



The Synoptic problem: A critical analysis of existing imaginations

Kolawole Oladotun Paul
Department of Biblical Studies and Theology,
ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Kwara State, Nigeria
E-mail: Pauldotun98@gmail.com

Abstract

The synoptic Gospels in the New Testament canon provide the information concerning the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. A careful reading reveals the similarities and differences among the Synoptics; one is somehow eager to provide an explanation. Over the years, the similarities and differences in the Synoptic gospels pose significant challenges to the doctrines and expositions of the texts. Why are there varieties in language agreement among them? Is any of the writer abreast with the work of one (or more) of the other? Are they dependent on older, now lost written sources? In other words, the literary relationship is what constitutes the Synoptic Problem. It is thus, the attempt to answer these questions by Synoptic scholars for about the last two hundred years. The research observes that the scope of 'Synoptic problem' is wide, because of varying schools of thoughts that have developed over time; however, the scope of this discourse is centered on J.J. Griesbach and Streeter's arguments.

Keywords: Synoptic Gospels, Synoptic Problem, New Testament.

Introduction

The New Testament canon presents four (4) separate accounts of the life of Jesus from which the church nourishes itself both spiritually and doctrinally. However, the explicit structure and narrative parallels between Matthew, Mark and Luke make it possible to set their accounts of Jesus' life alongside one another – thus "Synoptically". This enables one to gain a "synoptic" overview the three accounts. When the Synoptic Gospels are arranged in a parallel arrangement it is evident that they stand in a literary relationship with one another. In recent centuries scholars have wondered what exactly that relationship is. This has led to one of the major unsolved issues in Gospel Studies: "The Synoptic Problem". This assertion forms the framework of this discourse. In view of this, several scholars and notably among them are; J.J Griesbach (4 January 1745 – 24 March 1812, a German biblical textual critic) and B.H. Streeter (17 November 1874 – 10 September 1937, a British biblical scholar and textual critic) who have sought to give explanations on the considerable similarities and differences in spite of the extensive agreements of these three literary works.

The Synoptic Gospels

To begin with, the research sees the need to briefly explore what and why these gospels are referred to as "Gospels" and "synoptic" gospels. Nickle explained that the term 'gospel' mainly refers to a type of written document such as the first four books of the New Testament. He further



explained that the primary sense of the gospel was to proclaim ‘good news.’¹ The gospel as a technical designation of a type of literature is found in the numerous apocryphal (‘hidden’ but later mean ‘non apocryphal’).² More importantly, the early Christians significantly broaden ‘gospel’ to summarize the preaching of Jesus Christ which encapsulates his public ministry (Mk 1:1, 1:14-15, 13:10, 14:9; Matt 4:23, 24:14, Rom 1:1-5, 16; 1 Cor 1:17-24; 15:1-5).

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are referred to as ‘Gospels’ because they give records of Jesus birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection.³ But Matthew, Mark and Luke are called ‘Synoptic Gospels’ because they give details of Jesus’ life which can be arranged in columns so that they might be ‘viewed together’ (*syn* = with; *opsis* = look at).⁴ This is because differences exist between John and Matthew, Mark and Luke on crucial matters; the chronology of Jesus’ crucifixion and cardinal events in his ministry.⁵ In fact, Matthew, Mark and Luke are severally on the same page with respect to their descriptions of same event.⁶ This evaluation and assessment prompted the Syrian Titian’s attempt on the issue of different accounts by harmonizing them into one narrative.⁷ Though the gospel of John cannot be totally sideline from any discourse on the gospels; however, the synoptic gospels are the primary concerns of this research.

¹ Arguably, the term conveyed several meanings in the first century Greek vocabulary because of its use in the imperial court (a Greco-Roman pagan religion which worshipped Caesar) to refer to the birth of an emperor. The usage of the word ‘gospel’ in early Christianity were the meaning adhering from the Jewish scriptural traditions which had been translated into Greek; which could mean ‘the birth of a king or son’ 1st Kgs 4:2; Jer 20:15 as well as “victory in battle” – 1st Sam 31:8-10. Keith F. Nickle, *The Synoptic Gospels* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1993), 51.

² Nickle, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 53.

³ Craig L. Blomberg, “The Legitimacy and Limits of Harmonization,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1986), 144.

