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Broadhead's "The Gospel of Matthew on the landscape of antiquity" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Broadhead, E. K. (2017). *The Gospel of Matthew on the landscape of antiquity*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, v. 378. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Sebeck. 351 pp. \$209.00. ISBN 9783161544545

Broadhead presents a scholarly treatment of the Gospel of Matthew as a living tradition which “presents a fractured story within a disjointed narrative world” (p. 46). This work argues that “the disjointed profile of the Gospel of Matthew is not incidental or anecdotal. It is a defining trait, and it reveals the dynamic process through which this gospel functions as a Living Tradition” (p. 60). “The choice to value the Tradition History of a literary work above the quest for its author requires a fundamental realignment in approach” (p. 77). “My goal here is to move the question of authorship to the background and to bring to the foreground the history of tradition for the Gospel of Matthew” (p. 85). The Gospel of Matthew “is not simply a collection of sources, and its inherent conflicts are not erased by any projections of narrative coherence or theological design.” (130) “No projection of narrative coherence or theological design can unravel this knot [of unresolved conflict]” (p. 272).

Broadhead’s insistence on the importance of the tradition history of any ancient text is true. He deals with *Iliad*, *Brer Rabbit*, *Satan in Goray*, the Books of Moses, Isaiah, and the Letters of Paul. At times his treatment is brilliant. Broadhead recognizes the heresy, he uses that word (p. 202), of moving the question of authorship to the background. This reviewer observes that affirming the importance of tradition history for an ancient text does not automatically exclude an affirmation about authorship.

The book contains no fewer than twenty-four errors in the text. It is generous to call all of the errors typos. “This is particular true” should be “This is particularly true” (p. 269). At least once, there is a quotation without a citation. Content and arguments are often repeated. The text would be improved, its argument presented more clearly, if reduced by a third. The volume concludes with bibliography and indices.

Broadhead describes the *Special Traditions (M)* source for the gospel of Matthew as “a vital, vitriolic, unresolved tradition.” “In the Gospel of Matthew, this self-contradictory tradition is retained, and it is placed alongside other voices” (p. 272). More statements could be included, all of which are illustrative of his methodology and thesis.

Broadhead applies these words to the Gospel of Matthew: conflict, chaos, contradiction, complexity, disjunctive, a work in process, dynamic, awkward, ineptitude, disruption, multivalent, discord, discontinuity, vehement, vindictive, vitriolic, schizophrenic. This work is not for undergraduate libraries. It is for exhaustive collections of New Testament scholarship and libraries interested in collecting works related to the history of interpretation.

Reviewer

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