

## ***The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels: Problems and Prospects***

**Richard Bauckham**

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### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this concluding chapter is not to sum up all of the important results of all the preceding chapters, though I shall mention or discuss some of them. Rather my intention is to offer some broader reflections on this field of study, its importance for the study of the canonical Gospels and the quest of the historical Jesus, the particular problems it poses and the opportunities it provides for further study. I limit the field to Gospel traditions in Christian literature because this enables me to generalize to some extent, whereas the pagan and Jewish sources, which are also the subject of chapters in this volume, present quite distinct problems and possibilities. I certainly do not mean to devalue their importance.<sup>1</sup>

Attentive readers of this volume will have noticed, as well as some impressive areas of agreement among the authors, other instances in which their conclusions point in somewhat different directions. This is only to be expected, especially in studies which are relatively exploratory and innovative. Similarly my remarks in this chapter, though stimulated by reading the other contributions and intended to follow some of the directions in which they point, are very much my own thoughts on the subject. I should be surprised if they met with the complete agreement of all my fellow-contributors.

### **2. The Importance of the Subject for Gospel Studies**

The study of Gospel traditions outside the canonical Gospels is the Cinderella of Gospels scholarship. Although numerous articles have dealt with many particular aspects of

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the subject, there have been few major book-length studies, while most of the important work which has been done continues to be largely ignored in mainstream Gospels scholarship. Some of those who have championed the importance of the subject and made major contributions to it, such as Alfred Resch in a previous generation and Helmut Koester in this, have been thought to make exaggerated claims for its significance which have, rather perversely, tended to confirm more cautious scholars in the conviction that it can safely be ignored. Only the Gospel of Thomas seems to have acquired an assured place in mainstream Gospels studies, as a document whose parallels to Synoptic material must at least be

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<sup>1</sup> Though the facts that may be known about Jesus from non-Christian sources may seem meagre, A. E. Harvey has recently demonstrated (*Jesus and the Constraints of History* [London: Duckworth, 1982] chap. 2; p. 41 n. 23; p. 98) that they can be combined with broader historical information about the first-century world in order to yield a surprising number of implications about Jesus, which can then be compared with the Gospels for consistency.

discussed. The anomaly of this concession, alongside the continued neglect of other witnesses (such as the Apostolic Fathers) whose date is on most estimates earlier than Thomas and whose claim to preserve independent tradition is at least equally good, goes unnoticed.

I suspect that this situation results from a false impression of the relationship between the canonical Gospels and other early Christian literature in which the Gospel tradition has been preserved.<sup>2</sup> It is assumed that almost all other witnesses to the Gospel tradition are later in date than the canonical Gospels and therefore of very little interest to the student of the canonical Gospels. In fact, both parts of this assumption are unwarranted. In other words, there is a good deal of relevant material which is roughly contemporary with the canonical Gospels, while the material which is later is not necessarily unimportant because of its date. But studies which demonstrate this in particular cases fail to make a serious impact on Gospels studies because they fail to shake the prevalent assumption in general. While the assumption prevails as the general rule, too much notice need not be taken of occasional exceptions to it. And while not much notice is taken of the exceptions, the fact that they are becoming so many as no longer to prove the rule but rather to disprove it is not noticed either. Consequently the assumption needs to be challenged directly and in general. The following general reasons for Gospels scholarship to give serious, sustained and detailed attention to Gospel traditions outside the canonical Gospels seem to me to be valid on the basis of the work which has been done in this field, both in this volume and elsewhere.

**2.1.** Many early Christian works, within and outside the New Testament, which contain allusions to and quotations from

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Gospel traditions date from the period before and during which the canonical Gospels were being written (i.e. up to c. 100 A.D.). To this period belong the Pauline literature, Hebrews, Revelation, the Didache, 1 Clement, and probably (though some scholars date them later) James, 1 Peter and 2 Peter. In my view, a good case can also be made for dating Barnabas, Hermas and 2 Clement in the late first century. It should go without saying that these works are relevant to the study of the canonical Gospels. In some cases their independence of the canonical Gospels is well established, but whatever their relationship to the canonical Gospels, they provide much important evidence about the extent to which Gospel traditions were known and the ways in which they were used in the early church before and during the time of writing of the canonical Gospels.

**2.2.** The canonical Gospels were not the only Gospels written during the first century. scholars have often postulated written sources, now lost, behind our canonical Gospels. Moreover, there really is no good reason for not taking seriously our one piece of explicit

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<sup>2</sup> This impression is probably to some extent due to the way in which the canon has functioned to delimit the area of early Christian literature to which New Testament scholars pay close attention. For those, like myself, who hold a high view of the canon, it is important to distinguish the proper function of the canon, as a theological norm which delimits the Gospel traditions which have normative authority for the church, from an improper intrusion of the canon into the purely historical question of determining the range of early Christian literature which is relevant to or important for the study of early Gospel traditions. If the Gospel of Thomas were in fact the earliest extant Gospel (I do not think it is) or if a papyrus copy of Q were discovered in the sands of Egypt, the relevance for Gospel studies would be very considerable, but I do not think the canon would need to be extended or the normative authority of the four Gospels for the church's life and thought affected.

information on this subject: Luke's statement that 'many' had written Gospels before him (Luke 1:1).<sup>3</sup> Most of these were probably smaller collections of Gospel traditions, which passed out of use as more comprehensive Gospels, including the canonical Gospels, became known. Some may never have circulated beyond the church in which they were produced. But there is no reason to suppose that they all disappeared as soon as the canonical Gospels were written. They very likely remained available to some second-century writers who quote Gospel traditions, and they could have been among the sources of those 'apocryphal' Gospels which continued to be written throughout the second century. With the exception of one or two papyrus fragments,<sup>4</sup> it is not likely that any of these other first-century Gospels have actually survived,<sup>5</sup> but the fact that they once existed means that it is in principle quite possible that early Gospel traditions have been preserved, independently of the canonical Gospels, in extant writers of the second or even the third century, who knew these works at first- or secondhand. Of course, we must admit that in such circumstances the task of identifying such traditions with reasonable probability is usually likely to be hazardous, but it is not always impossible.<sup>6</sup> Works later in date than the canonical Gospels cannot be given priority over or equality with the canonical Gospels as reliable means of access to first-century Gospel

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traditions, but nor is their date alone sufficient reason for considering them wholly dependent on the canonical Gospels for their knowledge of early traditions. Careful study of them in relation to the canonical Gospels can yield significant results.

**2.3.** That first-century Gospels other than the canonical Gospels survived into the second century is intrinsically likely, but lacks much firm evidence. Much better evidence, however, is available to show that the oral tradition continued well into the second century. Most recent scholars, including Donald Hagner in this volume, have agreed on this. Consequently, a considerable number of early second-century Christian writers are likely either to have known, in a later stage of transmission, the same cycles of oral traditions as were known to the canonical evangelists and their sources, or to have known parallel streams of oral tradition, whether or not they also knew any of the canonical Gospels or any other written Gospels. In my judgment these writings include the letters of Ignatius, the Ascension of Isaiah, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Odes of Solomon, as well as several of the apocryphal Gospels which survive in fragments. James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Hermas and 2

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<sup>3</sup> See the careful discussion in L. C. A. Alexander, *Luke-Acts in its Contemporary Setting with Special Reference to the Prefaces (Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1)* (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1977) 88, 90-91; cf. 144-49.

<sup>4</sup> In my opinion, neither Pap. Oxy. 840 (on which see J. Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus* [London: SPCK, 1957] 36-49; and the doubts expressed by F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, <sup>2</sup>1984] 159-60; O. Hofius, 'Unbekannte Jesusworte', in P., Stuhlmacher ed., *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1983] 372-73) nor Pap. Oxy. 1224 (see Jeremias, *op. cit.*, 85-86; Hofius, *art. cit.*, 378; E. Hennecke, W. Schneemelcher and R. McL. Wilson ed., *New Testament Apocrypha I* [London: SCM Press, <sup>2</sup>1973] 113-14) can be shown to be dependent on the canonical Gospels or necessarily later in date than the first century.

<sup>5</sup> In my view, David Wright's careful study in this volume establishes the probability that Pap. Egerton 2 is dependent on the canonical Gospels. I am not convinced that the Gospel of Thomas is a first-century Gospel, but it may be dependent on one or more such writings.

<sup>6</sup> For a cautious attempt to identify an early tradition in the third-century Acts of Thomas, see my article, 'The Parable of the Vine: Rediscovering a Lost Parable of Jesus', forthcoming in *NTS*. See also Bruce Chilton's treatment of 'kingdom' sayings in the Gospel of Thomas in this volume.

Clement would also have to be included here, if they are not first-century works, and further possibilities include the Epistle of the Apostles, 5 Ezra, some of the apocryphal Acts, and the Apocryphon of James. Careful study of these works could help us to understand the nature of the oral traditions which were available to the canonical evangelists and also to investigate the important question of the relationship between oral and written forms of the Gospel tradition and the transition from one to the other.

