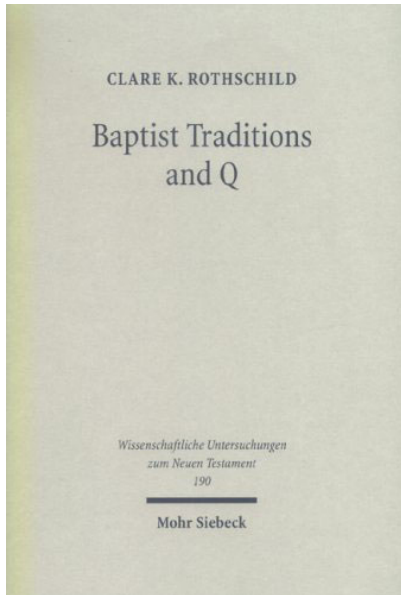


RBL 04/2007



**Rothschild, Clare K.**

***Baptist Traditions and Q***

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen  
Testament 190

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005. Pp. xvii + 309. Cloth.  
€74.00. ISBN 3161487915.

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The past two years have seen the publication of two monographs that endeavor to change the way we think about Q in fundamental ways. Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre's *Jesus among Her Children: Q, Eschatology, and the Construction of Christian Origins* (HTS 55; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) argued that Christology is not nearly as important an interpretive category for Q as most critics have made out and contends that Q stresses exhortation and paraenesis over polemic, a communal and cooperative vision of the *basileia* over the language of judgment and separation, and the communal project of transformation over a stress on the incommensurability of the figure of Jesus. The thesis of Clare Rothschild's monograph is yet bolder: that Q originated not in the circles of Jesus but in those of John the Baptist; that sayings originally attributed to John have been placed on Jesus' lips by Matthew and Luke; that Mark christianized Baptist materials and used them in Mark 8–13; that the so-called "coming Son of Man sayings" belong to John's original proclamation, not Jesus'; and that many of the kingdom sayings come from John and have been adopted by the Jesus movement (closely associated with John) for their hero.

Rothschild begins by arguing that, contrary to the conclusions of "redaction criticism," John is not systematically subjugated to Jesus. On the contrary, despite some obvious

efforts to co-opt John or to efface his distinctiveness—Matthew’s assimilation of John’s message in 3:2 to Jesus’ in 4:17, for example—various elements of the Gospels’ presentation of John use descriptions of John that one would think ought to be reserved to Jesus. For example, Luke 3:18 and 16:16 use εὐαγγελίζεσθαι to describe John’s preaching activity, which, according to Rothschild, the early church would hardly have done on its own accord, since it would have detracted from Jesus’ preaching (59). Perhaps, but she does not consider the fact that the use of εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, which is overwhelmingly Lukan, appearing twenty-five times in Luke-Acts (once in Matthew, never in Mark), may be just as much Luke’s way to co-opt John for the Jesus movement as Matthew’s attribution of Jesus’ preaching in Matt 4:17 to John in 3:2. In any event, redaction criticism as such is hardly responsible for an erroneous assessment of John’s significance in the Jesus tradition. Rothschild might disagree with individual critics—she focuses on C. H. Scobie, John Meier, and Joan Taylor—but she never explains how the method *qua* method is defective.

The heart of the thesis is developed in chapter 3, which argues that significant portions of Q are in fact Baptist in provenance. The key argument here is that the “Jesus” of Q is at odds with the “Jesus” outside of Q and that Q’s Jesus has strong affinities with the Baptist. In fact, “*sayings of John in Q are attributed to Jesus in Synoptic materials outside of Q*” (88, emphasis original). For example, while outside Q Jesus is said to have participated in feasts (Mark 2:15–17, 18–22; Luke 15:2; John 2:1–11), the Jesus of Q, like John, fasts and encourages others to fast. Rothschild points to Q 4:2 and, much more problematically, Q 6:21a; 11:3; 12:22b–24, 29, 45–46, and observes that Jesus’ opponents in Q also eat and drink (Q 13:26–27; 17:26–27, 28–30). Of course, Rothschild recognizes that Q 11:3 and 12:22b–32 do not enjoin fasting at all, so she argues that “minimal subsistence is, however, one definition of fasting” (90), and in this sense Jesus is like John, who also has a marginal existence. Rothschild’s reading of the text of Q is, however, selective or skewed. Q 13:26 has the “opponents” claim to have eaten and drunk *enōpion sou*, “in your presence,” which imagines for Q’s Jesus a convivial setting. Q 17:26–30 does not stress feasting but the utter normalcy of day-to-day life prior to the coming of the day of the Lord. This text neither encourages nor discourages feasting (or fasting); its point, rather, is that contrary to the apocalyptic scenarios that imagine messianic woes and a series of disasters presaging the end of the age, the end will come in the midst of the routine. Even less convincingly, Rothschild conjectures that Q 7:33–34, which contrasts John’s ascetical behavior with Jesus’ more convivial practices, might be an interpolation in Q, or perhaps that the “Son of Man” in 7:34 is not Jesus at all but John. The latter suggestion, however, creates an unbearable contradiction, since John can hardly simultaneously eat (7:34) and not eat (7:33).

