestantismus des 19. Jahrhunderts

Lukas Bormann takes a glimpse at the beginnings of the 2DH and reads these against the backdrop of Protestant Germany in the 19th century. He points out that the presupposed ‘objectivity’ of scholarly research on the 2DH served the

desire to demonstrate the ‘authenticity’ of the Protestant doctrine. After Karl Lachmann it was no longer sustainable that the Gospels of Matthew and John were written by eyewitnesses. Because of the Markan priority new ways of proving the ‘authenticity’ of Protestant teachings had to be found. When Christian Hermann Weiße (1801–1866), Christian Gottlob Wilke (1788–1854), and Heinrich Julius Holtzmann (1832–1910) developed the 2DH, Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) took recourse to the Sayings Source, which he deemed to be “more precious” than the Gospel of Mark in maintaining “original” Jesus traditions. Today we know that this is exaggerated, but these developments have helped us to understand the Gospels as historical texts being subjugated to an historical process of transmission.

Christopher Tuckett, The Reception of Q Studies in the UK: No room at the inn?

At the start of the 20th century, British scholarship enthusiastically adopted the 2DH. But this changed with the work of W. R. Farmer and his revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis. Later on there was a strong advocacy for the Farrer Hypothesis (FH), indebted to the work of Austin Farrer and Michael Goulder. According to Tuckett, some key elements keep recurring in many of the arguments by British scholars. One is a strong aversion to sources that are ‘hypothetical’, another is that postulating Q is ‘unnecessary’, and a third is an appeal to what is ‘simple’ and/or straightforward as the most likely explanation of the source question. Some of the arguments offered by British Q-sceptics correlate with trends within British philosophy. Thus, the claim that Q is ‘hypothetical’ correlates in one way with philosophical movements such as empiricism and perhaps logical positivism, both of which have been very influential within British philosophy (cf. figures such as Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Russell, Ayer). So too the argument appealing to ‘simplicity’ echoes (sometimes explicit in the modern arguments about Q) the work of William of Ockham and the principle of ‘Occam’s razor’. While one cannot claim that the arguments developed by British scholars against Q are the sole preserve of the British, there are some aspects of these arguments which might correlate with other features of British society, British life, and British ways of thinking which make a position of Q-scepticism at the very least congenial within a British context.

Paul Foster, The Rise and Development of the Farrer Hypothesis

After the general overview of Christopher Tuckett to the situation in the UK, Paul Foster now zooms in for a closer look at the Farrer Hypothesis (FH). The FH has to be considered the major rival competitor to the 2DH in the Synoptic Problem and thus deserves a special chapter in this book. During the period from the 1960s until the 1990s it is fair to say that the major rival alternative to the widely accepted 2DH was the Griesbach hypothesis, or perhaps more correctly the neo-Griesbach hypothesis. Farrer’s work attracted some limited support in the period from the 1950s to the 1980s. However, growth in support became

more widespread from the 1990s onwards, to the extent that it might now be correctly seen as the major rival proposal to the 2DH. British scholars who followed the Farrer hypothesis and added support to it in published works discussing the synoptic problem include Michael Goulder, John Drury, Eric Franklin, Barbara Shellard, and Mark Goodacre, who has become the standard-bearer for the Farrer hypothesis, or, as he would prefer it to be known, the Mark without Q (MwQ) hypothesis. After Goodacre, Francis Watson provided one of the more recent attempts to resolve the synoptic problem along the lines of the Farrer or MwQ hypothesis in his 2013 monograph. He deviates from Goodacre in two major ways. First, he gives a larger function to the role of a sayings collection in his solution to the synoptic problem. Second, he rejects the idea that this sayings collection reached the evangelists in oral form. Support for the Farrer hypothesis has always been strongest in Britain, having primarily been disseminated by scholars teaching, studying, or presenting lecture series at the University of Oxford.

Markus Tiwald, The Investment of Roman Catholics in the 2DH and Q

Catholicism in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century built up a fundamental opposition towards the challenges of modern exegesis. Especially the 2DH was seen as a major threat, because it denied that the author of the Gospel of Matthew was an eyewitness. The peak of these tendencies was reached in the oath against ‘modernism’, decreed by Pope Pius X in 1910 and remaining in force until 1967. The real breakthrough came only with the Second Vatican Council, which lasted from 1962–1965. The council’s declaration *Dei Verbum* dates from 1965 and states that inerrancy only refers to truths concerning our salvation and not scientific claims (e.g., the creation of the world in seven days). In the time after Vatican II, Catholic scholars had a big backlog demand in the area of biblical exegesis. Especially the former forbidden ‘Sayings Source’ served as a means of projections here. Ideas of ‘itinerant charismatics’ (brought up by Gerd Theißen and Paul Hoffmann in 1972) were eagerly accepted to advocate for a charismatic and poor church with fraternal structures. The quest for the ‘historical Jesus’ and the search for Jesus’ ‘original’ intention finally had reached Catholicism – with a delay of 200 years, since in Protestantism these matters had already been brought up by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781).

