

Mogens Müller and Heike Omerzu, eds., *Gospel Interpretation and the Q-Hypothesis*, Library of New Testament Studies 573, International Studies on Christian Origins, London: T&T Clark, 2018. Pp. x + 302. ISBN 978-0-5676-7004-5. Hardcover, \$120.00.

- [1] Published in the renowned International Studies on Christian Origins series, Mogens Müller's and Heike Omerzu's book *Gospel Interpretation and the Q-Hypothesis* aims quite high. It not only intends to reflect the state of the current debate revolving around the Synoptic Problem and the various attempts to solve it, but it also seeks to appropriately address the problem that a "critical history of the SP [i.e. Synoptic Problem] that not only describes the different solutions but also explores their interrelatedness with theological, ideological and other more or less ... hidden agendas is still a desideratum" (p. 5). To achieve this goal, the book is structured in two parts (that are, in fact, three) with a preceding introduction.
- [2] The introduction is a noteworthy feature of the edited volume as it not only sums up the individual articles but also contains a historical localization of the Synoptic Problem that (not only) beginners to the field will highly appreciate. The introduction also gives a clear argument for the importance of the volume that overall presents a variety of different approaches to the Synoptic Problem. This argument speaks in a special way to German readers as "the existence of the Sayings Source is barely fundamentally questioned within German scholarship while competing theories are at the same time marginalized and underrepresented in standard New Testament introductions" (p. 4).
- [3] The articles following the introduction are divided into two main parts. The first one focuses on questions of theory and method as well as a historical contextualization of the current research; the second part approaches the Synoptic Problem mainly from the perspective of individual texts and separate subquestions (most of which nevertheless connect substantially to the bigger issue, of plausible solutions to the Synoptic Problem and the more or less hidden agendas connected to them). While engaging with the articles in detail, one nevertheless cannot shake the feeling that there are, in fact, three parts to the volume as the last three texts of part 1 could be subsumed under the title "The Watson-Tuckett Controversy."
- [4] The controversy in question spans more than fifty pages and comprises of an article by Francis Watson, a critique of two of Watson's more recent publications¹ by Christopher Tuckett, and a response to Tuckett's critique by Watson. These three contributions to *Gospel Interpretation and the Q-Hypothesis* are revealing in more than one way. On the one hand, they give a quite fascinating and profound insight into the complex argument for and against both the Two-Source theory and the L/M-theory, which dispenses with Q and opts for a Lukan dependence on the Gospel of Matthew instead. On the other hand, they also reveal the demarcation lines between the supporters of Q and its critics that are drawn with considerable vehemence. Partly the emotions involved are concealed in the footnotes ("Tuckett misleadingly claims, on the basis of a garbled recollection of a conversation ..." p. 139), partly not ("Watson explicitly refuses to discuss a number of aspects ..." p. 116; "Does Tuckett suppose I failed to notice that?" p. 142).
- [5] With less vehemence but the same amount of care to detail are the other three articles in part 1. Especially John S. Kloppenborg's contribution "Conceptual Stakes in the Synop-

¹ Cf. Watson's 2013 book *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* and his article *Q as Hypothesis: A Study in Methodology* which was published 2009 in NTS.

