

Q and the *Logia*: On the Discovery and Marginalizing of P.Oxy.1

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First published in 1955, Austin Farrer's famous article "On Dispensing with Q" was directed against an orthodoxy associated especially with B. H. Streeter, an older Oxford colleague who had died in 1937 but whose work on gospel origins had already attained virtual canonical status.¹ In his opening pages, Farrer makes deft use of Ockham's Razor against those he calls "Streeterians".² *Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*: in explaining the origin of the "double tradition" there is no need to postulate an additional entity (Q) if Luke could have derived this material from Matthew. If Luke's use of Matthew can be shown to be plausible, Q disappears automatically at least in its dominant modern form.

I shall suggest here that this claim – that Luke's use of Matthew entails the elimination of Q – remains true, yet needs to be refined. Farrer overlooks the fact that Q has more than one function. It not only accounts for the non-Markan overlap between Matthew and Luke, it also helps to bridge the gap between sayings of Jesus uttered in around 30 CE and their incorporation into one or more written gospels half a century later. Fifty years is a long time to preserve an utterance by purely oral means, especially in the absence of any obvious institutional mechanism for controlling transmission. In dispensing with Q, must we either place our faith in oral tradition or assume with Michael Goulder that many of the

¹ Austin Farrer, "On Dispensing with Q", in *Studies in the Gospels in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), 55–88; B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924¹, 1930⁴). Streeter and his wife were killed in an aeroplane crash in Switzerland.

² "On Dispensing with Q", 55–57.

sayings and parables attributed to Jesus were actually composed by Matthew?³ If, however, Farrer's hypothesis is correct and Q in its conventional form is eliminated, it remains entirely possible for Matthew to have drawn on written collections of Jesus' sayings which, as such, would in a certain sense be Q-like although they would not be Q. Elsewhere I have argued that there is considerable evidence for the existence of a Sayings Collection genre, of which the *Gospel of Thomas* is a late but fully extant example.⁴ Here, I shall show that this possibility was already discussed in late 19th century Oxford, during the lifetime of the long-running seminar on the synoptic problem that was to inspire the work of Streeter. The discussion was occasioned by the publication of an important fragment of a noncanonical gospel, and I will suggest that the hypothetical Q document was preferred on the conservative grounds that it remains safely within the limits of the New Testament canon.

This long-forgotten episode in the history of scholarship has an interest of its own, but it is also instructive. It brings to light an often unrecognized factor in the construction of the so-called "Synoptic Problem", the assumption that a canonical boundary created towards the end of the second century corresponds to historical realities towards the end of the first. The Synoptic Problem seeks a purely intracanonial solution to the historical problem of the origin and development of early gospel literature. Projecting the canonical boundary back into the last decades of the first century, it assumes that texts later differentiated by the names of Matthew, Mark, and Luke already constituted a self-contained collection as soon as they came into being. These texts are, of course, inter-related. It is entirely appropriate to ask how that inter-relatedness is to be explained, seeking a literary solution entailing priority and

³ Michael Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm*, 2 vols. (JSNTSup, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

⁴ Francis Watson, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 217-85. In my view, Thomas in its present form shows unmistakable signs of synoptic influence – as argued persuasively by Simon Gathercole, *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas: Original Language and Influences* (SNTSMS, Cambridge: CUP, 2012), 127-224; Mark Goodacre, *Thomas and the Gospels: The Case for Thomas's Familiarity with the Synoptics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012). Contra Gathercole and Goodacre, however, I consider the *format* of Thomas – juxtaposed sayings with a simple introductory formula – to have primitive roots which make this relatively late work relevant for synoptic origins.

dependence rather than appealing to the vagaries of oral tradition. What is problematic is the assumption that the three inter-related texts are significantly related *only* to each other, and that they can be considered without reference to other early gospel literature – as though the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Egerton* gospel, or the Marcionite gospel were, from the very beginning, different in kind from the texts that later became canonical. In this field as in others, canonical or noncanonical status is determined by a text's reception by user-communities and not by inherent characteristics or conformity to pre-established criteria.⁵

Within this context of early gospel production Q is ambiguous and plays a variety of roles. It can be presented as an essentially noncanonical text that opposes the dominant emphasis on death and resurrection, miracle and apocalypse, by presenting Jesus as a teacher of wisdom.⁶ Analyzed into various successive layers, it can provide an account of written Jesus tradition prior to Mark.⁷ Yet Q is also a canonical text. There is nothing in Q that is not already in Matthew and Luke. Unlike genuinely extra-canonical gospels, Q contains nothing that is not already familiar. A radical theological stance can be assigned to it only on the basis

⁵ This account of gospel origins is in some respects similar to the one developed most influentially by Helmut Koester, in his *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: TPI, 1990) and *From Jesus to the Gospels: Interpreting the New Testament in its Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007). Koester writes: "In the vast treasure of non-canonical gospel literature, there are at least some writings that have not found their rightful place in the history of this literary genre", but which are "perhaps at least as old and as valuable as the canonical gospels as sources for the earliest developments of the traditions about Jesus" (*From Jesus to the Gospels*, 23). Koester also rightly locates the *Gospel of Thomas* within a broader Sayings Collection genre, building on his early work on *Synoptische Überlieferungen bei den apostolischen Vätern* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957). The major difference between Koester's position and the one assumed here (and developed elsewhere) is that he presupposes the existence of Q whereas I consider that later evidence allows us only to postulate a primitive Sayings Collection genre, but not to reconstruct any individual instance of it. In addition, a noncanonical gospel does not have to be "at least as old... as the canonical gospels" in order to be valuable for our understanding of gospel origins. The canonical gospels may themselves span a period of three or four decades, and a noncanonical gospel composed some years later indicates only that gospel literature continued to proliferate, not that it can be consigned to "apocryphal" status.

