

The Synoptic Concordance and the Reconstruction of Q

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During their meetings the members of the International Q Project discussed the variants between Matthew and Luke intensively. Did Matthew preserve Q's wording, and did Luke change it? Or was it the other way around? These discussions raised many questions that required a careful statistical evaluation before answers could be provided. For some problematic cases, no statistical data existed in the scholarly literature. More than once one or two members hurriedly flipped through the concordance or did a computer search during the debate, and then passed around a note reading something like "Luke inserts the word three times into Markan material." This obviously might convince those previously in favor of "Luke = Q" that Luke's wording might be redactional. However, all members felt somewhat uneasy about such quick solutions. For secure decisions one needs to verify those statistical statements about the gospel writers' usage of certain key words. New Testament scholars dealing with the Synoptics sometimes have the disappointing experience that some all-too-bold statements of the scholarly literature about Matthew's preference for certain words or Luke's tendency to avoid another word are not borne out by an investigation, at least are not as unambiguous as stated.

For a serious scholar there is no alternative than to verify for herself or himself the actual usage of a certain phrase by Matthew and Luke. This can be done by a conventional concordance, Moulton and Geden or Aland, for instance. But the concordance only gives the Matthean occurrences (with a small swath of context, usually very small), and does not indicate the wordings of the parallels in Mark and Luke. The next step is to grab a synopsis and check, e.g., whether Matthew added the word here to the Markan source, or preserved it from Mark, or whether it is unparalleled in Mark. One then makes a note of the finding, and moves to the next occurrence, flipping through the synopsis again, taking down a note, and so forth. This long process of switching between the concordance and the synopsis and one's own notes is often difficult, tedious, and open to a lot of errors. This is especially true for words that occur more than ten times in the Synoptics. And still there is no computer program available that solves our problem.

For the reconstruction of Q a knowledge of the redactional tendencies and vocabularic usages of the evangelists is indispensable. Only from this knowledge, especially how Matthew and Luke treated Mark, one can infer the wording of Q with a reasonable probability.

As a helpful tool for the reconstruction of Q and the study of the Synoptic Gospels, Paul Hoffmann, Ulrich Bauer, and I designed the *Synoptic Concordance* at the University of Bamberg, Germany. The project was funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*. The *Synoptic Concordance* combines the advantages of a concordance with those of a synopsis: each occurrence of a word in the Synoptic Gospels, along with a swath of text that provides its context, is displayed in three columns. One not only sees the occurrences of a certain word in one Gospel, but also the parallels in the other two Gospels. The presentation in columns allows a sufficient amount of context, more than in usual concordances. An earlier approach by Robert L. Lindsey and E.C. dos Santos did not earn much attention, probably owing to many disadvantages of that work¹. Parallel to the Bamberg project, F. Neiryck in Leuven is

¹ LINDSEY, ROBERT LISLE (ed.), *A Comparative Greek Concordance of the Synoptic Gospels*, 3 vols., Jerusalem: Dugith 1985-1988-1989. Collators and compilers: Elmar Camillo dos Santos (vols. 1 and 2) and James Leonhard Burnham (vol. 3). Some of the disadvantages are: a lot of errors, the out-of-date textual basis (9th edition of the

producing a synoptic concordance using an arrangement in horizontal lines rather than vertical columns². Neiryck's team has not yet published its results. The Bamberg *Synoptic Concordance* is complete in four volumes. Its basic features and some examples for which purposes scholars can use the *Synoptic Concordance* are given on a separate work sheet.

The phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, «Son of Man/Humanity» may be taken as an example how one could approach the *Synoptic Concordance*. In the entry “ἄνθρωπος” the index letter «a» in the left margin indicates this special usage, see for example Mark 2:28:

020		Mk 2,27 (2)	καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· τὸ σάββατον διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐγένετο καὶ οὐχ ὁ ἄνθρωπος διὰ τὸ σάββατον·			
a	Mt 12,8	κύριος γὰρ ἐστὶν τοῦ σαββάτου ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.	Mk 2,28	ὥστε κύριος ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τοῦ σαββάτου.	Lk 6,5	... κύριος ἐστὶν τοῦ σαββάτου ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

