

Book Reviews

Brisco, Jill, **Women Who Changed Their World** (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991, 95 pp, paper) reviewed by Gayle Tuttle.

Jill Brisco is an intelligent and practical author. She presents material in a creative and thoughtful way. I would not use this particular Bible study, however.

There are several subtle inferences concerning women and their roles in the home and in the church. For example, in the Bible study on Eve, the question is posed as to whether Genesis 3:16 is prescriptive or descriptive. In her discussion of Miriam the question of a woman's exercise of her gifts is discussed briefly. The relationship of Deborah and Barak is also the topic of one study. Did the Lord use Deborah because He could not find a man?

Although Jill Brisco does not discuss her views at length, they are interjected throughout. It seems to me that this is more dangerous than stating them dogmatically. Many Bible studies in this series are valuable, but I would be afraid to use this one.

Campbell, Donald K. and Jeffery L. Townsend, general editors, **A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus** (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992, 290 pp, cloth, \$21.99) reviewed by Charles E. McLain.

The aim of this volume is to present "exegetical evidence for premillennialism" (1). The desire of the editors is "to present the best exegetical evidence for premillennialism in a positive way . . . not to attack amillennialism or postmillennialism (13).

Before presenting the exegetical work the book offers a discussion of hermeneutics from a premillennial perspective (chapter 1). Following this initial discussion are 12 chapters dealing with passages significant to premillennialism. The final chapter summarizes the discussion of the previous chapters.

As a multi-authored work, the volume enjoys the benefit of several specialists dealing within their own areas of expertise. However, as with any multi-authored work, the scholarship, readability, etc. varies from author to author and chapter to chapter.

This reader found most of the chapters to be well-written, informative, well footnoted, easily understandable, and quite beneficial. Although, I am not sure what the "new consensus" of the title is, I did find the book to be a welcomed and refreshing look at this scriptural teaching.

Carder, Dave; Earl Henslin, John Townsend; Henry Cloud; and Alice Brawand, **Secrets of Your Family Tree: Healing for Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families** (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991, 298 pp, cloth, \$17.99) reviewed by Charles E. McLain.

Secrets of Your Family Tree is a recent addition to the growing number of books, both from secular and religious backgrounds, dealing with the topic of dysfunctional family and abuse recovery. As our society opens the closet doors to long concealed secrets, we are discovering that the "good old days" were not really so good. This 'discovery' is being made not only throughout society as a whole but also throughout Christian society that is willing to deal with such depressing but valid truths.

The authors of this volume all minister in counselling areas of local church and para-church ministries or in private practice. Their background is reflected in their writings. While not approaching their subject from purely theological or exegetical perspectives, they still seek to establish Biblical principles and examples on which to base their discussion.

The reader is warned in the introduction that "Christians tend to over-sanctify the families described in the Bible, so there is new ground to cover in terms of seeing them in a different, more realistic light" (15). At times this reader wondered whether or not the "new ground" did not over-psychologize the Biblical families instead of over-sanctifying them.

The reader is also warned that "this is painful material to cover, especially if your family of origin . . . is dysfunctional to one degree or another" (15). Some may find the illustrations in the following chapters to be appalling or even melodramatic. Painful and appalling it should be, since the authors are dealing with the results and evidences of man's fallen nature. However, melodramatic it is not. The case illustrations within this volume are all too real and all too frequent in dysfunctional families.

The authors seek (Part 1) first to establish Biblical patterns and principles by looking at the families of David and Isaac. Having laid a Biblical foundation, the authors continue (Part 2) by surveying factors which contribute to dysfunctional families. The concluding section (Part 3) deals with recovery.

The book is not intended to deal with any specific abuses but to lay down general principles and to point out general characteristics and patterns. The benefit of a multi-author volume is that it allows a specialist to deal with his particular area of expertise. With several authors several areas of expertise related to the topic of dysfunctional families are able to be combined into one volume. As with any multi-authored work, the benefits, readability, etc. will vary from author to author and chapter to chapter.

