

An Appreciation of Professor F.F. Bruce

Evangelical scholarship has lost a real stalwart in the homecall of Professor Bruce. In his early years as a biblical scholar at Leeds University, after a period as a Classics lecturer in the same University, he stood out among fellow scholars for his firm conservative stance. This was in the period when liberalism was in the ascendancy and it called for courage and determination to resist the current trends. He subsequently held professorships at Sheffield and Manchester. He was also actively associated with Tyndale House, Cambridge, and did a great deal to encourage younger scholars to devote themselves to the defence of the biblical faith. For many years he regularly attended the annual study groups held in Cambridge, where his contributions were always highly valued. He will be remembered world-wide as a teacher who took a great interest in furthering the work of his students. He was meticulous and remarkably punctual in corresponding with anyone who sought his advice.

It is, however, for his own writings that he will be most remembered. He was a prolific author whose writings never failed to reach a high standard of scholarship. His early work on the Greek text of Acts has remained a classic treatment. But his ready pen supplied commentaries on many of the New Testament books. It was the Pauline epistles that he made his special focus of interest. While his style could not be described as scintillating, his books provided a remarkable and penetrating insight into the text of Scripture. He was essentially a careful exegete whose comments were backed by wide research. Indeed, his knowledge of scholarly literature was phenomenal. Although he produced most books on the New Testament he was one of that rare species of scholar who was equally at home in the Old Testament as in the New. In fact, he achieved the rare distinction of being President of both the Society of Old Testament Studies and the even more prestigious Society for New Testament Studies. It was because of this dual interest that he was appointed to the Rylands professorship of Biblical Criticism, a position he filled with considerable distinction until his retirement.

I will remember being with FF on a tour of the Holy Land. The highlight was at Caesarea harbour where FF gave an off-the-cuff account of Paul's association with the area. It was masterly.

Those who knew Professor Bruce well discovered behind his highland reserve a real warmth and a genuine concern. He will be greatly missed in those circles devoted to the pursuit of biblical scholarship which he did so much to develop. This appreciation would not be complete, however, without mention of the loyal support he always received from his wife, Betty. Our sympathies are extended to her in her personal loss.

Donald Guthrie
