

# Analytic theology

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## Abstract

Analytic theology is often described as something like the application of analytic philosophy's tools to theological studies, but what this means can be unclear. In this paper, I offer a primer on analytic theology which clarifies this common description of the field. Particularly, following Sarah Coakley, I sketch an account of analytic theology on which it consists of a relation of familial resemblance. That is, analytic theologians are those who investigate theological loci in ways akin to those seen in contemporary analytic philosophy. In so doing, I also briefly describe how analytic theology is conceptually distinct from both philosophical theology and analytic philosophy of religion. I then provide a threefold typology for understanding analytic theology's literary landscape whereby its practitioners can generally be understood to produce works which are either philosophically-inclined, theologically-inclined, or mixed in their inclination. Finally, I offer a brief survey of new frontiers being explored by analytic theologians.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In his contribution to this journal, "Analytic Philosophy and Christian Theology," Jason McMartin surveys the 20th century rapprochement between Anglo-American philosophy and Christian theological studies. McMartin suggests that, "in the 21st century, *analytic theology* may become a new mode in which to engage Christian theological discourse," (2013, p. 368) and since that time this field has significantly grown. Even still, however, it can be unclear what precisely analytic theology *is* at bottom. For example, the field is often described as being an application of the "tools" (e.g., Arcadi, 2021; Crisp, 2011; MacDonald, 2014; Rea, 2022) of analytic philosophy (and especially analytic philosophy of religion) to the task of systematic theology, but what this entails can be difficult to ascertain. Efforts

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have been undertaken by analytic theologians to demystify and delimit the field but various understandings of it still remain. In response, I shall provide a broad reading of analytic theology's nature and status in order to offer a novel and, hopefully, illuminating understanding of it.

To do so, I first describe analytic theology's provenance in Christian theology before asking why the field is not simply collapsible into philosophical theology or analytic philosophy of religion. Next, I offer a threefold typology of analytic theology as something which can be understood as composed of three primary approaches to one's subject matter: philosophically-inclined approaches, theologically-inclined approaches, and mixed-inclination approaches. The first and second of the three reflect respectively philosophical and theological methodologies or heritages while the third is more blended. In offering this typology, I am not attempting to give a once-and-for-all reckoning of how analytic theology is (or should be) practiced. Rather, I simply intend to offer a framework for understanding how its practitioners might be viewed as sharing a truly interdisciplinary field of inquiry. Other renderings of this topic exist (e.g., Rea, 2022; Wood, 2021) and my depiction of the analytic theological spectrum should be read alongside rather than over and against them. Finally, I address ongoing moves in analytic theology to expand its conversation partners and subjects of study; particularly, recent efforts to draw a greater number of marginalized persons, non-Christian perspectives, and new approaches under the banner of analytic theology.

## 2 | THE EMERGENCE OF ANALYTIC THEOLOGY

### 2.1 | What is analytic theology?

For the sake of space, and because there are better sources to which one should look for the historical background (e.g., McMartin, 2013; Rea, 2022; Wolterstorff, 2009), I will not recapitulate the story of the sea change within analytic philosophy which allowed analytic theology to develop. Instead, I will focus on analytic theology's enterprise, and think particularly about what makes analytic theology distinctive. The term analytic theology (hereafter, AT for short) hails from Oliver Crisp and Michael Rea's 2009 edited volume *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*. Discussing the book's origins elsewhere, Rea comments that it grew out of a conversation between its editors "about the very puzzling fact that, despite the recent 'theological turn' within mainstream philosophy of religion, there has been very little by way of genuine and productive interdisciplinary dialogue between philosophers of religion and their theologian counterparts" (Rea, 2013, p. 573). He suggests that the underlying reasons for this lack stem largely from "the fact that many theologians seem to have very different ideas from analytic philosophers about how theology (and philosophy) ought to be done, and about the value of analytic approaches to theological topics" (Rea, 2009, p. 1). These differences pertain, in Crisp's words, to both methodological and substantive matters (2009, pp. 34–36). The former are "formal concerns about the way theologians should approach substantive matters" (2009, p. 35) while the latter are "material concerns about the nature of Christian doctrine" (2009, p. 35). Put differently, material or substantive concerns refer to *what doctrine's content is* and methodological concerns refer to *how we approach doctrine*.