**2.4.** The tendency of Gospels scholarship, in practice if not in theory, has been to treat the Gospel tradition as a process which led up to and stopped with the canonical Gospels. The above points 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 require a quite different picture of the Gospel tradition as a broader and longer process, within which the canonical Gospels need to be located. For some time and in some places other forms of the tradition, oral and written, continued quite independently of the canonical Gospels. We do not have much evidence to establish how rapidly or how extensively throughout the church the canonical Gospels came to be known and to be given a prominent place within the tradition, but it is clear that when they did so, the place they achieved was a place within the tradition. They did not immediately replace all other forms of the

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tradition, oral or written. Not until well into the second century did the oral tradition largely give way to written Gospels, and not until the third century did the canonical Gospels virtually replace other written Gospels in most parts of the church.

Thus the writing of the canonical Gospels neither brought the Gospel tradition to a halt nor produced a radical change in the nature of the tradition. The oral tradition covers a period of at least a century, not only preceding but also following the writing of the canonical Gospels. In ways which have yet to be fully investigated it must have increasingly interacted with its written products before giving way to them. The writing of Gospels, which probably began before Mark, continued unabated throughout the second century, and just as Mark became a source along with other sources for Matthew and Luke, so the canonical Gospels became sources, along with other sources, for later Gospels. It is not clear to me, though the matter deserves much more thorough study, that these later evangelists treated the canonical Gospels differently from their other sources or differently from the way in which the canonical evangelists treated their sources. Of course, there is an important sense in which increasing distance from the origins of the tradition gradually made the production of Gospels a qualitatively different matter from what it was in the first century, and the recognition of this, along with the theologically deviant character of many second-century products of the tradition, forced the process of discrimination which led to the exclusive canonical position of our four Gospels. But the second-century Gospel tradition seems to have had a momentum of its own, which was only halted by the imposition on it of the need for discriminatory judgment.<sup>7</sup> Second-century Gospels cannot really be understood from the perspective of the canon.

It follows that the traditional task of Gospels scholarship—the study of the canonical Gospels and their sources—can only be adequately pursued as part of a much larger task of studying the wider and longer process within which the canonical Gospels historically belong.

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<sup>7</sup> In the patristic period it was never entirely halted.

Otherwise a serious distortion of perspective and neglect of important evidence are bound to result. This was one of L. E. Keck's concerns when he stated the methodological thesis: 'He who studies only the canonical Gospels does not understand them.'<sup>8</sup> Though I disagree with many of Helmut Koester's conclusions on this subject, it seems to me the great merit of

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his *Introduction to the New Testament*<sup>9</sup> that he has attempted a broad description of the Gospel tradition in first- and second-century Christianity without isolating the canonical Gospels from this larger context. His work should be at least a stimulus to the great deal of detailed study that, needs to be done before such a description can be attempted with real confidence.

**2.5.** Although there are of course, many valid reasons for studying the Gospel tradition, the particular concern of this *Gospel Perspectives* series has been with the historical reliability of the canonical Gospels. The importance of the Gospel tradition outside the canonical Gospels for this issue needs to be considered with some care. It will not do to ask questions about historical reliability too quickly. Rather our first need is as accurate as possible an account of the whole process of the Gospel tradition and the relationship of the canonical Gospels to other parts of that tradition. Then it will be possible to make informed assessments of the relative historical value of various parts and phases of the tradition. Nor will it do to approach this issue with the crude apologetic desire to make the historical reliability of the canonical Gospels apparent by contrast with the obvious unreliability of the non-canonical material. Such a purpose is likely to be self-defeating, for if the rest of the process of the Gospel tradition produced only historically worthless material, how are these four remarkable exceptions to be explained? My own impression, necessarily provisional at this stage, is that the studies so far available, including those in this volume, tend to support the historical value of the canonical Gospels in quite a different way: by showing that the earliest and most plausible evidence for Gospel traditions outside the canonical Gospels provides a wide-ranging set of independent parallels to the kinds of material the canonical Gospels contain.<sup>10</sup> At any rate, it must be conceded that the historical reliability of the canonical Gospels can scarcely be adequately assessed in isolation from the question of the reliability of the Gospel tradition in general.

### **3. Some Particular Implications for Gospel Studies**

In this section I shall discuss some particular ways in which the study of Gospel traditions outside the canonical Gospels can contribute to well recognized areas of Gospels studies.

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#### **3.1. The tendencies of the tradition.**

Craig Blomberg's study of the parables in the Gospel of Thomas (in this volume) is an excellent example of the way in which study of post-canonical phases of the Gospel tradition

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<sup>8</sup> L. E. Keck, *A Future for the Historical Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 26.

<sup>9</sup> I refer to vol. 2: *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press/Berlin & New York: W. de Gruyter, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the final paragraph of Donald Hagner's contribution to this volume.

can illuminate the tradition behind and in the canonical Gospels, even when the post-canonical material in question is judged wholly secondary to the canonical Gospels. Assumptions about the way the tradition must have developed in the first century can be tested against the evidence for the way it continued to develop in the second century.<sup>11</sup> E. P. Sanders already made considerable use of extra-canonical material to throw doubt on common form-critical assumptions about the tendencies of the tradition,<sup>12</sup> but there is still room for further work in this area.<sup>13</sup> The relevant second- and third-century literature provides a long period and a large body of material in which the tendencies of the tradition may come to light more clearly than in the first-century evidence alone, as well as providing some material whose relative dates and literary relationships can be established more confidently than those of the Synoptic Gospels. There are, however, problems here about the relation of oral and literary forms of the tradition, which will be mentioned in section 4.3 below.

### 3.2. The *Sitz im Leben* of the tradition.

Despite the form-critical interest in the settings of Gospel traditions in the life of the early church, the value and implications of the evidence of Christian literature other than the Gospels on this subject has commonly been underestimated. In the New Testament letters, the book of Revelation, the Didache, and the letters of Clement and Ignatius, there is a great deal of contemporary evidence on how the Gospel traditions were actually used in the church: in catechetical instruction, apocalyptic teaching, and so on. At the same time, in such literature we can see what happened to Gospel traditions in such use: how they were adapted to needs and circumstances, expanded and combined with a variety of other types of material (Old Testament allusions and citations, Jewish wisdom traditions, apocalyptic traditions, sayings of Christian prophets, and so on), so that the Gospel traditions in such literature would usually be indistinguishable to us if we did not have the Gospels to help us identify them.

From the study of this material, the conclusion, already argued by Dodd,<sup>14</sup> Piper,<sup>15</sup> and Allison,<sup>16</sup> is inescapable, that the Gospel tradition itself and the paraenetic use of the

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Gospel tradition by the teachers and prophets of the church were relatively independent, just as the Gospel literature and other-kinds of literature (letters, apocalypses and the Didache) which used Gospel traditions were distinct literary genres. Who the tradents of the Gospel traditions were remains obscure, but it is clear that they preserved the traditions, not of course wholly without any influence from the circumstances in which they were transmitted and the uses to which they were put in the church, but nevertheless relatively independently of these factors. What has happened to Gospel traditions in their use in Christian literature other than the Gospels is only occasionally analogous to what has happened to them in the Gospels

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Keck, *Future*, 27.

<sup>12</sup> *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition* (SNTSMS 9; Cambridge: CUP, 1969).

<sup>13</sup> For a few examples, see my article, 'Synoptic Parousia Parables Again', *NTS* 29 (1983) 129-34.

<sup>14</sup> C. H. Dodd, 'The Primitive Catechism and the Sayings of Jesus', in A. J. B. Higgins ed., *New Testament Essays* (T. W. Manson Festschrift; Manchester: MUP, 1959) 106-18.

<sup>15</sup> J. Piper, 'Love your enemies': *Jesus' love command in the synoptic gospels and in the early Christian paraenesis* (SNTSMS 38; Cambridge: CUP, 1979) 136-39.

<sup>16</sup> D. C. Allison, 'The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels', *NTS* 28 (1982) 1-32.

themselves. Clearly the Gospel tradition was not understood to be the same thing as its interpretation and application. In paraenesis, therefore, the influence of the Gospel tradition was felt and its implications developed by teachers and prophets, but the tradition was normally not explicitly quoted. Since it was well known in its own right, it did not need to be.

