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Book Review

All Things New: The Significance of Newness for Biblical Theology, by Carl B. Hoch. Baker Book House, 1995. ISBN 0-8010-2048-4. \$19.99 (paper). 365pp.

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Although in practice, most Christians read and study the New Testament more than the Old, the reality is most would be hard pressed to tell you exactly what is so „new“ about the New Testament. My former New Testament professor, Carl Hoch, helps alleviate that embarrassing problem through the publication of All Things New. In this important contribution to the field of New Testament theology, Hoch sets out material many of his students were privileged to learn under his capable teaching at the Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary for almost twenty years.

Hoch's objective is to explore the New Testament concept of „newness“ and situate it within a biblical theology framework that is rich with exegetical and textual analysis. The book is divided into three major sections:

Part I The Commencement of Newness

Part II The Configuration of Newness

Part III The Significance of Newness

In Part I he lays out the distinctive place for the concept of newness in Luke's redemptive-historical framework as set forth in both his Gospel and Acts, with a special emphasis on the distinctive nature of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2.

In Part II he explores all of the New Testament themes of newness including the themes of new wineskins, new teaching, new covenant, new commandment, new creation, new man, new name, new song, new Jerusalem, new heavens and earth, all things new.

In Part III he explains the significance of newness for the individual believer and for the church in its corporate manifestation as the body of Christ.

The book contains two appendices that elucidate Hoch's views on the relationship between the church and Israel (Appendix A: „The Israel Problem: Is the Church the New Israel?“ and Appendix B: „The Term Israel in the New Testament“).

The book contains a complete bibliography as well as end of chapter citations. Indicative of his expertise as a classroom teacher, Hoch also includes a number of helpful diagrams and figures that support and illustrate his development of the theme of newness in the New Testament. The one complaint I have with these helpful additions, is directed more to the publishers (Baker Book House) than to Hoch. In nearly every case, the diagrams or figures are displayed in such a way in the text that it is impossible or extremely difficult to reproduce them for classroom purposes. One would have to copy and paste a whole new document together in order to make handouts for classroom distribution. Many of the diagrams and figures would lend themselves to such use but either the publishers wanted to make this possibility difficult or they just didn't think about it when doing the layout of the text. Another editorial irritant was Hoch's habit of using the cumbersome „this writer“ and other such third person circumlocutions. Modern writers are no longer hesitant to identify themselves in the first person. While harping on Baker, I might also lodge my complaint about the color of the book and its role in making Hoch's picture on the back cover look like he is wearing lipstick. I can testify to the fact that he doesn't, but based upon the texture of this picture, I would be hardpressed to prove it!

Enough nonsense, now regarding the substance of the book and its contribution to New Testament theology.

Hoch's view as set forth in *All Things New* is that the incarnation and advent of Jesus inaugurates a new age that contrasts in many ways with the old and yet retains some of the same features. The redemptive-historical significance of the advent of Jesus is that it demarcates the two ages of redemptive history. In this sense, Jesus begins a new age. The *olam habbah* (the age to come) invades the present age (*olam hazzeh*) in advance of its anticipated arrival. The death and resurrection of Jesus, viewed as a „new covenant,“ provides the basis for a „new creation“ that stands in stark contrast to the „old creation“ in Adam. Those who trust in Jesus are made „new“ and are therefore urged to act in accordance and in harmony with this new status in Christ. One of the ways in which this is done is to „put on the new man.“ This call to ethical obedience forms the core duty of all those who profess faith in Christ. This new status looks forward to a time of fulfillment when the newness of the new creation reaches its fullness in the new heavens and new earth.

This volume makes a needed contribution to New Testament theology by helping to fill a gaping hole in studies on the theme of newness. I think a similar contribution could be made by a study of the same theme in the Old Testament. Hoch's treatment of the theological implications of this theme, especially as it relates to the problem of the relationship between the church and Israel, places him squarely in the camp of progressive dispensationalists. As defined in *Progressive Dispansationalism* (Blaising & Bock), „Its major distinctive is found in its conception of the progressive accomplishment and revelation of a holistic and unified redemption. That redemption covers personal, communal, social, political, and national aspects of human life. It is revealed in a succession of dispensations which vary in how they stress the aspects

of redemption, but all point to a final culmination in which all aspects are redeemed together“ (56). Consequently, many of his criticisms are targeted to debated issues within this dispensational tradition and to an evangelical ecclesiology with which many may not be familiar. In spite of this shortcoming, his exegetical analyses are rigorous and his biblical theology portions are sound and worthy of consideration. Even if I were not a former student of Dr. Hoch, I would still offer a hearty endorsement of this important contribution to the field of biblical theology. No one claiming to be a student of biblical theology should be without this book. It offers a thorough and comprehensive treatment of a subject that has received scant attention in the past.