⁶ This is already the case in A. Harnack, *Sprüche und Reden Jesu: Die zweite Quelle des Matthäus und Lukas* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1907). For updated versions of this use of Q, see John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), and John S. Kloppenborg, *Q The Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2008).

⁷ John Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Traditions* (Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 1999²).

of an argument from silence, and such arguments can always be resisted.⁸ There is, then, a radical Q and a conservative Q, and it is this ability to appeal to all shades of opinion that explains Q's extraordinarily successful 20th century career. In addition to its role in resolving the Synoptic Problem, Q also generates the concept of "alternating primitivity" which seems so indispensable for conventional historical Jesus scholarship.⁹ Given that, as Farrer rightly emphasized, the very existence of Q hangs on the slender thread of Matthew and Luke's presumed independence of each other, Q's 20th century status as critical orthodoxy is a remarkable achievement.

At least in its British context, it was a conservative, intracanonial Q that established itself from the 1890s onwards. The Q hypothesis was used to declare the evidence of newly recovered noncanonical texts irrelevant to questions of gospel origins. Thus Streeter's magnum opus of 1924, subtitled *A Study in Origins*, limits its horizons to *The Four Gospels* with a decisiveness that Irenaeus himself would surely have applauded.

1. *Discovering the Logia*

⁸ For example in Philip Jenkins' polemic against the Jesus Seminar, *Hidden Gospels: How the Search for Jesus Lost its Way* (New York: OUP, 2001), 54-81.

⁹ For a critique of this concept see Mark Goodacre, *The Case against Q* (Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 2002), 61-66. Alternating primitivity is classically articulated by B. H. Streeter: "Sometimes it is Matthew, sometimes it is Luke, who gives a saying in what is clearly the more original form. This is explicable if both are drawing from the same source, each making slight modifications of his own; it is not so if either is dependent on the other" (*Four Gospels*, 183). Streeter here establishes the convention that "alternating primitivity" can be regarded as given and does not need to be demonstrated. His argument is reproduced almost verbatim by W. D. Davies and Dale Allison: "... [S]ometimes it is the First Evangelist who seems to preserve the more original form of a saying appearing in the double tradition, at other times it is Luke. This is inexplicable if one evangelist is following the other" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988-97), 1.116. For comprehensive evidence of alternating primitivity at work, see *The Critical Edition of Q*, ed. James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg (Hermeneia, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000). Here the format ($\alpha\beta\gamma$) represents Matthean agreement with Q against Luke, while [$\alpha\beta\gamma$] represents Lukan agreement with Q against Matthew.

In the summer of 1897 a newly discovered Greek fragment was presented to the world under the provocative title, ΛΟΓΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ: *Sayings of our Lord*.¹⁰ It became known as P.Oxy.1, and belongs to a text later recovered in a complete Coptic translation where it is entitled *peuaggelion pkata ;wmac, The Gospel according to Thomas*.¹¹ The new discovery was published with an Introduction and Commentary that assigned it an indirect role in canonical gospel origins. Scholarly rejection of any such role was intimately bound up with the development of the “Q” hypothesis, according to which the most important lost text is to be extracted not from the sands of Egypt but from within the canonical gospels themselves.

In more recent scholarship, P.Oxy.1 has long been subsumed into the study of the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*.¹² It will be instructive to consider it as it appeared to its first modern readers at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Logia fragment consists in a single piece of papyrus measuring around 15 x 10 cms, although broken off at the bottom.¹³ Its editors date it to the early third century. A page number is given at the top right of the verso (IA = 11), suggesting a text of similar or identical extent to the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* and to P.Oxy.654 (if it continued in step with its Coptic counterpart). Text on both verso and recto confirms that this book – unlike P.Oxy.654 – was in codex rather than roll format. The papyrus contains eight sayings of

¹⁰ Bernard Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, *ΛΟΓΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ: Sayings of our Lord* (London & New York: Henry Frowde, 1897) and *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol.1 (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898), 1-3. For modern editions co-ordinated with the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*, see Harold W. Attridge, “Appendix: The Greek Fragments”, in *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 95-128;118-21; Andrew Bernhard, *Other Early Christian Gospels: A Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts* (London & New York: T. & T. Clark, 2007) , 34-41. I here follow the enumeration of the sayings in the *editio princeps*.

¹¹ The convention of locating the title at the end of the work but not at the beginning no doubt derives from the translator’s Greek exemplar. P.Oxy.654 (= *GThos* 1-7) similarly appears to have lacked a superscription, to judge from the blank papyrus fragments above its opening line.

¹² For a discussion of the relationship of the Greek fragments P.Oxy.1, 654, 655 to the Coptic *GThos*, see Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary* (Leiden/Boston: 2014), 14-24, emphasizing the relative closeness of the Greek and Coptic versions. Of the three Greek manuscripts, P.Oxy.1 is closest to the Coptic text.

