

Amy Anderson and Wendy Widder, *Textual Criticism and the Bible*, Lexham Methods Series 1, rev. ed., Bellingham-Washington, D.C.: Lexham Press, 2018. ISBN 978-1-577997047. Paperback, pp. xv + 236. \$29.99.

- [1] The Lexham Methods Series provides essential and concise introductions to relevant areas of biblical interpretation and their various methods, which the authors intent to deal with in a neutral and unbiased way. The other volumes in the series are: Douglas Mangum and Josh Westbury, *Linguistics and Biblical Exegesis* (2017); Douglas Mangum and Amy Balogh, *Social and Historical Approaches to the Bible* (2017); Douglas Mangum and Douglas Estes, *Literary Approaches to the Bible* (2018). The promise made at the end of the preface to the whole series (ix-xi) – “The Lexham Methods Series introduces you to the world of biblical scholarship” – is definitely kept in the present volume on *Textual Criticism and the Bible*, that is, the explanations of both the textual criticism of the Old *and* the New Testament in one book are essential and rather pragmatic.
- [2] Amy Anderson and Wendy Widder take their readers by the hand and navigate them through the tides and narrows of textual criticism, that is, they provide a text easy to read and understand that gradually leads to more and more complex matters of method and approach but at the same time it always offers precise and state-of-the-art academic definitions. In their initial chapter the two authors refer to translations, depict where standard English translations stand between literal and free, point out in what way textual criticism may help readers comprehend differences between modern versions and come up with a definition of textual criticism (“textual criticism is not translation” [6]; they also explain key phrases such as “missing autographs,” “task of textual critics,” “resolve variations” or “the best representation of the *Ausgangstext*,” and “the ancient form of the text that is the ancestor of all extant copies” [7]). The chapters provide further information and help develop the readers’s ability to understand and to discuss textual criticism and comprehend how it works. Moreover, and thus underlining the value this book has for teaching, key terms are marked by bold type and some selected titles for further reading are provided at the end of a chapter.
- [3] Chapter 2 is an “An Overview of Textual Criticism” (11-48) in general. Readers are informed about the necessity of the work of textual critics and the differences and the nature of Old and New Testament witnesses before the authors come to write about errors, misspellings, mistaken letters, changes, glosses, haplography, dittography, homophony, additions, omissions, conflation, parablepsis, metatheses, harmonizations, spelling and grammar, and theological changes. Every single item is illustrated by examples from the Old and New Testament in order to show the readership how scribal habits might have influenced the shape of a copied text. With regard to internal and external evidence Anderson and Widder repeat the major principles of text-critical work – accompanied by the useful expounding of problems – in a very clear and manageable order.

- [4] Chapter 3 – “Introduction to the Old Testament Textual Criticism” (49-114) – starts with Origen’s Hexapla, deals with the first printed editions, and textual models, and then presents specific features of the Masoretic text before it plunges into the depiction of the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Peshitta, the Targum, the Vulgate, and modern critical editions of other witnesses. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to a step-by-step workshop of how to do textual criticism of the Old Testament (cf. see a similar approach in Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*).
- [5] The fourth chapter provides an “Introduction to the New Testament Textual Criticism” (115–77) which – again – follows a historical pattern first, presents (the most important) manuscript evidence and thereafter deals with lectionaries, patristic evidence, ancient versions, and modern critical editions. It may surprise the reader to find a passage about the SBL GNT in this section and to see the interesting project by Joseph M. Bover and José O’Callaghan missing. The rest of the chapter is – parallel to chapter 3 – reserved for a “How to Do Textual Criticism of the New Testament” (with a welcome reference to the critical apparatus), in which the two authoresses point out criteria for external and internal evidence and offer some quite clear examples for applying theoretical principles in practice. It is important to mention that the book also has a section on the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM), which it briefly introduces (125–26), and that it refers to the Center for the Study of the New Testament Manuscripts (CSNTM), the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing (ITSEE) and the New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room (NTVMR)
- [6] In chapter 5, Anderson and Widder write about “Textual Criticism and the Bible Today” (179–201) and critically assess English translations of the Old and the New Testament (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, ESV, NESV, and NET).
- [7] The book comes with acknowledgments, a list of abbreviations and a very useful glossary of terms that might appear as technical and arcane to students and post-graduates alike who are not familiar with the methods of textual criticism. A subject index with authors and topical terms (225–32) and a scripture index (233–36) facilitate navigation within the book for the readership. A bibliography is included that is far from comprehensive, but it has a clear focus on introducing the readers to the issues of textual criticism in order to provide starting points for further studies; it is structured according to subtopics such as “general,” “critical editions” (apparently of the New Testament, but listing the SBL edition which is not a critical edition at all) and “Old Testament” (including the Masoretic Text, Peshitta, Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Göttingen Septuagint, and Vulgate). The bibliography mainly focuses on English titles with occasional German ones.
- [8] The blurb on the back of the book offers the programmatic overall conception of this volume in the series: “Complicated concepts are clearly explained and illustrated to prepare readers for further study of textual issues.” Anderson and Widder clearly succeed in doing so.

- [6] Anderson and Widder ought to be congratulated on creating a handy, useful, and instructive introduction to Old *and* New Testament textual criticism that enables people interested in this field of biblical studies to make their first steps in a responsible and safe way. The information provided is sound and concise; the examples for instructing readers are well chosen and sufficient. This is a very helpful study aid for students and post-graduates alike; but biblical scholars will also benefit from reading this introduction to textual criticism.

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