

Instructions for Book Reviews

APPENDIX I BOOK REVIEW STYLE

The style of a book review is a modified form of the style for a research paper. All the specifications given in chapter 1 of this manual apply, as well as most of the guidelines given in chapter 2. This appendix addresses only those unique features in which the book review differs from research paper style.

Title Page

Look at the example of a research paper title page on page 6 of this manual. Only one change needs to be made for the title page of a book review: change the phrase "A Paper" to "A Book Review."

The title on the title page is simply the title of the book *italicized* in ALL CAPS. Do not give bibliographic information on the title page.

Bibliographic Information on the First Page of Text

A full bibliographic reference to the book takes the place of the title on the first page of text. Consult chapter 6 or 7 of this manual for proper bibliographic form. Follow the bibliographic reference with the number of pages and the price of the book. For example:

Leitaert Peerbolte, L. J. *Paul the Missionary*. Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 34. Leuven: Peeters, 2003. 335 pp. \$23.00.

This bibliographic reference should be placed in the same location as a title on the first page of text (two inches from the top of the page) but it is not centered, nor does it appear in all CAPS. It is single spaced if it extends more than one line. Leave two single blank lines (or 24 pts) between the bibliographic reference and the body of your review.

References

Refer to pages in the book being reviewed using parentheses in the body of your review instead of footnotes below the text on 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).

Refer to other works used to prepare the review by using standard footnote form. Such other works might include the source of your author information or others' reviews you have consulted to prepare your own review. A bibliography will not normally be necessary.

Leitaert Peerbolte. *L. J. Paul the Missionary: Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology* 34. Leuven: Peeters, 2003. 335 pp. \$23.00.

How does one account for Paul's missionary activity? Were there historical, sociological, and psychological factors that led to Paul's travels and preaching of repentance? Dr. L. J. Leitaert Peerbolte, Lecturer in New Testament at the Theological University of Kampen (Netherlands)¹ concludes that one can find the impetus for his activity "in the interaction between his specific context and his perception of the significance of Jesus Christ" (15).

Summary

Leitaert Peerbolte develops his theses by balancing his study of Paul with a study of the possible Jewish, pagan, and Christian antecedents to Paul's evangelistic work. Throughout Leitaert Peerbolte is guided by M. Goodman's distinction between three types of "non-proselytizing mission" and a "proselytizing mission" that encourages others change their life and join the new community (5). Leitaert Peerbolte asks six subsidiary questions about first century missionary activity, devoting a chapter to each of six questions. Chapter 1 engages Harnack's views that Paul was simply continuing a practice begun by Jewish missionaries who sought converts to Judaism in the Diaspora. Leitaert Peerbolte's own investigation shows that Judaism of the time was more interested in

¹Theologische Universiteit Kampen. "MA Theology: Main Subjects: New Testament" [online]. accessed 7 July 2005; available from http://www.theologischeuniversiteitkampen.nl/plodedDocs/ECTS_NT.pdf; Internet.

Figure 25: First page of book review

Divisions of a Book Review

Good book reviews can be organized in the following way, with most attention given to the "critical evaluation." Book reviews can have various lengths, depending on the assignment. Subheadings help the reader distinguish among the different parts of the 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 with a maximum of one-half page in length. The example at the left does not use the subhead 'Introduction' since that is obviously the purpose of the first part of the paper.

Summary

The purpose of a critical book review is only minimally to provide a summary of the book. Address first the author's purpose and the primary thesis he or she 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 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 as you read the book and prepare the review include:

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

Summary of Book Review Style

Remember that a book review is a type of assignment that requires some, but not many, variations from the style used in a research paper. Also remember that the actual content of the book review should be based on the specific assignment. Pages 125-26 offer a basic approach to a book review; your instructor may specify a different approach. However, the instructions given on pages 123-24 should always apply to the form, or style of the book review (title page, first page, use of references, etc.).