The Galilee and Christian Origins

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Preface

In the Fall of 2006 the Jesus Seminar, having spent twenty years in the quest for the historical Jesus, decided to turn its attention to something new: the beginnings of Christianity. The project had been long in coming—contemplated, started, stalled, re-started, stalled again—over several years. It was an idea no less fraught than the quest for historical Jesus itself. Both projects were a search for origins, and thus authorizations, and therefore hardly a field of inquiry free from the pressures of cultural contesting. Still, fraught though it may be, the question of how the followership of Jesus gradually emerged as a thing in its own right is a legitimate and important historical question, and so one to be faced.

To do this work we formed a new seminar (The Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins), and assembled a steering committee to set the ball rolling: Stephen J. Patterson, John S. Kloppenborg, Joanna Dewey, Dennis E. Smith, Arthur J. Dewey, and Bernard Brandon Scott. Together with other members of the original Jesus Seminar, we worked out a plan that we believed would shine a different light on an old question. We decided not to organize the work around texts, but around places. How did nascent Christianity emerge in distinct places around the Mediterranean basin? This would allow us to bring to the discussion the evidence, not just of texts, but of material culture as well.

The first place we chose to focus our efforts was the Galilee. The papers in this volume derive from three meetings devoted to the Jesus movement in Galilee: October of 2006 (essays by Marianne Sawicki and James M. Robinson), March of 2007 (William Arnal’s piece), and October of 2007 (Joanna Dewey’s essay). These represent a small portion of the work done in those sessions. Future volumes of Forum will feature more of this material as well as essays devoted to the emergence of nascent Christianity in other places. So far, in addition to the meetings on Galilee, the Seminar has held meetings devoted to Antioch and to Corinth.

The Christian Origins Seminar is an on-going project of the Westar Institute and open ended. It is hoped that work can be organized around Rome, Alexandria, Ephesus, and Edessa. The Seminar is open to all qualified scholars who wish to participate. Inquiries should be directed to me at Willamette University.

—Stephen J. Patterson
The Trouble with Q

William Arnal

Writing is found only where the signifier can be isolated from presence.—Michel de Certeau

I believe one must relate any discourse to the tensions characteristic of that society in which it circulates. . . . one does better to travel the lower path of inquiry into the social and material world in which eschatological, soteriological, and cosmological beliefs operate than to follow the supposedly higher path that remains within the heavenly worlds these beliefs describe.—Bruce Lincoln

Introduction: Reinventing the Wheel

The synoptic sayings source has been a problematic notion since its inception. Initially conceived of as a crutch for Markan priority—a deus ex machina accounting for the double tradition while maintaining Mark’s precedence—this originally amorphous entity was sidelined as (implicitly) of little historical import. Attention focused instead on the parameters of Ur-Markus (original or primordial Mark) as a reliable source for Jesus, with the logia (Holtzmann’s Λ) sometimes serving as a container for inauthentic material, to be emptied and transferred to Ur-Markus as taste dictated. Subsequently, the notion of a logia-source came to take on a life of its own, with a suitably mysterious and romantic (in English) nomenclature to go with it—“Q”—and, increasingly, some status as a discrete document. Yet Q did not thereby entirely transcend its origins: it continued through the first half of the twentieth century to be treated as an essentially passive entity, either a container for the original “Gospel of Jesus” or as

1. de Certeau, Writing, 216.
2. Lincoln, Death, War, and Sacrifice, 124.
3. With thanks to Leif Vaage for providing a model of insight and perseverance.
4. The subordination of the logia to Ur-Markus for as long as the latter was assumed the more “authentic” is nicely described by Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 329–31.
5. This siglum may have appeared algebraic and hence even scientific to its initial (German) users. In English, however, the letter’s rarity and the peculiar rules for its usage lend it a mysterious and foreign aura, especially when it appears without an accompanying U. See for instance the character in the James Bond novels or the character on “Star Trek: The Next Generation.” While the letter need not always have such connotations in English, its use as a designation for an ancient and lost religious document more or less ensures the activation of its mysterious potential.
a relatively straightforward source for “synoptic tradition.”6 Starting in 1959, redaction criticism of Q began to emphasize the distinctive nature of its theology,7 including the self-sufficiency of that theology (that is, the fact that its presentation of Jesus does not need to rely on extraneous conceptions not actually present in Q, especially the emphasis on Jesus’ salvific crucifixion and resurrection). Such an analysis in turn has paved the way for the recognition of a “Q group” or “Q community”8 and hence for the use of Q as a significant datum for reimagining our picture of the early stages of the “Jesus movement” in significant and substantial ways. The data provided by Q could either add new information to our overall picture of “the Jesus movements” in the first century, or they could attest to a group whose constitutive beliefs, circumstances, and practices were at odds with and not derivable from the other groups of “Jesus people,” or both.9 Q’s potential to actually change our picture of the development of the earliest followers of Jesus has been augmented since the 1980s, when Q’s literary history was plumbed to a degree not previously thought possible.10

6. The view of Q as a direct source for the teaching of Jesus was a short-lived contribution of Harnack. He is also responsible for the first Greek reconstruction of Q. The treatment of Q as a source for the synoptic tradition was typical of classical form criticism. Again, see Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 330–31; Kloppenborg, The Formation of Q, 13; compare von Harnack, The Sayings of Jesus; Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition. See also the discussion of Harnack in Fleddermann, Q, 19–20.

7. A development usually traced to Tödt, The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition, 222–74. For Tödt’s impact on the field, see Fleddermann, Q, 26–27; Robinson, “History of Q Research,” xlix–li; Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 345–46; and many others. Interestingly, see Casey, An Aramaic Approach to Q, 13–15 for the claim that Tödt’s work is the point at which Q scholarship ran off the rails, especially Casey, Aramaic Approach, 15: “We must therefore conclude that Tödt’s work was methodologically unsatisfactory from beginning to end. If this book was as important for the study of Q as subsequent Q scholars have asserted, the future of the study of Q was bound to be problematic.” Q scholarship had to wait ten more years for a thoroughgoing redaction-critical analysis: Lührmann, Die Redaktion der Logienquelle. Lührmann’s analysis was a real watershed for Q studies. It established the Deuteronomistic nature of Q’s redaction (wherever that redaction should be located in the context of the rest of the document), a conclusion that has only been affirmed by subsequent analysis from a redaction-critical perspective (see, e.g., Jacobson, “The Literary Unity of Q,” 109–14; Jacobson, The First Gospel, 72–76, 152–83, 251–60; Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, 102–70, 243–45).

8. So also (among others) Robinson, “History,” 1–li: “Tödt was thus the first to draw explicitly the inference that Q was not just the paraenetic material of the primitive church and thus subservient to its standard kerygma, but rather the central message of a distinct Q community. . . . Ever since Tödt, the study of Q has had a sociological concomitant, the Q community, a previously overlooked outcome of the impact of Jesus on his hearers and beneficiaries in Galilee.”

9. It is also possible, of course, that Q does not in fact provide any new information at all, in which case it would be a waste of time to devote further study to it. Given the very distinctive nature of Q’s presentation of Jesus, however, this seems an unlikely result.

10. Largely due to Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, and the reception thereof. Note the burst of social histories of Q or the people responsible for Q through the 1990s, especially (but by no means limited to) the essays collected in Kloppenborg and Vaage, Early Christianity, Q, and Jesus; Mack, The Lost Gospel; Vaage, Galilean Upstarts; and the essays collected in Kloppenborg, Conflict and Invention.
But the immense promise offered by Q scholarship as we entered the 1990s has not yet been nearly as fully realized as one might hope, and there is no reason for unbridled assurance that it ever will. Progress on this front has been obstructed by increasing resistance to allowing Q to speak for itself, manifested in two quite different ways, both of which, however, are to some degree engendered by a scholarly imagination in which too firm a link is assumed between Q and whatever notion of Christian origins is already subscribed. The first and most obvious source of resistance comes from active efforts to neutralize Q, in one way or another, among those who still reject any notion of Jesus-people in the first century who did not conform to a kerygmatic model. The second hindrance is largely inadvertent, but pernicious for all that: a romantic conception of Jesus and his first followers that is projected onto Q, preventing Q from speaking for itself. Both approaches in their different ways fail to grant Q the autonomy and integrity it deserves as a source of data, and thereby deflect and obscure the truly problematic reality that Q is neither an expression of anything like recognizably “Christian” doctrine nor a royal road to an “original” and universally authentic form of human practice and belief.

The first of these sources of trouble is relatively easily dispensed with, but still merits some (cursory) discussion. This is the approach that sees in Q, not an opportunity, but a danger to our imagination of Christian origins and that attempts to deal with this danger by taking whatever steps are necessary to neutralize Q as a source for any distinctive data, or as a source for any data whatsoever. Most obvious and thoroughgoing is the outright denial of Q’s erstwhile existence, usually by positing Luke’s direct dependence on Matthew and thus obviating any need for a hypothetical entity to explain the double tradition.11 This proposition, once a fringe viewpoint, has become increasingly popular, especially in the UK, precisely as scholarship on Q has begun to make claims about Christian origins in general. There are in addition “soft” versions of the denial of Q’s existence, usually by positing Luke’s direct dependence on Matthew and thus obviating any need for a hypothetical entity to explain the double tradition. This proposition, once a fringe viewpoint, has become increasingly popular, especially in the UK, precisely as scholarship on Q has begun to make claims about Christian origins in general. There are in addition “soft” versions of the denial of Q’s existence. One may assert, for instance, that Q lacks documentary integrity, that is, that the double tradition, designated “Q” purely by

11. See especially Farrer, “On Dispensing with Q,” 57–88; Goulder, Q; Goodacre, Goulder and the Gospels; Goodacre, The Case Against Q; and the essays in Goodacre and Perrin, Questioning Q. It is notable that Luke’s direct dependence on Matthew, while apparently held by many in the UK, is only actively advanced by a tiny number of scholars and has had very little impact on the shape of Lukan studies, even while serving as a warrant for dismissing Q. It is equally notable (and revealing) that denial of Q is a reliable predictor of the conclusion that the Gospel of Thomas is literarily dependent on the canonical gospels, even though, of course, the two issues are substantively unrelated. For responses to and criticisms of this proposal for synoptic relations, see Tuckett, Q and the History of Early Christianity, 16–31; Catchpole, The Quest for Q; Klopenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 39–41. See also Tuckett, “The Existence of Q,” 19–47. An alternative construction of synoptic relations that equally dispenses with Q is the Griesbach hypothesis, asserting Matthean priority with Mark as a combination and epitome of Matthew and Luke (see Farmer, “Modern Developments of Griesbach’s Hypothesis,” 275–95). This approach lacks the advantage of maintaining Markan priority, as the Farrer-Goulder-Goodacre hypothesis does.
convention, is comprised of multiple documents and/or various oral traditions, and hence that speaking of Q as a single text is misleading. Conversely, one may assent to Q's erstwhile existence, but claim that the text of the document cannot be reconstructed, and hence that it is irresponsible to draw any conclusions from it—this approach denies Q textual status in the present while granting the possibility that such a text may have existed in the past. Finally, those who wish to take Q's evidence off the table but who do not wish to offer any real arguments at all or to become embroiled in the intricacies of the synoptic problem can fall back on the assertion that Q—or whatever particular claim about Q is deemed to be unattractive—is "hypothetical." It is clear that the greater part of the appeal of all these sorts of denials comes precisely from their potential as magic wands that can neutralize whatever Q-derived data contradicts one's pet hypothesis. Such reservations about "hypothetical" conclusions are invoked selectively and tendentiously: the original text of, say, the Gospel of Mark is also hypothetical, as everyone knows, and so any conclusions drawn from it might also be dismissed as hypothetical. Indeed, there is little in our field that is not

12. See, as but one example, the argument of Casey, Aramaic Approach.
13. See, e.g., Ehrman, The New Testament, 77: "Despite the exuberant claims of some scholars, we cannot fully know what Q contained because the document has been lost. We have access to it only through the materials that Matthew and Luke both decided to include in their accounts, and it would be foolish to think that one or both of them included the entire document." Ehrman goes on to insist that we have no way of knowing whether or not Q contained a passion narrative. See also Ehrman, Jesus, 81–82.
14. See, e.g., among many possible examples, Chancey, Greco-Roman Culture, 123, who on encountering Q as evidence against his claims that Greek was not predominant in the Galilee simply dismisses the association of Q with Galilee as "speculative," without actually refuting it. The classic statement is that of Meier, A Marginal Jew, 181: "... my procedure throughout this book is to accept the hypothesis that Q represents a distinct and valuable source for the sayings (and, in a few cases, the deeds) of Jesus and John. Realizing, however, the hypothetical nature of Q—and indeed the hypothetical nature of my entire project—I think it unwise to make my conclusions depend on detailed hypotheses about Q that are tenuous at best."
15. I refer to the text of Mark here advisedly—there are notorious problems with fixing the original text of Mark (see Koester, Ancient Christian Gospels, 275–303). What is of particular note here is that the textual problems with Mark are not restricted to minor differences of wording, but to large segments of the Gospel that have a major bearing on the redactional theology of Mark, particularly the authorial position on Jewish purity practices and on Gentiles. Moreover, it is unknown precisely how the Gospel ended. And now some scholars are arguing that we do not know how it began, either (Croy, Mutilation). Hence the beginning, middle, and ending of the Gospel of Mark may all be said to be "hypothetical." The situation of Q as a hypothesis is nicely characterized by Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 54 (emphasis original): "To admit that the 2DH is a hypothesis... is not to encourage the kind of sloppy thinking or worse, intellectual laziness, that casually sweeps aside two centuries of Synoptic criticism with the assertion that 'it is all hypothetical.' Hypotheses are all that we have and all we will ever have. The Synoptic Problem can be addressed only at the level of theory and hypothesis. Hypotheses are to be constructed carefully and used critically and self-consciously. They are to be challenged and corrected by careful review of the evidence. When they are ignored with a whimsical dismissal it is time to wonder what nerve has been touched and whose undefended (or indefensible) assumptions have been threatened."
hypothetical. The usual approach to hypotheses with which one disagrees is to offer arguments in favor of a different hypothesis.\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, the hypothetical nature of Q or of any particular thesis about Q tends to be stressed precisely at the moment that Q interferes with one’s conclusions, or more broadly, with one’s overarching picture of the origins of Christianity. Since these kinds of “doubts” about Q are plainly tendentious, inconsistent, and illogical—or, in the case of outright denial of Q’s existence, unsustainable\textsuperscript{17}—it does not seem unreasonable to set them aside. Their effect is to place a brake on the forward progress of the field, as well as to force us to waste our time reinventing the wheel every time we wish to talk about Q.

Just as tendentious is another category of arguments in which it is asserted that Q did indeed exist and is accessible to modern scholarship, but in which it is denied in one way or another that Q is in any way distinctive. One approach here is to insist on a limited body of “normative” traditions about Jesus (whether theological or narrative) and to read Q in light of that (preconceived) framework. For instance, Arland Hultgren reads some Q sayings in light of, and as references to, particular narrative episodes in the canonical gospels—thus is the Q saying about carrying the cross (Q 14:27) read as a reference to the “event” of Jesus, or Simon of Cyrene, carrying the cross on which Jesus was crucified (Mark 15:21 and parallels; cf. John 19:17).\textsuperscript{18} More popular of late is the claim

\textsuperscript{16} It is sometimes claimed that at issue is really the extent to which Q and conclusions about it are hypothetical. One wonders, however, at which point a theory or thesis or hypothesis becomes so hypothetical that no arguments need actually be invoked against it other than outright dismissal. It is of course true that certain claims are more speculative than others and that, for instance, the reconstruction of the text of Q is indeed more speculative than the reconstruction of (most of) the text of the Gospel of Mark. But a speculative thesis still requires refutation and critics might derive comfort from the likelihood that the more speculative it is, the easier its refutation will be. Relevant here are the comments of Kloppenborg Verbin, \textit{Excavating Q}, 111: “The conclusions that Q was a Greek document and that it conformed generally to Luke’s sequence are not further hypotheses added onto the 2DH, but are entailed in the 2DH by the very nature of the synoptic data themselves. To embrace the 2DH and what it implies about the various relationships among the Gospels does not allow one then to evade the imperative to reconstruct Q and, ultimately, to face the literary and theological implications of reconstruction.”

\textsuperscript{17} By “scientific” criteria, Q is an astonishingly well-supported hypothesis. All alternative hypotheses face much greater problems than the two source theory with its entailment of a written Greek Q more or less coextensive with the double tradition. But what is exceptionally striking is that, since its first being posited, Q as a document has received “experimental” confirmation again and again. In other words, evidence independent of the original postulation of Q has served only to confirm Q. Once posited on particular grounds (the patterns of agreement and disagreement in sequence and wording among the synoptic gospels), the Q that has emerged directly (and even mechanically) from this literary evidence has taken on a shape that is theologically coherent, formally coherent, generically coherent and appropriate, socio-historically plausible, and whose general formal shape and theological orientation (including the theological motifs and formal features the reconstructed Q lacks) has been independently confirmed by the unrelated discovery and publication of the \textit{Gospel of Thomas} (however one dates or classifies this document).

\textsuperscript{18} Hultgren, \textit{Normative Christianity}, 33.
that Q does not represent any distinctive type of interest in Jesus, but was rather composed with a catholic orientation and a broadly normative approach to Jesus in which the actual content of the document “does not fully reflect the beliefs of those who composed and used it.”\(^{19}\) Such a conclusion is little more than an updated version of Dibelius’ characterization of Q as a paraenetic *supplement* to the kerygma,\(^{20}\) beefed up by factually false and logically specious accusations that the recognition of Q’s distinctiveness depends on an “argument from silence.”\(^{21}\) Then there are the approaches that deny Q’s socio-historical distinctiveness. These include the assertions that Q does not represent any particular group (for which it speaks), and the related argument that Q does not attest to a distinctive form of Galilean Christianity.\(^ {22}\) As is usual for this sort of approach, Q is not

\(^{19}\) Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 257; see his general discussion of Q. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 234–57. See also Meadors, “The ‘Messianic’ Implications of the Q Material,” 253–77. Against Hurtado’s assertions that Q is unquestionably and emphatically concerned with Jesus, see now Johnson-DeBaufre, *Jesus Among Her Children*.


\(^{21}\) For the “argument from silence” chestnut, see especially Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 224, 239–44; but the same argument appears elsewhere in different forms; cf., e.g., Ehrman, *Apocalyptic Prophet*, 81–82. This characterization is factually false insofar as the non-kerygmatic nature of Q’s presentation of Jesus has been asserted on the basis of the recovery of Q’s integral presentation of Jesus and his import (since Tödt, in fact), a presentation which is not kerygmic. See now especially Smith, *Post-Mortem Vindication*. It is not so much that Q lacks a kerygmic presentation of Jesus as that it possesses a non-kerygmatic presentation of Jesus (not to be confused, of course, with an anti-kerygmatic presentation of Jesus). That Hurtado happens to find Kloppenborg’s characterization of Q’s coherent image of Jesus non-compelling has less to do with the actual data provided by Q than with Hurtado’s own incredulity that first-century Jesus movements could contain some diversity (see his discussion in Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 233–35). The complaints about an argument from silence would also be logically specious, even if they were true. In fact, it is the framing of the issue as a denial of Q’s interest in kerygmatic theology that forces advocates of a non-kerygmatic Q into a defensive and logically inferior position, since it is usually impossible to argue negatives except by appeal to the absence of evidence. This is why, of course, the burden of proof in criminal proceedings is placed on the prosecution rather than on the defense. In such circumstances, the argument from silence is sufficient: there is no evidence that the defendant committed a crime and therefore s/he must be acquitted. Against Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 239, in such circumstances it is not necessary at all that the silence be remarkable. We apply this standard in daily life as well. Were I to be accused of being, say, a racist, my only real defense (since we are all rightly suspicious of “some of my best friends are . . .” arguments) would be to insist that there is simply no reason for saying so. If accurate, most people would find this compelling enough, even though it is indeed an argument from silence and even though this absence is not especially remarkable. The other problem here is that sometimes identification of an (alleged) argument from silence is treated as itself a refutation of the claim made on the basis of that silence. This leads us into strange territory: if we cannot infer, say, that someone lacks a brown suit solely on the basis of never having seen him in a brown suit, neither can we assert that, therefore, due to the logical weaknesses of the argument from silence, our failure ever to observe that person in a brown suit means that he probably does own one! Obviously if silence is weak evidence for the absence of something, it is even weaker evidence for its presence.

\(^{22}\) For the former kind of argument, see, e.g., Michaud, “Quelle(s) Communauté(s) derrière la Source Q?” 577–606; for the more specific claim that Q does not represent an “unknown and unattested” Galilean form of Jesus people, but rather is a product of the known
taken on its own terms, but is rather forced into a pre-existing historical model; the evidence Q itself provides is subordinated to an imaginative reconstruction of ancient Christian history into which Q's data has not been factored. All too typically, the actual arguments by which Q is located in the Galilee are simplified and even at times misrepresented (or perhaps insufficiently understood) by critics. Happily, most scholars have already set aside the unwarranted notion of a Jerusalem-derived Q on the grounds that Q lacks the distinctive theological features associated with Jerusalem in Paul's letters and in Acts. Further warrant for a clear identification of Q with Galilee comes from its clear immediate interest in specific and real (and rather obscure) Galilean places, as opposed to its literary and symbolic treatment of other places, and from its apparent use of local Galilean tradition. It is of course deeply problematic to begin with one's conclusions—that "Christianity" was monolithic, that Galilee lacked (and fleshed out mainly from Acts) "Jerusalem church," see Frenschkowski, "Galiläa oder Jerusalem?" 535–59; Pearson, “A Q Community in Galilee?” 476–94.

23. See especially Reed, “The Social Map of Q,” 17–36. The objection that the references to Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida in Q 10:13–15 are no more significant than the references to particular place-names in the narrative gospels betrays a lack of sensitivity to Q’s genre, which is not that of a narrative account of Jesus’ doings in a particular concrete environment (as are Mark, Matthew, and Luke), but a somewhat contemplating collection of narratively non-contextualized sayings: the specification in Q 10:13–15 of the geographical objects of the criticisms is by no means required and actually works against the polemical focus of this layer of redaction of Q unless this polemic is indeed directed at Galilean towns (otherwise, it is in the interests of the redaction to keep the critique vague and general, as in fact has mostly been done within Q's polemical material). Matthew and Luke's retention of the names of these towns is a function of their framing it within a specific narrative context. Particularly notable for this misunderstanding is Fleddermann, Q, 159: “But the argument of Schenk, Reed, Kloppenborg, and Arnal confuses the setting of a literary work with the place where it was composed.” Much more acute in his understanding of the issues is Myllykoski, “The Social History of Q and the Jewish War,” 178, emphasis added: “There is no need to speculate about Syrian origins in the case of Q, since the actual and bitter missionary references to Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum . . . in Q 10:13–15 attest that at least the main bulk of Q traditions originated in a Galilean community.” Against too facile a treatment of this issue, however, Kloppenborg notes (Excavating Q, 171–72) that these place names occur in only one or two Q pericopes (Capernaum also occurs, narratively, in Q 7:1, but this reference is much less diagnostic) and therefore do not carry much weight. He prefers adding a Galilean provenance on the grounds offered by Reed's analysis of Q's "narrative world." But it should be stressed that these town names occur in redactional additions to the "mission speech" and therefore suggest a redactional interest in specifying the targets of "Jesus’” polemic as Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. It should also be noted that Qs rhetoric seems to show an interest in rural and village social relations, which tends to confirm a rural Galilean locale and tends to militate against an origin in a large city like Jerusalem (a provenance in rural Judea, of course, is not ruled out by this last observation).


25. And “religious.” I am unable to resist noting, although space and time do not permit me to pursue it here, that much of the traditionalistic conception of Christian origins being
any followers of Jesus, that all documents about Jesus must be “Messianic” (or even that all documents in which Jesus is mentioned must be about Jesus)—and conform the construction of the data to those conclusions. These transparently reactionary types of claims about Q are not Q scholarship at all. They are the representatives of a rear-guard action in defense of a particular (and surely, by now, antiquated) view of Christian origins, aiming not to understand Q but to ensure that Q does not alter any historical conclusions.

The second—and, arguably, more pernicious—of our sources of trouble for Q is just the opposite of that already discussed: it derives from seeing in Q too much of an opportunity, and thereby romanticizing the text and/or the people or group responsible for it. Like the trends discussed above, there is an assumption at work here as well that Q is indeed somehow representative of “the Jesus movements” or perhaps of Jesus himself. An almost-inevitably romantic and attractive picture of these movements and their origins in Jesus—that they were diverse, that Jesus the teacher would have developed a following in his home region of Galilee, that the original truth of the message of Jesus was non-messianic—is then projected onto Q, not so much out of an unwillingness to allow Q to speak for itself as from too great an identification with, or idealization of, both Q and the “movements” it is imagined to represent. Indeed, even the assumption that Q is exemplary of the “Galilean Jesus movements” is a dangerous notion and may inhibit rather than expedite scholarship by tempting one to the perils of imposing either a cookie-cutter model of Christian origins or a dreamy picture of a pristine “originary” moment. Be this as it may, whether Q is or is not representative of either Jesus himself or a broader current of “Galilean Jesus movements,” there remains a real danger in reading into Q’s social situ-

defended with these sorts of reactions to Q scholarship is indebted to a peculiar, fixed (and in fact anachronistic) notion of “religion” and to the identification of data about the early Jesus-people as data of a “religious” variety. Many of the assumptions lurking behind these arguments would be transparently foolish if applied to other social and anthropological data, but the lingering conviction that “religion” constitutes a distinct domain in which the usual rules do not apply allows such arguments to persist unchallenged. See also my discussion in Arnal, The Symbolic Jesus, 34–35, 62.

26. By “reactionary” I mean retrograde, traditionalist, and negative. But I am also characterizing this scholarship as quite literally reacting to and denying the positive conclusions of Q scholarship (Q does not exist, is not Galilean, is not distinctive) rather than pursuing positive conclusions of its own.

27. See also the discussion of the nomenclature of “community” in Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 170–71.

28. We would do well to note the characterization of Q offered by Jacobson, First Gospel, 260: “The picture of the tradents of Q that emerges from the Q material seems to require, as many now recognize, a relatively isolated community. It was not a community which corresponds very well with any group that we know of in early Christianity. There is no redemptive understanding of Jesus’ death, no explicit reference to the resurrection, no hint of any sacramental language, and little evidence, except at a late stage, of any advanced christology.” Just as it is poor form to project our assumptions about what the ancient Jesus people “must” have been like onto Q, so also must one exercise caution in concluding that the data derived from Q can be generalized without problems.
ation our own romantic fantasies out of too great an admiration for this document and its rhetoric. The very fact that so much of Q’s language and content so strongly appeals to us—essentially “liberal,” middle-class intellectuals—should in itself raise doubts about the viability of claims that Q’s tradents were impoverished peasants. Any analysis of Q that accords too well with our own social or political ideals is suspect.

The bulk of this article, therefore, is devoted to attempting a rather less idealized characterization of Q’s literary development and social history than has been customary. It is not of especially great concern to me that the people responsible for Q be identified specifically and precisely with the exact office of village scribe (κωμογραμματεύς, sometimes translated as “village clerk”), or whether they “should perhaps be estimated a few notches higher.” Caviling about just how high or low on the spectrum of literate administrators these people should be does not much affect the basic reading of Q’s rhetoric or situation (though it might have some impact on the details), and in any case misses the point, which is to situate Q and its literary development in a genuinely historical context, that is, one that is specific, concrete, material, and also has the potential to be truly explanatory. So long as Q and its traditions are recognized

29. See especially Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 168–72, 180–82; cf. Arnal, “Gendered Couples in Q and Legal Formulations,” 75–94. The suggestion is originally Kloppenborg’s (“Literary Convention,” 85–86; cf. Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 200–201); I aimed to flesh out its implications for understanding Q’s ideology and to offer a social account of these scribes’ interest in inversionary rhetoric, while simultaneously calling into question the identification of Q with “radical itinerants.”

30. So Kirk, The Composition of the Sayings Source, 399. Leaving aside the question of just what degree of social hierarchy is signified by a “notch,” it seems a little forced to imagine a direct correlation between literary sophistication and social class. In addition, this specific claim and that of Pearson (“Q Community in Galilee?” 490 n. 59) assert without argument or data that village scribes are capable of only a set (and unspecified) level of literary competence. Such a claim must be demonstrated and Q must be shown to exceed that level for this argument to carry any weight at all.

31. In what follows I am taking it for granted that Q is the product of a Galilean environment and that it dates to before the war of 66–70 CE. The issue of Q’s date is surprisingly controversial. For very early dates, see Theissen, The Gospels in Context, 203–34; and Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 165–68. For very late, post-70 CE dates, see Hoffmann, Studien Zur Theologie der Logienquelle; and Myllykoski, “Social History of Q.” Most date Q to the 50s or 60s CE (see, e.g., Lührmann, Redaktion; Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 86–87). Perhaps the most striking indication of Q’s pre-war date is its warning that the judgment of “this generation” will occur without a sign in the midst of normalcy (see Q 11:29–30; 17:26–30, 34–35). Contrast this to Mark’s post-war insistence that the end has yet to come in spite of an abundance of signs (Mark 13:7–8). With respect to Q’s history as a document, I am working with, and will be assuming as basic background to my argument, the model of Q’s literary development offered in Kloppenborg, Formulation of Q, with minor revision in Kloppenborg, “Nomos and Ethos in Q.” 35–48 (the identification of Q 11:42c and 16:17 as glosses from the same, tertiary hand responsible for the addition of the temptation dialogue). While this may seem to some a question of piling hypothesis upon hypothesis, this is how knowledge advances, not by endless disputes over the same questions. Kloppenborg’s model is not simply the best model we have for the literary development for Q, it is a thoroughly compelling model both methodologically and substantively, particularly as regards the distinction
as the literary product of a bureaucratic-scribal milieu rather than an incidentally-transcribed residue of indigenizing village prophets or the self-promotion of destitute peasant itinerants, this will suffice.

A Literary Q

Q is what it is (or was what it was), and neither statistical probabilities nor reconstructions of its “necessary” historical background will make it otherwise. Procedurally, the data provided by the document itself must carry greater weight than probabilistic assertions about what is, or is not, likely in the ancient context of Q; broad conclusions are to be based on data, not the other way around. If Q was written, someone who could write wrote it down, even if the proportion of such people in antiquity was very tiny. If Q was written between the primary written collection of instructions and the secondary Deuteronomistic redaction of Q. As already noted, that Q has been redacted from a Deuteronomistic perspective is largely a consensus position among Q scholars (with some significant exceptions, e.g., Horsley), yet seems to be the primary objectionable feature of Kloppenborg’s stratification (the conclusion that the document’s apocalyptic elements are redactional, rather than originary, as they ought to be). Kloppenborg’s additional insight was the recognition of this redaction as an intervention into a discrete, coherent, and tightly-organized instructional document. I will henceforth refer to Q1, Q2, and Q3 without (further) apology. I will also be treating as axiomatic Piper’s analysis of argumentative clusters in Q (see “Matthew 7,7–11 par. Luke 11,9–13,” 411–18; Piper, *Wisdom in the Q Tradition*), and assume that these clusters—which are (generally, and arguably) restricted to Q1—are testimony to a stage in the collection and development of Q prior to Q1.

32. I cannot resist noting that both the figure of the prophet and the character of the wandering itinerant are literary tropes. I further note the contemporary left-liberal salience of each figure—the prophet of village renewal a model of anti-globalizing movements, and the itinerant radical a tuned-in and dropped-out hippie-type. Even the Cynic model of itinerancy is but an update of the hippie to an “anarcho-punk” (I owe the insight that there is a deep affinity between the ancient Cynic and the modern anarchist to Leif Vaage).

33. So also Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 154 and n. 84: “. . . the determination of the genre of Q is understood as a necessary preliminary to the determination of the social location of Q. [Note:] Rather than vice versa, as is the case with Horsley 1991a, who . . . reads his social construct into his analysis of Q.” So also Kirk, *Composition of the Sayings Source*, 48–49, who notes that Horsley assumes a “rustic” milieu for Q and reads off its genre from this assumption without reference to its actual features as a text. Such a procedure is still used by Horsley in “Introduction,” 1–22.

34. The matter of ancient literacy is still rather controversial and has always been difficult to establish, especially as regards different contexts. Can we extrapolate, for instance, literacy rates in Egypt to literacy rates in Palestine? Can we extrapolate from city to countryside? On ancient literacy in general, Harris, *Ancient Literacy* is much cited. Note, too, that in bureaucratic situations, broad illiteracy required and was rendered acceptable by the existence of scribes who could undertake various documentary tasks on behalf of others. So Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 152, 155; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 19. See also the discussion of illiteracy formulae in papyri in Youtie, “Yeιγαιον Φευτικος,” 101–8; and Youtie, “ΤΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΤΙΣ,” 201–21. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 246, introduces further complications and qualifications: “Administrative centers, home to self-conscious Greeks, sources of most Greek literary papyri found so far, locations of schools, the cities of Egypt were in all respects more Hellenic than the hinterland. But the countryside was not far away,
in Greek, this means that someone with the ability and motivation to write the text in Greek did so, even if it is unlikely that, for example, prophets of village renewal or destitute peasants would have had either this ability or motivation. That Q was written down, and written down in Greek at some time before the composition of Matthew and Luke is a direct corollary of the two source hypothesis and is essentially incontestable; if Q existed, it existed in written, Greek form when Matthew and Luke undertook to use it as a source. Further, this means that a person literate in Greek necessarily undertook this transcription. And moreover—since it is hard to imagine circumstances in which Q would circulate outside the immediacy of its performative context unless and until it was written down—that this literate individual most likely existed in the same socio-historical environment as generated Q’s traditions. Thus the existence of Q requires, or at least strongly suggests, the existence of an individual literate in

and it remains as difficult to be specific and precise about language and literacy in the cities as in the villages.” Even more emphatic is Lewis, Life in Egypt, 82: “It is a safe assumption that there were villagers . . . who could read and appreciate Greek literature—an assumption confirmed by the fragments of the works of Greek authors found in the ruins of some villages.”

35. This point has been argued at length and will not be rehearsed here. For the necessarily written character of Q as used by Matthew and Luke (and its status as a single document), see the summary of arguments in Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 56–72. The question of Q’s language is two-fold: its language in the form in which Matthew and Luke received it and its original language of composition. The former is easily settled: the high degree of Greek verbal agreement between Matthew and Luke in some segments of the document (e.g., Q 3:7–9, 16–17) is not consistent with independent translation of an Aramaic document. That this Greek Q is not a document translated from an original Aramaic is difficult to establish beyond the shadow of a doubt (for obvious reasons), which is unfortunate in light of the persistent desire in our field to postulate Aramaic originals, often on very flimsy evidence. Q is tempting in this regard because of its Galilean provenance and due to its focus on the words of Jesus, which, we imagine, were originally spoken in Aramaic. The most recent effort of which I am aware to establish an Aramaic Q is that of Casey, Aramaic Approach, criticized in Fleddermann, Q, 156; in addition, Allison, The Jesus Tradition in Q, suggests that one (early) literary stratum of Q was translated from Aramaic. The argument for an originally Greek Q is addressed in Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, 59–64; Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 77–78. Guenther, “The Sayings Gospel,” esp. 62–70, makes a positive argument for Q’s composition in Greek on the basis of its generic features and literary forms.

36. This is especially true under the conditions imagined by Horsley, who has emerged as one of the most vocal and insistent advocates of “oral” composition at work behind Q (see Horsley and Draper, Whoever Hears You Hears Me; and more recently Horsley, “Introduction,” 18–19). Horsley imagines a context for Q in “Israelite little tradition” (e.g., Horsley, “Performance and Tradition,” 50; cf. his discussion of Q in Sociology and the Jesus Movement; Horsley and Draper, Whoever Hears You Hears Me; and elsewhere), presumably “performed orally.” The enactment of this communal, rural, and politically subversive “performance” would not have “translated” well outside of its immediate socio-political context, leading one to wonder—if indeed a Greek written document would be so difficult to imagine in a rural Galilean context—how Q’s reduction to writing could possibly have come about. It strikes me as unfortunate that Horsley has been so insistently opposed to reading Q in a scribal context, since his distaste for the itinerancy model, his strongly political reading of ancient texts, and his particular interest in James C. Scott’s models are all helpful interventions in Q scholarship.
Greek proximate to, in contact with, belonging to, or otherwise associated with the group responsible for the Q traditions. Q is necessarily a scribal product in at least this limited way: the proposition that it was written down by a scribe should be about as controversial as the claim that a triangle has three sides. Both are true by definition. Minimally, then, we can stipulate that Q is a document and, moreover, that at least one literate person was involved in and thus proximate to at least one stage (the final) in Q's development.

The issue, unfortunately, is more complicated than this. The important question for a social history of the people responsible for Q is not so much whether Q was written as when and under what circumstances it was written. Shall we understand Q as a more or less fortuitously-recorded transcript of the oral performances and behaviors of illiterate village prophets, as per Horsley's more recent work on Q?\textsuperscript{37} Or shall we see in Q a more or less artful product of deliberate literary design, as per Kloppenborg?\textsuperscript{38} I position myself, obviously, in the latter camp. More is at stake here than may be immediately obvious. In asserting that Q is a literary object, the claim is being made that Q is a self-consciously rhetorical instrument and that writing (and hence reading, literacy, intertextuality, etc.) is integral to its composition and to the self-conception of those who created it. This is important not only for identifying the social location of those responsible for Q.\textsuperscript{39} It is also consequential for how we understand Q's rhetoric. When viewed as something like a transcript of the public proclamations of local prophets, Q tends to be read as rhetorically transparent, as

\textsuperscript{37} See Horsley and Draper, \textit{Whoever Hears You}; and Horsley, “Introduction”; Horsley, \textit{Performance and Tradition.” See also Allison’s (\textit{Jesus Tradition in Q, 31}) characterization of the material he regards as the earliest stratum of Q (Q 9:57–62; 10:2–16, 21–24; 11:2–4, 9–13; 12:2–12, 22–32): “Regarding the \textit{Sitz im Leben} of this material, which I shall label Q', we should probably not envisage individual missionaries wandering about with copies to consult. For most early Christians, and so presumably most Christian missionaries, were probably illiterate. So one concedes that among the early missionaries there was a literate teacher who drew up for his or her own use a document—a loose-leaf notebook such as Sato envisons?—to help instruct and encourage other missionaries.”

\textsuperscript{38} An insight closely linked to the identification of Q as having a distinct (and literary) genre, an observation promoted by Robinson, “LOGOI SOPHON,” 71–113, and developed thoroughly in Kloppenborg, \textit{Formation of Q}; cf. Kloppenborg Verbin, \textit{Excavating Q}, 154–65. For additional discussion of Q's literary roots in the wisdom tradition, see Kirk, \textit{Composition of the Sayings Source}.

\textsuperscript{39} In fact as I hint above, literacy as such is perhaps less of an indicator of social position than is sometimes assumed. In urban contexts, especially, highly literate individuals can run the gamut from slaves to artisans to aristocrats. It is to be assumed that literacy is more highly restricted in the countryside than in cities. Nonetheless, the limited evidence we possess suggests that there is not a one-to-one correlation between literacy and higher social status or illiteracy and lower social status. See also Youtie, “Impact of Illiteracy,” 220–21: “. . . in conditions of semi-literacy as we see them in Egypt, involving as they did the existence of a large class of professional scribes, the acquisition by persons of the lower and middle classes of some degree of competence in writing Greek, was regarded as a practical and therefore desirable accomplishment, but with no implications of social superiority. Against this background illiteracy did not induce anxiety and literacy did not foster estrangement.”
an unmediated, crystallized “performance” of real people in a real historical context, and hence as a direct testimony to the actual practices and beliefs of the ancient Jesus-people it represents. When Q blesses the poor, hungry, sad, and persecuted (Q 6:20–23), this means that the people responsible for it, and the audience imagined by these people, were poor, hungry, sad, and persecuted. They loved their enemies (6:27), hated the Pharisees (11:39–48), eschewed anxiety (12:22–31), canceled their debts (11:4), and when they prayed, they prayed the Lord’s prayer (Q 11:2–4). Such a reading is an updated version of the old form-critical treatment of ancient gospel writings as *Kleinliteratur*. But it is an attractive and convenient regression. The view of Q as a crystallized recapitulation of the spoken word would offer us direct access to an oral tradition we must otherwise concede is largely lost to us. The absence of literary artifice also, we tend to imagine, places us in the proximity of authenticity, presence, and the vital actuality of lived life rather than the enervating artificiality of the dead letter, which only comes into play when the unmediated experience is no longer accessible. Hence the *Kleinliteratur* model not only gives us direct access to the lived reality of the most ancient followers of Jesus, but also direct access to their existential encounter with God. By contrast, when we concede that Q is not only a document, but a deliberate composition making use of contemporary literary conventions, then we must look to it for intentional selection, organization, persuasion, rhetoric, and even clichés. In such a case, what Q says may be something rather different from what its composers actually did or how

40. See, e.g., Allison’s comment, quoted above. Allison asserts that the earliest material in Q was a sort of training manual for missionaries. There would thus be a one-to-one identity between what is said in (this portion of) Q and what is actually done by the missionaries.

