

Review

“The B Theory of Time and the Immutability of God”

In this article, the author tackles some of the most complex issues in analytic theology, namely those concerning theories of time. These theories are important to theology in asking how we can understand God’s relationship to time, and consequently how this impacts upon the attributes we usually ascribe to God. Many of the attributes of God that classical theism holds to, such as the immutability and transcendence of God, are impacted by how we conceptualise time. In terms of immutability, that is, God’s inability to change, it seems that we must argue He is completely removed from time, that is, atemporal, or that time can be conceptualised in a different way. The author’s argument here is that the ‘B-theory’ of time is the most compelling way for us to think about time, so long as we hold that God is immutable. The author offers a convincing argument for how it is difficult to defend God’s immutability in the context of an ‘A-theory’ of time; if God is within time and time is marked by change, God must change. Furthermore they argue that God’s time must be the same as our time, thus, God does not transcend time as an atemporal being. Their justification of this is that a truly transcendent God is not a personal God, He would be too distant from his creation, and not the God we see in scripture, a God who interacts with his people. The author thus sees God’s immutability as more worthwhile to defend than His transcendence. It is not necessarily true however that God’s transcendence entails distance and an impersonal God. T.J Mawson, writing in defence of the atemporal God, defines transcendence as the fact that God cannot depend on anything for His essential attributes’.²⁷ He disagrees that a God who transcends time is thus not a ‘personal’ God, arguing instead that this is covered by the doctrine of God’s immanence. Immanence, or omnipresence, means that God is involved in every moment of creation, as Mawson notes, by virtue of ‘God’s knowing everything about anything other than God directly...and his being able to affect anything other than God directly’.²⁸ Therefore, this article lacks a suitable explanation of why immutability is so necessary to defend as an attribute of God. An explanation of the author’s views on what is meant by immutability, such as whether they are defending a strong or weak view of immutability, might allow a greater sense of why this defence is so necessary, and thus, why the ‘B-theory’ of time is the best way in which to conceptualise time.

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²⁷ T.J. Mawson, *The Divine Attributes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 19

²⁸ Mawson, *Divine Attributes*, 20