

**God is Good, God is Great:  
Why Believing in God is Reasonable and Responsible**

William Lane Craig & Chad Meister (eds)  
Inter-Varsity Press, 2009  
265 pages, \$19.00 USD, paper

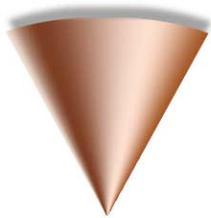
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If your parishioners think about their faith, they will appreciate you taking the time to read *God is Good, God is Great*. This book, a compilation of essays by prominent Christian philosophers, was written in response to 'New Atheism', which was composed by a group of vocal secular philosophers whose creed is "No heaven. No Hell. Just science." This is a mantra that is increasingly repeated in the television shows and Netflix movie choices that fill our parishioners homes in the evening and their minds the next day.

Can I be honest? The problem with many philosophy books is that they often speak about problems that I have never heard of in words that I do not understand. I am a preacher. I speak God's ancient words to contemporary people. My listeners come to church struggling with their job, kids, traffic and an evaporating 401K. If a philosophy book is going to help me, it's going to help average people who trying to take God and his Bible seriously.

Philosophy serves preachers well when it helps preachers understand why the worldview of the Scripture they are preaching is reasonable . . . and do so in concrete, non-technical terms that we can share with our congregations. Against this preacher's grid, *God is Good, God is Great* scored a B+.

The book is divided into four topical sections: the existence of God, the greatness of God, the goodness of God, and why it matters. If you don't have time to read the entire book, read sections 1 & 3. I found the authors in these sections to be particularly understandable and relevant.



In chapter one, for example, William Lane Craig restates some of the traditional arguments for God's existence in simple non-traditional ways. In the cosmological argument, for example, he states that since the universe is continually expanding must be expanding away from a starting point. Using a simple cone diagram he explains that anything that is getting bigger and bigger "cannot be eternal in the past and *must* have an absolute beginning." This is a simple and compelling argument I can easily share with my congregation.

Thanks Dr. Craig!

J.P. Moreland writes an outstanding chapter on how the image of God (found in every person on the planet) undercuts the argument of scientific atheism. These atheists insist on a causal explanation for everything that happens in the universe. Moreland points out, however, that when the argument is applied to people; you end up proving the existence of the God you deny!

Think about it. People are conscious, have free will, rationality, a unified self, and intrinsic human rights. Since you cannot use these descriptors on anything else in creation, how is it reasonable to say that people spontaneously emerged out of the rest of creation? A far more reasonable explanation for the uniqueness of people is that God made people in his own image. Like Moses says in Genesis 1&2.

Chad Meister does an outstanding job on the ‘problem of evil.’ Atheists argue, “If God is all powerful, all knowing and perfectly good . . . then how do you explain evil? The presence of evil proves that such a god does not exist.” Dr. Meister responds creatively by showing that evil is a bigger problem for atheists than Christians.

Does objective evil exist? Why? What makes acts like rape and murder wrong? If people are, as atheist Richard Dawkins argues in his book *Selfish Gene*, just “survival machines-robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes” (p. 112) than how can anything selfish molecules do be wrong? As Meister point out, ‘If moral notions such as good and evil exist objectively, then there must be an objective foundation for their existence.’ The problem of evil is not solved through scientific naturalism. That approach makes the world much more evil.

Space constraints don’t allow me to outline Alistair McGrath’s “Is Religion Evil?” Paul Copan’s “Are Old Testament Laws Evil?” and Jerry L. Walls’ “How

Could God Create Hell?" but they are outstanding chapters that are *well* worth the read.

*God is Great, God is Good* is not a perfect book for the preacher. Some chapters were so abstract that they are difficult to understand. With others, I struggled because I had not read Richard Dawkins book, *The God Delusion* (obviously every philosopher and philosophy student in the world has read it already.) At other places, the tone of the writers made me feel uncomfortable . . . like when your neighbors are fighting at night and you can hear every word through your bedroom window. Their argument may be healthy, but I don't need to be part of it.

For preachers who want to be able to explain and demonstrate the validity of the biblical worldview, however, *God is Great, God is Good* is very helpful. Get it, read it, think, and help your congregation do the same.