41. So also Kloppenborg, *Formation of Q*, 4.

42. Hence the epigraph to this paper from de Certeau, *Writing*, 216: “Writing is found only where the signifier can be isolated from presence.” That is, writing is perceived to be or represent a species of alienation, while orality is somehow a way to avoid that alienation. So also Paul in 2 Cor 3:6: “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” These characterizations, it should be stressed, are just that: I am not asserting (and neither is de Certeau) that writing actually is an expression of alienation, only that it tends to be regarded as such in romantic opposition to unmediated experience. The notion of experience itself as an authentic and unmediated access to reality is in fact a modern creation (to be traced to Schleiermacher) and one with significant problems at that. See the brilliant discussion in Scharf, “Experience,” 94–116.

43. See also Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 6–7: “Moreover orality is often idealized, invested with the romantic and nostalgic ideas connected with folklore, folk culture, and folk tradition, or the ‘noble savage.’ ‘Oral culture’ is often used interchangeably with folklore, folklore is seen as ‘oral tradition,’ and with little critical examination, but much idealism, orality and ‘oral societies’ take on the romantic and exaggerated attributes of folk culture. . . . Oral culture is innocent, pure, and natural, uncorrupted by the written word, or perhaps, depending on one’s standpoint, the pure manifestation of a people’s character.” This last point is of particular relevance to Horsley’s work on Q in which the “native” Israelite dimension of Galilee is not only emphasized alongside an insistence on illiteracy and hence orality, but is coordinated with it.
the social world of which they were a part really operated. Moreover, tragically, Q would deflate in stature from a record of the unique and unrepeatable experience of the in-breaking kingdom of God to yet another instance of human intellectual creativity.

The evidence for a studied, literary Q has been laid out much better than I could ever hope to do by those scholars who have explored the literary genre of Q. Their studies have established that Q is indeed a considered composition, and specifically a respectable example of wisdom literature. Several factors suggest thoughtful compositional activity and a literary formation, agenda, and ethos at each stage of the document’s composition. The first layer of Q (Q¹) is characterized by tightly-organized clusters of imperatives and related maxims, rhetorical questions, and other buttressing rhetoric, that is, it is typical of the instructional genre. Kloppenborg argues that Q¹ was already a written text when embellished by the Deuteronomistic redactor (Q²):

Given the techniques of interpolation and insertion [on the part of the Q² redactor], it is reasonable to assume that the ‘wisdom speeches’ [Q¹] were already in a written form when they were glossed. Otherwise one would expect a greater degree of homogeneity and fewer abrupt transitions.

But one may take the argument further: the adoption of the coherent generic conventions of a set type of ancient Near Eastern literature—one strongly associ-
ated with scribes and particularly with the quintessentially scribal practice of *list-making*\(^{48}\)—shows that, even at its compositional stage, Q was not only written but a literary contrivance.

The generic integrity of Q\(^1\) constitutes the clearest and strongest argument for the deliberately literary (and hence artificial) nature of Q\(^1\). Not only does the range of constituent forms appearing in it, as well as their organization,\(^{49}\) coordinate with the ancient literary genre of instruction, it does so in part by showing a remarkable consistency of forms and a remarkably limited set of argumentative techniques and strategies. The constituent forms in Q\(^1\) are largely limited to makarisms (e.g., Q 6:20–23), imperatives (e.g., 6:27–28), result or motive clauses (e.g., 6:23, 35), rhetorical questions (6:32–33), and gnomic observations about typical human behavior and other aspects of observed reality (including nature, the “behavior” of God, and so on; e.g., 6:35, 39–40, 43, 47–49).\(^{50}\) The larger argumentative strategies and structure throughout Q\(^1\) are generally restricted to the provision of motive clauses for hortatory imperatives (or makarisms, which share with imperatives the function of exhorting or idealizing certain kinds of behavior), citation of “common-sense” exempla as support or illustration for those motives (often buttressed by “how much more . . . .” types of arguments), and the offering of aphoristic generalizations expressive of a worldview in which the advice given makes perfect and obvious sense.\(^{51}\) Stylistically, the material is especially marked by contrastive parallelism and the serialization of examples. Q 12:33–34, though brief, is representative:

**A.1.** Do not treasure for yourselves treasures on earth  
(negative imperative)  
**A.2.** where moth and gnawing deface  
(supporting example #1: from nature)  
**A.3.** and where robbers dig through and rob  
(supporting example #2: from human behavior)  

\(^{48}\) On the association of the instructional genre with scribes, see Kirk, *Composition of the Sayings Source*, 151; Kloppenborg, *Formation of Q*, 283–86. While Q\(^1\) is fairly tightly organized, it and the instructional genre in general represent collections of sayings or speeches and serve as repositories for proverbs and the like. As such they represent *lists* of wisdom. For the strong association between lists, on the one hand, and scribes, literacy, and formalization of knowledge, on the other, see especially Goody, *Domestication*, 74–111. Cf. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, 178–79; Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 82; Smith, “Wisdom and Apocalyptic,” 103–4; Smith, *Imagining Religion*, 44–47; Crossan, “Lists,” 236–37.

\(^{49}\) See the extremely helpful formal analysis of Q\(^1\) in Appendix II of Kloppenborg, *Formation of Q*, 342–45.

\(^{50}\) See the useful formal breakdown of the opening Q\(^1\) speech (Q 6:20–49) in Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 155–56. There are a few places in Q\(^1\) where additional forms appear. In particular, Q 9:57–60 (61–62?) are a pair (or triad?) of chreiai. Their use as programmatic illustrations for what follows, however, conforms nicely to the standard organizational techniques of Q\(^1\) (so also Kloppenborg, *Formation of Q*, 318).

\(^{51}\) These kinds of features are enumerated in Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 156–57, and there compared to other examples of the instructional genre.
B.1. but treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven
   (positive imperative, in contrastive parallelism to A.1., above)
B.2. where neither moth nor gnawing defaces
   (supporting example #1: from nature; in contrastive parallelism to A.2.,
   above)
B.3. and where robbers do not dig through nor rob
   (supporting example #1: from human behavior; in contrastive parallelism
   to A.3., above)
C. For where your treasure is, there will also be your heart.\(^{52}\)
   (sententious concluding generalization, which makes sense of commands
   and examples given above)

These forms and the technique of combining them into thematic clusters repeat
themselves over and over throughout Q\(^1\). The complexity of this documentary
architecture, or of its range of constituent forms, is hardly overwhelming.\(^{53}\) But
it is precisely the limitations and constraints that this literacy genre places on
Q's contents and structure that is significant for identifying Q\(^1\)'s literary
status. People do not usually limit the range of their actual speech to aphorisms, im-
peratives, and result clauses, nor do they organize their speeches so repetitively,
and certainly do not do so spontaneously.\(^{54}\) Thus the extremely limited range of
forms and argumentative types in Q\(^1\)—or, to put it positively, the (erstwhile)
document's formal and rhetorical consistency—indicate a contrived, artificial,
literary composition, not the petrified utterances of actual people engaging in
socio-political and/or “religious” intercourse. If it seems peculiar to have desti-
tute peasant prophets speaking (in Greek!) in clusters of aphorisms, it is all the
more implausible that they would restrict themselves to such an idiom.

An important clue to the character and history of Q\(^1\)'s composition is af-
forded by Ronald Piper's identification of a series of repetitive speech structures
throughout the work. These set pieces appear to consist of various aphorisms
and imperatives embellished and organized according to a fixed template: (1)
general opening sayings; (2) sayings producing arguments directly in support
of the initial instruction; (3) rhetorical questions/new illustrations; (4) final argu-

\(^{52}\) Reconstruction and translation from Robinson, ed., *The Sayings of Jesus*, 20.
\(^{53}\) Kloppenborg, *Formation of Q*, 318, notes that Q\(^1\) is actually a fairly sophisticated example
of the instructional form: “... Q is not simply an agglomeration of sayings, but resembles
the organizing techniques of some of the more sophisticated instructions. Admonitions
are organized thematically. ... In four of Q's speeches (6:20b–49; 9:57–10:16; 12:2–7, 11–12;
13:24–14:34), a relatively sophisticated structure is observed. Each cluster begins with a
programmatic saying or group of sayings, setting the tone for the cluster (6:20b–23; 9:57–62;
12:2; 13:24), and then follows the imperatival or hortatory section.” It should be stressed,
however, that the developed character of Q\(^1\) within the confines of its genre is not the same
thing as high art. Q\(^1\)'s generic sophistication need not be equated with high learning, any par-
ticularly great literary skill, or high social standing. Indeed, what makes Q\(^1\) such a mature
example of its genre is its highly repetitive nature, its formalism, and the limited range of
topics and forms it encloses.

\(^{54}\) And thus even were these materials to be recited orally in certain contexts, their cal-
culated, artificial, and intentional posture persists.
ment and application. Several Q1 speeches exhibit this relatively rigid pattern: on not judging (Q 6:37–42); on bearing good fruit (6:43–45); on confidence in asking (11:9–13); and on anxiety (12:22–31); Piper finds a similar construction as well in the speech on love of enemies (6:27–36). These repeated structures are nicely exemplified in the speech on confidence in asking, in Q 11:9–13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech units</th>
<th>Q 11:9–13</th>
<th>Comparable Q1 structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Opening sayings (here, serialized imperatives with motivating results).</td>
<td>Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened for you. (11:9)</td>
<td>6:37a; 6:43; 12:22b; cf. 6:27–28, 35c, 31; 12:2–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sayings producing arguments in support of instructions (here, serial aphorisms in parallel with opening instructions).</td>
<td>For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and for the one who knocks it is/will be opened. (11:10)</td>
<td>6:37b–38; 6:44a; 12:23; cf. 6:35d; 12:4–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Rhetorical questions/new illustrations (here, rhetorical questions illustrating previous aphorisms from typical human behavior).</td>
<td>What man among you, whose son asks for bread will give him a stone? Or again, if he asks for a fish will give him a snake? (11:11–12)</td>
<td>6:39; 6:44b; 12:24–28; cf. 6:32–34; 12:6–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Final argument and application (here, “how much more” extrapolation to general conclusion about God supportive of opening imperatives).</td>
<td>If therefore you, being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good things to the ones who ask him. (11:13)</td>
<td>6:40–42; 6:45; 12:29–31; cf. 6:36; 12:8–9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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55. These characterizations of the Q1 speech-clusters are taken verbatim from Piper, “Evidence of Design,” 416. See also my discussion in Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 184.

56. See Piper, Wisdom, 14–51, 78–86. In addition Piper sees one of these structures in Q 12:2–9 (Wisdom, 51–61) and in Lukan special material (Luke 16:9–13; Wisdom, 86–99). The instance in Q 12:2–9 is interesting and problematic. Its concluding injunctions are clearly of a piece with the redaction of Q (Q2), while the remainder of the speech is just as clearly Q1 material. And the whole does seem to be structured according to precisely the same pattern as the other speeches identified by Piper. Has Q2 redaction perhaps obscured the original (Q1) ending of this cluster?

57. The structures outlined in this chart are based on Piper, “Evidence of Design,” 416; Piper, Wisdom, 14–77. The text of Q 11:9–13 in the following chart is my translation of the Greek provided in Piper, Wisdom, 15, itself based on Polag’s reconstruction of Q.
Once again, it is worth pointing out, against the stubborn persistence of theories of Q’s oral composition, that people do not normally speak according to such rigidly patterned and repetitious templates. Here, indeed, we see the work of a bureaucratic sensibility, taking a fixed format or stencil and plugging in (thematic) information as appropriate to produce a series of similar forms covering a range of topics.

Moreover, the embedding of these speeches within Q suggests some tentative conclusions about Q¹’s prehistory and composition. Since these speeches seem to be thematically consistent (on which, see below) and to be repetitious elements within Q¹, around which the remainder of the document appears to have been built, it seems most sensible to imagine that these short speeches were the core around which the remainder of Q¹ was constructed and that they represent an early (pre-Q¹) phase in the rhetoric of the people responsible for Q. Tending to confirm this hunch is the rhetorical treatment of Jesus tradition in both these prototype speeches and in Q¹ as a whole: in both cases, the contextualization and deployment of “free-floating” sayings attributed to Jesus⁵⁹ tend to redirect them in the service of far less radical conclusions than some of them might suggest on their own.⁶⁰ In connection with Piper’s aphoristic speech-clusters, it is particularly notable that more radical sayings tend to open the clusters, while much less radical sayings tend to conclude them. Thus, opening commands include such inversionary and uncompromising statements as “love your enemies” (Q 6:27), “judge not” (6:37), “no sound tree bears bad fruit” (6:43),⁶¹ “ask and it will be given to you” (11:9), and “do not be anxious about what you shall eat . . . [or] what you shall wear” (12:22). By contrast, the concluding exhortations or generalizations of these speeches redirect their radical contents into rather more banal directions: “be merciful” (Q 6:36),⁶² “remove the

⁵⁸. At the very least, such speakers would bore their auditors senseless. Perhaps one of the reasons filmic presentations of Jesus are never particularly compelling is that speeches such as these (and it is precisely this kind of Q¹ material that seems always to be used to characterize Jesus’ teaching) simply do not “work” well as spoken utterance in a concrete setting— they work best on the page.

⁵⁹. I assume that at least some of these sayings were attributed to Jesus and used as building blocks around which the rest of the speeches were elaborated, because some of the constituent sayings in these speeches are paralleled in (apparently) independent sources that also attribute them to Jesus. For example, the opening imperative of the speech in Q 11:9–13 (“seek and you will find”) is paralleled in Thomas 2 and 92, while two of the following supportive sayings (“one who seeks will find, and to the one who knocks it will be opened”) appear in Thomas 94. These may be “performative variants” of the same saying, both of which were then brought (back) together in the Q¹ speech. I thus assume that some of these sayings were circulating as sayings of Jesus and that the bulk of the speeches was composed around them by the people responsible for Q.

⁶⁰. See Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 185–89.

⁶¹. This statement is framed as a truism, but as a moral declaration it is shockingly uncompromising as phrased, since it implies that a good person must be morally perfect.

⁶². Here an inversionary and radical assertion that one must love even one’s enemies has been resolved into a rather more banal appeal that one exercise mercy.
log from your own eye” (6:42b), “the good person brings forth good things” (6:45), “the Father will give good things” (11:13), and “seek his kingdom” (12:31). Ideological positions (mercy, discernment, confidence in prayer, commitment to the kingdom) replace assurances of concrete largess or the leveling of all social distinctions. A similar compositional practice with a similar agenda and similar effects seems to control the selection, organization, and ordering of other elements in Q1. Thus, for instance, the serialization of the beatitudes—its a list-oriented analogue to the serialization of parallel examples in the Q1 speech clusters—follows the familiar progression from radical, inversionary, and uncompromising (blessed are the poor, the hungry), to a greater focus on cognitive or affective states (blessed are those who mourn), to, finally, a conclusion emphasizing ideological commitment to a program (blessed when reviled on account of the Son of Man). Likewise the association of the speech on confident asking (Q 11:9–13) with instructions specifically on how to pray is predicated on an understanding of the speech as concerned with God’s response to those who seek the kingdom—thus the speech cluster’s composition out of its disparate parts would appear to precede the juxtaposition with the Lord’s prayer, and to have been controlled by the same interests as motivated that juxtaposition. Broader Q1 structures—when they are still discernible—also show similar patterning. For instance, the material in Q 6:20–49 seems to be a collection of perhaps three speech clusters dealing generally with social

63. Here a prohibition against all judgment has been resolved into a command to self-awareness before criticizing others.

64. The positive, rather than negative, formulation of the sayings de-radicalizes it. The point shifts from insistence on perfection in its negative formulation (good people do not behave badly [at all]) to a genuine truism in its positive formulation (good people behave well).

65. Hence a general (and counter-intuitive) assertion of bounty and thorough confidence is reduced to the truism that God gives people good gifts. The point is even further diluted in the context of Q1 as a whole, since the juxtaposition of this speech with the Lord’s prayer in Q 11:2b–4 inflects the whole complex toward a comment on the efficacy of prayer and the caring nature of God rather than a statement of unbounded confidence about life in this world.

66. From an assertion of a naturalistic falling back upon the bounty of the world, the speech is redirected into an assertion that God’s kingdom is a worthier focus of attention than an interest in food and clothing. As with the material on prayer, part of the domestication of the constituent sayings takes place by shifting their point of reference from relentlessly worldly concerns to “heavenly” matters.

67. Note that neither in the case of the beatitudes nor in the case of any of the speeches identified by Piper is there any consistent pattern of multiple-attestation according to how radical a given saying may be or what position is occupied by it. Thus for example, blessings on the poor and hungry occur in Thomas (54 and 69b) but blessings on the persecuted (uninflected, mind you, in the direction of ideological or group commitment, as in Q) do as well (68, 69a). Likewise, Thomas has parallels to radical opening sayings of some of the Q1 speech-clusters (e.g., Q 11:9; cf. Thomas 92) and to some of the more banal concluding sayings (e.g., Q 6:45; cf. Thomas 45). Thus it would be unwise to associate the “radical” sayings with the historical Jesus and the more banal sayings with Q1 redaction. It is rather the organization of the material that should be regarded as the literary work of the composer of Q1.
behavior, which are framed by the programmatic beatitudes at their opening (6:20–23) and the hortatory example-story of the house-builders (6:46–49) by way of conclusion. The whole little collection of speeches with its opening promise of radical inversion has been summed up in the end in terms of adherence to a teacher. The overall effect of all of these organizational patterns in Q¹, including the composition of the document as a whole, is rather to de-radicalize (often by shifting the focus to the question of ideological allegiance) what appears to have been a radical sayings tradition, or conversely, to invest a fairly straightforward social and/or ideological program with the mystique of radical-sounding sayings.

If this reconstruction of the compositional practice of the Q¹ author holds any water at all, then Q¹ emerges as essentially a fixed list or compilation of a selection of template-speeches, buttressed by additional Jesus-materials associated with the speeches by thematic and structural relations. In this form, the order (and content) of the speeches is frozen in a given sequence. However productive the speech-format discovered by Piper may originally have been for generating stock pronouncements on a range of topics, by the time Q¹ was put together, this technique seems to have exhausted its utility and survives only as moribund vestiges in a larger collection or list of thematically-associated wisdom sayings. The interest behind Q¹ is preservation and collection, fixity and sequencing; its milieu and the ethos behind it are written and scribal, not oral.

68. The association of the (Q¹ version of) the mission speech with the radical chreiai of Q 9:57–60 has a de-radicalizing effect similar to the examples already given, shifting the import of these radical chreiai to the issue of commitment to the program of Jesus.

69. My references to these speeches as having been “productive” constructs that subsequently become “moribund” and leave only “vestiges” of their former usage is derived from an analogy from grammar whereby a particular grammatical form may be freely used to produce new words and constructs but eventually ceases to be used and survives in traces left by words and constructions that have come down from the time when the feature was productive. A classic example is the class of heteroclitic r/n stems from proto-Indo-European, which is still productive in some ancient Anatolian languages but survives only in a diversity of frozen forms in daughter languages (see Fortson, IV, Indo-European Language and Culture, 111; I mention this very unhelpful example in the interests of those readers who are getting fed up with analysis of layer after layer of hypothetical literary development; I refer those readers to the healthy, quite convincing, and quite elaborate field of comparative Indo-European linguistics for a respectable precedent). An example from English occurs in the formation of the past tense of the verb: the weak verbal form (addition of “-ed” to the end of the verbal stem) is still productive, while the strong verbal form (ablaut of the root vowel) no longer is. It survives in fixed forms such “brought,” “sang,” and the like, but is not typically used to create past tenses for new verbs. In any case, I am simply claiming that the speeches identified by Piper are the results of once-generative frameworks for producing arguments on demand, but are apparently used in the context of Q¹ as fixed content.

70. Note also Crossan, “Lists,” 236–37: “If we always cited a fixed sequence of parables, it would mean that we were thinking scribally rather than orally, and it might be better to describe such fixed sets as scribal lists given orally. Such a fixed oral operation, apart from magic or ritual, would not and could not occur before the conception of a fixed and written format or sequence had been created, that is, before the first arrival of literacy on a given scene.”
It must be stressed again, however, that while Q1’s overall structure and pattern of composition is artificial, literary, and clearly indebted to an intellectual ethos, this is not to claim that it is a particularly elevated example of literature. Such an assertion of very high sophistication has been made for Q as a whole (that is, in its completed form) by Alan Kirk,71 but this claim cannot in my view be sustained for Q1 as an integral and discrete document. It is simple, repetitive, and structured around models reminiscent of a fairly modest degree of educational attainment. The speeches identified by Piper are no more complex—and are rather reminiscent of—the most simple of chreia elaborations. The principles of association of units appear to be topical and the rhetorical flourishes (parallelism, repetition, exhortations to obey) are rudimentary, while the speeches that appear to be the building blocks around which Q1 was created are the ancient equivalents of “fill-in-the-blanks essays.” Thus, while “Q is very far from being a ‘random collection of sayings’ and is erroneously regarded as a pure sedimentation of oral tradition,”72 at the same time “Q does not show the same sort of self-conscious and studied composition expected in the products of the elite scribal establishments. The mode of organization is topical rather than by more complicated devices such as alphabetic acrostics or numeric schemata. There are few word plays apart from a possible pun on μωραίνω ([to make dull,] Q 14:34) and rhetorical ornamentation does not go much beyond alliteration and assonance.”73 In saying then that Q1 is a literary composition and in emphasizing the features that make it so, no implication of any extraordinary literary virtuosity is intended or required.74

Interestingly, as Q proceeds through the stages of its literary evolution, its textual nature becomes more marked.75 The redaction of Q (Q2) seems to maintain the organizational structures of Q1 intact, as well as preserving (at least some of) its content, not homogenized to redactional interests. This suggests not simply a written exemplar being reworked and glossed by the redactor, but in addition an active concern with the preservation of Q1 by this later writer. Rather than transcribing an organically-modified Q1, whose most recent oral

71. Kirk, Composition of the Sayings Source. Kirk does not think a free-standing Q1 can be isolated at all.
72. Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, 323. He continues (Formation of Q, 323–24): “It is, on the contrary, a carefully constructed composition which employs literary techniques characteristic of other ancient sayings collections.”
74. I am emphasizing and repeating this qualification because a recurring critique of Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, has been that the literary sophistication I impute to Q is too great to be expected from village scribes. This criticism represents a misunderstanding of my analysis. The intricacy and complexity of that analysis is a function of our (historical and ideological) distance from Q, and of the difficulties associated with reconstructing its rhetoric and agenda—not of the complexity of the rhetoric itself. Minute analysis can be applied as easily to relatively simple writings as to complex ones.
75. Again, I must stress that the point here concerns a textual orientation, not the issue of literary sophistication.
performances would more or less as a matter of course cohere with the performers’ current interests and agenda, the Q² composer aims to maintain the record of the ideological content of the program to which his additional polemic and rationalization refers. Generally speaking, and insofar as we can determine, the redactor’s main procedure is embellishment and glossing (the latter being a quintessentially textual procedure). In addition, the redactor offers some further organizational principles of his own. We encounter, for instance, cross-references and logical (or temporal) developments across the span of redacted Q, as well as some large-scale organizational principles similar to those found in Q¹. Most striking (and obvious) are the cross-references to “the coming one” (ὁ ἐρχόμενος) in Q² 3:16, 7:19, and 13:35. Q 7:19 fails to make sense apart from its reference back to John’s prediction in 3:16–17—a textual cross-reference. Likewise 13:35 acquires its sense and salience from the prior identification of Jesus with ὁ ἐρχόμενος in 7:19. Each reference builds upon the previous one and the sequence of the material follows a temporal progression from prediction to manifestation to future return. Moreover, enough of the organization of the front end of Q is still discernible that the framing function of the linkages be-

76. The androcentric assumptions of Q have been noted by Schottroff, “Itinerant Prophetesses,” in 347–60; Levine, “Who’s Catering the Q Affair,” 145–61; Arnal, “Gendered Couplets.” And it seems unlikely that the bureaucratic functionaries probably responsible for Q (on which see below) would have had women among their number. Hence my use of the masculine pronoun for the Q² redactor is a reflection of the likely reality of the situation: we should assume a male authorship of Q.

77. That is, the Q² additions are intended to lay out the consequences of failing to listen to the message of Jesus. Q¹ is preserved as the record of what that message was. Just as Q¹ is largely lacking in the polemical rationalizations that appear in redactional additions, it is notable that these redactional additions are themselves quite vacuous in terms of the content of the “message” of Jesus.

78. Obviously, we cannot be certain about this. The Q¹ speeches that survive were clearly retained more or less intact with the Q² redactor apparently adding his own material to pre-existing Q¹ speeches and larger structures. This redactor’s conservatism in his treatment of Q¹ is evident particularly in his failure to homogenize the Q¹ material more thoroughly to his own interests. But of course if the Q² redactor eliminated Q¹ materials as part of his work or if he so thoroughly rewrote sections of Q¹ that they are no longer discernible as such, we will not have any way to recover this material or even to know it was once there. However, the conservative treatment of the material that remains suggests a general conservatism on the part of this redactor. I note in addition a theory I floated many years ago (Arnal, “Redactional Fabrication,” 165–80) that the Q² redactor composed Q² 3:9 (readiness of the axe for trees not bearing good fruit) on the model of Q¹ 6:43 (a tree is known by its fruit). If so (and of course the thesis is admittedly speculative), such a procedure would not only attest once again to a textual ethos (since the new redactional material is most easily accounted for as textually derived from Q¹) but would also exemplify the conservative tendency of the Q² redactor insofar as he chose to preserve the “original” of a saying that had now acquired a redactionally-loaded “performative variation.”

79. On large-scale organizational structures in Q, see Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, 94–95; Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 122–24; cf. Kirk, Composition of the Sayings Source.

80. So Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, 94; and with even greater complexity, Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 122–24.
The Trouble with Q

between Jesus, John the Baptist, and ὁ ἐρχόμενος around the extended (and itself framed) Q¹ teaching material is still apparent. It is also at Q’s redactional stage that explicit textual quotation first occurs: Q 13:35 (“blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”) is a direct quotation of Psalm 118:26 (cf. also Mark 11:9). Even more striking, it is an exact, verbatim quotation from the Septuagint (LXX 117:26: εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου, “blessed is the one who comes in the Lord’s name”), establishing not simply a textual reference, but a reference to a Greek text. Q 7:27 quotes an odd version of Malachi 3:1 (which also appears in Mark 1:2), and here the material is explicitly referred to as a quotation from a written text, introduced by γέγραπται (“it has been written”). In fact, the comment in 7:27 is overtly exegetical, aiming to specify the meaning of a particular prophetic text as a reference to John the Baptist. Surrounding this quotation is an extended web of textual allusions also dealing with the identity of John and his relationship (or the relationship of his message) to Jesus.81 Another web of scriptural allusion, this time spanning the whole of Q, occurs in Q²’s multiple allusions to the Lot story, as identified by John Kloppenborg.82 These allusions are of course textual-exegetical allusions and moreover serve to unify Q² across the document as a whole.

One final observation on Q²’s literary-textual culture is in order. Both critics and defenders of the stratification of Q proposed by Kloppenborg have drawn attention to the marked presence of apocalyptic images and motifs in the Q² material, largely absent from Q¹ with its more exclusively “sapiential” orientation.83 It must be stressed that the apocalypse is a literary genre (not, of course, that Q is an apocalypse), that the motifs and symbolism of “apocalypticism” are drawn from highly learned circles (and tend to reflect a learned compilation

81. For a full discussion, see again Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 122–24.
82. That is, Q 3:3a, 7–9; 10:12; 17:28–30, 34–35. See Kloppenborg, “City and Wasteland,” 145–60; cf. Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 118–21. Kloppenborg notes that (Excavating Q, 119): “...the Lot story already had a long history of exegetical use in the Tanak and the literature of Second Temple Judaism, being employed as the archetype of a divine judgment that was total, sudden, and enduring...” Once again, the exegetical and literary orientation of this redaction can be seen.
83. It is a very serious mistake, however, to conclude, as many of Kloppenborg’s critics have, that it is either a supposed incompatibility of sapiential with apocalyptic orientations (so, e.g., Collins, “Wisdom,” 165–85; Horsley, “All Her Children”; their coexistence in Q itself gives the lie to any such claim) or a prior supposition that apocalypticism is necessarily tradition-historically secondary (so especially the wide range of scholars interested in defending an apocalyptic Jesus) that suggests Q’s literary stratigraphy. As Kloppenborg has noted again and again, Q’s literary history is not equivalent to the tradition history of its constituent units or motifs (Formation of Q, 244–45; Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 150–51). It is a redaction-critical analysis, not a form-critical or tradition-historical one. Nor is Q stratigraphy based on the atomization of motifs in Q (so, erroneously, Fleddermann, Q) but on the literary segregation of sets of motifs within Q itself. That is, Q—not Kloppenborg—is responsible for separating “wisdom” from “apocalyptic.” See Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 145–46, 151.
and systematization of native traditions), and that the social circles associated with apocalyptic literature are the same scribal circles typically associated with sapiential texts. As Seth Schwartz notes:

. . . there are no grounds for considering apocalypticism an artifact of popular reaction to social oppression either. In its literary expression, at least, it is in fact an elite or subelite phenomenon, for the most part socially coextensive with wisdom literature.

As for Q3, its contributions to the final shape of Q take the form of a paradigmatic introduction authorizing the sage (Q 4:1–13) and two textual glosses insulating Q2 material from potential anti-nomistic interpretations (11:42c; 16:17). What unites this material is an interest, absent from the remainder of the document, in “defending” Torah from threats to its legitimacy, and in asserting the normative character of Torah (quotations from Deuteronomy model Jesus’ behavior in Q 4:1–13). As well, a shift has occurred in the status of the Jerusalem temple, which has gone from being a God-forsaken (literally) site of murder in Q2 (11:51; 13:35) to a locale in which God’s angels protect his children. In some respects, this stage of Q’s development exhibits the most obvious manifestations of textuality. Textual glossing, as already noted, is itself an indication of both revisions of an established text and of a more or less scholarly concern with the interpretation of that text. Interpretation—and quintessentially textual interpretation at that—is also at the center of the temptation story, in which the validity of Jesus and his teaching is demonstrated by his winning an exegetical duel with the devil. And Torah itself is understood as a written text in this story, even when quoted as part of a verbal duel. Both Jesus and the devil introduce their quotations with γέγραπται (“it has been written”). It is written Torah that Jesus interprets; and it is written Torah that is defended in the nomistic glosses of Q 11:42c and especially 16:17: “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one iota [the smallest letter] or one serif of the Law to fall.” The generic function of the temptation as a preliminary authorization of Jesus is extravagantly academic: it establishes Jesus’ authority to offer all of the following teaching by showing his exegetical proficiency with Torah. The inversionary exhortations

84. See especially Smith, “Wisdom and Apocalyptic”; Collins, “Wisdom”; Horsley, “All Her Children”; cf. Saldañini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, 273; Schwartz, Imperialism and Jewish Society, 82. Again, this is a point that is often cited against Kloppenborg’s stratification of Q (so Collins, “Wisdom”; Horsley, “All Her Children”). The claim is factually correct but is not a relevant critique of Q stratigraphy. In fact, such a claim helps make sense of the redaction of an originally non-apocalyptic sapiential document from an apocalyptic perspective.

85. Schwartz, Imperialism and Jewish Society, 76.

86. On the original identification of the temptation story as a late addition by Kloppenborg (and others), see Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, 246–62. Regarding the addition of 11:42c and 16:17, see Kloppenborg, “Nomos and Ethos.” On Q3 in general, see Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 152–53, 212–13.

87. So Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 153.

88. So Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 212.
of the kingdom are offered in the end by an exegete of Torah. And of course, the overarching pattern of Q's serial revision is the addition of new materials that provide warrants and rationalizations for the (preserved) content of earlier versions. Q, from start to finish, is not simply a written work but a thoroughly and self-consciously literary work.

I note finally that some emphasis has been placed in recent work on the dimension of oral performance involved in all aspects of ancient communication. The real inspiration behind this claim seems to be recent work by Richard Horsley in which not only the orality of Q is stressed but the central importance of this orality for understanding Q and its social context. Such a claim must be qualified. We may stipulate that even a quite thoroughly literary Q would have been “performed” orally in some fashion or another, even if this involved little more than reading the text aloud, as was the norm in antiquity. But if our certainty on this point is predicated on the conviction that all communication in antiquity, including written and literary works, was oral to some degree, then its implications are significantly limited. The vague nature of the conceptualization of “orality” allows an illegitimate slippage between the general truism that the culture in question depended a great deal on oral communication and more specific and concrete conclusions, such as the non-textual character of composition or the non-scribal character of those who have produced the documents in question. But in fact, even a thoroughly scribal and/or school

89. Particularly Horsley and Draper, Whoever Hears You; and Horsley, “Introduction”; Horsley, “Performance and Tradition”; and several of the other essays in both volumes.

90. See, e.g., the comments of Horsley, “Performance and Tradition,” 43–44: “Recent studies of the media of communication in the ancient Mediterranean world have made it unavoidably clear that Gospel materials and the complete Gospels as texts were produced in a predominantly oral environment. Even if a text such as Q existed in writing, it was recited orally in a group setting. . . . The focus is not on the issue of whether Q was ‘originally’ composed in writing or orally. We know of Q, of course, only because parallel speech materials of Jesus were transmitted in writing in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Gospel texts such as Q speeches or Markan narrative continued to be recited orally however widely distributed they may have become in written manuscripts. In fact, interaction between manuscripts, memory, and oral recitation apparently continued into late antiquity as some text critics are beginning to recognize.”

91. See Thomas, Literacy and Orality, 3: “That the spoken word continued to have value is a platitude for any society—even the modern obsession with paper-work leaves some room for it, after all.” One possible inference that may be made from the likelihood of oral performance of a text is that ancient writings may have less fixity than we tend to imagine. But in the case of Q, the use and preservation of fairly intricate glosses seems to place limits even on this observation.

92. Again, Thomas, Literacy and Orality, 4: “‘Orality’ is especially prone to vagueness.” She also discusses the idealization and romanticization of orality (Thomas, Literacy and Orality, 4–5).

93. We can see the beginning of such a slippage, for example, in Horsley’s statement that, “As we are learning from recent studies of ancient Greek, Roman, and Jewish antiquity and the testimonies of ancient writers themselves, not only was the ‘reading’ of texts carried out orally, but composition of texts was closely related to their recitation” (Horsley, “Introduction,” 18).
setting would involve oral recitation and repetition of texts. The massive literary production of the rabbis is a case in point. Jack Goody has noted that the memorization of legal and exegetical materials, religious texts, and epic literature such as Homer or the Vedas—even the self-consciously oral rote memorization of such texts—has typically been the province and responsibility of scribes, those who are not simply literate but somewhat literarily accomplished. Likewise, the illiteracy of rural areas in the Roman empire, especially in the Greek east, is sometimes exaggerated. We are not dealing with an “oral society” in the strictest sense here at all. Writing is available, and documents and the ability to produce them did exist. While we must conclude that the majority of the population in all parts of the Empire (and indeed, all parts of the world until very recently) was illiterate, rural areas all the more so, this essentially statistical conclusion cannot be used to infer the absolute illiteracy of everyone outside of major cities. In fact, we know otherwise. In Egypt, certainly, papyrus evidence indicates the presence of literate functionaries in villages (especially administrators; see further below). And the presence of papyrus fragments of works of literature in rural locations indicates a literate readership there, no matter how small. In Judea, Josephus reports without comment the existence of a Torah scroll in a village (War 2.228–230; cf. Ant. 20.113–117). There is no reason to think the situation in Galilee was especially different. In conclusion, then, general observations about orality and oral cultures cannot overcome the evidence of the specific literary features of Q, which force upon us the conclusion that Q was a literary document and was so from the start.

94. I am muttering some of these sentences under my breath as I compose them. Maybe you are, too, as you read them.

95. Although, of course, this example is also adduced by proponents of the importance of orality. My point here is that obviously literate and textually-oriented sages produced a huge body of learned, list-oriented literature (Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmuds) in which bureaucratic interests and exegesis of texts preserved in writing are paramount but in which there is also a strong focus on memorization and oral communication. For Horsley, this would serve as evidence of the thoroughly oral character of all discourse in antiquity; for me it is an indication that evidence of oral performance and communication in no way bears on the extent to which a given product is literary or its tradents literate and learned.

96. Goody, *Power*, 33–36. In addition to the Rig Veda and Homer, Goody’s examples include the Mishnah and the Qur’an.

97. See especially Harris, *Ancient Literacy*. Harris takes particular issue with the special pleading that would make literacy more widespread among Jews than anyone else in the empire (281–82). He also notes that a major difference between city and countryside was the availability of *education* in the former (134).

98. See P. Teb. 1 and 2 in Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, *The Tebtunis Papyri, Part I*. Many of these papyri are associated with Menkhes, a (native Egyptian) village scribe of the small village of Kerkeosiris (on which see Lewis, *Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt*, 104). Lewis argues that Menkhes himself may be the scribe of P. Teb. 1 and 2, in addition to more everyday documents (which, as non-literary papyri, are written in a different style; Lewis, *Greeks*, 123). While attractive, this hypothesis is not necessary for my point here, which is simply that somebody in rural Egypt was commissioning copies of literature written in a book hand.

99. Jewish or Galilean exceptionalism is no more well-founded when used to support invariable illiteracy in the region than when used to support unrealistic degrees of literacy.
The Original Agenda behind Q

Q’s agenda—which kind of program it advances, and especially whether that program addresses or relates to either extreme poverty or the practice of itinerancy—only emerges with any clarity once its literary character has been established and its major organizational and argumentative features have been recognized. If Q is a literary composition rather than a bundle of individual sayings, one cannot simply treat each individual saying in Q as transparently determinative of the document’s social milieu or ideology.100 In short, Q’s agenda is much less romantic, abstractly theological, or high-minded, and is in my view much more concrete and realistic when the document’s literary character and literary history are taken into account.

The core of the original agenda behind Q is articulated in Q1 and may be found in part in the arguments made in the template speeches identified by Piper, speeches that address the rather repetitive and overlapping themes of proper judgment, appropriate reciprocity, generosity, confidence, and appropriate goals. The organization of this material, both externally and internally, provides some clues as to what is at issue. On the one hand, the arrangement of the speeches within Q1 is revealing. The first three (love of enemies, judging, bearing good fruit) are juxtaposed and are framed by the introductory beatitudes (Q 6:20–23) and the concluding exhortation to follow the advice in “the Lord’s” sayings (6:46–49). Their themes are manifestly related: they are held together especially by an emphasis on generosity and giving, on how the principle of reciprocity should properly lead to charity and abundance rather than calculating and miserly behavior.101 The two speech clusters that occur later in

100. Horsley asserts that “even” Kloppenborg and I treat Q as a receptacle of sayings rather than a compendium (or to use my language, list) of speeches (Horsley, “Introduction”). This accusation strikes me as deeply ironic. While arguing for a reading of Q that essentially treats the document’s sayings as transparent portals onto social reality, Horsley criticizes the more nuanced positions of Kloppenborg and me as being insufficiently attentive to the material’s rhetoric!

101. Reciprocity seems to be a critical issue in this material, but deployed in an unusual way. Sayings such as Q 6:29–30 taken alone seem to repudiate any positive valuation of reciprocity at all: allow yourself to be injured and exploited, give without thought of return, seek nothing for yourself. But seen within the context of the surrounding material (and Q1 as a whole), the argument is (as usual) rather less radical. Rather than rejecting the idea of reciprocity, the calculation of the benefits that accrue to giving is extended to include God and divine gifts as well. Thus, even assertions that one should love one’s enemies (6:27–28; cf. 6:32) offer arguments that rely on notions of reward and reciprocation: “if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?” And if 6:35c–d follows on 6:27–28 (see reconstruction in Robinson, Hoffmann, and Kloppenborg, Sayings Gospel Q, 83), then once more love of enemies is supported by appeal to emulation of the behavior of God—one reciprocates God’s impartial generosity by being impartially generous oneself. In such a context, the golden rule itself (6:31) is simply a promotion of a highly idealized conception of reciprocity, as is especially 6:38. And the cluster (as analyzed by Piper) concludes with the injunction to emulate God’s mercy, hence drawing the weight of the material from love of enemies and a wholesale rejection of reciprocity (which actually never occurs here) to an assertion
Q (on asking from God and on anxiety about food and clothes) both deal with issues of anxiety and confidence regarding the provision of goods. The Lord’s prayer may serve as a programmatic introduction to this material, although the original structure of the latter portions of Q cannot be reconstructed with any certainty. Formally analogous, these two large segments of Q also seem complementary in their central subject-matters: the first (Q 6) concerns generosity (in both judgment and in economics), while the second (Q 11–12) concerns confidence (in both judgment and in economics). It is of particular note that if the advice in the first of these segments, on giving, were to be followed consistently, then the consequences of these observances would justify the confidence expressed in the second large component, on receiving. So, for instance, if people actually give without expectation of return (Q 6:30), then the confidence in asking for anything exhorted in Q 11:9–10 would be concretely realistic.

