

Analytic Theology as Declarative Theology

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Abstract: Analytic theology seeks to utilize conceptual tools and resources from contemporary analytic philosophy for ends that are properly theological. As a theological methodology relatively new movement in the academic world, this novelty might render it illegitimate. However, I argue that there is much in the recent analytic theological literature that can find a methodological antecedent championed in the fourteenth century known as declarative theology. In distinction from deductive theology—which seeks to extend the conclusions of theology beyond the articles of faith—declarative theology strives to make arguments for the articles of faith. It does it not to provoke epistemic assent to the truth of the articles, but serves as a means of faith seeking understanding. In this paper, examples are drawn from recent analytic discussions to illustrate the manner that analytic theology has been, is, and can be an instance of declarative theology, and thus a legitimate theological enterprise for today.

Keywords: theological methodology, analytic theology, declarative theology, deductive theology, meta-theology

Analytic theology is a recent movement at the nexus of theology and philosophy that aims to utilize the tools, methods, and conceptual resources of contemporary analytic philosophy for the purpose of constructive theology. In light of this novelty, one might aver that it is a *sui generis* methodology that renders it illegitimate as a mode of Christian theological reflection.¹ However, despite the novelty of the name ‘analytic theology’, I here argue that one way of practicing analytic theology is to see it as a modern instantiation of the category ‘declarative theology’, which was the subject of much analysis by Christian theologians of the fourteenth century. By demonstrating that analytic theology has a methodological antecedent in a mode of theologizing that is

¹ Although I see no objection to this methodology being utilized by practitioners of a variety of religious traditions, much of the recent work and my own theological perspective fall within the Christian theological tradition.

squarely within the bounds of standard conceptions of Christian theological reflection, I render the claim that it is illegitimate on this score unsound.

In this article, I will first introduce declarative theology by way of a distinction made in the medieval period between declarative and deductive theology. Although these categories are not ultimately mutually exclusive, I show how analytic theology—as recently manifested in the literature—achieves the same theological *telo*i as was pursued by practitioners of declarative theology. From here, I show how analytic theology can, has, and should operate in the declarative mode. If, then, analytic theology pursues and achieves the same ends as a venerable and legitimate methodological antecedent, then it too ought to be considered a legitimate theological methodology.

Declarative theology

A distinction made and discussed by the likes of Durandus of St.-Pourçain, Peter Aureoli, Godfrey of Fontains, Gregory of Rimini, and Peter of Candia is between *declarative* theology and *deductive* theology.² Both types of theology refer to the manner of argumentation that is proper to theological discourse. I first here introduce definitions for these types of theology and then unpack them further. Durandus offers this definition of declarative theology. It is, ‘a lasting quality of the soul by means of which the faith and those things handed down in Sacred Scripture are defended and clarified by using principles that we know better’ (Brown 2009, 405). Those things we ‘know better’ might be *a priori* principles, empirical observations, or notions derived from simple metaphysical or logical principles. Deductive theology, on the other hand, is ‘a lasting quality of the soul by means of which it deduces further things from the articles of faith and the sayings of Sacred Scripture in the way that conclusions are deduced from principles’ (Brown 2009, 406). Both types of theology focus on the teaching of Scripture and the articles of faith, but they differ with respect to where those components fit into theological arguments. By ‘articles of faith’ I take it that these theologians mean the first principles of the Christian religion as contained in Scripture, the Creed, and/or other authoritative sources of theological reflection.³ These first principles would include such propositions as *that God exists, that God is triune, that Jesus Christ is God and a human, that God the Father Almighty is maker of heaven and earth, etc.*

² In the historical material of this section, I largely follow the analysis of Stephen F. Brown.

³ I include the last clause because I take it that these fourteenth-century theologians held the teachings of the Roman Catholic magisterium to be a locus of Christian first principles as well as Scripture and the Creed. However, I do not think that the methodology of declarative theology need take a position on just what the first principles are or where they are found. Thus, it can be utilized by Christian theologians of a variety of traditions.

ANALYTIC THEOLOGY AS DECLARATIVE THEOLOGY

For deductive theology, first principle propositions serve as premises in a theological argument wherein the conclusion is an extension of the content of theology. For example, a deductive theologian could perhaps make the following argument:

- (1) God is indivisible.
- (2) Anything composed of parts is divisible.
- ∴ (3) God is not composed of parts.