What makes AT distinctive in its approach to both sorts of concerns is often discussed like this: AT takes the toolkit of analytic philosophy and applies it to theological inquiry. But, as William Wood points out, when we survey the intellectual landscape "there are no uniquely analytic tools and methods" (2021, p. 49) to be found. To be sure, those using the toolkit-led description of AT often have particular scholarly implements in mind when they use it. For example, Crisp tells us analytic philosophy is "characterized by logical rigour, clarity, and parsimony of expression" (2009, p. 36) but it seems difficult to claim that analytic thinkers alone wield these tools. In fact, part of the straining between analytic philosophy and systematic theology which Rea noted above could perhaps be attributed to a view of AT as somehow deploying things like rigor, clarity, and parsimony of expression rather exclusively. Sarah Coakley makes a comment to this effect in her *Closer to Truth* interview on AT, stating that some of its practitioners appear "hidebound by the idea that the great gift of analytic philosophy is to go around tidying up logical messes left by other people" (2017). However, I do not think we need to view AT or its toolkit in this way to make sense of it.

By way of analogy, consider the phrase “the carpenter's toolkit.” Within the carpenter's toolkit would likely be a hammer, but the fact that hammers often find themselves in the toolkits of carpenters does not mean they cannot be properly used by other professionals even if the way in which the tool is used differs. Similarly, when discussing “the toolkit of analytic philosophy” we need not look for tools which are absent in other forms of philosophy (e.g., continental philosophy, or scholastic philosophy)<sup>1</sup> or even other fields of study. Instead, we can simply refer to *the particular tools* which analytic philosophy tends to prize (e.g., possible worlds semantics)<sup>2</sup> and *the way in which* those tools are used. Understood this way, we can see that analytic theology emerges out of the rapprochement between analytic philosophy and Christian theology primarily as a kind of relationship of family resemblance. Coakley describes analytic theologians as such; they are a “group who share some, but not all, of a range of overlapping and related goals and aspirations” (Coakley, 2013b, p. 603). She adds that, “if this is right, it is pointless to look for one *essentialist* definition” (2013b, p. 603) of AT, and Wood seems to agree in writing that AT “is a distinctive form of inquiry... because it is the product of a distinctive intellectual culture” (2021, p. 49). So, we can define AT like this: AT is a species of philosophical theological inquiry in which one particularly emphasizes analytic tools and virtues (e.g., Hasker, 2007) in taking up various theological tasks.

## 2.2 | Why not philosophical theology or analytic philosophy of religion?

A question worth asking at this juncture is why, with so thin a definition of AT as this one, the field should not simply be conceptually collapsed into either philosophical theology or analytic philosophy of religion. Whole articles have been written attempting to answer this question (e.g., those discussed in Rea, 2022), but my reply here must be brief. Said reply is that, even though we lack a richer definition of AT, philosophical theology, on the one hand, is too broad a category to adequately capture what AT refers to while, on the other hand, analytic philosophy of religion is too narrow. Starting with the former, philosophical theology can refer to a widely diverse array of thinkers including both those preceding the advent of analytic philosophy itself and those who are opposed to the methodologies employed by analytics. For example, though some analytic philosophers from the late twentieth-century onward have found areas of consonance with the works of Thomas Aquinas (e.g., Haldane, 2021), to say that the angelic doctor's philosophical approach to theology constitutes an exercise in AT is at best somewhat misleading and at worst plainly anachronistic. Similarly, Origen of Alexandria is clearly involved in an early form of Christian philosophical theological inquiry through his usage of Middle Platonic ideas in his doctrinal work. And yet, just as clearly, this sort of philosophical theology is wildly different from AT.

