

J.R. Hull Jr., *The Story of the New Testament Text: Movers, Materials, Motives, Methods, and Models*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010. Paper, pp. 244. ISBN 978-15898335204. \$29.95.

- [1] Robert Hull Jr.'s book is both informed and informative, providing readers with a narrative history of textual criticism as a discipline, and issuing a summons to a new generation of scholars to join the field. The book would serve as an excellent textbook for an advanced undergraduate or early graduate level course in NT textual criticism, though advanced graduate students would also benefit from its map-like overview of this sometimes arcane area of study.
- [2] Like bookends, the introduction and final five pages (pp. 1-6 and 186-191, respectively) articulate the book's goals. Hull intends not only to summarize the field, but also to demonstrate need for future research by charting a course for prospective studies (p. 191). To this end, he outlines ten "future tasks" that need attention, from, for example, careful examination of manuscripts along the lines of David Parker's work on Codex Bezae, to further analysis of patristic quotations of scripture, lectionaries, and allusions to the NT in non-continuous sources (inscriptions, amulets, letters, etc.), to the need for creative uses of electronic resources for the editing of texts (pp. 189-190). Hull is optimistic that his book can help generate interest among a new crop of researchers (p. 191), as it weaves together into one the periodic history of the discipline and the best of its scholarship to provide an "avenue of access" (p. 4) for the novice. The book provides a careful, fair, and thoughtful summation of the field.
- [3] It is also innovative. Chapters 2-9 are all structured mnemonically around themes: movers, materials, motives, methods, and models. "Movers" are the protagonists in the story of text criticism, from pioneers to contemporary scholars. "Materials" address the textual witnesses, including how they were discovered and collated. "Motives" state the goals of text criticism (e.g. questing after an "original text", and debating the usefulness of such a quest). "Methods" deal with methodology, especially parsing the kinds of eclecticism text critics employ. Lastly, "models" are the intermittent landmark studies that have advanced the discipline (pp. 4-5). The categories are like lenses through which the goals, methods, tools, and discoveries are filtered to allow the reader a panoramic view of the field, while gathering a sufficient glimpse of its detail. To assist the reader along the way, block summaries and charts are provided that outline the most influential manuscripts, methods, and people (pp. 16, 43, 51, 81, 118, 121, 124). There is also a glossary of terms at the beginning (pp. xiii-xiv), a thorough bibliography at the end (pp. 193-215), and mostly in-text citations instead of extensive footnoting in between.
- [4] Each chapter juxtaposes key contributors with the manuscripts discovered in the era in which they lived. Moving chronologically, ch. 2 ("The Precritical Age") discusses the period from Origen and Jerome to Erasmus, highlighting historical exigencies like Diocletian's belligerence toward early Christian texts and the resulting diminution of available manuscripts, Constantine's request for fifty copies of the scriptures and the resulting professionalization of copying, and the printing press as game-changer. Hull introduces the reader to the early versions and patristic citations of scripture, and underscores the shift from Latin to Greek as a "catalyst" for modern textual criticism (p. 38), exemplified in the Complutensian Polyglot and Erasmus' multiple editions of the Greek NT.
- [5] Ch. 3 ("The Age of Collecting, Collating, and Classifying") covers the two hundred years from Robert Stephanus and Theodore Beza to Johann Albrecht Bengel and Johann Salomo Semler. Each contribution from such "movers" is conveniently accessible and instructional. The discussion of Bengel, for example, includes his *alpha* to *epsilon* grading scale for marginal readings, his articulation of text critical rules of thumb (e.g. weighing manuscripts takes priority over counting them; the harder reading is preferred), and his deduction that

witnesses can be grouped into “families” or “tribes” based on common traits (pp. 47-49, 64). The “most noteworthy manuscripts” discussed by Hull from this era include Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Bezae, Claromontanus, and several other uncials, minuscules, and versions (pp. 52-59). Each is introduced, dated, and their contents summarized; and the prevailing methodology of this period is defined by Hull as the development of criteria for adjudicating between variant readings (p. 66).