With somewhat more plausibility Rothschild observes that outside of Q Jesus is represented as active in urban centers while the Jesus of Q, like John, is critical of urban centers. Care is needed here, however, since apart from the temptation story Q does not locate Jesus in the wilderness, even if Q links opposition and rejection to civic institutions and landmarks (the *agora*, *plateia*) and to Jerusalem and the towns of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Family life is another *topos* where Rothschild claims that Q's Jesus aligns with John against the Jesus outside of Q. She asserts that John "exhorts others to [leave family connections]" in Mark 1:2–6 and parr. (94). This is not at clear. Moreover, outside Q we find Mark 10:28–30, which belongs as much to antifamilial discourse as Q 9:59–60; 12:53; 14:26–27. On the other hand, Q's categorical prohibition of divorce (16:17) does seem closer to John's view (Mark 6:18) than Matthew's, which makes concessions to divorce and remarriage.

Rothschild also argues that Q's reticence regarding signs (Q 11:29) "contradicts the prevailing emphasis on Jesus' display of the miraculous outside of Q, but coincides with near absence of data on John's performance of signs" (94–95). This argument seems rather too quick: on the one hand, from the fact that John was not a signs-prophet one cannot infer that he was reticent concerning signs; on the other, Q seems to regard the events of 7:22—whether they are deeds of Jesus or not—as indications of the end times (but see below for Rothschild's interpretation of 7:22–23).

A much stronger argument for connections between Q and John is Rothschild's observation that the major themes in Q have affinities with traditions about John. Prominent among these is Q's emphasis on announcement of judgment and call for repentance, but also use of the Lot cycle, which is expressly invoked in Q 3:2; 10:12; 17:28–30 and implicitly in 3:7–9 and 17:34–35, since the framework of Q (3:2; 17:28–30, 34–35) and redaction at or near the stage of Q's final compilation (10:12) invoke the story of Lot and place *John* (not Jesus) in Lot's locale. While the present writer had supposed that Q's use of the Lot cycle to frame Q was a purely literary choice (*Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* [Minneapolis; Fortress; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000], 119–21), Rothschild reasons that Q's redactional choices reflect the original complexion of Q's material. She could well be right.

In order to bolster the thesis of the Baptist origin of Q, Rothschild argues that some *Sondergut* with Baptist affinities also comes from Q. In principle, the attribution of *Sondergut* to Q is defensible, since it is a priori likely that neither Matthew nor Luke took over the entirety of Q. In practice, however, rigorous criteria are needed in order to avoid the casual or whimsical expansion of Q. For example, one ought to show not only that the proposed candidates for Q-membership cohere with the style and conceptual array of the double tradition but that there are good redactional reasons for Luke, in the cases of

Matthean *Sondergut*, to have omitted the material (*mutatis mutandis* for Lukan *Sondergut*). It is at this crucial point of method that Rothschild's case is weak. Suggesting that Matt 6:16–18, which presupposes that Jesus and his followers fast, is from Q, she does not address the issue of why Luke, who can also contrast ostentatious displays of piety with less visible ones (Luke 18:9–14), passed over this “Q” passage. Much stress is placed on Betz's suggestion that the original *Sitz im Leben* of Matt 5:3–12 was a baptismal liturgy (*The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995], 92–105), which then allows the conjecture that this material also comes from Baptist circles. But the initial suggestion, as Betz himself indicates (95), is far from certain. Hence, it seems unwise to base so much on a mere possibility. And Rothschild fails to address the issue of why Luke passed over such important Q material. Rothschild also proposes a few pieces of Lukan *Sondergut* for membership in Q: Luke 3:23–38 (Jesus' genealogy, which she suggests was originally John's); 1:68–79; 7:11–17; and 12:50. Again, reasons ought to be supplied for Matthew's neglect of such “Q” material.