Thus it happens that literature outside the Gospels sometimes shows us how particular Gospel traditions were understood and applied in the early church, whereas the form of these traditions in the Gospels themselves has not been affected by this use. For example, from 2 Pet 2:20 and Hermas, Sim. 9:17:5 (cf. also Mand. 5:2:7; 12:5:4) we know that the Q saying Matt 12:43-45 par. Luke 11:24-26 was applied to the moral apostasy of Christians, whose post-Christian condition was considered worse than their condition before conversion. But this application has left no trace in the form of the saying in the Gospels. In Luke, the saying, itself seems wholly unaffected by whatever significance may have been seen in it in the tradition before Luke, while the evangelist himself interprets it only by attaching it to the Beelzebul controversy. In Matthew, an application quite different from that to Christian apostates is given by means of the redactional addition (if such it is) of 12:45b. Of course, it could be argued that the application to Christian apostates was peculiar to the tradition as used in the church of Rome in the time of 2 Peter and Hermas, and was not known in the tradition behind Matthew and Luke. But the point is that it was precisely because such sayings were not themselves affected by the uses to which they were put that they could be put to a variety of uses at different times and places. Another example is Matt 7:6, whose significance for Matthew can only be guessed from the context he gives it, whereas Didache 9:5 gives it a

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eucharistic application: but the saying remains verbally identical. Such examples, of which more could be given, illustrate the relative immunity of the tradition of the sayings of Jesus from influence from the way in which they were understood and the circumstances to which they were applied in early Christian teaching.

### **3.3. The sources of the canonical Gospels.**

If one takes seriously the general picture, suggested in section 2 above, of the relation of the canonical Gospels to the Gospel tradition as a whole, it should be apparent that the conventional ways of discussing the Synoptic problem and the sources of the canonical Gospels, may well be seriously inadequate because they proceed as though the canonical Gospels themselves were almost the only relevant evidence. Only within the widespread assumption that a solution to the Synoptic problem must result from study of the texts of the Synoptic Gospels alone, could the recent tendency in some circles to reduce or to dispense altogether with hypothetical Synoptic sources, including Q, have arisen. Only within that assumption could the extreme version of this tendency, Michael Goulder's attempt to ascribe all non-Markan material in Matthew and Luke to the creative compositional activity of the evangelists themselves,<sup>17</sup> have been suggested. Once the evidence for Gospel traditions outside the canonical Gospels is considered, it becomes clear that in the period of the composition of the Gospels the Gospel tradition was known in many forms, oral and written. Since the Apostolic Fathers knew non-Markan traditions in oral form, it is inconceivable that Matthew and Luke should not have done. Christian literature outside the Synoptic Gospels

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<sup>17</sup> M. D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974) and other writings.

provides so much evidence of independent, varying forms of Synoptic material that the probability is in favour of more, not fewer, Synoptic sources. I am inclined to agree with Morton Smith's comment that, 'From now on synoptic source criticism will have all the classic simplicity of three-dimensional chess.'<sup>18</sup>

The possibility that Christian literature outside the canonical Gospels provides us in some cases with independent access to their sources needs to be taken entirely seriously. This would, in effect, broaden the Synoptic problem into a larger problem of literary (and oral) relationships among the Gospels and other literature. Of course, it is important not to jump to premature conclusions. Such critical studies as David Wright's demonstration of the weakness of Mayeda's case

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for the pre-Johannine character of Papyrus Egerton 2 (in this volume) and Christopher Tuckett's exposure of the lack of strong evidence for claims that Paul or the Corinthians knew Q<sup>19</sup> constitute important warnings here. But they are warnings which establish the need for methodological rigour, not warnings which need deter us from investigating the relevance of any such material to the question of Gospel sources.

The following sections by no means exhaust the issues which arise in this area, but seem to me to be the most important issues which are raised by the studies of this volume and some other recent studies.

### 3.3.1. Pre-Synoptic blocks of tradition.

One of the most striking and surest results of studies of writers who probably knew Synoptic tradition independently of the Synoptic Gospels is that they knew, not simply independent *logia*, but particular 'blocks' of tradition. For example, the central part of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain material of Matthew and Luke seems to be independently attested as a connected series of *logia* by Paul,<sup>20</sup> 1 Peter,<sup>21</sup> James,<sup>22</sup> Didache 1:3-6,<sup>23</sup> 1 Clement 13:2, Polycarp, Phil. 2:3; 12:3,<sup>24</sup> and perhaps Justin (1 Apol. 15-16). Though the precise range and form of the Sermon material attested by each of these writers differs, their common testimony to the fact that some such block of material was widely known in the early church is very impressive. It seems to suggest that such a block of tradition existed prior to and independently of its incorporation into any larger collection of Gospel traditions (such as Q), and a full study of all of this evidence together clearly needs to be made.<sup>25</sup> If, as I suspect, there are independent parallels to both Matthew and Luke at points where they differ in this material, the

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in B. Corley ed., *Colloquy on New Testament Studies: A Time for Reappraisal and Fresh Approaches* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer U. P., 1983) 85.

<sup>19</sup> C. M. Tuckett, '1 Corinthians and Q', *JBL* 102 (1983) 607-19.

<sup>20</sup> Allison, 'Pauline Epistles', 11-12, 18-19; Wenham in this volume; Piper, 'Love your enemies'.

<sup>21</sup> See G. Maier in this volume.

<sup>22</sup> See P. Davids in this volume.

<sup>23</sup> See J. Draper in this volume.

<sup>24</sup> For these passages in 1 Clement and Polycarp, as well as Hagner's contribution in this volume, see his fuller discussion (with references to other literature), in D. A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Suppl. Nov. Test. 34; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973) 135-51.

<sup>25</sup> Other probably independent parallels to particular *logia* would also need to be included in such a study: e.g. Ignatius, Pol. 2:1; Pap. Oxy. 1224.



implications for the problem of Q and the evangelists' redaction of it could be of considerable interest.

Allison has argued that Paul also knew two other major blocks of sayings tradition: Mark 9:33-50 and the mission discourse (Mark 6:6-13; Matt 10:1-16; Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-12),<sup>26</sup> and the latter is partly confirmed by Richardson and Gooch (in this volume). David Wenham has argued that Paul and the author of Revelation knew a pre-Synoptic version of the eschatological discourse,<sup>27</sup> as Greg Beale also argues for Revelation and Gerhard Maier for 1 Peter (both in this volume). On the other hand, the implications of Didache 16:5-8, as discussed by Jonathan Draper (in this volume) and by Kloppenborg,<sup>28</sup> seem to

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be rather different, namely that the Didache is dependent on something like the source of Matthew's special material in Matt 24:10-12, 30-31, as a separate block of eschatological teaching.

Small collections of parables are a type of pre-Synoptic block of tradition which has often been plausibly postulated.<sup>29</sup> That the Q collection of parousia parables (Luke 12:35-48) was quite widely known in the early church, whether or not in connexion with other eschatological material, seems to be indicated by a variety of evidence outside the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>30</sup> That there were parable collections is also confirmed by Apocryphon of James 8:6-10, which seems to presuppose a collection of six or seven parables, though not a collection known to the canonical evangelists.

### 3.3.2. Q.

In the literature on Gospel traditions outside the canonical Gospels the suggestion is quite frequently made that the early Christian author in question may have known Q (independently of Matthew and Luke). In particular, the suggestion has been made with reference to Paul,<sup>31</sup> James,<sup>32</sup> the Didache,<sup>33</sup> and the Gospel of Thomas<sup>34</sup>. In my view, such suggestions are sometimes too imprecise to be useful. In the first place, they do not always distinguish between allusions to one or two particular blocks of Q material (as discussed in 3.3.1 above) and allusions to a wide range of Q material. Although the former would have some relevance

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<sup>26</sup> Allison, 'Pauline Epistles', 12-15; cf. also D. L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 41-75.

<sup>27</sup> *The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse* (Gospel Perspectives 4) (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), with summary on pp. 366-67.

<sup>28</sup> J. S. Kloppenborg, 'Didache 166-8 and Special Matthean Tradition', *ZNW* 70 (1979) 54-67.

<sup>29</sup> The common view (e.g. R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1968] 325; Koester, Introduction II, 150) that Mark 4 contains a pre-Markan parable collection is questioned by J. Lambrecht, *Once More Astonished: The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) chap. 4.

<sup>30</sup> See my article, 'Synoptic Parousia Parables and the Apocalypse', *NTS* 23 (1976-77) 162-76; and Wenham, *Rediscovery*, chap. 1. Wenham extends the collection to include all the parables in Matt 24:42-25:30; Mark 13:33-37.

<sup>31</sup> Richardson and Gooch in this volume; cf. Tuckett's useful survey of claims that either the Corinthians or Paul in 1 Corinthians used Q: '1 Corinthians', 607-10.

<sup>32</sup> P. Davids in this volume.

<sup>33</sup> J. Draper in this volume.

