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EVANGELICALS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES: A SURVEY OF BASIC BOOKS

By Mark Lau Branson

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REFERENCE VOLUMES

- Bromiley, Geoffrey (ed.). *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Eerdmans). Volumes I (1979) and II (1982) of four indicate that this will represent some of the best in mainstream evangelical scholarship. Bibliographies conclude major articles.
- Brown, Colin (ed.). *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Zondervan, 1975-78). This 3-volume set provides extensive comments on theological concepts. More usable than Kittel for most students and pastors, although the unexpected placement of some materials requires that one depend on the indices for guidance.
- Douglas, J. D. (ed.). *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Tyndale House, 1980). An update of the standard *New Bible Dictionary*. This 3-volume, full-color resource should soon be out as a single volume. Do not toss your old *NBD*, it is still very serviceable.

OLD TESTAMENT INTRODUCTIONS

- Bush, F. W., David Hubbard and William LaSor. *Old Testament Survey, The Message, Form, Background of the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1982). Arranged according to the Masoretic text (law then prophets then writings). Each book is set in its historical surroundings, then the major messages are expounded. Demonstrates a helpful approach to critical biblical study that appreciates the actual content of a book as we have received it in the canon.
- Childs, Brevard. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Fortress, 1979). Childs' gift is that of uncovering the theological core of a book. Several helpful essays on canonical studies are provided, along with fairly thorough bibliographies.
- Harrison, R. K. *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1969). This is the classical conservative work on OT introduction. Although idiosyncratic and polemical issues occasionally receive more attention than the actual message of OT writings, Harrison has provided a valuable storehouse of archeological, historical, and literary information.

NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTIONS

- Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction* (InterVarsity Press, revised 1981). A thoroughly evangelical volume which contributes to the ongoing discussions about dates, authorship, historical reliability and purpose, then proceeds to offer comments on the content.
- Harrison, Everett F. *Introduction to the New Testament* (Eerdmans, revised 1971). Though briefer than Guthrie, focuses more often on the purpose and content of each book.
- Kummell, W. G. *Introduction to the New Testament* (Abingdon, 1966). Though conservative for a German, probably to the "left" of American evangelicalism. Do not bypass this one though; Kummell is too valuable in discerning the messages of the NT in light of the historical background of the writings.
- Martin, Ralph P. *New Testament Foundations* (Eerdmans, 1975-78). Demonstrates how one can use critical tools without losing sight of the central messages of the books. Weak on socio-ethical concerns, stronger on theological issues. While some conservatives will disagree with Martin's comments on the authorship of some books, his consistent expertise in Pauline thought suggests that his judgments deserve careful consideration.

BIBLICAL HISTORY—OLD TESTAMENT

- Bright, John. *A History of Israel* (Westminster, revised 1981). Historical, cultural and archeological insights come to bear on OT times, with helpful comments on theological implications.
- Bruce, F. F. *Israel and the Nations* (Eerdmans, 1963). Though briefer than Bright, Bruce offers a learned commentary on the events, peoples, and activities of the OT era.

Kitchen, K. A. *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 1966). Compares OT accounts with what is known about other cultures in the eastern Mediterranean.

BIBLICAL HISTORY—NEW TESTAMENT

Bruce, F. F. *New Testament History* (Doubleday, 1974). Provides essential information about culture, governments, religions, and events as they correlate with the life of Jesus and the early years of the Christian church.

_____ *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (InterVarsity Press, revised 1960). After examining details surrounding Luke's accounts, Bruce argues that the case for biblical accuracy is solid.

Moule, C. F. D. *The Birth of the New Testament* (Harper & Row, revised 1982). Working with form critical tools, Moule examines the formation of the NT canon. Though often critiqued for his conservative conclusions, Moule says that the evidence points that way!

