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Analytic Theology and the Academic Study of Religion, by William Wood. Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. vi + 352. \$100.00 (hardcover).

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Since analytic theology was first explicitly labelled as such in the prominent and programmatic 2009 volume *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* edited by Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea, it has been a field in rapid growth. The past decade has seen the appearance of the *Journal of Analytic Theology*, an Oxford University Press monograph series, international and interreligious conferences, and dedicated research centres across the world. Nevertheless, analytic theology is not without its critics and despite, or perhaps because of, its increased visibility, the field faces new questions regarding its scope, possibilities, value, and place in the academy. William Wood's book *Analytic Theology and the Academic Study of Religion* is therefore a timely and important contribution to the ongoing debates and work of carving out a place for analytic theology.

Primarily framed as a defence of analytic theology against a two-sided attack, Wood's book firstly responds to theologians who object that analytic theology is too modern, too secular, and too philosophical to be truly theological. From the other side, it addresses scholars of religion who view analytic theology as *too* theological to be a genuine form of academic inquiry in the modern and secular university. Against these objections, Wood argues that analytic theology is a legitimate form of theology and that theology not only belongs but can flourish in the secular academy. However, as is helpfully laid out in the book's prolegomenous Part 1, Wood's project is not merely defensive, but is also underpinned by two positive interventions: Firstly, it engages internal analytic theology debates and formulates a new way to understand this developing field by focusing on both the distinctive virtues and limits of the analytic approach. Secondly, it seeks to instigate a respectful, engaged, and mutually educative dialogue between analytic theologians and philosophers of religion, other academic theologians, and scholars of religion. A major aim of the book is to bridge the gulf between these three different intellectual traditions or cultures by showing that analytic theology is a valuable interlocutor for these fields, while also having much to learn from both non-analytic theology and religious studies.

Part 2 further explicates this "deep gulf of misunderstanding" that Wood identifies as separating analytic modes of inquiry from other approaches in the humanities, and the vexed question of what analytic



theology is. In Chapter 4, Wood mainly puts down this misunderstanding to differences in rhetorical style and a lack of charitable interaction across traditions. Where the analytic style's insistence on narrow precision and clarity may be deemed off-putting or "thin" by thinkers with continental commitments, this does not mean that continental thinkers devalue clarity. Equally, Wood notes that the typical objections to analytic theology as being inimically ahistorical, hostile to mystery, and lacking practical orientation cannot be considered inherent to the analytic method, even if these things may be displayed by individual analytic thinkers. However, as Wood notes, all human practices, analytic theology included, exhibit "characteristic deformations," that is, corruptions of the practice's distinctive virtues. These foundational chapters orient the reader, regardless of background, towards Wood's bridge-building project, as they equip both analytic and non-analytic readers to better understand the commitments that inform their different approaches.

As a discipline which favours clarity, a tension at the heart of analytic theology is that its own definition remains an open question. In Chapter 5, Wood suggests that it is possible to define analytic theology with reasonable precision, but not anything that approaches "an essential definition" (48). The book settles for two overarching definitions, viewing analytic theology as *theology* that employs the tools and methods of analytic philosophy and as a form of faith seeking understanding. Wood also distinguishes analytic theology from philosophy of religion as well as philosophical theology, which are often considered synonymous. In addition to viewing analytic theology as a more specific and therefore better label than philosophical theology, Wood seeks to push analytic theology "to be even more theological" (8). For, the question that really interests Wood in this book is not what analytic theology is or what makes analytic theology *analytic* or philosophical, but rather what makes analytic theology *theological* (51). It is this key point that is developed in Part 3.

Wood begins by formulating a theology of analytic reason, which takes seriously the noetic effects of the Fall. In response to those who object that analytic theology relies too heavily on modern, secular, or autonomous reason, analytic theology and reasoning are shown to be grounded in and warranted by the Christian doctrine of creation. This doctrine gives us reason to be optimistic that our rational faculties are trustworthy and aim at truth, with our concepts mapping onto the created world. Furthermore, as humans are created in the image of God and of Christ, Christology grounds rational inquiry as a way to imitate Christ, as the divine Logos, and a way to get to know and love God. However, while honouring this account and the epistemic optimism it warrants, Wood does not shy away from offering a truly robust account of sin and its cognitive consequences. As fallen, human reason is limited, and recognising this fallibility demands epistemic humility. Thus, human nature is best viewed dialectically as created in the image of God, yet also sinful. I find this dialectic to be well expressed in what Wood describes as the "tragedy of analytic theology"

(106–107): that we must seek to understand God, which for most, according to Wood, means reasoning discursively, even though we are not very good at doing so and it is not a particularly good way to understand God. Wood goes as far as to calling the tools and methods of this discursive reasoning which are also the tools of analytic thought, “blunt and often nearly unusable” (107). And yet they are the best tools currently available.

