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Book Reviews

Bruce, F. F., *A Mind for What Matters: Collected Essays of F.F. Bruce* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990, 325 pp, paper, \$19.95) reviewed by Clint Banz.

The late F. F. Bruce, former biblical scholar and writer, needs no introduction to pastors and teachers. His works have proven valuable not only for their quality of scholarship, but also for their clarity. This coupled with the fact that he writes from an evangelical position make the digestion of his works a worthwhile investment of time and energy. This book is no exception. It contains eighteen essays which have all been formerly published over a period of half-a-century. All but two of the essays concern the following subject areas: early Judaism, New Testament, the early church, and Christian Brethren. The remaining essays are "The New Testament and classical studies" and "The Bible and the faith" respectively.

As with most books of this nature, its strengths are associated with its weaknesses. Although providing a sample of Bruce's expertise exposes the reader to the different areas in which he has specialized, it consequently limits one from receiving a thorough discussion of the related subject. Moreover, some essays specialize in areas which may be less pertinent to pastors than to scholars. Nevertheless, each essay provides a clear, though scholarly presentation of the subject from a committed evangelical scholar.

This book would be a worthwhile gem in a pastor's library and a must in all Christian college and theological seminary libraries. The publisher is to be commended for making available these lectures and essays in one volume.

Criswell, W.A., Great Doctrines of the Bible: Eschatology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Library, Ministry Resources Library, Paige Patterson, ed., 1982, 153 pp, cloth, \$12.95) reviewed by John M. Garber.

This book is the final volume in a series by the author dealing with doctrinal subjects. Appropriately the subject is Eschatology. With the eloquence of a pulpit master, Dr. Criswell makes very readable, understandable, and delightful future things from the death of the body or rapture of the church to watching for the Lord's return.

Dr. Criswell holds to the traditional, historical dispensational position of Bible believers concerning the sequence of events from the pre-tribulation rapture of the church and the immanency of the return of Christ. His conclusions are well supported on Scriptural foundations.

The book includes fifteen chapters, five of which this reviewer found of unusual interest in making easily understandable doctrines well known to theologians but not always easily comprehended by laymen. Chapter three: Pre - Mid - Post Tribulationists. Chapter seven: Historical Teaching on the Lord's Return. Chapter eight: What Do the Prophets Say. Chapter nine: Why I believe in a pre-millennial Faith. Chapter fourteen: Seventeen Signs of His Coming. Pastors and students might well use this text as a guideline for teaching or preaching these truths to help in making them easily understood. Though not necessarily designed for Bible Institute or Sunday School lesson it would be invaluable for such use.

The other volumes in the series include: Bibliology, Christology, Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, Christian Life and Stewardship and Prayer, and Angelology.

Garrett, James Leo, Jr., Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 658 pp, cloth, \$35.00) reviewed by Warren Vanhetloo.

Building on over twenty years of teaching in Southern Baptist schools, Garrett has presented a summary of theology intended for classroom use and for general use by Christian workers. His intensive consideration of Scripture and his dedicated scholarship are to be commended. All who use the book will benefit personally and professionally.

This is the first of two volumes, and deals with roughly half the scope of usual theological treatments: Revelation, the Bible, God, Trinity, Creation, Providence, Angels, Man, Sin, and the Person of Christ. The pattern of investigation is usually, first, what the Bible says, second, a survey of how this area has been understood throughout history, third, contemporary views, and

fourth, a summary. A careful reader will profit much from this development, especially in the section dealing with the attributes of God.

Although the volume is labeled a systematic theology, the author presents extensive surveys of contemporary thought, much of which is contemporary philosophy applied to theology rather than positions developed from sound exegesis and respect for the Word of God. Liberals and Barthians are quoted right along with believers.

Garrett does not respect nor espouse verbal-plenary inspiration. The author presents a section directly based on Scripture and then often turns to an extensive summary of men's ideas. It is much better to let God speak. He opts for *suprema Scriptura* rather than *sola Scriptura* (180-82). He favors "virginal conception of Jesus" rather than "virgin birth" (595-7).

Those who buy every theology as it comes into print will obtain this book. Advanced students will find it valuable. The pastor who buys a theology only once in ten years will await another in this decade.

Sproul, R.C., *Abortion: A Rational Look at an Emotional Issue* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1990, 207 pp, paper, \$9.95) reviewed by John M. Garber.

The clearly stated and well accomplished purpose of this book is to examine the ethical implications of abortion. The matter is examined from the perspectives of biblical law, natural law, and positive judicial law. Since the author is convinced that abortion-on-demand is evil the intention of the book is to be a thesis against abortion. Both sides of the argument are handled thoroughly and well.

Some of the questions raised and clearly answered include: Is abortion a form of murder? Does abortion involve willful destruction of a human being? When does life begin? If abortion violates the sacredness of human life, does not capital punishment violate the sacredness of human life as well? How much should government be involved in the issue? Does a woman have absolute right to her own body? Is the fetus a part of the woman's body or simply attached to and contained therein?

Since the feminist movement professes to champion the cause of human dignity it is inconsistent to find that the pro-abortion or pro-choice movement is closely aligned. Abortion demeans human dignity as well as the dignity of women.

The history of the pro-choice position is given in chapter nine. In the early 1970's, before the *Row vs. Wade* decision, militant advocates of legalized abortion met to adopt a strategy to change the abortion climate in the United States. They concluded that the fiercest opposition would be from the Roman Catholic Church so they enlisted the mainline Protestant denominations which were already involved in the feminist movement. They

were not asked outright to endorse the pro-abortion position but rather they suggested a less-offensive middle ground position called "pro-choice." Outside the church the secular people were encouraged to adopt a pro-choice position on the American principle of freedom of choice.

While there is little or perhaps no controversy among Bible believers whether or not abortion-on-demand is wrong, the ability to give reasonable arguments rather than emotional opinions might be wanting. This book would prove to be an invaluable addition to any pastor or Christian counselor's library. The appendix includes Pro-Life Resources, a good selected bibliography as well as a useful index.

Vasholz, Robert I., **The Old Testament Canon in the Old Testament Church** (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, 105 pp, cloth, \$49.95) reviewed by Warren Vanhetloo.

Tasty morsels abound throughout this seemingly staid consideration of a difficult area of study, the purpose of which is to weigh and discard unbelieving scholarly opinions by setting forth clear facts. A Bible-believer will inwardly shout for joy as the author shows how Scripture solidly establishes canonicity. Compilation of the Old Testament is clearly distinguished from the recognition of divine inspiration of the books included in the canon.

Chapters include: The Old Testament Rationale for Canonicity; Canon and the Pentateuch; Moses' Legacy; The Function of Prediction; Transmission of the Hebrew Bible; Transmission in Process.

The development of each chapter is scholarly and thorough. Footnotes are clear. References to Scripture abound. By nature of the study, God's self-revelations, proclamation, inscripturation, much of what the author covers falls in the area of Biblical Theology, properly understood as the history of God's self-revelations.

Although this study will be used most by specialists, every serious investigator should consider it. Pastors with a continuing interest in the Old Testament will certainly benefit from an immediate reading and future reference.