

In this perspective, the concepts of “God’s universal lawsuit” and the “seditious covenant-breaking” of idolatry need clarification against the background of mission to the Gentiles. This could be achieved by identifying them as expressing *God’s universal covenant lawsuit in the New Covenant Age against idol worshipers who broke the covenant of works in the first Adam*. This said, I highly recommend Pardigon’s well-researched and well-written book to students of the Bible for a deeper understanding of God’s redemptive history and the method of evangelism and apologetics in the age of global mission.

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Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry, eds. *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019.

Elijah Hixson, junior research associate in New Testament Text and Language at Tyndale House, Cambridge, and Peter J. Gurry, assistant professor of New Testament and codirector of the Text and Canon Institute at Phoenix Seminary, have enlisted the aid of several young scholars in New Testament textual criticism (or related disciplines) to offer a helpful book that seeks to address the myths and mistakes that attend New Testament textual criticism.

In the introduction, the editors set forth the purpose of this book, namely, to correct wrong approaches that have been taken by apologists who have set out to defend “the Bible and . . . its credibility” (1). The editors’ desire to dispel such approaches is motivated by their conviction that Scripture is truly “God’s special revelation” and thus ought to be defended—but, they argue, such defense must be accurate to avoid creating further doubt about the reliability of the Bible. Some examples they mention include “outdated information,” “abused statistics,” and “selected use of evidence” (5–12). The editors are then careful to state that this book is primarily concerned with matters of New Testament textual criticism; it is not meant to replace a general introduction to the subject.

In chapter 2, Timothy N. Mitchell addresses what autographs are and how long they survived. He engages the opposing views of Matthew Larsen and Craig Evans. Larsen completely rejects the idea of a finished autograph, whereas Evans argues against the existence of major changes between the autographs and the first copies. In light of Greco-Roman publication habits

and the ability of audiences to distinguish between different versions of a text, as well as the survival (or destruction) of ancient manuscripts, Mitchell takes a mediating stance that contrasts with those of both Larsen and Evans, arguing that the former overplays the “alterations made by readers and scribes” (46) and the latter fails to consider evidence contrary to his position.

Jacob W. Peterson discusses the number of manuscripts and whether more manuscripts amount to better evidence. He covers the difficulties of counting manuscripts, evaluating their value, and the continuing discovery of manuscripts, all of which point to his overall conclusion that the use of the number of manuscripts for apologetic purposes needs to proceed with modesty. James B. Prothro urges for the need for more accuracy when comparing the New Testament with ancient works.

Hixson addresses the dating of manuscripts, with specific attention given to the earliest manuscripts. After noting the difficulties of assigning a date to a manuscript, he provides helpful suggestions to the aspiring apologist. Greg Lanier, along similar lines, argues that assigning a later date to a manuscript does not necessarily mean it is a worse manuscript; he eschews inaccurate presentations of the Byzantine tradition(s) and discussing some of the habits of later scribes to substantiate his argument.

Zachary J. Cole offers a complex picture of the work of copyists of the New Testament manuscripts, arguing against both those who state that they were untrained and hence grossly imprecise in their work and those who suggest that they were on par with the Jewish copyists of the Old Testament. Peter Malik discusses the actual practice of copying, with specific attention to what corrections made to the exemplar teach us. One major takeaway is that the corrections a scribe made to his copy can demonstrate a concern to present a carefully copied text.

Building on his PhD dissertation, in which he collates the entire Greek manuscript tradition of Philemon, S. Matthew Solomon presents some of the findings that emerge from this work and urges for the need to fully collate other texts of the New Testament (Jude and John 18 are the only other fully collated texts besides Philemon) given the benefits obtained.

Concerning the issue of textual variants—an issue often met with much consternation—Gurry concludes, “In the final analysis, it is best to admit that, in relatively rare cases, variants *do* have some bearing on some doctrines or ethical practices of the Christian faith, but none of these ... practices is *established* from these disputed texts. Nor are any of them in jeopardy because of these disputed texts” (209).

Robert D. Marcello explores the possibility of corruptions due to theological motivations and argues that we must be tentative when identifying

corruptions of this nature. Indeed, it is much more challenging to determine the motivations lying behind textual corruptions than is often suggested. Andrew Blaski argues against the myth that virtually the entire New Testament could be reproduced from the writings of the church fathers. He presents evidence for more complex citation practices among the fathers, such as a citation of two different variants when deemed appropriate.

John D. Meade seeks to dispel the weight accorded to the codex in the early church's recognition of the canon, arguing instead that early canonical lists are the best way forward in tackling this question. Jeremiah Coogan explores early translations of the New Testament and argues that, while they are less useful for textual criticism, they have much value for understanding early Christian practice. Edgar Battad Ebojo, in the final chapter, explores the relationship of modern translations to textual criticism, noting that the concerns of translators are not always consistent with text-critical concerns and, as such, modern translations are not the primary place for understanding the issues surrounding textual criticism.

By way of evaluation, this volume is clearly written and beneficial. First, it provides a nuanced and complex picture of New Testament textual criticism. Second, it engages with the most recent findings in the discipline. Third, it provides accurate information for the apologist; indeed, some chapters have an apologetic thrust (especially chapters 8, 11, and 12). Fourth, it persuasively argues for continued work in New Testament textual criticism and notes areas that need more attention. Fifth, the contributors are not afraid to question recognized scholars (e.g., Daniel Wallace and Michael Kruger) when necessary.

One negative aspect is that the reader will have to have a general familiarity with the issues to follow the arguments. However, the editors rightly note that this book does not replace an introduction on the topic, but it constitutes a supplement to such an introduction.

In sum, this book meets its objective, especially since it offers helpful contributions to the discipline of textual criticism. It ought to be read by anyone interested in textual criticism in particular or in evidence-based apologetics in general.

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