TIME AND ETERNITY IN THE GREEK FATHERS

DAVID BRADSHAW

University of Kentucky
Lexington, Kentucky

NE OF THE MOST familiar phrases of medieval
philosophy is the definition of eternity given by Boethius:
"the complete possession all at once of unlimited life."[1] As
is well known, this definition would seem to derive from that of
Plotinus, who defines eternity (aiwv) as "the life which belongs to
that which exists and is in being, all together and full, completely
without extension or interval."[2] The Plotinian definition, in turn,
was a distillation of a longstanding consensus among the Platonists
of antiquity, one that neatly synthesized the conception of eternity
in the *Timaeus* with that of Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* (book A)
and *De Caelo.* (I shall return to this subject below.) Seen in that
light, the Boethian definition is the fruit of a rich and deeply
rooted tradition.

What is surprising in Boethius's discussion of eternity is not the
definition itself, but the way in which it is applied to God.
Boethius prefaces it by the statement: "Now that God is eternal is
the common judgement of all who live by reason. Therefore let us

---

[1] Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy,* book 5, prose 6: "interminabilis vitae tota simul et
perfecta possessio."

[2] *"Ti rrcpl Ti ov ilv T0 dvm   6µo0 rracm Kai   ciotcfornrni; rravrnxfj"* (Plotinus,
Enneads 3.7.3.37-39; trans. A.H. Armstrong [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,
1966-88], 3:305). For Boethius's knowledge of Plotinus and the sources of his teaching on
eternity see Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources* (Cambridge, Mass.:
Harvard University Press, 1969), 281-83, 312-16. Courcelle thinks that Boethius did not read
Plotinus directly but received his Neoplatonism through later authors. I am not convinced on
this point, but if it is correct a likely source for the definition would be Proclus, *Elements of
Theology,* prop. 52 (not cited by Courcelle).

consider, what is eternity; for this makes plain to us both the divine nature and the divine knowledge." [3] For Boethius, eternity is a feature of the divine nature; indeed, one could even say that eternity *is* the divine nature. As he explains in his theological tractates, in God there is no distinction between substance and attribute, so that for God to be just, good, or great, and simply to be God, are one and the same. [4] Although in these discussions Boethius does not mention eternity, there can be little doubt that, in his view, for God to be eternal and to be God are also one and the same.

The place of eternity in the Plotinian system is sharply different. For Plotinus eternity is a characteristic of the second hypostasis, Intellect, and as such is wholly derivative from the One. As he goes on to explain in the treatise containing his definition, the nature that is eternal "is around the One and comes from it and is directed towards it," so that eternity is "an activity of life directed to the One and in the One." [5] Since eternity arises only at the level of the second hypostasis, in the process of emanation from the One, the One itself is no more eternal than it is temporal. As Plotinus states elsewhere, the One "was what it was even before eternity existed." [6] Both eternity and time are "contained" in the One as in their source, but precisely because it is their source it transcends them both. [7] What Boethius has done, from the perspective of Plotinus, is to equate God with Intellect. The One as the first principle of Intellect-a first principle that can be approached only apophatically, in a noncognitive way of knowing-has simply disappeared from the picture.

Boethius was not the first Western theologian to adopt this radical simplification of Neoplatonism. A similar tendency to

---

[3] Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy,* book 5, prose 6 (trans. S. J. Tester, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973], 423).

[4] Boethius, *On the Trinity* 4, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 18); Boethius, *On the Hebdomads,* Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 50.

[5] Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.7.6.2, 11.

[6] Ibid., 6.8.20.25.

[7] For the One as containing what is in Intellect, but in a simpler way, see ibid., 5.3.16.42-43; 6.8.18.17-38.

equate God with Intellect, accompanied by a rejection of apophaticism, can be found in St. Augustine. [8] For Augustine, too, God is a wholly simple being identical with his own attributes. As he writes in *On the Trinity:*

God is not great by partaking of greatness, but He is great by Himself being great, because He Himself is His own greatness. Let the same be said also of the goodness, the eternity, and the omnipotence of God, and in short of all the attributes which can be predicated of God as He is spoken of in respect to Himself, and not metaphorically or by similitude. [9]

Later Augustine extends the identity to include the very being *(esse)* and essence *(essentia)* of God. What we normally speak of as different divine attributes are in fact different names for the single eternal act by which God is. Although Augustine develops this point particularly in relation to wisdom, it applies to eternity as well:

In God, to be *[esse]* is the same as to be wise. For what to be wise is to wisdom, and to be able is to power, and to be eternal is to eternity, and to be just to justice, and to be great to greatness, that being itself is to essence. And since in the divine simplicity to be wise is nothing else than to be, therefore wisdom there is the same as essence. [10]

One could equally well say that "eternity there is the same as essence." Augustine draws this very conclusion in his homilies on the Psalms, where he states directly that "eternity is the very substance of God. "[11] No doubt it is from Augustine that Boethius

---

[8] See especially Augustine, *On the City of God* 8.6, and my discussion of this text in David *Bradshaw, Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 224-26.

[9] Augustine, *On the Trinity* 5.10.11; translation in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 1, ed. Philip Schaff (repr.; Grands Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 3:93. Although I quote this series and the Ante-Nicene Fathers series because they are readily available, I have freely modified quotations from them for the sake of style or to bring out features of the original text that are important to my argument.

[10] Ibid., 7.1.2 (NPNF1, 3:106). For further statements on divine simplicity see ibid., 15.5.7-8; 13.22; 17.29; Augustine, *Confessions* 12.15.18; idem, *On the City of God* 8.6; 11.10.

[11] Augustine, "Homily 2 on Psalm 101," ch. 10, in *Expositions of the Psalms (PL* 37:1311).

derives his understanding of divine simplicity, and indeed the entire framework in which God is conceived in terms characteristic of Plotinian Intellect. [12]

The overwhelming influence of Augustine and Boethius in shaping the Western theological tradition needs no demonstration here. On the subject of eternity, in particular, the Boethian definition, along with the Augustinian and Boethian framework in which it was placed, became part of the common heritage of Western Scholasticism. Anselm, Peter Lombard, Albert the Great, Bonaventure, and Aquinas are among those who adopt both the doctrine of divine simplicity and the identification of God with his own eternity that is its corollary. [13]

Thus there would seem to be an impressive consensus on this subject within Christian thought through at least the later thirteenth century. Or is there? An important fact that is not often enough remarked is that in the Christian East neither Augustine nor Boethius had any appreciable influence. [14] Accordingly one might expect to find there a somewhat different approach to time and eternity. Just how different it could be becomes apparent on examining the *Divine Names* of St. Dionysius the Areopagite. [15] The *Divine Names* is of particular importance because, of the works we shall discuss, it was one of the few available in Latin translation during the Middle Ages. It is therefore an appropriate

[12] Note, for instance, that Boethius adopts the Augustinian understanding of God as *vere forma* and *ipsum esse* (On *the Trinity* 2). This is not to deny that there are also non-Augustinian aspects of Boethius; see Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West,* 115-17.

[13] Anselm, *Monologion* 16; *Proslogion* 18; Peter Lombard, *Sentences* 1.73; Albert the Great, *Summa de Creaturis* II, q. 3, a.3; Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind to God* 5.5-7; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 10, a. 2.

[14] The earliest translation of either author into Greek was in the late thirteenth century, when Augustine's *On the Trinity* and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* were translated by Maxim us Planudes. It is also likely that Maxim us the Confessor read Augustine during his sojourn in Carthage, although the traces of Augustine's influence in his work are rather scanty. See Dom E. Dekkers, "Les traductions grecques des ecrits patristiques latins," *Sacris Erudi* 5 (1953): 193-233; G. C. Berthold, "Did Maximus the Confessor Know Augustine?" *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982): 14-17.

[15] I adopt the traditional practice of regarding the author of the Areopagitic corpus as a saint, regardless of whether he was identical with the Dionysius of Acts 17. The prefix "pseudo" seems to me superfluous, as there is no body of writings deriving from the biblical Dionysius with which the later corpus might be confused.

place to begin in getting a sense of the relationship between the Western tradition and the non-Augustinian theology of the East. After beginning with Dionysius, I will turn to other Greek Fathers both before and after him. Ultimately I hope to show, first, that the Eastern tradition contains a radically different view of time and eternity from that of the West; and second, that there are considerable reasons to recommend the Eastern view.

L DIONYSIUS VERSUS THE \VEST

To come to Dionysius from Augustine and Boethius is to step into a different atmosphere of thought. The differences are largely determined by a different way of appropriating Neoplatonism. For Dionysius it is axiomatic that God is both "the being of beings" (τwv ovτwv oua(a) and "beyond all being" (mforic;ouatrn; EnEKElva). [16] In other words, God is to be described *both* in terms appropriate to Intellect *and* in those appropriate to the One. This does not indicate a duality of hypostases, of course, but only that God, as creator, both constitutes the perfections of creatures and is beyond these perfections as their source. God is not only Being (To av), but the transcendently Being (To um:poumov); not only the Good, but the transcendently Good (To um:paya8ov); not only Wisdom, but the transcendently Wise (To urr£pao¢ov); and so on. The latter member of each pair asserts "a denial in the sense of superabundance" (2.3.640B). As for the first member, Dionysius refers to the perfections that God shares with creatures in a variety of ways: as divine irradiations (E:i\/\aµl)Jnc;),processions (rrpoooouc;),manifestations (£K¢avanc;), powers (ouvaµnc;), and providences (rrpovofac;). [17] The interpretation of these terms has been much disputed. Here I will merely state my belief that they should not be taken as referring to creatures or created effects, on the one hand, nor to "emanations," on the other, if by this is meant something possessing a subsistence distinct from that

[16] Dionysius, *Divine Names* 1.3.589C, 1.1.588B. I use the text of Beate Regina Suchla, Giinter Heil, and Adolf Martin Ritter, ed., *Corpus Dionysiacum* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990-91), vol. 1.

[17] For these terms see ibid., 1.2.588D; 1.4.589D; 2.4.641.A; 2.7.645A; 5.2.817 A.

of God. They *are* God as he is manifest in his activity. [18]
Significantly, even to say that God is simple is for Dionysius not
an assertion about the divine nature, but about how God is
manifested in his activity: to call him monad or henad means that
by "the simplicity and unity of his supernatural indivisibility" he
imparts oneness to all things (1.4.589D; cf. 13.2-3).

Of course God's activity takes place within and among
creatures. Hence to understand the divine processions in the way
that I suggest still implies that they are refracted, as it were,
through the created order. This observation becomes important
when one turns to Dionysius's teaching on time and eternity.
Dionysius seems somewhat ambivalent regarding whether time
and eternity are creatures or divine processions. On the one hand,
God "transcends both time and eternity, and all things in time and
eternity" (5.10.825B); on the other, "He *is* the time and eternity
of all things" (10.2.937B). [19] To say both that God is x and that
God transcends x is how Dionysius typically speaks of the divine
processions. Yet he never actually lists time or eternity among the
processions, and in the continuation of the last passage cited he
seems to regard them as creatures, or, more precisely, as modes of
the being of creatures. He writes:

Scripture does not call eternal [a[wvw] [only] things that are altogether and
absolutely ingenerate and eternal [c'd8w], and imperishable, immortal,
immutable, and so forth. For instance, there is "Rise up, you eternal gates [m.Jllm
aiwvtot]" (Ps. 24:7, 9), and the like. Often it calls things that are very ancient by
the designation of eternity, or, again, it sometimes designates as eternity [aiwv]
the entire span of our own time, inasmuch as it is characteristic of eternity to be
ancient, immutable, and to measure the whole of being. . . . Moreover the
Scriptures sometimes praise temporal eternity [[yxpovoc; a[wv] and eternal time
[a[wvtoc; xpovoc;]. Yet we know that more properly they discuss and denote by
eternity the things that are, and by time the things that come to be. It is necessary
therefore to understand that the things called eternal are not simply co-eternal
[auva:18ta] with God who is before eternity [6E0 T(\l npo diwvoc;]. Following
without deviation the sacred Scriptures, one must take such things as both

[18] See Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West,* 179-82.

[19] To the former passage one may add Dionysius, *Divine Names* 2.10.648C (God is "the
measure of eternity and beyond eternity and before eternity"); and to the latter ibid.,
5.4.817C ("the eternity of things that are, the time of things that come to be").

eternal and temporal, in the ways appropriate to them, and as between the things that are and those that come to be; that is, as things which in one way partake of eternity, and in another of time. But one must praise God as both eternity and as time, as the cause of all time and eternity, and the Ancient of Days; and as before time, and beyond time and the immutable "seasons and times," and again existing before the ages [rrpo aiwvwv], inasmuch as He is before eternity and beyond the ages, and His kingdom "is a kingdom of all the ages." Amen. (10.3 .93 7C-940A)

Plainly Dionysius is struggling here to be faithful to scriptural usage. In Scripture one finds atwv used of both a specific age (as in "the present age" or "the age to come") and of all time understood as a whole (as in the expression de; TOY cdwva, "for all eternity"). God is both eternal (a[wvioc;) and before the ages (npo a{wvwv); indeed he is the maker of the ages (tnoiriac:v Touc; atwvac;). [20] This range of meanings persists throughout patristic literature, and, although the context usually makes the meaning clear, one must always keep the different possibilities in mind. There is also the term cH8wc;, which in both classical Greek and Scripture is roughly synonymous with alwvioc;. [21] By the time that Dionysius was writing the pagan Neoplatonists had drawn a distinction between the two terms, using cH8toc; for the everlasting through time and a[wvioc; for the timelessly eternal, but Christian authors generally did not adopt this convention. [22]

Dionysius has his own way of attempting to bring order to this rich but confusing diversity. He distinguishes "the things that are," which are eternal in the proper sense, from those *called* eternal in Scripture. The reference to the "eternal gates" indicates that among the latter he has in mind primarily the angels and the

[20] Heb 1:2; cf. Ps 54:20; Rom 16:26; 1 Cor 2:7, with further references and discussion in Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:197-209.

[21] Wis 7:26; IV Mace 10:15 (some MSS.); Rom 1:20; Jude 6; cf. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary,* 1:168.

[22] The distinction is not in Plotinus, who raises the question of whether there is a difference but concludes that there is not *(Enneads* 3.7.3.1-4; 5.12-17). It appears first in Proclus, *Elements of Theology,* props. 48-49, *52-55* (especially the corollary to prop. 55); cf. *Commentary on the Timaeus,* ed. Diehl (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-6), 1:277.32-278.13.

heavenly realm. [23] The identity of the "things that are" is not immediately apparent, but since they are "absolutely ingenerate" and thus cannot be creatures, I would suggest that he has in mind the divine processions. [24] This does not rule out that eternity itself is among the processions, for the processions (like the Forms in the *Sophist)* can blend or partake of one another in various ways. [25]

Having made this distinction, Dionysius then uses it to clarify the status of eternal creatures such as the angels and the heavens. They are "between the things that are and those that come to be," partaking both of eternity and of time. As regards the angels, he probably has in mind not only that they act in time, but also that even in heaven they grow in the knowledge of God. [26] By contrast, God is not to be located at any particular point within this structure. He permeates and encompasses the whole, being identical to both eternity *and* time, and yet prior to them both. As I have mentioned, this is the characteristic form of his relationship to the divine processions. In stating that creatures are eternal (aiwvt0<;) but not coeternal (ouvdi8ta) with God, Dionysius might seem to suggest that there is a general distinction between ai8toi; and aiwvtoi;; if so, however, he does not clarify it. The most natural way to take these statements is simply that God is eternal (whichever term is used to indicate it) in a way different from that of creatures, by himself being eternity. He is thus also the *source* of eternity, for creatures are eternal, to the extent that they are, by participating in him.

This raises an interesting question. Would it not follow by parity of reasoning that since God is also time, he must be

---

[23] See Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 304-7; and idem, *The Angels and Their Mission* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1957), 38-41.

[24] Dionysius most frequently uses Ta ovTa in an indefinite way, meaning "the things that are, whatever they may be." There are at least two passages, however, where it must refer to the divine processions (5.4.817Dl; 5.5.820A9). The first of these exhibits both uses: God is the source of Ta EV Tot<; oOatv ovTa, "the things that are in the things that are."

[25] See *Divine Names* 5.5.820B-C, where Dionysius recognizes that the other processions partake of Being.

[26] See *Celestial Hierarchy* 7.3.209B-D; *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 6.3.6.537B-C.

temporal in a way surpassing that of creatures? Dionysius does not quite draw this conclusion, but he comes dose while discussing the relationship between God and being in chapter *5.*

God is the the source and measure of being and eternity [alwv], since He is before substance and being and eternity, and the substance-making source, middle, and end of all. That is why in Scripture the truly Pre-existent is multiplied [noi'li'lani'laatai;nm] in accordance with every conception of beings, and "was" and "is" and "will be" [To   Kal To fon Kai T0 foTm] and "became" and "is becoming" and "will become" [To tytvno Kai yfvnm Kal
are properly hymned of Him. For, to those who hymn them in a God-fitting way, all these signify that He exists supersubstantially in accordance with every conception, and that He is the cause of all that in any way are. (5.8.824A)

Since God is the source of all being, and being can take on temporal modalities, temporal language must apply to Him. [27] Yet it does so only as signifying that "He exists supersubstantially in accordance with every conception, and that He is the cause of all that in any way are." Thus its purpose is not so much to render a neutral description of God as to praise him as the source of temporal being.

   This passage is all the more striking because earlier Dionysius had explicitly denied that temporal language-including not only "was" and "will be," but even "is"-applies to God (5.4.817D). Such simultaneous affirmation and denial is typical of Dionysius's use of language as a way of reorienting the reader away from the attempt simply to describe God, and toward the attempt to render him fitting praise. Temporal language, in particular, is for Dionysius a way of "multiplying" God, and therefore necessarily fails to be adequate to him in his unity. The "multiplication" here is much like that in Neoplatonism of each higher level of reality

   [27] Dionysius probably has in mind particularly Revelation 1:4 and 8, where God is "He who is and was and is to be" (6 wY Kai 6   Kai 6 i'pxoμEvo<;).This phrase is a synthesis of Exodus 3:14 (God is "He who is"), John 1:1 (the Word "was" in the beginning), and Psalm 118:26 as applied to Christ ("blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"). The use of wY rather than fon is suggestive. I suspect that Dionysius would have found in this verse simultaneously both an affirmation of the temporal ("was" and "is coming") and a denial ("being" rather than "is").

within the subsequent level. [28] The difference is that, since there is no distinction in hypostasis, any temporal affirmation must always be balanced by the apophatic insistence that God is beyond time as its source. This tension is one that Dionysius embraces, for he finds in it the only language adequate to God as both truly present in creation and beyond it as its cause.

Clearly the distance separating Dionysius from Augustine and Boethius is immense. Far from identifying eternity with the divine nature, Dionysius regards it as either a divine procession, or as an attribute of the processions, or (most probably) as both. Time is also a divine procession, so that creatures partake of God not only insofar as they are eternal, but also insofar as they are temporal. Since God is time, but also is beyond time, temporal language must be both affirmed and denied of him. Finally, looming behind these differences is a divergence in attitude toward theological language. Boethius offers his definition of eternity in order to "make plain the divine nature"; Dionysius wants not so much to state what God is, as to show how he should be praised.

The medieval Scholastics were well aware of Dionysius. Surely, one would think, they must have recognized these differences and attempted to adjudicate them. A full exploration of this subject would require a careful review of medieval treatments of time and eternity in relation to the *Divine Names*. Rather than attempt that here, I will merely note how medieval treatments of this topic tended to be skewed by problems of translation. The most widely used translation of the Areopagitic corpus, that by John Sarracen, renders Dionysius's terminology pertaining to eternity in a way that is systematically misleading. The change can be observed in the following table: [29]

---

[28] See Porphyry, *Sententiae* 33 (ed. Erich Lamberz [Leipzig: Teubner], 36.4), where the intelligible is multiplied (noAAanflaa1ao8Ev)within sensible objects; Proclus, *Elements of Theology,* props. 27, 152, 155 (ed. E. Dodds [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963], 32.8, 134.7, 15, 136.18).

[29] I am indebted to Professor John Jones of Marquette University for help in compiling these statistics. They cover the entire corpus, although the great majority of occurrences are in the *Divine Names.*

Dionysius	Sarracen
	aeternus 6
	sempiternus 2
auvcil8ioc; 2	*coaeternus* 2
alwvioc; 13	*aeternus* 11
	aeternaliter 1
	aeternalis 1
alwv 47	*aevum* 36
	saeculo 11

Two points are of note here, one minor and one significant. The minor point is that Sarracen does not preserve the distinction between *d"ibwc;* and a!wvwc;. This need not in itself lead to misunderstanding, for even in Dionysius the meaning of these terms is fluid and must be drawn from the context. Far more important is the bifurcation of the closely related pair atwv and atwvwc; into two unrelated terms, *aevum* and *aeternus*. The effect of this is not only to obscure the connection between the noun and the adjective; it is to create the impression that Dionysius is speaking of a distinct concept, the *aevum,* which is different from *aeternitas* in the proper sense. Thus, where I have interpreted Dionysius as stating both that God is eternity and that he transcends eternity, and have taken this as a deliberately paradoxical statement about God's relationship to one of his own attributes, the Latin reader would find instead that God is the *aevum* and transcends the *aevum.*

Precisely what this means will naturally depend on what one takes to be the *aevum.* Beginning in the early thirteenth century, there seems to have been a consensus that these Dionysian occurrences of the term are to be interpreted in light of its use by Augustine to designate the form of eternity characteristic of the

angels. [30] Since on this view the *aevum* belongs securely to the level of created being, Dionysius accordingly appears to be discussing the relationship of God to an attribute of creatures. Aquinas, for example, identifies God as the *aevum* in that he is the measure of permanent being, and as prior to the *aevum* in that he is its cause. [31] The *aevum* in turn he identifies as *participated* eternity, that is, as the attributes of creatures (such as lengthy duration or immutability) which give them a resemblance to divine eternity. [32] There is nothing particularly paradoxical about this; indeed, it fits neatly into Aquinas's reading of Dionysius as a proponent of theology as science. [33]

The question of precisely how these ingredients contributed to the understanding (or misunderstanding) of Dionysius is a fascinating one that deserves closer study. At this point, however, we must leave the West aside and begin the rather different task of attempting to place Dionysius into his historical context. Recent scholarship has emphasized that Dionysius was not the splendid but isolated voice that he appeared to the Scholastics, but instead fits securely within the Greek patristic tradition. [34] His

[30] See Carlos Steel, "The Neoplatonic Doctrine of Time and Eternity and Its Influence on Medieval Philosophy," in *The Medieval Concept of Time: Studies on the Scholastic Debate and Its Reception in Early Modern Philosophy,* ed. Pasquale Porro (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 3-31; Pasquale Porro, "Angelic Measures: *Aevum* and Discrete Time," in Porro, ed., *The Medieval Concept of Time,* 131-59; Italo Sciuto, "Il concetto di *aevum* nel pensiero medioevale," in *Ii tempo in questione: Paradigmi della temporalita nel pensiero occidentale* (Milan: Geurini e Associati, 1997), 130-41.

[31] Thomas Aquinas, X *De Div. Nom.,* lect. 2 (Marietti ed., 862-63); cf. II *De Div. Nom.,* lect. 5 (Marietti ed., 203). Note also that in his *Commentary on the Book of Causes* Aquinas interprets the statement that the First Cause is beyond *aeternitas* as indicating that *aeternitas* is here equivalent to *aevum* (prop. 2).

[32] Aquinas, X *De Div. Nom.,* lect. 3 (Marietti ed., 875); cf. *STh* I, q. 10, aa. 3 and 5; I *Sent.,* d. 8, q. 2, a. 2; d. 19, q. 2, a. 1. (There is also a more robust sense of "participated eternity" in Aquinas, as discussed below in section 6.)

[33] See further John Jones, "(Mis?)-Reading the *Divine Names* as a Science: Aquinas's Interpretation of the *Divine Names* of (Pseudo) Dionysius Areopagite," forthcoming in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly.*

[34] See especially Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989); Alexander Golitzin, *Et introibo ad a/tare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita* (Thessalonica: Patriarchikon Idruma Paterikon Meleton, 1994); idem, "The Experience of God in Eastern Orthodox Christianity," *Pro Ecclesia* 8 (1999): 159-86; idem, "Dionysius Areopagita: A Christian Mysticism?" *Pro Ecclesia* 12 (2003): 161-212; and John Jones, "An

theology is in many respects a development of that of his predecessors, particularly Clement of Alexandria and the Cappadocian Fathers, and was carried further by his successors, such as St. Maximus the Confessor, St. John of Damascus, and St. Gregory Palamas. This means that, alongside (and embracing) the question of the relationship of Dionysius to his commentators, there is also that of the relationship of the Greek patristic tradition as a whole to the fundamentally Augustinian theology of the West. My hope is that, by placing Dionysius within this context, we will be able both to understand his views better and to determine to what extent they were characteristic of the Greek tradition as a whole. Having done so, we will also be in a position to assess whether this tradition provides an appealing alternative to that of the West.

In the remainder of this article I approach this task chronologically. Section II deals with the most important pre-Christian sources (Plato, Aristotle, and Philo of Alexandria); section III with the early Greek Fathers; section IV with the Cappadocians; and section V with the reception of Dionysius by John of Scythopolis and Maximus the Confessor. In sections VI and VII I discuss the relationship of the two traditions, arguing that that of the East is both distinctive and philosophically promising.

II. THE CLASSICAL SOURCES

There can be no question that Plato is fundamental for both the Eastern and the Western traditions. As regards time and eternity, Plato established the concepts and terminology that later authors drew upon even when (as in Dionysius) they did so in order to deny their adequacy to God. Plato must therefore be our starting point.

Plato's most explicit treatment of time and eternity is in the *Timaeus*. There the creation account begins by positing that the sensible world is modelled on an original that is eternal (αἰοτον),

unchanging, and grasped by intellect or reason rather than opinion (27d-28a, 29a). These statements alone do not imply that the model is eternal in any sense other than everlasting; however, two further points soon complicate the picture. One is that the model is in some sense alive, a Living Creature that "embraces within itself all the intelligible living creatures" (30c). The other is that time is a property solely of the image, and not of the Living Creature itself. As is well known, the Demiurge creates time as a "moving image of eternity" (30d). We might expect that this would mean that eternity (αἰών) is a property solely of the Living Creature, and not of the sensible world. However, that would be to overlook the crucial fact that the sensible world is an *image* of the Living Creature and therefore replicates its properties in a derivative way. Specifically, as regards eternity the sensible world is "an eternal image, moving according to number, of eternity remaining in unity" (30d).

Thus Plato implicitly distinguishes two kinds of eternity (αἰών): that of the sensible world, which is derivative and temporally extended, and the "eternity remaining in unity" of its intelligible model. He clarifies the difference by adding that terms such as "was" and "will be" apply properly only to the sensible world, whereas only "is" is appropriately said of its intelligible model (37e-38a). Undoubtedly these statements are to be read against the background of Plato's general distinction between the being of the Forms and the becoming of the sensible world. [35] Nowhere in the *Timaeus,* however, is there any explanation of what it means to say that intelligible reality is *alive,* indeed a "Living Creature," or how we are to understand the relationship between its life and its eternal being.

Whatever Plato may have thought about these questions, in most of subsequent Greek philosophy they were approached through a complementary set of concepts introduced by Aristotle. Aristotle's Prime Mover is like the Living Creature of the *Timaeus* in two crucial respects: it is alive, and it is without change or

---

[35] The sense in which the Forms are eternal has been subject to dispute. I follow the more or less traditional view upheld by Richard Patterson, "On the Eternality of the Platonic Forms," *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie* 67 (1985): 27-46.

movement. Aristotle explains this seemingly paradoxical com-
bination in the statement that "life is the activity [or actuality,
tvtpyna] of intellect. "[36] This statement must be understood
against the background of the *Metaphysics (Metaphys. e.6)*. There
Aristotle distinguishes tvtpyna from movement (KtVY]at<;)partly
on the grounds that an tvtpyaa is intrinsically atemporal, in that
it does not require time to reach completion. [37] Among the
examples of tvtpyaa that Aristotle cites is VOY]at<;,the activity of
intellect. *N6Y]at<;* is thus not a movement or change, but a form of
activity that is intrinsically atemporal. Furthermore, as Aristotle
explains at length later in the *Metaphysics (Metaphys. !\. 7 and 9)*,
the Prime Mover is simply the self-subsistent act of vorimc;. This
means that it is alive and eternal, and that it is the latter both in
the sense of enduring everlastingly through time and in the
stronger sense of existing independently of time and requiring no
time in which to fulfill its existence. One could say of the Prime
Mover, just as Plato says of the Living Creature, that it has no
"was" or "will be," but simply "is." [38]

Aristotle also provides a way of approaching Plato's distinction
between the temporally extended eternity of the sensible world
and the "eternity remaining in unity" of the Living Creature. In a
remarkable passage of *De Caelo,* he observes that "outside the
heaven" there is neither place nor time, and that the things there
"continue through all eternity [8taTEAE1 TOY O:navTa a{Giva] with
the best and most self-sufficient life" (1.9.279a22-23). The
reference to "there," a place where there is no place, and to things
there "continuing" where there is no time, give us warning that
language is here being pushed to its limits. (The reference to a
place beyond the heaven may in fact be a deliberate echo of the

---

[36] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* /\..7.l072b27.

[37] Ibid., 0.6.1048b18-34. For a detailed explication of this passage see *Bradshaw,Aristotle East and West,* 8-12.

[38] See further David Bradshaw, "In What Sense Is the Prime Mover Eternal?" *Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1997): 359-69. There I take issue with a number of scholars (Kneale, Whittaker, Taran, Sorabji) who have held that the Prime Mover is sempiternal only. All seem to me to overlook the crucial role of the £vtpyEta - KtYTjati; distinction.

Charioteer myth in the *Phaedrus,* another sign that the language here is quasi-mythic.) The passage continues:

Indeed, our forefathers were inspired when they made this word, alwv. The end [To *Tfi\oc;]* which circumscribes the life of every creature, and which cannot in nature be exceeded, they named the alwv of each. By the same analogy also the end of the whole heaven, the end which circumscribes all time even to infinity [To T0V mxvrn xpovov Kai   cinnptav m::pLEXOV TEAO<;], is alwv, taking the name from "always being" [ad Eivm]-the alwv that is immortal and divine. In dependence on it all other things have their existence and their life, some directly, others more obscurely. (l.9.279a22-30) [39]

Here Aristotle, like Plato, distinguishes two kinds of a{wv. The distinction is not quite the same as Plato's, for the first kind of a{wv is simply the lifespan of a living creature. The real question is what to make of the second kind. Aristotle introduces it by analogy with the first, so that the second kind of a{wv would appear to be, roughly, the lifespan of the cosmos. Yet immediately we have to qualify this statement, for a{wv in the second sense "circumscribes all time even to infinity." This means that it is not a "span" at all, for it has no beginning or end. The point is confirmed by the derivation of a{wv from d:El dvm, "always being." Clearly this phrase is not to be read merely as everlastingness through time, for Aristotle has already told us that in the realm of which he is speaking there is no time. On the other hand, neither is it to be taken in the sense of unchanging static facticity, like that of, say, the truths of mathematics. As the analogy with the lifespan of a living creature indicates, the immortal and divine a{wv is a form of *life-a* life that embraces or circumscribes all of time, but is not itself dependent on temporal process. It would seem that we are here very close to the description of the Prime Mover in the *Metaphysics.* [40] We are also

[39] The translation is that of W. K. C. Guthrie, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939), 93, modified.

[40] Note also that "in dependence on it [the immortal and divine alwv] all other things have their existence and their life." This closely parallels the statement about the Prime Mover that "on such a principle depend the heaven and the world of nature" (Aristotle, *Metaphys.* A.7.1072b13). See also Bradshaw, "In What Sense Is the Prime Mover Eternal?", 366-67.

close to Plato's atwv that "remains in unity," of which the a{wv
of the sensible world is an image.

What we find in Plato and Aristotle, then, is a highly suggestive
set of elements which, although they do not quite cohere into a
single doctrine, certainly point in that direction. Both authors
agree in distinguishing a higher, transcendent eternity from the
temporal passage of the sensible world. Plato approaches this
eternity from the top down, as it were, positing it as the original
of which time is an image. Aristotle approaches it from the
bottom up, conceiving it as the whole span of infinite time taken
together as a whole. Accordingly, whereas for Plato there are two
types of aiwv, that of the intelligible model and that of its sensible
image, for Aristotle there is a single aiwv which somehow
embraces within itself all temporal extension. I have suggested
that this synthetic unity can be understood through the *tvtpyna*
- Klvrimc; distinction. Since the life of God is voriaic;' a
paradigmatic case of tvtpyna, it is both temporally extended (in
possessing duration) and yet whole and complete at each moment,
and in that sense independent of time. Thus for Aristotle eternity
is the life of God, conceived as embracing time, whereas for Plato
it is the life of the intelligible world, conceived as the archetype
of time. Both agree that it is a kind of *lifeJ* indeed of divine life,
and both agree that time is in some sense dependent upon it.

Let us turn now to Philo of Alexandria, the first author to
synthesize these themes from Greek philosophy with Scripture.
Our brief survey of Plato and Aristotle will help to explain some
otherwise puzzling dualities that run through Philo's references to
eternity. Like other Middle Platonists, Philo adopts the Stoic
definition of time as the extension or interval (8u:Xan1µa) of the
movement of the cosmos. [41] Accordingly he views the physical
universe as the "father" of time, and God, the maker of the

---

[41] Philo, *On the Making of the World,* 26; cf. idem, *On the Etemity of the World,* 4, where
this definition is recognized as Stoic. For discussion of the definition see *J.* M. Rist, *Stoic
Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 273-83. References to Philo are
to *Philo,* ed. and trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge,
Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929-62), 10 vols.

physical universe, as its maker or (continuing the metaphor) its grandfather.

> God is the maker of time also, for He is the father of time's father, that is of the universe, and has caused the movements of the one to be the source of the generation of the other. Thus time stands to God in the relation of a grandson. For this universe, since we perceive it by our senses, is the younger son of God. To the elder son, I mean the intelligible universe, He assigned the place of firstborn, and purposed that it should remain in His own keeping. [42]

Philo follows Plato in distinguishing the sensible from the intelligible cosmos, but unlike Plato he identifies God as the creator (or "father") of both. Most significantly for the subject of time and eternity, he continues:

> And thus with God there is no future, since He has made the boundaries of the ages subject to Himself. For God's life is not time, but eternity [aiwv], which is the archetype and pattern of time; and in eternity there is no past nor future, but only present existence. [43]

This passage is not only Platonic, in its understanding of time and eternity as image and archetype; it is also Aristotelian, in its identification of eternity with the life of God.

Keeping this dual background in mind will help explain the difference between this statement and another elsewhere, where Philo identifies eternity, not with the life of God, but with that of the intelligible world. Commenting on the phrase "the other year" in Genesis 17:21, Philo explains that it is not "an interval of time which is measured by the revolutions of sun and moon, but something truly mysterious, strange and new, other than the realm of sight and sense, having its place in the realm of the incorporeal and intelligible-the model and archetype of time, that is, a{wv." He continues: "The word a{wv signifies the life of the intelligible world, as time is the life of the perceptible. "[44] This is a different view from that in the previous passage, for the intelligible world

---

[42] Philo, *On the Unchangeableness of God* 31 (Colson and Whittaker, trans., 3:25-27).

[43] Ibid., 32.

[44] Philo, *On the Change of Names* 267 (Colson and Whittaker, trans., 5:279; translation modified).

is not God. Philo identifies it with the mind or reason (/16yoc;) of God as he is engaged in creating, or (equivalently) with the pattern that God has in mind as he creates. [45]

Is Philo simply inconsistent? If so, the inconsistency would be easy to understand in light of his sources. For Aristotle eternity is the life of God; for Plato it is that of the intelligible world, which Philo identifies with the divine mind engaged in the act of creating. It would not be surprising if Philo failed to keep these two views entirely separate. Nonetheless, there is a possible reconciliation. Philo regards the term 'God' (8foc;) as a name, not for God as he is in his own nature-for which Philo typically uses 'That Which Is' (To av) or 'He Who Is' (6 wv)-but for the first of the two divine Powers, also known as the Creative or Beneficent Power. [46] These Powers are not truly distinct from God, but are God apprehended in the limited way characteristic of the human mind. [47] Perhaps, then, in saying that eternity is the life of God, Philo does not mean to identify it with the life of God *simpliciter,* but rather with that of the Creative Power-that is, God as he is manifested in the creative act.

This interpretation not only brings the first passage dose to the second; it also fits well with the apophatic character of Philo's theology. One of the most characteristic features of Philo's theology is his view that God is aKmallrirrrnc;, ungraspable by the human mind. [48] The divine Powers give us knowledge, not of *what*

[45] Philo, *On the Making of the World, 24-25;* idem, *On the Migration of Abraham,* 102-3. See David Bradshaw, "The Vision of God in Philo of Alexandria," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly 52* (1998): 483-500, especially 494-95.

[46] The second is the Kingly or Punitive Power, which we have in view in referring to God as Lord. See Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues,* 137; idem, *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things,* 166; idem, *On the Change of Names,* 15-17, 28-29; idem, *On Abraham,* 121.

[47] Philo, *On Abraham, 122-23;* idem, *Questions on Genesis 4.2.* For a general discussion of the divine Powers see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 161-66.

[48] Philo, *On the Posterity of Cain,* 169; *On the Unchangeableness of God, 62; On the Change of Names,* 15; *On Dreams,* 1.67. On the philosophical sources of Philo's apophaticism see John Dillon, *The Transcendence of God in Philo: Some Possible Sources* (Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1975). I have discussed the biblical sources (though without specific reference to Philo) in David Bradshaw, "The Divine Glory and the Divine Energies," *Faith and Philosophy 23* (2006): 279-98.

God is, but only *that* he is. As Philo writes in *On the Posterity of Cain:* "all that follows in the wake of God is within the good man's apprehension, while He Himself alone is beyond it, beyond, that is, in the line of straight and direct approach ... but brought within ken by the Powers that follow and attend Him; for these make evident not his essence but his subsistence
from the things which He accomplishes. "[49] In general, Philo holds that only the fact of God's existence can be known, and that any positive statement regarding the divine attributes must be taken as referring to the divine Powers.[50] There is no reason to think that eternity is an exception to this rule.

In sum, Philo adds little directly to the doctrine (or proto-doctrine) of eternity found in Plato and Aristotle. His achievement lies instead in incorporating this doctrine within a fundamentally apophatic framework.

Ill. FROM CLEMENT TO ATHANASIUS

The early Greek Fathers adopted both aspects of this synthesis. Often their apophaticism is expressed, as with Philo, in the relatively simple statement that God has no "proper name" but is named only indirectly through his works or deeds.[51] It was with Clement of Alexandria that apophaticism became a more prominent and carefully developed theme. The following passage from Clement is especially significant:

The One is indivisible [a8tatp£Tov]; wherefore also it is infinite, not considered as untraversable   but as having no division [or dimension, a81a0Tmov] and not having a limit [rr€pac;]And therefore it is without form or name. And if we name it, we do not do so properly, terming it either the One, or the Good, or Mind, or Absolute Being, or Father, or Creator, or Lord .... For

[49] Philo, *On the Posterity of Cain,* 169 (Colson and Whitaker, trans., 2:429).

[50] Besides the passage just cited, see also Philo, *The Worse Attacks the Better,* 89; *On the Unchangeableness of God,* 55-56, 62; *On Flight and Finding,* 164-65; *On the Change of Names,* 7-9; *On the Special Laws,* 1.32-50, *On Rewards and Punishments,* 39-40.

[51] Justin Martyr, *Second Apology* 6; Pseudo-Justin, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 21; Theophylus, *To Autolycus* 1.4-5; Origen, *On Prayer* 24.2-3.

each [name] by itself does not express God; but all together are indicative of the power [8uvaμc:wc;] of the Omnipotent. [52]

This statement strikingly anticipates the doctrine of Dionysius that the divine names refer to the divine powers or processions. It is also notable for its use of the term d8taaTaTov in reference to God. Clement would seem to mean by this either "without division" or "without dimension," or perhaps both. [53] As we shall see in a moment, d8tammov will be adopted by the Cappadocians as a key term for distinguishing God from creatures, including creatures that are eternal.

It would be interesting to know how Clement understands divine eternity and how he relates it to his apophaticism. The only passage that sheds light on this point is one in which he remarks that eternity "presents in an instant" (dKapwfwc; auvfon1m) the past, present, and future. [54] Plainly Clement means to endorse the traditional view that God's knowledge is not temporal. Since he does not dwell on the point, however, we cannot say precisely what he would make of eternity as a divine attribute.

Clement's great successor at Alexandria, Origen, is similarly hard to pin down. He defines the a!wv of someone as, in general, the time that is coextensive (auμrrapc:KTElvoμc:vov) with the

<hr />

[52] Clement, *Stromata* 5.12.81-82 (trans. Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson [repr.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986], 2:464); see Otto Stiihlin, ed., *ClemensAlexandrinus: Stromata Buch I-VT* [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960], 3 80-81). See also *Stromata* 2.2.5: God is remote in essence (oua(a) but near by his power which holds all things in its embrace.

