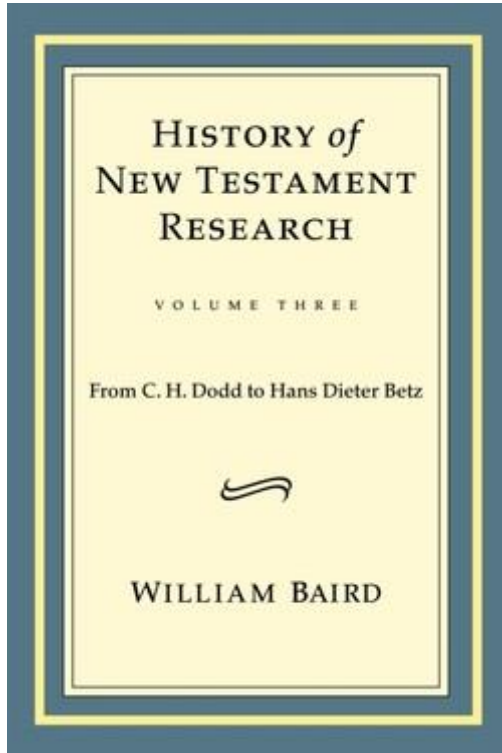


Book Review: William Baird's History of NT Research, Vol. 3

09/23/2013

[3 Comments](#)



William Baird, *History of New Testament Research Vol. 3: From C. H. Dodd to Hans Dieter Betz*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. Xix + 775 pp. Hardback. \$70.

I would like to express my utmost appreciation to the kind folks at Fortress Press for sending me a review copy of this book.

In his third and final installment of *History of New Testament Research*, William Baird masterfully surveys the history of twentieth-century New Testament (NT) scholarship in a tome just shy of 800 pages. The volume is comprised of three parts: 1) The Renaissance of NT Criticism, 2) The Revisiting of Critical Problems, 3) Theological and Synthesizing Movements. Given its size and scope, it is impossible to review each section of this book, so I shall highlight a few key strengths and weaknesses.

One of the strongest sections of the book is Baird's treatment of Bultmann in chapter 2, where he spends thirty-one pages describing Bultmann's life and work. The opening line of this section is probably true: "Rudolf Bultmann is the most important NT scholar of the twentieth century" (85). But one of my favorite quotes from this section is actually a witty statement from Karl Barth about Bultmann: "Bultmann's work is inconceivable apart from his Lutheran background... Those who throw stones at Bultmann should be careful lest they accidentally hit Luther, who is also hovering somewhere in the background" (87). Baird does an excellent job summarizing Bultmann's works, such as his program of "demythologization," commentary on John, *Theology of the NT*, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, etc. In the end, Baird shows that while Bultmann was a master of historical criticism, he never did quite explain "why so much effort should be devoted to historical critical research when it was of no importance to faith" (117). Bultmann has always been a controversial

figure, especially among conservatives, but whatever one thinks about Bultmann one cannot deny the fact that this “master” put his stamp on the field.

In addition to his survey of major figures, Baird includes a lengthy chapter on “New Discoveries, Archaeology, Textual Criticism” (ch. 4), where he discusses the Nag Hammadi codices and their significance, the Dead Sea Scrolls, archaeology and the NT, and methods of NT textual criticism. These twentieth-century discoveries and developments have reshaped the field of NT scholarship and so Baird is to be commended for including this chapter. There are a few things in this section that are unclear, problematic or incorrect. At one point, Baird claims that “the oldest manuscripts of this version [i.e., the LXX] date from the third and fourth centuries CE” (216). There are, however, many manuscript fragments of the LXX that date earlier than the third and fourth centuries CE; some even date to the first and second centuries BCE. But perhaps he is here speaking of complete copies, in which case the dates offered are correct. In contrasting the number of extant NT manuscripts with extant manuscripts of Homer and Euripides, Baird says: “Fewer than seven hundred manuscripts of Homer’s *Iliad* exist, and the tragedies of Euripides are preserved in a little more than thirty texts” (243). These numbers are very outdated. A check in the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB) reveals that there are over 1,551 manuscripts of Homer’s *Iliad* and over 210 manuscripts of Euripides. Interestingly, a discussion of the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM) is absent from the section on methodological developments in the textual criticism of the second half of the twentieth-century, a method that has gained significant traction in the field. Finally, on p. 222, Baird states that apart from its use in 4Q246, “no use of the title ‘Son of God’ for the messiah has been found in pre-Christian Judaism.” It is true that this exact title in reference to the messiah is unique to 4Q246, but most scholars believe that the term is implied in texts such as Ps 2, 2 Sam 7 and the *Florilegium* from Qumran.

