

treatment for some of the most challenging issues facing married couples. Entire families and their homes are at stake; consequently, the author addresses the topic with a healthy measure of urgency.

I would like to offer several minor suggestions for future revisions of this book. A Scripture index would make the work more accessible for study, particularly for couples whose counselor assigns them homework in passages addressing couples' issues.

Second, no single book can effectively treat all possible challenge to couples. But the absence of any comment about the role of disability in marriages is worth noting. One in seven spouses with disabilities or children with disabilities globally, experience disability trauma that usually does not go away. At the other end of life, those of us who live to be 80 years old will have a fifty percent chance of developing a disabling condition. In short, disability reaches deeply to the hearts of couples. Perhaps a future edition of the book could include basic guidance for couples facing the unique challenges of disability, particularly those whose newborns' have just received a disability diagnosis. Ernie Baker's, *Disability Pressures Our Marriage* (Shepherd Press, 2019) models this counseling for couples. This suggestion made, Holmes's suggestion of audio-taped Scripture for a husband who, due to dyslexia, was unable to read Scripture for his counseling homework was excellent (46–47).

We are indebted to Jonathan Holmes for producing a tool that can help meet the specific needs of couples. This biblical and practical guide is a must read, particularly for pastors who serve as the only pastoral staff member in a local church. I highly recommend this outstanding new counseling book and look forward to reading future counseling publications by Jonathan Holmes.

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*Every Believer Confident: Apologetics for the Ordinary Christian*, by Mark J. Farnham. Sisters, OR: Deep River Books, 2019. 206 pp. \$14.99.

Serious students of apologetics are aware of the trouble that presuppositional apologists (a.k.a. *transcendental*, *covenantal*, or *worldview* apologists) have had rendering practical their system of apologetics. Presuppositional apologetics does not reduce easily to evangelistic monologues that can be memorized, so it can be difficult, especially for new believers, to master the approach. It is the apologetic method, so it would seem, of Christian elites and philosophers; a method intellectually out of reach for "ordinary Christians" or, worse, an example of the very sorts of intellectual posturing that Paul warns us to avoid (e.g., 1 Cor 1:18–2:5).

Those who have drunk deeply at Van Til's well have found little relief in his publications. As Bill Edgar notes in his introduction to the

second edition of Cornelius Van Til's book *Christian Apologetics* (P&R, 2003), "Cornelius Van Til...was a pioneer, painting with broad-brush strokes." He spoke chiefly to the academy and, except for a few brilliant moments, rarely to the street. The latter he entrusted to practitioners who would embrace the theory he supplied. This task has proven difficult and remains incomplete. Still, as Edgar continues, "We owe it to this father in the faith to develop and apply his apologetics.... Our task is not only to go into the details, but also to apply the approach to many fields besides the ones that had his attention" (14).

Mark Farnham offers us a sturdy attempt to place the cookies of presuppositionalism on the lower shelves of the cupboard. And he does so without returning to the vomit of evidentialism, as many before him have done. This does not mean that Farnham's work is a simple read. He warns his readers in his opening chapter that they will have to read each chapter carefully, retain the data, then connect dots from each chapter to craft out the mosaic that is the apologetic task. To become successful apologists, we must "master certain theological concepts and philosophical ideas that kick into gear when the time is right" and "re-train our minds to think in a distinctively Christian way" (35). This takes time and effort, and can never be reduced to a one-size-fits-all sales pitch for Jesus. Still, the book is such that, if savored slowly, it can be successfully digested by its stated audience—"ordinary Christians." In short, the book achieves the purpose stated on page 20: "Giving ordinary Christians the confidence and equipment to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20), give an answer to those who question them (1 Pet. 3:15–16), and declare the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:3–4)."

Farnham begins with an apology for apologetics, observing in Scripture a surprising number of examples of the practice, and proving that apologetics goes beyond simple proclamation to include a whole philosophy of life. We are all of us philosophers, and becoming a Christian is not simply a matter of accepting the bare gospel, but of submitting to God in all of life. Unbelievers do not become believers simply by incorporating Gospel facts and a rote prayer into their existing worldviews (this makes for syncretism of the worst sort); they become believers by exchanging their pre-Christian allegiances for Christian ones. The apologist's goal is first to "destroy strongholds" (chap. 5), and only then to "get them to Jesus" (chap. 6). Only after a radical deconstruction and reconstruction of worldviews take place does the Gospel come into clear relief.

This means that the apologetic task rarely begins with the facts of the Gospel; rather, it begins with genuine and respectful interest in the target unbeliever's understanding of the world, gentle but probing questions about his or her underlying worldview, and confident assertion of the Christian philosophy to life and thought as the only one that makes comprehensive sense of the world that we share. God is God and God has spoken, and all must admit this and make their peace with him.

What makes Farnham's treatment stand out, I would venture, is his penchant for explaining and comparing apologetical approaches not so

much in theoretical, philosophical, or methodological terms, but in *conversational* terms. That is, he offers representative evangelistic conversations that might be initiated, respectively, by the evidentialist, the “cumulative case” apologist, the “minimal facts” apologist, the presuppositionalist, and the anti-apologist (a variation of fideism often confused with presuppositionalism, but mistakenly so). The best presuppositional conversations he draws from the Scriptures themselves (often citing our Lord Christ); still, a healthy sampling of contemporary conversations extend the apologetic task from its proper seat in the Christian Scriptures and makes it germane in the current marketplace of ideas. Chapters seven through ten are particularly fruitful in this regard.

Farnham is careful to clarify, in his third chapter, that the apologist depends wholly upon God to realize his evangelistic goals. The very most seasoned apologist cannot, by argument alone—even *Scriptural* argument alone—effect regeneration. Lest we become smug in our supposed mastery of the Christian system, Farnham reminds us that God alone regenerates, not us. He reminds us further, in chapter four, that when the unbeliever remains unpersuaded, fault lies neither with the apologist nor with his message, but with the unbeliever’s culpable hostility toward the God that he knows to be there. These reminders not only check the apologist’s pride, but give him confidence that his method is not deficient even when it seems to be unsuccessful. It also alerts the apologist to the fact that his first task is not to take his opponent to the mat, but to the prayer closet. And when we do this, we find our combative tendencies replaced with gentleness, earnest piety, and true Christian concern. I find in these two chapters chapter an important answer to the criticism, sometimes raised, that presuppositional apologists are better pugilists than they are persuaders. Not only should this not be true, but as the author himself demonstrates, it is not always true.

I was left with a few minor questions and concerns. The first was organizational. Farnham rightly emphasizes the apologist’s “mastery of certain theological concepts,” but does not spell these out until the final three chapters. This seems backwards to me, and while I am certain that Farnham did not intend this, the ordering could suggest to the reader that the method is more important than the content. Another concern that I have is the emphasis on justification over regeneration in “getting them to Jesus.” While, again, I have no reason to believe that Farnham has anything other than a robustly biblical view of regeneration and sanctification, I wonder whether a discussion of the latter aspects of the Gospel might rightly receive greater attention as part of the biblical worldview of which we are attempting to persuade men.

These minor points aside, I am very pleased to recommend *Every Believer Confident* as a helpful primer for the “ordinary Christian” to become not only an orthodox, but also a successful Christian apologist in the presuppositionalist tradition.

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