

is an(other) attempt at a “Christ of history,” i.e. an(other) attempt to authenticate the Christ of the author’s faith. Like other “Christs of history,” Bauckham’s is generally of interest only to Christian insiders who already pit the gospels *against* historical criticism to a certain extent; those who differentiate sharply between the Historical Jesus and the Christ will find little here to convince them otherwise. Had the book not been framed and marketed as a victory between these “sides,” its valuable work (e.g. on Papias, testimony in Greco-Roman historiography and the gospels, and Palestinian-Jewish names in general) would surely have reached a wider audience.

In the first paragraph of the book, Bauckham complains about Historical Jesus researchers who “have castigated their predecessors but put their faith in new methods and approaches that they claim will succeed where others failed.” The reader must decide whether the present volume escapes this verdict. While the book advocates important under-used approaches to the gospel material (such as onomastics), the leap from these insights to the historical Jesus is not one other scholars will rush to follow Bauckham in making.

Although *Jesus & the Eyewitnesses* criticizes the bias of “sceptical” approaches, it has its own theological programme. It goes to varying lengths—psychology, hermeneutics, philology, historiography—in order to convince the reader that eyewitness testimony was considered “best practice” at the time of the gospels, and that eyewitness memory can more or less be trusted (see esp. ch. 13). Yet it does not take seriously the possibility that authors might *fabricate* “best practice.” Nevertheless, it cannot be dismissed. It is a blend of careful work which contributes to scholarly knowledge, and of heavy bias which only contributes to the polemical din. This is no surprise; it’s a blend that has always characterized Historical Jesus Research.

### ***A Student’s Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible***

Paul D. Wegner. Downers grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

ISBN: 0-8308-2731-5. Pp. 334.

Reviewed by Mike Arcieri, McGill University.

Wegner is a professor of Old Testament at Phoenix Seminary in Phoenix (Arizona), having taught at Moody Bible Institute for some 12 years. *A Student’s Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible* is his second book, following closely on the heels of his previous and excellent book, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*, in which Wegner outlines the origin, transmission and translation of the Bible as a literary work. The present *Guide to Textual Criticism* is

limited exclusively to the issues relating directly to the textual criticism of the Old and New Testaments.

Wegner's book is divided into four major parts. Part I (chapters 1–3) deals primarily with introductory matter: questions regarding the general value and importance of textual criticism, scribal errors, and the history of the transmission of both Testaments. Part II (chapters 4–6) focuses primarily on the criticism of the Old Testament. Specifically in chap. 4, the reader is introduced (in a general way) to ancient witnesses to the Hebrew text (i.e., the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, Origen's Hexapla and the Latin Vulgate) as well as the work of the Masoretes. Chap. 5 provides examples of textual variants found within the Hebrew manuscripts and the methodology employed in identifying the most plausible reading. Chap. 6 curiously returns to the same topic as chap. 4, except in greater detail. In this section we are introduced to the Samaritan Pentateuch (not discussed in chap. 4), as well as other Greek recensions on par with Origen's Hexapla. Part III (chapters 7–9) turns its attention to the New Testament, including overviews of early patristic and later scholars' awareness and attempts at solving textual problems, description of the primary manuscript sources available (Papyri, Uncials and Minuscules), and the ancient Eastern and Western versions of both the Old and New Testament. Each chapter closes with a useful bibliography.

Wegner writes for the those who are beginning their text-critical journey, and seeks to lead them step by step along the way. In this regard he succeeds. Wegner introduces his discussion by reciting oft-asked questions: "Is the Bible we have today accurate?" "How accurate is the biblical text?" (Preface, p. 19). Wegner closes his book with a quotation from no less an authority than Frederick Kenyon: "It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result. . . is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures, and our conviction that we have, in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable word of God" (p. 301). Wegner's favourable view with regards to the text's preservation and identity permeates his book. His perspective is that the manuscript evidence has preserved fairly accurately the canonical Scriptures; he maintains that only a very small percentage of the text is questionable (with no doctrine affected). However, he does not necessarily believe that the very '*ipsissima verba*' of the autograph texts are preserved in every instance, since there are clear signs of later redactional activity.

Wegner writes for undergraduates and the general public. He does not avoid technical discussion or even explaining real problems within the tradition, but does so in a user-friendly fashion in which all can understand. In fact, it is difficult to find five consecutive pages without coming across some type of illustration, picture or chart illustrating some aspect of the history or process of the transmission of the biblical text. This generous use of visual aids greatly enhances the value of the discussion among beginning students who will readily appreciate the added visuals.

Wegner's approach to the biblical text is quite conservative. He prefers by far the Hebrew Massoretic text as the most authoritative, allowing other texts (i.e. LXX) to 'correct' the Hebrew only in the most obvious of instances. The Alexandrian text is considered the most accurate text for the New Testament, along with the commonly accepted rules (i.e., the shorter, harder reading to be preferred; the date and variety of witnesses overriding any claims to the number of MSS to the contrary).

Typographical errors are the eternal bane of writers and publishers, and unfortunately this book does not escape. Rather than adopting the more traditional alphabetical/roman numeral outline, Wegner's book is exclusively numerical (ex. 3, 3.1, 3.1.1) with the occasional slip (cf. pp. 110, 135, 223ff). The pagination in the subject index is off by a few pages in many entries. Strictly speaking, Wegner's discussion (excluding the Preface) does not begin until page 23; however, one will find many topical references to pages 7–22, even though these pages contain no discussion whatsoever and are used for the Table of Contents, Abbreviations, List of Figures, etc. (ex.: the index refers to the Abbreviations as being on page 7, when they are actually on page 13). This appears to be limited to the first 25 pages of the book, and the remaining indices appear to be correct. Other minor issues can be mentioned (ex.: there is a disproportionate amount of space given to Westcott and Hort, while other important 19th century scholars are not even discussed (ex.: F. H. A. Scrivener, S. P. Tregelles); his discussion on the present state of New Testament textual criticism relies exclusively on E.J. Epp's view, since this is the only scholar repeatedly quoted!).

Wegner's style is lucid and non-polemical, even while discussing opposing views. He does not pretend to have all the answers to perplexing issues and frankly admits when solutions remain tentative. Admittedly, Wegner's description of the different facets of textual criticism and ensuing discussion are brief and succinct as compared to other available textbooks (ex.: B. M. Metzger, E. Tov), since Wegner covers both Old and New Testament criticism under one volume. However, for those looking for a comprehensive and detailed study of the history and transmission of the text, there is hardly a better introductory textbook available for students. One does not need to agree with Wegner in every detail in order to appreciate the discussions of the theory and praxis of biblical textual criticism, all set in a user-friendly style. This is a very useful classroom tool.