

conceding the pattern of first-century exegesis, how likely is it that just starting with only the fact of crucifixion, the present passion narrative would have emerged out of reading the OT alone?

There are a number of less important matters that could be raised in evaluating the book. Perhaps the most significant of these is the need for a concise summary chapter at the end which brings together all of Crossan's conclusions about the history he has been investigating. It is a long book (586 pp. in its main body), and on the first reading one is left wondering whether Crossan has actually accomplished what he set out to do. The reader is left contemplating the character of the Christian God in the final chapter: a worthy topic, but one that appears to be yet another element that is marginally attached to the central concern of the book. It is only when one goes back to survey the book as a whole that one discerns the massive achievement of Crossan. A summary chapter would make this much more accessible to the reader.

These matters, and host of smaller details will ensure that the work will generate much further debate. But this is probably more a positive than negative thing. Crossan and those working with similar methodologies have brought new possibilities to the study of Jesus and his first followers. The book's undoubted merits, its controversial conclusions, the significance of the subject it treats, and the reputation of its author, all conspire to make this book one which is likely to become a standard work of reference.

Avondale College
Cooranbong, N.S.W. Australia

ROBERT K. MCIVER

Dembski, William A. *Mere Creation: Science, Faith and Intelligent Design*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998. 475 pp. Paperback, \$19.99.

William Dembski, a leader in the design theory movement, defines "mere creation" as "a theory of creation aimed specifically at defeating naturalism and its consequences" (14). The book *Mere Creation: Science, Faith and Intelligent Design*, edited by Dembski, contains eighteen papers presented at a 1996 conference held on the campus of Biola University and sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ through its Christian Leadership Ministries division. In addition to the papers, Henry F. Schaefer III, the third most cited chemist in the world, contributed a foreword; Dembski wrote the introduction; the prominent University of California, Berkeley antievolutionist and author Philip Johnson contributed an afterword; and Bruce Chapman, former United States Ambassador to the United Nations Organizations in Vienna and president of the Discovery Institute, provided a postscript. Most other contributors are well-known participants in the origins debate.

Because of the broad definition given to "mere creation," this conference was open to those of all faiths who question the naturalistic origin of life. In fact, many of those presenting papers published in this book are not evangelical Protestants; examples include: Michael Behe, Catholic; Mark Reynolds, Eastern Orthodox; and David Berlinski, Jewish. While the collected papers in *Mere Creation* are written from many different philosophical, theological, and professional perspectives, all question the ability of the neo-Darwinian mutation/selection model to explain what is observed in nature.

All the authors are experts in the fields in which they write, and the vast majority pursue academic and research careers.

Following Dembski's introduction, *Mere Creation* is divided into five sections, starting with papers directed specifically at unseating naturalism, followed by those dealing with design theory, and then moving into the specifics of biological design. Philosophy and design are the subject of the second-to-last section, followed by a final section dealing with design in the universe. This sequence provides a structure that is probably as logical as any that can be imposed on a series of papers written by independent authors. Each paper stands alone, although some share common themes and thus complement one another. An example of this would be Siegfried Scherer's paper, "Basic Types of Life," followed by a paper authored by Sigrid Hartwig-Scherer, "Apes or Ancestors?" which uses the basic-type paradigm to examine fossils thought to be related to humans. This pair of papers also illustrates how the ideas of creationists in the past have stood the test of time and still fit remarkably well with what is observed in nature. The basic-type idea was promoted from the 1940s through 1970s by Frank L. Marsh, the idea being that basic types of organisms with the potential to produce highly variable descendants were created, and from these have arisen the variety of organisms seen today.

