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# Explaining Social Reality: Some Christian Reflections

Richard J Mouw

*Richard J. Mouw is Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Sociology, as we have all learned from introductory textbooks, is the attempt to 'explain social reality'. But sociologists are not the only scholars who investigate this segment of reality. Social psychologists and historians—to cite just two examples—do so as well. Theologians have also become increasingly busy in this area. It is being urged from various quarters that theology draw heavily from sociology in both methodology and focus. These urgings are significant and, I think, legitimate.

What ought to characterize the attempts by theologians and other Christian scholars to explain social reality? How, in these attempts, ought theology and sociology to interact? What are the benefits of this interaction for the larger Christian community?

These are questions which I will discuss here. My discussion will not be exhaustive. For one thing, a fully adequate account of what it means to explain social reality would have to attend, in great detail, to what is meant by both 'explaining' and 'social reality', matters which will only be touched on briefly here. My main concern is to

offer some preliminary observations about why Christians ought to be interested in explaining social reality, and why it is important therefore that there be an intimate relationship between theological and sociological inquiry.

## I

There are some possible reasons for justifying Christian involvement in sociological inquiry which must be rejected at the outset as inadequate in the present context. The considerations I have in mind are very similar to those rejected by Peter Berger in the course of his attempt to articulate a proper 'invitation' to sociological pursuits.<sup>1</sup> We have not properly understood the sociological enterprise, Berger argues, if we consider the sociologist merely to be someone who likes to 'help people', or as someone who provides the theoretical framework for 'social work', or as a social reformer, or as a compulsive collector of statistics ('an aide-to-camp to an IBM machine'), or as a 'cold manipulator' of other humans.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Berger, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963), pp. 1-15.

There are distinctively Christian analogies to these common misconceptions of the merits and demerits of sociology. Thus, we must insist here that the unique genius of sociology is not merely that it provides 'a good course of study for youth workers', or that it can supply us with the 'hard data dimension' of 'saturation evangelism', or that it can function as a guide to 'Christian social action'. And, needless to say, if sociology is not to be defended purely in terms of its 'instrumental' value to the Christian community, neither can it be criticized for incidental services it might perform on behalf of other communities. The merits of sociology must be considered quite apart from whether it can actually function as either a 'tool of the Church' or a 'tool of the devil'.

Berger locates the central impulse of sociology—as opposed to the various incidental benefits of sociological research—in its attempts at 'understanding society in a disciplined way'.<sup>2</sup> This formulation needs no alteration for our present purposes. The Christian sociologist ought to aim at *understanding*. 'And with all thy getting, get understanding.'

The disciplined understanding of society at which sociology aims is an important dimension of the kind of broad understanding of society which the Christian community must seek to attain. That is why, as I view things, it is helpful to see Christian sociological reflection as one component of a larger process of social reflection that must be taking place within the Christian community. Let us call this larger discussion the area of *Christian social thought*, which is in turn an inter-disciplinary (or cross-disciplinary, or multi-disciplinary—depending on how one spells out such matters) area of discussion which must be fed by the following disciplines and sub-disciplines: political theory, in both its normative and political dimensions; that branch of theology which can be called 'social-political theology', where special attention is given to the social-political dimensions of Biblical teaching; economics; social-political philosophy; history, especially social, political and intellectual history; psychology, especially 'social psychology; and sociology.

One important reason why there should be this area of discussion in the Christian community is that there are indeed topics which are dealt with from many of these disciplinary perspectives, but which are not dealt with adequately from the point of view of any single discipline by itself. Consider the topic which we might call 'a Christian account of institutions'. An adequate Christian under-

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

standing of the nature, purposes, functions, and limitations of human institutions must be informed by a wide variety of empirical studies, theoretical reflections and so on. And no single discipline or subdiscipline permits the range of expertise necessary for the broad discussion required.

Since our present focus is on the nature of Christian sociological inquiry, let us briefly consider what sociologists would have to contribute to this broad area of inter-disciplinary discussion. At the very least, sociologists can inform us concerning the ways in which institutions actually function in the larger network of social interactions. It is worth noting that some sociologists, especially those who belong to the 'functionalist' school, believe that the task of describing the actual functionings of institutions constitutes the *whole* task of sociology. As will be obvious in what follows, this seems to me a rather myopic view of the sociological calling. But if this descriptive task is not *all* that sociology has to offer, it is certainly the *least* it can offer. And it is also worth noting that some of the harsher critics of sociological functionalism regularly find it necessary to acknowledge the importance of the descriptive task which the functionalists have stressed. Thus, George Homans qualifies his rather strong attack on functionalism by admitting that 'institutions are interrelated, and it is certainly one of the jobs of a sociologist to show what the interrelations are'<sup>3</sup>—'and it was one of the glories of the school to have pointed out many such interrelations'.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Ernest Nagel, while insisting that so-called 'functional explanations' are 'in the main very dubious', acknowledges that some of these accounts have been 'very illuminating', especially

the great many accounts which exhibit relations of interdependence between patterns of standardized conduct in primitive societies, between economic and legal institutions, between religious, social, and economic ideals, between architectural style, social norm, and philosophical doctrine, between social stratification and type of personality, and much else besides.<sup>5</sup>

Descriptive accounts of this sort are also indispensable to Christian social thought.

Second, sociologists can help to explain *why* institutions function in the way they do; they can

<sup>3</sup> George C. Homans, 'Bringing Men Back In,' reprinted in *The Philosophy of Social Explanation* (ed.) Alan Ryan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science: Problems in the Logic of Scientific Explanation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), p. 535.

tell us what larger social needs specific institutions tend to fulfill—with all of the complexities sociologists are dealing with when they write of ‘functional’ institutions, ‘dysfunctional’ and ‘non-functional’ ones, the ‘latent’ versus ‘manifest’ functions of institutions, *etc.* Of course, it will be necessary to recognize the speculative and ‘theory-laden’ nature of many of these explanations, and Christian sociologists can perform an important service by offering critical evaluations of the ways in which their fellow-sociologists discover that, say, specific institutions contribute to the ‘self-stabilizing’ tendencies of larger ‘social organisms’, and the like.

Third, sociologists can help us to see how their accounts of institutional interrelations relate to accounts offered in other disciplines which study human behaviour. Homans sees this interdisciplinary task as a part of sociology proper—in the sense that sociologists must regularly import data from, say, psychology in order to explain institutional interrelations in a significant manner. As an example, Homans insists<sup>6</sup> that it is not enough to note that the process of industrialization is closely correlated with a strengthening of the bonds of the nuclear family. We must ask *why* this correlation exists. A likely answer, he suggests, is that in agricultural societies ‘extended family’ ties were closely related to mutual help in farming activities. When people began to work in factories, there was less time, and fewer rewards, for maintaining close relationships with the extended family; thus time spent outside of factories tended to be devoted to the smaller family circle rather than the extended family. In this explanation as to *why* the institutional correlation exists, reference is made to personal motivation—thus, the explanation includes psychological as well as sociological premises. Homans’ defense of offering this kind of explanation is worth quoting, if only to keep his metaphor alive:

If a serious effort is made to construct theories that will even begin to explain social phenomena, it turns out that their general propositions are not about the equilibrium of societies but about the behaviour of men. This is true even of some good functionalists, though they will not admit it. They keep psychological explanations under the table and bring them out furtively like a bottle of whisky, for use when they really need help.<sup>7</sup>

Fourth, Christian sociologists can make us sensitive to the philosophical and theological dimensions of social reality as they encounter those

dimensions in their sociological pursuits. As Berger puts it:

Just because the social is such a crucial dimension of man’s existence, sociology comes time and again on the fundamental question of what it means to be a man and what it means to be a man in a particular situation. This question may often be obscured by the paraphernalia of scientific research and by the bloodless vocabulary that sociology has developed in its desire to legitimate its own scientific status. But sociology’s data are cut so close from the living marrow of human life that this question comes through again and again, at least for those sociologists who are sensitive to the human significance of what they are doing. Such sensitivity . . . is not just an adiaphoron that a sociologist may possess in addition to his properly professional qualifications (such as a good ear in music or a knowing palate for food), but has direct bearing upon sociological perception itself.<sup>8</sup>

And Alvin Gouldner:

All social theories, however technical and esoteric, bear the trace marks of some judgment about the social world; all reflect a vision, however dim and indistinct, of a world more desirable than the one the theorist knows. To be a social theorist is not simply to seek out the world that is; it is also to reach for a world that might be, even if this is done with pick-pocket fingers. To be a social theorist is not simply to describe and analyze the world that is; it is also to pronounce a judgment on it, even if this is done in a ventriloquist’s voice.<sup>9</sup>

Some sociologists would attempt to refuse the task of engaging in philosophical and theological reflection on the matters which they study. But I do not think that this refusal is legitimate. There is an important sense in which every Christian scholar must engage in this sort of reflection on his subject-matter. To be sure, this need not be done to the degree that philosophical and theological reflections replace, say, sociological research. But philosophical and theological reflection cannot be carried on by the philosopher and theologian exclusively, if that kind of reflection is going to be sensitive to the world as it is studied from the other disciplines. Furthermore, what is at stake here is not merely the sensitivity of the philosopher and theologian, but also, as Berger puts it, ‘sociological perception itself’.

<sup>6</sup> Homans, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>9</sup> Alvin Gouldner, *Enter Plato* (New York: Basic Books, 1965), p. 197.

Finally, sociologists can contribute to intra-disciplinary honesty by engaging in the larger discussion of Christian social thought. It is a fact that within each of the disciplines mentioned as components of this larger discussion attention is given to at least some of the other disciplines. Let us consider just three of those disciplines: sociology, theology and philosophy. Each has a sub-discipline which pays attention to each of the other two: sociologists engage in what might be called 'sociology of theology' (e.g., Weber on Calvin) and 'sociology of philosophy' (e.g., Durkheim's lectures on Rousseau); theologians engage in 'theology of sociology' (see Max Stackhouse's discussion of sociological theories as 'secularized theologies'<sup>10</sup>) and 'theology of philosophy' (of which Barth and Tillich offer two very different versions); and philosophers engage in 'philosophy of sociology' (as in works on the philosophy of the social sciences) and 'philosophy of theology' (as in Chapter Six of Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*).

Christian scholars in these disciplines cannot but be bothered by the disrespectful tone which often characterizes these intra-disciplinary discussions of other disciplines. Indeed, it is not difficult to find actual examples of each claim in the series of which the following are members: 'sociology is nothing but bad philosophy', 'philosophy is nothing but bad theology', 'theology is nothing but bad sociology', and so on.

