

## PREFACE



The purpose of the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum in Faith and Culture is to provide a venue for fair-minded dialogue on subjects of importance in religion or culture. The intention is to have an evangelical Christian dialogue with a non-evangelical or non-Christian. The forum is intended to be a dialogue rather than a debate. As such, it is a bit more freewheeling than a traditional debate, and it is not scored. The goal is a respectful exchange of ideas without compromise. So often in our culture the sorts of issues that the forum addresses stoke the emotions and, consequently, the rhetoric is of such a nature as to ensure that communication does not take place. There may be a place and time for such preaching to the choir, but minds are rarely changed as a result of such activity—nor are better arguments forthcoming as a result of gaining a better understanding of positions with which one disagrees. The result often is that what passes for argument is really nothing more than a prolonged example of the straw man fallacy.

The subject of the 2008 Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum in Faith and Culture was “The Textual Reliability of the New Testament.” The dialogue partners were Bart Ehrman of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Daniel B. Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary. I would hope that every Bible reader has at least some interest in whether he or she is reading what the authors of the New Testament books actually wrote.

The dialogue took place April 4 and 5, 2008, in the Leavell Chapel on the campus of the host institution, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. On that unusually fair April evening in New Orleans, nearly a thousand people filled the Leavell Chapel to hear the exchange. The audience was enthusiastic and appreciative. No doubt, the popularity of Ehrman's best-selling book *Misquoting Jesus: The Story behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* had much to do with the size of the audience and its evident enthusiasm for the topic. The discussion between Ehrman and Wallace was spirited and direct but respectful, punctuated with good-natured humor. It was obvious that both men believed passionately in their position and felt they had an important message to convey to those in attendance. One of the consistent fruits of the forum has been the realization that disagreement does not have to be shrill or heated; one does not have to check one's convictions at the door in order for respectful dialogue to take place.

Along with my introductory chapter, this book includes a transcript of the April 4, 2008, dialogue between Ehrman and Wallace, as well as the papers presented the following day by Michael Holmes, Dale Martin, David Parker, and William Warren.

In addition to the essays presented at the Greer-Heard Forum, three other essays are included. The first author, K. Martin Heide, offers a Continental perspective on issues related to the New Testament text. Craig A. Evans writes of how his training in critical studies has affected his understanding of the New Testament text and what this means for his personal faith. Kim Haines-Eitzen also agreed to contribute a chapter for the book but, unfortunately, had to withdraw due to circumstances beyond her control. The final chapter is Sylvie Racquel's contribution discussing early Christian scribal practices.

While one could easily note issues that are not addressed in this volume or think of significant scholars who are not included, these chapters make for a fuller treatment of the issue. Readers will have to judge for themselves whether this is, in fact, the case.

I am grateful that Fortress Press has seen fit to allow us to present the fruit of the 2008 Greer-Heard Forum. I trust that you will read it with an open mind and carefully consider what each author has to say. You will be the richer for having done so.