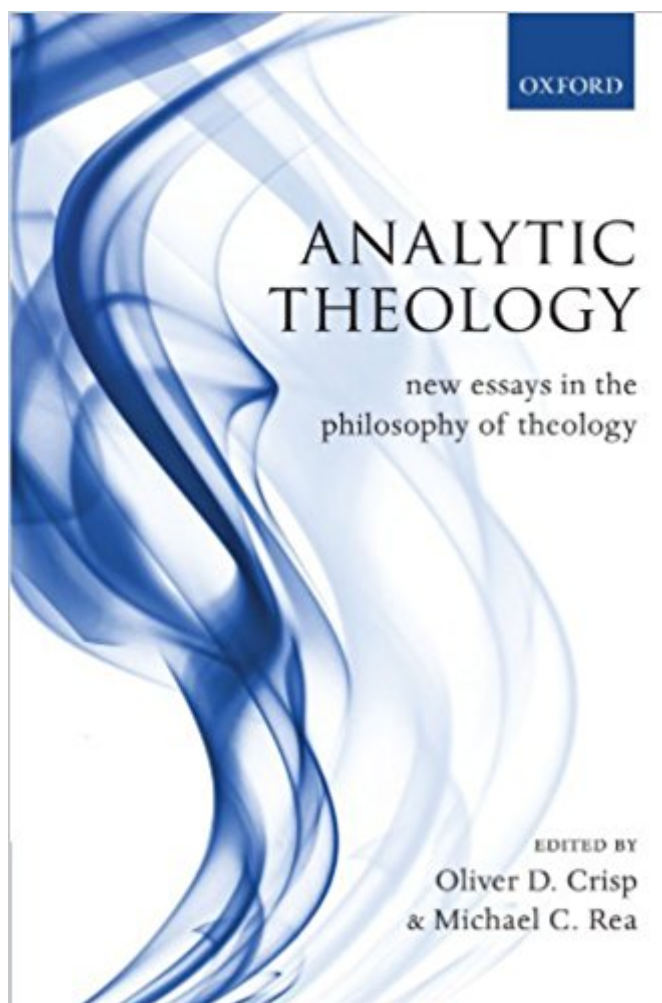


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Analytic Theology: New Essays In The Philosophy Of Theology



Synopsis

Philosophy in the English-speaking world is dominated by analytic approaches to its problems and projects; but theology has been dominated by alternative approaches. Many would say that the current state in theology is not mere historical accident, but is, rather, how things ought to be. On the other hand, many others would say precisely the opposite: that theology as a discipline has been beguiled and taken captive by 'continental' approaches, and that the effects on the discipline have been largely deleterious. The methodological divide between systematic theologians and analytic philosophers of religion is ripe for exploration. The present volume represents an attempt to begin a much-needed interdisciplinary conversation about the value of analytic philosophical approaches to theological topics. Most of the essays herein are sympathetic toward the enterprise the editors are calling analytic theology; but, with an eye toward balance, the volume also includes essays and an introduction that try to offer more critical perspectives on analytic theology.

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Customer Reviews

"The editors of this volume have elicited new essays from an impressive list of contributors, including both long established figures in philosophy and theology and other relatively new... these are good essays well worth reading." --Gordon Graham, Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews 12/01/2010

Oliver D. Crisp is Lecturer in Theology at the University of Bristol. Michael C. Rea is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame.

Many good essays.

According to Crisp and Rea, the analytic school (especially philosophy) is interested in rhetorical clarity and the possibility of knowledge outside the natural sciences (3ff). Its aim at clarity is to spell out hidden assumptions. Some essays were magnificent. Others seemed to miss the mark. The latter would posit topic A (say, the problem of evil) and then spend most of the essay talking about personalism and never really integrate the two. But that shouldn't detract from the truly outstanding essays by Crisp, McCall, Rauser, and to an extent, Wolterstorff. Crisp introduced the topic of analytic theology and nicely distanced it from ontotheology (i.e., positing God as a being among beings). Analytic theology took a metaphysical turn after everyone saw that the Vienna school was discredited. Analytic theology asks what are the ultimate constituents of the world and how they interact. Thomas McCall gives a fine critique of Barth's view of Scripture, noting that it contradicts Barth's Christology; if God has sovereignly limited himself in human flesh, then who are we to say that God can't do so in the Bible? Wolterstorff explains how analytic theology became possible in the 20th century.

"A consequence of the demise of logical positivism has proved to be that the theme of limits on the thinkable and the assertible has lost virtually all interest for philosophers in the analytic tradition" (Wolterstorff 157). I don't see Merold Westphal's essay as an attack on analytic philosophy, but rather a seeking of assurance that it won't become autonomous and devolve into ontotheology. Sarah Coakley ends the discussion noting convergences between William Alston's religious experience epistemology and certain contributions of feminism. Or so she says. I think she had a good essay and I agreed with her analysis of Alston, but I just didn't notice anything "feminist" about it.

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