Perhaps the bigger reason, though, to understand AT as a way of doing philosophical theology rather than simply *reducible* to it is the fact that philosophical theology also rightly refers today to work done at the intersection of continental philosophy and theology. Michael Rosen and Brian Leiter observe that analytics can sometimes characterize the difference between these two streams “as one of style: analytic philosophy is careful, rigorous, and clear; Continental philosophy is not” (2007, p. 2). However, Rea and Thomas Flint give a more generous description of the two from an analytic perspective:

The analytic tradition has, by and large, treated philosophy as an explanatory enterprise aimed at analyzing fundamental concepts (‘person’, ‘action’, ‘law’, etc.) and at using this analytic method to clarify and extend the theoretical work being done in the natural sciences. The continental tradition, on the other hand, has viewed philosophy as an autonomous discipline aimed, more or less, at exploring and promoting our understanding of the human condition in creative and decidedly non-scientific (and not even mostly explanatory-theoretical) ways (2009, p. 2).

So understood, it is plain that continental and analytic philosophy are doing different, but not entirely separable, things. AT, then, cannot simply be philosophical theology since that term can refer to systematic theology's

intersection with both analytic and continental philosophy. Instead, it is a specific *type* of philosophical theology as I described above.

Let us now look to the latter category: analytic philosophy of religion. What makes AT meaningfully different from it? Here it is helpful to dig a little deeper into what AT's relation of familial resemblance might be in practice. James Arcadi observes that “analytic theology tends to follow the, almost canonical, prescriptions laid down by Michael Rea in the original *Analytic Theology* volume” (2021, p. 3). These prescriptions from Rea are as follows:

- 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 it is possible) as a source of evidence (2009, pp. 4–5).

Notably, Rea's original articulation of these five points was not, strictly speaking, intended to be a delineation of how AT practitioners ought to work in order to resemble one another. Instead, these points articulate Rea's paradigm examples of what we could call analytic philosophy of religion's “rhetorical style” (2009, p. 5). So, inasmuch as AT largely exhibits the characteristics described in P1-P5 it is assuredly the case that AT is closely related to analytic philosophy of religion, but this much should be clear already. What is more significant for present purposes in Arcadi's overview of the field is his description of AT's substantive shape, at least in Christian forms. This is something related to yet distinct from the formal shape of AT which P1-P5 constitute.

Arcadi draws this distinction from Wood (2016). The difference between the two is that the formal component of AT is content neutral—which is to say that “a theologian does not need to adhere to any substantive theological or philosophical views in order to count as an analytic theologian” (Wood, 2016, p. 255)—while the substantive component is content laden—which is to say that it works to “advance a specific theological agenda” (Wood, 2016, p. 255). Arcadi outlines the substantive shape of AT as constituted by typical commitments to “(a) some form of theological realism, (b) the truth-apt and truth-aimed nature of theological inquiry, and (c) the importance of providing theological arguments for substantive doctrinal positions” (2021, p. 3). AT's propensity to have such a component is what makes it too broad in its loci of inquiry to be conceptually collapsible back into analytic philosophy of religion. For, as William Wainwright notes in his introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, “analytic philosophers of religion have tended to focus on God or the religious object and on the rational credentials of claims about it” (2007, p. 9) rather than the more in-house issues which pertain to AT's substantive shape. Having now seen how AT is distinguishable both from philosophical theology as a broader domain and analytic philosophy of religion as a narrower one, we can look ahead to a typology of AT which will help us to further understand its contemporary practice.