[53] John Whittaker, "Philological Comments on the Neoplatonic Notion ofinfinity," in *The Significance ofNeoplatonism,* ed. R. Baine Harris (Norfolk, Va.: Old Dominion University, 1976), 155-72, argues that aotaarnrnv in this passage means "infinitely small" (156). Not only is this not a standard meaning of the word (one for which Whittaker fails to provide any other instances), but the notion that God is "infinitely small" would surely require explanation. Clement's other uses of the word fit its normal meanings of either "continuous, uninterrupted" or "without division" *(Stromata* 4.22.136; 6.12.104; 7.12.70; *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 8.3). There is also a third normal meaning, "without dimension." Of these three candidates, the first can be excluded as making little sense in the context, leaving the second or third. (Granted, "without division" would repeat the claim already made by aow(pnov, but that may be what Clement intends.)

[54] *Stromata* 1.13.57 (Stiihlin, ed., 36; ANF 2:313).

structure of his life.[55] If this definition can be applied to God, then the divine eternity will be, not strictly timeless, but the infinite expanse of time that is coextensive with the divine life; in other words, we shall have returned to the "all time even to infinity" of Aristotle. That is indeed the view Origen maintains. Commenting on the verse, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Ps. 2:7, Heb. 1:5), he explains:

There is no evening for God, I believe, since there is also no morning, but the time which is coextensive with His unoriginate and eternal [di8ftp] life, if I may so put it, is the day which for Him is "today," in which the Son has been begotten. Consequently there is no finding of the beginning either of His generation, or of His day.[56]

Although he speaks of time as coextensive with the divine life, Origen is not here simply equating divine eternity with sempiternity. Like Aristotle he approaches eternity from the bottom up, understanding it as the summation of all time gathered together in a single "day." This would seem to be rather different from Clement's view that God is d8taoTaTov. Elsewhere we learn that for Origen God is not strictly aKmaA.rpnoc; and the divine names are not names only of the divine powers. [57] Nonetheless Origen affirms that the Trinity transcends "all time and all ages and all

---

[55] Origen, *Exposition of Proverbs* 10 *(PG* 17:189A); *Commentary on Ephesians,* frag. 9, as printed in *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1902): 403. Time is not mentioned explicitly in the first of these passages, but it would seem to be implicit. There is much information about Origen in Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *The Concept of Time in Origen* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991); and idem, "Origen and the Stoic View of Time," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52 (1991): 535-61, although Tzamalikos considerably exaggerates Origen's originality.

[56] Origen, *Commentary on John* 1.204 (Erwin Preuschen, ed., *Origenes Werke,* vol. 4 [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903], 37).

[57] In *On First Principles* Origen affirms that God is incomprehensible and escapes the grasp of the human mind (1.5). Nonetheless, he goes on to add that "there is a certain affinity between the mind and God, of whom the mind is an intellectual image, and that by reason of this fact the mind, especially if it is purified and separated from bodily matter, is able to have some perception of the divine nature" (1.7) (Origen, *On First Principles,* trans. G. W. Butterworth [Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973], 13). He also holds that God's power is finite, for if it were infinite God could not understand even himself (2.9.1). Similar reasoning would imply that the divine nature is also finite. It is presumably for this reason that we do not find Origen repeating such statements of Clement as that God is "without dimension" and "without form or name."

eternity," and that it "exceeds all comprehension, not only of temporal but even of eternal intelligence. "[58] In general, although Origen is not as rigorously apophatic as Philo or Clement, he too is very far from identifying eternity with the divine nature in the manner familiar to later theology.

Origen is also important in that he was the first Christian theologian to affirm explicitly that the begetting of the Son by the Father is eternal, so that it is false to say "there was a time when the Son was not." [59] The Son is begotten by the Father "as an act of will proceeds from the mind, without either cutting off any part of the mind or being separated or divided from it. "[60] Yet these statements must be tempered by, on the one hand, Origen's subordinationism, according to which the Son is God in only a derivative sense; and, on the other, by his belief that the creation too has always existed, so that one equally cannot say "there was a time when the creation was not. "[61] Thus although for Origen there is no "separation" or "interval" between the Father and Son, this is not for him a distinguishing feature of God as against creation.

The debates of the Nicene era forced Christian thought into clarity on this point. The Arian slogan, "there was when the Son was not"   ΤΤΟΤΕ *DTE* ΟΥΚ   was taken by the orthodox as implying the existence of a temporal interval (8taOTT]μa) during which the Father had not yet begotten the Son. [62] It is not clear that Arius himself would have accepted this implication, for he also says that the Son was created or generated before time and that time was made through Him. [63] Possibly Arius was attempting to articulate a view like that of the Platonist Atticus, who found

[58] Origen, *On First Principles* 4.4.1 (Butterworth, trans., 316).

[59] Ibid., 2.1.2 and 9.

[60] Ibid., 2.1.6 (Butterworth, trans., 19).

[61] Ibid., 1.2.10; 1.4.3-5 (where, however, he appears somewhat less certain). Origen's subordinationism was largely erased from the translation of *On First Principles* by Rufinus, and must be reconstructed from various statements quoted by Jerome and Justinian (Butterworth, trans., 20 n.5, 27, 33-34).

[62] Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistle* 6 *(PG* 18:557 A-B); cf. the Symbol of Antioch set forth in 345 A.D. (PG 26:729A).

[63] Athanasius, *Orations against the Arians* 1.14; Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.4.

in the *Timaeus* a distinction between a precosmic time and the time that came into being with the creation of the world. [64] Even on this view, however, there was an interval of some kind (although not one measured by time) between the Father and the Son.

Saint Athanasius, in his rebuttal of Arius, refuses to concede even this much. He observes that in Scripture Christ is the maker of all the ages (aiwvEc;),and so must be before *any* sort of interval whatsoever:

> The words addressed to the Son in the hundred and forty-fourth Psalm, "Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages," forbid anyone to imagine any interval [8taCJTT)µa] in which the Word did not exist. For if every interval in the ages is measured, and of all the ages the Word is King and Maker (Heb 1:2; 11:3), therefore, whereas no interval at all exists prior to Him, it would be madness to say, "There was once when the Everlasting was not." [65]

Creatures, he says, "have a beginning of existence connected with an interval"   T00 Etvm EXEt), in that they were created "from some beginning when they were not yet." [66] The Word, by contrast, "has no beginning of its being ... but has always been." [67] It will be noticed that Athanasius does not rule out the possibility of some sort of quasi-temporal order prior to that of the physical cosmos. His concern is solely to insist that no interval, whether temporal or otherwise, intervened between the Father and the Son.

The question all of this raises is how God's adiastemic existence is compatible with his somehow embracing and being present to all of time. This issue did not arise for Plato and Aristotle, for they start from a framework in which time and eternity bear an intrinsic and organic relationship. Clement and Athanasius, although with different motivations, each arrive at a

---

[64] See E. P. Meijering, "HN CTOTE OTE OYK HN 0 YIOl:: A Discussion of Time and Eternity," in his *God Being History: Studies in Patristic Philosophy* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1975), 81-88.

[65] Athanasius, *Orations against the Arians* 1.12 (trans. NPNF2 4:313; *PG* 26:37A-B).

[66] Ibid. 2.57 (trans. NPNF2 4:379; *PG* 26:268C).

[67] Ibid. (PG 26:269A).

view of the divine life that emphasizes its simplicity, wholeness, and lack of division. How can this life be related to something as extended and divided as time? One of the tasks facing the subsequent tradition will be to answer that question.

IV. THE CAPPADOCIAN FATHERS

The Cappadocian Fathers-St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Gregory Nazianzen-were the primary defenders of Nicaea against the Arians of the later fourth century. They made the Athanasian denial that there is 81am1iμa between the Father and the Son a recurrent theme. Saint Basil argues that the Father possesses paternity coextensively with his own eternity (Tfj E:auToO d1816TT]Tl auμrraptxn:tvoμtvriv); and since paternity implies the existence of a Son, the Son is present with the Father without interval. [68] Saint Gregory of Nyssa makes a similar argument. [69]

More importantly, Gregory also extrapolates this point of Trinitarian theology into a general distinction between the divine life as adiastemic and the diastemic existence of creatures. Creation "journeys to its proper end through intervals of time [xpovtKwv btaOTT]μaTwv]," whereas the life of God "has no extension [8taoTtjμaTo<;] accompanying its course and therefore no span or measure. "[70] It seems likely that Gregory is influenced here, not only by Clement and Athanasius, but also by pagan Neoplatonism, for one finds in Plotinus and Porphyry a similar distinction between the adiastemic life of the intelligible world and the diastemic character of sensible existence. [71] Gregory in much the same way views the distinction as a philosophical truth

[68] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 2.12 *(PG* 29:593B-C); cf. similar arguments at *Against Eunomius* 1.20; and B;isil, *On the Holy Spirit* 6.14.

[69] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 1.344-58, 685-88.

[70] Ibid. 1.365-66 (trans. NPNF2 5:69). For the text *see Gregorii Nysseni Opera,* ed. Werner Jaeger et al. [= GNO] (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960-96), 1:135.

[71] See (besides the definition of eternity cited above, n. 2) Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.5.7.23-31; 3.7.2.31-34; 3.7.3.14-20; 3.7.6.35; 3.7.11.54; 5.8.9.20; 6.2.4.22; etc.; *Porphyry,Sententiae,* sect. 33 and 44.

grounded in God's being what he is without participation. As he writes in *Against Eunomius:*

Wide and insurmountable is the interval that fences off uncreated from created nature. The latter is limited, the former has no limit [m:prn;].... The latter is stretched out by a certain degree of extension [8taOTT]µanKfjTlvi rrapanfon cruµrrapEKTclVETat]circumscribed by time and place; the former transcends all conception of interval [rrcrcrav 8taOTrjµaTO<;£vvoiav], baffling curiosity from every point of view ... [It is] ever the same, established of itself, not traveling on by intervals [ou 8taOTT]µanKw<;8to8afoucra] from one thing to another in its life. Nor does it come to live by participating in the life of another, so that one could consequently conceive a beginning and limit of its participation. But it is just what it is, Life made active in itself [l;wrj f.v foUTfj f.vEpyouµ£vri], not becoming greater or less by addition or diminution. [72]

Elaborating on the distinction between creatures as diastemic and God as adiastemic, Gregory goes so far as to say that "8taaTriµa is nothing other than the creation itself."[73] Since all creatures are bound in their thinking by their own diastemic perspective, there is no possibility for a creature to apprehend the preeternal (npomwvfou) and adiastemic nature of God. Gregory likens one attempting to do so to a mountain climber whose foot suddenly steps off a precipice. [74]

This sharp distinction between the diastemic creation and adiastemic Creator raises the question of how we are to understand the eternity of creatures such as angels, who are not subject to the temporal order of the physical cosmos. The Cappadocians respond by distinguishing the eternity of the angels from that of God in a way that seems, at first at least, to anticipate the medieval theory of the *aevum.* Basil defines time as the interval

---

[72] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 2.69-70 (GNO 1:246; NPNF2 5:257).

[73] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on Ecclesiastes* 7 (GNO 5:412).

[74] Ibid. (GNO 5:413-14). For further references and discussion of this theme in Gregory see Brooks Otis, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian Conception of Time," *Studia Patristica* 14.3 (1976): 327-57; David L. Balas, "Eternity and Time in Gregory of Nyssa's Contra Eunomium," in *Gregor von Nyssa und Die Philosophie,* ed. Heinrich Dorrie, Margarete Attenburger, and Uta Schramm (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 128-55; T. Paul Verghese, "11.IAITHMAand 11.IAITADI in Gregory of Nyssa: Introduction to a Concept and the Posing of a Problem," in Dorrie et al., eds., *Gregor von Nyssa und Die Philosophie,* 243-*60.*

coextensive with the existence of the cosmos (Το αυμrrap-
c:KTc:tvoμEvov Tfj aumcfoc:t TOO Koaμou 8ufon1μa), by which all
movement is measured. [75] He adds that what time is for sensible
objects, the nature of the eternal is for supercelestial beings, so
that 8taan1μa is the constitution common to both time and
eternity. [76] Plainly eternity (aiwv) here is not a characteristic of the
divine nature, but a mode of created being characteristic of the
angels.

There is a more detailed explanation of this point in Basil's
Hexaemeron. [77] Prior to the creation of this world there existed
"an order suitable to the supercelestial powers, one beyond time
[Tj urr[pxpovoc;], eternal and everlasting [Tj aiwv(a, Ti cit8wc;]." To
this order at last was added the succession of time, connate to this
physical world, "always pressing on and passing away and never
stopping in its course. "[78] The invisible and intellectual world, no
less than the visible and sensible, belongs to "the things that have
come to be" and is transcended by its Creator. [79] Later, com-
menting on the statement of Genesis 1:5 that "the evening and the
morning were one day," Basil observes that God made the week
"revolve upon itself," forming it out of one day revolving upon
itself seven times. He adds, "such is also the character of eternity
[al<ilvoc;],to revolve upon itself and to end nowhere." Indeed, the
reason the Septuagint refers to "one day" rather than the "first
day" is to show the kinship of this primordial day with eternity.
Echoing Plato, Basil refers to the first day as an image (dKova) of
eternity, the "first fruit of days" that is the basis for all others. [80]
Throughout this discussion eternity is the mode of being of the
angels, one that transcends our time but is no more characteristic
of God than is time itself.

[75] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1.21 (PG 29:560B).

[76] Ibid. 2.13 (PG 29:596C).

[77] Unlike most of the other works cited in this section, the *Hexaemeron* was available
during the Middle Ages in a Latin translation *(PL* 53:865-966). In the translation, however,
a[wv is rendered as *saeculum,* considerably obscuring Basil's meaning.

[78] Basil, *On the Hexaemeron* 1.5 (PG 29:13A-B).

[79] Ibid. (PG 29:13C); cf. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 6.14.

[80] Basil, *On the Hexaiimeron* 2.8 (PG 29:49C, 52B); see also a similar explanation in Basil,
On the Holy Spirit 27.66 (quoted below in section VII).

The two Gregories likewise insist upon the diastemic character of the eternity of the angels and its kinship to our own time. Saint Gregory Nazianzen defines the atwv as "a certain timelike movement and extension" (n xpovtKov Ktvriµa Kai 8taOTT]µa) that is coextensive with eternal beings (T0l<; at8lot<;), although not itself divided or measured by any motion. [81] He observes that when the mind considers God as both beginningless and endless, it naturally calls him eternal (atwvtov); nonetheless, this conception of God, like all others, is only a mental image (cpavTacr(a).Citing Exodus 3: 14, Gregory explains:

> In Himself [God] sums up and contains all being, having neither beginning in the past nor end in the future; like some great sea of being, limitless and unbounded, transcending all conception of time and nature, only adumbrated by the mind, and that very dimly and scantily-not from the things directly concerning Him, but from the things around Him [oLlK EK TWV Km' aLlTov, di.A' EK TWV nEpi aLlT6v]; one image [<\JavTacrfac;]being got from one source and another from another, and combined into some sort of presentation of the truth, which escapes us when we have caught it, and takes flight when we have conceived it. [82]

The distinction between "the things directly concerning Him" and "the things around Him" is roughly equivalent to that between the divine essence and Powers in Philo, or the supersubstantial divine being and divine processions in Dionysius. The "things around Him" are not creatures, but God himself as he is manifested in his acts of creating, sustaining, and governing the world. [83] What Gregory emphasizes here is that these acts give us only a partial and elusive grasp of their transcendent source, and that we can never forget the role of our own mental faculties in forming even this limited apprehension.

Gregory of Nyssa, too, views our understanding of eternity as inevitably tinged by our own temporal being. Commenting on biblical phrases such as that God's kingdom is "before the ages"

---

[81] Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 38.8 *(PG* 36:320B); cf. *Orations* 29.3.

[82] Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 38.7 *(PG* 36:317B-C); cf. a similar statement at *Orations* 30.17.

[83] See Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West,* 166-68.

(npo Twv c.dwvwv) or "extending beyond the ages" (urri:p Touc; a[Glvac; ΕΚΤΕΙ voµtvriv), he observes:

Human life, moving through intervals, advances in its progress from a beginning to an end, and our life here is divided between that which is past and that which is expected ... so we speak in this way, though incorrectly, of the transcendent nature of God; nor of course that God in His own existence leaves any interval [ot6:an1µa] behind, or passes on afresh to something that lies before, but because our intellect can only conceive things according to our nature, and measures the eternal [ciiotov] by a past and a future. [84]

Gregory, like Clement and Athanasius, adheres strictly to the adiastemic character of the divine life. He takes this term not as implying a kind of pointlike existence, however, but as indicating a higher way of being of which we can form no conception. To speak of the divine life as "extending" in any way, even as extending beyond the ages, is a concession to the inevitably temporal framework of our own understanding.

We also note in passing that Gregory in this passage seems to reserve the term aiowc; for the eternity of God that transcends all the ages. This seems on the whole to be Gregory's terminological preference. [85] Basil at one point draws a similar distinction, defining aiOwc; as "more ancient in being than all time and every age [or eternity, aiwvoc;]."[86] This tendency in the Cappadocians is probably the source of the similar tentative distinction in Dionysius. On the whole, however, the biblical precedent for describing God as aiwvwc; was too strong for this attempt at clarification to catch on very widely.

Regardless of terminology, the Cappadocians consistently agree that the eternity of God transcends even the nontemporal (but diastemic) eternity of the angels. In this there is common ground with the West. On the other hand, for the Cappadocians whatever eternity we ascribe to God is not itself the divine nature, but one of the "things around God." We have seen that Gregory

[84] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 2.459 (GNO 1:360; trans. NPNF2 5:296).

[85] See ibid., 1.666; 3.6.3; 3.6.67-68; Gregory of Nyssa, *Great Catechism* 1 (GNO 3:2); idem, *On Infants' Early Deaths* (GNO 3:77).

[86] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 2.17 *(PG* 29:608C).

Nazianzen regards the description of God as eternal as a cpavTaa(a-meaning not that it is false, but that it must be supplemented by other equally limited and partial images to arrive at "some sort of presentation of the truth." For Gregory of Nyssa, all the divine names signify not the divine essence or nature but the "things around God," or, equivalently, the divine energies (£v£pyctm). [87] Although I have not found Gregory applying this general point specifically to divine eternity, he comes close in stating that among the "things around God" are God's infinity and being without beginning. [88] It seems likely that Dionysius derives from the Cappadocians, as well as perhaps from Clement, his own understanding of the divine names as referring to the divine processions.

Even as regards angelic eternity, there are important elements in the Cappadocians' views that are not found in the West. We have seen that Basil contrasts angelic eternity to time, which is "always pressing on and passing away and never stopping in its course." Evidently the eternity of the angels, although it is diastemic, does not involve the "knife-edge present" of temporal succession. Gregory of Nyssa develops this thought in a passage of his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*. Distinguishing God and the angels as two species of the "intellectual nature," he explains:

The intellectual nature that is brought into being by creation always looks toward the first cause of beings and by association with its superior is forever kept in the good and in a manner of speaking is always being created
because of its increase in goodness through its alteration for the better, so as never to possess any limit or be circumscribed in its growth toward the better by any boundary. But its ever-present good-however great and perfect it may seem to be-is the commencement of an additional and greater good, so that in this respect the apostolic word seems to be true, when it speaks of forgetting the acquisitions of the past in reaching forth to the things that are before (Phil. 3:13). For he who is always finding agreater and supreme good and devoting all

[87] See ibid., 2.582; 3.5.58-60; Gregory of Nyssa, *On Not Three Gods* (GNO 3:1, 43-44); also Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West,* 161-64.
[88] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 2.89.

his attention to his share in it, is not allowed to look to the past, and just because of his enjoyment of what is more precious loses his memory of what is less so. [89]

For the angels, whatever good has been acquired is always only the beginning of an even greater good; hence they have no need of memory, for the past good is always contained within that of the present, even as they strain forward to the yet more comprehensive good to come. Thus although their state is diastemic (insofar as it is one of perpetual progress), they are not constrained to the knife-edge of the present. Elsewhere Gregory gives a similar description of the life of the blessed in heaven, describing it as an expansive ever-growing enjoyment of the good in which all need for memory or hope is left behind. [90]

This sheds some light on what it means to speak of time as an image of the eternity of the angels. We may think of time as narrowing into a moving point, as it were, the ever-growing enjoyment of the Good that constitutes the angelic life. Yet precisely as an image time also points forward to its heavenly archetype. Time is not only linear but also circular, "revolving upon itself" in a weekly pattern that points to the Eighth Day, the day of the new creation. [91] This means that time and eternity are not entirely distinct modes of being, but instead constitute, respectively, a more partial and a fuller arena in which the ever-forward movement into God is accomplished.

We can summarize the Cappadocians' teaching in the following points. (1) God is adiastemic, creatures (including angels) diastemic. (2) As a consequence, any conception we can form of divine eternity is merely a mental image (¢avTaafa) that does not represent its real nature. (3) Divine eternity is one of the "things around God," not the divine nature itself. (4) The eternity of the angels, by contrast, is diastemic and time-like in a way that

---

[89] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs* 6 (GNO 6:174). The translation is taken from Otis, "Gregory of Nyssa," 344, slightly modified.

[90] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection* (PG 46:92A-96C); *Homilies on the Song of Songs* 8 (GNO 6:245-47); cf. the discussion in Otis, "Gregory of Nyssa," 344-46.

[91] On the Eighth Day see Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy,* 255-75.

permits an unending progress into God. (5) Angelic eternity is the archetype of which time is an image.

This teaching is in many ways a natural extension of the apophaticism of Philo and Clement. Its most original feature lies in identifying as archetype and image, not divine eternity and time, as in Philo, but *angelic* eternity and time. In light of the Cappadocians' understanding of the divine life as adiastemic, the earlier, Philonic approach could hardly have been retained without alteration. Athough relating angelic eternity and time in this way is a fruitful idea that proved important in other areas, such as mystical theology, it leaves us with the same question we had in regard to Clement and Athanasius: How can the adiastemic divine life possibly embrace or be present to all of time? For an answer we shall have to turn to the Fathers who wrote after Dionysius.

V. IN THE WAKE OF DIONYSIUS

Clearly there is much in the earlier Fathers that directly anticipates Dionysius. In particular, what I have called Dionysius's framework-his denial that anything can be said of the divine essence, his careful balancing of the apophatic and kataphatic, his assignment of the divine names to the divine processions-is already present in the Cappadocians, and to a lesser extent in Clement and even Philo. So too is his insistence that God transcends eternity just as much as he does time. Finally, since Dionysius sees the angels as both growing in knowledge and acting in time, he would presumably agree with the Cappadocians' description of angelic eternity as diastemic. Indeed, since he sees the blessed as "equal to the angels" and "partakers of eternity," it seems likely that he would accept Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of perpetual progress, including its application to the blessed. [92]

There remain several points that are original to Dionysius. First is the symmetry of his teaching *both* that God is eternity *and* that

----

[92] Dionysius, *Divine Names* 1.4.592C; 10.3.937D.

he is time. It had long been traditional to identify God with
various perfections such as goodness, being, and wisdom, but
Dionysius was the first to extend this pattern to time and eternity.
He does so by regarding them both as divine processions, and thus
as perfections that are participated by creatures. To view them as
processions was a critical innovation, for it reestablished the link
between the eternity of God and that of creatures that had been
missing in earlier authors. For Dionysius, the angels are eternal by
participating in eternity, just as they (and all creatures) are
temporal by participating in time. Clearly there is much here that
needs   explanation,   but the   originality   and importance   of
Dionysius' ideas cannot be denied. [93]

How were the more original aspects of Dionysius's teaching
received? We are fortunate to have the evidence on this point of
the scholia on the Areopagitic corpus traditionally attributed to St.
Maximus the Confessor. It has long been known that many of
these scholia were in fact by John of Scythopolis, an ardent
defender of Chalcedon whose career spanned roughly the first
half of the sixth century. Recent work by Beate Regina Suchla and
others has made it possible to identify precisely which scholia
were written by John and which by Maximus. It has also revealed
that their influence was even more widespread than previously
thought, for the original recension of the scholia (containing those
written by John) was already incorporated into most manuscripts
of the corpus by the mid-sixth century. [94] We will take first the
original scholia and then those added by Maximus.

[93] Dionysius's notion of the dual participation of the angels in time and eternity *may* have
been influenced by the Procline doctrine that souls are eternal in their oucr(a but temporal in
their tv[pyna *(Elements of Theology,* props. 50, 106-7, 191-92). However, the resemblance
is really not very close. I do not agree with Carlos Steel ("Dionysius and Albert on Time and
Eternity," in *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter,* ed. Tzotcho Boiadjieic, Georgi Kapriev,
and Andreas Speer [Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 317-41) that Proclus was the major influence
on Dionysius's treatment of time and eternity. Such a conclusion can only be reached by
ignoring the patristic antecedents.

[94] See Paul Rorem and John Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus:
Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 2, *36-39.* In identifying the
scholia by John I use the collation in ibid., 264-77.

John defines eternity (a1wv) as "unextended and infinite life" (d8tamchou Kai dn-dpou l;wflc;), or more fully as "the life that is unshaken and all together at once, already infinite and entirely unmoving, standing forth as a unity. "[95] Here he would seem to have in mind the eternity of God rather than that of the angels, for he notes repeatedly that God is eternal (atwvwc;) by himself being eternity, whereas creatures are eternal by partaking of eternity. [96] Later he observes that the term aiwvwc; has a range of meanings, but that only God is absolutely cit8wc;[97] This might suggest that John understands there to be a general distinction between a(wvwc; and a{8wc;; if so, however, he does not explain it. Instead, commenting on the statement in chapter 10 of the *Divine Names* (10.3) that things called eternal in Scripture are not absolutely coeternal (cruva'l8ta) with God, John explains that although the incorporeal powers (that is, the higher angels) are eternal (aiwvta), they were produced by God and so are not coeternal with Him. [98] Thus he identifies two major differences between the eternity of God and that of creatures: first, God is eternal by being eternity, whereas creatures are eternal by participation; and second, even eternal creatures have a cause of their being.

The identification of God with eternity is reminiscent of Augustine and Boethius. However, John does not overlook the other side of Dionysius's teaching, namely that God can also be identified with time. Immediately after the definition of eternity just quoted, he continues:

Thus also time, being once at rest in He Who Always Is, shone forth in its descent [KaEl'   when later it was necessary for visible nature to come forth. So the procession [rrp6ooov] of the goodness of God in creating sensible objects, we call time. For the movement of intervals   vrimc; TWV otaCJTcXCJEWU into portions and seasons and nights and days is not time, but homonymous with time. Just as we are accustomed to call by the same name that which measures and that which is measured, so is it here-as for instance, when that which is measured by a cubit, such as a foundation or wall, we call a cubit. According to the verse, "let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for years" (Gen. 1:14), the motions of the stars were made by God for us for the sake of clear division and distinction [of time]. Hence the One who ordered them is Himself these things, supereternally [unEpatwvfoc;] and timelessly, as their cause. [99]

There are here two distinct ways in which God can be referred to as time. One is in reference to time in the proper sense, "the procession of the goodness of God in creating sensibles." Time in this sense is God just as any of the divine processions is God, although he also remains beyond it as its source. (Indeed, it was "once at rest in He Who Always Is," prior to its shining forth in the creation of the sensible world.) Second there is time as "the movement of temporal intervals," that which is measured by time in the first sense. God can also be called time in this sense, just as he can be called by the name of any of his creatures, since they preexist in **him** as their cause. By way of analogy, we might distinguish two ways in which God can be referred to as the Good: goodness as a divine procession, and "the good" as referring collectively to those creatures which partake of the Good in the first sense. John is careful to qualify this second way of referring to God as time by the adjectives "supereternally and timelessly," so as to make it dear that in using the name of creatures for God there is no diminishment of divine transcendence.

    Even more striking is the light that this passage sheds on the relationship between divine eternity and time. Time *qua* divine procession is the unfolding of divine eternity-the life of He Who Always Is-within the act of creating sensible beings. [10]°Contrary to the normal tendency in Dionysius, eternity and time are here

99 *Scholia on the Divine Names* (PG 316A-B).

    100 John frequently repeats the traditional derivation of alwv from ad wv, "ever being" *(PG* 4:208B, 209A, 313C).

decidedly asymmetric, for eternity is identified with the divine life, whereas time, although it is equally a divine procession, comes forth only as God creates. John may well have been inspired at this point by Plotinus, for whom eternity is the life of Intellect and time the life of Soul. [101] Unlike Plotinus, however, John does not assign time and eternity to separate hypostases, but views them both as different forms of divine self-manifestation. In fact the logic of John's position would seem to call for a distinction between types of eternity parallel to that between types of time. First, there is eternity as a divine procession, albeit one that exists independently of creation; second, there is eternity as the "timelike movement and extension" (in the phrase of Gregory Nazianzen) that is coextensive with the life of the angels. Eternity in the second sense is, as it were, the mode in which creatures partake of eternity in the first sense.

Let us turn now to St. Maximus. One point in Dionysius that John does not comment upon is the insistence that God is "properly hymned" through the use of temporal language. Maximus adds a long scholium on this point. Commenting on the statement in chapter 5 of the *Divine Names* (5.8) that "was," "is," and "will be" are "properly hymned" of God, Maximus writes:

'Was' and every conception accompanying it are fitting to no one other than to God, because in Him 'was' is contemplated as higher than every first principle. And 'is' and 'will be' [are also fitting to Him] as entirely unchangeable and in every way immutable, whence also He is called supersubstantial [um:poucrtoc;] . . . How is it that earlier Dionysius said that neither 'was,' nor 'is,' nor 'came to be,' nor 'is coming to be,' nor 'will come to be' are said of God [5.4.817D], but here he says that 'is' and 'will be' and 'came to be' and 'is coming to be' and 'will come to be' are properly hymned of Him? Does Saint Dionysius contradict himself? By no means. Above he said that God is the creator of every existence, subsistence, substance, nature, and time. He was right to order around Him 'was' and the others, so you would understand that neither from time, nor in time, nor with time did God begin to be, but that He is higher than being itself; for he said that "being is in Him" [tv auTw T0 Elvm]. But here, since he has said that God is multiplied in accordance with every conception, he rightly says that 'was,' 'will be,' and the rest apply to Him, so that whatever season or time you consider, you will find God there, and beyond the things that are, and preexisting, and the

---

[101] Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.7.11.43-57.

cause and maker of the things that are-not something among them, as we say, because He is not one of the things that are, and yet He is in all.[102]

Maximus juxtaposes to the passage affirming temporal language of God *(Divine Names* 5.8) one denying it (ibid. 5.4). He does not find in this pair a contradiction, but a reaffirmation of the fundamental Dionysian theme that God is both present in all things and beyond all things. In this way God is "multiplied in accordance with every conception." The most radical statement Maximus makes is at the beginning of the passage, where he goes beyond even Dionysius in asserting that 'was' and other temporal conceptions are "fitting to no one other than to God." Maximus is here applying to temporality the Dionysian principle that "caused things preexist more fully and truly in their causes."[103] He concludes that God "was" in a higher sense than creatures, for all "was-ness," all temporality, derives from him.

There is also a point on which Maximus gently corrects the earlier scholia. John had taken chapter 10 of the *Divine Names* (10.3) as teaching that the angels are simply eternal (albeit they are so by participation), whereas the things that partake of both eternity and time are the heavenly bodies.[104] There is really no hint of this in the text. Maximus therefore suggests a different reading, on which the things that partake of both eternity and time are angels and souls. The "things that are," which are eternal in the proper sense, he takes as the things "around God," meaning presumably the divine processions.[105] As I suggested in section I, this reading fits better not only the passage in chapter 10 (10.3) but also the general context of Dionysius's theology.

Despite this difference, it is clear that both Maximus and John fully embrace the innovations of Dionysius. Partly through their influence, the Dionysian legacy became authoritative for the Eastern tradition as a whole. The last developments of the

---

[102] *Scholia on the Divine Names* (PG 4:328A-C).

[103] Dionysius, *Divine Names* 2.8.645D.

[104] *Scholia on the Divine Names* (PG 4:389A-B).

[105] Ibid. (PG 4:389B-C) (the beginning of Maximus' remarks is marked byv   It is interesting to note that Aquinas, in his comment on this passage, ignores the interpretation of Maximus and adopts that of John (X *De Div. Nom.,* lect. 3 [Marietti ed., 875).

tradition relevant to our subject are to be found in the works of
Maximus other than the scholia, particularly his *Questions to
Thalassius* (on difficult points in Scripture) and *Ambigua* (on
difficult points in the writings of Gregory Nazianzen). There we
find a further extension of the Dionysian legacy, including above
all its application to eschatology. The central concept used by
Maximus is one in the *Divine Names* on which we have not yet
touched, namely, that of the rational principles (.Myot) of beings.
In an important passage in chapter 5, Dionysius identifies the
paradigms of creatures with "the rational principles [/..Oyouc;]
which produce the substance of beings and preexist in a unified
way in God." He adds, "theology calls them predeterminations
[npoopwµouc;] and divine and good acts of will [8c:Atjµma] which
produce and define things, by which the supersubstantial one
predetermined and led forth all beings. " [106] Here Dionysius in
effect redefines the Platonic paradigms as divine acts of will which
predetermine the being of creatures.

   The Dionysian understanding of the divine iloyot became fun-
damental for the ontology of Maximus. Maximus adds to it the
further point, derived from Origen and Evagrius, that the Aoyot
of beings are unified within the single divine Logos. [107] He thus
understands them as the multiply refracted presence of the Logos
within creatures. Each individually constitutes the Creator's intent
in creating a particular being, so that taken collectively they
constitute the entirety of the Creator's "uttered word." As
Maximus writes in *Ambigua* 7:

The highest, apophatic theology of the Logos being set aside (according to which
He is neither spoken nor thought, nor in general is any of the things which are
known along with another, since He is supersubstantial and is not participated
by anything in any way), the one Logos is many Myot, and the many are one.
The One is many by the goodly, creative, and sustaining procession of the One
into beings; the many are One by the returning and directive uplifting and
providence of the many to the One, as to an almighty principle, or a center

   [106] Dionysius, *Divine Names* 5.8.824C.
   [107] For references see Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological
Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup and Ejnar Munksgaard,
1965), 77 n. 1.

which precontains the principles of the rays that go out from it, and as the gathering together of all things. [108]

It is the "procession of the One into beings" that multiplies the single Logos into many .Myot, and the "returning and directive uplifting and providence of the many to the One" that returns them to unity. Despite this fundamentally Neoplatonic scheme, the procession of the Logos into the *>.6ym* is not a necessary emanation, but a free act of the divine will. Elsewhere Maximus speaks of it as a kind of "cosmic incarnation" of the Logos, one parallel to (and anticipatory of) his historical incarnation in Christ. Through it the Logos, "having ineffably hidden Himself in the >.oyot of beings for our sake, indicates Himself [u1100T1µa(v-nm] proportionately through each visible thing as through certain letters." [109] This means that the procession of the Logos into the Myoi is as much a free expression of God's own being as is the Incarnation itself. Obviously we are here very far from any conception of a necessary emanation.

What is most important for present purposes is that the A6yo1 are not so much Platonic paradigms or Aristotelian essences as dynamic principles governing the growth of creatures into the fulfillment of the Creator's intent. In other words, they are, in their expressed, diversified form, intrinsically temporal. When he has this aspect in view Maximus often prefers to speak of the "Myot of providence and judgment," or, more simply, the *"i\6yot* of time." Although Maximus nowhere explicitly defines the relation of the i\oyot of providence and judgment to the Myot of beings, it would appear that, just as the latter are the Creator's intent as expressed in the diversity of creation, the former are his intent as expressed in and through historical processes. They are thus the principles governing divine action within history and

[108] *Maximus,Ambigua* 7 *(PG* 91: 108 lB-C). There is a complete translation of this treatise in Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, trans., *On the Cosmic Mystery of Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 45-74.

[109] *Maximus,Ambigua* 33 *(PG* 91:1285D). For a translation of the entire passage see Paul M. Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 119-20.

within the life of each person, principles that are a diversified expression of his own being. [110] Building upon this understanding of the Myot of providence and judgment, one could say that for Maximus the temporal realm is above all that in which God expresses his being in a new mode. As such it is intrinsically directional, being aimed toward a culmination in which the unity of the Myot in the Logos will be existentially (l'mapKnKwc;) realized. [111]

   Maximus's fullest statement on this point occurs in the course of an allegorical interpretation of the appearance of Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration. He takes them as figures, respectively, of time and nature, each appearing in order to pay homage to Christ. Moses is a particularly apt figure of time because he did not himself enter into the Holy Land with those he had escorted to it. Maximus explains:

For such is time, not overtaking or accompanying in movement those whom it is accustomed to escort to the divine life of the age to come. For it has Jesus as the universal successor of time and eternity. And if otherwise the Myo1 of time abide in God, then there is manifest in a hidden way the entry [into the Promised Land] of the law given through Moses in the desert to those who receive the land of possession. For time is eternity, when it ceases from movement, and eternity is time, whenever, rushing along, it is measured by movement; since by definition eternity is time deprived of movement, and time is eternity measured by movement. [112]

Although Moses (time) does not enter into the Promised Land, the laws given through Moses-that is, the Myot of time-do so, inasmuch as they "abide in God." Historically, the Law entered the Promised Land precisely to the extent that it was embodied within the practice and observance of the Israelites. If we are

---

[110] See further Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator,* 69-76; Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy,* 107.

[111] *Maximus, Ambigua* 7 (PG 91:1089B); for the resonances of this term in Maximus see Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of Origenism* (Rome: Herder, 1955), 188 n. 15.

[112] Maximus, *Ambigua* 10 (PG 91:1164B-C). The translation is that of Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 130-31, somewhat modified.

justified in pressing this feature of the allegory, then the /\6yo1 of time return to their unity in God through their embodiment in the lives of those who enter into "the age to come." Although Maximus does not make this point explicitly, it is in keeping with the high role he elsewhere assigns to human obedience as the means by which God "takes shape" in the world and "is called and appears as human." [113] At a minimum, there can be no question that eternity and time are here seen as reciprocal, and indeed almost interchangeable: time becomes eternity when it ceases from movement, and eternity becomes time when it is set in motion. ("Become" here indicates a definitory relationship, as a circle "becomes" a sphere when it is rotated through a third dimension.) Jesus transcends them both, not only as their source, but as their "successor" –that is, the one toward whom they are aimed and in whom they find fulfillment.

It is important to note that for Maximus eternity or "the life of the age to come," although it is without movement, is not a static condition but is ordered toward fulfillment in God. Maximus elaborates this theme extensively elsewhere. He speaks of the state of the blessed as one of "ever-moving stability" (anKtVY]TO<; aTaatc;) and "stable sameness-in-motion" (aTamµov TauTo-Kt vria(av). [114] It takes place in "the infinity around God," a region which, although it is uncreated, is yet infinitely transcended by God as its source. [115] Maximus also describes this state as a participation in the divine activity (tv[pyna), although he is careful to explain that such participation in no way undermines-and indeed, is ultimately required by-creaturely self-determination. [116] This "unmoving motion" of the blessed in the "infinity around God" would appear to be Maximus's version of the perpetual progress of Gregory of Nyssa. However, Maximus emphasizes

[113] Maximus, *Epistle 2 (PG* 91:401B); cf. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West,* 197-201.

[114] *Maximus,Questions to Thalassius* 59 *(PG* 90:608D), 65 *(PG* 90:760A). Neither Liddell and Scott nor the *Patristic Greek Lexicon* of G.W.H. Lampe includes an entry for TCTUTOKtvriaia, but the latter does define   (a term Dionysius uses of the angels) as "moved uniformly."

[115] *Maximus,Ambigua* 15 *(PG* 91:1220C).

[116] *Maximus,Ambigua* 7 *(PG* 91:1076B-D); cf. *Bradshaw,AristotleEastandWest,* 194-95.

more than does Gregory that such "stable sameness-in-motion" is also a state of *rest* that constitutes the *telos* of creaturely motion. [117] What makes possible this fusion of the concepts of rest and motion is that the "motion" he has in view is tv£pyaa. As I observed earlier, Aristotle's distinction of tv£pyaa from
isolates tv£pyaa as a form of activity that is timeless and intrinsically complete. Maximus understands the life of the blessed as a state of ever-growing participation in such tv£pyaa, and hence as both restful and experienced subjectively as unending growth.

VI. THE EAST AND WEST COMPARED

When one places the Eastern tradition bearing on time and eternity in juxtaposition to that of the medieval West, at least two differences leap to the eye. One is the more apophatic orientation of the East. No one in the Eastern tradition identifies God with his own eternity in the manner of Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas; instead the constant refrain is that God is as much beyond eternity as he is beyond time. However, this simple comparison must immediately be qualified. Eastern authors have no hesitation in identifying God with eternity, provided that the identification is understood as referring to a divine power, procession, or energy, rather than the divine essence or nature. For them the force of the identification is to make it clear that God is eternal by himself being eternity, rather than by participating in eternity as do creatures. In fact, it would be fair to say that the assumption that creatures do participate in divine eternity is an axiom that determines much of the rest of their thought. If there is to be such participation, then that which is participated must be God in some sense (for otherwise it is not *divine* eternity), but cannot be the divine essence (for to participate in the divine essence is to be God by nature). Hence the view that it is a divine power, procession, or energy-that is,

---

[117] See Paul Blowers, "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress,'" *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 151-71.

an act in which God manifests himself and gives himself to be shared by creatures, while remaining beyond this act as its source.