<sup>34</sup> H. Koester argues, not exactly that Thomas is dependent on Q, but that both have a common origin in early collections of *logia*: 'Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels', *HTR* 73 (1980) 112-19; *Introduction* II, 47.

to the Q hypothesis, only the latter could demonstrate a writer's dependence on Q. Secondly, a general impression of dependence on Q is sometimes given without a sufficiently careful examination of each possible parallel to Gospel traditions. Thus Allison,<sup>35</sup> Wenham,<sup>36</sup> and Tuckett<sup>37</sup> have all criticized the hypothesis of Paul's knowledge of Q, on the grounds that Paul alludes to material which is found in a variety of strands of the Synoptic tradition, not especially to Q material.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that the independent parallels to Q material are of considerable importance to the question of the existence and nature of Q, which is regularly discussed as though only the Synoptic Gospels were relevant evidence. Independent parallels to Q material (whether they indicate a writer's knowledge of Q as such or only of particular sections of Q material) could help to substantiate the Q hypothesis in its broadest and least dogmatic form,

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i.e. the probability that the material common to Matthew and Luke derives from one or more common sources, oral or written. If, as I suspect may be possible, a significant number of independent parallels agreeing with Luke against Matthew in Q passages could be assembled, this would be important evidence against the view that Luke derived his Q material from Matthew. Study of the whole range of independent parallels to Q material could help to establish whether Q material was known to Matthew and Luke in the same or different forms. In any case, the current reconsideration of the Synoptic problem needs to break out of the traditional, but artificial restriction of its evidence to the Synoptic Gospels alone.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.3.3. Matthew's special source.

In my opinion, of all the putative sources of the Synoptic Gospels, the one for which there is the best evidence outside the Synoptic Gospels is not Q, but Matthew's special source, though that evidence has been little enough recognized and studied.

The best starting-point would be Ignatius' special relationship to Matthean *Sondergut*, which led Smit Sibinga to argue that Ignatius knew not Matthew, but Matthew's special source M.<sup>39</sup> In section 5 below, I shall outline a fuller and more rigorous method of testing and establishing that claim. It is a claim of such significance for Matthean studies that it at least deserves much closer attention than it has so far received. Moreover, in a forthcoming study of Gospel traditions in the Ascension of Isaiah I hope to show that a similar claim can plausibly be made for the Ascension of Isaiah (a work roughly contemporary with Ignatius). To these two principal witnesses to Matthew's special source can be added the Didache<sup>40</sup> and the Gospel of Peter.<sup>41</sup> The result, as I hope to argue elsewhere, is a cumulative case for seeing

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<sup>35</sup> 'Pauline Epistles', 19.

<sup>36</sup> In this volume.

<sup>37</sup> '1 Corinthians'.

<sup>38</sup> For this reason, H. Koester's interaction with proponents of the Griesbach hypothesis, in Corley ed., *Colloquy*, 31-122, is important and interesting. Cf. Koester's remark (in discussion) on p. 77: 'the problem of the Synoptic Gospels I don't think can be solved as such anymore.... Because the synoptic problem is also a small part of a larger problem'.

<sup>39</sup> J. Smit Sibinga, 'Ignatius and Matthew', *NovT* 8 (1966) 263-83.

<sup>40</sup> For the Didache's relationship to M material, see J. Draper in this volume, and Kloppenborg, 'Didache 166-8'.

<sup>41</sup> See Koester, 'Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels', 129-30; B. A. Johnson, *The Empty Tomb Tradition in the Gospel of Peter* (Th.D. thesis, Harvard, 1965). I do not deny that the Gospel of Peter probably shows some signs

Richard Bauckham, "The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels: Problems and Prospects," David Wenham, ed., *Gospel Perspectives*, Vol. 5. *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985. pp. 369-403.

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Matthew's special material (or at least a large part of it) as the tradition, probably oral, of the church of Antioch and neighbouring churches, known in slightly varying forms to Ignatius and the authors of the Ascension of Isaiah, the Didache, and the Gospel of Peter. In this way the extracanonical sources should help to illuminate both the nature of Matthew's special source and the way in which he uses it.

Christine Trevett has recently used the issue of Ignatius' relation to Matthew as an example of the way in which 'our knowledge of the Synoptic Problem, of the form, date and provenance of individual Synoptic sources and of the use of

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Gospel traditions in Christian communities may be furthered by means of an approach to the Gospels from the second century'.<sup>42</sup> Though by no means the only example, it is a particularly good one, and I have therefore used it as a paradigm case in section 5 below.

### 3.3.4. An Ur-Gospel?

Tending in a different direction from these suggestions about Q and M is David Wenham's use of Gospel traditions, especially in Paul and Revelation, as part of an argument (which also depends considerably on his study of the Synoptic material itself) for a kind of Ur-Gospel, i.e. a pre-Synoptic source known to all three Synoptic evangelists and from which they drew most of their material, including their special material. Though he has argued this in detail primarily in relation to a pre-Synoptic form of the eschatological discourse,<sup>43</sup> he has already suggested the extension of the same approach to other parts of the Synoptic tradition and proposed the thesis of a pre-Synoptic Gospel.<sup>44</sup> His contribution to the present volume gives some examples of this approach to other parts of the Synoptic tradition, with the aid of Pauline evidence. It should also be noticed that Wenham's approach is supported, in this volume, by Beale's study of the eschatological discourse and Revelation, and to some extent perhaps also by Maier's study of 1 Peter (see especially his section A.III.5).

This approach not only represents a significant fresh alternative within the current reconsideration of the Synoptic problem. It is also reminiscent of Resch's use of Gospel traditions outside the canonical Gospels to reconstruct a Hebrew Ur-Gospel on which the Synoptic evangelists and many other early Christian writers were dependent.<sup>45</sup> Wenham's use of traditions outside the Synoptic Gospels is much more limited and cautious than Resch's. However, perhaps it is time that the conventional verdict that Resch's thesis was wholly and

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of dependence on the canonical Gospels, but I think it can also be shown to have had independent access to something like Matthew's special source. However, as David Wright shows in this volume, the new fragment of the Gospel of Peter in Pap. Oxy. 41.2929 throws doubt on the reliability of the Akhmim MS. as an accurate witness to the original second-century text of the Gospel, and therefore makes arguments about the relationship to the canonical Gospels hazardous.

<sup>42</sup> C. Trevett, 'Approaching Matthew from the Second Century: The Under-Used Ignatian Correspondence', *JSNT* 20 (1984) 59-67.

<sup>43</sup> *Rediscovery*.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 367-71. He allows that this may have been an oral 'Gospel'.

<sup>45</sup> A. Resch, *Aussercanonische Paralleltexzte zu den Evangelien* (TU 10; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1894); *idem*, *Agapha: aussercanonische Schriftfragmente* (TU 30; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906).

conclusively refuted by Ropes<sup>46</sup> should not be simply taken on trust by those (like myself) who have not studied either in detail.

### 3.3.5. Tradition and Redaction in the Gospels.

Synoptic redaction criticism has largely proceeded on the unquestioned basis of the two-document hypothesis and the assumptions of classical form-criticism, so that recent doubts in both these areas make its results, as E. P. Sanders comments, 'by definition insecure'.<sup>47</sup> But it has also been conducted

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as a wholly inner-Synoptic discipline, on the conventional assumption that the Synoptic Gospels themselves provide all the relevant material for their own criticism. Hence in the Markan and Q passages of Matthew and Luke it is commonly assumed that Matthean and Lukan redaction can be fairly easily distinguished from their source simply by comparing the Synoptic parallels. Large conclusions about the redactional intentions and theologies of Matthew and Luke rest on this basis. It could be that serious attention to parallels outside the Synoptic Gospels could lead to different conclusions about what is redactional in the Synoptic Gospels.

Thus—to take a small example from a critic who is in general very cautious about the use of parallels outside the Synoptic Gospels—Christopher Tuckett argues that, in the light of 1 Cor 13:2, the Q saying Matt 17:20 par. Luke 17:6 may already before Matthew have existed not only in the more original Lukan form, but also in the Matthean form, so that Matt 17:20 'is not simply due to Matthean redaction but reflects a pre-Matthean development of the tradition'.<sup>48</sup> This is just one example of the way in which consideration of parallels outside the canonical Gospels can lead to the conclusion that differences between the evangelists in parallel material are not due to redaction by one of the evangelists, but to differences in the traditions known to them. And if this conclusion is sometimes necessary where independent parallels exist, it ought to shake the confidence with which material is assigned to the evangelists' redaction in other cases where, as it happens, independent parallels do not exist.

Assuming the two-document hypothesis, the possibility that what looks redactional may in fact be traditional applies not only to Q passages but also to Markan passages in Matthew and Luke. Matthew and Luke, even if working with a written source in front of them, always had in their minds the oral traditions of their own churches, and this mental familiarity with one form of a tradition could easily influence their redaction of another form of the tradition. The same would be true, of course, of scribes, whose tendency in the earliest stages of the transmission of the Gospels would not be to harmonize one canonical Gospel with another, but rather to harmonize the text they were copying with the oral tradition they knew by heart or perhaps with some other, no longer extant, Gospel text which they knew well. This point about scribal tendencies is a somewhat disquieting consideration in view of the close connexion between textual criticism and the practice of Synoptic source- and redaction-criticism.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> J. H. Ropes, *Die Sprüche Jesu* (TU 14; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896).

