

Bailey, Mark, and Tom Constable. *The New Testament Explorer: Discovering the Essence, Background and Meaning of Every Book in the New Testament*, Swindoll Leadership Library. Waco: Word, 1999. v + 576 pp. Hardcover, \$29.99.

Mark Bailey and Tom Constable are long-time faculty members at Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas. In the present volume Bailey wrote the material on the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, while Constable wrote on the Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline Epistles, general Epistles, and the book of Revelation. The authors provide essential information on each biblical book regarding authorship, date, geography, and the general argument and theme of the book. At the end of the volume there is a useful bibliography on each NT book.

This introduction to the NT is different from others in many ways. Instead of serving as a summary of scholarly theory and critical literature, it surveys the entire early Christian literature in a comprehensive way. The aim is to make this corpus accessible for beginning students, to aid and encourage them to read the NT.

The book generally communicates a strong sense of each author's integrity and faith. In some ways it deviates from the usual format followed by works of this kind, but the authors have largely succeeded in making a text that is not "over the heads" of relatively biblically illiterate first-year undergraduates, but which nevertheless does not depreciate the content.

Scant attention is paid to less conservative theories regarding authorship, date, or composition of individual books. Bailey and Constable consistently provide the most conservative and traditional information, yet seldom present reasons for rejecting other views.

Some anomalies appear. Matthew is said to stress Jesus as "Savior of Israel and the World" (6), even though that title is singular to Luke, while no reference to Matthew's unique emphasis on Jesus as "Son of David" or "Royal Messiah" appears. It is curious to read that Mark emphasizes the resurrection (98) when in fact it does not describe that event in detail.

Constable briefly presents and answers objections to the authenticity, authorship, and date of 2 Thessalonians and 1 Peter. A similar approach with books that are more often questioned is needed (e.g., Ephesians, the pastoral epistles, and 2 Peter).

Particularly interesting is the way Constable develops and explains the book of Revelation. He presents a perceptive explanation of this book's relation to OT prophecy, especially the book of Daniel.

Since this introduction makes the NT more accessible to general readers, it will be of benefit to pastors and laypersons. Because of its orientation, it will be appreciated most by conservative evangelicals.

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OTIS COUTSOUPOS

Baldwin, John Templeton, ed. *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000. 219 pp. Hardcover, \$14.99.

*Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* could best be compared to an intellectual appetizer, encouraging hunger for more, not bloating the reader with waffle and

superfluous detail, but cutting directly to flavorful core issues and arguments. At a diet-sized 219 pages this fat-free book takes on a weighty argument, logically connecting the substitutionary death of Christ with the global flood of Noah and a one-week creation of life on earth as recorded in Gen 1. The editor, John T. Baldwin, professor of theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary (SDATS), is not the first to have recognized a theological interdependence between these three events, but he may present in this book the most compelling arguments yet put forward for the connection. One of the most unexpected commentators on this subject, the novelist and historian H. G. Wells (*The Outline of History—Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*, 4th rev. ed. [London: Cassell, 1925], 2:616), noted:

If all the animals and man had been evolved in this ascendant manner, then there had been no first parents, no Eden, and no Fall. And if there had been no fall, then the entire historical fabric of Christianity, the story of the first sin and the reason for an atonement, upon which the current teaching based Christian emotion and morality, collapsed like a house of cards.

At its core the logic of *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* is simple: if evolution over long periods of time requires death as part of the creative process, then evolution is inconsistent with the doctrine of atonement. If death was necessary to create man, then the sin of man could not be the cause of death and, consequently, the death of Christ could not act as a substitute for the wage of sin by taking on death in mankind's place. Thus, if the substitutionary death of Christ is true, life on earth must have been created in a short period of time and the fossil record as found in geological strata must be accounted for by processes other than evolution over long periods of time. Baldwin argues that this alternate process for producing the geological column is the global flood of Noah documented in Scripture.

But are the data, the biblical record, and nature logically consistent with a Creation, Flood, or atonement? The collection of essays in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* combine to directly address this surprisingly complex question. Each chapter peels off a subquestion that must be addressed if the big question is to be answered. The eight authors represent a multidisciplinary team, each addressing an area of his expertise. This writing team first gratifies by successfully saying in few words, understandable to an educated lay audience, what represents a lifetime of work. Several then go on to courageously trespass outside of their disciplines. In one of two chapters he authored, Baldwin reveals a startling understanding of geology. Scientist and informed lay people gain a new degree of respect for theologians when, as Baldwin shows, there is at least one who has taken up the challenge of understanding a discipline that makes claims directly contrary to his theology. Baldwin clearly grasps the limitations of arguments he is making, and this is one of his greatest strengths. For example, after listing some regional evidence of catastrophic events which could be evidence for a global Flood, he is honest and rigorous enough to caution, "Such examples do not prove the biblical flood, but illustrate a new direction in conventional geological theory pointing toward regional catastrophe" (117). Honest evaluation of evidence characterizes this publication, setting it apart from any number of equally well intentioned, but

less rigorous, works that touch on related themes. While some may refer to evidence, this book shows and explains the data.

