



Craig, William Lane.

Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics, 3rd. ed.

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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William Lane Craig is a man who needs no introduction in the evangelical community. For years he has been one of the world's leading Christian apologists and philosophers, authoring and editing more than thirty books, both at the scholarly and popular levels. It is with great pleasure that I offer this brief review of the third edition of what I would consider to be his magnum opus, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*.

The changes in this edition as compared to the first two consist of expanded and updated information and the removal of an entire chapter. Craig says:

Keeping this book at approximately the same length was made possible by the deletion of an entire chapter on the historical reliability of the New Testament, a chapter which a former editor had insisted, despite my protestations, be inserted into the second edition. (11)

One of the main features of this book that I really appreciate is the format. For starters, Craig "structured this book around various apologetic issues that arise in the *loci communes theologiae*." (13) So the sections in this book are: 1) *de fide* (faith), 2) *de homine* (man), 3) *de Deo* (God), 4) *de creatione* (creation), and 5) *de Christo* (Christ). He's rearranged the usual order that they appear in systematic theologies in order to follow logical progression of apologetics. I think that this sets him apart from (as well as above) other apologists and their text books, e.g., John Frame's *Apologetics to the Glory of God* (P&R, 1994) which presents Apologetics as: 1) Proof, 2)

Defense, 3) Offense; or Norman Geisler's *Christian Apologetics* (Baker, 1976) who sections his text according to: 1) Methodology, 2) Theistic Apologetics, 3) Christian Apologetics.

The chapters themselves are also wonderfully structured. Craig begins by presenting: 1) the historical background of the issue at hand, 2) his assessment of the issue at hand, 3) the practical application of the issue at hand, and finally 4) a select bibliography of works cited and recommended reading for further study. And what I really appreciated about this final feature is that it is not chapter end notes, it's simply an end of chapter bibliography — Craig uses footnotes throughout!

For the most part Craig's presentation is lucid and easily understood, while not being overly-simplistic in the least. But there were times when I found myself needing to re-read certain sections to be able to understand what was being said, and quite honestly, I still walked away a bit confused. For example, in chapter 6 "The Problem of Miracles" when addressing David Hume's arguments against miracles, he goes into probability theory, specifically citing Bayes' Theorum which is accompanied by what I found to be confusing equations (270-276). Now I'm sure that for people much smarter than myself this won't be a problem but unfortunately for me, I'm not them.

One of the things that I found most refreshing throughout this text is Craig's honesty. For example, in the practical application sections at the end of both chapters 5 and 6 he notes that the material covered in the chapters has very little, if any, practical application to evangelism. He says:

The content of this chapter [i.e., chapter 5] has little direct applicability to evangelism. I have never met a non-Christian who overtly objected to the gospel message because of historical relativism. (240-241)

And again:

Like the contents of the last chapter, the material shared in this chapter [i.e., chapter 6] does not, I must confess, admit of much practical application to evangelism. I've never encountered a non-Christian who rejected the gospel because of an overt objection to miracles. (278)

But this is indicative of this work as a whole. Craig states that his purpose isn't to present a check list of responses to tough questions about the faith, nor is it a handbook for how to win your unbelieving neighbor to Christ in five easy steps. The simple intention of this book is to provide a positive apologetic of the Christian faith (which consequently is why we don't find anything by way of counter-cult apologetics here). Craig said it best in the introduction:

[B]y having in hand a positive justification of the Christian faith, one automatically overwhelms all competing worldviews lacking an equally strong case. Thus, if you have a sound and persuasive case for Christianity, you don't have to become an expert in comparative religions and Christian cults so as to offer a refutation of every one of these counter-Christian views. If your positive apologetic is better than theirs, then you have done your job in showing Christianity to be true. (24)

I think Craig has done a fantastic job throughout this volume of equipping the reader for just such a task. This is probably the best book on Christian apologetics that I have in my library (and I have few), so it is without reservation that I suggest everyone reading this review picks up a copy. The only feature to mention that hasn't been covered above is the eight-page subject index. As I said, Craig used footnotes (as well he should have), and each chapter ends with a bibliography.

It is also worth mentioning that there is a conjoining website¹ with a number of online resources to accompany this third edition. There you can download PDF files of study guides for each chapter of the book as well as view/listen to video and audio presentations of supplemental material for each section of the book. There's even a page dedicated to media, which includes bloggers, where review copies can be requested, and information to help in reviewing and promoting the book can be obtained. For the combined effort of the written work and online material I recommend *Reasonable Faith* to one and all with this one caveat: you should have *some* foundation in apologetics before picking this volume up. I think it might be a bit overwhelming as a student's first book on apologetics, but that's understandable since its target audience is seminarians.

¹ http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/PageServer?pagename=rftools_home