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Spring 1986

## Review: The Case for Christianity

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### Recommended Citation

Habermas, Gary R., "Review: The Case for Christianity" (1986). *LBTS Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 339.

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Furthermore, what individual man, when confronted with the awfulness of his sin and depravity, dares to exclaim himself majestic? Allen speaks of the paradox between the great depth of sin and the great worth of man. I prefer, however, to see the paradox as being between the awfulness of sin and the awesomeness of the *imago dei*.

Another key point in Allen's discussion relates to the title Jesus gave to himself, namely, "the Son of Man." Allen refers this to Jesus' identification with humanity as it ought to be: royal, wonderful, and majestic (p. 124). Allen then construes this title as bespeaking the high value and worth of man (pp. 63, 108). However, others understand this title as pointing to Jesus' heavenly origin, his possession of heavenly glory, and his suffering for men (cf. Morris, *The Gospel According to John* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] 172; and Charles Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of NT* [Chicago: Moody, 1970] 51).

Secular humanism elevates man's concept of himself. Allen sees a biblical anthropology as teaching a paradox between the great depth of sin and the great worth of man. I believe, however, that the emphasis of Scripture focuses on the greatness of God, as expressed in the central theme of Psalm 8: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!"

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*The Case for Christianity*, by Colin Chapman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983. Pp. 315. \$12.95. Paper.

Originally published in hardcover, *The Case for Christianity* has now been released in a paperback edition. This book is a cross between a history of philosophical ideas and an apologetics text. It features a handbook-style anthology with over one thousand quotations from a wide variety of sources and well over one hundred drawings and photographs (both color and black-and-white).

The text is arranged in seven major sections which are subdivided into almost forty smaller sections. It begins with a discussion of ten of mankind's most basic questions concerning such topics as meaning, values, truth, love, suffering, evil, and death (sec. 1). Then there is a logical progression from a statement of Christian answers to these questions (2) and Christian beliefs (3), to how these beliefs may be tested (4), to a comparison of them with other systems of thought (5), and then to a defense of Christianity (6). This book closes with an appeal to the reader to trust Jesus Christ and the Christian world view set forth in Scripture.

Chapman's volume has several positive qualities. Few books on the market in this general field exhibit the variety of topics that this one does, ranging from crucial questions to a comparative study of major religions and from philosophical world views to apologetics. Another feature, and perhaps

the strongest, is the emphasis on studying ideas. Quotations, often from world-renowned scholars, set the stage for the exploration of major concepts in both Eastern and Western thought.

The different sections are of varying quality, but are usually well done. For example, the questions raised in section one are not only of obvious importance (even in terms of life and death), but are stated in such a way that one can existentially relate to the problems themselves. Sec. 4, which is concerned with the criteria for testing beliefs, is also well done. The conclusion is that Christianity is, in principle, testable in the same general way as is history (pp. 112-13), philosophy (p. 118), and even science (pp. 121-23). However, the last part of sec. 4 (concerning the "test case" of creation versus evolution) makes some good points but is rather indecisive. Sec. 5, measuring almost one-third of the entire book, is an information-packed division which briefly discusses five world religions, ten major philosophers and ten philosophies.

Another positive point concerns the readability of the book. While the ideas are lofty, the language is quite comprehensible.

A few concerns also need to be noted. Although the sections are generally strong, a few areas need strengthening. The relative indecisiveness of the creation versus evolution test case was just mentioned. A more important example concerns sec. 6, which in a certain sense is the heart of the book. While featuring a major apologetic for Christianity, it is probably also the weakest portion of the text. It is not so much that the arguments are poor, but that the various points generally need strengthening against more rigorous forms of each objection. As an example, the portion on the reliability of the NT is only three pages long (pp. 234-36). Though it never treats the issue of inspiration at all, it later quotes extensively from NT texts. However, general reliability does not insure the nature of the exact words, at least not as Chapman presents the evidence. More argumentation and evidences are needed.

Another major point concerns the presence of so many quotations (over one thousand) in this volume, some of which are fairly long. While they frequently serve a very positive purpose (see above), often they are strung together with little commentary.

Lastly, while this reviewer often found the many pictures attractive, they frequently distracted from the discussion. Additionally, the pictures were often unrelated (or only incidentally related) to the text. Yet, it is certainly realized that such a comment falls into the broad and complex field of aesthetics and that others might disagree at this juncture.

As a whole, my assessment of this book is positive. It is distinctive in its approach and certainly in its colorful format. Its vast range of topics gives it a broad appeal as does its readable language and style. And the development of prominent ideas in both Eastern and Western thought is probably the strongest single feature of this volume. I recommend this book as a good survey text, especially for college classes which attempt a combined treatment of philosophical ideas and apologetics. The many topics even allow much room for the professor to choose selected areas for study.

With regard to the areas of concern noted above, a professor could supplement sec. 6 (or any other portion) with additional material. With regard to the need for more discussion, this could also be supplemented by class notes and lectures. In fact, both of these procedures are recommended by this reviewer.

With these qualifications, Chapman's volume could serve as a general text for college classes in areas of philosophy or apologetics. It is also broad enough to interest persons who simply like to read and study in these areas.

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*Foundations of Evangelical Theology*, by John Jefferson Davis. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984. Pp. 282. \$9.95. Paper.

*Handbook of Basic Bible Texts*, by John Jefferson Davis. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984. Pp. 158. \$6.95. Paper.

*Theology Primer*, by John Jefferson Davis. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981. Pp. 111. \$5.95. Paper.

John Jefferson Davis, assistant professor of Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has written three outstanding volumes to assist the student (and professor) in the introduction to the study of theology. Together, the books provide a wealth of information regarding biblical texts, brief commentaries on important passages, extensive bibliography, definition of terms, identification of leading figures in theology (past and present) and a truly fine example of theological method. I am sure that the books will find acceptance in a broad range of theological institutions.

The *Handbook of Basic Bible Texts* provides a complete text of key passages which form the foundation for the study of particular theological topics. Davis gives the key passages offered by proponents of various views where there are genuine differences of opinion among evangelicals. At places there is a brief commentary on the positions and references to theologians supporting the disputed points. The translation which he uses for Scripture references is the *NIV* (showing the wide acceptance that this version is receiving among evangelicals). Each section closes with a brief listing of books for further study. The beginning student will find this little volume invaluable in working through the issues in systematic theology.

A second volume, the *Theology Primer*, complements the *Handbook*. New students in theology sometimes sit under a professor who surveys the history of various views and demonstrates strengths and weaknesses of each. Such students may feel completely overwhelmed with the amount of literature, the new and difficult terms, and the names of numerous theologians who advocate certain positions. This book is mandatory for such students. As the author says, "it will help the student find his or her way around the theological landscape."