

The Introduction to Q (Q 3:1-17) (SBL abstract, 2014 – © David B. Sloan)

Previous works considering the first few verses of Q have come from a minimalist-Q perspective, but it is likely in combining Mark and Q that Matthew and/or Luke would omit more of Q here than elsewhere. This paper takes a fresh look at Q 3:1-17 from the perspective of a larger Q. Luke 3:10-14 resembles the structure and syntax of Q, most notably the three-part dialogs in Q 4:1-13 and Q 9:57-62, and it provides a contrast with Q 3:7-9 so that while on the one hand “the Pharisees and the Sadducees” (Matthew) or “the crowds” (Luke) (Q: “the Pharisees and the lawyers”?) are not baptized by John, on the other hand the crowds (Q: the people?), tax collectors, and soldiers are. Q 7:29-30 alludes back to this contrast, suggesting that Luke 3:10-14 is from Q. A case can also be made for more of Matt 3:1-6//Luke 3:1-4 coming from Q. Neiryneck argues that each minor agreement here can be explained without recourse to Q, but seeing Q as behind Luke 3:1-2 explains why Luke 3:1 has non-Lukan features and reads like the beginning of a book. After offering a reconstruction of Q 3:1-17, this paper discusses how this introduction would incline the reader to read the story. It would be a mistake to conclude based on the seemingly prophetic beginning of the book (cf. Jer 1:1-2) that the genre of Q is prophecy. Rather Q introduces John as a prophet in order that the last of the prophets would attest to one who is greater, whose coming begins the new age in which sinners repent and find life, while Pharisees and lawyers are exposed and condemned. Thus Q may be seen as a new type of literature for the new era, perhaps the first gospel.