Whether believers and pastors like it or not, ministry involves working with people. And working with people involves ministering to their problems. And ministering to their problems involves dealing with dysfunctional families and abuse. And dealing with dysfunctional families and abuse requires more than to simply 'Take two verses and call me in the morning.' Dealing with dysfunctional families and abuse takes a long term commitment and understanding. One avenue toward understanding is education through volumes such as *Secrets of Your Family Tree*.

Hill, Andrew E. and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991, 461 pp, cloth) reviewed by Michael S. Jones.

The discovery of new materials and methods of study which impact the understanding of the Old Testament never stops. Therefore, Old Testament survey/introduction books are particularly vulnerable to time. *A Survey of the Old Testament* is an introduction which is written from a conservative perspective, yet interacts with the plethora of current methodology and material.

In their preface, the authors state that their purpose is "to bring together the most significant data from Old Testament historical and literary backgrounds, critical and technical introduction, Biblical commentary, and Old Testament theology . . . challenging the reader to a serious investigation and personal appreciation of God's truth as revealed in the Old Testament" (xiv, xv). The first chapter deals with the historical, cultural, geographical, literary, and religious background of the Old Testament, and its formation and canonization. Chapters 2 through 5 treat

the individual books of the OT. Each book is investigated concerning its writing, background, outline, purpose and message, structure and organization, and major themes. Each section ends with questions for further study and suggestions for further reading (xiv). The final chapter discusses the relation of the Old Testament to New Testament studies, and reviews the major impacts of the Old Testament on Christian theology.

Hill and Walton believe that Israel was not unaffected by the milieu in which it lived, and that therefore studying this milieu may shed light on the OT (see Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*). Thus light can be shed on the Decalogue by comparing it to a Neo-Hittite suzerain treaty (116, 144), or on Job by observing the retribution principle in ancient Near East theology (271-2). Likewise, higher critical methodologies may provide useful insights into the OT (eg. the partial Mosaic authorship of Exodus, 106). But Hill and Walton are also aware that, via Divine intervention, the OT can be quite independent of its milieu (eg. Canaanite worship versus true worship, 147ff).

A Survey of the Old Testament is a well-written, up-to-date introduction to the Old Testament. Its authors are both conservative and informed. This book is well suited for an advanced college or entry level seminary textbook. Its (sometimes excellent) outline and theme sections make it a useful reference for pastors as well.

Hoekema, Anthony A., **Saved by Grace** (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 277 pp, cloth, \$22.95) reviewed by Warren Vanhetloo.

This is the third of the author's "three expository studies in central topics of Reformed theology." The first was *The Bible and the Future*, the second, *Created in God's Image*. The author studied under Louis Berkhof and was professor of systematic theology at Calvin Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, for twenty years. Chapters treat the Gospel call, regeneration, conversion, repentance, faith, justification, and an enlarged chapter on sanctification.

Advanced students will profit from word studies and exegetical emphases. There is much of practical benefit throughout, but the reader needs to be aware of serious typical Reformed flaws. The author holds to simultaneous rather than chronological or causative relationships at the moment of turning to Christ. He does, though, retain a logical sequence, that regeneration must precede repentance and faith. Consequently, too,

he accepts that covenant regeneration (apart from Gospel) may precede by many years the conversion (repentance and faith) of covenant children. The covenant child, although (supposedly) regenerate, is yet under condemnation until he accepts Christ by faith (173), a paradox that the author seems to find acceptable.

The author in ten pages, from Scripture, shows faith to be a human response to the Gospel; then from the Reformed system claims it is a divine not a human work (more properly, it is not a work in any sense; it is recognizing that we cannot save ourselves and letting God save us). Concerning a carnal Christian, the author sets up a straw man (that self is *exclusively* on the throne, or that they are *totally* enslaved by the flesh, 25), which he flays ineffectively.

The serious Bible student when using this book needs to be alert to the arbitrary additions and improper definitions typical both of Calvinism and of Reformed theology. To the author, election is causative, not cognitive. By the label "paradox" he employs the ultra-calvinistic identification of sovereignty while attempting to assert human responsibility. A pastor will be wise not to loan this book to the immature.

Neff, Miriam, Devotions for the Working Woman (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991, 165 pp, paper) reviewed by Gayle Tuttle.

