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## Review: Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis

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world such as the mystery religions. After an extensive discussion of Graeco-Roman religions Ferguson observes that

Parallels to the resurrection have been suggested in the "dying and rising savior-gods." But the "resurrection" of these gods is very different from what is meant by that word in Christian belief. There is nothing in the myth of Osiris that could be called a resurrection: the god became ruler over the dead, not the living (p. 280).

Third, readers will develop a much greater awareness of the Judaism which served as a cocoon for the growth and spread of early Christianity. Ferguson's discussions of the translation of the Septuagint, his summaries of other Greek Jewish literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the writings of Josephus, and rabbinic literature provide an excellent overview of the literary world of Judaism. His brief but insightful section entitled "Qumran and the New Testament" provides wise conclusions on a much debated subject.

Ferguson's final chapter is entitled *Christianity in the Ancient World*. He discusses literary references to Christianity in non-Christian sources and archaeological remains affecting early Christian history. He points out the attitudes of pagans toward Christians, and he analyzes the legal status of early Christians. He concludes with an answer to the question of the uniqueness of Christianity. On this subject he says

That which is truly unique to Christianity is Jesus Christ. He was what was essential to its beginning and remains central to what it is. This is so in a historical sense. However much of his life and teachings might be paralleled from one part of the ancient world or another, Jesus—his person and work—are what was unique to Christianity (p. 582).

Students of NT backgrounds cannot afford to ignore this excellent work by Ferguson. It represents the fruit of a lifetime of study by a devoted scholar. It brings together in a summary fashion material which will aid in the process of understanding and applying the NT in our generation.

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*Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, edited by David Alan Black. Nashville: Broadman, 1992. Pp. 319. \$15.95 paper.

These ground-breaking essays were chosen and skillfully edited by Dr. Black, adjunct professor of NT at Talbot and Golden Gate Baptist seminaries. He was ably assisted by Drs. Katharine Barnwell and Stephen Levinsohn of the Wycliffe Bible Translator organization, which hosted the original conference (at the Dallas Summer Institute for Linguistics Center) at which the

majority of the material was originally presented in 1991 (pp. 11–12). The volume is fittingly dedicated to Professor Jesús Paláez of the University of Córdoba, Spain, a founder of the journal *Filologia Neotestamentaria*, which focuses on the study of the NT in light of modern linguistics (p. 13), and includes a Foreword by the eminent Eugene Nida.

The book is divided into two parts: “New Methodological Approaches” (chapters 1–5) and “Applications to Specific Texts” (chapters 6–14). These sectional titles reflect relative emphasis, not exclusive focus (i.e., there is some application to scriptural texts in chapters 1–5, as well as a fair amount of discussion of methodology at some points in chapters 6–14).

Though all the essays in Part I contained certain stimulating insights, the most profitable for the present reviewer were J. P. Louw’s “Reading a Text as Discourse” (pp. 17–30) and Editor Black’s “Discourse Analysis, Synoptic Criticism, and Markan Grammar” (pp. 90–98). Black designed Louw’s lead-off chapter to serve as an introduction of sorts to the book (p. 13), and it accomplishes that purpose very effectively. Black’s chapter dismantles the views of evangelicals like R. Stein and S. McKnight, who attempt to use features of the grammar in the Gospel of Mark to back a certain approach to the Synoptic Problem, including Markan priority. Taking on the concept of “correct” Greek, as well as linguistic arguments dating back to Streeter, Black purposely chooses to stop short of arguing for an alternative view on the Synoptic Problem. Rather, he closes by suggesting that the study of Markan grammar (and its implications) is “at a crossroads” and its future direction is, as yet, uncertain (p. 97).

Like a child in the middle of a pile of Christmas gifts, this reviewer reveled in a number of the chapters in Part II. Especially meaningful were E. Wendland’s study of Luke 7:36–50 (pp. 101–43), K. Callow’s discussion of 1 Cor 5:1–13 (pp. 194–206), V. Parunak’s analysis of Galatians (pp. 207–39), R. Longacre’s insights into 1 John (pp. 271–86) and C. Osburn’s exposition of Jude (pp. 287–319). Particularly fascinating was the common thread of observed crucial chiasmic structuring at one level or another in each of these otherwise considerably different NT books.

The strengths of this volume are so many as to render this reviewer virtually a shameless “cheerleader!” Just a few of these are: 1) The edited “macrostructure” of the volume, taking very different essays and getting them to hang together amazingly well; 2) Excellent ‘References’ lists, though they ranged dramatically in size (almost none in K. Callow’s twin treatments of 1 Corinthians to over six pages in Osburn’s chapter on Jude); 3) A most helpful clarification of “Granville Sharp’s Role” by K. Titrud (pp. 249–50); and 4) Structural analyses of Galatians (by Parunak), 1 John (by Longacre), and Jude (by Osburn) that are superior to any seen by this reviewer in the standard commentaries on these difficult epistles.

In a concerted effort at objectivity, several weaknesses, or areas of possible improvement, will also be mentioned: 1) Some of the chapters needed to have more of “an eye on the beginning student” (p. 11) regarding highly technical terminology; 2) There were a few print errors not caught (e.g., “Levinsohn” repeated, p. 269; “1:5–29 instead of 1:5–2:29 on p. 274); and 3) Inconsistency in

'References' format (e.g., the "Zerwick" data on pp. 206 and 270). If a second edition is released, indexes and a glossary would be very helpful.

In conclusion, in spite of these nit-picky criticisms, I can highly recommend this splendid volume to anyone possessing a foundational knowledge of NT Greek. D. A. Black and his fellow essayists have charted a clear path into the future of NT exegesis, a path that should be very attractive for evangelicals because it does not in any way require assumptions or methodology inimical to consistent biblical faith.

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*Introducing The New Testament*, by Joe Blair. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994. Pp. 237. \$21.99 paper.

The author, who teaches at Houston Baptist University, has written a non-technical survey for the purpose of giving students some basic perspectives on the NT so as to make responsible interpretation and application of it. In this reviewer's opinion he has successfully accomplished his objective.

The book begins with succinct but helpful discussions of issues pertaining to the canon, the inspiration of Scripture, and the interpretation of Scripture. This includes a brief introduction to the historical-critical methodology and a balanced assessment of its usefulness. Then follow three chapters addressing influences upon the NT times. These chapters present a brief historical overview of Jewish history and some of the major philosophies still current in NT times. The remainder of the book is given over to an analysis of each of the NT books. Authorship, readers, and message are first addressed and then an outline is given, which is followed by a brief exposition of the book in accord with the outline.

This is a well designed book for the beginning student, including charts, maps, illustrations, study and review lists, questions for consideration, a fine glossary, and suggested books for further reading. In any book of this nature there will be points where one could quibble over this or that conclusion, but the book is characterized by a balanced discussion of the major points of controversy which also contributes to its usefulness. It is curious though that methodologically the study of the Gospels was along expository lines except for Luke, which was thematic. The thematic approach for all the Gospels would have been preferable in my opinion. It is also quite debatable whether John's use of *agape* supports the conclusion that it is unique among all the loves (p. 208). In summary, for those looking for a nontechnical introduction to the NT for survey courses or in church contexts, this book is worthy of consideration as a helpful primer in preparation for more extensive study of the NT documents.

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