Since the use of these terms by the Greek Fathers has often struck interpreters as problematic, I should perhaps say a word as to why I do not think that it is. Of course there is a great mystery in how God can give himself in a way that enables creatures actually to participate in his life. About this one can only say that God is God and he is able to do such things. Once the fact of such giving is accepted, however, to describe it in terms of essence and energy (or comparable terms) introduces no additional difficulty. *Any* agent is "beyond" his acts as their source, simply because he is the agent who performs them. That does not prevent the acts from constituting a real manifestation of his character. The traditional term for sharing in the activity or energy of another is 'synergy' (auv[pyna). As I have observed elsewhere, the possibility of divine-human synergy is clearly affirmed in the New Testament and elaborated in detail by the Greek Fathers. [118] I believe that it is because the Greek Fathers understand the distinction of essence and energy in such straightforward (and largely biblical) terms that they use it freely, without seeming to feel that it needs special explanation.

From the Eastern standpoint, the notion that eternity could be "the very substance of God" is plainly unacceptable, for it would mean that creatures could not actually participate in eternity. A Western author such as Aquinas, however, would find here a false dichotomy. Aquinas affirms just as firmly as do the Greek Fathers that the blessed participate in divine eternity, but he holds that they do so through a form of participation that the Greeks apparently do not envi.sage. His view is that in the beatific vision the blessed take on the divine essence (and hence divine eternity) as an intelligible species. As he explains in the *Summa contra Gentiles:*

Acts are specified by their objects. But the object of the aforementioned [beatific] vision is the divine substance in itself, and not a created likeness of it, as we

[118] See Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West,* chaps. 6-9; also David Bradshaw, "The Divine Energies in the New Testament," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 50 (2006): 189-223.

showed above. Now, the being of the divine substance is in eternity, or rather is eternity itself. Therefore, this vision also consists in a participation in eternity. [119]

In the background of this passage is the Aristotelian thesis of the identity of the act of understanding with its object. Since the blessed apprehend the divine essence in an intellectual act, they in a sense participate in the divine essence, but not in a way that would make them God by nature. As Aquinas has explained earlier, the blessed are united to God not "in the act of being, but only in the act of understanding. "[120] Thus the Thomistic view fully satisfies the desideratum that there be a form of participation in divine eternity that does not involve deification by nature.

The reason this possibility does not occur to the Greek Fathers is simply that they do not regard God as an intelligible object. For Aquinas, God is the highest intelligible object; indeed his argument for the beatific vision is predicated on this assumption. [121] In this he merely follows Augustine, for whom God is the "first Form" *(prima species)* and as such is intrinsically intelligible, however much we may be unable to apprehend him in our current state. [122] Thus the difference between the Eastern and Western traditions regarding participation in divine eternity stems from their different stances toward apophaticism. Each tradition identifies a form of participation that is consistent with its own understanding of God, in the one case as beyond intellect, in the other as the highest intelligible object.

These observations will help explain why, despite the linguistic kinship of the Greek α1wv and Latin *aevum,* the two are really not very similar. Aquinas thinks of the beatific vision as the *telos* (in the Aristotelian sense) of all rational creatures, and therefore as an *end,* a state of "unmoving stability" in which all natural desire is

---

[119] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* III, c. 61 (trans. Anton Pegis [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975], 3:200-201).

[120] *ScG* III, c. 54.

[121] *ScG* III, c. 25; III, c. 37; III, c. 51; *STh* I, q. 12, a. 1.

[122] Augustine, *City of God* 8.6; cf. Aquinas's adoption of a similar description in *STh* I, q. 3, a. 2; and in *De spir. creat.,* c. 8.

at rest. [123] Accordingly he argues that there can be no progress in beatitude. [124] This means that the *aevum* is not for Aquinas, as the atwv is for the Greeks, the realm of an expansive, ever-growing progress into God. Its role is limited to that of serving as a measure for the natural angelic acts, that is, the angels' acts of being, of self-knowledge, and their natural knowledge of creatures. The act of beatitude (the vision of the divine essence and of creatures as seen in the divine essence) is measured not by the *aevum* but by participated eternity, and as such is wholly without succession. [125] Obviously, then, Aquinas does not see human beatitude as coming to share in the angelic *aevum*. Since there is no progress in the beatific vision, either for angels or for human beings, the *aevum* is irrelevant to beatitude.

Aquinas in effect presents a three-story universe in which God, angels, and temporal beings each occupy a different level. The distinctions between them are ontological and as such are not affected by an intentional change such as the achievement of beatitude. Hence the measures of their respective beings-eternity, *aevum,* and time-are similarly fixed and distinct. Aquinas states this threefold distinction succinctly in the *Commentary on the Sentences:*

It is clear therefore that act is threefold. To one type there is not appended any potency; such is the divine being and its operation, and to it there corresponds in the place of measurement, eternity. There is another act in which there remains a certain potency, but there is nevertheless a complete act obtained through that potency; and to it there corresponds *aevum.* Finally there is another to which potency is appended, and there is mixed with it the potency for a

---

[123] ScG III, c. 48; cf. the comparison with the movement of a body toward its natural place in ScG III, c. 25, and the denial that there is succession in the vision of creatures as seen in the divine essence in ScG III, c. 60.

[124] *STh* I, q. 62, a. 9.

[125] ScG III, cc. 60-61; *STh* I, q. 12, a. 10. The angels do progress in other acts, such as local motion and the knowledge of temporal events, but these are measured by a discrete or noncontinuous time not commensurable with our own time. For the complexities here see James Collins, *The Thomistic Philosophy of the Angels* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 346-67; Carl J Peter, *Participated Eternity in the Vision of God: A Study of the Opinion of Thomas Aquinas and his Commentators on the Duration of the Acts of Glory* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964), 12-34; Porro, "Angelic Measures: *Aevum* and Discrete Time."

complete act according to succession, receiving the addition of perfection; and to it corresponds time. [126]

God, angels, and temporal beings all have different sorts of *esse-the* one wholly without potency; the second complete but nevertheless containing a certain potency (i.e., that of existence), which has been actualized by an efficient cause; the third achieving completion only through temporal succession. These are basic ontological distinctions which do not admit of transition from one to another. Accordingly, although Aquinas endorses the traditional notion that the blessed are "equal to the angels," he generally adds that they are equal in glory or in the act of beatitude, rather than in being. [127]

This brings us to the second of the major differences between the Eastern and Western traditions: the sense of continuity between time and eternity in the Eastern tradition, as opposed to their separation in the West. Richard Dales has observed that the question of how time and eternity are related was one that the thirteenth-century Scholastics found virtually unsolvable. [128] When Aquinas treats of them both, as in question 10 of the *Prima Pars,* he generally simply moves from one to the other without attempting to describe any genetic or intrinsic relationship between them. [129]

This sense of an arbitrary conjunction has left its mark in contemporary philosophy of religion. Broadly speaking, contemporary discussion of how time and eternity are related tends to focus around three questions: (1) How can God, being

---

[126] Aquinas, I *Sent.,* d. 19, q. 2, a. 1 (ed. Pierre Mandonnet [Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929-47], 1:467); cf. I *Sent.,* d. 8, q. 2, a. 2.

[127] E.g., *ScG* III, c. 57; I *De Div. Nom.,* lect. 2 (Marietti ed., 67).

[128] Richard Dales, "Time and Eternity in the Thirteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (1988): 27-45.

[129] In this connection it is interesting to note that a genetic relationship was developed sketchily by Augustine in *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis,* which gives the "heaven of heavens" (that is, the angelic realm) a role in mediating the creation of time roughly similar to that of Soul in Plotinus. See Katherin Rogers, "St. Augustine on Time and Eternity" in idem, *The Anselmian Approach to God and Creation* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 131-49. It does not appear that this account had much influence in the thirteenth century.

eternal, act at specific times? (2) How can God know temporally indexed propositions (if indeed he does know them)? (3) How can he possess personal or quasi-personal attributes such as life, will, and intelligence? Although I cannot here attempt a full survey of the literature, it is worth tracing the main outline of the traditional Western approach to *these* issues in order to distinguish it from that of the East.

As regards God's action in time, Augustine already recognized that, if God is simple and immutable, he does not so much act at particular times as perform a single act that has multiple temporal effects. [130] Aquinas similarly holds that God's will and action are perfectly simple and unchanging. [131] More recently, the notion that God performs-or better, is-a single eternal act with multiple temporal *effects* has been vigorously upheld by contemporary Thomists such as Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann. [132]

The question of God's knowledge of temporally indexed propositions was not as widely discussed in the classical sources, but the constraints on an answer are dear. Augustine and Aquinas are emphatic that there can be no succession, temporal or otherwise, in the divine knowledge. [133] This might *seem* to imply that God cannot know, say, what time it is now, for the latter is an inescapably temporal fact. Katherin Rogers has suggested that this was indeed the view of Augustine. [134] According to Rogers, the absence of such knowledge in God merely indicates that he does not (and cannot) know in the way that temporal creatures do. She argues that this is no more an imperfection than the fact that he cannot *act* as temporal creatures do, that is, with pain, effort, and the possibility of failure. Stump and Kretzmann, on the other hand, hold that God does know temporally indexed propositions. Their argument is based on the view that eternity is (in a special

[130] Augustine, *City of God* 12.17; *Confessions* 11.8.10; 11.10.12; 12.15.18; *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* 4.33.51-35.56; 5.23.44-46.

[131] ScG I, cc. 74-77, II, cc. 8-10; *STh* I, q. 19, aa. 2 and 5.

[132] Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, *"Eternity,".fournal of Philosophy* 78 (1981): 429-58; "Absolute Simplicity," *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985): 353-81.

[133] Augustine, *Confessions* 11.31.41; *City of God* 11.21; Aquinas, *STh* I, q. 14, a. 13.

[134] Or at least that it fits well with his views; see Rogers, "St. Augustine on Time and Eternity," 136-37.

sense they define) simultaneous with every temporal event. Since "from the eternal viewpoint every temporal event is actually happening," God knows that it is now 3:50, *and* that it is now 3:51, *and* that it is now 3:52, and so on. [135] Whether this is an acceptable solution I leave for the reader to judge. Stump and Kretzmann are surely correct that it is the only way to attribute such knowledge to God while maintaining that his knowledge is without succession.

The third point is perhaps the most difficult of all. Aquinas argues that God is a personal being (my term, not his) in three stages: first, God has life and intelligence; second, God has will; third, God has free choice *(liberum arbitrium).* It is not necessary to repeat his arguments here. For our purposes the important point is that, if the question is whether God is a personal being of roughly the sort depicted in the Bible, then the first two stages alone are insufficient. Aristotle's Prime Mover has life and intelligence, and indeed, Aquinas borrows Aristotle's arguments at this point. Likewise, the One of Plotinus has will, at least in the broad sense defined by Aquinas, that of a rational appetite for the Good. [136] Yet neither of these is very much like the biblical God. The real weight is borne by the third point, the assertion of free choice. Unfortunately it is precisely at this point that severe difficulties arise. Aquinas, reasonably enough, understands free choice as involving the capacity to do otherwise. The question then is how God *could* do otherwise, given that his will and his action are identical to his essence. It would seem that if he were to will or do anything differently than he actually does, then he would be different in essence. That would make God's essence depend on his relationship to creatures, a view that is wholly unacceptable to traditional orthodoxy. [137]

[135] Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity," 457.

[136] In the case of the One this "appetite" is its self-directedness, and "rational" must be understood as in a way beyond Intellect; see *Enneads* 6.8, "On Free Will and the Will of the **One."**

[137] See Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West,* 247-50, 259-62. A further difficulty is that, if creatures possess libertarian freedom, then their choices would affect God's activity and thereby also the divine essence. See on this point Katherin Rogers, "The Traditional Doctrine of Divine Simplicity," *Religious Studies* 32 (1996): 165-86.

Admittedly, the problem here pertains most directly to divine simplicity, and to divine eternity only by implication. A more immediate sign that there is difficulty reconciling the Western understanding of eternity with divine personhood is the widely felt desire to reconceive of eternity as in some way extended. Stump and Kretzmann observe that "it would be reasonable to think that any mode of existence that could be called a life must involve duration," and accordingly their own interpretation of Boethian eternity takes it as "beginingless, endless, infinite dura- tion."[138] This view has been challenged both on exegetical grounds and as regards its internal coherence. [139] Nonetheless, it is hard to deny that a completely unextended and durationless life seems *prima facie* impossible. It is striking that Brian Shanley, having argued in detail that Aquinas does not regard eternity as extended, nonetheless suggests (following a proposal of Brian Leftow) that we should think of it as "both an indivisible extensionless point and an infinitely extended duration," much as physicists think of light as both particle-like and wave-like. [140] This seems to me a suggestion of even more doubtful coherence than that of Stump and Kretzmann. It is further evidence, if any is needed, that even the most acute and historically informed scholars find great difficulty in reconciling the traditional understanding of eternity with any meaningful belief in God as a living and personal being.

VII FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE EASTERN VIEW

One lesson of our historical review is that the very way in which these debates have taken shape is a product of the sharp distinction between time and eternity that is characteristic of the Western tradition. Eternity is posited as one way of being, time as

---

[138] Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity," 433.

[139] For example, Kathrin Rogers, "Eternity Has No Duration," *Religious Studies* 30 (1994): 1-16; Brian Shanley, "Eternity and Duration in Aquinas," *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 525-48; William Lane Craig, "The Eternal Present and Stump-Kretzmann Eternity," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 73 (1999): 521-36.

[140] Shanley, "Eternity and Duration," 547.

another, and the question then is how the two, being so different, could possibly overlap or intersect. A similar question can legitimately be asked of the Greek tradition prior to Dionysius, with its strong emphasis on the adiastemic character of the divine life. However, since the Greek tradition was not committed to identifying divine eternity with the divine essence, it had considerably more room to maneuver. Ultimately the impasse was overcome by Dionysius and his commentators. Recognition of this fact has been the crucial element missing from contemporary discussions of time and eternity.

The central innovation of the mature Eastern view lies in the understanding of time and eternity as divine processions that are not simply parallel and distinct, but genetically related. To quote again John of Scythopolis: "time, being once at rest in He Who Always Is, shone forth in its descent when later it was necessary for visible nature to come forth. So the procession of the goodness of God in creating sensible objects, we call time."[141] Time is here a procession that comes forth as God creates the sensible world; however, even before that creation it was already present implicitly, "at rest" within divine eternity. John then goes on to distinguish from time as a procession the "movement of intervals into portions and seasons and nights and days" which is measured by time in the first sense, and can itself be called time homonymously. As I suggested earlier, one could similarly distinguish between divine eternity and the "timelike movement and extension" that is the eternity of the angels. In each pair, the latter member is the mode in which creatures participate in the first member.

Putting these elements together, we arrive at a fourfold structure:

(1)   (a) Eternity as a divine procession, "the life that is unshaken and all together at once, already infinite and entirely unmoving, standing forth as a unity."
         (b) Angelic eternity, the "timelike movement and extension" coextensive with the life of the angels.

---

[141] Cited above, n. 99.

(2)   (a) Time as a divine procession, "the procession of the goodness of God
             in creating sensible objects."
             (b) Time as a creature, the "movement of intervals into portions and
             seasons and nights and days."

There are several links binding this structure together. As I have
mentioned, (2)(a) is the unfolding within the creative act of (l)(a),
and in each pair (b) is the mode in which creatures participate in
(a). Furthermore, according to Basil, (2)(b) is an image or icon
(EiKwv) of (l)(b). (We shall return to this point in a moment.)
One way to summarize these various relations is to recognize here
a repeated pattern of procession and return. (l)(a) and (2)(a) are
the processions of God within the intelligible and sensible
creations; (1)(b) and (2)(b) the corresponding acts of return. In
adopting this Neoplatonic language, however, one must be careful
not to import any suggestion either of necessary emanation or of
a hierarchy of being in which the lower levels serve only as a
ladder to the higher. Both eternity and time are ways in which the
unknowable God freely manifests himself. It is true that time is an
"icon" of eternity, but this means only that it finds there its final
meaning and consummation, not that it is valueless in its own
right. The teaching of Maximus is particularly salutary on this
point, especially if (as I suggested earlier) it is precisely through
their embodiment within the lives of the faithful that the A6yot of
time are taken up and subsumed into the age to come.

   To Western eyes at least part of this structure looks familiar,
for the definition of divine eternity is much like that of Boethius.
This is hardly surprising, since both were probably inspired by
Plotinus. However, since on the Eastern view divine eternity is
not the divine essence, but a procession, it can be interwoven-or
rather, unfolded-into the rest of the structure in the ways
indicated. That is what makes all the difference. Because of the
genetic relationships binding the structure together, there is
nothing within it that is foreign to God. Indeed, there is nothing
that *is* not God, when understood properly as a form of divine
self-manifestation.

If we return now to the three issues that have proven so problematic in the West, we find not so much that they are problems for which we have found a solution, as that they do not even arise. *Of course* God is present and acts at every moment of time, for time itself is his action. There is no need to attempt to understand his various temporal acts as the effects of a single eternal act, for the premise that made this seem necessary-the identification of God's activity with his essence-has been removed. Likewise, *of course* God knows what moment it is now, for he is the cause of this moment, as of every moment. Since he acts both "all together at once," qua eternity, and within and through the succession of time, his knowledge likewise takes both forms. This means that there is no need to fear attributing succession to the divine knowledge. The succession is as real as time itself; yet, like time, it is an unfolding of that which is already precontained within divine eternity. [142]

The third issue is more subtle. The problem facing the Western tradition has been to prevent the doctrine of divine eternity from seeming to present God as an impersonal first principle much like the Prime Mover. As I mentioned earlier, the strategy of Aquinas (which I will take as representative) is to start from a roughly Aristotelian basis and attempt to show that God also possesses attributes such as will and free choice. This strategy is on the face of it rather unpromising. The trouble is that the God of the Bible is not the sort of being whom one can construct by taking the conception of some lesser being and adding to it. What makes the God of the Bible "personal" is not just his possession of a list of attributes-intelligence,   will, and so forth-but that he acts as one who is sovereign and has an absolute claim to our love and obedience. His actions are never a neutral manifestation, but are instead a summons to stand in his presence and live as one who is answerable to him. Seen in this light, God is personal only in the sense that he is One before Whom we must stand. Our concept of person is not a genus under which he falls; on the contrary, it is

---

[142] See Dionysius, *Divine Names* 7.2.869A-C. I leave aside questions pertaining to divine foreknowledge and human freedom, which require a separate treatment.

merely an image (<jlavTaai'.a)that we have formed in the attempt
to stand before Him. He can no more be defined in terms of it
than by any other human concept.

Since the Christian East did not start from an Aristotelian
foundation, it did not face the problem of attempting to "save"
divine personhood. Instead its problem was the obvious (indeed,
inescapable) one of how to speak meaningfully about a God who
transcends all human concepts. Its answer was the balance-or
rather, the careful interweaving-of the apophatic and kataphatic.
As I have argued elsewhere, this framework provides a natural
way in which to articulate the content of biblical revelation. [143] On
the Eastern view, God is not so much a person possessing life,
intelligence, and will, as One who erupts into the human sphere
in a way that we can only apprehend, partially and inadequately,
through these concepts. As Gregory Nazianzen put it, they are
images which have to be "combined into some sort of
presentation of the truth, which escapes us when we have caught
it, and takes flight when we have conceived it."

One way of reacting to this view would be to see it as a counsel
of despair. If God so radically transcends human concepts, and
our most carefully crafted descriptions of him largely miss the
mark, what hope is there that we can know him as he is? To
appeal to the afterlife merely puts the problem back a stage, for
even in the afterlife we will still be finite minds that operate
within a network of concepts. Besides, the Greek Fathers deny
that there is direct knowledge of the divine essence in the
afterlife. It is in keeping with their apophaticism that the verbal
descriptions of God they do offer are often left to stand with
hardly any supporting explanation. We have seen that John of
Scythopolis adopts the Neoplatonic conception of divine eternity
as "the life that is unshaken and all together at once, already
infinite and entirely unmoving, standing forth as a unity." Unlike
Western authors, however, he does not attempt to clarify the
meaning of this rather paradoxical description by offering

---

[143] See Bradshaw, "The Divine Glory and the Divine Energies" (above, n. 48).

metaphors, whether they be of something line-like, point-like, or anything else. He allows it to stand as a mystery.

Oddly enough, no one in the Eastern tradition seems to have felt a need for further explanation. If we are to understand this outlook we must search not at the conceptual level, but at that of praxis. Here is where the iconic relationship between time and eternity becomes crucially important. Instead of conceptual guidance in understanding divine eternity, the Greek Fathers offer a way of life in which time is *experienced* as an icon of eternity, so that one has, in one's own experience, a foretaste of the direct participation in divine eternity of the age to come. This practical orientation is evident in the very passage of *On the Holy Spirit* where St. Basil speaks of time as an icon of eternity. The context is that he is explaining the importance of unwritten traditions that have been handed down in a mystery (£v μuOTT]pt'-1J, 1 Cor 2:7) from the apostles. One of them is that of praying without kneeling on Sunday.

We make our prayers standing on the first day of the week, but all do not know the reason for this. For it is not only because we are risen with Christ and that we should seek the things which are above, that on the day of the Resurrection we recall the grace that has been given us by standing to pray; but also, I think, because this day is in some way the image [dKwv] of the future age. This is why also, being the first principle   of days, it is not called the "first" by Moses, but "one." "There was," he says, "an evening and a morning, one day," as though it returned regularly upon itself. This is why it is at once one and the eighth, that which is really one and truly the eighth, of which the Psalmist speaks in the titles of certain Psalms, signifying by this the state that will follow the ages, the day without end, the other aeon which will have neither evening, nor succession, nor cessation, nor old age. It is, then, in virtue of an authoritative claim that the Church teaches her children to say their prayers standing on this day, so that, by the perpetual recalling of eternal life, we may not neglect the means which lead us to it. [144]

To pray without kneeling on Sunday is not only a commemoration of the Resurrection, but a foretaste of the age to come, as befits Sunday, which is itself an icon of that age. In such

---

[144] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66 *(PG* 32: 192A-B); translation in Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy,* 263.

an act one deliberately lives within the iconic meaning of time, accepting time as the expression, within our current sensible existence, of the immeasurable fulness of eternal life.

What is true of this single act is also true, on a larger scale, of the entire liturgical ethos of the Eastern Church. Here is another passage on the iconic nature of time, this one from St. Gregory Nazianzen. He is discussing the feast of the Octave of Easter, when the newly baptized removed the white robes they had worn since their baptism on Holy Saturday. This feast possessed far greater importance in the ancient Church than today, for it was seen as a symbolic recognition of the passage from earthly time into the new creation.

That Sunday [Easter] is that of salvation, this is the anniversary of salvation; that was the frontier between burial and resurrection; this is entirely of the second creation, so that, as the first creation began on a Sunday (this is perfectly clear: for the Sabbath falls seven days after it, being repose from works), so the second creation began on the same day, which is at once the first in relation to those that come after it, and the eighth in relation to those before it, more sublime than the sublime day and more wonderful than the wonderful day: for it is related to the life above. That is what, as it seems to me, the divine Solomon wishes to symbolize when he commands (Eccl 11:2) to give a part, seven, to some, that is to say, to this life; and to others, eight, that is to say, the future life: he is speaking of doing good here and of the restoration of the life beyond. [145]

According to ancient conventions of counting, the first Sunday after Easter is also the eighth day after Easter. That is what makes it "more sublime than the sublime day and more wonderful than the wonderful day," for it is the first to pass beyond the seven-day cycle of our present time and into the life to come. Gregory, building on rabbinic tradition, associates with this feast Ecclesiastes 11:2, "give a part of it to seven and even to eight."[146] The part one is to give to seven, that is to this life, is good works; the "eight," which one cannot give but can only receive, is resurrection. Through this rather odd exegetical digression Gregory finds within the feast not only a celebration of the life to

[145] Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 44 *(PG* 36:612C-613A), translation in Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy,* 269.

[146] See Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy,* 268.

come, but a reminder of how one must live in order to attain that life.

These two passages typify the sense of time that permeates the Eastern tradition. The significance of time is not to be found in its external features, such as its ability to serve as a measure of movement, but rather in the opportunity it offers of standing within God's presence. Such "standing" may be highly active, as in the doing of good works mentioned by Gregory, but it is nonetheless a way of being that finds in our temporal existence an icon of something higher. That is why, for the East, divine eternity is not a philosophical concept requiring explication, but a mystery that can be known only by living within it.

GIVING A GOOD ACCOUNT OF GOD:
IS THEOLOGY EVER MATHEMATICAL? [1]

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

Heythrop College, University of London
London, England

OME YEARS AGO I examined a thesis for the Catholic University of Leuven written purporting to offer a definitive mathematical proof for the reality and necessity of the Divine Trinity. At its heart lay an equation, which-it was argued-if factored on both sides, produced the result that three is equal to one. On first acquaintance I was impressed, if a little baffled, until I took myself again through the steps of the proof (enlisting the help of a banker, someone for whom mathematics really counts). Offering only the reason (quite correctly) that factors may be used to simplify equations, my candidate had divided by a factor of three on one side of his equation and nine on the other. The numerically agile will know that this indeed yields the result that three is equal to one. The candidate had neglected to ensure that *the same* factor was used on each side of the equation to which factors are applied: the thesis, mathematically at least, was false.

Nevertheless the underlying instinct for this student's argument stands in a tradition that stretches back at least as far as Descartes, if not all the way to Plato and the Pythagoreans: that the mathematical may inform the theological, and even be used to demonstrate   (or in Descartes's case, prove) certain kinds of theological truth. What is at issue here is the relationship between

---

[1] A version of this paper was given at the Cambridge 'D' Society on 10 March 2006, by kind invitation of Dr. Douglas Hedley and Dr. Chris Insole of the Cambridge University Divinity Faculty.

philosophy and theology-taking the commonly understood view of mathematics as a form of rational thinking, von Leibniz's claim that logic is *mathesis genera/is.* The philosophical and theological are thereby inherently united; they can be made to treat of the same things in the same way. Notwithstanding a vigorous polemic against this view from at least as far back as Luther up to Karl Barth and beyond, the possibility of this connection is retraced by Denys Turner in the central contention (I hesitate to say argument, since the very premise of the book is that none need be supplied) of his *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God,* that "the existence of God is rationally demonstrable." [2] In fact many contemporary theologians, especially those declaring themselves to be among the most orthodox, make little or no distinction between philosophy and theology (theo-ontologies abound). There is a presumption that the existence, being, or essence, of God can, by means mathematical, logical, or analogical, be bound to the being of being human. This connection is negative: we remain orthodox provided we say nothing of the 'whatness' *(quidditas)* of the divine essence, only *that* it is, or that an argument can be had by which means it could thereby be said 'to be' (which I take be the essence of Turner's argument *absconditus).*

I want to examine this claim by appealing to Martin Heidegger's critique of the relation between mathematics and theology, especially in relation to Descartes, in notes he made between 1938 and 1939-especially in relation to his reading of Nietzsche, and made available in his *Collected Works* only in 1999. Heidegger makes a series of astonishing polemical remarks about the relation of theology and mathematics. He begins by speaking of the age of the "theologies," which is at the same time the age of the "end of all metaphysics"; he means by this our

---

[2] D. Turner, *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), ix. We should exercise caution: Turner only purports to argue that he does "no more than to give further reasons of a theological nature why Christians should think, as a matter of faith" that his conclusion is right. This, however, is to make his argument belong solely to theology, while holding out the promise that it might also, or really does, belong to philosophy, independent of the question of faith. The book, for this very reason, rests on a sleight of hand.

contemporary situation. Though this remark is conditioned by his own understanding of "the end of metaphysics," nevertheless, the number of articles, books, and theologians now claiming to have overcome, or be overcoming, metaphysics is legion. "Theology," said Heidegger, "has become diabology," not in the sense of the devil's having been reduced to the merely harmless level of a fallen angel; rather, he adds, this diabology is one "which admits and unleashes the unconditioned un-essence of God into the truth of beings."[3] Unconditioned here is my translation of *unbedingte*-literally, un-en-thinged, having no concern with things. Un-essence, similarly, translates *Unwesen.* Only beings are concerned with *das Wesen:* essence, being. Heidegger says here that God has no place in the realm of either being or beings-a point he makes in many places across his work. We are apt to hear this as some radical claim to negative theology, yet nothing of the sort is intended. The Greek gods *also* have nothing to do causally with being or beings, even when they dispose themselves as presences within the realm of being. God and the gods dwell without reference to being or beings, but can be self-disposing as beings within being. The question Heidegger raises here is the manner, and so means by which, the un-essence of God is admitted and unleashed into beings.

Immediately following these remarks Heidegger begins a discussion under the title "Theology and Mathematics." He points to Plato's aya86v as the singular cause of being through which "the *theological* character of metaphysics is decided,"[4] through the "over there" (trrtKnva-the reference is to the sixth book of the *Republic)*[5] whereby being and the most-beingful in beings *(das Seiendste)* are "slammed together" *(zusammengeschlossen)* as both the same thing and as divine. What does it mean, he asks, "that all

[3] M. Heidegger, *Metaphysik und Nihilismus,* in *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 67, *Das Zeitalter der "Theologien"* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1999), §145, p. 154f. "Im Zeitalter des Endes aller Metaphysik … (wird) die Theologie zur *Diabologie,* die … erst unbedingte Unwesen Gottes in die Wahrheit des Seienden ein- und losllillt."

[4] Ibid.: "Damit ist der *theologisch* Charakter der Metaphysik entscheiden."

[5] Plato, *Republic* 6.509b6-10: "ovTo<;T00 dyaeoo, W.X £n Eirfrct va Tfj<; oucrfo<;rrpccrj3dc;x Kai ouvciµEt UTIEPEXOVTO<;."

metaphysics is 'theological'?" [6] What really concerns him, how-
ever, is theology in the modern age, the period from Descartes up
to Nietzsche and into the present. He says "mathematics only
comes to be decisive for metaphysics with the transformation of
truth into certitude," the period ushered in by Descartes.

I. ACCOUNTING FOR GOD:
DESCARTES AND THE MATHEMATICAL

To take up the title of this article is to take up the question of
whether or not a "good account"-the pun is intended, it refers
to the *ratio,* the counting-up character of all rationality-of God
can provide us with secure knowledge of the divine. Descartes's
assertion *cogito, ergo sum* is grounded in *cogitare* not (as usually
translated) as "thinking" but as a kind of active deliberating. [7] It
says that in every deliberation *(cogitatum)* that which is dubitable
and that which is certain are sifted apart and separated, so that
what I securely know is what is entirely and only secured on the
basis of certainty over against, and in opposition to, the dubitable.
These remarks of Heidegger about Descartes and the mathe-
matical repeat in a more extreme form remarks he had made in
1927 in *Sein und Zeit.* [8] Here he notes that Descartes is unable to

[6] Heidegger, *Metaphysik und Nihilismus,* 155. "Was heif5t dies, daf5 all Metaphysik
'theologisch' ist?"

[7] The range of the verb *cogitare* for Descartes is far broader than just "thinking" or
"knowing intellectually" *(intelligere,* a verb of which Descartes also makes frequent use). Cf.
R. Descartes, *Principia Philosophice,* in C. Adam and P. Tannery, eds. *CE,uvres de Descartes,*
vol. 8 (Paris: Vrin, 1996), 7, §9. "Cogitationis nomine, intelligo illaomnia, qme nobis consciis
in nobis fiunt, quatenus eorum in nobis conscientie est. Atque ita modo intelligere, velle,
imaginari, sed etiam sentire, idem est hie quod cogitare" ("By the term 'thought', I understand
everything which for us occurs, to the extent that there is for us co-knowledge of them. And
therefore thus not only thinking, but also willing, to-be-imagining, sensing, in the same
manner is this which [we name] cogitates.") In fact, for reasons that we do not have time to
explore here (but that Nietzsche expressly understood), "willing" *(velle)* is the prior and most
determinative, since it is the means by which our knowing is analogously like to God's, even
if (unlike God's) it most exposes us to error. Indeed *velle* is the means by which the distinction
between finite and infinite cogitation can expressly be distinguished (cf. Descartes, *Principia
Philosophice,* 18, §35).

[8] Cf. M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit,* in *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Klostermann,
1977), §§20-22.

resolve the question of substantiality ontologically, in a position Heidegger remarks is repeated by Kant ("being is not a real predicate"), and this because in any working out of questions ontologically "Descartes remains always far behind the Scholastics. "[9]

Heidegger says that "mathematical knowledge signifies [for Descartes] as that one manner of apprehending beings which can always give assurance that their being has been securely grasped. If anything measures up in its own manner of being to the being which is accessible in mathematical knowledge, then it *is* in the authentic sense. "[10] Two claims are made here: first, Descartes's inability to resolve the question of substance ontologically means that he resolves the same questions that the meaning of substantiality resolved, but he does so mathematically; second, that in this mathematical securing of essences a kind of analogy is at work-anything that can be secured in the same way as the things of mathematics will yield the same degree of certainty that is yielded in the securing of mathematical truths.

Before asking what is meant by this shift from substantiality, and so from the ontological to the mathematical, we should examine Descartes's actual relation of the being or existence of God to the mathematical. Descartes says in the fifth of his *Meditations on First Philosophy:* "I have always held truths of this mode-which things, namely, of figures or of numbers or of the other things pertaining to Arithmetic or Geometry or to pure and abstract mathesis in general, I evidently recognized-to be the most certain ones of all. "[11] He makes no particular distinction

[9] Ibid., p. 125: "Descartes bleibt ... weit hinter der Scholastik zuriick."

[10] Ibid., p. 128: "Die mathematische Erkenntnis gilt als diejenige Erfassungsart von Seiendem, die der sicheren Habe des Seins des in ihr erfaGten Seienden jederzeit gewiG sein kann. Was seiner Seinsart nach so ist, daG es dem Sein geniigt, das in der mathematischen Erkenntnis zuganglich wird, *ist* im eigentlichen Sinne."

[11] R. Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia,* in Adam and Tannery, eds., *CEvres de Descartes,* vol. 7 (Paris: Vrin, 1996), 65: "meminique me semper etiam ante hoc tempus, cum sensuum objectis quam maxime inhxrerem, ejusmodi veritates, qux nempe de figuris, aut numeris, aliisve ad Arithmeticam vel Geometricam vel in generx ad puram atque abstractam Mathesim pertinentibus, evidenter agnoscebam, pro omnium certissimus habuisse." Translations modified from R. Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia I Meditations on First Philosophy,* trans. G. Heffernan (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

between the figures of geometry and number as such; in this he is far behind Greek understandings of mathematics, and for a reason which, in advance of ever having considered the question, already *decides* the outcome of the "debate" between Aristotle and Plato-a debate that has come to us from antiquity only from Aristotle's description of it. [12]

Precisely because mathematical-in particular, geometrical-proofs are "most certain," Descartes concludes (explicitly with respect to his assertion *cogito ergo sum),* "I might bring out [an idea] from my cogitation" and in doing this, "cannot therefrom also an argument be had by which the existence of God might be demonstrated?" [13] This is because "I certainly find within me the idea of God, namely, the idea of a most highly perfect being, no less than I do the idea of some figure or number; nor do I understand less clearly and distinctly that it pertains to his nature that He always exist than that which I demonstrate of some figure or number also pertains to the nature of this figure or number." [14]

I am not concerned with whether or not Descartes's claims to a kind of a proof succeed. The question in all so-called proofs or demonstrations of the existence of God is not whether they work or are convincing (one might almost say: for some they do, for others, they don't), but what makes the demonstration possible: on what kind of understanding is the possibility of proof or demonstration based? My purpose is to inquire into the consequences for how we understand God in the light of this assertion of Descartes, which, it seems to me, have become the basis for many assumptions in contemporary theology that take for granted all too readily the structure of subjectivity that Descartes lays out as a possibility for Western thought. In interpreting Descartes I take the view, also advanced by Jorge

[12] Descartes does not even include in the list of the things of 'mathesis' the third discipline which Plato names, of logistic   TfxVT] /..oywnKTj).

[13] Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia,* 65: "possim ex cogitatione mea depromere ... nunquid inde haberi etiam potest argumentum, quo Dei existentia probetur."

[14] Ibid.: "Certe ejus ideam, nempe entis summe perfecti, non minus apud me invenio, quam ideam cujusvis figur:e aut numeri; nee minus dare et distincte intelligo ad ejus naturam pertinere ut semper existat, quam id quod de aliqua figura aut numero demonstro ad ejus figur:e aut numeri naturam etiam pertinere."

Secada (although I differ from him in important ways) that far from transforming philosophy over against the late Scholasticism of the immediately preceding period (the thought of Suarez as Descartes would have encountered it, especially at La Fleche), Descartes in fact advances interpretations that, although pressing possibilities inherent in the previous theology of the schools in particular directions and transforming some important aspects of late medixval thought, nevertheless are heavily indebted to the metaphysical positions of the preceding centuries. [15]

What exactly is Descartes's argument? Zbigniew Janowski argues that the novelty of Descartes's philosophy lies in his "making mathematical essences as closely dependent on God as possible. "[16] What this means for Descartes is that the substance of God can be deduced by the same means as a mathematical proof can be had, exactly as Heidegger suggested. We can be as certain, if not more so, of the being of God as we can of the necessity of number, and geometrical figure, and the other objects of *mathesis.* At the same time Descartes only makes a largely negative claim about the being of God-and in so doing he again remains faithful to an entirely orthodox, late medi:rval, insight.

If Descartes makes no real distinction between geometric figure and number this is largely because he privileges geometry over number. [17] Like God, Descartes says, the objects of mathematics

have their own true and immutable natures. When I imagine a triangle, for example, even if such a figure would perhaps exist nowhere in the world outside my cogitation-nor would it ever have existed-there still is in fact a

[15] See J. Sccada, *Cartesian Metaphysics: The Scholastic Origins of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[16] Z. Janowski, *Cartesian Theodicy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), 106.

[17] The distinction, for Aristotle at least, is attained by entering into which of the disciplines is ontologically prior. Geometry is the least abstracted of the mathematical sciences, since geometrical figures, even when abstracted from the surrounding world,, retain for tl1eir meaning a relation to what they are abstracted from (iliey retain a *etans,* a position-like character); number is more abstracted, since it can 'stand for itself' and in being abstracted need retain no originary reference to what it is abstracted from; but wisdom (a0<ji(a) as the science of the one (£v) is the most abstracted, even more abstracted ilian number, and so the most originary.

determinate nature or essence or form of it, immutable and eternal, which has
not been feigned by me, nor does it depend on my mind. [18]

   We encounter here a certain decision that Descartes makes,
against Aristotle and for Aristotle's account of Plato. Aristotle
maintained (against Plato) that mathematical objects are not
eternal, but atemporal-strictly   speaking they are 'without' time.
They enter time at the point where they are thought, which is to
say, they enter the time of the one thinking them. If there were no
mind to think of a triangle, then for Aristotle triangles and the
triangular as such would not exist. This is Aristotle's own binding
of thought to being; in other words, it reflects Aristotle's
genuinely ontological outlook. Plato also is driven by an implicit
and no less binding ontology, but in a quite different way, as we
shall see; a way that, superficially at least, was invisible to
Aristotle.
   Descartes implicitly relies on an understanding of God that
characterizes all orthodox Christian, Islamic, and Jewish theology
of the High Middle Ages: anything that *is* exists in a prior and
more eminent way in the mind of God than it does in any human
mind. Even if there were no human minds, the divine mind,
which always exists, would sustain all that is in being. In the
disputed questions *De Veritate* (for just one example) St. Thomas
Aquinas says "even if there were no human intellects, things could
be said to be true because of their relation to the divine
intellect. "[19] The eternity of the triangle, for Descartes, is already
eternal because it preexists in the divine mind. It is unnecessary
for Descartes even to decide for Aristotle and against Plato in this
question, because the Christian Descartes can always assume that
the preexistence (and prior existence) of God is a given, without

---

[18] Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia,* 64: "suas habent veras et immutabiles
naturas. Ut clim, exempli causa, triangulum imaginor, esti fortasse talis figura nullibili gentium
extra cognitionem meam existat, nee unquam existerit, est tamen profecto determinata
quredam ejus natura, sive essentia, sive forma, immutabilis et reterna, qure a me non effect est,
nee a mente mea dependet."

[19] Aquinas, *De Veritate,* q. 1, a. 2: "Uncle, etiam si intellectus humanus non esset, adhuc res
dicerentur verre in ordine ad intellectum divinum." See also *De Verit.,* q. 3, "De ideis"
(concerning the ideas).

question. Insofar as God is, God always was (and ever will be), and sustains all things in virtue of causing them. The question of the being of things with respect to thought-ontology as such—and, precisely in this issue, the question of the substantiality of substance is decided in advance of a single philosophical thought being expended on it. We should note here that, for Heidegger at least, even prior to Descartes, this is the means by which, and the manner of, the binding of God to beings-of the unleashing of the Divine 'unessence' into the 'essence' of beings. The existence of any particular being is already always dependent on the 'omni temporal existence' of God. [20] Beings are causally dependent on God, because insofar as they are, God is the prior and preeminent cause of their being.

