

Houghton, H. A. G. ed. *Early Readers, Scholars and Editors of the New Testament: Papers from the Eighth Birmingham Colloquium on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*. Edited by H. A. G. Houghton. Texts and Studies 11. Piscataway: Gorgias, 2014. ISBN 978-1-4632-0411-2. Pp. xiv + 217. Hardback \$95.

- [1] This book presents the reader with a breadth of approaches to the field of textual criticism on the New Testament. It begins with an informative introduction to the modern goals of textual criticism and is followed by a collection of ten papers from the March 2013 Colloquium on Textual Criticism at the University of Birmingham. The individual papers are not centered on a single theme, thereby positively offering readers exposure to various methods and studies. They can be summarized as follows.
- [2] Chapter 1, “Υπηρέται ... τοῦ λόγου: Does Luke 1:2 Throw Light onto the Book Practices of the Late First-Century Churches?,” 1–15: Thomas O’Loughlin contends that Luke 1:2 refers to how ancient books were copied, disseminated, and cared for in the ancient world. He begins his case with the phrase in Luke, ὑπηρέται τοῦ λόγου, which O’Loughlin glosses as “servants of the word.” O’Loughlin believes that Luke is referring to keepers of libraries. Apparently Luke has in mind people who were highly literate and served the early church by authenticating and preserving church documents. Authentication would have been important in the early stages of the Christian communities with no previously established libraries. The paper argues against the more common position that Luke refers to the eyewitnesses of the earthly work of Christ who later became servants of the church as teachers, such as the apostles. O’Loughlin does a fine job exploring the lexical evidence and the historical transmission of texts. He acknowledges that not all will be convinced by his argument, but it is a well-researched article addressing some interesting ideas of how early Christian documents were preserved.
- [3] Chapter 2, “The Gospel of John and Its Original Readers,” 17–25: Hans Förster and Ulrike Swoboda offer a very short paper addressing the the implied audience for the Gospel of John. While a substantial debate with many variables, the authors suggest that collocation analysis and text criticism should caution scholars denying the possibility of a Jewish audience being intended. Unfortunately, the paper admits to only being a preliminary proposal, and full conclusions were not presented.
- [4] Chapter 3, “The Eusebian Canons: Their Implications and Potential,” 27–43: Satoshi Toda explores the potential use of the Eusebian Canons for textual criticism and New Testament studies more generally. Toda offers a fascinating article with plenty of research and historical studies. Focusing on the passion episodes in the Gospels, Satoshi comes to some suggestive conclusions. First, she believes the Canons demonstrate that the author of the Gospel of John did not make use of Mark (33). This contention runs contrary to mainstream views within Gospel studies. Second, the relationship between Matthew and Mark should be considered independently from relationships with Luke or John. Again, her suggestion has significant ramifications for approaches to Synoptic studies. Lastly, she finds that since the Canons only have 233 sections for Mark, it indicates that Eusebius’s manuscripts ended with Mark 16:8. These three suggestions alone make Satoshi’s article worth reading.

- [5] Chapter 4, “Donkeys or Shoulders? Augustine as a Textual Critic of the Old and New Testament,” 45–66: Rebekka Schirner offers an intriguing piece on ancient text critical practices. She proposes, and ably defends, the thesis that Augustine was a competent text critic with formal principles for evaluating variants. Schirner gathers examples from many of Augustine’s works to demonstrate how he implemented his methods in textual evaluation. She concludes that Augustine used such criteria as the number of manuscripts, the provenance of the manuscript, the age, and grammatical features of the variant. Augustine also evaluated Latin texts according to the Greek and further considered if scribal errors or competing intentions could be the cause of a textual variation. Her essay demonstrates how textual criticism has been important for Christianity from the early stages of the biblical texts. Plus, it shows many modern methods are not new, just more sophisticated and quantitatively more encompassing with the onset of computers.
- [6] Chapter 5, “The Sources for the Temptations Episode in the *Paschale Carmen* of Sedulius,” 67–92: Oliver Norris writes a historical essay examining the biblical base texts used by Sedulius, a fifth century biblical-poet, when writing his *Paschale Carmen* and *Paschale Opus*. While modern readers are likely unfamiliar, and perhaps indifferent, to Sedulius as a historical figure, the essay offers valuable lessons in textual criticism. Norris suggests a method for examining ancient works to determine their underlining biblical text. He explains that one must consider far more than simple quotations or references. An examiner must contend with what local texts were available to the ancient author, as well as potential homiletic texts. While more of the results are shown than revealing the method itself, there is potential for applying this method to other ancient works. It would be interesting to further use Norris’ suggestions for determining the biblical texts behind other ancient authors.
- [7] Chapter 6, “A Reintroduction to the Budapest Anonymous Commentary on the Pauline Letters,” 93–106: Rosalind F. MacLachlan also offers a historical paper on the VL 89 manuscript, known as the “Budapest Anonymous Commentary.” It is a ninth century Latin manuscript with brief comments on what was regarded as the Pauline canon, the thirteen letters, and Hebrews. MacLachlan presents the reader with a thorough description of the structure and layout of the manuscript and the method scribes used to link the biblical text with comments. She then points to the types of questions that can be asked from studying old manuscripts. Unfortunately, the questions are raised without exploration or answer. The essay does not include her findings.
- [8] Chapter 7, “Preliminary Investigations of Origen’s Text of Galatians,” 107–17: Matthew R. Steinfeld writes one of the best articles in the book. He explores the works of Origen that reference Galatians in order to see what text critical information can be derived. He begins the essay by offering an insightful critic of the circularity of many approaches to the patristic writings and then proposes some new approaches. He primarily contends that patristic references should not be dismissed too prematurely simply because they do not conform to known manuscripts. Steinfeld gives examples comparing Origen’s references to the Majority Text, NA28, and significant ancient texts. Although he convincingly argues that scholars should make greater use of Origen in textual history, his full conclusion is somewhat contradictory to his presented evidence. He states that Origen should be incorporated more into critical texts, such as the NA28, as an early witness. However, his paper demonstrates that Origen’s biblical quotations

