Those amongst us who do not want to side with the uncommitted and still believe that there are good reasons to assign to Q the three sayings in Luke 16:16-18 and their parallel in Matt. 5:18, 32; 11:12-13 face a triple challenge. First they have to reconstruct a text that is transmitted in quite different forms by Luke and by Matthew, and they have to find a place for these sayings in Q, if that is possible at all. They also have to produce an explanation for each of the sayings on the level of Q, and for those who would argue that Q 16:16-18 (all three verses or the first two) already formed some sort of unity in Q there is the additional problem of making sense of the whole. And then they have to account for Luke’s and Matthew’s redaction. In this essay I will focus on one specific problem, that of the identification of the “violators of the kingdom,” but this will give me an opportunity to touch upon the interpretation of Q 16:16-18 as a whole.1

The precise location of 16:16 in Q is difficult to establish. However, if one keeps to the order in which it appears in Luke, as will be argued here, it might well be the last time that the word βασιλεία, with the qualification “of God,” as elsewhere, occurs in the Sayings Source. The word still figures in 17:20-21 (up to three times!), but since these verses do not have a parallel in Matthew, it is far from certain whether they belong to Q at all. The Critical Edition puts them in double brackets. The Kingdom is not mentioned in the Parable of the Talents/Pounds, though this parable contains some features echoing “a royal sphere.” And the word does most probably not occur either in the concluding section in Q 22:28-30, where Luke must have introduced it, if not from the immediately preceding

context with its reference to the kings of the Gentiles (22:25), then perhaps from some parallel like 12:32 (the Father gives them the Kingdom) or 13:28-29 (the eschatological meal in the Kingdom; cf. 14:16-24, though without identifying the place of gathering with the Kingdom, but see Matt. 22:2).²

The reference to the Kingdom in 16:16 is unique in more than one respect. It is not said that the Kingdom is “coming” or that it “is near” (Q 10:9), nor is it explicitly likened to something the audience knows from daily life as is the case in the Kingdom parables (Q 13:18-19, 20-21). It is not said either that its coming is to be preached by the disciples (again Q 10:9) or that people are residing in it (Q 13:28-29) or entitled to it (Q 6:20). And yet one should also say that all these elements are in some way present in 16:16. The Kingdom is not nearing, it is supposed “to be there” already. Also, the Kingdom is not openly compared to something else, but on the other hand it is now represented very much like any other earthly kingdom, a politico-geographical entity that can be conquered and is an object of strive among factions. The disciples are not mentioned, but on every explanation that has been suggested it is accepted that Christians are implicated in the action that is described. And finally, it is perhaps not about rightfully entering the Kingdom, but it is about trying to get in after all.

But if there may be some truth in these observations, it is a fact that some of the wording used here with regard to the Kingdom is found nowhere else in Q or in the gospels in general, and that the combination of a Kingdom saying with one on the Law and the prophets occurs only here. Scholars have been “shocked” above all by the image of a Kingdom that is said to be vulnerable.³ But the other aspect is certainly no less puzzling.