The confident tone of *Mere Creation*, coupled with its rigorous scientific approach to problems with both naturalism and creationism, is refreshing. Many of the papers contain brilliant insights and stimulating suggestions for further research to test the theories that are put forward. The greatest strengths of this book are its provision of a sound philosophical basis from which to pursue investigation and the bold theoretical framework that is presented. One of the major criticisms of those who invoke a designer is that they present no scientifically testable theories from which to work. As a consequence, critics have made the valid point that all creationists do is try to shoot down evolutionary theory while providing no theory of their own to stand or fall under the rigor of scientific examination. *Mere Creation* addresses this problem brilliantly and has the potential to jump-start research into origins from a creationist perspective. The ideas that are presented may or may not stand up under close scrutiny, but by providing a basis for research *Mere Creation* takes a dramatic and substantial step forward.

A number of the chapters in *Mere Creation* are written by authors whose ideas have been well publicized already. For example, few who are interested in the origins debate have not heard of Michael Behe's book, *Darwin's Black Box*. Behe's paper in *Mere Creation*, "Intelligent Design Theory as a Tool for Analyzing Biochemical Systems," briefly reviews his earlier thoughts on irreducible complexity and builds off this idea, suggesting lines of potential work dealing with levels of cellular activity higher than the biochemical machines discussed in *Darwin's Black Box*. Behe's paper serves as a very useful introduction to his thinking for those who are not familiar with his earlier work and also gives insight into the development of his ideas. A number of other papers by authors whose thoughts are well known reflect this pattern.

The very thing that makes *Mere Creation* exciting, its rigorous approach to creation, also means that all the papers published in this volume will not be readily understood by every reader. These are scientific papers, not papers written for a general

audience. As a molecular biologist, I found the philosophical and design theory papers to be reasonably understandable, as they should be for most readers. On the other hand, some papers use unnecessarily obscure terminology. Examples of this are the papers on basic types mentioned previously, in which scientific (Latin) names are used for different taxonomic groups, with only occasional hints at what the groups being discussed actually are. To get a clear picture of what is being discussed requires looking up the meaning of Latin names like *Estrildidae* (finches), *Maloideae* (a subgroup in the rose family), and *Geeae* (still a mystery to me). This distracts unnecessarily from understanding and complicates the concepts being presented.

Mere Creation is a brilliant compilation of papers presenting exciting new theories about nature within the context of creation. It is not for the casual reader, but it is for those who want to learn some of the latest and best thinking that is going on in this area. As a resource for understanding how a creationist perspective is capable of producing new and exciting ideas and suggesting profitable lines of future research, *Mere Creation* is an invaluable resource. It belongs in the collection of every scientist who deals with questions surrounding the origin of life and also in the collections of pastors and theologians who wish to knowledgeably address apparent conflict between the prevailing evolution paradigm in science and a literal interpretation of the Bible.

Andrews University

TIMOTHY G. STANDISH

Dittes, James E. *Pastoral Counseling: The Basics*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999. 173 pp. Paperback, \$16.95.

In the last five years, more than twenty books have been written with the title "Pastoral Counseling," Dittes's work being one of the latest. This book, according to the author, is a record of what he has learned in 45 years of teaching pastoral counseling at Yale Divinity School (ix). Therefore, no primary or secondary sources of information are presented; there are no footnotes and no bibliography.

The book raises many interesting and important questions related to the work of the pastoral counselor, such as: "How can I help?" "How can I make a difference?" "How do I counsel the same people I have to preach to and the same people I have to ask for a housing allowance?" The author pretends to answer those "How" questions with the "What" question: "What is pastoral counseling?" And throughout the book, several working and practical definitions are presented: Pastoral Counseling is "the pastoral response of providing the spiritual climate that maximizes the opportunity for the parishioner to grow in personhood and the capacity to cope. The pastoral counselor empowers the parishioner to identify the problem and discover resources" (10); "swimming alongside [the counselee], that is pastoral counseling" (23); pastoral counseling cannot change the facts of poverty, injustice, abuse, oppression, "But pastoral counseling is profoundly committed and effective in energizing people to address such facts, changing what they can and coping creatively as they must" (161). He finishes his book with a very practical definition: "To reclaim commitment and clarity, to beget faith, hope, and love, to find life affirmed—this is the conversion of soul that sometimes happens in pastoral counseling" (161).

Throughout the book the author presents what he considers to be the different