This thematic relationship, not simply within but between Q’s discrete collections of speech-clusters—especially echoed as it is by similar argumentative strategies and common themes as well as by at least some degree of formal similarity—indicates that the people responsible for constructing Q did not consider these template speeches as disconnected sayings of Jesus but as articulations of a coherent overarching ideology. There is an intelligible (if perhaps of a more extended vision of what reciprocity entails. We might even regard these speeches as defenses of the principle of patronage, as well as reciprocity, but with the twist that it is God (who is everyone’s social superior) rather than one’s (human) social superiors who now serves as patron. For a similar stress on the concept of reciprocity in the speech material in Q 6, see Kirk, “Love Your Enemies,” esp. 685–86, where he argues that the composition of this speech somewhat mitigates the unrealistic sentimentality of the saying on love of enemies and instead, via the golden rule, promotes a real social program.

102. Note that if the speech cluster identified by Piper at Q 12:2–9 does reflect a modified Q speech, this strengthens rather than diminishes the case for a second macro-structural element in Q beginning with the Lord’s prayer. The material in 12:2–7, at least, addresses in a format nearly identical to that of the other speech-clusters the issues of fear and confidence, this time, fear of hostility and death, and the confidence to offer bold proclamations. Hence, we would have, as in the opening “sermon,” a formally distinct statement of principle (the Lord’s prayer, also involving the “kingdom”), followed by a set of three thematically-related speech clusters. There is even a concluding example story exhorting obedience in Q 12:42–46. (Note, however, that Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, 148–54 [cf. Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 118] characterizes this parable as an example of the redactional [Q2] motif of judgment. In its current form, there is no question that the material coheres with Q2 redaction. But was the parable added by the Q2 redactor or modified from its original Q form?)

103. Especially if the scattered material at the beginning of Q 12 is regarded as the remnants of an original Q speech-cluster. But even if we only consider the material solidly attributed to Q, we still have here a collection of thematically-linked speech-clusters, as is the case also with Q 6.

104. As noted above, the arguments depend on appeals to experience, commonplace logic, rhetorical questions, analogies with nature or habitual human behavior, and appeals to the role of God as patron and provider. Common themes include food, judgment, reciprocity, bias, and generosity among others. Note also that the beatitudes that open the first major segment of Q (6:20–23) address matters such as hunger and persecution, issues of concern in Q 11–12, thus further linking the two major segments under discussion here.
ultimately untenable) social program in mind here, identified in the introductory sayings (Q 6:20; 11:2b) of these macro-structural elements as “the kingdom of God.” As this phrase implies, the social program is structured (and argued) along the assumption that God is immediately present, and thus that social relations premised on patronage and reciprocity must factor God and the divine behavior into calculations of proper conduct. The same program emerges from the organization—and especially the conclusions—of the speech clusters identified by Piper: judgment, need, social conflict, and even immoral behavior do not magically disappear, but they are mitigated by an ethos of fairness, generosity, and confidence justified by a notion of proximity to and intimacy with God. Throughout Q, one is to pattern their behavior and relationships on direct emulation of God and on the assumption of God’s presence and immediate salience, rather than on either structures of religious mediation (Q’s silence about temple or Torah is notable, but even more so is its assumption that God is directly present in ordinary affairs) or (especially) human social institutions that promote “unnatural” relationships or that erect hierarchies that fail to

105. With, once again, appropriate reservations about recovering the original organization of Q, I also note that the so-called mission speech (Q 10:2–16), with its introductory chreiai (Q 9:57–60), seems to intervene between these two larger collections within Q. If so, this feature as well reinforces the strong sense of a concrete social agenda behind this material rather than simply a sentimental or ideal worldview. The mission speech in its Q form seems to lay out a program of ideological persuasion, however conceived. It thus could have functioned in Q as a thematic transition between the principles laid out in Q 6 and their (discursive) realization in Q 11–12.

106. The phrase “kingdom of God” (or equivalent; e.g., “his kingdom”) is associated with the overarching program of Q elsewhere in this stage of the document at Q 10:9 (identified with the people who transmit the Q program), 12:31 (the conclusion of the Q speech on anxiety: “seek first his kingdom”), and 13:18, 20 (parables comparing the kingdom to the hidden but productive activity of mustard and yeast). Questionable are 17:20–21, which may not have been in Q at all, and Q 16:16, for which the decision as to the stratum to which it belongs depends on the controverted issue of original location. References to the kingdom also occur in Q 7:28 (least in the kingdom greater than John), 11:20 (kingdom proven by exorcisms), 11:52 (exegetes of law shut up kingdom from people, if the phrase here should be attributed to Q rather than Matthew), and 13:28 (patriarchs in the kingdom, but you excluded). Interestingly, the later layers of Q also refer to competing kingdoms: that of Satan (Q 11:18) and those of “the world” (Q 4:5). In addition, there are Q references to worldly kings, whose insight (10:24) or manner of life (7:25) is opposed to those of the followers of Jesus.

107. That is, especially relationships that involve the “artificial” social structures of law courts, loans and debt, and really any formal institution that impedes spontaneous human interaction or in any way creates any barrier to transparency between people. Q adopts a “naturalistic” tone throughout, which I think is closely related to its social agenda, visible especially when arguments are constructed about human behavior on the basis of observations about grass or birds or lilies. But this naturalism is also apparent in many of the human examples offered in Q’s arguments, since these examples treat the behavior in question as natural, obvious, and unconstrained. One need not agree that, e.g., parental generosity is “natural” to recognize that Q treats it as such. It is precisely the naturalism of Q’s agenda for human behavior and its arguments in support of that agenda that have provided the most fertile ground for characterizations of the early Q material as Cynic-like (see especially Mack, Lost Gospel and Vaage, Galilean Upstarts). The major difference is that the rhetorical
take God and divine patronage into account. Thus Q¹ advises avoidance of the law courts precisely on the grounds that they are hierarchical, exploitative, and miserly: “While you go along with your opponent on the way, make an effort to get loose from him, lest the opponent hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the assistant, and the assistant throw you into prison. I say to you: You will not get out of there until you pay the last penny.”¹⁰⁸ Conversely, direct, face-to-face, non-hierarchical human contacts should operate on a more humane logic, as will, of course, analogous contacts with God: “to the one who asks of you, give; and from the one who borrows, do not ask back what is yours . . . Be full of pity, just as your Father is full of pity.”¹⁰⁹ It must be stressed that the behavior in question, that which Q¹ subjects to analysis and on which it gives advice, does not necessarily revolve around extraordinary religious virtuosity but around mundane matters that can affect everyone and that can be expected to arise on a daily basis: interpersonal conflict, borrowing and lending, judging others, teaching, food and drink, clothing, fear of injury or death, legal proceedings, divorce, forgiveness—in short, the mundane concerns of everyday life. The result of pursuing Q¹’s agenda would be, it is claimed, the blessing of the poor, the feeding of the hungry, and the comforting of the sad (Q 6:20–21). In sum, the compositional agenda of Q¹ is the promotion of a program of transparency and immediacy in social relations, predicated on the theological notion of the immediacy of God and the transparency of divine behavior.

The upshot of Q¹ as a document, then, is essentially that one should live as though God is immediately present in everyday (village) life. We should see in this image a socio-rhetorical intervention, not an abstractly theological one.¹¹⁰ Not only is the assertion and/or assumption of God’s immediacy, his presence in quotidian village interactions, used as an argumentative prop to encourage specific social behaviors (and attitudes), but in addition, it has a strong symbolic force all its own. The image of God—especially a national-ethnic God—serves naturalism of the Cynics seems to be offered as a social criticism without any particular alternative in mind, whereas that of Q¹ seems more positively oriented.


¹⁰⁹. Q 6:30, 36, as reconstructed and translated in Robinson, Hoffmann, and Kloppenborg, Sayings Gospel Q, 85, 87. Similar instances abound in Q¹, but an especially revealing example comes from material that in its current form and context, at least, is decidedly attuned to the redactional interests of Q², that is, Q 12:42–43: “Who then is the faithful and wise slave whom the master put over the household to give them their food on time? Blessed is that slave whose master, on coming, will find so doing” (reconstruction and translation from Robinson, Hoffmann, and Kloppenborg, Sayings Gospel Q, 125). What I find so striking about this saying is its association of the presence (actual or intended) of the master with the likelihood of receiving food on time. There is a thematic association here, in other words, between the presence of God (one assumes) and the appropriate organization of society (the household). The parable of the talents (19:12–13, 15–24, 26) also seems to reflect on the issue of God’s proximity.

brilliantly as a representation for the social body at its highest and most abstract level of salience. As others have noted, the distancing of the deity in antiquity from the national temple to the celestial regions corresponds to an expansion of the known (and socially relevant) world, and to a distancing of the seat of (now imperial, rather than national) power. Q represents something of a rhetorical or symbolic reversal of this process. In the document’s emphatic assertion that God is present here and now in ordinary life, and in its insistence on the social enactment of that premise, Q both symbolically and concretely aims to renew and revive an independent village culture, one that does not refer to or depend on—or even acknowledge—the structures of power that exist beyond it and that tie it to an external world regarded as artificial and inhumane: tetrarchy, temple, empire. Q operates on the pretense or fantasy of an isolated Galilee, on a reversal of processes already well in place by the time any stage of Q was composed. The imperatives in Q—the apparent meat of the matter—represent the social corollaries of the ideological claim of an immediately present God. These corollaries are presented in both economic (e.g., Q 6:30) and legal-administrative (e.g., Q 6:29, 37) terms, apparently to be enacted at the level of whole villages and towns (see especially Q 10:8–9). And hence, they are indicative of a program imagined as a thoroughly political and even bureaucratic venture.

111. On this point, I have always been convinced by Durkheim without necessarily buying into his whole sociology. See Durkheim, Elementary Forms.
112. See especially Martin, Hellenistic Religions; Smith, “Pearl of Great Price,” 90–101; Smith, “Wisdom and Apocalyptic”; Smith, Drudgery Divine; and especially now, Smith, “Here, There, and Anywhere,” 323–39. This process is obvious in the case of the national Judean God, YHWH, who gradually moves from a royal guarantor to a cosmic savior. A similar and analogous process is visible, e.g., in the figure of Isis, who shifts from being the chthonic guarantor of the Egyptian national throne to a celestial savior.
113. A slightly different way of framing this in terms borrowed from the typology offered in Smith, “Here, There, and Anywhere,” is that Q aims to assert the religion of “here” (of the household) over the religion of “there” (of the national temple).
114. Should these imperatives be understood as real or as part of the larger suasive package? The matter need not be addressed here, but my own hunch (and it is only a hunch) is that these imperatives are rather subordinated to the concluding maxims of the speech clusters and thus their aim is more suasive than actual: they are there to draw a picture of what “the kingdom” would look like were it enacted and hence to persuade people to adopt the kingdom-agenda.
115. To my mind, this is an extremely important point, one that overshadows the particular identity of the purveyors of Q. The materials that comprise Q (whether one subscribes to any given compositional model of Q or not) are routinely characterized vaguely as “eschatological” (see, e.g., Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, 173; Koester, Ancient Christian Gospels, 150–62; Tuckett, Q and the History of Early Christianity, 141–61; Allison, Jesus Tradition in Q, 5–6), a term that often seems to lack content. As Ron Cameron has argued, “eschatology is now applied so indiscriminately to virtually anything and everything, that the term works solely as a ‘magic wand,’ to signal the uniqueness of the New Testament and the incomparability of Christian origins” (“The Anatomy of a Discourse,” 240; cf. Georgi, “New Testament Revisited,” 75–87). The effort here has been to characterize Q’s program and agenda in as concrete and realistic a fashion as possible and without invoking this curiously vague theological category at all.
That program is one of local autonomy, a nativistic revival of a (supposed) golden age in which the region was self-sufficient and self-governing (which in fact it had not been for centuries), and stood in the direct gaze of the divine presence.\footnote{116}{It may be precisely this agenda of immediacy that helps explain some of the puzzling absences of Q1 or of Q in general (with the usual proviso that it is impossible to be certain what a reconstructed document did not contain). As many critics of Kloppenborg’s stratification of Q have correctly (but irrelevantly; cf. Kloppenborg Verbin, \textit{Excavating Q}, 159) noted, it was precisely the same circles that produced wisdom literature that also produced apocalyptic literature. While this observation hardly necessities that one invoke any extraordinary explanations for wisdom writings that do not include apocalyptic features, their absence from Q is all the more easily accounted for in light of the program I have described, a program that stresses the \textit{immediacy} of God and not, as with apocalypticism, God’s distance. It is also notable that at no stage of its development does Q appear to even mention the new cities of Sepphoris or Tiberias (they are absent, in fact, from the entire synoptic tradition), cities the foundation of which, I argue, were responsible for the social conditions that generated the ideology found in Q in the first place. Their absence, however, makes perfect sense in light of Q’s program, which is essentially predicated on ignoring those aspects of their context that tie the Galilean villages to the social structures of the world around them.}

What this program does \textit{not} seem to have been, even in its earliest discernible forms, is a broadly-based or spontaneous social movement, particularly one of the lower classes. Q gives us (indirect) evidence for the very specific interests and plans of a specific group of people, rather than showing us (indirectly or otherwise) a broadly-based sea change in the attitudes or conditions of the common people, that is, in this context, the peasantry. It is an effort to promote “local renewal.” But such a conclusion should not lead us to imagine, with, for example, Richard Horsley,\footnote{117}{See, e.g., Horsley and Draper, \textit{Whoever Hears You Hears Me}.} an organic (and romantic) movement of popular self-assertion, nor should it bring to mind, with Theissen and so many others,\footnote{118}{Theissen, \textit{The First Followers of Jesus}; cf. Uro, \textit{Sheep Among Wolves}; Crossan, “Itinerants and Householders,” 113–29.} the even more romantic notion of Q as the product (direct or mediated) of itinerant radicals. As I have noted above, the more radical statements that appear in Q1 are mitigated and domesticated by their subordination to larger argumentative frameworks whose points are rather more banal: blessings on those who hunger are reduced to blessings on those committed to the movement, loving enemies is reduced to an act of reciprocal mercy, avoiding judgment altogether is reduced to exercising judgment responsibly and fairly, and so on. Rich and poor (Q 19:12–26), male and female (17:34–35), lenders and debtors (6:30), and even legal settlements (6:29; 12:58–59) apparently persist in the document’s imagined utopia. The basic structures of social hierarchy, inequality, and differential status (see especially Q 6:40) seem to be maintained in the kingdom of God—they are altered simply by a radical foreshortening of the “chain of command,” which disguises the relationships in question as “natural.”\footnote{119}{Hence the naturalistic imagery and arguments of Q are fundamentally ideological and opportunistic.}
of Q\(^1\) as a document of some literary pretension (if not necessarily accomplishment) is likewise a hint as to its purveyors’ intellectual, deliberate, and even pedantic orientation. The nature of Q’s agenda is, in short, not especially radical, even though it is framed with radical rhetoric. Q\(^1\) serves as the expression of an essentially political program that promotes local legal and political autonomy as solutions to wide-ranging social problems. The circumstances of an imagined past are presented as “natural” and “divine” (which amount to the same thing), and thus as self-evidently preferable to current circumstances, which this utopic vision functions in part to deplore. As it stands in Q\(^1\), this venture is primarily one of the imagination, but when it is conceived concretely, it is conceived in essentially political or administrative terms\(^{120}\) rather than as an undertaking of the masses for more broad and radical social transformation.\(^{121}\)

**Poverty and Itinerancy in Q?**

Nonetheless, the persistence of readings of Q (or Q\(^1\)) as concerned with extreme poverty and destitution, perhaps brought about in the form of an economic crisis precipitated by the establishment of Sepphoris and/or Tiberias, requires that this issue be dealt with directly and on its own terms. The thesis that Q was composed by, or intended for, an utterly impoverished constituency is difficult to maintain, with little evidence in its favor and some significant evidence against it. First, there is the obvious point that, normally, destitute people do not aim to improve their condition by writing about it—that is something done by intellectuals, students, college professors, and scribes. It is for this reason, I assume, that scholars who are interested in a Q reflecting indigence and privation are so insistent on the non-literary, and especially “oral,” nature of the document;\(^{122}\) and so it is also for this reason that I have been so insistent on Q’s literary qualities. Even the brute fact of a written Q seems to militate against

\(^{120}\) This orientation is particularly evident in the Q\(^1\) version of the “mission speech,” which appears to give fairly concrete instructions for the dissemination of Q’s message. These instructions appear to focus on reception at the level of towns or villages (so also Kloppenborg, “Literary Convention,” 90) and thus appear to represent an engagement with the administrative structure of the villages rather than an endeavor concerned with “public preaching,” a notion which strikes me as romantic and unrealistic in any case. See my discussion of this text in Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes*, 178–83.

\(^{121}\) Again, I note in support of this assertion the various indications mentioned above of Q’s assumption that assorted types of social and economic hierarchies and differential roles will continue to exist, even in the “kingdom.” I should stress that the distinction I am attempting to draw here between a political project and a social movement is one of emphasis and rather impressionistic.

\(^{122}\) The best example of the connection between these two arguments is found in Horsley’s work on Q, especially Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*; Horsley, “Introduction”; and Horsley, “Performance and Tradition.” This latter volume combines essays dealing with Q and orality in the first part with essays addressing Q and peasant “hidden transcripts” in the second part.
destitute tradents, since papyrus and the services of a scribe cost money. One cannot draw direct conclusions from the literary features of a given writing to the social standing of those who produced it. But Q’s status as a written document, and even more so as a literary document, makes it that much harder to assert that it is the product of indigent peasants. And there is little evidence that the Galilean peasantry at this time was falling below subsistence levels more dramatically than usual or even losing tangible ground in their standard of living. As I have argued elsewhere, the urbanization and monetization initiated by Antipas had the clear agenda of exploiting the region more effectively and drawing off more of its surplus than had been possible before. But these processes were initiated in the first century, and rather feebly at that. It is only in the second century that they begin to bear heavily on the overall socio-economic shape of the Galilee. Seth Schwartz argues that:

... the cities were a mixed blessing for the following reasons. It is a truism that ancient cities were generally exploitative of the countryside, but Tiberias and Sepphoris were small places with tiny territories; the creation of Tiberias, presumably by synoecism of villages in the area... was necessarily disruptive, but only in a small area; Sepphoris was simply a big village with altered status. So the cities’ effects on Galilee as a whole cannot have been nearly as drastic as those, described by Goodman (1987), of Jerusalem on Judaea in the wake of the Hasmonean expansion and Herod’s massive construction.

The process of urbanizing and monetizing Galilee—while a clear and deliberate feature of Roman policy—appears to have been fairly slow and incremental, suggesting that the peasantry was drawn into the newer exploitative structures of the Roman empire only gradually. This is an important point, as peasants tend to react to sudden and dramatic—visible—changes (including especially those brought about by famines and/or by increases in taxation), and to essentially ignore incremental immiseration. The very fact that Antipas was able to expand Sepphoris, and establish Tiberias more or less ex nihilo, and without too much difficulty to support their populations, is an indication that the surplus

123. Q’s existence in Greek also works against any sort of “populist” conclusions about the text’s tradents; see, e.g., Harris, Ancient Literacy, 187: “In Syria, Judaea and Arabia we encounter an extremely variegated linguistic situation, in which, however, Greek occupies a fairly definable place. It is one of the languages of provincial and city government. It is the language of immigrants and their descendants, and of partially Hellenized social and commercial elites, whose members, together with their dependents, may have a stronger or weaker grasp of it while they simultaneously hold on to one or more local languages. It is not the language of the streets except in a few places, and it is not the language of the ordinary villager.”
125. See, e.g., Moreland, “The Jesus Movement,” 169–73; Chancey, Galilee of Jesus, 181; etc.
127. So also Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 150–55.
128. See Kautsky, Politics, 307; Moore, Social Origins, 474.
needed for these projects was there to be extracted and in a way that was at least perceived to be sustainable. The fact that urbanization subsequently increased over the next century indicates that this perception of sustainability was correct. None of this is to say that Galilean peasants spent their time dancing happily and singing songs of praise to the Herods. Josephus attests to considerable hostility between the Galilean countryside and the urban centers, as well as incidences of banditry (bandits may be recruited from among peasants who have fallen below subsistence levels), at least in the period of the War (see Ant. 18.274; Life 77–78, 104–11). But Josephus also attests to the remarkable fecundity of the region and its prosperity (War 3.42–43). The most visible consequence of the establishment of Antipas’ tetrarchy and his city-building would have been to compromise the political autonomy of the Galilean countryside. Economic repercussions were probably long-term, incremental, and less dramatically felt.

The content of Q likewise suggests that the people responsible for the document and the document’s projected audience were not marked by extreme poverty or destitution, either voluntary or imposed. Some of the advice offered in Q\(^1\) actually takes it for granted that its auditors have disposable resources. This is particularly evident in those passages in which comments are made about how to give or lend: Q 6:30 (“to the one who asks of you, give; and from the one who borrows, do not ask back what is yours”\(^{131}\)); and 11:4 (“we too have canceled for those in debt to us”). It is also suggested somewhat less directly by other passages in which advice is given that seems to assume that the auditors have more or less valuable possessions or status. For instance, Q 6:29 and

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129. See Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 253–55; cf. Schwartz, “Josephus in Galilee,” 302: “Still, the foundation of the cities cannot have been entirely inconsequential: a striking, and probably basically true feature of Josephus’ accounts of Galilee, is his reports of the deep hatred and resentment the Galilean country people felt for the Sepphorites and Tiberians. . . .”

130. On this point, see especially Schwartz, “Josephus in Galilee,” 305: “Josephus’ account suggests that by the middle of the first century, this patronal system, though it had not collapsed, was under increasing stress—in part for reasons which affected Palestine generally (and which affected Galilee somewhat less than the other districts), but in part due to urbanization. The main consequences of the foundations of Tiberias and Sepphoris in the early first century were the creation of a class of absentee landlords based in the cities, a decline in the position of the country landlords (and so a breakdown in relations between them and their Herodian and Roman patrons), and the impoverishment of small farmers. These processes in turn produced a partial breakdown of the patronal system, the most conspicuous manifestations of which were the development of a number of large bands of brigands; the violent hostility between the urban upper classes and the country people which is such an important theme of Josephus’ account; and finally the adherence of expanded groups of clients to the wealthier and more ambitious country landlords . . . conditions were less dire in Galilee than elsewhere in the country, and the Galilean social system was still partly functioning; the number of Galileans devoted to the revolt was not finally very large.”


12:58–59 assume an audience with sufficient goods as to make lawsuits a real possibility. Q 10:4 assumes, not an audience lacking basic resources, but one that has access to purse, knapsack, shoes, and staff, and so must be warned against using these resources in their travels. Q 6:36 is directed, it seems, to people who are in a position to choose to exercise mercy. The emphasis throughout Q on nature’s bounty, on the ultimate beneficence of normal circumstances, and on confidence in God’s provision of needs does not seem compatible with people who are truly destitute or starving to death. The serene confidence of texts such as Q 11:9–10; 12:22–31; and even the self-assured petition for daily bread in 11:3, militates very strongly against any suffering or straightened circumstances among those who produced or heard Q—these are texts whose logic is in part an appeal to the experience of bounty to make their point. If the auditors of this material could not be expected to assume that everyone who asks does indeed receive, or that fathers do indeed give their children good things (because they can), or that they were indeed worth more than sparrows (Q 12:7), then the arguments offered here would not only be ineffective but would generate some considerable cynicism. Q also, of course, refers to the poor, and to circumstances that seem to suggest poverty. But the document’s apparent concern with poverty is rather attenuated once one takes its rhetoric into account. While a great deal of Q’s rhetoric is inversionary and uses imagery associated with poverty, these apparently “radical” images are metaphors used in the service of a naturalism (as discussed above) in which extended social hierarchies are repudiated. Viewed in its literary context, in other words, poverty and various other social inversions are for Q simply more tropes used to argue its program of local renewal. The point of Q is not so much to actively promote the various inversions it portrays—including the centrality of the poor—as it is to advocate a persuasive way of viewing the social body in which the bases for an extended social hierarchy were corroded. The beatitudes are a case in point. Much has sometimes been made of their opening blessings on the poor and hungry, and in particular the use of the word πτωχός (poor, beggarly) to characterize these poor. The word πτωχός is probably less significant than it has been made out

133. See discussion in Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 183.
134. So also Kloppenborg, “Literary Convention,” 88: “It does not seem very likely that idealizations of poverty and detachment would have had much appeal to beggars, day workers or small holders; instead, these are the views of intellectuals who utilize such idealizations as a counterbalance to what is perceived as a bankrupt or failing culture.”
135. Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 183–84. Note Thompson, The Messiah Myth, 105: “The reversal of this world’s power and wealth are central elements in a clearly definable song type and theme. It can be found in every major ancient Near Eastern wisdom tradition and in nearly every ancient text tradition that gives voice to the ideology of kings and kingship. As it has been transmitted and reinterpreted within biblical tradition, this trope has played a decisive role in the development of the Jesus story. It goes far in defining his character, personality and mission.”
to be, and certainly lacks the necessarily extravagant associations that would prevent it from being used as a metaphor or image in Q.\textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{137} Of greater import is the dilution of the images of poverty and hunger in these beatitudes by virtue of their serialization and culmination in blessings on those who are sad (“those who mourn,” Q 6:21b, a designation that can apply to anyone regardless of social standing, and which therefore generalizes the thrust of the whole set of blessings from an economic inversion to a utopic state of bliss for all\textsuperscript{138}) and then finally on those who commit to the Q\textsuperscript{1} program to such an extent as to be marginalized as a result (6:22–23a). The same pattern recurs on the larger scale of the inaugural speech running from Q\textsuperscript{1} (6:20–49): the series of blessings is used as an introduction to a larger block of material that focuses on a concrete program of behavior and that culminates in injunctions to commit to that program (Q 6:46–49; see discussion above).\textsuperscript{139} Thus as I say elsewhere, “the Beatitudes, as a single unit, had come to refer to something other than literal poverty or destitution: they were used, rather, to enunciate a set of paradigmatic inversions of basic social positions in support of a final conclusion to the effect that adherence to ‘x’ . . . would be beneficial in spite of apparent disadvantages.”\textsuperscript{140}

This conclusion can be extended to the other sections of Q\textsuperscript{1} as well: the text uses poverty as a rhetorical trope, and elsewhere seems to work on the assumption that its auditors are relatively comfortable and secure.

For reasons very similar to those militating against a destitute audience for Q, it seems equally unlikely that Q at any stage of its written development was the product of “radical itinerants” as imagined by Gerd Theissen,\textsuperscript{141} quite apart

\textsuperscript{137} While it is certainly correct that some Greek texts—especially older ones—draw a contrast between πτωχός and πένης, with the former conveying ignoble destitution and the latter respectable modesty of circumstances, this distinction seems to have disappeared in later, and in Jewish, literature. So the definition given in BAGD 728: “(. . . note that they [πτωχός and πένης] are synonymous in Ps 55:1; 69:6 al.), dependent on others for support, but also simply poor (as Mod. Gk. φτωχός),” citing, inter alia, Josephus, War 5.570; Did 5:2; James 2:5; Rev 3:17; 1 Clem 15:6 quoting Ps 11:6. Πτωχός appears as a simple antonym of “wealth” in various wisdom literature, including Sir 10:31; 11:14; 13:24; 18:25; and many others. In various places in the LXX πτωχός is offered as a synonymous parallel for πένης (and cognates), sometimes as a designation for those who are to be blessed; see Psalm 40:17 (LXX 39:18: ἐγὼ δὲ πτωχός εἰμι καὶ πένης· κύριος φροντιεί μου); Psalm 41:1 (LXX 40:2: Μακάριοι ὁ συνίων ἐπὶ πτωχόν καὶ πένητα); Ps 72:12–14 (LXX 71:12–13: ὅτι ἐφούσατο πτωχόν ἐκ χειρὸς δυνάστου καὶ πένητα, ὃς ὕπερθην βοθοῦς· φείσεται πτωχόν καὶ πένητας καὶ ψυχὰς πενήτων σώσει); and especially Ps 112:7–8: ο ἐγείρων ἀπὸ γῆς πτωχόν καὶ ἀπὸ κοπρίας ανυψών πένητα τοῦ καθίσαι αὐτὸν μετὰ αρχόντων). Note that in this last example, not only are the two figures treated as functional equivalents, but the πένητα is the one who is described in more degraded terms!

\textsuperscript{138} Cf. Vaage, Galilean Upstarts, 57.

\textsuperscript{139} So Kloppenborg, Formation of Q, 188–89; Tuckett, Q and the History of Early Christianity, 226; Catchpole, Quest for Q, 80.

\textsuperscript{140} Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 188.

\textsuperscript{141} See Theissen, First Followers of Jesus; cf. the discussion in Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 23–45. As I note in Jesus and the Village Scribes, 13–21, the notion of itinerant preachers at the origins of Christianity can be traced back to Harnack’s 1884 work on the Didache. For
from the question whether the itinerancy hypothesis is cogent and realistic for any strand of the Jesus tradition. The character of Q as a document, and a literary document at that, seems to ill-accord with what we would expect for both the social background and the lifestyle of such itinerants who, if they are not to carry purse or staff or money, seem all the less likely to be carting along a scroll of Q, or commissioning one (with their non-existent money), or composing one (with the pen, ink, and papyrus they carry about in their non-existent luggage). And one wonders why popular preaching to an Aramaic-speaking peasantry would be recorded in Greek. More to the point, the instructions in Q1 pertain not to life on the road, but for the most part provide advice on how to handle the quotidian realities of normal, settled life, including how to handle prosperity and surplus resources. Matters such as conflict, judgment, teaching and learning, debt, lawsuits, relations with friends, and the like seem more typical of the realities of settled villagers (especially as those realities would be seen by people with an administrative orientation) than of the primary concerns of solitary wanderers. An ongoing involvement in settled and hierarchically structured village life is presupposed. In fact, the arguments for generous behavior and confidence in God’s bounty that occur in the Q1 sayings-clusters depend to a significant degree on a logic of “business as usual” — they presume the salience of ordinary social relationships and behaviors (e.g., “what person of you whose child asks for bread will give him a stone?” and the like), and precisely for this reason, the adoption of an extraordinary lifestyle would ren-

itinerancy in Q, see Crossan, “Itinerants and Householders”; Crossan, Birth of Christianity, 317–44; Blasi, Early Christianity, 229; Vaage, Galilean Upstarts; Hartin, James, 223; Schottroff, “Itinerant Prophetesses”; Allison, Jesus Tradition in Q, 30–31; Hoffmann, Studien, 333–34; Stegemann and Stegemann, Jesus Movement, 187. Cf. Uro, Sheep Among Wolves, 241–43, who argues that Q represents the householders established originally by itinerants.

142. The various conceptual and evidentiary flaws of the notion of radical itinerants behind the synoptic tradition, or behind any early Jesus tradition, have been discussed in Horsley, Sociology, and Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 13–91.

143. Of course, according to the hypothesis, Q is not necessarily a document of the itinerants themselves but the preservation of some of their preaching by one of the settled communities they established. But if so, the radical content of that original preaching and its orientation to itinerancy has been significantly diluted in Q as document.

144. So also Chancey, Galilee of Jesus, 163–64: “The probable association of Greek with urban elites [in Galilee] also renders problematic reconstructions of Q that simultaneously argue for a Galilean provenance, a mid-first-century date for the earliest stratum, and a social context of poor, wandering charismatics. It is unlikely that literacy would have been widespread among such a group and unclear why the rare literate member would have chosen to compose such a text in Greek rather than Aramaic.”

145. As I say elsewhere (Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 173–74): “Proponents of itinerancy tend to treat the ordinances apparently offered to the wealthy by Q1 as though they were general statements of principle, while they treat those addressed to the poor as specific injunctions with direct application. Given the undeniably specific character of the other advice directed by Q1 to those in comfortable economic positions (the material on giving and lending cited above), such a reading is not only arbitrary but demonstrably false. Q addresses itself, at least in part, to the relatively wealthy.”

146. So also Tuckett, Q and the History of Early Christianity, 306.
under much of this advice, or its persuasiveness, moot. Q⁴ offers a theological message of reliance on God in day-to-day life. The rejection of day-to-day life in favor of some form of extraordinary religious virtuosity does not mesh well with such a message.

Such extraordinary virtuosity is not in fact unequivocally promoted in Q, but is read into it on the basis of a prefabricated construct predicated, ultimately, on romantic notions of mission and proclamation. The only text in Q⁴ that seems to refer explicitly to homelessness—Q 9:57–58—is, as its juxtaposition with Q 9:59–60 (and perhaps Q/Luke 9:61–62) indicates, an injunction to commitment, not homelessness (which is here attributed only to the “son of man” in any case, and is not enjoined of the potential follower). In much the same way, Q 14:27 encourages steadfast dedication by means of a dramatic example, and is not a command to deliberately seek out crucifixion. The so-called “mission speech” is a set of guidelines for some form of travel in the service of ideological persuasion, but given the small size of the region, its density of population, and the specific instructions given in Q 10, itinerant prophets speaking to crowds of people outside of the ordinary structures of social interaction seem very unlikely. Kloppenborg sums up the matter well:

Given the facts that the region of the lower Galilee is only 15 by 25 miles, that it contained not only several large centers (Sepphoris, Tiberias, Taricheae, Capernaum) but also a large number of villages, that the lower Galilee had one of the highest population densities in the Roman empire . . . one could easily travel from a home base to the next village in less than an hour, and to another major center in several hours or a day at most. Hence itinerancy is more likely to have looked like brief excursions than like the extended journeys of Paul. Indeed, the workers are specifically enjoined not to carry a travel bag or wear sandals—that is, not to appear as though they were on a long journey. Second, there is little in Q 10 to suggest that the “workers” were expected to stay for a long duration in any village, or that they intended to “found” a community there. There is indeed no indication that the “workers” were leaders at all, either in the communities from which they were sent forth or in the villages that accepted them.

My own reading of the mission speech, with particular emphasis on its public character as it appears in Q, suggests that it offers guidelines for more or less

147. Piper, “Language of Violence,” 62, also asserts that itinerancy is an unlikely mode of existence for people who would offer the kinds of instructions we find in Q.
148. See my more extended discussion in Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 176–77.
149. So also Kloppenborg, “Literary Convention,” 89–90; Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 91–95.
151. As signified by the focus on acceptance or rejection at the level of the village, not the household. The latter is original and core to the speech. Thus the reorientation of the speech to refer to villages seems a reflection of Q¹’s specific agenda. For discussion, see among others, Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 180; Braun, “Historical Jesus,” 288–91; Hoffmann,
“official” visits to villages—perhaps to village “big men” or officials such as the κωμάρχης (village chief) —to solicit communal or even formal sanction for their “kingdom” program:

What are the Q¹ village scribes doing? Apparently, at least immediately prior to the incorporation of the Mission Charge into Q¹, they are making short trips to adjacent towns in some kind of official or quasi-official capacity. In other words, they are acting, as we might expect, like administrators, even if what they are doing is not part of their authorized job description. . . . But the approaches made . . . were made in an official mood or were intended to have an official tone. They were thus local, public, and corporate in intention. Persons were actually traveling, but not as beggars and not for long distances.¹⁵²

Finally, in support of the conclusion that Q¹ assumes sedentary tradents and auditors, it is probably significant that it uses metaphors of houses and households to reflect on commitment to its program. In Q 6:46–49, the image of a solidly built house is used to characterize those who act on Jesus’ teachings. And in 12:42–46, 13:24–27, and 19:12–26, the operations of a household are used to characterize the differences between those who do, and who do not, take appropriate advantage of their responsibilities. While these images of households are of course metaphors, they do indicate that the people responsible for Q¹ saw themselves as part of a structured environment, and did not think it inappropriate to see lessons for the kingdom of God within the image of a functioning household. In sum, then, Q seems more likely to have been the product of reasonably prosperous and settled individuals than destitute peasants or radical itinerants. Its agenda is not that of a social movement of voluntary poverty, but a project of local administrative or political autonomy.

The Subsequent Development and Agenda of Q

All of the discussion above pertains at least to the “activist” agenda behind Q, and out of which its material was generated. But by the time Q¹ was composed as an integral document, and with increasing intensity as the original text underwent (at least) two subsequent revisions, this agenda shifted, to become the rather more “scholastic” project of preserving, defending, and reflecting upon the original program. That is to say, at some point shortly before the composition of Q¹, the Q agenda shifted from an outward- and forward-looking project with specific and concrete goals, as exemplified in the boilerplate speeches of Q¹ and in the Q¹ version of the mission speech, and gradually became instead an internally-directed effort to cherish and preserve the ideals and values of

¹⁵². Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 180–82.
a bygone plan—to maintain, memorialize, and rationalize a vision rather than to enact an active and purposive enterprise. In the case of Q1 (if my characterization of its literary development and agenda, above, is at all correct), this activity would have consisted of the preservation and thematic arrangement of selected speeches and the contextualization of those speeches within larger literary structures, and in the form of a collection, a document or fixed record of “the Q message” (or, presumably, as Q would present it, the “message of Jesus”). That document (Q1) serves in part simply to preserve lists of examples of the kind of teaching and kind of acts of indoctrination that its tradents had initially hoped to implement. Since none of this material is especially complex, commitment to writing is hardly necessary for such implementation—a written copy of Q would not be required for the “workers” of Q 10 to remember their approach, nor would teachers of the Q agenda derive a great deal of benefit from repeating the set speeches on judgment or generosity or confidence that are preserved in Q1. Rather, the purpose of textualizing such a relatively small amount of uncomplicated material must be to record it, preserve it, and perhaps study and elaborate it. One assumes that even at this early stage (the stage of the composition and textualization of Q1), the active promulgation of the Q agenda had already started to fade into the background, had—not to put too fine a point on it—essentially become defunct. The continued active infiltration and reorientation of administrative structures apparently anticipated or envisioned in the original Q materials is now recast as an ideal to which the auditor is enjoined to ally him/herself. Assent in principle has replaced concrete legislative or administrative application as the goal behind producing these speeches. The effort to shore up the original ideals, to persuade others to commit to them, is itself an act of rationalization required by the Q tradents’ inability to implement the original program.

We can see the orientation behind this phase of Q’s agenda in texts in which the authoritative mouthpiece for Q’s ideology, Jesus, offers pronouncements that place a huge premium on adherence to Q’s ideological content under even the most extreme circumstances, with the promise of extravagant rewards. The

153. I make this suggestion with the modern analogy of Western Marxism in mind, as discussed in Perry Anderson, Considerations. Long before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Marxism in the West had ceased to be anything like a working-class revolutionary movement and was instead largely comprised by intellectually-oriented efforts to promote and defend the ideals that had originally animated that (now, largely defunct) political project.


155. I provide a little more textual warrant for these claims in my analyses of the tradition-historical development of the beatitudes and the mission charge in Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 178–93.

