



COVENANT BAPTIST  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
— + —  
INFORMED SCHOLARSHIP • PASTORAL HEART

## Book Review Style Sheet

The style of a book review is a modified form of the style for a research paper.

### Bibliographic Information

A full bibliographic reference to the book takes the place of the title on the first page of text. Follow the bibliographic reference with the number of pages and the price of the book. For example:

Borgman, Brian. *My Heart for Thy Cause: Albert N. Martin's Theology of Preaching*. Ross-Shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2001. 288 pp. \$19.99.

This bibliographic reference should be placed in the same location as a title on the first page of text, but it is not centered, nor does it appear in all CAPS. Leave two blank lines between the bibliographic reference and the body of your review.

### References

You may refer to pages in the book being reviewed by the use of parentheses in the body of your review rather than by footnotes at the bottom of each page. You need not cite the author's name. It will be assumed that you are referring to the book being reviewed. Simply give the page number in parenthesis. For example, (14).

### Divisions of a Book Review

#### Introduction

Begin the review with a section that briefly introduces the book and the book's author. Biographical information about the author (education, training, experience, etc.) should be included only as it demonstrates the author's competency to write the book. Within the context of the paper, do not use titles (Dr., Rev., etc.).

In most five-page reviews, you will likely need to limit the introduction to one or two paragraphs. The introduction should in all cases be a maximum of one-half page in length.

## Summary

The purpose of a critical book review is only minimally to provide a summary of the book. Address first of all the author's purpose and the primary thesis he is presenting. Relate that purpose or thesis to the work of others in the field (is the author contradicting, supporting, or building off the work of others?). Follow this up with a summary of the main points by which the author argues the thesis or accomplishes the book's purpose. Overall, the summary should extend to no more than two pages.

## Critical Evaluation

"Critical" does not necessarily mean saying something negative about the book. Rather, it implies a careful weighing of the claims and arguments used to support them. On the one hand, you should avoid bland endorsements, such as, "This is a good book that should be recommended reading for everyone." Avoid blanket dismissals as well, such as, "This is a lousy book not worth reading." On the other hand, avoid trivial criticisms, such as pointing out irrelevant factual errors or typographical mistakes. Instead, engage the main points that relate to the author's argument. Questions to ask yourself include the following:

1. Are the claims and arguments well supported? Are there factual errors among the author's main contentions? What are the strengths and weaknesses in the author's argumentation? Include in your assessment an evaluation of the arguments biblically and theologically.
2. Does the author approach the subject with any overall perspectives that influence or condition his conclusions? These may be theological, experiential, philosophical, denominational, or cultural perspectives. Do these perspectives limit the value of the work or its applicability (in certain cultures, certain settings, etc.).
3. How does the author's presentation fare when compared to other work done in the field? How successful and significant is this work when evaluated within its own field? To what extent does work done in other fields affirm or question the author's claims?

Throughout your critique, be specific in your evaluations. Do not just tell the reader about the book; tell and show the reader with concrete examples from the book. As previously suggested, include page numbers when making specific reference to the book.

## Conclusion

In a final paragraph or two, give your overall evaluation of the book. In light of its strengths and weaknesses, state the value of the work for your own research, general knowledge, or ministry. Conclude with a brief comment about the author's achievement.