- tic Problem” builds a solid foundation for the rest of the volume as it makes important points concerning method in general and the methodological approaches to the Synoptic Problem in particular. He writes: “I am not of the view that definitive arguments for or against *any* of these hypotheses or variations of these are in fact possible. At best, we can propose compositional scenarios that account for most of the data, most of the time” (p. 13). More than anything he urges readers to make the stakes that are connected to different scholarly positions transparent, and he clarifies a methodologically important point early on in the volume: “the complexity of synoptic data makes it impossible to arrive at a *neutral* display of synoptic data” (p. 19, my emphasis). At the end of his article Kloppenborg warns: One should “reflect on the conceptual entailments of various SP hypotheses and ... recognize that they are not innocent of ideological commitments” (p. 42).
- [6] Stefan Alkier’s “Sad Sources: Observations from the History of Theology on the Origins and Contours of the Synoptic Problem” lives up to its promise and delivers a detailed overview of the history of research related to the Synoptic Problem. Mogens Müller follows with his “Argument for the Quest for Sources behind the Gospels” before we find the Watson-Tuckett Controversy that concludes the first part of the volume.
- [7] In the second part of the edited volume, the focus shifts from theoretical questions and a mostly historical approach (which also contains some text-critical reasoning) to contributions that turn to smaller, more contoured questions.
- [8] Eve-Marie Becker starts with a reflection on the overlap between Markan and Q studies in which she concludes by stating as “fact that Mark has concealed Q” (p. 163). The following articles contribute to various aspects of the Synoptic Problem and its pursued solution—from Clare K. Rothschild’s exegesis of a Q pericope with interesting consequences for the Synoptic Problem, through Hildegard Scherer’s exploration of the “interplay of social concepts” and “the social matrix of the double tradition” that “makes some sense of its own” and “are clearly marked off from the Markan traditions” (p. 198) to Mark Goodacre’s treatise of the “Mark-Q Overlaps” (which are terminologically superseded by “major agreements” [p. 222]) and Werner Kahl’s passionate argument against the “latest twist in the study of Q” (p. 226) and against the “so-called Critical Edition of Q” (p. 227).
- [9] Goodacre and Kahl are finally followed by Shelly Matthews, who contributes to the volume with the question of how “Dating Luke-Acts into the Second Century Affect[s] the Q-Hypothesis.” After considering general dating issues and the connection between the Gospel of Luke and Marcion’s gospel, Matthews proposes a modified Two-Source hypothesis including a “core Luke” (p. 246) and the canonical Gospel of Luke at “a later redactional stage” (p. 246) with a possible direct connection to the Gospel of Matthew. Especially with Kloppenborg’s article at the beginning of the volume in mind, Matthews’ contribution is (among other aspects) interesting because of the attention it devotes to the “recognition of one’s biases” (p. 264) and the reflection that “our decisions on how we reconstruct these beginnings [i.e. the beginnings of ‘Christianity’] have consequences” (p. 264).
- [10] Dieter T. Roth concludes the volume with his article on the connection between “Marcion’s Gospel and the Synoptic Problem in Recent Scholarship.”
- [11] Overall, the volume unites scholars of high renown with quite varied views on the formation of the Synoptic Gospels and on the Synoptic Problems. It also unites various methodological approaches (narrative criticism can be found as well as redaction criticism and text critical arguments) and at least a selection of discussed texts beyond the scope of the Synoptic Gospels (e.g., the Gospel of Thomas and Marcion’s gospel).
- [12] Furthermore, it also manages the feat of not only assembling articles with strong and clear arguments but also providing very important introductory and explanatory para-

graphs concerning various topics. For example, one can find a concise introduction to the gospel genre in general in Alkier's contribution. Also, the authors do not just presuppose the finer points of the Synoptic Problem scholarship as well known, but they provide the reader with sufficient explanation to follow the argument even if they are experts in the field (see, e.g., the explanation of the Triple Tradition in Mark Goodacre's article).

- [13] Nevertheless, two critical observations remain and also one concern. The first observation relates to the abbreviations used throughout the volume. Even though the book seems otherwise to take great care to be accessible (e.g., by providing introductions into relevant topics and explanations of complex arguments), it also uses a lot of abbreviations that in my opinion complicate the reading. Deciphering short forms like 2ST, 2GH, 2DH, SIM or CEQ can deflect attention away from the complex arguments at hand.
- [14] Also, it could be asked why the discourse remains limited to Northern Europe and the United States of America. While incorporating a relatively high percentage of female authors, scholars from the global South or even Eastern Europe are completely missing in the list of authors.
- [15] And finally, there is one concern—or rather a wish—to be made from a teacher's point of view. The problem of a “reluctance of German-speaking scholarship to discuss (and embrace) alternative solutions to the SP” (p. 6) has been addressed early on in the volume as well as the “rather conservative industry of New Testament Introductions” (p. 6). At the same time, the volume itself presents some impressive texts that could help with a more balanced presentation of possible solutions to the Synoptic Problem to students of biblical studies. As a teacher of biblical studies at an undergraduate level, I would really appreciate a selection of the texts of this volume coming together in a more textbook-like setting that might even be translated and thus be made even more accessible to students.

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