

Why Believe? Reason and Mystery as Pointers to God. By C. Stephen Evans. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996. 154 pp. Paper, \$13.00.

This popular apologetics work was written in response to one of the author's former students who committed suicide as a result of struggles with faith. This real life tragedy is disclosed both in the preface and on the back cover. Consequently, the reader is gripped from cover to cover with the importance of being able to explain and defend the Christian worldview.

Although Evans is a professor of philosophy, he does a fine job writing for a popular audience. In thirteen chapters, Evans tackles every major objection to the Christian faith. He begins with faith itself. In this chapter, Evans unveils his foundational logic: "Each of us has a faith dimension. None of us can avoid faith in something or someone. We must believe in something or someone because we must have something or someone to live for" (p. 9). For Evans, the only question is who or what we will place our faith in.

Chapters two and three are a persuasive attempt urging the reader to ponder the existence of *a* God. He does this quite capably by raising doubt in the atheistic and agnostic worldviews. He then states that he "will attempt to show that a reasonable 'cumulative case' can be made for a particular kind of religious faith: Christianity" (p. 24).

In chapters four through six, Evans challenges the reader to consider three mysteries in which God has intervened: (1) the mystery of the physical universe, (2) the mystery of a moral order, and (3) the mystery of human personhood. It is this final mystery that stirs the soul. Evans argues these two truths: (1) God made man in His image. (2) God made man for a special purpose that includes a loving relationship with Himself. Evans then reasons that we must need God in some way. Particularly compelling are his sections entitled "The Need to Believe" and "The Craving for Eternity."

Chapters seven and eight present Jesus Christ as God's ultimate revelation of Himself. Evans capably presents the uniqueness of Christianity as demonstrated through the person and work of Jesus Christ. The emphasis here lies in the historicity and deity of Jesus, His claims, and His resurrection.

The remaining chapters address the issues of miracles, science, the Bible, suffering, and religion. Amidst these chapters, Evans responds to several well-known questions (e.g. “Are miracles possible?” “Is God a psychological crutch?” “Is Christianity sexist?” “Do all religions point to the same truth at the bottom?” etc.).

In his chapter on suffering, Evans is careful not to defend God. This results in a balanced and humble treatment of what may be the most problematic objection to Christianity. Evans tenaciously wrestles with man’s freedom and the existence of evil. Concerning our attempt to understand and explain why and how God sovereignly uses mankind’s freedom, he writes, “...we would have to have exhaustive knowledge of God’s purposes in creation of His plans for eternity” (p. 101). His final conclusion is simple: “If God permits evil, then He must have a good reason, even if we don’t know what that reason is. Our evidence for this is simply our total knowledge of God’s character. God loves us, God cares about us, and God honors His commitments” (p. 103).

A helpful appendix entitled “Suggestions for Further Reading” categorizes 49 different apologetic books under 14 different headings. Great minds like Lewis, Moreland, Kreeft, Bruce, and Stott head up this list of exceptional tools. A minor disappointment is that Evans only included three new works in the ten-year interim between revisions of this book.

Some readers will cringe as Evans suggests, “It is clear that what is necessary to become a Christian is not merely acceptance of a proposition on the basis of evidence, but *a change in a person’s whole orientation to life*” (p. 78, italics is the author’s). However, he contradicts himself later with this biblical truth: “The new life in Christ is not something that must be earned or willed; it is a *gift*. Growth in the Christian life is a matter of realizing this more and more profoundly” (p. 122, italics his). I recommend this book as an outstanding apologetic tool.