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## Book Review: An Invitation To Analytic Christian Theology

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from Audi's theory that we cannot say something more general between these two candidate values? After all, we can look back to Audi's augmented list of Rossian principles to find that no virtue of patriotism or loyalty is listed among them. And this does not seem to be mere oversight. It is at least plausible to suppose that—say—justice and non-injury could be accepted as moral principles from a mere conceptual understanding of morality. However, it seems significantly less plausible that privileging co-nationals above other persons could follow from a mere investigation of moral concepts. But let us be generous in assuming that somehow, we could follow Audi's procedure and place a kind of patriotic loyalty on the list. In that case, how should we adjudicate between a *prima facie* cosmopolitan duty (supported by our obligation to beneficence) and the *prima facie* patriotic duty? Among his weighting principles, Audi includes a principle to defer to the greater number of affected persons. In most normal cases, it seems that this would support favoring the cosmopolitan position above the nationalist one.

I raise these questions to draw appreciation to Audi's work as much as criticism of it. My suggestion is that the theoretical resources he provides might be called on to help answer questions in more ways than the volume considers explicitly. Given the continuing importance of debates about global politics and religion in political society, the arguments offered in *Reasons, Rights, and Values* provide a contribution of ongoing philosophical value.

*An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology*, by Thomas H. McCall. IVP Academic, 2015. Pp. 183. \$22.00 (paper).

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As a named entity, analytic theology has only been around since the 2009 Oxford University Press publication of the edited volume *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, which introduced the phenomenon to the academic world. However, the practice of utilizing contemporary analytic philosophy for theological purposes stretches back at least as far as the 1960s and '70s in the pioneering work of the likes of Alvin Plantinga, Basil Mitchell, Richard Swinburne, and William Alston, among others. Despite a slew of articles and introductions over the past few years that describe and offer apologia for analytic theology, there have been two lacuna amidst these treatments. First, analytic theology has lacked a book-length, one-stop shop that surveys what analytic theology is, is not, and could be. Although the 2009 book edited by Oliver



D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea was groundbreaking and programmatic, its piecemeal approach does not achieve this desideratum. What is more, a second gap arises because the aforementioned articles and introductions have been largely written for the academic guilds of philosophers and theologians. Yet, if theology is to be for the church, then it is necessary for analytic theologians to build bridges to both ministers and the “person in the pew.” Thomas H. McCall’s book *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology* strives to fill both these lacunae.

It is important from the outset, however, to note that there seems to be nothing about analytic theology as such that precludes it from being used by a variety of religious or non-religious traditions or by a variety of Christian denominational traditions. If analytic theology is simply theology done using the tools of analytic philosophy, then any competent tool-user from any tradition should be able to utilize this methodology. McCall is careful to label his project as analytic *Christian* theology, not because that is the only tradition in which to do analytic theology, but because it is his tradition and the tradition of his main interlocutors. Indeed many of the topics and concerns that this book touches on reveal that McCall writes from and to a Protestant Evangelical tradition in which stand both McCall’s institutional home and the publisher of this monograph.

Chapter 1 is aptly titled “What is Analytic Theology?” and provides just what one would expect from a chapter with this denotation. McCall offers a quick review of the history of analytic philosophy, shifts to discuss the move toward analytic philosophy of religion—what the aforementioned proto-analytic theologians pioneered, followed by an up-to-the-moment description of recent analytic theology practitioners and initiatives. Following this, McCall addresses the *quiddity* issue by expounding the five prescriptions for analytic theology that Rea offers in his introduction to the *Analytic Theology* volume. These now almost canonical prescriptions are:

- P1. Write as if philosophical positions and conclusions can be adequately formulated in sentences that can be formalized and logically manipulated.
- P2. Prioritize precision, clarity, and logical coherence.
- P3. Avoid substantive (non-decorative) use of metaphor and other tropes whose semantic content outstrips their propositional content.
- P4. Work as much as possible with well-understood primitive concepts, and concepts that can be analyzed in terms of those.
- P5. Treat conceptual analysis (insofar as possible) as a source of evidence. (17–18, from Michael C. Rea, “Introduction,” *Analytic Theology*, 5–6)

I have wondered about the utility of elevating these prescriptions to a place of authority in analytic theology. It seems that either McCall has wondered this as well, or he has encountered many who do take them as authoritative but then reject analytic theology on the basis of them. McCall’s exposition of each of these prescriptions includes a fair amount of

deflationary work in the manner of *this prescription is not as intense as you might think*. For instance, McCall writes,

Consider P1. This need *not* mean that all meaningful statements in theology (or philosophy) need to be expressed formally. . . . Consider P2. This need *not*—and should *not*—be taken to mean that logical precision and coherence are the only important criteria for a theologian. . . . *Neither*, further, should P2 be taken to imply that the same levels of logical precision are possible with all theological topics. . . . P3 . . . does *not*, or at least need *not*, mean that there is no valid or valuable place for metaphor in theology . . . P5 . . . does *not* say that conceptual analysis is the *only* source of evidence. (18–21, italics mine except the last)

Perhaps the difficulty with defining analytic theology in this manner lies in the difficulty of defining analytic philosophy. What might be more beneficial than a set of prescriptions or definitions, is seeing analytic theology in action.

This in fact is where McCall turns for the remainder of the book. But before canvassing this aspect of the book, I pause to note that McCall helpfully dispels some common misconceptions that have arisen regarding analytic theology. For instance he addresses the allegations that analytic theology only utilizes univocal language about God (it doesn't); that analytic theology is identical to natural theology (it isn't); that analytic theology is historically naïve (many of the best practitioners work in the history of philosophy or history of theology); that analytic theology is apologetics for conservative theology (as a method it makes no decision as to the substantive commitments of the tool-users); that analytic theology relies on substance metaphysics (it doesn't); and that analytic theology is not spiritually edifying (it could be . . . and has been for at least one person, the present author of this review).

