

thread (if there was one) of the argument. The book reads more like a collection of essays.

More conservative readers may take issue with some of the historical critical positions taken by the author, e.g. the division of Isaiah (p. 13 n. 6) and the exclusion of the book of Daniel from the basic discussion (pp. 16–17). Interestingly though, the author has about seventy entries to Daniel in the Scripture index.

Overall, Meier has provided a valuable contribution to the study of the prophets. There are helpful insights to be gleaned here. But finding a niche for the book may prove a bit challenging. Since the book is not written for the novice and is not introductory in nature (p. 12), it would not be the best choice for the beginning student as an entrée into the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible. That being said, the book should be fairly accessible to a general readership, with transliteration, helpful indices, moderate footnoting, and minimal interaction with Hebrew. But some of the very elements that make this book accessible for the average reader may prove less appealing to the more academically-minded reader who is likely to be interested in more extensive interaction with the Hebrew text and more exhaustive interplay with the secondary literature. In sum, the most likely audience for *Themes and Transformations in Old Testament Prophecy* will be advanced Bible college or seminary students, but even here, the book would probably best serve as a supplementary or a “recommended-for-further-reading” text.

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An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts. By D. C. Parker. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 368 pp., \$34.99, paper.

David C. Parker, the Edward Cadbury Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham and Executive Editor of the International Greek New Testament Project, offers in this comprehensive handbook, a fascinating and often humorous look into the world of manuscript studies and textual criticism.

In Part I, Parker covers the first of these two topics. Chapter 1 gives a summary of the development of the codex and then details the methods, resources, and pitfalls for studying the versions. NT manuscripts are introduced as well. The range of information is impressive. On the one hand Parker teaches that “documents written on papyrus . . . are called *papyri*” (p. 35). On the other hand he takes us through a sample search using the *Liste*, even noting dead ends. In this way the text acts as a guide, walking us through the maze of resources. (The glossary at the end is invaluable, but perhaps a bit limited.)

Chapter 2 details the examination of a manuscript to make either a collation or a transcript. The author hopes that professors will be encouraged to introduce Greek students to manuscript studies (p. 88). Again, in this chapter the level of detail is impressive; Parker even reminds transcribers to choose “a writing implement . . . strong enough to show clearly when photocopied” (p. 96). One assumes that this suggestion comes as a result of sad experience.

Chapter 3 covers the study of patristic citations, versions, and other references and inscriptions. These may require their own critical evaluations and suffer from a lack of ancient witnesses. There is need, as well, to distinguish between “an adaptation, an allusion, or a genuine quotation” (p. 110). On the other hand, their value rests in the possibility that a manuscript more ancient than any we now possess lies behind a quotation (p. 109).

Part II moves from manuscripts as artifacts to the texts they contain, starting with Chapter 4 on scribal corrections. Here again, Parker’s concern for teaching is evident. He investigates the thesis that a correlation would exist between “numbers of extant copies and numbers of variant readings” (p. 151) and finds it unsupported by the data. He also examines B. D. Ehrman’s assertion of intentionality regarding scribal corrections and concludes that the question should be stated with “a degree of agnosticism” (p. 157).

The chapter on textual criticism (Chapter 5) offers an historical and methodological exposition, with a detailed history of the “development of the text-type concept” (p. 172). It ends by showing the relevance of textual criticism for history, exegesis, and theology. Parker advocates, for example, commentaries which go beyond simply choosing which reading the exegete believes is best attested towards an analysis which takes the force of all variants into consideration. This chapter is slightly marred by a dismissal of fundamentalism, the Majority Text theory, bibliolatry, and evangelicalism all practically on the same basis, ignoring the significant nuances between and within these positions.

Chapter 6 details various critical editions. It not only defines much of the terminology and presents the main editions in existence, both print and electronic, but it also walks the reader step by step through the Tischendorf apparatus. In this chapter especially, the value of the online plates is apparent. The necessity of reading near a computer is more than compensated for by the joy of being able to examine (and even zoom in on) the resources under discussion. (Many links are on the publisher’s website which eliminates the usual problem of broken connections, although that continues to be an intermittent frustration with the other footnotes.) Parker’s explanation in this chapter would be difficult to follow without the book in one hand and the appropriate image on the screen. With this combination of resources, however, the reader is suddenly given the key to what looked at first like secret code.

In Part III of the book Parker goes through the history, the manuscript evidence, and the specific challenges of each section of the NT. He begins

with Revelation which has a history of research representative of “that of the whole New Testament” (p. 227). Again, Parker introduces us to a wealth of information along with curious historical side notes. He covers the work of Erasmus, Tregelles, Hoskier (who included a variant “communicated by a medium,” p. 230), and Schmid. He points out the rise of copies of Revelation at the fall of the Byzantine Empire, when interest grew in this “coded message of Christian endurance in a hostile world” (p. 234).