Joseph Verheyden, Introducing “Q” in French Catholic Scholarship at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Century: Alfred Loisy’s “Évangiles synoptiques”

It took a certain heroism in Catholic quarters in the first half of the 20th century to speak up for Q, or for any other theory related to historical-critical scholarship and considered ‘innovative’ by the magisterium. *Les Évangiles synoptiques*, Loisy’s opus magnum, was published in two volumes in 1907–1908. The goal was nothing less than to contribute to the restauration of biblical studies among the French clergy. According to Loisy, the best way forward was

not to get stuck in hopeless debates but to try to reconcile tradition and “sound criticism”, “joindre en toutes choses la docilité prudente du théologien à la sincérité du savant, sans sacrifier l’une à l’autre”, as Loisy said. For him Mark is the source of Matthew and Luke; any material the latter two have in common stems from Papias’ Hebrew gospel that would have been “principalement didactique” compared to Mark’s narrative gospel. All remaining material, the *Sondergut*, comes from indistinctive sources – written or oral. “Q” for him takes only a minimal place and is a mere detail in the study of the gospels that does not really need any particular attention from the critical scholar. Verheyden coins the category of “diplomatic language” to qualify Loisy’s discourse with the Catholic ministry. All controversies and all initiatives for self-defence notwithstanding, scholars like Loisy above all wanted to continue their biblical research in an atmosphere as serene as possible while keeping true to the standards of critical biblical scholarship.

2.3. *Q and Social Sciences*

After the historical retrospective, the focus now is directed at the present time. The contributions of Gerd Theißen and Marco Frenschkowski both deal with sociological concepts as a means of interpretation of Q. Nevertheless, both reach different results in judging the itinerancy in Jesus’ ministry.

Gerd Theißen, Itinerant Radicalism: The Origin of an Exegetical Theory

It is the big merit of Gerd Theißen of having integrated sociological aspects in his studies of early Christianity. Already in his inaugural lecture as “Privatdozent” in November 1972, he advocated the thesis that homeless wandering charismatics had transmitted the words of Jesus by living up to their master’s homeless, itinerant, and peaceful ethos. Theißen detected their homelessness as symptomatic of a crisis within Jewish society, and Jesus’ response as a creative form of peaceful revolution under the auspices of the coming reign of God. This assumption has triggered many reactions, from fervent acceptance to total rejection. Gerd Theißen was accused of having projected the spirit of the 1968-movement onto the biblical narratives. In his present paper, he does not defend his theories but contributes some further details to the sociological context in which the thesis of itinerant radicalism was born. He mentions his personal *biographical* context, the *political* circumstances, the *development of social sciences*, and the *state of exegesis and theology* as normative factors for his thesis. He demonstrates that scholarly research always is influenced by external factors like biographical events, politics, and sociological conceptions.

Marco Frenschkowski, Itinerant Charismatics and Travelling Artisans – Was Jesus’ Travelling Lifestyle Induced by His Artisan Background?

The contribution of Marco Frenschkowski continues the sociological perspective of Gerd Theißen, but other than Theißen he does not see an emblematic lifestyle from the beginning behind Jesus’ itinerancy. He rather locates Jesus’ lifestyle in his background as wandering artisan. The juxtaposition of his paper with that of Theißen may demonstrate how much our exegetical results are also due to our sociological frame of reference. First, Frenschkowski illustrates what being a τέκτων (Jesus’ profession according to Mk 6:3) might have meant in those times. As we have learned, a τέκτων is somebody working with stone and wood, not exactly just a carpenter, but someone who builds larger objects such as houses, especially doors, yokes for oxen, ships and perhaps also barns and roads. Nevertheless, the word has rather general meanings, can be applied to different crafts, and can even take on a more general meaning: “master, in any art”. Without discussing all vicissitudes of the question what exactly a τέκτων might have done in first century Galilee – probably he did what was needed in house and ship building and perhaps other fields. The embarrassment of Church fathers about Jesus being a τέκτων demonstrates the low social status of this profession. Frenschkowski mentions that itinerancy of artisans was common in those times and underlines this with a plethora of examples. His suggestion is that Jesus started his preaching and healing career as a traveller in wood and perhaps stone work because this was what he was doing anyway. This would mean that Jesus never chose the itinerant lifestyle. Rather, it was his way of living since his early youth. Frenschkowski also shows with many examples preaching and travelling crafts could combine quite well.

