

Book Reviews

Miracles: Everything That Is or Was or Is to Come Is a Miracle. By Olen R. Brown. Charleston, South Carolina: BookSurge Publishing, 2007, paperback, 322 pp., \$ 18.95

In *Miracles: Everything that Is or Was or Is to Come Is a Miracle*, Olen Brown, Ph.D. in Microbiology from the University of Oklahoma, contends with a dragon that has two-heads, *synscretism* (sin-SIGH-cruh-tizm) and the use of science to reject God. *Synscretism*, modeled after the word syncretism, is the author's neologism for the practice of adding worship of science to the worship of God. Brown maintains this phenomenon is a failing of modern Christianity. The second "head" of the dragon is the use of science to reject God, a failing of modern science. As might be expected by Dr. Brown's academic credentials and his Christian testimony (pp. 1-2), the author enters the fray as a champion of orthodox science and orthodox Christian faith, the latter evident in his choosing to draw his scripture citations from the King James Version of the Bible. The reader encounters both facets of the author's mind—logical, rational thought and life-filling commitment to God—on almost every page as the author contends for truth (logical, scientific, biblical), faith, and salvation. Miracles are the arena for the battle for science and faith because in Dr. Brown's view they are a key to integration of scientific and biblical truth. Thus, instead of being a problem, they represent a way to use mind and spirit. Brown focuses on miracles, too, because, as the work's subtitle indicates, the author sees miracles everywhere. Creation is a miracle, so, too, is salvation through Christ Jesus. Unfortunately, this wide span reveals that indeed the book is really two books.

The first book, chapters 1-5, deals with a broad range of subjects. After the apologetic comments of chapter one, the second chapter refers to creation but deals, too, with Jesus' miraculous deeds as well as everyday miracles. Chapter 3 focuses on the miracle of Christian faith and presents a brief taxonomy of twelve kinds of faith, e.g., active faith, intelligent faith, scientific faith. Chapter 4 seems to depart from discussion of the miraculous in order to deal with the existence of good and evil. Logically, then, a chapter on "Free Will and Miraculous Salvation" follows (chapter 5). These first chapters may encourage the already-convinced Christian, arguing that miracles represent a continuum from the physical world to the theological, but they seem to offer little to the physical scientist already convinced that miracles do not exist. The second portion of the book then attempts to redress this difficulty.

Chapters 6-11 give the author room to demonstrate his knowledge and to celebrate the amazing work of God. Early on Dr. Brown expressed his conviction that the basic physical world miracle is that the world (or universe or reality) exists. His point is that regardless of how much time (the "hero" in evolutionary schemes) is allowed to work, the expected, even logical result of random or undirected development would be non-existence, not the ordered, knowable world about us. "The fact that anything exists is evidence of a

fundamental miracle” (p. 9). Again, the most probable state of the universe that arises by chance is nothing at all. Siding with an active, purposeful, sovereign God, Professor Brown is able to show the amazing results of God’s original and on-going miracles.

The specifics of chapters 6-11 begin with an argument for creation and a setting aside of the “Big Bang” theory (chapter 6). Chapter 7 is given entirely to the subject of oxygen. While dealing with the subject of oxygen, however, Olen Brown makes a number of positive ad hominem contributions as he shares information about the spiritual perspectives and religious sensitivities of such persons as John Priestly, the apt-named discoverer of oxygen, and Antoine Lavoisier who significantly furthered the discipline of chemistry. Chapter 8 deals with energy and the sub-atomic world which produces it. Brown looks at the mundane leaf in chapter 9, dealing with photosynthesis. The two concluding chapters look at miracles in the microcosm (chapter 10) and miracles in the macrocosm (chapter 11). Both deal with human life, looking at such subjects as DNA, antibiotics, and blood chemistry. Oddly enough, Brown’s treatment of these subjects, and others considered too much for the average reader, does not send the reader fleeing to mind-numbing television, but to thanksgiving and praise.

Dr. Brown has performed a significant service to Christians who feel intimidated by authors who summon weighty technical details to bury believers. His writing is clear, well-sourced, and invites the reader to think along with him. *Miracles* is not without its faults, however.