This is just a rough argument for something like the doctrine of divine simplicity, but it is here only to illustrate the methodology. Arguably, premise (1) is a first principle contained in Scripture (perhaps one could point to the *Shema*, 'Here O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one' [Deut. 6.4], as an expression of this premise). Premise (2) is derived from metaphysical reflection. The conjunction of (1) and (2) yields (3) that God is not composed of parts. *That God is not composed of parts* is not stated explicitly in Scripture or in the Creed. But the deductive theologian beginning with the first principle regarding God's unity, and then in adding another premise, deduces a theological conclusion from an article of faith.

In distinction from deductive theology, according to Durandus, declarative theology inserts the first principle propositions as conclusions in theological arguments. For example, this procedure might look something like this:

- (4) Any division of an entity diminishes that entity.
- (5) God cannot be diminished.
- ∴ (6) God is indivisible.

In this argument, the conclusion (6) is the same proposition as premise (1) of the preceding argument. In both, the proposition *that God is indivisible* is a first principle—an article of faith—derived from Scripture *ex hypothesi*. In the deductive theology example this proposition functions as a premise in an argument for something like a doctrine of divine simplicity. In the declarative theology instance, this proposition is the conclusion of the argument. Hence, the distinction might be characterized as deductive theology argues *from* the first principles, whereas declarative theology argues *to* the first principles.

However, it must be stressed that declarative theological arguments are not intended to establish epistemic assent to the first principles. Aureoli, an archetypal defender of declarative theology, is explicit that assent is due to faith alone, and faith is a gift from God. One believes *that God is triune* because one has the gift of faith, and this is the case for the professional theologian and non-theologian alike. Thus, in describing the habit of theology, Aureoli says, 'Every habit that makes something to be *imagined better* by the intellect without producing any assent is a declarative habit' (Brown 2009,

414, emphasis added). This theological practice does not produce assent to the truth of the article of faith, for that would make one's faith dependent on the argument. However, the argument serves to help the possessor of faith to 'imagine better' that which that person already believes by faith.

If one already believed the propositions of the articles of the faith by faith, then it might seem that arguments made within a declarative theology mode would be superfluous. In order to show why the possessor of faith would benefit from theological arguments of this kind, in his commentary on Lombard's *Sentences Aureoli* entertains four ways that one who had faith might misunderstand that which one believes. First, one might not understand the meaning of the terms used in an article of faith. For instance, the proposition *that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures* would be difficult to understand if one only had a rudimentary grasp of key terms such as 'person' or 'natures'. Secondly, Aureoli imagines one who believes the articles of faith, but also comes across arguments against the faith that produce confusion in this one's mind. For example, suppose someone affirmed the truth of the proposition *that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures* as it is formulated in the 'Definition' of Chalcedon. But then suppose that person was presented with the following argument:

- (7) All persons are instance of one and only one nature.
- (8) Jesus Christ is a person.
- ∴ (9) Jesus Christ is an instance of one and only one nature.

Clearly, (9) contradicts the article of faith *that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures*. A person might still assent to the truth of *that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures*, but in light of the above argument they might hold that proposition with less confidence or be in a state of confusion. Declarative theology could, among other things, press on premise (7) to find it the weak point in the argument, and thus contribute to restoring the confidence of the person who affirmed the article of faith that Christ has two natures. Thirdly, Aureoli continues, one might misunderstand the articles of faith because one 'lacks examples, confirming arguments, or analogies related to' belief (Brown 2009, 414). Fourthly, and finally, one might misunderstand because she does not have probable arguments to support or confirm what she already believes. The declarative theologian seeks to dispel these inhibitors to understanding. The result will be a theological methodology that 'makes the believer imagine in a better and clearer way the things he believes, and yet it will not be what makes him believe, since he most firmly would already hold these things by faith' (Brown 2009, 415). The arguments of declarative theology are not intended to establish or create faith, rather they are intended to enable the one who already believes the articles of faith to do so with greater confidence and clarity.