⁴ Mark Goodacre, *Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze* (London, New York: T and T Clark International, 2001), 15.

⁵ The gospel of John stands in a class by itself Keith argued that its author was a highly creative theologian. He further explained that the book was produced among a group of people quite different from communities of which the Synoptics were written. Meanwhile, it would not be inaccurate to think of John’s community as a sect of early church who were on the fringes of the Christianity that produced the Synoptics. Although, John owes most to the literary dependence of the three; yet, there is an inter relatedness between the Synoptics that John do not share. Nickle, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 54.

⁶ Allan J. McNicol, *The Importance of the Synoptic Problem for Interpreting the Gospels in KAIROS - Evangelical Journal of Theology / Vol. 1, No. 1 (2007)*, 2. A clear example is the healing of the blind man (men) near Jericho; Matthew attests it happened after Jesus leaves Jericho and there were two blind men healed (Mt 9:27). Mark provides the entrance and exit of Jesus from Jericho; while leaving Jesus encounters and heals blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46). Luke says it took place as Jesus “drew near to Jericho” (Lk 18:35). This example among others presents these three gospels worthy of being referred to as “Synoptics”.

⁷ Titian, a pupil of Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 150-160) worked out *Diatessaron* (meaning “through the four”), an edition of the four Gospels compiled as a harmony and written as one continuous narrative. Eusebius says that it began to circulate at an early date in the Syriac-speaking churches and became the standard text of the Gospels down to the fifth century, before it was finally replaced by four separate Gospels. Gary H. Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew (Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures Using a Theme-based Approach to Identify Literary Structures)*, 2018 Edition, 48. For more information on Titian’s *Diatessaron*, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and*



The Beginning: A Brief Overview

Over the years, the interest is in the story of Jesus and not in the peculiarities of each of our four canonical Gospels. Goodacre explains that Most of the Jesus films adopt the same course; they harmonize the events recorded in the Gospels in an attempt to produce a coherent, dramatic narrative.⁸ Until the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries in Europe, almost everyone in Christendom considered that the historical accounts found in the Bible and their referential meaning were exactly the same thing. Whether the Bible spoke about Adam or Jesus, they existed; and their actual activities were in much the same way as the Bible describes. But with the coming of the Enlightenment⁹ (*Aufklärung*) in Europe (c. 1660-1802) this synthesis began to fall apart.¹⁰ The growth of the sciences (natural and social) caused people to doubt the received history that came down from the ancient world. It was reckoned that only those things coming from antiquity which passed the test of critical reason would be regarded as true. In historical study this meant that one must critically study the sources in order to evaluate the claims of any writing.¹¹ The Enlightenment was a time when man believed himself to be illuminated in his own reasoning abilities beyond the need for religious revelation. This era precipitates several debates about the gospel origins. Its influence is still present today in modernism and its flavors it continues to challenge religion in a general, but Christianity most explicitly. The challenges of various kinds of criticism came at the level of philosophy, like in ethics where the God of the Old Testament is challenged as being different to the God of the New Testament.¹²

The Synoptic Problem

From the preceding section of this work – *‘the beginning’*, the research showcases what spurred this modern development with a brief historical overview. The Synoptic Problem continues to fascinate biblical scholars and students of the New Testament, with no end in sight so far as arriving at a final solution or even a truce in the ongoing debate.¹³ A probable reaction upon hearing the term ‘synoptic problem’ is a shock-perplexing mood of what is wrong with the synoptic gospel? Thus, the research posits that the addition of the word ‘problem’ to synoptics can mean

Restoration, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 89–92 and Robert H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 18.

⁸ Mark Goodacre, *Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze*, 14. The pre-history of the Synoptic problem is broadly engaged in David L. Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

⁹ In fact, the Enlightenment resulted in several distinctive intellectual and sociological features, one of which was rationalism, which was responsible for making reason the basic tool of scientific investigation of nature and human striving for truth. David Laird Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels*.

¹⁰ F. F. Bruce, “The History of New Testament Study,” I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1977), 21-59.

¹¹ Allan J. McNicol, *The Importance of the Synoptic Problem for Interpreting the Gospels*, 17.

