CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ITINERANT PROPHETESSES:
A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE SAYINGS SOURCE Q

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The following observations\(^1\) are based on minimal Q, that is those overlapping sayings of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke not found in Mark.\(^2\)

The Androcentric Opposition to Patriarchy
in the Sayings Source and Its Limits

By patriarchy I mean a social organization based on the husband’s domination over his wife in a patriarchal “house”, which includes further dominitive relationships, for example over children and slaves. The state in turn is based on an analogous domination by the ruling class over the masses. Society’s hierarchical structures of domination are likewise repeated in its conception of God.\(^3\) Throughout the sayings source Q, an androcentric language corresponding to this patriarchal ideology is spoken. Women are never acknowledged as independently operative outside of the home—the Queen of the South (Q 11:31)\(^4\) being the exception that proves the rule. They are the objects of men’s transactions in marriage (Q 16:18, 17:27) and in divorce (Q 16:18). Women are only acknowledged as operative within the domestic realm in their chores (by milling in Q 17:35; by baking in Q 13:20f.). The conflict in the patriarchal

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\(^1\) This essay arose in connection with the Q Seminar of the Society of Biblical Literature. Translated by Jonathan Reed, Associate Director, Institute for Antiquity and Christianity in Claremont, and also published in the Institute’s *Occasional Papers* 21 (1991).


\(^4\) As is the case with other essays in this volume, the Lukan versification is used for Q according to the current scholarly convention, without prejudicing either the order or reading in favor of Luke.
household brought about by Jesus' message is acknowledged only in the conflict regarding a son's duties towards his father (Q 9:59-60). Matthew's androcentric version of Q 12:51-53 therefore likely preserves Q. Luke's more egalitarian version also presupposes a patriarchal household, in which the young bride moves in with the groom's parents. Matthew's "person" (ἀνθρωπος) is the young man in the patriarchal household of his father. Female companions of Jesus or encounters with women on the road—described in the other synoptic sources—are sought for in vain in the sayings source. Except for the household, the world of the sayings source is—seemingly—strictly a society of males. Yet the relegation of women to the household should not be understood as their confinement to the "private" realm. The household was at that time also in some sense "public". Their confinement was based on the patriarchal ideology, according to which women were defined by matrimony.

The sayings source criticizes the reality of patriarchal domination in a radical way, but exclusively from the perspective of men, who oppose any domination as contrary to the divine will. I would like to illustrate an example of this androcentric opposition to patriarchy in some detail. An eschatological logion of the sayings source reads as follows:

As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. For just as (in those days before the flood) they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day when Noah went into the ark and (they did not notice until) the flood came and destroyed them all (Q 17:26-27).

The periphrastic imperfect tense in Matthew's version as well as the imperfect tenses in Luke's version emphasize the usual pursuit of daily life and the habitual behavior of Noah's generation. They continue on as always. But their behavior is seen as culpable and obstinate in God's eyes, which leads to their eschatological destruction, to eternal death. Numerous exegetes have claimed that this logion finds Noah's generation innocent: "Their activities are in no way evil in and of themselves" (D. Zeller); "the regularity of daily life is sur-

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5 The Lukan and Matthean overlap is sufficient for an understanding of the saying. The text cited represents the Matthean version, with those portions of the Matthean text without a Lukan parallel in parentheses.

6 Matthew's version ("marrying and giving in marriage") has in mind the groom and the bride's father; Luke's version ("they married, they were being married") the groom and the bride. In both cases, women are the objects of men's transactions.

7 "They were eating..."

8 Dieter Zeller, Kommentar zur Logienquelle (Stuttgart: 1984) 91.