156. The more people one can persuade to adhere to one’s program, the more evidence one has of that program’s legitimacy to counterpose against the actual failure to implement the program.
cluster of materials in Q 14:26–27, 17:33, and 14:34–35 is a case in point, focusing on commitment, persistence, and reward: giving up family and even life as part of the cost of “being my disciple” and of maintaining one’s “seasoning” (cf. also Q 11:33–35; 12:33–34; 13:24–27; 16:13; 17:6). There is no real substantive content to this material: it simply reinforces the importance of Jesus’ words and adherence to them. Something similar happens with the framing of the mission speech in Q1. The speech itself, from Q 10:2–11, seems to give instructions for how to undertake a project of ideological persuasion (or even infiltration). But in Q1 it has been introduced by two or three chreiai whose point is not how to undertake this project but simply how a high degree of commitment is required by the teacher. And the mission speech in its Q1 form is concluded by Q 10:16, which links assent to the program with allegiance to Jesus. The mission charge’s point has been generalized to commitment and its main function now in this new written context is to serve as an instance or example of such commitment.157 The same kind of absorption of pragmatic instructions into a rather petrified recording of the master’s words, with attendant rationalization of those words and exhortation to adhere to them, occurs in the organization of the several speech-clusters that appear in Q 6. They are opened by the beatitudes, which, in their Q form, culminate in blessings on those who suffer social alienation for the sake of the son of man (Q 6:22–23ab). What “for the sake of” actually means is then specified in the contents of the speeches that follow; the last Q beatitude in context encourages commitment to the countercultural teaching of the son of man.158 And this long speech concludes with an overt injunction to conform oneself to Jesus’ teachings (Q 6:46: “Why do you call me, Master, Master, and do not do what I say?”159) and an example-story illustrating the benefits of so doing (Q 6:47–49; cf. similarly Q 12:42–46). Even the organization of the speech-clusters within this large unit serves that redactional agenda. Speeches dealing with generosity in social relations gradually shift their focus to judgment and then finally to teaching and the role of teachers, thus producing a speech in which the teacher’s teaching culminates in an injunction to heed the teacher’s teaching. The whole large unit running from 6:20 to 6:49 has now become framed as an exhortation to commit to Jesus by committing to his teaching and emphasizing the positive results of that teaching both at introduction and conclusion. It is also to this stage of Q’s development that we should trace the addition of those Q texts that reflect on and promote the fecundity of the “kingdom,” such as the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast (Q 13:18–21). All of this material has a rationalizing intention, emphasizing the importance

157. See Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 181.
158. See my discussion of the development of the Q beatitudes in Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 189–90.
159. Reconstruction and translation from Robinson, Hoffmann, and Kloppenborg, Sayings Gospel Q, 91. Note that this saying takes for granted that Jesus’ teaching has not been obeyed.
of the content of Jesus’ teaching, the necessity of adhering to it, and the positive effects of so doing. The emphasis is no longer on political-administrative transformations, but on commitment, on the value of the ideas expressed by the teacher, and on the importance of heeding that teaching. This emphasis is of course typical of instructional literature, but that is precisely my point: what may have once been a concrete project has now become an academic matter; a political faction has become a school. Willi Braun has, for essentially these reasons, offered a compelling characterization of Q as a school product:

With respect to Q, its production as a scholastic effort from its visible beginning to the point where we lose sight of it has been demonstrated well enough. Indeed, the history of recent Q scholarship is the history of the discovery of Q as a literary document and the Q community as an increasingly self-conscious and fairly sophisticated research collective. . . . It thus seems fitting to envisage both the social and the literary formation of Q in a school “space.” That is, both the group and its document display an evident bent on investing in the power of text production . . . as locus and means of social formation. . . . 160

Both Q² and Q³ continue this same tendency and push it further, confirming the impression that whoever is responsible for formulating this material has opted to deploy it in the context of a school-like social formation. The very fact of the text’s serial redaction already suggests as much: “While prolonged tinkering with a single text does not per force lead us to suppose ‘school production,’ it would seem to be prerequisite to a school hypothesis, for time is surely an important ‘environmental’ element in forming a school entity.”161 These expansions and modifications of the text of Q¹ also enact their own shift in emphasis. As a school identity develops and intensifies, more and more stress is placed on the authority of the founding teacher, and rather less on the (frankly otiose) social content of the teaching. Even if we view Q² as an effort to “exegete” the contents of Q¹, that effort takes the form, not of analysis of the meaning or applicability of the Q¹ material itself such as we find in rabbinic re-readings of Torah, but rather focuses on the cosmic consequences of adherence or non-adherence, on the role played by Jesus’ teaching in the epic relations between Israel and God, and on the identity, import, and personal authority of Jesus himself162 (these last two emphases are particularly novel in contrast to the rhetoric of even the rationalizing and self-referential portions of Q¹). Even the form of the material in Q² reflects this shift in emphasis and strategy. While Q¹, with its focus on specific social transformations and the inherent positive consequences

of assenting to the values implied by those transformations, uses the form of maxims and other sentences for its constituent sub-units Q², with its altered focus on the status of the teacher and the importance of personal allegiance to him, makes use primarily of the chreia form, the effect of which is to emphasize his personality as much or more than the content of his teaching.¹⁶³ It is to this stage that most of the son of man sayings¹⁶⁴ and all of the material identifying Jesus as “the Coming One” belong, as interest in the identity of Jesus takes a cosmic direction.

Typically, as far as can be told, Q² preserves the material from Q¹ largely intact. Where redactional alterations are made to extant material, they tend to take on the form of interpretive glosses that emplace Q¹’s reflections on commitment to the message of Jesus into the new context of a sweeping Deuteronomistic perspective on Israel’s history. Such is the effect of Q 6:23c, added to the blessing on those persecuted for the sake of the son of man: “for so their fathers did to the prophets.” Likewise the Q² additions to the mission speech (already in Q¹ an exhortation to commitment): the invocation of Sodom in Q⁽²⁾ 10:12; and the woes on the Galilean towns in Q⁽²⁾ 10:13–15. These interventions are in part interesting simply because of their apparent conservatism with regard to the text and content of Q¹. The “original” material (as far as we can tell) is more embellished than altered, and the embellishment tends not to change the basic point of the sayings so much as to emphasize their cosmic and epic import. Also symptomatic of this conservatism—which again suggests a scholastic setting in which the Q¹ materials are preserved and reflected upon, and in which their importance is asserted and reasserted—is the retention in Q of two different “performance variants” of the same saying: the Q¹ version of the saying about trees bearing good fruit (Q 6:43–44), and the redactionally-inflected Q² version, attributed to John the Baptist (Q 3:8–9). This performance variant indicates, again, a context in which Q¹ materials are actively interpreted in an exegetical fashion, where their significance and point of reference is discussed and debated.

Perhaps most remarkable among the various Q² materials are texts such as Q 13:34–35 (itself inserted into Q¹ material emphasizing the need for com-

¹⁶³. See Kloppenborg, “Literary Convention,” 92: “The selection of chreiai as the means by which to transmit sayings of various natures (prophetic, apocalyptic, sapiential) has the effect of emphasizing not simply the confrontation between God and Israel, but rather the interaction between Jesus, John and their partisans on the one hand, and specific other groups (mostly within Israel) on the other.” Cf. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, 201.

¹⁶⁴. But not all! Q 9:58 refers to the son of man, although one could make a case that this usage is generic, signifying “humanity,” rather than titular. Less equivocal is Q 6:22. It is literally necessary that this text have been in Q¹, as Kloppenborg, *Formation of Q*, 178, argues on the basis of thematic and catchword connections between the first part of this last beatitude and the following material on love of enemies (interrupted by the Q² redactional addition of 6:23c). But resistance to finding titular references to the “son of man” in Q¹ has led some (see especially Mack, *Lost Gospel*) to ignore this literary data and attribute the whole last beatitude to Q² on essentially thematic grounds. This is a methodological step backwards.
mitment), which distills the Q² redactional orientation into a single distinctive saying:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her nestlings under her wings, and you were not willing! Look, your house is forsaken! . . . I tell you: You will not see me again until the time comes when you say: Blessed in the one who comes in the name of the Lord.¹⁶⁵

Quite apart from its unaccountably-neglected contribution of chicken-christology, this intensively Deuteronomistic saying manages to link Jesus to divine Wisdom in multiple ways,¹⁶⁶ to relate his identity to the status of the temple, to link him to scripture (the quotation from LXX Psalm 117:26), and to emplace him in the context of the whole sweep of the epic history of Israel. Moreover, the saying establishes a strong link between the reception of Jesus (and, implicitly, his message) and Israel’s ultimate fate. Also characteristic of this material is reflection on John the Baptist and his relationship to Jesus, as occurs in Q(²) 3:7–9, 16–17 (which also alludes to the scriptural figure of Abraham¹⁶⁷) and the long cluster of chreiai in Q(²) 7:19–35 (which also contains both scriptural allusions¹⁶⁸ and textual quotations).¹⁶⁹ I have argued elsewhere that the entire point of Q’s interest in John the Baptist is simply to buttress the authority of Jesus by appeal to a popular local figure,¹⁷⁰ but such a conclusion is not necessary: even if there is a substantive interest in John’s identity and stature, this interest is framed in terms of John’s relationship to Jesus, and hence reflects on Jesus’ identity and status as well. Notable about this additional material are its efforts to reach beyond its own conceptual universe and begin to engage with cultural symbols and content that have import for those outside of Q’s immediate circles. This is evident in Q²’s use of scriptural allusion and exegesis to frame and rationalize the faction’s own experience and its relationship to those outside the group (or perhaps an “enculturation” of those inside the group). By appealing to a set of

¹⁶⁵. Reconstruction and translation from Robinson, Hoffmann, and Kloppenborg, Synoptic Gospel Q, 133.

¹⁶⁶. Through the implication of their identity, as Jesus speaks from the trans-historical perspective and feminine identity of divine Wisdom, through parallelism, as Wisdom’s efforts and their failure parallel the fate of Jesus and his message, and through attestation, as divine Wisdom testifies that her abandonment of “your children” and “your house” relate to the failure of her putative auditors to bless the Coming One.

¹⁶⁷. As Kloppenborg has argued, the redaction of Q (Q²) has an interest in the character of Lot and the figures around him as a textual-scriptural embodiment of the theme of judgment. Abraham is a figure in this complex and allusions to it are particularly intense at the beginning of Q. Sodom, mentioned in Q² additions to the mission speech (10:12), also figures. For discussion, see Kloppenborg, “City and Wasteland”; and Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 118–21.


¹⁷⁰. So Arnal, “Redactional Fabrication.”
“canonical” texts shared with outsiders (which the sayings of Jesus alone are not), Q² manages, at least conceptually, to build bridges to outsiders, and to draw them into their conceptual universe (or again, vice-versa: the outsiders have persuaded those responsible for Q to participate in this larger symbolsystem). This technique was not used in Q¹. The “failure” of a project of local self-sufficiency not only brings with it textualization and an increased scholastic orientation, but also increased discursive contact with the very outsiders and cultural tropes the avoidance of which was central to Q¹’s agenda.

Likewise indicative of Q’s increasing engagement with the broader culture of the region, its tropes, symbols, and touchstones, and even with the nation of “Israel” as a whole (including Judea, evidently), is Q²’s (apparently novel) engagement with John the Baptist as an outsider figure whose activity and identity somehow reflects on that of Jesus. A further broadening of symbolic horizons new to Q² may be found even in this redaction’s critical engagement with the Jerusalem Temple (11:51; 13:35), and with Pharisees (11:39–48) and perhaps legal exeges. Clearly critical nonetheless, these judgmental comments bring the geographically-distant Judean Temple and the socially-distant persons and concerns of the Pharisees and other high-level scholars into play in Q’s intellectual universe. Even if the consideration is mainly negative, Q and its program are now considered in terms of a relationship to these external institutions, thus allowing the faction responsible for Q and its message to be understood and evaluated with reference to cultural symbols and norms shared by outsiders. Q as a developing school does not seem to be turning more and more inward, in spite of its judgmental tone and castigation of those who fail to hear its message. There can be little doubt that the people responsible for Q² no longer anticipate sending out “workers” to villages and otherwise engaging in active “mission.” They see themselves as an embattled minority and spend much of their effort both rationalizing the rejection of their message and predicting the apocalyptic downfall of those who have failed (or will fail) to heed their threats. But this does not necessarily mean that the people responsible for this material have

171. Depending on whether Q 16:16 is attributed to Q¹ or to Q², a decision that in its turn rests on how one reconstructs the placement of this saying in Q.

172. This point is valid even if one adopts Robinson’s hypothesis that Q² is marked by a rapprochement between followers of Jesus and (the original and consistently apocalyptic) followers of John. See Robinson, “Building Blocks,” 504–7. This theory would mean that John is not really an “outsider” figure at all from the perspective of Q². Nonetheless, the incursion into the Q group of some Baptist disciples would be evidence in its own right of openness to outsiders and an increased willingness to incorporate tropes and symbols not originally part of Q’s discursive inventory.

173. And it is not wholly negative, at least in the case of the Temple. While the Temple is presented as a site for murder in Q 11:51, in Q 13:35 (if “house” here really does refer to the Temple) it is a site of cosmic attention. God abandons the Temple because of the rejection of Jesus and his message. The implication is that the Temple is at least of neutral moral status and perhaps even more, since it is a location in which God bestows reward or punishment (presence or absence) according to the reception of Jesus.
retreated wholly from the world. They continue to engage with that world at the intellectual and symbolic level, and in fact at this stage enlarge the scope of that engagement by adding to Q wide-ranging references to the broader culture around them, a culture now extended to include Judea and Pharisees, John the Baptist, the Temple, and scripture. For this reason, I find myself attracted to the interpretation of the parable of the children in the agora (Q[2] 7:31–35) offered by Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, who states:

The parable and the application make a case to the audience of Q that when they judge John or Jesus on the basis of their different eating practices, they are like children in the marketplace foolishly judging each other. . . . What is unexpected, however, is the possibility that there is also no divide between “this generation” and John/Jesus, and thus no divide between “this generation” and the audience of Q. The text argues for the equal legitimacy of John’s practices and Jesus’ practices within the larger group which they represent and of which they are both a part. This interpretation places Jesus, John, and the audience in the same category as “this generation.” Jesus asks, “What is this generation like?” To recast this question colloquially, Q’s Jesus now asks, “What are the people of our time like? What’s wrong with us?” The answer stings: we are like children sitting in the marketplace judging each other on the basis of our differences.

It is at least tempting to find in this interpretation of Q 7:31–35 confirmation of an increased, rather than decreased, engagement, at least intellectually and symbolically, with the culture around them. According to such a reading, the Q people recognize and deplore the differences between their own commitments and those of outsiders, but are increasingly seeking common ground with those outsiders, seeking some basis for interaction and discussion. With this possibility in mind, Q’s “school” identity might be read as that of a faction within a larger context, group, or profession.

Interestingly and predictably, the academic and textual nature of Q’s approach escalates over time. This escalation is evident in Q[2]’s quotations of and (sometimes quite subtle) allusions to scriptural texts, of course, which attest to the continued and even intensified textual and scholastic orientation of this group, an exegetical focus absent in Q[1]. Such an escalation is also evidenced in the Q faction’s choice of Pharisees and legal exegetes as examples of what not to do. The identification of such exegetically- and intellectually-oriented opponents suggests an equally exegetical, intellectual, and scholastic orientation on the part of the people responsible for Q. Likewise, Q[2]’s adoption of apocalyptic imagery at this level of redaction suggests a more overtly academic focus. As noted above, apocalypticism is a learned, scribal movement, and so the addition of such material to Q in the shift from Q[1] to Q[2] reveals an increasingly explicit interest in native intellectual traditions. Q[3] continues this trend with increased

175. Johnson-DeBaufre, Jesus Among Her Children, 55, emphasis original.
sophistication, increased assimilation to the norms and practices of elite intellectual culture, and increased confidence. The temptation explicitly concerns itself with textual exegesis and establishes Jesus’ authority by demonstrating him to be an authorized legal exegete. The validity and status of Torah (16:17) and of particular interpretations of tithing requirements (11:42c) are asserted against the potential (mis)readings of Q² texts. Jesus’ authority seems to be progressively inflated, but to some degree this impression is simply the byproduct of Q's intensifying reference to an increasing number of mainstream and highbrow intellectual reference-points. Thus, rather than seeing in the elevation of Jesus’ apparent status from Q¹ (sage) to Q² (son of man) to Q³ (son of God) an increasingly sectarian inflation of his authority, we might instead find evidence of an increasing effort to connect their ideals with those of individuals (perhaps colleagues?) outside of the limited Q compositional circles. Such a trend could be understood as reflecting the gradual “Judeanization” of Galilean intellectual circles, but it might equally be regarded simply as reflecting an increasing sophistication or “mainstreaming” of the people who composed and transmitted Q. In any case, by the time we get to Q² and Q³, the import of the Q¹ content is really simply that it was spoken by Jesus: the document's agenda shifts from promoting the benefits of that content to underscoring the authority of the speaker. Thus it may be that in some cases, at least, the initial collection and embellishment of Jesus’ sayings was not undertaken by devotees of Jesus, but rather that the act of collecting and embellishing such sayings created devotees of Jesus. In sum, the real social activity of the Q people (at least insofar as Q as a document attests to it), or at least their actual practice, seems to be sitting around and reading, studying, and embellishing the words of Jesus. We might be tempted to characterize this as sectarian behavior, but for the interesting fact that as Q develops, it shows not only greater literary sophistication but increasing contact with and use of the shared intellectual tropes of the culture at large. Likewise we might be tempted to regard this as evidence of the failure of this faction’s original “mission.” But even this characterization might be too harsh. It may be better to speak of a reorientation of the group’s goals, from active intervention to scholastic reflection. Were it not for such a shift, we might

176. I was quite struck by the characterization of Torah offered by Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 68 (emphasis original): “. . . the ‘Torah’ was a series of negotiations between an authoritative but opaque text and various sets of traditional but not fully authorized practice.” It seems to me that we could, perhaps, regard Q¹ as an effort to resist the application of this “foreign” cultural artifact (“foreign” either in the sense of Judean, or urban, or both) as a threat to traditional practice. Q² then aims to rationalize that traditionalistic project in terms of the Deuteronomistic epic (and so cedes ground to Torah or to “foreign” intellectual traditions), while Q³ justifies Jesus’ authority in nomistic terms. Thus Q may reflect the process by which Galilean intellectuals were gradually assimilated into broader cultural currents as a result of the foundation of Sepphoris and/or Tiberias, which may have served as vectors for non-Galilean intellectual expressions.

177. So, among many others, Arnal, “Why Q Failed,” esp. 84: “Persuasion comes, as it were, from the barrel of a gun, and the Q people had no guns.”
never have had access to this material at all. Indeed, such a shift may be the
generative impulse behind at least some forms of attention to Jesus as a heroic
figure.

A Bureaucratic Q

Finally, then, there is the question of the concrete social identity of the people
responsible for Q. My own view, taken from John Kloppenborg’s suggestion, is
that the people responsible for Q were Galilean village scribes178 or, as the term
κωμογραμματεῦς is sometimes (aptly) translated, “village clerks.” The ancient
references to them were typically not made by historians or other elite writ-
ers. As rather unromantic bureaucrats, village scribes were largely neglected
in literature.179 Moreover, as essentially rural functionaries, they tended to be
ignored by urbanites or, when they were mentioned, to be regarded with con-
tempt.180 As a result, our knowledge of κωμογραμματεῖς derives for the most
part from what direct documentary evidence of their work survives in papyrus
fragments. Since such papyri tend to survive mainly in Egypt for climatic rea-
sons, the evidence for these figures happens to come as a rule from Ptolemaic
and Roman Egypt.181 These scribes were local administrators, typically

178. So Kloppenborg, “Literary Convention,” 85–86; Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q,
200–201; Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 151–55, 168–72.
179. See Braun, “Graeco-Roman Schools,” 223: “The grammarian/scribe was one of antiq-
uity’s ubiquitous, yet largely anonymous (as far as the documented historical record goes)
and unsung ‘middling’ figures, ranking well below other public intellectuals, such as the
rhetorician, the sophist, the philosopher, on scales of public recognition, honor, income, and
opportunities of upward advancement, even though the grammarian/scribe shared some of
the competencies for which the latter are known, competencies which . . . must be presup-
posed in relation to Q.” Bagnall, Egypt in Late Antiquity, 241–42, speaking of Egypt in the
Roman period, states: “It is a commonplace that the majority of the rural population was
unable to write and presumably unable to read as well. But the evidence, which offers little
hope of statistical analysis, reveals on close examination a host of complexities not readily
set out even in categorical terms. In most cases, it is not said who wrote the body of documents
drawn up in villages” (emphasis added).
180. An example is the treatment of the office in Josephus, Ant. 16.202–203: “In this way
Salome learned of everything that passed between them and also made her daughter hos-
tile to the youth. And she, to please her mother, often said that when they were alone, the
youths spoke of Mariamne but hated their father and continually threatened that if ever they
obtained power, they would make village clerks [κωμογραμματεῖς] out of the sons borne to
Herod by his other wives, for, they said, their present concern with the education which had
carefully been given them fitted them for such a position.” Commenting on this passage,
Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, 263, asserts that “Josephus notes that the threat
against the brothers was a sarcastic reference to the careful education they had received. The
passage implies that village scribe was a very low status occupation.” It should be noted,
however, that this contempt and implication of very low status comes from an elite urbanite
and need not indicate the actual political or administrative importance of these figures in a
village context.
181. This region was also very heavily bureaucratized in antiquity, more so than the rest
of the Mediterranean world, so the accidental preservation of more papyri and hence more
directly documentary evidence for village scribes in Egypt may parallel the greater density
of such figures there than elsewhere. We should not conclude, however, that functionaries
appointed over small settlements by figures in larger centers. A village scribe might be subject to the authority of a τοπογραμματεύς (regional scribe) and/or a basilico-grammateus (royal scribe). In villages and small towns, alongside village scribes, we also find the figures of the “village chief” (κωμάρχης) who are thought to have often been illiterate but were part of the rural administrative structure. Much of the scholarly literature that mentions village scribes emphasizes their low status and marginal erudition. Certainly, when viewed from the perspective of urban elites, such figures did indeed lack clout and must have seemed to have lacked literary sophistication. We even know of one

of this sort were unique to Egypt, on which see further below.

182. P. Teb. 41 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 142–44) preserves a petition from 119 BCE by a village chief (κωμάρχης) named Harmiusis complaining of the predatory behavior of a certain Marres, who was a topogrammateus. This same Marres seems to have been the immediate superior of Menkhes, who from 120–110 BCE was the village scribe of Kerkeosiris, “a small village near the larger Tebtynis, in the south-west corner of the Arsinoite nome” (Lewis, Greeks, 104), about whom and from whom we have a huge amount of documentary evidence. It is Marres who writes to inform Menkhes of his (re-)appointment in P. Teb. 9 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 70–71). Later, Marres also writes to Menkhes with complaints of his own: Menkhes has allegedly mistreated a relative or retainer of Marres (P. Teb. 23; 119 or 114 BCE; Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 94). P. Teb. 24 (117 BCE; Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 101) refers to individuals who “are engaged in the duties of topogrammateus and control at least two komogrammateis in each division.” Cf. also OGl 665.31, 666.14; and P. Teb. 902 and 903 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Goodspeed, The Tebtunis Papyri, Part II, 189).

183. In P. Teb. 10 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 72), it is the basilico-grammateus who writes to Marres, the topogrammateus, to inform him of the (re-)appointment of Menkhes as the village scribe of Kerkeosiris. Various of the Tebtunis papyri (e.g., among others, P. Teb. 13, 14, 15, 16; Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 77–86) are reports from Menkhes to Horus, a basilico-grammateus (royal scribe), and his superior. See P. Teb. 43 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 146) for a basilico-grammateus who sits on a court of law. Much later, these figures still appear. In P. Teb. 374, from 131 CE, we find an application for a lease of crown land made to the basilico-grammateus, who authorizes it by appending to it a note to the relevant subordinate komogrammateus (Grenfell, Hunt, and Goodspeed, Tebtunis II, 214–15).

184. P. Teb. 22 is a communication from Taos, a komarch, and village elders to Menkhes the village scribe. The editors describe the text thus: “The Greek in which Taos the komarch and the elders address Menkhes is so corrupt and ungrammatical that it is very difficult to ascertain the meaning of their letter” (Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 92). On the illiteracy of these village officials, see also Harris, Ancient Literacy, 278; Lewis, Life in Egypt, 81. It is possible that the position of komarch formally outranked that of village scribe. The evidence for this precedence is inferential, based on the normal tendency in letters to place the names of superiors first and inferiors afterwards. P. Petrie II.42 (referred to in Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 92) offers the following ranking of various officials in its address: Κλέανδρος οἰκονόμοις, νομάρχαις, βασιλικοῖς γραμματεῦσι, φυλακίταις, μυριαρούροις, κωμάρχαις, κωμογραμματεύσι χαίρειν. Such formal seniority might not always be recognized, however, nor necessarily translate into social precedence. In P. Teb. 48 Menkhes is addressed by the komarch Horus and the village elders as though he is their superior.

185. See, e.g., Hanson and Oakman, Palestine in the Time of Jesus, 182: “... village non-elite scribes played only very simple roles, like drawing up debt contracts or marriage contracts by rote”; Saldařini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, 263, 274, referring to Ant. 16.202–203. This low level of literacy is also assumed by Kirk, Composition of the Sayings Source, 399. Cf. Lewis, Life in Egypt, 82, on the literary limitations of scribes, albeit from a rather different perspective.
case of a village scribe who was himself illiterate.\textsuperscript{186} Such extreme cases, however, would be atypical and in any case date from a later period, as the office of village scribe was de-professionalized (and so de-skilled) increasingly through the Roman period.\textsuperscript{187} In the Ptolemaic period, figures such as Menkhes were not only prominent in village life but appear to have been rather highly-educated as well.\textsuperscript{188} The situation in the first century is probably precisely as characterized by Lewis: \textquotedblleft The educational level of the scribes varied with the individual, but most leave the impression of being merely literate rather than highly educated. They wrote mostly in formulas and clichés.\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{189}

Whatever the village scribe’s literary achievements, he will have played a very prominent role in village life, precisely because of the distinctive ancient combination of a bureaucratic society with a largely illiterate population.\textsuperscript{190} As a result, the duties of the village scribe revolved heavily around administrative matters:

A very large part (though hardly all) of what was written existed in some sense to exercise someone’s power over someone else. The largest consumer of papyrus was thus the government, which needed to keep records of people and property, compute, record, and transmit their taxes, keep track of its own expenditure, carry on a voluminous internal correspondence, and send to the ultimate authorities a report of all that had been done.\textsuperscript{191}

In light of this administrative role, a village scribe’s typical duties would predictably include such tasks as composing official documents of various types,\textsuperscript{192} forwarding complaints, applications, and other petitions to higher officials,\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{186} The person in question is Petaus, clerk of Ptolemais Hormou in 184–87. He would simply sign documents with \textit{Petaus komogrammateus epidedeka}, “I, Petaus, village scribe, have submitted [this].” Papyrus P. Petaus 121 is a worksheet for practicing this formula by rote memorization. Petaus is discussed in Thomas, \textit{Literacy and Orality}, 11; Harris, \textit{Ancient Literacy}, 278; Lewis, \textit{Greeks}, 123. This individual is cited by Horsley, “Introduction,” 13–14, as evidence for the general level of scribal literacy.

\textsuperscript{187} Lewis, \textit{Greeks}, 123: “In later centuries, when Egypt was a province of the Roman Empire, the office of village clerk was transformed into an unsalaried compulsory public service, and we have evidence that men were sometimes assigned to that duty who could barely manage to sign their names; the real paper work, even for literate office-holders, was performed by clerks or professional scribes hired by the incumbents. The conditions that obtained under the Ptolemies were very different. The salary, status, and authority that went with the office of village clerk made it a sought-after post; . . . Under such conditions the government would not need to scrape the manpower barrel for less than fully qualified personnel.”

\textsuperscript{188} See the inferences drawn by Lewis, \textit{Greeks}, 123; cf. Lewis, \textit{Life in Egypt}, 82.

\textsuperscript{189} Lewis, \textit{Life in Egypt}, 82.

\textsuperscript{190} On the critical role of scribes for this nexus of bureaucracy in government with illiteracy among the population, see Thomas, \textit{Literacy and Orality}, 152, 155; Harris, \textit{Ancient Literacy}, 19; Youtie, “Impact of Illiteracy,” 220–21; Bagnall, \textit{Reading Papyri}, 13–14, 25.

\textsuperscript{191} Bagnall, \textit{Reading Papyri}, 13–14.


and serving as official witness for loan and lease documents.\textsuperscript{194} In addition, a village scribe was charged with making reports on land surveys (both of use and measurements),\textsuperscript{195} census figures and tax information,\textsuperscript{196} and even lists of livestock.\textsuperscript{197}

In the organizational scheme of the Ptolemaic government, the prime function of the village clerk was that of compiler and keeper of the basic records of the basis of the economy, agriculture. The records kept by Menkhes were of several types, relating to land, crops, population, rents, and taxes.\textsuperscript{198}

As an administrator, a village scribe would often be a major player in local politics.\textsuperscript{199} He would be required at least to report all criminal and other important legal and economic matters to his superiors,\textsuperscript{200} but often to intervene or act as a significant party to such affairs. In some cases, for instance, village scribes are seen setting rents on crown land and other government holdings,\textsuperscript{201} and enforcing tax collection\textsuperscript{202} and other laws and regulations.\textsuperscript{203}

\textsuperscript{194} For examples of village scribes serving as witnesses for legal documents, see Edgar, \textit{Zenon Papyri}, v. 2, 26–29 (P. Zenon 59173, 255 or 254 BCE); Edgar, \textit{Zenon Papyri}, v.2, 46–48 (P. Zenon 59182, 255 BCE); Edgar, \textit{Zenon Papyri}, v.4, 104–5 (P. Zenon 59666).

\textsuperscript{195} For example, P. Teb. 826 (173 BCE) is “... a report drawn up by the comogrammateus of Berenicis Thesmophori concerning land which was for various reasons unproductive (ὑπόλογος) at that village. ... In the present case a summary description of the different pieces of land, giving the date when they became unproductive, is followed (ll. 55 sqq.) by a survey list showing their geographical position.” So Hunt, Smyly, and Edgar, \textit{The Tebtunis Papyri, Volume III}, 1.

\textsuperscript{196} For first century tax rolls, see e.g., P. Teb. 346 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Goodspeed, \textit{Tebtunis II}, 175–76). Lists of taxpayers also occur \textit{inter alia} in P. Teb. 880, 881 (Hunt, Smyly, and Edgar, \textit{Tebtunis III}, 2, 136–39).

\textsuperscript{197} We find lists of sheep and goats in P. Teb 882 (Hunt, Smyly, and Edgar, \textit{Tebtunis III}, 2, 139–41) and a list of pigs in P. Teb. 883 (Hunt, Smyly, and Edgar, \textit{Tebtunis III}, 2, 141).

\textsuperscript{198} Lewis, \textit{Greeks}, 111. See Arnal, \textit{Jesus and the Village Scribes}, 151, for citations of primary sources in addition to those cited above.

\textsuperscript{199} So Lewis, \textit{Greeks}, 109: “In the normal course of his duties, which included keeping the village’s records and conducting its correspondence with officialdom, the village clerk was obviously in a singularly strategic position to render or deny many a favor to many a local inhabitant—by invoking or by obviating bureaucratic delay, to cite but one of many possibilities. Menkhes, in turn, was similarly beholden to his superiors.”

\textsuperscript{200} For example, we find among the Tebtunis documents (e.g., P. Teb. 13, 14, 15, 16; Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, \textit{Tebtunis I}, 77–86) various reports of criminal matters—damage to dikes, trials for murder or assault, fugitives, assaults on officials, thefts, etc.—written by Menkhes for Horos, his superior. Usually these reports are simply intended to provide information, but sometimes Menkhes asks Horos for instructions or to do something specific in response to the situation.

\textsuperscript{201} For example, see P. Teb. 302 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Goodspeed, \textit{Tebtunis II}, 88), a petition of 71–72 CE from temple priests who were complaining to a prefect because the village scribe had raised their rents.

\textsuperscript{202} See, e.g., P. Zenon 59275 (3 October, 251 BCE; Edgar, \textit{Zenon Papyri}, v.2, 121–22), in which we hear of Horos, a village scribe, imprisoning an individual named Achommneuis for some violation regarding the salt tax.

\textsuperscript{203} See, e.g., P. Teb. 374 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Goodspeed, \textit{Tebtunis II}, 214–15) and P. Teb. 325 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Goodspeed, \textit{Tebtunis II}, 134–35) for documents in which the village scribe confirms and executes leases, first checking the character of the (already-approved)
The Trouble with Q

the account provided by P. Teb. 43, in which we find a description of a visit of the chief of the nome’s police to Kerkeosis:

. . . in accordance with custom we [Menkhes, the village scribe; and Polemon] went to meet him, taking with us the headman of the village, some of the elders of the tenant farmers, Demetrios the chief constable and acting-chief of police of the village, and others. We greeted him, and he arrested us [Menkhes and Polemon] as well as Demetrios and one of the farmers . . . 204

The arrest appears to have been based on a (spurious) accusation of poisoning against Menkhes, which collapsed when it was taken to court. The text is interesting for what it tells us about the expected role of the κωμογραμματεύς as a representative of the village, going out to greet the visiting official, as well as for showing us the kinds of intrigues to which such a local noteworthy might be subjected.

It turns out that Menkhes, at least, was also a local landowner of some importance, and used his role as an administrator as a vector for information and opportunities that allowed him to expand his holdings. In his application for reappointment to the office of village scribe, Menkhes promised to pay an up-front fee (bribe?) of 50 aratabae of wheat and 50 of various pulses.205 In addition, upon appointment he was required to reclaim 10 arourae of abandoned royal land, cultivate it, and pay the highest level of rent (5 aratabae per aroura) on it.206 This rent is unusually high, since reclaimed royal land usually rented at low rates or was even rent-free for a period. Thus, the requirement both to reclaim the land and to pay the highest level of rent on it probably represents, like the initial payment of wheat and pulses, a de facto fee for the office. But subsequent records relating to Menkhes help clarify why he might be willing to bear such expenses. During his (second) term of office, Menkhes’ landholdings expanded. Apparently his office gave him opportunities to reclaim land, this time at the common rent, and at times to establish outright ownership of it.207 The potential applicant. And see P. Teb. 410 (16 ce; Grenfell, Hunt, and Goodspeed, Tebtunis II, 285): “Give heed to Soterichus the stonemason on account of the encroachments being made on him by a neighbor who has bought some of the adjoining property, and (inform?) Lysimachus the comogrammateus.”

204. Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 146–48. Translation of this portion is from Lewis, Greeks, 116. For discussion of the circumstances that prompted this particular text, see Lewis, Greeks, 117–18. Lewis is especially concerned to argue that the charges leveled against Menkhes were malicious and fraudulent.

205. P. Teb. 9, 116 BCE (Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 70–71). The application also refers to a certain Dorion, who will provide an additional 50 aratabae of wheat and 10 of pulses.

206. See P. Teb.10 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 72) and the discussion in Lewis, Greeks, 109: “The premium rate charged Menkhès (and other officials like him) was no doubt a way of making him pay for an incumbency which, in addition to paying him a salary, could also be counted upon to engender lucrative perquisites.”

207. See P. Teb. 75 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 72), which also mentions reclaims of land by the basilico-grammateus and topogrammateus.
power and influence of village scribes is recognized in laws prohibiting office holders from selecting the best land for themselves to cultivate,\textsuperscript{208} and in the role of some officials to mediate disputes between these administrators and villagers and to protect villagers from their potential depredations.\textsuperscript{209} The business of a village scribe not only entailed a huge amount of correspondence, but various local inspection tours and travel to nome capitals on a regular basis as well.\textsuperscript{210} In any case, extensive contact with supervisors and subordinates, superiors and inferiors, outsiders and locals, was the norm. It must be stressed once again, however, that the status of the position and consequently its social standing decreased over time. Presumably, it also varied by region. In the middle of the Ptolemaic period, the office appears to be undertaken by a person of some (local) substance who performs at least some of the documentary work himself. By the late Roman period, the office appears to have been an unwanted liturgy, filled by persons of mixed quality and no necessary competence, with undersecretaries performing the actual work of writing.\textsuperscript{211}

While the bulk of our evidence for village scribes naturally comes from Egypt, there is no reason to claim that these figures were restricted to Egypt alone or to deny the presence of such figures (or something like them) in Galilee. First, there is fairly direct evidence of the existence of (relatively) complex local administrative apparatus outside of Egypt. Kloppenborg notes that:

\textsuperscript{208} Lewis, Greeks, 109, notes the edict of Ptolemy VIII/Kleopatra II from 118 BCE (P.Teb. 5; cf. LCL Select Papyri #210); and particularly lines 162–67: “Neither strategi nor holders of official positions nor their subordinates nor any other persons whatever shall take Crown land of good quality from the cultivators by fraud or select it for themselves to cultivate” (translation in LCL, emphasis added). The decree is clearly intended to prevent office-holders from taking excessive advantage of their administrative position.

\textsuperscript{209} P. Teb. 703 (Hunt and Smyly, The Tebtunis Papyri, III, 1, 66–102) is a lengthy official memo from the late 3rd century BCE laying out general administrative instructions to a subordinate. Lines 40–49 (p.74) deal with “protection of crown-cultivators against the village officials” (p.73); those lines are translated thus (p.84): “In your tours of inspection try in going from place to place to cheer everybody up and to put them in better heart; and not only should you do this by words but also, if any of them complain of the village-scribes or the comarchs about any matter touching agricultural work, you should make inquiry and put a stop to such doings as far as possible.” The editors thus conclude (p.84): “The duty of the oeconomus as stated in this paragraph was to protect the agricultural population of the nome and to act as a kind of judge between them and the village administration.” P. Teb. 24 (117 bce; Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 95–101) is a complaint about fraud and embezzlement and denounces figures who, it is claimed, have wormed their way into administrative positions precisely in order to perpetrate such fraud. Cf. also P. Teb. 41 (Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 142–44) for complaints against a τοπογραμματεύς. For a different kind of recognition of the importance of scribes, see Goodman, Roman Galilee, 59: “R. Eliezer’s assertion that vows not to benefit from a particular man are cancelable if he turns out to be scribe may refer to teachers of the Law as in the Gospels’ ‘scribes and Pharisees,’ but in Tannaitic texts the term normally designates the public clerks who write out documents for clients in the market places, and Eliezer’s assumption that access to such a scribe is essential would not be out of place.”

\textsuperscript{210} So Lewis, Greeks, 116.

\textsuperscript{211} So, again, Lewis, Greeks, 123.
The best epigraphical data on village administration comes from Ituraea (including Auranitis [modern Hauran] and Trachonitis) and from a slightly later period. What these data indicate is that the area east of the Jordan was a “country of villages,” as A. H. M. Jones puts it. The relative rarity of significant cities allowed the villages to develop structures which emulated those of the polis: assemblies (οἱ κωμῆται, τὸ κοινόν, ὁ ὀχλός, ὁ δῆμος), a village chief (πρωτοκωμήτης, στρατηγός), and various appointed magistrates and commissioners of public works (διοικηταί, πιστοί, προνοηταί, ἐπιμεληταί, ἐπίσκοποι, οἰκονόμοι, ἐκδικοί).212

And as already noted, Josephus appears to attest to the existence of village scribes, specifically, in Judea.213 Second, Palestine as a whole, including the Galilee, had been under Ptolemaic administration for a century before (briefly) passing to the control of the Seleucids. We have little direct knowledge of the respective administrations of the region, but it makes sense to imagine that the Ptolemies established structures analogous to those pertaining in Egypt insofar as possible and that these structures would not have been completely dismantled by the Seleucids.214 Bagnall asserts that:

...the bulk of the countryside in the province [of Syria and Phoenicia] was dealt with directly by royal bureaucrats in hyparchies and villages, the oikonomoi and komarchs. The system is in essence close to what we know of Egypt, although the bureaucracy may not have been so elaborate, because the economy probably needed far less close supervision. The cities were probably less isolated from the countryside than were the cities of Egypt...215

Third, there is the simple logical observation that little reason exists for concluding that Galilee was treated any differently than the surrounding regions after having existed for some four or five centuries under the control of a succession

213. As noted above, Ant. 16.202–203: “In this way Salome learned of everything that passed between them and also made her daughter hostile to the youth. And she, to please her mother, often said that when they were alone, the youths spoke of Mariamne but hated their father and continually threatened that if ever they obtained power, they would make village clerks [κωμογραμματεῖς] out of the sons borne to Herod by his other wives, for, they said, their present concern with the education which had carefully been given them fitted them for such a position.” Cf. also War 1.479.
214. See Chancey, Myth, 35–36: “The Ptolemies founded cities on previously settled sites, establishing Ptolemais, on the coast at Acco; Scythopolis, at Beth She’an in the plain southeast of Galilee; and Philoteria, to the southwest of the Sea of Galilee (perhaps at Beth Yerah?). These foundations may have been accompanied by the arrival of colonists, though our knowledge of the Ptolemaic foundation process in Palestine is scanty. Colonists, if they were introduced, would have included Greeks and resettled locals, with perhaps an Egyptian element as well. No cities were founded and no colonists settled in the interior of Galilee, however. While at least some Ptolemaic administrators would have been assigned to Galilee, their numbers are entirely unknown. ... After their takeover of the region, the Seleucids, too, would have assigned administrative officials to Galilee, though, in general, they relied on locals to meet many of their personal needs.”
of bureaucratic empires. Perhaps the specific office of “village scribe” was restricted to Egypt (and Judea!?), but a similar kind of functionary was required elsewhere in the empire wherever laws existed, taxes were levied, censuses taken, and any of the tasks of a bureaucratic state performed: “Villages in Galilee, the region of the Decapolis, Perea and Ituraea all undoubtedly had administrative infrastructures which saw to the collection and disbursement of various revenues and to the administration of justice.” Horsley, seeking to dismiss the notion of village scribes (or any other kinds of scribes) behind Q, asserts that Galilean culture was more or less wholly oral, and that the administration of law, the taking of contracts, and so forth, was undertaken by oath or other ceremony, rather than the production of written documents. Not only does such a claim make of Galilee a rather exceptionally isolated backwater of empire but it also fails to take into account that it was precisely broad illiteracy itself that made scribes so necessary and ubiquitous in bureaucratic empires, at least for official and legal transactions. Do we have direct and reliable evidence for the existence, specifically in Galilee, of the office of κωμογραμματεύς? No, in fact, we do not. But it would be extremely odd if the region did not have administrative functionaries in place whose duties were at least akin to those of the Egyptian κωμογραμματεῖς. Such an absence would have rendered the area essentially ungovernable.

