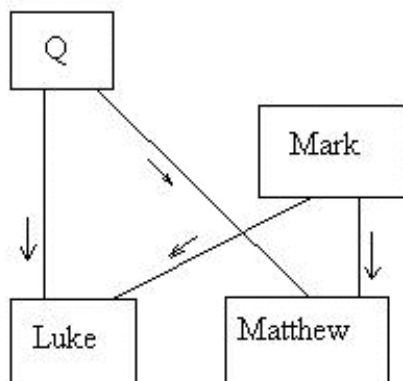


What approaches to Biblical scholarship precipitated the "Essays and Review" controversy?

The Two Source Theory of Gospel Origins



Modified from www.religioustolerance.org

Based on careful internal analysis of the parallel texts (see <http://www.utoronto.ca/religion/synopsis/meta-syn.htm>), it is now readily apparent that the authors of Luke and Matthew worked independently of each other without being aware of the other's writing. However, it is also obvious that both borrowed portions from two earlier Gospels. They added this material to their own writings, frequently word for word. In addition, both Matthew and Luke added material from their own unique perspectives – often with very different emphases.

This was "breaking news" in England in the mid-nineteenth century. Moreover, further analysis showed that one of the source documents was a public version of the Gospel of Mark.

The other source document was an unknown "Sayings Gospel." As the name implies, this would consist primarily of elements from Christ's sermons, along with instructions, parables, witty comments etc. It would contain little accompanying narrative about the activities of Christ and his disciples. A total of about 225 verses of Luke and Matthew come from this source. The German researchers who pioneered in this work called this lost document "Quelle" which means "source". This is usually abbreviated to "Q". **This German approach was brought to England and championed by the authors of "Essays and Reviews."**

There were some initial criticisms of the "Q" concept. The texts of many Gospels have survived – both the four in the official canon, and dozens more that never made it into the Bible. However, no copy of "Q" had survived intact into the modern era. Also, all known Gospels were written as narratives; no other Sayings Gospel had ever been seen; it was an unknown gospel construct. But after the 1945 discovery of the Sayings Gospel of Thomas at Nag Hammadi in the 1940's, the theory of "Q" became much more believable (see <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gosthom.html> for text of Thomas and related commentary).

(see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Q_document for an overview of "Q" scholarship)

Many theologians conclude that Q was written by unknown authors, starting circa 50 CE. It was widely used by one of the groups who followed the teachings of Jesus. The author of the Gospel of Thomas, a very early Gospel which never made it into the official canon, is believed to have quoted from Q as well. Many scholars believe that Q represents the beliefs of an early group of Jesus' followers, when Jesus was considered a secular philosopher-teacher. This is before many "supernatural" theological concepts had imported from the Greco-Roman tradition and incorporated into the Christian belief system: of Jesus being part of the Trinity, of church organizations, salvation, baptism, virgin birth, resurrection, etc. One author suggests that Q might be "a kind of missing link between the Jewish world of Jesus and the early Christian church."

In addition to these internal analyses, some of the authors of "Essays and Reviews," as well as scholars on the Continent, advocated analyzing Biblical texts with respects to non-religious texts and (most importantly in the context of this game) the evidence obtained by science – especially related to the age of the earth.