Needless to say, the 'purity' of each of these disciplines is in turn threatened by encroachment from yet other disciplines—thus the contemporary trends associated with such labels as 'socio-biology', 'psychoanalytic sociology', and (heaven help us) 'bio-theology'. The above list of 'nothing but' claims, then, can easily be expanded to include such proposals as 'theology is nothing but bad economics', 'sociology is nothing but bad psychology', and 'philosophy is nothing but bad linguistics'. In the midst of these confusing currents each discipline has much to gain from joint explorations of legitimate disciplinary boundaries.

## II

Since we are presently concerned with the shape of *Christian* sociological explanation, we would do well also to note some of the affinities which hold between theology and sociology. We cannot dwell here on all of the dimensions of this relationship. But some important items can be brought to atten-

tion by briefly asking what the theologian has in common with the sociologist, quite apart from those common interests that they will share as co-participants in the discussions of Christian social thought.

We will focus here on the work of what I referred to earlier as 'social theology', and especially that task of social theology which involves the attempt to clarify the Biblical message concerning social reality. In considering this task and its relationship to sociological study we must, as I see it, firmly reject those viewpoints which attempt to carve out exclusive 'territories'<sup>11</sup> for theology and sociology in such a way that there is no overlap in the two subject-matters. One common version of this sort of territorialism is found in the claim that the theologians's explanation somehow 'take over' where the sociologist's 'leave off'. The underlying pattern of thought here is nicely captured by Ernest Gellner: 'Modern theologians no longer explain strange Revelations about the ordinary world, but tend to seek strange realms in which those Revelations will be ordinary truths.'<sup>12</sup>

It would be odd—even pathetic—if those Christians who have successfully resisted the creation of 'strange worlds' on other fronts would succumb to such machinations in their understanding of the social sciences. The Bible is a book about, among other things, social reality. And it is not merely an account of the social structure of heaven or hell; nor is it merely a set of prescriptions concerning that dimension of human existence which 'transcends' earthly reality. It tells us extraordinary things about the 'ordinary world'.

The Bible, as we should all be ready to admit by now, is not a 'textbook' of anything, including theology; thus, it is not a textbook of sociology. But it would be wrong to infer from this that the Bible does not speak to issues which are of concern to sociologists. The Biblical writers regularly engage in something that seems to me to fall under the category of 'social commentary', or 'social criticism'. The Old Testament prophets 'analyze' institutional interrelationships. '(Jerusalem's) heads give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for hire, its prophets divine for money' (Mi. 3: 11). The wise sayings of Israel deal with questions of social cohesion: 'When a land transgresses it has many

<sup>10</sup> Max Stackhouse, *Ethics and the Urban Ethos: An Essay in Social Theory and Theological Reconstruction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), especially Chapter IV.

<sup>12</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Words and Things: A Critical Account of Linguistic Philosophy and A Study in Ideology* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1959), p. 234.

rulers; but with men of understanding and knowledge its stability will long continue' (Pro. 28: 2). And the Apostles address questions of 'class distinctions' and social status: 'But you have dishonoured the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you, is it not they who drag you into court?' (Jas. 2: 6).

All of this must be considered grist for the mill of social theology.<sup>13</sup> First, the social theologian, functioning as a *Biblical* theologian with a special focus on social reality, must tell us what these Biblical social commentaries *mean* in their context. What were Jeremiah and Amos meaning to tell us about the ways in which religious, political and economic patterns interacted in their societies? What was Micah describing when he observed that 'the priests teach for hire'?

A second level of discussion, still under the rubric of 'Biblical social theology', must work at discovering more general *patterns* of Biblical social commentary. How, in *general*, does the Bible view the actual and possible patterns of institutional interaction? How are we to understand Biblical prescriptions which contain references to institutional interrelationships? For example, what are the similarities and dissimilarities between the 'jubilee' description in Leviticus 25 and the 'acceptable year' passage of Isaiah 61? How in turn are we to understand Jesus' intentions in quoting (and modifying) Isaiah, as recorded in Luke 4? How is the relationship among economic redistribution, the penal system, social stability, and spiritual well-being viewed in these various contexts?

A third level would bring us into the area of *systematic* social theology. How are we to understand various patterns of Biblical social commentary in the light of the overall patterns of redemptive history? What 'cross-cultural' norms may we extrapolate from Scripture for use in contemporary Christian social thought? To what degree are Biblical perspectives on institutional interactions related to the status of institutions in a *fallen* world? How ought the redeemed people of God to relate to their surrounding institutional milieu? What ought to be the institutional self-understanding of the disciples of Jesus, who are called to be 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people . . . aliens and exiles', yet 'subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution' (1 Pet. 2: 9-13)? Is an 'eschatology of

institutional life' possible? What are the institutional manifestations of the 'mark of the Beast'? What will the lifting of 'the curse' (see Rev. 22: 3) mean for patterns of corporate behaviour?

I do not see how the social theologian can carry out this task effectively without being on intimate terms with various theoretical perspectives in sociological theory and without the use of sociological categories in the analysis of Biblical data. If the Biblical writers are regularly addressing issues of social change, patterns of institutional interaction, and social cohesion in, say, Old Testament societies, then an awareness of sociological perspectives on these phenomena can only heighten the theologian's sensitivity to the nuances of Biblical social commentary. Earlier we noted Gouldner's observation that sociologists inevitably operate with 'a vision, however dim and indistinct, of a world more desirable than the one the theorist knows'. Theologians are also in the business of dealing with visions. And even at its best, theology's grasp of those visions will be dim and indistinct—for theologians, too, see through glasses darkly. But there is no excuse for the perpetuation of the sort of dimness that results from reading the Scriptures in a manner undisciplined by sociological sensitivities. Peter Berger tells us, in *A Rumour of Angels*, that if non-theologians would take 'signals of transcendence' more seriously than they have they would gain a new 'openness in our perception of reality'.<sup>14</sup> But it is also true that if theologians would take the categories of social scientific study more seriously they might be able to better discern the 'signals of transcendence'.

In good part, then, the task of social theology is to reconstruct the patterns of social reality of the Old and New Testament societies by reconstructing the Biblical writers' perceptions of social reality. The results of this empirical-constructive study, enabled by sociological awareness, must be further 'sorted' through systematic theological reflection. The results must then be brought to the discussion in the broader area of Christian social thought in order to be further sifted and co-ordinated in the context of interdisciplinary discussion.

This is, of course, an oversimplified description of the process of moving from disciplinary to interdisciplinary discussion—it is perhaps an 'ideal type' of that process. It is more likely that the discussion will, as a matter of fact, move back and forth between inter-disciplinary and disciplinary study in a rather dynamic fashion. Theologians must

<sup>13</sup> My account here of the proper scope of 'social theology' parallels my discussion of the proper task of 'political theology' (which I take to be a branch of social theology) in *Politics and the Biblical Drama* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), Chapter One.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Berger, *A Rumour of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1970), p. 95.

begin talking with sociologists, even if they haven't done their sociological homework; and sociologists must begin talking with theologians in order to gain initial hunches and clues for their own 'disciplined study of social reality'. And the same holds for the other areas of thought which must contribute to Christian social reflection.

### III

Earlier on I suggested that Christian attempts to explain social reality were not to be justified merely on the grounds of their instrumental value. The word 'merely' must be stressed here. Christian attempts to explain social reality have more than instrumental value. But they also have instrumental value. And in a day in which we are being re-sensitized to the Biblical call to liberation and justice it would be wrong to ignore the praxis-oriented dimensions of Christian social thought.

Christian efforts at understanding social reality can be a means, to use Pauline categories, of unmasking the principalities and powers, the rulers in heavenly places. Sociological inquiry has much to contribute to this crucial task.

At the end of his defense of sociology as a 'humanistic discipline', Peter Berger suggests that we think of ourselves as puppets on a stage, being manipulated by the 'subtle strings' that link us to

the forces which control the social milieu. This picture, Berger proposes, has an element of truth in it.

But then we grasp a decisive difference between the puppet theatre and our own drama. Unlike the puppets, we have the possibility of stopping in our movements, looking up and perceiving the machinery by which we have been moved. In this act lies the first step towards freedom. And in this same act we find the conclusive justification of sociology as a humanistic discipline.<sup>15</sup>

This is an intriguing way of viewing the situation. But Berger's account has too much of a 'Sartrean' flavour: by seeing the strings we move in the direction of freedom. The Christian's goal is not freedom as such, but obedience to the will of the liberating God. Sociological inquiry can also give us the insights necessary for faithful obedience. By enabling us to discern the 'subtle strings' of social manipulation it can prepare us for one important step in the direction of 're-socialization', a step toward an obedient posture from which we can confess 'that neither . . . angels, nor principalities, . . . nor powers, . . . nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God' (Rom. 8: 38-39).

<sup>15</sup> Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, p. 176.

regarded by those who might be described as the mainline reformers. This will be undertaken in the light of the most recent investigations and with reference to the relevant literature in the decade from 1970 to 1980. Such a procedure will enable the reader to decide whether or not the time has come to reassess the modern reassessment of the radicals.

### Classification

In his lectures on Genesis Chapters 38 to 44, delivered as far as can be ascertained in 1544 (only two years before his death), Martin Luther reported on the situation in the Church as he saw it at that time. 'Today the purified doctrine of the gospel has enlightened many who were oppressed by the tyranny of the Antichrist; but at the same time also there have gone out from us the Anabaptists, the Sacramentarians, and other fanatics, who have openly handed down godless teachings about the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ. They have not arisen from our midst. Yet for a time they were with us. But they have not sought purity of doctrine. No, they have sought their own glory and fame.'<sup>1</sup>

As Mark U. Edwards brings out in his study of *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stamford: Stamford University Press, 1975), Luther first encountered the radical reformation in the persons of Karlstadt and Müntzer with their aberrations and excesses. As a result, he tended throughout his career to assume that other radical leaders were tarred with the same brush. He regarded them as heretical, divisive and even diabolical. As the extract from his lectures on Genesis shows, Luther refused to recognize them as being genuine offspring of the reformation.

