

Linnemann, Eta. *Is There a Synoptic Problem?: Rethinking the Literary Dependence of the First Three Gospels*. Translated by Robert W. Yarbrough. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992. 219 pp. \$10.95.

Eta Linnemann is well known in scholarly circles. Her conversion to evangelical Christianity caused her to rethink her support for the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation, resulting in her surrendering the Bultmann chair at Marburg University. In this volume she tackles the arguments in favor of literary dependence in the Synoptic Gospels.

Linnemann begins by tracing the historical development of the argument for literary dependence in the Synoptic Gospels. She describes how a theory became accepted as an unquestioned assumption without the requisite scientific investigation which should form the basis for such certainty, and how subsequent investigations were done from the presupposition of literary dependence, leading to a biased result. Thus, from the outset, Linnemann attacks the credibility of any of the hypotheses that purport to explain literary dependence among the Synoptics.

In Part 2 she does her own quantitative scientific investigation to determine whether the actual evidence in fact supports any theory of literary dependence, concluding finally that it does not. Regardless of what one thinks of her conclusion, her statistical research is impressive, and certainly makes a very significant contribution to Synoptic studies. Scholars should be grateful for the wealth of data she has contributed to the field.

In Part 3 Linnemann asks whether the Synoptic Gospels could have arisen independently, then posits a theory of independence which does not require literary dependence to explain Synoptic relationships. She also attempts to offer alternative explanations for features that are often held to support theories of literary dependence, and postulates the probable origin of the Synoptic Gospels, with support from the testimony of the Fathers.

In Part 4 she briefly raises the issues of the Fourth Gospel and its relation to the Synoptics, closing with a suggested approach to the Gospels and a case study involving the relationships between the Gospels.

Linnemann's work poses a serious challenge to the claims of critical New Testament scholars. It deserves a serious response. Although she writes with an apologetic goal, that in itself does not invalidate the objective nature of the data she submits for evaluation. As she points out on pp. 12 and 40, Gotthold Lessing also had an apologetic goal when he formulated the Synoptic problem based on a theory of literary dependence, but that has not stopped scholars from studying and adopting or modifying his hypothesis. She has the right to begin from a presupposition different from that of Lessing and propose alternative conclusions from a restudy of the evidence, submitting the results to the world of scholarship for evaluation and feedback. She appeals for just such feedback on p. 158.

There are several things that could have improved the book. Linnemann's qualification regarding other investigations of the Synoptic data, found in the introductory question and answer section (12-13), needs to be repeated elsewhere

in the study where she repeatedly asserts that the two-source theory resulted from no thorough investigation of the biblical data (see, e.g., 25, 39, 65). Also, chapter 8, in which Linnemann discusses the definition of literary dependence, should have come sooner in the study, before she drew conclusions in chapters 3-7 about whether or not literary dependence can be shown from the data.

One could question the basis for Linnemann's quantification of the Synoptic data, which for her was "the word as the smallest component of meaning" (71). Often a phrase, rather than a word, may constitute the smallest unit of meaning, especially with articular nouns and participles and with certain prepositional and infinitival phrases. I wonder, too, how the statistics would vary if she were to test words for similarity in content rather than for identity.

There were a few proofreading errors: "posses" (37), "a thorough an investigation" (67), and "into to writing" (186). The "heavy" and "light" diagonal lines described on p. 112 appear to be reversed on the chart on p. 113. Probably more serious is the apparent error in the figures given in the summary (128). As far as I can discern, the second sentence ought to read, "The above tables cover 3911 words, or 55.51 percent of the 7045 total."

Considering the fact that about seventy pages of the book deal with statistics, it is remarkably concise and easy to read. It was not the dull reading I had imagined it might be. I found it stimulating and challenging. It is always good to have a provocative challenge to established thinking. Whether or not Linnemann's work will change many minds from their established views regarding the Synoptic problem, her diligence should evoke admiration and invite a response from serious scholars. It is recommended reading for all students and teachers of New Testament studies. Those especially who take the Bible's own claims seriously will not want to miss this thought-provoking study.

Adventist International Institute
of Advanced Studies
Silang, Cavite, Philippines

EDWIN E. REYNOLDS

McConville, J. Gordon. *Grace in the End: A Study in Deuteronomistic Theology*. Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993. 176 pp. Paper, \$16.99.

McConville's collection of essays inaugurates a new series for Zondervan's academic publishing section, a series which with this work promises to offer a helpful dialogue with other (especially non-evangelical) perspectives in biblical theology. As the subtitle suggests, McConville offers a survey of the central theological ideas drawn from Deuteronomy (primarily) and the sacred history recorded in Joshua through Kings.

The five essays found here draw heavily from previously published work by the author; but that material is incorporated in a fashion that is conversant with more recent research. McConville's first essay, a history of research, sets