It is for this reason that mathematics can play the role that it can for Descartes in his supposed proof. It is dear from what Descartes asserts in these passages that he is not offering some formula, some actual means of calculation that will demonstrate the existence of God; rather, it is the character of the mathematical as such that makes mathematics decisive in the transformation of the essence of truth now to be conceived as certitude, *and* in a certain understanding of the essence of God. Descartes asserts that what is sought is a demonstration of the existence of God "at the minimum in the same degree of certainty" as the proofs of mathematics. [21] What is signified by this *in gradum eodem* is a kind of analogy. Mathematics is the most certain and binding knowledge, insofar as its truth is, as so many Anglophone philosophers have loved to describe it, 'analytic'. Any knowledge that has the same degree of certainty as mathematical knowledge is thereby itself 'mathematical'. For Descartes, first in the order of certainty is the knowledge *ego cogito:* this is the most

[20] If this seems uncontentious it is as well to remember that a (theological) truth in consequence of *faith* has been transferred so that it becomes taken for granted as a 'fact' of philosophy, a 'fact' that conditions the relation *between* God and beings in all thinking, *irrespective* of faith-this is the burden of Heidegger's criticism. The *Unwesen* (unessence) of God has become the basis for the *Wesen* (essence) of beings.

[21] Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia,* 64: "in eodem ad minimum certitudinis gradu."

mathematical truth. Heidegger notes in a lecture on Nietzsche given around the same time as the remarks we are considering from 1938-39 that

the certitude of the principle *cogito sum (ego ens cogitans)* determines the essence of all knowledge and everything knowable; that is, of mathesis; hence, of the mathematical. What can therefore be demonstrated and ascertained as a being is only the sort of thing whose co-positing *[Bei-stellung]* guarantees the kind of surety that is accessible through mathematical knowledge and knowledge grounded on 'mathematics'. [22]

We may add that mathematical knowledge has this same character because, *ex cogitato,* and exactly there, it also cannot be doubted. This is the grounds for Descartes's 'proof': insofar as the essence of the triangle *is,* or exists, it *is always* or is eternally. Insofar as the essence of God *is,* it also *is always:* eternity is the prior and preeminent perfection of God. This proof is possible, however, because, as Descartes says, I have already an 'idea' of God within me.

The Cartesian ontology takes for granted the radical separation of God, the world, and the self (the *ego* of *ego cogito)* in a way that every subsequent philosophy has sought to reconnect (even when it declares God to be dead-the historicality of God's having once been thought to be alive still needing to be accounted for *by* the proclamation of the death). The reconnection is, in almost every case (in fact, in every case until Husserl's philosophical struggle against the psychologism of the *ego cogito,* and despite his best efforts to the contrary, perhaps even with Husserl as well) secured through something like the *ego*

---

[22] M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Der europaische Nihilismus,* in *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 48 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1986), 204 (cf. vol 6.2, *Nietzsche* [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1997], 145). "Die Sicherheit des Satzes cogito sum (ego ens cogitans) bestimmt das Wesen alles Wissens und WiEbaren, d.h. der mathesis, d.h. des Mathematischen. Deshalb ist auch nur jenes als Seiendes ausweisbar und feststellbar, <lessen Bei-stellung eine solche Sicherung gewahrt, namlich jenes, was <lurch die mathematische und die auf 'Mathematik' gegriindete Erkenntnis zuganglich wird." The lecture course "European Nihilism" was given in the second trimester of 1940.

cogito-albeit m ways that are often left unclarified or mysterious. [23]

The emergence of the *ego cogito* enforces a fundamental transformation in the order of understanding that has far-reaching consequences not only for philosophy but also for theology. Before Descartes, the unity of every analogy is secured on the prior being of God as first and preeminent cause of all that is. [24] The unity of every analogy is, following Descartes, secured solely on the basis of the unity and prior necessity of the *ego cogito.* Insofar as there is anything like a 'theory' of analogy in St. Thomas Aquinas, this is the very opposite of the way in which the analogy proceeds for him: for St. Thomas analogy (which is in any case *nominum,* of names, rather than *entis,* of being) [25] is always primarily in virtue of God and only secondarily with respect to beings. The *real* meaning of every analogical name is located in God, and is only imperfectly manifested by beings. For St.

[23] Not even Kant was able to secure the reconnection to his own satisfaction, in a problem that remained with him right through to the notes he made at the end of his life and the outline of which was published in his *Opus Postumum;* I. Kant, *Opus Postumum,* in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1936), 21:50.

[24] This point is explained with sharp clarity by W. Norris Clarke, S.J., in "Analogy and the Meaningfulness of Language about God: A Reply to Kai Nielsen" *(The Thomist* 40 [1976]: 61-95, esp. 81-94). Clarke notes (85) that "Thus the very initial positing of God as cause of the world situates him within the primary a priori (a dynamic and existential, not a logical, a priori) analogous field of both intelligibility and being-of being precisely because this is demanded by intelligibility" and concludes (86): "If both cause and effect were of the same species the similarity would be on the same level and kind, that is, univocal. If the cause were a higher level of being than the effect, then the similarity could not be strictly univocal but would have to be at least analogous. In this perspective, the very fact of establishing a causal link between a lower effect and a higher cause at once *ipso facto* generates an analogous similarity, a spectrum of objective similarity extending from the known effect at least as far as the cause, whether the latter is directly known or only postulated as a necessary condition of intelligibility for an already known effect. Whether both terms of the relation are known or only one, every effect has to be similar in some way to its cause, or it could not be a real effect, and the same holds for the cause." Clarke cites *Summa contra Gentiles* I, c. 29; and *Summa Theologice* I, q. 13, a. 5.

[25] For a full explanation of what I mean here, see L. P. Hemming, "Analogia non entis sed entitatis: The Ontological Consequences of the Doctrine of Analogy," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6 (April 2004): 118-28. The argument that St. Thomas has no actual 'theory' of the *analogia entis* is controversial; nevertheless, it must be acknowledged even by supporters of the view that he does that neither the actual phrase *analogia entis* nor anything resembling it ever occurs in any of St. Thomas's own texts.

Thomas, analogical language is the signification of a relationship whereby the creation is understood to be already dependent on the creator, In each case God is the 'prime analogate', the attribution to the creature is made only secondarily: the analogies proceed *from* God *to* beings. Even if there were to be demonstrated a formal *analogia entis* in Aquinas (which I sincerely doubt), [26] the 'being' in question is ascertained through faith and not rationally-it is not demonstrable independently of faith and God's having revealed himself. The being of man is subsequent to, and dependent on, the revelation of the prior being of God.

For Descartes, however, the prior ideal certainty of every *ego cogito* means that every *cogitatum,* every individual thought, is secured on the prior unity of the 'I' that cogitates. Even the fact that this 'I' is itself caused by God is secured on the basis that the 'I' is an already-present singular thing that *then* proceeds to discover its having-been-caused (by God).

It can be argued that the effect is the same-that the priority of the *ego cogito* in the *ordo cognoscendi* (the order of knowing) does not disturb the essential priority (tirelessly witnessed to by theologians throughout Christian antiquity and the media::val period) of God's priority over man and creation in the *ordo essendi* (the order of being). This, however, is exactly to misunderstand Heidegger's point about the transformation of the essence of truth with respect to certainty. The question is what in knowledge I can secure *certe,* certainly. Everything else, even when I know it, I know as either actually or potentially dubious (I do not know it securely or certainly, so that I do not really know it at all). Saint Thomas (for just one example) is untroubled by this. He has a healthy skepticism about the certain status of human knowledge precisely because we will only know 'as God knows' after we have been divinized, after judgment and the last things, and at the end of time. The presumption is always that because God certainly knows (and knows essentially), we are free

---

[26] As Clarke notes: "St. Thomas himself, ordinarily such a systematic thinker, for some unexplained reason was never willing to pin himself down to any one consistent terminology or structural analysis of the logical form of analogy" ("Analogy and the Meaningfulness of Language about God," 61).

to be in error (and err 'accidentally', i.e., *per accidens),* even when we think we know something substantially. [27] For those who preceded Descartes, as much as for Descartes himself, all knowledge of (corporeal) beings is a posteriori and dubitable. Only for him does this dubitability become troublesome. But whereas for the theologians of the late Middle Ages, knowledge of God is also a posteriori (God being known only through his effects, which are tantamount to his accidents), for Descartes knowledge that God is can be had with certainty, a priori, and is secured precisely on the security of the *cogito sum.* Even were Descartes himself to be indifferent to this, his interpreters are not. The means by which the *ordo essendi* itself is known has undergone a fundamental transformation: the question is not one of order, but of the character, and this means the certainty, of the knowledge given in the *taxis* or order.

The resultant knowledge is an entirely different kind of analogy to that for which many of the theologians of the late Middle Ages argued. After Descartes the analogy in question is in fact a similitude, the ομοfwcru that Heidegger repeatedly claimed is the basis for truth from Plato onwards. Contemporary philosophy is very often unable to ground the character of the (mathematical) analogies in question. Thus Wittgenstein begins his enquiry into the foundation of mathematics by being able to ground the necessity and inexorability of mathematical reasoning only in use and through learning; he is unable to give any account of this origin (he is unable, unlike Aristotle and Plato, to ground the origin of mathematics ontologically). He goes so far as to say that "the proposition 'it is true that this follows from that' means

---

[27] This issue is discussed in detail by P. L. Reynolds, "Properties, Causality and Epistemological Optimism in Thomas Aquinas," *Recherches de theologie et philosophie medievales* 68 (2001): 270-309. Reynolds notes, "in Thomas's view, we do know what the essences of created substances are, although our knowledge of them is inferred and remains *a posteriori* because we have no direct sensory access to the substantial forms" (273). God's knowledge of substantial form is, on the contrary, *a priori* because he intended them to be what they are. Again it is for this reason that Descartes is forced to jettison all knowledge of substances 'in themselves'. All knowledge of the corporeal is as of *res extensa,* the extensions and surface-presentations of things. There is no 'inner' substance or essence to be known which is not given through the *extenta.*

simply: this follows from that. "[28] He concludes "it cannot be said of the series of natural numbers-any more than of our language-that it is true, but: that it is usable, above all, *it is employed.* "[29]

Whilst Wittgenstein (to take just one example) demonstrates very well the restriction of counting to the self that counts (it is all a matter of use), the absence of any possible ontological grounding for counting except in use shows the extent to which the ontological character of mathematics on which Descartes was relying has fully decayed. For no demonstration of the being of God can be had from the mere use of practice and custom. Descartes was relying-really, taking for granted (because he was unable to thematize it)-on something in the character of mathematics that played the role of the ancient and medireval ontology, and so could provide a ground for the connection of the mathematical, the self, and the divine.

II. *MATHESIS* AS THE ALREADY KNOWN

The word μαερicrt<; in Greek has nothing to do with mathematics as such. The μαetjμma are the things that are learnable, or rather, they are the things that, in every learning, show up as already known. The verb μaveavw means "I learn"-by study, practice, or experience. Learning consists in coming to know what one already knows. Thus in discovering that there are three chairs in front of me, the "three" comes to the fore as the thing I already knew with respect to the chairs. In every case μαερicrt<; refers to what I bring to any particular situation in advance of it. It is what I already know, we might say "in general" or "in advance" that enables me to know about *this* matter in particular, that there can be three. It is only by extension that Ta μαetjμaTa come to mean the arithmetical and

[28] L. Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen iiber die Grundlagen der Mathematik* (Frankfurt; Suhrkamp, 1984), 38: "Der Satz: 'es ist wahr, daB das aus diesem folgt', heiBt einfach: das folgt aus diesem."

[29] Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen iiber die Grundlagen der Mathematik,* 37f.: "DaB Man von der natiirlichen Zahlenreihe-ebenso wie von unsere Sprache-nichtsagen kann, sie sei wahr, sondern: sie sei brauchbar und, vor allem, *sie werde verwendet."*

geometrical, as the easiest and most demonstrable examples of
what I know "in advance" in every knowing. The word μα8ricm:;
describes, not learning as such, but the act of learning, and this
means the appearing and gaining of the thought of what learning
learns.

It is this "learning what I already know" that Plato attempts to
demonstrate in the opening sections of the *Meno*. Meno asks Soc-
rates whether excellence   can be taught, or if it is acquired
by practice rather than in teaching (μα8riTov). [30] The point of what
follows, with regard to both excellence as such as opposed to the
specific excellences, and figure as such as opposed to particular
figures, is that while specific excellences or figures are always
recognizable, excellence in itself, or figure in itself (or health, or
color, and so forth), remains in a certain sense already known,
and is only recollected in learning. Socrates remarks that "indeed
it follows that intellectual pursuit and learning is entirely recol-
lection [avaμvrimc;]. "[31] Socrates takes a slave boy in Meno's house
and has him undertake a simple geometrical exercise, whereby he
reveals that he knows already a geometrical demonstration
whereby he can double the area of a square. In the course of the
working out, Socrates remarks "you see, Meno, indeed I am not
instructing him in anything, but entirely asking?" [32]

By a process of questioning, Socrates has the boy demonstrate
that by doubling the length of two sides of the square at right
angles to each other to complete an enlarged square, then dividing
the new square at the mid-point of each side and connecting the
divisions, a square with double the area of the original square is
produced inside the double. [33] As such, learning is, the translations
usually say, "self-recollecting [avcxμtμvtjoxrn8m]."   [34]

---

[10] Plato, *Meno* 70a: μm drrE1v, *Ji* IwKpmEi;, &paotOOKTOVr̄l̄ ap£Ttj;   O!OOKTOV
afli' cXO'KfJTOV;   OUTE cXO'KfJTOV OUTE μa8rJTOV."

[31] Plato, *Meno* 81d: "TO yap l;ETE1V *apa* Kal TO μav8avnv avaμvrnti; OAOV EOTlv."

[32] Plato, *Meno* 82e: "Op\Xi;,,*Ji* M£vwv, wi; f.yw TOUTOV OUOEV OlOcXO'KW,*ailX* f.pwTW rrcivrn;"

[33] The square produced by the doubled sides is not double, but four times the area of the
original square. By dividing this square in two, the resultant calculation is $4 \times h = 2$, which
is therefore double the original.

[34] Plato, *Meno* 85e: "avaμ1μvtjaKEa8m."

The self-recollecting in question, however, is the unseen, and so 'hidden', unity of the manifold of what appears. The self-recollecting allows the unseen of excellence as such to be seen in the specific examples of excellences-the *Meno* speaks of the excellences of slave, child, master. Socrates argues that the excellences "may be both many and of every kind, yet they all have the one same Elbo<; whereby they are excellences. "[35]

Heidegger's notebook of 1938-39 comments that the trans-formation of metaphysics on the basis of mathematics posits a *'Vorbild'-a* prior image or ctbo<; given in every specific thought that makes the interior unity of those thoughts possible. But the existence of the prior d8o<; *(Vorbild)* or 'type' (idea), was already supposed in the High Middle Ages: every idea was in the *mens Dei,* the mind of God, which secured the manifold appearing of every particular thing. The prior Elbo<; present in every case for Descartes, however, is not God and the *mens Dei,* but the unity of the *ego cogito* posited alongside every thought-even the thought of God-by which that thought is secured. Heidegger comments "but mathematics is thereby not only a *Vorbild* of the most stringent knowledge, but the mathematical-being-secured-characterizes the basic manner of being as representedness. "[36] The representedness in this case is "being-secured as subjectivity." [37]

The effect of this is that even though God remains posited as the first and prior cause of all things, nevertheless this certain knowledge is secured on the basis of the prior representedness of the *ego cogito.* We are now in a position to see what Heidegger meant by characterizing theology as a diabology "which admits and unleashes the unconditioned un-essence of God into the truth of beings." Insofar as God is secured on the basis of μa0ricrt<; and

[35] Plato, *Meno* 72d: "Kav ei TTOAAal Kal TTaVTOOaTTaieiatv, EV yf. Tl dorn; TaUTOV cmaaai exouatv 01' 0 daIv dp£Tat."

[36] Heidegger, *Metaphysik und Nihilismus,* 155f.: "Aber die Mathematik ist dabei nicht nur ein Vorbild der 'strengsten' Erkenntnis, sondern das Mathematische-das Gewi!Ssein-kennzeichnet die Grundart des Seins als der Vor-gestelltheit."

[37] Ibid., 155: "Gewiilsein als Subjectitiit" I have translated here only partially adequately with the term 'subjectivity'-in fact Heidegger means something more like 'sujecticity', a term he uses in other places as well.

the entirely mathematical character of the *ego cogito,* that which can be known of God is always decided in advance by the possibilities already present for the 'I' that cogitates. God is measured by the human; God cannot be anything that man cannot already decide God would be. I would venture to suggest this has been the situation of the last four to five hundred years, and in its most aggressive form the situation of the last fifty. God, no matter how much he is proclaimed to be a *substantia infinita,* has been shrunk to a very human measure (even if 'the infinite' is the greatest measure a human may make).

In this sense we can answer our question: Can we give a good account of God with reference to mathematics? The answer must be no: every attempt to secure the essence of God mathematically decides in advance what the essence of God is. Moreover, a strong, in fact determinative, calculative relation between the essence of God and the being of man is always posited in every attempt. [38] If God is secured on the basis of the subjectivity of the subject, then the possibility will always be held out that a 'rational demonstration' of the being of God is possible. In every case what is demonstrated is the character of the mathematical grounding and not the genuine being or essence, or even existence, of God. This is the very reason for the continuing seductive possibility of every proof or rational demonstration of the being of God from first principles, or prior causality, or anything of the sort. At the same time this possibility is explicitly facilitated and made possible by the intrusion of Christian or at least Western (and here I include Jewish and Islamic) theistic assumptions, largely carried over (at least in the West) from the mediaeval period. Many of them have their origins not only in the Neoplatonism of Philoponus but also in the Arab schools of the sixth to thirteenth centuries.

The understanding of God delivered by µa8rimc; is an essentially negative knowledge. The present universal vogue for 'negative theology' is precisely testimony to the emptiness of the

---

[38] This is the reason for my excursus into the question of analogy above: the analogical relation has become, after Descartes, at least open to being construed as *calculable.*

understanding of God to be gained here, despite all the tantalizing talk of *viae negativae* and of Meister Eckhart's lugubrious German sermons. Descartes himself confirms this in his third *Meditation,* when he says, "and I must not think that I perceive the infinite through a true idea, but rather only through the negation of the finite."[39] Heidegger comments that "mathematical knowledge is in itself, in its content ... the emptiest knowledge in what it lets itself think, and as this is at the same time the least binding for man."[40] He concludes, "mathematical knowledge does not necessarily need to be borne by the inner substance of man."[41]

What kind of knowledge of God is "borne by the inner substance of man," and what is philosophy's relation to such knowledge? The diabolical character of (contemporary) theology is to be found in its restricting man to what he already sees so that he can no longer be led to see beyond himself. Here even the contemporary character of all claims to transcendence and the transcendent are exposed as the end of an aim, of man's furthest reach as what can be declared to be beyond him (even when this reach is said to be infinite). However, divinity and God have nothing to do with man's furthest reach-more precisely, with what man can himself see-but rather have to do with man's essential restrictedness to what he can see for himself. God-and the gods (taken philosophically)-are those who see what man does not see, and who address man with what remains unseen to him. The Greeks refer to the gods as the ouv(crTOpE<;the ones not who witness (the usual translation of this term) but who see with respect to what is concealed from man, what is not known to him. Insofar as the gods have a relation to being as such, the concealment of being is their proper realm. The contemporary

---

[39] Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia,* 45: "Nee putare debeo me non percipere infinitum per veram ideam, sed tanrum per negationem finiti."

[40] M. Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit,* in *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 29/30 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1992), 25: "Die Mathematische Erkenntnis ist in sich ihrem Gehalte nach ... die leerste Erkenntnis, die sich denken laflt, und als diese zugleich fiir den Menschen die unverbindlichste." Heidegger adds that this is why mere seventeen-year-old mathematicians can make great discoveries.

[41] Ibid.: "Mathematische Erkenntnisse miissen nicht notwendig von der inneren Substanz des Menschen getragen sein."

clatter about transcendence and immanence is enmeshed in this failure of man to allow himself to be addressed by that one who sees beyond what man sees. God's essential realm is in hiddenness and the concealed (what is concealed to man: this is an ontological concern, it is restricted to disclosing something about the character of human knowledge), and this is as true for the Christian God as it is for the gods of the Greeks.

III. ARISTOTLE, 'PLATONISM', AND PLATO

In Descartes's conception of the mathematical something has already been decided, almost without our noticing it, and for a very specific reason. This something relates to the ancient quarrel between Aristotle and Plato-at least as Aristotle tells it. According to Aristotle, that which Plato holds to be known already-virtue, health, figure, color, and above all number-is known already because it preexists in some sense. Aristotle spoke against Plato and the Pythagoreans for holding that numbers in particular preexist whatever they are the numbers of. We touch here on the theory of the forms, although we should recall that this theory as it is commonly attributed to Plato we learn primarily at Aristotle's hand. Aristotle, in contrast to Plato, maintains that in any number (as indeed in any universal) the number is inseparable from the things numbered. The three of the three chairs is inseparable from the chairs themselves. Put another way, when I understand there are three chairs and three tables it is not the same three that is present in each. [42]

Aristotle says, with reference to the Platonic understanding of number: "it was binding for those stating that beings are from out of the elements, and that the first beings are numbers, that they demonstrate the manner in which one thing was derived from the other, and thereby saying in what manner number is from things

---

[42] There is, however, something is 'common' (Kmv6v) to both threes. What is 'common' is not that they participate in the essence of number (which they do), but rather that they participate in crocj>fa, the *knowledge* (0Ewpfa) of number. Here knowledge implies a 'one-knowing'.

prior. "[43] Aristotle draws attention here to a fundamental feature
of the mathematical: the order in which things arise, what follows
what *(taxis).* For Plato, the manifold of specific beings arises out
of the preexistent *one* (the TaOrnv c:180<;) to which every instance
of the manifold is in each case led back. The force of Aristotle's
argument is that number is not separable from what it is number
of ,[44] which is why it is not the most abstracted of the knowledge
given in μciElrimc;.Moreover, the origins and sources (Tac; apxcic;)
as well as the order of number and figure are other for Aristotle
than they have been suggested by the Platonists.

Before we can address what these origins and order are, we
must ask, In what way are some numbers first or prior? As we
have seen, the mathematical is 'what comes first' in my en-
countering any thing in the world, it is what I bring to the
encounter in order to makes sense of it and understand it. The
mathematical is therefore that which goes in advance of every-
thing it encounters;   it is, in the broadest sense, what I already
know in what I come to learn. For Plato this led to the theory of
eidetic number, something separated in advance of everything that
is, that then explains *what* it is, and so its actual being: the Ta0Tov
d8oc;. For Aristotle, however, it led in a different direction. As
number is separable from what it is the number of, so thinking
itself is separable from what it thinks of. 'Separable' does not
mean separated from whatever is encountered. Number can be
read-off what it numbers, but it is the activity of reading-off that
discloses in each case what the number in question is a number of.

It is in Aristotle that we can see how number is grounded
ontologically. The   of number has the character of a one, but
it is a one not mixed with the body (i.e., it is the most abstracted);
hence it is always unity ([v), but not a monad (μovcic;): it is the
essential unity not of the c:18oc; or 'form', but of *world* that allows
both the body and the chair (or whatever else that is at issue) to
appear. *It is what has run ahead of every particular body to make*

[43] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1092a21: '"'EoEt *5£* rnus AtyovTas *EK* OTotxdwv Evm Ta 15vrn
Kal TWY 0VTWY Ta npwrn TOUS apt8μous, OtEAoμtvous TIWS aAAO   aAAou EOTIV,0UTW AEYElV
Tiva Tponov *6* apt8μ6s Eo-nv EK TWV apxwv."

[44] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1093b27: "rnO   xwpwTaElvm TaμaOriμanKaTwv aia811Twv."

the individuation of every possible body apparent. Although he does so in an entirely metaphysical sense, what Aristotle uncovers with respect to the EV as apart from the μovac; is the phenomenon of world: the 'that through which' I and everything I know is uncovered, as a something that entirely involuntarily has already run ahead of me and towards which I am drawn. The 'one' is always counted out from the two, it has no genuinely ontological ground: the unity within which the manifold appears and from which the one can be counted up is the originating of being itself. In separating the unity from the monad (his critique of the *Mathematikoi),* [45] in fact Aristotle shows how they are related. In genuinely encountering the EV as ahead of me, I become able to produce the one (as "one of" whatever it is one of) as the μovac;, from out of the prior, implicit, unity of world-that is, of the EV.

The one as both Ev and μovac; would seem also to be the of the whole origin of number, as the origin of the series. However, this is so only in a particular sense, because the μovac; is itself inferred (i.e., worked out), or abstracted, from the manifold, by virtue of my being here in the manifolding of the manifold. [46] Aristotle argues that the μovac; is only potentially the same as the Ev; for what is actual and present, this cannot be so. [47] Both the EV and the μovac; can only exist in thought, and in what is thought-from-through-to (8tavonv) neither the [v nor the μovac; can be seen with the eyes (to see one only is already to know what it is one of-one *of* the trees, one *of* the windows). This is the genuinely ontological character of the 'one', how being and thinking belong together. Hence Aristotle says that the truth is [I':v] C>uvaμa. It is actualized by the one thinking (in

[45] I have discussed this in much more detail (in a text on which these few paragraphs are based) in L. P. Hemming, *Postmodernity's Transcending: Devaluing God* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press; and London: SCM Press, 2005), chap. 7, pp. 137-67.

[46] We see here therefore, why the EV, the μova<;, and in fact the geometrical point (are not really numbers at all (in the Greek sense); they have to be found out in every case. In each case their finding-out is by a different means, although Aristotle's criticism of the *Mathematikoi* was that these made all three the same.

[47] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1084b21: "foTt yap πw<; EV EKaTEpov,Tfj μi:v <XAri8d<;XouvaμEt . i:vTEA£XEl\X8'ouK fon μova<; i:KmEpa."

abstracting). Every actuality (every single thing already present) is, in contrast, already in some sense indicative of a twofold-in that it is *abstracted* as a one-over-against-the-other *from* the unity of the manifold from out of which it is taken. It appears as a 'second' to the unity of the manifold.

The force of this argument is ontological: it requires a one seeing, and so knowing in every case, that (while the ΕΝ is always) the μοναc; is to be inferred and is only potentially. We can now see why for Aristotle number is separable but not separated from whatever is encountered. It can be read-off, as all the appearances can be read-off, but (as I have noted) it is the activity of reading-off that discloses in each case what number is *of*. Every reading-off leads back to the original unity of the ΕΝ and the μοναc;. However, the one seeing is for Aristotle, not God, but the given human being in its being who encounters the chairs, or the excellences, or whatever it is he or she encounters. In order to reach a conclusion, we need to enquire whether Aristotle is correct in his implicit argument that the 'theory of the forms' is inadequately grounded in Plato.

IV. CONCLUSION: REMEMBERING AS PLATO SAID IT

Previously I translated the term αvαμvriatc; (which we en-countered in the *Meno)* as "recollection," and referred to the ap-parently medial infinitive αvαμtμvtjaKrn8m, "self-recollecting." In fact the Greek qualifies this with mhov ΕΝ αuT<{l, "in himself and by himself," but already a clue is given, for the 'self with respect to the self' is really the same requirement for a 'one seeing' that we encountered in Aristotle's distinction of the ΕΝ and the μοναc;. The suggestion is that, contrary to how Plato is always interpreted, it is not what the self thinks that is at issue (the psychological interpretation on which Descartes's entire sub-jectivity and *mathesis* depends), but *that a self emerges and can be abstracted (taken-off) from thinking,* in every thinking. The mhov ΕΝ αuT<{l need indicate no psychological activity of a prior existent self, and so does not indicate an already present, stable entity, but

rather the 'how', the manner of my being in any situation in which I find myself (it indicates my becoming, not my being).

What does αναμvriau; actually mean? The word is usually understood in terms of Plato's, or the Pythagoreans', supposed doctrine of reincarnation, whereby the soul has already looked at the forms (Etbot), and so sees and interprets the essence or being of any particular being with respect to the being to which it is led back, the *Vorbild* we encountered in Heidegger's notebook. This is the interpretation that sits at the basis of Descartes's concern with the mathematical. In fact, αναμvriau; cannot mean this, for this is the work done by the verb dMvm (which Plato does not employ here). Normally translated as a present infinitive, "to know," d8[vm is really a perfect infinitive meaning "to have seen." It means to know only because it means first "to recognize" in the sense of "to know what *this is here* by already having seen its like before *over there."* It corresponds exactly to the word d8oc;; not a form, but, literally, an 'already visible' (having the 'E'augment, and so indicating a thing already having taken place).

At the end of his lectures on the fragments of Parmenides, [48] Heidegger proposes an extraordinary interpretation of the term αναμvriatc; from a line late in Plato's *Republic* which speaks of T0 Tflc; n£8iov. [49] This phrase, often translated as "the plain of oblivion," Heidegger translates as "the field of withdrawing concealment. "[50] Heidegger notes that to translate αναμvrimc; as "recollection" gives the term an entirely psychological interpretation, whereby it loses its essential relation to d8oc; and iota. [51]

---

[48] Given in the Winter Semester of 1942/1943.

[49] Plato, *Republic* 62la.

[50] M. Heidegger, *Pannenides,* in *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 54 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1982), 180: "Das Feld der entziehenden Verbergung."

[51] Both words stemming from the same root, *id-, nd-,* from which we get *videre, visa,* "visual." Heidegger turns to this word again in relation to Plato in M. Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe,* in *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 51 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1991), 66. Here he implies that there is an ambiguity in Plato's use, either for him or in our recollection of him, that suggests not (as Heidegger asserts) that "Das Sein erinnert dergestalt wesentlich. Das Sein ist selbe das Er-innernde, *ist* die eigentliche Erinnerung" ("Being thus is what remembers essentially. Being is itself what re-members, *is* the appropriate remembering" [emphasis in original]), but "In *Platons* Lehre wird nur gesagt, wie wir uns zum Sein des Seienden

Properly thought in Greek, and even here in this section of the *Republic,*   means the outward look that a thing presents in its appearing-hence,   in German, not its *Vorbild* as type but its *Bild* as image or appearance as such: its genuine <j>a(vi::a8at, its 'appearing for itself', self-presenting. If   carries the augment, a thing 'as-having-appeared',   the icSfo is its appearing-as-such, not its having appeared, but more simply its face, countenance, or mien. Heidegger comments that "the icSEa is the presentness of presencing: the being of beings."[52] In Heidegger's   sense, therefore,   the icSEa is the unconcealedness   of whatever is unconcealed; it is the way the thing appears from out of the concealedness of lltj8T], in a-Atj8na.

What is the relation of   to icSEa and alltj8na? The question is decisive for the interpretation   of Plato, of the so-called theory of the forms, and indeed for the very foundation of the claims I have been making here with respect to Descartes.

Atj8T] (Aav8avw) means not only concealment, but forgetful-ness. In lltj8T] the difference between the 'here' (the *Da* of *Dasein!)* and the 'there' or 'over there' (ElTEKEtva) is made avail-able. Even in the way something comes out into the open in alltj8na, in unconcealedness, it is in constant danger of being withdrawn into concealment. This does not mean it disappears: rather, it disappears in its truth (we are never really only concerned with mere outward appearances) in the being of its being. Put simply, we can forget and lose what a thing really is and is for. Stonehenge is a thing that, though still extant, has entirely disappeared in the being of its being. We have no idea what it is nor even who it was for. It is a monument to what Heidegger means by 'withdrawing concealment'. For this reason, to understand a being in its being requires a kind of an effortful comporting, a constant mindfulness of it. The Greek word for

verhalten .... Jetzt aber gilt es zu erkennen, daß das Sein nicht ein 'Gegenstand' der moglichen Erinnerung fiir uns [ist]" ("In Plato's doctrine it only comes to be said, how we ourselves comport to the being of beings .... it must be recognized, that being is not an 'object' of possible remembering for us").

[52] Heidegger, *Parmenides,* 180: "Die ilifo ist die Anwesenheit des Anwesenden: das Sein des Seienden."

this, Heidegger reminds us, is μναομm. He continues: "the keeping on a path and keeping to its journey is called in Greek ava-, the constant thinking about something, the pure saving of the thing thought into unconcealedness, is therefore avaμvT]atc;."[53] Heidegger concludes "In Plato's sense, and therefore thought in a Greek way, the relation to the being of beings is avaμYT]atc;."[54]

The interpretation advanced here preserves Plato's properly ontological understanding of beings. What is essential here is that avaμYT]atc; is in no sense a psychological category in the way it is routinely interpreted later-the interpretation on which Descartes's arguments must rely in order for him to slip loose from the last vestiges of the ancient ontology as they manifest themselves in the Christian thought of the Middle Ages, in favor of the mathematical and 'certain'. From thereon all Western philosophy is at the same time a psychology, a fact Nietzsche was to celebrate: the being of beings is to be had only in self-consciousness. Aristotle preserves this ontological relation in an entirely different way, through his distinction between the *EV* and the μovac; (the singular and the one).

This interpretation of Heidegger's comes shortly after he had explicitly raised the question of "the difference between the Greek gods and the Christian God." [55] For Heidegger, the Greek gods "jut" *(ragen)* into being; the Christian God, despite his characterizations, never enters into the region of being in this way. Here we depart from Heidegger, for reasons which have barely, if ever, been adequately discussed in Christian theology, and which in the present rage to make Christianity intelligible and available to everyone (in a way that would drag the essence and interior life of God into the open like a sheet dragged round on the floor by a child) risk being lost altogether.

[53] Ibid., 184: "Das sich einer Bahn und Fahrt entlang zieht, heiSt griechisch ava-, das standige Denken auf etwas, das reine Retten des Bedachten in die Unverborgenheit ist die avaμvriau;."

[54] Ibid.: "Im Sinne Piatons, und d.h. griechisch gedacht, ist deshalb der Bezug zum Sein des Seienden die avclμvriau;."

[55] Ibid., 162: "Der Unterschied der griechischen Gotter zum christlichen Gott."

Heidegger remarks that the essence of the Christian God is determined (he cites von Leibniz) in the following way: "cum Deus calculat, fit mundus." He translates this as "because and while God calculates, the world comes into being. "[56] The reference to calculation taunts all post-Enlightenment Christianity, and indeed, the essential theoretical Neoplatonism of Christianity since Philoponus and perhaps even Augustine himself. Certainly the condemnations of 1277 in Paris, with their underlying defense of the (at least potential) arbitrary omnipotence of God (a defense Descartes himself was still pursuing),[57] pushed Christianity decisively in the direction that led Descartes and von Leibniz to mathematicize the essence of God. But there is an entire tradition of reflection on the essence of God that is overlooked here. It is a tradition exemplified in Aquinas-and in St. Thomas's gentle resistance to some of the consequences of St. Augustine's thought-in the essential and joyful nonarbitrariness of the world for man in his conversation with God. This tradition understands the essence of the Christian God to be thought through its hiddenness, so much so that the unessence of the Christian God is never made known to man directly, but only in figures, signs and sacraments. Even this knowledge is not worked out (ratiocinated, excogitated) in any way, but arises only on the basis of God's own self-disclosure: it is theological, and arises solely on the basis of faith (i.e., the faith of the one-believing), and so is never philosophical knowledge. [58]

Saint Thomas, we must recall, speaks of the sacraments, not only of the new covenant, but also of the old. The Christian God remains so hidden from man that even God's intrusions into being before the event of the Incarnation are made, St. Athanasius is adamant, through the *second* and not the *first* person of the divine Trinity. This interpretation is decisive for any theology of the incarnation, as much as it is for any theology of the sacrifice of

---

[56] Ibid., 165: "Weil und wiihrend Gott rechnet, entsteht die Welt."

[57] Cf. (for one instance) R. Descartes, letter to Mersenne of 6th May, 1630 in Adam and Tannery, eds., *CEvres de Descartes,* 1:147 ff., esp. 149.

[58] A point explored with huge care throughout Mark Jordan's recent book *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); see esp. 60-88.

the Cross. God can never be known in advance of himself, and he can only be known through the Son. The Son alone is the way to the Father.

THE THEOLOGY OF DISCLOSURE AND BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

WILLIAM M. WRIGHT IV

Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

N HIS THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS, Robert Sokolowski articulates a program for what he calls "the theology of disclosure. "[1] This way of doing theology appropriates prin-ciples from Husserlian phenomenology to examine the appear-ances and modes of manifestation proper to sacred realities by which they are made known. [2] Up till now, Sokolowski's theologi-cal contribution has received most attention from philosophers of religion and theologians who are concerned with the doctrine of God or human morality. [3] Even though Sokolowski devotes chapters in his books *The God of Faith and Reason* and

---

[1] See Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982); idem, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993).

[2] Sokolowski admits that his interpretation of Husserl, which is characteristic of the "'East Coast'" school of Husserl interpretation in the United States, is not shared by all phenomenologists. See Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 222-23.

[3] For instance, the essays in *Ethical and Theological Disclosures: The Thought of Robert Sokolowski,* ed. Guy Mansini, O.S.B., and James G. Hart (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003); David B. Burrell, C.S.C., "The Christian Distinction Celebrated and Expanded," in *The Truthful and the Good: Essays in Honor of Robert Sokolowski,* ed. John J. Drummond and James G. Hart (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 191-206; Brian J. Shanley, O.P., *"Sacra Doctrina* and the Theology of Disclosure," *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 163-87; Allen Vigneron, "The Christian Mystery and the Presence and Absence of God," in Drummond and Hart, eds., *The Truthful and the Good,* 181-89.

Eucharistic Presence to the relationship between the theology of disclosure and Scripture, his work has yet to be considered as an interpretive resource by biblical scholars.

This essay seeks to integrate some elements of Sokolowski's theology of disclosure with biblical scholarship by means of an exegetical case study: the Christological interpretation of Psalm 69 in the Gospel according to John. For this purpose, I will set forth the basic tenets of the theology of disclosure with special attention to the place of Scripture within it. Then, I will analyze the interpretation of Psalm 69 in the Fourth Gospel and explore its convergences with the theology of disclosure.

I. THE THEOLOGY OF DISCLOSURE AND SCRIPTURE

Sokolowski defines the theology of disclosure as having "the task of describing how the Christian things taught by the Church and studied by speculative theology come to light." [4] He illustrates the character of the theology of disclosure by contrasting it with positive theology and speculative theology. [5] Positive theological disciplines, such as biblical studies or patristics, are historical in character. They examine the treatment of theological realities in specific historical contexts. Speculative theology is more properly philosophical and systematic. It considers theological things in themselves (e.g., Christ) and in relation to other theological things (e.g., Christ and the Church), organizing them into a system. In contrast to positive and speculative theology, the theology of disclosure focuses on how sacred realities are manifested or presented to a subject. [6] The theology of disclosure takes seriously the appearances by which sacred realities are presented. From these appearances, the theology of disclosure draws conclusions

---

[4] Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 7.

[5] Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason,* 91-103; idem, *Eucharistic Presence,* 5-12, 173-79.

[6] Sokolowski articulates the distinction between the theology of disclosure and systematic and historical theology in this way: "the theology of disclosure differs from speculative theology because it examines the manifestation of Christian things and not, primarily, their nature, definition, and causes; and it differs from positive theology because it is concerned with essential structures of disclosure, which would hold in all times and places, and not with matters of historical fact" (Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 8).

about the character of sacred things and the ways in which sacred things are to be distinguished from other things. In this respect, the theology of disclosure operates with the phenomenological principle that the identity of a thing can be known through the manifold of appearances by which it is presented. [7]

Sokolowski's treatment of the Eucharistic Prayers in *Eucharistic Presence* exemplifies the kind of thinking characteristic of the theology of disclosure. For instance, Sokolowski calls attention to the changes in intentionality brought about by the linguistic shifts in these prayers. [8] He observes that the Eucharistic Prayers in the Roman Rite are for the most part addressed to God the Father. The actions mentioned in them are articulated in the present tense and in the first person plural (e.g., "Father, *we bring* you these gifts ... ").[9] During the institution narrative, however, one's attention is directed into the past. The actions of Jesus at the Last Supper are presented in a past tense and in the third person singular (e.g., *"He broke* the bread, *gave* it to his disciples ... ").[10] Another shift in intentionality occurs in the words of consecration where the priest quotes Jesus' words in the present tense and in the first person singular. Furthermore, during the priest's quotation of Jesus' words, the congregation is addressed in the second person plural. From the point of view of the Last Supper, the quotation employs the future tense to refer to the coming sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (e.g., "this *is* my body which *will be given up* for *you")*. [11] These changes in temporal setting and address serve as means of disclosure.

In the Eucharistic Prayers, the identity of the one sacrifice of Christ is presented through a manifold of appearances. The present-tense address to God the Father illumines the Mass as a prayer and sacrifice offered to God the Father within the present

[7] See Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations: How Words Present Things* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 86-110; *Introduction to Phenomenology,* 17-21, 27-33.

[8] See Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 27-33, 82-117, and esp. 13-15.

[9] All quotations from Eucharistic Prayer III are taken from *The Catholic Liturgy Book: The People's Complete Service Book* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1975), 280; emphasis added.

[10] Ibid.; emphasis added.

