

Additionally, when it comes to the practicalities of applying the *sola scriptura* principle, one wonders which writings are easier to understand, the biblical writers or Oden's "Great Eight." Most certainly the writers of the long Christian tradition of theological exposition have made their positive contributions, but would we not be better served to go back to carefully and prayerfully pondering the canonical books of the Bible for our key perspectives in doing theology, especially when it comes to our anthropology, hamartology, and soteriology?

Oden's *Memoir* should be a preferred read for anyone interested in twentieth- and twenty-first-century historical and systematic theology, especially as such work has played out in the halls of modernity, evangelicalism, and ecumenical trends, especially in the context of the unfolding exchanges between Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Evangelical Protestantism.

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Porter, Stanley E., and Andrew W. Pitts. *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. xvi + 201 pp. Softcover, US\$22.00.

According to the authors, this book was produced to fill the need of a midlevel textbook that introduces first- or second-year Greek students to the field of textual criticism and issues related to the canon and translation theories (xiii–xiv). It is the second volume of a series of Greek language resources published by Eerdmans (xi). The first volume, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek*, was published in 2010 by Stanley E. Porter, Jeffery T. Reed, and Matthew Brook O'Donnell and is composed of a textbook and an accompanying workbook. The third volume, an intermediate grammar, is in the process of being written, and the final volume, a book on exegesis and interpretation, is in the planning stage (xii).

Stanley E. Porter is currently president, dean, and professor of NT at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton (Ontario). He has authored twenty-eight books, edited ninety volumes, and written over 300 journal articles and chapters in different disciplines of religious studies. He has published several publications in the field of NT textual criticism and actively participates in the current debate by calling scholarship to move away from an eclectic text and accept a single text model. Thus, without any doubt, the author knows the field of NT textual criticism.

Andrew W. Pitts is currently chair of the Biblical Studies Department and assistant professor of Biblical Studies and Christian Ministries at Arizona Christian University. He is the assigned coauthor of the forthcoming intermediate grammar.

Fundamentals Of New Testament Textual Criticism consists of thirteen chapters and an appendix, entitled *Tools for Further Text-Critical Study*. Each chapter ends with a summary, a list of key terminology, and a bibliography. At

the end of the book, there is an index of modern authors and one for ancient sources. There is no comprehensive bibliography at the end of the book.

In chapter one, they define textual criticism, introducing the traditional model, which seeks to recover the text of the autograph, and the sociohistorical model, which focusses on the transmission process itself. The authors indicate that they sympathize with the traditional model. In chapter two, they address the issue of the NT canon, taking a conservative standpoint by advocating that the formation of the canon was a result of reacting to heresies in the second century CE. Chapter three contains general information on ancient book making, literacy, ancient writing styles, writing materials, and methods of how the NT manuscripts are classified. Chapter four provides an overview of the major witnesses to the NT text, such as the Greek manuscripts, the early versions, and the patristic quotations. Chapter five describes the four major text-types. Chapter six addresses the issue of the definition and boundaries of a textual variant. Chapters seven to ten deal with text-critical methodologies. Chapter seven gives an overview on the four major approaches to NT textual criticism: Stemmatic, Majority Text, Eclectic, and Single Text. Chapters eight to ten focus on the current standard methodology, reasoned eclecticism, discussing the external evidences (ch. 8), the transcriptional probabilities (ch. 9), and the intrinsic probabilities (ch. 10). Chapter eleven presents a brief history of the modern critical editions, starting from Ximénes's edition and going to NA^{27/28} and UBS^{4/5}. Chapter twelve provides a guide to the use of the text and the apparati of NA^{27/28} and of UBS^{4/5}. In the final chapter, the authors address the issues of translating the NT into modern languages, with a special focus on English versions.

This book certainly is an easy read and thus presents what the title promises. The outline and the layout of the book serves its purpose well. The authors provide simple explanations of technical terms and the examples are well chosen.

Beginning with a critique of minor importance, primarily directed against the publisher, I asked myself why they were not able to match the cover's layout with the one used for *Fundamentals in New Testament Greek*, given the fact that they are part of the same series.

Focusing now on content, I observed many flaws that finally make me question the *raison d'être* of this book. First of all, the authors are too selective in presenting the material. In the beginning of chapter two, they point out that two main views exist on when the canonization of the NT took place. However, the rest of the chapter focuses only on one view, the traditional view. After providing an overview on the four major approaches to NT textual criticism in chapter seven, only the methodology of reasoned eclecticism (chs. 8–11), which is not even Stanley's favorite approach, is described in detail.

I observed at least two instances when the authors provide more detailed information later in the book on something mentioned previously. This is not beneficial, especially if the targeted readers are novices. For example, they state, "Because of its popularity, a later publisher referred to the text that resulted from Erasmus's efforts as the *Textus Receptus*." (74). Later in the book they identify the publisher as Elzevir (139). I cannot think of any

reason why they did not mention the publisher in the first instance. Another example is the initial reference to lectionaries. This large group of manuscripts is generally insufficiently described by scholars. In this book they introduce lectionaries as a key term, with only two explanatory sentences in the section where classification methods are discussed (49). Uninformed readers may ask what lectionaries are. They will have to read on a couple of pages before this question is answered (62–63). A cross-reference would have solved the problem.

