

BOOK REVIEWS

J.W. Childers and D.C. Parker, *Transmission and Reception: New Testament Text-critical and Exegetical Studies*. Texts and studies. Third series 4 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias 2006) Pp. xxiii + 327. Hardback.

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The Greek witnesses to the New Testament and the ancient versions preserve both variant readings and early interpretations of the biblical text. Because the ancient versions are first and foremost translations, they are conservative in their interpretations, which are often the result of an ambiguous Greek text. In their preface, Childers and Parker set the purpose of their volume in more dramatic terms: “Ancient manuscripts are not mere repositories of textual data; they reverberate with the echoes of faithful meditation, intellectual discourse, and mighty battles between opposing parties. Manuscript investigations create resonances with contemporary concerns in surprising and often provocative ways” (p. xiii). The majority of the articles in this volume, which honors Carroll D. Osburn on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday, illustrate this proposition.

The articles are divided into two categories: transmission and reception. Under transmission there are nine articles: Larry W. Hurtado, “The New Testament in the Second Century: Text, Collections and Canon” (3–27); Klaus Wachtel, Early Variants in the Byzantine Text of the Gospels (28–47); D.C. Parker, “Manuscripts of John’s Gospel with *Hermeneia*” (48–68); Curt Niccum, “The Ethiopic Version and the ‘Western’ Text of Acts in *Le Texte Occidental des Actes des Apôtres* (69–88); Michael W. Holmes, “*The Text of the Epistles* Sixty Years After: An Assessment of Günther Zuntz’s Contribution to Text-Critical Methodology and History” (89–113); Barbara Aland, “Sind Schreiber früher neutestamentlicher Handschriften Interpreten des Textes?” (114–122); Eldon Jay Epp, “Minor Textual Variants in Romans 16:7” (123–141); Gordon D. Fee, “The Spirit and Resurrection in Paul: Text and Meaning in Romans 8:11” (142–153); J.W. Childers, “*The Life of Porphyry*: Clarifying the Relationship of the Greek and

Georgian Versions through the Study of New Testament Citations (154–178).

Under the heading “reception” there are seven articles: Mark W. Hamilton, “11QTemple 57–59, Ps.-Aristeas 187–300, and Second Temple Period Political Theory” (181–195); Kenneth V. Neller, “Water into Wine (John 2:1–11): Foreshadow of the Atonement” (196–211); Richard E. Oster, Jr., “The Ephesian Artemis ‘Whom All Asia and the World Worship’ (Acts 19:27): Representative Epigraphical Testimony to Ἀρτεμις Ἐφεσσία outside Ephesos” (212–231); Kenneth K. Cukrowski, “An Exegetical Note on the Ellipsis in 1 Timothy 2:9” (232–238); James W. Thompson, “The Epistle to the Hebrews in the Works of Clement of Alexandria” (239–254); Everett Ferguson, “The Greek Grammar of Sexuality” (255–269); Frederick D. Aquino, “Clement of Alexandria: An Epistemology of Christian *Paideia*” (270–284). In a final article Tera Harmon reviews the life and scholarly contributions of Carroll D. Osburn.

Syriac scholars will be interested in four of these articles. L.W. Hurtado reviews the literature on the transmission of the NT in the second century, an obscure period. He stresses the need for greater attention to the techniques that second century Greek authors employed when citing the New Testament. His counsel applies to the citations of early Syriac authors as well. Hurtado makes a brief reference to the *Diatessaron* but does not consider how the gospel was transmitted in Aramaic speaking communities in the second century. E.J. Epp, in his study on the name Junias (masculine) or Junia (feminine) in Rom 16:7, notes that the Syriac versions affirm that the person named in that verse, Junia, is “indeed a woman apostle” (p. 130).

C. Niccum’s article examines the Ethiopic version of the Acts of the Apostles to challenge the notion that this version is an important witness to the “Western” text. He revisits the research of M.-É Boismard and A. Lamouille and shows that their evidence does not support the conclusion that the Ethiopic version is a “Western” text. In the process, he disputes the argument that the original translation of the Acts of the Apostles into Ethiopic from a Greek source (the “A-text”) was revised in the sixth century to bring it closer to the Syriac Peshitta. There was no Syriac revision. The readings, erroneously thought to be from the Peshitta, are, in fact, evidence of a medieval revision on the basis of an Arabic text.

J.W. Childers studies the Greek and Georgian versions of the *Life of Porphyry*. He confirms the argument that the Georgian version was translated from a Syriac exemplar, which witnesses to the impact that Syriac literature had on Georgian Christian literature from the 4th to the 7th centuries. Aramaic literature continued even in Hellenized areas as is suggested by the Semitic names in the *Life of Porphyry*. Was the *Life* first composed in Syriac or in Greek? Childers concludes that “the Syriac source of the Georgian *Life of Porphyry* was translated from the Greek version of the *Life*” (p. 178). Thus, the Georgian version is not an earlier form of the *Life of Porphyry*.

These articles, along with those that deal exclusively with the Greek text, illustrate the sober and sometimes tedious approach that textual criticism brings to biblical interpretation. Sometimes the Syriac witnesses could have received greater attention. In K.L. Cukrowski’s discussion of 1 Tim 2:9, where commentators want to add Βούλομαι προσεύχεσθαι, it should be noted that the meaning of the Greek text without this addition was apparent to the Peshitta translator. (The Peshitta reads καὶ [καὶ γυναῖκας; ܩܝܡܐ ܕܥܡܐ] which is omitted in important Greek witnesses.) When the meaning of the Greek is obscure, the ancient versions often witness to that obscurity by offering a lucid translation. This was not the case in 1 Tim 2:9. This volume reminds New Testament exegetes that a careful reading of the Greek witnesses along with an assessment of the ancient versions is an essential component of biblical interpretation.