### 3 | THE ANALYTIC THEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM

#### 3.1 | Preliminaries

The typology I propose here is threefold, but the three sorts of AT which I describe should be thought of not as discrete categories where one either does or does not participate in them. Instead, they should be thought to sit on a spectrum similar to the way in which visible light can be represented spectrally. The visible spectrum of light has two ends based on the wavelength of light observed, violet being on the shorter wavelength end and red on its

opposite. However, between violet and red lie various hues of blues, greens, yellows, and oranges which, though they are distinct enough from each other to be given their various names, blend one into the other across the spectrum of visible light such that the exact point where one ends and the next begins is difficult to discern. The categories of AT which I will be using here—philosophically-inclined AT, theologically-inclined AT, and mixed-inclination AT—likewise have fuzzy boundaries, but this does not mean that the differences between one and the next are wholly inscrutable.

Additionally, as I describe particular works from various analytic theologians as examples of one of these three sorts of AT, one should not understand this to mean that *all* of their work is in that category. Given the interdisciplinary nature of AT, analytic theologians may not always write in ways which are only emblematic of one of these three types. Instead, the usage of a particular piece of writing in each of the following categories should just be understood to indicate that *this particular* work is a helpful representation of what I mean to describe as philosophically-inclined AT, theologically-inclined AT, and mixed-inclination AT respectively. Relatedly, and finally, I am purposively here only using works which both postdate the coining of AT as a term and whose authors have clearly identified themselves as practitioners of it. This is for the sake of clarity rather than because I think that we absolutely cannot say particular texts or thinkers fall within the bounds of AT unless they meet these two conditions. With these initial details spelled out, we can begin with the first of the typology's three members.

### 3.2 | Philosophically-inclined analytic theology

Philosophically-inclined analytic theology (hereafter, PAT for short) can be understood as instances of AT which emphasize the formal shape of the field than the substantive shape. Another way of putting this distinction is that PAT more greatly resembles the philosophical side of the analytic theological family and its forebears than the theological side. Crisp has noted that while AT is, in a sense, inherently theological, AT “may not always be a species of systematic theology” (2019, p. 17). This is because one may engage in an AT project, for example, “without recourse or appeal to special revelation or ecclesiastical tradition, using evidence and premises that are accessible to all reasonable human beings, irrespective of theological persuasion” (2019, p. 17). PAT need not always be so minimal as the natural theological<sup>3</sup> work which Crisp describes here, but it is one example of what I am after.

Another example of the sort of work I have in mind is R.T. Mullins's book *The End of the Timeless God*. One of the first volumes in Rea and Crisp's co-edited Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology (OSAT) series,<sup>4</sup> Mullins explicitly describes the book's efforts as “a Christian research program” (2016, p. 3). By this, he means that *The End of the Timeless God* explores the concept of divine timelessness from within the bounds of a number of key Christian claims, of which he offers seven (2016, pp. 3–10). This scope means that Mullins is engaged in a theological task—namely in scrutinizing a purported divine attribute of the Christian God—but is primarily interested in testing the concept of timelessness using the rhetorical style which constitutes AT's formal shape rather than working to articulate a particular doctrinal notion or idea in the narrower bounds of AT's substantive shape.

In fact, Paul Helm criticizes Mullins on this front, writing that

the Christian theologian is not dealing with data that are so easily manipulable as are scientific data, hard as they are to manipulate... The faith seeking understanding tradition occupies much of the author's attention. Yet may he not have overlooked the modesty of the “seeking?” It is ominous that every finding of the author's program is in the direction of domesticating the transcendence and mysteriousness of deity (2017, p. 917).

Helm may here think Mullins's work to pull apart and show flaws within divine timelessness is “ominous,” but I would suggest that this is likely to be the case only if one construes Christian theology, including Christian AT, to necessarily be something like John Webster's “theological theology” (2016, Ch. 1). Crisp summarizes Webster's meaning here as “a confessional practice quite distinct from the study of religion, whether that study is conceived of under the aegis of

the social sciences or philosophy" (2016, p. 25). I do not mean to say that Helm is committed to the idea that theology can only be properly practiced as theological theology. All I am suggesting is that the problem that he thinks he is highlighting in Mullins's work is less of a difficulty *simpliciter* and more of a difficulty to only some species of theological inquiry. So, whereas Helm appears to exhibit some trepidation about the theological status of *The End of the Timeless God* I would instead suggest that its subject matter and boundary markers clearly show forth its theological nature; it is just an exercise in PAT because of its lack of confessional or other non-minimalistic boundary lines rather than another inclination of AT, systematic theology, or something else.