[11] Ibid.; emphasis added.

context of the liturgy. The shifts in verb tenses enable the present sacrifice of the Mass to be identified with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This identification is made through the direction of one's attention to Jesus' words and deeds at the Last Supper, which he himself identified with his impending death on the cross. The present tense of the words of consecration fuses the present context of the liturgy with the past context of the Last Supper, and the priest's quotation of Jesus' words in the present tense exemplifies his acting *in persona Christi.* [12] As Sokolowski writes, "We as a group of Christians at worship, we as addressing the Father, living in our own present time and place ... are now all brought together to the single time, place, and perspective from which Jesus, at the Passover he celebrated with his disciples, anticipates his own sacrificial death." [13] These modes of presentation shed light on the nature of Jesus' sacrificial death and its relationship to the Eucharist and the Church's liturgy.

Of fundamental importance to the theology of disclosure is what Sokolowski calls the "Christian distinction between God and the world." [14] Implicit in the doctrine of a free creation, the Christian distinction between God and the world understands God, as the transcendent Creator, to be radically distinct and "other" from all of creation. Sokolowski illustrates the Christian distinction by contrasting it with the understanding of the divine found in ancient Greek mythology and philosophy. Whereas the ancient Greeks considered the divine to be the greatest and best part of all that is, the Christian distinction understands God to be completely distinct from the world. As the free Creator of the world, God exists completely independently of the world and does not need the world to be God. Sokolowski argues that God's creating the world does not add anything to him, nor would his perfection be lessened if he had not chosen to create. As Soko-

---

[12] Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 15, 17-18.

[13] Ibid., 14.

[14] Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason,* xiv. He defines this distinction in ibid., 8-10, 31-40; idem, *Eucharistic Presence,* 37-54. David Burrell finds the relationship between God and the world articulated by Sokolowski to be similar to that presupposed by Al-Ghazali and Maimonides (Burrell, "The Christian Distinction Celebrated and Expanded," 196-206).

lowski puts it, Christians "understand the world as that which might not have been, and correlatively we understand God as capable of existing, in undiminished goodness and greatness, even if the world had not been." [15] The situation articulated by the Christian distinction holds God to be utterly transcendent and completely self-sufficient and perfect apart from the world. The world also emerges as radically contingent: the very existence of everything depends on God's free choice.

The Christian distinction between God and the world provides the context for all theological thinking. The Christian distinction requires that modifications be made to all thinking and speaking about God. [16] Human reason, language, and categories are limited to the context of the world. These human capacities are proper to the created world and the things that are found within it. Since God is not a thing that exists within the context of the world, human language and categories cannot be applied to God in a straightforward manner. They must be modified in light of the Christian distinction. [17] All thinking and speaking about God within the horizon of the Christian distinction must resist the impulse to conceive of God as a thing among other things. Since the theology of disclosure attends to the appearances by which sacred things are made manifest, it accents the unique character of the sacred things that are disclosed through a manifold of appearances. Working within the context of the Christian distinction, the theology of disclosure considers the ways in which the unique character of sacred realities requires that they be distinguished from things of the world. The theology of disclosure is thus extremely sensitive to the shifts in thinking and speaking about sacred realities, which the Christian distinction necessitates.

Given the character of the theology of disclosure and the context in which it operates, what is the place of Scripture within this theological program? Sokolowski recognizes that Scripture

---

[15] Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason,* 19.

[16] Ibid., 31-34, 39.

[17] "It is not just that we have to add new categories or new names; the old names have to be newly understood. 'Necessity' and 'contingency', 'divine' and 'worldly', take on a transposed sense" (Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 48).

can be read and studied in a number of different ways. He makes
a distinction between private reading, which a biblical scholar or
devotee might carry out in silence, and public reading, which
performs the Scripture aloud, usually within a liturgical context.
The context of the liturgy is the most appropriate place for
reading Scripture, because the liturgical reading of Scripture
makes present the events of salvation history to the worshiping
community in the presence of God. [18]

   With respect to private reading (and specifically academic
reading), Sokolowski distinguishes between biblical studies as a
historical discipline and reading Scripture in the theology of
disclosure. He considers biblical studies to be a largely historical
discipline, and he refers to it as "the primary part of positive
theology." [19] He acknowledges the benefits of scholarly work
devoted to comparative studies of the Bible and other ancient
literary texts, the various redactions of a single biblical com-
position, and the existence of different theologies within the
canon. [20] Like other positive theological disciplines, historical
biblical studies make a beneficial and important contribution to
theological thinking. But positive theological disciplines, including
biblical studies, must guard against a collapse into historicism,
which "reduces the articles of faith to opinions prevailing in
certain historical circumstances. "[21]

   The theology of disclosure treats the written language of the
biblical text as a mode of appearance by which sacred realities are
disclosed. [22] Vitally important for reading the Bible in the theology
of disclosure is this priority of things over words. [23] Sokolowski

   [18] Ibid., 142-44.

   [19] Ibid., 6.

   [20] Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason,* 119.

   [21] Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 7. He adds that the theology of disclosure can help
guard against historicist reduction because it deals with "essential structures of disclosure,
which would hold in all times and places, and not with matters of historical fact" (ibid., 8).

   [22] For Sokolowski's treatment of the Bible in the theology of disclosure, see Sokolowski,
God of Faith and Reason, 119-32; idem, *Eucharistic Presence,* 138-58.

   [23] See Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 141-44. Sokolowski's consideration of the Bible
as a vehicle of theological disclosure incorporates elements from his phenomenological
analysis of language. See Robert Sokolowski, "The Sentence as a Signal for Propositional
Achievement," in *Presence and Absence: A Philosophical Investigation of Language and Being*

argues that words are fundamentally referential. They continually direct one's attention away from themselves to another thing or state of affairs, which they present to one's consciousness. [24] The meaning of a proposition, then, is a thing or an articulation of the world *as presented* by a speaker or writer; it is "how the world is being projected as being, through what someone is saying." [25] While the theology of disclosure examines appearances, it does not treat appearances as things in themselves, but as means by which things are presented. The biblical text is a written, linguistic means by which sacred things and states of affairs are presented. Therefore, when the Bible is read within the theology of disclosure, the interpretive concern ultimately lies with the things presented by the biblical text, rather than the words of the biblical text. [26]

To demonstrate the priority of things over the words by which they are presented, Sokolowski cites the example of Jesus and the four canonical Gospels. [27] While the Gospels differ among themselves in particular respects, they all present the same thing: Jesus. When the Bible is read in the theology of disclosure, the theological concern ultimately rests on the thing presented (i.e., Jesus), rather than the specific means by which he is presented (i.e., the words of the gospel texts). Instead of focusing on the "Johannine Jesus" or the "Markan Jesus" as quasi-distinct entities or literary

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 99-115; idem, "Exorcising Concepts," in *Pictures, Quotations, and Distinctions: Fourteen Essays in Phenomenology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 173-85; idem, "Grammar and Thinking," in *Pictures, Quotations, and Distinctions,* 213-25; idem, *Introduction to Phenomenology,* 77-87, 108-11.

[24] Sokolowski argues that words enable a subject to intend an object in its absence. It is not therefore the idea or concept (understood as some kind of abstract substantive) in the speaker's or author's consciousness that is the object of reference. See Sokolowski, "Exorcising Concepts."

[25] Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology,* 100. The truth of a proposition is determined by verifying whether or not the state of affairs or articulation of the world as presented through a proposition actually is the case. The confirmation of whether or not a proposed state of affairs is the case is constituent to Sokolowski's "'disquotational' theory of truth" (see Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology,* 101). See also the discussion of the *"truth of correctness"* in ibid., 158-59.

[26] Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 143-44.

[27] Ibid.

constructs, the reader of Scripture should be attentive to the one Jesus, who is presented in both John and Mark.

To place the theological emphasis on the things presented by the Scripture is not to ignore the differences between the scriptural texts, nor to downplay their literary and rhetorical qualities. For instance, Sokolowski discusses how the rhetorical trope of ambiguity in the Gospel according to John serves as a means of disclosure. [28] Throughout the Fourth Gospel, John deliberately assigns more than one meaning to a single term or statement. This feature of Johannine literary style allows different aspects of a single thing to be disclosed. An example of this phenomenon (which Sokolowski does not himself provide) is Jesus' statement to Nicodemus: "Unless one is born *an6then,* he is not able to see the Kingdom of God" Gohn 3:3). The adverb *an6then* has the twofold sense of "again" and "from above." The ambiguity of this term allows for different aspects of this birth to be presented. Nevertheless, even in this consideration of scriptural language, the theological concern ultimately rests with the thing presented by the text.

Scripture presents sacred things and realities, and it always does so within a particular context. This context is a primary concern for reading Scripture in the theology of disclosure. As mentioned previously, the context for all theological thinking is the Christian distinction between God and the world. Scripture has a particularly important role with respect to the Christian distinction because the biblical witness is a source for our knowledge of the Christian distinction. [29] Sokolowski writes, "the Bible also contains a narration of events, and these events can contain the Christian distinction without explicitly formulating it. "[30] While he articulates the Christian distinction in explicitly

---

[28] Ibid., 156-58. Sokolowski defines ambiguity as "the deliberate expression of two meanings in one phrase" (ibid., 156). Compare the discussions of misunderstanding and double meaning in Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *An Introduction to the Gospel of John,* ed. Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 288-90; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 152-65.

[29] Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason,* 24-25.

[30] Ibid., 123.

philosophical terms, he maintains that the relationship between God and the world, which the Christian distinction defines, is present implicitly in the narratives and worldview of Scripture and above all in the life of Christ. [31]

Sokolowski argues that the biblical understanding of God first came to light within the context and against the background of pagan religiosity. [32] God revealed himself to Israel in this context, and the people of Israel came to understand what it was that made Yahweh distinct from pagan deities. A new sense of the divine as being completely "other" to the world came to light in Israel through this contrast with the deities of other Ancient Near Eastern cultures. The Old Testament understanding of God, however, undergoes significant modification with the Incarnation and the New Testament. [33] In the Incarnation, the God of Israel, who is completely separate and distinct from the created world, enters into the created world and becomes a part of it in Jesus Christ. [34] The Incarnation reveals that God "is so transcendent that even this [i.e., becoming part of creation in the Incarnation] will not comprise the Godhead. "[35] The Incarnation thus establishes a new context for understanding God and his relationship with the world. The Old Testament and its understanding of God estab-lishes the context for the New Testament, and the New Testament provides a new understanding of the God of Israel, who has revealed himself fully through the Incarnate Word.

As the Incarnation modifies the understanding of the distinction between God and the world, it also sheds new light on everything presented in the Old Testament. When viewed in light of the Incarnation, the events and situations in the Old Testament

---

[31] Ibid., 122-24.

[32] Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 144-47; idem, *God of Faith and Reason,* 124-31.

[33] The shift in the understanding of God brought about by the Incarnation is fundamentally different from the Old Testament distinction made between Yahweh and pagan deities. See Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 52-54, 147-51; idem, *God of Faith and Reason,* 36-40, 127-30.

[34] Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence,* 52. The sense of God revealed in the Incarnation, namely, that God can become part of the world without detriment to his divinity, is what makes the Christian distinction specifically Christian.

[35] Ibid., 147.

can be seen as anticipating the salvation brought by Christ.
Insisting again on the priority of things over words, Sokolowski
argues that when the Old Testament is read in light of Christ it is
the things presented by the Old Testament text, rather than the
Old Testament text itself, that possess Christological dimensions.
He writes, "It is not the case that there was one meaning in the
mind of the human author and another meaning intended by God,
but that one *thing* intended by the human author had dimensions
that had not yet come into view, dimensions that could not appear
until more had happened." [36] The light of Christian faith enables
one to see anticipatory dimensions of the things and realities
presented in the Old Testament.

Having established this understanding of the place of Scripture
in the theology of disclosure, we now turn to the exegetical case
study of the Christological interpretation of Psalm 69 in the
Gospel according to John. When that study is complete, we can
compare its results with the principles of the theology of
disclosure and its reading of Scripture.

II. THE CHRISTOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 69
IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Psalm 69 is categorized as a lament psalm. [37] It articulates the
situation of a good, pious person in turmoil. The Psalmist com-
pares his present suffering to drowning in water (vv. 2-3). He is
surrounded by enemies, who persecute him on account of his
relationship with God (vv. 5, 8-10, 13). The Psalmist tries to do
penance and seek consolation, but he receives only more ridicule,
with insult added to injury (vv. 11-12, 21-22). He prays that God
will deliver him from his present circumstances and take action

---

[36] Ibid., 149. Sokolowski uses the notion of *sensus plenior* as a foil for his argument that
it is the things presented in Scripture, not the authors' conscious or unconscious meanings,
that possess Christo logical dimensions. On this point, Sokolowski's understanding approaches
that of Henri de Lubac on the spiritual sense; see Henri de Lubac, S.J., *Scripture in the
Tradition,* trans. Luke O'Neill (New York: Herder & Herder, 2000), 11-31.

[37] For critical analysis of Psalm 69, see J. Clinton McCann,Jr., "Psalms," New Interpreter's
Bible 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 951-54; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100,* Word Biblical
Commentary *20* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 186-202.

against those who assail him (vv. 14-19, 23-29). In keeping with the convention of a lament, the Psalmist turns from a description of his suffering to an expression of confidence that God will save him. He speaks of the song of praise that he will offer once God has helped him (vv. 30-35). His case will serve as an example for others in need and act as a model for the restoration of an exiled people to their homeland (vv. 33-37). With its portrayal of an individual in torment who beseeches God for deliverance, Psalm 69 was often employed by New Testament writers to present Jesus' suffering and death (cf. Matt 27:34; Mark 15:23, 36; Luke 23:36; Rom 15:3).

A) John 2:17

There are three references to Psalm 69 in the Fourth Gospel. The first reference is a direct citation of verse 10 in John 2:17. In John 2:13-17, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for Passover and enters the temple precincts. He drives out the animals being sold in the temple area and spills out the currency used in the sale of these animals. He overturns the tables of the merchants and tells them, "Get these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a house of commerce" (2:16). After the narration of these events, John inserts an aside in which he indicates that Jesus' disciples "remembered *[emnesthesan]"* a scriptural text (Ps 69:10): "Zeal for your house will devour me" Gohn 2:17).

In order to appreciate the citation of this verse, it is necessary to grasp the significance of the narrator's remark that the disciples "remembered *[emnesthesan]"* (2:17). The specific form *emnesthesan* occurs two other times in John (2:22; 12:16). Immediately after Jesus' actions in the Temple, a group of Jews appear and ask Jesus for a sign that would demonstrate publicly God's sanctioning of Jesus' actions in the Temple.[38] Instead of performing a sign on the spot, Jesus replies, "Destroy this temple! And in three days, I will raise it up" (2:19). The Jews misunderstand Jesus'

---

[38] A sign *(semeion)* could serve as God's confirmation of a prophet's or emissary's activity (cf. Exod 3:12; 4:8-9, 30; 11:10; Deut 13:1-6; Mark 16:20; 1Cor1:22). Some Jews also request a legitimating sign from Jesus in John 6:30.

words, thinking them to be about the actual temple building
(2:20). However, the narrator provides his readers with the
proper meaning of Jesus' statement: Jesus was referring not to the
physical temple structure but to his own body (2:21). The
narrator's comment in 2:22, which follows directly from 2:21, is
quite significant. [39] He informs his readers that "when *Uesus]* was
raised from the dead, the disciples remembered *[emnesthesan]*
that he had said this" (2:22).

Another instance of the disciples being reminded occurs in
John 12:16. In 12:12-15, Jesus enters Jerusalem greeted by a
crowd that carries palm branches and cries out the words of Psalm
118:25-26. After mentioning that Jesus sat upon a donkey during
his entry, a gesture that embodies the oracle in Zechariah 9:9,
John quotes a composite of Scripture texts with reference to Jesus'
actions (LXX Zech 9:9; cf. Zeph 3:14-16). A narratorial
comment follows this quotation of Scripture: "His disciples did
not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified,
they remembered *[emnesthesan]* that these things were written
about him and they did these things for him" (12:16). As in John
2:17, the disciples remember something that Jesus said or did, and
they make an association between Jesus' actions and Old
Testament texts.

The significance of the disciples' remembering becomes evident
in light of Jesus' statement that the Paraclete *"will remind* you
[hupomnesei] everything which I told you" Gohn 14:26). When
John indicates that the disciples remember, it is implied that they
are reminded by the Paraclete, as reminding is one of the
functions that he performs. [40]

[39] The narrator's interpretation of Jesus' statement as being about his body (2:21) is linked
to the circumstances of the disciples after Jesus' resurrection (2:22) through the inferential
force of *oun* in 2:22; cf. Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambrige, Mass.: Harvard
University Press, 1984), §2964.

[40] So too John Chrysostom, *Homiliae inJoannem* 23.2 (PG 59:141); Gail R. O'Day, *The
Gospel ofJohn,* The New Interpreter's Bible 9 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 544; Rudolf
Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John,* trans. Kevin Smyth, 3 vols. (New York:
Seabury Press, 1965-82), 2:376-77; D. Moody Smith, *John,* Abingdon New Testament
Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 277. It should be noted that the verb
predicated of the Paraclete *(hupomimneisko)* is not precisely the same one predicated of the
disciples *(mimneisko).* The sole occurrence of *hupomimneisko* in the gospel is in 14:26. The

The temporal location of the disciples' remembering after the resurrection also suggests the activity of the Paraclete. On a number of occasions, John stresses that the Paraclete will come only after Jesus departs. Jesus himself states, "For if I do not depart, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (16:7). When the narrator clarifies the meaning of Jesus' words about rivers of living water as referring to the Spirit, he states that the disciples had not yet received the Spirit "because Jesus had not yet been glorified" (7:39). At the moment of Jesus' death, the text reads "and bowing his head, he handed over the spirit *[pneuma]*" (19:30). [41] In John 20, when the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples, he breathes on them (evoking LXX Gen 2:7) and says "Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:21). The sending of the Spirit is associated with Jesus' glorification.

In John 2:22, the temporal clause introduced by *hate* locates the time of the disciples' being reminded after the resurrection. Similarly, the narrator indicates in 12:16 that "when Jesus was glorified, they [the disciples] remembered." It was after Jesus' glorification that the disciples came to grasp the significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and these Old Testament texts. The inclusion of these narratorial asides also makes clear that the narrator of the Fourth Gospel adopts a backwards-looking point of view. [42] The story of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is told from an explicitly postresurrection perspective.

---

only other instance of this verb in the Johannine corpus is in 3 John 10. While there is a distinction between the two verbs in terms of the prefix, there is no substantial distinction in meaning. Moreover, there are two other instances in the Fourth Gospel in which the disciples are said to remember (15:20; 16:4). In both cases, the verb *hupomimnesko* is used to articulate the disciples' remembrance of Jesus' words.   .

[41] The play on the word *pneuma* in 19:30 exemplifies Sokolowski's treatment of ambiguity/double meaning. When Jesus dies, he hands over his spirit-that is, he dies. But he also hands over the Spirit, the Paraclete.

[42] Cf. Richard Bauckham, "The Audience of the Fourth Gospel," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition,* ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 105; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel,* 27-32; Gail R. O'Day, "The Word Become Flesh: Story and Theology in the Gospel of John," in *'What is john?": Volume II: Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 7 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 72-74. Moreover, by making a reference to Jesus' death and resurrection at this point in the narrative, the narrator indicates that the audience of the gospel has prior knowledge of the story of Jesus; cf. John 11:2.

This reminding activity of the Paraclete may very well involve more than a simple recollection of something that Jesus had said or did in the past. When Jesus tells the disciples that the Paraclete will remind them, he also mentions that the Paraclete "will teach you everything" Gohn 14:26). Similarly, Jesus informs the disciples, "the Spirit of Truth will lead you to all truth" (16:13). Jesus defines this activity of the Paraclete in relation to himself. The Paraclete "will not speak on his own" (ibid.). The Paraclete "will take from me and announce it to you" (16:14; cf. 16:15). Thus, Ignace de la Potterie, in his classic analysis of the Johannine understanding of "truth," writes that the Paraclete "will cause them [the disciples] to understand the true significance and bearing of the words of Jesus." [43] In reminding the disciples, the Paraclete gives them a correct, and previously unknown, understanding of that which is recalled. [44] The Paraclete will teach the deeper significance of Jesus and his life to the disciples.

Such integration of reminding and understanding can be seen in John 2:18-22. Only after the resurrection did the disciples remember, and they "believed in the Scripture and in the statement which Jesus made" (2:22). Likewise, the narrator specifies in 12:16 that "the disciples did not understand these things at first." However, they did come to understand the

[43] Ignace de la Potterie, "The Truth in Saint John," in *The Interpretation of John,* ed. and trans. John Ashton, 2d ed., Studies in New Testament Interpretation (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 67-82, 77; repr. from *Rivista biblica italiana* 11 (1963): 3-24. De la Potterie continues, "the task of the Spirit will be to cause the message of Jesus to penetrate into the hearts of the faithful, to give them the understanding of faith" ("Truth in Saint John," 78). See also Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 36-38; Oscar Cullmann, *Thejohannine Circle,* trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 18-19; FelixPorsch, *C.S.Sp.,PneumaundWort: Ein exegetischerBeitragzur Pneumatologie desJohannesevangeliums,*Frankfurter Theologische Studien 16 (Frankfurt: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1974), 257-67.

[44] Cf. Fernando F. Segovia, *The Farewell of the Word: The Johannine Call to Abide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 105. Lyonnet writes, "in 'recalling' all that Jesus said, he [the Paraclete] will not only remind the disciples of a teaching they might have forgotten; his true task will be to *make them understand* internally the words of Jesus, to make them grasp such words in the light of faith, to make them perceive all the possibilities and importance of such words for the life of the Church" ("The Paraclete," in Ignace de la Potterie, S.J., and Stanislaus Lyonnet, S.J., *The Christian Lives by the Spirit,* trans. John Morriss [Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1971], 64).

significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the relevant Old Testament texts after Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus' glorification and the attendant gift of the Spirit perform a hermeneutical function, which allow the deeper meaning of his words to be discerned from a later perspective. To use Henri de Lubac's terminology, the disciples are brought to "spiritual understanding": [45] after Jesus' resurrection, the Paraclete reminds the disciples of what Jesus said and did and brings them to grasp their significance. [46]

The reminding and teaching activity of the Paraclete with respect to the disciples is significant for John's Christological reading of Psalm 69 because in all three cases where the disciples are said to remember (2: 17, 22; 12: 16), the remembering involves Scripture. In 2: 17, the disciples remember and make an association between Jesus' actions in the Temple and Psalm 69: 10. Although there is no explicit citation of Scripture in 2:22 as there is in 2:17 and 12:15-16, the text does read that the disciples "believed in the Scripture and in the word that Jesus spoke" (2:22). After Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in John 12, scriptural texts are cited in reference to actions performed by Jesus. The narratorial commentary in 12:16 suggests that the Paraclete brought the disciples to a new, spiritual understanding, "reminded them," of an action performed by Jesus in light of Scripture. In these three cases, the Paraclete reminds the disciples and enables them to grasp the spiritual meaning of Christ's words and deeds, which involves reading certain Old Testament texts in light of Christ. The ability to see the Christological significance of the Old Testament is part of the disciples' postresurrectional, spiritual understanding of Jesus effected by the Paraclete.

With this interpretive framework in place, we are better able to approach the interpretation of Psalm 69 in the Fourth Gospel. [47]

[45] De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition,* 16.

[46] Cf. Bruno of Segni, *Commentaria in Joannem* (PL 165:467); Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 10.27-28 (PG 17:391); Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis Lectura,* ed. P. Raphaelis Cai, O.P. (5'h ed.; Rome: Marietti, 1952), §414.

[47] For discussion of explicit citations of Scripture in the Fourth Gospel, see Barnabas Lindars, S.S.F., *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM Press, 1961), 265-72; Bruce G. Schuchard, *Scripture within*

In 2:17, John's quotation of Psalm 69:10 reads, "The zeal for
your house will devour *[kataphagetai*(future middle)] me" (2:17).
However, the text of LXX Psalm 68: 10 reads "the zeal for your
house devoured *[katephagen*(aorist active)] me." [48] The change in
the tense of *katesthio* from the aorist to the future gives the
citation from Psalm 69: 10 a more overtly prophetic ring, in-
dicating that John understands this psalm as anticipating Jesus'
actions in the Temple. Furthermore, the use of the future tense at
this point in the gospel narrative anticipates Jesus' coming death.
Dodd writes of the quotation of Psalm 69: 10, the "implication is
that, just as the Righteous Sufferer of the Psalm paid the price of
his loyalty to the temple, so the action of Jesus in cleansing the
temple will bring him to grief." [49] Jesus' death has already been
foreshadowed in John 2 with the mention of his coming "hour"
(2:4). The statements about the destruction of the Temple and
Jesus' resurrection in John 2 likewise look forward to the passion
narrative (2: 19-20, 22).

When the narrator mentions that the disciples remember the
line from Psalm 69: 10, "Zeal for your house will devour me," he
implies that the disciples came to interpret Jesus' actions in the
Temple and Psalm 69 in light of each other after the resurrection.
The disciples come to see that Jesus' actions in the Temple were
anticipated by Psalm 69. The zeal that Jesus has for his Father's
house impels him to act as he does in driving out the animals and

---

*Scripture: The Interrelationship of Fann and Function in the Explicit Old Testament Citations
in the Gospel of]ohn,* Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 133 (Atlanta: Scholars
Press, 1992).

[48] That John would make deliberate adjustments to the LXX is not out of character for
him. Throughout the gospel, there are instances in which John quotes the LXX verbatim (e.g.,
John 10:34 [Ps 82:6]; John 12:13 [Ps 118:26]; John 12:15b [Zech 9:9b]; John 12:38 [Isa
53:1]; John 19:24 [Ps 22:19]). On other occasions, he will adjust the text of the LXX or
conflate multiple texts into a single citation for his purposes (e.g., John 12:27 *[tetarakati,* vs.
LXX Ps 6:4, *etarachth§j;* John 19:36 [integrating elements from Exod 12:10, 46; and Ps
34:21]; John 6:31 [combining language from Exod 16:4 and Ps 78:24]).

[49] C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1953), 301. So too Schnackenburg writes, "the disciples grasp the dangerous
consequences of Jesus' actions: his zeal for the house of God 'will cost him his life'" in *Gospel
According to St. John,* 1:347. See also Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic,* 106-7; O'Day,
"Gospel of John," 543-44.

overturning the tables of the merchants. But just as the zeal the
Psalmist had for God's house led to persecution, so too will Jesus'
actions in the Temple contribute to his death. The narrator's
comment that the disciples remembered suggests that this Christo-
logical reading of Psalm *69* can only take place through the
activity of the Paraclete after Jesus' glorification.

B) john 15:25

The second reference to Psalm 69 in John's Gospel is in 15 :25.
Here it is found in the speech of Jesus himself. During the
farewell discourse, Jesus tells the disciples that they will be
"hated" by the unbelieving world just as Jesus himself was hated
(15: 18-24). The world's hatred of Jesus correlates to its refusal to
believe in what he reveals about God (15:21, 23-24). Since Jesus
is the Son, who has been sent by the Father, he perfectly reveals
the Father in such a way that to reject Jesus is to reject the One
who sent him: "they have seen and hated both me and my Father"
(15:24;cf.5:19-20;   10:37-38; 12:44-45; 14:7,9-11). The world,
however, does not have an excuse for its unbelief because Jesus
came to them and performed unprecedented deeds. Jesus does the
works of the Father, which reveal and legitimate Jesus' mission
(5:19-20;   10:37-38;   15:24). The unbelieving world saw his
unprecedented deeds and still rejected him (15:24; cf. 9:32-34).
Jesus places the world's unwarranted hatred in a scriptural
context by remarking "that the statement written in their Law
may be fulfilled, 'They hated me without cause' *[emisesan me
darean]"* (15 :25).
Jesus' statement is not a direct quotation of any one scriptural
passage, but it is evocative of several texts, including Psalm 69:5. ₅₀
In its various uses, this scriptural language describes the plight of
an unjustly persecuted individual who petitions God for
vindication. This Old Testament language in the Fourth Gospel
articulates a connection between a situation in the life of Jesus

---

⁵⁰ This language is also evocative of Ps 35:19; 109:3; and Psalms of Solomon 7:L CL
Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic,* 103. Compare the relevant readings of LXX Ps 69:5 *(hoi
misountes me darean)* and John 15:25 *(emisesan me di5rean).*

(i.e., his rejection) and the situation articulated in Psalm 69. Both Jesus and the Psalmist in Psalm 69:5 are scorned and persecuted by people who do not have a justifiable reason for doing so. Previously in the Fourth Gospel, the narrator remarked that the refusal of many to believe in Jesus, even though they had witnessed Jesus' signs, was anticipated in Isaiah Gohn 12:37-41; cf. Isa 6:9-10; 53:1). [51] The Scripture witnesses to Jesus and the situations of his life, including the resistance he encounters.

By speaking of this scriptural quotation as contained in "their Law" Gohn 15:25), Jesus associates the hatred of the unbelieving world with his rejection by his Jewish opponents. With respect to the use of Scripture in 15:25, Gail O'Day writes, "Jesus positions the Jewish leaders' own Scripture to bear witness against them. He used Scripture in a similar way at 5:39, 46-47, and 10:34." [52] As O'Day observes, John frequently presents the Old Testament as supporting Jesus rather than his Jewish opponents, who invoke its authority to support their own position. The Scripture serves as a witness on Jesus' behalf (5:34), and Moses wrote about Jesus in the Scripture (5:45-46). While not all the references to Scripture in the Fourth Gospel can be examined here, the Scripture quotation in 15:25 exemplifies a larger re-reading of Scripture around Jesus in John. Belief in Jesus enables one to see how the Old Testament relates to him and the circumstances of his life.

C) john 19:28-30

The third use of Psalm 69 in the Fourth Gospel is even more subtle. It consists of an allusion woven into the narrative in 19:28-30. Just before Jesus dies on the cross, he cries out, "I am thirsty *[dipsO]"* (19:28). In response, some of those by the cross (presumably the Roman soldiers; see 19:23, 32) offer "sour wine" (oxos) to Jesus, which he drinks (19:29-30). The mention of "sour wine" given for "thirst" in 19:28-30 likely constitutes an allusion

---

[51] See J. M. Lieu, "Blindness in the Johannine Tradition," *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 84-88.

[52] O'Day, "Gospel of John," 764.

to LXX Psalm 69:22 in which the Psalmist says that his tormentors give him "sour wine" *(oxos)* for his "thirst *[dipsan]."* [53] The Psalmist looks for some kind of consolation amidst his suffering but does not find any (Ps 69:21). Adding insult to injury, his tormenters give him something undrinkable when he is thirsty (Ps 69:22). The offer of sour wine contributes to the Psalmist's suffering.

Much exegetical attention has been directed to the symbolic or spiritual significance of Jesus' thirst. Interpretive possibilities include Jesus' willingness to finish the Father's work through his death [54] and Jesus' desire to hand over the Spirit. [55] Some also see a contrast between Jesus' drinking "sour wine" at the moment of his death and the "good wine" that he miraculously confected at the wedding feast at Cana (2:10). [56] In a literal sense, Jesus' admission of thirst can be taken simply as the expression of a dying man, who is physically thirsty. [57] In addition to these possibilities, the intertextual allusion to Psalm 69 suggests that the offer of sour wine can be taken as an insult to Jesus. As the sour

[53] LXX Ps 69:22 reads *"kai edokan eis to br6ma mou cholen kai eis ten dipsan mou epotisan me oxos."* That an allusion is being made to Ps 69:22 in John 19:28-30 is supported further by the observation that Ps 69:22 is the only LXX text which speaks of *oxos* being given in a negative sense. However, some commentators also see an allusion to Ps 22:16 as John previously cited Ps 22:19 in 19:24. For discussion of this point, see Robert L. Brawley, "An Absent Complement and Intertextuality in John 19:28-29," *journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (1993): 436-38; Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *The Gospel according to john,* 2 vols., Anchor Bible 29-29A (New York: Doubleday, 1966-70), 2:929; O'Day, "Gospel of John," 832.

[54] Jesus' admission of thirst may evoke the previous statement about his impending death at the time of his arrest: "The cup which the Father has given me, am I not to drink it" (18:11)? As a sign that he has fulfilled his Father's will, Jesus drinks the sour wine and says, "It is finished" (19:30) at the moment of his death. For discussion, see Brown, *Gospel according to john,* 2:929-30; John Paul Heil, *Blood and Water: The Death and Resurrection of Jesus in john 18-21,* Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 27 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1995), 102; O'Day, "Gospel of John," 832-33; Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John,* 3.282-84.

[55] So Ignace de la Potterie, S.J., *The Hour of Jesus: The Passion and the Resurrection of Jesus according to john* (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1989), 125-31.

[56] See Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 113; Heil, *Blood and Water,* 100; O'Day, "Gospel of John," 833.

[57] John Chrysostom, *Homiliae injoannem* 85.3 (PG 59:461); Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel,* ed. Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 531; O'Day, "Gospel of John," 832; Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. john,* 3:283-84.

wine contributed to the Psalmist's suffering, so too is Jesus given sour wine for his thirst in the hour of his death. Construing the soldiers' offer of sour wine to be an insult makes this small episode an instance of ironic misunderstanding. By giving the sour wine to Jesus for his physical thirst as an insult, the soldiers do not realize that Jesus' real thirst is his desire to complete the Father's work and give over the Spirit (cf. 4:34; 18:11). Near the very end of his mortal life, Jesus is still misunderstood by some. The allusion to Psalm 69 at the moment of Jesus' death may also evoke the previous quotation of Psalm 69:10 in John 2:17, through which Jesus' death was anticipated at the beginning of his public ministry. [58] Similar to the other references to Psalm 69 in the Fourth Gospel, a relationship is discerned between events at the moment of Jesus' death and the situation articulated in Psalm 69.

Ill. THE THEOLOGY OF DISCLOSURE AND JOHN'S CHRISTOLOGICAL READING OF PSALM 69

What insights can be gained by comparing the Christological reading of Psalm 69 in the Fourth Gospel with the reading of Scripture in the theology of disclosure? As was noted previously, the theology of disclosure pays careful attention to the context in which things are presented to a subject. Most important for Sokolowski is the Christian distinction between God and the world, which provides the context for all theological thinking. With respect to reading Scripture, Sokolowski calls attention to the shifts in context that occur with the Incarnation. When the transcendent God takes on a real human nature without detriment to his divinity in Christ, God and all other sacred things presented in the Old Testament appear in a new light. The Incarnation establishes a new context for understanding God and the other realities revealed in the Old Testament.

Such concern for context proves to be quite important when considering the Christological reading of Psalm 69 in John. The

[58] So Brawley, "Absent Complement and Intertextuality," 439

preceding exegetical analysis has shown that shifts in context occur with respect to Jesus and the Old Testament Scripture and the disciples before and after Jesus' glorification. The use of Psalm 69 in the Fourth Gospel establishes a relationship between Jesus and the Old Testament Scripture. The psalm provides a context for understanding events in Jesus' ministry. John invites the audience of the gospel to take Jesus' actions in the Temple, his rejection by the unbelieving world, and the offer of sour wine to slake his thirst on the cross in light of Psalm 69. When viewed from the perspective of the resurrection and the Paraclete, the psalm can be seen as anticipating or foreshadowing Jesus' life. The Scripture provides a context for understanding situations and events in Jesus' life, but Jesus' life also interprets the Scripture. [59] By narrating this correlation, John shows that Jesus' ministry and actions are in harmony with the Old Testament.

Another significant shift occurs with respect to the understanding of the disciples before and after Jesus' death and resurrection. After his reply to the Jews' request for a sign Qohn 2: 19), the Jews (and arguably the disciples) do not grasp the full meaning of Jesus' words, although they heard them correctly. [60] Similarly, when Jesus entered Jerusalem to the greetings of the crowd, John explicitly tells the audience that "his disciples did not understand these things at first" (12: 16). The disciples only understood these events "when Jesus was glorified" (ibid.). The analysis of remembering in the Fourth Gospel has suggested that when the disciples remember, they are reminded by the Paraclete. The disciples are brought to a deeper, spiritual understanding of Jesus and events in his life. Spiritual understanding, then, involves seeing both the significance of Christ and the Old Testament in

[59] Compare de Lubac's discussion of Christ as the exegete and exegesis of Scripture in Henri de Lubac, S,J., *Medieval Exegesis,* voL 1, *The Four Senses of Scripture,* trans. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids, Mich,: Eerdmans, 1998), 234-41,

[60] John establishes that the Jews heard Jesus' words correctly by having them repeat a significant amount of language from Jesus' statement in 2:19. Compare Jesus' language in 2: 19 *"lusate ton 1J.flSlJ1touton kai en trisin hemerais egeroauton"* with the Jews' reply in 2:20 *"tessarakonta kai hex etesin oikodomethe ho 1Jll£§, houtos kai su en trisin hemerais egereis auton!'* Even though the Jews heard the words correctly, they misunderstood their significance.

light of Christ. Spiritual understanding can therefore be char-
acterized as kind of Christocentric hermeneutic, which discerns
the significance of Christ and things in light of Christ. For John,
this understanding conferred by the Paraclete has Jesus as its
primary object, and the Christological reading of the Old
Testament is an extension of grasping the significance of Christ.

However, reading Scripture in the theology of disclosure
requires one to make a distinction between the contextual shift
that occurs between Jesus and the Old Testament and the shift in
the understanding of the disciples before and after the resur-
rection. Within the theology of disclosure, the Incarnation
establishes a fundamentally new context for understanding the
one God and his self-revelation in the history of Israel. The shift
in the disciples' understanding, however, takes place within the
larger contextual shift established by the coming of Christ. The
disciples live within the new context of the Incarnation and
resurrection. The work of the Paraclete thus complements the
work of Jesus (see John 14:26; 15:26;   16:13-15). The Paraclete
does not bring a new understanding of Jesus in the same respect
that the Incarnation provided a new way of understanding God.
The Paraclete does not provide another teaching, different from
that of Jesus. Rather, he brings the disciples to a deeper under-
standing of Jesus and what was has already been done and taught
by him. [61]

This spiritual understanding largely pertains to events or
situations. In John's narrative, the Paraclete brings the disciples to
a spiritual understanding of Jesus himself and particular events in
Jesus' life (e.g., his actions in the Temple and his entry into
Jerusalem). Since John frequently connects Psalm 69 with various
moments in Jesus' life, he arguably sees the situation of the
suffering individual articulated in Psalm 69 as anticipating events
in the life of Jesus. It is the *situation* articulated in Psalm 69 that
John understands as anticipating situations or events in Jesus' life,

---

[61] So too does Rudolf Bultmann write, "It is nothing new that the Spirit will teach, but
whatever Jesus taught or did will appear in new light under the Spirit's teaching, and thus for
the first time become clear in its true meaning" (Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New
Testament,* trans. Kendrick Grobe! [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951-55], 2:89).

not simply the words of the psalm proper. The Psalmist suffers undeservedly on account of his zeal for God, and experiences insult added to injury through an offer of sour wine for his thirst. So too was Jesus undeservedly rejected, and his actions in the Temple contributed to his death, which featured an offer of sour wine to quench his thirst.

Within the theology of disclosure, the Incarnation reveals anticipatory dimensions of the things presented in the Old Testament. That is, when viewed in the light of Christ, the things, persons, and situations in the Old Testament can be seen as having dimensions that anticipate Christ. The Incarnation does not add these dimensions to the things presented in the Old Testament, but reveals dimensions that had been there all along through God's providence. Similarly, John shows concern for the situation of the individual described throughout the whole of Psalm 69 and not just particular lines in the psalm. The repeated citations and allusions to Psalm 69 throughout the Fourth Gospel suggest this correlation. The Evangelist reads Psalm 69 as anticipating or foreshadowing Jesus because the words of the psalm describe a situation he sees mirrored in Jesus' life.

While the theology of disclosure places the interpretive emphasis on the things presented by the words, one should be careful not to lose sight of the mode or form by which those things are presented. One must attend to the important relationship between form and content in scriptural disclosure. Narrative composition, rhetoric, and literary technique are essential to the presentation of things through the biblical text. The Fourth Gospel exemplifies the relationship of form and content quite well. As O'Day writes, "In order to understand *what* John says about Jesus and God, then, one must attend carefully to *how* he tells his story."[62] I have argued that the narratorial asides, which speak of the disciples' remembering, indicate that the Evangelist has composed his gospel with a backwards-looking point of view from within the horizon of the resurrection. Rhetorically, the fact that John adds these remarks about the

[62] O'Day, "The Word Become Flesh," 69.

disciples' postresurrectional   understanding of Jesus shows that the
Evangelist aligns his own narratorial   perspective with that of
Jesus' disciples after the resurrection.   He has written the gospel
from the perspective of a spiritual understanding,   possessed by the
disciples in the narrative. Through the narrative of the gospel,
John presents Jesus and narrates the story in such a way that the
spiritual significance of Jesus and of things in relation to Jesus is
made visible. The narrative presentation   of Jesus in the gospel
conveys this spiritual understanding   of his life. By writing the
gospel narrative in such a way as to present the significance of
Jesus and his mission, John invites the reader to share this same
spiritual understanding.   The spiritual understanding   effected by
the Paraclete in the narrative is extended to a larger audience
through the medium of the gospel itself.