The most glaring fault from this reviewer’s perspective is a minor one having to do with form. The book is filled with boldly-printed, widely spaced quotations. These quotations can distract the reader and often they interrupt the author’s explanations. Some of the quotations are helpful, opening new doors to those desiring to go forward on a given point. Some seem to add little to the author’s argument. Moreover, on occasion, the quotations become the tail that wags the dog; continuity of argument is lost as the author reports matters having to do with the individual quoted. (Examples include comments on Einstein’s quote on p. 3, the pp. 79f. paragraphs on Bertrand Russell’s stance, and a discussion of Isaac Asimov on pp. 135f.) Brown has helped by giving the sources of the quotations in an Appendix. (This is in addition to reference notes at the end of each chapter.) The Appendix often gives much more than standard bibliographic data, too, making the notes informative and helpful.

The author’s argument is difficult to follow in the first chapters of the work. This seems to result from trying to address both the Christian who wants help with miracles and the non-Christian scientist who wants to reject miracles. While this difficulty eases some later, the book still has faults. For instance, what is the purpose of attempting to create an equation to quantify the relation between a perceived miracle and faith? Even if the reader should understand the point of this exercise, it contributes little to the thrust of the work. Further, when Brown attempts to use word-count statistics to make a point (“evil is the 123rd most frequently used word in the bible [*sic*]” p.105) he fails to recognize the difficulty of making such an argument from an English translation. Perhaps a good editor could have helped the author avoid such missteps. Still, the work is thought-provoking and provides ammunition for those who want to undercut the

contemporary Christians' worship of science and to return science to its descriptive and interpretive roles.

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Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives. By Mark Wilson. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2007, 134 pp. US\$: 21.99 paperback, ISBN978-0-8254-3939-1.

The reader will encounter in Mark Wilson's book a different approach to charting the book of Revelation than the ultra familiar, ever up-dated, end-times sketches proposed by various representatives of the dispensationalist schools of interpretation. Given the complexities of the book of Revelation, the author of these charts contends that the project is intended to reveal the "complex intertextuality and intratextuality of the book . . . with new levels awaiting discovery on each reading" (p. 9). The charts have organically grown out of Dr. Wilson's doctoral research on the seven churches of Rev 2-3, which culminated with the publication of his commentary on "Revelation" in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

The book comprises a collection of 79 charts arranged in no particular order or grouping, yet spanning an impressive spectrum of topics and interests, balancing the literary, historical and theological perspectives on the book of Revelation. Some of the charts are expected in this type of collection, especially the charts dealing with the issues of authorship, date, historical and geographical background of Revelation. Others, however, are quite surprising and ingenious, displaying the attention to details with which their author read John's Apocalypse. For example, chart 20 traces the "Five Senses in Revelation," chart 21 lists the "Minerals, Gems and Other Commodities in Revelation," chart 24 explores the "Symbolism of Colors and Numbers in Revelation," and there are many others that illuminate the unusual world of this unique book of the NT canon.

While a complete list of the charts cannot be supplied here, the following samples will help in getting the feel for this important pedagogical aid. One subgroup deals with the thematic parallels between Revelation and various other canonical or extracanonical writings. The very useful chart 9 listing the allusions and verbal parallels in the Old Testament and extra-biblical literature belongs here, but is not as extensive, one might add, as the one compiled by C. A. Evans in *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* (Hendrickson, 2005). Another subgroup is formed by the charts exploring various aspects of the content of Revelation, such as chart 28 "Angels and Demons in Revelation," chart 37 "Wars and Battles in Revelation," chart 50 "Time Periods of Persecution," and so on.

Even though the overall impression might be that everything worth charting in Revelation has been covered by the author, this reviewer would have found helpful a chart with the grammatical solecisms and with the linguistic idiosyncrasies which abound in Revelation. Similarly, a chart, or maybe several,

presenting in parallel columns the interpretation of key passages by different schools of interpretation would have been very useful. For the completeness of the collection and, not least, because some readers might expect it, a chart of the temporal line proposed by various dispensational schools of interpretation also would have been a welcome addition.

However, one caveat remains in spite of the overall positive contribution that this book will likely make toward understanding John's Apocalypse. One of the book's major strengths, the visual approach to Revelation, can also become quite detrimental, if the examination of the charts would replace the student's direct reading of the book of Revelation. It should be remembered that the greatest impact of the book is to be achieved by being exposed to the text of the book, preferably in a congregational setting that included the reading of the prophetic message in the hearing of the believers (Rev 1:3). While it is usually true that a picture is worth a thousand words, when it comes to John's Revelation, at least as its author intended it, the roles of pictures/charts and words might need to be reversed.

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Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry. By Robert Welch. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005, 384 pp, \$34.99.