That Q is a product of such figures—whether thought of specifically as κωμογραμματεῖς or simply and more generally as “the lower administrative sector of the [Galilean] cities and villages” seems not only a reasonable, but an almost inescapable conclusion, albeit one based exclusively on inferences from

217. See the devastating critical discussion of Horsley’s reservations about scribalism in Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 201 n.43.
218. Horsley, “Introduction,” 11; cf. his comments on the absence of directly Galilean evidence for villages scribes in Horsley, “Introduction,” 13–14. Interestingly, Goodman, “Texts” 102, makes precisely the opposite point: “Even the secondary role of scribes in recording oral transactions could of course be highly important in societies which attributed strong evidential value to written documents, as was evidently the case among Jews in the Roman period. . . . It was assumed in rabbinic texts that scribes (soferim) could be found in village markets with blank forms to record loans and sales. Such services could be essential for normal life. . . .”
219. See, generally, Youtie, “They Do not Know Letters”; Youtie, “Impact of Illiteracy.” See also Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 86: “The relatively low degree of literacy also meant that one would find a good number of scribes and notaries in the agora of any city, ready to assist in the transaction of sales, loans, rental agreements, marriages and divorces.”
220. So also the carefully worded statement in Horsley, “Introduction,” 14: “There is to date no evidence that suggests the presence of royal officers called komogrammateis in Galilee.” Note, however, that the ubiquity of scribes in the synoptic gospels could be read as evidence for the presence of such figures in rural Galilee. This appears to be the position taken by Saldarini, Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, 263–67; and Goodman, “Texts,” 104, 107.
221. See also the discussion in Kloppenborg, “Literary Convention,” 86.
the nature of Q itself and its literary and ideological features. Q’s status as not only a written document but a document with some limited literary aspirations already suggests its development among those few individuals who were capable of reading and writing in Roman Galilee: “If one asks, who would be in a position to frame the Sayings Gospel as it has been framed, the answer would appear to be village and town notaries and scribes. These were the local embodiment of literary technology.” Moreover, the composition of Q in Greek supports such identification, given the association of Greek with government and bureaucracy:

In Syria, Judaea and Arabia we encounter an extremely variegated linguistic situation, in which, however, Greek occupies a fairly definable place. It is one of the languages of provincial and city government. It is the language of immigrants and their descendants, and of partially Hellenized social and commercial elites, whose members, together with their dependents, may have a stronger or weaker grasp of it while they simultaneously hold on to one or more local languages. It is not the language of the streets except in a few places, and it is not the language of the ordinary villager.

We find in Q’s contents precisely the kinds of concerns, assumptions, and literary features that we would expect to be reviewed and/or cultivated by scribes. With respect to Q’s literary genre, Kloppenborg notes that “the fact that Q¹ is framed as an instruction—a typically scribal genre—and reflects the interest of scribes in the process as well as the content of learning is also best explained on the supposition that Q¹ is the product of scribes.” In part, this scribal affinity for the instruction relates to its nature as a recorded list, since the scribe’s principal bureaucratic duties included the reduction of data to recorded lists, such as census documents, tax lists, surveys, and the like. Q¹’s structure as essentially a list of speeches conforms, therefore, with precisely the format we would expect from κωμογραμματεῖς or similar low-level administrators. Likewise the reproduction in Q of a series of stock speech-templates (the stereotypical speech-clusters noted by Piper) on various topics conforms to scribal, bureaucratic practice: much of a village scribe’s duties would have consisted of filling in stock templates for petitions, legal documents, and the like, with the specific details at issue in any given situation. Not simply Piper’s speech clusters, but Q as a whole is in its organization and style rather boilerplate, as Kirk notes:

224. Harris, Ancient Literacy, 187.
226. On the scribal affinity for lists, see, e.g., Schwartz, Imperialism and Jewish Society, 82; Goody, Domestication, 108; Vansina, Oral Tradition, 179.
227. For stock reproduction of clichés and formulae as a major part of scribal activity, see Bagnall, Reading Papyri, 25; Hanson and Oakman, Palestine in the Time of Jesus, 182; Lewis, Life in Egypt, 82.
the textual configurations proposed here are on virtually all points rather
slavishly indebted to convention. Q is hardly an innovative literary achieve-
ment. . . all the compositional models employed were available as well-worn
conventions to the Q redactor, whose task it was—certainly demanding—to
adapt specific materials to those conventions; to be sure, in so doing giving those
conventions an individualized impress.228

It must be stressed that the textual and literary features of especially Q1 are
not—as some critics have suggested—too elevated for Q1 to be a believable
product of village scribes or other lower-level bureaucrats.229 Such a claim ten-
dentiously inflates the literary merits of Q, while underestimating the skills of
village scribes.230 Not only is Q (especially Q1) compiled from a limited set of
stock tropes and literary patterns, but it lacks the flourishes of more elevated lit-
erary compositions: “These scribes should not be placed too high on the profes-
sional ladder. This is indicated by Q’s general lack of compositional affectations,
by the generally mundane topics it addresses, and by the unpretentious nature
of its rhetorical appeals.”231 In light of Q’s relatively limited literary art, we
should be seeking literate tradents, but not necessarily highly cultured ones.232
Lower-level bureaucrats perfectly fit the bill. The development of Q over time
in an increasingly scholastic direction suggests that this scribal self-conception
and orientation persisted through all stages of the text’s literary history,233 and
perhaps even beyond.234

228. Kirk, Composition of the Sayings Source, 403.
229. As is claimed, e.g., by Pearson, “Q Community in Galilee?” 490 n.59.
230. The documentary evidence suggests that scribes ran the gamut from fairly high liter-
ary cultivation to near-total illiteracy (and hence incompetence). One need not assert that
only one end of this spectrum characterizes all or most scribes. All that is necessary for Q to
have been produced by such people is that some scribes were actually competent at writing.
It is noted by the editors in Grenfell, Hunt, and Smyly, Tebtunis I, 146, that Menkhes—an
example of an apparently highly literate and skilled village scribe—makes errors in the case
endings of Greek words. This is precisely the sort of fault that will have been eliminated
(along with spelling errors, and the like) in the transmission of Q, while (of course) being
preserved in autograph papyri.
231. Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 200,
232. On the limited rhetorical sophistication of Q1, see Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes,
168–69.
233. It is unclear whether this scribal identity persisted in reality or only in the self-concep-
tions of those responsible for the additional redactions. Piper thinks that, given the hostility
often expressed toward the legal system in Q1, it is extremely unlikely that the people re-
ponsible for Q are still actively involved in administrative duties even at this stage (Piper,
that one need not have quit one’s job to be cynical about its value. And in any case, Q1 is
not by my reading hostile to judgment as such, but simply to the existing law courts with
their links to hierarchies of which the Q group disapproves. The continuing literacy and
intensifying interest in textuality and exegesis suggest to me that the people responsible for
Q maintained some contact with professions relating to scribal activity through all stages of
the document’s development. Such a view is more inherently plausible than the alternatives.
As literate individuals, the people responsible for Q1 may have suffered losses in status and
independence but their skills would always have been in demand.
234. That is, in the “school of St. Matthew,” noted by Robinson, “Building Blocks,” 106;
In addition, Q concerns itself with the range of topics that were precisely those with which village scribes were preoccupied. Kloppenborg notes that the interest of Q in debt (Q 6:30; 11:4; 12:58–59), divorce (16:18), and lawsuits (6:29) is just what we might expect from people whose job it was to write loan contracts, bills of divorce, and petitions for legal redress. Q’s opening “sermon” (Q 6:20–49) shows an overriding concern with judgment and the procedures and results thereof. The tight relationship between the theme of judgment and that of learning that appears here represents a combination that parallels the professional duties of scribal administrators. There are also a variety of details in Q at various stages of its redaction that appear in a new light when imagined as the products of bureaucrats. For instance, as I have noted elsewhere, the tendency in Q to provide paired male and female illustrations of its points (Q 11:31–32; 13:18–21; 14:26–27; 15:4–10; 17:27; 17:34–35; and perhaps 7:29–30) suggests an administrative and bureaucratic worldview and orientation. Or again, the Q assertion that God keeps track of the lives of sparrows and the number of hairs on everyone’s heads (12:6–7) makes a good deal of intuitive and experiential sense coming from individuals responsible for census data and, in some cases, even for counting livestock. The particular interest in students and teachers that we find in Q seems to accord well with a scribal environment, and the advice given in Q 6:40 that a student should not seek to surpass his teacher is, once divested of christological presuppositions, simply a conservative assertion of scribal hierarchy. Q also has features evocative of scribes and administrators. The parable of the faithful slave (Q 12:42–46), for instance, tells of household administrators responsible for both economic and juridical functions (12:42, 45) who will be held accountable when “the master” returns, an image surely evocative of bureaucrats who see themselves as directly responsible to God. The legal orientation of the people responsible for Q may also be reflected in Q’s concluding promise that “You who have followed me will sit . . . on thrones judging (κρίνοντες) the twelve tribes of Israel” (Q 22:28, 30). Even the children in the marketplace of Q 7:32 could be a reference to scribes, especially if Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre is right to read this text


235. Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 200. Cf. Lewis, Greeks, 111, who, describing the correspondence of Menkhes the village scribe of Kerkeosiris, notes that “the records kept by Menkhes were of several types, relating to land, crops, population, rents, and taxes.”

236. See Batten, “More Queries for Q,” 44–51.

237. Arnal, “Gendered Couplets,” 92: “. . . the Q couplets do not in and of themselves serve as any convincing indication of a tendency toward gender inclusiveness. The parallel with contemporary regulatory materials should serve to reinforce this point. Instead, the couplets evince a legal predilection on the part of the composers of Q. This penchant for legal formulas—evident elsewhere in the document—offers further support for the already-well-attested claim that these individuals were scribal village administrators.”

238. As already noted, lists of sheep and goats appear in P. Teb. 882 (Hunt, Smyly, and Edgar, Tebtunis III,2, 139–41) and a list of pigs in P. Teb. 883 (Hunt, Smyly, and Edgar, Tebtunis III,2, 141).

239. Reconstruction and translation from Robinson, Sayings of Jesus, 31.
as an exhortation to communal solidarity between the groups of “children.”

Several scholars have offered characterizations of ancient public scribes as planting themselves in the marketplace and soliciting and conducting business in that location, and so the groups calling back and forth to one another may represent a Q-faction within scribal circles in its relationship with other scribes. It is also possible, of course, as Wendy Cotter has argued, that the image of seated children is an image designed to lampoon the act of judgment. In either case, interest in and familiarity with local administration is presupposed. And finally, one of the only realistic and concrete contexts that makes sense of the mission charge (in its Q1 form) is the occupational context of scribes undertaking local tours of inspection and (especially) “trips on official business” to meet with other scribes, local leaders, and other figures in the local bureaucracy. Whatever the original import of the “mission charge” (in the form in which Mark inherits it), by the time it has been appropriated by Q, its focus is decidedly on local, short-term travel and more or less “official” corporate acceptance or rejection. This squares well with the image of scribes seeking through their usual contacts and behaviors and via typical administrative channels to undertake a political project of detachment from urban institutions—a subversive and backward-looking project, to be sure, but one that evinces the concerns and even the procedures for implementation that we would expect from lower Galilean village bureaucrats.

If one accepts that the people responsible for Q—and particularly for the initial program sketched out in some of Q’s speeches—were village scribes or some similar type of local bureaucrat-administrators, what circumstances might have inspired them to adopt and adapt such radical rhetoric as appears in some places in Q1 and to have aligned themselves with the poor and marginal? All of the more plausible hypotheses suggest that some form of professional and/or geographical displacement was a major factor. As Willi Braun notes:

One is not surprised to see that grammarians were remarkably mobile figures, both geographically and in terms of the versatility of professional/spiritual activities derived from their mastery of literate instrumentalities. A grammarian’s move from the classroom to an assessor’s post, advocacy or other administrative portfolios is a matter of record; a move from village administration to an urban tax collection job, such as one might suppose for some Q scribes, is likely. . . . Mobility . . . is related to demographic and other socio-economic

240. See her discussion in Johnson-DeBaufre, Jesus Among Her Children, 43–80.
241. So, e.g., Morgan, Literate, 1; Goodman, Roman Galilee, 59.
244. Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 201, notes that “there is no reason to suppose that this sector [village bureaucrats] was universally aligned with the ruling classes against the poor or that this sector functioned exclusively as retainers of the elite.”
factors associated with urbanization and centralizations (or decline of centers) of administrative infrastructures that created a surplus of middling bureaucrats here while generating shortages elsewhere. For the scribe/grammarian whose mobility was encumbered by force of sentiment or by familial and social ties to native region or hometown, these same factors would contribute both to real and perceived sense of professional and personal devaluation and out-of-place-ness.245

As Braun notes, urbanization and the vicissitudes of individual cities were undoubtedly factors that had an impact on the fate of bureaucrats. And we know that one of the major features of first-century Galilean life was the social, economic, and political tensions revolving around the two major (by Galilean standards) cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias.246 The shifting political geography of the Galilee, with administrative borders being variously redrawn, meant among other things that the capital of Galilee was shifted to Tiberias when the city was first built, and then back to Sepphoris in 54 CE.247 Kloppenborg has suggested that these transfers of jurisdiction were resented by some lower-level scribal administrators, a view that accords well with Braun's observations above, and that could help explain the “naturalistic” and “primitivizing” rhetoric of a document like Q.

Equally plausible—and perhaps more finely implicated in the broad patterns characteristic of the Roman east during the Principate—is my own suggestion, which focuses on Antipas’ expansion of Sepphoris and establishment of Tiberias. These urbanizing activities had the effect of redirecting the economic and social life of the region from a relatively self-sufficient “closed” orientation to a more “open” one in which local economic patterns and socio-political hierarchies were linked to external forces and structures.248 Among village administrators, the effect of such an extension of social structures could have been significantly alienating:

The scribes have been transformed [by the administrative effects of urbanization] into local clerks charged with little more than supervising the intensified exploitation of their compatriots. This new situation, in addition to involving a considerable curtailment of function and a loss of prestige, also places these figures in a tenuous position among their neighbors. Still charged with a mediating position, they must now serve the villagers as functionaries for and representatives of not the local strong men or leading families, who may serve both as respected community patrons and as nearby sources of power and authority in cases of conflict, but of the distant and hated city. Like the tax collectors who figure so prominently in the narrative stories of Jesus, they are forced to play

246. So also Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 236.
247. See Ant. 20.159; Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 236.
248. See my extended discussion in Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 134–51; and cf. Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q, 239–41.
the role of the enemy within. Abandoned by their patrons, perhaps resented by their charges, with considerable loss of power and diminution of roles, these individuals both increasingly identify with the progressively exploited peasantry yet are alienated from them and, indeed, participate in their exploitation.²⁴⁹ This suggestion not only places Q in the context of the beginnings of Roman urbanization of the east, it also coordinates Q with two social trends observed independently of Q. One is the displacement of the country landlords as the main power brokers of the lower Galilee in the course of the first century and their replacement by urban-based landlords.²⁵⁰ The other is the discernibly decreasing status of local administrators under Roman governance.²⁵¹ Both of these trends ultimately relate to urbanization and both represent significant realignments in the social patterns of rural retainers, and not for the better. Under such circumstances, it makes perfect sense to think of the initial Q¹ project as a reaction to these changes and an effort to re-establish their own now-lost autonomy, independence, and salience in the form of an appeal to a kind of nativistic revival.²⁵² By the time we get to Q² and Q³, the group has transformed itself into something like a faction—perhaps now urban-based (due to the increased contacts with the city that were the cause of the crisis in the first place), perhaps not—within the scribal bureaucracy of the Lower Galilee. At this later stage, the group’s real agenda is simply the perpetuation of their own factional existence by preserving, studying, and embellishing their foundational text and, increasingly, by identifying themselves as devotees of that text’s spokesman. In the course of so doing, rather predictably, they begin to absorb both a broader range of literary competencies associated with the “Great Tradition” and the hallmarks of a more overtly “Judean” religiosity.²⁵³

Conclusion: The “Jesus Movement” as an Intellectual Current?

What, then, is the problem with Q? It is that the evidence provided by Q fails to accord with or confirm our normal frameworks for understanding the origins

249. Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 153.
251. See Lewis, Greeks, 123.
252. Interestingly, Schwartz, Imperialism and Jewish Society, 36, notes that “The Hasmoneans exemplified the proposition that adopting Greek culture could function in the Hellenistic world to preserve a native culture.” So the composition of a Greek document in the service of a nativistic agenda is hardly unaccountable. For discussions of the invention and retrojection of “traditional” cultural patterns in modern Europe and its colonial outposts, see the essays in Hobsbawm and Ranger, The Invention of Tradition.
253. Note the observation by Schwartz, Imperialism and Jewish Society, 45, that “One of the main tendencies of his [Herod the Great’s] reforms seems to have been, in fact, to turn Judaean institutions into Jewish ones by enhancing their attractiveness to non-Judaean Palestinian Jews and Jews of the Diaspora.” For the characterization of Q as increasingly “Jewish,” see Arnal, “The Q Document,” 145–53.
of the Jesus movement. This is true at the most obvious level insofar as Q fails to support the dramatic picture of an origin in the transformative experience of the resurrection, or as a devotional “community,” or in the congenial crucible of popular apocalypticism. Indeed, Jesus is essentially an incidental figure in the literary or social history of Q. But it is rather worse than this. What Q reveals is a set of people with a decidedly intellectual and a decidedly self-interested project in mind that they attributed to a literary character (a local hero?) named Jesus. Q is not recognizably the product of a mass social movement, of impoverished peasants, or of a religious revival. It is rather the resentful musings of displaced bureaucrats who wish things to return to “the good old days” when they and their work were invested with a higher status. The problem with Q is not only that it offers us an alien and unfamiliar image of some of the first Jesus-people, but also, paradoxically, that its actual composers may have been rather uncomfortably and unattractively too much like ourselves. There may be popular, peasant traditions in the Jesus traditions, even some embedded in Q. But we will not find peasants among the tradents of Q or peasant sensibilities in Q’s arguments and agenda. It is of little moment to me whether we consider Q to be typical or atypical of the earliest Jesus-movements, as long as we are careful not to allow our assumptions about the latter to infect our reading of the former. Such generalization may not be possible. But if we can generalize our conclusions about Q to other aspects of the early Jesus-movements, then we must conclude with Burton Mack that Christianity was always, even from its inception, an essentially intellectual project.

254. For a discussion of just how congenial an apocalyptic Jesus is for modern scholarship, see Kloppenborg, “As One Unknown,” 1–23.
255. Especially as articulated in Mack, A Myth of Innocence.

Works Consulted

William Arnal


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Postcolonial Issues Post-Calvary
Which Imperial Overlay Defined Galilee—the Roman-Herodian, or the Judean-Hasmonean?¹

Marianne Sawicki

Galilee was conquered by Judeans around 100 BCE and annexed to the Temple state. Thereafter, starting some four generations before Jesus, the Hasmoneans tried in earnest to win the hearts and minds of the indigenous Galileans even as they built settlements and infrastructure to exploit the place. Judean imperial practices soon gave way to Roman hegemony as Herod the Great expanded many of the Hasmonean foundations in Galilee and Samaria.

That happened in Jesus’ grandparents’ generation. When Jesus’ mother was a little girl, Herod opened the huge Mediterranean seaport of Caesarea, just southwest of Galilee via good roads. When Jesus himself was in his early twenties, Herod’s son Antipas drastically altered the Kinneret lakeshore by founding the resort city of Tiberias, attracting international trade and tourism across the “Sea” of Galilee from Syria and Babylon. Galileans now had better means and stronger motives to travel to Damascus, Jerusalem and beyond. Cousins, colleagues, and business associates hosted them in the cities, but imperial politics was treacherous. Herodian intrigues proved fatal for several Galileans. Executions punctuated the experience of Galileans who traveled to or near Jerusalem: Jesus in 36 CE, James the son of Zebedee in 43 CE, and Jesus’ brother James in 59 CE.² The paleochurch was emerging on a recently reconfigured and still contested colonial landscape. It emerged in the wake of about five generations of accommodation to empire, or more precisely, to two successive empires. It emerged in the struggle for cultural and physical survival on the colonized, compromised, and increasingly dangerous landscape that was Galilee.

This paper examines first-century Galilee as a built environment. It must begin by addressing certain misconceptions arising from a pottery survey reported about twenty years ago by Zvi Gal. Those misconceptions are corrected in an excursus, and then this paper considers four issues:

1. Several paragraphs of this paper, principally those in the “Corrective Excursus,” also appear in my article “Who Wouldn’t Marry Jesus?”
2. John the Baptist, executed about 35 CE, may also have had Judeo-Galilean roots.

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1. How to understand the ongoing “contact” among the various constituencies in Herodian Galilee and their respective agendas
2. Networks of kinship and business, already in place and accessible for the paleochurch, that is, the band of Galileans who maintained allegiance to the name of Jesus after Calvary
3. What sort of ethos was embraced or developed by that band in their built environment
4. How to grasp the evolving project or purpose of that band’s activities on that landscape

These are postcolonial issues. The term “postcolonial” generally refers to the era after outsiders move in and initiate problematic contact with indigenous people and practices. Such a “contact” period is characterized by progressive accommodation and assimilation, social instability and innovation, oppression for some and opportunity for others. The contact experience evolves. The first generation remembers the status quo ante. Subsequent generations consider the occupation more and more normal. Texts, artifacts, and the built environment do not “refer” to this, nor do they merely “reflect” it. Rather, they actively renegotiate cultural assets: traditions, social identities, kinship practices, histories, the perceived past, and the imagined future. Both gospel and mishnah do so, at the start, in Galilee. This short paper cannot develop a full-blown post-colonial hermeneutic for either the texts or the archaeological record. It will merely profile occupied Galilee in broad strokes, beginning with the question of that “occupation” itself.

Corrective Excursus

Galileans in the Early Second Century BCE

Who was living in Galilee before it was annexed by the Temple state? The current common wisdom on that is: hardly anyone at all. Jonathan Reed argues this thesis in the much cited second chapter of Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus.3 But his argument is flawed. The Hasmoneans conquered Galilee; they did not enter unopposed. The Judean Temple state, under Hasmonean administration, launched a military campaign to annex Samaria and Galilee during the late second through the early first centuries BCE. The Hasmoneans’ justification for the conquest is found in 1 Macc 5:14–23. Allegedly, some Judeans who were resident in Galilee appealed to Jerusalem for help. Galilee is portrayed in the text as a kind of irredenta, that is, a region with a minority ethnic population who are harassed by the majority population and therefore stand in need of rescue. From the perspective of the Judeans, this war of conquest is a restoration of the Land of Israel to dimensions resembling those of the Davidic empire before the secession of the Northern Kingdom about 922 BCE.

3. Reed, Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus.
Mordechai Aviam cites this same passage, 1 Maccabees 5, in his discussion of the archaeological evidence of the Hasmonean conquest. How could Galilee of the late second century BCE have a minority population claiming ethnic affinity with the Judeans? The Israelite population of the Galilee had been deported in the eighth century by the Assyrians, “almost completely” as Aviam says. He surmises that a very few escaped deportation, and that those survivors “gradually concentrated in the western part of Lower Galilee.” By the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, people of non-Israelite culture had gradually moved from the coastal region eastward and southward into mostly abandoned areas of Galilee and slowly repopulated them. Another possibility, not explicitly mentioned by Aviam, is that some Judeans might have moved north into Galilee before Hasmonean times. Aviam cites additional biblical texts that presume continuity of a “Jewish” presence in a few towns in western Lower Galilee after the eighth-century deportation. Yet he cautions that there are no Galilean sites for which excavators can securely establish habitation in the post-deportation era, that is, the seventh-sixth centuries BCE.

Aviam thus acknowledges, albeit cautiously, the obvious divergence of the archaeological record from the textual record. The biblical texts indicate that non-Judean Israelite people continued to inhabit (at least) a few villages in western Lower Galilee after the Assyrian deportation of the eighth century. These would have been survivors of the ten northern tribes, the Kingdom of Israel, which had seceded from the Davidic empire after the death of Solomon. On the other hand, “no solid evidence” of them has been reported by archaeologists.

What could count as “solid evidence” of such a non-Judean, but self-consciously Israelite, habitation in Galilee after the deportation, which the biblical texts presume (Jdt 1:8; 2 Kgs 21:19; 2 Kgs 23:36)? The answer is distinctive potsherds. In other words, ceramics of similar material composition and evolving styles would be found in habitation layers both above and below a layer of destruction from the Assyrian conquest, indicating continuity of habitation by people of Israelite culture. However, no such continuity of shards before and after the deportation has yet been reported by archaeologists.

This lack of continuity pertains to larger towns, which tend to attract archaeological attention. Galilean sites important enough to have been excavated with an eye for stratigraphy can be separated rather neatly into two groups: those with shards datable before the Assyrian deportation, and those with strata datable to the era of Hasmonean expansion. Strata datable as “Iron III” and “Persian” periods (733–586 and 586–322 BCE, respectively) are quite rare. For the larger towns, at least, it appears that pre-deportation sites were uninhabited

5. Aviam, Jews, Pagans and Christians, 42; see also 49.
7. As Reed illustrates in a chart in Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus, 33.
afterwards, while post-deportation sites were founded in previously unoccupied locations.

This still does not prove that Galilee was empty of people, Israelite or otherwise, in the seventh through fourth centuries BCE. It merely suggests that the larger towns either were abandoned, or were inhabited \textit{in a manner that did not add any novel artifacts} or layers to be excavated by archaeologists. A few people could have lived in or near the ruins, in the sixth century, making pots that still looked like pre-deportation pots. The material traces left by those people would be indistinguishable from those of the century before.

But not everyone lived in a town of notable size. For tiny hamlets and farmsteads, there has been no stratigraphic excavation of which to speak. The locations of many small localities mentioned in ancient texts are not even known today. Fortunately, there is another archaeological technique, besides stratigraphic excavation, for gathering data about habitation in areas of low population density. It is the surface survey, a systematic collection of all potshards and other artifacts that turn up on the surface of the ground across a wide area. By definition, the shards collected are not associated with any stratum or datable level of habitation. They are associated only with a place. Presumably they arrive at the surface of the ground by having been dropped there or by being exposed through erosion, or turned up through plowing or burrowing animals. The presence of a shard or other artifact proves only that human beings were once there, not when or why they were there, much less who they were.

But in combination with prior stratigraphic findings, the data of a surface survey can yield additional information through the principle of analogy. That is, two shards of similar composition and design are assumed to be of similar age and origin. In practice, when a ceramic shard turns up in a surface survey, it is compared to a reference collection of shards whose ages and origins are already known through prior stratigraphic excavation. In other words, a surface survey yields materials datable only through analogy. If a similar shard was found elsewhere in a sealed locus together with a datable coin, then the new shard acquires the date and origin of the reference shard. Identification of shards through comparison with reference sets is a skill practiced by experts with many years of field experience, and their prestige helps to secure the evidence of the new shard.

Zvi Gal conducted a surface survey of Lower Galilee and published his findings in a dissertation in 1992.\textsuperscript{8} Gal covered more than 80 sites whose names are known, and his is the most comprehensive data set available for Galilee. He classified the shards he found by comparing them with shards whose origin and date already were established. One may assume that Gal collected carefully, and that a representative sample of all extant potshards happened to rise to the surface of the ground where he could pick them up; this is the methodological

\textsuperscript{8} Gal, \textit{Lower Galilee During the Iron Age}. 
premise of the surface survey. Gal reported that he could date almost none of
the shards he found to the seventh or sixth century BCE. That literally means
that no one in Galilee made pots that resembled pots made outside Galilee in
the seventh and sixth century BCE. Gal’s evidence is perfectly consistent with a
scenario where people in Galilee, though reduced in number, still continued to
make pots in the seventh and sixth centuries that closely resembled pots made
in Galilee before the eighth-century deportation of their ancestors’ neighbors.

Since, by conventional wisdom, there “is no” Israelite habitation in Galilee
after the Assyrian conquest, there is no reference set of shards identifying Israelite
populations in seventh- and sixth-century Galilee. Thus no matter what Gal
found, he could not have dated it to the seventh or sixth century, there being
no criterion for comparison. The argument is absolutely circular. It is built to
conceal the perfectly plausible case in which the pottery signature for post-de-
portation Israelite Galileans was identical with that for pre-deportation Israelite
Galileans. If Galilean Israelites made any pots in the seventh or sixth century,
the shards will be (mis)classified as eighth-century shards, on the basis of the
available reference set, which was assembled from pre-deportation sites.

Gal’s findings are widely interpreted as evidence that Galilee was empty of
population after the Assyrian deportation and remained so during the seventh
and sixth centuries BCE. On this view, non-Israelite (therefore pagan) popula-
tions began to drift back into the unoccupied land in the fifth and fourth centu-
ries, so that by the time of the Hasmonean invasion in the late second century,
the indigenous population of Galilee was gentile, with the exception of those
few Judeans who might be found in isolated pockets in western Lower Galilee.

But that view cannot be supported. The evidence of Gal’s surface survey is
insufficient to rule out continuity of kinship and culture between the Israelite
non-Judean population of Galilee before Assyrian deportation and people in the
third and second century BCE who could claim to be their descendants. Those
descendants could well be some of the indigenous people of the land whom the
Hasmoneans subdued when they annexed Samaria, Galilee, and Golan.

Granted, the Hasmoneans also encountered non-Israelite people and places
when they invaded Galilee. Some had customs, beliefs, and observances rather
similar to the Israelites; others were more dissimilar, but they all shared some
degree of cultural affinity.9 Whether these “gentiles” were absolutely avoided
by the indigenous non-Judean Israelite Galileans, whether they had some trade
contacts among their respective villages, whether they occasionally intermar-
rried and, if so, what the effects were for their experiences of ethnic and religious
identity—these are issues that cannot be decided on the basis of presently avail-
able archaeological evidence.

Aviam found that some of the people whom the Hasmoneans conquered
were using a plain utilitarian kind of storage jar, made of what he calls Galilean

9. This is well argued by Seth Schwartz. See footnote 20 and discussion below.
Coarse Ware or GCW. At a few sites, shards of GCW were found near figurines, suggesting that such jars and their contents were acquired by households that sheltered individuals of non-Israelite or laxly Israelite religious sensibilities. GCW in itself is not “pagan”; it is just pottery.10

In the absence of decisive evidence, what can account for the tenacity of the (unsupported) thesis that Galilee remained unpopulated in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, and hence there can have been no indigenous Israelite but non-Judean population there in the first centuries BCE and CE? This thesis is ideological and serves—today as it did twenty-two centuries ago—to justify the Hasmonean imperial program of restoration of ancestral territories, with Judeans as rightful heirs to the supposedly long-vanished Galilean Israelites. It projects a neat binary opposition—gentiles versus Jews (Judeans)—by erasing any inconvenient indigenous people who were non-Judean, non-gentile, and too poor to care much about rituals, tithes, baths, strategic betrothals, or cooking kosher with their GCW. One is then free to imagine that the Hasmoneans either slew all the gentile pagans, forcibly converted them, or drove them out of Galilee, clearing the way for the flourishing of a “pure Jewish” population in the first centuries BCE and CE.

This thesis of a “pure Jewish/Judean” Galilee by the time of Jesus, James, and Hillel is advanced by Eric Meyers and Jonathan Reed.11 So tempting is this thesis to Christian and Jewish scholars alike, that Zvi Gal’s dissertation is cited widely and uncritically as expert testimony confirming its main premise, the vanishing of Galilee’s indigenous Israelite population. For example, Reed extrapolates well beyond Gal’s evidence, “essentially ruling out any direct continuity between the Northern Israelites and the first-century Galileans.”12 These overstatements go undetected, and Reed in turn is widely cited as the expert.13 His prestige, not his evidence, validates the widespread but mistaken claim that the only Israelite people in the Galilee where the Jesus traditions emerged were the Judean families whose immigrant forebears developed the place after the Hasmonean conquest.14

10. Galilean Coarse Ware (GCW) is associated with the people whom the Hasmoneans conquered; see Aviam, Jews, Pagans and Christians, 46–49. In several places in Upper Galilee and at Yodfat, GCW was found near ceramics or stone or metal items decorated with human figures, although apparently not in the same locus with them.


12. Reed, Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus, 27; 23–43.

13. John Dominic Crossan has endorsed Reed’s view. See Crossan and Reed, Excavating Jesus.

14. An extensive literature in the sociology of scientific knowledge examines the various ways in which “facts” are certified and accepted. This has enormous bearing on practices and uses of archeology in Israel. Compare the controversial reception of Abu El-Haj’s Facts on the Ground.
How to Characterize the Contact between Indigenous Peoples and Expatriate Judeans

Occupiers and occupied do not confront each other monolithically. Numerous frontiers of contact develop. The wealthy may fare better, or worse, than the poor. Men’s experiences will be different from women’s. In turn, economic activities and gender practices can mediate, advance, or resist the colonial program in various and evolving ways. Besides economic and gender contact, one could investigate political, religious, culinary, class, industrial, architectural, marketing, or residential interfaces between indigenous and expatriate in Galilee. Two of the most significant frontiers are jurisprudence and kinship. To understand colonial contact along those frontiers, one must learn how people reconciled “the laws of the Jews” with indigenous common-law practices. One also must consider Hasmonean-Judean kinship networks, including the Herodian branches, as foundational for national and international trade, constituting the Galilee-Jerusalem axis of the paleochurch.

With regard to the interfaces of jurisprudence and kinship, one must reject the Meyers-Reed thesis\(^\text{15}\) of a homogeneous “Jewish” Galilee, faced off against pagans in the surrounding Greek cities and sprinkled with Romans (actual or aspirational) in government jobs assisted by Jewish sinners (tax-collectors and other collaborators). More nuanced and credible proposals have been put forth by Richard Horsley, Sean Freyne, and Seth Schwartz.

a. Horsley’s thesis has been endorsed by the present writer in earlier publications.\(^\text{16}\) Horsley sees the Hasmonean invasion of Galilee as a violent incursion against an Israelite but non-Judean indigenous population who are the descendants of Israelites too poor or unimportant to have been carried off into exile in the eighth century BCE by the Assyrians. Thus, he sees opposition and animosity between Galileans and the representatives of the Temple state, continuing into the first century CE. This is the scenario that is denied by Meyers, Reed, and others who accept Gal’s assertion that Galilee was virtually empty of population from the late eighth through the sixth century BCE. More recently, Horsley suggests that Galilean village sages represent a “little tradition” in opposition to the “great tradition” advanced by authorities from Jerusalem.\(^\text{17}\)

b. Sean Freyne recognizes the two opposing factions (indigenous Galileans versus Judeans) but tries to find some grounds for consensus between them. The common ground, he says, is “Jewish restoration hopes” tied to Ezekiel’s vision and capable of various modes of expression. One expression is “the emerging nationalist tradition in Judea” and the Hasmonean military campaigns of

\(^{15}\) See the Excursus above.
exansion. This expresses a “lateral” or “extensive” ethnic ideology. But the vision of restoration can have another dynamic as well, which is “vertical” or “intensive.” This dynamic heightens the ethnic identity or identification with the central symbols. Freyne suggests that these two contrasting ideals could be pursued at the same time, that is, in the territorial annexation of Galilee and the “enculturation” or intentional affiliation of Galileans with the Temple.

Freyne does not assert causal explanatory links between those ideal possibilities and the historical realities. In texts dating from the Hasmonean and Herodian eras, he says, place names function symbolically in one or both of the ideological dimensions. Oppositions between Galilee and Jerusalem, then, are primarily differences “between two different models of Israel’s restoration and ideal condition, the one more open and expansionist and the other centrist and exclusive.” Freyne draws implications for early Christianity “as a Jewish renewal movement” that “shared this repertoire of restoration images and drew on both tendencies, the lateral and the vertical, to express its own understandings of restoration.” Handily, then, the common ground between Jerusalem and Galilee also can work as common ground between James and Paul.

May one then simply transpose territorial issues into ideology and symbolism? Though tempting, this inference would be premature. Nevertheless, Freyne’s proposal helpfully highlights four crucial factors in this contact situation:

1. The ideological uses of space and place
2. The utility and synergy in practice of ideologies seemingly opposed in theory
3. The need for the Hasmoneans to inculturate the Galileans into their ideology (win over their hearts and minds for the Temple state)
4. The agenda of “Judaism under construction” (if not entirely up for grabs) in the Hasmonean and Herodian eras

With this, the argument advances beyond the “pure Jewish” thesis of Meyers and Reed and the “Judean versus non-Judean Israelite” oppositional thesis of Horsley.

c. Seth Schwartz’s proposal, though quite different, shares these same four features. Where Freyne, like most Christian scholars, accepts a predominantly “Jewish” Galilee in the first century on the strength of Gal’s pottery survey, Schwartz sees a complex ethnic mix, owing to the way the conquest was accomplished. The key ethnic distinction for the Hasmoneans, says Schwartz, was Greek cities versus non-Greek people of Israelite, Edomite, or Arab descent, with cultural traditions similar to those of Judea, including (often) circumcision,

festivals, kinship practices, and Semitic language. These non-Greek peoples could be persuaded to throw in with the Hasmoneans not only because of their greater or lesser ethnic affinity, but also because they were invited to share the spoils when they joined the Hasmoneans against the wealthy Greeks. In return, they accepted “Torah” or the laws of Jerusalem. This inter-national or federal law required tribute to the Temple state, but did not reach down to interfere with everyday village life and customs—assuming that circumcision, betrothal and dietary practices already were similar. One could say that “the Torah was the constitution of the Jews of Palestine.”

Hasmonean policy gradually forged “Judaism” or a common nation where there had been divided tribes, according to Schwartz’s view. In subsequent generations, intermarriage became possible and advantageous. In this way, the Idumean Herod was betrothed to a Hasmonean daughter, Mariammē. Judean customs and architecture spread down and out to the newly annexed territories. But some practices also flowed “upstream” to Jerusalem, so to speak. Most notable was secondary burial. Schwartz writes:

> The mass conversions ought to have been controversial among Judeans, yet there is surprisingly little evidence that they were. We know that some Judeans were contemptuous of the annexed nations, but there is no indication that they were not regarded as Jews. What their Judaism consisted of is a different question. . . . [T]hey may have introduced some of their own practices into standard Judaism. For example, archaeologists have traced the practice of burial in kokhim—niches hewn out of the walls of caves—from Marisa, the main city of Idumea, in the third and second centuries BCE to Judea, in the first century BCE, to all of Jewish Palestine, in the first century CE and following.

An ideological system embracing one God, one Torah, and one Temple gradually took hold across the territories annexed by the Hasmoneans, says Schwartz. Yet he notes two kinds of “deviance” from this ideal that are highly significant for the issues under consideration here. For one thing, Torah did not and could not determine all the questions arising in everyday life. In itself, it needed interpretation. Moreover, conflict inevitably arose in matters covered by divergent local custom, especially outside Judea proper. Schwartz concludes that “the ‘Torah’ was a series of negotiations between an authoritative but opaque text and various sets of traditional but not fully authorized practice.” Jurisprudence was needed. There was work for local arbiters, interpreters, judges, sages, and scribes.

