

Boekbesprekings / Book Reviews

Heil, J P 2007 – *Ephesians: Empowerment to walk in love for the unity of all in Christ*

Publisher: Society of Biblical Literature. Pages 355. Price: \$21.00

Reviewer: Dr Estelle H Dannhauser (Johannesburg)

John Paul Heil is a professor of New Testament Studies at the Catholic University of America. His previous publications show that the study of rhetoric and an audience-oriented approach to texts hold his interest and these he applied to Luke-Acts, Mark, 1 Corinthians and Matthew 26-28.

The reader reaps the reward of a carefully chosen title as it offers a blueprint of the content. Encapsulated in each word of the title is a part of the message the author believes the Letter to the Ephesians wants to convey to its audience. The introduction motivates the selection of each consecutive word of the title, as well as the inter-relatedness of the words of the title as a whole. It then very briefly touches upon the author's premises concerning authorship (he opts for the historical apostle Paul as author), audience ("the holy ones in Ephesus", in all probability including believers of both Jewish and Gentile origin), and method (literary-rhetorical and audience-oriented).

In Chapter 2 the reader is briefly familiarized with the nature of macro- and micro-chiastic structures. The author suggests nine criteria which should be rigorously applied to all possible chiastic structures within the text, thereby eliminating subjective super-imposing of structures as far as possible. The theory is that the application of these criteria to the text of the Letter to the Ephesians will lead to the detection of precise verbal parallels, allowing a natural division of the text into "15 distinct literary units" (p 16). The methodology and thought processes leading to these conclusions are explained for the benefit of the reader, followed by an illustration of how the 15 units combine to form a macro-chiasm with as unparalleled pivotal unit Ephesians 4:1-16. The author believes to have detected precise verbal parallels (7 pairs of parallel units) that combine to form a macro-chiastic structure through the text as a whole.

As is obvious from the author's choice of title, "love" is central to his thesis. He discovers this theme to be permeating the whole, with explicit terms for love in ostensibly deliberate and functional positions within the rhetoric and most noticeably at the centre of the macro-chiasm.

In the remaining chapters the author seeks to plumb the intended response to the rhetoric strategy by means of the rather intricate chiastic patterning he discovered within the text. He believes that Paul (implied author) presupposes common tradition-ground (Jewish, Christian and Gentile) which he draws upon in order to empower the congregation of believers into participating in the "... central theme of love that pervades the Letter to the Ephesians" (p 10).

To be taken on a guided tour through the text in question by means of the possible mnemonic patterns and persuasive devices within the rhetorical and literary encoding, is rewarding. This approach to a text ostensibly intended as *Rundschreibe* to be performed, heard, comprehended and internalized, offers much to be recommended. Moreover, the overall precision and lucidity of reasoning and presentation ensure that the tour is a pleasant one and most of the front-runners in the field are invited along to further elucidate the particular approach to the text.

However, the fact that other perusals of Ephesians have discovered other chiasms sounds a warning bell indicating how difficult it is to avoid the pitfalls of subjectivity when

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attempting to reconstruct patterns and devices in our quest for a better understanding of ancient texts.

Confusion may sometimes arise as to the author's use of "micro-" and "macro-chiasm". Furthermore, the question why the analysis did not yield other prominent terms such as "peace" alongside "love" could be asked and one might ask for more substance being given to the introductory topics, such as authorship and audience.

On the whole, however, the book is recommended for providing an example of a detailed literary-rhetorical, audience-oriented approach, for contributing to an appreciation for and insight into the Letter to the Ephesians and for highlighting the importance of the theme of "love" within it, shown to be underlined and supported by the careful structuring of this text.



Peters, T 2007 – *The stem cell debate*

Publisher: Fortress. 122 Pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof Cornel du Toit (University of South Africa)

This is a lucid introduction to the stem cell debate, offering ethical guidelines for assessing it. The author, Ted Peters, is a well-known systematic theologian at the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, California. He is also prominent in the die science-religion debate. From 1990 to 1994 he was involved in monitoring the human genome project. Since 1996 he has been involved in the stem cell controversy and was appointed consultant to MD West, chief executive of Geron Corporation at that time. In 2004 the state of California approved a grant of \$3 billion in bonds for stem cell research. The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) was established and Peters is a member of the workgroup that advises CIRM on ethical standards (p xiii). Thus, Peters is theoretically not involved in the issue, but directly influences the way in which the research is conducted.

The controversy centres around the status of zygotes, since stem cells mostly develop from these cells, and for this reason the debate encompasses abortion with all its ramifications.

To grasp the ethical problem the book is dealing with, one needs to understand the biological background. Stem cells can potentially trigger a medical revolution in that they create new tissue. Peters explains (p 2): "What scientists are imagining is placing regenerative stem cells into not only the heart but also the brain, pancreas, liver, and spinal nervous system. With tissue renewal, regenerative therapy could reverse deterioration that leads to such diseases as heart disease, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes, lower body paralysis, and numerous others. As a by-product, regenerative medicine offers strides forward in the battle against cancer."

Within days after the formation of a zygote mitosis occurs. Every cell (now called a blastomere) is totipotent. At the blastocyst stage the trophectoderm (an external shell/tissue of sorts formed between days four and six, surrounding the inner cell and eventually the connective tissue with the uterine wall) is removed and the inner cell mass is disaggregated. The individual cells are placed on a feeder tray and if all goes well, the cells, now called pluripotent cells, will divide. After fifty cell divisions they will be defined as 'characterized'. "Once characterized, experiments to tease pluripotent cells into integrating with targeted tissue can begin" (p 10). That, in broad outline, is the background.