

Title: From Here to Eternity: A Biblical, Theological, and Analogical Defense of Divine Eternity in Light of Recent Challenges within Analytic Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Four decades ago, several analytical philosophers began to reconsider the traditional doctrine of divine eternity, which maintains that time is part of the created order, that God is not subject to its limitations, and that the mode of God's existence (following Boethius) is "the complete possession all at once of an unlimited life."

Critics objected that this doctrine was biblically underdetermined, that it was more Greek than Christian, and that it was incoherent since an eternal God could not redeem or be actively involved in the temporal world, could only minimally be considered a person, and could not possess knowledge of tensed truths such as what is happening "now." They argued God should be considered "everlasting" (infinitely extended over time) rather than eternal. This challenge generated an extensive published debate.

In this thesis, I maintain that the traditional view of eternity is defensible, is biblically grounded and theologically significant, and withstands the analytic critique. I argue that (a) the present conflict reflects two efforts of "Faith Seeking Understanding" with differing agendas; (b) much of the analytic debate misunderstands the tradition as absolute timelessness rather than duration without succession; (c) the tradition is motivated by biblical, not Greek concerns; (d) the eternity doctrine explicates rather than reduces the plenitude of divine life; (e) the traditional view is important to the ecumenical creedal tradition; (f) it is compatible with the Chalcedonian understanding of the Incarnation; (g) it is biblically and theologically supported; and (h) the eternity doctrine is *prima facie* coherent on the basis of numerous analogical models used to conceptualize it.

These arguments unfold in eight chapters. Chapter 1 (Introduction) states my thesis and characterizes attempts at formulating God's relationship to time as examples of Faith seeking Understanding. Chapters 2 through 4 provide an extensive survey of the contemporary analytic debate. Chapter 5 clarifies the history of the doctrine relative to the contemporary debate. Chapter 6 develops a creedal, biblical, and theological defense of divine eternity understood as duration without succession. Chapter 7 presents an analogical defense of its coherence. Chapter 8 draws conclusions and makes suggestions for further research.