Now, two quick caveats before proceeding. First, I put my examples of theological arguments in syllogism form purely for illustrative purposes. I do not think that syllogistic reasoning is required for either deductive or declarative theology. Recall that 'deductive' in deductive theology only characterizes that one deduces further notions from the articles of faith, not that one only uses deductive logic. One can certainly use non-syllogistic forms of argumentation in the service of either deductive or declarative theology. Secondly, I do not think that one must be forced into a strict bifurcation between deductive and declarative theology. Stephen Brown describes Peter of Candia as one who offered a synthesis between these two modes of theologizing (Brown 1991, 171-173). Peter of Candia's simple point is that these are not mutually exclusive tasks and theologians are called up on to perform both tasks at different times. I am happy to accept this point, and thus accept the utility of deductive theology in certain contexts. Thus if analytic theology is an instance of both declarative and deductive theology then it ends up with two venerable historical methodological antecedents. This then is all the better to block the objection to analytic theology due to its apparent novelty. However, I see analytic theology as particularly pursuing the aims and objectives of declarative theology. The next section moves to exposit some of the aims and methods of analytic theology before the final section draws these two approaches to the theological task together with specific illustrations from recent analytic discussions.

Analytic theology

Although analytic theology as a named entity is relatively fresh on the theological scene, yet I see it as another instance of a longstanding practice within the Christian theological tradition of viewing philosophy as a handmaiden to theology.⁴ From this perspective, philosophical reasoning can assist the theologian in the theological task of speaking about God and the things of the faith. Whereas in the Church's past the version of philosophy utilized by a particular theologian might have been Aristotelianism or Neoplatonism or Phenomenology or others, analytic theology makes use of contemporary analytic philosophy as its preferred handmaiden.

In his *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology*, Thomas H. McCall likens the ambitions and aims of analytic theology to those of analytic philosophy. McCall commends as the goal of analytic theology Quentin Smith's description of Alvin Plantinga's work in that it exemplifies such values as conceptual precision, argumentative rigour, and technical sophistication (McCall 2015, 17). Along similar lines

⁴ The advent of analytic theology as a named entity can be traced to the publication of the edited volume *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* eds. Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

of description, Oliver Crisp comments that, like analytic philosophy, the method that analytic theology employs will be 'characterized by a logical rigour, clarity, and parsimony of expression' (Crisp 2009, 35). These characteristics find their fullest expression in Michael Rea's almost canonical prescriptions:

- 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 conceptus that can be analyzed in terms of those.
- P5. Treat conceptual analysis (insofar as possible) as a source of evidence (Rea 2009, 5-6).

These stated values and ambitions of analytic theology follow closely on—what might be taken to be—standard conceptions of analytic philosophy.

However, some demur from this 'rigourist' explication of analytic theology and thus call into question the utility of Rea's P1-5. For instance, Sarah Coakley comments, 'At least some of us, in fact, also seek to enrich, compensate for, and sometimes significantly question the relentless urge of classic analytic philosophy to pure propositional clarity; and we do so by calling on insights drawn from different realms of philosophical discourse, or from other more strictly theological and revelatory sources' (Coakley 2013, 603). Coakley calls for an opening up of the horizons of analytic philosophy, and thus analytic theology with it. She urges that the analytic theologians should feel empowered by—not restricted by—the analytic methodology.

In a similar vein, William J. Abraham has offered something of a more deflationary account of analytic theology. He sees it as simply a way of doing systematic theology, 'By analytic theology I mean here systematic theology attuned to the skills, resources, and virtues of analytic philosophy, broadly conceived' (Abraham 2009, 54). In this regard, the subject matter of analytic theology is that of standard Christian systematic theology: God and the teaching of Christianity as they are found in revelation and the historical teaching of the church. Yet, the manner in which one approaches this task will, then, end up being as diverse as the many instances of analytic philosophy and thus may not fall as neatly into Rea's P1-P5.

Nevertheless, one of the hallmarks of analytic approaches—like the scholastic approaches before them and in distinction from much contemporary work in Christian theology—is attentiveness to argumentation. Analytics trade in presenting, analysing, defeating, and interacting with arguments. Given this description of the ambitions and aims of analytic theology, I contend that analytic theology is uniquely positioned to be

able to carry on the tradition of declarative theology as explicated in the previous section. In fact, what I will show in the next section is that analytic theologians have already been orienting their work around the four motives for declarative theology that Peter Aureoli outlines in his *Sentences* commentary. This does not entail that analytic theology is the only or even the best mode for theologizing today, but it does show that analytic theology has a legitimizing methodological ancestor in declarative theology.

