

## Book Review: Hidden In Plain View

*Hidden in Plain View*, by Lydia McGrew, Chillicothe, OH, Deward Publishing Company, c. 2017, 276, ISBN: 978-1-936341-90-0.

Lydia McGrew has resurrected an apologetic argument that needs further study in our modern world. The argument that she develops using undesigned coincidences to show the integrity and veracity of the Scriptures is sufficient proof of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. It is an argument against modernism. It pushes back against higher criticism. It fosters belief in the truthfulness of God's Word.

The book is comprised of a foreword by Craig Keener, a General Introduction, and two Parts. Part One focuses on Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels and Part Two on Undesigned Coincidences in Acts and the Pauline Epistles. The two parts are followed by a conclusion and an afterward by J. Warner Wallace. The book ends with notes, works cited, an index of Authors and Names, a Scripture index and a Subject index. In the context of the book there are six tables and three maps. In the tables, a summary chart is given for each section discussed by the author revealing a total of forty-seven examples of undesigned coincidences that are discussed in the book.

McGrew's definition of an undesigned coincidence is given in the general introduction. "An undesigned coincidence is a notable connection between two or more accounts or texts that doesn't seem to have been planned by the person or people giving the accounts. Despite their apparent independence, the items fit together like pieces of a puzzle" (12). The main argument of the book is stated by the author: "The occurrence of multiple undesigned coincidences between and among the documents supports the conclusion that the Gospels and Acts are historically reliable and that they come from people close to the facts who were attempting to tell truthfully what they knew" (14).

McGrew also gives information concerning the authors who have influenced her own work in this area of apologetics. She mentions: William Paley, *Horae Paulinae* and *A View of the Evidences of Christianity*; John Blunt, *Undesigned Coincidences in the Writings of Both of the Old and New Testaments*; Thomas R. Birks, who published his own edition of Paley's *Horae Paulinae*; J. S. Howson, *Horae Petrinae* and *The Evidential Value of the Acts of the Apostles*; J. Warner Wallace, *Cold Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*; and James Smith, *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul* to name a few.

Part One is divided into four chapters. The focus of this part of the book is to examine undesigned coincidences in the Gospels. Chapter one examines how the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) explain the Gospel of John. Chapter two shows how the Gospel of John explains Matthew, Mark and Luke. Chapter three relates how Matthew, Mark and Luke explain each other. The final chapter in this part looks at undesigned coincidences that do not easily fit into any of the other categories. In these first four chapters, McGrew considers twenty-seven examples of undesigned coincidences. The author gives the passages of Scriptures involved, pinpoints the details in each passage that relate to the example and shows how the details fit

together and form an undesigned coincidence. Then, she makes some observations that show that the passages are from independent writers, truthfully present the historical evidence and are sometimes interwoven with the accounts of miracles demonstrating that if the historical details are accurate, then, there is no reason to doubt the miraculous details either. When giving this information, the author realizes that the overall argument is cumulative and varies in strength from example to example, yet, provides good evidence of the veracity of the accounts.

Part Two is divided into two chapters: five and six. These chapters show the correlation between material in Acts and the Pauline Epistles. There are twenty specific examples given. The author makes a division between the universally acknowledged epistles of Paul (chapter five) and the other Pauline epistles (chapter six).

Some of the explanations that the author makes concerning the interpretations of the events involving the undesigned coincidence could be challenged. For instance, she believes that the statement by Jesus in John 6:53-56 concerning “eating his flesh and drinking his blood” could be a reference to the partaking of the Lord’s Supper. She recognizes that other biblical interpreters may give different explanations. Was Jesus speaking of the communion of his body and his blood or was he referring to symbolically partaking of His teaching (His words are spirit and life, John 6:63).

McGrew does revive an older apologetic for the integrity and veracity of God’s Word. Her book is not exhaustive, but it is extensive enough to demonstrate her main thesis. She references other works so that the reader can continue studying and developing this argument. She challenges the reader to find his/her own undesigned coincidences through the diligent effort of comparative study.