

Steven B. Cowan, gen. ed., *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 398 pages.

Zondervan has done a great service in publishing what may be the best book in the Counterpoints series edited by Stanley N. Gundry. It exhibits a clarity that some other volumes may not possess and provides a clear overview of options. This particular volume edited by Steven Cowan presents an irenic but lively debate between five different presenters in the area of apologetic strategy. At the beginning of the book, Cowan gives a glossary of key terms and concepts which aids the student who is studying the field of apologetics for the first time. He also reviews the question of taxonomy. That is, what is the best way to categorize the varying views of apologetics? While noting that some scholars have opted to organize apologetics based upon epistemology or upon the relationship of faith and reason, Cowan wisely opts instead to classify apologetics based upon apologetic strategy. This allows for epistemological concerns as well as the areas of faith and reason to be discussed but within the framework of the overall approach one uses to perform the apologetic task.

The presenters were well chosen. William Lane Craig outlines and defends classical apologetics while Gary Habermas fleshes out the evidential approach. Paul Feinberg adds the cumulative case method to the mix which attempts to build the most reasonable circumstantial case (like a lawyer's brief) for the truth of Christianity. John Frame ably represents the presuppositional model with his modified Van Tillian apologetics. Finally, Kelly James Clark gives an overview of the Reformed epistemological method. Craig, Habermas, and Feinberg could be categorized together loosely as on the evidential side of the spectrum as some would see it. Frame and Clark would be more on the presuppositional side of the ledger. It is unfortunate that Greg Bahnsen's untimely home going prevented him from representing classical Van Tillian apologetics in this volume. Nonetheless, the interaction between these scholars is focused with responses and final statements provided in the book.

Some of the more interesting debates within the book are: 1) Habermas versus Craig concerning whether Craig is legitimately a classical apologist or does he allow for one-step apologetics as does evidentialism, 2) Habermas versus Frame and Clark concerning positive apologetics, 3) the debate over circular reasoning as raised by Frame. What is particularly telling is that all of the contributors argue for the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing a person to Christ, the necessity of faith for a person to come to Christ, and that evidences have a place of value in apologetics. One of the greatest values of the book is that it shows that evangelical apologists of differing perspectives perhaps have a lot more in common than has been acknowledged in the past.

The footnotes of the book are at times extremely helpful and must be read along with the text. For example, on page 17, note 26 alerts the reader to Cowan's assessment that the cumulative case method by Feinberg is the same as the verificationism of Gordon Lewis and which Norman Geisler labels (although rejects) as combinationalism in his *Christian Apologetics* (Baker Books). Such reviews from time to time help the reader to frame the entire discussion within evangelicalism rather than limiting dialog to just the five particular presenters of the book. In the final analysis, this is a good introductory work in apologetics which is extremely suitable for a seminary classroom.

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