Sokolowski's emphasis on the priority of things over the words
by which things are presented is shaped by a concern not to treat
an appearance as a self-subsisting thing. Moreover, Sokolowski
stresses that while rhetoric and language are components of the
presentation   of things, they should not be treated as things
proper. Phenomenologically   speaking, one should not treat
rhetoric or literary technique, which are "moments,"   as if they
were independently subsisting "wholes. "[63] Sokolowski's treatment
of ambiguity as a trope in the Fourth Gospel shows some concern
for the gospel's narrative presentation and rhetorical strategy. He
also recognizes that John's purposeful use of language functions
as a vehicle for disclosure. The double meaning John assigns to
certain terms and statements in the gospel enables different
aspects of the same thing to be disclosed. Yet, Sokolowski's
attention to the rhetorical and literary character of the scriptural
form of presentation remains somewhat underdeveloped.   From an
exegetical point of view, reading Scripture in the theology of
disclosure does well to attend to the things as presented by the
text. But one must also be mindful of the "as presented"   part of
the proposition.

[63] Sokolowski defines the phenomenological   category "moments" as "parts that cannot
subsist or be presented apart from the whole to which they belong" (Sokolowski, *Introduction
to Phenomenology,* 23). Cf. Idem, *Husserlian Meditations,* 16-17.

There are other areas in which comparisons between biblical exegesis and the theology of disclosure may prove to be fruitful. The theology of disclosure, informed as it is by Sokolowski's interpretation of intentionality, offers a different avenue for thinking about issues of reference and the locus of meaning in interpretation. It offers a contemporary biblical exegesis an interpretive strategy, which is informed by a realism-friendly epistemology and accounts for the modern turn to the subject. The concerns and principles of the theology of disclosure can help shape the interpretation of Scripture, and biblical exegesis can "flesh out" and refine some tenets of the theology of disclosure. Further interactions between the theology of disclosure and biblical exegesis may prove to be enriching for both of these theological disciplines.

A TEST OF KARL RAHNER'S AXIOM,
"THE ECONOMIC TRINITY *IS* THE IMMANENT TRINITY AND VICE VERSA"

DENNIS W. JOWERS

Faith Seminary
Tacoma, Washington

B
y HIS FAMOUS AXIOM, "the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity, and vice versa," Karl Rahner means to assert that divine self-communication "can, *if* occurring in freedom, occur only in the intra-divine manner of the two communications of the one divine essence by the Father to the Son and the Spirit." [1] In other words, the immanent constitution of the Trinity forms a kind of *a priori* law for the divine self-communication *ad extra* so that the structure of the latter cannot but correspond to the structure of the former. [2]

Rahner advances this axiom, the *Grundaxiom* of his theology of the Trinity, primarily for the purpose of manifesting the relevance of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity for ordinary human life. [3] If one can demonstrate, Rahner reasons, that the Trinitarian structure of the intradivine life necessarily corresponds

---

[1] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity,* trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Herder, 1970), 36.

[2] "The Trinity as present in the economy of salvation," Rahner writes, "necessarily embodies also the Trinity as immanent" ("Reflections on Methodology in Theology," in *Theological Investigations* 11, trans. David Bourke [London: Darton, Longman & Todd; New York: The Seabury Press, 1974], 108).

[3] "We must," writes Rahner, "try to make the doctrine of the Trinity fruitful for practical Christian living, given that the doctrine has a 'sitz im leben' and that the Trinity is of crucial importance for actual Christian life and spirituality .... The teaching cannot even have the right 'speculative' content and form, unless it meets these demands in Christian life" ("The Mystery of the Trinity," in *Theological Investigations* 16, trans. David Morland, O.S.B. [New York: The Seabury Press, 1979], 256). Cf. also Rahner, *The Trinity,* 10-15, 39-40.

to, and indeed constitutes,   the *ratio essendi* of the universal
structures of human experience,   then one can also explain why
human beings ought to care about the ontology of God *in se.* Spe-
cifically, if the human experience of divine self-communication is
an experience of the immanent Trinity as it eternally and
necessarily exists in itself, then the doctrine of the immanent
Trinity in large part accounts for the peculiar structure of this
experience [4] and explains to a great extent the structures of human
beings themselves, whom God has created to be the addressees of
his self-communication. [5] If Rahner's *Grundaxiom* is correct,
therefore, every statement of the theology of the Trinity is also a
statement about the experience, nature, and purpose of human
beings: all matters of pressing, existential concern.

    Besides Rahner's pastoral interest in manifesting the relevance
of Christian doctrine for human life, a second motive also seems
to animate his arguments for the necessary correspondence of the
immanent and the economic Trinity. He desires to place
Trinitarian theology on a new methodological footing, far
removed from typically neo-Scholastic presuppositions. He
wishes, specifically, to ground all speculation about the immanent
Trinity in what he considers the ultimate source of human
knowledge of this mystery: the human experience of the economy
of salvation. [6]

    [4] Cf. Rahner's analysis of the experience of divine self-communication into four dyads of
mutually opposed moments (origin-future, history-transcendence, invitation-acceptance,
knowledge-love); his reduction of these dyads to the fundamental relation of knowledge-love;
and his argument for the correspondence of the external processions of the Son and Spirit,
respectively, with these moments of human experience (Rahner, *The Trinity,* 91-99).

    s Cf. ibid., 88-89.

    [6] "The OiKovoμia," writes Rahner, "is actually the whole of theology and … contains and
reveals the immanent Trinity in itself" ("Trinitiitstheologie," in *Sacramentum Mundi,* 4 vols.,
ed. Karl Rabner et al. [Freiburg: Herder, 1967-69]). Putatively revealed propositions, by
contrast, cannot constitute the immediate means by which the immanent Trinity discloses
itself, in Rahner's view, because God does not intervene in the categorical order as he must
if he is to insert data concerning his inner nature directly into the consciousness of the bearers
of revelation. As Rabner explains: "A special intervention of God can only be understood as
the historical concreteness of the transcendental self-communication of God which is already
intrinsic to the concrete world. Such an 'intervention' of God always takes place, first of all,
from out of the fundamental openness of finite matter and of a biological system towards
spirit and its history, and, secondly, from out of the openness of the spirit towards the history

Rahn er' s *Grundaxiom* serves, therefore, to magnify the rele-
vance of Trinitarian doctrine and to place it on a securer basis
than the supernaturalistically conceived, propositional revelation
of the neo-Scholastics. The *Grundaxiom,* nonetheless, seems
difficult to falsify and, therefore, difficult unambiguously to
confirm. In the following, accordingly, after determining that my
methodology does not contravene Rahner's presuppositions, I
shall conduct a test of sorts that I consider approximately
adequate to the purpose of either falsifying or corroborating
Rahner's famous thesis.

I intend to ask, specifically, whether the intra-Trinitarian rela-
tions reflected in the economy of salvation always correspond to
the Tasu; of the immanent Trinity as this Taste; is envisioned by
Rahn er.[7] For this purpose I will consider one of the most striking
manifestations of the Trinity recorded in Scripture: the Father's
anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit after his baptism in the
Jordan. If one can reasonably construe this theophany as a faithful
representation of the intra-Trinitarian Taste; as Rahner conceives
of it, then this singularly important episode within the economy
of salvation lends credit to Rahner's *Grundaxiom.* H the pattern
of intra-Trinitarian relations displayed in Christ's anointing with
the Holy Spirit cannot be reconciled with what Rabner considers
the orthodox understanding of the intra-Trinitarian Taste;,
however, it appears that either Rahner's axiom or his own, mildly
Latin Trinitarianism must be false. By evaluating strategies for
reconciling Rahner's views about the necessary structure of
Trinitarian self-communication with the portrait of the Trinity

of the transcendental relationship between God and the created person in their mutual
freedom. Consequently, every real intervention of God in his world ... is always only the
becoming historical and becoming concrete of that 'intervention' in which God as the
transcendental ground of the world has from the outset embedded himself in this world as its
self-communicating ground" (Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction
to the Idea of Christianity,* trans. William V. Dych [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 87). Cf. the
discussion below of Rahner's method in Trinitarian theology in section V.

[7] In Rahner's view, "these 'distinct manners of subsisting' [i.e. the divine persons] should
be seen as relative and standing in a determined   to each other (Father, Son, and Spirit)"
(Raimer, *The Trinity,* 112). Again, writes Rahner, "we *cannot* say *[nicht* sagen kann] that the
Son proceeds from the Spirit" (ibid., 117 n. 41).

given in Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit, I intend to determine whether the anointing accounts in Scripture (Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:22; and John 1:32) confirm or falsify Rahner's vision of Latin Trinitarianism revealed in the economy of salvation. [8]

I. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before beginning this investigation, it seems advisable to consider whether the presuppositions of the inquiry would be acceptable to Rahner himself. Three questions may be considered. First, does Rahner consider Scripture a legitimate measure of the truth or falsehood of theological statements? Second, does Scripture constitute an appropriate norm for the *Grundaxiom* of Rahner's theology of the Trinity? Third, does Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit constitute an appropriate matrix in which to test this axiom?

A) Scripture as a Measure of Theological Statements

The appropriate answer to our first question will vary in accordance with the sense one attaches to the idea of a "legitimate measure" in theological questions. Rahner emphatically denies that Scripture constitutes a "legitimate measure" for theological statements if by this one means that Scripture consists in a body of divinely revealed and, therefore, normative propositions.

It is apparent that God does not effect revelation by simply adding new "propositions" "from outside" to the basic substance of the Christian faith .... Revelation is not revelation of concepts, not the creation of new fundamental

---

[8] One might object, admittedly, that Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit need not constitute a revelation of the intra-Trinitarian   Rahner, however, specifically affirms that the Trinitarian persons' "opposed relativities are ... concretely identical with both 'communications' ('processions') as seen from both sides" (ibid., 73). Any manifestation of the divine persons relating to each other, therefore, is *ipso facto* also a manifestation of the in which the divine processions occur.

axioms *[Grundaxiome*], introduced in a final and fixed form into man's consciousness "from outside" by some supra-historical transcendent cause. [9]

For Rahner the idea that "the transcendent God inseminates *[indoctriniere]*fixed and final propositions into the consciousness of the bearer of revelation" [10] constitutes matter for scorn, a thesis unworthy of serious consideration.

Rahner understands revelation in its most fundamental sense, rather, to consist in "a transcendental determination of man, constituted by that which we call grace and self-bestowal on God's part-in other words, his Pneuma." [11] This universal revelation constitutes, in Rahner's view, not a mere preamble to faith, but the deepest reality of the Christian faith itself. "The original one and unitive event of the definitive eschatological revelation in Christianity," Rahner writes, "is the one event of God's most authentic *[eigentlichsten]* self-communication, occurring every-where in the world and in history in the Holy Spirit offered to every human being." [12] This "one and unitive event," moreover, constitutes not an aspect, not even the most fundamental aspect, but the whole of Christian revelation. In his words, "the totality of the Christian faith is in a real sense *[eigentlich]*already given in ... transcendental experience. " [13]

In Rahner's view, then, the Christian revelation constitutes a transcendental, universal, nonobjective existential of concrete human nature of which "the material contents of historical reve-lation"14 are mere "verbalized objectifications. "[15] They are, how-ever, at least objectifications. Rahner treats such objectifications,

[9] Karl Rahner, "The Historicity of Theology," in *Theological Investigations* 9, trans. Graham Harrison (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 67-68.

[10] Ibid., 68.

[11] Karl Rahner, "The Current Relationship between Philosophy and Theology," in *Theological Investigations* 13, trans. David Bourke (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 62.

[12] Karl Rahner, "Yesterday's History of Dogma and Theology for Tomorrow," in *Theological Investigations* 18, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 17.

[13] Rahner, "Reflections on Methodology," 109.

[14] Karl Rahner, "The Act of Faith and the Content of Faith," in *Theological Investigations* 21, trans. Hugh M. Riley (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 158.

[15] Ibid.

moreover, as indispensable means to the self-realization of God's
transcendental   revelation, his "inner word of grace." [16]

The external historical word expounds the inner one, brings it to the light of
consciousness in the categories of human understanding, compels man definitely
to take a decision with regard to the inner word, transposes the inner grace of
man into the dimension of the community and renders it present there, makes
possible the insertion of grace into the external, historical field of human life.[17]

In order for God's self-bestowal to reach beyond the tran-
scendental sphere, beyond what Rahner calls the "fine point"
(Funklein)[18] of the soul, then, verbal-historical objectifications
must explicitate it in the realm of the concrete and palpable.

Moreover, the statements of Scripture occupy, according to
Rahner, a privileged position within the universe of objecti-
fications, both religious and secular, in which human beings
encounter   divine revelation. In Scripture, Rahner believes,
Christians possess "the pure objectification of the divine, humanly
incarnated truth. "[19] Rahner is even willing to say that "being a
work of God it is absolutely *[schlechthin]*inerrant. "[20]

Rahner's position on this point must be understood in light of
other claims. *AB* we have seen, Rahner considers "the history of
revelation ... co-extensive with the spiritual history of mankind
as such" [21] and insists that the idea of inspiration be understood in
such a way that it does not "smack of the miraculous. "[22] On

---

[16] Karl Rahner, "The Word and the Eucharist," in *Theological Investigations* 4, trran.
Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 259.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 258.

[19] Karl Rahner, "Scripture and Theology," in *Theological Investigations* 6, trans. Karl-H.
and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969),
95.

[20] Ibid., 90. Cf. Rahner's similar remarks in "Heilige Schrift," *inLexikon furTheologie und
Kirche,* 10 vols., ed. Joseph Hofer and Karl Rahner (Freiburg: Herder, 1957-65); and his more
tepid endorsement of scriptural inerrancy in *Foundations,* 375-77.

[21] Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Concept of Revelation," in Karl Rahner and Joseph
Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition,* trans. W.]. O'Hara (London: Burns & Oates, 1966), 16.

[22] Karl Rahner, "Buch Gottes-Buch der Menschen," in *Schriften zur Theologie,* 16 vols.
(Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1954-84), 16:284. Joseph Donceel's translation, "without recourse to
the miraculous" ("Book of God-Book of Human Beings," in *Theological Investigations* 22,

certain occasions, moreover, Rahner does not shrink from frankly disagreeing with Scripture's literal sense.[23] According to Rahner's own standards, then, a few citations of Scripture can hardly suffice to undermine or to confirm a theological thesis: especially one of architectonic and hermeneutical significance such as the *Grundaxiom* of Rahner's Trinitarian theology.

Rahner does, nonetheless, characterize Scripture repeatedly as *"norma non normata* for theology and for the Church. "[24] It seems, therefore, that he could not reasonably object if one sought to evaluate elements of his thought in the light of Scripture, which he himself describes as "the inexhaustible source of all Christian theology, without which theology must become sterile" [25] and "as it were, the soul of all theology." [26]

B) *Scripture and the "Grundaxiom"*

One could argue, however, that, although a scripturally oriented evaluation may be feasible for other aspects of Rahner's theology, two factors render a scriptural trial of the *Grundaxiom*

trans. Joseph Donceel, S.J. [New York: Crossroad, 1991], 219), accurately conveys Rahner's overall position, but misses the sense of this particular passage.

[23] For instance, Rahner recognizes that Paul explicitly teaches monogenism in Acts 17:26 (Karl Rahner, "Mary's Virginity," in *Theological Investigations* 19, trans. Edward Quinn [New York: Crossroad, 1983], 225) and yet rejects it. Likewise, Rahner refuses to consider Enoch and Elijah exceptions to the principle of the universality of death, Genesis 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:11 notwithstanding (Karl Rahner, "Christian Dying," in *Theological Investigations* 18, 238).

[24] Rahner, "Scripture and Theology," 89-91, 95. Cf. also, e.g., idem, "What Is a Dogmatic Statement?", in *Theological Investigations* 5, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 62; idem, "Schrift, Heilige Schrift," in *Sacramentum Mundi;* and idem, "Replik: Bemerkungen zu Hans Kling, 'Im Interesse der Sache,'" *Stimmen der Zeit* 187 (1971): 159.

[25] Karl Rahner, "Schriftbeweis," in *Kleines Theologisches Worterbuch,* 1st ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1961).

[26] Karl Rahner, "Schriftbeweis," in *Kleines Theologisches Worterbuch,* 10th ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1976). Here Rahner quotes the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam Totius* 16. Rahner writes elsewhere, "It has often and rightly been said today that the study of scripture is the 'soul of theology' (Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests," in *Theologica!Investigations* 6, 133). Again, remarking on "theology in general," Rahner writes, "its 'soul' must be scripture, as Vatican II rightly says" (Karl Rahner, "Philosophy and Philosophising in Theology," in *Theological Investigations* 9, 50).

inconceivable. First, Rahner states that he formulates his theology of the Trinity, at least partially, in order to quell embarrassment over "the simple fact that in reality the Scriptures do *not explicitly* present a doctrine of the 'immanent Trinity' (even St. John's prologue is no such doctrine)."[27] It might seem, therefore, that Rahner constructs his *Grundaxiom* with a view to liberating the theology of the Trinity from the Bible and setting it on an entirely new foundation. If this were so, the idea of a distinctly scriptural test for the axiom would be unreasonable.

Second, one could argue that a person who marshals biblical texts in support of or in opposition to Rahner's *Grundaxiom* commits a category mistake. For such a person might seem to confuse the *Grundaxiom,* a principle that concerns how one ought to interpret Scripture, with a first-order assertion concerning a state of affairs with which assertions of Scripture may agree or conflict. Scriptural arguments of this nature would manifest only the confusion of their author, not any merits or inadequacies of Rahner's *Grundaxiom.*

Serious grounds do exist, therefore, for denying the possibility of a specifically scriptural test of the *Grundaxiom* of Rahner's theology of the Trinity. To the scriptural test proposed here, however, these considerations appear to pose no significant obstacle.

1. The Relevance of the Bible to the Theology of the Trinity

Rahner's belief that the Bible lacks an explicit doctrine of the immanent Trinity does not move him to unleash the doctrine of the Trinity entirely from its biblical moorings. He seeks, instead, to anchor the doctrine of the immanent Trinity in the economy of salvation whose structure, in his view, appears preeminently within the narratives of Scripture.

Accordingly, Rahner states as one of the three principal goals of his theology of the Trinity, whose centerpiece is the *Grundaxiom,* that it "do justice *[unbefangener wurdigen]* to the biblical statements concerning the economy of salvation and its

[27] Rahner, *The Trinity,* 22.

threefold   structure,   and to the explicit biblical statements
concerning the Father, the Son, and the Spirit." [28] Rahner, in fact,
describes "salvation history, our experience of it, [and] its biblical
expression"   as the foundation   of human knowledge   of the
economic Trinity. [29]

Though Rahner rarely treats exegetical questions, moreover,
he does attempt in at least two instances to supply some exegetical
basis for the idea that the Trinitarian persons perform distinct
functions in salvation history, one of the essential presuppositions
of the *Grundaxiom.* Specifically, he argues that "in Scripture the
interior Trinity and the Trinity of the economy of salvation are
seen and spoken of in themselves with such simultaneity *[zu sehr
in einem]* that there would be no justification in itself (logically)
for taking the expressions literally and substantially in the first
case and only in an 'appropriated' way in the second. "[30] Likewise,
he devotes more than a third of his long essay, "Theos in the New
Testament" [31] to proving that in the New Testament the term Ο
{κος; does not merely often stand for, but actually signifies, the
intra-Trinitarian   Father, a thesis by which Rahner seeks to bolster
his case for ascribing distinct influences in the economy of
salvation to the Trinitarian persons. One cannot reasonably claim,
therefore, that Rahner considers exegetical considerations simply
irrelevant   to arguments   concerning   the   soundness   of the
Grundaxiom.

2. The Hermeneutical Character of the *Grundaxiom*

The hermeneutical   character of the *Grundaxiom* does not
render it insusceptible to every variety of scriptural trial. Even if

---

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 82

[3°] Karl Rahner, "Uncreated Grace," in *Theological Investigations* 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst,
O.P. (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 346.

[31] Karl Rahner, "Theos in the New Testament," in *Theological Investigations* 1, 79-148.
Marcelo Gonzalez, incidentally, finds in this essay (p. 148) the first appearance of a form of
the *Grundaxiom* in Rahner's corpus *(La relaci6n entre Trinidad econ6mica e inmanente: el
"axioma fundamental" de K. Rahner y su recepci6n: lineas para continuar la reflexion,* Corona
Lateranensis 40 [Rome: Pontificia universita lateranense, 1996], 37, 67).

one cannot, in the nature of the case, discover a straightforward
correspondence   or disparity between the statements of Scripture
and the *Grundaxiom,* one can test Rahner's   claim that the
relations   among the persons in the history of salvation are
identical to those described in the classical, Western doctrine of
the immanent Trinity. [32] To do so, one need merely select a scene
from Scripture in which the three persons appear in a salvation-
historical context, discern the pattern of relations between them
in this context, and measure this pattern against what one knows
of the immanent Trinity as conceived in the Latin tradition. If the
two patterns correspond, this does not prove Rahner's axiom true,
but it does lend it a degree of credibility. If the two patterns
diverge, however,   this indicates that Rahner's   claims require
qualification.

    Someone might object, of course, that a disparity between the
pattern of relations within the economy and the pattern depicted
in the Western doctrine of the Trinity would not necessarily prove
that otKovoμ(a and Elc:oJ\oy(adiverge. One could also take such a
disparity as evidence of flaws within the Western doctrine. Since
Rahner regards the doctrine of the Trinity taught by the IV
Lateran Council and the Council of Florence, however, as a
donnee, [33] a disparity between the economic Trinity and the
Western doctrine would, from his perspective at least, suffice to
falsify the *Grundaxiom.* Even if the trial attempted here cannot,

---

[32] "God relates to us in a threefold manner," writes Rahner, "and this threefold, free, and
gratuitous relation to us is not merely a copy or an analogy of the inner Trinity, but this
Trinity itself" (Rahner, *The Trinity,* 35).

[33] Rahner considers   "an ecumenical council together with the Pope," such as the Fourth
Lateran Council or the Council of Florence, one of the "bearers of infallibility" whose
definitive pronouncements   cannot err (Karl Rahner, "Unfehlbarkeit," *inKleines Theologisches
Worterbuch,* 10th ed.). In his words: "The historicity of a dogma does not mean that the
infallibility of the church must be interpreted   thus: God guarantees an eschatological
perseverance of the Church in the truth, while dogmas of the magisterium or statements of
Scripture could always be erroneous. The perseverance in the truth realizes itself also in true
propositions; every ultimate *Grundentscheidung* of the human person, which (through the
grace of God) establishes him in the truth, expresses itself always and necessarily in true
propositions. The Church as a tangible substance would not persevere in the truth if the
objectivations of its perseverance in the truth, viz., its actual propositions of faith as the
concrete form of its perseverance in the truth, were erroneous" (ibid., 426-27).

in and of itself, falsify the *Grundaxiom* in all of its possible acceptations, therefore, it may be adequate to show that the *Grund.axiom* entails consequences that Rahner finds unacceptable.

A scriptural test of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* that respects its hermeneutical character, accordingly, appears at least conceivable. One could reasonably challenge the legitimacy of the sort of trial attempted here, it seems, only on the grounds that it employs inappropriate biblical texts.

C) The Anointing of Christ with the Holy Spirit: An Appropriate Test Case

The texts employed in this trial of the *Grundaxiom* (Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:22; and John 1:32) do, admittedly, contain elements that might seem objectionable to Rahner. For God appears in these verses "at work palpably *[handgreiflich]* as an object *(Sache)* and not merely as a transcendent First Cause *(Ursache)*";[34] he appears as one who "operates and functions as an individual existent alongside of other existents . . . a member of the larger household of all reality."[35] The scriptural accounts of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit seem to portray precisely the God of whom Rahner says: *"that* God really does not exist,"[36] and "anyone in search of such a God is searching for a false God."[37] Insofar as these texts contain a supernaturalistic narrative of the sort that Rahner specifically rejects as incredible, then, one could plausibly argue that he would reject their normativity for the theology of the Trinity.

Likewise, one could maintain, with some measure of warrant, that the scriptural accounts of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit are simply irrelevant to the question of how the divine

[34] Karl Rahner, "Science as a 'Confession'?" in *Theological Investigations* 3, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), 389.

[35] Rahner, *Foundations,* 63.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

persons relate to each other in the immanent Trinity. Rahner does assert that God changes in the process of self-communication and, thereby, seems implicitly to admit that the economy of salvation contains elements that do not exactly reflect the intradivine life.[38]

It seems, accordingly, that one cannot responsibly apply Rahner's axiom without taking into account the necessarily analogous character of any valid inference from the forms in which the divine persons manifest themselves to conclusions about the immanent Trinity. The consequent necessity of qualifying *per analogiam* claims about the immanent Trinity derived from the economy, therefore, might appear to justify Rahner in characterizing Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit as an economic aberration that does not reveal the intra-Trinitarian relations.

The prominence of divine intervention in the anointing narratives and the inevitable gap between οtκονομ(α and 8rn:Aoyfa that results from the metamorphosis of God's being in divine self-communication as Rahner conceives of it, thus pose at least apparent difficulties for the aptness of the anointing accounts as a matrix in which to test Rahner's *Grundaxiom.* Neither concern, however, seems sufficiently grave to preclude the anointing accounts from serving adequately in this role.

---

[38] In particular, Rahner asserts that God changes in the most radical instance of divine self-communication, the Incarnation. Although, he writes: "we must maintain methodologically the immutability of God ... it would be basically a denial of the incarnation if we used it [i.e., the divine immutability] to determine what this mystery could be. If, to expedite the mystery, one transferred it into the region of the creature alone, one would really abolish the mystery in the strict sense.... The mystery of the incarnation [therefore] must lie in God himself: in the fact that he, although unchangeable 'in himself', can become something 'in another'" (Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," in *Theological Investigations* 4, 114 n. 3). Since Rahner conceives of the Incarnation as a moment in God's one self-communication to the world (cf. Karl Rahner, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World," in *Theological Investigations* 5, 177-78) and defines divine self-communication in general as "the act whereby God goes out of Himself into 'the other' in such a way that God bestows Himself upon the other by becoming the other" (Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in *Theological Investigations* 4, 68), it seems reasonable to characterize change in the divine being as a concomitant of divine self-communication, as Rahner conceives of it, at least in its most radical forms.

1. The Supernaturalism of the Anointing Narratives

It would be at least difficult to reconcile outright rejection of the normativity of these accounts, because of their super-naturalism or for any other reason, with Rahner's repeated and emphatic statements concerning Scripture's status as *norma non normata* for Christian theology. Rahner explicitly grants, more-over, that the expressions of Scripture "wholly retain their meaning even though the worldview on the basis and with the help of which they were once made has become obsolete. "[39] By declaring the idea of divine intervention at particular points in space and time incompatible with "our modern experience and interpretation of the world," [40] therefore, he does not absolve himself of the responsibility to discern some meaning in a given text of Scripture and to respect the text as "the pure objectification of the divine, humanly incarnated truth." [41]

When Rahner states that he desires, in his theology of the Trinity, to "do justice *[unbefangener wurdigen]* to the biblical statements concerning the economy of salvation and its threefold structure, and to the explicit biblical statements concerning the Father, the Son, and the Spirit," [42] furthermore, he seems to commit himself to taking seriously the biblical narratives of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit. The thrust of Rahner's thought on these questions, therefore, suggests that these narratives, their supernaturalistic elements notwithstanding, ought to be treated as authentic witnesses to God's Trinitarian self-manifestation.

2. The Relevance of the Anointing Accounts

Exclusion of the anointing accounts from consideration in determining, *via* the *Grundaxiom,* the shape of the intra-Trinitarian relations would seem reasonable only if the pattern of

[39] Rahner, "Science as a 'Confession'?", 396.
[40] Rahner, *Foundations,* 259.
[41] Rahner, "Scripture and Theology," 95.
[42] Rahner, *The Trinity,* 22.

relations displayed in these accounts appeared to be tangential to
the whole of the Trinity's economic self-revelation. The pattern
of relations   exhibited   in   the   anointing   accounts,   that is,
Father-Spirit-Son,   and especially the passivity of the Son vis-a-vis
the Holy Spirit manifested in these narratives, however, appear
frequently in the New Testament.

The angel of the Lord, for example, informs Joseph that the
child in his fiancee's womb is "from the Holy Spirit" (Matt 1:20).
After God "anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power"
(Acts 10:38), the Spirit "immediately drove him out into the
wilderness" (Mark 1:12). In his inaugural sermon in Nazareth,
Jesus announces that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because
he [= the Lord] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor"
(Luke 4: 18; cf. Isa 61: 1-2). When his opponents   attribute Jesus'
exorcisms to Satan, Jesus asserts that he casts out demons "by the
Spirit of God" (Matt 12:28). On the cross, Jesus offers himself up
to the Father "through the eternal Spirit" (Heb 9:14); and Jesus'
Father raises him from the dead through the power of the same
Spirit (Rom 1:4; 1Pet3:18).

The general pattern of relations manifested in the anointing
accounts appears throughout the Synoptic Gospels, therefore,
and, to a certain extent, throughout the New Testament. Since,
then, the manifestation of the divine persons in the order Father-
Spirit-Son, characteristic   of the anointing accounts, is by no
means an isolated phenomenon, and since Christ's anointing itself
forms a decisive caesura in the economy of salvation, it seems
unreasonable to exclude the anointing from the set of events that,
according to the *Grundaxiom,* ought to manifest the inner
structure of the immanent Trinity. Neither the anointing accounts'
supernaturalistic elements nor the inevitable gap Rahner implicitly
posits between oiKovoµ(a and 8rnAoy(a, therefore, suffices to
invalidate the trial of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* proposed here.

D) The Anointing, the "Grundaxiom," and the "Filioque"

Those who (a) identify the Holy Spirit of the anointing
accounts with the third person of the eternal Trinity, (b) believe

that the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son as from a single principle, (c) accept that the divine persons can effect distinct influences in the world, [43] and (d) accept the *Grundaxiom* of Rahner's theology of the Trinity can account for the events portrayed in the gospel accounts of the anointing in at least three ways. Such persons can:

1. claim that the Spirit is in some way involved in the begetting of the Son;

2. argue that the anointing accounts manifest a prior occurrence in which o[Kovoµ(a and 8rnAoy(a correspond; or

3. conclude that the Spirit constitutes the Father's intra-Trinitarian gift to the Son.

In the following, I shall examine each of these interpretations with an eye to determining the extent to which they resolve the difficulty for Rahner's *Grundaxiom* posed by the anointing of the Son with the Holy Spirit.

IL THE SPIRIT INVOLVED IN THE BEGETTING OF THE SON

"In the biblical accounts of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit," claims Thomas Weinandy:

a trinitarian pattern is clearly discernible. God's creative and prophetic word is always spoken in the power of the Spirit, and, as such, in light of the New Testament revelation, we have a clue to the inner life of the Trinity. The breath/spirit by which God speaks ... his prophetic word throughout history is the same breath/Spirit by which he eternally breathes forth his Word/Son. As the

---

[43] Raimer holds that the traditional axiom, *"inseparabilia sunt opera Trinitatis"* (DH 491, 535), applies to God's creation of beings distinct from himself through efficient causality, but not to his self-communication to human beings *via* quasi-formal causality (Rahner, *The Trinity,* 77). If the axiom did apply to all divine acts *ad extra,* then an economic Trinity, in the sense of a Trinity manifesting itself to the world, would exist only to the extent that Scripture appropriated acts performed by the one divine omnipotence to individual persons.

Father commissioned Jesus by the power of his Spirit to recreate the world so, in the same Spirit, God eternally empowered him to be his Word. [44]

In Weinandy's view, then, "the ... roles played by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit [here and elsewhere] in the economy of salvation . . . illustrate the . . . roles they play within the immanent Trinity, namely that the Father begets the Son in or by the Holy Spirit. "[45]

This view, whose supporters, alongside Weinandy, include Leonardo Baff,[46]   Durrwell, [47] Edward Yarnold, [48] and Gerard Remy, [49] seems to draw greater strength from the scriptural narratives of the virginal conception than from the accounts under consideration here. Each of these authors, however, appeals not only to the virginal conception, but also to the anointing, to bolster his view.

A) Patristic Precedents

Although the contemporary advocates of this pos1t1on uniformly appeal to Rahner's *Grund.axiom* and thus present it in a distinctively modern cast, this view does not lack precursors in the earliest ages of the Church. The idea of the Spirit as the breath that accompanies the Father's Word, for instance, appears explicitly in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, [50] Maximus the

[44] Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 27.

[45] Ibid., 52.

[46] Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society,* trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), 205, 207.

[47] Frarn;ois-Xavier Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God: An Essay in Biblical Theology,* trans. Benedict Davies (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), esp. 141; idem, *L'Esprit saint de Dieu* (2d ed.; Paris: Cerf, 1985), esp. 155. Cf. also idem, "Pour une christologie selon !'Esprit Saint," *Nouvelle revue theologique* 114 (1992): 653-77, esp. 661-65.

[48] Edward Yarnold, "The Trinitarian Implications of Luke and Acts," *Heythrop Journal* 7 (1966): 18-32, esp. 19.

[49] Gerard Remy, "Une thfologie pascale de !'Esprit Saint: Apropos d'un ouvrage recent," *Nouvelle revue theologique* 112 (1990): 731-41, esp. 732-35.

[50] Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica* 2, in *Opera dogmatica minora, Pars N* (Ekkehard Miihlenberg, ed., *GregoriiNysseni Opera* 3-IV [Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1996], 12).

Confessor, [51] and John of Damascus. [52] One finds imagery patently suggestive of this view in the comparison of the Father, Spirit, and Son to Adam, Eve, and Seth: an analogy employed by Gregory of Nazianzus. [53] At least one orthodox Father, furthermore, explicitly endorses the idea that the Father begets the Son "in or by" the Spirit. Marius Victorinus, the Christian rhetor memorialized in Augustine's *Confessions,* [54] states in his *Adversus Arium* that "He is not mistaken ... who imagines that the Holy Spirit is the mother of Jesus, as well on high as here below. "[55]

The idea that Christ derives from the Holy Spirit in some sense, furthermore, finds considerable support among various marginal groups of the first Christian centuries. The author of the *Gospel of the Hebrews,* for instance, seems to ascribe Christ's generation at least partially to the Holy Spirit. In a fragment preserved by Jerome, this author writes, "It came to pass now, when the Lord had ascended from the water, that the source of all holy Spirit both rested on him and said to him:. my Son, in all prophets I was awaiting you, as coming, and I have rested on you. For are my rest; you are my first-born son, who reigns everlastingly."56 The author of the *Epistula Jacobi apocrypha* (6.20), [57] likewise, depicts Christ identifying himself as "the son of the Holy Spirit"; and the author of the *Odes of Solomon* portrays Christ as testifying that the Holy Spirit has "brought me forth [= begot

[51] Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones et Dubia* 34 *(PG* 90:814B). Ironically, in this context at least, Maximus uses the logical precedence of the *verbum cordis* over speech to explain why one cannot reasonably characterize Christ as the Son of the Holy Spirit.

[52] John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 7, in *Die Schriften des Johannes van Damaskos,* vol. 2, ed. Bonifatius Kotter, Patristische Texte und Studien 12 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1973), 16.

[53] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 31.11 (SC 250:294-96); cf. John of Damascus's employment of this analogy in *Expositio fidei* 8. Both Gregory and John, of course, employ this analogy in order to illustrate how the Holy Spirit can be consubstantial with the Father without either being begotten by him or being identical with him.

[54] Augustine, *Confessions* 8.2.3-8.5.10 *(CCL* 27:114-19).

[55] Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Arium* 1.58 (CSJ7,L 83/1: 157) .

[56] Quoted in Jerome, *Commentarius in Esaiam* 4, on Isa 11:1-3 *(CCL* 73:148).

[57] *Epistula Jacobi apocrypha: Die zweite Schrift aus Nag-Hammadi-Codex I,* edited and translated with commentary by Dankwart Kirchner, Texte und Untersuchungen 136 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1989), 16.

me?] before the Lord's face," [58] and that "according to the greatness of the Most High, so She [i.e. the Holy Spirit] made *me."s9*

B) Difficulties

Motifs suggestive of the view that the Father begets the Son in or by the Holy Spirit, namely, that Christ proceeds eternally *a Patre Spirituque,* then, appear repeatedly, if not frequently, in the writings of the patristic period. The orthodox Fathers, nonetheless, almost universally reject this proposal for a rather obvious reason. The idea that Christ *qua* divine derives his being from the Holy Spirit seems to reverse the   of the Trinitarian persons revealed in the baptismal formula. As Basil explains, in the formula of orthodoxy he composed for Eustathius of Sebaste:

One must avoid those who confuse the order the Lord imparted to us, as men openly fighting against piety, who place the Son ahead of the Father and set the Holy Spirit before the Son. For it is one's duty to maintain unchanged and unharmed the order that we received from the same discourse of the Lord, saying, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" [Matt 28:19]. [60]

Such reasoning, of course, seems unpersuasive from Rahner's perspective, because Rahner expresses doubts as to whether the baptismal formula actually derives from Jesus' own words, [61] and he considers the scriptural writers' words mere objectifications of transcendental experience as mediated by salvation history.

A second reason for rejecting a procession of Christ *a Patre Spirituque,* however, seems quite weighty given Rahner's assumptions about the theology of the Trinity. This second reason consists simply in the datum that the Catholic Church, in three

---

[58] *Odes of Solomon* 36:3 *(The Odes of Solomon,* ed. and trans. James H. Charlesworth [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973], 126-27).

[59] Ibid. 36:5.

[60] Basil, *Epistula* 125 *(Saint Basile: Lettres: Tome II,* ed. and trans. Yves Courtonne, Collection des Universites de France [Paris: Les belles lettres, 1961], 34).

[61] Karl Rahner, "Theology in the New Testament," in *Theological Investigations* 5, 35.

councils that she considers ecumenical, [62] has declared that the Holy Spirit derives his personal being from both the Father and the Son so that the Holy Spirit's very existence presupposes the personal constitution of the Son. In view of these decrees, which Rahner considers irreformable and infallibly true, [63] then, it seems that Rahner cannot consistently affirm that the Son derives in any way from the Holy Spirit. If the anointing accounts, accordingly, when interpreted in accord with Rahner's *Grundaxiom,* imply an eternal origin of the Son from the Holy Spirit, then this *Grundaxiom* seems ultimately to undermine what Rahner considers orthodox, Western Trinitarianism.

III. MANIFESTING A PRIOR OCCURRENCE

Heribert Mi.ihlen believes that he can project the pattern of interpersonal relations manifested in the scriptural narratives of Christ's anointing into the immanent Trinity, as the *Grundaxiom* requires, without in any way contravening the *filioque.* He attempts, specifically, to resolve the dilemma posed by the anointing accounts by distinguishing sharply between Scripture's view of Christ's anointing and what he calls a *"dogmatic* understanding" [64] of this event.

A) Muhlen's Dogmatic Understanding of the Anointing

"According to the statements of Holy Scripture," Mi.ihlen writes:

the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit occurs at his baptism .... For a dogmatic understanding [however] ... one must say: Jesus possessed the fullness of the Spirit already from the first temporal moment of his existence. He is himself (together with the Father) the eternal origin of the Holy Spirit. He [thus]

[62] Fourth Lateran Council (DH 800), Second Council of Lyons (DB[27] 460), and the Council of Florence (DH 1300, 1313).

[63] See above, n. 33.

[64] Heribert, Miihlen, *Der Heilige Geist als Person: In der Trinitiit, bei der Inkamation, und im Gnadenbund: Ich-Du-Wir,* Miinsterische Beitrage zur Theologie 26 (5'h ed.; Munster: Aschendorff, 1988), § 7.12, p. 206.

remains this origin of the Holy Spirit also as the Incarnate, so that also the Incarnate Son is never without the Holy Spirit. [65]

Mlihlen follows Matthias Scheeben, then, in regarding the actual anointing of Christ with the Holy Spirit, as opposed to its subsequent manifestation after Christ's baptism, as at least temporally concurrent with the uniting of Christ's human nature with the Logos at the first moment of that nature's existence in Mary's womb. He follows Scheeben, likewise, in holding that "the Logos … anointed *himself.*"[66] Muhl en does not, however, follow Scheeben in equating the unction, with which Christ's zygotic human nature was invisibly anointed, with "nothing less than the fullness of the divinity of the Logos, which is substantially joined to the humanity and dwells in it incarnate."[67] Over against Scheeben, rather, he insists that:

in Scripture, in any event, a distinction is made between the man Jesus and the anointing that *comes* to him. In a mode similar to that by which the anointing comes to Jesus, in the early apostolic proclamation also the title "the Christ" [i.e. the anointed one] must be *added* to the proper name Jesus. The twelve proclaim Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:42), for God has made the self-same Jesus, whom the Jews have crucified, Christ (xpwTov foo(riocv, Acts 2:36). [68]

The Incarnation and the anointing differ, Mtihlen explains, in that the first effects the grace of union and the second the habitual grace of Christ, and the first is identical with the salvation-historical mission of the Son while the second constitutes the mission *ad extra* of the Spirit.

Muhlen defines "mission," following Thomas Aquinas *(STh* I, q. 43, a. 2, ad 3), as an eternal procession with a temporal effect, or *terminus ad quem,* of the procession. [69] Since the missions are not really distinct from the intra-Trinitarian processions, they necessarily conform to these processions' order of origins: "the

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.,§ 6.06, p. 175.