Writing in 1530, Sebastian Franck ventured on a classification which sought to distinguish between those radicals who remained within what might conceivably be considered to be the reformation family and those who had taken a less characteristic line. 'In our times, there are already three faiths which have a large following: the Lutheran, Zwinglian, and Anabaptist. But a fourth is already on the way to birth, which dispenses with external preaching, ceremonies, sacraments, the ban, and offices as unnecessary, and which seeks to gather only an invisible church in the unity of the Spirit and of faith, governed wholly by the eternal, invisible word of God.'<sup>2</sup>

The recent upsurge of attention paid to the radical Protestant movement has not only led

investigators to draw a line of demarcation between the magisterial reformation and its counterpart, but also between the variegated strands of radicalism itself. Professor George Huntston Williams has produced a complex analytical classification which identifies three subsidiary groupings—anabaptists, spiritualists and evangelical rationalists.<sup>3</sup> The first two of these he further categorizes as evangelical, revolutionary and contemplative anabaptists and revolutionary, evangelical and rational spiritualists. As will quickly be realized, the possible variations are innumerable. Quite obviously, Williams's own primary scheme could be replaced by a rearrangement of types under the alternative though not parallel designation of evangelicals, revolutionaries and rationalists. The radical reformation represents such a labyrinth of ramifications that a point is reached where the attempt to systematize, let alone to synthesize, proves to be counter productive. No wonder Rufus Jones referred to this aspect of the reformation as a veritable banyan tree.<sup>4</sup>

Although Williams preferred the title 'radical' to denote it, and this has been accepted by many, others have resorted to differing captions. 'The left wing reformation' was a term suggested by Roland H. Bainton in an ecclesiastical and theological rather than in a political sense, as applying to all parties whose convictions distanced them from the stance of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin.<sup>5</sup> Looking at the issue from the viewpoint of these three foremost reformers, some have spoken about radicalism as 'the second front'.<sup>6</sup> In its infancy, mainstream Protestantism was locked in combat with the papacy, but before it had come of age it found itself fighting on another frontier to resist the radicals. Zwingli went so far as to claim that the struggle against Rome was child's play compared with this more sinister threat.

Luther referred to the radicals as enthusiasts. He visualized them as Schwärmer or swarming bees. Gordon Rupp rather impishly defines Schwärmerei as 'too many bees chasing too few bonnets'.<sup>7</sup> That may have been applicable to some, but certainly not to all. There was a fanatical fringe, to be sure, yet others who were equally if not more genuinely representative of the radical reformation stood much closer to the centre.

<sup>1</sup> *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, ed. George Huntston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (London: SCM Press, 1957), The Library of Christian Classics Vol. XXV, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of Religion*, Vol XX1 (July 1941), pp. 124ff.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Roland H. Bainton, Warren A. Quanbeck and E. Gordon Rupp, *Luther Today* (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1957), Martin Luther Lectures Vol. I, p. 147.

<sup>1</sup> *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav J. Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St Louis: Concordia, 1955), Vol. 7, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> *Chronica und Beschreibung der Türkey*, K. 3b. (Nürnberg, 1530).



# The Radical Reformation Reassessed

A Skevington Wood

*Dr Arthur Skevington Wood is Principal of Cliff College Calver. He is the author of a number of books in the area of Church History and is a regular contributor to the pages of this journal.*

In the last thirty years there has been a remarkable increase of interest in what we have now come to identify as the radical reformation. The term is employed to distinguish between the three major reformers (Luther, Zwingli and Calvin), representing the magisterial reformation, from such men as Grebel, Hubmaier and Denck and later Hutter, Hoffmann and Simons to say nothing of Karlstadt and Müntzer.

Until comparatively recent times this wing of the Protestant Reformation was little known and often misunderstood. Historians have now largely dispelled such ignorance and presented a much more detailed and sympathetic picture of the radicals on the basis of long neglected source materials. The imbalance of past assessments has been redressed to such an extent that some scholars now wonder whether the interpretative pendulum has not swung too far in a favourable direction. In this article we propose to supply a brief and hopefully objective account of how the radical reformation originated and developed, together with some indication of the way in which it was

regarded by those who might be described as the mainline reformers. This will be undertaken in the light of the most recent investigations and with reference to the relevant literature in the decade from 1970 to 1980. Such a procedure will enable the reader to decide whether or not the time has come to reassess the modern reassessment of the radicals.

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The recent upsurge of attention paid to the radical Protestant movement has not only led

investigators to draw a line of demarcation between the magisterial reformation and its counterpart, but also between the variegated strands of radicalism itself. Professor George Huntston Williams has produced a complex analytical classification which identifies three subsidiary groupings—anabaptists, spiritualists and evangelical rationalists.<sup>3</sup> The first two of these he further categorizes as evangelical, revolutionary and contemplative anabaptists and revolutionary, evangelical and rational spiritualists. As will quickly be realized, the possible variations are innumerable. Quite obviously, Williams's own primary scheme could be replaced by a rearrangement of types under the alternative though not parallel designation of evangelicals, revolutionaries and rationalists. The radical reformation represents such a labyrinth of ramifications that a point is reached where the attempt to systematize, let alone to synthesize, proves to be counter productive. No wonder Rufus Jones referred to this aspect of the reformation as a veritable banyan tree.<sup>4</sup>

Although Williams preferred the title 'radical' to denote it, and this has been accepted by many, others have resorted to differing captions. 'The left wing reformation' was a term suggested by Roland H. Bainton in an ecclesiastical and theological rather than in a political sense, as applying to all parties whose convictions distanced them from the stance of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin.<sup>5</sup> Looking at the issue from the viewpoint of these three foremost reformers, some have spoken about radicalism as 'the second front'.<sup>6</sup> In its infancy, mainstream Protestantism was locked in combat with the papacy, but before it had come of age it found itself fighting on another frontier to resist the radicals. Zwingli went so far as to claim that the struggle against Rome was child's play compared with this more sinister threat.

Luther referred to the radicals as enthusiasts. He visualized them as Schwärmer or swarming bees. Gordon Rupp rather impishly defines Schwärmerei as 'too many bees chasing too few bonnets'.<sup>7</sup> That may have been applicable to some, but certainly not to all. There was a fanatical fringe, to be sure, yet others who were equally if not more genuinely representative of the radical reformation stood much closer to the centre.

<sup>3</sup> *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, ed. George Huntston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (London: SCM Press, 1957), The Library of Christian Classics Vol. XXV, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Journal of Religion*, Vol XX1 (July 1941), pp. 124ff.

<sup>6</sup> Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Roland H. Bainton, Warren A. Quanbeck and E. Gordon Rupp, *Luther Today* (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1957), Martin Luther Lectures Vol. I, p. 147.

<sup>1</sup> *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav J. Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St Louis: Concordia, 1955), Vol. 7, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> *Chronica und Beschreibung der Türkey*, K 3b. (Nürnberg, 1530).

Because of their doctrine of the Church, the radicals have often been dubbed separatists or sectarians. But, as Walter Klaassen has recently shown in a perceptive article, their position was not as unconsidered and theologically naïve as some have supposed.<sup>8</sup> Leonard Verduin prefers to describe them as the stepchildren of reform, since as the progeny of a second marriage, as it were, they were treated as inferiors.<sup>9</sup>

The name anabaptist has sometimes been applied indiscriminately to the entire spectrum, but not with sufficient accuracy, since by no means all practised rebaptism. In any case, Zwingli saw even the authentic anabaptists rather as what he called catabaptists or antibaptists since at Zurich rebaptism was regarded as invalid. Other reformers dismissed them as scribes or pundits because of their allegedly legalistic approach. They themselves for the most part opted for some unpretentious designation such as brethren or Christian brethren (adopted by the earliest group which was that at Zollikon after the break with Zwingli), evangelicals, or simply Christians.

### Germany: Wittenberg and Allstedt

It was while Luther had retreated to the Wartburg Castle in 1521, so as to gain a temporary respite after his condemnation at the Diet of Worms, that the first stirrings of the radical reformation were felt in Wittenberg itself, where he had previously lectured and preached. Ironically, the leader of the revolt was Luther's senior colleague at the University, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, who sought to make a total break with all the liturgical traditions of the Roman Church even to the extent of banning choirs 'with their geese-like shrieking'.<sup>10</sup> Any distinctive form of ministerial dress was repudiated and Karlstadt presided over the Lord's Supper as he wore his outdoor clothes. As Steimle observed, 'without Luther's clearness of vision and aptness of speech, he likewise failed to discern the pitfalls which Luther had so carefully avoided'.<sup>11</sup>

An eccentric Augustinian monk, Gabriel Zwilling, was hailed as a second Luther and preached on Christmas day wearing what appeared to be a kind of Davy Crockett hat, according to Rupp.<sup>12</sup> Three unwise men from Zwickau, two weavers and a former undergraduate, appeared in Wittenberg claiming to have held 'familiar conversation with God' and inciting the people to overthrow the

Lutheran regime. Eventually Luther himself, at some risk to his person, left the protection of the Wartburg and sought to counsel restraint and restore order. His eight sermons deserve the closest attention. The hub of his argument was that the Word of God alone must be left to bring about further reforms. 'It is God's work alone, who causes faith to live in the heart. Therefore we should give free course to the Word and not add our works to it. We have the *ius verbi* (right to speak) but not the *executio* (power to accomplish). We should preach the Word, but the results must be left solely to God's good pleasure. . . . For the Word created heaven and earth and all things (Ps. 33: 6); the Word must do this thing, and not we poor sinners.'<sup>13</sup>

Karlstadt retired to the village of Orlamünde in the Saale valley and there developed his own often bizarre programme of reform. Luther was surely justified in branding him as a fanatic, yet even more seriously as one who had relapsed into a new legalism. Even though Ronald J. Sider, in seeking to vindicate him, denied that he effectively taught works—righteousness and James S. Preus has also leapt to his defence, their pleas have proved less than convincing and we are compelled to conclude with Rupp that Karlstadt's story must be interpreted as a cautionary tale.<sup>14</sup>

Thomas Müntzer is regarded by many as the fountain-head of the radical movement. Both Karl Holl and Heinrich Boehmer treated his theology with the utmost seriousness. He was won over to the cause by the Zwickau prophets, although it is unlikely that he accompanied them to Wittenberg as some have surmised. He established himself at Allstedt in Saxony and there initiated liturgical reforms of considerable significance. Finding an incendiary ally in Simon Haferitz, he preached a demagogic sermon calling on the people to revolt against both Church and State. In apocalyptic terms he announced that the day of doom was fast approaching. Eventually he was forced to leave his pastorate and thereupon heaped abuse on Luther in his *Apology*, caricaturing the pioneer reformer as Dr Sit-on-the-Fence, Dr Easy Chair, the Pope of Wittenberg, the Thieving Magpie and the Sly Fox.