<sup>47</sup> In Corley ed., *Colloquy*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> '1 Corinthians', 614.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Koester in Corley ed., *Colloquy*, 76-77.

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In view of these considerations, I would tentatively suggest that Synoptic redaction criticism needs to adopt the following two principles of method (in addition to other, well recognized principles): (i) Parallels outside the Synoptic Gospels which could plausibly be independent of the Synoptic Gospels must always be considered before a judgment about what is redactional in the Synoptic Gospels is reached, and such judgments in cases where there are independent parallels must be taken into account in cases where there are not. (Since the relations between the Synoptic Gospels themselves are not known with certainty, it is unreasonable to require conclusive proof of the independence of a parallel before it can be considered.) (ii) Textual variants must in some cases be treated as part of the evidence.

## 4. Problems

Some of the areas considered in section 3 seem to me to offer very promising lines of research, but their promise is unlikely to be fulfilled unless some progress is made towards overcoming the peculiar problems that beset research in this field, of which the following three are perhaps the principal:

### 4.1. Establishing allusions.

In most of the literature with which we are concerned, direct citations of Gospel traditions are the exception, allusions the rule. This creates a problem which is apparent in a great deal of work in this area: that of knowing how to distinguish a real allusion to the Gospel traditions from a coincidental resemblance. Frequently it seems a matter of purely subjective judgment when one scholar detects an allusion but another denies it, and readers of this volume may well have noticed that some of its authors seem disposed to admit allusions on fairly slender grounds, while others are evidently working with more stringent requirements for what may count as an allusion.

The problem arises because the judgments involved need to be very complex. The degree of verbal resemblance is important, but by no means decisive and cannot be applied as a mechanical test. Agreement in an unusual idea, with minimum verbal resemblance, may be more impressive than agreement in a commonplace idea expressed in rather common and obvious words and phrases, even if the degree of verbal resemblance is relatively extensive. The relationship to the writer's own style and vocabulary needs to be considered, but some writers will be more likely than others to assimilate allusions to their

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own style and vocabulary. Judgments are bound to be somewhat affected, not unjustifiably, by prior judgments about the general likelihood of a writer's familiarity with Gospel traditions or with Gospel traditions of a certain category. (For example, those who have strong reasons for thinking it unlikely that Johannine traditions would be known to the author of 1 Peter will probably require clearer allusions to convince them than will those who would not find it surprising.) A certain number of clear citations or allusions in a particular writer may provide not unreasonable grounds for tipping the balance in favour of more doubtful allusions, especially if these show some kind of coherence with the clearer ones. Furthermore,

judgments are more complex than in the case, say, of allusions to the Old Testament, because more allowance has to be made for the possibility that allusions are being made to a form of the Gospel tradition different from the forms we know.

Two developments in recent literature on the subject seem to be useful steps towards dealing with this problem: (i) Both Allison, in the case of Paul,<sup>50</sup> and Davids, writing on James in this volume, attempt to show that a particular writer knew a particular block of Gospel traditions by arguing for a good number of allusions to this one block of tradition. Such allusions are more impressive in combination than they would be singly. The same kind of principle can be used to establish a writer's knowledge of a particular strand of the Synoptic tradition or a particular Gospel. (ii) The method used long ago in the Oxford Committee's work on the Apostolic Fathers<sup>51</sup> is used in this volume by Davids and Maier: that of classifying allusions as more or less probable. If a table of a particular writer's allusions is drawn up on a scale of probability, it will be possible to base arguments (say, for his knowledge of a particular Gospel) on the right kind of evidence: on very probable allusions only, or on an impressive number of less probable allusions, or on some appropriate combination of more and less probable allusions, but not on a few rather uncertain allusions alone.

These methods will be useful, but I think that some valuable methodological work could be done in listing the kinds of criteria which should count in establishing allusions and arguing for their relative importance. In the end a degree of subjectivity is bound to remain, but a more self-conscious and disciplined use of clearly defined criteria could reduce the subjective element considerably.

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#### **4.2. Establishing dependence.**

Much of the literature with which we are concerned derives from a context in which Gospel traditions were known in many forms: oral and written, pre-canonical sources, canonical Gospels, non-canonical Gospels, some known, some no longer extant. The difficulty of telling from which of these sources a particular writer's allusions to Gospel traditions derive is considerable, as Donald Hagner points out in his chapter on the Apostolic Fathers. We have to recognize that a writer need not always allude to the same source, and that in a period when written and oral sources were both well known they might influence each other in his memory. Faulty memory and deliberate redactional adaptation of the material are also factors to be taken into account.

As in the case of allusions, prior expectations often seem to govern a scholar's judgment. It seems that for some scholars any allusion which could be to a canonical Gospel is, while for others any allusion which need not be to a canonical Gospel is not. Clearly we must become more self-conscious and reflective about method, and it is with the aim of beginning to develop more rigorous methods of determining dependence that I have added section 5 of this chapter.

#### **4.3. Orality and textuality.**

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<sup>50</sup> 'Pauline Epistles'.

<sup>51</sup> A Committee of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905).

This whole area of study needs to become much better informed by thinking about the differences between orality and textuality and about what happens in a situation in which oral tradition and texts coexist.

For example, study of tendencies of the tradition (section 3.1 above) seems to make no distinction between the way oral traditions develop and the way a writer may use a written source. But Werner Kelber has strongly criticized E. P. Sanders' work (with its use of writings dependent on the canonical Gospels to establish tendencies which would have been at work in the pre-canonical tradition) on the grounds that studies of oral culture require a distinction between these two processes.<sup>52</sup> Craig Blomberg's contribution to this volume seems to be arguing that behind the Gospel of Thomas lies a period of oral tradition dependent on the Synoptic Gospels. Is this a plausible picture of how written and oral sources might have interacted in the second century? Donald Hagner in this volume plausibly uses mnemonic form as a criterion by which to distinguish amoral source for some Gospel traditions in the Apostolic Fathers. But to what extent

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might the forms of the sayings of Jesus in oral tradition and written Gospels have differed? Were some types of Gospel literature closer to the oral tradition than others?

The phenomena of allusions to Gospel traditions in much of the literature of the first and second centuries are unlikely to be properly understood unless they are deliberately related to the dynamics of a situation in which written Gospels functioned alongside oral tradition or (perhaps it would be better to say) within the context of oral tradition. What such a situation implies for the way in which written Gospels actually functioned in the churches, for the way in which their texts were transmitted,<sup>53</sup> for the way in which people thought of, remembered and quoted the Gospel tradition, needs to be explored with the help of the modern studies of orality and textuality<sup>54</sup> which are beginning to influence Gospels studies.<sup>55</sup> It would be a great pity if the growing interest in this subject confined itself to work on the canonical Gospels in the usual manner of trends in Gospels scholarship, since it is precisely outside the Gospels themselves, in writers who knew both oral and written traditions, that the interesting evidence for the way the two interacted and the way the transition from one to the other happened is likely to be found, once we have the methodological clues with which to detect and interpret it.

## **5. The Problem of Establishing Dependence: Ignatius and Matthew as a Paradigm Case**

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<sup>52</sup> W. H. Kelber, 'Mark and Oral Tradition', *Semeia* 16 (1980) 19-20.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Ong's comments on the way in which manuscripts are less 'final' than printed books: W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London/New York: Methuen, 1982) 132. A manuscript copied within a living oral tradition of its subject-matter could well be regarded as anything but final.

<sup>54</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, is a stimulating introduction to the subject.

<sup>55</sup> W. H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: the Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), which I have not yet been able to see, is clearly an important pioneering study in this area. From the reviews in *Bib* 65 (1984) 279-81 (D. J. Harrington) and *CBQ* 46 (1984) 574-75 (T. L. Brodie), it seems that Kelber may be overstressing the contrasts between orality and textuality in a situation where texts belonged in an oral context.