Building upon this theology of analytic reason, Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 defend analytic theology from a web of connected concerns, such as charges of idolatry, ontotheology, theistic personalism, and of spiritual sterility. Wood counters the latter charge precisely by extending the notion of analytic theology to show it can be a form of spiritual practice, something others have denied (see for example Crisp and Rea, *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 18–19). In Chapter 10, Wood identifies five specific features of analytic argumentation that can foster a life of virtue and particularly desire for God, and which all apply to the analytic approach: attention, wonder and attachment, argumentative transparency, imaginative identification with interlocutors, and the passive waiting for insight. Although these features are not specific to analytic inquiry, analytic theology certainly sets itself apart from other disciplines in its prioritisation of argumentative transparency. Wood views this as a way to actively make oneself intellectually vulnerable to criticism, while the narrow claims and small contributions made can be viewed as expressing profound intellectual modesty. It is continually emphasised in these chapters that analytic theology is not and should not be treated as if it were unique or different to other theological inquiry. Nor is it any more or less vulnerable to the charges brought than other forms of theology. Some may protest just how unremarkable, even unimpressive, Wood’s account can at times make analytic theology appear. However, conversely, I think theologians would be hard pressed to deny its theological credentials.

What is particularly effective about Part 3 is that it largely shows rather than tells us how a charitable conversation can be had across different cultures of inquiry. Wood for example puts numerous contemporary analytic and non-analytic theologians, from David Bentley Hart to Brian Leftow, into conversation noting where misunderstandings arise, and where in fact theological similarities emerge, such as the preservation of the Creator-creature distinction and creation *ex nihilo*. Wood also extensively draws on and engages the continental tradition in these chapters, making thinkers like Heidegger, Hegel, Jean-Luc Marion, and Pierre Hadot central interlocutors in his discussions of idolatry, ontotheology, and spiritual practice. Thus, Wood shows in these chapters how analytic theology need not be practiced in isolation from the continental tradition or the wider theological field, but that analytic theology can beneficially be put into conversation with other intellectual cultures. This is likewise a strength of the fourth and final part, which comprises Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14 and

takes on the task of demonstrating that analytic theology can be a valuable interlocutor for religious studies.

Wood admits that theology is a distinct form of inquiry from religious studies, but argues that religious studies benefits from welcoming different approaches, including theology. Wood begins by establishing in Chapter 11 that analytic theology (and theology generally) can be considered genuine forms of academic inquiry, the norms of which can be defined as obligation to support claims with reasons and evidence, and to respond with reasons and evidence when one's rational commitments are challenged appropriately (235). In the remaining chapters Wood puts his vision of analytic theology to work to intervene in three current debates in the study of religion and demonstrate how analytic theology can constructively contribute to these debates. The first debate is about naturalism and reductionism, in which Wood shows that when methodological naturalism is put forward as a field-defining norm, controversial metaphysical claims are left unexamined. The second debate relates to the hegemony of critique as a style of thought in religious studies, which Wood seeks to reject, and the third debate concerns the question of normativity in the study of critique. In the spirit of keeping in mind sin's effects and building bridges, Wood importantly underlines that his defence of analytic theology is not an attempt to inoculate it from rational scrutiny—quite the opposite, as disagreement is already the norm in analytic inquiry. Wood therefore remarks that he would love to see scholars of religion push analytic theologians to defend their commitments, as everyone in the academy profits from thorough critique (235). Yet, the central methodological intervention offered in the final chapter of this section is not a new form of critical inquiry: It is rather an equally normative, but positive alternative, which Wood calls "rigorous appreciation" (271–273). As Wood notes, proper academic rigour is required to skilfully appreciate something. Whereas incisive literary interpretation can for example be used to deconstruct a text, such work can also contribute to the recognition and experience of even deeper beauty, knowledge, and enchantment. With rigorous appreciation Wood suggests we can use academic inquiry as a way to foster these moments. With his concept of rigorous appreciation, Wood makes a notable methodological contribution, not just in analytic theology, but in the wider field of the humanities.