Editor’s (M. Tiwald’s) remark on the papers of G. Theißen and M. Frenschkowski

In my view, the diverging positions of Theißen (emblematic itinerancy) and Frenschkowski (travelling lifestyle induced by Jesus’ background as wandering artisan) can be reconciled. Frenschkowski’s depiction of Jesus as a travelling craftsman seems quite convincing to me. Most probably, his itinerant lifestyle during the time of his public mission can also be traced back to his past as a wandering artisan. Nevertheless, this does not exclude an emblematic reinterpretation of his past in the light of the emerging kingdom of God. Jesus’ former life now takes on a new meaning: like his poverty, his itinerancy is also reinterpreted as an emblematic virtue instead of a necessity for mere survival. For Jesus, the kingdom of God changes the perspective of everything: what previously was considered a deficiency (lack of money, lack of stable working conditions) now becomes a virtue (cf. the beatitudes for the poor, the hungry and the weeping, Q 6:20). Jesuanic creativity opens up new possibilities: the needs and pressures of a poor life are now transformed into signs of emblematic election in the light of God’s upcoming kingdom.

2.4. *Gender Studies and Q*

When we are talking about sociological contexts that form our theological perceptions, then it is not only fair but mandatory to include gender aspects here. The gender gap is especially high in Q-scholarship – maybe even higher than in the rest of NT studies. Certainly, Paul and his female co-workers might be more attractive as the seemingly ‘conservative’ Sayings Source. Nevertheless, the dearth of women in Q studies is striking – and should be given a closer look.

Sarah E. Rollens, Where Are All the Women in Q Studies?: Gender Demographics and the Study of Q

Female authors often write about topics being considered ‘female’, but Sarah Rollens clearly opts against the view that identities and experiences can be understood only by people who inhabit them – such concepts again will create a gender bias. ‘Women writing about women’ has often been perceived as a ‘soft’ topic, a safe space, in comparison to more rigorous scholarship that men have tended to carry out. Furthermore, biblical studies still routinely sees edited volumes, journal issues, and conference panels made up entirely of men. On social media, the constancy of such products are now the target of both critique and mocking, with female scholars and their allies regularly contacting the producers of such collections and panels to ask them to account for their lack of representation. Nevertheless, including a token woman in a conference accomplishes very little in the overall scheme of things. Rather, our aim should be to change our system from within. Our universities sometimes function as backward looking, conservative bastions. They reward scholarly activity that fits into predetermined measures of excellence and follows traditional methods for producing such scholars. It is thus challenging to propose new structural arrangements to achieve a more gender-balanced representation. Even if we cannot change the terrain of academia and expose everyone’s unconscious biases overnight, the first step is certainly to acknowledge the problem and to realize the extent of our unintentional complicity. The essay contains an appendix that lists all the women scholars who could be considered “Q scholars” or who have worked on Q in some substantive sense.

2.5. *The Sayings Source in Academic Teaching and Systematic Theology*

Last but not least there should be a special chapter on how our concepts of Q studies ‘condense’ in our academic teaching and in Systematic Theology.

Hildegard Scherer, Learning Lessons on Q: The 2DH and Q in Academic Teaching

Hildegard Scherer poses the question: “What types of social interaction have been used when teaching the Two-Document-Hypothesis (2DH)?” She refers to introductory books to the New Testament from the German-speaking area spanning from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century and then to the period from post-WWII until today. Scherer singles out two factors for her research: One is ‘expert power’, i.e. how we exercise power to convince others. The other factor is ‘time’ that is severely limited: in introductory books, the 2DH problem is only discussed on a limited span of pages and therefore necessarily schematic. The turn of the 20th century was a heyday of New Testament introduction text books. For both Catholic and Protestant scholars, the period was marked by intensive debate. The Catholics felt the restrictions of ‘anti-modernism’, which had manifested itself in the magisterial rescripts of the Pontifical Biblical Commission since 1905. These rescripts prohibited to argue in favour of the 2DH. However, also the Protestants were torn between Orthodoxy and Liberalism, and labelled by their opponents as either unscientific or destructive. Skipping the years of the two world wars, Scherer then examines the introductory books since the 1940s. Here the 2DH is presented as the most important theory underlining a presumed consensus among scholars. Finally, Scherer puts these introductory books to the test by comparing them with the requirements of the EU’s Bologna Criteria of good teaching practice. One of the Bologna keywords is the “orientation towards competences”: pupils shall not only accumulate knowledge but be enabled to use their skills in a solution-oriented way. Scherer concludes how important it is to practise fair teaching, leaving aside the tricky pitfalls of polemics, one-sidedness, incompleteness, majority moves or even identity creation. According to her, the main challenge consists of developing teaching settings that pay respect to the complexity of the topics but still work within the curricular limits of time.

