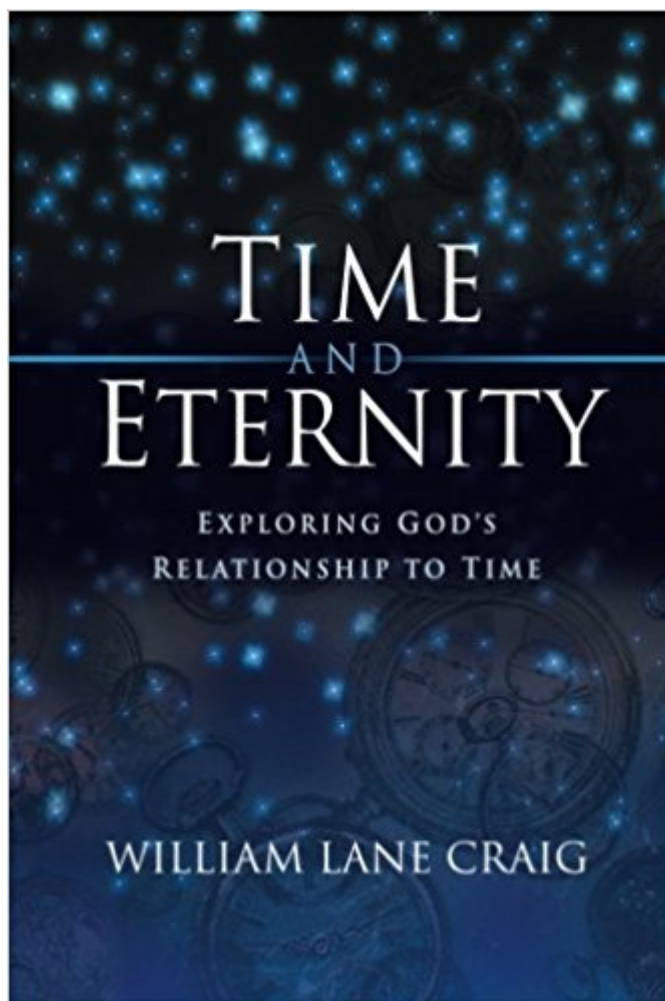


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# Time And Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship To Time



## 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 Maximilians 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

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

William Lane Craig (PhD, University of Birmingham, England; DTheol, University of Munich) is research professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, California, and at Houston Baptist University in Houston, Texas. He has authored or edited over thirty books and is the founder of ReasonableFaith.org, a web-based apologetics ministry.

In Nicolas Tomalin's "The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst", a participant in the first solo round the world sailing race, circling aimlessly around the north Atlantic while trying to convince race organizers that he was in fact leading the race by calling in clever but false position reports, goes insane contemplating the nature of time, and holding the ship's clock steps off his boat and disappears under the waves. It is hard not to be sympathetic to Mr. Crowhurst as time, like water to a

fish, surrounds and dominates our existence yet is extraordinarily difficult to define and understand. William Craig's book, *Time and Eternity*, takes on the problem of time and how God must relate to time and makes the topic as intelligible and accessible as I think possible, even while thoroughly discussing and evaluating the different theories of time. As Craig notes in his foreword, this is a book for Christians, and it is clear that some reviewer's presuppositions about the impossibility or silliness of the existence of God have prevented them from appreciating the depth of Craig's arguments. They missed a lot as Craig carefully presents the philosophical and logical arguments for understanding time as dynamic, with a constantly emerging 'Now', or as static with all 'moments' simply being slices of a 4 dimensional static block of spacetime that only gives the appearance of movement to observers. The author concludes that the arguments in favor of dynamic time have much the more defensible and coherent position. He arrives, as noted, by a careful and exceedingly thorough and fair presentation of the arguments for and against these two theories (sometimes referred to as the 'A' theory of time - dynamic - or the 'B' theory of time, that is, static.) Because Craig is a gifted logician and respected philosopher, he makes few declarative statements, but rather lays out the logical arguments for the positions he reviews, then arrives at some key and highly defensible positions: 1. Time is dynamic, and we exist in a world where the 'Now' is not mind dependent but a feature of reality. 2. Time cannot be logically past infinite. (His chapter on this is particularly articulate.) 3. Since God cannot be past finite, prior to His creation of time, He must exist timelessly. This book will appeal to those who, on the mention of God, do not get the vapors with a subsequent shutdown of their cerebral cortex and to those who are willing to carefully read and think through the arguments presented. This is not a book to fall asleep while reading; nor is it entertainment per se. Rather it is a scholarly work, well written as are all of Craig's books, that must be studied to derive maximal value from the effort of reading it. This is not to scare off the casual reader, but to warn that the topic of time can be so abstract that it takes a bit of intellectual effort to understand what Craig is going on about. So if you are interested in the nature and subject of time and reality, and in particular want to explore how God relates to time, this is a fantastic read. Being a slow learner, I took it a dozen pages or so a day, carefully taking notes to make sure I understood the arguments, and having done so recommend the same approach to the serious reader. The only quibble I have is that Dr. Craig seems to give short shrift to Dr. Hugh Ross' notion that God must necessarily exist in multiple or infinite dimensions of time. Craig's references to Ross' speculations on God and time described in his book *'Beyond the Cosmos'* seem, at least to me, to indicate that Dr. Craig did not carefully consider Ross' point of view as his dismissal of that view seems based on a superficial understanding of what Ross is suggesting. Be that as it may, for the serious student of

