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Craig's "On guard: Defending your faith with reason and precision" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Craig, W. L. (2010). *On guard: Defending your faith with reason and precision*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook. 288 pp. \$25.00. ISBN 9781434764881

William Lane Craig is arguably the most popular contemporary apologist of the Christian faith – he’s often brought up in conversations between aspiring apologists and those who have recently delved into the discipline. He’s debated many of the “New Atheists”, including Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens. *On Guard* is Craig’s popular level Christian apologetics book. It’s important to note that it is not an academic publication. A well-read Christian apologist will notice the scope a few pages in. For a book that is on a higher intellectual plane, offering a more robust and laborious read is Craig’s *Reasonable Faith*. If someone is looking for a book that dives further into Christian apologetics and analytical philosophy, I’d point them to *Reasonable Faith*. Though not an in-depth review of arguments for the Christian faith, *On Guard* carries its weight in gold. The book is well-gearred for study groups, personal (and less intense) learning, while offering a baseline skillset for the beginning Christian apologist.

The first chapter of the book outlines why apologetics is important to the Christian faith, citing Peter’s words, “... *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...*” (1 Peter 3:15 ESV). Craig makes sure though to tell readers a defense of the faith is to be done with love, and to be careful not to fall into non-sensible argumentation. Throughout the book Craig adds in his personal testimony of faith and pivotal moments in his academic journey making the read more personable. Frequent, humorous remarks let his personality shine through.

Chapter two, “*What Difference Does It Make If God Exists?*” presents one of the more powerful arguments for God’s existence – the realization that life is ultimately nihilistic without God. Craig weaves in his own realization of this while premising the argument. He keenly transitions to Chapter three, “*Why Does Anything at All Exist?*”. This argument, first formulated by Gottfried Leibniz, can be summed up to “*Why does something exist rather than nothing?*”. Craig does well to stack the two aforementioned arguments together as it facilitates a contemplative experience.

Chapter five is the teleological argument. The use of pictures and thought experiments here aides the reader in understanding the statistical magnitude of the probabilities cited – his frequent employment of them make the book more colorful and friendly to a popular audience. This is what makes this book shine, this is underrated when targeting a Christian audience. This delivery is doubly valuable here because Craig introduces the reader to counter arguments, then equips the reader with objections. For example: Craig introduces Richard Dawkins' objection to a designed universe by laying it out, and then counters it with ... "*Dawkins' argument is jarring because the atheistic conclusion, 'Therefore, God almost certainly does not exist,' doesn't follow from the six previous statements even if we concede that each of them is true. There are no rules of logic that would permit such an inference. Dawkins' argument is plainly invalid.*" (pp. 12) ... quite the statement from Craig.

Dr. Craig's *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* is recommended for Christians looking for an introductory guide to apologetics, or simply those whom are interested in the intellectual validity of the faith. Keep in mind the book *does* arm the Christian with a good apologetics skillset, though one should be wary – there is a wealth of philosophical and scientific arguments for both sides of the aisle. I'd recommend this book as a springboard.

Reviewer

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