Church Administration has quickly become the standard administration text for a new generation of seminary students. In this book, Robert Welch blends twenty years of military leadership to his role as Dean of the School of Educational Ministries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to bring to life a subject that is often perceived as "duty" not "ministry." To achieve the goal of the subtitle, *Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry*, Welch has filled the pages of *Church Administration* with solid scriptural foundations, applicable anecdotes, and practical helps for a myriad of administrative tasks. Churches would do well to have a copy available for committees and ministry leaders. For the pastor or church leader, *Church Administration* will likely become a welcome and oft referred to addition to their personal library.

Reasons to buy and read *Church Administration* are many. Although most of the issues addressed by Welch are timeless, the book is contemporary enough for pastors and churches regardless of their age. Welch has drawn upon the wisdom gained through years of experience and extensive reading and research. He includes sources ranging from Author Flake to Rick Warren, thus demonstrating a clear understanding of the variety and types of churches.

The practical helps and suggestions cover the spectrum of administrative issues, from job descriptions to administering programs of evangelism. The reader can turn to almost any page and find gems of relevance.

The content will be a benefit to church plants and established churches alike. Church planters will benefit from the chapters covering organization and documents, such as constitutions and by-laws, while established churches will benefit from the sections on risk management and personnel. Of use to many

churches are the extensive sections detailing the development of church policy manuals, business meetings and implementing a planning process.

Students enrolled in Midwestern Seminary's Education Administration class were the first to use *Church Administration* as a required text. In the course of their studies, students were required to write a review. Twenty four of twenty-six reviews noted the "reference" quality of this text. Comments included:

"... one of a handful of textbooks that I will read after I graduate from seminary."

"I didn't know how much I didn't know. I will refer to this book often."

"The things in this book would have prevented me from making several mistakes that have caused problems in my church."

"(Welch) will be within reach of my desk from now on."

"Once I was past the first couple of chapters, the book was a goldmine of practical information. I actually look forward to my next business meeting."

"I wish I would have had this book last year. I will refer to it often in my work as a youth pastor, and someday, as pastor."

Shortcomings, although few, should be mentioned. At times the book goes into too much detail. For example, the "housekeeping survey needs projection summary" uses a formula that breaks down tasks, such as cleaning the "Kitchen/fellowship hall," down to 16.03 hours per week. The formulas are helpful, but I found the table for determining how much time it would take to buff or spray buff a floor using 175-RPM machine, 300-RPM machine, 1000-RPM machine and 2000-RPM machines to be overkill. The short section on the use of PDAs and other electronic devices will become dated.

The index, although useful, is slightly limited for what would otherwise serve as a comprehensive resource. Many of the tables used by the author are printed in what appears to be a size 6 font, making the text a challenge to read for people like myself who find the text of "large print" Bibles far too small.

The reality of ministry is that most pastors and staff spend more time doing administration tasks than any other aspect of ministry. *Church Administration* is a book that can help ministers become more effective in their administrative tasks, thus freeing them up for other ministerial activities.

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Invitation to Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar by Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006, xx + 364 pp. \$49.99

Invitation to Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar Workbook by Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006, xiv + 335 pp. \$29.99

Russell T. Fuller is associate professor of Old Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Kyoungwon Choi is currently a Ph.D. student in Old Testament at The Southern Baptist Seminary. Both Fuller and

Choi have studied with Dr. Isaac Jerusalem at Hebrew Union College and are beholden to him with respect to many of their methods and principles.

For many years the choice of textbooks for teaching biblical Hebrew was limited. However, in the last two or three decades there has been a relative deluge of new introductory grammars. *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew* is one such offering. The book is organized around five main sections with ten appendices at the end. The first section (chs. 1-6) introduces the alphabet, dagesh, gutturals, shewa and the rules of proto-Hebrew. The remaining four sections are classified as morphological principles with a section on particles (7-9), nouns and adjectives (10-16), strong verbs (17-28), and weak verbs (29-38). Morphology is emphasized throughout the book under the stated principle that learning Hebrew should be a two-year process, with syntactical principles being relegated to the second year. The goal of the book is to make biblical Hebrew a usable tool for those going into ministry. The authors recognize that without a solid foundation Hebrew will quickly fall into disuse.

Chapter six at the end of the initial section on phonological principles presents the foundation of the book's pedagogy. In particular, chapter six introduces the rules of Proto-Hebrew and the five rules of syllables in biblical Hebrew and how these relate. Choi and Fuller argue that mastering these rules will enable the student to understand Hebrew. The assumption is that the historical development of the language is the key to understanding and retaining the knowledge of biblical Hebrew. Ideally, perceiving the behavior of certain vowels and consonants will reduce the amount of memorization involved in learning the language by making the linguistic patterns intuitive for the student.