A marked feature of Wood's argumentation in this book is its recurring claims of modesty. Nevertheless, I found the vision of analytic theology outlined to be both ambitious in scope and demanding on its practitioners. Wood for example wants to see "analytic theology become more historically informed, more sensitive to premodern ways of reading and thinking, and more attuned to mystery and the limitations of human thought" (51). The analytic theologians would also benefit from "a serious scholarly engagement with critical inquiry" to become more self-critical and in turn "better colleagues and more sophisticated thinkers" (262–263). Additionally, Wood acknowledges the highly technical skills and training

(101) required to become a good analytic philosopher and theologian. Finally, on Wood's dialectical account of analytic theology, the analytic theologian must accept that his or her work likely will not yield an especially good understanding of God, but must undertake this work anyway. These demands also give rise to the question of how analytic theologians are to be trained well within the confines of the university's traditional disciplinary demarcations.

Another question is what the implications of Wood's extension of the term analytic theology might be. That contemporary analytic philosophy has developed beyond its original or classical method and scope is noted by Wood (37–39) and many others. Recently, it has been suggested that perhaps the term "analytic philosophy" has outgrown its familiar categories to such an extent that it no longer makes sense to speak of analytic philosophy at all. Some have even proposed that we find ourselves in a post-analytic age. Perhaps we might extend this reflection to analytic theology too—as such it is possible that the only real issue non-analytic theologians would have with Wood's vision of analytic theology is its name.

A final point to consider is Wood's conviction that there are no absolute fixed boundaries between philosophy and theology or between the analytic and non-analytic (48). Admittedly, Wood acknowledges that he does not fully argue this point. Nevertheless, I wonder whether it would have been worthwhile to elaborate on how this conviction fits with the book's aim and success in precisely drawing a sharper distinction between analytic *theology* and not just *philosophy* of religion, but also *philosophical* theology by making it more theological (8). Just as Wood notes that analytic philosophy might be conducive to identifying the similarities and differences in different religious traditions (285), and that it is analytic theology's dual nature, as both theological and analytic-philosophical, that renders it distinctly valuable to religious studies (278), Wood's vision of analytic theology then similarly has the potential for sharpening our grasp of the similarities and differences of philosophy and theology.

These queries aside, this book impressively brings together its various levels of argument into a comprehensive and cohesive resource for building—perhaps also mending—bridges between analytic theology and theology and religion. Its nuanced account of analytic theology and respectful style of argument should commend this book to students and scholars alike across its three main audiences: For those already trained in or sympathetic to the analytic mode of inquiry, the book not only rearticulates the distinctive value of analytic theology in an explicitly theological register, but also highlights important limitations, while offering a diverse and attractive trajectory. For theologians outside or suspicious of analytic theology, Wood's book offers a helpful introduction to the field and its main figures, and to a great extent allays common and entrenched objections through its dialogical and undeniably theological vision of the analytic theologian's task and aims. For scholars of religion, this book models a constructive way in which dialogue with analytic theology (and

theology generally) is not only possible, but can be mutually enriching, educative and convicting, opening up fruitful avenues for future interaction, both critical and appreciative. While patience and effort are required to continue the work of such interdisciplinary engagement, this book sets a humbling example for anyone who wishes to take up this task.

Justice and Charity: An Introduction to Aquinas's Moral, Economic, and Political Thought, by Michael P. Krom. Baker Academic, 2020. Pp. xv + 238. \$20.05 (paperback). \$49.99 (hardcover).

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Michael Krom offers his readers an education in Aquinas's moral, economic, and political thought, and not—as the title would suggest—a mere introduction. Krom's mission is to elucidate Aquinas's thought in these three domains, with respect to its general framework as well as Aquinas's substantive views and reasoning. But Krom does more than provide an exegesis of Aquinas's views—he brings them to life and motivates them. Krom tells us that he writes the book more as a teacher than a scholar, and one can tell that the book's content is the fruit of years of teaching. Krom formulates and presents Aquinas's views in fresh ways, using creative examples and thought experiments, and readers can appreciate and learn from his pedagogical style. While I have taught and written on Aquinas's ethics, I found my understanding deepening in areas of Aquinas I know and learning from Krom in areas of which I am less familiar. I also often found his treatments helpful for how I can present Aquinas's thought in the classroom. Due to this pedagogical style, Krom's book is fit for a number of audiences, including scholars and teachers that focus on Aquinas, others who touch on Aquinas's thought in the general run of their teaching or scholarship, undergraduate and graduate students, and those looking to learn more of Aquinas outside of a formal educational setting. Krom especially helps his readers by opening each substantive section with background readings from Aquinas's works (or other sources where appropriate). This enables the teacher, scholar, or student to easily find and examine for herself Aquinas's ideas and arguments through his own rich and rigorous texts. The above praise is not to say that I didn't object to Krom in places, regarding interpretation, manner of presenting, or inclusion/exclusion of certain materials. But what stand in the foreground are the ways I learned from the book and its unique pedagogical style.

