Daniel B. Wallace, ed., *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic and Apocryphal Evidence. Text and Canon of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011, 284 p.

Daniel B. Wallace, Professor of Biblical Studies at Dallas Seminary and a renowned expert in text criticism, started in 2011 publishing some works dedicated to the canon and text of the New Testament. The first volume of essays in this series, *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament*, appeared soon after an expanded version of the book by Bart Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. Such, Ehrman's pessimistic conclusions regarding the transmission of the text of the New Testament were given a necessary corrective.

Intended for the uninitiated, the first essay, signed by Wallace, is a competent and accessible introduction to the issue of the whole project. "Lost in Transmission: How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?" is written, as Wallace notes in the preface, for the laymen, in the hope for them to have it as a stimulus for further study of the subject. He introduces a perspective that can provide a way out of the epistemological despair in which someone may come after reading a work such as *Misquoting Jesus*.

Noteworthy is one of Wallace's reactions to Ehrman's skepticism on the fidelity of the existing manuscripts to the original autographs: "His is the right *analysis*, but for the wrong *religion*" (p. 34). Wallace argues that it is not the New Testament but the Qur'an that underwent "orthodox" revision. Qur'an's claim to have no textual variants is called into question by the fact that all the variants (including the originals) were eliminated. Most experts acknowledge that during the two millennia of Christianity there were theologically motivated interventions on the text of the New Testament, but they were certainly not consistent or systematic. There is also a consensus that the harmonization of the Gospel was to ancient scribes "a stronger impetus than a high Christology … the *historicity* of Christ was

more important than their *doctrine* of Christ" (p. 52). Wallace makes a brief analysis of seven passages that Ehrman claims to have suffered orthodox "improvements". He shows that Ehrman's approach is not the only possible and concludes that the New Testament manuscripts we have are reliable.

The second essay entitled "The Least Orthodox Reading Is to Be Preferred: A New Canon for New Testament Textual Criticism?" is signed by Philip Miller. He shows that although Ehrman does not admit to have altered the principles of textual criticism, "his methodology and resulting textual decisions indicate otherwise" (p. 58). Before examining Ehrman's methodology, Miller makes a brief review of the evidence that exists in favour of theologically motivated interventions on the New Testament manuscripts and clearly states that că "the 'canon of unorthodoxy' has been discussed for centuries" (p. 67). Surprising at Ehrman's approach is his addition of "least" to this canon and the "high priority" he places on it (p. 67). In *Text-Criticism*, p. 101, we are told that we must always prefer the reading that best explains the existence of other variants. Miller examines three of the seven passages mentioned in Wallace's essay to demonstrate convincingly Ehrman's favouring of the alleged canon of "unorthodoxy". Miller believes that the reason for which Ehrman and USB committee have different options in many cases is Ehrman's unspoken belief in the existence of a canon more valid than others. "In the end, the canon of unorthodoxy appears to be presuppositionally driven" (p. 87).

The title of the third essay is "The Legacy of a Letter: Sabellianism or Scribal Blunder in John 1.1c?", and represents Matthew Morgan's contribution to this volume. After a brief introduction, the author presents the Fathers' reactions to Sabellianism and the indications they offer on the text of Jn 1, 1. Thus, with the exception of two manuscripts from the 8th century, in none of the others can we find an article before θεός. The question Morgan wants to answer is: Is it possible that in order to combat Sabellianism and maintain the distinction between the Father and the Son, Orthodox copyists may have removed the article? (p. 100). After evaluating the evidence, he concludes that there is no historical grounds to assert that the transmission of the Gospel of John was influenced by Sabellianism. Next, the author provides a fairly thorough analysis of the particularities of the scribes who copied the manuscripts of the 8th century and then continues with the discussion of some grammatical aspects. He concludes that the

Codex Regius was copied by a careless person who, according to Metzger and Ehrman, made a lot of mistakes (p. 104, 113), and that we know too little about the copyist of Codex Freerianus to enable us to form an opinion. With regard to grammar, Morgan shows that if the reading ὁ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος was "authentic, it would stand as the only clear instance where two singular personal nouns are interchangeable in the NT" (p. 122). In conclusion, there is no good reason to assert that the in the original text of Jn 1,1c θεὸς was articulated.

The fourth essay, "Patristic Theology and Recension in Matthew 24. 36: An Evaluation of Ehrman's Text-Critical Methodology" signed by Adam Messer, focuses on Matt 24, 25, because it "is Ehrman's example *par excellence*" in both *Orthodox Corruption* and *Misquoting Jesus* (p. 130). Ehrman's theory is that the Orthodox scribes deleted οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός from Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν οὐρανῶν οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μόνος in order to leave heretics no grounds for challenging the divinity of Christ. Messer takes the view that the short reading is original and οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός was early added by scribes familiar with the Gospel of Mark. Messer's essay gives us a well-argued presentation of the theological issues that might have motivated either orthodox or heretics scribes; corrupting the text, the author reminds us, could have started start from both sides. Before proceeding to criticize Ehrman's methodology, Messer systematizes on 20 pages the patristic comments on the text of Matthew and the attitudes of the Fathers towards a possible ignorance of Jesus. It is noteworthy that although there would have been more possibilities to change the verse, "it is oddly peculiar that when a variant occurs, it always occurs in the same way …- by removing οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός." One would expect scribes throughout a large empire to amend a text in more than one way. This observation largely explains Messer's rejection of the "better" older Alexandrian manuscripts' reading.

In his essay dedicated to the Gospel of Thomas, "Tracking Thomas: A Text-Critical Look at the Transmission of the Gospel of Thomas", Tim Ricchuiti compares the Greek fragments of the Gospel with a later complete Coptic manuscript. As a result of some fairly well substantiated comparisons and analyzes, Ricchuiti concludes that in the Coptic translations there are theologically motivated changes of the text. "It does indeed appear that the Coptic scribe altered Thomas in such a way as to make it more ame-

nable to the [Nag Hammadi] community" (p. 228). Ricchuiti suggests that achieving similar studies by comparing fragments of the New Testament with later and more complete manuscripts could help us better understand the "relative level of reverence" accorded to early Christian writings (p. 228).

In the final essay, "Jesus as ΘΕΟΣ: A Textual Examination", Brian Wright turns his attention to seven passages of the 17 possible in which Jesus is seen as God. These are: Jn. 1, 1; 1, 18, 20, 28; Acts 20, 28; Gal. 2, 20; Heb. 1, 8; and 2 Pet. 1, 1. The author examines the variants, sometimes numerous, of these texts and highlights those that are preferable, but without overwhelming the reader with too many details. The conclusion he reaches is that by most times in the New Testament θεός is associated with the Father, and the few places where it is used for the Son "makes explicit what is implied by other Christological titles" (p. 264). Jesus was considered God right from the first Christian century. This title is not an expression of a "subapostolic distortion of the apostolic kerygma", nor was it a "doctrinal innovation to combat Arianism", and even less a "creation of Constantine" (p. 265).

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