

In this thread, which is supposed to be on the lost writings of early Christianity that I would most like to have discovered, I can't seem to get away from Q. Several readers have asked a pointed question about Q. If you recall, Q is the hypothetical document that contained principally sayings of Jesus, that was evidently used by Matthew and Luke (but not by Mark) in constructing their Gospels. The logic is that if Matthew and Luke both used Mark (which the vast majority of scholars agree about), then one has to explain why they have so many other materials (mainly sayings) in common not *found* in Mark.

I have pointed out that Matthew does not seem to have gotten those sayings from Luke or Luke from Matthew, and so they both most have gotten them from some other one-time-existing source. That is what we call Q (for the German word Quelle: Source). But some readers have asked WHY it is unlikely that Matthew got these sayings from Luke or Luke from Matthew. It's a bit tricky, and I need to simplify a bit. But I'll try to explain as follows.

This is partly drawn from my discussion in my textbook on the New Testament. The argument that follows is actually used (in the book) to establish Markan Priority - that is, the view that Mark was prior to the other two Synoptics and was used by them as a source. But as I'll explain, the same argument is often appealed to as evidence that neither Matthew nor Luke got its sayings material from the other. It has to do with the sequence in which this sayings material appears in both Gospels.

Here is what I say in the book:

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