[67] Matthias Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity,* trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis and London: Herder, 1946), 332.

[68] Miihlen, *Der Heilige Geist als Person,* § 6.17, p. 184.

[69] Ibid., §7.10, p. 203.

relation of the sender to the sent," Mi.ihlen writes, "includes the inner-Trinitarian order of origins. "[70] By defining the anointing as the mission of the Holy Spirit, therefore, Mtihlen supplies himself with a sure argument for the conformity of the persons' order of operations in the anointing with their order of procession in the immanent Trinity. Quoting Aquinas *(STh* III, q. 7, a. 13), he writes, "The mission of the Son ... according to the order of nature, is prior to the mission of the Holy Spirit: as in the order of nature the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son. "[71]

B) *Grace and the Person*

Mtihlen does not confine himself, however, to this stipulative mode of argumentation. He recognizes that, by identifying the temporal effects of the missions of the Son and Spirit, respectively, with the grace of union and habitual grace, he implies that Christ's grace of union logically precedes his human nature's habitual grace. If one could prove that Christ's habitual grace logically precedes the grace of union, therefore, one could falsify Mtihlen's proof of the correspondence of the economic with the immanent Trinity in the event of Christ's anointing. If Mi.ihlen could establish that the grace of union logically precedes the endowment of Christ's human nature with habitual grace, and could accomplish this without appealing to the definition of the persons' missions as "the free continuation of ... [the intra-Trinitarian] processions *ad extra,* "[72] however, he could at least corroborate his interpretation of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit.

Such corroboration lies ready to hand, Miihlen believes, in the following remark of Thomas:

A third reason for this order [i.e. for the precedence of the hypostatic union over Christ's endowment with habitual grace] can be derived from the end of grace. For it is ordained to acting well. Actions, however, are of *supposita* and

---

[70] Ibid., §7.06, p. 201.
[71] Ibid., §7.13, p. 207.
[72] Ibid., §7.10, p. 203.

individuals. Hence action, and consequently the grace that is ordained to it, presupposes an operating hypostasis. A hypostasis, however, is not presupposed in the human nature before the union .... Therefore, the grace of union logically *[secundum intellectum]* precedes habitual grace *[STh* III, q. 7, a. 13].[73]

Miihlen glosses:

According to . . . St. Thomas, the nature is that by which the agent acts *(principium quo),* whereas by the hypostasis or the *suppositum* the agent itself is meant *(principium quod agit).* The action is not possible without the *suppositum* which 'has' or 'bears' the nature. Insofar, now, as grace is ordained to acting well *[bene agere],* it presupposes the operating hypostasis. One can derive from this finding the universal principle: *GRACE PRESUPPOSES THE PERSON.* [74]

This principle, accordingly, dictates that the grace of union which personalizes Christ's human nature must enjoy at least a logical precedence over the endowment of that nature with habitual grace. Miihlen appears capable, therefore, of corroborating his interpretation of the anointing by means other than a stipulative and aprioristic appeal to the definition of "mission."

For those who identify Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit with the bestowal of habitual grace on his human nature, Miihlen constructs quite a persuasive case for the correspondence of the immanent and the economic Trinity in the difficult case of the anointing. He correlates the processions and the missions of the divine persons, moreover, in a way that resonates profoundly with certain patristic interpretations of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit.

C) Patristic Precedents

Athanasius insists that Christ anoints his own human nature and that the Logos, as the second person of the divine Trinity, remains permanently the dispenser, and not the recipient, of the Holy Spirit.

[73] Miihlen cites the passage in ibid.,§ 7.22, pp. 212-13.

[74] Ibid., p. 213.

If, as our Lord declares, the Holy Spirit is his, if it receives of him and is sent by him, it cannot be conceived that the Word and Wisdom of God, as such, should receive an unction from that Spirit which he himself bestows. It was his flesh which was thus anointed, and he himself thus anointed it, and for this purpose, that the sanctification, which by this unction he conveyed to himself as man, might come to all men by him. [75]

Cyril of Alexandria, likewise, speaks of how "the Son anointed his own temple" [76] and maintains that although

the Son is supplier of the Holy Spirit: for all things of the Father's are naturally in his power [77] **---** he humanly received the Spirit among us ... when he came down to us, not adding anything to himself insofar as he is understood to be God and Logos, but in himself principally as the chief of human nature introducing the Spirit of abounding joy.[78]

Like Milhlen, then, Athanasius and Cyril construe the anointing accounts in such a way that they reflect the order of persons revealed in the baptismal formula. In at least one respect, however, Mi.ihlen's interpretation of Christ's anointing seems to excel these explanations of Athanasius and Cyril in clarity and accuracy. Cyril and Athanasius, in the passages just quoted, tend to downplay, if not entirely to ignore, the personal character of Christ's human nature insofar as it subsists in the eternal Logos. Mi.ihlen, by contrast, admits and even accentuates this aspect of the mystery of Christ's anointing. "The Holy Spirit," Mi.ihlen writes, "is sent to the already, in the sense of logical priority, personalized human nature of Jesus! From this point of view the sending of the Holy Spirit *ad extra* includes not a relation of

---

[75] Athanasius, *ContraArianos* 3.47 *(PG* 26:109C).

[76] Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium. Liber XI* at John 17:19 *(PG* 74:549D). In John 17:19, of course, Jesus says: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in trmh."

[77] Cyril presumably alludes to Christ's words in John 16:15a: "All thai: the Father has is **mine."**

[78] Cyril of Alexandria, *In Psalmum* 44 [45]:8 *(PG* 69: 1040A). Cyril frequently emphasizes that Christ receives the Holy Spirit as man, not as God. Cf., e.g., *In Lucam* 3, 22 *(PG* 72:524D); *In Isaiam. Liber III. Tomus V (PG* 70:849D and 852A); *De recte fide ad reginas,* 13 *(PG* 76:1220D-21A); and *Comm. Infoelem Prophetam* 35 *(PG* 71:377D and 380A).

person to *nature* as the sending of the Son does, but a *relation of person to person.* "[79]

D) Difficulties

Muhlen correctly notes that (1) by virtue of the grace of union, Christ's human nature subsists as personal in the Logos before (in the sense of logical priority) the Holy Spirit endows it with habitual grace; and (2) consequently, when the Holy Spirit thus endows Christ's human nature, he acts not merely on a creature, but on the person of the eternal Word. Although Mlihlen himself underlines this aspect of the mystery, it constitutes a considerable difficulty for his own attempt to harmonize the anointing accounts with Rahner's ideas about the immanent and the economic Trinity.

According to Rahner's theology of the immanent Trinity, the Holy Spirit receives his personal being from the Father and the Son and is identical with his receptive relation to these two persons-a relation customarily termed "passive spiration." The Father and the Son, correspondingly, are identical, albeit each in his own way, with the relation of active spiration. This relation does not constitute a person of itself, because it involves no opposition of relation between the two already, in the logical sense, existing *spiratores.* The Father and the Son, as relative to the Spirit, therefore, are pure activity; and the Holy Spirit, as relative to them, is pure receptivity.

The idea that the anointing of Christ with the Holy Spirit consists in the bestowal of habitual grace on the Logos suggests that, in the economy of salvation, the Son and the Spirit invert their intra-Trinitarian relations; the eternal giver receives, and the eternal receiver gives. Miihlen ameliorates this problem, of course, by holding that the Son anoints himself, but he does not eliminate it. Even in the event that the Son anointed himself with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit would still influence not an impersonal nature, but, as Muhlen rightly insists, the very person

---

[79] Miihlen, *Der Heilige Geist,* §7.13, p. 207.

of the eternal Word. Miihlen's best efforts notwithstanding, then, the pattern of mutual relations the divine persons manifest in the incident of the anointing still diverges from the pattern of the immanent Trinity. Miihlen ultimately does not succeed in his attempt to reconcile the scriptural narratives of Christ's anointing, when interpreted in accordance with the *Grundaxiom,* with Rahner's presuppositions concerning the theology of the Trinity.

IV. THE SPIRIT AS INTRA-TRINITARIAN GIFT OF THE FATHER TO THE SON

The hypotheses considered thus far, however, by no means exhaust the range of options available to theologians desiring to resolve the dilemmas generated by the anointing accounts for Rahner's theology of the Trinity. Franc;;:oisBourassa [80] and Guy Vandevelde-Dailliere, [81] for instance, attempt to harmonize the accounts of Christ's anointing, considered as a revelation of the intra-Trinitarian relations, with a filioquist understanding of the immanent Trinity by conceiving of the Holy Spirit as the intra-Trinitarian gift of the Father to the Son. Bourassa writes, accordingly:

"It is without measure that God *gives* the Spirit; the Father loves the Son and has *given* all to him" Gohn 3:34-5). The principal meaning of this revelation is that of the baptismal theophany: the constitution of *Christ,* of the man Jesus, in the dignity of the *Son of God,* object of the Father's pleasure in the Spirit of sanctification (Rom 1:4). But theology is justly unanimous: the mission is the procession of the person, the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, the Incarnation in a global sense, viz. the whole existence of the Son in the flesh, is the revelation of the "only begotten in the bosom of the Father" Gohn 1:18). Thus the Spirit is, above all, in the interior of the Trinity, "the gift of God," viz. the Gift of the Father to the Son "before the creation of the world," in which the Father has given him all, giving *himself* to him, by engendering him as his only Son, in the effusion of his Love for him. [82]

[8]°Cf. esp.   Bourassa, "Le don de Dieu," in idem, *Questions de Theologie Trinitaire* (Rome: Universita gregoriana editrice, 1970), 191-238.

[81] Cf. Guy Vandevelde-Dailliere, "L'«inversion trinitaire» chez H.U. von Balthasar," *Nouvelle revue theologique* 120 (1998): 370-83.

[82] Bourassa, "Le don de Dieu," 212.

According to Bourassa, then, "The Son himself is constituted
eternally Son of God 'in the bosom of the Father' in that the
Father communicates to him his plenitude in the gift of the
Spirit"; [83] and one can infer this from the anointing of Christ with
the Holy Spirit.

A) *The Identity of Active Spiration and Active Filiation*

This view appears, of course, to conflict with the *filioque,* as
Bourassa frankly admits. "If the Spirit is the gift of the Father to
the Son *in generation,"* he writes, "it seems, then, that generation
takes place through the Spirit or in virtue of the Spirit. The Spirit
is, therefore, the principle of the generation of the Son, whereas,
according to the most firm facts of dogma, the generation of the
Son is the principle of the procession of the Spirit. " [84]

Bourassa, nevertheless, considers this conflict merely apparent.
The principle, "In God all things are one, where no opposition of
relation intervenes," [85] implies that the Father and the Son spirate
the Spirit *tanquam ab uno principio.* [86] The unity of the Father and
Son as the single principle of the Spirit's procession, furthermore,
implies that the Father's eternal generation of the Son is not really
distinct from his eternal spiration of the Holy Spirit. Active
filiation, in other words, is not really distinct from active
spiration.

The identity of both the Son and the Father with active
spiration, moreover, implies that the person-constituting relation
of the Son, namely, passive filiation, which the Father bestows on
him by generating him, is also identical with active spiration.
Bourassa concludes, therefore, that "as in generating the Son ...
the Father communicates to him all of his substance ... he
communicates to him also to be with him the overflowing source
of the Spirit. " [87] This last datum entails, in Bourassa's view, the

---

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid., 229.

[85] DH 1330.

[86] DB[27] 460.

[87] Bourassa, "Le don de Dieu," 229.

central point of his argument: that just as the Holy Spirit appears as the gift of the Father to Jesus in the economy of salvation, so for all eternity the Father pours out the Holy Spirit on his immanent Word.

B) The Holy Spirit as "medius nexus" of the Father and the Son

Bourassa recognizes, naturally, that some might find his inference less than obvious; to bestow on the Son the capacity to share in active spiration is not at all to bestow on him passive spiration, the person-constituting relation of the Holy Spirit, which active spiration logically precedes. "Here," writes Bourassa, "the objection arises anew. Must one not then suppose the Spirit to be anterior to the Son, or **...** possessed anteriorly by the Father, or proceeding anteriorly from him in order to be given to the Son **...** ?"[88] In answer to this criticism, Bourassa refers the reader to Aquinas:

The Holy Spirit is said to be the *nexus* of the Father and Son inasmuch as he is Love, because since the Father loves himself and the Son in a single dilection and *e converso,* the habit of the Father to the Son and *e converso* as lover to beloved is brought about *[importatur]* in the Holy Spirit as love. Yet from this very thing, that the Father and the Son love each other mutually, it must be that the mutual Love, who is the Holy Spirit, proceeds from both. According to origin, therefore, the Holy Spirit is not a medium, but the third person in the Trinity; according to the aforementioned habit [however], he is the *medius nexus* of the two, proceeding from both. *(STh* I, q. 37, a. 1, ad 3)

Now, Bourassa argues, one can draw a merely rational distinction between the Father's active spiration and his notional love for the Son, just as one can distinguish rationally between the Father's active filiation and his active spiration. Yet, in the pristine simplicity [89] of the Godhead, the Father's notional act of loving the

---

88 Ibid., 230.

89 Rahner does, incidentally, endorse the doctrine of divine simplicity. God, he writes, "is absolutely 'simple' ... precisely because of his infinite fullness of being" ("Gott V. Die Lehre des kirchl. Lehramtes," in *Lexicon fiir Theologie und Kirche,* 2d ed.). Again, he writes, "God ... is absolute and simple spirit" (Karl Rahner, "Immanent and Transcendent Consummation of the World," in *Theological Investigations* 10, trans. David Bourke [New York: Herder and

Son and his notional act of generating the Son are really identical. Bourassa holds, accordingly, that if one prescinds from the question of origin and attends rather to the "order of circum-incession," then one can reasonably say that the Father generates the Son through the Holy Spirit just as one can say that the Father generates the Son through his love for him.

Bourassa explicitly grants, then, that, according to the order of origin, the Father does not generate the Son by bestowing upon him the Holy Spirit. "According to the order of origin," Bourassa writes, "the Holy Spirit is the *third* person of the Trinity, but according to the circum-incession of the Father and the Son, the Spirit, being their communion of love *(koinonia),* is *intermediary* between the two."[90] With the aid of his distinction between the order of origin and the order of circumincession, therefore, Bourassa might seem finally to succeed in transposing the divine persons' relations in the anointing into the immanent Trinity, as Rahner's *Grund.axiom* requires, without compromising the understanding of the immanent Trinity that he and Rahner share.

C) Difficulties

Two difficulties, however, call Bourassa's solution into question. First, it might seem that Rahner denies the possibility of mutual love among the persons of the Trinity. In his tractate on the Trinity in *Mysterium Salutis,* Rahner explicitly states that "there is not actually a *mutual* (presupposing two acts) love between the Father and the Son,"[91] and, indeed, that "within the Trinity there is no reciprocal 'Thou.'"[92] Second, one could plausibly argue that the Holy Spirit as such does not actually constitute a *medius nexus* between the Father and the Son. For, as

Herder, 1973], 287).

[90] Bourassa, "Le don de Dieu," 231.

[91] Rahner, *The Trinity,* 106. I have modified Donceel's translation here significantly. Rahner's German reads: "es nichteigentlich *einegegenseitige* (zweiAkte voraussetzende) Liebe zwischen Vater und Sohn" ("Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter urgrund der Heilsgeschichte," in *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik* 1-5, ed. Johannes Feiner and Magnus Lohrer [Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965-81], 2:387)

[92] Rahner, *The Trinity,* 76 n. 30.

Aquinas explains *(STh* I, q. 37, a. 2) the Father loves the Son "by" the Holy Spirit not because the Holy Spirit constitutes the means whereby the Father performs this notional act, but because the Father's notional act of loving the Son effects the Holy Spirit's existence as a distinct, divine person. In Thomas' words:

Since things are commonly denominated from their forms, thus a white thing from whiteness and a human being from humanity, everything from which something is named has to this extent the habit of a form .... Now, instances exist in which something is named through that which proceeds from it ... [i.e.] even from the term of its action, which is the effect, when this effect is included in the understanding of the action. We say, for instance, ... that a tree flowers by its flowers, although the flowers are not the form of the tree, but a certain effect proceeding from it ... [Now] truly, as it is taken notionally, to love is nothing other than to spirate love.... As, therefore, a tree is said to flower by its flowers, so ... the Father and the Son are said to love each other and us by the Holy Spirit or Love proceeding.

Aquinas, then, thinks that one can truthfully assert that the Father loves the Son by the Holy Spirit only to the extent that the Holy Spirit constitutes the effect of the Father's notional love, that is, active spiration. Now, since active spiration is the act in which the Father loves the Son, and is also the act in which the Father and Son unite so as to form a single principle of the Holy Spirit, it might seem that active spiration constitutes the bond that draws the Father and Son together, and not the Holy Spirit, which appears rather as the effect of active spiration's unitive power.

D) Responses

The adequacy of Bourassa's interpretation of the anointing accounts, at least for the purpose of obviating the difficulties they pose for Rahner's theology of the Trinity, appears doubtful. The first difficulty, however, and, to a lesser degree, the second, are quite surmountable. In order to refute the first charge, specifically, one need only note that Rahner explicitly affirms that the Holy Spirit does constitute the mutual love of the Father and the Son. In summarizing magisterial teaching on the subject, he

states that the Holy Spirit's "'procession' is only cautiously in-
dicated, although as such it is defined *[bestimmt]* as the proces-
sion of the mutual love of Father and Son." [93]

The two passages cited above as evidence for Rahner's
opposition to this tenet, moreover, prove nothing of the sort. In
the first passage, in which Rahner writes, "there is not actually a
mutual (presupposing two acts) love between the Father and the
Son," he expressly excludes only a mutual love that would require
of the Father and Son individually distinguished notional acts of
love as opposed to their common act of notional love, active
spiration. Likewise, when he denies the existence of a "reciprocal
'Thou'" in the Trinity, Rahner seems to deny only the existence
of distinct subjectivities who know each other through their own
exclusive consciousnesses. He affirms in the same context that
each Trinitarian person constitutes a "distinct subject in a rational
nature" [94] and approvingly quotes Lonergan in the same work to
the effect that "the three subjects are aware of each other through
one consciousness which is possessed in a different way by the
three of them." [95] It seems, then, that instead of peremptorily
excluding the doctrine that identifies the Holy Spirit as the Father
and Son's mutual love, Rahner explicitly endorses both the
doctrine and its ontological presuppositions.

The second difficulty-that   is, the charge that active spiration,
instead of the Holy Spirit, constitutes the *medius nexus* of the first
two Trinitarian persons-seems   somewhat more imposing. One
can plausibly argue, however, that this objection rests on a false
dichotomy. Even if active spiration serves as a unitive bond in a
much stricter sense than the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit may still
qualify as the *medius nexus* of the Father and Son in some less
rigorous acceptation of the term. As Aquinas suggests, the Father
and the Son do love each other "by" the Holy Spirit in the same
sense as a tree flowers "by" its flowers so that one can reasonably
characterize the Holy Spirit as the *forma* by which the Father and
Son love each other, albeit in a highly attenuated sense. Perhaps

[93] Ibid., 67.
[94] Ibid., 75 n. 29.
[95] Ibid., 107 n. 29.

more importantly, the Holy Spirit does constitute the *raison d'etre* of active spiration so that, in the order of intentions if not in the order of execution, it takes precedence over active spiration as the more ultimate reason for the Father and Son's unity in their act of notional love. One can do justice to the concerns of the second objection without categorically rejecting Bourassa's identification of the Holy Spirit with the *medius nexus* of Father and Son. Apparently, Bourassa succeeds in proving that the economic Trinity corresponds to the immanent Trinity, as understood in orthodox Latin Trinitarianism, even in the difficult case of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit.

V. THE ORDER OF CIRCUMINCESSION AND HUMAN KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRINIDI

Bourassa succeeds in interpreting the anointing in such a way that it undermines neither the *Grundaxiom* nor Latin Trinitarianism, however, only at the expense of partially defunctionalizing the *Grundaxiom.* If the economy of salvation, that is to say, presupposes not one, but two intra-Trinitarian then the *Grundaxiom* does not suffice to ground the theology of the Trinity exclusively in the human experience of divine self-communication.

Rahner seeks, as we have already noted, through his axiom, "The economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity and vice versa," to place Trinitarian theology on a new methodological footing. Unlike neo-Scholastic theologians who consider the doctrine of the Trinity a datum revealed primarily through words and without foundation in ordinary, human experience, Rahner contends that "the mystery of the Trinity is the last mystery of our own reality, and ... it is experienced precisely in this reality. "[96] Though he cautions that "this does not imply ... that we might, from this experience, by mere individual reflexion, conceptually objectivate the mystery," [97] he insists that when "we experience that the divine

[96] Ibid., 47.
[97] Ibid.

self-communication   is given in two distinct ways, then the two intra-divine processions are already co-known as distinct in this experience of ... faith. "[98] In Rahner's view, accordingly, "we may ... confidently look for an access into the doctrine of the Trinity in Jesus and in his Spirit, as we experience them through faith in salvation history. "[99]

Instead of relying on putatively revealed propositions in the manner of the neo-Scholastics, therefore, Rahner seeks to eluci- date the doctrine of the immanent Trinity by showing how it originates ultimately in the human experience of the economic Trinity. The following remarks of Rahner about the concepts of "substance" and "essence" reflect his approach to Trinitarian theology as a whole.

These concepts ... always refer back to the origin from which they come: the experience of faith which assures us that the incomprehensible God is really, as he is in himself, given to us in the (for us) twofold reality of Christ and the Spirit. . . . Hence insofar as the *dogmatically* necessary content of both concepts is concerned, nothing should be introduced into them except that which follows ultimately from our basic axiom, that which comes *from the fact* that the "economic" Trinity is *for us* first known and first revealed, that it is the "immanent" Trinity and that of it [i.e. the immanent Trinity] we can know with dogmatic certitude only what has been revealed about the former. [100]

According to Rahner, then, the *Grundaxiom,* in light of which the economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity, [101] is or at least can be the sole formal foundation of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity; and the human experience of the economic Trinity is or at least can be its sole material foundation, its genuine *"Ursprungsort-fur-uns.* "[102]

---

[98] Ibid., 119.

[99] Ibid., 39.

[100] Ibid., 55.

[101] In Rahner's view, writes Mario de Frarn;a Miranda, "the basic principle of Trinitarian theology, which acknowledges the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity as identical, must be maintained on penalty of our knowing nothing of God, as he is in himself" (O *misterio de Deus em nossa vida: A doctrina trinitdria de Karl Rahner,* Cole1;ao£ê e realidade 1 [Sao Paulo: Edi1;i6esLoyola, 1975], 109).

[102] Karl Rahner, "Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte," in *Schriften zur Teologie,* 13:32. In Rahner's view, writes Josep M. Rovira Belloso, "only *[tan s6lo]* from the economy of salvation ... is it possible to enter into the mystery of the Trinity .... Only from here can we 'ascend'

If this is the case, one ought to be able to clarify, to a certain extent at least, how the Church's experience of the economic Trinity, as objectified in salvation history and interpreted in accordance with the *Grundaxiom,* accounts or could account for her consciousness of the immanent Trinity. [103] **If**, as Rahner affirms, one can know about the immanent Trinity only that which is revealed about the economic, such a clarification must, it seems, be possible.

One central datum of the Western Church's consciousness of the immanent Trinity is that the divine persons' eternal order of origin is Father-Son-Spirit. **If** the persons manifest themselves in two divergent TaS,nc; in the economy of salvation-that is, the order of origin (Father-Son-Spirit) and the order of circum-incession (Father-Spirit-Son)-one ought to be able to clarify how the Church discerns "with dogmatic certitude" which of these TaS,nc; constitutes the order of origin. It is not at all apparent, however, how the human beings who make up the Church could distinguish which economic TaS,tc; corresponds to which intra-Trinitarian order if, as Rahner would have it, the Church possesses no propositional revelation that addresses the subject. [104]

towards the Trinity in itself" ("Karl Raimer y la renovaci6n de los estudios sobre la Trinidad," inLa *teologia trinitaria de Karl Rahner,* ed. Nereo Silanes, Koinonia 20 [Salamanca: Ediciones Secretariado Trinitario, 1987], 103).

[103] According to Rahner, such a clarification is necessary in the case of the doctrine of the Son's pre-existence *(The Trinity,* 66 n. 18). Rahner claims, moreover, that identifying the salvation-historical roots of a doctrine, and then determining what can reasonably be inferred therefrom, is a legitimate means of determining the meaning of a doctrine (cf. e.g., "Theology in the New Testament," 32-35; "Yesterday's History of Dogma," in *Theological Investigations* 18, 16-22); he adds that one must employ this method in order to grasp the true significance of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity ("Yesterday's History of Dogma," 21). Rahner seems to think, therefore, that an explanation of how the economy of salvation warrants the doctrine of the immanent Trinity is indispensable to a correct understanding of the doctrine.

[104] For Rahner's actualistic, nonpropositional conception of the immanent Trinity's self-revelation, see, for example, the following remark: "The revelation of the Trinity as immanent can be conceived of as occurring only in this way: it is communicated in the divine *act* of grace as such [in der gottlichen Gnadentat als solche] and, therefore, becomes the economic Trinity" ("Trinitiit," in *Sacramentum Mundi* 4). In Rahner's view, writes Klaus Fischer, "the Trinity is … the revelation itself" (Klaus Fischer, *Der Mensch als Geheimnis: DieAnthropologie Karl Rahners,* Okurnenische Forschungen 2.5 [Freiburg: Herder, 1974], 341).

The methodological program associated with Rahner's
Grundaxiom, consequently, faces something of a dilemma. If one
denies that the Trinitarian persons exhibit varying   in the
economy of salvation, one appears to contravene Rahner's
understanding of Scripture as *norma non normata* for Christian
theology. If, however, one grants the existence of diverse
in the economy, one thereby renders the view that all
dogmatically binding human knowledge of the immanent Trinity
derives from the persons' economic self-manifestation highly
implausible. [105] For one unquestionably binding dogmatic datum,
for the Latin tradition at least, is that the persons' order of origins
is Father-Son-Spirit: a truth that one could not infer, it seems,
from an economy of salvation in which the divine persons appear
in multiple orders.

If Rahner is correct about the origin of human knowledge of
the immanent Trinity, in other words, one ought to be able to
identify "with dogmatic certitude" [106] which of two or more
in the economy reflects the intra-Trinitarian order of
origins: something, it seems, that a person who possessed neither
specially revealed information on the subject nor a direct intuition
of the Godhead could not conceivably do. Given the existence of
multiple   tc;, therefore, a methodology of Trinitarian theology
that takes its data solely from the economy of salvation seems
insufficient for the purpose of justifying Rahner's filioquist
doctrine of the immanent Trinity.

VI. CONCLUSION

The test of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* that we have conducted,
accordingly, yields mixed results. The difficulties posed for the
axiom by the scriptural accounts of Jesus' anointing with the Holy

---

[105] Hans Urs von Balthasar seems to entangle himself in this difficulty when he asserts that
human beings ultimately derive all of their knowledge of the immanent Trinity from the
economy of salvation (see, e.g., *Theologikill: Der Geist der Wahrheit* [Basel:Johannes Verlag,
1987], 127, 192), and yet that, in this economy, the Holy Spirit sometimes takes precedence
over the Son (ibid., 29-30, 166-68, 192).

[106] Rahner, *The Trinity,* 55.

Spirit seem not to invalidate Rahner's most fundamental claim: namely, that God's economic self-manifestation necessarily corresponds to the reality of his inner being. As we have seen, if one follows Bourassa in positing the existence of an intra-Trinitarian order of circumincession, one can locate an archetype of the Taste; Father-Spirit-Son in the immanent Trinity. The test, then, confirms, although it does not prove, a flexible version of the *Grundaxiom* that allows for the appearance of divergent TaSEl<; in the economy of salvation.

The test, however, calls into question the viability of the methodological program that Rahner intends for the *Grundaxiom* to serve. If, that is to say, God may express himself in the order Father-Spirit-Son as well as the order of Father-Son-Spirit, then one cannot discern the intra-Trinitarian order of origins simply by transposing a Taste; one encounters in the economy of salvation into the immanent Trinity. In order to discern the order of origins, rather, one requires additional information as to the significance of the various TcXSEl<;-information the economy of salvation seems ill-suited to provide. To the extent that the identification of the intra-Trinitarian order of origins as Father-Son-Spirit is integral to Rahner's own filioquist Trinitarianism, Rahner's *Grundaxiom* and the economy of salvation, considered together, constitute an inadequate basis for a practicable and, by Rahner's standards, orthodox Trinitarian theology.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Theology of Thomas Aquinas. Edited by RIK VAN NIEUWENHOVE and JOSEPH
WAWRYKOW. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.
Pp. 472 $37.50 (cloth). ISBN 0-268-04363-9.

As seen from the Old World, Anglo-Saxon studies on St. Thomas Aquinas,
which at present seem to be flourishing, are developing according to two major
lines whose convergence appears at the same time problematic. *Primo,* there is
"analytical Thomism," which essentially focuses on the letter of Thomistic texts
in order to extract from them a rational argumentation capable of being utilized
in contemporary debates on philosophy of religion. Although this way of reading
Thomas is generally decontextualized and dehistoricized, it has the merit of
rendering a certain philosophical actuality to these venerable texts. However, in
neglecting their theological context and their historical depth, it runs the risk of
lacking a profound intelligibility. Above all, in accommodating St. Thomas to the
contemporary mode of doing philosophy, it neutralizes the formidable power of
debate and innovation which the medieval mode of thinking currently holds.
Secundo, there is another current that is very critical in the face of the
presuppositions of neo-Thomism (of which analytical Thomism is in some ways
a metamorphosis) that seeks to return the Thomistic corpus to its (super)natural
place, which is theology, not only from a kind of archeological concern for
historical exactitude but also to highlight the pertinence of St. Thomas to the
contemporary theological debate. This wonderful work offered to us by Rik van
Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow constitutes a sort of assessment and a
manifesto *in actu exercito* of this Thomism re-theologized.

The eighteen essays that make up this work were confided to well-known
specialists of Thomistic thought, several of whom here offer us the heart of their
work. Many of these authors are connected with two particularly vibrant centers
of contemporary Thomism: the University of Notre Dame (Burrell, Porter, Priigl,
Wawrykow) and the Thomas Institute of Utrecht in the Netherlands (Goris,
Leget, Rikhof, te Velde). The essays can be divided into two groups. Following
more or less the plan of the *Summa Theologiae* itself, chapters 2-15 present St.
Thomas's teaching on the principal topics of theology, from the foundational
mystery of the Trinity to eschatology. Chapters 16-18, as well as chapter 1,
investigate the nature of the Thomistic project itself and the conditions of its
actualization.

Chapters 2-15 have a pronounced family resemblance that greatly contributes to the unity of the work. Here I would like to point out four principal characteristics. *Primo,* the authors adopt a "historical-theological approach" (xx), with the result that the teaching of St. Thomas is seen in continuity with biblical and patristic thought, as well as within the horizon of medieval theology. *Secundo,* much is made of the internal unity of Thomistic thought as it is reflected in literary structures. Thus, the authors often make reference to the plan of the *Summa Theologiae,* both to situate the topic that they are treating within the entire theological vision of Thomas and to expose its main points. They also know how to exploit the connections between the various parts of the *Summa.* For example, Wawrykow judiciously throws light on St. Thomas's teaching on grace in the *Prima Secundae* with his reflections on predestination in the *Prima Pars* and the grace of Christ in the *Tertia Pars* (chap. 9). *Tertio,* the emphasis laid on the synchronic coherence of the great works of Aquinas goes hand in hand with the taking into account of certain diachronic evolutions in his thought. Thus, Wawrykow demonstrates well the determinative influence that renewed readings of the anti-Pelagian works of St. Augustine had upon the Thomistic theology of grace, much different in the *Scriptum* and in the *Summa Theologiae* (see 206-9), or else the impact that a deeper reading of the Greek Fathers had on Aquinas's mature Christo logy (see 237, 389). *Quarto,* the authors refuse, and rightly so, "to bend Aquinas to the demands of the modern or postmodern scholarly agenda" (xx), but they do not hesitate to place Thomas's teaching in relation to contemporary theology and its issues. Sometimes, they underline the convergence between certain assertions of contemporary theology and aspects of Aquinas's thought heretofore much neglected, as for example, the Trinitarian dimension of his anthropology (see chap. 6, D. *J.* Merriell, "Trinitarian Anthropology"). Thus, as Herwi Rikhof and Gilles Emery point out, not only does the Thomistic theology of the divine missions make room for the significance of the *oikonomia* recognized by contemporary theology, it also allows us to avoid the trap of pure narrativity in placing salvation history on a solid foundation in *theologia:* "Speculative reflection on the being of the Trinity, on the properties of persons, and on their processions makes possible a true theological doctrine of the Trinitarian economy" (Emery, "Trinity and Crea-tion," 74). Sometimes, they help draw out, in contrast, the limits of certain contemporary theologies. Thus, Paul Gondreau, whose article "The Humanity of Christ, the Incarnate Word" (chap. 11) underlines the resolute anti-docetism of Aquinas, spares no criticism of low Christology which, unlike St. Thomas, makes the mistake of opposing the full humanity of Christ to his divinity. Likewise, van Nieuwenhove holds that the soteriology of St. Thomas, founded on participation in Christ and not on some theory of substitution, better respects the New Testament data on the mystery of the Cross than certain more recent theologies (chap. 12, "'Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion': Aquinas' Soteri-ology"). However, the monopoly he accords to the purely medicinal or pedagogical value of penalty, as distinguished from its objective, ontological, "vindictive" value, needs to be more nuanced. To these four principal

characteristics, I would also point out the richness of the bibliographical
references, which nevertheless could have been brought together in a general
bibliography.

In this presentation of the theology of St. Thomas, the greater emphasis is on
what would today be characterized as systematic theology. It is true that the
moral theology of Aquinas, unlike his systematic theology, has already been the
object of several syntheses of high quality (e.g., S. *J.* Pope, ed., *The Ethics of
Aquinas* [Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002]). It is also true
that classical Thomism links the question of grace (chap. 9) or that of original sin
(chap. 7) to moral theology. In this connection, in "Evil, Sin and Death," Rudi
te Velde endeavors to show that original sin is irreducible to an hereditary
premoral handicap and that it implies a voluntary, moral dimension which is
explained by the solidarity of the human race in Adam: "The whole of the
human race is to be regarded as an extended moral self, of which Adam's will is
the primary principle" (156). That being said, the sole essay that systematically
treats of moral theology in the contemporary sense is that of Jean Porter, "Right
Reason and the Love of God: The Parameters of Aquinas' Moral Theology"
(chap. 8). Persuaded that "Aquinas' moral theology can only be understood
within the wider context of his metaphysics and theology" (187), since practical
right reason, the norm of action, "integrates both pre-rational and super-rational
aspects of human existence" (169), she "offer[s] an overview of Aquinas' mature
moral theology as developed in the *Summa theologiae,* which will highlight the
overall plan of his moral theology and indicate how the central motifs of that
theology-beatitude, virtue, law-are related to one another" (168).

The other offerings cover the span of systematic theology. Some follow the
exposition in the *Summa Theologiae* closely. This is the case with Liam Walsh's
essay on the sacraments, which is a close reading of questions 60-65 of the *Tertia
Pars* (chap. 14). Others, because they broach themes that St. Thomas did not
treat in a systematic way, are creative reconstitutions based on the orientations
found in Thomistic texts (chap. 13, T. F. O'Meara, "Theology of the Church").
I regret that the questions from the *De Deo uno (STh* I, qq. 2-26) are not the
object of a similar essay. It would be wrong to give the impression that these
questions constitute a sort of philosophical preamble and that theology, properly
speaking, begins only with the specifically Trinitarian questions. It is the Trinity,
considered from the perspective of what constitutes the unity of persons, that is
at issue from question 2 on! This absence is nevertheless partially compensated
by the beautiful personal meditation of David Burrell on the metaphysical
presuppositions that govern theological language in St. Thomas, as well as in
Meister Eckhart and in St. John of the Cross (chap. 4: "Analogy, Creation and
Theological Language"), and by the excellent contribution of Harm Goris,
"Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination and Human Freedom"
(chap. 5). The author takes up the central theses of his *Free Creatures of an
Eternal God* (1996): we must make a distinction between the problem of the
relation between infallible divine knowledge and the future contingent
(according to Goris, the Thomistic solution to this problem does not imply "a

tenseless theory of time"), and the problem of the relation between the all-powerful First Cause and the contingent effects of secondary causes. In line with the Utrecht school (see also C. Leget, "Eschatology," 370 and 381), the recourse to negative theology, applied here to the relationship of time to eternity and to the articulation of divine and human causalities, is not an easy way of avoiding the problem. It takes note of the transcendence of God as to his mode of presence and as to his causality which, because it is of a completely different order from created causalities, embraces and rules over the diverse created modalities.

Among the essays that focus not on a particular theme of Thomistic theology but on its spirit, we note the well-documented synthesis of Thomas Pri.igl on "Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture" (chap. 16), which carefully illumines St. Thomas's exegetical theory by its concrete practice and which rightly underlines "how systematic theology and the interpretation of Holy Scripture overlap in the works of Thomas Aquinas" (404). Much more polemical is the article of Paul O'Grady: "Philosophical Theology and Analytical Philosophy in Aquinas" (chap. 17). Why are the majority of Thomists wary of the analytical tradition? O'Grady sees here the poisonous fruit of "certain evasionist tendencies in current theological practice" (439) that dangerously flirt with fideism. He laments that the historical approach to Aquinas's work is often done to the detriment of a properly speculative approach. But above all, he strongly opposes "theologism" with its (pseudo-)justifications. Behind the evident and theorized disdain for autonomous philosophy and the modern sciences lies, he suspects, a flight from and a refusal to enter into debate between Christian faith and contemporary culture. In sum, O'Grady deplores the fact that "some recent reactions to [neo-scholasticism] have thrown out the philosophical baby with the neo-scholastic bathwater" (418). He himself is convinced that St. Thomas in many respects-his interest in the sciences, his rigorous use of the Scholastic method-is an analytical philosopher.

Among O'Grady's targets are two authors who are contributors to this work: Eugene Rogers and Bruce Marshall. In "Faith and Reason Follow Glory" (chap. 18), Rogers defends Aquinas against accusations ordinarily brought against him by Protestant theologians. Insisting on the eschatological perspective that dominates Thomas's thought, especially his concept of the relationship between nature and grace, he shows that in Thomas the initiative of the *theosis,* which puts the synergy of man and the Holy Spirit into action, depends entirely upon merciful grace. In fact, O'Grady attacks Rogers (see 423-29) more on the idea developed in his work, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God* (1995), that at the end of his career, "Aquinas lacks a separable philosophical component" (423) and advocates instead a pure and simple integration of metaphysics in his *sacra doctrina.* Rogers defends himself on this point in a footnote (456-58).

Similarly, O'Grady criticizes two theses upheld by Marshall in his essay on the nature of theology in Aquinas (chap. 1). In this essay, Marshall throws light on the significance of theology in the Christian life. However, his unique

presentation of the relationship between theology and the other sciences leaves him open to criticism (see 14-25: "The Wisdom of God and the Wisdom of the World"). First of all, Marshall attributes to St. Thomas "a kind of theological coherentism" (16), which O'Grady contests. According to Marshall, "The epistemic primacy of faith's articles over even the most obvious of reason's certainties" (17) leads to the fact that "consistency with the articles of faith is a necessary condition for the truth of all other beliefs" (21). Theology, then, is in a position to judge the conclusions of all the other sciences, even if it cannot of itself establish their conclusions. Although this is true, must we then conclude that "for Aquinas philosophy is evidently not autonomous, but is always subject to correction from another quarter" (23)? Does the completely extrinsic control that *sacra doctrina* exercises over secular knowledge suffice to call into question an epistemological and methodological autonomy that St. Thomas has always defended against an Augustinian epistemic supernaturalism? Perhaps it would be best to distinguish between autonomy and absolute sovereignty. Furthermore, and this is the second thesis that O'Grady criticizes under the title "the 'Simple Being' Argument," Marshall insists that "for claims about God to be true, the person who makes them actually has to believe the articles of faith" (18). This brings us back to the position of reserving all true natural theology to Christians and to denying all authentic knowledge of God among non-Christians, beginning with those pagan philosophers of antiquity upon whom Aquinas does not hesitate to lean for support, including those times when he treats of the mystery of God. Certainly, the act of faith presents a requirement of totality (at least implicit) founded upon the unicity of the supernatural motive that makes us adhere equally to all those propositions that are perceived to be revealed. One believes in everything or one believes nothing (cf. *STh* II-II, q. 5, a. 3). But does this requirement extend to natural knowledge? Marshall thinks it does in virtue of the Aristotelian principle invoked by St. Thomas according to which *"in simplicibus defectus cognitionis est solum in non attingendo totaliter"* (see *STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 2, ad 3; and Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.10). However, who does not then see that, taken *simpliciter,* this principle would end up disqualifying all knowledge of God outside of the beatific vision? In fact, the principle of all or nothing in the knowledge of a simple object holds for the intuition of its *quid est,* which cannot be partial, as St. Thomas explains: "Quicumque enim non attingit ad *quod quid est* rei simplicis, penitus ignorat ipsam" (IX *Metaphys.,* lect. 11). From this point of view, the Christian theologian is not less ignorant than the pagan philosopher, since that which God is in himself remains for the theologian here below "penitus ignotum" *(ScG* III, c. 49). However, here below, the knowledge of God is made, *quoad nos,* according to a complex mode, for a multiplicity of concepts *(rationes)* which are not synonymous among themselves (see *STh* I, q. 13, a. 4). Ignorance of (or even the negation of) one of these concepts does not totally invalidate our knowledge of the object (see *In Boet. De Trin.,* q. 1, a. 4, ad 10). Rather, it renders it incomplete, imperfect.

