

threatening to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq if the United Nations does not take control of the country.

Yet it is not just Spain and the American-led coalition who have been shaken. The BBC correspondent James Robbins stated: "All Europe's governments have been *shaken* by the scale of the Madrid attacks and may feel more vulnerable".² These words were spoken in the immediate aftermath of the bombings. Following the turnaround in the election, which most commentators attribute to the bombings, the feeling of being shaken has only been heightened. The possibility that terrorists could influence a na-

tional democratic election on such a scale has increased the feeling of vulnerability amongst governments.

Britain, the Tarshish power, looks to have lost an important ally in Europe. On the other hand, Europe appears to have gained because the incoming Spanish prime minister is keen to increase cooperation with Europe, especially with France and Germany. So although "the powers of heaven" have been shaken, we should remain steadfast and lift up our heads, knowing that our redemption is near.

2. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3500452.stm>.



Reviews

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Two creationist books: a cautionary note*

John Nicholls

THIS REVIEW concerns two recently published books by the same author defending the Genesis account of Creation. Whilst they both have much commendable material, they also present an unbalanced view of the age of the earth and contain several erroneous doctrines and some poor exposition.

The design argument

The first book, *Hallmarks of Design*, is in many ways the less unacceptable of the two. The author's basic thesis is the design argument, which is, of course, the argument of Scripture itself, for example in Romans 1:19,20 and Psalm 107:8,15, 21,24,31. He takes six hallmarks of organisms and their environment that could only be produced by an intelligent designer:

- irreducible mechanisms
- complete optimum design
- added beauty
- extreme similarity in features
- extreme diversity of kinds
- man-centred features.

The author, who is Reader in Engineering Design at the University of Bristol, makes a compelling case for the "irreducible human knee joint"—which is a four-bar mechanism—being the work of a designer. He argues that the sixteen essential characteristics of the knee joint could not possibly have evolved at one and the same time, and that they must therefore have been designed and brought into being by an intelligent Creator. He uses the same type of argument about flight mechanisms of birds, the earth's ecosystems and the abundant evidence of optimum design in living things. Many engineers strive to copy this latter feature, regarding nature as the perfect design handbook.

There follows his argument about added beauty in nature. By this he means features whose only purpose is to produce a beautiful effect,

* *Hallmarks of Design*, Dr. S. Burgess, One Day Publications, second edition, 2002, £7.99, and *He Made the Stars Also*, same author and publisher, 2001, £6.99.

and he goes into a great deal of detail about the peacock's tail and about bird song. This latter topic has been quite widely studied, and the reviewer found this a particularly interesting part of the book.

A chapter follows on the extreme similarity in features of living creatures. Evolutionists claim that such similarity is a proof of evolution, but it can equally be claimed that the similarities are evidence of one designer Who made all to a similar pattern. Further chapters on the diversity of living creatures, man-centred features in creation, the unique design of man and the unique beauty of man are all well written and argued.

Doubtful ideas

All the book up to chapter 12 would be acceptable to believers in Biblical Creation, and there is much useful material that can be used in combating evolutionary beliefs. The chapter entitled "The biblical creation account", however, is where the reviewer starts to part company with the author. In this chapter it is proposed that the earth (and the empty heaven, containing no sun, moon or stars) were created on the first day. This may be true, but the Scriptures do not give us the age of the earth. We are told that living things, including man, were created about 6,000 years ago. The psalmist seems to imply that the physical earth is ancient (Ps. 90:2), and our pioneer brethren were content to accept the scientific opinion prevailing in their time that the earth is very old. In the absence of clear Bible teaching on the age of the earth, we conclude that it is not a matter affecting our salvation and that we are not intended to know the answer to the question this side of the Kingdom. There is no room for the dogmatic view of the author.

In the same chapter of the book there is also a faulty exposition of the use of the term 'heaven' in Scripture. It is clear from passages like Deuteronomy 32:1 and Isaiah 1:2 that 'heavens' can be understood as symbols of rulers and governors, both mortal and immortal. The author apparently does not accept this and so is led to take some such scriptures literally, resulting in his belief (stated on page 221 of the book) that the universe is going to be removed and replaced by a new one. In the last chapter of the book, entitled "Answering the questions of life", the author expresses his belief in an immortal soul which lives for eternity in heaven, and so shows himself to be a believer in the serpent's lie.

Making the universe

The second book, *He Made the Stars Also*, presents the same unbalanced view of the age of the earth but to a much greater extent, and contains a lot more wrong doctrine. There are some chapters with material that could be used to support the creationist view and to combat evolutionary ideas. In his first chapter he gives ten reasons why Genesis 1 is literal. However, he never entertains the possibility that God created the heaven and earth separately from the work of the six days.

