

**Bart D. Ehrman. *Studies in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*. New Testament Tools and Studies 33. Brill: Leiden-Boston, 2006. Pp. ix + 406. ISBN: 9004150323. \$139.00 USD, cloth.**

1. Without doubt Bart Ehrman, currently James A. Gray Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has not only influenced the textual criticism of the New Testament during his academic career but has also actively shaped it, so that it is now what it is and how it is. The present volume comprises sixteen studies dispersedly published and five lectures dealing with several topics of significance to the field of research (and not fifteen studies and six lectures as wrongly promised by the text on the back of the book cover). The studies—roughly arranged by topic—cover a period of time of more than twenty years and thus witness to the development of textual criticism since then; and this, together with the easy availability of Ehrman’s text-critical studies, is what turns this collection into an invaluable tool and a kind of history book of the discipline of the textual criticism of the New Testament.

2. The attentive readers will quickly realize how Ehrman’s own occupation with text-critical topics has changed over the years. In the early years of his academic career—even as a Ph.D. student—he tackled the problem of method in general and of manuscript classification in particular. It is needless to retell the content of the essays, of which many have become landmark studies in the field of textual criticism. However, chapter one (‘The Text of the New Testament’, pp. 1-8), a general introduction to the discipline and the methods of textual criticism, and chapter four (‘A Problem of Textual Circularity: The Alands on the Classification of New Testament Manuscripts’, pp. 57-70), a kind of review article of the English translation of the Alands’ *The Text of the New Testament* in 1987, help the readers to identify Ehrman’s own methodological approach, which he has already developed and applied in his *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels* (The New Testament in the Greek Fathers 1; Atlanta 1986). He clearly points out what he recognizes as the crucial and weak points of the Alands’ manuscript classification system, and at the same time justifies the strength of the quantitative method (i.e., “collating a number of MSS and establishing their proportional relationship to one another ... in all units of variation in which at least two of the MSS agree against all the others”; p. 59). Finally, he proposes (p. 70) “to use the quantitative and profile methods in tandem.” Apart from the more general and methodological essays, some others deal with individual verses and the textual problems involved in them. The final four studies, of which two are about the exegete Heracleon and remnants of his commentary on the Fourth Gospel, focus on the interrelation of patristic evidence and textual criticism. The final five lectures have only slightly been modified in order to keep their oral and thus eloquent “original flavor of the lecture” (p. 307 n. 1). Two of them are the Kenneth W. Clark lectures (Duke Divinity School in 1997), which have also been published in *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* [<http://purl.org/TC>] 5 (2000), the final three the Shaffer Lectures (Yale University in 2004) previously unpublished.

3. The book comprises some indices (scripture, modern authors, and subjects; pp. 395-406) and a foreword (pp. vii-ix). The book cover shows the recto of *P.Ryl. III 457*, among Biblical scholars better known as  $\mathfrak{P}^{52}$ , a papyrus fragment with John 18:31-33 (verso with 18:37-38).

4. It is not surprising that the well-produced book shows Ehrman at his best. Due to the range and depth of the essays chosen for this volume specialists in the field, but also other scholars and even students interested in textual criticism, will find pivotal methodological reflections about that discipline. But at the same time they will profit from some detailed studies on individual issues associated with textual criticism and so from the application of the method. This *is* a very

significant contribution to the textual criticism of the New Testament that guarantees easy availability of and access to Ehrman's quintessential studies in the field.

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