On more than one occasion, I found the authors guilty of drawing untenable conclusions. For example, based on \mathfrak{P}^{46} , a papyrus dated from 180–200 CE, which includes all Pauline Epistles (including Hebrews), except 2 Thessalonians and the Pastoral Epistles, the authors conclude that canonizing activities were taking place at the end of the second century CE. Because this conclusion is very legitimate, they further conclude that \mathfrak{P}^{46} most likely proves that “either Paul himself or his close traveling companions, which would have included his secretaries, fellow missionaries, and church planters,” were already collecting these letters (14). This is quite a stretch! In another instance, the authors state, “the rapid spread of Christianity in the ancient world, therefore, accounts for the rapid production of NT books represented by the abundant number of manuscripts currently available” (37). The truth is that only a small percentage (less than 2.5 percent) of the available manuscripts are from the first century CE. The vast majority of available manuscripts (over 65 percent) were produced in the eleventh–fourteenth century CE. The authors give the wrong impression that most of the available manuscripts are from the early period, when Christianity was spreading.

In addition, the authors sometimes present information without enough nuance. For example, their remarks on literacy in the first century CE could be more nuanced in terms of what “reading” meant in the Greco-Roman culture. Richard Rohrbaugh’s chapter on “Ancient Reading” in *The Social Sciences and NT Interpretation* (2014) provides helpful insights that would enrich this section. Another example is that they seem to take the questionable story of Tischendorf’s discovery of Codex Sinaiticus with monks burning parchment leaves to heat their rooms at face value (56).

Of even more importance is the fact that the authors provide inaccurate information. It is known that the apparatus of Catholic Epistles in NA²⁸ replaced \mathfrak{M} by the letters “byz.” The authors do not refer at all to “byz” in relation to the apparatus of NA²⁸, but point out only that “byz” is used in the apparatus of UBS^{4/5} instead of the symbol \mathfrak{M} that is used in the apparatus of NA^{27/28} (162).

This leads to another major flaw of this book. In their guide for the text and the apparati of the UBS^{4/5} and NA^{27/28} (ch. 12), the authors discuss, in footnote one, the value of the NA²⁸ edition (147). They conclude that based on the differences in the apparatus of the Catholic Epistles and the rest of the New Testament, NA²⁸ or UBS⁵ could cause confusion for the students. For this reason they decide to discuss the apparati of UBS^{4/5} and NA^{27/28}. This decision leads, in my opinion, to even more confusion, especially because of their insufficient treatment of the matter illustrated in the case of the use of

NT/byz. I think a mid-level introduction in textual criticism should provide a detailed explanation of the apparatus only of the current critical editions of the Greek New Testament, since students will automatically look for the most current version. In addition, I really question whether a mid-level introduction in textual criticism is the right place to critique the current versions of the critical editions of the Greek New Testament.

I am sure that the authors' intention to simplify the subject matter, to provide a smooth entry in the given field for first- and second-year students, is well meant. However, it also raises a fundamental question concerning their underestimation of students' capacity. I am skeptical of the recent trend of producing more and more simplified books at the cost of comprehensiveness. I do not share the authors' evaluation of the three standard introductory books on the NT text by Aland & Aland (1989), Metzger & Ehrman (2005), and Parker (2008) as far too detailed for first- or second-year Greek students (xiii). I would prefer upcoming revised editions of these books, rather than incomplete mid-level introductions on textual criticism, as the one I have here reviewed.

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Sæbø, Magne, ed. *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Vol. III: From Modernism to Post-Modernism. Part 2: The Twentieth Century—From Modernism to Post-Modernism*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015. 777 pp. Hardcover, EUR 150.00.

This volume completes the project *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament The History of Its Interpretation* (HBOT), edited by the Norwegian theologian Magne Sæbø, professor at MF Norwegian School of Theology. Since its initial planning around 1980, it now constitutes a major monument in Sæbø's contribution to scholarship. As he himself writes, the intention of the entire project was to contribute and further develop the tradition of Ludwig Diestel (*Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christliche Kirche*, 1869) and Fredric W. Farrar (*History of Interpretation*, 1886). HBOT is not alone as a recent multivolume project presenting the history of interpretation of Scripture. Others that can be mentioned are the *Bible de tous les Temps* (1984–1989) by Roman Catholic scholars; Henning Graf Reventlow's *Epochen der Bibelauslegung* (1990–2001); the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scriptures* (2014), edited by T. C. Oden; the *Blackwell Bible Commentary* (2004–), edited by J. F. A. Sawyer, still to be completed; and finally the planned *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* edited by Hans-Josef Klauck et al.

The first volume, part 1 (HBOT I/1), *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, was published in 1996. It took us from the beginnings of Scriptural interpretation within the Bible itself up through Jewish and Christian Scriptural interpretation in antiquity. The second part (HBOT I/2) covers Christian and Jewish Scriptural interpretation in the Middle Ages. The second volume (HBOT II), *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*,