Overall, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew* has much to recommend it. The layout is pleasing both in terms of individual pages and the structure of the whole book. The organization and treatment of grammar and especially of the weak verbs is logical and clear. Where reference is made to previous lessons or rules, a specific reference is given so that the student can go back and refresh his or her memory. Each major section is introduced with an overview; this element is extremely helpful and provides a map of the pedagogical progress for the student. Additionally, there are a number of places where Fuller and Choi bring together two concepts so that the relationship is apparent. For example, the connection between the perfect verb forms and the independent personal pronouns is helpful for memorization and comprehension.

Within Fuller and Choi's handling of the verbal system, the sections on the vav-consecutive and volitives deserve special mention. The authors explain the vav-consecutive, a relatively complex grammatical and syntactical feature of Hebrew, in such a way that the beginning student should be able to assimilate it. At the same time, the explanation does not create a contradictory basis for future learning in comparative Semitics, a weakness of many beginning grammars with respect to the vav-consecutive. It is also refreshing to see the volitives introduced at the same time as the imperfect forms. Even if these forms are not mastered initially, clearly demonstrating their relationship to the imperfect aspect is sound.

As with any grammar, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew* has some weaknesses. Despite the intentions of the authors to avoid grammatically technical jargon within the explanations, there are numerous points at which the material is

linguistically opaque in its instruction. To be fair, it is almost impossible to explain biblical Hebrew without technical terminology unless the teacher expects the student to relearn certain labels down the road.

There are a number of places in the grammar that would end up being difficult and perhaps incomprehensible for the beginning student. For example, in chapters 17-19, several of the grammatical concepts of the verbal system are introduced in a very short space. Participles and infinitives are introduced in one chapter, which would be overwhelming for most beginning students. Likewise, the explanation of the suffixes to verbs is fairly complicated and difficult to follow at points. Another issue is the fact that in chapter 21, Isaac Jerusalmi's colorized system of understanding the vowel patterns of verbal forms is introduced. While this system is tremendously helpful, the book does not actually utilize colors in any of the chapters themselves. For some reason, colors are provided only in the book's appendices. Similarly, Jerusalmi's system of "boxes" is partially utilized with little to no satisfactory explanation of the system itself.

The exercises in the book are themselves rather complex for the beginning student. The requirement for the student to master English to Hebrew instruction is commendable. However, the exercises tend to focus on numerous concepts instead of focusing on the mastery of one or two. That being said, many of the above weaknesses are compensated by the DVD set and the purchase of the corresponding workbook. The DVD provides actual lectures by Russell Fuller which will help the student who may become lost with the book alone. The lectures would benefit by utilizing PowerPoint or other technological features which are widely available. In the lectures, Fuller alternates between cursive and block script when he writes on the board, which is potentially confusing for the beginning student. The workbook provides more traditional exercises and the means to check one's work and to measure comprehension.

As a student of Isaac Jerusalmi myself, I was eager to see this book and to consider adopting it for my own Hebrew instruction. For this reason I was surprised when, after careful examination, I realized that the book was too complex for the beginning student. Knowing how Jerusalmi's method had helped me, and reflecting on the seemingly overly complex nature of the book, I came to the conclusion that the target audience is the source of the problem. Isaac Jerusalmi's method and teaching has been geared toward those who have had biblical Hebrew before but have failed to master it. His method builds on a foundation rather than starting from the *aleph bet*. Herein is the greatest weakness of Fuller's and Choi's grammar. The authors are attempting to provide the foundation of biblical Hebrew and a modified Isaac Jerusalmi method all at once. While this does vastly reduce the amount of rote memorization required by the student, the gain is offset by a requirement for mastery of an increased amount of theory and concepts of the morphological and phonological behavior of biblical Hebrew.

Only slightly less problematic is the decision to relegate the study of syntax to a second year and different (forthcoming) book. While the authors' reasons for doing so are reasonable, it is not realistic. Fuller and Choi's *Invitation* leaves a significant gap in training for a college or seminary curriculum which only allow for one year of introductory Hebrew. Nevertheless, I would warmly

recommend the book for those wishing to refresh their biblical Hebrew. Given plenty of time and self-discipline, the combined resources of the book, workbook and DVDs would provide a good starting point for a student who wished to learn biblical Hebrew on his or her own.

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Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education. By David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002, pp. 446, \$19.99.