A closer look at the entry may begin with the synoptic statistics, displayed in a table beside each key word:

code	triple tradition																double tradition			Sondergut		total	
	+Mt / +Lk				-Mt / -Lk			traditions not taken over by Mt / Lk						subtotals			202	201	102	200	002		
	222	211	112	212	221	122	121	022	012	021	220	120	210	020	Σ ⁺	Σ ⁻	Σ	202	201	102	200	002	
Mt	8	4 ⁺			3	1 ⁻					2				4 ⁺	1 ⁻	17	8	1		4		30
Mk	8				3	1					2						14						14
Lk	8		2 ⁺		3 ⁻	1									2 ⁺	3 ⁻	11	8		2		4	25

A simple three digit code is used to indicate the distribution of vocabulary. The first digit stands for the Gospel of Matthew, the second for the Gospel of Mark, and the third for the Gospel of Luke. Each of these digits can either be “0”, “1”, or “2”. A “2” indicates that the keyword occurs in the pericope of the evangelist in question; a “1” indicates that while the keyword does not occur in the evangelist in question, there exists a context in which the keyword might have occurred; and a “0” indicates that a context is lacking entirely. Thus, for example, the column headed by the code 222 lists the number of times that the keyword appears in all three Gospels in the same context; 200 indicates occurrences of the keyword in Matthew alone; 012 lists Lukan occurrences of the keyword where Mark has a context that lacks the keyword, and where Matthew has no parallel at all; 211 lists the number of times that Matthew adds the keyword to Mark; and 212 indicates the so-called “minor agreements.”³ This coding describes all possible constellations of synoptic vocabulary. The table of the synoptic statistics thus records the synoptic constellations for each key word.

synopsis by Huck-Lietzmann), the very limited amount of context, the lack of the occurrences in Acts and of statistical data, a very strange synoptic theory as a basis for crucial decisions.

² See F. Neiryck's review of the Bamberg *Synoptic Concordance*: “A New Synoptic Tool”, in *ETL* 75 (1999) 407-418.

³ One can use the *Synoptic Concordance* even if one does not subscribe to the two-document hypothesis. It is possible to evaluate the figures from the viewpoint of a different synoptic theory. For example, on the Griesbach hypothesis (or Two-Gospel Hypothesis), the 222 column would refer to vocabulary which Luke took from Matthew, and Mark took from either Matthew or Luke. The 121 column would refer to words that Mark added to Matthew and Luke, and 221 to words that Luke omitted from Matthew but which Mark took from Matthew, and

In the example the first column (222) indicates eight instances in which ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου appears in all three gospels at the same place. We already saw the example Matt 12:8 par. Mark 2:28 par. Luke 6:5. The next column, 211, records the number of times that the key word ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου occurs in Matthew, but not in the parallel gospels. In order to identify these four cases, one needs only to look for index «a» AND code «211» in the left margin of the synoptic display of texts. One will quickly find for example Matt 16:28 and parallels:

a	Mt 16,28 → Mt 24,34	ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι εἰσὶν τινες τῶν ὧδε ἐστῶτων οἵτινες οὐ μὴ γεύσωνται θανάτου ἕως ἄν ἴδωσιν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτοῦ.	Mk 9,1 → Mk 13,30	... ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι εἰσὶν τινες ὧδε τῶν ἐστηκότων οἵτινες οὐ μὴ γεύσωνται θανάτου ἕως ἄν ἴδωσιν	Lk 9,27 → Lk 21,32	λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ἀληθῶς, εἰσὶν τινες τῶν αὐτοῦ ἐστηκότων οἵ οὐ μὴ γεύσωνται θανάτου ἕως ἄν ἴδωσιν	→ Jn 21,22-23
211				τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐληλυθυῖαν ἐν δυνάμει.		τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.	

«... there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.» Instead of «the Son of Man in his kingdom» the parallels in Mark and Luke read «the kingdom of God.» Next, one could look up the other three cases and evaluate the findings, e.g., in the light of the two-document hypothesis: Why did Matthew add ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου here? Time does not allow to go into redaction critical details here.

Another example concerns Q: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου occurs 19 times in the “double tradition” where a Markan context is entirely lacking. In 16 cases the phrase occurs in Matthew and Luke at the same place – what is normally called “minimal Q.” The code for this is «202». Thus if one wishes to see the eight occurrences of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in Matthew where a Markan context is lacking and the Lukan parallel reads ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου at the same place, one needs to look for index «a» AND code «202» in the left margin.