This volume is virtually an encyclopedia of all major topics, problems, events and persons concerned with twentieth century NT scholarship. But it is not written in a dull, encyclopedic fashion. It is lively and at times quite entertaining, as evidenced by statements such as “Obviously, shots fired at the ancient heretic ricocheted off Marcion and hit Rudolf Bultmann” (144) or “In any case it is obvious that Matthew and Luke did not use the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*” (378). As the introduction indicates, a new feature of the third volume is the inclusion of accounts of personal experiences. One such account is told in the introduction to Günther Bornkamm. Baird was at Heidelberg for a year attending Bornkamm’s lectures on NT Theology when one day Bornkamm insisted that he come to his house and ride with him to class every morning for the rest of the semester. Baird concludes: “The association with Bornkamm was rewarding, but what I learned above all was that this great teacher—in his last year of lecturing on a subject he had presented scores of times before—was still preparing for every lecture until the last minute” (148). Such anecdotes make for an interesting read and offer glimpses into the lives and personalities of such great figures within our discipline.

In summary, this book should be required reading for every NT doctoral student. It will also be the go-to book for anyone needing a refresher on a certain scholar’s work. The endnotes are detailed and thorough and the bibliography is exhaustive. In future printings, it would be desired if the following numerous typographical errors were corrected:

Italicize “Luke-Acts” (p. 23, paragraph two); “of less value than Mark” (p. 27, paragraph 3); change εὐαγγέλιον to εὐαγγέλιον (p. 45, paragraph 2); omit the word “a” in the phrase “the word κήρυγμα a” (p. 45, paragraph 2); change ἦν to ἦν (p. 100, paragraph 1); “more reliable than Bultmann admits” (p. 115, paragraph 3); “crowned by a year [in] Göttingen” (p. 129, paragraph 1); change δικαιοσύνη to δικαιοσύνη (p. 140, paragraph 1); “When all this [is] added up” (p. 145, paragraph 4); omit the word “a” in the phrase “is not a an attribute” (p. 165, paragraph 1); “occurring [in] the death of Christ” (p. 165, paragraph 3); replace “to” with “is” in the phrase “righteousness to a gift to all humanity” (p. 165, paragraph 3); capitalize “bce” (p. 213, paragraph 1); replace “at” with “a” in the

phrase “which included at temple” (p. 232, paragraph 1); correct journal title is “*TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*” (p. 245, paragraph 3); add the preposition “from” between “data about” (p. 283, paragraph 3, l. 1); replace period with comma in the phrase “modern critical texts_” (p. 341, paragraph 3); change “history background” to “historical background” (p. 359, paragraph 2); change “he is going ahead to you” (p. 360; paragraph 4); change “It possible” to “It is possible” (p. 366; paragraph 3); change “2HD” to “2DH” (p. 377, paragraph 2); change “Leaven” to “Leuven” (p. 377, paragraph 3); change “around world” to “around the word” (p. 397, paragraph 1); remove “x” in “God.x47” (p. 405, first indented quotation); change “more the” to “more than” in the phrase “more the fifteen smaller books” (p. 408, paragraph 2); delete the second “not” in the phrase “John the Baptist will not be not reviewed here” (p. 418, paragraph 1); change “to by held in Oxford” to “to be held in Oxford” (p. 452, paragraph 2); capitalize “ce” in “30-50 ce” (p. 462, paragraph 2); change “it” to “its” in the phrase “who criticizes the Seminar for it passion” (p. 472, note 84).

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