Moreover, Torah coexisted in the late second-Temple period with widespread allegiance to a completely contrary ideology, that of apocalyptic. Schwartz calls

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22. Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 42. Interestingly, kokhim burial is one of the Meyers-Reed indicators of “pure Judaism”!
this “the myth,” and he contrasts it with “the covenant.” According to Torah and the covenant, there is one God, alone in heaven, all-powerful, who remains faithful to the covenant and always rewards those who keep the laws. According to the myth, on the contrary, God is not alone in the heavens. There are angels and demons galore. God has stepped back while the demons wreak havoc on earth. Bad things really do happen to good people, both individually and nationally. Amazingly, these two contrasting ideologies can be found together interlaced in a single document at Qumran. Schwartz concludes that “in social terms, the covenant and the myth formed a single complex [but] performed different social roles.” Interestingly, Schwartz writes:

[T]he covenant told you whom to marry and how, what to eat, how to worship; the myth not only told you why things nevertheless went wrong but also could be used to improve them, to cure the sick, protect you from your enemies, discover, at the very least, when things are likely to change. If the correct adjudication of a property dispute, or proper preparation of food, were the day-to-day manifestations of the power of the covenant, the exorcism, cure, or oracle were the corresponding manifestations of the power of the myth.24

Schwartz observes that the incorporation of apocalyptic elements—“the myth”—into mainstream Judaism marked its transition from a quasi-sectarian ideology into a successful national religion. The elements acquired by the ideological system at this time included “belief in the power of demons, astrology, bits of Canaanite mythology, almost certainly derived from popular Palestinian religion.”25

**Networks of Kinship and Business**

*within Galilee, Galilee-Judea, and International*

Social connections of various kinds were operative already in Herodian-era Galilee. Not only were they available to “spread the Christian message”, they were instrumental in constituting it. One may recognize three distinct populations in Galilee immediately pre- and post-Calvary, all working out ways to maintain their own integrity, all pursuing their own interests, and all selectively relating to the other groups.

a. People of the land, formerly farmers and now also wage laborers, have strong kin ties within villages and among neighboring villages. They do not need “marketplaces” or “village squares” (that is, dedicated space) to distribute livestock, produce, oil, or other commodities. They cannot recline at meals, for they have no couches or tables, and nowhere to put them anyway. They do not need synagogue buildings for their festivals, rituals, and community decision

making, although villages may share a common bread oven, threshing floor, well, or wine or oil press. The indigenous people of the land are none too careful about caste-maintaining marriages, and they probably do not travel to Jerusalem for festivals or willingly send tithes there. Their sons and daughters may find employment in the workshops, lands, boats, and homes of Judean or Herodian families. The workers may “commute” between elite villas and their own homes, if any, on a daily, weekly, or seasonal basis.

b. Hasmonean expatriate families have kin ties among themselves and with their kin in Judea. They hire the indigenous people to work in their villas, their factories, their fishing boats, and their estates. They travel to Jerusalem and beyond. Some have kin and/or business ties in the diaspora: in Alexandria and imperial cities to the west, in Tyre on the northern coast, or in Syria and Babylon. They deal on a national or even international scale. After the Herodians arrive in Galilee and develop the Kinneret lakeshore, these entrepreneurial families adapt creatively to the new situation. They are ready to do business. They may even betroth their daughters to Herodian officers (as Hasmonean Mariammē was betrothed to Herod the Great, and Joanna to Chuza).

c. Herod Antipas, his officers, and their families associate with the old Hasmonean aristocracy in Jerusalem and with the first families of the Roman empire. They entertain ambassadors and visiting businesspeople in their palatial homes. To enhance the perceived legitimacy of their administration, they may betroth their sons to daughters of aristocratic Judean families. One purpose for Antipas’s new city of Tiberias and the cliffside palace there is to facilitate international contacts at the highest level. This also makes opportunities for local businesspeople to connect with eastern and Roman imperial markets.

Clearly, then, one kind of network operating in pre- and post-Calvary Galilee is the national and international commercial one. Antipas is actively promoting the industries and international trade that started up after the Hasmonean conquest. Men and even women are now traveling across the lake, with layovers in Tiberias, on their way between Jerusalem and Damascus or Babylon. Plausibly, expatriate Judean families in Galilee strategize to secure access to these commercial networks. The names of Joanna and Mary suggest nationalistic Judean affiliation. Several of the Twelve also have identifiably Hasmonean-sympathizing names: the two Simons, the two Judases, and John the son of Zebedee. (Zebedee had named another son after the patriarch Jacob [“James” in English], as had the parents of Jesus—perhaps asserting their affinity with Jacob/Israel against

26. In Crossing Galilee I argue that Mary of Magdala and Joanna wife of Chuza were likely both daughters of Hasmonean expatriate families. Their names signify nationalistic sentiments on the part of their parents. See Williams, “Palestinian Jewish Names in Acts,” 79–113. I place Joanna and the Magdalene in the same generation as Mary the mother of Jesus, that is, senior to Jesus. I further suggest that, given this social affinity, Mary’s association with the fish-processing town of Magdala, and Joanna’s association with the palace in nearby Tiberias, they might have done business together.
any who would deny it.) The naming of the future Baptist (Luke 1:59–66) also signifies nationalistic Hasmonean anti-Herodian sympathies.

Thus, commercial networks are amplified by traditional kin networks, but in different ways for indigenous people of the land than for expatriate Judean families in Galilee. The people of the land are increasingly hard-pressed to keep up their pre-colonial lineage-maintaining practices, for which they needed houses and land of their own. Many lose their farms. Their children find waged employment in Hasmonean fortified towns and later in Herodian cities. The young men and women thus come into unsupervised contact with each other and with non-local, exotic people and options. On the other hand, the descendants of Hasmonean administrative and entrepreneurial settlers have important kinship ties to Judea and especially Jerusalem. These are commercially, politically, and religiously advantageous—probably in that order. Both in Galilee and Judea, these families are poised to forge new ties with the Herodians. Antipas, whose territory no longer includes Jerusalem as his father’s did, can still gain channels of access there through the established “Jewish”/Judean expatriate families near whose settlements he built Tiberias.

“Hasmoneans” in Galilee included military officers, administrators, business people, their families, and their friends—not just the kin of the Jerusalem aristocrats, but their sympathizers, agents, and retainers. With the progressive annexation of Samaria, Galilee, and the Golan, fortified administrative centers had been established to defend and protect the overland trade routes and the lake. In the wake of their conquering forces, the Hasmoneans had established administrative outposts at strategic locations in the Galilee and the Golan. Judeans moved north to staff those outposts. Southern families settled in Galilee and the Golan to develop farms, olive orchards, wineries, and other industries such as weaving and fish-packing.

The benevolence of this takeover must not be assumed. Yet it did build the infrastructure for industrial development (textiles, processed foods, etc.), export, and business connections both international and domestic. The influx of Judean administrators and their families accounts for the distinctive architecture and other material culture excavated in the settlements at Gamla, Yodfat, Zippori, and elsewhere in Galilee and Golan. Some of these families were of modest means, but others became wealthy enough to build villas with stepped pools (miqva’ot27). That is, they introduced Judean forms and furniture into Galilee. Their homes and their non-domestic buildings have been extensively excavated, while farmsteads and indigenous village housing have received almost no attention from archaeologists.28

27. Miqva’ot, plural of miqveh, as spelled in Mishnaic Hebrew.
28. One of the few exceptions is the excavation of rural housing at Horvat Kanaf, dated no earlier than the fifth century CE, discussed briefly by Galor, “Domestic Architecture.” A more comprehensive, less ideological source is Feinsy, Social History of Palestine. Farmsteads excavated in nearby Samaria are suggestive for imagining similar indigenous buildings in Lower Galilee.
The Hasmonean settlements in Galilee prospered. Three or four generations of expatriate Judeans were born in Galilee before Roman power was imposed there by Herod the Great. Presumably they kept in touch with their southern kin. This would include caste-preserving marriages to reinforce political and business alliances.

These close relations between Judeans in Judea and those in Galilee continued after Herod the Great displaced the Hasmoneans as government officers, though not as residents. Herod, backed by Rome, enormously altered the landscape. Herodian monumental architecture, waterworks, basilicas, and roads are on display at archaeological parks today. Herod built the harbor city of Caesarea, and this effectively brought Galilee much closer to Alexandria and to Rome itself. His expansion of the Temple created an international tourist attraction—a “destination”—to put Palestine on the imperial map. His son Antipas, coming to power in a pared-down Galilee about the time Jesus was born, controlled less territory but was just as ambitious. Caesarea was no longer his, so Antipas founded his own beachfront city: Tiberias on Lake Kinneret. This attracted travelers and trade coming from the east (Damascus and Babylon), arguably in much the same way that his father had channeled Mediterranean travelers through the new port of Caesarea a generation earlier.

Thus the Herodian administration created a Roman-style infrastructure in and near Galilee, manifested materially in harbors, cities, aqueducts, baths, temples, industrial development, and foreign visitors. But the earlier, smaller scale Judean architecture and material culture continued alongside the new monumental urban installations, especially where Herodians took over a pre-existing Hasmonean outpost, such as Zippori/Sepphoris.

The Ethos of the Band

But in the mid-first century CE, should one call those towns “Jewish”? Did the Jesus band live and work in “Jewish” places? Jewish ethnicity and religious sensibility are difficult to define, even today among living people. Jewishness in the past is identified through judgments based on criteria, and those criteria need examination and evaluation. When archaeologists assert that an artifact, a building, or a city is “Jewish,” they mean that certain recognized indicators of Jewishness have been identified there. Early reports from one of the excavators of Sepphoris, a Greco-Roman city in Galilee, insisted that this was “a Jewish city” in the first century CE and specified two indicators as criteria of Jewishness: the presence of stepped pools in domestic contexts, and the placement of tombs outside the city walls.29 In a 1994 article, this writer pointed to the rhetorical character of miqva’ot. These stepped pools do not simply indicate Jewishness as if they were caused effects of it. At most, miqva’ot may reflect a

considerable degree of concern about a particular version of Judaism and may enter into the contested construction of it. “Jewishness” itself is not an inert fact, but a cultural achievement that must constantly be renewed.

One student of Meyers branded the critique anti-Semitic. Jonathan Reed (in a book dedicated to Eric and Carol Meyers) carefully expanded the list of archaeological indicators of “Jewishness” to four: cups or jars carved from stone; stepped pools (miqva’ot); implements for secondary burial, such as ossuaries or loculi tombs; and bone profiles that lack pork. Implicitly there is sometimes a fifth indicator: decoration, when present, is aniconic, without human and animal figures.

An archaeological indicator, strictly speaking, must be present whenever what it indicates is present, and only then. In this case, “Jewishness” would have to be causing the production of stone vessels, miqva’ot, distinctive burial architecture, and pig-less bone assemblages. And this must invariably happen whenever “Jewishness” is present. Reed tries hard to make his data meet this standard, often by overgeneralizing or extrapolating beyond the data. Aviam,

32. Reed, Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus, 44; see also 28.
33. The logic of the inference is bi-conditional ("if and only if"), but the arrow of causality goes from the indicated entity to the indicator, not the other way around. (For example: All Jews and only Jews make stepped pools. Stepped pools do not cause Jews.) On the other hand, if an artifact could be used to define, construct, and assert a social identity, and if it could have had no other conceivable use, then the indicator points merely to those intentions (that is, to define, construct, and assert an identity) as existing prior to and independently of itself. It still does not “indicate” that desired identity, however.
34. In Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus, Reed asserts that Nazareth exhibits “the same pattern in religious indicators” (p. 56) presumably including bone profiles that lack pork, although he earlier noted that no bone profile had even been reported for Nazareth (p. 50 n. 68). In another example, Reed states that the supposedly “Jewish” town of Capernaum lacks the indicator of a miqveh, but he attributes this lack to the relative poverty of the town and the nearness of the Sea of Galilee to accommodate ritual bathing (pp. 157–58). Thus, it appears that miqva’ot are at best an indicator of wealthy urban landlocked Herodian-era Jewishness, not of Jewishness as such. In my opinion, two of the Meyers-Reed indicators, miqva’ot and the architecture for secondary burial, when found in Galilee are best interpreted as cultural markers of expatriate Judeans. These forms were brought north from Judea, where they are well represented, and they first appear in Galilee with the coming of the Hasmonean administration. Nor do these forms persist in the archeological record much after the first century ce. Even the miqva’ot are soon filled or converted to other uses. This architecture, together with the innovation of the synagogue building itself, serves to assert Judean cultural identity in a context where it is contested. The two other indicators, stone cups and pig-free bone assemblages, are suggestive but ultimately admit of alternative interpretations. Aversion to pork is attested in ancient Egypt and may be a cultural preference of West Asian peoples, in contrast to those of Mediterranean ancestral stock. Small stone cups should be distinguished from large stone storage jars. The latter are quite expensive to make: a heavy block is quarried, transported to a shop, and turned on a lathe. The interior of the jar must be laboriously hollowed out. Stone jars indicate wealth, as do the domestic miqva’ot and the secondary burial implements, including ossuaries carved from stone. But a small stone cup with a handle can be carved by a poor person without a lathe.
who also accepts “stone vessels” as indicators of a Jewish population, found that only a handful of sites yielded both stone vessels and ossuaries.  

Yet the presence of these Judean cultural artifacts indicates that some residents of Galilee were attempting to live “Jewishly” (that is, in a Judean manner) under Herod the Great and after Antipas made over Galilee into a little Italy. The Meyers-Reed indicators of Judaism, especially stone cups and miqwa’ot, should be recast as modalities of resistance.  

Resistance to what? Not to Greek culture as such, for Hasmonean Judaism was a kind of Hellenism. Judaism now would develop some of its signature practices in this very time and place in response to cultural pressure from the secularizing Roman-style cities.  

The impulse to draw and defend sharp distinctions between “Jewish” and everything else—Greek, Roman, pagan, gentile, Galilean, unobservant, illegitimate, indigenous, peasant—was vigorously operative in Galilee during the first centuries BCE and CE. This impulse is Freyne’s dynamic ideology of annexation-cum-enculturation. It is Schwartz’s synthesizing, eclectic Judaism-under-construction. One must position the pre- and post-Calvary paleochurch in opposition to that impulse. The paleochurch easily aligns with Schwartz’s Deuteronomistic optimism about Torah, for it had little recourse (yet) to Schwartz’s apocalyptic “myth.” In that sense, the paleochurch is “un-Jewish,” even “anti-Jewish.” But in a larger sense, the paleochurch is trying to shift the emphasis back to a Deuteronomic spirituality, to a “law of freedom” that abstains from judging or making fine distinctions (Jas 1:25, 2:12; cf. 2:8).  

The reckoning of caste and kinship is highly salient for the architects of “Judaism.” But alterations in the built environment of Galilee by the Hasmoneans, then by the Herodians, have impacted small house-holders and imperiled the kin lines embodied and protected in those houses. The new patterns of land ownership and the new urban topography thus drastically alter the options for action by women. Traditionally, in the Israelite caste system,
daughters are the means of maintaining caste, that is, ethnic identity. A girl with the right (rhetorically defensible) lineage must cross the threshold of her father’s house and enter the house of another lineage, to produce offspring for them and also to produce services and commodities for their use. The system is stressed or ruptured entirely by any material displacement: loss of housing, transfer of labor or commodities into a market economy, irregular sexual liaisons. Indigenous people of the land are more vulnerable to these threats than the expatriate Judean families in Galilee.

But the caste system was resilient and flexible. The fate of Mariammē is instructive. She was directly descended from the ruling Hasmonean dynasty. Her male kin needed wives of pure Israelite caste in order to maintain the identity of the family. Mariammē herself, however, was betrothed to Herod the Great, a powerful man but utterly out-caste. The offspring of this marriage would be unable to claim Israelite identity or to marry anyone who did. It was a political alliance, to protect the family as Rome took control of Palestine. In other words, the family that gives away a daughter does not lose caste thereby, and may well gain a voice and a set of eyes and ears in another household that could prove very advantageous to itself—politically, commercially, or both.

Hasmonean women married into Herodian households. Personally and through their offspring, they facilitated contact between Roman and Judean interests, both in Judea and in Galilee. This mediating role has significance for the composition and transmission of early Jesus materials that can hardly be overestimated. Well-established networks of in-laws and cousins extend between Jerusalem and Galilee thanks to the betrothal practices of Hasmonean families. Women with nationalistic Hasmonean names are attested as suppliers of processed food to the Herodian palace of Masada in Judea.41

The expatriate Judean connection is the likeliest way to get the gospel from Galilee to Judea. Jesus’ maternal grandparents likely placed him right in that network. But even if Jesus himself had no such Judean ties, the paleochurch surely did, or else it would not be in Jerusalem at all. The ethos of the post-Calvary band of Jesus followers is “accommodationist,” pragmatic, opportunistic, and still hopeful. They embrace a Deuteronomistic attitude, like that which Schwartz attributes to proponents of Torah over against proponents of the apocalyptic “myth” in the late second-Temple period. They cherish a non-exclusive “restorationist” vision, like that which Freyne identifies as the expansive, welcoming side of the Jewish restoration ideology.

What they are not is a liberation movement, much less a fellowship of equals. They do not seek freedom from gender roles, nor are they proto-communists. Their polity is more al-Qaida than soviet. By the late first century CE, the

41. Cotton and Geiger, “The Economic Importance of Herod’s Masada.”
paleochurch self-consciously describes itself with the metaphors of salt and leaven. Its constituents look for the kingdom to come as corrosive change in the midst of the empire, as foment from within the colonized landscape.

The Agenda of the Band: Jesus-kerygma or Yeshua-halachah

Indigenous villages in Galilee, of whatever ethnicity, certainly were linked in their own networks of kinship and barter. Historians have long imagined these to be the medium for the transmission and elaboration of the stories and sayings of Jesus. The hypothesis of a Q-community relies on just such networks and short-range circulation. But given the massive redesign of the Galilean built environment in two waves of colonial impact, elite Hasmonean and Herodian networks may well have been equally formative of this Q material, and from a very early date.

Post-Calvary, there are three networks available in Galilee to develop and transmit Jesus materials: indigenous village-to-village kin groups, expatriate Judean kin-based commercial interests, and the pro-Roman Herodian party. There is, then, very little reason to insist on a “primitive” post-Calvary Aramaic-speaking kingdom movement in Galilee, predating a more sophisticated gospel propagated by Greek speakers in the Jerusalem church. Communication was rapid and reliable between Jerusalem and elite families in Galilee.

Birger Pearson is right for the wrong reason when he asserts that proponents of “a Q community” have failed to “delineate a special brand of early Galilean Christianity distinguishable from that of Jerusalem or other areas of Jewish Palestine.” He is wrong to imagine Galileans as isolated rural villagers speaking only their Aramaic dialect and to place all Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem, where they will translate Q quite some time after Calvary. The Hasmonean Hellenistic agenda of commercial networking continued full-speed in first-century Galilee, well after political control passed to the Herodians. Jesus the young healer-exorcist was noticed and sponsored by that network before he started performing Q material at all.

Post-Calvary, and arguably pre-Calvary as well, the Jesus-kerygma/Yeshua-halachah needed more for its growth than a network to travel through. It also needed gathering spaces. There had to be places available—that is, a kind of

43. There is no intention here prematurely to foreclose discussion of the character of the post-Calvary Jesus materials. Although I designate them halachah, Westar fellows distinguished a “Jesus-kerygma” from a “Christ-kerygma” in the voting at the 2006 Fall Meeting. See Patterson, “Report,” 20.
44. Pearson, “A Q Community in Galilee?” 493.
45. See Sawicki, Crossing Galilee.
built environment—to accommodate performance, for sure, but also conducive to discussion, rehearsal, critique, elaboration, correction, application, comparison, reinforcement, and argument. What is needed is something like a villa, or at least a courtyard house or workshop, large enough to accommodate six to twelve people and maybe some writings or writing material. Tables would be useful. Common village houses would be too small; Herodian basilicas, palaces, markets, or other “public” spaces would be too big.

The parallel experience of the earliest rabbis in Galilee is instructive. They innovated by bringing the Torah into an enclosed “study house” that selectively admitted students and shut out others. This “housing” of Torah was one of the means of enhancing the prestige of the rabbis, establishing the authority of their interpretations and gradually expanding the sphere of their influence. Architecturally, the *beit midrash* does not become an annex to the synagogue hall until several centuries later. It begins as private, proprietary domestic space. The study house was the mechanism for attaching the name of a particular teacher to a *mishnah*.

So it seems that the kind of architecture needed by the Jesus people in Galilee after Calvary is available primarily in the homes of the expatriate Judean entrepreneurial families. This likely was true before Calvary as well. Jesus began his career as the protégé of expatriate Judean women in Galilee who have connections to the Herodian court through marriage and/or business alliances. Women of these families were not cloistered at home. They went abroad on business. If they returned home to villas with dedicated space for women, the *gynakōn*, they surely did not cloister themselves up alone in there. More likely they used that space to entertain other businesswomen.

Such a setting may have been the incubator for *Q*. At any rate, some such established social practice, housed within a built space of approximately the dimensions of a modest *triklinē*, was surely instrumental for the coalescence of *Q* materials in Greek. Once again, the comparison with the rabbis’ experience is instructive. The Mishnah did not emerge during all the generations when Torah was recited in formal gatherings by *meturgemanin*. Mishnah developed, in Hebrew, only after the housing of Torah study within private proprietary spaces in Galilee. Thus, public outdoor performance in Aramaic could conceivably have led to something like a Jesus *targum* (Aramaic rendition of traditional historical narratives). But it stands to reason that there could be no halachic *Q* (rules of conduct) or Jesus *haggadah* (stories about him) without the right kind of built environment in which to incubate them. The architecture is decisive.

46 We can even name names. Four “Salomēs” and a “Mary of Kypselos” had their product labels on jars in Herod’s larder at Masada. See notes 41 and 26 above. “Mary of Magdala” might represent Magdala and its famous produce, potted fish. Then there is the Greek-speaking Phoenician from Syria who accosts Jesus near the grain-exporting port city of Tyre (Mark 7:25–30).
Women’s practices of mourning and lament were the matrix for the original paleoecclesial reflection that established the significance of the death of Jesus. Those “christogenic” discursive practices too required a particular kind of architecture to accommodate them. The same goes for the symposion or agapē meal, another practice often suggested as a matrix of earliest christological elaboration of the death and life of Jesus. The simple village houses of indigenous Galileans could accommodate neither. Again, one must look to expatriate Judean housing in and around Galilee as the locus of resistive, christological reflection about Calvary.

Finally, one must recall Schwartz’s perception of a need to reconcile the laws of the Jews (the federal Torah, so to speak) with local common law, including laws and customs of ethnically diverse Israelite and other Semitic indigenous peoples in Galilee. The Hasmonean program of nation-building and infrastructure-development in Galilee required the articulation of a cross-cultural jurisprudence. On top of that, Roman imperial laws, taxes, and contracting and employment arrangements had to be negotiated too. The interests of expatriate Judean landowners and industrialists surely support a cadre of scribes with a repertoire of case law to handle these matters. To the extent that the interests of indigenous people still conflicted with those of villa residents, there would be a need for another corps of scribes. William Arnal’s proposal of village scribes seems very plausible here. However, Arnal’s scribes will be working without offices and desks. They will be walking a village circuit and often may trade their expertise for their dinner.

For Yeshua halachah to continue after Calvary, it must already have been afoot in these places before Calvary. Jesus may have been an important tradent or proponent of this school of jurisprudence, but he probably was not its center or foundational authority pre-Calvary. The material itself had to make sense, be useful, resolve current issues without his name. Otherwise, it would not attach to his name. One should understand Q¹ as halachic jurisprudential principles: developing out of and supporting a villa-village alliance in occupied Galilee, projecting a fusion of interests between expatriate and indigenous, seeking to capture hearts and minds in league with the Freyne-Schwartz Judean “enculturation” program, and offering its two-cents worth toward the construction of a common Judaism sustainable on the edge of the Roman empire.

47. Sawicki, Seeing the Lord, 149–81.
48. Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes, 168–72, 180–82.

Works Cited


A Galilean Provenance for the Gospel of Mark?

Joanna Dewey

The arguments for and against a Markan provenance in Rome or in Syria and/or Galilee have been going on for more than seventy years since Ernst Lohmeyer first argued for Galilee.¹ They show no signs of abating: in 2003, Brian Incigneri published a 400-page plus monograph arguing for Rome; in 2004, Hendrika Roskam, a mere 300-page monograph arguing for Galilee.² Most recently, Adela Yarbros Collins has concluded: “The evidence is not strong enough to point definitively to either Rome or Antioch, but it is compatible with both locations (and others).”³ There are simply not enough data to answer conclusively the question of where the gospel originated. Everything is interpretation: interpretation of Mark, interpretation of Josephus, interpretation of first-century Galilee, interpretation of early Roman Christianity. Basically there is no certain external evidence and the internal evidence is not sufficiently explicit for a firm conclusion. There are simply too many unknowns. Morna Hooker has accurately summed up the matter: “All we can say with certainty, therefore, is that the gospel was composed somewhere in the Roman Empire—a conclusion that scarcely narrows the field at all!”⁴

This article addresses the question of whether the Gospel of Mark may be situated in Galilee and thus used for the reconstruction of Galilean Christianity.

¹. Lohmeyer, Galiläa. For arguments for a Roman provenance, see van Iersel, Mark, 30–57; Hengel, Studies in the Gospel of Mark, 1–30, 117–38; Gundry, Mark, 1026–45; Winn, The Purpose of Mark’s Gospel, 76–91. For an argument against Rome and for a Syrian provenance in dialog with Hengel, see Theissen, The Gospels in Context, 236–49. For an excellent overview up to 1992, see Donahue, “The Quest for the Community of Mark’s Gospel,” 817–38. For a more recent argument for Syrian provenance, see Marcus, “The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark,” 441–62; Marcus, Mark 1–8, 25–39; for Galilee, in addition to Lohmeyer, see Marxsen, Mark the Evangelist; Kelber, The Kingdom in Mark.

². Incigneri, The Gospel to the Romans; Roskam, Purpose. Of the two, I find Roskam the more convincing, but that is as much due to her calm and rational style in contrast to Incigneri’s somewhat belligerent style and sometimes fanciful interpretations. Both books contain good arguments and together demonstrate clearly the inconclusive nature of the evidence.

³. Collins, Mark, 101. Collins rejects Galilee because of the lack of attestation of a Christian community in Galilee with sufficient financial resources to produce the gospel. If one takes into account a memorial culture and the oral style of Mark’s gospel, I do not believe lack of financial resources is a hindrance to Galilean composition.

First, I ask whether an attempt to establish provenance is worth doing at all, and conclude that it is. Second, I survey most of the standard arguments on particular aspects of Mark’s text used to locate the gospel in Rome or in the East, and argue that neither individually nor collectively are they decisive for either location. Third, since Incigneri argues that the failure of the disciples points to a Roman provenance, I ask whether the portrait of the disciples in Mark is useful for ascertaining provenance, and conclude it is not. Fourth, building on the gospel as a whole, I present some arguments for a Galilean provenance, and raise the issue of Greek language usage in Galilee. Finally, I sketch a tentative proposal for a provenance involving both Galilee and Gentile villages to the North and East. I conclude with some observations about the relation of Mark and Q.

Is Seeking to Establish Provenance a Worthwhile Activity?

Given that certitude or even a high probability in regard to provenance is not possible, is the enterprise worth undertaking at all? Should we perhaps abandon the attempt? A decade or so ago, Richard Bauckham argued that the attempt to determine a specific provenance for each gospel is misguided since the gospels were not written for specific communities but for all Christians everywhere. For the Gospel of Mark at least, this thesis has not received general acceptance. While Matthew and Luke may well have hoped that their gospels would replace Mark for the church as a whole, Mark was probably composed for a particular community or network of communities. After its composition, however, it travelled both orally and in writing throughout Christian communities and changes to the text undoubtedly occurred. Nonetheless, it still shows signs of a specific origin, particularly in the mention of Alexander and Rufus, the children of Simon of Cyrene, probably known to Mark’s first audiences, a reference dropped from both Matthew and Luke (Mark 15:21). It is reasonable to assume that the Gospel of Mark emerged out of some particular context that is worthwhile to explore.

The next challenge is: are arguments for any particular provenance so circular as to be pointless? Dwight N. Peterson has argued that the process for determining provenance is so circular—one uses the text to posit a situation and then the situation to interpret the text—as to make the entire enterprise futile. He writes, “The Markan community . . . is the product of highly speculative, viciously circular and ultimately unpersuasive and inconclusive reading.”

While Peterson is surely correct about the inevitable circularity of argument, I would suggest that exploring provenance does have its uses. Positing a specific provenance is useful at least heuristically. Interpreting the gospel in the context of southern Syria (Marcus) or Rome (van Iersel; Incigneri) can shed light on how it might have been heard in such contexts, and equally important, may reveal difficulties in hearing it in such contexts. Furthermore, reasonable arguments can be put forward that some settings or types of settings are more probable than others.

Standard Arguments on Particulars of Mark’s Gospel Regarding Provenance

External Evidence
The external patristic evidence, such as it is, points to Rome. It requires the double connection, first of the gospel to Peter and then of Peter to Rome. This evidence, in my opinion, is inconclusive and contradicted by the internal evidence of the gospel.10

Geography
It has often been argued that Mark was stunningly unclear on the geography of Galilee. In particular, in Mark 5:1–20 Gerasa is too far inland from the lake, and in Mark 7:31 Jesus is said to travel from the villages of Tyre north toward Sidon in order to get to the Decapolis farther south. As Adela Collins describes it, that would be like going from Chicago to Indiana via Wisconsin and then East and South through Michigan.11 She suggests, however, the problem may be with our notions of where the Decapolis is. She argues that Mark’s notions coincide with Pliny’s, who considers Damascus one of the ten cities.12 Roskam presents a detailed and quite convincing argument for Mark’s knowledge of Galilee.13 Both Roskam and Collins suggest that the problem of Gerasa being inland from the lake (Mark 5:1–20) may be due to lack of detailed knowledge of the Decapolis rather than lack of knowledge of Galilee. While Roskam may be pushing the data too far when she argues that the geographical information in the gospel strongly supports Galilean provenance, it at least can be said the information is no hindrance to a Galilean provenance.

Latinisms
The gospel does contain Latinisms, but these are primarily military and economic terms. These are possible anywhere within the Roman Empire. While it

10. For a good summary, see Collins, Mark, 7–10. She suggests the internal evidence is more compatible with the East (p. 8). See also Roskam, Purpose, 2–3, 76–81. For a careful review of all the external evidence, see C. Clifton Black, Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter, 77–191.
13. Roskam, Purpose, 104–9. She thinks the problem with Mark 7:31 is that Mark did not know where Sidon was.
is true that Roman armies were not stationed in Galilee prior to or at the time of the composition of Mark, they did march through, conquering at periodic intervals: Pompey in 63 BCE; Varus in 4 BCE, and, of course, Vespasian in 66–67 CE. Nearly a century ago, Benjamin Bacon wrote, “All these expressions had passed over into the current speech of Jews throughout the empire, so that their mere occurrence in Mark cannot prove anything as to its origin in a Latin-speaking region.”¹⁴ The terms “Syrophoenician” and *lepta/quadrans* can make as much or more sense in the East as they do in Rome.¹⁵

More recently, van Iersel has suggested the gospel’s use of two grammatical structures suggests composition in a Latin speaking region: the position of the verb in relation to accusatives and datives depending on it and the use of *hina* in the non-final sense of the Latin *ut*.¹⁶ These do occur noticeably more frequently in Mark than in Matthew or Luke. If van Iersel’s argument based on grammatical structure holds, then there is some support for the argument that the gospel was composed in a Latin speaking area or by someone fluent in Latin.

**Aramaisms¹⁷**

On the other hand, the presence of Aramaic words suggests a milieu in which Aramaic as well as Greek was spoken. Aramaic words are found in Mark 5:41; 7:11, 34; 14:32; and 15:22, 34. The words are generally translated into Greek, suggesting that the composer knew both Aramaic and Greek. More significant, perhaps, are the phrases and constructions that suggest Aramaic. For example, while referring to the lake of Galilee as the “Sea of Galilee” is not typical of Greek or Latin usage, it accurately reflects the Hebrew and Aramaic construction.¹⁸ As strong or stronger a case can be made for Aramaic influence on the text (thus an Eastern provenance) as can be made for Latin influence.

**Persecution**

Most scholars agree that the Gospel of Mark is addressing a situation of actual persecution or threat of persecution. This persecution is specifically for following Jesus (Mark 8:34–35; 13:9–10). Persecution is to come from both Jewish and Gentile authorities (Mark 13:9). The only non-Christian evidence we have of a major persecution in the 60’s or 70’s is Nero’s persecution of Christians in Rome in 64 CE. I find Joel Marcus’s argument against the Neronian persecution convincing: if the Roman persecution by Nero were the issue, we would find more “on the wickedness of a Nero-like pagan king” as in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13.¹⁹

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¹⁷ See Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*.
Furthermore, the threat of persecution in Mark, most apparent in Mark 13, seems definitely to be related to the Roman-Jewish War of 66–70 CE, and the ensuing destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Josephus’ writings can be used to support the presence or the absence of persecution of Christians in Palestine. Using Josephus, Roskam argues that Galilee does present a situation of likely Gentile and Jewish persecution, the Jewish authorities having the same interests in maintaining peace as the Gentile governors. Incigneri, on the contrary, argues that Josephus’ writings cannot support persecution in the East. I suggest that there may well have been incidents of persecution of Jesus-followers in Galilee in the 60’s and/or 70’s. Both Acts and Paul mention various instances of persecution, and Josephus cites the death of James the brother of Jesus. There certainly was enough violence and disorder in Galilee: neither Roman nor Jewish authorities were averse to the use of force when they had power. Although we have no specific evidence of persecution of Christians in Galilee, incidents of persecution may well have occurred. Q, which most scholars locate in Galilee, also forecasts persecution of the followers by synagogues, rulers, and authorities (Luke 12:11–12; 14:26–27). Indeed, Mark 13:9 seems to be a variant of Q 12:11 and is likely dependent on the same oral tradition. Lack of specific information on Galilean persecutions does not exclude a Galilean provenance.

Mark 13:14: “then those in Judea must flee to the mountains”

In Mark 13, Galilee is not mentioned and Jesus’ followers in Judea are explicitly charged to flee to the mountains. Marcus suggests this verse reflects Markan community history—the hills are those on the eastern edge of the Jordan Valley in the Decapolis, the nearest neutral territory. This basically corresponds to the reports of Eusebius and Epiphanius. On this reading, Galilee is out of the picture. On the basis of a careful analysis of Mark 13:14–23, Roskam counters that vv. 14b–20 address followers in Judea and vv. 21–23 address the community, a separate group located in Galilee. Her argument is certainly possible but not conclusive. It is also possible that Galilean followers of Jesus fled to Jerusalem from Galilee along with other anti-Roman Jews as Vespasian’s armies took over Galilee, and then at some point disassociated themselves from the Jewish struggle and took off for somewhere else, perhaps back to a now somewhat stabilized Galilee. This is entirely speculative, but no more speculative than other hypotheses.

22. Marcus, Mark 1–8, 36.
In summary, the various arguments based on specific aspects of the Markan text are not conclusive in arguing for or against a Galilean provenance. Rather, they are subject to multiple different interpretations.24

The Markan Disciples and Provenance

The interpretation of the disciples is a much disputed issue in Markan studies. Robert Tannehill, David Rhoads, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, and I are among narrative critics who believe the gospel narrative expects the disciples to be restored after their flight at the arrest and Peter’s denial of Jesus; Robert Fowler, Mary Ann Tolbert, Werner Kelber, and Ted Weeden are among those who think not. We each can point to evidence in the narrative. Those who, like Weeden and Kelber, wish to interpret the gospel as rejecting Peter and the disciples stress, for example, that the disciples deny, betray, and abandon Jesus and thus fall under Jesus’ saying, “Moreover, if any of you are ashamed of me and my message in this adulterous and sinful generation, of you the Human One will likewise be ashamed when he comes to his Father’s glory accompanied by the holy angels” (Mark 8:38, SV). Those who view the gospel as expecting the restoration of the disciples stress that the disciples are promised a reward for following (10:29–30), that they do finally understand and accept that following Jesus and the kingdom of God entails persecution by the powers of this age (10:35–40; 14:29–31), and that the repeated pattern of prophecy and fulfillment throughout the narrative suggests the fulfillment of the prophecy that the disciples will see Jesus in Galilee (14:28; 16:7), in spite of the women’s silence (16:8). I remain as convinced that the narrative expects the disciples to be restored as Weeden and Kelber, among others, are convinced that their restoration is out of the question. Indeed, narratives are polyvalent; the fate of the disciples is open. Is this perhaps what the narrative means to convey?

Scholars have used the portrait of the disciples to make inferences about Markan Christianity and sometimes about provenance. Weeden (using redaction criticism) and Kelber (using redaction and then narrative criticism) argue that, by portraying the rejection of the disciples, Mark is also opposing the leadership of the successors of Peter and the apostles in the churches of his day.25 Neither directly argues from the disciples to provenance, but both make inferences about the Christianity of Mark’s day that have implications for an Eastern provenance.26 Incigneri takes a very different tack: he sees the disciples

24. This is also true for two other debated issues, Mark’s understanding of purity rules around food (Mark 7:1–13) and of a woman’s right to initiate divorce under Jewish law (Mark 10:2–9). See Collins, Mark, 343–53, 459–64.
26. Kelber’s argument for Galilean provenance is based more on the portrayal of Galilee in the gospel.
failing, as do Weeden and Kelber, but he does not interpret this as criticism of contemporary church leadership. The important issue for Incigneri is that Jesus remains loyal to the disciples to the end, inviting them to come to Galilee. The fact that Jesus forgives the disciples who deny and abandon him suggests to Incigneri that the Roman community is being exhorted to behave like Jesus and forgive those who turned away during the Roman persecutions. He writes, “Mark’s portrayal of the disciples may be one of the strongest pointers to a Roman setting.” Thus, he uses the same negative portrait of the disciples, not to suggest contested leadership, but as an argument that the Roman community is to model forgiveness. Clearly, there is neither agreement on how to interpret the disciples nor, for any given interpretation, agreement on what that tells us about Markan Christianity or provenance. Once again the data are open to multiple interpretations, depending on which data one chooses to emphasize and how one chooses to interpret them.

I suggest further that the narrative plotting of the disciples in Mark’s gospel suggests that the disciples should not be used for making inferences about Mark’s Christianity or provenance. (That is, it precludes making inferences about what the disciples’ failures say about Mark’s theology or provenance. One certainly can infer that Mark thinks discipleship is challenging.) In interpreting the gospel, it is important to evaluate not only individual passages but also to study the impact of the gospel as a whole. Kelber writes:

If we take the final literary gospel form seriously, we will be compelled to take yet another, crucial hermeneutical step. Not only will our interpretive focus rest on the text in its present form, but the plotted nature of this final text demands that we abstain—at least for the time being—from assumptions regarding antecedent sources, stages or layers before and until we have comprehended the present text’s narrative construction.

It is also necessary to take the entire plotted narrative into account when exploring the gospel’s provenance. Of course, this makes our task more complex. Narratives are by nature polyvalent. Different readers and hearers will interpret the gospel differently. Inferences from the gospel, however, need to be based on an understanding of the entire narrative.

The Disciples in Mark’s Narrative
Working with the narrative as a whole, then, is crucial for answering the question of whether the portrait of the disciples in Mark impacts the question of provenance. We must first seek to understand the role of the disciples in Mark’s

28. Incigneri, The Gospel to the Romans, 360. I am sympathetic to Incigneri’s interpretation of the disciples, but not to his inferences about provenance. His scenario would fit anywhere there has been persecution.
overall plot before making any inferences about what that role may say about provenance. In what follows, I argue that comprehension of “the present text’s narrative construction” precludes using the disciples’ plot line to make inferences about Markan Christianity, let alone provenance. The Markan narrative presents three interacting levels of conflict: the overarching cosmic conflict; the conflict of Jesus and the authorities; and the conflict of Jesus and the disciples. The cosmic conflict takes place between God and Satan. As Mark tells the story, the audience knows from the beginning that God is the sure victor and that Jesus is God’s agent. If the audience rejects this, the narrative will be unconvincing. The second, or middle, level is Jesus’ conflict with the social, political, and religious authorities, the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Rome. These first two plot lines are established early in the narrative: the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news (1:1, 15) and the authorities reject Jesus, plotting to destroy him (3:6). The narrative is not ambivalent on these conflicts: the authorities will destroy Jesus in this age, but the new age has begun with Jesus and will triumph. The hearer knows what to expect from early on in the narrative and these expectations remain consistent throughout.

The third, or most embedded, conflict is the conflict between Jesus and the disciples. As noted, scholars interpret this conflict differently. I suggest, however, that the gospel supports neither the positive nor the negative view. Rather, the portrait of the disciples in the Gospel of Mark is ambiguous, even deliberately ambiguous. The narrative uses the disciples to teach the hearers what “following” entails, to emphasize the difficulties of following, and to maintain plot interest as the disciples do and do not succeed in understanding and in following. The disciples’ misunderstandings provide the Markan Jesus with opportunities to teach correct understandings to the gospel’s hearers. Eric Havelock notes that oral narrative often uses negative examples, “warning examples of how not to behave. . . . It should be noted that the examples which tend to predominate are in fact those in which the instruction fails to be carried out.” In the gospel, the discipleship narrative is an effective teaching device, an effective way to keep the hearers listening to find out what the disciples will or will not do, and an effective way to raise the issue of what they, the hearers, will or will not do. The very ambiguity in the portrayal of the disciples serves to heighten the challenge to the gospel’s hearers: will they follow or will they fail?

Furthermore, it is only on this third level of conflict in Mark, the disciples’ conflict, that the Gospel of Mark is ambiguous. Clearly God is the victor in the cosmic conflict and clearly, after temporary defeat, Jesus will ultimately

triumph. Only whether the disciples will be restored is ambiguous, open to various interpretations. This suggests to me that it was not a major aim of the gospel to discredit the disciples and Peter or, on the contrary, to affirm them. If the composer’s aim was to discredit the disciples, the narrative would be as unambiguous on this plot level as it is on the first two levels of conflict; it would not be possible for hearers or readers to expect the disciples’ restoration. Or, if Mark’s aim was to have the disciples restored in Galilee, hearers should not expect their permanent rejection. The narrative is in fact ambiguous. The narrative use of the disciples does not permit making inferences about Markan Christianity or the gospel’s provenance.