Analytic theology as declarative theology

Recall that Peter Aureoli delineated four ways that the faithful could falter in their embrace of the articles of faith, and the alleviation of these are four *telo*i of declarative theology. The faithful might (a) not understand the terms utilized in the articles, (b) come across defeaters to their belief in the articles, (c) lack examples or analogies, and (d) fail to have probable arguments to support their belief. My argument is that analytic theology not only ought to preserve these declarative theology values, but that analytic theologians have already been achieving the ends of this methodological antecedent. In noting these instances of fulfilling the motives of declarative theology, I also here attempt to bring greater clarity to what these motives are and how they might be realized.

On the clarification of terms

The articles of the Christian faith are expressed using many technical terms, a fair amount of which have much theological and philosophical conceptual underpinning. Analytic theology as declarative theology seeks to explicate and explain the meaning of these terms and show how they function to express the theological realities they attempt to denote. Crisp comments that analytic theology will ‘seek to deal with complex doctrinal concerns by dividing them into more manageable units, or focusing on providing a clear expression of particular theological terms that inform particular doctrines in important respects, for example, “substance”, “perichoresis”, or “person”’ (Crisp 2009, 35). Thus, clarification of terms is at the heart of the analytic way.

One example of this terminological clarification projects occurs in discussions of the Incarnation. For instance, when one assents to the truth of the article of faith *that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures*, one might not deeply grasp just what a ‘nature’ is in this context. The recent analytic discussion of Christology has provided a way forward in explicating this term. A key distinction in the literature is that made by Plantinga between *concrete* and *abstract* conceptions of natures (Plantinga 1999). Abstractists hold that, at bottom, a nature is a property, a rich property, or a cluster of properties. Concretists hold that, at bottom, a nature is a concrete particular that bears properties. Plantinga puts the distinction this way regarding the abstractist position:

when the second person of the Trinity became incarnate and assumed human nature, what happened was that he, the second person of the Trinity, acquired the property of being human; he acquired whatever property it is that is necessary and sufficient for being human (Plantinga 1999, 183).

We might think of a nature on the abstract view as being simply a rich property like, *being capable of rational thought and being appropriately linked with a human body and being capable of intentional action*, or whatever components one thought was necessary and sufficient for being a member of the natural kind 'human'.

In distinction from the abstract-nature view, the concrete-nature perspective begins not with properties, but with concrete particulars. Plantinga describes the concretist view of natures:

On the second view, by contrast, what he assumed was *a* human nature, a specific human being. What happened when he became incarnate is that he adopted a peculiarly close and intimate relation to a certain concrete human being, a 'human nature' in the sense of a human being. That is, there is or was a concrete human being—a creature, and a creature with will and intellect—to whom the Logos became related in an especially intimate way, a way denoted by the term 'assumption' (Plantinga 1999, 183-184).

The concretist holds that natures are or are composed of concrete particulars that bear properties, but that are not themselves properties. Concrete particulars are not sharable by other entities, they cannot be borne by others, rather, the concretist holds with Michael Loux that a nature is such that it bears certain necessary properties and is not itself a property (Loux 1998, 126-127).

The distinction between these two views on the nature of natures is really about logical priority and starting points. Does one start with properties or with a concrete particular? Plantinga offers this comparison of the two views:

the terms 'nature' and 'human nature' get used in two analogically related but very different senses: in the first sense [the abstract-nature view], the term 'human nature' denotes a *property* (or, if you like, group of properties): the property P which is such that necessarily, every human being has P, and necessarily, whatever has P is a human being. In the second sense [the concrete-nature view], the thing denoted by 'human nature' and that gets assumed is a human being, a concrete object, not an abstract object like a property (Plantinga 1999, 184).

This is not the space to settle views as to which perspective on natures is accurate. What this subsection does show is that analytic theology can do much with respect to the clarification of terms and thus fulfil this goal of declarative theology.

