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Stott's "Basic introduction to the New Testament" (Book Review)

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The prefatory materials promise a look at the big picture for evangelical believers on the premise that “the particularity of each New Testament author was in no way smothered by the unique process of inspiration” (p. ix). To that end, the book devotes one chapter each to Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, Paul, Hebrews, James, Peter, and Revelation, examining how biography helped mold message. The book fulfills that purpose.

Chapters rest on material published in the early 1950s. Language and format have been updated. New material has been added. Long paragraphs of tightly packed compound sentences are now bulleted lists. A chapter each on Mark and Matthew displaced a single chapter on the message of the gospel.

It is as if Stott and Motyer interviewed these men, reviewed their literary work, and then reported on their findings. There is great advantage in the results: a treasure of scholarly, devotional, and homiletical insights. We connect the upbringing of James the brother of Jesus with his letter to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. The potency of the personality of Peter shows in his letters. Paul deals with having persecuted the church in more than one paragraph of his writings.

There is some disadvantage in this process. The impact of Matthew as tax collector is over wrought. The treatment of the Pauline corpus in one chapter of thirty pages does not give opportunity to hear the distinctive voice of the Pastoral Epistles nor any other sub-set of Paul’s letters. There is far more advantage than disadvantage.

One must go elsewhere for fuller treatments of critical questions raised by scholarship. The book of Jude is not treated at all. This book is an introduction to authors of the New Testament and their works.

The greatest value of this book: All of this value comes from authors who affirm the authority of scripture. A joy to read. Highest recommendation, within the scope of its purpose.

Reviewer
Michael Bain, Point University