

## Review

**Koukl, G. (2017). *The Story of Reality: How the World Began, How it Ends, and Everything in Between*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.**

By Matthew Etherington, PhD

The author, Gregory Koukl is a Christian apologist, radio talk show host, author, speaker, and the founder of the Christian apologetics organization *Stand To Reason*. I have read many of Greg's other books and heard him speak on different occasions. I appreciate Greg's passion, clarity, consistency and positive analysis of Christian theism.

Gregory Koukl's *The Story of Reality: How the World Began* invites readers to think carefully about the current state of the world and how the Story of Christianity provides a compelling answer to the troubles we all face in this world. Using a narrative approach to provide a positive case for Christian theism, this book fits into the current thinking on the subject of Christian apologetics.

The book is organized around a collection of short easy to read chapter essays. Each chapter is interesting to read and provides various insights, questions and answers to some of the most fundamental grievances and questions human beings have about themselves. Koukl adopts a precision for explaining difficult topics such as evil, suffering, and God's wrath. He does this by using analogies, personal experience, logic, history, and philosophical insights to demonstrate how everything is set within a particular grand Story. The Christian Story provides a compelling all-embracing explanation for why the world is the way it is and what Koukl describes as a massive rescue operation that involved "Jesus who came to rescue us from the Father" (p.117). This point provides lots of further discussion for both theists and non-theists.

Koukl suggests that human beings largely agree on one thing— the world is not the way it should be. Something is terribly wrong with it and us. This reality sends people in two different directions. One is to conclude that there is no God, while the other is confirmation that there is a God. Speaking to both people of different faiths and also people of no particular faith, Koukl asks his readers to consider the Christian story within the same structure of all good stories: "...the basic parts of a good story...beginning (creation), conflict (Fall), conflict resolution (redemption) and ending (restoration)" (p. 27). To understand the Christian Story, one must first understand narrative or story structure.

In his book, Koukl shares with readers what he determines is the greatest Story ever told. With all good stories, there is a problem, there is a solution, there is restoration that does not always come quickly because complex problems take time to solve, but there is a good end to the Story. The end of the Christian Story is perfect justice to all, and no one will miss out. Of course, this is good news for some and not for others because it ultimately means no person will get away with what they have done or not done. As Koukl says, “...God misses nothing” (p. 156).

Koukl addresses the questions and traditional criticisms people have against God, especially an all-loving God. For example, how is eternal hell an example of a loving God? He answers, “Hell is *not* an example of God’s love. It is an example of his justice” (p. 162). Koukl then frees us from a mistake that many people today make in relation to God’s love. The error is to think of love as God’s only attribute. Koukl maintains that love is only one true attribute, with justice as another true attribute of God. Therefore, God’s identity is that of love and justice.

The rigour of research and scholarship is transparent as Koukl provides in the *Notes* section (p.179) his chapter-by-chapter sources and with explanation and clarification. This book adds to current knowledge on Christian theism; however, based on my personal experience engaging with other books related to this subject, Koukl has produced a unique resource that not only complements other reading material on the subject of Christian apologetics but does so with a good balance of academic understanding, storytelling and personal experience. Koukl’s invitation does not disappoint. His book achieves its goal.

Matthew Etherington achieved his PhD in the philosophy of education from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, while completing doctoral research at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). He is presently a Professor in the School of Education at Trinity Western University, British Columbia, Canada. Matthew is the Director of the Institute of Indigenous Issues and Perspectives (IIIP). His primary interests are in epistemological inclusion in education, Aboriginal pedagogy, outcomes, assessment, and philosophy. Matthew has published three books, *Changing Careers to Become a Teacher: A Study of Mature Age Preservice Teachers in Career Transition* and *Foundations of Education: A Christian Vision (editor and author); and What Teachers Need to Know: Topics of Inclusion (editor and author)*. He writes on a diversity of topics in education and spirituality using a philosophical lens for analysis.

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