On defeating defeaters

Many of the articles of faith, such as those contained in the Creed or the statements of the Ecumenical Councils, were forged in the face of arguments against the faith. Whether by outright contradiction of the proposition or by slight—but nevertheless heretical—modifications, the articles of faith have long been subject to counter-argumentation. Analytic theology as declarative theology seeks to meet the objections of detractors from the articles of faith so that the faithful might more firmly hold that which they believe by faith.

Consequently, one sphere in which trained to utilize ‘logical rigour’ will be especially proficient will be in argumentative analysis (Crisp 2009, 35). Crisp comments regarding the right use of reason by Christian theologians is such that:

reason is a tool for establishing the logical connections between different propositions, for distinguishing what I am talking about from what I am not, and whether what I am saying makes sense, or is incoherent. Such reasoning also enables me to consider the validity of a particular argument that is put forward, and whether or not it is subject to less obvious defects of reasoning, like question-begging or affirming the consequent, and so on (Crisp 2009, 41).

Thus, Crisp continues, ‘for the analytic theologian, clarity and precision of argumentation, coupled with attention to possible objections to one’s position, will be very important considerations’ (Crisp 2009, 44). When an analytic theologian engages with arguments against the articles of faith, to find them unsound or invalid, one achieves this second motive for declarative theology.

For instance let us take the exchange between Michael Martin and Katherin Rogers in *Debating Christian Theism*. Martin marshals an argument against Thomas Morris’ account of Christology from his *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Morris 1986). In that text Morris argues that:

(10) Christ is one person with two minds.

Each of Christ’s minds correspond to one of the two natures that the ‘Definition’ of Chalcedon assigns to him. Martin, however, makes the following argument:

(11) Each person has one and only one mind.

- (12) Either Jesus Christ is one person with one mind, or two persons with two minds (Martin 2013).

Yet, regardless which side of the disjunction in (12) that one embraces, a contradiction is derived when combined with (10). Thus, Martin concludes, traditional Christology is incoherent.⁵ Perhaps one who embraced (10) and yet came across Martin's argument might still believe the traditional position *that Christ is one person with two natures*, but they might do so with some uncertainty as to how this might be. Analytic theology as declarative theology, as Crisp describes, evaluates whether the claims of coherence or incoherence are sound.

In response to Martin's argument, and as an instance of declarative theology, Katherin Rogers meets the allegation of the incoherence of the Incarnation understood as a 'one person / two natures' view of Christ (Rogers 2013). She understands the Incarnation as a divine action, as God doing something. She uses an extended analogy of a state of affairs called 'Nick Playing' which involves a boy, 'Nick', playing a first-person video game, the character being denoted as 'Virtual Nick'. Thus, the Incarnation is a state of affairs akin to Nick Playing. Nick Playing being composed of two parts is a picture of Christ being composed of divine and human natures. Virtual Nick allows Nick to operate in the virtual world, as Christ's human nature allows the divine Word the ability to act in the human sphere. Rogers' Nick Playing scenario seems to make sense of one person possessing two minds. Given the constraints of the virtual world in which Virtual Nick dwells, Virtual Nick is only able to have mental experiences within that sphere. But, during Nick Playing, Nick is able to access both Virtual Nick's mental states and Nick's own. The mental states of Virtual Nick might not accrue to Nick, or only in some derivative sense as when Virtual Nick falls down a Warp Pipe, and Nick says, 'I'm falling down a pipe!' It is *qua*-Virtual Nick that Nick is aware of the fall, even though Nick in his non-virtual mind, is aware that he is not falling. Yet, the state of affairs of Nick Playing includes Nick's awareness of both mental state via his two minds. Rogers' argument does not establish the necessity of embracing the article of faith of Christ's dual natures, but it at least supports the coherence of this proposition. Thus, analytic theologians as declarative theologians will carefully evaluate arguments against the articles of faith in order to support faithful's belief in these articles.