Müntzer stretched Karlstadt's distinction between the Spirit and the flesh still further by discarding baptism altogether and by setting aside the Scriptures as in themselves constituting no more than a dead letter. 'Bible, Babel, bubble!' was his

<sup>8</sup> *Church History* Vol. 46 (December, 1977), pp. 421ff.

<sup>9</sup> Verduin, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> *Luther Today*, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> *Works of Martin Luther*, ed. Henry E. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1915), Vol. 2, p. 388.

<sup>12</sup> *Luther Today*, p. 117.

<sup>13</sup> *Luther's Works*, Vol. 51, pp. 76f.

<sup>14</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt: the Development of his Thought 1517-25* (Leiden: Brill, 1974); James S. Preus *Karlstadt's Ordinations and Luther's Liberty: A Study of the Wittenberg Movement 1521-2*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

slogan. Luther agreed, of course, that the word of Scripture apart from the Spirit is lifeless, but insisted that the two are no more to be separated from each other than the soul from the body. Müntzer was in danger of lapsing into a lopsided idolatry of the Spirit since 'he had swallowed the Holy Ghost, feathers and all'.<sup>15</sup> Yet with the words 'Spirit, Spirit, Spirit' he kicked away the very ladder by which the Holy Spirit comes to God's people, namely, through the outward ordinances of God, such as baptism and the preached Word of God.

Here, then, were the beginnings of the radical reformation which originated not in Switzerland but in Saxony. It may be legitimate to claim that authentic anabaptism is traceable to Zurich, but if we are to reassess the full scope of radicalism we cannot do other than start with Karlstadt and Müntzer. Admittedly they were extremists and it may be argued that they were unrepresentative. How direct and determinative was their influence on the groups which emerged elsewhere and later is also uncertain. But the attempt of recent researchers, especially those of the Mennonite School, to dissociate them altogether from subsequent developments or to exclude them entirely from the radical scene has proved abortive.

#### Switzerland: Zurich

Zwingli's reformation in Zurich, though more far-reaching in practice than that of Luther, nevertheless did not satisfy some who looked for a more complete break with tradition on the basis, as they believed, of an appeal to clear New Testament principles. They rejected baptism and adopted an even simpler form of communion service than that of Zwingli. Beyond that, however, they held to a different conception of the church, particularly in its relationship to the State. It was envisaged as a select society, a spiritual élite, separated from the world, composed only of the regenerate and the properly baptized. In short, we are presented with what Ernst Troeltsch was to identify as the sect type of Christian community, isolated from the majority even of evangelical believers as represented by the Lutheran and Zwinglian churches at this stage.

The leader of these Swiss brethren was Conrad Grebel along with Georg Blaurock, the first to be rebaptized in the house of Felix Manz at Zollikon. There can be little doubt that they were in contact with and to a certain extent affected by Karlstadt and Müntzer, as Grebel's correspondence with the latter indicates. But, as James M. Stayer makes

clear in a useful article, they avoided the worst excesses both of their predecessors and some of their successors.<sup>16</sup> They eschewed the chiliasm which ultimately blighted the Dutch and German anabaptists. They displayed few leanings towards extravagant and violent prophecy after the manner of Hutter or Hofmann. They were free from the suffocating mysticism which marked so many of the spiritualist leaders. And there is no disputing the fact that, as Stayer puts it, the Swiss anabaptists originated 'in, with and under the reformation' even though they eventually broke away from the mainstream.<sup>17</sup>

Zwingli's reaction to the rise of anabaptism in Zurich is reflected not only in the stance he adopted during a series of public debates, but also in five major treatises produced between 1523 and 1527. In the second of these, entitled *Who Are the Troublemakers?* (1524), he listed four forms under which opposition to the biblical gospel manifested itself, even within the Protestant camp. The last of these includes the idealistic radicals, represented by Grebel, Blaurock, Manz and Hubmaier with their supporters. Although he did not actually label them, Zwingli exposed what he took to be the weaknesses of those who no doubt were more extreme. They were puffed up by their pretended acquaintance with the gospel rather than aflame with the Spirit of charity. They were continually criticizing others, but they failed to consider themselves. Their outlook and practice were alike full of inconsistencies. They believed themselves to be moved by the Holy Spirit when in fact they were controlled by the Saturnian spirit of melancholy. They preferred to submit themselves to such control rather than to place themselves unambiguously under the authority of God's Word.

As Dr G. W. Bromiley rightly reminds us, behind both the theology and ecclesiastical activity of Zwingli at Zurich there stood two great doctrines round which his entire thought ultimately revolved: the supremacy of the divine revelation in Holy Scripture, and the sovereignty of God in election and grace.<sup>18</sup> It was on the basis of these twin principles that he resisted the teachings of Rome, and it was from the same premises that he argued against the radicals. Like Luther, he found himself waging war on two fronts. Recent attempts to present the anabaptists in a more favourable light,

<sup>16</sup> *Church History*, Vol. 47 (June 1978), p. 174.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Zwingli and Bullinger*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London: SCM Press, 1953). The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XXIV, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kristische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. J. F. K. Knaake, et al. (Weimar, 1883- ), XVII.i.560.

like that for example of Peter J. Klassen, claim that Zwingli contributed to the invention of a myth which has persisted for more than four centuries.<sup>19</sup> Professor G. R. Potter, however, believes that, while on the one hand no historian nowadays can write off the anabaptist phenomenon with the prejudice and ignorance which prevailed until within the last fifty years, neither is it possible on the other hand to dismiss Zwingli's strictures as carrying little or no weight. It is at such a point that the previously redressed balance needs yet again to be redressed.<sup>20</sup>

#### Holland: Amsterdam

If the radical reformation began in Germany and then in Switzerland, the third area to see its emergence was Holland. Wittenberg and Allstedt were the original centres, followed by Zurich. Amsterdam later developed as a focal point of Dutch anabaptism as well as that of the low countries and lower Germany, as Cornelius Krahn has shown.<sup>21</sup> After 1520 sixteen students went to Wittenberg from West Friesland and the North Netherlands. Most of them returned to disseminate the views of Karlstadt and Müntzer. Before long books by Luther and Lutherans were confiscated in the parsonage at Witmansun—the birthplace of Menno Simons who was destined to become the leader of Dutch radicals, although he disapproved of its militant wing. In East Friesland, as well as in Holland proper, anabaptist doctrines were advocated by Melchior Hofmann, the Protestant apostle of the Baltic who had turned from Lutheranism on the issue of free will. He preached in a fiery apocalyptic fashion before returning to Strassburg in 1533 to await the end of the world and the establishment of the New Jerusalem in that favoured city. Here, as Professor Williams puts it, 'we sense the intense heat and, as it were, the chthonic pressures beneath the crust of the magisterial reformation and peer into the molten hearth from which the anabaptist volcanoes burst forth in Münster and Amsterdam'.<sup>22</sup> In the Dutch centre David Joris was to emerge as the preponderant influence and afterwards, of course, Menno Simons himself. Although the latter falls into a different category from his less restrained predecessors, we cannot detach the chiliastic and revolu-

tionary elements from the purer anabaptist stream as conveniently or distinctly as most Mennonite historians imagine.

#### Germany: Nuremberg, Strassburg, Münster

Our survey must conclude with a glance at the development of the radical reformation in Germany after Karlstadt and Müntzer. Nuremberg had been the first notable imperial city to accept the teachings of Luther but a ferment of radicalism was brewing from 1523 onwards. There were visits from Müntzer and Hutter. The preaching of a layman, Bauer von Worth, influenced Hans Denck, a schoolmaster at St Sebald's. He, like Hofmann, rejected Luther's insistence on the bondage of the human will and questioned not only the need for the sacraments and the ministry, but also, in effect, the forensic nature of justification and the sufficiency of Christ's atoning death. In October 1525 Denck was compelled to leave Nuremberg.

He was received at Augsburg where he was re-baptized by Hubmaier. Augsburg and Strassburg developed into centres where upper German (Denck) and Swiss (Gebel and others expelled from Zurich) anabaptists were to mingle. In a comprehensive treatment, Miriam Usher Christman, dealing with *Strassbourg and Reform: A Study in the Process of Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), shows how Martin Bucer aided by Heido, Capito and Sturm was able to hold his own against the radical threat, partly because of dissension in the ranks of those who were opposed to Lutheranism. In 1529 a group of anabaptists appeared in Moravia and were reorganized by Hutter in 1533 to form the sect associated with his name. After leaving Zurich, Hübmaier also ministered in Moravia. In Franconia the anabaptists grew in strength under the influence of Hans Huth, whom Rupp describes as a Pied Piper at whose winning words men left goods, honour, fortune, wife.<sup>23</sup> Königsberg was the headquarters and, as Günther Bauer has shown, the leaders there were in touch with sympathizers in Passau, Nikolburg and Rothenburg as well as in Augsburg.

The less said about the events in Münster the better. It represents the most unfortunate of all radical expressions and goes far to account for the disrepute into which the movement not unnaturally fell. In January 1534 at the invitation of Bernhard Rothmann, the Lutheran pastor, two radical apostles made their dramatic appearance in the Westphalian city of Münster. They both came from Holland where, as we have seen, the anabaptists

<sup>23</sup> Gordon Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation* (London: Epworth Press, 1969), p. 333.

<sup>19</sup> Peter J. Klassen, *The Economics of Anabaptism 1525-60* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> George R. Potter, *Zwingli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 169.

<sup>21</sup> Cornelius Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism: Origin, Spread, Life and Thought 1450-1600* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968), pp. 71ff.

<sup>22</sup> *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, p. 182.

were already represented. One was Jan Beukels, a tailor from Leiden, and the other was Jan Matthijsz, a baker from Haarlem. The latter assumed that he was the patriarch Enoch while the former claimed to be the ruler of all the world. Through the 'limping prophet', Johann Duschentschür, a goldsmith from Warendorf, he proclaimed Jan of Leyden as King of the New Jerusalem in Münster, adding that he 'should occupy the throne of David until the Father should claim the kingdom from him'.<sup>24</sup> The outcome was that the Bishop, assisted by other Catholic princes, brought the recalcitrant city under control, executed the radical rebels and re-established Roman worship. 'God had chased out the devil,' Luther commented, 'but the devil's grandmother had come in.'<sup>25</sup>

It is to be noticed that Luther himself had warned the people of Münster about this very danger, urging them not to be deceived by heresy. He named the anabaptists and other sectarians, including the followers of Zwingli whom he regarded with almost equal suspicion though with considerably less justification. Luther seems to have anticipated the defection of Rothmann, whom he praised as an excellent preacher. 'Nevertheless, it is needful to admonish him and all other preachers to watch and pray diligently that they and their people may be preserved from false teachers. The devil is a sly rogue and able to seduce fine, pious and learned preachers; we have, alas! before our eyes the example of many who have fallen away from the pure word and have become followers of Zwingli, Müntzer, and the anabaptists; such have also become disturbers of the public peace, and once and again have laid hands on the reins of the secular government.'<sup>26</sup> Luther had actually sent a similar letter to Rothmann himself, urging him to be on his guard against such inroads.