It has been twenty years since Allan Bloom wrote his best-seller *The Closing of the American Mind*, a perceptive and sobering critique of higher education in America. According to Bloom, the modern university is in a state of crisis, unable (and perhaps in some cases even unwilling) to help students make sense of the fragmented, and seemingly unrelated and irrelevant knowledge they receive during the course of their studies. As a result, argues Bloom, year after year these universities graduate polite but passionless, self-centered people who may have acquired a specialization, but who are unable to answer life's bigger questions such as, What is true?, What is good?, What is the purpose of life?, and How am I to live?

Having served in campus ministry at several secular universities for over ten years, I have found Bloom's observations to be on the mark, but find his solution (a return to the Great Books of western civilization) to be deeply unsatisfying. *Shaping a Christian Worldview* is a collection of essays written by the faculty and administration of Union University, which offers a compelling Christian way forward to the higher education crisis, one that implicitly affirms what early Christians theologians asserted—"we believe in order to understand." *Shaping a Christian Worldview* is an unabashed claim that Christian faith belongs in the academy. But it goes even further than that; these essays argue that a Christian worldview is essential to bring coherence to our fragmented knowledge and to provide guidance for right and meaningful living.

The book is divided into two major sections. Part One, "Building a Foundation", which consists of five chapters, explores the nature of the Christian worldview. More specifically this section sets out to answer the following questions: What are the fundamentals of the Christian worldview? What is the authoritative structure of a Christian worldview? Who are those who have successfully articulated a Christian worldview in the past and what can we learn from them? And, why have Christian universities in the past lost their Christian orientation? While this first section is not an exhaustive treatment of the subject, those new to the conversation will likely find these chapters helpful for getting up to speed. Part Two, "Applying a Christian Worldview", makes up the bulk of the book (thirteen chapters), and is concerned with relating the Christian worldview to the natural and social sciences, business, the arts, education, the media, and health care. These essays offer a fascinating look at how particular Christian professionals understand their faith in relation to their

fields of study—an aspect which is often lacking in other Christian worldview books.

There is one steady feature of this volume that merits recognition. The collection has highlighted the fact that worldviews are inevitable and serve as the foundation for how we make sense of knowledge. Scientist, entrepreneurs, health care workers, artists, whether they are aware of it or not, approach their specialty with particular assumptions that influence how they interpret knowledge and how they make moral decisions. *Shaping a Christian Worldview* puts Christian assumptions on the table for all to see while also arguing for their validity. In a related manner, *Shaping a Christian Worldview* also points out that being a Christian or going to a Christian college does *not* guarantee that we have a *Christian* worldview. Given this reality, Union University has taken up the call to be intentional about how they shape their students, in the hope that they develop a Christian way of understanding the world and their place in it.

There was one notable omission in the collection of essays—politics. This volume would have been enhanced by a deeper reflection on how the Christian worldview informs our views regarding politics and the use (and abuse) of power—a theme very important to many New Testament writers.

There are likely several different groups that will benefit from this book. New university professors who want to reflect upon their particular discipline and its place within the larger whole of a Christian university will no doubt be stimulated by what has been offered in this volume. Parents of high school students, who are considering a Christian college, having read the book, will be well-informed for the process. Campus ministers and deans of student life may also want to consider the vision that *Shaping A Christian Worldview* casts for the Christian university. I also think this collection of essays serves as a model for other Christian universities who want to work together (faculty and administration) to engage in the intentional task of shaping their students to think *Christianly*.

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A Text-Linguistic Investigation into the Discourse Structure of James. By Mark Edward Taylor. London: T & T Clark, 2006, viii + 146 pp., \$110.00.

A majority of last-century's discussion of James was dominated by the influential conclusions of Martin Dibelius who in his commentary concluded, "*the entire document lacks continuity in thought*" (p. 2, emphasis original). In this revised dissertation considering the discourse structure of the Letter of James Mark Taylor adds his voice to a growing chorus heralding the structural continuity of the text. Taylor takes his place among a number of recent investigations which seriously consider what kind of coherence and structure may be found in this neglected letter.

The opening chapter offers a comprehensive description of the various attempts at structuring James along with a brief assessment of each approach. Here Taylor lays the foundation for his particular investigation noting that: 1)

Dibelius' atomistic (and form-critical) approach has been abandoned; 2) there is an emerging consensus that James is a coherent literary composition; 3) chapter one plays a particular role in introducing the rest of the text; and finally 4) 2:1-13, 2:14-26, and 3:1-12 constitute discernible units developing sustained topics (p. 33). Each of these conclusions provides an accurate and helpful new platform for fresh research in this text.