Perhaps you are more interested in another case, e.g., where Luke reads ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, but Matthew does not. The code is 102. With the help of this code and the index letter «a» one will find Luke 6:22 and 12:8:

102	Mt 5,11	μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ’ ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ.	Lk 6,22 (2)	μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν μισήσωσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ὅταν ἀφορίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ ὀνειδίσωσιν καὶ ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν ὡς πονηρὸν ἕνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.	→ GTh 68 → GTh 69,1
...	Mt 10,32	πᾶς οὖν ὅστις ὁμολογήσει ἐν ἐμοὶ ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁμολογήσω καὶ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν [τοῖς] οὐρανοῖς.	Lk 12,8 (2)	... πᾶς ὃς ἂν ὁμολογήσῃ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁμολογήσει ἐν αὐτῷ ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀγγέλων τοῦ θεοῦ.	

so forth. According to the Farrer-Goulder hypothesis, 212 would be vocabulary that Matthew added to Mark and which Luke took over, etc.

The Matthean parallel reads ἐγώ in both cases. What did Q read here? For Q 12:8, the Documenta Q volume lists 160 pages of quotations from the scholarly literature and 51 pages of evaluations of the problem⁴. This shows that the case is heavily disputed. One can pursue the many issues involved by studying the relevant pages in Documenta Q 12:8-12. From the synoptic statistics one could get the following impression: Matthew shows a slight tendency to add ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου to his Markan source (4⁺), while Luke has a slight tendency to avoid the term (3⁻). It occurs only once in Acts 7:56. (The occurrences in Acts are given after the synoptic display of the Gospels). These observations make it more likely that Luke took the term in 12:8 from Q than that he added it to his source.

One would also need to look up the key word ἐγώ and compare the findings there with the usage of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου here. The statistical figures at the entry ἐγώ seem to corroborate the results found here.

ἐγώ	triple tradition																double tradition			Sondergut		total	
	+Mt / +Lk				-Mt / -Lk			traditions not taken over by Mt / Lk							subtotals			202	201	102	200		002
code	222	211	112	212	221	122	121	022	012	021	220	120	210	020	Σ ⁺	Σ ⁻	Σ	202	201	102	200	002	total
Mt	2	2 ⁺		1 ⁺	4	2 ⁻	1 ⁻				2	4 ⁻			3 ⁺	7 ⁻	11	5	9		12		37
Mk	2				4	2	1				2	4		1			16						16
Lk	2		2 ⁺	1 ⁺	4 ⁻	2	1 ⁻		1 ⁺						4 ⁺	5 ⁻	8	5		2		11	26

Although Matthew leaves out ἐγώ seven times (7⁻) from the Markan tradition, he does not dislike the word. Checking the occurrences of the codes 122, 121, and 120, one sees that in many cases Matthew shortens the whole phrase. Matthew further shows a clear tendency to add ἐγώ to Q material in most of the nine 201 occurrences. In total, Matthew has significantly more occurrences of ἐγώ than Luke (and Mark). On the other hand, Luke is indifferent regarding the usage of ἐγώ in his Markan *Vorlage* (4⁺ and 5⁻). Hence, from the viewpoint of ἐγώ, too, it seems more probable that Matthew changed υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in Q 12:8 to ἐγώ in Matt 10:32.

The *Synoptic Concordance* provides the necessary statistical data and – much more important – presents the occurrences and the synoptic parallels at a single glance. We hope that this tool will help to make further study of the synoptic gospels easier.

Now, that the Critical Edition of Q is published—do we actually need a tool for the reconstruction of Q any longer? The critical text of Q is based on a lot of decisions that again are based on a lot of arguments Pro and Con. A scholar does not believe uncritically in critical editions of any text, but still needs evidence. The Synoptic Concordance can provide this evidence. It will corroborate many of the decisions of The Critical Edition of Q, and it might question some of the solutions presented. There is no end to the study of the Synoptic Gospels, of course. The Critical Edition of Q as well as the Synoptic Concordance are helpful tools for further scholarship.

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⁴ PAUL HOFFMANN together with JOSEF E. AMON, ULRIKE BRAUNER, and THOMAS HIEKE, Confessing or Denying, in: CHRISTOPH HEIL (ed.), Documenta Q 12:8-12, Leuven: Peeters, 1997, pp. 40-250.