

## Expectations of an Alphacrucis Student Book Review

A book review should explain what a book is about, and critically assess how successful it is in achieving its goals. To this end, the review should attempt to answer some of the following questions:

What is the book about?

- What is its purpose?
- Who is the author, what is their perspective (including biases), and do they have the requisite expertise?
- Who are the intended readers?
- What is the argument?
- What is the underlying method supporting the argument?
- What content is covered?

Does the book succeed in its purpose (i.e. what are its strengths and weaknesses)?

- Is it well-written, and at a level appropriate for its intended audience?
- Is the argument logical and coherent?
- Is the evidence supporting the argument adequate and balanced? What are its strengths/weaknesses?
- Is the scope of sufficient depth and breadth?
- How does it relate to other books on the same topic? Do other authors agree/disagree with the perspective presented in the book? Does it contribute to its field of literature?

What did I think of the book?

- Was it stimulating (boring), challenging (pedestrian), useful (pointless) etc.
- Was it relevant to my life and ministry?

Depending on the particular situation, the amount of space allocated to each section of the review will vary. As a general rule of thumb, however, about 50% of the review will explain what the book is about and 50% will be evaluation (unless otherwise stated by the lecturer).

### **What a Book review is not**

- A book review is not an essay. Apart from failing to address the above questions, the most common problem in book reviews is that students use the particular book as a launching pad to set out their own argument about a particular topic.
- A book review is not a book summary. You must interact, review and evaluate the book, not just describe it.

The most important thing about a book review is that it must focus attention on the book at hand – its content, strengths and weaknesses.

### **Engagement with other sources**

A book review will be focused on the text under review. However, *unless specified in the subject outline*, those students seeking higher grades will engage with other similar or related texts, using these sources to aid in the critical task of analysing the method, content and conclusions of the book being reviewed.

### **References**

This is an academic paper – and as such it is expected that you will reference the book you are reviewing, especially footnoting direct quotes. As usual, you need to footnote and put in the bibliography any other sources that you refer to within your paper.

### **Format**

Book reviews do not require an abstract, but do require a cover page and bibliography. As with any other assessment, please format in Times New Roman or Arial, size 12 font with double line spacing.

## Template Guide for a Book Review:

The following is a template for how to set out and structure the actual book review itself:

*The bibliographical reference to your reviewed book must appear at the start of your review, as a bibliographical citation (see example below):*

Barzun, J. and Graff, HF. *The Modern Researcher*. Sixth edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2004.

*Using the structure set out below, write your book review as one continuous body of writing (i.e. no subheadings):*

1. Present an idea of interest to the readers of the journal related to the subject of the reviewed book
2. Provide a brief description of the book's aim, scope, and place in the world – including the author's relevant qualifications
3. Describe the main thesis upheld by the book
4. Describe the author's main arguments that underpin their thesis
  - a. Include the methodology employed by the author (e.g. how they structured the book, the language used, sources used to back up their points, etc.)
5. Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the book
  - a. This includes the author's thesis, arguments and methodology
6. Analyse any contrary points in other authors or your research that might illuminate your reviewed text further
7. Discuss how our conception of the field is changed by the book
  - a. What further work is needed to clear up doubtful points?
  - b. Where have gaps been left that must be filled?
8. Strike the balance of merits and faults, noting how it might be relevant to your own life and ministry
9. Conclude with some words about what the author has achieved with this book, not yourself or the subject.