¹³ Cf. Grenfell and Hunt, *Sayings*, 6-7.

Jesus, although only faint traces of the fourth and eighth of these remain. Logia 2, 6, 7 are intact, however, as are substantial parts of Logia 1, 3, and 5. A standardized introductory formula, λέγει Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς, serves both to isolate the sayings from each other and to place an unusual emphasis on the person of the speaker. The formula is extant in four sayings (2, 3, 6, 7) and may be presumed for the others. Here and elsewhere, conventional Christian scribal abbreviations are employed: Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς (lines 5, 11, 30, 36), θ(εο)ῦ (line 8: “kingdom of God”), π(ατέ)ρα (line 11: “you will see the Father”), ἄν(θρώπ)ων (line 19: “the sons of men”), and, less usually, π(ατ)ρίδι (line 32: “his own country”).¹⁴

The surviving part of Logion 1 corresponds closely to the end of Luke 6.42: “... and then you will see clearly to cast out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.” Logia 2 and 3 are entirely new.¹⁵

Jesus says: Unless you fast to the world, you will not find the kingdom of God.¹⁶

Unless you observe the sabbath, you will not see the Father.

Jesus says: I stood in the midst of the world and I appeared to them in flesh, and I found them all drunk and no one did I find thirsty among them, and my soul grieves over the sons of men because they are blind in their hearts...

¹⁴ On the so-called *nomina sacra*, see L. Traube, *Nomina Sacra: Versuch einer Geschichte der christlichen Kürzung* (Munich: Beck, 1907); C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London: OUP, 1979), 26-48; Philip Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography and Textual Criticism*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 199-253; Larry Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 95-134. The appropriateness of Traube’s expression *nomina sacra* is questioned by Christopher Tuckett, “‘Nomina Sacra’: Yes and No?”, in *The Biblical Canons*, ed. J.-M. Auwers and H. J. de Jonge (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 431-58, and defended by Jane Heath, “*Nomina Sacra* and *Sacra Memoria* before the Monastic Age”, *JTS* 61 (2010), 516-49. Writing prior to Traube, Grenfell and Hunt refer simply to “the regular contractions used in biblical MSS” (*Sayings*, 7).

¹⁵ For analysis of these sayings in their Greek and Coptic forms (*GThos* 26-28), see Gathercole, *Thomas*, 320-34.

¹⁶ The Coptic refers only to “finding the kingdom” (*GThos* 27.1), and “of God” is uncertain in the Greek, where it is unclear which letter or letters preceded the *upsilon* with the supralinear stroke that indicates a conventional contraction. There appears to be no satisfactory alternative to “kingdom of God”.

Owing to the loss of the lower part of the page, only the final word of Logion 4 (πρωχρεία) survives at the top of the recto side. The first few lines of the recto are themselves seriously damaged, and Logion 5 exists only in tantalizing fragments until its remarkable conclusion: “Raise the stone and there you will find me, split the wood and I am there.” Logia 6 and 7 have Lukan and Matthean affinities respectively, although their wording is distinctive:

Jesus says: A prophet is not acceptable in his own country, nor does a doctor work cures for those who know him.

Jesus says: A city built on top of a high mountain and established can neither fall nor be hid.

In sum, there are at least three new sayings (2 *fasting/sabbath*, 3 *drunken world*, 5 *stone/wood*) to complement three familiar ones (1 *removing the speck*, 6 *prophet/doctor*, 7 *city on hilltop*), of which the last two contain significant novel elements.

The Logia fragment was published under the auspices of the Egypt Exploration Fund, founded in 1882 “for the purpose of conducting excavations in the Delta, which up to this time has been very rarely visited by travellers”. (The year 1882 also marked the beginning of British rule in Egypt.) In 1895 the Fund decided to include the Graeco-Roman period in its scope, and three young Oxford-based archaeologists – David Hogarth, Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt – were sent to prospect for promising sites in the Fayum region.¹⁷ Grenfell and Hunt returned in the winter of 1896-97 to excavate at Behneseh, site of the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus, around 200 miles south of Alexandria. After a slow start, their efforts met with

¹⁷ See D.W. Rathbone, ‘Grenfell and Hunt at Oxyrhynchus and in the Fayum’, in *The Egypt Exploration Society: The Early Years*, occasional papers ed. Patricia Spencer (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007), 195-229.

spectacular success. In their own words, written after their return to Oxford in the spring of 1897:

The ancient cemetery, to which for various reasons the first three weeks' work was devoted, proved on the whole unproductive; but in the rubbish-heaps of the town were found large quantities of papyri, chiefly Greek, ranging in date from the first to the eighth century, and embracing every variety of subject.¹⁸

The first edited collection of these texts was published the following year, in 1898,¹⁹ but one papyrus fragment seemed important enough to edit and publish immediately:

The document in question is a leaf from a papyrus book containing a collection of Logia or Sayings of our Lord, of which some, though presenting several novel features, are familiar, while others are wholly new. It was found at the very beginning of our work upon the town, in a mound which produced a great number of papyri belonging to the first three centuries of our era, those in the immediate vicinity of our fragment belonging to the second and third century.²⁰

To this laconic account of the discovery Grenfell later added vivid circumstantial detail in the pages of the October 1897 issue of *McClure's Magazine*, an American illustrated periodical, founded in 1893, which offered its readers a miscellany of fiction, history, and current affairs.²¹ Grenfell recounts how, the previous autumn, "leave was obtained by the

¹⁸ Grenfell and Hunt, *Sayings*, 5.