time, this is a classic work.

This is the culmination of over two decades of Craig's reflection on the nature of time and God's relationship to it. The different philosophical aspects being raised in this book have been treated in other book length works of his (One on the A-theory of time, one on the B-theory, one on Philosophical interpretations of Relativity theory (as editor and contributor), one on the problem of future contingents and various works relating these issues to theism and Big Bang cosmology. This should give a hint of the time and effort he has dedicated to this issue). In some less friendly circles Craig may be reduced to a "rhetorician" which is somewhat understandable given his almost mind blowing commitment to debate and public interaction throughout the years. But this reduction is completely unfair considering his academic work and is better explained as a by-product of Craig being involved in a "culture war" in which he seems to be a force to be reckoned with. I found this book to be a great introduction to many different aspects of the philosophy of time from a theistic perspective. You will grapple with the question whether time is to be understood dynamically (A-theory of time) or as something static (B-theory of time). Is temporal becoming part of reality or is it an illusion of our consciousness? Can science decide this issue or give us hints? Does the Bible give answers to these questions? What is the difference between an Einsteinian and a Newtonian view of time? If God knows what I will do tomorrow how can my choice be free when tomorrow arrives? What makes statements about the past true? Is only the present real? Many more deep questions like these are raised which makes this both an intense but at the same time most interesting and rewarding book to read. So what sort of view does he represent? According to Craig, God is neither essentially timeless nor essentially in time, he sees no good arguments to draw any such a priori conclusions about the nature of God. Rather God becomes temporal in creating our temporal universe (Summed up nicely: "1. God is creatively active in the temporal world. 2. If God is creatively active in the temporal world, God is really related to the temporal world. 3. If God is really related to the temporal world, God is temporal. 4. Therefore, God is temporal.") Craig agrees that God's timelessness could be deduced from either his simplicity or his immutability, it is just that he doesn't believe there are good enough reasons to believe that God is simple or immutable! ("Thus, while we may freely admit that a simple or immutable God must be timeless, we have even less reason to think God simple or immutable than to think Him timeless and so can hardly infer that He is timeless on the basis of those doctrines."). He also argues from God's omniscience that it would have to involve God knowing the "tensed facts" of our world, which would be impossible (according to Craig) if God is understood as timeless. This leads him into defending that there really are such

tensed facts to be known. Another great portion of the book is dedicated to what modern science has to say about time. One very interesting and mind boggling consequence of standard interpretations of relativity theory is that there is no "privileged now" just a "now" related to a particular observer. So if God is to be said to exist "now" (or to know what happens "now") the obvious question is "which now do you mean?". Just selecting one possible observers "now" seems arbitrary and saying that God is within every "now" would seem to threaten God's unity and make him a schizophrenic. What to do? Craig tries to solve this issue by defending a Lorentzian interpretation of relativity in which a privileged "now" makes more sense. This leads him into a very interesting historical discussion of the influences philosophy have had on the work of famous scientists like Newton, Lorentz, Einstein and Leibniz. To me this was probably the most fascinating part of the book. Ultimately I may not agree with all of Craig's views on time and God but he has given us a very serious yet readable treatment of these issues which will have you thinking long after you finish the book. As has been mentioned in other reviews there are many books out there giving us a different theistic perspective on these issues (stressing God's timelessness in particular). Given Craig's popularity among laymen theists this might be good to point out in order to guard some from relying too much on just one individual in the theistic philosophical community. These are tough metaphysical questions and we pay respect to them by following Craig's example and think hard about them! Finally, I bought this in the Kindle edition and must unfortunately say that there were more typos than acceptable for a professionally published work like this. I've tried to report these best I can and hopefully they'll be fixed for future editions. Other than that there were no major formatting issues.

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