One of the more adventuresome aspects of the book is Rothschild's argument that the transfiguration story ought to be seen not as an anticipation of Jesus' resurrection or as a misplaced appearance scene but rather as the resurrection of John. The “Elijah” who appears with Moses in Mark 9:4 is John, as he is later identified in 9:13. This leads to the observation that most of Mark's parallels with Q material either explicitly concern John (Mark 1:2 [Q 7:27]; 1:4 [Q 3:2]; 1:7–8 [Q 3:16–17]; 1:9–11 [Q 3:21–22]; 1:12–13 [Q 4:1–13]) or appear in the section of Mark following John's death (6:14–29) and “resurrection” (9:2–9). According to Rothschild, Mark knew the Baptist provenance of Q materials and deliberately placed these Baptist materials following John's “resurrection”: “the risen John descends from heaven with Moses to sanction Jesus as successor, formally inaugurating Jesus' appropriation of John's well-known teachings for his own teaching ministry” (171).

The final two chapters argue that Jesus referred to John as the Son of Man (Mark 9:12) and that the characterization of the Son of Man coming in judgment (Q 12:8, 10, 40; 17:24, 26, 30) does not cohere with the Isaianic miracle worker of Q 7:22 but does agree with John's Coming One of Q 3:16–17. In fact, Rothschild argues that Jesus' answer to John's question in Q 7:18–23 (“Are you the Coming One?”), which most exegetes have taken to be an elliptical affirmation, should be regarded as a denial: “No, I am not the Coming One. But I merely work wonders.” Jesus first connected John with the Son of Man (Mark 9:12), and his followers later multiplied coming Son of Man sayings, interpreting them as *Jesus'* return. Finally, Rothschild argues that the kingdom sayings are also Baptist sayings: Q 6:20b (because it is a macarism that allegedly belonged to John's baptismal liturgy); 7:28b (a self-deprecating saying of John); 10:9 (because it espouses a vagrant way of life); 11:2b (introduced by Luke in relation to John's prayers); 11:52 (a woe

better associated with John than with Jesus); 12:31 (because of its rigorist tendency); 13:18–21; 13:28–29 (connected with John because of the mention of Abraham; cf. Q 3:7–9); 11:20; 17:20–21; and 16:16. Much of Rothschild's argument here depends on positing a binary opposition between John as prophet of judgment and speaker of woes and Jesus as a healer and banqueter. The parables of the mustard seed and leaven are ascribed to John only by interpreting them (implausibly) *via* Mark 4:26–29 and John 12:24, as sayings about risking all and personal jeopardy. It is hard to imagine how the metaphor of the leaven fits this reading. Rothschild's general strategy, distinguishing sharply between John and Jesus, only renders more improbable the hypothesis that the material that originated with the Baptist could have been transferred to Jesus.

*Baptist Traditions and Q* is ambitious, clever, and relentless in its efforts to “baptize” Q. The danger of so ambitious a thesis is that its very enthusiasm—which unfortunately allows many weak arguments and mere conjectures to pass—becomes its own undoing. If most or all of Q is from the Baptist, if Mark knew this (and yet hid it), if Matthew and Luke knew it and effaced John's teaching by ascribing them to Jesus, and if both the Son of Man and the kingdom were central to John's preaching, then as historians we are faced with the puzzle of how the follower and disciple, Jesus, managed to eclipse his teacher so completely, especially if, as Rothschild must insist, John and Jesus were significantly different in crucial respects. The eclipse is complete in the case of Son of Man and kingdom sayings, since no hint remains in the literary record that either term passed John's lips. Rothschild's argument might have been more successful had its scope been more modest, for example, arguing that Q shows significant influence of Baptist thinking in its representation of Jesus as a repentance preacher (Q 10:13–15; 11:31–32) when, if E. P. Sanders is right, this was not the dominant character of Jesus' preaching (*Jesus and Judaism* [London: SCM, 1985]). Nonetheless, this is an important work and well worth considering and arguing with, precisely because it proposes so radical a rereading of Q.