### 3.3 | Theologically-inclined analytic theology

Similarly to the way in which PAT is AT which emphasizes the formal shape of the field, theologically-inclined analytic theology (hereafter, TAT for short) emphasizes the substantive shape of AT. One way to get at this distinction is by comparing Mullins's work to get greater clarity about the relationship between God and time with Coakley's description of AT as

being absolutely clear about what you cannot be absolutely clear about. In other words, there are moments in theology where one is dazzled by transcendent mystery, moments wherein one is dealing with paradoxicality which isn't a cloak for incoherence but is paradoxical because of the subject matter you're dealing with (2017).

This sort of givenness to the possibility of theological mystery seems like the sort of thing Helm may have wanted from Mullins's work, but it simply was not interested in doing AT with that sort of intellectual posture. In contrast, TAT is sufficiently normed by particular theological commitments and agendas that it retains the sort of openness to dazzling transcendence Coakley describes. This is not to say, however, that one must work with the concept of divine mystery as closely as Coakley (e.g., 2013a, Ch. 7) in order to practice TAT. What I mean to demonstrate in highlighting her comfort with the possibility of mystery in AT is the idea that one's work might, as it were, begin with the theological rather than the philosophical.

One recent work which exemplifies this feature of TAT is Andrew Torrance's own OSAT book, *Accountability to God*. Therein, Torrance pursues a decidedly theological understanding of accountability. Noting that accountability can be a somewhat sticky topic, Torrance describes his reason for working to offer a positive construal of it as "prompted by the belief that God creates and commands us to be characterized by relationships of accountability that are defined by love for God and one another" (2023, p. 2). He further states that "to be open about the theological motivations for defining accountability in a particular way could seem like an audacious move" (2023, p. 3), but that this is done, among other reasons, because "insofar as this book is a work of theology, we shall aim to think about the world as it exists before God" (2023, p. 4). As such, the first four chapters of *Accountability to God* take up the sort of conceptual engineering work indicative of AT projects while the latter five very intentionally set Torrance's plainly articulated concept of accountability into an overarching theological story narrated by both Scripture and theological tradition.

For example, Torrance offers an understanding of baptism (2023, Ch. 8) which is read out of a specific "theological narrative" (2023, p. 102) he traces throughout the book's back half. From a covenantal understanding of humanity's origins (2023, Ch. 5) through to a fresh view of Saul's conversion and renaming as Paul (2023, Ch. 9), Torrance seeks to offer a case "for a narrative view of accountability according to which we are to interpret ourselves as characters in the stories of others and, in particular, in God's Christological story of creation" (2023, p. 184). In so doing, he plainly mobilizes the rhetorical style which constitutes AT's formal shape, but he does so in a way that is led by substantive theological commitments which are significantly more robust than those seen in PAT. *Accountability to God*, therefore, is an instance of TAT, for it not only aims to analyze the truth and intelligibility of particular claims about God but, as

Thomas McCall puts it, serves “to edify God’s people” (2015, p. 170). McCall contends that “analytic theology— as theology—should serve the Church and the world,” (2015, p. 171) and this is quite right. However, AT which particularly focuses on placing itself within the norms and bounds of a theological tradition (e.g., Reformed theology) is what I mean to refer to by TAT.