¹⁹ *Oxyrhynchus Papyri Part I* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898).

²⁰ Grenfell and Hunt, *Sayings*, 6.

²¹ Bernard P. Grenfell, "The Oldest Record of Christ's Life: The First Complete Account of the Recent Finding of the 'Sayings of our Lord'", *McClure's Magazine*, vol. IX no. 6 (Oct. 1897), 1022-30. Grenfell's article follows an account of "An Elephant Round-up in Siam" and a short story entitled "The Turf Cutters", and it is followed by a Civil War-related piece on "The Making of a Regiment: What a Service of Seven Months did for a Troop of Raw Volunteers." Grenfell's contribution is highlighted on the magazine's front cover, above an image of a young woman carrying an outsize apple under her arm to signify the arrival of Fall. The title, "The Oldest Record of Christ's Life" relates primarily to the Introduction to Grenfell's article provided by Frederick Kenyon (Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum, later its Director), who presents the *Logia* as "the earliest, and

Egypt Exploration Fund for Professor Flinders Petrie and myself to excavate anywhere in the strip of desert between the Fayûm and Minya, ninety miles long, in which Oxyrhynchus is situated.”²² Oxyrhynchus was selected for three reasons. First,

I had for some time felt that one of the most promising sites left was the city of Oxyrhynchus, on the edge of the western desert, 120 miles from Cairo. Being the capital of one of the districts into which Egypt was anciently divided, it must have been the abode of many rich people who could afford to possess a library of literary texts.²³

Second, Oxyrhynchus had been left intact by local antiquities-hunters, in contrast to other sites:

Though the ruins of the old town were known to be fairly extensive, and the site still continued partly to be inhabited up to the present day, no papyri appeared to have come from it, a fact which, though it might mean that there were no papyri to be found, made it probable that the place had not been much plundered for antiquities in recent times.²⁴

Third, and above all, Oxyrhynchus

far the earliest, record of the words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth” (1022). “Some of these sayings are certainly authentic, since they are preserved in the inspired Gospels. Some of them are not found in the Gospels; but who shall say whether they are or are not authentic?” (1023). Kenyon had also contributed to the previous issue of the magazine, where he argued that the recent publication of the Arabic Diatessaron refuted F. C. Baur’s late datings for the Gospels and confirms their historical veracity (“When were the Gospels written? Discoveries of the Last Twenty Years and what they have done toward answering the Question” (*McClure’s*, vol.IX no.5 [Sept. 1897], 1000-4). In contrast, Grenfell does not engage with historicity issues and confines himself to an account of “How We Found the ‘Logia’.”

²² Grenfell, “Oldest Record”, 1025. In view of the exceptional value of Grenfell’s article, I quote from it at length.

²³ Grenfell, “Oldest Record”, 1024.

²⁴ Grenfell, “Oldest Record”, 1024.

seemed to be a site where fragments of Christian literature might be expected of an earlier date than the fourth century, to which our oldest manuscripts of the New Testament belong: for the place was renowned in the fourth and fifth centuries on account of the number of its churches and monasteries, and the rapid spread of Christianity about Oxyrhynchus, as soon as the new religion was officially recognized, implied that it had already taken strong hold during the preceding centuries of persecution.²⁵

Having set the scene in this way, Grenfell proceeds to describe how, after abandoning work on the unproductive cemetery, the excavators switched their attention to the town itself:

On January 11th we sallied forth with some seventy workmen and boys, and set them to dig trenches through a mound... The choice proved a very fortunate one, for papyrus scraps at once began to come to light in considerable quantities, varied by occasional complete or nearly complete private or official documents containing letters, contracts, accounts, and so on; and there were also a number of fragments written in uncials, or rounded capital letters, the form of writing used in copying classical or theological manuscripts.²⁶

The discovery of the *Logia* papyrus followed not long after:

Later in the week Mr. Hunt, in sorting the papyri found on the second day, noticed on a crumpled uncial fragment written on both sides the Greek word *KAPΦΟΣ* (“mote”), which at once suggested to him the verse in the Gospels concerning the mote and the beam. A further examination showed that the passage in the papyrus really was the conclusion of the verse, “Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye,

²⁵ Grenfell, “Oldest Record”, 1024-25.

²⁶ Grenfell, “Oldest Record”, 1027.

and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye;" but that the rest of the papyrus differed considerably from the Gospels, and was, in fact, a leaf of a book containing a collection of sayings of Christ, some of which, apparently, were new. More than that could not be determined until we came back to England.²⁷

There was more to come:

The following day Mr. Hunt identified another fragment as containing most of the first chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. The evidence both of the handwriting and of the dated papyri with which they were found makes it certain that both the "Logia" and the St. Matthew fragment were written not later than the third century, and they are, therefore, a century older than the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament. It is not improbable that they were the sole remains of a library belonging to some Christian who perished in the persecution during Diocletian's reign, and whose books were thrown away.²⁸

The Matthew fragment is P.Oxy.2 = 3¹, and the implication of Grenfell's account is that it was found in close proximity to the Logia papyrus, presumably in one of the baskets in which the second day's findings had been gathered.²⁹

2. *Interpreting the Logia*

Grenfell's engaging and illuminating article complements the slim 20-page booklet, published three to four months earlier, in which he and Hunt presented their transcription,

²⁷ Grenfell, "Oldest Record", 1027.