The relation of Ignatius to Matthew is a peculiarly interesting case of an early Christian writer's relationship to one of our Gospels. At least since Streeter<sup>56</sup> the claim that Ignatius was dependent on Matthew has held an important place in Gospel scholarship, providing both the earliest firm *terminus ad quem* for Matthew and a possible indication of the Gospel's place of origin.<sup>57</sup> However, the confidence with which Ignatius' knowledge of Matthew is usually asserted in studies of Matthew is hardly justified by detailed studies of Ignatius' relation to Matthew. Though Massaux thought the evidence proved Ignatius' use of Matthew,<sup>58</sup> Inge in the Oxford Committee's volume was much more cautious.<sup>59</sup> Koester denied that Ignatius knew any written Gospel, though he held that at one point he was indirectly dependent on Matthew.<sup>60</sup> Smit Sibinga, in the most recent detailed study, thought the evidence proves Ignatius' dependence not on Matthew, but on Matthew's special source.<sup>61</sup> Hagner, in the present volume, finds it

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impossible to be sure that Ignatius is ever dependent on a Gospel rather than on oral tradition. In a recent survey of the issue, Trevett highlights 'the lack of consensus among scholars on this topic and also the need for further work to be done'.<sup>62</sup>

This lack of consensus is not due to a lack of evidence. Although there are few places where Ignatius could be held simply to quote a Gospel tradition without adaptation, there are a considerable number of certain or probable allusions, almost all of which have some kind of parallel in Matthew. Trevett provides a list of eighteen Matthean passages to which Ignatian parallels are most commonly claimed in the literature on the subject<sup>63</sup> and a further list of eighteen other passages which are sometimes cited.<sup>64</sup> (I should wish to add three more to this latter list of possible parallels.<sup>65</sup>) Naturally, judgments vary as to which are the more probable allusions. Most, but not all, of Trevett's 'top eighteen' seem to me reasonably probable, and some are virtually certain. I myself would regard six Matthean passages as having virtually certain parallels in Ignatius,<sup>66</sup> and about ten others as having reasonably probable parallels.<sup>67</sup> Of course, the case for an Ignatian allusion needs to be argued in detail in each case, and an argument about Ignatius' relationship to Matthew ought to give most weight to the most probable cases. But there are enough probable allusions to provide a reasonable amount of

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<sup>56</sup> B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924) 16, 504-7.

<sup>57</sup> One of the latest writers in this tradition is J. P. Meier in R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983) 24-25. His brief argument for Ignatius' dependence on Matthew evades the real complexity of the issue.

<sup>58</sup> E. Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu sur la littérature chrétienne avant saint Irénée* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires/ Gembloux: Éditions J. Duculot, 1950) 106-7.

<sup>59</sup> *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> H. Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern* (TU 65; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957)

59. The passage is Smyrn. 1:1.

<sup>61</sup> J. Smit Sibinga, 'Ignatius and Matthew', *NovT* 8 (1966) 61.

<sup>62</sup> Trevett, 'Approaching Matthew', 64.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-63.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 67 n. 22.

<sup>65</sup> Matt 5:39 (Eph. 10:2); Matt 9:12 (Eph. 7:2); Matt 26:40-41 (Pol. 1:3).

<sup>66</sup> Matt 3:15 (Smyrn. 1:1); Matt 10:16 (Pol. 2:2); Matt 12:33 (Eph. 14:2); Matt 15:13 (Trall. 11:1; Philad. 3:1); Matt 19:12 (Smyrn. 6:1); Matt 26:7 (Eph 17:1).

<sup>67</sup> Matt 2:2 (Eph. 19:2-3); Matt 5:45-46 (Pol. 2:1); Matt 7:15 (Philad. 2:2); Matt 8:17 (Pol. 1:2-3); Matt 10:40 (Eph. 6:1); Matt 10:42 (Rom. 9:3; Smyrn. 10:1); Matt 13:24-25, 36-43 (Eph. 9:1; 10:3); Matt 18:19-20 (Eph. 5:2); Matt 23:8 (Eph. 15:1; Magn. 9:1); Matt 27:52 (Magn. 9:2-3).



evidence for judging whether Ignatius used Matthew's Gospel or relied on other sources for material parallel to Matthew. Although the lack of scholarly consensus on this issue owes something to the difficulty of deciding whether some possible allusions really are allusions to the Gospel tradition, it seems to me that it owes much more to the lack of a sufficiently rigorous method for determining literary dependence or independence.

My present purpose is to develop a method by outlining the stages which an argument needs to take. Although I shall reach particular conclusions, I cannot in the space available provide the full argument which would be needed to establish those conclusions. Instead, I provide a skeletal argument in which the main considerations which can help decide the issue will be discussed and the way they need to be handled illustrated. The skeletal argument is about Ignatius and Matthew, and the method has been developed to suit this particular case,<sup>68</sup> but my hope is that it provides a paradigm argument which can be adapted to suit other cases.

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### **5.1. Dates and Places of Origin**

The importance of these considerations is that they may provide us with an initial presumption that Ignatius is likely to have known Matthew or at least could have known Matthew. The letters of Ignatius are unusual among early Christian writings in that they can be dated and located with reasonable certainty: a date c. 107 is accepted by nearly all scholars,<sup>69</sup> and Ignatius was undoubtedly from Antioch.<sup>70</sup> Matthew's Gospel has been very often thought to come from Syria in general or Antioch in particular, and is usually dated one, two or three decades before Ignatius' letters. So there seems a good case for expecting Ignatius to have known the Gospel. It should be noted that this case, based on both date and place, is much stronger than a case based on date alone, since we do not know how soon Matthew's Gospel is likely to have become known in places distant from its place of origin. But even a Syrian origin for Matthew would by no means ensure that Ignatius must have known it. Serapion, bishop of Antioch at the end of the second century, had never read the Gospel of Peter which was in use in the church of Rhossus, on the Syrian coast, only about twenty miles from Antioch (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 6:12:2-6).

It is also important to avoid the circular arguments which all too easily arise in this kind of discussion. Most arguments about the date and place of Matthew treat Ignatius' supposed dependence on Matthew as a very important piece of their evidence. But insofar as our conclusions about the date and place of Matthew are dependent on Ignatius' supposed knowledge of Matthew we cannot argue from them to Ignatius' knowledge of Matthew. Since, however, there are also other grounds for dating Matthew before Ignatius and for locating Matthew in Syria,<sup>71</sup> the presumption that Ignatius is quite likely to have known Matthew remains reasonable, provided we are careful not to give it more weight than it can bear.

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<sup>68</sup> My indebtedness especially to Smit Sibinga's discussion of Ignatius and Matthew will become apparent.

<sup>69</sup> For a recent dissenting opinion, see C. Munier, 'A propos d'Ignace d'Antioche: Observations sur la liste épiscopale d'Antioche', *RevSR* 55 (1981) 126-31.

<sup>70</sup> The letters were not, of course, actually written in Antioch.

<sup>71</sup> See Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 22-24; J. Zumstein, 'Antioche sur l'Oronte et l'évangile selon Matthieu', *Studien NT Umwelt* 5 (1980) 122-38.

However, a degree of probability that Ignatius would have known Matthew cannot produce an equal degree of probability that Ignatius' allusions to Gospel traditions are to the text of Matthew's Gospel. Even if we could prove that Ignatius knew the Gospel, it would not follow that an Ignatian passage which could be dependent on Matthew is dependent on Matthew, since we do not know what place Matthew had in Ignatius' church or in Ignatius' own knowledge of Gospel traditions. Matthew need not yet have replaced other forms of the Gospel tradition in the church at Antioch. Ignatius himself might have memorized the oral Gospel traditions of his church long before

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Matthew was known to him, so that his own allusions would still be largely dependent on these, however prominent Matthew's Gospel had more recently become in his church. Ignatius could even have received Gospel traditions from the apostles. If Matthew was written in Antioch, Ignatius could easily have been as familiar with Matthew's sources' as Matthew himself was. The possibilities are such that we cannot assume, without argument, that an Ignatian allusion which could be to Matthew is to Matthew.

Thus, the relative dates and locations of Matthew and Ignatius are a relevant consideration, but not in any way a decisive one.

### **5.2. Evidence for unknown Gospel sources.**

Good evidence that a writer knew a source (written or oral) of Gospel traditions which is no longer extant is always relevant to the question of that writer's dependence on the canonical or other known Gospels, but is too often neglected in studies which limit themselves to close parallels with the canonical Gospels.

Three Ignatian examples will illustrate several kinds of such evidence:

(a) Pol.2:1 is very likely an allusion to the Q saying Matt 5:46 par. Luke 6:32. It is closer (in the words χάρις... ἔστιν) to Luke than to Matthew, but even closer (in using φιλέω where both Matthew and Luke have ἀγαπάω) to the form of the saying in Didache 1:3 (where the best text has φιλήτε). That Ignatius' source used φιλέω rather than ἀγαπάω is extremely likely, since Ignatius elsewhere uses ἀγαπάω twenty times but φιλέω never. It therefore seems clear that Ignatius knew a form of this saying different from the form(s) known to Matthew and Luke. This example shows how important it is to compare Ignatius not only with canonical but also with extra-canonical parallels.

(b) Smyrn. 3:2 might be thought to be Ignatius' own adaptation of Luke 24:39, were it not for other evidence that these words of the risen Christ in the form which Ignatius gives existed in a non-canonical source. Jerome's claim that Ignatius was quoting the Gospel of the Hebrews may not be trustworthy,<sup>72</sup> but Origen (de princ. I prooem. 8) more reliably informs us that this logion occurred in work called the *Petri doctrina*.<sup>73</sup> Whether or not this was actually

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<sup>72</sup> See *New Testament Apocrypha* I, 128-29.

