

Book Reviews

Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, eds. *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*. 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill, 2014. Pp. xii + 884.

This volume is the second edition of a work that first appeared in 1995, but it has been so thoroughly revised and updated that it is substantially a new book. The book's twenty-eight chapters canvas relevant issues relating especially to the sources and methods of New Testament textual criticism. A new edition of this work is a welcome sight, since many new developments have arisen in the field of textual criticism since the first edition appeared. This newer edition features seven new essays, several essays revised by the original authors, and three essays revised by different authors. One essay (relating to the use of computers) has been omitted (not because computers are no longer used in textual criticism, but because the technology is constantly changing).

The first sixteen chapters are devoted to the major sources from which we derive the text of the New Testament. Readers will find chapters on the papyri, majuscules, minuscules, lectionaries, and other Greek sources (i.e., ostraca, inscriptions, amulets, etc.). Also included are informative surveys of Tatian's Diatesseron, versional evidence (Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, and Gothic), along with chapters on Greek, Latin, and Syriac Fathers.

The final twelve chapters focus more on text-critical methodology and factors relating to the history of transmission. These include the social history of Christian scribes, the analysis of New Testament manuscripts, the identification of textual "clusters," the goal of New Testament textual criticism (i.e., "Initial Text" or "Original Text"), thoroughgoing eclecticism and

reasoned eclecticism, modern editions of the Greek New Testament, an assessment of the “Majority Text” position, and criteria for evaluating variant readings.

The scholars assembled in this volume comprise both established leaders and younger scholars in the field of textual criticism. The authors provide overviews and assessments of pertinent issues in their areas of expertise. Indeed, textual criticism is one of those fields in which scarcely anyone can master all the relevant data; therefore, assembling a guide to the state of the issues in a range of subfields is an exceedingly useful endeavor. Additionally, each chapter includes an up-to-date bibliography for those interested in reading further on a given issue. Readers may not agree with all that is included here, even as the contributors would not always agree with one another. But for those engaged in textual criticism and looking for more knowledge in particular subdisciplines, this book emerges as a go-to resource. Professors and upper-level graduate students should familiarize themselves with the topics addressed, and anyone who is interested in going beyond introductory studies in textual criticism will be stimulated from the wide-ranging discussions. Libraries that support biblical studies should consider investing in this volume. Mercifully, the book has recently appeared in paperback that, while not cheap (\$76.00), is much more affordable than the hardback edition (\$314.00).

Some noteworthy issues deserve specific mention. First is the need for readers of the Greek New Testament to be familiar with the emerging use of the Coherence Based Genealogical Method (CBGM), which has already been implemented in the Nestle-Aland 28th edition of the Greek New Testament for the Catholic Epistles and is slated to be used more thoroughly in forthcoming editions. Although the CBGM can be difficult to summarize, in brief it utilizes computers to identify genealogical relationships between readings in an effort to account for contamination. Several chapters address the CBGM to some degree in this volume. Second, and related to the CBGM, for many the traditional categories of “text types” are no longer helpful given the complexities involved in identifying distinct family relationships between manuscripts (E. J. Epp prefers “textual clusters”). Third, recent assessments of the early New Testament papyri, such as the study from James Royse, have caused many to question the standard text-critical canon *lectio brevior* (preferring the shorter reading) as a reliable rule, since papyri often seem to omit words or phrases. Fourth, Michael Holmes introduces readers to the ongoing debate as to whether the goal of New Testament textual criticism is to recover the “Original Text” or simply the “Initial Text” (or *Ausgangstext*, i.e., the earliest recoverable text that is not

necessarily identified with what an author actually wrote). Holmes is surely correct that terminological precision is needed, yet it seems to this reviewer that reports of the death of the original text are greatly exaggerated. Fifth, Daniel Wallace includes a spirited critique of the Majority Text theory, which holds that the best reading for any given variant is most likely the reading that is preserved in the majority of manuscripts.

Even those not particularly interested personally in textual criticism must be aware of the importance of the discipline, since our access to ancient books (including the New Testament) comes through the process and tools of textual criticism. An important aspect of the Reformation was the return *ad fontes*, most notably to Scripture itself in the original languages. Virtually concurrent with Luther's nailing of the ninety-five theses was Erasmus's first published edition of the Greek New Testament (1516). The last five hundred years have witnessed numerous editions of the Greek New Testament, but they are all possible because scholars are applying the tools of textual criticism to the array of evidence we have. Our knowledge of the text of the New Testament has only grown since the days of the Reformation. We should therefore be thankful that we do indeed find God's singular care and providence in preserving for us the text of the New Testament, just as we can also be thankful for those who have dedicated so much of their lives to investigating these matters so thoroughly. We can likewise be grateful to have so much fruit from their labors gathered together in one volume as we endeavor to give the text of the New Testament the careful attention it deserves.

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C. Clifton Black. *Reading Scripture with the Saints*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014. Pp. xxvi + 263.

C. Clifton Black, who teaches New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary and is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, specializes in the study of the Gospels, Mark in particular. By engaging with the recent renewal of interest in theological interpretation and the history of the interpretation of the Bible, he intends in *Reading Scripture with the Saints* to build bridges between academia and the church.

With the historical-critical method, a strict separation between exegesis and theology was established, but lately a new movement of theological