Arguments for a Galilean Provenance

Views of Galilee have been changing rapidly in the past decades. Not too long ago, it was argued that Galilee had a sizeable Greek-speaking Gentile population and was relatively urbanized. Archaeological work has called that picture into question.33 Recently, Jonathan Reed describes the population as overwhelmingly Jewish. Sepphoris and Tiberias were the only two cities, minor cities by Near Eastern standards. These cities were Jewish, but were also centers of administration, which was most likely conducted in Greek. For the rest, Galilee consisted of subsistence rural villages that were Aramaic speaking. The area at the northern end of the lake, Capernaum, and particularly Bethsaida (actually in Philip’s and not Antipas’ territory, and re-founded by him as a city named Julius), although largely Jewish, may have included more Gentiles and more Greek speakers. The narrative of the Gospel of Mark fits very well, even convincingly, in this rural Jewish Galilean context—with one major aspect that may disqualify Galilee altogether, its composition in Greek. I shall first consider arguments for a Galilean provenance and then address the language issue. Again, I am considering the narrative as a whole, not just particular passages.

Rural Setting

The Gospel of Mark breathes a rural air. It assumes a rural setting rather than an urban one. Except for Jerusalem, Jesus stays away from cities. He visits the region of Tyre (τα ἡρια, Mark 7:24, 31); he goes to the villages of Caesarea Philippi (κόμαι, 8:27), he does not go to the cities themselves. The settings of the parables in Mark are mainly agricultural: the seed and the sower, the seed growing to harvest, the mustard seed, the wicked tenants, the fig tree. Only the parable of the man going on a journey leaving slaves in charge assumes an urban elite household, and that parable is narrated overlooking Jerusalem (Mark 13:34–36). A quick comparison of the parables in Mark with those found in Matthew and

33. I am basically following Jonathan Reed’s reconstruction in Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus.
especially in Luke shows Mark’s comparative lack of urban parable settings. The origin of the gospel in a rural rather than an urban setting seems highly probable. Rome seems an unlikely origin for such a rural gospel.

**Social Location of the Markan Audience**

In analyzing the social location of Mark’s audience, Richard L. Rohrbaugh demonstrates that the gospel reflects the highly stratified society of antiquity. The elite on the social scale do indeed appear in the gospel: for example, Pilate, Herod Antipas, and the high priests. These characters appear consistently as opponents of Jesus. Rohrbaugh concludes that the story would appeal primarily to peasants and to those even more marginalized—the degraded, the unclean, beggars, and day laborers. Richard Horsley also locates Mark in an oral peasant village setting. Both view the peasantry as under economic pressure from increasing urbanization, as indeed was the case in Galilee (as well, of course, as elsewhere in the empire). Given the limited literacy in antiquity, the clumsy Greek and the highly oral nature of Mark’s gospel, such a social location seems appropriate.

**Jewishness of the Gospel of Mark**

The gospel is probably addressed to both Jews and Gentiles. The gospel, however, consistently draws on Jewish assumptions and Jewish understandings. The parables often make use of Jewish tropes. There are frequent references and allusions to Jewish scripture, from the opening citations of Malachi and Isaiah (misattributed only to Isaiah) to the use of Psalm 22 in Jesus’ cry of abandonment on the cross. There is abundant use of Jewish tradition, not only in material with a good claim to go back to the historical Jesus, but also in material that took shape later. The parable of the wicked tenants, an allegory of God’s dealing with Israel, makes clear use of Isaiah 5. The little apocalypse of Mark 13, which presumably only took final shape during or after the Roman-Jewish war, is filled with scriptural allusions. Not only does the gospel make use of specific allusions, it also builds on broader themes such as the exodus and wilderness traditions in the boat and feeding stories. The gospel is grounded in Jewish contexts.

Neither a rural setting, nor a peasant and more marginalized social location, nor the Jewishness of the gospel requires a setting in Palestine, however, let alone Galilee. Outside of Palestine (and perhaps neighboring portions of Syria), Christianity does seem to have flourished mostly in cities. Further, Jews who emigrated from Palestine within the Roman Empire most likely moved to cities. Why move from a village where you do not have land but do have kin to

another village where you have neither land nor kin? The combination of rural, peasant, and marginal social location and Jewishness suggest, but do not absolutely require, a Palestinian provenance.

Galilee
Beginning with Lohmeyer, some scholars have suggested Galilee as the provenance because of the very positive valence given to Galilee throughout the Markan narrative.37 Galilee is the place of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. It is the location of the gathering of the new community, of most of the healings and nature miracles. Furthermore, the disciples (and the women at the tomb and the audience) are charged to return to Galilee, where they will see Jesus (14:28; 16:7). Jerusalem and the temple have a negative valence throughout the narrative. In her careful Levi-Straussian structural analysis of all spatial references in Mark, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon has demonstrated both how the gospel has held up the Jewish cultural code (linking heaven with order and earth with chaos, land with order and sea with chaos) and challenged that code by linking Galilee, house, and Mount of Olives with order, and Judea, synagogue, and temple with chaos. Malbon’s analysis clearly documents the positive valence placed on Galilee. She sees the final resolution, however, not as Galilee but as “the way.” The way, as the final mediator of opposites, “signals not so much another place, as . . . a dynamic process of movement.” “Conflict between the chaos and order of life is overcome not in arriving but in being on the way.”38 This view may fit well with the gospel’s missionary thrust (see below).

The portrayal of Galilee versus Jerusalem in the narrative suggests, first of all, that Judea is not a likely provenance for Mark’s gospel. If the gospel originates in Palestine, it is likely to be in Galilee. Second, I think that the positive valence on Galilee militates strongly against a Roman provenance. Galilee is a small unimportant out-of-the-way geographical area and, as the location of God’s kingdom on earth, would hardly be convincing to residents of the world’s capital. It would be like telling a New Yorker or a resident of Cambridge, Massachusetts that heaven on earth is to be found in Stillwater, Oklahoma or Missoula, Montana. The message is unlikely to meet with much credence. Luke’s geographical structure in Acts, stressing the message emerging from Jerusalem and spreading out to Asia, Europe, and Rome, would be more palatable.39 Finally, if we take Malbon’s analysis seriously, while Galilee is certainly to be preferred over Judea, the gospel may be on the way from Galilee into Gentile territory.

37. See note 1.
39. Luke’s only mention of any church in Galilee is in Acts 9:31: “Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up.”
Greek Language
Taking into consideration the rural setting, the social location of the Markan audiences, the Jewishness of the gospel, and the positive portrayal of Galilee, a Galilean provenance seems highly probable. There is one major hindrance, however: the gospel is in Greek. The villages of Galilee in the first century appear to have been Aramaic speaking, and it was probably also the primary language for most of the residents of Sephoris and Tiberias, if not for the elite residing there. Whether the gospel was composed in writing, or composed orally and then transcribed, it was surely composed for oral performance and hearing. The gospel is fluent oral Greek, not translation Greek. Its Greek has most likely been honed in repeated performances to Greek speaking audiences. This does not exclude performance of the tradition in Aramaic and also performance in Greek. There are bilingual storytellers who perform orally the same basic tradition in two different languages. Discussing Q, John Miles Foley writes:

[A] dual-language vehicle is a fairly common phenomenon worldwide. All this apparent miracle requires, after all, is a single bilingual speaker who can perform in two different linguistic registers. . . . If we understand that such migration amounts simply to construal and expression within two linguistic systems rather than the conversion of one artifact to another, a transition and interplay between Aramaic and Greek may not appear so problematic.

What the gospel does require, however, are Greek-speaking audiences to listen to the story. Were there enough Greek speakers in Galilee? At the present state of our knowledge, this appears not to be the case. At the 2007 fall Westar meeting, Brandon Scott summarized the changing state of the question of use of Greek in Galilee:

I am not convinced by Chancey’s argument that this means Greek was not widespread. It just means we have little or no archaeological evidence. Even more, Chancey admits that Greek was widespread in the areas surrounding Galilee. This raises the question, how isolated was Galilee from the surrounding area?

I echo Scott’s conclusions. There may well have been more Greek spoken in some villages of Galilee. Evidence of spoken language is extremely difficult to obtain. It may be that the parables, Q, and Mark are in fact evidence that Greek

40. So Shiner, Proclaiming the Gospel, 121.
41. Foley, “The Riddle of Q,” 133.
43. Scott, “Parables in Galilee,” 71.
was spoken in Galilee. Nevertheless, it would be reassuring to have some independent evidence.

Our answers on the prevalence of spoken Greek in Galilee affect more than the Gospel of Mark. They affect as well how we situate the parables and the Q tradition. If we want to assert that any or all of these took shape in Galilee, we are also arguing that Greek as a spoken language was common at least in parts of Galilee. Since the Gospel of Mark appears to be addressed to Gentiles as well as Jews, one must also ask the question of the presence of Gentiles in Galilee, particularly peasant and marginalized Gentiles. Basically, we have to establish on some grounds the probability that Greek was a common language among some Jewish villagers or we have to find another provenance for the Gospel of Mark.

A Tentative Proposal for the Provenance(s) of Mark’s Gospel

What follows is a sketch for a possible development of the Gospel of Mark and its provenance(s). The proposal’s virtues are that it makes sense of the data we have, that it builds on the entire gospel, and that it makes sense in terms of what we know of orality, scribality, and their interaction in antiquity. Its weakness is the weakness of all the various proposals we have—there is really not sufficient evidence to prove or disprove the hypothesis.

Stage 1
The male and female followers of Jesus return to Galilee after Jesus’ crucifixion (some perhaps after his arrest before the crucifixion). They return to their villages, most likely Capernaum, neighboring villages, and probably Bethsaida. They remember Jesus and tell stories about him. All the various strands of Jesus tradition get their start in these village story-tellings in Aramaic: the sayings material, parables, miracle stories, and, I would argue, a short narrative of Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus’ death would be understood in the tradition of persecution of the prophets (found in both Q and Mark) and gradually as a martyr’s death. It would not be understood salvifically.

Stage 2
The second stage includes both solidifications of the traditions and the spreading of the traditions into new areas.

44. Studies of millenarian sects show that when hoped-for events do not occur, isolated individuals tend to abandon the sect, but groups maintaining some solidarity tend to maintain the sect and redefine the hoped-for events.

45. Those writing against René Girard’s understanding of Jesus as a unique innocent victim cite a number of instances of followers recalling the death of a particular victim.
**Solidifications.** Kenneth Bailey has argued for “Informed Controlled Oral Tradition” as historically reliable.⁴⁶ Weeden has demonstrated effectively that Bailey’s data show there is control. Yet, it does not serve a need to remember history accurately but, rather, the present needs of the community using the traditions. Studies of orality and of cultural memory also show that traditions are shaped to serve the present needs of the group, consolidating into larger wholes, to shape and support the identity of a particular group.⁴⁷ The traditions, then, did not remain isolated items and stories but began to coalesce into larger traditions to serve the present needs of Jesus’ followers.

First of all, the sayings tradition, already orally performed as a number of diverse and flexible discourses, gets put into writing and is shaped and worked over by scribes. Scribal influence can clearly be seen in the standardization of the speeches using deliberative formats and elaborations of chreia.⁴⁸ I leave to the Q scholars the exploration of the layers and development of Q, but placing Q as the work of scribal archivists accustomed to Greek in Sepphoris is a reasonable hypothesis.⁴⁹ Since sayings without any narrative plot are harder to remember orally than narrative, and are much harder to sequence orally than narrative, in an oral-scribal culture one would expect this material to be put into writing early. Of course, the tradition would continue to be performed orally, both entirely independently of written versions and as performances of written texts. Oral transmission does not stop with the existence of written versions. But written versions of Q begin early.

The traditions about Jesus, parables, miracles, and biographical apothegms—including the baptism and crucifixion—also begin forming larger wholes and a larger whole. Since these materials are easy to remember orally, the story remains entirely oral far longer than Q. There is no need for writing to reinforce memory. Studies in folklore, oral tradition, oral history, and cultural memory all suggest the consolidation of traditions into larger wholes. Traditions are remembered (adapted and invented) by gathering them around a hero, not just by retelling disparate individual episodes.⁵⁰ Memory continually structures and adapts tradition to support community identity and needs in the present. A subculture such as the Jesus movement in a largely Jewish context needs a story, a narrative, to establish and maintain its identity.⁵¹ A story of Jesus’ ministry and death gradually takes shape.

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⁴⁸ Kirk, “Administrative Writing, Oral Tradition, and Q.”
⁵¹ This would of course be true in pagan contexts as well.
Spreading of traditions into new areas. Both Q and the Gospel of Mark show evidence of a concern for mission. The mission discourse is one of the Q-Mark overlaps/doublets (Mark 6:6b–13; Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–16, Matt 9:35–38; 10:5–11). While a core of this tradition may go back to the historical Jesus, most of it appears to be post-Easter developments. Q scholars have suggested that the Q movement began as a missionary movement and then perhaps retrenched as the movement was rejected. The Gospel of Mark tends to have a missionary focus throughout and, like Q, calls apocalyptic judgment on those who reject the message.

David Rhoads has used tools from the social sciences to give a social description of the Jesus movement in Mark’s narrative world:52

My thesis is that the Jesus movement depicted in Mark is a renewal faction in the configuration of a network centered around the holy man Jesus and oriented to mission and that the overarching symbolic world in the narrative—its moral and cosmological framework—mandates and supports such a social movement.53 He carefully demonstrates that the gospel does not establish norms for a settled community but rather a network of mobility and hospitality centered around Jesus (or his name). The network is outgoing—the gospel must first be preached to all nations before the imminent end arrives (Mark 13:10). The movement is not concerned to maintain boundaries, delineating who is out—rather people exclude themselves. Of course, as Rhoads indicates, one cannot map the social world of the narrative directly onto the historical social world of the Jesus movement or Markan Christianity. It is not clear “how much the social system urged by Jesus in the narrative is actually lived out by hearers and how much it represents an ideal for which they should strive.”54 It is clear, however, that the gospel encourages its audiences to participate in an expansive missionary movement, either through actively preaching and healing or by offering hospitality to those who travel preaching and healing. Rhoads’ analysis also suggests that we are should not be seeking a single major community for Mark’s provenance, but rather a network of villages or neighboring regions.

The mission moves out to the Gentiles. The discussion on food and the “word” of the Syrophoenician woman prepare the way; the feeding of the four thousand is a Gentile feeding. I suggest that the Jesus movement regroups around Capernaum after Jesus’ crucifixion, moves out to neighboring villages, including Bethsaida across the Jordan, and up into the villages to the north—probably both the villages under the control of Tyre and the villages towards Caesarea.

Philippi. In discussing provenance and Mark’s geography, Adela Collins suggests that Mark’s “description of Jesus’ route may be understood as the deliberate construction of a wide-ranging journey in a great arc” from Tyre and Sidon to include Damascus in the north and around to Gerasa in the south. She writes, “Mark may simply have wanted to show that Jesus traveled in these regions, thus prefiguring, or perhaps even inaugurating, the mission to the Gentiles.”

Stage 3
I suggest that it is into the villages of this region of a great arc that the story of Jesus moved. These are Greek-speaking Gentile areas. The growing story of Jesus was now told in both Aramaic and Greek. And somewhere, probably close to Galilee, with the crucible of the Roman-Jewish war, the Gospel of Mark gets written down in Greek shortly before or most likely after 70 CE. Mark’s version may have been composed orally and transcribed, or it may have been composed in writing for oral performance. Somewhere. This might be as close to Galilee as Bethsaida, especially if it had sufficient Greek speakers and a mixed Jewish Gentile population. Philip’s establishment of it as a minor city suggests it may have had scribes literate in Greek. Or it might be farther afield. And, of course, the writing of the gospel did not end the oral narrative tradition.

The above scenario is hypothetical and speculative—as are all scenarios for the provenance of Mark (and Q). Its virtues are that it maintains the rural context and yet gets the gospel into predominantly Greek-speaking territory. It also conforms to what is probable in an oral context with some scribal influence. Furthermore, and here it is superior in method to many of the proposals for provenance, it coheres well with the plotted narrative and narrative world of the Gospel of Mark as a whole. There is, of course, not sufficient evidence to prove or disprove my hypothesis. And, finally, I add, if it can be shown that there were sufficient Greek-speaking villagers in Galilee, I would be happy to argue for a Galilean provenance.

Postscript on Galilean Christianity
A Few Comments about Mark and Q

Our two texts, Mark and Q, appear to have arisen in the same environment. Both are thoroughly Jewish in context. Both reflect rural environments. Both traditions appear to have begun centered around Capernaum. They have themes in common: a missionary emphasis, apocalyptic judgment on those who refuse the missionary message, a negative attitude towards Jerusalem, considerable freedom in regard to the Pharisaic understanding of the law. Both understand Jesus’ death in light of persecution of the prophets and expect persecution of Jesus’ followers. It seems probable that they arose in basically the same oral

56. On Mark’s understanding of Jesus’ death as not salvific, see Dowd and Malbon,
environment. This makes the overlaps between Mark and Q a non-problem. The overlaps are due to drawing on the same oral tradition, not to any textual relationship between the two.57

I suggest that the differences between Mark and Q may be ascribed primarily to the difference in genre. Q is a collection of sayings. The Gospel of Mark is a narrative. The paucity of sayings in Mark is due to the narrative genre—the performer has to keep the plot moving forward. The stories of the violent deaths of both John the Baptist and Jesus are narrative. They belong in a narrative; they do not belong in a sayings collection. Genre influences what is included. Thus, I suggest Q’s greater emphasis on Jesus’ life in comparison to Mark’s emphasis on the passion narrative is primarily the consequence of the different genres, not of different Christian understandings.58 Furthermore, it is unlikely that Mark and Q, both originating out of Galilee, represent separate Christian communities, one celebrating Jesus’ life and one focusing on his death. Rather, it is likely that audiences heard renditions of oral traditions, renditions of Mark, and renditions of Q, conflating them into a composite in their memories much as we conflate the Christmas stories of Matthew and Luke today.

I further suggest that Q may come from and address a slightly higher social status than the Gospel of Mark. Scribal working and reworking seems evident in Q, while Mark remains (even in writing) an oral narrative. The written Q probably took shape in Sepphoris—a minor city but a city—by scribes who did not make their living as peasants or village artisans. The Gospel of Mark, in my opinion, remains closer to the oral peasant world, with its delight in the miraculous and its enjoyment of popular storytelling. Thus, in conclusion, I suggest that the Gospel of Mark took shape largely in Galilee, although its writing probably took place outside of Galilee to the north or east. Therefore, the gospel may be used, with caution, for discerning Galilean Christianity.


57. The doublets in Matthew and Luke are due at least in part to scribes using both Mark and Q, or at least having both Mark and Q in their memories.

58. As I have argued elsewhere, the Gospel of Mark reflects the both-and hermeneutic characteristic of oral narrative: both miracles and persecution/execution (Dewey, “Oral Methods”). Most suffering in the gospel is in fact overcome. It is only persecution, suffering because of following Jesus, that is emphasized in the narrative.

Works Consulted

Arnal, William. “The Trouble with Q.” Westar Seminar paper, Fall 2007. (Note: in this same issue)


First-century Christianities
Galilee

James M. Robinson

Perhaps I should begin by conceding that the title of my paper is an anachronism. They did not know they were “first-century” people. The “official” dating at the time was from the legendary founding of Rome (ab urbe condita). Jesus apparently dated things from the time of John the Baptist on (Q 16:16), in which regard he was followed by Q, Mark, John, and the sermons in Acts. The Diocletian persecutions were so devastating in Egypt that the Copts dated everything from their survival of that tragedy, so their dating system is some three centuries later than ours. In sum, the date 100 CE is only a convenient way to refer to the period including the Gospel of John (presumably) and before the Apostolic Fathers (perhaps excepting the Didache).

Similarly, “Christianities” is an anachronism. The followers of Jesus and Paul were first called “Christians” in the Gentile church of Barnabas and Paul in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Since Q does not use the title “Christ,” those of us working on Q have referred to Jesus’ followers as the Jesus people or the Q movement. To refer to them as “Jewish Christians” is harmonistic. But it does identify in simple terms two distinct confessions: the “Jewish Christian Church” and the “Gentile Christian Church.”

Of course here again one needs to be careful. “Church” is used in only one gospel (Matt 16:18, 18:17 bis). Luke knew the term, since he uses it often in Acts, but he did not use it in his gospel. Why? Should this tell us something? It was Luke who revoked the “mission instructions” of Q just before the passion narrative to prepare for the “church militant,” or at least the business-like Pauline missions (carrying money for the poor of Jerusalem, as well as buying boat tickets and earning a livelihood making tents). Did Luke not recognize the Q movement as “Christian,” part of the “Church”? More on this later.

Now, having dismantled my title, let me proceed to my paper.

First-century Christian Scribes

There are no physical remains of first-century Christianity that one can touch or see: no Christian artifact such as a shard or more, no excavated ruins of a building constructed by Christians, no fragment of a manuscript written by a Christian in the first century.

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This point is a rather new insight in the history of Christianity, since one traditionally had many such localities and artifacts. The Palestinians knew how to sell a bill of goods to pious pilgrims! The Church of the Holy Sepulcher marks the place where Constantine’s mother Helena discovered where Jesus was crucified (unless the place be where the Protestants commemorate Good Friday, the Garden Tomb), and the Church of the Nativity marks where he was born (unless the place be where the Protestants celebrate Christmas, Shepherds’ Field). Veronica wiped Jesus’ face indelibly on the medieval shroud she somehow had available—it is still venerated in Turin. The Crusaders brought back to Europe enough relics for any cathedral to have at least a true piece of the Cross. But for us moderns, there are no artifacts that date from the first century. Field archaeologists no longer look for such Christian treasures, but rather seek to determine the kind of physical world in which Christianity emerged, no longer hoping for Christian artifacts—and yet we want to talk about first-century Christianities!

Even worse, there are no Christian manuscripts dating from the first century. Michael Baigent’s new book, *The Jesus Papers*, tells about having seen Aramaic papers written by Jesus. I met Baigent in London in October 2006 at a Masonic conference, whose journal he edits. I asked if his book were not wholly fictional, but he said no. He maintained that he was able to see it, but not to keep or study it, and had to return it to the owner. But he saw the word “messiah,” and that was enough to convince him it was written by Jesus! But Michael Baigent not only could not translate Aramaic, he could not even identify the Aramaic letters of “messiah” even if he saw them. Baigent simply represents a continuation of the lucrative medieval relic cult in our own time. Christian Aramaic texts are extant only in later centuries, and we call them Syriac.

What is even more striking, there are no Greek Christian manuscripts dating from the first century. Of course we immediately think of the New Testament, most of which was written in the first century, and to that extent first-century Christianities are not “Lost Christianities,” such as Bart Ehrman writes about. Some of their documentation came to be canonized. It is right there in the New Testament. Rather than being lost, much of it was harmonized into “orthodox” Christianity, though some of the beginnings of “heresy” are also preserved in the New Testament (see below on non-harmonized Christianities 30–70 CE).

But, again, it is not all that simple. Most of the first-century Christian scribal activity of which we know anything was quite different from later scribal practice. We cannot simply read back into the first century the scribal habits of Christian scribes of later centuries whose work is documented in extant papyrus and parchment manuscripts and studied intently by textual critics.

2. Baigent, *Jesus Papers*.
Yet it is striking how much we know about Christian scribal activity in the first century, even without manuscripts dating from that time. Let me itemize a series of relatively certain factors regarding scribal activity, since it is documented in what became New Testament texts:

1. The codex replaced the scroll. Just when this first took place is unclear. The New Testament papyrus that has usually been thought of as the earliest to have survived—even if only in a small fragment (John 18:31–33, 38–38), P52, has usually been dated around CE 125, though it may be from later in the second century—is already from a codex. But the length of the gospels, for example, and the fact that Luke and Acts are separated into two volumes, suggest that the typical length was that of a scroll, rather than of the much larger codex. A plurality of scroll-length texts could be combined into longer codices, ultimately producing the “books” of the one book, the New Testament. Of the one hundred and sixteen vestiges of New Testament texts on papyrus that have survived, only four (P12 of the late third century, P13 and P18 of the third to fourth century, and P22 of the end of the third century) are from scrolls, the first three on the back of a leaf with another, earlier text on the front. Probably this is also the case with the fourth, though the front is blank, perhaps because the text on the front had run out by then. Hence, none of these four scrolls with New Testament texts attests to a preference for the scroll over the codex. The writing surface in each case would not have been usable to make a codex. They just used what they had. Then in later centuries as parchment

4. Koester, “Gospels,” 33 n. 30: “A date in the early second century for this papyrus, however, is not as certain as generally believed.”

5. Aland and Aland, Text, 102. As the Alands indicate, all four “are either opisthographs or written on reused materials.” An opisthograph is a roll with writing on both sides (an unusual occurrence), of which P18 (P.Oxy. VIII.1079) is one example; it contains Exod 40:26–32 on the recto, and, on the verso—written in the reverse direction—is Rev 1:4–7. P13 (P.Oxy. IV.657) contains extensive portions from five chapters of Hebrews on the verso of a roll with portions of a Latin epitome of a history of Rome by Livy on the recto. P12 (P.Amh. IIIb, pp. 30–31) has part of Heb 1:1 on the recto in a third or early fourth century hand, followed by a Christian letter that, however, is in an earlier hand; on the verso, which was blank when the writer of the Hebrews first used it, is Gen 1:1–5. Thus, the scribe who placed Heb 1:1 at the top of the letter was employing an already used papyrus—and also may have written the Genesis verses on the reverse. See Clark, Descriptive Catalogue, 170. By their nature, these papyri do not enter into the roll versus codex discussion, for the scribe of P12 was reusing a papyrus letter, while P13 and P18 each utilized the verso of a roll whose recto had been used already; hence, a codex could not have been formed for the New Testament material. P22 (P.Oxy. X.1228) may at first appear to be an exception, for the reverse of both of its small fragments of John (from two consecutive columns) are blank, but John is written on the verso, and the blank portions are the recto. Obviously, more of John than several verses from chapters 15 and 16 were written originally, and the other side of the roll elsewhere—and doubtless extensively—was occupied by text of some kind; if not, the scribe of John certainly would have used the customary and smoother recto of the roll. (For another explanation, see Aland, Repertorium, 242).
replaced papyrus and more money was available, the codex became standard.

2. *Nomina sacra* came into use as abbreviations for specific holy names. One wonders if this usage goes back to the Jewish veneration of God’s name. Even today, observant Jews do not pronounce God’s name and some even write God as G-d. Yet one has not found Jewish texts making use of *nomina sacra*. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament makes use of *nomina sacra* only when it is a copy made for Christian use. 6

3. Amateur scribes, or scribes only trained for writing documentary papyri, usually preceded professional scribes trained in copying literary texts.

4. The Christian writings of this earliest period that were later incorporated into the New Testament were not considered sacred scripture, as a “New Testament,” to put beside the Jewish (and Christian) scriptures, as an “Old Testament.” Therefore, the exacting scribal policies exemplified in some Dead Sea Scrolls for copying sacred scripture cannot be automatically presupposed for this earliest Christian period. In any case: “The devout scribe felt compelled to correct misstatements which he found in the manuscript he was copying.”7 And of course, what a given scribe would consider a misstatement could vary considerably from one scribe to another.

5. The earliest manuscripts that have survived, such as P46, were of course copied from still earlier manuscripts. But it is not probable that, for example, P46 was copied from anything older than the “published” editions of the Pauline corpus. Presumably, the extant second century fragments of P52 and P90 are not copied from what the evangelist “John” himself wrote, but rather from what was enlarged by the addition of chapter 21 and then circulated in this enlarged form, since there is no manuscript evidence of the earlier form. 8

6. During the first hundred years, we have so-to-speak no manuscripts as a basis for discussing textual criticism in the normal sense of the term, as to how much exactitude and how much “correction” was involved. But a great deal of Christian copying was actually taking place, of which there is indirect evidence, though it was all of a quite different kind. It is anything but an effort to reproduce exactly, or with only minor corrections, the *Vorlage*, as was the case with later scribes. Instead, it was an improve-

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8. Schenke, “Erscheinen,” 893–904. This was published as a fourth century Coptic leaf that has a blank space at the end of John 20, “which permits the inference that here Chapter 21 should no longer be attached” (893). The essay concludes (902): “The fact that the given text ends with Chapter 20 could under certain circumstances point to an absence of Chapter 21 in the text copied by the scribe. To what an extent actually inferences can be drawn from that about an earlier Greek original lacking Chapter 21 is left to the critical evaluation of this witness to the text from a theological point of view.”
ment, an enlargement, an updating, a rewriting, that characterized the scribal activity of which we have any evidence during the first hundred years. An old text was often used to produce a different, new text—as can be traced within the New Testament itself, which is the only “documentation” we have for the first hundred years down until P52.

Yet there is considerable information about first-century scribal activity that can be inferred from the New Testament, even though no first-century manuscripts have survived. Paul’s letters were written to be read out loud to the largely illiterate congregation. (What they knew about Jesus was also hear-say, stories and sayings handed down by word of mouth.) Paul advocated carrying out a judicial decision to expel an erring brother during a church service when he is present only in spirit:

For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Cor 5:3–5).

Paul then referred to a letter that he had already written to the church, but that apparently had not been acted upon (1 Cor 5:9–13).

Of course Paul could read and was familiar with Greek (LXX) translations of Hebrew scriptures. But just as those who “read” Paul’s letters did not actually do the reading for themselves but heard them read, just so Paul did not do the actual writing for himself. Instead, he signed by hand letters written for him by scribes: “See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand” (Gal 6:11). Philemon 19 is similar: “I, Paul, write with my own hand, I will repay it.” The personally written greeting can be simple, as in 1 Cor 16:21: “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.” The Pauline school repeated this formulation verbatim in Col 4:18. Then 2 Thess 3:17 repeated it with the addition, “This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.”

These appended notes distinguishing Paul’s own hand from the hand that wrote the bulk of the letter indicate that Paul used a scribe to write the clean copy, which he only signed with his own hand. But of course Paul may well himself have written earlier drafts. Yet his reference to using “large letters” may indicate almost apologetically that he was not a skilled scribe. In his business, he may have needed a business-man’s writing ability as seen in documentary papyri but not the skill of a professional scribe of literary texts. Paul may have dictated his letters to the scribe. Or his scribe may have composed the letters knowing what message Paul wanted to convey. Indeed, the tradition of the Pauline school to compose “Pauline” letters after his death may have begun already before his death. In any case, by the time of the publication of the Pauline corpus, much creativity regarding the Pauline letters had taken place—the Deutero-Pauline letters had been composed by his followers. Romans 16 may
have been a letter to Ephesus, to judge by those whom Paul greeted, which only later came to be appended to Romans (see Helmut Koester’s new volume of collected essays on Paul). We do not have in a literal, pedantic sense Paul’s own letters as he “wrote” them. We only have the Pauline corpus that was collected and edited after his death. It is only that Pauline corpus that came to be copied or “published.” To what extent it was identical with what Paul himself “wrote” is indeterminate. There may have been sharp edges in what Paul “wrote” that were later smoothed out to provide a more domesticated Paul, which should make us wonder if the church history of the period was also domesticated in the process.

Much the same “freedom” of copyists/editors/revisionists prior to “publication” was going on with the other earliest known Christian writings. The Sayings Gospel Q underwent a “Deuteronomistic” redaction, though there is no scholarly consensus as to whether that was preceded by a first, sapiential edition, as advocated by John S. Kloppenborg, or whether, as was previously assumed, it was preceded only by smaller collections such as the Sermon, the Ravens and Lilies, the Lord’s Prayer and its interpretation, the Mission Instructions, etc. Once copies of Q were available in the Matthean and Lukan congregations, they may have undergone updatings prior to being copied by the evangelists themselves (for example, in Matthew’s Lord’s Prayer: “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”; or in Matthew’s Mission Instructions: no cash payments). The redactional traits not distinctive of Matthew or Luke that do occur in each respective gospel’s version of Q might indicate that improvements prior to the evangelist’s own editing may have taken place. And of course, Matthew and Luke “edited” Q literally in hundreds of places, usually of no great import, as far as we can tell. But, did Luke delete a Q reference to Jesus limiting the mission to Jews (Matt 10:5b–6; Q 22)?

Mark was copied by Matthew and Luke, but the Mark they copied may not have been identical with the Mark that became canonical. For there are so-called “minor agreements,” places where, in passages borrowed from Mark, both Matthew and Luke agree in having a non-Markan reading. And of course “Secret Mark,” in Clement’s Letter to Theodore that Morton Smith either found or forged in the Mar Saba monastery, would (if authentic) indicate still further tampering with Mark. The heretical Carpocratian additions to Alexandria’s enlarged spiritualizing Mark would have been pruned back in Alexandria, but some vestiges of that textual adventure may have remained unnoticed in canonical Mark. Helmut Koester has made this point repeatedly, most recently:

In spite of some doubts regarding the authenticity of the letter, what these references to the Secret Gospel of Mark might suggest for the history of the text of

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9. Kloppenborg, Formation of Q.
10. See most recently Brown, Mark’s Other Gospel; Carlson, Gospel Hoax; then a refutation of a major item in that argument by Brown, “Reply,” 144–49.
Mark’s Gospel should be given some serious consideration. I have observed that in a number of instances of the canonical text of Mark there are special Marcan features that are absent in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but fit very well with the tendency and wording of the story of the raising of a young man that is told in the *Secret Gospel*. That story of the raising of the young man, though no longer present in the canonical text of Mark, is itself remarkable as form-critically much older than the version of this story in John 11. The version of the story of the epileptic boy in Mark 9:14–29 must be the product of a later editor, who changed the much simpler account of an exorcism, still well preserved in both Matt 18:14–21 and Luke 9:37–42a, into a much more elaborate story of the raising of the boy from the dead. This rewriting thus forms a parallel to the raising of the young man that was inserted into the *Secret Gospel* after Mark 10:34.

Closely related is the note in Mark 14:51–2 about a young man at the arrest of Jesus letting his linen cloth go and fleeing naked, which is missing in both Matthew and Luke. It recalls the appendix to the story of the young man who was raised from the dead, of whom the *Secret Gospel* tells that he went to Jesus to be initiated into the mystery (*mysterion*) of the kingdom of God ‘dressed with a linen cloth over his naked body.’ Finally, there is the use of the term ‘mystery’ in the singular in Mark 4:11, where both Matthew (13:11) and Luke (8:10) use the much more appropriate plural. There are thus several passages in the extant text of the canonical Gospel of Mark which reveal changes and additions introduced by the author of *Secret Mark*. The story of Mark’s Gospel may thus be a paradigm of the instability during the second century of a text of a Gospel that later became canonical.11

Just what “Mark” wrote may remain unclear. All that is clear is that early copyists, at least Matthew and Luke, constantly disagree in material they both derived from Mark. They changed the Mark they were copying above and beyond their minor agreements against Mark.

“Matthew” combined Q and Mark with each other and with oral material to produce the canonical Gospel of Matthew. His interest in Matthew 3–11 seems to have been to vindicate Q by carrying through to its completion the argument of Q 3–7, to the effect that Jesus was indeed the “one to come” (Q 7:19–22) prophesied by John the Baptist (Q 3:16), before turning in Matthew 12–28 to a rather rote copying out of Mark, with only slight pro-Q improvements.12


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his Acts of the Apostles. And Luke as we have it in manuscripts from the third and later centuries may not be quite what “Luke” wrote:

The work of Luke has survived in two different versions, the Alexandrian text and the so-called Western text. As the differences of these two text forms persist throughout the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, both versions must have been circulated before the separation of Luke’s work into two different books. While the Alexandrian text is preferred by most scholars as the original version, the Western text is also known to have been used in the middle of the second century. That the text of Luke’s gospel (as also that of the Gospel of Matthew!) was by no means sacrosanct is evident not only in Justin Martyr’s free expansions of Lucan materials in his harmonizations of the texts of the synoptic gospels; it is also evident in Marcion’s radical new edition of that gospel.14

“John” may have edited a preceding Signs Source, while criticizing (“spiritualizing”) its demand for physical signs.

The Gospel of John was originally circulated without chapter 21, which contains the narrative of Jesus’ appearance at the lake, and without the several corrections of John’s radically realized eschatology and the eucharistic interpolation in chapter 6. Moreover, the question of the original order of some chapters in the Gospel of John has been discussed repeatedly. Did John 15–17 originally stand after John 13,34–5, and did chapter 6 originally follow directly upon chapter 4? Even if such suggestions for the reordering of the sequence of some chapters are not generally accepted, it must be conceded that the extant manuscripts do not present the Gospel of John in its original form.15

And John itself was augmented by later hands to become the John prevalent through the centuries. John 5:3b–4 was added prior to Tertullian, who quotes this interpolation and the story of the woman taken in adultery at John 7:53–8:11, “began already in the second century its way into the later canonical Gospels.”16

The author of Ephesians rewrote and updated Colossians with an ecclesiological focus, incorporating aspects from other Pauline epistles. The author of 2 Peter edited Jude to become 2 Peter 2.

Thus the only actual evidence that has survived from the first hundred years shows Christian scribes not copying verbatim with as much accuracy as possible, as would be the case with scribes who copied the extant papyri of New Testament books, but rather shows them redacting, updating, improving, and rewriting as they thought best. It is rather disconcerting to realize that what the evangelists and Paul wrote went through this earliest phase, for it makes clear how uncertain it is to speak of their original text. But we should not be so disconcerted as to ignore this evidence of first-century “tampering.”

Kurt Aland drew a clear distinction between the usual procedures of textual criticism based on extant manuscripts and what is to be assumed for the earliest period:

He who is not able to bring any documentation from the manuscript tradition for the gloss, interpolation, redaction, composition, or whatever it is that he maintains, endangers his thesis from the very beginning. It is to be well noted that this applies only for glosses, interpolations, etc., that are assumed for the period after the circulation of a New Testament document: for the Gospels for the time after their completion by the author or redactor, for the Pauline letters after the completion of the collection, etc., in brief, for the time after transcriptions of the original exemplar have been made and circulated. For the period before, these regulations do not apply. Then, there is after all either only one manuscript, or one reworking replaces the other. And if the author, redactor, or collector might have had side by side several manuscripts or formulations of a new manuscript, then, after all, only for one’s own personal use or for that of a small circle of friends or pupils, and not for publication. 17

Sobered by all of this inferential “information” about the writing and transmission of the first-century texts that were canonized into the New Testament, we turn to first-century Christianity itself.

**Non-Harmonized Christianities 30–70 CE**

First-century Christianity is not “lost,” since it is “found” in the New Testament, safe and sound in the canon. But as we have seen, it is unclear to what extent the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are accurate copies of what Paul, the evangelists, and others originally wrote. Furthermore, they have been interpreted in a harmonistic way. The canonizing process itself involved selecting documents that could be understood as representing the same emerging “orthodox” Christianity. That is to say, they got into the canon only by being harmonized in their interpretation (and to an indeterminate extent in their actual wording). The church down through the centuries has consciously or unconsciously continued this harmonizing reading of the texts. But we realize today that this is not an objective historical approach. It needs to be adjusted by a more critical assessment of first-century Christianity, as a plurality of Christianities.

Scholarly presentations of the “church history” of the first century have traditionally been based on Acts, which has meant: limited to the Pauline mission (after a brief introduction of the Jewish-Christian Jerusalem church, just long enough for it to accredit the Gentile mission). But this one-sidedness needs now to be transcended.

Walter Bauer taught us not to speak of the alternate kinds of Christianity as “heresies,” since at the beginning there was diversity. The “apostolic” unity that later “orthodoxy” maintained was read back into the beginnings, in orthodoxy’s efforts to undercut the claims of “heresies” to be an original part (or the only original part!) of Christianity.\(^{18}\)

The “Apostles’ Creed” is the most glaring instance of such retroactive harmonization. Of course this is nothing like what Jesus taught his disciples/apostles, but is only a creed of later centuries based on the baptismal confession of the capital of the empire, Rome, read back into the beginnings. It was intended to lay claim as the only beginning. Any divergent views would not have been “apostolic” but only later distortions, presumably inspired by Satan and hence surely “heretical.”

The first-century period extended some seventy years from 30 to 100 CE. There was a major break in the middle around 65–70. For this is the time of the devastating Roman invasion through Galilee to Jerusalem, culminating in the destruction of the temple. Whatever Jesus people may have stayed in Galilee, as well as the church of Jerusalem, must have been decimated, scattered, in large part destroyed by the war, as were the other branches of Judaism in Palestine. This scattering, undocumented that it is, must have been accompanied, or followed, by a regrouping of any survivors, undocumented that this is.

