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Smith's "How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor" (Book Review)

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How Israel Became a People,

by Ralph K. Hawkins. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013. 288 pp.
\$37.99. ISBN 9781426754876

*Reviewed by Daniel Chesney, Acquisitions and Interlibrary Loan,
Southern Nazarene University, Bethany, OK.*

Over the last century as archaeology has uncovered and interpreted more and more artifacts that date to the Biblical time period, there has been increased interest in trying to align that historical data with the Biblical record. One area of great interest has been the original conquest of Palestine and the early history of the Israelite people as described in the books of Deuteronomy through 2 Kings, also referred to as the Deuteronomistic History. Ralph Hawkins' text does not simply offer one possible interpretation of the history of Israel, but instead documents the development of thought on the subject. While Hawkins eventually presents his best understanding of the data, throughout the book he is objective, providing impartial information that allows readers to make their own value judgments.

The text begins by outlining the nature of historiography in the ancient world and the significance of studying early Israelite culture. This introduction is then followed by multiple chapters that outline and integrate information from the Biblical text, archaeological findings within Palestine, and artifacts from neighboring ancient cultures. Hawkins ends by presenting his theory of a slow, long-term cultural development and infiltration process that formed the people of Israel. The work contains an excellent index and a lengthy notes section. While the text is very informative it is still relatively approachable and contains a glossary to help those unfamiliar with some of the more discipline specific terms. This text would make a great addition to a seminary library or any institution that teaches classes on Deuteronomistic history and/or Biblical archaeology.

How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor,

by James K. A. Smith. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014.
148 pp. \$16.00. ISBN 9780802867612

*Reviewed by John E. Shaffett, Director of Library Services,
The Baptist College of Florida, Graceville, FL*

James K. A. Smith's *How (Not) to be Secular* is basically a manual or handbook to Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* which was published in 2007 by Harvard Press. Smith believes that Taylor's book makes an original contribution to our understanding of the secularization process. He thinks Taylor's book is an important book that needs to be read widely. The problem is that Taylor's book is over eight hundred pages. Smith hopes that those who read his book will be encouraged to read Taylor's *A Secular Age*.

Smith's book is meant to be a commentary on Taylor's book. Taylor's book "offers a genealogy of the secular and an archaeology of our angst" (ix). Taylor basically disagrees with the modern secular thesis that with more reason and rationality we have less and less religion. Taylor argues that the secularization thesis is "a long-held thesis that hypothesized that religious belief would decrease as modernity progressed" (20). Smith argues that this has not happened. In contrast, Taylor offers an alternative theory that can be detected in his definition of a secular age: "A society is secular ... insofar as religious belief or belief in God is understood to be one option among others, and thus contestable and contested" (22).

Most of the book is a narrative on how we went from a religious age (the Middle Ages) to a secular age (modernity). Taylor and Smith describe the different characteristics of a secular age. A major characteristic of secularists and the secular age is closing off transcendence. However, even then, secularists are haunted by ghosts. Smith notes, "But almost as soon as unbelief becomes an option, unbelievers begin to have doubts – which is to say, they begin to wonder if there isn't something more" (61). Smith's *How (Not) to Be Secular* does a good job of guiding the reader through a very important book. It shows how we reached this secular age. It shows the different characteristics of modern life. It also shows that even unbelievers are haunted by doubts. Taylor's alternate theory of the need for transcendence in modern life is convincing. This book is recommended for all libraries.

In the Zone,

by Mark Crear. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014.
128 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 9781426772023

*Reviewed by Amy C. Rice, Access Services Librarian,
Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, ID*

It comes as no surprise that two-time Olympic medalist, life coach, and certified counselor Mark Crear would be writing a book aimed at helping others achieve their goals. He writes that some components in an athlete's training regimen may be used by non-athletes to achieve their personal and spiritual goals. Simplified, these components are purpose, preparation, passion, permission, prayer, and practice. Crear intersperses the practical elements of goal achievement with stories of his successes and failures. Yes, failures. *In the Zone* is not likely to give anyone false hope that achieving his or her goals will be easy, but the author includes plenty of encouragement that despite those obstacles, one will succeed.