### Calvin

John Calvin's comments on the radical reformation came, of course, at a later stage of its development than those of Luther and Zwingli. For this reason they have sometimes been discounted as if they were less relevant or reliable. Indeed, Peter Klassen went so far as to claim that Calvin knew less of the

movement than any of the leading reformers.<sup>27</sup> Willem Balke, however, demonstrates the fact that Calvin had considerable first-hand acquaintance with the radicals as a result of his encounters with them both in Geneva and Strassburg.<sup>28</sup> He was sufficiently aware of their various groupings to be able to distinguish between one and another. He was less suspicious of the anabaptists proper than of the spiritual libertines. Calvin was, as always, concerned about doctrinal purity and he tended to assume that all radicals held Hofmann's docetic view of the incarnation since many of those he had met had come from the low countries.

In *Psychopannychia* (The Watchfulness of the Soul), an early work written before the *Institutes* (though not published until 1542), Calvin resisted dubious anabaptist theories about the sleep of the soul in the intermediate state. He strongly felt that any denial of scriptural teaching called in question the truth of eternal life generally.<sup>29</sup> He preferred to confine the analogy of sleep to the resting of the body in the grave until the day of resurrection.

In 1544 Calvin produced his *Brief Instruction against the errors of the Anabaptists*, which was a rebuttal of a French translation of the Scheitheim Confession (1527) then being circulated in the vicinity of Neuchâtel. Balke thinks that the *Institutes* aimed to clear French Protestantism of the change of radicalism.<sup>30</sup> Although they are not often actually mentioned by name in the text, Balke believes that Calvin often had the anabaptists in mind. This is apparent, for example, in Calvin's fear of schism, his defence of infant baptism, his emphasis on the unity of the Old and New Testaments, and his reluctance to perpetuate the prophetic office.

The debate about the radical reformation still continues and will do so as more evidence comes to light. We are wise to avoid any simplistic conclusions which dismiss the left wing altogether as of minimal importance but, on the other hand, its contribution needs to be critically assessed with particular attention paid to the comments of the major reformers.

<sup>27</sup> Klassen, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Willem Balke, *Calvijn en de doperse radikalen* (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1973); review in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. XXV (October 1974), pp. 420f.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things* (London: Lutterworth Press, ET, 1955), p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> Balke, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Karl Rudolf Hagenbach, *History of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Clark ET 1878-9), Vol. II, p. 219.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

# The Q Debate since 1955

Howard Biggs

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

'Q is and remains a hypothesis.' So wrote Austin Farrer in 1955 in an article,<sup>1</sup> which may fairly be regarded as initiating the developments in the Q debate over the past two decades or so. Farrer's view was that Q is an unnecessary hypothesis and should be dropped. Recently, articles and studies touching on all aspects of the Q question have appeared regularly. Further, the scope of the question has broadened into the area of redaction criticism, in an effort to show Q as having particular theological motifs and interests. In this respect, it is important to recognize that studies in the theology of Q are part of the wider search for the theology of the evangelists, away from 'solutions' of the synoptic problem in purely literary terms. Nevertheless, Q regarded as an hypothesis necessary for a proper solution of the literary relationship between the synoptic gospels is still very much part of the contemporary debate. This article will take a look at Q from three angles. First, we must see how Q is faring as one of the main planks in the classical two (or four) documents solution as set out by Streeter in 1924.<sup>2</sup> This will lead to a look at the revival of hypotheses which wish to dispense with Q and seek a solution in terms of direct borrowing between Matthew and Luke, or more complex solutions involving multiple sources. Finally, we will give some account of recent attempts to establish Q as a theological document.

For an exposition of the traditional solution of the synoptic problem, one of the best available is that of W. G. Kümmel in his *Introduction to the New Testament*<sup>3</sup> pp. 52ff. It is vital to understand that Q does not stand on its own, but alongside its twin hypothesis of the priority of Mark. Thus Kümmel sets out the reasons for accepting Markan priority before going on to the Q question (pp. 63ff.). Indeed he notes that C. H. Weisse in 1838 linked the idea of a common sayings source for Matthew and Luke to the priority of Mark, thus carrying on

the line of research opened up by Schleiermacher and Lachmann. H. J. Holtzmann in 1863 took up Weisse's proposals in their modified Ur-Markus form to provide an important milestone in the development of the two-document hypothesis, eventually abandoning the Ur-Markus theory in favour of Matthew's and Luke's knowledge of canonical Mark.

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

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

2. The argument from order. This is an important line of investigation which for reasons of space it is not possible to develop and the diagram is not very helpful. The force of the case may however be gauged by referring to V. Taylor's presentation of it in his *New Testament Essays*,<sup>5</sup> his arrangement of the Matthean material in five columns corresponding to the discourses. The result does indicate some clear sequences and leads Taylor to claim that 'the manifest signs of a common order in Matthew and Luke raise the hypothesis to a remarkable degree of cogency short only of demonstration'. This is extravagant and Taylor's case is slightly weakened by the omission of several passages where verbal resemblance is slight. Taylor justifies these omissions by explaining that 'if in these passages, Q and another source overlapped, it is reasonable to expect that the order of Q as reflected in Matthew and Luke may be obscured'.<sup>6</sup>

3. The presence of doublets and double traditions (double traditions are verses presented by both

<sup>1</sup> 'On Dispensing with Q'—*Studies in the Gospels*, Ed. D. E. Nineham (Blackwell, 1955)

<sup>2</sup> *The Four Gospels* (MacMillan).

<sup>3</sup> ET 1975 (SCM).

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> Epworth (1970) pp. 90ff., also *JTS* NS 4 pp. 29ff. (1953)

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 91.

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

Compared to this evidence of doublets and double traditions Mark presents a single doublet (Mk. 9: 35; 10: 43f.). From this, Kümmel deduces that Matthew and Luke must have used a second source in addition to Mark, the linguistic agreements demonstrating that this source was in Greek.

We find a similar defence of the traditional Q in J. A. Fitzmyer's contribution in *Jesus and Man's Hope*,<sup>7</sup> where he rejects A. M. Farrer's theory of Luke's dependence on Matthew. He makes the following points:

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

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

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

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

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

Attempts are made from time to time to establish the existence of Q by refuting hypotheses which seek to shew direct contact between Matthew and Luke. This was Farrer's purpose in the article cited at the outset. He wrote that the hypothesis of Luke using Matthew must be explored before the hypothesis of a common source be considered.

In 1965, the challenge was taken up by F. G. Downing in an article<sup>8</sup> which examined some key passages to test Farrer's proposition that Luke used Mark as a framework with which to fit material he had quarried from Matthew's additions to Mark. The passages selected are those where Matthew has apparently conflated Markan material with similar, but distinct material of his own. He considers in detail the notoriously difficult Beelzebul controversy (Mt. 12: 22–45; Mk. 3: 20–29; Lk. 11: 14–26; 12: 10; 6: 43–45) with shorter studies of the Baptism narrative (Mt. 3: 1–4: 11 par); the sending out of the twelve (Mt. 9: 35–10: 16 par); and The Synoptic Apocalypse (Mt. 24: 4–26 par). In the case of the Beelzebul controversy, Downing notes that Luke does not use Mark where Matthew has taken him over more or less intact, but only follows Matthew where he adds new material to Mark or largely alters Mark. From this it is concluded that Luke did not know Matthew's use of Mark for no convincing reason can be suggested for Luke's rejection of material taken over intact from Mark. A similar pattern is found in the other passages.

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

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

<sup>7</sup> Pittsburgh (1970).

<sup>8</sup> 'Towards the Rehabilitation of Q' *NTS* 11 pp. 169–181.



to him is confirmed by either Matthew or Luke and the greater part of it by both. The corollary to this is with regard to Q that a parallel passage in the triple tradition is never *immediately* followed in both Matthew and Luke by a separate incident or discourse common to these two alone. Streeter<sup>9</sup> used the phenomena of order to shew not only that Mark was the best representative of the original gospel, but also that Matthew and Luke used Mark and Q independently.

The data relating to order have had a stronger influence on the two-document hypothesis and therefore on Q than any other. It is this plank in the traditional approach which has been under strong attack recently. In an article entitled 'The argument from order and the relationship between Matthew and Luke',<sup>10</sup> E. P. Sanders, following up his earlier book on *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*,<sup>11</sup> subjects this axiom to minute examination. He points out that any agreements, even minor ones between Matthew and Luke on a point of order which cannot be attributed to their independent use of Mark and Q will raise the possibility of some contact between Matthew and Luke. Verbal agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark are treated separately.

The crucial question is what constitutes an agreement in order? Earlier statements of the argument from order dealt only with full pericopes as found in Tischendorf's synopsis. These corresponded with the essential biographical outline of Jesus's life. But once the question becomes the literary one of possible contact between Matthew and Luke it is clear that these arbitrary divisions are no longer warranted. Obviously, once the larger pericopes are broken up, small points where Matthew and Luke agree are as difficult to explain as large ones. Here is one example: Matthew 11: 10 par Luke 7: 27 place the *idou apostellō* quotation concerning John in the context of John's question and Jesus' testimony to him. Mark 1: 2 places it in the context of John's preaching.<sup>12</sup>

Sanders also rejects the suggestion that in some instances where Matthew and Luke place Q material in the same place in the Markan outline, this can be explained if the preceding Markan passage was also in Q. Agreements between Matthew and Luke under these circumstances would be caused by their following the order of Q. (e.g. Mt. 3: 7-10 par Lk. 3: 7-9). Sanders lists the

following passages in Mark which are inexplicably unsupported by either Matthew or Luke 1: 4; 11: 11; 11: 15-19; 13: 33-37; 3: 13-19; 6: 1-6a; 4: 23; 12: 34c; 11: 25; 1: 4-6; 9: 41; 6: 34b.<sup>13</sup> Sanders' conclusion is worth quoting: 'The assurance with which it is usually said that Matthew and Luke were independent of each other rests on the assertion that they *never* agree together in such a way that it cannot be explained by reference to their independent use of Mark and Q. When we note the number of instances where they do, the assurance we have felt in the traditional hypothesis must be correspondingly weakened.'<sup>14</sup>

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

It is worth noting here that there has always been an undercurrent of opposition to the two-document hypothesis by defenders of rival hypotheses which place Matthew first.<sup>15</sup> Early in this century E. W. Lummis and H. G. Jameson<sup>16</sup> sounded an alarm that the reigning two-document hypothesis ignored important data. Jameson wanted to return to the Augustinian solution, which has been given a further airing in recent years by B. C. Butler.<sup>17</sup> The hypothesis propounded by Augustine held that the order of the gospels was Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, that no gospel was written in ignorance of the others and that Mark was the epitomiser of Matthew. Recently, dissatisfaction with Q, fed by a growing quantity of data which seriously undermines it, has led to a considerable revival of interest in alternative hypotheses, chiefly the Griesbach hypothesis, which sees Matthew as a source for Luke with Mark using both.