Chapter two describes the methodology used to gauge James' structure and coherence. Largely following in the foot steps of George Guthrie, Taylor uses a form of discourse analysis called "text-linguistics." Specifically drawing upon several applications of discourse analysis in the NT along with sensitivity to ancient literary conventions, this approach seeks to discern macro-level cohesion within a discourse by identifying unit boundaries, inclusions, cohesion indicators, and other connectives clearly present in the text.

In chapters three and four Taylor applies his method to the text by analyzing cohesion shifts and *inclusio* structures. His cohesion shift analysis results in what many studies of James have already discovered, namely that the letter characteristically shifts rapidly from unit to unit--even at times leaving particular texts isolated from their surrounding contexts. More importantly, Taylor provides the most comprehensive study of inclusions in James. Of the numerous inclusions outlined here, several have been noted before (*viz.*, 1:2-4/1:12; 4:7/4:10; 4:6/5:6); however, this analysis draws attention to two significant inclusions that have gone unnoticed. Taylor sees an *inclusio* between 1:12 and 1:25 marked by the repetition of the term "blessed" and eschatological focus of both verses. He goes on to argue that there is a double opening *inclusio* in chapter one (1:2-4/1:12 and 1:12/1:25). This analysis leads Taylor to identify 1:12 as a key passage in the letter opening (more about this below). Likewise, he detects another significant *inclusio* between 2:12-13 and 4:11-12 centered around the themes of "law," "judgment," and "speech." He asserts regarding this large-scale *inclusio* that both passages of the inclusion function as "key summary/transition units relating to their immediate contexts" (p. 71). Finally, Taylor offers evidence of a "grand *inclusio*," between 1:2-25 and 5:7-20, which frames the composition as a whole.

The final two chapters of the work attempt to draw out the significance of the cohesion shifts and inclusions identified earlier. While Taylor's close observations from the text are helpful, it is at this point of the study that some of the connections seem less than evident. In chapter four Taylor attempts to demonstrate how structural features noted in the text were intentionally used by the author to establish "cohesion for the whole" and to effect "movement from one unit to the next" (p. 96). These observations include: 1) thematic and lexical "strings" that are pulled through the entire text (namely, "references to deity and the community," "perfection," "double-minded," "law," and references to speech) and 2) various intentional transition markers (among which include "hook words," "distant hook words," "overlapping constituents," "proverbial transition/summary statements"). Now, that there are several key terms/themes developed throughout the text is apparent, but that this constitutes clear progression of thought is not. With respect to the "transition" markers, it is on one hand clear that "hook words," "overlapping constituents," "proverbial transition/summary statements" are used to connect material; however, Taylor

has not satisfactorily demonstrated how such devices were used intentionally to mark thematic movement (or provide logical development) from one unit to another.

For example, an “overlapping constituent” for Taylor is a “passage used simultaneously as the conclusion of one block of material and the introduction to the next” (p. 82). His prime example is 1:12 which serves as both conclusion to the *inclusio* consisting of 1:2-4/1:12 and the introduction of the next *inclusio* consisting of 1:12/1:25. From this observation Taylor concludes (in chapter 6) that 1:12 is “the central proposition of the chapter; the one who endures the test manifests a love for God and will be ‘blessed’ with the crown of life” (p. 100). Structurally one can see the pivotal position of 1:12, but it is difficult to see how this verse is the “central proposition” of chapter one. How does one collapse themes of “perfection” versus “double-mindedness” (1:2-8) and human anger versus God’s righteousness (1:19-20) into 1:12? Further, building upon the structure of this double *inclusio* in chapter one, Taylor understands that the smaller units in 1:2-11 and 1:13-27 are parallel in arraignment. Yet it is difficult to see how “wise attitudes for rich and poor” (1:9-11) and “don’t be deceived regarding religious practice” (1:26-27) are at all parallel (let alone how this is a fitting description of 1:9-11, unless extremely ironic).

Another example of viewing clear thematic progression from unit to unit where there it may not be so clear may be seen in Taylor’s understanding of proverbial material in James. In chapter five he identifies the function of proverbial material in James as “transition/summary statements” (p. 83). It seems that the absence of any discussion regarding the literary form of a proverb specifically or the genre of James in general renders such a conclusion on the function of proverbial material in James rather questionable. Do the proverbs in James serve merely to close out discrete units of text by slowing the reader down and inviting reflection (see Richard Bauckham), or do they constitute a transition marker indicating a clear, thematic connection between adjacent units? Do they function the same way in every instance? Though some proverbs seem to summarize and offer transition (1:26-27 and 3:18), others do not (especially in chapter one).