### 3.4 | Mixed-inclination analytic theology

Finally, we come to mixed-inclination AT (hereafter, MAT for short). If we recall the analogy of AT as like a spectrum, then we can think of PAT and TAT as those works within the field which tend more towards either end of that spectrum. MAT, then, is those works which lie closer to the middle. This gravitation towards the center can take multiple forms. One key example of such a form is what Crisp calls “analytic systematic theology” (2019, Ch. 1). To explain this term, Crisp surveys several prominent, yet strikingly different, systematicians in order to pull threads of connection between them: John Webster, Brian Gerrish, and Gordon Kaufman. These connections despite their differences make up what he calls the “*Shared Task of systematic theology*.” (2019, p. 22)

Shared Task: Commitment to an intellectual undertaking that involves (though it may not comprise) explicating the conceptual content of the Christian tradition (with the expectation that this is normally done from a position within that tradition, as an adherent of that tradition), using particular religious texts that are part of the Christian tradition, including sacred Scripture, as well as human reason, reflection, and praxis (particularly religious practices), as sources for theological judgements (2019, p. 22).

This concept being outlined, Crisp presses that, *pace* some of its detractors, AT “*can (and should) be practiced as a species of systematic theology*” (2019, p. 17) because it is just as capable of participation in the shared task of systematic theology as Webster, Gerrish, and Kaufman, none of whose status as systematic theologians is questioned.

Notice that both the formal and substantive shapes of AT are on display in Crisp’s articulation of the shared task. The analytic precision and tendency towards tight definitional work are blended with concern for one’s being normed by a theological tradition in which they participate. This is the sort of thing MAT seeks to capture; MAT is a swirling together of the philosophical and theological aspects of AT’s heritage which does not clearly incline further to one end of AT’s spectrum or another on the whole. I say “on the whole” because there may well be particular parts of a work which qualifies as MAT that look more philosophical or theological. Consider, for instance, yet another installment in the OSAT series, Eleonore Stump’s *Atonement*. Much of what Stump offers therein looks quite philosophical and yet, simultaneously, she is unabashed in her being normed throughout by Catholic, especially Thomistic, theological commitments. One place we see this at work is in her acceptance of the proposition that salvation cannot occur post-mortem because Aquinas’s philosophical psychology does not permit it (2018, p. 426 n. 21). Of course, she argues for the intelligibility of this position elsewhere (e.g., 2003, Ch. 9 and 11), but this is a kind of theological concession which PAT generally lacks. And yet, in places like Stump’s treatment of union with God (i.e., 2018, Ch. 4), we can also see a firmer embrace of the analytic rhetorical style as essential to her task than might be present in TAT. So, in its running of AT’s gamut, *Atonement* is also an example of MAT.

## 4 | NEW FRONTIERS FOR ANALYTIC THEOLOGY

Having outlined this threefold typology with which we can understand the diversity of approaches that make up AT as a field, our remaining space will be devoted to a brief survey of the increasing diversity of topics and interlocutors within said field. Analytic theologians to date have largely focused on traditional Christian theological subjects like the doctrine of God, Christology, soteriology, eschatology,<sup>5</sup> and, more recently, liturgics<sup>6</sup> (e.g., Arcadi, 2018, Ch. 3;



Cockayne, 2022, Ch. 6–7). However, strictly speaking, there is no reason that AT could not include non-Christian theology, be more attentive to marginalized voices, involve hermeneutical approaches which emphasize personal experience and testimony, or engage topics which fall outside of Christian systematic theology's traditional range. As Rea and Michelle Panchuk note, AT's neglect of such things is largely a consequence of “the demographics of the discipline and the particular kind of academic culture that is thought to characterize it” (2020, p. 1) as well as “misconceptions about the *nature of the activity* of analytic theology” (2020, p. 1) rather than anything inherent to AT itself.

