

**Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, eds. *Passionate Conviction: Contemporary Discourses on Christian Apologetics*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007. 280 pp. \$19.99**

*Passionate Conviction* is the first book of an on-going series edited by philosophers Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (at the time this review is being written, the second book of this series, *Contending with Christianity's Critics*, is currently in print). This text, as the ones to follow, is a collection of essays dealing with various topics in apologetics written on a level accessible to non-philosophers. The essays themselves have been taken from the Evangelical Philosophical Society's apologetics conferences. As such, the essays have been written by various Christian philosophers and apologists, including J. P. Moreland, Jay Richards, Craig Evans, and N. T. Wright. The essays chosen for *Passionate Conviction* have been arranged into six categories. The first category includes essays on the need for apologetics. The remaining categories include essays dealing with God, Jesus, comparative religions, postmodernism and relativism, and practical application of apologetics. Due to space constraints, this review will highlight the more remarkable and less remarkable essays.

The book begins on a particularly high note in Part One, "Why Apologetics?" with a call that is desperately needed: the need for Apologetics and intellectual engagement among Christians. In the first chapter, "In Intellectual Neutral," Craig argues that Christians must develop their minds and "help create and sustain a cultural milieu in which the gospel can be heard as an intellectually viable option for thinking men and women" (8). Craig has made this same call in some of his other works, e.g., *Philosophical Foundations for a Worldview*. This call needs to be heard among all Christians from every walk of life because, as Craig indicates, Christians in western culture have too often isolated themselves from the intellectual public arena. The call to become intellectually engaged is further developed by Moreland in the second chapter, "Living Smart." Moreland makes a connection between developing the mind and Christian discipleship, a welcomed and much needed presentation.

Part Two of the text deals with the topic of God, and the different discussions included in this part are anticipated and appropriate. R. Douglas Geivett deals with two versions of the cosmological argument, namely, Samuel Clarke's contingency argument and the *kalam* cosmological argument. Although this chapter is relevant and necessary, some non-academicians may find Geivett's layout of the arguments difficult to follow. That being said, it is not immediately clear how one could do much better than how Geivett lays out the arguments. One particular interesting essay in Part Two is Michael Murray's "Why Doesn't God Make His Existence More Obvious to Us?" He deals effectively with this question while taking apart an atheist's argument against God's existence due to his hiddenness. In regard to God's hiddenness, Murray proffers that it is based upon God's desire to have creatures freely choose to love him or reject him (47). Jay Richards also has an essay in Part Two which is essentially a very brief overview of the task of the Intelligent Design movement. Finally, Paul Copan deals with the moral argument for God's existence in the final chapter of this part. Copan's essay is a very good and concise presentation of the argument and is probably one of the most accessible essays in the book.

Chapters 7-9, written by Charles Quarles, Craig Evans, and N. T. Wright, respectively, compose Part Three which deals with Jesus. All three essays deal with the typical questions about Jesus, such as his deity and whether he rose bodily from the dead. There is really not too much unexpected discussion in these chapters. Only one aspect stands out in these chapters, and it is in Evans' essay when he deals with the question of who killed Jesus. He states, "While

some of the ruling priests and a small number of aristocratic authorities opposed Jesus and called for His death, we should assume that the vast majority of Jews who knew anything of the matter did not. The actual execution of Jesus was a Roman affair” (114). It seems that this statement is made more from a fear of being accused of anti-Semitism than an accurate portrayal of the biblical evidence.

Part Four, “Comparative Religions,” includes an article by Craig Hazen that, in my view, makes the entire book worth reading. His writing style is not only engaging but the story in which he chose as the basis for his chapter is very gripping. Hazen tells of an invitation he received from a local community college to speak about Christianity. In a turn for the unexpected, Hazen describes how he spoke with the class about “four reasons why a thoughtful person on a religious quest should start with that quest with Christianity” (143). His reasons are: (1) Christianity is testable, (2) in Christianity salvation is a free gift from God, (3) in Christianity you get an amazing worldview fit, and (4) Christianity has Jesus as the center. Hazen’s discussion of these four reasons offers the reader a very practical, yet intellectually engaging way to begin discussing Christianity in a pluralistic society.

L. Rush Bush’s chapter, “Christ in the New Age,” is probably the least satisfying in the entire text. The title implies that the essay is about the doctrine of Christ in the New Age Movement. But one searches in vain for any such discussion in the chapter. Rather, Bush spends an inordinate amount of space on how the term “Age” has been understood throughout history. And in a very confusing turn at the end of the chapter, he goes on to discuss Islam and contrasts it with Christianity. What does this have to do with the New Age? So, while the title of the chapter is “Christ in the New Age,” one must not expect any mention of this idea in the essay.

Part Five, “Postmodernism and Relativism,” includes chapters by Moreland, Francis Beckwith, and R. Scott Smith. Moreland’s chapter, “The Challenges of Postmodernism,” is only five pages long and concentrates on how postmodernism has influenced counseling. The brevity of the chapter leaves much to be desired; there is so little content in the chapter that it could have been omitted. Beckwith’s article, on the other hand, is an accessible read for non-academics on cultural relativism as it relates to morality. His discussion on making a distinction between preference claims and moral claims is very helpful for the non-philosopher. Also, he includes arguments against moral relativism, which are clearly stated and easily understandable. Finally, Smith does a good job of relating the basics of the Emergent Church Movement in his essay. Although the Emergent Church brings challenges to orthodox Christianity, the chapter almost seems out of place in a text such as this one. The reason is that the purpose of the book is to engage our culture via apologetics. The Emergent issue seems to be more about what is taking place inside Christianity itself rather than engaging the culture at large. Nonetheless, it is a helpful and ecclesiastically relevant chapter.

The final chapters of the book, which comprise Part 6 “Practical Application,” focus upon two problems relevant to Christians in particular. The result is that the chapters are more pastoral in nature. Gary Habermas’ chapter, “Dealing with Emotional Doubt,” discusses some reasons why Christians doubt the truth of Christianity. To fight these doubts, he suggests that replacing false ideas about God with true ideas in conjunction with practicing the truth. The final chapter by Sean McDowell deals with an issue that more Church leaders are beginning to concentrate upon: the lack of discipleship among youth. He gives many examples and statistics that show how the youth in Churches leave for college and never return to the Church. This

chapter is well-placed in the book as it serves to summon the call for apologetics to be taught to youth as well as adults.

Overall, *Passionate Conviction* is an excellent compilation of essays by many leading Christian philosophers and apologists. Although a few articles could have been left out and have a few problems with them, the majority of the essays will be found to be helpful for non-technical (i.e., non-philosophical/non-academic) readers. The text is essentially a primer for various apologetical issues, and thus it is recommended particularly for those who wish to be introduced to current apologetical issues.

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