On analogies

This discussion of Rogers' use of analogy segues to the third goal of declarative theology: the deployment of analogies related to the articles of faith. Although there are

⁵ Of course it should be noted that Martin only calls into question the coherence of Morris' specific explication of traditional Christology.

some truths contained in the articles of faith that many theologians have held can be assented to on the basis of reason alone (such as *that God exists*, or *that God is one*), many of the propositions of the articles of faith are only understandable on the basis of divine revelation. No one pondering alone without the aid of divine revelation and the gift of faith would come to believe *that God is triune* or *that Jesus Christ is God and a human* or *that the bread of the Eucharist is the body of Christ*. As such, these propositions are *sui genesis* and have no natural dovetails with phenomena in the natural realm. However, that does not mean that theologians cannot strive to explain revealed truths by means of certain comparisons with items in the created realm.

For instance, I have already discussed how Rogers' used the analogy of a boy playing a video game to portray the relation between Christ's divine and human natures. Another metaphor utilized in discussions of Christology—by Brian Leftow and Oliver Crisp—is that of conceiving of the human nature of Christ as a garment or scuba gear that the divine Word puts on in order to operate in the human realm in a similar manner as a diver utilizes a diving suit to operate in the aquatic realm. Crisp states, 'The second person of the Trinity puts on human nature like a garment; he is "clothed" by his nature; but he is not identical to it,' thus 'The human nature thus assumed is rather like an environment suit for God the Son that enables him to act in the world among human beings' (Crisp 2011, 47, 48). One might think that either there is not as deep enough a connection between a person and the garment they are wearing to describe the Incarnation, or that the connection is such that the divine nature is still contaminated by the created realm. However, Leftow thinks this connection might indeed be so captured by the analogy. He writes, 'Scuba gear is intimately connected to the diver's body. Yet it keeps the diver disconnected from the water it touches: scuba gear lets one swim without getting one's feet wet. [The human nature of Christ] is the Son's environment suit, letting him manoeuvre in time yet stay dry' (Leftow 2002, 292). For the person who believes by faith *that Jesus Christ is God and a human* an analogy of this sort could help the faithful imagine better this proposition.

Now, I offer a brief excursus on this point before proceeding to the final motive for seeing analytic theology as declarative theology. For one might think that this third motive of declarative theology with respect to the use of analogies contradicts Rea's P3: 'Avoid substantive (non-decorative) use of metaphor and other tropes whose semantic content outstrips their propositional content' (Rea 2009, 5). I submit that these values, properly explicated, do not contradict one another. For Rea is especially concerned to avoid inserting metaphor or story into a theological discourse as though it were an argument or premise in itself. That is, instead of pursuing the careful work of clearly laying bare the components of one's argument, the theologian in this case allows a metaphor to stand alone as a substantive component to the treatment of the issue. For instance, an untoward use of metaphor in a theological argument might be the following:

- (13) Centaurs are half human, half-horse entities.
- (14) Jesus Christ is like that, but with God instead of horse.
- ∴ (15) Jesus Christ is God and a human.

Of course, (15) is an article of faith. But it hardly seems that the metaphor of Christ being like a Centaur is an argument for (15). This is a substantive and non-decorative use of metaphor that Rea recommends analytic theology to avoid.

However, the analogies that declarative theology deploys are offered to aid in understanding of particular article of the faith or in understanding an argument for one of these articles. The analytic *qua*-declarative theologian could, for example, deploy this argument/metaphor couplet:

- (16) Jesus Christ is one person with a divine nature.
- (17) Jesus Christ is one person with a human nature.
- ∴ (18) Jesus Christ is one person with a divine nature and a human nature.

‘What is it like for one person to have two natures? Well, it is sort of like a Centaur who has the rational capacities and upper torso of a human, but the legs and body of a horse.’ But the theologian would also then need to show how this analogy breaks down.

Analytic theologian Oliver Crisp actually describes analytic philosophy by recourse to an extended analogy:

On one way of characterizing the analytic philosophical project problems are broken down into their constituent parts, analysed, and then reformed in an argument that attempts to make sense of the original problem. Here the analytic philosopher is rather like a mechanic who decides to strip an engine down in order to understand why is it making a peculiar rattling sound. He analyses the parts of the engine, cleans them up, and then reassembles the machine having satisfied himself that he has addressed the problem so that the engine will work properly once reformed (Crisp 2009, 36).

In this illustration, the metaphor helps us grasp just what the analytic philosopher is doing in her task. Thus the metaphor advances understanding, it does not detract from it. Thus, it is not always the case that metaphor or analogy have no place in the clear explication of the articles of faith, they simply must be used in the service of the project of clarification, not as a substantive arguments for the article.

