ology of peaceful acceptance (or perhaps "peaceful resistance") is much more in line with the likes of Jeremiah, who actually quotes Micah, in arguing against open rebellion to the Mesopotamian powers of the day. The author allows that such theology may be an indication of theological prophetic debate between those prophets advocating peaceful submission and those contending for war-backed independence (Isaiah, Hananiah, 29). With Senecarib's offer of a personal vine and fig tree serving as a backdrop (Isa 36.16) S-C notes that, "The book of Micah may well represent precisely the kind of insurrectionist thinking that the Neo-Assyrian armies hoped to instigate" (13). Throughout, S-C brings interpretation back to issues related to warfare and suffering, even if this goes against traditional readings (122), and such readings are indeed unique, interesting, and refreshing.

The book follows the standard OTL format: an in-depth bibliography, followed by an introduction which then moves into a verse-by-verse commentary, organized by ideological units (39). Each section offers its own translation with detailed discussion of textual and translation issues, an essential part of Micah studies. Additionally, the book offers eight excursuses that cover a wide range of historical, literary, and interpretive issues. Lastly, the commentary is thoroughly intertextual, with constant cross-references to both testaments.

As with all books, this one is not without its shortcomings. Most importantly, the entire thrust of the commentary hinges on the author's rather distinctive approach to Micah's theology, and while valuable could still be found in his textual and historical discussions, the usefulness of the book will be greatly reduced if the reader rejects his nonviolent theology. Additionally, while the author demonstrates knowledge of the recent research in broader, unified readings of the Book of the Twelve, such issues are only occasionally mentioned. Overall, Smith-Christopher has produced one of the most interesting, unique, and challenging commentaries on Micah that is well suited for both academics and ministers. With America entering its 15th year in the war in Afghanistan, as well as military action in Libya, Somalia, and other countries across the globe, this commentary has the capacity to allow Micah's ancient words to speak to modern ears.

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The present volume is an interesting, if at times problematic, addition to the library of reference works in the field of NT textual criticism. The first page of the introduction asserts that the volume is unparalleled in the field because it provides commentary on the readings in actual manuscripts rather than the reconstructed Greek text of UBS5 or NA27 (7). This is a rather bold claim, and one that the present reviewer does not think holds true for the volume as a whole, for reasons detailed below.

Chapter one is a helpful, standard introduction to the text and features of the early NT manuscripts. Readers are introduced to the major textual witnesses and their standard classifications (20-29). Comfort also outlines the standard canons of NT textual criticism and lays out his own logic for establishing the original text. Comfort aligns with a school of textual-critical thought called "reasoned eclecticism" and favors the readings of the earliest extant
manuscripts (31). Comfort does not, however, offer a robust theory as to how the earliest manuscripts can be so confidently categorized as “pure preservations” of the originals (26). Comfort is also too sanguine in his assumption that the nomina sacra—the unique abbreviations of divine words and names in the early manuscripts—are not only early but original (31). Lacking the original manuscripts, this claim is unprouvable and, when applied to the actual manuscripts themselves, causes Comfort to elide the space between the habit of later scribes and the intended meaning of a NT author. For example, the nomen sacrum in Matt 9:27 in N B C W is taken as evidence that the characters in the narrative considered Jesus to be divine (142). Given the data we have, at most the nomina sacra suggest that early scribes considered Jesus to be divine and interpreted the acclamation of the characters along these lines. They cannot really offer us insight into the intent of the original authors or of the historical figures behind the Gospel narratives.

In the second chapter, Comfort provides a handy annotated bibliography of the early NT textual witnesses: the papyri (45-92); significant uncial manuscripts (93-111); minuscules (111-115); ancient versional witnesses (115-123); and the church fathers (123-124). This is a useful section, but is not unique even within Comfort’s published oeuvre. Much of this chapter reproduces the comments published in Comfort’s Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography & Textual Criticism (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2005). Still, though, the annotated list is a useful reference point for the dates, features, and published editions of particular manuscripts. At a few points, however, Comfort makes the questionable move of dating particular manuscripts according to personal correspondence with papyrologists (“In a personal letter to me, Kim dated P3 as c. 200,” 45) or, even more problematically, according to an anonymous source (“Another papyrologist, who wished to remain anonymous, dated P46 to the reign of Marcus Aurelius,” 47). This defies the logic of citation; scholars should cite published sources that readers can check—not personal letters or, even worse, anonymous sources that fall outside the access of any reader. Furthermore, one wonders why a papyrologist should wish to remain anonymous. NT textual criticism is not usually so cloak and dagger.