<sup>73</sup> The dismissal of Origen's evidence here by R. M. Grant, 'Scripture and Tradition in St Ignatius of Antioch', *CBQ* 25 (1963) 327, is irresponsible. The *Petri doctrina* may be the same work as the *Kerygma Petrou* known to Clement of Alexandria.

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Ignatius' source, it is much more likely that Ignatius does quote the logion from some source than that the *Petri doctrina* took the logion from Ignatius.<sup>74</sup> This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that Ignatius shows no other sign of dependence on Luke.

(c) Eph. 19:2-3 is unlikely to be Ignatius' own elaboration of the references to the star in Matt 2. He must be following a source other than Matt 2, but it could perhaps be a source which was itself dependent on Matt 2.<sup>75</sup>

In relation to Ignatius' possible use of Matthew, these three examples are of differing significance. (a) shows that Ignatius did know a source which contained material parallel to material in Matthew, but not dependent on Matthew. (c) shows he knew a source which contained traditions related to traditions in Matthew, but which could perhaps be dependent on Matthew. (b) shows that he knew a source of Gospel traditions with no parallel in Matthew.

Even if (b) were our only evidence that Ignatius knew no longer extant sources of Gospel traditions, it would be important for our purposes. Since any considerable body of Gospel traditions is likely to have overlapped at some points with any other such body (as Mark and Q do), the possibility that an Ignatian parallel to Matthew derives not from Matthew but from the same source as Smyrn. 3:2 must always be considered. This point is often neglected in discussions of this kind. (To take another example, if the Gospel of Thomas can be shown to be dependent on our Synoptic Gospels in some instances, it is not therefore necessarily dependent on the Synoptic Gospels in all its parallels to them, since the Gospel of Thomas undoubtedly also had other sources of the sayings of Jesus and it remains possible that these sources preserved, independently of the Synoptic Gospels, sayings which also occur in the Synoptics.)

In Ignatius' case, we know not only that he had another source or sources, but also, from (a) and (c), that this source or sources did in fact contain material parallel to Matthean material, both, as (a) shows, in Q passages, and, as (c) shows, in special Matthean passages. Consequently other parallels to Matthew cannot be assumed to derive from Matthew without argument. To distinguish an allusion to Matthew from an allusion to Ignatius' other source or sources will require rather stringent argument.

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It is also important to notice that in cases (a) and (b) Ignatius' small variations of wording from the canonical Gospels can be shown, by means of extra-canonical evidence, to be derived from his sources, not due to his own free citation of the canonical text. This suggests that the same explanation should be seriously considered in other cases of Ignatian parallels to Matthew where there is significant variation of wording, even though extra-canonical parallels may not be available in these cases.

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<sup>74</sup> As Vielhauer in *New Testament Apocrypha* I, 130, thinks.

<sup>75</sup> P. Borgen, 'Ignatius and Traditions on the Birth of Jesus', in *Paul Preaches Circumcision and Pleases men and other essays on Christian origins* (Trondheim: Tapir, 1983) 160, has a useful, but I think not wholly conclusive argument against this. See also Koester, *Überlieferung*, 31-32.

### **5.3. Distinguishing Matthew and other sources.**

The difficulty of determining whether Ignatian parallels to Matthew are allusions to Matthew or to some other source is very considerable. The following attempt at an ideal method of deciding the issue will show the kind of evidence that is actually needed to prove specific conclusions. For the sake of relative simplicity, the argument in this section will not distinguish the various putative sources of Matthew, but that consideration will be introduced in 5.4.

The following explanations of Ignatian parallels to Matthew are possible:

- A. Ignatius knew and quoted Matthew.
- B. Ignatius knew and quoted Matthew's source.
- C. Ignatius knew and quoted not Matthew's actual source, but a closely related source.
- D. Ignatius knew and quoted a source dependent on Matthew.

To explain the full range of Ignatian parallels to Matthew, one of these explanations may be sufficient, or more than one may be necessary.

Study of the individual parallels could demonstrate one of the following in each case:

- (1) Ignatius agrees with Matthew and with Matthew's source (since Matthew here reproduces his source unaltered).
- (2) Ignatius agrees with Matthew against Matthew's source.
- (3) Ignatius agrees with Matthew's source against Matthew.

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- (4a) Ignatius disagrees significantly both with Matthew and with Matthew's source
- (4b) while also agreeing with Matthew against Matthew's source
- (4c) while also agreeing with Matthew's source against Matthew.

In the case of many of the parallels it may not be possible to decide at all confidently between some of these possibilities, but if some clear cases of any of possibilities (2)-(4c) can be demonstrated, then the following results can be obtained:

If there are clear cases of (2), but no clear cases of (3), (4a), (4b), or (4c), then A is proved.

If there are clear cases of (3), but no clear cases of (2), (4a), (4b) or (4c), then B is proved.

If there are clear cases of (4c), but no clear cases of (2) or (4b), then C is proved.

If there are clear cases of (3) and (4a), but no clear cases of (2) or (4b), then C is proved.

If there are clear cases of (4b), but no clear cases of (2) or (4c), then D is proved.

If there are clear cases of (2) and (4a), but no clear cases of (3) or (4c), then D is proved.

If there are clear cases of (2) and (3), but no clear cases of (4a), (4b) or (4c), then A and B are proved.

If there are clear cases of (2) and (4c), but no clear cases of (4b), then A and C are proved.

If there are clear cases of (3) and (4b), but no clear cases of (4c), then B and D are proved.

If there are clear cases of (4b) and (4c), then C and D are proved.

By this method it will not be possible to prove combinations B and C or A and D, since B and C will be indistinguishable from C alone, and A and D will be indistinguishable from D alone.

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This method requires us to find clear cases of one or more of possibilities (2)-(4c), but this is difficult to do, for two reasons in particular: (i) Most Ignatian parallels to Matthew are to Matthean *Sondergut* (see section 5.4), where it is much more difficult to distinguish source and redaction than it is where (according to the two document hypothesis) Matthew is dependent on Mark or Q. (ii) Since Ignatius rarely, if ever, gives a straight quotation from Gospel tradition, there is the additional problem of distinguishing Ignatius' source from his redaction. These difficulties do not make the method impossible to use, but they do make it necessary to recognize the extent to which we are dealing only in relative probabilities. In particular, it will not be wise to assume, as unquestionable, judgments about what is redactional in Matthew which have been made in Matthean studies without reference to the parallel in Ignatius. Such judgments may have to be revised, since the Ignatian parallels may be part of our evidence for distinguishing source and redaction in Matthew (see section 3.3.5 above). The nature of the evidence also suggests that special importance be attached to cases where parallels outside Matthew and Ignatius help us to distinguish source and redaction (such as Pol. 2:1, discussed in section 5:2).

Sibinga, who provides the most sophisticated discussion of Ignatius' relation to Matthew, concentrates on discovering cases of (2) and (3) in order to prove either A or B. His discussion (which is deliberately not exhaustive, but covers only thirteen possible Ignatian parallels to Matthew) provides only one possible case of (2), and six cases which he judges to be cases of (3), and so he draws conclusion B. However, it seems to me that Sibinga has neglected category (4) and possible explanation C. One of his six cases of (3) seems to me to be in fact a case of (4a), since his argument is that in Eph.14:2 Ignatius is dependent on a Greek translation of the Q saying (Matt 12:33 par. Luke 6:44) different from the translation known to Matthew and Luke. There seem to me to be at least three other cases of category (4): (i) Pol. 2:1 (discussed in section 5.2 above) is a case either of (4a) or, probably, of (4c).

(ii) Eph. 19:2-3 (also discussed in section 5.2) is probably a case of (4a). (iii) Eph. 6:1 (of Matt 10:40; John 13:20) is a good case of (4a). These four cases of (4a) and (4c), together with at least some of Sibinga's remaining five cases of (3), point quite strongly to conclusion C.

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Sibinga is also, in my view, mistaken in thinking that a selective discussion of only some Ignatian parallels to Matthew is sufficient to prove his case.<sup>76</sup> He seems to assume that if Ignatius knew Matthew, his allusions would normally be to Matthew.<sup>77</sup> But this is not necessarily the case. As I suggested in section 5.1, if Ignatius was already acquainted with another source or sources of Gospel tradition before he knew Matthew, he might continue to prefer this source, but could occasionally augment it from his knowledge of Matthew. Hence conclusions A and C are quite compatible, and if, in addition to cases of (3), (4a) and (4c), there were convincing cases of (2), then conclusions A and C would both be proved.

