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**Kloppenborg, J S, Meyer, M W, Patterson, S J & Steinhauser, M G 1990 — Q  
Thomas Reader**

Sonoma: Polebridge Press. 166 pages. Price: US \$ 14,95

**Reviewer: Rev Willem Oliver**

For many years scholars have speculated about the existence of a so-called ancient sayings source which was used together with Mark by the authors of the gospels of Matthew and Luke in the construction of their gospels. It is believed that in 1890 Johannes Weiss used the name 'Q' to designate this undiscovered source: 'Q' comes from the first letter of the German word 'Quelle' (rather 'Redenquelle!'). This source is said to contain, in general, the sayings and speeches of Jesus organised thematically. Although Mark did not use Q, it was written before Mark, 'sometime in the period between 50 C E and 70 C E' (p 5). According to James Robinson, the author of the *Foreword* to this book, Q was not only seen as a source of sayings used by the canonical gospels, but 'was understood by Matthew to be a gospel in its own right' (p viii).

Constructing the contents of Q was something scholars shied away from. In 1979, for example, Athanasius Polag remarked in the *Vorwort* to his book, *Fragmenta Q: Textheft zur Logienquelle*, 'Die Rekonstruktionsversuche zur Logienquelle in den Arbeiten der literar-kritischen neutestamentlichen Forschung werden heute allgemein mit starken Vorbehalten benutzt' (my emphasis).

In 1987, however, Kloppenborg wrote a book, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, in which he showed that 'Q began as a collection of wisdom instructions and was later expanded through the addition of prophetic and apocalyptic sayings' (p 29). This book was followed in 1988 by his book *Q Parallels: Synopsis — Critical Notes & Concordance*, in which he constructs the Greek text of Q and complements it with an English translation. In 1990 Robert Funk, the publisher at Polebridge Press, stated that Q, together with another sayings gospel, the Gospel of Thomas (henceforth 'Thomas'), was to be included in the new edition of the *New Testament Apocrypha*!

Still, that the text of Q has not been fixed yet. Kloppenborg mentions that a number of scholars 'are collaborating on a project under the auspices of the Society of Biblical Literature and Claremont's Institute for Antiquity and Christianity' (p 23) to represent something of a scholarly consensus on the Greek text of Q.

In Kloppenborg's version of Q there are still quite a number of lacunae. One of the reasons is that he maintains that Luke presented a better sequence of events as found in Q than Matthew did. For this reason he divides Q into specific chapters and verses to correspond with Luke. Kloppenborg's version of Q has twenty-two chapters.

Thomas was probably better known to early Christianity than Q, though it did not carry the same weight as the canonical gospels. This gospel was only discovered about a century ago in its Greek form, and about half a century ago in a Coptic translation. During 1959 Guillaumont and others published the *editio princeps* of Thomas in Dutch, German and French. At first it was assumed that Thomas contained excerpts only of the canonical gospels, and possibly of the non-canonical gospels as well, and even that it contained traces of Gnosticism.

The latter supposition was proved wrong, mainly because the 'gnostic myth' could not be found in Thomas. The literary context of Thomas much rather corresponds to the wisdom literature of the later Judaism. The former was also invalidated, because quite a number of sayings in Thomas do not occur in the canonical gospels, nor in the non-canonical gospels. The implication is that Thomas derives primarily from oral tradition. Dating Thomas is almost impossible. The nearest scholars get is dating gospel between the rise of the Jesus movement and the end of the second century (p 88).

Two peculiarities in Thomas need to be mentioned: (1) In the prologue Thomas refers to his gospel as being a collection of 'secret sayings' (p 129); (2) Most of the time the sayings of Jesus are introduced with 'Jesus said' or 'And he said'.

*Q Thomas Reader* takes the translations which are published in the *New Testament Apocrypha* as a basis for its own translations. Kloppenborg prepared the translation of Q while Meyer was responsible for the translation of Thomas. These two translations form the body of this book. The original language text of Q is not printed in this book, because it is available in Kloppenborg's *Q Parallels* (cited above). Meyer only added the Coptic translation of Thomas, seeing that a constructed copy of the Greek fragments is already published in *Nag Hammadi Studies* (1989:96-128).

As far as contents are concerned, this book is constructed systematically and is easy to read. After a preface and a foreword, five chapters are dedicated to Q, being the 'Introduction', 'Suggested Reading', 'Contents', 'Sigla' and 'Translation & Notes'. Then follows Thomas, also with five chapters called 'Introduction', 'Suggested Reading', 'Sigla', 'Text & Translation' and 'Greek Fragments'. The book concludes with 'Q-Thomas parallels', a 'Glossary' and an 'Index'.

The book succeeds in being a 'Reader'. A wide range of persons could make use of it. An undergraduate will find the introduction and translation parts very interesting for getting acquainted with some of the background and the contents of the two sayings gospels. The postgraduate student will be very interested in the footnotes and 'Suggested Reading' parts, where many references are cited.

Orthographically this is a very easy to handle book with a practical reference system. Only a few spelling errors could be found in the book, with maybe the biggest blunder on page ix, where 'Gospel of Thomas' reads 'Gosepl of Thomas'.

Four other reviews have already been published on this book:

- \* Winterhalter, Robert 1994. *Journal of Religion and Psychological Research* 17, 51-52.
- \* Matera, Frank J 1992. *CBQ* 54, 394-395.
- \* Fitzmyer, Joseph A 1991. *Bible Review* 7, 10-11.
- \* Neiryck, Frans 1990. *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 69/1, 175-177.