Chapter 2 is about the Big Bang theory. He sets out arguments against the theory, both philosophical and technical. He says that most of the evidence is for stars decaying and disappearing, and that the overall trend is for a decaying universe. However, this conclusion goes against frequent sightings by the Hubble telescope of many young (blue) stars. In a section called "Admissions by secular scientists" he cites two writers. The first, from an article in the *New Scientist*, indicates serious weaknesses in the Big Bang theory. The second citation is just a single sentence. The reviewer feels his case against the theory would be more convincing if several more objections had been quoted. The Big Bang theory, which makes no mention of the Creator, is not an acceptable theory to believers in the Scriptures, but the author's case against it on technical grounds seems thin.

Intelligent design

The chapter "Clockwork motion in the Universe" is about the stable and precise planetary orbits, which are evidence of intelligent design. This chapter, and the next one on how the earth is designed for life, are excellent, providing plenty of material for arguments supporting creation and against evolution. The same can be said of the following two chapters, firstly one on how the stars are designed for the earth, then another on the beauty of the universe. The author quotes from a book entitled *Majestic Universe* by S. Brunier, which states that, if the solar system were located in the 'bulge' of the Milky Way galaxy, the night sky would be ablaze with light and the moon and stars would not be seen clearly. From the same book by Brunier, the author makes the point that a project commenced in the 1980s to count and name all the stars we can see had to be abandoned because the task was too immense. As the psalmist says, only our God can do this (147:4).

But peppered all over the book are doctrinal errors. The error of immortal soulism, expressed in the first book, appears on page 175 of this book. The author believes that Jesus is God (p. 175), as does the author of the foreword (p. 8). He believes in a supernatural agent of evil, Satan (pp. 45,90,111,150,160). Again the idea that the literal universe will one day be dissolved and replaced by a new one crops up (p. 30 and elsewhere).

He also makes mistakes in his interpretation of the seed of Abraham (p. 176), saying that the seed of Genesis 15 are those that trust in the same God as Abraham. But it is clear from this chapter that the natural descendants of Abraham, who went down into Egypt, are the seed in question (v. 13). The author clearly does not appreciate the hope of Israel and the teaching of the apostles in the New Testament.

The second section of the book deals with the current search for extraterrestrial life. Apart from the doctrinal errors, there is much that we can agree with here and material that could be used in preaching work. The search for extraterrestrial life consumes vast sums of money, which could be used to feed the hungry and provide healthcare for the sick. Politicians propose to

send men to Mars in the hope of finding evidence of life that once lived on the planet. Other topics that the author considers in this section include life on other planets, UFOs and the analysis of radio waves from outer space for messages from intelligent life out there. For over forty years now the radio waves have been analysed for messages from such beings, but with no success.

There follows a critique of science fiction and a chapter on the rebellion of modern man against God, which is likened to a modern-day Tower of Babel.

In summary, these two books need to be read with care. The geocentric view adopted throughout is refreshing and is a fair reflection of the Scriptures. There is some material that could be made use of in preaching. But the doctrinal errors and the unbalanced view of the age of the earth mean that a recommendation is not warranted.

Editor's note

As the issues raised in this review have previously been thoroughly aired in *The Testimony*, it is not proposed to publish further correspondence about them.—J.N.



Correspondence

Comments on articles appearing in the magazine are always welcome, and should be addressed to the editor in whose section the article appears.

The covenants and Israel today

I very much appreciated the editorial in the February issue of *The Testimony*, particularly in its drawing attention to the fact that it is only by being “in Christ” that Jews, as well as Gentiles, can be counted as “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”.

Alongside this there are numerous verses which indicate that being a descendant of Abraham (and Jacob) *of itself* is no sinecure. There are John’s words to the Pharisees and Sadducees: “think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father . . .” (Mt. 3:9). There is the response of Jesus to the Jewish leaders’ claim that “Abraham is our father” when he said: “If ye were Abraham’s children [implying they were not], ye would do the works of Abraham” (Jno. 8:39); they did not, and as a result the kingdom

of God was to be taken away from them “and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Mt. 21:43). There are Paul’s words: “he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly”; and, “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 2:28; 9:6); and the whole thrust of the contexts in which these, and other like verses, occur.

Now it seems to me that, amongst other things, one of the consequences of all this is that the Israelis of the present time have no Divine right to the land they occupy, nor to adjacent land on which they may have designs. They have no right under the Abrahamic covenant because “circumcision” of itself “availeth” nothing (Gal. 6:15). They have no right under the Sinaitic covenant, even if they were obedient to it, because that has been superseded. It follows that neither of these covenants has any bearing on questions about whether the Israelis should acquire more