The nine chapters of *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* deal with separate questions, all of which convincingly argue necessary conclusions if the doctrine of atonement is to be consistent with the biblical or scientific evidence. Gerhard Hasel, former dean of the SDATS, penned as his final words the second chapter, a vigorous defense of the literal 24-hour days of creation. Randy Younker, associate professor of Old Testament and biblical archaeology at the SDATS and director of the Institute of Archaeology, reconciles apparent inconsistencies between Gen 1 and 2 in a masterful explanation of the Hebrew text that was fully understandable to this native English speaker. Combining the Hebrew text with masterful logic, Richard Davidson, J. N. Andrews Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and chair of the Old Testament Department at the SDATS, demonstrates that the Bible clearly intends to convey the idea of a global flood while excluding the possibility of a local catastrophe. Up to this point the book has established what the Bible has to say. Ariel Roth, retired director of the Geoscience Research Institute, picks up the stream of logic and, using the Grand Canyon as his example, explains how geological data can be shown to be consistent with fast acting violent processes such as a flood and lack characteristics expected to result from slow processes over long periods of time.

Having established what the biblical and geological data are saying, the logic of *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* turns on the sixth chapter which, like the first, is authored by John Baldwin. In the first chapter Baldwin argues that from Genesis to Revelation the Bible consistently invokes the Creation week. In chapter 6 he draws together his argument for unity between the OT and NT, along with Younker's argument for unity between Gen 1 and 2, the literal meaning of "days" demonstrated by Hasel, and the global nature of the flood argued by Davidson and Roth, to convincingly show why each, if true, is consistent with the doctrine of atonement while alternatives to the conclusions drawn in the previous five chapters are logically inconsistent with this doctrine. Subsequent chapters bolster this argument by showing either problems with alternative ideas or its consistency with other commonly-held doctrines. Norman Gulley, professor of systematic theology at Southern Adventist University, summarizes the intellectual bankruptcy of current evolutionary theory. Problems resulting from the adoption of theistic evolution when trying to reconcile evolutionary theory and the biblical account of origins are addressed by Ed Zinke, a former pastor and research scholar at the Biblical Research Institute. Martin Hanna, a Ph.D. candidate at the SDATS, closes the book arguing that nature and Scripture complement one another as they both comment on the same being, Jesus Christ the Creator. He thus argues against the temptation to create a dichotomy between science and theology.

There is one major flaw in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*: it is directed at a vastly smaller audience than it should be. It has been published for a Seventh-day Adventist audience and not the vastly wider evangelical Christian audience that desperately needs books of this depth and quality. This defies the very kind of elegant logic the book is so rich with. About three sentences, aside from the chapters authored by Zinke and Hanna, would require minor modification to expand this book's appeal

to a much broader readership. Even the Zinke and Hanna chapters could easily be modified without in any way compromising the elegance of the book's writing or logic. Clearly there are still publishers out there unaware of the wide interest in science, evolution, and Scripture. In an age when Phillip Johnson's new book *The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism* can gain instant best-seller status, a broad market is clearly in place for books that deal with the origin of life. *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* should be a player in the big leagues and not arbitrarily confined to the Seventh-day Adventist sideline.

Another frustration stems from one of the books strengths: its brevity. Because it is short, there are few opportunities to get bogged down in boring waffle; but while each essay makes a complete point, there are times when all of the arguments for a specific position are not addressed. For example, Randall Younker does an excellent job of demonstrating the coherence of Gen 1 and 2 without paying even passing reference to the argument of William Shea that the two chapters combine to form a chiasmic structure indicating the hand of a single author producing a coherent written product (W. H. Shea, "The Unity of the Creation Account," *Origins* 5, no. 1:9-38). *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* exposes the reader to an array of fascinating evidence and elegant logic that effectively shows the interrelationship between the Creation, Flood, and atonement; but once readers are hooked, many will want to dig deeper into parts that pique their interest. Maybe this is not a shortcoming, but the book's greatest strength.

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TIM STANDISH

Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. lxiv + 1245 pp. Hardcover, \$75.00.

The new Revelation volume in the NIGTC series by G. K. Beale is, along with Aune's three-volume commentary in the Word series, a monument to scholarly detail. Taken together, these two massive commentaries provide an unprecedented collection of detailed resources for the study of Revelation. Not only is each commentary impressive in its own right; each tends to be strong in areas where the other is relatively weak.

Both volumes have impressive introductions. But while Aune's commentary is relatively weak in its handling of allusions to the OT in the book of Revelation (see my detailed analysis in "The Book of Revelation and the Old Testament," *Biblical Research* 43 [1998], 61-69), Beale's introduction offers, in my opinion, the best short discussion of the subject available (76-99). The same could be said of Beale's outstanding discussion on the use of symbolism in the Apocalypse (50-69). These two parts of the introduction are worth the price of the entire book. A third exceptional section of the introduction is Beale's convincing analysis of the role of Rev 1:19 in the structuring of Revelation (152-170). The exhaustive bibliographies of previous research in Aune's work, on the other hand, along with his detailed analyses of the manuscript tradition and of the grammar and vocabulary of the Apocalypse, are of such a quality as to require little repetition