²⁸ Grenfell, "Oldest Record", 1027-28.

²⁹ Grenfell's account continues to narrate how, "finding that the rubbish mounds were so fruitful, I proceeded to increase the number of workmen and boys to 110, and the flow of papyri rapidly became a torrent which it was difficult to cope with" ("Oldest Record", 1028).

reconstruction, and interpretation of the Logia papyrus. They consider but reject the possibility that the fragment is derived from an apocryphal text such as the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* or the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, known from patristic references.

Whether canonical or apocryphal, a gospel gives

a connected narrative of events and discourses, not a series of disjointed sayings... A more satisfactory view, though not free from difficulties, is that this fragment is what it professes to be: a collection of some of our Lord's sayings. These, judging from their archaic tone and framework, were put together not later than the end of the first or the beginning of the second century: and it is quite possible that they embody a tradition independent of those which have taken shape in our Canonical Gospels... In any case we may have got for the first time a concrete example of what was meant by the Logia which Papias tells us were compiled by St. Matthew, and the *λόγια κυριακά* upon which Papias himself wrote a commentary.³⁰

The crucial point here is that the Logia fragment is independent of canonical and noncanonical gospels at least as regards its genre. Gospels are connected narratives, whereas the Logia fragment is a Sayings Collection. We *may* have here a tradition independent of the synoptic one: that, say Grenfell and Hunt, is "quite possible". What is not just possible but certain is that we have here a "concrete example" of written Jesus tradition being transmitted in non-narrative form. Even if several of the sayings have been influenced by their Matthean or Lukan counterparts, the framework in which they are set would still be independent of all narrative gospels. That framework is unlikely to be unique to the present Logia fragment:

³⁰ Grenfell and Hunt, *Sayings*, 17, 18.

“[P]robably many such collections were made”.³¹ The new discovery confirms the existence of a genre.

The editors received an early and enthusiastic endorsement of their hypothesis from James Rendel Harris, for whom the new text demonstrates “the influence of extra-canonical texts upon the readings of the New Testament.”³² In the new Logia,

We find not only that we are behind the Gospels, but that there was more in the sources of the Gospels than is conserved in the Gospels themselves.³³

In assuming that the new text is itself part of a gospel source, Rendel Harris goes well beyond Grenfell and Hunt’s more cautious and defensible emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Logia genre. Rendel Harris does, however, provide further evidence for the existence of a Sayings Collection genre by citing passages from Acts and the Apostolic Fathers that attribute sayings to Jesus that do not occur in the canonical gospels. The Paul of Acts instructs the Ephesian elders

to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he said [ὅτι αὐτὸς εἶπεν], “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”³⁴

As Rendel Harris points out, the introductory formula, “that he said”, is superfluous in this context but recalls the repeated “Jesus said” of the Logia fragment. A similar

³¹ Grenfell and Hunt, *Sayings*, 18.

³² J. Rendel Harris, “The ‘Logia’ and the Gospels,” *Contemporary Review* 72 (1897), 341-48; 341. Four years earlier Rendel Harris had written, romantically yet presciently: “[I]t is to Egypt that we must more especially look in the coming days, for in the ruins of her cities and amongst her tombs there must yet lie a wealth of buried treasure in literature, which would make the world astonished. Especially should search be made and excavations carried on amongst the remains of cities belonging to the Christian era; for these, although not furnishing material to the student of Egyptology, are likely to contain many Christian and Greek documents” (*A Popular Account of the Newly-Recovered Gospel of Peter* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893), 11-12).

³³ Rendel Harris, “The ‘Logia’ and the Gospels”, 346; italics removed.

³⁴ Acts 20.35.

introduction is provided for an elaborate extra-canonical saying attributed to Jesus by 1 Clement, whose readers are to

remember the words of the Lord Jesus which he spoke teaching gentleness and patience. For he said this [οὕτως γὰρ εἶπεν]: “Be merciful, that you may receive mercy. Forgive, that it may be forgiven you. As you do, so it shall be done to you. As you give, so it shall be given to you. As you judge, so shall you be judged. As you are kind, so shall you receive kindness. With what measure you measure, with it shall it be measured to you.”³⁵

This carefully constructed saying is related to canonical material but does not derive directly from a canonical gospel. If extracanonical sayings are introduced with a standardized introductory formula in the new Logia sayings collection, other unfamiliar sayings and their introductions may stem from similar collections. Early citations of Jesus’ sayings regularly diverge from the canonical gospels, suggesting that their sources lie elsewhere – in sayings collections *exemplified* by the Logia text although not to be identified with it. Rendel Harris’s evidence strengthens the case for a Sayings Collection genre relatively independent of the canonical narrative gospels.³⁶

3. *Competing Logia Theories*

If this Sayings Collection hypothesis has any plausibility, it would have significant implications for the Synoptic Problem. In particular, the “two-source hypothesis” popularized by H. J. Holtzmann would face some new questions. The first of the two sources, the Gospel of Mark, would remain in place; the second, also used independently by Matthew and Luke,

³⁵ 1 Clem 13.2.