On faith seeking understanding

Finally, Aureoli notes that some might misunderstand the articles of faith because they do not have probable arguments to support their faith. Misunderstanding, again, is not misbelieving. The articles of faith are believed based on faith, but this side of the eschaton we all must have a posture like the man who responded to Jesus in Mark 9, 'I believe, help my unbelief!' Or, like St. Anselm, we possess faith seeking understanding. The articles of faith are not believed on the basis of argumentation, but argumentation can help the faithful to solidify or understand that which they already believe.

In fact, continuing with St. Anselm, this seems to be the posture from which Anselm deployed his famous ontological argument for the existence of God.⁶ Much ink has been spilled over whether an argument of the kind will really convince the atheist, especially one who is dead-set against Christianity. But the analytic theologian, *qua*-declarative theologian, need not worry about this for the declarative theologian is writing for the Christian who already embraces the articles of faith.⁷ This Christian already assents to the truth of the proposition *that God exists*, but—the declarative theologian holds—this Christian can embrace that truth with more confidence if she has an argument that supports it.

This in the context in which the analytic theologian can explore and deploy the conception of God as that than which nothing greater can be conceived, as an effort of faith seeking understanding. As Abraham comments, 'Clearly Anselm began his thinking about God inside the faith. He was not in search of God or in search of a proof of God; he already had come to know God for himself in the life of the Church' (Abraham 2009, 62). For Anselm, the ontological argument was a creative exploration of the notions of goodness and existence as it pertained to the God he already knew and loved. 'The point' says philosopher Lenn Goodman, 'was not to prove God's existence to those who doubted it but to show that that existence follows from God's perfection' (Goodman 1996, 51). The analytic theologian as declarative theologian, following Anselm's example, would also deploy arguments of like manner to support the faith of the faithful.

Anselm's argument is well-known, and I only here present it for illustrative purposes. I think it can be somewhat simplified into the following form:

⁶ One can also find a contemporary analytic version of the ontological argument, taking its cue from Anselm, in Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 213-216.

⁷ I do not mean to imply that the ontological argument cannot be deployed in apologetic situations or as a defense of the reasonableness of Christianity against the non-Christian. I only indicate that the theologian operating in the declarative mode is to support the faith of the faithful. A theologian is certainly free to operate in other modes.

- (19) God is the supreme good (i.e., that than which nothing greater can be conceived).
(20) If God is the supreme good, then God exists.
∴ (21) God exists.⁸

The crucial move in this argument, as has long been pointed out, is to observe that that which is the supreme good necessarily necessarily exists. One can certainly quibble with just what key notions like 'goodness', 'existence', or 'supreme' mean in this context. But for the Christian who already assents to (21), if the analytic/declarative theologian presents (19) and (20), and the Christian sees the reasonableness in these premises, then she will have a confirming argument for that which she already believes by faith. Again to reiterate Aureoli, an argument like the ontological argument is not employed by the declarative theologian to produce faith in (21), rather the declarative theologian seeks to help the Christian embrace (21) better and more deeply as faith seeks understanding.

Conclusion

Analytic theology is a relatively new movement in the history of Christian theological reflection. Yet this novelty ought not to render it illegitimate, for it has a methodological antecedent in the declarative theology championed by the likes of the fourteenth-century Christian theologian Peter Aureoli. Aureoli discussed declarative theology as a motif for theologians to strive for as they help the faithful seek deeper embraces of the articles of faith. In this mode of theologizing, the articles of faith function as conclusions in theological arguments. The declarative theologian seeks to find premises that support these conclusions or they seek to defeat arguments that have positions contrary to the articles of faith as their conclusions. As has been demonstrated, analytic theology's proclivity for rigorous analysis of arguments, clarity, and a focus on the terminology employed in these arguments make it a worthy heir to this methodological tradition and is unique among methodologies on offer in contemporary Christian theology. I contend that future analytic theologians should continue this trajectory and thereby help the faithful Christian 'imagine in a better and clearer way the things he believes' (Brown 2009, 415).⁹

⁸ I owe this formulation to Jeffery Brower.

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