¹² Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (USA: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1996), 259

¹³ Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyre, *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Bakers Academic, Bakers Publishing Company, 2016), vii.



several things. In view of this, Porter and Dyre argue that if the term “Synoptic Problem” can be used in its best possible manner to refer to an issue that has garnered much scholarly attention and a variety of opinions then its use is welcome.¹⁴ This explanation concurs with Reicke who explained that “the Synoptic Problem is a discourse among varying scholars and schools of thought concerning the divergent relationship between the three gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).”¹⁵

Although, the ‘oral traditions’ in the early centuries have often been used in tackling the synoptic problem while standing on the ground of ‘literary independency’. The research argues that oral tradition, though logical, is not all -sufficient to tackle this problem with the emphatic statement in Luke 1:1-4.¹⁶ Guthrie in his work delineates several considerations to the problem’s development:

- i. There are similarities of arrangement among the above-mentioned gospels.
- ii. There are similarities of style and wording among all three gospels.
- iii. There are cases where there are similarities in only two of the three gospels. In particular, there is material in Matthew and Luke that are absent in Mark.
- iv. There are some common accounts among all three that simply diverge from each other on many minor points.¹⁷

In view of this, the research notes that ‘the questions’ regarding the reason behind the similarities and differences between the first three gospels as it relates to their origins is called the ‘synoptic problem’. Consequently, these issues are not easily explained. Therefore, the Synoptic Problem is the questions about the relationship between the three Synoptic Gospels in light of their unique similarities and differences. Scholars have engaged the problem with theological, historical, oral and literary solutions; notable among which is the Griesbach hypothesis and Streeter’s argument. These approaches have been held in high esteem by scholars arguing in its stead as a viable solution to the synoptic problem. This forms the framework for the research discourse in the next section of this work.

J.J. Griesbach’s Hypothesis

One of the scholars in modern developments concerning the subject matter here is a German scholar, Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745–1812); who first used a synopsis to analyze the synoptics which was called “Two-Gospel Hypothesis” or “Griesbach Hypothesis”.¹⁸ Bruce refers

¹⁴ Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyre, *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views*,13.

¹⁵ B. Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 4.

¹⁶ *Many Have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed over to us by those from the first were eye witnesses and servant of the word...since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you...so that you may know the certainty of the things that you have been taught.*

¹⁷ Donald. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction: The Gospels and Acts* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1965), 114-115.

¹⁸ The ‘Griesbach Hypothesis’ is strongly argued for by several other scholars such as; F. C. Baur and the Tübingen School, W. Farmer, J. B. Orchard, D. L. Dungan, B. C. Butler, D. A. Black. The title of this school of thought is named after Griesbach probably because he is first proponent of this view. Henry Owen, *Observations on the Four Gospels* (London: T. Payne, 1764).



to Griesbach as Selmer's pupil who mark the transition from the "post-reformation" to the "modern" age of New Testament study.¹⁹ Mcnicol explained that Griesbach was a cardinal figure of the Enlightenment; who accepted the inheritance from antiquity that the Gospels were written in the order, Matthew, Luke, Mark and John. He constructed a famous Synopsis²⁰ of the Gospels and did monumental critical studies of the text to support that position. His view of the order of the Gospels prevailed as the primary perspective in Germany until the mid-nineteenth century.²¹

More so, Farnell explained that Augustine cannot be denied in the Griesbach hypothesis; Mark drew from Matthew and Luke.²² This premise is connected with patristic tradition; from Papias (Matthew compiled the sayings 'logia' in the Hebrew language *'Hebraidi dialekto'*),²³ Eusebius, Irenaeus, Jerome, Clement, Origen among others.²⁴ A proper view of the early church tradition through the church fathers favors Matthean priority.²⁵ Majority of the early church fathers argue that Matthew would have to radically rearrange and dislocate sentences to be relying on Mark; so that it would be easy to compose it from scratch. Nevertheless, by contrast, Mark relied on Matthew; abridging it in places. Thus, they posit that this order makes sense; coupled with the fact that the Gospel of Matthew was quoted (copied) far more than Luke and Mark.

Paynter in his explanation on the principal positions concerning the dependencies between the Gospels and the Sources behind them summarized; "Griesbach Hypothesis hold that Matthew's Gospel was written first, and then Luke made use of Matthew; Mark's Gospel is an abridging

¹⁹ A new approach to New Testament interpretation was marked by the *'Abhandlung vom freien Gebrauch des Kanons'* (1771-75) of Johann Salomo Semler (1725 - 1791), which approached the New Testament canon on a historical basis, and the *'Einleitung in die göttlichen Schriften des Neuen Bundes'* (first edition, 1750) of Johann David Michaelis (1717-91), though they extract their premise of argument from Richard Simon's work (1689). Bruce, "The History of New Testament Study," I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, 21-59.