³⁶ On this see my *Gospel Writing*, 249-85.

would encounter potential difficulties. This hypothetical second source would shortly come to be known as “Q”, but in the 1890s it was still known as the *Logia* – precisely the term that Grenfull and Hunt chose for their new discovery.³⁷ At this point, then, there are *two* quite different Logia-hypotheses in play: one generating a single Logia text from the study of double-tradition passages in Matthew and Luke, the other proposing that a newly discovered Logia text exemplifies an early Sayings Collection genre. The potential problem the new hypothesis poses for Q is that Q does not conform to the generic conventions that may be extrapolated from the new text. Q is a collection of connected discourses, not of individual sayings separated by an introductory formula. For that reason, German scholars sometimes preferred to speak of Q as a *Redensammlung*, a collection of speeches, rather than as a *Spruchsammlung*, a sayings collection.³⁸ Q also contains narrative accounts of Jesus’ temptations and the healing of the centurion’s servant, distancing it still further from the Sayings Collection genre suggested by Grenfell and Hunt’s discovery.³⁹ Advocates of the Q hypothesis could not be expected to welcome the rival Logia text.

The fundamental questions posed by Grenfell and Hunt’s *Logia Iēsou* are as follows. Is the newly discovered material so closely related to the canonical texts that it must be integrated into our account of their origin and composition? Or do its affinities lie with later, second century, apocryphal gospel literature, dependent on and inferior to the authentic gospels of the apostolic age? More succinctly: does the new text change anything?

³⁷ In the 2nd edition of his *Horae Synopticae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909² [1899¹]), Sir John Hawkins notes that he has replaced his earlier references to “the Logia of Matthew” with the designation “Q”, following the lead of German scholars (107). The terminological shift in English-language scholarship may have been influenced by the publication in 1908 of Adolf Harnack’s book on Q in English translation (*The Sayings of Jesus: The Second Source of St. Matthew and St. Luke* (Eng. tr. London: Williams & Norgate; New York: Putnam, 1908).

³⁸ H. J. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Freiburg i. B.: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1886²), 371.

³⁹ For criticism of the assumptions that Q and the *Gospel of Thomas* are works in the same genre, and that the existence of Thomas strengthens the case for Q, see my *Gospel Writing*, 217-21 (in debate with H. Koester and J. M. Robinson)..

Grenfell and Hunt published their Logia papyrus in June 1897, as the nation celebrated the aged Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The new text rapidly evoked a flurry of reviews, letters to editors, public lectures, and journal articles, in outlets ranging from the *Expository Times*, the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* and the *Revue Biblique* to the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, *Leisure Hour*, and *Sunday at Home*. One of the more substantial responses was the joint production of two senior Oxford colleagues, Walter Lock, Dean Ireland's Professor, and William Sanday, Lady Margaret Professor, the foremost English protagonist of the Q hypothesis, described by Grenfell and Hunt as "amongst the most conservative of our critics"⁴⁰. Lock and Sanday delivered public lectures on 23 October which appeared in print with supplementary material before the end of the year.⁴¹ Lock, more sympathetic to Grenfell and Hunt than Sanday, pays tribute to their editorial work: "[T]he careful decipherment of the text and the cautious wisdom of the notes have been recognized universally both in England and on the Continent".⁴² In his assessment, the new text is "a copy of some pre-canonical collection of our Lord's discourses".⁴³ If so, however,

they would not constitute that new gospel which the *Spectator* dreads and which the *Daily Chronicle* welcomes; they would not seriously alter the conditions of the Synoptic problem as Mr. Rendel Harris imagines, for the prologue of St. Luke shows that there were pre-canonical documents out of which our Gospels were framed...⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Bernard Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, *New Sayings of Jesus and Fragment of a Lost Gospel from Oxyrhynchus* (London: Henry Frowde; New York: Oxford University Press, 1904), 27. The title refers to the discovery of P.Oxy.654 and P.Oxy.655 respectively.

⁴¹ Walter Lock and William Sanday, *Two Lectures on the 'Sayings of Jesus' recently discovered at Oxyrhynchus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897).

⁴² *Two Lectures*, 15. For a "continental" tribute to the editors, see A. Harnack, *Die jüngst entdeckten Sprüche Jesu* (Freiburg i. B.: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1897), 5. Harnack argues that the papyrus contains extracts from the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* (27-34).

⁴³ *Two Lectures*, 27.

⁴⁴ *Two Lectures*, 27.

If the Logia fragment is really a copy of a pre-canonical Logia collection, it is hard to see how this could have no bearing on the Synoptic problem. Sanday is more incisive than his colleague. The editors view the fragment as the remnant of an old sayings collection and suggest that “probably many such collections were made”. Sanday thinks we should be deeply sceptical of their claim:

They are perhaps justified in saying this; but if so, their own discovery is the chief ground for holding the opinion. It is a tenable hypothesis that the new Logia are a specimen of a class, but whether they are or not will need further testing. The chief direction in which this testing can be applied would be through the analysis of our existing Gospels; and this, as inquiry stands at the present moment, can hardly be said to be favourable.⁴⁵

Sanday does not deny that the fragment represents a sayings collection but he seeks to persuade his audience to view it as a unique literary phenomenon rather than as instantiating a Sayings Collection genre. The editors’ hypothesis is “perhaps justified”, it is “tenable”, it merits “further testing” – and yet these lukewarm concessions amount to little, for Sanday’s real point is that current trends in gospels scholarship make the Sayings Collection hypothesis extremely unlikely. If we wish to investigate early transmission of the Jesus tradition, we have far more to learn from “the analysis of our existing Gospels” than from bits of old papyrus dug up by junior members of the University with next to no theological background.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Two Lectures*, 31.

