

BOOK REVIEW

of

Gordon H. Clark, *In Defense of Theology*,
The Trinity Foundation, 2007.

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

John W. Robbins, in the forward to this short book, writes “Ever since the time of Immanuel Kant, hostility to God and truth has taken the form of criticism of the intellect, language, and logic. Modern philosophy is so virulently opposed to truth that it seeks, not merely to reject truth, but also to destroy those instruments that understand, express, and receive truth. No longer is the Bible alone rejected as truth, but the notion that men can possess or express any truth at all is rejected. . . . There are many irreligious opponents of theology as well, and in recent years they have become more vociferous: Books by men such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Ayn Rand sell millions of copies each year, but they offer no new arguments against Christianity.” In recent years these attacks take the form of PostModernism. Having rejected God’s truth, soon all truth is questionable at best. One way of dealing with this, for Christians, is to adopt the two-story approach to truth, where real, concrete, scientific knowledge is discovered by rigorous intellectual means, but “spiritual knowledge” is pursued more by the emotions. *In Defense of Theology* is a call for a return to the Total Truth of the Bible’s message.

There appears to be a growing awareness on the part of at least some evangelical thinkers that Christians need to perhaps give more thought to how Christianity applies to all areas of life. Nancy R. Pearcey in her excellent book *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, Crossway Books, 2004, had much to write about the importance of a worldview, and the whole thesis of her book is that Christianity has impact upon all aspects of life. D.A. Carson, in his book *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, Zondervan, 1996, also has much to write about how Christianity should and must make a greater impact upon our pluralistic society than what it currently does. But it would seem to me that most Christians who take these ideas seriously will likely soon be confronted by serious questions about just what is the impact that Christianity should have upon various aspects of society. Not that Pearcey and Carson ignore such questions, but both seem to expend their energies calling attention to the fact that our Christianity should impact all aspects of our lives rather than explaining just how Christianity should make that impact. This book by Gordon Clark presents four approaches to the study of God, and recommends one approach that honors God (and provides a basis for impacting the world around us).

This short book is only about 50 pages in length and has six chapters. Chapter 1 is titled Three Groups. Chapter 2 is Atheism. Chapter 3 is The Uninterested. Chapter 4 is Neo-Orthodoxy. Chapter 5 is Logic. Chapter 6 is The Fourth Group.

In this book Clark divides people into four groups according to their interest in theology. Group One is made up of those who are average Christians who for one reason or another do not have much time for theology. These may be members of evangelical churches and attend regularly. They may have memorized some Scripture. They profess to believe the Bible. But they seem to think that theology is mostly some sort of hair splitting, and not really that important to Christianity. Clark reminds us that to “say ‘Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures’ is to talk theology.”

The second Group consists of atheists. They do not believe that there is a God. Clark describes the varieties of atheists. He groups pantheists and agnostics under his heading of atheists. He argues that probably “most persons in the United States are atheists, of a sort. . . . They are ‘practicing atheists.’”

The third Group is made up of the Neo-Orthodox. According to Clark, “One very basic fact can hardly be hidden: Neo-orthodoxy is a religion of experience; not the sensory experience of the scientific secularists, but rather religious experience. . . . rationality and logic are rejected as irreligious – God cannot be understood by reasoned, logical thinking.”

The fourth Group, the one that Clark recommends, sometimes instinctively, sometimes via serious study, knows that true religion requires the careful study of God’s Word followed by a willing response to that Word. To people in this Group theology, the study of God as revealed to us, is a critical and important part of Faith. As Clark writes at the end of this short book, “One can sum up this defense of theology by repeating an earlier sentence: God has given us a verbal revelation; we are obligated to study it. No further exhortation is necessary.”