The extensive parallels between the book of Chronicles and other biblical texts (primarily Samuel and Kings) are one of the staples of biblical scholarship. They have been noted many times and even listed on occasion. However, this book, which is a translation and revision of the author’s Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten: Literarisch-historiographische Abweichungen der Chronik von ihren Paralleltexen in den Samuel- und Königsbüchern (BZAW 226, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), goes significantly further, classifying the differences between Chronicles and its sources according to the kinds of changes they represent and then exploring their implications for understanding the Chronicler’s style and technique.

Readers who have studied the relationship between Chronicles and its sources are likely to recognize many of the examples that are included here; what is new is the way they have been organized into discrete categories. There are nineteen of these, each of which is illustrated with several examples. Some are straightforward, such as those in which the Chronicler has simply added something to or “corrected” his source. These can raise interesting questions as to his purpose, as when 1 Chr 21:2 and 5 gives the name “David” in place of the term “the king” in the parallel 2 Sam 24:2 and 9. Others are due to the new context in which the material has been set, as when a reference to war is added to the
summary statement about Jotham’s reign in 2 Chr 27:7 (contrast the parallel 2 Kgs 15:36), reflecting the Chronicler’s reference to Jotham’s war with the Ammonites in 27:5. Still others fill out the characterization of a particular figure, as when the description of the Egyptian killed by Benaiah (1 Chr 11:23, which is parallel to 2 Sam 23:21) is fleshed out with details taken from the depiction of Goliath in 1 Sam 17:7. And, of course, there are those cases in which divergent traditions must be harmonized, as in the famous reference to Elhanan’s victory over Goliath’s brother (1 Chr 20:5), which resolves the conflicting traditions in 2 Sam 21:19 and 1 Sam 17:50.

However, most of the differences listed here are stylistic. Often these involve the incorporation of literary devices. For example, the repetition of ntn l- in 1 Chr 21:22, of kol hā’am in 2 Chr 7:4-5, and of the root ḥwr in 2 Chr 34:3–5 serve to create frameworks that do not exist in the parallels (2 Sam 24:21; 1 Kgs 8:62–63 and 2 Kgs 23:6, 16–19). Likewise, the root swt, which does not appear in 1 Kgs 22:2 and 32, serves as a Leitwört in the parallel 2 Chr 18:2 and 31. Such changes can also help to make a point, as when 1 Chr 10:9 repeats one verb (nš) where 1 Sam 31:9 and 12 have two different verbs (krt and lqh), thereby emphasizing the contrast between how Saul’s head was treated by the Philistines and his body by the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead. The Chronicler is also fond of numerical groupings, as can be seen by contrasting his arrangement of 1 Chr 3:5–8 and 15 with 2 Sam 5:14–16. In addition, in 1 Chr 2:13 the syntax of the names of Jesse’s two eldest sons establishes a chiasm that is not found in the parallel 1 Sam 17:13.

It should be stressed that these differences are not merely listed but methodically organized, with each group broken down into subcategories along with ample illustrations of each in order to demonstrate how the Chronicler reshaped the material with which he was working. To this are added numerous examples of similar techniques from other ancient sources, ranging from classical works to the writings of Josephus and rabbinic literature.

To be sure, not all of Kalimi’s interpretations are equally convincing. For example, some of the changes that he considers stylistic could as well have been the result of differing Vorlagen, a possibility that is only occasionally noted. Also given less attention than it deserves is the possibility that the differences identified here are the result of linguistic or cultural change, which is sometimes mentioned, as on page 256. However, Chronicles was written centuries after Samuel and Kings, at a time when the language was demonstrably different from what it had earlier been, as a variety of scholars have now documented. Similarly, Kalimi’s explanation of the substitution of ělōhîm in 1 Chr 14:10–16 for the Tetragrammaton (in 2 Sam 5:19–25) as an effort to contrast Israel’s God with that of the Philistines ignores the well-attested tendency to avoid the Tetragrammaton in later periods, a phenomenon that should at least have been considered.
in assessing these passages. On the other hand, he does propose that the phrasing ‘al bêt hammelek in 2 Chr 26:21 is the result of the Chronicler’s failure to recognize that the phrase ‘al habbayit in 2 Kgs 15:5 was a title.

In any case, whatever quibbles one might have about how individual texts are treated, the collective weight of the material gathered here provides strong and convincing evidence in support of Kalimi’s conclusions. Thus, his suggestions of passages in which similar techniques could have been used despite the lack of confirmation from textual parallels are generally persuasive. More importantly, the evidence of the Chronicler’s creativity that has been gathered here will make it difficult to characterize Chronicles as no more than a scissors-and-paste job in the way that it often is. This was clearly no passive copyist. And, of course, since Chronicles is virtually the only biblical work for which we have the actual sources, one could extend these conclusions to speculate as to the kinds of techniques that were likely used by other biblical authors. As a result, this study can provide unique insight into how they worked and, consequently, how they may have understood what they were doing.

Because of its well-organized and thorough documentation, this is a very impressive piece of work. The fact that its approach is so straightforward enhances its value while making it all the more remarkable that no one has done this before. In so doing, the author displays a remarkable breadth of learning, using linguistic, historical, and literary insights to address a fundamental issue of biblical scholarship. Whatever one makes of his individual conclusions, they are valuable and their presentation straightforward. This book will be of immense value for both the data it marshals and the conclusions that it is able to reach from them. Readers who take the effort to work through the meticulous details that are gathered in both the text and the notes of this book will be rewarded many times over.