

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Readers are invited to submit reviews of current literature relating to origins. Mailing address: ORIGINS, Geoscience Research Institute, 11060 Campus St., Loma Linda, California 92350 USA. The Institute does not distribute the publications reviewed; please contact the publisher directly.

THE CANYON OF CANYONS

GRAND CANYON: MONUMENT TO CATASTROPHE. 1994. Steven A. Austin, editor. Santee, CA: Institute for Creation Research. 284 p. Paper, \$19.95.

Reviewed by R.H. Brown, Yucaipa, California

As stated in the Preface, this book is intended to serve as a “field guide to the geology, biology, and human history of the world’s greatest natural wonder,” prepared from a “distinctly creationist viewpoint.” The treatment is in nontechnical language at the undergraduate college level and provides an easy introduction to geological concepts and terminology. Scholarly documentation is provided for readers who wish to investigate technical details. The text is profusely illustrated with 120 excellent line drawings and 50 color photographs.

Suggestions concerning the origin of the various geologic and paleontological features associated with the Grand Canyon are discussed from both a long-geologic-age viewpoint and a recent-flood-geology viewpoint. At the present state of knowledge, neither of these viewpoints has produced a 100% successful explanation for all these features; but readers of this book may expect to be surprised and/or assured by the large proportion of features for which the biblical viewpoint provides a scientifically superior explanation.

The authors’ model for development of the Canyon is based on mega-erosion and associated tectonic events, resulting from two episodes of catastrophic drainage of immense post-Flood lakes (inland seas). Suggestions are given for research that might elaborate and/or produce additional support for their model.

Chapter 6 gives a compilation of radioisotope-age data significant to an understanding of the formation of the Grand Canyon and provides

what may well be the best and most thorough treatment of radioisotope age with respect to the actual associated real-time significance.

The treatment of modern biology in the Canyon (Chapter 8) contains interesting data on plant and animal adaptation for desert survival, and gives impressive examples of evident design. This chapter can serve as a good introductory treatment on the presumed mechanics of evolution from simple to complex organisms.

The usefulness of the book is enhanced by the glossary in Appendix E. Appendix D provides a list of questions that may be useful for group study based on the book.

The high technical standard otherwise exemplified by this book is compromised by the assertion that “a fallen 90-foot fruit tree with ripe fruit and green leaves still on its branches has been found in frozen ground of the New Siberian Islands” (p 193). No reference is given by which the reader can check the authenticity of such an unusual find.

Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe combines biblical interpretation with technical description and modeling. A reader who is mainly interested in the technical/scientific aspects may not appreciate all the accompanying biblical interpretations. For example: did God introduce “death and bloodshed into the world, that we could have a doorway through which we could walk in order to be saved” (p 3), or are death and bloodshed natural consequences of sin? Does the smaller variety of organisms today represent a purging of corruption (p 150), or is it a consequence of more limited capability of the post-Flood environments? The effectiveness of this book as a witness for biblical creationism would be enhanced without such theological overlays.

In promotion of the Canopy Theory, Chapter 9 moves from observation and good scientific analysis into speculation. Although widely advocated in creationist literature, this theory is based on questionable exegesis of Genesis 1:6-8, and is thoroughly contradicted by basic considerations of natural science.¹ To have the pre-Flood atmosphere contain 40 ft³ of water per square foot of Earth surface would require either surface temperatures greater than 220°F (water as vapor), or an unsustainable cloud cover (water as droplets or ice crystals supported by upward air currents). Elsewhere the editor of this book has proposed a physically justifiable “fountains of the deep” (Genesis 7:11) model for the basic sources of sufficient water to inundate the Earth during the flood.²

With due recognition of the negative aspects noted above, I can unhesitatingly give this book the highest recommendation for the library of anyone interested in the geology of the Grand Canyon or in the validity of the record in Chapters 6-8 of Genesis.

ENDNOTES

1. Morton GR. 1979. Can the canopy hold water? *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 16:164-169.
2. Austin SA et al. 1994. Catastrophic plate tectonics: a global flood model of Earth history. *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Creationism*. Pittsburgh: Creation-Science Fellowship, p 609-621.