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Peter, Stephen, James and John (Book Review)

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Book Reviews

by John M. Zinkand

Peter, Stephen, James and John, by F.F. Bruce. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979. 159 pages, \$3.95. Reviewed by Wayne Kobes, Assistant Professor of Theology.

F.F. Bruce is one of the most prolific and most respected authors in the evangelical world today. Bruce, who recently retired from the University of Manchester, has written numerous books on topics ranging from the evaluation of the New Testament manuscripts to important events in the history of the early Church. Presently he is serving as the general editor of the New International Commentary on the New Testament.

In the area of New Testament studies Bruce has gained attention for his Pauline studies. Although the present work is on non-Pauline Christianity, Bruce's expertise in Pauline studies provides valuable insight into this study as well. As Bruce himself notes, Pauline and non-Pauline Christianity must be studied in light of one another in order to understand either.

The student of the New Testament finds at his disposal a wealth of material focusing on the writings of the Apostle Paul. However, writings which focus on the non-Pauline movements and writings of the New Testament church are not as common. In fact, many Christians will readily admit that their knowledge of the non-Pauline sections of the New Testament is rather incomplete. *Peter, Stephen, James and John* provides valuable insights into important figures who did much to shape the early church.

One of the serious problems facing anyone attempting to undertake such a study of non-Pauline Christianity is the scarcity of reliable extra-biblical sources and limited New Testament material. Bruce's approach to this challenging task is that of a cautious, responsible examination of the New Testament writing which sheds light on the subject, as well as a critical consideration of various early church writings. Bruce is to be commended on his determination to avoid speculation; speculative approaches are often appealing but are also inappropriate and unfruitful.

Peter, Stephen, James and John is a collection of four lectures presented in 1979 as the inaugural series of the Didsbury Lectures at the British Isles Nazarene College in Manchester. In the first chapter Bruce focuses on the Apostle Peter's central position in the early church. By careful examination of Biblical and extra-Biblical material, Bruce concludes that Peter provided a point of unity in the early church which could not be provided by Paul or James because they appeared to many Christians to represent the extremes of orthodoxy. Bruce writes:

Peter had it in him to be a stone of stumbling or to be a foundation stone. Thanks to the intercession which his Master made

for him in a critical hour, he strengthened his brethren and became a rock of stability and a focus of unity. (p. 48)

Chapter two is concerned with the role that Stephen and other Hellenists played in the early church. Numerous references to the Hellenists in the New Testament writings are examined and a view of this movement in the early church is proposed. The study is especially helpful for those who desire to gain an understanding of the influence of Apollos and Alexandrian Christianity.

The third chapter deals with James and the Church of Jerusalem. Often underestimated, James was a figure of great significance in the early church. When one reads the New Testament record, he finds conflicts between the Hellenists and the Hebrews. Bruce's careful analysis of the relevant material helps one gain a much clearer understanding not only of the form this conflict

took, but also of the effect this had in the later periods of church history.

In the final chapter the author leads his readers through a study of John's influence in the church. He discusses the questions of the authorship of the Gospel of John and of the book of Revelation. Were there two Johns? Relevant material from the Bible and from the church fathers is considered and a responsible answer is proposed.

Bruce's *Peter, Stephen, James and John* is a concise yet enlightening study which will provide new insight into one's reading of the entire New Testament. Bruce's style is exciting and, above all, clear. The book is not intended for the scholar who is a specialist in the field, but for the inquiring Christian who wants to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible. Once again Bruce does not disappoint his readers.

The Edge of Contingency: French Catholic Reaction to Scientific Change from Darwin to Duhem, by Harry W. Paul. Gainseville, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1979. 213 pages, \$15.00. Reviewed by Russell Maatman, Professor of Chemistry.

Modern natural science came into being in the seventeenth century as a result of a scientific revolution. Although there were other fundamental changes in scientific thinking in the next two centuries, it is generally held that the next scientific revolution was the revolution in physics which occurred in the twentieth century. Prior to this second revolution, mostly in the last part of the nineteenth century, the growth of science and technology was phenomenal. These great changes in the world of thought and the effects of these changes on our culture continue to be analyzed by historians and philosophers of science. With respect to these changes this book examines the controversy which took place within one culture—the French Catholic community—during one period of time, the last half of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century.

The relation between natural science and the Catholic faith was discussed vigorously in an intellectual climate in which Darwinism spread, some Catholic philosophers attempted to revive Thomism, and many accepted the concept of modern miracles, such as those which were held to have taken place at Lourdes. Paul documents in Chapter 2 the Catholic philosophical objection to Darwinism. In the eyes of many the evolutionary idea was an abomination because, they held, being cannot be derived from nothing. Furthermore, Darwinism was often equated to

materialism and positivism. Paul shows in Chapter 3 that in spite of these objections Darwinism was eventually accepted by much of the French Catholic scholarly community. An early leader of the trend in this direction was D. Cochin, who wrote *L' evolution et la vie* in 1886. Cochin maintained that Darwinism did not exclude the idea of creation. Cochin suggested that there could have been three creations, one each for ponderable matter, the living germ, and the intelligent soul. He insisted that evolution was a part of God's plan; therefore positivistic science, which insisted that scientific activity was to be carried out without any reference to God, was in error.

Paul's analysis of the debate over Darwinism can be compared with that of Neal Gillespie in his book, *Charles Darwin and the Problem of Creation* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1979). Gillespie shows that Darwin debated vigorously with those who accepted evolution but clung to divine purpose. Paul does not seem to show well enough the difference between Darwinism and what Gillespie terms "providential evolution." Perhaps some of the problem stems from Paul's style; he emphasizes the details of debates involving a large number of people over a span of many years, while summary statements are, when given, often not clear.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the work of Albert de Lapparent, a geologist who began his work in the philosophy of science in 1905. Lapparent held that