The bulk of the volume (chapters three through eight) is a book-by-book commentary on what Comfort takes to be the original text of the NT documents and their variant readings. These chapters are both like and unlike the field standard, Bruce M. Metzger’s A Textual Commentary on the New Testament (2nd Rev. ed.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005). It is like Metzger’s textual commentary in that it attempts to establish the original text and offers reasons for deciding between the at times divergent readings. Comfort’s volume cannot really replace Metzger, but should nonetheless be consulted alongside it as an informed and helpful second opinion (John 5:44, 255). What sets Comfort’s work apart from Metzger is Comfort’s careful notation of the nomina sacra throughout the manuscripts of the NT. Readers with an interest in the phenomenon of the nomina sacra should pay close attention to Comfort’s collation of these sacred names.

In addition to the concerns discussed so far, the present volume is further hampered by other problems throughout. As a reference work seemingly intended for students and scholars of textual criticism, it is unclear why Comfort’s reconstructions of the original text are consistently rendered in English translation, never in Koiné Greek. This forces readers to either translate the English back into Greek or look up the Greek text of the various witnesses cited. This is a questionable feature for a textual criticism reference work. Comfort also at
times deviates from careful description of textual data to uncritical theological apologetic, as in the appendix on the *nomina sacra*. Here Comfort includes in his discussion a rather ham-fisted apologetic for the divinity of Jesus (particularly 421; 423; 424; and the straw-man argument against unnamed “modern” interlocutors on 426). While this reviewer is a committed Nicene Christian, one wonders why this kind of apologetic is necessary for a book such as this or, if such *apologia* is helpful, if this is the form it should take.

Despite the criticisms and concerns expressed in this review, the present volume is still a welcome contribution to the field of NT textual criticism. Students and scholars of the NT text and its transmission should make critical and judicious use of this commentary. Thus, while it is not without its problems, it is still a valuable reference tool to be consulted alongside others.

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Well-known evangelical scholar Craig Evans is Distinguished Professor of Christians Origins at Houston Baptist University in Texas—a recent appointment after teaching for thirty-five years at institutions in Canada.

This volume is a collection of ten essays intended to “investigate recent advances and discoveries in archaeology” (xiii) as they pertain to the first-century world of Jesus. Seven of the ten are updated republications first produced between 2005 and 2011. The book is aimed at a scholarly audience—more so, for example, than Evans’s shorter 2012 book, *Jesus and His World: The Archaological Evidence*. Though Evans has distinguished himself as a defender of Jesus (see *Getting Jesus Right: How Muslims Get Jesus and Islam Wrong* [2015] and *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* [2006]), this book is not apologetic in tone or intent.

Like most scholarly treatments of biblical archaeology, Evans explains the function of the discipline as something other than apologetic. He distances himself from trying “to prove something,” and instead describes the aim of biblical archaeology as “to collect and record the data, to do as little damage as possible to the site and to the artifacts that are recovered, and to be as fair as possible to the interpretation of what is exposed and recovered” (1). He goes on to emphasize the need to revise conclusions when necessary and to avoid overinterpretation.

Chapter 1 is “A Tale of Two Cities: What We Have Learned from Bethsaida and Magdala.” Most archaeological data from these two sites, especially Magdala where excavation began only six years ago, is quite recent. Thus this opening chapter is one of the three which are new rather than updated. Siding with the majority, Evans concludes that et-Tell, rather than El-Araj, is indeed the site of Bethsaida, in spite of it being nearly two kilometers from a shoreline. Evans explains that this site is outside of Galilee proper, shows no evidence of a synagogue, and has provided non-kosher animal remains to excavators. As a result, linking Paul’s tale about Peter in Galatians 2 with Peter’s hometown of Bethsaida, Evans sug-