²⁰ A Synopsis is a book in which parallel accounts in the Gospels are placed side by side for the sake of comparison. Meanwhile, instead of harmonizing the seeming discrepancies; Goodacre notes that the synopsis draws more attention to them. Mark Goodacre, *Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze* (London, New York: T and T Clark International, 2001), 15.

²¹Mcnicol, *The Importance of the Synoptic Problem for Interpreting the Gospels*, 17.

²² R. H. Stein, "The Synoptic Problem", in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1992).

²³ S. Mcknight Matthew, *Gospel of Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 527. From earliest times, the gospel was treated as canonical and authoritative on the life of Jesus Christ, regardless of authorship.

²⁴ D. Edmond Hiebert, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 1. The Gospels and Acts (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1975), 53.

²⁵ David Farnell, *The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church: The Testimony to the Priority of Matthew's Gospel* in the *Masters Seminary Journal*, TMSJ 10/1 (Spring 1999), 69. Floyd Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, 2d ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), 16. Jeremiah Jones, *A New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1827), 30-31; these are good and recommendable materials for exploring patristic views of the origins of the Gospels.



synthesis of both Matthew and Luke's Gospels.²⁶ The research observes that a clear view of patristic tradition and Griesbach hypothesis vary slightly. Although, they both purports Matthean priority; Griesbach does not follow the composition arrangement of patristic tradition; this in turn forms the variation of Griesbach hypothesis and early church tradition.

Patristic Tradition = Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Griesbach = Mathew, Luke and Mark.

However, scholars in this stance strongly opined that it is possible to understand the redactional process through which Mark went, on the hypothesis that he composed his Gospel based primarily on Matthew and Luke.²⁷ Furthermore, the Griesbach hypothesis has been defended by scholars like William R. Farmer a sturdy advocate of this argument in his work.²⁸ In addition, the research outlines three integral elements that form the argument of the Griesbach Hypothesis:

- i. Matthean priority.
- ii. Luke's dependence on Matthew.
- iii. Mark's dependence on both Matthew and Luke.

Scholars who argued against this hypothesis posits (especially the Streeter's argument) that 'Griesbach hypothesis' is not a viable solution to the synoptic problem but scholars like Farmer *The Synoptic Problem* (1970), and Orchard *Why Three Synoptic Gospels?* (1975) affirms the opposite.

B.H Streeter's argument

B.H Streeter (1874–1937) is a prominent British scholar in modern developments concerning the Synoptic problem; who developed the 'four document theory' in *The Four Gospels*, 1924.²⁹ Holtzmann believed that Mark was primitive (in composition and language); thus must be early. He further posited a source behind that document (*Ur-Marcus* or proto-Mark) as a separate source. Holtzmann's proposition informs Streeter's major treatise, *The Four Gospels*, 1924 in page 149-198, - "*The Fundamental Solution*". In view of this, Streeter took Holtzmann's work to

²⁶ Stephen E. Paynter, How the Synoptic Gospels Were Written: *An Evangelical Introduction to The Synoptic Problem, and to Source, Form, and Redaction Criticism* on 6th November 2015. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302904710> (Accessed on 21st April, 2019).

²⁷ William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (London: Collier-Macmillan 1964), 219.

²⁸ W.R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* 2nd ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1976).

²⁹ Often times, several people refer to this theory as complicated version of the "two document theory" earlier discussed under the 'J.J. Griesbach argument' in this paper. B.H Streeter is a prominent scholar to this discourse; He built his argument on the work of H. J. Holtzmann (1832-1910) and his contributions to the body of knowledge concerning the synoptic problem are noteworthy. In the same vein, Streeter's works are of significance with John Hawkins, who produced a detailed study on the synoptic gospels titled *Horae Synopticae: Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem* (2nd ed. 1909) as well as William Sanday (1843–1920) who chaired the "Oxford Seminar on the Synoptic Problem" (1894). More so, Streeter as a strong proponent of this hypothesis is in the arrays of scholars like C. H. Weisse, H. J. Holtzmann, R. Stein and S. McKnight who strongly argue for the 'Markan Priority'.