The name which is probably most familiar to students of the synoptic problem in current debate is William R. Farmer whose book *The Synoptic Problem—a critical analysis*<sup>18</sup> sought to reopen the whole question of synoptic relationships with the aim of establishing the Griesbach hypothesis as the only one which satisfied the requirements of the data. But, anybody who reads Farmer hoping for

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also points where Matthew and Luke agree to some extent in placing same material at same place in Markan outline where such agreement not due to Q. Mt. 13: 33 par Lk. 13: 20f.; Mt. 18: 10-22 par Lk. 17: 3f.

<sup>14</sup> *Art. cit.*, p. 261. But see the article in *The minor agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark* (291ff., B. E. T. L. Louvain, 1974) for some modification of Sanders' argument.

<sup>15</sup> *How Luke was written* (Cambridge, 1915).

<sup>16</sup> *The origin of the Synoptic Gospels* (Blackwell, 1922).

<sup>17</sup> *The originality of Matthew* (Cambridge, 1951).

<sup>18</sup> New York (1964), recently republished without alteration by Western North Carolina Press (1976).

<sup>9</sup> *Four Gospels*, p. 161.

<sup>10</sup> *NTS* 15 (1968-69), pp. 249-261.

<sup>11</sup> *CUP* (1969).

<sup>12</sup> See also Mt. 7: 2 par Lk. 6: 38 cf. Mk. 4: 24; Mt. 3: 2 par Lk. 3: 3 cf. Mk. 1: 4; Mt. 3: 11 par Lk. 3: 16 cf. Mk. 1: 7f.

an exhaustive discussion of Griesbach will discover that the first 200 pages are taken up with a critical history of the treatment of the synoptic problem from the 18th century to the present. Farmer then leads us to 'a New Introduction to the Problem' covering some 84 pages along Griesbachian lines including a necessarily abbreviated chapter entitled 'Notes for a History of the Redaction of Synoptic Tradition in Mark' (50 pages). The reader must judge for himself, but in our judgment the value of Farmer's book lies in the fascinating historical section. Farmer skillfully, but without rancour, exposes the foibles and lack of objectivity at crucial turning points in the debate. In this writer's view, the best two chapters are 3: 'The English Endorsement and Modification of the Two-Document Hypothesis' and 4: 'An Analysis of Streeter's contribution to the Two-Document Hypothesis'.

One of the main reasons why the Griesbach hypothesis has aroused such interest in recent years is the failure of the two-document solution to deal with the problem of the so-called 'Minor Agreements'. These are the many instances where Matthew and Luke agree against Mark. C. H. Turner in 1924 declared that 'so long as it is supposed that there is a residuum of agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark in matter taken from Mark . . . so long will research into the synoptic question be hampered and a final solution be delayed'.<sup>19</sup>

The study of the minor agreements has become something of a 'growth industry'. Recently a full-scale study of this question has appeared edited by F. Neirynck.<sup>20</sup> It is a book which provides complete data relating to the minor agreements with an introductory essay on the way the problem has been treated in the past.

One of the interesting facts which emerges from the survey of the minor agreements is that some scholars are able to combine an acceptance of the priority of Mark with the abandonment of Q. This was Farrer's position,<sup>21</sup> but he was vulnerable to attack because he was proposing a general hypothesis which was exposed at many points. But he was followed by others who looked at particular instances of agreement between Matthew and Luke. N. Turner<sup>22</sup> in a contribution to the Oxford Congress of 1957 replying to an article by E. L.

Bradby<sup>23</sup> discusses some Markan passages produced by Bradby (Mk. 2: 26; 4: 4, 9, 19, 20; 6: 7; 8: 31, 34, 35, 36). Turner is relying upon arguments from style when he writes: 'There cannot be any other reason than *literary* dependence to explain these apparently irrelevant agreements of style and grammar. . . . Because these agreements are so often inconsistent with St Luke's style elsewhere, it is more likely that Luke depends on Matthew than vice-versa' (p. 234).

R. T. Simpson in his article 'The Major Agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark'<sup>24</sup> discusses three passages: Mark 1: 1-13; 12: 28-31; 3: 22-27. As a general proposition Simpson writes: 'The more strongly we plead the case for Q as a means of explaining all those resemblances between Matthew and Luke which are not attributable to their common use of Mark, the more we undermine the theory of the priority of Mark and the more we stress the importance of the Matthean and Lucan "improvements" of Mark, the more the significance of those minor agreements which are such a difficulty for the defender of Q will be enhanced'.<sup>25</sup>

The crux of Simpson's argument is that in the passages referred to, Matthew and Luke do not simply add to Mark, but also *improve* it, often in precisely the same way. The choice of words carried with it a value judgment, but the essential point still stands when it is noted that there is a close connection between the Q material and that taken from Mark. In fact the Q material cannot stand on its own.<sup>26</sup> Simpson notes the volte face by Streeter on this point between the publication of the *Oxford Studies* (1911) and *The Four Gospels* (1924). Simpson's other axiom is the priority and independence of Mark and his conclusion that 'once this is conceded, then the case for believing that the major agreements could have been produced only as a result of St Luke's use of an edited version of Mark is entirely convincing'.<sup>27</sup>

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

<sup>19</sup> 'In Defence of Q,' *ExpT* 68 (1956-7), pp. 315-318.

<sup>20</sup> *NTS* 12 (1965-6), pp. 273-284.

<sup>21</sup> *Art. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the remark of Downing *Art. cit.* p. 171 that Q material in the Beelzebul controversy formed a 'Coherent Narrative.'

<sup>23</sup> *Art. cit.*, p. 275. Major agreements: the inclusion of Q material alongside certain of the minor agreements gives them an importance which distinguishes them from other agreements in Mark.

<sup>19</sup> *JTS* Vol. XXV, p. 377.

<sup>20</sup> *The Minor Agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark* (B. E. T. L. Louvain, 1974).

<sup>21</sup> *Art. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> 'The Minor Verbal Agreements of Matthew and Luke Against Mark'—*Studia Evangelica* I (1959), pp. 223-234.

Matthew. Mark's rather clumsy phrase *egō ebaptisma hymas hydati* is replaced by the more stylish *egō men (en) hydati baptizō hymas* and the saying is moved to a more emphatic position. Again the Q material in Luke 3: 17=Matthew 3: 12 is an expansion of the Markan narrative. Simpson believes that the independent alteration of Mark in this way must be more than coincidental. More striking however is the fact that the material appended to Mark 1: 8 begins with the pronoun which refers back to the subject *autos* taken from Mark.

Simpson's final conclusion is that 'either . . . Mark knew and modified Q (or even Matthew) or . . . Luke knew Matthew as well as Mark. In every case we have considered, it is Mark who appears to give the more primitive version and it is obvious that the simplest solution to the problem is that Luke made use of Matthew.'<sup>28</sup> He is careful to say that on the evidence adduced, the probability is greatly strengthened that Matthew was one of Luke's sources rather than offering an overall solution. However, Simpson did not consider the older view of overlapping of sources, and further, by insisting that in each case Mark offered the original version, he ruled out the Griesbach solution. It is to this that we must briefly now turn.

The Griesbach solution to synoptic relationships can on the face of it eliminate just those difficulties which are so troublesome to defenders of the two-document solution, especially of course the minor agreements. Hardly less important for advocates of Griesbach, however is the claim that there is no need to have recourse to any theory of overlapping sources. This they regard as a desperate expedient to explain passages in Mark which appear to contain secondary features. Thus D. L. Dungan writes: 'The existence of Q has always been essential to the argument for Mark's priority—precisely as the loophole to invoke any time one finds a pericope that is more primitive in Matthew and/or Luke when they are supposedly using Mark: the blessed overlap.'<sup>29</sup> This is not quite accurate. Overlap is more usually postulated to explain different features or versions in Mark, not necessarily secondary ones. That is a separate and

further problem. Further, advocates of Griesbach sometimes appeal to an overlap of sources in passages where Luke's version appears more primitive than Matthew's. Farmer, for instance, says that Luke used parallel traditions for his versions of the parables of the lost sheep, the talents/pounds, and the wedding feast, in addition to parts of the apocalyptic discourse.<sup>30</sup> Thus defenders of Griesbach cannot claim to have escaped from this problem. The difficulty of establishing proper criteria for determining when a Mark-Q overlap exists is one that cannot be discussed here, but enough has been said to show that the existence of parallel and overlapping sources is not peculiar to Marcan priorists and defenders of Q.<sup>31</sup>

Even if it is granted, however, that the possibility of overlapping sources does not present so much of a problem to advocates of the Griesbach hypothesis and further, when the difficulty of the minor agreements are dealt with by placing Mark third, can we see the revival of Griesbach as offering a way forward? The only way to arrive at a satisfactory answer to the question is to examine in outline a typical passage where Farmer claims that Mark is the result of direct redactional activity on the text of Matthew and Luke.

The parable of the mustard seed is an excellent example since it has always presented problems, whichever view one takes as to the relationship between the three versions. Farmer's basic axiom in describing Mark's method and purpose is put as follows: Mark was 'guided by the literary purpose not to deviate from the text to which his predecessors bore concurrent testimony'.<sup>32</sup>

Firstly, on Farmer's principles, it is not at all clear why Mark has included this parable at all. According to Farmer, Mark has just stopped using Luke as his source (4: 21–25=Lk. 8: 16–18) and gone over to Matthew. He then omits Matthew's parable of the tares, but inserts his own parable of the seed growing secretly (4: 26–29). It could be that Mark decided to follow Matthew at this point because there is a Lucan parallel, though in a different Lucan context (Lk. 13: 18f). Why then does Mark not include the parable of the leaven which follows in both Matthew and Luke? The

<sup>28</sup> *Art. cit.*, p. 282. Simpson effectively disposes of Hawkins' suggestion in *Horae Synopticae* that some of Matthew and Luke's agreements against Mark may be due to their use of a revised 'deutero-Mark'. In a number of places Luke appears to conflate Matthew's improved version of Mark with the original (e.g. Lk. 3: 4a, 16) so that he must have known both. On Simpson's general approach see now M. D. Goulder, 'On putting Q to the test' *NTS* 24, No. 2 (1978).