Ralf Miggelbrink, The Quest for the Historical Jesus and Q in the View of Systematic Theology

Ralf Miggelbrink classically structures his paper in *Thesis - Antithesis - Synthesis*. In his *Thesis*, he points out that for the Catholic magisterium of the 19th century, a historical-critical look at Jesus was not considered appropriate for the ‘Son of God’. Besides, what could a historical-critical access contribute when the necessary doctrine about Jesus Christ had already been established by the Church? Jesus should not be interpreted according to historical plausibilities but according to trans-temporal salvific necessity. The *Antithesis* to such concepts was formed in the *devotio moderna* within the context of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Especially the Jesuit movement stimulated the religious interest in Jesus as a human person suffering for us. The Christian discussion on the suffering of Jesus lasted up to the 6th century. The climax of this conflict is reached with Maximus Confessor, who was killed because he insisted on the idea

that Christ actually suffered and felt human feelings. But how can we reconcile the ideas of Divine knowledge directly stemming from God with a real human life of learning, discussing and teaching? St. Thomas Aquinas solves this problem in a consequently Aristotelian way: the knowledge infused by God into Jesus (*scientia infusa*) is not defined knowledge, but the intellectual enabling to generate knowledge in a human way. The *scientia infusa* enables Jesus to achieve knowledge as *scientia acquisita* in a human way. St. Thomas leads to a solution that has been explained by Karl Rahner, as Miggelbrink explains in his *Synthesis*: incarnated divine omniscience does not mean knowing all, but being able to understand everything in the right way. Jesus perceives, thinks and decides in a human way that is inspired by God. In this situation, the critical and historical quest for Jesus, which asks for his probable intentions, intuitions and ideas is a way to clean our minds from our own ideas about Jesus, in order to come closer to this figure in which Divine Wisdom explains itself historically as a model for all those who strive to be disciples of Jesus in our days.

Key Issues Concerning the Q Hypothesis: Synoptic Problem, Verbal Reconstruction, and the Message of Jesus

Jens Schröter

1. Introduction

The purpose of this volume and the conference on which it is based is not to prove or disprove the Q hypothesis. Instead, the focus is on implicit presuppositions of the Q hypothesis in different scholarly discourses and cultural settings. Such an approach is appropriate for two reasons. First, there is no straightforward solution to the Synoptic problem which would solve the textual and historical problems. The Synoptic problem is therefore not only an exegetical, but also a methodological and hermeneutical task. In other words, because in our attempts to “resolve the Synoptic problem ... we are dealing only in the realm of probabilities rather than ‘proofs’”¹, meta-level reflections not only highlight the possibilities and limits of proposed solutions to Synoptic problem, but also illuminate implicit agendas and interests.

Second, a particular characteristic of the Q hypothesis is that it is not based on a text, attested by manuscript evidence or citations from ancient Christian authors, but on a scholarly theory, developed in the 19th century.² Although there are good reasons to presuppose common traditions behind Matthew and Luke (see below), the missing of any external evidence is a striking difference to other Gospels or Gospel-like texts from which we have only limited knowledge, such as the Egerton Gospel, the Gospel of the Hebrews or the Gospel of Peter. Unlike “Q”, these and many other early Christian Gospel texts are attested either by (even in some cases only scanty) manuscript evidence or by citations from ancient Christian authors. The Q hypothesis, by contrast, is dependent on a specific solution of the Synoptic problem and supposes a text which does not exist, and without the discovery of a manuscript it cannot be proven that it ever existed. These circumstances determine the place of the Q hypothesis in the

¹ See Kloppenborg, *Theological Stakes*, 11.

² A helpful overview on the Q hypothesis among other solutions of the Synoptic problem and the history of Q is provided by Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating*, esp. chapters 1 “Q and the Synoptic Problem” (11–54) and 6 “The Jesus of History and the History of Dogma. Theological Currents in the Synoptic Problem” (271–328).