Another factor that made this break (caused by the war with Rome) even more devastating for the Jesus people was the death of the first generation, those who had actually known Jesus personally. A recent newspaper article makes this clear from an unusual angle.\(^{19}\) The title reads, “Latrine practices posed health risks to sect.” The subtitle reads, “Archeologists look at the toilet rituals that shortened the lives of the men who created the Dead Sea Scrolls.” The outcome of the investigation is to the effect that “efforts to achieve ritual purity inadvertently exposed members to intestinal parasites that shortened their lives.” Let me spare you the details and jump to the final sentence: “Fewer than 6% of the men buried there survived to age 40, he [the investigator] said. In contrast, cemeteries from the same period excavated at Jericho show that half the men lived beyond the age 40.”\(^{20}\)

If then the Jesus people did not undergo daily total immersion in stagnant water and hence had a longer life expectancy than did the Essenes of Qumran, but were more like the Jews of Jericho, what does that mean about their life expectancy? If Jesus was born around 4 BCE and was around the age of 30 when he died, one may conjecture that those who left home and family to follow him may have been in their twenties. Someone born around 0 CE would become forty around 40 CE. By that time, half of Jesus’ immediate followers would have died,

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if Jericho is typical of Galilean Judaism as well. At that mortality rate, probably none would be left a quarter of a century later by 65 CE when the Roman army began to impose its scorched earth policy throughout Palestine. The martyrdom of Christian leaders only accentuated the problem: James in Jerusalem about CE 62; Peter and Paul in Rome about the same time. Jewish Christianity was on the verge of disappearing.

Jewish leaders after the war must have realized that Judaism itself was in danger of disappearing now that its symbol of unity, the temple with its blood sacrifice and priesthood, no longer existed, with no hope of it being restored in the foreseeable future. The legend developed, though it may only be a legend, that a remnant of leadership gathered at Jamnia to produce a Jewish identity based on beliefs rather than on animal sacrifice. The luxury of multiple parties (Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes, Therapeutai, Sethians, and Jesus people) had to give way to a more unified religious community out of which normative Judaism ultimately emerged, which did in fact achieve the miracle of saving Judaism from extinction. What other religion of antiquity survived? None (except Christianity!).

Just as the other Jewish sects tended to disappear from the scene in favor of the new overarching unity of belief, just so the Jesus people, as one of these Jewish sects, would tend to be brought into that emerging unity of belief. Any who held out for their divergent beliefs would have been expelled. Think of the verb “de-synagogize” (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2) and Paul five times receiving “forty lashes but one” (2 Cor 11:24), after himself having been a Pharisee sent to Damascus to persecute Christians (Gal 1:13, 23; 1 Cor 15:9; Acts 8:3, 26:11). The Jesus people were brought before synagogue courts to keep them in line (Q 12:11–12):

When they bring you before synagogues, do not be anxious about how or what you are to say; for the holy Spirit will teach you in that . . . hour what you are to say.

There is a beatitude for those persecuted because of Jesus (Q 6:22). It is not surprising that there were indications throughout Q of the shriveling of the number of Jesus people. The remnant seems ultimately to have merged into the Gentile church (of Antioch?) that made use of the Gospel of Mark, a merger documented by the emergence of the “ecumenical” Gospel of Matthew.

21. Levine, “Introduction,” 24: “The Flavians—Vespasian, Titus, and the younger son Domitian—would rule Rome for the next several decades. Judaism would turn to the successors of the Pharisees and the scribes, the group soon to be known as the “Rabbis” (the term comes from the Aramaic word for ‘teacher’; see John 1:38) or ‘Tannaim.’ Following their time at Jamnia, first under the leadership of ben Zakkai and then Gamaliel II (ca. 80–120), the group would relocate to Galilee. In Caesarea, their successors would codify the oral law into the Mishnah (ca. 200). Christianity would turn increasingly toward the Gentile world, and worship of Jesus would come to the attention of the state.”
Thus it should not be taken as a matter of course that the Jesus movement, at least its Jewish form in Palestine, survived at all. In view of this double decimation of Jewish Christianity by 65–70 ce, the (largely Jewish) Christianity prior to those decisive factors would have been quite different from the kind of Christianity (largely Gentile) that came together after that devastation. Scholars have not taken into consideration this two-fold break in first-century Christian history with adequate seriousness, perhaps because of the paucity of documentation making any discussion depend heavily on imagination, indeed speculation.

One has normally narrated the first generation of church history by depending largely on Acts, with the help of the letters of Paul as primary documentation. One traditionally used the gospels for data from half a century before their composition to speak directly about Jesus. Then, with form criticism followed by redaction criticism, one came to focus on what the stories and sayings in the gospels permit us to infer about the communities that transmitted and shaped them and about the evangelists who collected these oral (and written) traditions and superimposed their own editing. But this focus on the transmission and editing of the traditions was primarily used to discount later accretions in order to work back to what can be known about Jesus. Bultmann’s book The History of the Synoptic Tradition did not actually trace the history of the developing church that transmitted the sayings and stories, but rather the traditions themselves, in view of determining from them what could be said about Jesus. Now the time has come to focus on these books, dating from the last third of the first century, to infer whatever one can about the church history of the half-century prior to their composition. The evangelists as authors do reveal more of their “church history” than one had suspected.

I list briefly several kinds of first-century Christianities documented in first-century texts. This inevitably means documented in the New Testament itself, since these are the only uncontested first-century texts that have survived (under such circumstances as have been described above). Since we do not assume they were just private authors, but brought to expression the Christian community of which they were part, much can be said of their communities. But I do not mean necessarily to present them as their authors intended, but rather as they may have come to be perceived and may have functioned in some divergent first-century circles. They indirectly reveal trajectories of which they have already become part, although such a trajectory may become fully conscious and identifiable only in the second century:

The CNN two-hour Christmas special of 2006, entitled “After Jesus: The Earliest Christians,” began its second hour with Marvin Meyer in front of picturesque Egyptian scenery introducing the Christmas audience to the second-
century Gnostics. These Gnostics had indeed maintained that the resurrected Christ had set them apart to give them higher teaching not known to the vulgar (“orthodox”) crowd: *The Gospel of Thomas* (Saying 13) has Thomas refer to three sayings that, if divulged to the other apostles, would cause them to be consumed with fire. *The Gospel of Mary* has revelations Jesus gave only to a woman, which Andrew and Peter hence refused to accept, until Levi called them to task. *The Gospel of Judas* has Jesus revealing only to Judas Iscariot, thereby condemning to ignorance “the Twelve,” representing the corrupt “apostolic” church of the second century.

Now that the Nag Hammadi codices and such non-canonical gospels as *The Gospel of Mary* and *The Gospel of Judas* have focused attention on Gnosticism as much more prevalent than previously assumed, and much more arousing today than we originally could have expected, there has been a natural proclivity to date such texts as early as possible. But the dating of texts should be free of such tendentiousness. Nothing is gained from a scholarly point of view by appending a vague phrase such as “and possibly earlier” to the date of composition than objective study gives to a text. Of course, no dating of this kind is absolutely certain, and so the correct date of any such text may be “possibly earlier,” but equally well, “possibly later.” We should not play such tendentious games.

A more valid way to understand the relationship of such second-century Gnostic (and other) “heresies” to the first century is to realize that nothing is born full-grown from Jove’s head. Every development in the history of ideas needs “lead time,” a period of time prior to its full-blown documentation in which its ideas gradually developed. This is particularly the case with primitive Christianity: It began largely with illiterates, for which it thanked God—who has “hidden these things from sages and the learned and disclosed them to children” (Q 10:21). Peter and John are “unlettered” and “untrained” (literally or, at least, etymologically, “idiots”; Acts 4:13). Jesus himself is put in question: “How does this one know letters, not having been to school?” (John 7:15). Luke’s presentation of Jesus reading the Hebrew scriptures out loud and then preaching a sermon based on the reading (Luke 4:16–30) has been shown to be an early instance of painting Jesus in one’s own image. For it has become clear that Jesus’ sermon here is similar to those of Peter and Paul in Acts, all of which were composed by Luke, each to fit the occasion, as was the custom in ancient historiography. If literacy in the Roman Empire was ten to fifteen percent of the population (with Latin and Greek being the primary languages in question), literacy in a Galilean Aramaic-speaking hamlet would no doubt be less.

But after a century of straight living, the Christians found nothing better to do with their money than give their children a university education. Though they had known all along that their Christian faith was the ultimate truth, they only gradually learned how to think that through within the mythological and philosophical categories of their day and age. Yet Gnostic leaders such
as Valentinus, Basilides, Isidore, or the like did not start from scratch. They merely brought their intellectual competence to the formulation of what had been developing over a period of time. In analyzing first-century Christianity, we should keep our ears open for what led up to these first philosophical theologians. This then is the first of a number of non-harmonized first-century Christianities to be listed:

**Proto-Gnostics**

One of the favorite techniques of second-century (and later) Gnostics was to argue that the reason their teaching was unknown earlier to the “orthodox” mass of illiterate Christians was that the “Resurrected” had appeared privately to the Gnostics, giving them a higher teaching not dulled by Jesus’ physical body, indeed a teaching partly learned by Jesus only at his ascension, prior to his appearances to those capable of higher insight. To forestall such a Gnostic proclivity, emerging “orthodoxy” could not let Jesus’ last word be updated again and again with appearances here and there of quite varying content. The Resurrected had to be tied down somehow more directly to Jesus of Nazareth.

The two-level hermeneutic familiar to the Judaism of the day (documented in the Pesharim of Qumran)—teaching in parables (understood as riddles), whose meaning is then resolved at a higher level—had to be transplanted back from the Resurrected, explaining the higher meaning of the earthly life of Jesus, to the earthly Jesus, revealing the higher meaning of the traditions about himself. So the Jewish “parable” became Mark’s norm for Jesus’ teaching (Mark 4), and then, once Jesus states the Christian passion and resurrection message prior to the passion narrative itself, that parable could be resolved openly in the last half of Mark’s Gospel (Mark 8:32)—with the church’s passion message. The Gospel of John did much the same thing, with the shift from the “riddle” to its explanation taking place in the parting discourses (John 16:25, 29), before, rather than after, the passion. Similarly both Mark and John could plant Jesus’ final higher-level discourse prior to the crucifixion (Mark 13; John 13–17). In this way Mark could avoid completely any potentially dangerous resurrection appearances. Though the Gospel of John needed the story of doubting Thomas to emphasize the physicality of the resurrection, further resurrection stories are then explicitly cut off (John 20:30): “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.” Luke in turn sensed the potential of Gnostic exploitation of resurrection appearances with enough clarity to preclude it by limiting the appearances to 40 days, after which it would be the Holy Spirit in all Christians that would connect up with God. It was of course fine with the Gentile Christians that the Resurrected had appeared to the persecutor Paul and commissioned him as the apostle of the Gentile mission, but that was as far as they wanted to go (and perhaps further than the Jerusalem church really wanted to go). Paul’s list of appearances (1 Cor 15:3–8), ending with the appearance to him, brought that all to a satisfactory conclusion.
Again, one need not assume full-blown (but undocumented) Gnosticism in the first century, though its lead-time can be sensed by such efforts to forestall it as have been sketched here. Simon Magus, led the way (Acts 8:9–24)!

**Proto-Adoptionists**

“Mark” had the problem of figuring out how to write the beginning of the Christian story, since he had no precursors so far as we know. But he invented the genre “gospel” in such a clumsy, fumbling way that adoptionists merely had to pick this up and run with it, as we can hear if we listen with a proto-adoptionist ear: As an author of the Gentile church, he was the heir to Paul’s argument that ever since Easter all things are new; we need not know anything of Jesus prior to Easter (2 Cor 5:16–17). Yet a story about Jesus going back behind Easter had become necessary for the Gentile church, if for no other reason than because around 70 CE the last witnesses to the story were passing or had already passed from the scene. One could no longer leave all that to the Jewish disciples who had known Jesus personally. And they were no longer around to contest what Mark might write! For the Gentile church did not want the pre-Easter Jesus to disappear completely. Mark had to tell the story, and he did his best to represent the Gentile church in the process: He condemned, as had Paul (Galatians 1–2), the holy family, the pre-Easter apostles, and Jesus’ hometown. He made the whole story just a “passion narrative with a long introduction,” leading to the Pauline emphasis (1 Cor 2:2) on Jesus’ redemptive death (Mark 10:45).

Mark then had to figure out just what material to cover in his story, where to begin, and where to end. Jesus had apparently pointed back to John the Baptist in describing when it all began (Q 16:16). Hence Mark began with Jesus’ baptism by John. But at the same time, he was of course writing the story of the Son of God (Mark 1:1). Since the Jewish God had no sex life, there could be no divine father and human mother, as was customary in Hellenistic mythology. (Matthew and Luke did the best they could, and at Christmas we are grateful.) So Mark found in the familiar concept of spirit-possession—by a good (Holy Spirit) or evil (demon) spirit—an “anthropological” solution: Jesus could be Spirit-possessed by God, as the beginning of the story. The Spirit descended on him at his baptism (Mark 1:10), whereupon the heavenly voice named him Son of God (Mark 1:11), and the Spirit sent him on his way (Mark 1:12). At the other end of the story, of course, Jesus’ death ended it all. But since God is by definition immortal and so cannot die, the story could not just die down with a dying of the Son of God. God had to depart from the Jesus he had possessed in the nick of time before Jesus actually died: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Mark 15:34). Of course, Mark had to include the resurrection (though no appearances), since this was central to the Gentile-Christian gospel of Paul before him.

Some manuscripts of Luke and quotations by Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria seem to support Mark’s potential adoptionism by quoting at the
baptism (Luke 3:22) the OT psalm (Psalm 2:7) more accurately than had Mark, “. . . today I have begotten you.” This led B. H. Streeter to conjecture that this was the original reading of Luke derived from Q. Of course the evangelist “Mark” did not intend a proto-adoptionist gospel, but he laid himself wide open to such a proto-adoptionist reading. Matthew and Luke may have sensed the problem, and so proceeded to forestall adoptionism by having Jesus begotten by God at his conception. Since the Gospel of John presents Jesus as God from the very beginning (John 1:1), that gospel could come down to earth with John the Baptist as a safe human beginning. Thus, all the canonical gospels avoid adoptionism, which Mark may have unwittingly suggested.

Baptist Almost-Christians
Jesus was a Baptist and disciples of John the Baptist (Philip, Andrew, and Peter) were the first disciples of Jesus (John 1:44; 12:21). Bethsaida seems to have been a Baptist center, safely across the frontier from the realm of Herod who had beheaded John. Luke presents Jesus withdrawing to Bethsaida after hearing of John’s death and of Herod’s interest in interrogating Jesus (Luke 9:7–9).

Q had reported a delegation sent by John to inquire if Jesus was “the One to Come” as prophesied by John (Q 3:16; 7:18–35). Though John apparently meant this to point to God coming for the last judgment, the Jesus people had it refer to Jesus (Q 3–7). Yet the delegation from John did not return to John announcing that Jesus was indeed the one who was to come. This probably means it did not happen. Then Matthew 3–11 tried to carry through the argument better than had Q by proving that Jesus performed each miracle listed by Jesus to prove his case (Q 7:22), even before the delegation from John arrived. This mission of the Jesus people to convert the Baptists did not seem to have succeeded, except in isolated cases (Acts 18:24–28, Apollos in Ephesus; 19:1–7, a dozen in Ephesus). Instead, the Baptists persevered in their separate way, perhaps down to the Mandaeans of today.

Jews-only Christians
The Paul-Barnabas schism is usually overlooked in preference to emphasizing their working together to found the Gentile Christian church. But when in Galatians 2, Barnabas yielded to the pressure from delegates of James, Jesus’ brother, to segregate table fellowship and Paul stood his ground, there is no report of Barnabas falling into line, in spite of Paul’s glowing sermon with which Galatians 2 ends. Paul would no doubt have reported this if it had happened. Acts tells of Paul and Barnabas deciding on different missionary journeys for a harmlessly unimportant reason, which probably hid a more serious defection. The Antioch church did not send Paul out any more, but he went out on his own and worked to finance his missions. Ever since then, the history of the church

of Antioch has been largely ignored (since undocumented—and we are on the Pauline, Gentile side of that issue). Presumably, the congregation split, at least at mealtime, which would inevitably have led to a schism (they ate at worship services!). The Gentile part of the congregation may have followed Paul, but what of the Jewish part that continued the practice of James, Q, and, presumably, Jesus of eating only with Jewish Christians? Matthew does have Jesus report in his mission instructions that one is to go only to Jews (Matt 10:5–6, 23), which could have been in Q, except that it is not in Luke (for obvious, pro-Gentile reasons), and therefore has to be omitted from Q in our minimalistic reconstruction. The Jewish-Christian limitation to the circumcised was a much bigger issue at the beginning than we want to admit.

The Signs Source and the Spiritual Gospel
This gospel, like the books of the New Testament that come after the gospels, Acts, and Paul, attests to the divergence of Christianity in different places each seeking to figure it all out but largely independent of other such small Christian communities. John may have begun as a collection of miracle stories (the “Signs Source”), which was then spiritualized in a proto-Gnostic way (Ernst Käsemann) to produce the “spiritual” gospel. Just where “John” is to be located geographically is unclear. The “Hellenistic” location at Ephesus (which is where the beloved disciple took care of the Blessed Virgin Mary and one of the places—the other being Jerusalem—where she was buried—oops! from where she was assumed into heaven) has been replaced (so Walter Bauer and Rudolf Bultmann) by a Semitic language culture, Syria or Palestine, and more recently moving further south, thanks to the pull of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Ecumenicity, Domestication, Canonizing
After the devastating war leading to the fall of Jerusalem and the passing of the first generation of disciples, one can detect, as reflected in the synoptic gospels, two confessions, Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian. Q is the gospel of the Jewish Christian church, though as we have seen, this terminology is actually inappropriate (Q does not use the terms “gospel,” “Christ,” “Christian,” or “church”). All of this is derived from our Gentile Christian perspective. In Q, the Jesus people are called the “poor,” which is the category under which they are “blessed.” Mark in turn became the Gentile Christian gospel.

In a last gasp of ecumenicity long before the Jewish Christians reemerge in the writings of the heresiologists as the “heresies” of Nazarenes and Ebionites, “Matthew” led whatever was left of the Q movement into a “church union” with the Gentile Christian church. To achieve this end, Matthew merged the Jewish Christian Gospel Q with the Gentile Christian Gospel Mark. He bit the bullet by conceding (Matt 28:16–20) a Gentile mission as the parting instruction of the Resurrected (“make disciples of all nations”), while pointing out that these instructions included preaching the Jewish-Christian sayings of
Jesus found in Q (“teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you”).

Luke in turn reciprocated by merging the same two gospels of the two “confessions” from a Gentile Christian perspective. He even quoted the mission instructions from Q, but then after completing the incorporation of Q into his gospel, immediately had Jesus revoke the Q instructions so as to be able to turn immediately to Mark’s passion narrative, where a disciple needs to have a sword to cut off an ear of one of the arresting troops (as we have seen). The path is open for Luke to present Paul’s much more business-like missionary journeys than what is presupposed in the mission instructions of Q and Mark. The rest is history—our Gentile-Christian history.

Christianity in Galilee 30–70 CE

The location of the writing of Q in Galilee, argued in detail by Jonathan L. Reed and John S. Kloppenborg, has been challenged outright by Marco Frenschkowski. Since Reed and Kloppenborg’s positions are already more familiar to you, let me summarize that of Frenschkowski, discussing only a few and leaving the rest to you:

His denial of Q having been written in Galilee is based in large part on a denial of there being a first-century Galilean Christianity. Luke made this easy: Acts skipped over Galilee in the envisaged scan of the mission (Acts 1:8): “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This omission of Galilee is hardly compensated for by Luke’s one passing concession of a church in Galilee (Acts 9:31): “The church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up.” Furthermore, Luke completely ignored, as a variety of early Christian experience, any resumption of the proclamation of Jesus’ sayings after the crucifixion in his history of early Christianity in Acts. Yet he had to have known about that resumption of Jesus’ message, since he copied out the Sayings Gospel Q in his gospel. But then Luke revoked (Luke 22:35–38) Q’s mission instructions (Q 10:2–16) as soon as he had completed copying out Q (Luke 22:30), so as to be ready to turn to Mark’s passion narrative (Luke 22:39ff). This became acute because Mark’s scene in Gethsemane involved the disciples using a sword. So Luke reports that they had two (Luke 22:38). But this made it necessary for Luke to move beyond Q’s defenseless mission instructions (Q 10:4) in order to be in a position to cut off the ear of one of those arresting Jesus (Mark 14:47), which Luke dutifully reported (Luke 22:49–50). Thus Luke already in his gospel moved away from the mission instructions of Q to be ready for the much more cosmopolitan Pauline Gentile mission.

Frenschkowski misrepresents Luke’s position as equivalent to Matthew’s, who indeed improves Q (Matt 3–11), before copying out rather pedantically Mark (Matt 12–28):

. . . that both Matthew as witness to a theologically ripened Jewish Christianity as well as the two-volume work of Luke oriented to the Pauline mission could receive Q as an authoritative text and expression of the Jesus tradition. This does not have to do with the awareness of Q, but rather with the authoritative position that Q has for two so fully different theologies as those of Matthew and Luke. 27


The book of Acts then confines the disciples to Judea and Samaria: After the stoning of Stephen, “all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria” (Acts 8:1). Philip went to Samaria (Acts 8:5), as did Peter and John (Acts 8:14). Thereupon, “they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans” (Acts 8:25). Philip went west to Gaza (Acts 8:26) and then went through Azotus on the way to Caesarea Maritima (Acts 8:40). Peter went west to Lydda, Sharon, Joppa, and Caesarea Maritima (Acts 10). When Peter escaped from prison, “he went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there” (Acts 12:19).

When the mission got beyond Samaria and Judea, it skipped over Galilee, as Acts 1:8 had already indicated: Saul went to Damascus to persecute Christians

27. Frenschkowski, “Galiläa oder Jerusalem?” 544: “. . . daß sowohl Mt als Zeugnis eines theologisch gereiften Judenchristentums als auch das an der paulinischen Mission orientierte Doppelwerk des Lk Q als autoritativen Text und Ausdruck der Jesusüberlieferung rezipieren konnten. Es geht dabei nicht um die Kenntnis von Q, sondern um die autoritaten Stellung, die Q für zwei so völlig unterschiedliche Theologien wie diejenigen des Mt und des Lk hat.”
there (Acts 9). The persecution following the stoning of Stephen led refugees to go to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 11:19). Then Paul and Barnabas went on their “first missionary journey” to Cyprus (Acts 13) and the Gentile mission became the future of the church. Thus, Luke’s “church history” simply bypasses Galilee.

But rather than assume uncritically that there was no Galilean church history to record, one need only consider Paul’s reduction of Jewish Christianity to the Jerusalem “pillars” to see that he needed just long enough to get from them the concession that he too was an apostle on an equal footing (Gal 2:2). Though Luke did not carry on in detail Paul’s theology, he was a leader in the Gentile church founded by Paul. From Galatians 1–2, it is clear that Paul stood in a competitive relation with the leaders in Jerusalem. So he argued that he did not get his apostleship from them (Gal 1:11–12). On his conversion, he says that “[I] did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me” (Gal 1:16–17). He reported that only after three years did “[I] go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord’s brother” (Gal 1:18–19). When fourteen years later Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem to get the approval for their Gentile mission, not because they were called on the carpet, but as a result of a revelation (Gal 2:2), they resisted “false brothers” (Gal 2:4) and (as he says) the “leaders contributed nothing to me” (Gal 2:6). “There are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:6), on whom Paul pronounces his “anathema” (Gal 1:8–9). A superior gospel of those who knew the historical Jesus is rejected, since “everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor 5:16–17).

James had become the head of the Jerusalem church. He sent delegates to Antioch, to the church of Barnabas and Paul, who called for the separation between Jews and Gentiles at the eucharist. When Peter and Barnabas fell in line with these instructions from Jerusalem, Paul stood them down theologically (Gal 2:11–21). But rather than reporting the outcome that Peter and Barnabas returned to the fold of one communion table, this decisive outcome is not mentioned, presumably because it did not happen. Whereas the church at Antioch had “laid their hands on them [Barnabas and Paul] and sent them out” (Acts 13:3), that is, made them their “apostles” for the “first missionary journey,” there is no further reference to Antioch sending them on mission. In planning the “second missionary journey,” “Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark, but Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia (reported in Acts 13:13) and had not accompanied them in the work” (Acts 15:37–38). “The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and set out. . . . He went through Syria and Cilicia” (Acts 15:39–41). Mark may have been a “cousin of Barnabas” (Col 4:10), which would explain Barnabas’ preference to take Mark with him again. But the split between Paul
and Barnabas must have been over something more basic than whether to take a relative along the second time. It is generally agreed by scholars (I picked it up from Günther Bornkamm’s book on Paul) that the falling out over the issue of table fellowship, so fundamental for Paul, is what led to the separation of Paul from Barnabas and from the church of Antioch, which Barnabas presumably continued to lead as a segregated congregation.

The delegation from James apparently reflected the policy of Jerusalem and of Jewish Christianity as a whole, to judge by Matt 10:5b–6: “Go on no road of the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This is not included in the critical edition of Q, because it is not in Luke. But of course, if it had been in Q, Luke would in all probability have omitted it. Jesus healed the centurion’s boy without having to enter his Gentile house (Q 7:1–9), praising the centurion’s faith as exceeding that of Israel, which made the Gentile healing legitimate. Luke enlarged on this legitimation, reporting that this Gentile centurion acted favorably toward Jews (Luke 7:3–5), as Luke also emphasizes regarding the centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:2). Jesus at first resists healing the Syrophoenician/Canaanite woman’s Gentile daughter (Mark 7:24–30; Matt 15:21–28), a story Luke omits. Thus, in his gospel Luke prepares as well as he can for the forthcoming Gentile mission.

Luke’s Gentile Christian reticence regarding Jewish Christian sensitivities is already apparent in the Gentile Christian Mark. Though Mark feels it necessary to tell the story of Jesus for the Gentile church, he succeeds in disqualifying the apostles as not understanding Jesus (Mark 4:13, 33–34, 40–41; 6:50–52; 8:17–21; 14:27–28, 37–41, 50), Peter as “Satan” (Mark 8:31–33; 14:66–72)—the “Rock” is Matthew’s effort to rescue Peter (Matt 16:18), the holy family wanting to get him out of sight (Mark 3:19–21, 31–35), since he is an embarrassment, his home town rejecting him (Mark 6:1–6).28

From all of this, one comes to suspect that the Gentile Christian New Testament tends to avoid Jewish Christian sensitivities. Thus, the argument from silence about Galilean (that is, Jewish) Christianity does not carry as much weight as it would if Paul, Luke, and Mark were objective reporters.

Still, the lack of documentation for Galilean Christianity does need to be recognized:

At no place in the whole epoch prior to Nicaea do we hear of a Christian congregation in Capernaum.29

But the sober truth is—and this is one of the most revolutionary reversals in the most recent picture of Galilee: there were apparently no synagogue buildings in Galilee before AD 70, or at most first beginnings toward such. . . . No single

28. For the details of Mark as a Gentile Christian gospel, see Robinson, Secrets of Judas, 5–16.
Galilean synagogue building derives certainly from the time before 70 (that is not the case for Jerusalem!).

In the motherland of the movement Paul seems to know of Christians really only in Judea. Judea is for him the motherland of the church (similarly Gal 1:22; cf. Rom 15:31; 2 Cor 1:16). Galilee on the other hand is never mentioned.

The historical value of Acts is of course contested in almost every detail. Yet it is, in view of the quantity of information tied down locally and in view of the immense, authoritative significance that Q has for Luke, very remarkable, that congregations are never mentioned in Galilee.

How does it stand with a Galilean Christianity in later years? No Christian document of the time A. D. 70–200 provides indications that it could be derived from Galilee, also not the Didache. Neither the Apostolic Fathers nor the Apologists mention Christians in Galilee. And about Jewish Christian congregations—about which we have some information on other places, for example, from Berea—we hear nothing. . . . At the Council of Nicaea there are among the 220 participants (according to what is doubtless the oldest tradition) to be sure a few bishops from cities from the region around Galilee, but not from the Galilean heartland itself, especially none from cities like Nazareth, Capernaum, Tiberias, etc., that are familiar to us from the Gospels, also none from Sepphoris. Even by 325 Galilee is still hardly touched by Christianity. . . . The very generous construction of congregations in these places (namely Capernaum, whose aetiology is then said to be Q 7:1–10) in parts of New Testament research not only has no facts for it; it has all known facts against it.


A few scattered Jewish Christians may perhaps be attested by quite unclear and quite late rabbinic texts, which incidentally—quite noticeably—at most document individual Christians, but precisely no congregations. To this is added the archaeological situation: “Thus far there are no archaeological remains in the Galilee of Christianity prior to the fourth century ce.”

Part of Frenschkowski’s argument against Galilee has to do with the importance of Pharisees in the redaction of Q:

Anyone who is as massively and exclusively fixated on the Pharisees as opponents, indeed as an endangerment of the religious truth and value of the people of Israel, as is the Q tradition, has them constantly before their eyes in thought and surely no doubt also in reality. But in Galilee we hear hardly anything before 70 precisely about Pharisees.

But this exclusion of Pharisees from Galilee is not shared by other scholars, as reported by Kloppenborg:

The rhetoric of Q accords well with the situation that must be assumed for the Lower Galilee prior to the First Revolt. Freyne (1980) and Saldarini (1988a) argue that Pharisees represented an intermittent presence, but restricted to the larger cities of the Galilee (that is, Tiberias and Sepphoris). Their emphasis on tithing and their adaptation of a priestly model of piety made them good representatives of the hierocracy in Jerusalem, who wished to collect taxes and to exert influence in regions that lay outside their direct political control (Saldarini 1988a: 35–49). Freyne notes further that there is evidence of pockets of Shammaite Pharisees in the Galilee (Freyne 1980: 311–18). Under such conditions, Q's woes may be seen as local resistance to Pharisaic presence in the Galilee. The otherwise curious linkage that occurs in the woes between the Pharisees and lawyers—who historically had nothing to do with killing the prophets—and the killing of Zechariah in Jerusalem (Q 11:49–51) is likewise intelligible if they were perceived to represent the interests of the hierocracy in Jerusalem.

All of Frenschkowski’s documentation against Galilee as the place where Q was written is the backdrop for his thesis: “Q is a, perhaps even the decisive document of the Jerusalem primitive community.” But Kloppenborg summarizes the argument against Jerusalem:

34. Frenschkowski, “Galiläa oder Jerusalem?” 548: “Ein paar verstreute Judenchristen werden vielleicht durch gänzlich unklare und durchaus späte rabbinische Texte bezeugt, die übrigens—sehr auffällig—bestenfalls einzelne Christen, aber gerade keine Gemeinden belegten. Hinzu tritt der archäologische Befund: ‘Thus far there are no archaeological remains in the Galilee of Christianity prior to the fourth century c.e.’”


36. Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q. 175.

Reed is no doubt correct that Q's view of Jerusalem makes that city an unlikely provenance. . . . The unlikelihood of a Jerusalem provenance for Q, combined with the focus on Q's map on the Lower Galilee and the local knowledge that Q assumes on the part of its addressees form the best basis for the assumption of a Galilean provenance for Q.38

But then, defending the historicity of the Pella tradition,39 Frenschkowski transplants the actual redaction of Q to this Transjordanian location:

Parallel to the decidedly pro-Roman attitude of the Sayings Source in the imminent Jewish War (Q 7:1–10), the Jerusalem congregation decides to leave the city destined to destruction (Q 13:34–35; 11:49–51) and to retreat to Pella in Transjordania. We find ourselves no doubt in the period between A.D. 62 (martyrdom of James) and A.D. 66 (outbreak of military action). This withdrawal takes place not as flight, but according to the unanimous statement of the sources, as emigration, and so can have extended over two or three years or longer.40

Not only Wisdom’s predicted “settling of accounts” with Jerusalem (Q 11:49–51) and the “lament” over Jerusalem’s “house” being “forsaken” (Q 13:35), but the drastic shift in Q’s orientation at the redactional level from an ever-forgiving, non-judgmental God who loves even enemies, to the judgment on Israel for rejecting Sophia’s mission of John and Jesus,41 point to a different situation at the redactional level from the situation when the smaller units were being translated and collected into clusters. Thus, the Pella emigration would objectify this distancing of the Q redaction from the earlier Q collections. Of course, as the crow flies, Pella is almost twice as far from Jerusalem as it is from Capernaum, and a migration over a period of several years would have no doubt attracted Jewish Christians (and non-Christian Jews?) from wherever they were located, or dislocated, in the course of the war with Rome. One could speculate that one reason Christians from Jerusalem went to Pella was because Transjordania had

already become a center of Jewish Christian refugees retreating from the devastating Roman march through Galilee.

Perhaps it might be useful, in order to put into perspective Frenschkowski’s uncritical argument from silence about there being a Galilean church, to quote the report of Epiphanius as to the location of the Ebionite “heresy.” Of course, “Ebionite” is derived from the Aramaic for the “poor,” a self-designation of the Q community (Q 6:20; 7:22), not as Epiphanius falsely assumed from the name of a heretical founder named Ebion: “He first lived in a village called Cocabe in the district of Qarnaim—also called Ashtaroth—in Bashanitis.”

Here Epiphanius located the Ebionites across the Jordan due east of the Sea of Galilee, far up a river valley emptying into the Jordan between the Sea of Galilee and . . . Pella! It may be no coincidence that Epiphanius’ references to Pella and Cocabe are side by side (Panarion 29.77f.; 30.2,7f. for Pella, and Panarion 30.2, 8 for Cocabe). To argue for the historicity of the one and pass over in complete silence the other would seem to be inappropriate. If the Gentile Christian church could ignore the Q movement as being not “Christian,” then Gentile Christian traditions about the “heretical” Ebionites would be the logical place to expect them to report whatever traditions there might have been about the Q people. In view of the Roman invasion, the remains of the Q movement of Galilee may have emigrated across the Jordan, as did the Jerusalem church according to Frenschkowski. One may also recall Paul’s collection for the “poor” in Jerusalem (Rom 15:26), which would associate the Pella and Cocabe émigrés.

My own hesitation over the years to opt for a location of Q in Jerusalem has been the divergence of Q from the kerygmatic theology normally associated with the city. A century ago, Q was thought of as the catechetical instruction for new converts to Christianity, converted into belief in Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection for their sins, a unified gospel documented in the ‘50s by Paul’s authentic letters. The appeal of locating Q in Jerusalem still has this traditional conservative undercurrent of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. But one of the striking things that has emerged about Q is that, though much is contemporary with Paul, it presents a much more primitive theological development. Hence, twenty years ago I postulated Galilee as an alternative to Jerusalem:

The Jesus movement had its center apparently in Galilee, to judge by the specific place names where this tradition says it carried on a mission, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Q 10:13–15), though it should not be overlooked that this demographic information includes the point that these locations rejected the message. Q mentions neither James nor Peter (both of whom had left Galilee), nor any of the twelve, nor the concept of the twelve, nor that of apostles (though “sheep” are “sent” among “wolves” Q 10:3, as are “prophets and sages” Q 11:49), nor the names of any disciples. The only individuals are John, Jesus,

42. Epiphanius, Panarion 30.2, 8.
the devil, the centurion and his boy, two who offer half-heartedly to follow, a
dumb man and his demon. The saved are designated neither “Judaism” nor
“Hellenism” nor “Christianity,” but rather “the poor,” who in first place are the
“blessed” (Q 6:20), and in the climatic last position among the fulfillments of
prophecy “are evangelized” (Q 7:22). . . . Church offices with which we might
identify are lacking, though there are “workers” for the harvest who need room
and board as a worker needs his wages (Q 10:2, 7; cf. 2 Cor 11:13; Phil 3:2). And
one stands in the succession of the martyred “prophets.” The Jesus people are
Wisdom’s “children,” through whom she is vindicated when John and Jesus are
repudiated (Q 7:35).43

In 1994, I noticed this primitiveness of Q in comparison with Paul with regard
to Christological titles:

The earliest layer of the Sayings Gospel Q seems to have begun (at Q 6:20), by
identifying the main speaker not with a Christological title comparable to Mark’s
“The gospel of Jesus Christ the son of God,” but simply as Jesus of Nazara.
This spelling occurs only twice in the earliest Christian literature (and nowhere
else), and both times at the same position in terms of Q: directly between the
Temptation and the Sermon (Matt 4:13; Luke 4:16). This designation may have
been used at the beginning of Q in the oldest layer of the Q tradition simply
because fully developed Christological titles were not yet current.

The title Christ, like the title Christian first introduced in the Pauline envi-
rnonment of Antioch (Acts 11:26), never made its way into Q. Yet the “anointing”
by the Spirit (echrise me) in Isa 61:1 LXX, a verse quite prominent in Q 7:22 (and
perhaps echoed at the opening of the Sermon at Q 6:20–21 and reflected back
into the Baptism at Q 3:22/Matt 3:16), would have made intelligible the use of the
term in Q, even in the absence from Q of Davidic Messianic overtones.

The considerable presence of sapiential traditions in the early layer of Q
stands in some contrast to the presence of Sophia only in the redactional layer:
At Q 7:35 she is vindicated by her children, such as John and Jesus; and at Q
11:49, the quotation formula “therefore also (the) Wisdom (of God) said” intro-
duces the mission of prophets and sages throughout history interpreted in
a Deuteronomistic sway characteristic of the Q redactor. These beginnings of a
christological title did not, in distinction to the others, reach full maturity, but
such a title does show the first stages of development in Q. For “the wisdom of
Solomon” is surpassed by “something more than Solomon” Q 11:31.

A similar development toward a Christological title may be sensed in the term
kyrios. It often refers to God, as in Old Testament quotations (Q 4:8,12; 13:35) and
in other references by Jesus to God as someone other than himself (Q 10:2,21).
In parabolic language it refers to the master of a servant (Q 12:42,43,45,46; 14:21;
16:13; 19:16,18,20), although a latent allegorical tendency suggests a reference to
Jesus in an indeterminate number of such instances, comparable to Mark 13:35 //
Matt 24:42, where “the master of the house” becomes “your Lord” (as in Rev 3:3;
16:15, where it is Jesus who comes as a thief). When used as a form of address to

Jesus, *kyrios* is a term of respect for a person to whom one looks up as a religious leader, but need mean no more than “Sir” (Q 7:6), or “Master” (Q 9:59). But in Q 6:46 *kyrios* (*bis*) is a title of address directed at Jesus as authoritative teacher by those who in fact do not do what he says, followed by the parables of the house built with or without adequate foundation, leading to ultimate vindication or condemnation. In one parabolic instance of a house owner (Q 13:25; cf. Matt 25:11 of a bridegroom), the parable is applied to Jesus as teacher (Q 13:25). But only Matthew develops this saying one step further, with *kyrie kyrie* referring to Jesus as the definitive witness at the judgment (Matt 7:22–23; 25:11). Thus Q uses “Lord” as a designation of Jesus, but not with the full theological significance of this as a christological title, as found e.g. already in Paul.

Son of God is a Christological title that seems to have been missing from the parts of Q usually ascribed to the older layering, such as the Q Sermon (6:20–49), but then emerged full-grown at the redactional level of Q. Q 6:35 / Matt 5:45 uses “sons of (your Father)” to designate persons who love their enemies, in imitation of God who “raises his sun on bad and good and rains on the just and unjust.” At this layer of Q one is completely unprepared for the redactional level’s exclusive use of the designation son of God for Jesus (except for Wisdom’s “children,” Q 7:35) pronounced on him at the Baptism (Q 3:22 / Matt 3:16). This provides the occasion for the devil to challenge and for Jesus to vindicate this designation at the Temptation (Q 4:3,9). The title is then exalted in its exclusivity in the surprisingly “high” Christology of the so-called Johannine pericope of Q 10:22, where “everything has been entrusted to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father and the Father except the Son, and to whomever the Son chooses to reveal him.”

It is the idiom son of man, as son of humanity, an individual human, that is the most common self-designation of Jesus in Q, where the development toward a title may also be traced. In the older layer the term is infrequent, and refers to Jesus only during his public ministry (Q 6:22; 9:58), but in the redactional layer it is common, in most cases used in an apocalyptic sense, so that a directionality in the development is indicated.44

It is this way in which the pre-redactional stages in Q serve to document, as nowhere else, a stage of christological development more primitive than that found in Paul that is responsible for my hesitancy to ascribe Q to Jerusalem, where the more developed christology reflected in Acts has been (falsely?) assumed.

Of course, it is possible that the early Q collections reflect that more primitive theological development in titles and names for the disciples, church offices, and christological titles as characteristic of Jesus’ own teaching and initially that of his followers in Galilee, but that the more advanced stage of development reflected at the redactional level could be located elsewhere in Jerusalem or Transjordania. This would then necessitate revising the picture of Jewish Christianity in Jerusalem to whatever extent and at whatever time the Q

traditions took root there, to then be redacted in the late 60s. Jerusalem would of course not come in question after its destruction in 70 CE. This is why the hypothetical location in Transjordania is somewhat appealing as the least unlikely location shortly after 70 CE.

Works Cited