<sup>29</sup> 'Mark—the abridgement of Matthew and Luke' in *Jesus and Man's Hope* Vol. 1 (Pittsburgh, 1970), pp. 51–97.

<sup>30</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 248, 272. Also his article 'A fresh approach to Q' in *Christianity, Judaism and other Graeco-Roman Cults—Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* Pt. 1 (ed. J. Neusner-Leiden, 1975), pp. 39–50.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Streeter *op. cit.*, p. 306 and the criticism of Sanders in 'The overlaps of Mark and Q and the Synoptic Problem' *NTS* 19 (1973), pp. 453–65. His own criteria are open to criticism.

<sup>32</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 217. Farmer is attending to E. D. Burton's *Principles of Literary Criticism and the Synoptic Problem* (Chicago, 1904).

verbal agreements are so great as to compel some literary relationship. We are left in some doubt as to what Mark's redactional procedure really was!<sup>33</sup>

However, granted that Mark has chosen to include this parable, his choice of wording presents problems for the Griesbach hypothesis. A few examples must suffice.

1. Having reverted to Matthew as a source, he immediately changes the Matthean introduction and substitutes a simple *kai elegen*, although this is a feature of Markan style and may not be significant.

2. Mark now follows with a double question taken from Luke, but not exactly. Luke's *homoioō* is moved to the first half of the double question, preceded by *pōs* rather than the more usual construction using *tini*. Even if it could be granted that the changes are due to Markan style, lack of close verbal similarity makes the theory of direct literary dependence difficult.<sup>34</sup>

3. The next passage makes very difficult reading in Mark. Both Matthew and Luke have the same construction *homoia estin* followed by the dative, but precisely where on Farmer's thesis Mark should be following his common source, he ignores it and substitutes his own *hōs* plus dative. The whole of Mark's sentence is odd here, since he has left it without a proper main verb and he makes other changes which make the Griesbach solution look decidedly shaky. In fact, it looks as if, far from Mark following his sources where they bear concurrent testimony, he has painstakingly avoided the coincidences of Matthew and Luke. Since the result is grammatically baffling, we have to place a large question mark against the hypothesis.<sup>35</sup>

It seems, then, that insuperable difficulties lie in the way of accepting the Griesbach solution, but if we take seriously the evidence often presented that in this and other passages<sup>36</sup> there are two separate versions, independent of each other, we are back to discussion of overlapping sources and in the present writer's opinion, the existence of an independent source drawn upon by Matthew and Luke which overlapped with Mark is still the most probable

explanation of the phenomena.<sup>37</sup>

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

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

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

2. Sir John Hawkins at the beginning of this century in his contribution to *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem* divided up the Q material into three classes. Class A—passages very probably derived from Q are almost twice as long as classes B and C put together (*i.e.* those passages where derivation from Q is less likely). It seems to us that the weight of probability is still on the side of an independent use of Q by Matthew and Luke when the data given by Hawkins is taken in conjunction with Luke's odd editorial policy if we wish to make Matthew Luke's source. This latter point is still a most serious obstacle for supporters of Griesbach.

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

The debate is refreshingly vigorous and shews no signs of abating as yet. In particular, the Baptist material poses real difficulties for traditional Q supporters.

We now turn to the third main area of importance in Q research, which concerns the status of Q as a theological work. Such an undertaking is beset with

<sup>33</sup> See Farmer's comment *op. cit.* p. 248, 'Whenever Mark undertook to conflate or combine material from one of his sources with parallel material from another, he tended to confine himself to literary units between which there already existed a close relationship of literary dependence' (!).

<sup>34</sup> See F. Neiryneck *Duality in Mark* (Louvain, 1972), p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> Lohmeyer in *Das Evangelium des Matthaus* (Gottingen, 1967), p. 216 put forward another theory of the Markan conflation of two sources.

<sup>36</sup> *E.g.* Mk. 3: 22-30 par Mk. 4: 21-5 par Mk. 1: 12-13 par.

<sup>37</sup> For an assessment of the Synoptic situation by a classical scholar see J. M. Rist *On the Independence of Matthew and Luke* SNTS Monograph No. 32 (Cambridge, 1978).

difficulties, not the least of which is scholarly agreement on the extent of Q. The danger of circularity is never absent. Nonetheless, the work done in this area does suggest that in broad terms the material labelled Q possesses certain distinctive characteristics and motifs. T. W. Manson in his important book *The Sayings of Jesus*<sup>38</sup> believed that Luke preserved to a fair degree the order of Q and further that it is possible to uncover an outline of Pre-Q (and Pre-M) tradition consisting of the following elements. (1) Jesus' Preaching; (2) Mission charge; (3) Against the Pharisees; (4) Eschatological Speech.

The consideration of Q as a distinctive theological work is of course part of the larger enterprise called 'Redaction Criticism'<sup>39</sup> itself an aspect or rather a stage in the traditio-historical study of the gospels. For a useful introduction to and survey of redaction criticism, readers are referred to J. Rohde's *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*.<sup>40</sup> For the purposes of this article, it is assumed that the reader is familiar with the developments in Form and Redaction Criticism and we will proceed straight to the application of Redaction Criticism to Q.

Reference has already been made to the work of T. W. Manson who pointed out that Q carries certain emphases. His explanation as to why Q lacked a passion account was simple—the community which used this collection already knew it. This is a neat solution and Manson makes a considerable point of the small amount of the polemical material in Q (ten per cent). He explains this by saying that it is better to be positive than controversial.

Can this classic *kerygma-plus-didache* solution be accepted? Unfortunately it cannot if only because of the presence in the Q material of such passages as the Beelzebul controversy, the John sayings and the prophecy about Jerusalem. It was H. E. Tödt in 1959, who first focused attention on Q as a 'controversy' document, as a by-product of his study of the Son of Man sayings.<sup>41</sup> Tödt picked up Bultmann's observation, that Jesus' teaching was not simply gathered, but also proclaimed.<sup>42</sup> Q ceases to be thought of simply as a moral guide, supplementing the *kerygma*, but rather Q was produced by a community not centred on the

*kerygma* at all. This community saw its task as continuing to proclaim the message which Jesus proclaimed. The *words* of Jesus now have significance and not just his *death*.

What were the motives that resulted in the Q collection? Tödt starts with the mission discourse in Matthew and Luke, which is based on Q, and compares it to Mark. The influence of Q is seen primarily in Matthew 10:7=Luke 10:9 where the disciples are told to pass on the message preached by Jesus—the imminence of the Kingdom of God. Mark 1:1 states that the message is about Jesus the Christ.<sup>43</sup>

It is clear, according to Tödt, that the Q community believed the announcement of the Kingdom of God to be as relevant now (in the post-Easter situation) as it was in Jesus' lifetime. Hence the character of Q is determined by the imminence of God's reign and not by the passion *kerygma*. Tödt accepts the future Son of Man sayings as authentic and his point is that the expectation of the Q community is found in its use of the Son of Man title and the related statements of the nature of the disciples' mission. Another point worth noting is Tödt's treatment of the resurrection. Although of crucial significance for the Q community, the resurrection was not a subject of its early preaching. The resurrection affirms Jesus' authority, and that of his teaching. Tödt calls this 'Christological Cognition'.<sup>44</sup> The continuity between Jesus and the risen Christ lies in equating of Jesus and the Son of Man.

Tödt's book is a long one and we have done little more than point to its significance in relation to a redaction-critical approach to Q, although in substance his work probably has more christological significance than methodological. He does not for instance suggest anything more original than a Palestinian provenance for Q, and the idea that the Q community gathered the teaching of Jesus with a view to its continued contemporary proclamation is taken from Bultmann.<sup>45</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that W. D. Davies also presented a critique of the view that Q was preserved primarily for hortatory reasons in his book *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*,<sup>46</sup> quite independently of Tödt. Among the reasons given for denying the hortatory character of Q is the fact that, as recent studies have shown, catechetical material in the New Testament offers few, if any, parallels to Q. For example, Davies does not

<sup>38</sup> London (1937).

<sup>39</sup> An attempt to translate the German *Redaktionsgeschichte*.

<sup>40</sup> SCM (1968).

<sup>41</sup> *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (SCM) ET, 1965.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247 and R. Bultmann *Theology of the NT* 1, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> This comparison is arbitrary since Mark goes on to record Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom in 1:14f.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247 (Citing Bultmann *Theology* 1, p. 34).

<sup>46</sup> Cambridge (1963), pp. 366-386.

see the section on John the Baptist as an exhortation to avoid the sect of his followers (Mt. 3: 11= Lk. 3: 16) but as a proclamation of the impending crisis which John had announced: 'The original Q form . . . had no reference to the Spirit. It ran "He will baptize you with fire". . . . The sense of the saying is not that John's baptism is the preliminary to something better, but that it is the last chance of escaping something very much worse, namely, the coming of judgment.'<sup>47</sup> Davies observes this note of crisis through much of the Q material and concludes that the ethical teaching in Q 'expresses the total final demand that God lays upon men in Christ'.<sup>48</sup> It therefore follows 'that the teaching of Jesus in Q cannot with justice be characterized as catechetical, if by catechetical is meant elementary instruction given to candidates for admission into the Church at baptism'.<sup>49</sup>

These works of Tödt and Davies mark the beginnings of what was soon to become a stream of studies in which redaction-critical methods were to be brought to bear on Q.<sup>50</sup> Amongst the important names in the late 60's and early 70's are those of D. Lührmann<sup>51</sup> and P. Hoffmann.<sup>52</sup>

Lührmann's point of departure is the distinction made by Bultmann between collecting and editing. Is it possible to discern within the Q material a purpose which goes beyond merely collecting material according to certain laws of transmission? Lührmann believes that such a redactional purpose is discernible. The two-source hypothesis is assumed as is also the form-critical axiom that the synoptic tradition originally consisted of independent units circulating according to local need and circumstance. He also accepts that there were community formulations (inventions!?) at all levels of the tradition.<sup>53</sup> As an indication of the provenance of Q, he believes that Q presupposes the Gentile mission and that the final editing cannot be earlier than AD 50 or 60 in the Hellenistic community. As regards the form of Q, Lührmann agrees with Robinson's *logoi sophōn*, but not that the form of Q as such is gnosticising.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369 (Citing T. W. Manson).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 385.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386.

