

## **The First Gospel: An introduction to Q — Arland D Jacobson**

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**Reviewer: Rev G C J Nel**

Arland D Jacobson, Executive Director of the Charis Ecumenical Centre in Moorhead, Minnesota, is the author of various articles on Q, especially on the aspects of the literary unity and history of composition of Q.

### **Introduction**

'The First Gospel — an introduction to Q' consists partially of and has its roots in Jacobson's doctoral dissertation which was completed as long ago as 1978, under the title: 'Wisdom Christology in Q'. Articles written by the author in 1982 and 1987 are also incorporated in the present work, making it a book which contains the thoughts of the author over a lengthy period. This can be regarded as an bonus point as Jacobson succeeds in bringing his previous standpoints into debate with recent research.

Although Jacobson initially exploits the original thoughts of his mentor J M Robinson whose work entitled: 'LOGOI SOPHON': Zur Gattung der Spruchquelle Q' represented a pioneering attempt on the question of the hermeneutics of the Sayings Gospel Q, with this work Jacobson shows himself to be an independent researcher.

### **Motivation purpose, and procedure**

Jacobson regards Q-study as necessary for two reasons:

- \* It sheds light on the time when Christianity was born from Judaism and
- \* it also sheds light on the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth. Jacobson wants to 'map' the literary terrain of Q — individual sayings and groups of sayings should be understood in larger context. In this he succeeds to a large extent.

An important presupposition that Jacobson states is that Q is not a Christian but a Jewish document — an idea that forces us to a recontextualisation of material known to us through Matthew and Luke. Jacobson mentions two procedures of reconstructing the Q material:

- \* a reconstruction of the initial wording of each saying or group of sayings and
- \* a reconstruction of the original sequence of material. In the latter Jacobson is the first scholar to place this particular aspect as the central focus of his work.

### **Summary of contents**

Besides the preview and introduction the book consists of 8 chapters, a conclusion and various handy indexes. In the first chapter entitled 'Source Criticism' Jacobson discusses the two aspects of this literary 'tool':

- \* examination of the document for signs of literary disunity and
- \* the establishment of the literary unity of the putative source(s). His assumption is that synoptic relationships are literary ones and, regarding the two document hypothesis, he regards it as viable, but not to be simply taken for granted.

In Chapter 2 his main argument consists of the idea that Q should be regarded as a gospel rather than just a source and he substantiates this argument by citing views from H J Holtzmann (1863) through to H E Tödt (1959). One feels this idea needs further elaboration. Chapter 3 is a discussion of recent Q research and, in contrast to the redaction-critical approach of Lührmann according to which isolated sayings were edited according to various existing tendencies, and also to Schulz who distinguishes between earlier and later material in Q on account of traditions, Jacobson introduces his own method of 'composition criticism': no saying in Q was meant to be an individual saying, but all are part of larger literary schemes. The sequence of Q material needs to be reconstructed and the reconstructed material must then be analysed. In Chapter 4 the question of the literary unity of Q comes up for discussion. Jacobson regards references to 'this generation' in connection with Israel's rejection of God's messengers to be the centre around which Q's literary unity builds. Jacobson sees in this theme ('this' generation') a deuteronomic tradition which he regards as the theological framework for the redaction of Q. In Chapters 5 to 8 Jacobson divides the Q-text into 4 parts: (1) 'John and Jesus' (Q 3:1-6 to Q 7:31-35); (2) 'Mission and reception' (Q 9:57- Q 10:22); (3) 'Against this generation' (Q 10:23- Q 11:48) and (4) 'To the Community' (Q 12:2 -Q 22:30).

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Jacobson admits that there is no clear picture of the compositional history of Q but, as he concludes in the final chapter, the small community where Q had its beginning is of great importance as it represents the earliest Jesus movement.

### **Conclusion**

Jacobson admits this work is not the last word on the Sayings Gospel Q. It is definitely, however, an essential contribution to the very important debate on Q.