its logical conclusion; although upgraded *Ur-Marcus* to “Q” (*quelle* = source)³⁰ consisting of material common to Matthew and Luke, not drawn from Mark.³¹ Streeter’s solution is therefore known as “Two-Source Hypothesis” although many find it accurate to call it “Four Source Hypothesis” because of the inclusion of “M” and “L” as extra sources.³²

The research observes Streeter’s crucial statement according to Hapmann; “only an idiot would have done what Mark must have done if he were using Matthew.”³³ This statement is embedded with implications on the part of Streeter; the research notes that he explicitly affirmed what he argued for as if he is 100% sure. In the same vein, Streeter’s informative statement in his work seems to counteract his affirmative statement here; “for we cannot possibly know, either all the circumstances of churches, or all the personal idiosyncrasies of writers so far removed from our own time.”³⁴

Here, the research spots Styler as a sturdy advocate of Markan priority with his comments: “the classic statement and defense of the ‘Two-Source Hypothesis’ was made by Streeter.” In his advocacy for this hypothesis, he argued that “it just as easy to imagine clumsy Mark botching up competent Matthew as to imagine competent Matthew tidying up some of Mark’s inelegancies.”³⁵ He further argued that, it is hard to see why Mark should have omitted so much of value if he was using Matthew (e.g Sermon on the Mount). In fact, Styler argued that the strongest argues for Markan priority is based on the ‘freshness’ and the ‘circumstantial character’ of Mark’s gospel.³⁶

However, this hypothesis has “Griesbach hypothesis” and “Farrer’s theory” as strong rivals. Although, the framework of this research work is limited to Griesbach and Streeter’s argument; a

³⁰ The issue of ‘Q’ is a logical assertion which engulfed from the synoptic problem. Though not visible, scholars have been working with reference to this source; yet no one can say for sure if a stuff of such actually existed or not; though none of such material is available. For more information, check Mark Goodacre, *The Case against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 2002). A recent article by Luigi Schiavo, “*Apocalyptic Wisdom: an interpretative key of the Q Source*” in *Estudos de Religião*, v. 23, n. 1, 126-152, Jan/Jun. 2009. The researcher posits that a clear understanding of Q is needed to key in to the divergent views concerning the synoptic problem. Although, the Mathean priority have nothing to do with “Q.”

³¹ McNicol, *The Importance of the Synoptic Problem for Interpreting the Gospels*, 18. B.H. Streeter, *Study of Origins Treating the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship & Dates*. Revised Edition (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1930), 436-442.

³² Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyre, *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views*, 7. With argument for Markan priority, one must still account for the double tradition and how these two later Gospels came to share so much material. The Two Source Hypothesis addresses this by arguing that Matthew and Luke shared a common source that is now lost to us. This hypothetical source was given the name Q, short for the German word for “source,” *Quelle*. Porter and Dyre, 8.

³³ H.P Hapmann, “*Sic Et Non: Are We so sure of Mathean Dependence on Mark?*” in *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Vol XLI, number 8, September, 1970, 465.

³⁴ B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 169

³⁵ G. M. Styler, “The Priority of Mark,” Excursis IV in C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 228.

³⁶ Styler, “The Priority of Mark,” Excursis IV in C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament*, 223 – 232.



clear understanding of Farrer's theory is relevant, since there is only a sharp-thin distinction between Farrer and Streeter's stance. Farrer accepts Markan priority but dispenses Q.³⁷ However; Goodacre explained that the Farrer movement began with the Oxford scholar Austin Farrer, who presented a seminal article 'Dispensing with Q' in 1955.³⁸ Furthermore, the research observes three principal elements in Farrer's Hypothesis stated below:

- i. The argument for Markan priority
- ii. Matthew's dependence on Mark; and
- iii. Luke's dependence on both Mark and Matthew.

In other words, Mark was written first; Matthew's Gospel was written before Luke, and Luke used Matthew and Mark's Gospel without the influence of anything called 'Q'. In the course of interaction with this hypothesis, the research notes that Farrer himself only wrote an article on this subject matter but the Hypothesis has been developed and defended by scholars like Michael D. Goulder³⁹, a pupil of Farrer and Mark Goodacre. From a clear interaction with the standpoint of Two-Source Hypothesis; the research discovered three (3) indispensable elements in the argument:

- i. Mark's Gospel was written first.
- ii. Matthew and Luke though wrote independently; used Mark as a source for their Gospels.
- iii. Matthew and Luke both used another written source, known as Q, which contained the material common to them both but unknown to Mark.