<sup>50</sup> See also particularly J. M. Robinson 'On the Gattung of Q' in *The future of our Religious Past—Essays in honour of R. Bultmann SCM* (1971), pp. 84-130.

<sup>51</sup> *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle* (WMANT 33: Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener—Verlag, 1969).

<sup>52</sup> *Studien Zur Theologie des Logienquelle* (NT Abh 8, Münster: Aschendorff, 1972).

<sup>53</sup> See the valuable new study by D. Hill *Prophecy in NT* (MM & S, 1979) who levels very just criticism against this widely held view.

<sup>54</sup> 'Die Form Von Q als Solche gnosticisierend sei' (*ibid.*, p. 91).

What then of the theology of Q? Here, Lührmann believes that for the Q community the most important redactional motif is the contrast between Jesus and the disciples on the one hand and Israel on the other. The separation is absolute; for Israel there remains only judgment. Christologically, the leitmotif is that the community continues the proclamation of Jesus, in particular the judgment. 'Jesus is not the one proclaimed, but on the contrary, the content of the proclamation is the coming judgment in which Jesus as Son of Man will save his community.'<sup>55</sup> *Hyios* and *Kyrios* occur as Christological titles in addition to Son of Man. There are few explicit Old Testament citations but instead we find frequent allusions to Old Testament narratives, particularly those which accompany minatory words (*Drohworten*), underlining Q's purpose of admonition to watchfulness as judgment approaches.

The core of the study is a detailed analysis of Q passages classified under three major headings: (1) 'Jesus and "this generation"' subdivided into: (a) the question of John the Baptist (Lk. 7: 18-35 and 3: 7-9, 17); the Beelzebul controversy and request for a sign (Lk. 11: 14-23; 24-26; 29-32); discourse against the Pharisees (Lk. 11: 39-52). (2) 'The Community' (Lk. 12: 2-9; 6: 20-49; 7: 1-10; 9: 57-60; 10: 2-12, 13-15, 21-24). (3) 'Eschatology' (Lk. 12: 39-40, 42-46; 19: 12-27; 17: 24, 26-30, 34-35, 37 [see pp. 24-83]).

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

<sup>55</sup> My translation.

allegory) fits quite well with the explanation and it cannot be ruled out that the parable had an application from the start.<sup>56</sup>

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

Before leaving the German scene, no survey would be complete without an acknowledgment of the great commentary of S. Schulz.<sup>57</sup> Here, we can do no more than note that Schulz takes account of recent studies in German by Tödt, Hoffmann and Lührmann. His interest is the light thrown on the development of early Christianity by a study of Q. He sees the sayings source used by Matthew and Luke as itself the product of two stages of development. The first is marked by post-Easter apocalyptic enthusiasm and by charismatic eschatological intensification of the Torah. Jesus was the exalted Son of Man and expected judge. To this earlier stage are assigned the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, the injunction to love of enemies and the prohibition of divorce and judgment of others. The early Q community is regarded as a type of 'Hebrew' Christianity and draws attention to passages upholding the Torah and disparaging Gentiles and tax collectors. No future study of Q can safely ignore Schulz, and it seems churlish to criticize a work which is by any standards monumental. But, from a conservative standpoint, its sheer massiveness makes one ask whether in the end the author has paid sufficient attention to the question of the creative role of Jesus himself. We are back with the crucial question of criteria. This question becomes very pressing when dealing with the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus and is therefore relevant to the study of Q. Whilst Schulz does not employ the absurdly stringent criteria of N. Perrin and others (dissimilarity, coherence and multiple attestation), there is always the danger that the sheer impact of Jesus himself will not be given sufficient weight in his desire to locate Q in its appropriate post-Easter milieu.

The French have not been idle in the field of Q

studies and we must now look briefly at some recent contributions in French. To maintain continuity, we start with a most useful article by M. Devisch in a volume published in 1972 on Matthean questions.<sup>58</sup> His article entitled 'Le document Q, source de Matthieu. Problématique Actuelle' is in itself a sound review of existing redactional studies of Q dealing with method, theology and Sitz-im-Leben. Devisch identifies with great charity the dangers and risks in identifying successive phases of the Q tradition in which the theology is supposedly located. He summarises the approaches of Polag, Lührmann and Hoffmann and concludes as follows: 'To sum up, the method can be reduced principally to isolating by means of the *Formgeschichte* the pre-existing units in the great discourses of the Q source so as to describe in this way the redactional activity of the composer of these discourses and the theological motifs expressed there. When we can discover the same motifs for several discourses, we can, in agreement with Lührmann, justly characterize the document Q as a work of editorship or of theology.'<sup>59</sup> We will leave our general criticism of this until the end.

It is convenient at this point, however, to mention the question of the literary genre to which Q belongs. One of the difficulties faced by supporters of Q in the past has been the fact that the idea of a sayings collection of the kind represented by Q is without parallel. In 1964, however, J. M. Robinson in an influential article<sup>60</sup> put forward evidence to suggest that Q belongs on a 'trajectory' stretching from the Jewish wisdom literature to the full gnosticised *Pistis Sophia* in the second century AD. He cites in particular the Gospel of Thomas and says that Q and Thomas represent particular moments in the development of a literary *Gattung* with a history in Judaism and in 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' Christianity.

Robinson's view has had a mixed reception and Devisch is among those who find it untenable. He points to certain differences between Q and Thomas as refuting any connection between them. He points out (rightly) that Thomas has no Christology, where Q does, but when he says that 'Q, actually is not a gnostic writing where the resuscitated Christ, placed outside the world and of time, reveals the gnosis'<sup>61</sup> he is not understanding Robinson correctly. Thomas, according to Robinson, represents a movement away from the synoptic Jesus towards the gnostic revealer Jesus, but outwardly there is a

<sup>56</sup> See *Jeremias Parables*, pp. 160-162.

<sup>57</sup> *Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten*—Zurich, Theologischer Verlag (1972).

<sup>58</sup> BETL (Leuven Univ. Press).

<sup>59</sup> *Art. cit.*, p. 89 (my translation).

<sup>60</sup> See note 50 ante.

<sup>61</sup> *Art. cit.*, p. 85.

similarity of form. In our view, this question requires more detailed attention before we can accept Kümmel's conclusion that 'the Gospel of Thomas can teach us nothing about the origin and the literary character of Q'.<sup>62</sup>

The French, it seems go in for solutions of the synoptic problem which can only be called elaborate, dealing in multiple sources. All that is possible here is a glance at one of the more involved, not to say eccentric, schemes described by P. Benoit and M. E. Boismard.<sup>63</sup> This gives an outline of the pre-history of the gospels with a section-by-section commentary on the working out of the theory in practice. The complexity can best be illustrated by referring the reader to the review in *JTS* 25 p. 485 where an amazing diagram of interrelationships is presented!

Before drawing the threads together, we must mention the recent book by J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*<sup>64</sup> insofar as it bears upon the question of Q. This book is worth reading as a brilliant tour de force, challenging as it does many sacred cows in the matter of relative dating. Bishop Robinson is found to be at many points a surprising ally of the conservative cause!

Robinson's basic thesis is that the entire New Testament was completed by AD 70, which means, of course, that so far as the synoptic gospels are concerned, the time span for gestation and acceptance as source material is drastically reduced. The following brief extract will, I hope, whet the appetite: 'My conclusion is that we must be open to seeing that the most primitive state of the triple . . . tradition is not consistently or exclusively to be found in any one gospel, to which we must then assign overall priority. Rather, I believe that there was written (as well as oral) tradition, underlying each of them, which is sometimes preserved in its original form by Matthew, sometimes by Luke, though most often I would judge by Mark. Hence the strength of the case for the priority of Mark, which is nevertheless overstated when this document is itself regarded as the foundation document of the other two. The gospels as we have them are to be seen as parallel, though by no means isolated developments of common material for different spheres of the Christian mission, rather than a series of documents standing in simple chronological sequence.'<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Kümmel *Introduction* p. 76. See also M. J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Harvard, 1970), pp. 6ff.

<sup>63</sup> *Synopse des quatre Evangiles en francais—Tome II* (Paris, 1972).

<sup>64</sup> SCM (1976).

<sup>65</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 93f.

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

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

1. The 'fundamental solution' proposed by Streeter, although not abandoned, is under considerable strain. We are witnessing the curious situation, in which, on the one hand, literary criticism is undermining the viability of Q as a distinct source and on the other, large edifices of theological construction are being erected on the assumption that Q is an 'assured result'. This phenomenon demonstrates the inconclusive and indeed circular nature of Q studies. In this writer's view, a Q hypothesis is still the best explanation of the large body of common material in Matthew and Luke, but the indeterminate scope and content of the hypothetical source Q remains a major problem. Further, such problems as the minor agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark mean that the Griesbach challenge cannot be dismissed as a temporary aberration.

2. Whilst we do not wish to detract from the solid achievements of practitioners of the theology of Q, this writer feels some disquiet at some of the results. Lührmann for example stresses the Q distinction between Jesus (and John the Baptist) and 'this generation', but it seems clear that for Lührmann this reflects the situation of the Q community in its proclamation of judgment. The style of the proclamation is thus a community formulation and does not necessarily tell us anything vital about Jesus and his generation during the ministry. Can we, indeed visualize the kind of community delineated here by Lührmann and others, where in Lührmann's words 'continuity between Jesus and the Church is provided in eschatology and not in *kerygma*'?<sup>66</sup> What sort of gospel community is it which concerns itself with judgment and not with the saving events of the *kerygma*?<sup>67</sup>

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

<sup>66</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>67</sup> See G. N. Stanton 'On the Christology of Q' in *Christ and Spirit in the NT* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 27-42.



imposed a fresh meaning, either by the addition of introductory matter, juxtaposition of content or use of Christological titles. As Devisch aptly points out, 'what we are concerned with is the theology of the last editor,'<sup>68</sup> but he implicitly concedes that to lay bare such final redaction is not possible for certain since the final editor may incorporate the

<sup>68</sup> *Art. cit.*, p. 90.

theology of his source intact. What we must not lose sight of is the fact that Matthew and Luke have incorporated into their gospels material which *prima facie* has certain emphases and concerns, but as finished products they display a concern to incorporate all aspects of Jesus's career and its final character in ushering in the day of salvation.

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