P. Doble and J. Kloha (eds.)


This volume brings together 18 essays offered in honour of Professor Emeritus J. Keith Elliott by his colleagues and friends. After an opening foreword paying tribute to Elliott as a scholar, mentor and friend, the editors and former students Peter Doble and Jeffrey Kloha introduce the work. The essays are organized under three main sections: Principles—Studies—Early non-canonical Christian literature.

The first essay, “When Criteria Conflict” by Michael W. Holmes, treats four NT passages (Rom 10:5; Mark 8:35; 1 Cor 12:9-10, and Matt 18:18) to illustrate the problem that faces text critics how to combine a set of criteria for the originality of readings in practice; which criteria should be applied when, and what weight should they be given. Holmes justifiably warns of the risk that criteria are used not as a help to make decisions, but to authenticate decisions made on other grounds.

David Parker’s essay on “Variants and Variance” reacts against sweeping statements about what motivated scribes to make textual changes, as if they acted like authors or redactors. Parker illustrates his point by examining corrections in a portion of Codex Sinaiticus and concludes that the scribes and correctors attempted “to produce a quality text as part of a quality production.” In spite of the quality work of scribes, there is extensive variation in the textual tradition, which relates to the frequency of copying, where occasional textual changes become accumulated. Parker’s choice to examine an individual manuscript points to the necessary methodology to avoid speculation about the general motivation of scribes.

In the next essay, “In the Beginning was the New Testament Text, but Which Text?” Eldon Epp considers the past and current terminology for critical editions of the Greek New Testament and the reconstructed text they present.
He identifies three phases in the evolution of editions, as deduced from their titles or descriptions: (1) Editions of the *textus receptus* (from 1516); (2) Editions which included the phrase “with variant readings,” as part of the title, marking an emphasis on textual variants rather than the critical text; and (3) Editions that represented various “constructed texts” of “The Greek New Testament” including current contemporary editions.

In the second part of his essay, Epp discusses the most recent term, *Initial Text* (*Ausgangstext*), as used by the editors of the *Editio Critica Maior* to describe the reconstructed text. Although the term apparently stresses “beginning,” it is clear that the editors distinguish *Initial Text* from “original” or “authorial” text(s). However, Epp fears that the ambiguous term will be misunderstood by future users of the edition, since he thinks “it easily assumes the aura of ‘original text’” (70). The good thing with new (and ambiguous) terms, however, is the opportunity to explain and discuss them.

The next contribution is a personal letter from Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, titled “Eclecticism and the Book of Acts,” in which she considers the merits and disadvantages of the eclectic method, which her Doktorvater has championed for decades, as it applies to Acts. Read-Heimerdinger holds to the minority view that Codex Bezae (D05) is the best extant witness to what Luke wrote, being characterized by a Jewish perspective and exegetical techniques. She concludes that “an eclectic approach to Acts fails to take account of the global picture of the variation, or of the characteristics of D05 in particular” (88). On the other hand, she thinks it can be used where Bezae is not extant, but in her version it should then identify “the variant that best fits with the linguistic and theological characteristics of D05” (88).

James Kelhoffer’s essay, “Hapless Disciples and Exemplary Minor Characters in the Gospel of Mark,” opens the second part of the volume (*Studies*), devoted to studies of biblical books or individual passages. Kelhoffer argues that a readiness to suffer in Mark, as highlighted in ten particular passages (4:17; 8:34-39; 9:38-41; 10:28-31, 35-40; 13:9-13; 14:3-9, 26-50; 15:20b-24, 39), confirms that his audience are legitimate followers of Jesus: “authentic discipleship entails not only recognition of Jesus as God’s suffering Messiah . . . but also a readiness to suffer as Jesus did” (95). In this way, the message to the Markan community presents an encouragement to those who are willing to take up their cross (Mark 8:34) and a warning to those who are unwilling. Kelhoffer’s essay forms part of a larger thesis, which he has developed elsewhere.

The next essay by James Voelz examines “The Characteristics of the Greek of St. Mark’s Gospel.” By way of introduction, Voelz points out that when examining an author’s linguistic usage, it is first necessary to determine that author’s text. In order to avoid circularity, one should start with characteristics