A re-think on the Hypotheses

At this juncture, the research re-states the bedrock of the argument between the two examined schools of thought and sets each in its place. The prior existence of the Matthew's gospel entrenched with collections of words of Jesus made Mark felt unnecessary to repeat it all in another gospel and was comfortable to focus on where he had a input to make. This is clear and simple; the Griesbach Hypothesis supports, while the Streeter's hypothesis oppose. The research argues that the examined schools of thought have not been confirmed "Solution" as against the other (although they are referred to as solution by their proponents but better still the research argues for the term "attempted solution" or "working-solution" to the general acceptability); therefore, they are all under the 'theories of synoptic problem'; still probe-able and probable.

More so, the research opines that the two explored Hypothesis are cardinal to the discourse of the synoptic problem. In fact, the weight of the arguments is said to be on the same pedestal; though scholars in the recent time have not much flair for Mathean priority. However, their influence and impact of these arguments on the critical re-assessment of modern New Testament

³⁷ The Farrer Hypothesis was named after Austin Farrer who proposed it in 1955. Austin Farrer, "Dispensing with Q", in D.E. Nineham (ed), *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R.H. Lightfoot*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), 55-88. (reproduced on-line at Mark Goodacre ed., *The Case Against Q: A Synoptic Problem* Web Site, <http://NTGateway.com/Q>).

³⁸ Mark Goodacre, *Synoptic Problem: A Way through the Maze*, 23. Check more information on the possibility to dispense with Q; Paul Foster, "Is It Possible to Dispense With Q" in Brill; *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 45, Fasc. 4 (Oct., 2003), 313-337.

³⁹ For more information on "Farrer Hypothesis" consult Michael D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974) and *Luke: A New Paradigm* (JSNTSup, 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).



scholarship development cannot be overemphasized. The research clearly put; the Griesbach Theory advocates neither Markan Priority nor Q, but postulates Matthean Priority; meaning Luke use Matthew and Mark use both. While Streeter's Hypothesis argues for Markan Priority; Matthew and Luke independently used two sources, Mark and the hypothetical source called Q.

In view of this, the research notes that there is an iota literary dependence which makes the premise of synoptic problem itself plausible. The strong point of Markan priority is based on internal evidence while the strength of Matthean priority is the patristic tradition and the shortcomings of Markan priority stance. The research observes that the development of more hypotheses seems possible (which has started with Two-Source Hypothesis to Farrer Hypothesis); if this is the case, then how likely is the availability of all information for solving the synoptic problem?

From this premise, it is clear that Griesbach and Streeter's Hypothesis are like two like poles which repels. Therefore, the research posits that the fecundity of these schools of thought can only be appreciated in what each of them stands for in expunging a fray; which is their varying and contrast standpoints. In view of this, the research affirms that the question of why study synoptic problem will still lingers in the heart of critical minds and thinkers until the solution that satisfies everyone is found. Apparently, scholars in New Testament study hold divergent opinions when it comes to the issue of bridging the lacuna the synoptic problem spurs.

Conclusion

Of a truth, the Synoptic problem is really a problem in the light of modern thinking which demands a rational and logical explanation of the gospels. The research posits that a common denomination of the evangelists is the oral tradition of which Griesbach and Streeter's views permeate. Thus, the research posits that while 'oral tradition' was interested in the transmission of Jesus' sayings; the early church tradition was interested in the composition rather than comparison of the gospels. However, the tradition of the church in the early Christianity supports the order of composition for the Gospels just as we have it in the canonical order today. A lucid view as seen in this research reveals that Griesbach and Streeter's hypothesis is noteworthy in the synoptic problem; in other words, they have contributed immensely to the body of knowledge as it concerns the New Testament study. Although some see the two attempts as problems rather than as being solutions like the proponents claimed. The research opines that the historical trend of New Testament modern scholarship is sadly devoid of an interaction and engagement with these schools of thoughts and will definitely be deficient; these hypotheses as explored in this research though probable, remained fairly effectively intact.

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