

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for the *Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Journal* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_cbrfj.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_cbrfj.php)

our traditions, we tended to speak to the Bible, so that it failed to speak to us. It is not for nothing that Bruce so often quotes in his addresses his father's advice to accept no interpretation on trust, until we have seen it in Scripture for ourselves. Then he has opened our minds to the richness of Biblical insight available today—a contribution of immense importance if we are to avoid the intellectual inbreeding which has brought disaster to so many movements. Then—and by no means least—he has shown us how, in matters theological, we may disagree and yet behave like gentlemen!

F. F. B. would certainly disclaim any suggestion that the recently published *A New Testament Commentary* reflected his influence in Brethren churches—he himself transcends it, and there must be many things in it with which he would disagree. Yet, to compare that Commentary, in its freshness and open-ness of approach, and its inter-action with general scholarship, with so much that was representative of Brethren writing of a generation ago, is to understand just what has been accomplished by the influence and example of, pre-eminently, Bruce himself. Discussing the commentary recently in relation to common misconceptions of Brethren, an eminent Anglican evangelical, who had himself published a highly commendatory review of it, remarked to me: "It has opened the eyes of a great many people". When my reply referred to the influence of F. F. Bruce, it received a hearty agreement.

Bruce's work extends far beyond Brethren: the *Tabula Congratulatoria* of the *Festschrift* bears witness to that. Yet, among all those who have signed it, none could have added their names with more genuine feeling and sincerity than those of his friends from among Brethren who appear in that list. F.F.B., we thank God for you.

## F. F. BRUCE AS A TEACHER

DAVID F. PAYNE\*

As a young undergraduate, one's first impressions of F. F. Bruce as a teacher were his clarity and lucidity. If comparisons are odious, undergraduates certainly make them—and F.F.B. came out well from any comparison with one's other lecturers and teachers. The content was nicely judged; each of his lectures was 'meaty', but yet did not demand the talents of a stenographer from the student taking notes.

The erudition was recognisable from the start, but somewhat disguised by his ease of delivery, and his remarkable avoidance of abstruse (and German!) terminology. I think one therefore came to appreciate the depth of the erudition better in retrospect. The 'footnotes' were not uttered, of course, but any question from a student immediately elicited one, without the least hesitation or playing for time. There is no doubt that every lecture had been prepared in depth.

The courses at Sheffield University, it was laid down, were to be strictly 'non-doctrinal'—an impossible goal. But Mr. Bruce (as he was till

\*Mr. D. F. Payne is Lecturer in Semitic Studies in The Queen's University of Belfast.

1955) observed the spirit of this law scrupulously, and no student could have claimed that he had been in any way indoctrinated. A breadth and a choice of viewpoint were always offered, and offered in the most objective way; at the same time, shrewd and sensible criteria were presented, so that the student was not left befogged by a vast and conflicting mass of undigested opinions. This technique had the effect of forcing one to think for oneself, to reach one's own conclusions, and to learn facility in applying criteria. At the same time, it gave one opportunity to adjust one's thinking to unpalatable facts or theories, without losing one's spiritual balance. The attempt to shock was never one of F.F.B.'s teaching methods; one was never bullied into making an immediate decision, pro or con. Hence one was schooled, almost unconsciously, to avoid snap judgments, to weigh up problems carefully and objectively, and above all to resist the temptation to oversimplify all questions into black-and-white terms ('sound' or 'unsound', 'evangelical' or 'liberal', etc.).

In his individual relationships with students, Professor Bruce was a true Barnabas. He was no taskmaster, but his pupils received every encouragement. Work done for him was assessed shrewdly—but kindly. Any burgeoning aptitudes or interests were noted and fostered. And any ideas or suggestions, however ill-conceived, one might proffer to him, consistently received courteous and sympathetic—though, wisely, not uncritical—attention.

F.F.B.'s literary output speaks for itself. The wonder is that he has never put research before students, and that he has always been prepared to give unstintingly of his valuable time to the needs and demands of his pupils.

Years have passed since I could speak from first-hand experience—hence the past tenses of the above paragraphs. But I do not doubt that the same—and more—could be said of the present Rylands Professor in the University of Manchester (to which Chair he succeeded in 1959).

## F. F. BRUCE AS A FELLOW-ELDER

ARNOLD PICKERING\*

IN April 1960 when we had the joy of welcoming the Bruce family into the fellowship of the church which meets in Crescent Road Hall, Stockport, F.F.B. appeared to have found a congenial spiritual home. He diligently entered into the activities of the church and evidently enjoyed the spontaneity of its worship and service. His particular ministry was immediately apparent and gratefully acknowledged. Here was a man with a unique insight into the Word of God and a facility in giving the sense and causing the reading to be understood.

By common consent his service in the church soon required formal recognition. Precisely two years from his first visit to the Hall to conduct a Broadcast Service he, and others, were presented to the church as additional elders. Very probably the manner in which this recognition was effected differed little from common practice, but for us there was one

\*Mr. A. Pickering, a Certified Accountant, is an elder of Prof. Bruce's home church.