⁴⁶ At the time of Sanday’s lecture Grenfell was 27, Hunt 26, and Sanday 54.

The issue that Sanday rightly grasps is that the new noncanonical Logia text poses a challenge to the old intracanonial one – that is, to Q. But Q will not be so easily dislodged from its privileged position as the earliest record of Jesus’ teaching:

It is a widely held opinion that behind the common portions of our First and Third Gospels... there lies a yet earlier source which might be described by the name ‘Logia’. But the tendency is to think of these Logia as something more than pure sayings, strung together in no apparent order, and with no connexion beyond the repeated λέγει Ἰησοῦς of the Fragment. If we take a narrative like the Healing of the Centurion’s Servant, which is common to the two Gospels, and is not found in St. Mark, we see there a complete story, and not an isolated saying or sayings, and partly cast into the form of dialogue. In this it is unlike the Fragment. And even those portions of the common matter of the two Gospels which are more strictly made up of sayings yet in one or both of the Gospels usually have a few words of introduction assigning them to some particular occasion.⁴⁷

While Sanday’s Logia would seem to be a text of greater literary sophistication than the Oxyrhynchus Logia text, we are certainly not meant to conclude that the new text might predate Q. For all its veneer of modernity, Q is a canonical text. Literary and theological degeneration from the early and authentic to the late and apocryphal is only to be expected.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries Q was establishing itself as a benchmark of critical orthodoxy in the English-speaking world, and Sanday was a key figure in that process.⁴⁸ It is worth reflecting further on the factors that led Sanday and subsequent

⁴⁷ *Two Lectures*, 31-32. “Yet” in the last sentence seems to mean “nevertheless”. Sanday acknowledges that the introductions may well be redactional, but allows his point to stand.

⁴⁸ Sanday’s significance is acknowledged by B. H. Streeter in the dedication of his source-critical classic (*The Four Gospels*, v): “In Memoriam Gulielmi Sanday, S.T.P., insignissimi apud Oxonienses horum studiorum Fautoris” (“... the most eminent patron of these studies among Oxonians”).

generations of scholars to prefer to work with a hypothetical yet intracanonial text rather than engaging seriously with rediscovered extracanonial ones.

4. *The Politics of Q*

Q has its natural habitat within what Sanday calls the “Two-Document hypothesis”,⁴⁹ The two documents are Mark and Q understood as sources used independently of each other by Matthew and Luke. Foundational to the whole construct is the modern assumption of literary interdependence which replaced the traditional notion of independent apostolic or post-apostolic authorship. The theory of literary interdependence was limited and sometimes challenged by appeals to an unknowable oral tradition, but it was widely agreed that oral tradition alone was unlikely to have produced gospels in which common material so often occurs in common sequence. The question was which of several competing accounts of literary interdependence was to be preferred. An enduring consensus gradually formed around Markan priority as the best explanation for the “triple tradition” material shared by all three synoptists. The decisive criterion here is the *lectio difficilior* principle borrowed from textual criticism: in a preponderance of cases it is easier to believe that Matthew or Luke has emended Mark than that Mark has emended Matthew or Luke (as Griesbach had claimed). Yet Matthew and Luke do not normally agree with each other as they rewrite Mark; they must therefore have done so independently. It is at this point that the second document of the “Two-Document hypothesis” comes into view. If Matthew and Luke are independent of one another in the “triple tradition” material derived from Mark, it is plausible to suppose that they are equally independent of one another in the “double tradition” material they share only with each other. In that case, this material must be drawn from a common source: hence, Q.

⁴⁹ *Two Lectures*, 31n.

The Two-Document hypothesis is based on a supposed *analogy* between the editorial processes that created the triple and the double traditions respectively. If Matthew and Luke appear to engage independently with an earlier source in the one case, that is likely to be true of the other. One reaches Q by way of an analogy assumed *a priori* and then tested against the textual evidence. Q stands or falls by its ability to make this analogy credible and defend it against counter-arguments.⁵⁰

This is essentially the position that a 29-year-old Sanday had already reached in 1872, when he announced his provisional acceptance of “the documentary origin of the Synoptic Gospels, the priority of St. Mark, the existence of two main documents, and the independent use of them by the Evangelists” (i.e. Matthew and Luke).⁵¹ This account is associated especially with H. J. Holtzmann but is also maintained by “a majority of the best critics during the last ten or fifteen years”.⁵² This 1872 appeal to a majority opinion recurs in the 1897 lecture, where the two document hypothesis is described not only as “a widely held opinion” but also as “[t]he dominant theory”.⁵³ The concern here is essentially *political*: to promote a consensus around Markan priority and Q by representing it as an already existing orthodoxy from which it would be foolhardy to dissent. Sanday’s political agenda comes to light especially in the collection entitled, *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, which he edited in 1911 towards the end of his long career. This work, he tells us, has had an unusually long gestation:

⁵⁰ “Half a century of critical investigation has made it clear that the parallel matter in Matthew and Luke falls into two parts – a larger part, which is convincingly explained by their use of a common source still substantially preserved in our Second Gospel, and a lesser part, which *it seems natural to explain on the same analogy* as due to their use of a second common source now lost – which hypothetical source has been conveniently designated by the symbol ‘Q’” (B. H. Streeter, “On the Original Order of Q”, *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, by Members of the University of Oxford, ed. W. Sanday (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 139-64, 141; italics added).

