

## BOOK REVIEW

of

John Blanchard,  
*Does God Believe in Atheists?*,  
Evangelical Press, 2000.

This book is in the Evangel Library,  
and this review is presented by Larry D. Paarmann.

When was the last time you read an apology for the Christian faith? There are a number of books available on apologetics, and in presenting apologetics it is inevitable that some content of an apology will be included. Also, some apologetic content may be present in theological books; Calvin's *Institutes* would be a good example, where, at least in part, Calvin wanted others to know what it was that reformed Christians believed. It is also the case that early Church Fathers presented apologies, such as Tertullian's *Apology*, Eusebius' *The Proof of the Gospel*, and Augustine's *The City of God*. However, it struck me as I read this book by John Blanchard that this may be the first modern book I've read that could be labeled as a true apology for the Christian faith. John Blanchard is a British author, teacher and conference speaker. I've not read anything by him before, and he may be new to you as well. The Forward to the book, written by Sinclair Ferguson, strongly endorses the book, calling it "unique" and "remarkable."

The book can be divided into four parts (not labeled as such). The first part, consisting of 12 chapters, gives an overview of atheistic thinking. He begins by stating three propositions: Only a minority of people are atheists. Most people are atheists. Nobody is an atheist. As the book (not just the first 12 chapters) unfolds, he shows that all three propositions can be true, depending on how the word *atheist* is defined. According to polls, the first proposition is true. Defining a theist as one who believes in God, the one true God who has revealed His attributes as recorded in the Bible, then the second proposition is true. Defining an atheist as one who has no knowledge nor awareness of God, then the third proposition is true. Blanchard doesn't tell you this up front, but spends several hundred pages to convince the reader that all three propositions can be true depending on how the word *atheist* is defined. In the first 12 chapters, ancient Greek philosophy, that of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment are reviewed. The purpose is to show the inadequacy of these systems (an even more complete review may be found in Gordon Clark's *Thales to Dewey*, which is in the Evangel Library). Blanchard continues by reviewing evolution and the implications of it, rightly including it in a review of philosophy, not science. Then he reviews existentialism, secular humanism, dogmatic atheism, and agnosticism. He includes in his review a brief overview of world religions, and finally in chapter 12, a brief overview of religious cults. This is a relatively long overview of philosophical and religious thinking that differs from Christianity (all such he labels in this part of the book as atheistic, since, if adherents profess to believe in a god of some sort, it is not the God of Christianity).

The second part, chapters 13 through 17, may be labeled as *The Argument from Design*. In this part he presents the physical universe, the origin of life, the uniqueness of human beings compared with all other physical life, meaning, morality and rationality, and human dignity and conscience as *pointers* (not proof, per se) that Christianity alone is truly rational. He argues that only God with the attributes revealed in the Bible makes any sense out of what we know and experience in these areas. If God doesn't exist, or if we conceive of a god that is not sovereign, or lacks any attributes of the Christian God, then the physical universe and human life is meaningless, which contradicts universal human experience.

The third part, chapters 18 through 21, may be labeled as *The Unity and Importance of the Bible*. In this part Blanchard discusses the trustworthiness of the Bible, the relationship between science and the teachings of the Bible, the Bible's teaching on the nature and attributes of God, and the Bible's teaching on the nature of man.

The fourth part, chapters 22 through 24, may be labeled as *Direct Response to Atheistic Thinking*. In chapter 22 the problem of evil is presented as *The Case Against God*. In chapter 23 a Christian response is given to the problem of evil in a rather effective way. Blanchard stresses that if there is no God, what can we mean by evil? In his opinion, what requires explanation is not evil but good, not cruelty but kindness, etc. In the last chapter, Blanchard presents the historicity, the uniqueness, and the claims of Jesus Christ. A fitting conclusion to a book that requires decision and action.