There seem to me to be only three arguable cases of (2): (i) Smyrn. 1:1, since the parallel words in Matt 3:15 are widely thought to be a Matthean composition; (ii) Eph. 17:1, which is Sibinga's only possible case of (2), since Ignatius' use of ἐπί, puts him slightly closer to Matt 26:7 than to Mark 14:3 (unless D's reading with ἐπί is accepted); and (iii) Magn. 5:2, where again Ignatius is slightly closer to Matt 22:19 than to Mark 12:15. But (iii) may not be a true parallel at all, and (ii) hardly provides a very convincing case. The weight of the case for Ignatius' knowledge of Matthew therefore seems to rest on Smyrn. 1:1.

This is a difficult but very illuminating example for methodology. In the first place, a very good argument can be made for regarding it, not as a case of (2), but as a special case of (4b). It has commonly been recognized that in Smyrn. 1:1-2 Ignatius is dependent on a traditional form of kerygmatic summary,<sup>78</sup> and there seems no good reason why Ignatius should have added the words about Jesus' baptism which are parallel to Matt 3:15. He probably found them in the traditional form he quotes. This would be a special case of (4b), because here Ignatius would have depended on a short, isolated source, not his usual source of Gospel traditions. Consequently a conclusion in this case would have no implications for other Ignatian parallels to Matthew. Thus Koester's position, which is that in this case Ignatius is indirectly dependent on Matthew<sup>79</sup> but in no other case is he directly or indirectly dependent on Matthew, is a logical and defensible one, which does not deserve Grant's criticism.<sup>80</sup> If Matthew's Gospel were known in Ignatius' church it could have influenced a traditional kerygmatic summary which Ignatius quotes, but (as we have already suggested) it need not have been Ignatius' own preferred source of Gospel traditions.

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<sup>76</sup> 'Ignatius and Matthew', 266.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>78</sup> Most recently, Borgen, 'Ignatius', 156-58. Ignatius' use of similar traditional forms in Eph. 7:2; 18:2; Trall. 9:1-2, provides a cumulative argument.

<sup>79</sup> Koester, *Überlieferung*, 58-61.

<sup>80</sup> Grant, 'Scripture', 325.

However, Smyrn. 1:1 also illustrates another issue, by posing the question: How confidently can we know that Matt 3:15 is a Matthean composition? Koester's confidence on this point obliges him to regard Smyrn. 1:1 as the only Ignatian text influenced (albeit indirectly) by Matthew's Gospel, but Sibinga argues, on the contrary, that Smyrn. 1:1 reflects not Matt 3:15 but Matthew's source. The vocabulary and idea are certainly characteristically Matthean, appearing both in Matthean redaction of Markan and Q material and in passages which may derive from a special source. But the possibility cannot be entirely excluded that Matthean redaction, in Markan and Q passages, was influenced by Matthew's special source. If the special source were the oral traditions of Matthew's own church, this might even be considered rather probable. Thus the possibility that Matt 3:15 is based on Matthew's special source, which Smyrn. 1:1 also reflects, cannot be dismissed too easily

Smyrn. 1:1 at most provides an isolated case of (4b), which which would permit conclusion D as the explanation of *this passage only*. For the rest of the Ignatian parallels to Matthew, we should be content with conclusion C. (The above argument is, of course, only a skeletal argument for conclusion C. A full argument would require detailed examination of all Ignatian parallels to Matthew.)

It will be remembered, however, that this method cannot prove conclusions B and C in combination, since the evidence for this would be indistinguishable from the evidence for C alone. The possibility therefore remains that other evidence could show that B and C are both true, and this must be borne in mind in the next section.

#### **5.4. The significance of the distribution of the parallels in Matthew.**

Ignatius' parallels to Matthew are very predominantly to Matthew's special material, and are scattered quite widely through that special material. This is true whatever one's judgments as to the most probable parallels. In Trevett's list of the eighteen Matthean passages most commonly cited as parallels to Ignatius, twelve are in M material, four in Markan material, and two in Q material. In my judgment, there are sixteen very or reasonably probable parallels, of which twelve are in M material, two in Markan material, and two in Q material.

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Sibinga rightly points out the importance of this distribution for the question of Ignatius' sources. Matthew's special material 'may make up roughly 25% of the whole Gospel; so one could normally expect that if Ignatius were using Matthew, the quotations from his special source would amount to a similar percentage'.<sup>81</sup> Sibinga concludes that Ignatius must have known Matthew's special source M, and that for him this was a much larger percentage of all the Gospel traditions he knew than it was for Matthew.

Some caution is required here. Sibinga has not asked whether Ignatius' interests might have determined this particular pattern of allusion to Matthean material. Ignatius does have a special interest in Gospel sayings which he can apply to his enemies the false teachers, and would have found more of these in M material than elsewhere in Matthew. This interest accounts for five passages in Trevett's list of twelve M parallels and for four passages in my own list of twelve M parallels. It therefore goes a little way, but only a little, towards accounting for Ignatius' selectivity. I cannot discern any other possible reason for Ignatius'

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<sup>81</sup> Smit Sibinga, 'Ignatius and Matthew', 282.

preference for M material, if he were equally familiar with all of Matthew or with all of Matthew's sources. Those who take Ignatius' parallels to Matthew to be proof of his dependence on Matthew do not seem to have noticed this problem.

Sibinga's argument therefore seems a sound one, though compatible with conclusion C as well as with his own conclusion B. But before discussing further the form in which Ignatius knew the M material, we must consider the explanation of the fact that Ignatius does have a small number of probable parallels to the Q material and the Markan material in Matthew. The main possibilities are two: (a) The M traditions known to Ignatius overlapped at these points with Q and Mark. This is quite probable not only in general terms, but also specifically in relation to the passages in question. We have already noticed (sections 5.2, 5.3) that the two Q passages which were very likely known to Ignatius (Pol. 2:1 par. Matt 5:46; Eph. 14:2 par. Matt 12:33) were known to him in forms different from those in Matthew's and Luke's source(s). The story of Jesus' anointing (Eph. 17:1; cf. Matt 26:7 par. Mark 26:7) was evidently a very popular Gospel story, known also in Luke's special source and in Johannine tradition. Other possible parallels with Markan material are with the kind of logia which could easily have been duplicated in another stream of Gospel tradition.

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(b) The Ignatian parallels with Markan material could derive from his knowledge of Matthew or Mark. Although he was mainly familiar with the M material, independently of Matthew, he may have read Matthew or Mark and absorbed some Gospel traditions from that source. If it was Mark that he knew, this could also explain the one plausible (though far from certain) instance of an Ignatian parallel to a Markan passage without parallel in Matthew (Smyrn. 10:2; cf. Mark 8:38).<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, if more weight were given than I am inclined to give (see section 5.3) to the fact that in Eph. 17:1 and Magn. 5:2 Ignatius's wording agrees very slightly with Matthew against Mark, then we should conclude that it was Matthew, rather than Mark, which served as Ignatius' minor source.

It seems to me most probable either that Ignatius knew the M traditions only, independently of Matthew, or that he knew the M traditions, independently of Matthew, and also Mark's Gospel. It would be hard to make a case for his knowledge of Q.

However, it is now necessary to reconsider the conclusion to 5.3, which was reached without distinguishing Matthew's sources. If we decide that Ignatius knew Mark as well as some form of the M traditions, then we can affirm conclusion B (in relation to Mark) as well as conclusion C (in relation to the M material). (This combination B and C could not, by the method used in section 5.3, be distinguished from conclusion C alone.) But conclusion C in relation to the M material now needs to be checked. In section 5.3, we reached conclusion C rather than Sibinga's conclusion B because of the evidence of four texts in category (4). But two of these (Eph. 14:2; Pol. 2:1) were the two parallels with Q material, and a third (Eph. 6:1) may also be a parallel with Q material (if Matt 10:40 derives from Q). We can now see that these three passages could be attributed to the overlap between M and Q, so that Ignatius follows the M form but Matthew preferred the Q version. They would not then be evidence that M as known to Ignatius differed from M as known to Matthew. To establish this we would need cases of (4) in Ignatian parallels to M material in Matthew. But our fourth case of

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<sup>82</sup> See Massaux, *Influence*, 107-8.



Richard Bauckham, "The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels: Problems and Prospects," David Wenham, ed., *Gospel Perspectives*, Vol. 5. *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985. pp. 369-403.

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(4) was such a case: Eph. 19:2-3 (cf. also Eph. 19:1) does seem to suggest that Ignatius knew a source related to, but different from the source of Matthew's infancy narrative.

Thus conclusion C may still stand in relation to Ignatius' knowledge of the M traditions, but we have very little evidence to indicate how different they were in the form known to

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Ignatius from the form known to Matthew. The difference would be readily explicable if in both cases M was the oral tradition of the church of Antioch, on which Matthew drew some twenty or thirty years before Ignatius wrote.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> The argument of section 5.4 assumes a theory of Synoptic sources. If this assumption is disallowed, the argument would have to proceed rather differently, and could become part of a larger argument for a theory of Synoptic sources.