⁵¹ W. Sanday, *The Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel, Considered in Reference to the Contents of the Gospel Itself: A Critical Essay* (London: Macmillan, 1872), ix.

⁵² *Authorship and Historical Character*, ix.

⁵³ *Two Lectures*, 31n.

For some considerable time past (since 1894) a class has been in the habit of meeting in the ‘lodgings’ of the Lady Margaret Professor which we have called a ‘Seminar’, though it has not been quite like the gatherings known by that name on the Continent. The subject of study has been the Synoptic Problem... The Seminar has lived through some four or five generations of Oxford life, and it has been attended for the most part by graduates and special students; so that a certain proportion of the members have naturally been ‘birds of passage’, who have stayed for a year or so and have then gone. But it has been the peculiar happiness of this Seminar that it has had a permanent nucleus of members who have been faithful to it from the very first.⁵⁴

Playing down his own role, Sanday informs us that the essay collection is the work of three of those original members and three younger scholars who have joined the seminar more recently. First and foremost among the senior group is Sir John C. Hawkins, author of a work entitled *Horae Synopticae* whose two editions present painstaking analyses of the distinct vocabularies of the synoptic evangelists and their sources. Pre-eminent among the second, younger group is B. H. Streeter. Markan priority is generally accepted, but only Hawkins and Streeter share Sanday’s understanding of Q; two of the founder members remain unpersuaded and develop alternative source-critical hypotheses of their own.⁵⁵ Embarrassed by this lack of consensus, even after seventeen years of working together, Sanday separates the sheep from the goats. The positions of Hawkins and Streeter “fall well within the limits of what may be called the view generally current among scholars.”⁵⁶ Their essays therefore open the main body of the volume: Sanday thinks it “a distinct advantage

⁵⁴ *Oxford Studies*, vii.

⁵⁵ W. C. Allen reverts to a Schleiermacher-like identification of Q with the Matthean discourses (“The Book of Sayings used by the Editor of the First Gospel”, *Oxford Studies*, 235-86; on Schleiermacher’s Logia hypothesis see my *Gospel Writing*, 105-7). J. V. Bartlet identifies Q as the source of all non-Markan material in Luke (“The Sources of St. Luke’s Gospel”, *Oxford Studies*, 313-63). The other two contributors (W. E. Addis and N. Williams) do not directly engage with Q.

⁵⁶ *Oxford Studies*, xv.

that the Two-Document hypothesis should have a full statement first”.⁵⁷ Then there are the views of “the two dissentients” (W. C. Allen and J. V. Bartlet), whose theories “fall a little (though in substantial result not very much) outside” the generally current view represented by Hawkins and Streeter.⁵⁸ By casting his own contributors as orthodox or dissenters, and by making clear his own decided preference for orthodoxy, Sanday is converting the Synoptic Problem into a Synoptic Solution with Q at its heart. Already canonical by virtue of its origin within Matthew and Luke, Q becomes canonical a second time as an assured result of modern critical scholarship. Debate will continue, no doubt, but questioning the orthodox Q hypothesis will now be redefined as *dissent*. Sanday’s contribution to the Synoptic problem lies not in any reasoned scholarly arguments but in his rhetoric.

Some such political agenda already underlies Sanday’s response to Grenfell and Hunt in 1897. The new Logia come into potential conflict with the intracanonial Q, and they are therefore banished into apocryphal obscurity. In an only apparent concession to the new discovery, Sanday states that “[i]n any future investigation of the Synoptic Question, the new Fragment is not likely to be lost sight of.”⁵⁹ The statement is disingenuous. Sanday has no intention of integrating the fragment into debate about canonical gospel origins. On the contrary, he is determined to exclude it. In the *Oxford Studies* it is referred to just once, in a parenthetical reference to the “so-called *Logia* found at Oxyrhynchus.”⁶⁰ There is only one authentic Logia text, and it is the canonical Q.

There is nothing in the hypothesized Q that was not first in Matthew and Luke. If Q’s discourses are coherent, it is a Matthean or Lukan coherence. The wording of a reconstructed

⁵⁷ *Oxford Studies*, xi.

⁵⁸ *Oxford Studies*, xv.

⁵⁹ *Two Lectures*, 33.

⁶⁰ *Oxford Studies*, 123 (Hawkins). The index lists a second reference to Oxyrhynchus, which appears to be incorrect.

Q saying will always be drawn from the Matthean or Lukan version of the same saying, or from both. The order of Q will correspond to the order of Q elements in Matthew and/or Luke. At no point is Q independent of its canonical containers; it has its place firmly within the canonical four gospel collection, distributed and duplicated across two texts. Q is not apocryphal or extra-canonical or even pre-canonical. Although radical conclusions are sometimes drawn from it, it is essentially a conservative hypothesis which leaves the canonical/noncanonical boundary intact. Already in 1897 the publication of P.Oxy.1 brought to light the more challenging possibility that noncanonical gospel material might have a part to play in the continuing investigation of canonical gospel origins.