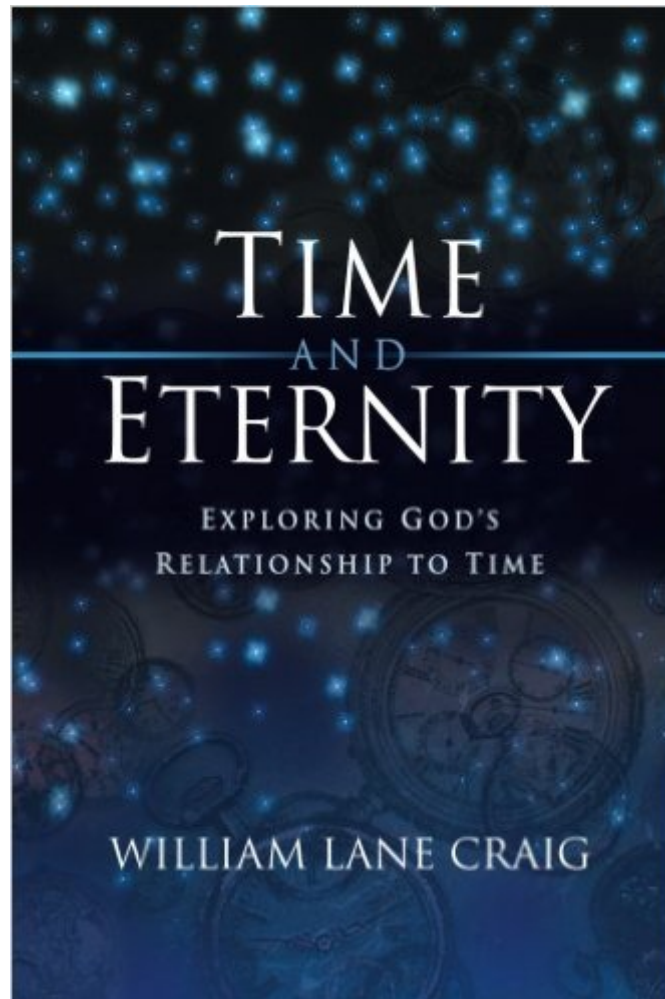


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Time And Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship To Time



Synopsis

Time and Eternity deals with difficult issues in modern physics and brings them into relation with traditional theological doctrines. Craig has done a great work, and it is marvelous that now the philosophy of religion is engaging with the philosophy of science to the great benefit of both.--John R. Lucas
Fellow of Merton College, Oxford University Time and Eternity offers a comprehensive discussion of the problems in the concepts of time and eternity on the basis of an extraordinary familiarity with a vast number of recent contributions to this issue from scientists and philosophers. The argument is subtle and precise. Particularly important are the sections on the impact of the different versions of relativity theory on the concept of time.... The book offers a plausible argument for a realistic conception of temporal process and for God's involvement in the temporal distinctions and processes because of His presence in His creation.--Wolfhart Pannenberg
Professor of Systematic Theology Ludwig Maximillians Universitaet-Muenchen, Germany As a scientist doing theoretical research in gravitational physics and quantum cosmology, I found Dr. Craig's thoughtful book highly interesting. He has carefully given arguments defending several different viewpoints for each of the many issues about time that he discusses, followed by critiques in which he emphasizes his own opinion. Reading Time and Eternity has forced me to develop better arguments for my own opinions (which differ considerably from Craig's).... I am certain that Time and Eternity will also stimulate your thinking about this fascinating subject and your appreciation for the God who created time as part of the marvelous universe He has given us.--Don N. Page
Professor of Physics and Fellow of the Cosmology and Gravitation Program of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada William Lane Craig is one the leading philosophers of religion and one of the leading philosophers of time. In this book, he combines his expertise in these areas to produce an original, erudite, and accessible theory of time and God that will be of great interest to both the general public and scholars. It is a rewarding experience to read through this brilliant and well-researched book by one of the most learned and creative thinkers of our era.--Quentin Smith
Professor of Philosophy, Western Michigan University In Time and Eternity, William Lane Craig defends the remarkable conclusion that "God is timeless without creation and temporal since creation." Craig argues his case philosophically by carefully weighing evidence for and against divine temporality and personhood in light of dynamic versus static theories of time and their warrants, in turn, in a Lorentzian interpretation of special relativity and an objective, mind-independent theory of becoming, including fascinating excursions into Big Bang cosmology and the philosophy of mathematics. As the latest in his series of ground-breaking books, Time and Eternity summarizes and extends Craig's previous technical arguments and conveys them to a