- [6] Because the book maps the field chronologically, the reader is able to see how methodological developments are related to discoveries of new manuscripts. The usefulness of this approach is most clearly demonstrated in chs. 4-5 and 6-7. Hull summarizes the century from Griesbach to Wescott and Hort in chs. 4-5 (“The Age of Optimism” parts I and II) as the era when the *Textus Receptus* (TR) was finally “overthrown” (p. 95). Building on information gleaned from manuscripts known by the end of the preceding era (i.e. in ch. 3), key methodological advances are outlined, like, for example, Griesbach’s “the shorter reading is preferred” (p. 73), Lachmann’s interest in the earliest attainable text based on early witnesses and geographical spread (pp. 75-77), and Tischendorf’s discovery of and preference for *Sinaiticus* in the text and apparatus of his eighth edition of the Greek NT as another early and more reliable witness than the TR. Pride of place is given to Wescott and Hort (pp. 82-85, 97-108), whose theory of a “neutral”, “pre-Syrian” text-type—as manifested primarily in *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*—based on internal evidence and date, and closely identified with the “original text” of the NT, marks the final blow to the dominance of the TR, and a transition to the modern period.
- [7] Ch. 6 discusses the results of new discoveries of papyri in the twentieth century. These have made the data set messier, and forced a reconsideration of the neatness of the Wescott and Hort model of NT textual history (see p. 109). For instance, *P⁴⁵* seems to present an “intermediate” stage between the Alexandrian and Western textual groupings, and has opened the possibility for another textual family dubbed “Caesarean” (p. 114). Likewise, the text of *P⁶⁶*, and others, suggests that none of the major papyri manifest a “pure text” that can be seamlessly grouped (p. 116). *P⁷⁵*, conversely, has vindicated one aspect of the Wescott and Hort reconstruction by “push[ing] the origin of a B-type text back into the second century” (p. 118). Hull’s summary of this complicated interaction between model of textual history and manuscript discovery, and the chart he provides that summarizes the data (p. 118), are quite helpful.
- [8] The point of this discussion is to illustrate the data problem that now encumbers the field of text criticism. What once was a problem of dearth of available manuscripts has now become one of plenty; and the older models that parsed textual families by geography or elegantly simple reconstruction (pp. 109, 142) have needed rethinking, which is one reason why “... The Age of Doubt” is part of ch. 7’s title. One way to meet the challenge has been through the use of quantitative analysis for classifying manuscripts, like that of Ernest Colwell, Gordon Fee (pp. 138-139), and the Alands (pp. 140-141). Another has been a shift in methodological preference for internal evidence when making decisions about variant readings—a more “eclectic” approach (pp. 144-146). Whether the latter is a solution, or merely a symptom of the data problem, remains to be seen, however. In any case, the overriding issue of what the purpose of text criticism is, namely, whether it is to deploy the right model or method to attain the “original text,” still haunts sectors of the discipline.

- [9] Some, like Eldon Epp (p. 156) and David Parker (pp. 158-159), have questioned this purpose. Ch. 8 addresses this shift in focus, which is typified in Bart Ehrman's landmark study of how texts deemed to be scripture were shaped by theologically interested copyists. Though Ehrman's work presumes an "original text" that was then altered, still it demonstrates the very human process of textual development (pp. 153-154), and raises the issue, taken up by Parker (p. 159), of whether an "original text" is even the most interesting avenue of investigation in text criticism, since individual variants have stories of their own to tell (as Epp has also pointed out). Along these lines, ch. 9 lists possible areas of future research, including further exploration into scribal habits and their social contexts, building on the work of Kim Haines-Eitzen (pp. 172-173) and James Royse (pp. 176-178).
- [10] One disappointing aspect of the book is the attribution of this most recent development in text criticism to "postmodernism" or the "postmodern era" (appearing on pp. 152, 154, 159, 167, 172). "Postmodern" is not defined, and the connection is not demonstrated. Further, the attribution contradicts the argument of the final few chapters, which have labored to demonstrate that the field of textual criticism is not infected with a poststructuralism or deconstruction problem, but laden with a data problem. What does Foucault or Derrida have to do with Epp and Parker? Any future editions of the book should demonstrate what recent trends in the discipline have to do with "postmodernism," or eliminate the connection altogether as irrelevant.

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