

## **BOOK REVIEW**

Stephen Evans in **Why Christian Faith Still Makes Sense** (Baker Academic 2015, £12.99) refutes the shrill blasts of the New Atheists. He attacks the two brash charges of Dawkins and Co. that ‘faith is intellectually baseless’ and that ‘religion poisons everything.’

In a culture such as ours it is important to re-engage with ‘natural theology’ yet at the same time be mindful of its limitations. Taking a lead from Calvin and Pascal he explains the concept of the ‘natural signs’ of God. These he believes are ‘hard wired’ into creation but have to be first recognised and secondly interpreted correctly. In the central chapters of his book he sets out his five signs; the experience of cosmic wonder, purposive order, the sense of moral accountability, human dignity and the longing for transcendent joy. He insists that these signs are to be trusted in spite of the ‘alleged defeaters’; namely the accusation that ‘God is unscientific’ and the problem of ‘how a good God can create evil.’

For a fuller knowledge of God we have then to look to the Bible. Evans has to deal with the issue of the authority of Scripture and how to interpret it. He turns first to the Reformed epistemologist Alvin Plantinga before drawing on the insights of Richard Swinburne, Scheiermacher and Kierkegaard. The climax of his argument is that ‘the authenticity of revelation is independent of the content of revelation’. The book ends with two compelling chapters examining miracles and the validity of the

resurrection, the paradoxical nature of the incarnation and 'existential power.'

Evans argues, just like my former theological teacher Professor T. F. Torrance that the receiving of revelation demands a cognitive transformation of the framework of the mind through the Holy Spirit. As Kierkegaard puts 'Believe that Christ is God – then call upon him, pray to him, the rest comes by itself'.

If you are looking for a book of precision and clarity then Evans cannot be faulted. His use of technical terms like 'wide accessibility principle', the 'principle of credulity' however does suggest that his target audience are students. Don't let this put you off.