more general audience. It is a must-read for anyone seriously interested in the problem of time and eternity in Christian philosophy.--Robert Russell Professor of Theology and Science Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, Calif. The nature of time is a continuing source of puzzlement both to science and in everyday life. It is also an important issue in theological understandings of the nature of God. In this interesting book, Professor Craig tackles this complex set of topics in a clear way. His discussion of the interrelated scientific, philosophical, and theological issues clears up many previous misconceptions and proposes a plausible understanding of the relation of God to time and eternity that many will find helpful.--George Ellis Professor of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics University of Capetown

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Customer Reviews

This was a fairly good basic intro book for the issues of God/time and God's knowledge/future contingents. While this issue is usually discussed in philosophical journals and in books which cost an arm and a leg to purchase, Craig has brought the issue to the lay persons and scholars alike. Before I review this book, it must be noted that I disagree with Craig's position. However, I think that Craig has done a noble job in defending his position, and I respect him for that. If I was able, I would have given Craig's book three and a half (3 1/2) stars for my own disagreements with Craig's overall assertions and some of the misunderstanding Craig had regarding certain philosopher's and their assertions (i.e. Aquinas being one which was mentioned below). Craig's position in this book is that God is temporal (or omnitemporal) due to relations which occurred with the created universe (relations which were not present w/o creation). Craig argues his point based

on several elements. First, Craig believes that God cannot remain untouched by the created order's temporality. In other words, according to Craig, God comes into (so to speak) new relations which were not present without the created universe. Second, Craig believes that once time begins at the moment of creation, God becomes temporal by virtue of His real relation to the temporal world. Third, thus God, at least, according to Craig, undergoes some type of extrinsic change due to this new real relation with the created world. These are Craig's underlying assertions regarding God and time. Also, in this book, Craig rejects Einstein's interpretation of the Special Theory of Relativity (STR). Note, I did not say that Craig denies STR, rather he agrees with the Lorenzian interpretation of the theory over and against Einstein's interpretation. You can read why Craig believes this, since he details it in several chapters of this work. I believe Craig's overall assessment of the issues is misdirected and wrong in several areas. First, He univocally predicates to God relations which occur between one human and another. This predication occurs via God's new relations with the universe. However, if God is a necessary being (which I think Craig would agree that God is), then any properties predicated of that Being must be predicated necessarily. However, if God is omnitemporal (as Craig asserts) then these properties must be predicated necessarily. By Craig's univocal predication, he does not predicate of God necessarily as he should. This is so because Craig declares that God "changes" from a being who is eternal to a being who is omnitemporal. This is, via Craig's view, an ontological change in God's nature and this is, I believe, metaphysically impossible. Either God is necessarily eternal or God is necessarily omnitemporal. He cannot move from one state to the other and remain a necessary being. Another problem I had with this book was Craig's misunderstanding of Thomas Aquinas' assertions about God and real relations. In chapter three (3), "Divine Temporality," part II. "Divine Relations With the World," Craig asserts, "Thomas [Aquinas] escapes the conclusion that God is therefore temporal by denying that God stands in any real relation to the world." This could not be more inaccurate and wrong. Aquinas does not deny that God stands in any real relation to the world. In fact, Aquinas declares just the opposite. Aquinas asserted three types of relations: one where both terms are ideas, one where both terms are real, and one where one is real and one idea. That which is created, according to Aquinas, is really dependent upon God, but God is not really dependent upon the created. Thus, they are related as real to an idea. God knows about the relationship of dependence but He does not actually have it. The relationship between God and the world is very real, but God is not dependent in that relationship. In other words, Aquinas is only denying dependent relations between God and the world, not all real ones. Aquinas treats this issue in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 13, 7, ad. 2. (Also, for an easy explanation of this issue see Norman Geisler's book titled "Thomas Aquinas: An

Evangelical Appraisal" I briefly summarized this position based upon those two works). Overall, Craig's book is pretty good, but it is wrought with several problems. I appreciate Craig's work to bring this issue to the non-philosopher, so to speak, but I would recommend reading Craig's book in light of Brian Leftow's book titled "Time and Eternity," and Paul Helm's work titled "Eternal God." Both of these books are available here at .com.