Far from reading James as a randomly constructed, “string-of-pearls” list of exhortations, this reviewer does see cohesion and thematic development in James; however, the logical progression between units expressed in Taylor’s study are not sufficiently supported by the structural elements alone. Interestingly Taylor himself states the following: “These dynamics indicate a complex rhetorical strategy that resists a neat, step-by-step outline. Nevertheless, close analysis reveals that a balanced and symmetrical strategy seems to be at work in the letter” (p. 107). James is a richly complex text which resists our best efforts to neatly outline a linear progression of units. Often in the history of research in James outlining the epistle has proved to be an activity with few clear exegetical rewards. Despite this critique, Mark Taylor has put us in his debt in offering a careful textual analysis of this often neglected letter. His insights regarding structural shifts, especially his analysis of inclusions embedded in the text, will aid future students of James.

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Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader. Edited by Suzanne Richard, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003. 486 pp. \$47.50.

At the beginning of her introduction Richard states, “This volume is intended as a basic reference work for students, scholars, and the general public alike.” And, “This Reader serves as the perfect companion reference textbook for college classes in archaeology, history, and biblical studies” (xiii). Does this sixty-two article book deliver as a reference volume for a wide range of readers? And, does it live up to its claims for students of biblical studies?

Originally the *Reader* was to be a one-volume encyclopedia of Syrian-Palestinian archeology in a larger work on Near Eastern archaeology. With the help of William Dever, however, the editor was able to rework this proposed encyclopedia into a reader using only select topical essays (xiii-xiv). These essays are well written, they do cover a broad variety of topics within the arena of archeology, and there is an abundance of information related to biblical studies throughout the work.

In his forward to the book, Dever briefly discusses the history of American archaeology in the Holy Land, which had its roots in biblical studies. After noting that in the 1970s and ‘80s American archeology became its own secular discipline, he explains a few of the difficulties involved in labeling this branch of archeology that is so closely related to the Bible and Israel. He then closes by mentioning the value of archaeology for biblical studies as an illuminator of the biblical text.

The contributions of the fifty-two scholars are divided into two parts. Part one is devoted to “Theory, Method, and Context.” Some of the articles that are of special interest for biblical studies students include: “Bible and Archaeology” by Rast, “Writing and Scripts” by Rendsburg, “Roads and Highways” by Dorsey, “Nautical Archaeology in the Eastern Mediterranean” by Carlson, “Women in the Ancient Near East” by Ackerman, and “Everyday Life” by Matthews. Part two covers “Cultural Phases and Associated Topics.” Here some of the more helpful articles for students of biblical studies include: “Canaanite Religion” by Nakhai, “El-Amarna Texts” by Matthews, “The Iron Age in the Southern Levant” by Younker, “Religion and Cult in the Levant” by Dever, “Goddesses” by Ackerman, “Syria-Palestine in the Persian Period” by Carter, “The Samaritans” by Giles, and “The Hellenistic Period” by Berlin.

The Reader is missing at least two important pieces. First, it should have included an index. As a reference work this book needs an index. As a textbook it needs an index. Richard does offer some help in her introduction for those desiring to read about topics not covered as separate essays, but her information is limited, and people do not normally look to an introduction for index information. Second, because the intended audience for this work does include those whose primary discipline is either history or biblical studies, and because its “focus is primarily the Levant” (xv), this volume should have included a survey article on the Roman period. It is true that other essays in the Reader

discuss or otherwise make reference to this period, but it should have been in the ranks.

On the positive side, several items are worth mentioning. First, the scholarly approach and clear writing do make this work especially well suited for supplemental reading at the college level. Second, each article does include a bibliography for further study. Third, 122 continuously numbered figures significantly add to the Reader's overall appeal (curiously without a list of figures at either end of the book). Fourth, many of the essays with similar topics are clustered together and often expand on related topics. Fifth, several articles on specialized fields such as paleoethnobotany and archaeozoology help introduce readers to some of the less well known areas of archaeology.

Does this book deliver as a reference volume for a wide range of readers? And, does it live up to its claims for students of biblical studies? With strong scholarship behind readable essays, numerous figures to help along the way, a generous amount of biblical discussion in the articles, and essay bibliographies included for further study, the answer to both questions is yes.