LIFE OF JESUS

- Harrison, Everett F. *A Short Life of Christ* (Eerdmans, 1968). Major events and teachings carry the reader through Jesus' life. Harrison appreciates contemporary scholarly debates, providing here the classical evangelical work. Bibliographies follow each chapter.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* (Eerdmans, 1977). Focuses on the methodology of historical study and then interacts with issues like supernatural happenings and the nature of the gospels.
- Stein, Robert H. *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings* (Westminster, 1978). In this exposition of the content of Jesus' teaching content and methods, we actually have a noteworthy study on his central actions in relationship to those teachings. Several topical essays add to the value of this book.
- Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus* (Eerdmans, 1972). Argues that the personal and social ethics taught by Jesus were not "interim" but central to his age and ours. Yoder penetrates central issues in the life of Jesus which others treat superficially.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

- Boer, Harry. *The Bible and Higher Criticism* (Eerdmans, 1981). Seeks to examine the problems in methodology and the biases among scholars. A worthwhile critique.
- Brown, Colin (ed.). *History, Criticism and Faith* (InterVarsity Press, 1976). Essays by Brown, Bruce, France, and G. Wenham offer valuable introductory comments on issues in biblical studies: mythology, the authenticity of Jesus' words as recorded in the NT, how one's faith relates to historical events.
- Maier, Gerhard. *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (Concordia, 1977). Another critique, a la Boer, with helpful insights.
- Ramm, Bernard. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Baker, 1970). This classical evangelical text examines various types of biblical literature and discusses the appropriate tools for study.
- Virkler, Henry. *Hermeneutics, Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Baker, 1981). A helpful conservative text written to walk a student through the interpretive process.

OLD TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

- Bimson, John. *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* (The Almond Press, 1981). A thoughtful, scholarly case for a 15th century exodus.
- Bright, John. *The Authority of the Old Testament*. (Baker, 1975). To encourage churches to pay more attention to the OT, Bright surveys study methods and emphasizes the relevance of these teachings for today. Learned on scholarly issues, sensitive to contemporary appropriation.

NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

France, R. T. and David Wenham. *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* (Paternoster, 1979). A valuable collection of essays concerning the gospels and mat-

Mark Lau Branson, General Secretary of Theological Students Fellowship, has recently authored *A Reader's Guide to Evangelical Books*, to be released later this year by Harper & Row.

ters of historicity.

- Kistemaker, Simon. *The Gospels in Current Study* (Baker, revised 1980). A conservative introduction to issues in gospel study.
- Ladd, George E. *The New Testament and Criticism* (Eerdmans, 1967). Examines critical approaches (linguistic, literary, historical, form, and comparative religion methods), offers definitions, evaluations and his own proposals. Easily the most valuable for students who are beginning to explore biblical studies.
- Marshall, I. Howard (ed.). *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Eerdmans, 1977). Bruce, Smalley, Goldingay, Thiselton and others on contemporary biblical criticism. Overall it reflects the strength and vitality of British NT scholarship.
- Morris, Leon. *Apocalyptic* (Eerdmans, 1972). A valuable introduction to apocalyptic literature, its characteristics and uses in the NT.
- Ridderbos, Herman. *The Authority of the New Testament Scriptures* (Baker, 1963). A conservative critique of modern biblical criticism, with an appreciative eye toward study methods that are indeed helpful. Sees the uniqueness of the Bible in that it is far more than a historical book.
- Thiselton, Anthony. *The Two Horizons, New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Eerdmans, 1980). In examining the works of Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer and Wittgenstein related to interpreting texts and language, Thiselton opens up new possibilities for more sensitive readings of biblical texts.

GUIDES TO COMMENTARIES

- Childs, Brevard S. *Old Testament Books for Pastor and Teacher* (Westminster, 1977).
- Goldingay, John and Robert Hubbard. *Old Testament Commentary Survey* (TSF, revised 1981).
- Thiselton, Anthony and Don Carson. *New Testament Commentary Survey* (TSF, revised 1977).

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY—GENERAL

- Bruce, F. F. *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Eerdmans, 1969). A valuable introduction to thematic study that spans both testaments.
- Childs, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Westminster, 1970). Surveys the history of the discipline with a call for re-writing the agenda.
- Purkiser, W. T., Richard S. Taylor and Willard S. Taylor, *God, Man and Salvation* (Beacon Hill, 1977). Theological themes receive helpful comments from a Wesleyan-Holiness perspective.
- Baker, D. L. *Two Testaments: One Bible* (InterVarsity, 1976). Surveys various approaches to the question of continuity, defends the essential unity of the Bible.
- France, R. T. *Jesus and the Old Testament* (InterVarsity, 1971). A careful study of Jesus' appropriation of OT passages.
- Ladd, George E. *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Eerdmans, 1964). A topical study that explores both testaments.
- LaSor, William. *Israel: A Biblical View* (Eerdmans, 1976). The relationship of Israel to the church is discussed with a conclusion that the two are not totally merged into one NT concept.
- Longenecker, Richard. *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Eerdmans, 1975). In discussing interpretive methods of the NT era, Longenecker examines their cultural appropriateness—for the first century and for ours.

OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

- Clements, R. E. *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach* (John Knox, 1978). Especially helpful on methodology, then approaches various themes: the God of Israel, the People of God, the OT as Law, the OT as Promise.
- Dyrness, William. *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (InterVarsity, 1979). Brief, thematic developments of key topics, with attention toward theology.
- Goldingay, John. *Approaches to Old Testament Theology* (InterVarsity, 1982). Helpful both as a commentary on different methods and in outlining profitable approaches to discover the

relevance of the OT for today; useful bibliography.

- Hasel, Gerhard. *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Eerdmans, revised 1975). Brief, understandable survey to current writers and methods, along with Hasel's own agenda.
- Kaiser, Walter. *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Baker, 1978). Works with a centerpiece of "promise" to provide a thread through OT thought, but not as successful as Martens.
- Martens, Elmer. *God's Design—A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Baker, 1981). God has an agenda, and OT events and literature provide the strands the indicate how that plan is woven. Special essays on liberation theology, power, warfare, and others make this an even more useful contribution.

NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

- Bruce, F. F. *The Message of the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1973). A brief, thematic overview of central theological issues in the NT.
- Dunn, James D. G. *The Unity and Diversity of the New Testament* (Westminster, 1977). Values the unique features of each NT writer, often emphasizing more surface differences while missing underlying continuity. However, Dunn's work deserves appreciation, and the unifying center (the congruence between the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ) cannot be far off.
- Goppelt, Leonhard. *Theology of the New Testament, Volume 1* (Eerdmans, 1981). The wait was worth it! Goppelt's ability to knit together responsible exegesis and rich systematic theology is noteworthy. The book is subtitled "The Ministry of Jesus in its Theological Significance." Compare Goppelt's 280 pages with Bultmann's 32 pages on Jesus—little more need be said.
- Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Theology* (InterVarsity, 1981). By arranging his material topically instead of the more common separation by writers, Guthrie is able to indicate the crucial unifying themes that receive the attention of most or all authors. Often not in touch with other NT scholars, and misses ethical issues that move beyond concerns of individual sanctification.
- Hasel, Gerhard. *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Eerdmans, 1978). As a companion to his OT volume, explores various scholarly approaches and brings his own proposals.
- Ladd, George. *A Theology of the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1974). Works with four divisions (synoptics, John, Paul, others) to develop theological strands. While this brings out common elements in each strand, it undervalues the uniqueness of particular authors or books. However, Ladd does provide valuable guidance on the core issues and interacts competently with other views.

NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTOLOGY

- Longenecker, Richard. *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (Baker, 1970). The OT development of the words "messiah" and "Lord" feed into Jewish Christianity, and Longenecker thus indicates some valuable diversity in NT theologies.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (InterVarsity, 1976). Explores Jesus' own christology and how other early thinking moved into Pauline teaching. Very helpful.
- Morris, Leon. *The Cross and the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1965). An author-by-author survey on the atonement.

PAULINE THEOLOGY

- Bruce, F. F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Eerdmans, 1977). A biography, theology, and history which lets Paul work in his own cultural settings and interact with its politics, economics and religions. Excellent topical development of important themes, though weak on Paul's interfacing with OT Law. Still, a most valuable resource on the man and his theology.
- _____ *Paul and Jesus* (Eerdmans, 1974). Paul's interpretation of Jesus receives expert attention.
- Longenecker, Richard. *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (Baker, 1964). A brief introduction to Paul's life and theology.
- Ridderbos, Herman. *Paul, An Outline of His Theology* (Eerdmans, 1975). Paul sees God's redemptive work as an historical activity and Ridderbos uses that as the center for this valuable theological tome.