

Ernst Würthwein and Alexander Achilles Fischer, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*, 3rd ed, translated by Erroll F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. Pp. xix + 363. ISBN 978-0-80286-680-6. Paperback, \$30.00.

- [1] The third edition of *The Text of the Old Testament: Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica* by Ernst Würthwein and Alexander Achilles Fischer functions as a revised and expanded version of its predecessor published in 1995. To comment briefly on the authors, as it is well known, Würthwein (1909–1996) was a professor emeritus of Old Testament at Philipps-Universität Marburg in Germany, expert in textual criticism, and author of the previous editions. Fischer, the one continuing Würthwein’s legacy, is a professor of Old Testament at Friedrich Schiller University in Jena. Returning to a commentary on the present volume, while maintaining the *ethos* of Würthwein’s *Der Text des Alten Testaments* and previous editions of *The Text of the Old Testament*, the third edition boasts an assortment of new content reflecting recent biblical and extrabiblical archeological discoveries and the development of the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, new volumes in the Göttingen Septuagint, as well as an edition of the Antiochene texts of the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, to list a few. All this has resulted in Fischer’s near one-hundred-page expansion. As the present review engages with a revised volume, I give my attention to Fischer’s expansions and revisions, which I summarize momentarily, while encouraging the reader to direct him or herself to other articles addressing the first and second editions for a summary of the remaining content.
- [2] To summarize the revisions and expansions, there are three changes to the section “Plates” (207–303). First, the Izbet Sartah abecedary has been eliminated. Second, plate 1 is now the Tel Dan inscription (208–9), discovered in 1996 that contains reference to the “house of David.” Third, plate 15 is a fragment of Ecclesiastes discovered at Qumran (236–37). Otherwise, a selection of plate photographs has been improved. Concerning plate descriptions, when necessary, Fischer has edited, expanded, or adapted these descriptions to include subsequent developments in recent research since the publication of the previous edition. Also, added below each plate’s caption is a brief identification of the manuscript or witness that includes its designated symbol, date, location, and a sample of the text.
- [3] Another improvement from the previous edition is the provision of selective topical bibliographies that follow each section. These bibliographies contain references to an assortment of significant research in Old Testament textual criticism that students and other interested people should be aware of. A more extensive bibliography remains at the end of the volume, though it is not topically divided.
- [4] The most interesting expansion and revision Fischer makes in the third edition concerns references to the continuing development of computational text critical analysis, though he does not note this change in his preface. With the text critical application advancements made in Bible software programs like Accordance, Bibleworks, and Logos, though the last is not mentioned by Fischer, computational analysis is becoming rather significant in modern text criticism. He also includes an evaluation of digitized ancient witness libraries. I was intrigued to find an engagement with these resources in the third edition.

- [5] The most significant expansion of the third edition in terms of page count is Fischer's added section, "The Qumran Scrolls" (54–91). He builds on Würthwein's five-page discussion of the Qumran texts found within "The Masoretic Text" section of the second edition to deliver over thirty-five pages on these scrolls in the third edition. Here, Fischer divides his discussion of these texts into five sections excluding the scholarly editions and topical bibliography: (1) the Qumran settlement, (2) the Dead Sea biblical manuscripts, (3) individual scrolls of biblical books, (4) insight on the early phase of the history of the text, and (5) the classification of early biblical manuscripts. Prefaced by the story of Muhammad edh-Dhib, the accidental discoverer of the Qumran scrolls, finding the texts while herding his cattle in 1947, the 1QIsa^a being among those initially found, Fischer provides a brief yet substantial review of the Qumran texts and the significance they hold to the advancement of Old Testament text criticism.
- [6] While Fischer provides significant expansion and revision in the third edition, in his preface, he clearly states that his work is not meant to compete in comprehensiveness with Emanuel Tov's *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001). Instead, *The Text of the Old Testament* in its *telos* remains to function as an aid and introduction to Hebrew Bible textual criticism for students and other interested persons. Compared to Tov's volume as an introductory aid, *The Text of the Old Testament* boasts a simpler layout, concise yet comprehensive descriptions of the discussed ancient witnesses, selective topical and general bibliographies, and higher quality photographs, for example. Würthwein and Fischer's third edition is also less daunting in nature than Tov's *Text Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*.
- [7] I have only a single criticism of Fischer's revisions worth mentioning, which concerns the continued lack of a more comprehensive engagement with the symbols and abbreviations contained in the *BHS* and *BHQ* critical apparatuses. As the volume serves as an introductory textbook to Old Testament textual criticism of primarily the *BHS*, and now *BHQ*, I expected a more significant review of one of resources defining features—the critical apparatus. As a result, the introductory or intermediate student, or the professor teaching such individuals, requires the subsequent aid of William R. Scott's *Simplified Guide to BHS: Critical Apparatus, Masora, Accents, Unusual Letters and Other Markings*, 4th ed (North Richland Hills: Bibal, 2007), for example, when dealing with real instances of Old Testament textual criticism in the classroom.
- [8] With the review and critique in mind, I recommend the revised and expanded third edition of *The Text of the Old Testament* to any person interested in Hebrew Bible textual criticism. Specifically, the volume is meant to introduce beginning and intermediate biblical Hebrew students to the world of Old Testament textual criticism. Thus, the volume has the potential to serve as an asset for professors teaching second, third, or fourth level biblical Hebrew classes in undergraduate and graduate programs, for example. Instructors of more advanced text critical classes should make use of Tov's treatment of the subject. I also recommend, with less intensity, that the more seasoned scholar in Old Testament textual criticism give the third edition his or her attention as the volume could prove useful in some way to his or her own research.

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