



Clarion Review

Religion

Brass Tacks: Christianity and Beyond!

Roger L. Bradley

Trafford

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Three Stars (out of Five)

Brass Tacks: Christianity and Beyond!, by Roger L. Bradley, is written in the tradition of the Christian literary genre called meditations.

The book's twelve chapters are organized around a set of themes, from practical Christianity (the "brass tacks" of the title) to the metaphorical, the Bible as a mirror into the Christian life. One insightful chapter reflects on one of the most famous psalms, the twenty-third, which begins with "The Lord is my shepherd." Another chapter in *Brass Tacks* discusses hospice care by examining the story of Lazarus. As a meditation book, the topics of the chapters do not have to be read sequentially.

Bradley, a former US Army chaplain who served in the Vietnam War, uses his experience with the military and military families to comment on and interpret scripture. His spirituality falls decisively in the evangelical category, with scripture as the sole source and authority of Christian teaching. Though he was a Baptist minister, Bradley notes that the book is solely his own viewpoint rather than an espousal of the tenets of an established religion.

After quoting scripture, Bradley interprets its meaning for the individual and describes how it can be applied to daily Christian living. While he does not advocate any particular theological viewpoint, there are hints of Calvinism in his text. In the first chapter, Bradley notes, "There is nothing the natural me can do to advance anything in a supernatural or spiritual realm." Later, in chapter eight, Bradley writes, "As far as our salvation from sin is concerned, we contribute nothing to that effort."

Bradley's enthusiasm and honesty permeate the chapters. At times, he addresses his audience directly as "dear reader," and his prose often suggests that he is trying to engage the reader in conversation, such as when he asks readers, "What is this verse saying to you?" But this intimate style has its liabilities, as when the prose becomes exceedingly exhortative in

nature, a problem that spills into the layout of the text: All of the scriptural quotations are in italicized bold text; some of them are further emphasized with underlining, capitalization, and excessive use of exclamation points. Frequently, the text reads like a transcribed sermon with markedly long quotations from the Bible. This organization gives the book a sluggish pace.

Despite the book's flaws, Christian readers seeking encouragement and spiritual solace will welcome the sincerity and wisdom contained in this work of reflections and meditations.

Thomas H. Brennan