This lack on the field's part has not gone unaddressed. For example, the *Journal of Analytic Theology* has run several issues which include sections specifically aimed at broadening AT's intellectual horizons. Within them non-Christian instances of AT like an exercise in Islamic soteriology (Saemi & Davison, 2020) and something of a prolegomenon to potential engagements between Wiccan and Christian views of divine incarnation (Hill, 2020) can be found. Included as well in the journal's 10th volume is an entire symposium on Jewish AT, and this area has also begun to be more thoroughly explored in monographs too (e.g., Lebens, 2020). Further, and despite the fact that Coakley has offered such a voice to the field since its inception (i.e., 2009), feminist perspectives have not been well-included in AT conversations, something which the *Journal of Analytic Theology* has also begun attempting to remedy (e.g., Griffioen, 2021; Hernandez, 2021; Panchuk, 2021).<sup>7</sup>

Beyond the efforts of its flagship journal, AT's most prominent venture towards a diversification of its perspectives comes from the essays gathered in Panchuk and Rea's edited volume in the OSAT series, *Voices from the Edge: Centering Marginalized Perspectives in Analytic Theology*. Liberation theology (Yadav, 2020), intersectional concerns from LGBTQ and black theology alike (Tobin & Moon, 2020), disability theology (Timpe, 2020), and more receive airtime within its pages. In assembling this diverse mix, Panchuk and Rea state that the book is purposed towards the following goals:

1. Expanding the range of topics recognized by analytic theologians as theologically important.
2. Expanding the range of social identities represented in the discipline.
3. Deploying arguments for the importance of the first two contributions.
4. Expanding our conceptions of what it looks like to do analytic theology well (2020, 2).

Only time will tell what this particular volume's contribution towards AT's expansion will be, but further analyses of race (e.g., Everhart, 2023; Yadav, 2021; Rutledge, 2022), examinations of disability (e.g., Leidenhag, 2021; Yancey, 2021; Stump forthcoming), and work conducted by non-Christian thinkers (e.g., Abdelnour, 2023; Sztuden, 2018) all indicate that change is certainly coming.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

AT is, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, a tricky thing to define. Even so, in this brief paper I have attempted to offer something of a clarificatory evaluation of the field. In so doing, I suggested we follow Coakley in understanding AT to consist primarily in a relationship of familial resemblance; we know it phenotypically even if we lack a narrow essentialist definition of the thing. Moreover, we know this thing called AT across three different inclinations that analytic theologians tend to adopt in their various projects. Particularly, they can exhibit philosophical inclinations (i.e., PAT), theological inclinations (i.e., TAT), or mixed inclinations (i.e., MAT) in their efforts. It is my sense that most analytic theologians would like to think of themselves as falling into the last of these three categories, but one legitimately practices AT regardless of which type a given instance of their work represents. We might then, in closing, think of AT as like a family reunion held in a public park. To the outside observer, where the party begins and ends might be somewhat unclear, particularly if there are guests who have been brought along by some of the family's members and depending on how the group is spread out when one spots it. Nevertheless, these fuzzy boundaries do not prevent one from figuring out the commonalities among the family with time; mannerisms, inside jokes,



likenesses of appearance, and so on will all become more visible if we look closely. Similarly, AT's multifaceted composition means there are various ways to be an analytic theologian but, with time, one's place in the family can be ascertained anyway.

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## PEER REVIEW

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Primers on each can be found in (Leiter & Rosen, 2007) and (Livingstone, 2013) respectively.
- <sup>2</sup> For an overview, see Menzel's entry on possible worlds in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2016). More broadly, see also (Hill, 2016).
- <sup>3</sup> "Natural theology is the practice of philosophically reflecting on the existence and nature of God independent of real or apparent divine revelation or scripture. Traditionally, natural theology involves weighing arguments for and against God's existence, and it is contrasted with *revealed theology*, which may be carried out within the context of ostensible revelation or scripture." (Taliaferro, 2012, p. 1)
- <sup>4</sup> Readers should note that there are now other AT book series beyond OSAT. E.g., the Routledge Studies in Analytic and Systematic Theology, and Analyzing Theology with Cascade Books (an imprint of Wipf & Stock).
- <sup>5</sup> The uninitiated can find helpful overviews of each topic in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (2007). Coverage of each from AT perspectives can be found in the *T&T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology* (2021).
- <sup>6</sup> That is, the study of Christian worship's rituals, practices, and so forth.
- <sup>7</sup> See also (Rutledge, 2020).

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