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Women, Ministry and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms. Edited by Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007, 304 pp. \$24.00.

Women, Ministry and the Gospel is a compilation of thirteen essays written by thirteen different authors on subjects related to the scriptures, questions and issues surrounding the role(s) of women in ministry. A wide variety of topics and viewpoints are represented in this book – which is actually a collection of papers that were presented at the 2005 Wheaton Theology Conference. The stated goal of this book is to “present new paradigms and fresh perspectives for evangelicals on an issue that often is prematurely settled with reference to well-entrenched set-piece arguments. In this book evangelical scholars think aloud about softer, more nuanced or less rigid ways to articulate viewpoints on an issue of contemporary significance” (9).

The book is comprised of five sections: 1) New Perspectives on the Biblical Evidence; 2) New Perspectives on the Body of Christ; 3) New Theological Perspectives on Identity and Ministry; 4) New Perspectives from the Humanities and the Social Sciences; 5) Beyond the Impasse: Toward New Paradigms. The book includes essays on a wide variety of topics such as “Deborah: A Role Model for Christian Public Ministry;” “Opposite Sexes or Neighboring Sexes? What do the Social Sciences Really Tell Us?;” “Identity and Ministry in the Light of the Gospel: A View from the Kitchen;” and “Forging a Middle Way Between Complementarians and Egalitarians.” Given the wide-ranging nature of the essays, it is not feasible to provide a summary of their contents in this review, other than to note that they provide snapshots of specific pieces of the theological puzzle of women in ministry.

The content and helpfulness of the essays vary. While all of the essays do address various aspects and questions related to *Women, Ministry and the Gospel*, the essays are not tidily tied together. They are, rather, stand-alone compositions and do not comprise a neatly formulated address to the questions related to the role of women in ministry. The lack of cohesiveness is understandable once the reader understands that the book is actually a collection of papers presented at a theology conference. The editors acknowledge that “each piece (essay) is far too incomplete to ‘prove’ that one side or the other is the right one on its own” (11). There are some significant holes in the book, if one is looking for a complete perspective on women in ministry. The editors recognize that proponents on each of the two main positions – egalitarian and complementarian – might be frustrated by the lack of essays on some of their primary supporting passages and points. For instance, there is “no essay offering a comprehensive biblical and theological case for an egalitarian position, while a faithful and able attempt at a comprehensive view of the complementarian position is presented” and “complementarians might well be frustrated that so many of the essays in this volume, although they only address individual pieces of the puzzle, have an egalitarian drift to them” (10).

This book would likely be most useful as a supplementary text for the reader desiring to seriously investigate the issues surrounding the topic of women in ministry, but not as a starting point for someone unfamiliar with many of the questions and issues. A reader unfamiliar with the topic might flounder in their reading of *Women, Ministry and the Gospel* – many of the authors appear to assume that the reader has an understanding of some of the questions surrounding the subject of women in ministry – again understandable given that the essays were presented at a theological conference. A better starting point for investigating the topic of women in ministry is *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, edited by James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, which lays out the primary points of the egalitarian and complementarian views on women in ministry.

The reader who is unfamiliar with some of the questions surrounding women in ministry might want to begin reading at the last section of *Women, Ministry and the Gospel* – “Beyond the Impasse: An Attempt at New Paradigms.” This final section of the book summarizes some of the broad-ranging questions surrounding women in ministry – while some of the earlier sections focus on more narrow aspects of the topic. For example, the first essay in the book discusses the ministry of Deborah. Another essay surveys the role of women in the Holiness Movement begun in the late 19th century by Phoebe Palmer. While interesting, these essays do not address many of the questions surrounding the larger subject.

Once the reader understands that this book is not a comprehensive tome on women in ministry, a strength of this book is, in fact, its variety of viewpoints and topics, covering a wide range of topics and facets of the questions related to women’s roles in ministry. The book provides an overview – albeit incomplete – of *some* of the hot topics related to the questions of women’s roles. The stated intent of the book is to continue the discussion regarding this important issue, a noble goal. As with other theological issues, it is important that Christians strive to educate themselves regarding the questions, the issues and the biblical

interpretations oft cited in support of a particular position on women in ministry. As one writer in this collection stated, the issue of women's roles "is not a debate between conservative and liberals. It's a debate between conservatives and *conservatives*. Those who are *not* conservative typically have never even heard of the conservative in-house terms of complementarian and egalitarian" (258). The goal of continuing the conversation between evangelical Christians with opposing positions on this topic is to be lauded.

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