In this fascinating treatment of God's relationship to time, William Lane Craig argues that God, though timeless without the universe, is in time since the creation of the universe. This detailed study encompasses a wide variety of issues, including the biblical conception of God, the nature of time, relativity theory, the linguistic account of tensed facts, and a slew of other topics. Near the beginning of the book, Craig considers arguments in favor of God's timelessness. He first considers arguments that God's immutability or simplicity necessitate a timeless nature. Craig points out that these doctrines, however, are more controversial than the doctrine of divine timelessness itself, and therefore cannot be used to support timelessness. Moreover, both of these doctrines have conceptual difficulties and lack a clear scriptural basis (verses discussing God's immutability only entail that God's character does not change). The next argument leads into some exciting territory. Defenders of divine timelessness sometimes argue that Einstein's relativity theory supports their view. Since the special theory of relativity implies that there is no absolute "now" but rather a plethora of inertial frames, we must reject the idea that God is in time. For if God is in time, then He is either in a specific inertial frame (according to which He is ignorant of real facts concerning all the other reference frames) or He is in multiple inertial frames (which leads to a radical splitting of God's consciousness). Since both of these alternatives are untenable, we are forced to reject God's temporality. Here, Craig argues that Einstein's interpretation of relativity theory is not the only valid interpretation, and, in fact, the physicist Hendrick Lorentz (a contemporary of Einstein) offers a better interpretation which upholds absolute time and space. According to Lorentz, measuring devices shrink or contract in the direction of motion, and it is impossible to experimentally determine one's absolute location and time, even though in reality there is an objective fact about the matter. Craig contends that Einstein's interpretation of relativity was heavily influenced by a verificationist epistemology and that Lorentz's interpretation is actually superior, since it upholds the commonsense notion of absolute time and actually accords better with some scientific findings. Finally, Craig considers the argument offered by some advocates of divine timelessness which contends that temporal existence is not adequate for God, as the most perfect being. Due to the inherent limitations of temporal existence, God must exist timelessly. Craig argues that, while

the argument has some plausibility, it is inconclusive. God's omniscience entails that He always knows what is coming in the future and He never forgets what happened in the past, and, moreover, there is some evidence that consciousness of time's flow can be an enriching experience. In chapter 3, Craig offers two powerful arguments in favor of God's temporality. The first concerns God's actions in the temporal world. Given that God is creatively active in the temporal world, God is really related to the world, and is therefore Himself temporal. The second argument concerns God's knowledge of facts. Since some facts are tensed (and thus are past, present, or future), God's knowledge of such facts must change. For example, in order for God to know what time it is now, He must constantly change His belief about the current time. Craig argues that it is impossible for a timeless God to know tensed facts such as "It is now 3:00 P.M." After discussing arguments for and against divine timelessness and divine temporality, Craig embarks on a fascinating discussion of the very nature of time. There are actually two main theories of time seriously discussed by philosophers today- dubbed the "A-Theory" and the "B-Theory" of time (or the tensed theory and tenseless theory of time, respectively). Essentially, the A-Theory is the theory of time of the man on the street. According to this view, there really is an objective 'now' and things really come into and go out of existence. The B-Theory holds that 'now' is just a subjective feature of consciousness and that things do not really come into or go out of existence. Past, present, and future events are all equally real. Craig argues at length that our experience of tense and the ineliminability of tense in language provides powerful justification for adopting the A-Theory. The B-Theory of time is primarily justified on the basis of a Minkowskian interpretation of the special theory of relativity, according to which reality should be understood as a four-dimensional structure called "space-time." On this view, the universe just exists as a four-dimensional block and there is no room for tensed facts or temporal becoming. Craig argues that, once again, a Lorentzian interpretation of relativity can plausibly account for all the same facts and is metaphysically superior to the Minkowskian interpretation. Having considered the arguments for and against divine temporality and divine timelessness and surveyed the arguments for the competing models of time, Craig concludes the book by arguing that God is in time. However, as can be recalled from a summary of the arguments for divine temporality, Craig's case that God is in time is based on the existence of a temporal universe. Without that universe, there is no reason to think that God is in time, and, Craig argues, this view leads to incoherencies. If God has existed for an infinite amount of time prior to the creation of the universe, then why did He wait so long to create? Craig therefore concludes that God, though in time since the creation of the universe, is timeless without the universe. Anyone interested in God's relationship to time should read Craig's illuminating study in "Time and Eternity."

Whether or not you accept his conclusion, this book will help clarify your thinking on this complicated subject, as well as enhance your knowledge of a number of intriguing issues being discussed in philosophy and theology.

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