Devotions for the Working Woman is a collection of brief devotions drawn from the book of Proverbs. The book contains sixty devotional topics applicable to the working woman. Some of these topics include: dealing with criticism, moral discretion in the workplace, leadership, planning, and meddling.

As diverse as the needs of women are so are the answers supplied in the Book of Proverbs. Miriam Neff does an excellent job of weaving together the need and the antidote. The devotions are brief, the discussion is limited, but to the point. It would be a good supplement for devotions for a busy woman. It would be a good resource for a pastor's wife who desired to know some of the problems of working women.

Welch, Edward T., Counselor's Guide to the Brain and Its Disorders: Knowing the Difference Between Disease and Sin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991, paper, \$15.95) reviewed by Mike Chodan.

Is there a difference between sin and disease when the brain and its disorders are being evaluated? This enigma has gone through the mind of many pastors and counselors as they have dealt with many individuals. This topic is relevant today because of the unusual behavior displayed by certain types of people. There is a disparity between the medical model of brain research and the Christian view that states we are moral beings before God. The result can easily be excusing behavior that is sinful or overreacting to those who have biological problems.

This book addresses the subject of brain disorders in three steps. In the first step a foundation is laid Biblically and biologically, followed by an explanation of the brain and its relationship to certain behaviors of the body. Also, the diagnostic instruments are discussed in respect to their benefit and validity. The second step in this discussion focuses on the realm of several psychiatric diseases which are prevalent today. The final major section looks at misdiagnosis: mistaking sin for sickness or vice versa. A stirring conclusion ends the book.

There is a battle being fought today over the human heart. This struggle is explained just before the major discussions. This is the clash between two worlds: the Bible and brain sciences. As Bible believers, we stand upon the revelation of Scripture. There must be a caution not just to categorize all sickness as a result of personal sin. The need is that of continually searching the Word of God and updating our understanding of people, sin, disease, and personal responsibility. We must be alert to medical advances and interpret properly the data. The author points out a need to have a proper understanding of the difference between Biblical and secular vocabulary. For example, words like moral, organic, mind, and psychological must be defined accurately. The believer has a pivotal doctrine of sin which is foundational to truth. On the other hand, secular vocabulary like abnormal, functional, and schizophrenia can be relative. One premise secular people model is reductionism. This means all behavior can be reduced to a biological source. To them all problems are some type of disease, caused by biological factors that must be treated through medicine or therapy from the "experts." Their glaring omission is ignoring the presence of spiritual life and claiming the body is the cause for these diseases (15-26).

In evaluating a book, there are usually strengths and weaknesses. The strength of this handbook on brain disorders is a very obvious one. This is one of the first books that takes to task the question: "Is it disease or sin?" in relationship to the brain. The author, Edward T. Welch is qualified, both in the spiritual exegetical understanding along with a

medical knowledge of disease. Being a biblical counselor has given him much practical insight and illustrations of the discussed.

The misdiagnosis section is also a strength to alert the counselor that there must be a continual caution as remedies are given out freely to the problems of life. The most usable tools will be exercised in the course of time. This book is usable because of the subject index at the end of the book. An index to common drugs and medications is helpful, which is the number one factor why brain disorders occur. There is also an extensive bibliography to help those who would realize the need to study more in a specific area. The book is easy to follow along in because of how the material has been laid out.

The weaknesses are very few in this book. The content, although not exhaustive, is very helpful to this area of the counseling field. It is important because the brain controls the behavior of the body. There could have been a little more extensive discussion of the Biblical foundations. However, I realize the author's point, that many counselors have either gone from the extreme of calling all problems sin or seeing them as only a disease. Perhaps more of a warning could be given to people concerning the therapies and practices of the medical and secular counseling world. The names of certain places or programs to avoid and keep believers steered away from could have been given. The balance of biblical and medical information was very evident. However, a biblical index and listing for each specific problem could be helpful in counseling.

My recommendation would be that this is indeed a tool that is invaluable for the pastor or counselor. I would hesitate to put it in the hands of the average lay-person, because of the lack of dogmatic answers to each of these diseases or disorders. It could possibly confuse that person who is looking for the answer with no variables. However, a trained, serving lay-person could benefit greatly from this material.