In Chapter 8 Parker takes us through a similar analysis of the Pauline letters. He starts (and ends) by noting that the whole enterprise here depends on assumptions about the production and collection of the letters. The variations we see could be due to differences between “copies in circulation” and Paul’s “archived version” (p. 249). In his analysis of textual variants in Romans, Ephesians, 1 Corinthians, and Hebrews, rather than proposing definitive answers, Parker teaches us to ask the right questions and shows us some of the principles of textual criticism.

Chapter 9 addresses Acts and the Catholic epistles. In the book of Acts, Latin witnesses are often found to testify to a Greek text no longer extant. Past decisions to place all texts into either the Old Uncial or the Western family are revisited. Parker finds evidence for a more gradual development of the text. For the Catholic epistles, Westcott and Hort’s view on the Byzantine text as a recension has been superseded by further studies (namely by Wachtel) also pointing towards a more gradual development.

Finally, in Chapter 10 Parker tackles the textual background of the Gospels. As in Acts, we have the telling of a story, and by now Parker has shown us that the content of a text has an impact on its development. In contrast to Acts, however, in the Gospels the narration is more stable than the dialogue. Parker includes an explanation of internal as well as external harmonization. He then discusses a variant of Matt 5:22 to show the weight of implications for Christian communities which textual criticism is made to bear. He prefers to emphasize the way these variations evidence the understanding of early Christian groups rather than to search for “a single authoritative form” of the text (p. 338).

The world of manuscripts supports much of the work of theology and yet is often hidden from view. D. C. Parker’s book invites us into this world and introduces us to its language, its tools, and its methodology in a systematic and comprehensive way. His love for his topic is evident. In a discussion on the benefits of natural *versus* artificial light, he talks about a palimpsest in St. Petersburg whose ink “as the sun rose in the sky . . . slowly faded as though the writing were magic runes” (p. 90). He tells us of Augustine of Hippo’s comment that “some people removed” the story of the woman caught in adultery “from their manuscripts in case their wives decided that it gave them *carte blanche*” (p. 343). These comments invite us to share in the joy that he finds in his studies, his detailed instructions give us the tools, and his frequent allusions to research yet to be undertaken give us direction.

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Introducing Paul: The Man, His Mission and His Message. By Michael F. Bird. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008, 192 pp., \$20.00 paper.

Michael Bird sets out to provide an introductory book on Paul's life, thought, and writings in a way that is relevant and stimulating without being overly distracted by "scholarly debates and complex technicalities" (p. 6). This is quite a challenge; however, Bird, who is a lecturer in NT at Highland Theological College in Dingwell, Scotland, admirably accomplishes this task in *Introducing Paul*. Chapter 1 is a fast-paced discussion seeking to answer the question, "What is Paul?" Bird's answer is that he was "a servant of Jesus Christ" (p. 29). Furthermore, this chapter introduces the reader to various contested issues within Pauline studies, all structured around the image of Paul as a "persecutor, missionary, theologian, pastor, martyr, and maverick" (p. 28). Bird understands Paul's greatest accomplishment to be his successful mission to include gentiles within the transformed understanding of the people of God. Chapter 2 briefly highlights the implications of Paul's Damascus road experience, referred to as a conversion "to a messianic sect *within Judaism*" (p. 35, emphasis original). Bird provides a traditional Pauline chronology and then a description of the way Paul's identity and theologizing were discontinuous with his pre-Damascus road Jewish self-understanding and Pharisaic theology.

Chapter 3 presents a narrative substructure for a Pauline biblical theology. Bird's topical review of salvation-history provides the reader with key intersecting narratives that inform his epistolary discourse. His discussion of Adam and Christ is quite theological while his discussion of Israel argues the viewpoint that, for Paul, the church has replaced Israel as the people of God (p. 50). Chapter 4 gives a brief summary of the argument, structure, and framework of all the canonical letters attributed to Paul. Bird is a maximalist with regard to Pauline authorship of these letters (but see pp. 70–71 n. 5). Chapter 5 provides a narrative-critical reading of the gospel. Bird contends that for Paul the gospel is concerned with both the person and work of Christ. Furthermore, the Pauline stories in Rom 1:1–4; 1 Cor 15:1–5; and 2 Tim 2:8, function as theological narratives designed to inform their auditors about God, salvation, and humanity (p. 83). Bird draws from historic empire studies and the work of N. T. Wright to provide an informative discussion of the way the gospel was heard in the context of Roman imperial ideology.

The death and resurrection of Christ, which Bird understands as the center of Paul's theological thought, is expressed through images and metaphors designed to explicate the significance of the gospel. These concepts are introduced by Bird in chap. 6 and, when taken together, provide a contingent discursive understanding of Pauline soteriology. The



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