and references are not evidence of an actual biblical manuscript. Rather, Steinfeld shows that Origen used “his own stylistic variation” and was willing to adjust the biblical reference for his own purposes (116). In other words, Origen’s references are revealing of the biblical text in use, not evidence of an actual manuscript. For example, in Gal 2:9, the reference in Origen reads Παύλω, where the NA28 has ἐμοὶ. Origen’s adjustment is understandable within the context of his writing, but it should not be registered in a critical text as a variant reading. Despite this critic, it is an enjoyable article with some quality research presented.

- [9] Chapter 8, “Family 1 in Mark: Preliminary Results,” 119–61: Amy S. Anderson contributes the longest essay with the most data. As the title suggests and she admits three times (121, 123, 139), the work is preliminary and still in progress. Despite that, she makes a good presentation of her work to establish a “family tree of Family 1 in Mark” (139). Anderson is doing in Mark what Alison Welsby, “A Textual Study of Family 1 in the Gospel of John,” did in John. In short, it is an exercise in collocation analysis trying to establish genealogical relationships among manuscripts. At this point in the project, there is more data than results, but it looks promising. When the project is complete, it would be intriguing to compare her findings with the more technical methods of stemmatics using computer based cladistics mapping.
- [10] Chapter 9, “Textual Criticism and the Interpretation of Texts: The Example of the Gospel of John,” 163–87: Hans Förster provided this reviewer the most interesting and thought provoking article. Förster contends that textual criticism is more useful for arriving at the oldest recoverable textual form than literary or source criticism. Additionally, making use of the “versional evolutions” (168) offers greater interpretive insights too. He argues his thesis by focusing upon the raising of Lazarus in John 11. Förster compares the Sahidic and Coptic translations against the Greek text to arrive at insights concerning the various healing episodes and the so-called “signs-sources” in John. He provocatively concludes that, by using text criticism and translation history, the scholar can avoid the interpretive pitfalls of literary criticism, which unintentionally deconstruct the original unity constructed by the ancient author. This is a worthwhile essay.
- [11] Chapter 10, “The Correspondence of Erwin Nestle with the BFBS and the ‘Nestle-Kilpatrick’ Greek New Testament Edition of 1958,” 189–206: The last essay finds Simon Crisp telling the history of a failed attempt to make a critical Greek New Testament in the 1950s. The story recounts how the British Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) contacted Erwin Nestle, the nephew of Eberhard Nestle, to create a critical New Testament text for the BFBS to replace their outdated 1904 edition. Crisp tells his well-researched story as a cautionary tale of the challenges of competing interests and the complexities of publishing a commercial Greek Text. It is interesting to see how the differing interests of Christian missionaries in the BFBS and the scholarly George Kilpatrick eventually lead to the dead end. In the end, the BFBS joined the American Bible Society that had been launched by Eugene Nida.
- [12] Overall, this is a well-printed book with some helpful indexing for ease of use. There is, however, one considerable problem readers will encounter: the essays are preliminary. All but the first one and last two essays give the distinct impression of being incomplete. In fact, nearly a dozen times the authors attest that their work is still in progress. Two of the essays are even titled as preliminary. While it has unfortunately become more common lately for presenters at confer-

ences to arrive with incomplete papers, before publication they should have been expanded and finalized. For most readers, the cost will be a deterrent for a collection of papers that are not complete. That being said, those who do use the book will benefit from the diverse chapters. There are some good points throughout that deserve further exploration.

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