

Book Review: Great Books

reviewed by Patch Blakey

As Christians, we are people of The Book. The Bible is the basis for all of our thoughts and actions. No area of creation is neutral, and certainly no element of knowledge may be evaluated apart from the Holy Spirit's divine revelation written in the pages of the Old and New Testaments. Most of the historical books that I've read, while fascinating in their portrayal of past events, have generally been considered only in light of social, economic, cultural or political issues, but seldom have they included religious issues unless from a secular perspective.

Keys to the Classics, by Dennis Oliver Woods, is a serious attempt to provide just such a biblical analysis of the writings of a select group of classical authors. These are men whose contributions to "the Great Conversation" have helped shape the mindset of the current postmodern world in which we live. Woods calls his selected authors "50 men who rule from the grave." Some of these are unbelievers such as Homer, Aristophanes, and Socrates. Others are Christians who lived by faith, but nonetheless did not fully appreciate the broad scope of the Scriptures as they pertain to every area of life. You might be surprised to learn that even includes stalwarts such as John Milton, John Calvin, and Samuel Rutherford.

The first volume is divided into five general areas of history,

including the pagan world before the advent of Christ, the Prince of Peace who established His kingdom, the patristic world, the papal world, and the modern world. The section on the modern world is further

Keys to the Classics: A Biblical Analysis of the Great Books of Western Civilization, Vol. 1

by Dennis Oliver Woods

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pp 184, \$29

divided into six ages: Renaissance, Reformation, Revolution, Reason, Romanticism, and Relativism, each with a selection of their principal authors and the ideas they offered the world. The work is also well illustrated.

Each author is introduced with a visual memory "key" and a paragraph summary to help the student remember the individual and the heart of his philosophy. For example, Homer is represented by a Trojan horse, Isaac Newton an apple, Jesus a lamb. These are also sold separately as a "Walk-Thru-The-Bible" style set of flash cards. Each section includes a brief biography of the author, the historical context at the time of writing, a summary of the author's teaching, the implications of these teachings for subsequent history, a biblical analysis of these teachings, and corrective or prescriptive actions to

correct the unbiblical influences of these teachings.

Following this section is a series of objective questions for the student's response to help reinforce the lesson. There is a section of fill-in-the-blanks, true or false statements, matching words from two columns, and a select reading assignment from the author's principal work. The latter is accompanied by a number of thought-provoking questions based on the seminal work. In all, the book contains almost 1,500 review questions. There is also an accompanying

teacher's guide with answers to the questions on the selected seminal readings. The teacher's guide is an easily understood, philosophical treatise in its own right.

This is an outstanding commentary for students being trained in the classics to evaluate what they are reading in light of the Scripture. As Christians, we are to take every thought captive to the Lordship of Christ, and this is exactly what Woods has attempted to do. This is the sort of analysis that the modern Christian world desperately needs. *Keys to the Classics* was a stimulating and thought-provoking read for me; I highly recommend it for you and your students.

The books and flash cards may be ordered at the bookstore on www.kingswayclassicalacademy.com or contact the author at (503) 658-1755.