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Peter Head's Uncalled for Remark

While mentioning in the Evangelical Textual Criticism blog (12 Dec. 2006) various persons he met recently in Lund, Peter Head goes on to make the uncalled for remark: [I met] "Chrys Caragounis (who was not not so happy about a review of his big book on Greek but did manage to shake hands with me)". This unprovoked comment, which is so out of place here, was made because, while shaking hands, I asked him "Are you writing any more of your brilliant reviews?" and "Did you read anything in my book apart from the Preface?" (I also asked him "when are you leaving?" and I wished him all the best, but he did not consider it to his purpose to mention this).

What is noteworthy here, however, is that instead of feeling at least a little bit of regret or embarrassment for his unfair and *unseriös* 'review', Peter Head now has also the audacity to make me appear as a kind of culprit.

Peter Head's notice of my book is to be found in the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27 (2005), 150-51. The notice is three quarters of a page long. Having given a rather patchy and inexact presentation of the concerns of the book and without any hint of its rich nuances, he devotes the last five lines to tell the reader (a) that my "wishful thinking finds evidence where there isn't any (e.g. p. 315)", (b) that "at other points evidence against his position is dismissed rather too quickly (e.g. p. 362-64)", and (c) that "the register shifts somewhat uncomfortably between personal, anecdotal and technical discussion".

This is supposed to be a review of a book of 750 pp., in which parade authors and their evidence from all the twenty-eight centuries of Greek literature, plus innumerable inscriptions and papyri, and which is the first book ever published that challenges the approach to the language of the NT as pursued since the time when Erasmus perpetrated his error. Needless to say, I have looked at the pages in which I am supposed to give evidence which does not exist or to have suppressed it, but could not make head or tail out of Head's criticism. If any reader discovers what I am accused of, I shall be glad to hear of it.

Peter Head, like many others, has misunderstood the meaning of the Greek term 'criticism' (*kritikê*), taking it to mean 'negative remarks'. Criticism means the ability to *sift and weigh evidence* and to make *right judgments*, whether negative or positive! One cannot, therefore, help but

ask: Does Peter Head's review satisfy the scientific demands of a truly *critical* review? — critical in its proper, scientific sense, in which a judgment corresponds accurately and in right proportion to both the merits and the demerits of a book. I ask: Does his notice give a fair representation of what this book is about and what it attempts to do?

But if Peter Head's notice is not critical in the scientific sense, can it be said to possess any value? If Peter Head did not feel that he possessed the competence to write a critical review of this book, the honest thing to do would have been to abstain from writing it, rather than read the Preface and look at a couple of places just to say something negative, which, hopefully, would pass for critical and informed!

If the readers of the *Evangelical Textual Criticism* blog wish to read reviews that make a serious attempt to present the concerns of this book accurately and to evaluate it critically, without necessarily agreeing with it, they can turn, for example, to Prof K. J. Elliott's review in *Novum Testamentum* XLVII, 4 (2005), pp. 394-96, for German to Dr E. Dafni's review in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 131, 11 (Nov. 2006), Cols. 1146-50, and for Dutch to Prof P. van der Horst's review in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 59 (2005) pp. 21-30.