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are each helpfully structured to include discussions of the relation between analytic theology and an important topic followed by a “case study” that is a summary discussion of an issue within analytic theology. Chapter 2 addresses the relation between analytic theology and Christian Scripture. McCall here rehearses some of the standard conversations between “revealed” and “natural” theology and between philosophy and theology, including soundings from Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, and Karl Barth. The chapter concludes with a case study on the interplay between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. McCall shows how conversations in biblical theological treatments of the issue—such as that of exegete D. A. Carson—can be clarified by discussions of free will and determinism from the philosophical literature. Although McCall does not solve the dilemma, he succeeds in showing that analytic theology can bridge these two approaches to a similar question and thus enrich both.

Chapter 3 expositis the relation between analytic theology and historical expressions of Christian doctrine. This chapter seeks to further dispel the allegation that analytic theology is inherently historically naïve. Readers of this journal will be fully aware of the dialectic between contemporary

analytic philosophy of religion and historical work on the great philosophical theologians of the church's past. The work of such analytic theological staples as Eleonore Stump, Marilyn McCord Adams, Norman Kretzmann, Richard Cross, Oliver Crisp, Christina Van Dyke, and many others show that analytic approaches to historical theology abound. In fact, to me, the charge leveled against analytic theology of historical naiveté can only be brought by someone who has not read much analytic theology. McCall's main contributions in this chapter are two case studies of analytic theology deployed in recent work on Christology. What this conversation in the analytic literature reveals is a sensitivity to historical issues in service of a proper understanding of the church's formularies (such as the Nicene Creed and "Definition" of Chalcedon). In fact, the whole contemporary analytic discussion of Christology might simply be construed as offering accounts of the Incarnation that exposit the standard, historical position of the church.

Whether by coincidence or by a feature inherent in the methodology, practitioners of analytic theology have shown themselves to be open not only to philosophy as a handmaiden to theology, but many other spheres of learning as well. Chapter 4 is almost entirely an instance of "seeing it in action" by way of a case study on the prickly issue of the historical Adam within the trilogue between creation, evolution, and Christian doctrine. No philosophical theological discussion of this topic ought to proceed without some proficiency in such fields as physics, geology, evolutionary biology, and others. But McCall shows that none of these areas of inquiry are devoid of philosophical underpinnings and that they must interact with biblical material if they are to aid theology properly. Like the previous case studies, McCall does not settle this issue with finality. But he does demonstrate how analytic theology is uniquely able to clarify arguments, surface hidden assumptions, excise confused interpretations, and correct false characterizations within this contentious debate.

Chapter 5 is a meditation on what it means to be a good theologian *simpliciter*. The exhortation McCall offers here is applicable to theologians of analytic and non-analytic persuasions alike. Theology, according to McCall, should ultimately "strive to speak truthfully of God in a manner that glorifies him, and in doing so should serve to edify God's people" (170). It is not clear from this section whether McCall thinks that analytic theology is *uniquely* or *particularly* equipped to achieve this goal, or if it is just one methodology among many potentially useful ones. And I suspect this might reveal an ambiguity in the analytic theology movement itself. Does analytic theology (and its practitioners) set out to simply find a place at the table among a panoply of contextual theologies and other theological methodologies? Or does analytic theology set out to offer the best way to speak truthfully about God and edify God's people? Getting clear—as analytics are wont to do—on this distinction would help analytic theologians understand the scope of their project better and would make the nature of McCall's "invitation" more explicit.

There is much to commend in this book and it should attain a wide readership. Those already on the analytic theology scene, so to speak, will find McCall's book a refresher on what makes analytic theology helpful. For those familiar with, but skeptical of, analytic theology, this book will go a long way in assuaging common reservations. But as an introductory text that carefully outlines the aims of analytic theology and illustrates the utility of analytic theology, this book will be of most use to seminarians, undergraduates, ministers, and interested laypersons. If analytic theology is to break into the mainstream of Christian theological reflection, then this is a book to help blaze that trail.

*The End of the Timeless God*, by R. T. Mullins. Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xii + 248. \$110.00.

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R. T. Mullins has written an ambitious book. He aims to explain the traditional view of divine timelessness (DT) expressed by classical theists such as Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, and Aquinas (among others) and then to show that Christians ought to reject it. Mullins makes a number of good points, both on the historical side of the project and on the philosophical side, but in the end the work is *so* ambitious that he is not able to develop his historical explanation or his philosophical rejection persuasively.

In the beginning (3–10) Mullins outlines what commitments a “Christian Research Program” must include. He proposes six, all of which (except perhaps that God literally takes on “obligations”) are happily accepted by classical theists. However, he leaves out a commitment that is important to many Christian philosophers, and certainly to classical theists; the basic thesis of Perfect Being Theology (PBT), that God must be perfect, unlimited, that than which no greater can be conceived. A being than which we mere mortals can conceive a greater is not God. It is not clear whether Mullins allows that there could be a better being than the God arrived at by his version of a viable Christian Research Program.

In setting up his project, Mullins makes some helpful clarifications. In the last century or so the discussion about DT and—a necessarily related issue—the nature of time has often been cast in unhelpful language. For example (24–25), participants have often adopted McTaggart's A-theory and B-theory as if they referred to the ontological nature of time, whereas in McTaggart's original article they are about language. Mullins clarifies the contemporary debate explaining that it is mainly between presentists (only the present moment exists) and isotemporalists (all times are equally