Whatever we might think, the debate between O'Grady and Rogers-Marshall on the place of philosophy and more particularly of natural theology in St.

Thomas is not beyond the subject matter of this work. On the contrary, this debate invites us to reflect on what kind of form the necessary re-theologization of St. Thomas should take. The neo-Thomist schema of a totally independent philosophy, espousing the model of rationality proper to the Enlightenment, is without doubt obsolete. The analytical approach hardly seems to have noticed that it retains from Scholasticism only its argumentative rigor while not questioning itself on the fundamentally traditional presuppositions which form the base of this structure of thinking. But the primacy given to theology would not amount to a total supernaturalism which would reduce philosophy to a purely functional role at the heart of theology. The encyclical *Fides et ratio* has reminded us that a fruitful dialogue always presupposes two partners. (Translated by John Langlois, O.P.)

SERGE-THOMAS BONINO, O.P.

> *Dominican House of Studies*
> *Toulouse, France*

Democracy and Tradition. By JEFFREY STOUT. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004. Pp. 348. $35.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-691-10293-7.

Aristotle held that the central analytic category for politics was that of the "regime" *(politeia),* which not only indicated who ruled in a city and to what end, but also suggested a privileged way of life. Regimes made claims about justice and about the best life one could live. Aristocracy, democracy, oligarchy, and the rest were not simply sets of procedures and institutions. Modern liberal democracy has often resisted this sort of view, insisting that democracy specified only the rules of the game and allowed citizens to pursue whatever life they thought best within the boundaries set by the rules. It was a fruit of the liberal-communitarian debates of the 1980s and 1990s, provoked largely by John Rawls's seminal 1971 book, *A Theory of Justice,* that this procedural or neutralist view was sharply challenged by critics of liberalism like Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer, and Alasdair Macintyre, who all pointed out its moral and cultural aspects. It is a merit of Jeffrey Stout's large and complex book that he takes this challenge seriously; indeed, he pleads guilty as charged. He then helpfully argues for a view of just what modern democracy does and should claim for itself and against its "communitarian" or "traditionalist" critics. *Democracy and Tradition* is one of the most substantive answers to the critics of liberal democracy to have emerged from the new set of debates over neutrality that emerged in the wake of Rawls's important 1993 book, *Political Liberalism.*

To be fair, the neutralist paradigm had already been rejected by a number of liberal writers, notably Stephen Macedo in his *Liberal Virtues* (1990). But where

Macedo's critique of liberalism's communitarian critics constituted little more than a series of caricatures, Stout's engagement is sustained and considerably more nuanced, if not altogether convincing. This is doubtless in part a function of Stout's somewhat unusual perspective: he is a professor of religion and a serious student of American pragmatism and his understanding of democracy is shaped by a perspective that, while not seemingly orthodox, is rooted in the specifically Christian sensibilities of the civil rights movement (91, 173). This is a democratic theory different from the usual purely secular variety. Stout proposes an account and defense of the democratic "tradition" against the "new traditionalist" critics of democracy, especially Stanley Hauerwas, Alasdair Macintyre, and John Milbank. Against secular political liberalism, Stout rejects neutrality and the notion of public reason that goes along with it, accepting the importance of religious language and ideas in the formation of modern democratic culture and the notion of tradition-constituted rationality; against the "new traditionalists," he defends modern democracy against the charge that it is necessarily individualistic, morally impoverished, and relentlessly secular.

The most important component of Stout's democratic traditionalism is rooted in "discursive social practices" of "holding one another responsible" through deliberation and discussion (6, 13, 42, 82, 109, 184, 197, 209, 226, 246, 297, 299, 302; cf. 272, 280). This view is "pragmatic in the sense that it focuses on activities held in common as constitutive of the political community," but *activities* understood to embed substantive normative commitments, albeit always subject to and indeed undergoing revision and thus including an important historical dimension (4-5; cf. 84, 183-84, 203, 240, 246-47, 270-276, 296). Stout variously describes his own view as "Emersonian perfectionism" (76, 320 n.2, 282; cf. 83, 147, 168, 172), "democratic expressivism" (81, 282; cf. 12, 183), and Hegelian pragmatism (13, 138). The pragmatist and expressivist aspects of Stout's view indicate his deep philosophical commitments regarding philosophy and public life, his skepticism about metaphysical argument, and his mode of moral analysis.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is devoted to a discussion of the way that democracy shapes character. It includes a chapter on democratic piety and a chapter on African-American thought, focusing on James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison. The first chapter argues for the central role of religion in shaping American character. Stout offers a narrative here that is notably different from that of other students of American Christianity: he emphasizes the religious dimensions of the thought of Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, and Dewey, leading to a notion of "Augustinian democracy" constituted by critical discourse and self-correction. The second chapter evaluates some aspects of black nationalism and its connections with pragmatism, defending a hope in democratic practices against some of the more negative voices in that movement.

The second part of the book concerns the role of religion in modern democratic society. Here Stout critically engages both secular liberals who would limit religious discourse (in chap. 3) and the "new traditionalists" who reject liberalism and key elements of democratic culture as antithetical to Christian

traditions (chaps. 4-7). Stout rejects strictures on public debate such as Rawls's notion of "public reason" and Richard Rorty's view of religion as a "conversation-stopper." All citizens should be encouraged honestly to air and to exchange their deepest commitments and reasons. While Stout endorses a relatively weak obligation to make one's reasons maximally intelligible to one's fellow citizens with different faith commitments, he rejects any explicit limitations on the sorts of arguments that can be used, breaking with Rawls and thus with other even stronger versions of justificatory liberalism like those of Robert Audi or Gerald Gaus, and taking the side of critics of the restrictive view, such as Christopher Eberle and Paul Weithman. Stout's reason here stems from doubts about the possibility of successfully arriving at the sort of overlapping consensus about a free-standing political conception of justice that Rawls's theory proposes. Moreover, Stout thinks that the Rawlsian view has had the effect of alienating serious Christian thinkers from democratic institutions and practices, and thus nourishing the animus of the new traditionalists: "[t]he more thoroughly Rawlsian our law schools and ethics centers become, the more radically Hauerwasian the theological schools become" (75).

Stout argues in chapter 4 that the secularization of modern democratic society is essentially pluralism and thus does not entail a commitment to an explicitly secular world view. Rather, it simply rules out religious coercion and, in turn, sets the stage for the kind of pragmatist discourse-based public culture that should be our object. This view of secularization is deployed against John Milbank and his "radical orthodoxy" movement, whose narrative of the rise of secularism overemphasizes the role of intellectuals and theories, oddly accepting the very terms of its opponents who are committed to undermining religious influence.

Stout's most extensive criticisms, however, are reserved for Macintyre and Hauerwas. For Stout the great problem with both is that their views tend "to undermine identification with liberal democracy" (118). The central charge against Macintyre is that, contrary to his interest in translation and dialogue/conflict with rival traditions, he has never taken the liberal democratic tradition seriously. His very definition of it is unfair and substantively mistaken: according to Stout liberals attempted to develop a political theory appropriate to a society already characterized by pluralism. The social fact was first, and theorists attempted to meet it (97, 127, 177). Perhaps Stout's most serious charge against Macintyre is that his arguments are really just the latest version of a strain of romantic social criticism that is itself a product of modernity. Indeed, Stout sides with Richard Bernstein in seeing at the center of MacIntyre's project the face of Hegel, and Stout holds that his own Hegelian pragmatism is both a more constructive and a more honest view of our situation (137-38). He sees Hauerwas's view as a derivative combination of a dualism between church and world that Hauerwas takes from the thought of John Howard Yoder and MacIntyre's antiliberalism. Hauerwas fails to distinguish liberalism from democracy and this blinds him to democracy's own distinctive virtue tradition. In chapter 7 Stout offers some examples of the underappreciated literature of

democratic tradition that belies the characterizations of democracy central to Macintyre and Hauerwas.

The third part of *Democracy and Tradition* is concerned with large theoretical issues about the extent to which moral agreement is possible and on what basis. The advantage of Stout's version of pragmatism is purported to be its ability to steer a course between the various foundationalist accounts vulnerable to all manner of modern technical philosophical objections and the sort of skepticism (e.g., Rorty) that seems to render moral discourse trivial. His approach distinguishes justification, which is always contextual, from truth, which is an ideal goal defined by its use rather than by any notion of correspondence or even coherence (251). His hope is that this theoretically light account provides a more accessible route to the formation of the kind of common morality appropriate to modern pluralistic democratic culture.

Stout has done a great service in constructing the account he does here and a number of his criticisms of both liberals and "new traditionalists" need to be seriously considered. The rootedness of his account in distinctly American ideas, and ideas that cross the boundaries that usually separate philosophy, literature, and cultural studies, is especially distinctive and welcome. There are also some problems. This is a lengthy, and at times (for example in the discussion of truth and justification mentioned above) densely argued, book. At other times, it is oddly cavalier, and it isn't clear how to understand this inconsistency. With respect to both modes of argument there are serious questions to be asked. I can only indicate a few here.

Stout defends moral norms (such as a norm against torture in combating terrorism, which he discusses in chap. 8) as "expressive" commitments "implicit in our own practices" (198). A similar account of rights is defended in chapter 9. His general approach here is to affirm that moral convictions can be justified, but that justification is relative to shifting contexts and so a universal set of moral principles that holds always and everywhere (natural law) is unavailable. He hedges a bit here, allowing that some such thing *may* be possible, but holding that there is a "low probability" for the "prospects of showing that there are *[some* (nontrivial) moral claims everyone is justified in believing]" (232). In particular Stout rejects the role of a metaphysics based on any correspondence theory of truth in grounding morality. So, in fact, on Stout's view the notion of a natural law is as irrelevant to moral discourse as the notion of truth as adequacy of the mind to its objects is to any statement about the world. He does not reject the very notion of truth, but he does reject all but minimal versions of it related primarily to its use as a hedge against premature conclusions (254).

Stout also wants to preserve the idea of a "higher law, " but largely for "rhetorical" purposes (in chap. 10). It means something when Antigone, Thomas Jefferson, and Martin Luther King, Jr., all appeal to some higher standard of justice, but it doesn't necessarily mean what they thought it meant. Stout imagines the possibility of an ideal moral law analogous to David Lewis's notion of a complete unified science; that is, he imagines general moral rules organized into deductive systems achieving various degrees of calibrated simplicity and

strength. If we take all the generalizations that appear in all of the best such possible deductive systems we might have "the moral law" (242). Such a thing is merely an "imaginative projection," rather like Aquinas's notion of the eternal law (243). While such a system would be on the whole inaccessible to human beings, it would serve the rhetorical function needed for appeals against present injustice like those made by Antigone, Jefferson, and King.

Of course, taking seriously the reference to eternal law, one might well object here that Aquinas thinks the standard to which human reformers would appeal is rather the natural law. But for Stout the advantage of *his* notion of higher law is precisely that, while it can serve as a kind of ideal, one cannot ever claim to have defined or implemented it. Natural law "theories," on the other hand, "become mystifications when they assume that an ideal system or its axioms can function-or is already functioning-as *our criterion* for deciding which moral claims are true" (245). To this sentence is appended a footnote that contains the book's entire engagement with natural-law thinkers by way of a dismissive paragraph devoted to the work of John Finnis and Germain Grisez, whose theory is "prone to ideological abuse," especially where sexual ethics are concerned, but for which Stout has "the utmost respect" when it leads its proponents to criticize nuclear weapons and capital punishment (331 n.15). It is difficult not to think that the critical standard here is simply Stout's own political views (however arrived at), since there is nothing remotely close to an engagement on principles. One might have expected more from a thinker who repeatedly commits himself to the thesis that "exchanging reasons" is the defining mark of democratic culture (e.g., 10-11, 42, 74, 152, 207, 209). Alas, however, the same is true of his much lengthier discussion of Macintyre, where he contests MacIntyre's ideas about modern culture and (some of) his view of tradition, but none of his substantive arguments in ethics. One might especially have expected some extended engagement with MacIntyre's view of truth in his 1990 Aquinas Lecture, but there is none.

I noted at the beginning of this review that *Democracy and Tradition* constitutes a return to a classical view of political regimes. This is both a strength and a potential weakness given Stout's ambitions as a contributor to public philosophy. It is a strength because of its honesty. Democracy does seem to make substantive and not just procedural claims and this has not been admitted frequently enough. On the other hand, there are at least two related challenges to such an account. By concentrating on democracy and leaving aside the discussion of "liberalism" Stout hopes to avoid many sterile debates. However, if pluralism is a chief mark of modern democratic society and democracy does make the kinds of cultural claims Stout admits, then it is natural to expect democratic society over time to encourage an internalization of that pluralism by individuals and communities. Doesn't this support a continuing caution on the part of older substantive moral and theological traditions and thus a continuing source of tension within democratic society and perhaps a reason to be cautious about Stout's solutions? Related to this, Stout emphasizes the importance of reason-giving and debate as central to democratic culture. He also emphasizes

the extent to which his pragmatism "travels light" (254), eschewing complicated
philosophical commitments with respect to epistemology and metaphysics and
supporting what Arthur Fine has called the "natural ontological attitude" (251).
Is it not the case that other moral traditions, those that travel less lightly, risk
losing essential parts of their identities if they take up Stout's view of democratic
community? Does this not pose, in the end, the same risk as a Rawlsian public
reason of eroding what the older traditions take to be essential? Why would they
accept such an offer, especially when they think their own "heavier" accounts
better explain what is true and right about democracy, human rights, and limited
government? Finally, an important part of Stout's negative case for pragmatism
rests on what are in fact rather technical arguments in epistemology and the
philosophy of science. But why should technical philosophical argument be able
to do that work and not the work of defending the importance of what are, from
the perspective of other traditions, important metaphysical claims-especially
when they seem to support the "natural ontological attitude" of ordinary citizens
better than the alternatives?

V. BRADLEY LEWIS

The Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

Foundations of Systematic Theology. By THOMAS G. GUARINO. New York: T &
    T Clark, 2005. Pp. 356. $39.95 (paper). ISBN 0-567-02751-1.

Thomas Guarino is Professor of Systematics in the School of Theology at
Seton Hall University. This substantial book is his second: his first, published in
1993, treated an associated topic, that of the relation between truth and
revelation. He has also published many academic essays and reviews on topics
in fundamental   and philosophical theology.

The central claim of this book is that Christian doctrine, which Guarino
sometimes treats as interchangeable with Christian theology, needs philosophy,
and not just any philosophy but some first philosophy of genuinely metaphysical
range. And why does theology need philosophy of this sort? Because without it
theology will collapse (the metaphors of buttressing, support, undergirding,   and
foundation-providing   are scattered broadside) into unintelligibility, which is to
say into the simple fideistic assertion of claims that can't be explained, justified,
made intelligible, or argued for. The right kind of philosophy serves theology,
in Guarino's view, as *ancilla,* but one with a certain autonomy: *non ancilla nisi
libera.* There is a deeply suggestive difference, however, between handmaidens,
whether autonomous or not, and foundations or buttresses, one that is not taken
seriously enough by Guarino.

But to get at the problem we need to see what, more exactly, Guarino has in mind when he speaks of first philosophy. He is never very precise about this, but it is clear that such a philosophy must be realist, it must assert (or at least permit) the possibility that we human knowers can apprehend the truth with certitude (i.e., not merely that we can know the truth, but that we can know when we do so), it must permit the possibility that truths about God be uttered and known by us (uttered analogically, of course, and known with all the usual qualifications about God's unknowability *in se),* and it must allow that those without the benefit of access to revelation can know and speak truths. Phrases like philosophy "with a genuinely metaphysical horizon" (taken from *Fides et ratio)* serve, in Guarino's text, as a shorthand for all this.

With such a philosophy to hand and in mind, Guarino argues, it is possible to make sense of-to elucidate and support-Christian doctrine in general, and most especially some key meta-claims about doctrine and belief, namely, that Christians now have the same beliefs they have always had, and that the Church now teaches what it has always taught. Guarino nuances these claims: the material identity across time of what is taught by the Church and what is believed by Christians does not for him entail anything crass like verbal invariance in doctrinal formulation or the rejection of development in doctrine. What moves him most is the necessity of being able to say, and to explain and defend, that what (for example) the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Symbol meant (and means) about the Holy Trinity can also, in essentials, be meant by me when I recite it now. *Prima philosophia* in Guarino's sense is, he thinks, necessary for a comprehensible assertion and explanation of this claim. And he argues that many strands of twentieth-century thought-including at least the early Heidegger, the mature Gadamer, Levinas and his progeny (among whom he counts the eminently Catholic contemporary philosopher Jean-Luc Marion), and at least some versions of Wittgenstein's later philosophy-do not meet the needs of theology and should therefore not be adopted by theologians. Most generally: any version of postmodernism (Guarino, though well aware of the difficulties of using this term, chooses to use it) of a broadly non- or anti-foundationalist kind fails to meet theology's needs.

Which philosophies do meet these needs? Which can serve as theology's free handmaiden? Guarino offers several candidates: Lonergan's transcendental Thomism, Rahner's version of the same, Sokolowski's broadly Thomistic phenomenology, Milbank's Augustinian/Dionysian Platonism, de Lubac's *nouvelle theologie* (on some readings of it), and others. But he consistently refuses to identify any one of these as the right one, or the one best suited to meet the needs he has identified. Indeed, he makes a virtue of that refusal, quoting, *inter alia, Fides et ratio* to the effect that the Church has no philosophy of its own. Any philosophy may meet theology's needs so long as it meets the broad criteria laid out, which is to say so long as it has genuinely metaphysical range and can thus serve as a revelationally appropriate first philosophy. Guarino's pluralism in this regard is interesting, not least because several of the candidates he identifies as possibly meeting theology's needs are incompatible

one with another. One can't, for instance, coherently defend both Milbank and Lonergan.

Guarino develops his main thesis about the need for a broadly metaphysical first philosophy by treating separately the four main areas in which there have been significant modern challenges to its possibility. These four areas are: the truth of Christian doctrine, the meaning of Christian doctrine, the language in which Christian doctrine is expressed, and the relation of what is claimed by Christian doctrine to what is claimed by discourses and traditions external to it. His method is the same in each case. He begins with a short survey of magisterial documents relevant to the topic, moves to discussions of significant twentieth-century philosophical and theological contributions to it (with occasional excursuses on medieval or patristic material), and then identifies which may be approved of and which rejected as respectively making possible or ruling out a revelationally appropriate first philosophy. His most frequent interlocutors are the predictable ones: Heidegger, Rahner, Lonergan, Barth, von Balthasar, de Lubac, and, among living thinkers, Jean-Luc Marion. His exegesis is eirenic rather than confrontational: he is concerned always to identify what is good and acceptable even in positions he will finally reject. And although he certainly has a position and an argument for it, his method is not principally argumentative but is, rather, exegetical: more than eighty percent of the book is devoted to expounding the thought of his interlocutors. There is correspondingly little space devoted to the development of his own argument.

There is a good deal to like about the book. It is motivated by an apparently deep and genuine love of and concern for the truth of what the Church teaches; it shows wide and thoughtful reading in the philosophical and theological literature of the twentieth century, and a considerably more than passing knowledge of large tracts of the premodern Latin Christian tradition; and it is written with a clear desire to find and build upon common ground in our fractiously argumentative theological world-and this even with those whose views Guarino judges furthest from his own. The book could profitably be used in a seminary or graduate course on twentieth-century philosophical or fundamental theology, and the care with which Guarino signposts, summarizes, and recapitulates his argument (this leads to a good deal of repetition, but it is at least clear) suggests that he may have such a use in mind.

Still, Guarino's view is sufficiently argumentatively undeveloped that it is difficult to tell exactly what he does mean by *prima philosophia* and in exactly what way theology-or the claims made by Christian doctrine-needs it. I will suggest some possible clarifications, which are also probably disagreements.

First, there is the claim that theology-or at least doctrine-without its properly philosophical *ancilla* lacks intelligibility. The right kind of philosophy, Guarino thinks, supplies the lack. But since he seems to mean by 'intelligibility' a relation that doctrinal claims bear to their human knowers or hearers (to some? to all? Guarino doesn't say), and not intelligibility as a property intrinsic to the claims, there is an obvious difficulty, which is that Guarino seems committed to the view that, for example, Lonergan's philosophy is more intelligible than, say,

the words of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan   Symbol. It is hard to see why anyone would think this, and Guarino offers no reason to think it. The truth is that most ordinarily equipped human beings find the Symbol much more intelligible than Lonergan-and rightly so. Trying to make the content of Christian teaching intelligible by means of first philosophy is almost always to attempt clarification of the mysterious with the impenetrably enigmatic. And this means that whatever else first philosophy may do for Christian teaching, it is unlikely to provide intelligibility.

Or, consider the question of truth. Guarino thinks that Christian teaching needs a theory of truth: he several times asks what theory of truth is implied by fundamental Christian beliefs. His answer, if I understand him rightly, is that we don't know. We do know, he thinks, that it must belong to a certain family (broadly realist, etc). But we don't know which of the many members of that family is the right one, and since some of them are mutually contradictory, the upshot is, so far as I can see, that we are left with many possible ways of talking about what we might mean by saying that Christian doctrine is true, some of which must be wrong. If Guarino is right, it is the case that some kinds of truth theory (exhaustively pragmatic-hermeneutical ones perhaps; perhaps also coherence theories) are ruled out by what Christian doctrine claims, and that we can know this. But he is happy for Christians to use any of those in the endorsed family, mutually contradictory though some of them are. This, however, means that he endorses the view that Christian thinkers may profitably use false, incoherent, or otherwise dubious theories of truth for the explication of Christian doctrine, because some in the preferred family must be that, and he endorses the use of any member of it. And if we can do that with theories of the preferred kind, why can't we do it with theories of the rejected kind? It can't be because the former are true (coherent, indubitable, or what-have-you) while the latter aren't. It must then be because the former are useful (though if we were to ask useful for what we'd be back in the territory of the preceding paragraph), while the latter aren't. But this conclusion, which I rather think the right one, does not seem to be what Guarino wants. He wants something more, as a revealing footnote (305 n. 51) contrasting his position with that of Stanley Hauerwas, shows.

He acknowledges that Hauerwas thinks metaphysics can be useful for the effective display of what the Church teaches. Guarino comments that effective display doesn't amount to intelligibility or rational explanation, which shows that he wants more than his own position permits him to have. Exactly what more is never explained, but it is probably the right metaphysic, the best theory of truth, the one true hermeneutic, in the absence of which the Church's teaching trembles on the brink of collapse. But by Guarino's account, we don't have these things (or, more exactly, if we have them we don't know that we do: we lack certitude about the matter). What the Church does have, and will continue to have, is a need to talk about, display with elegance, ornament, comment upon, and depict, what doctrine means and how it should be understood. These enterprises have an importance, but not much of one: hardly any Christians are interested in them; salvation does not depend upon them; and

even the Church's use of them is always responsive to particular currents of thought and particular, changeable and changing, vocabularies, and there have been and will be again periods when these enterprises recede even further into the background than they are at the moment. The fundamental point is that these matters have always been and will always remain, much more murky than doctrine itself. Guarino's metaphors mislead him, too often, into thinking the opposite, into thinking that the mistress's *ancillae* can be sure, in the arguments they have among themselves in the antechamber, about which dress will best set off her beauty. But they can't. Their concern should be for ornamentation and display, not for the single best dress; and if that is not the concern, there are many more possibilities than Guarino acknowledges.

PAUL J. GRIFFITHS

University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Through Holiness to Wisdom: The Nature of Theology according to St. Bonaventure. By GREGORYlANAVE.Bibliotheca Seraphico-Capuccina 76. Rome: Istituto storico dei cappuccini, 2005. Pp. 241. 20 €(paper). ISBN 88-88001-33-6.

Gregory LaNave has undertaken to articulate Saint Bonaventure's understanding of theology. Others have investigated this territory before, but none have charted it as fully and carefully.

LaNave's understanding of Bonaventure is, in outline, simple. Theology is a science, requiring holiness, and ordered to wisdom. When so stated, the thesis is clear enough. Such clarity is always admirable in scholarly writing, perhaps especially in scholarly writing on Bonaventure. But that is not the substantive contribution of this book.

At a certain point in reading Bonaventure, one cannot help but be struck by the very capaciousness of his mind. The breadth of his inquiry, it would seem, is without limit. But he is no intellectual magpie; the synthetic powers of his intellect are such as to give location to whatever he turns his mind to. Things have a place, a place determined by their relationships to other things. Bonaventure sees and strives to articulate the deep lines of unity among all things created and God. The power of his penetration into things is further manifest in the often painstaking details of analysis. He is, after all, a Scholastic, and it shows. But the distinctions are in the service of articulating reality and the ultimately interconnected character of things.

I confess to an odd reaction on reading much of the scholarship on Bonaventure. It often seems accurate enough, but somehow madequate to the scope of Bonaventure's thought. The difficulty is that in focusing on some aspect

of a topic, the larger frame is lost; in proposing a key to a given topic, or even to the whole of the doctor's thought, one does not simply set aside topics (as one must always do in sound scholarly writing) but one sets aside topics that are intrinsic to the one under consideration.

LaNave has, remarkably, avoided this. He might, most simply, have done a word study of the term *theologia* in Bonaventure. Such a study would have required cutting "theology" loose from vital elements with the effect of distorting, if not simply misrepresenting, the master's thinking. And so LaNave looks to articulate those terms, those elements vital to "theology." They are, on his account, three: *scientia, sanctitas,* and *sapientia.* Any one of these three would have made an interesting enough study. What makes this book valuable is the careful articulation of the relationship between science, holiness, and wisdom such that a remarkably full portrait of theology emerges. LaNave's point, so clear in execution, is that a consideration of theology in Bonaventure that neglects any one of the three is not simply truncated, it is deficient.

The three ideas establish the basic structure of the book. LaNave first considers Bonaventure on theology as a science. His principal source here is, as one might suspect, the commentary on Lombard's *Sentences,* especially, but not exclusively, the prologue to book 1. LaNave delineates the lines of Bonaventure's thought with reference to Odo Rigaldus and the *Summa fratrisAlexandri,* noting what Bonaventure has adopted and where he has departed from his own masters. LaNave gives the Aristotelian elements in Bonaventure's thought their due. There can be no serious consideration of theology as a science in the thirteenth century without addressing the demands of Aristotelian notions of science. The profoundly Scholastic character of Bonaventure's understanding of theology is here affirmed, in the face of a scholarly trend rather in the other direction.

LaNave then turns to *sanctitas.* His interest is in its role in the intellectual life of the Christian, and specifically the theologian. After giving a preliminary definition of *sanctitas* with reference to the commentary on the *Sentences,* the *Breviloquium,* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron,* he turns to the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* for a fuller account of the effect of holiness. In the very choices the reader can see LaNave's focus on the intellect. But it is never a blinding focus. Thus, for example, in considering the *Itinerarium's* rich and perplexing distinction between seeing God "in" and seeing God "through," LaNave offers his own well-considered analysis. In particular, his serious attention to the linking of seeing God in with the spiritual senses is illuminating. LaNave describes what he aptly calls a "logic of sensation" in explaining the spiritual senses.

Within this larger frame he addresses the role of St. Francis, looking especially at the *Legenda maior.* The broader consideration helps the reader understand more clearly what Bonaventure understood to be Francis's holiness precisely as it is the ideal of the theologian. His analysis of Francis as the expressed likeness of the Crucified in relation to the theologian is a significant contribution to the study of Bonaventure's notion of theology. LaNave's analysis of Francis is, happily, devoid of the facile.

Finally, LaNave turns to *sapientia.* Bonaventure's use of the term is complex and many-faceted, requiring especially supple handling on the part of the commentator. LaNave begins with the disputed questions *De scientia Christi* to articulate the relevant elements of wisdom, turning then to the commentary on Lombard's *Sentences,* the *Collation es de septem donis,* and finally the *Collation es in Hexaifmeron.* His study culminates in the fourfold form of wisdom: *sapientia uniformis, sapientia multiformis, saptientia omniformis, andsapientia nulliformis.* All of this makes possible a subtly considered "sapiential theology."

The result is a work of mature synthetic insight-especially notable in a book that began as a doctoral dissertation. LaNave is able to show the deep and intrinsic links between these ideas in the thought of Bonaventure such that each of the three is illuminated by the other and the three together give a fullness to Bonaventure's understanding of theology that, to my knowledge, has not been achieved before.

LaNave is not intimidated by the manifold Scholastic divisions that are found throughout Bonaventure's work. LaNave's prose can be a bit thick as he takes seriously such distinctions and their expression in technical Scholastic idiom. But the reader is well rewarded, for LaNave has a knack for seeing the point of a distinction and not losing sight of the underlying integrity that is to be understood in and through it.

This breadth of vision in considering Bonaventure's thought allows LaNave to situate himself in relation to, as well as account for, the scholarship on Bonaventure. Much of what he has to say in the particular is drawn from the work of those who have gone before him, and he duly acknowledges this. But it is not simply a matter of noting what others have said before; the reader can see better how given authors fit within a broader consideration of Bonaventure. Old issues receive new light. For example, the modern questions around the precise character and relevance of the spiritual senses are addressed in the context of holiness in the *Itinerarium.* LaNave is critical of Rahner and sympathetic here (as throughout the book) to Balthasar. But the reader can see not just that Balthasar's reading is more authentic to the text, but why.

Although the work is in great part an historical work, it is also explicitly a contribution to contemporary Roman Catholic theology. There is much discussion today regarding the relationship between systematic theology and spirituality. LaNave is convinced, and he is surely correct, that Bonaventure has much to contribute to this discussion, and not simply as a partisan of some loosely conceived notion of spirituality. Indeed, it is precisely the rigor of his thought and the depth of his spirituality together that make him such a valuable resource for modern theological reflection. LaNave turns explicitly to this in his conclusion.

Finally, I could not help but recall how the late Fr. John Francis Quinn would exhort those of us who were his students many years ago "to leave our Aquinas at the door." It seemed an odd exhortation from a man who had written such a large book on Bonaventure *(The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy)* in which he regularly compared the two masters. But

he wanted those of us who were Thomists at heart to let Bonaventure speak for himself. LaNave has certainly produced a book in which Bonaventure can speak for himself. And for Thomists, he has produced an especially welcome book. Thomists have something of an advantage over Bonaventurians: the interconnectedness of Thomas's thought is well established even if often violated. Of course for St. Thomas theology is a science, indeed a wisdom, not unrelated to holiness. But the articulation is not that of St. Bonaventure. LaNave has, I can only hope, opened up a new chapter in placing these two masters of speculative synthesis into conversation. His book is an invitation not only to Bonaventurians to think anew about their man, but to Thomists to enter into a new and deeper conversation with Thomas's great contemporary. We need no longer leave our Aquinas at the door.

                                                                    JOHN F. BOYLE

            University of St. Thomas
                St. Paul, Minnesota

Metaphysique et noetique: Albert le Grand. By ALAIN DE LIBERA. Paris: Librarie PhilosophiqueJ. Vrin, 2005. Pp. 431. 28 € (paper). ISBN 2-7116-1638-X.

    No less an historian than Etienne Gilson found the problem of the Aristotelianism of Albert the Great so daunting that he declined to undertake its discussion in his monumental *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages.* In particular, he considered Albert's Aristotelian commentaries to be of such great bulk so as to defy analysis. Albert had lived a long and studious life and throughout the whole of it he pursued nearly every field of study. The result, as Gilson remarked, is that the amount of philosophical and scientific information heaped up in Albert's writings is nothing short of amazing. There seemed just too much there to sort out profitably. Moreover, Gilson found that it is not always easy to distinguish Albert's own thought from what he appeared to be merely reporting. Not only did Albert make occasional remarks that seem to imply a desire to distance himself from the claims of the Aristotelian text, but his learned and voluminous discussions of the views of various Greek and Arabic authorities often leave the reader in some doubt as to Albert's own position. It is not surprising, then, that Gilson never undertook the task of working out Albert's place in the history of Aristotelianism, nor that of determining the overall unity of Albert's thought.

    Scholarship has advanced since Gilson's day and much of Albert's work is now better known and understood. With respect to the Aristotelian commentaries themselves, James Weisheipl and others have successfully brought them into sharper focus as central expressions of Albert's philosophical

contribution. Not only is Albert's role in the revival of Aristotle's research programs in zoology and other natural sciences coming to be better appreciated, but Albert's exegetical contributions to the understanding of Aristotelian form are now recognized. Yet, difficult questions about Albert's Aristotelianism continued to be debated, as does the question of the unity of his thought.

One area in which such questions continue to occupy Albert scholars concerns the nature of metaphysical knowledge. Nearly fifty years ago, Weisheipl had identified Albert's opponents, against whom he argues throughout his commentary on the *Metaphysics,* as the so-called Oxford Platonists, especially Robert Kilwardby. These *amici Platonis* had claimed that the principles of nature are mathematical and the subsisting figures and numbers that are the proper subject of mathematical science have their source in God, the eternally subsistent divine unity. They identified God, then, as the proper subject of metaphysics, a view repeatedly rejected by Albert. More recently, Albert Zimmermann, in his *Ontologie oder Metaphysik?* (1998), took this point further, claiming that Albert belongs, along with Thomas Aquinas, to a distinctive tradition that emphasizes the ontological character of metaphysics, placing God outside its subject genus properly understood. Taking a somewhat different tack, Alain de Libera maintained in his *Albert le Grand et la philosophie* (1991) that Albert's thought on the subject of metaphysics is the product of a distinctive fusion of two traditions: the Greco-Arabic tradition of Aristotelian ontology and the Neoplatonism of the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition. In particular, he argued that in Albert's works one finds both ontological and theological conceptions of metaphysics: Albert associates the ontological dimension of metaphysics with Aristotle's treatise of that name and the theological dimension with the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis.*

De Libera's new study, *Metaphysique et noetique,* develops this same thesis with respect to a theory of the intellect. To some degree a revision and recasting of his earlier study, this new book investigates Albert's central role in the initial development of two distinct conceptions of metaphysics that arose out of the later medieval period. One is a metaphysics of the spirit that later gave rise to German idealism. The other is a metaphysics of being, a philosophical ontology, that influenced later Aristotelianism. Albert's distinctive reception of both the Neoplatonic and the Aristotelian metaphysical traditions place him in an historically unique position. This is reflected, de Libera points out, in that Albert was the first to attempt a harmonization of ontological and theological reflections on being with a philosophical psychology. The result is seen in the thought of Albert's disciples of the German Dominican School-Ulrich of Strasbourg, Dietrich of Freiberg, and Master John Eckhart-especially in their concern with such topics as *henosis.* De Libera presents a treatment of various traditional topics of medieval metaphysics and psychology in light of this Albertian tradition. Attention is given to the subject of theology as distinct from that of philosophy, analogical predication of divine being and action, ontological procession, the status of universals, the problem of monopsychism, and the divinization of the human intellect. The study is supplemented by a selection of

texts from Albert's works in French translation, drawn mostly from the Aristotelian commentaries.

There is much to say in favor of de Libera's view that crucial to Albert's metaphysical thought is the conjunction of Aristotelian and Pseudo-Dionysian approaches. Inheriting a tradition of negative theology and receiving the newly translated Aristotelian texts presenting a developed substance/accident ontology, Albert was faced with the difficult work of uniting these disparate traditions into a comprehensive metaphysics. Central to this task is the determination of the way in which the study of being *qua* being constitutes a *scientia divina.* Even if it is true that the distinction between ontological and theological approaches to being do not directly correspond to the division of Aristotelian and Dionysian sources in Albert's works in precisely the way de Libera argues, the conjunction nonetheless remains vital. Yet it is unclear how far this goes in clarifying Albert's conception of metaphysics or solving the problem of his Aristotelianism. Some scholars, such as *J.* Aertsen, have suggested that de Libera's earlier account in *Albert le Grand et la philosophie* failed adequately to account for the unity of Albert's thought. Others, such as Timothy Noone, have noted that de Libera's former treatment needs to be supplemented by a study of how Albert combines the Avicennian approach to metaphysics with certain "pre-Thomistic" elements. While de Libera's new study certainly adds depth to his earlier account, these issues remain open to debate.

Even within the text of Albert's *Metaphysica,* one must account for apparent compromises of his Aristotelianism. At least one reason this problem arises is Albert's tendency to mix highly Platonic language with defense of distinctively Aristotelian positions. This tendency runs throughout the text, but is already evident in the opening tract, where Albert discusses the way in which metaphysics is required for establishing *(stabilire)* the foundations of the other theoretical sciences of physics and mathematics. Does the fact that Albert insists that metaphysics is to be studied after physics and mathematics mean that the results of physical and mathematical research are in themselves only probable and not certain? The favorable quotation of Ptolemy makes it clear that Albert does not reduce mathematical knowledge to opinion. Yet, he is also firm in rejecting the *error Platonis* that physics is established by mathematics and mathematics by metaphysics. As physics concerns the real substances from which mathematics arises by way of abstraction, it is physics that provides the foundation for mathematics and not the other way around. Moreover, Albert refers again to Ptolemy later in the text only to reject his notion that certainty cannot be had in physics. The contradiction is only apparent, for while mathematics is indeed quite certain in its results, as Ptolemy says, it fails to consider substance in itself. This is why another science is required to establish, through an account of *esse simpliciter,* what is presupposed by both physics and mathematics. Albert notes, using the language of Platonic emanation, that this metaphysical science is rightly also called *scientia divina* because it treats of universal existence as the *effluxio Dei.* Such Platonic expressions reside alongside firm Aristotelian insistances throughout the text, leaving the reader in some

doubt about how such expressions are to be read in light of the defense of Aristotle.

As a number of scholars have pointed out, then, one does not have to go beyond the text of the *Metaphysica* to encounter the problem of Albert's Aristotelianism. Most certainly Albert considers metaphysics *in modo doctrinae* as a theology that provides the ultimate explanation of the first causes establishing the natural and mathematical sciences. Yet, knowledge arising from sence perception first yields the natural sciences *in modo inventionis* and mathematics *in modo abstractionis,* both of which treat their subject-genera in terms of their own principles and proximate causes. Albert affirms this autonomy of the lower sciences through a rejection of the Platonic reductionism-or, perhaps better put, superductionism-to the Absolute One. Thus, Albert can rather firmly insist that the subject of metaphysics is not God and support this claim with an avowedly Aristotelian justification that metaphysics concerns being just insofar as it is being and not this or that kind of being. Such an analogical notion of being can be formed only when one already knows that there exists something that is not physical. Were there no nonphysical being, physics would be the most fundamental and universal science. The Oxford Platonists, who claim that the proper subject of metaphysics is eternal substance that is the first cause of all other substances and accidents, are in error. In this regard, Albert certainly can agree with Avicenna that there would be nothing to seek in the science of metaphysics were God its proper subject.

So, what is the reader of the *Metaphysica* to make of its often Platonized language? One might suggest that the tendency to use such expressions simply represents a preference for the contemplative language of the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition, but this is not very helpful. It is no more satisfying than the claim that Albert was simply reporting Aristotle's views in the *Metaphysica-views* that Albert himself did not hold. Recent work on Albert's natural philosophy has made it abundantly clear that Albert understood himself to be following in the footsteps of Aristotle and, most notably, that he realized this required an acceptance of the Aristotelian conception of form as opposed to that of Plato. This comports well with the opposition to the Oxford Platonists as expressed in the *Metaphysica.* De Libera, however, is quite right that Albert must also be taken seriously as the source for the very different views of the German Dominican School. At the very least, it must be admitted that the juxtaposition of Platonism and Aristotelianism in Albert's conception of metaphysical knowledge, even within the text of the *Metaphysica,* certainly requires further attention. Among the merits of de Libera's new study of Albert's metaphysics, therefore, is the attention it gives to the difficult and important question of the Aristotelianism of the *Doctor Universalis.*

MICHAEL W. TKACZ

Gonzaga University
Spokane, Washington

The History of the Church. By GUYBEDOUELLE.New York: Continuum, 2003.
Pp. 306. $59.95 (cloth), $29.95 (paper). ISSBN 0-8264-1480-X (cloth),
0-8264-1481-8 (paper).

C. S. Lewis once labeled the "theologizing" of history as "Historicism," and
said that it was a vain attempt to guess at the plan of God as opposed to writing
real history ("Historicism," *The Month* [October 1950]). To see theological
patterns and directions is not the job of the historian, maintained Lewis, because
"we ride with our backs to the engine." We have no idea where we are going or
how soon we are going to get there. We do not know if we are in the first act of
a drama, or the fourth act. So to assign theological significance to history is a
futile business.

Fr. Guy Bedouelle, a French Dominican scholar of note, begs to differ. In his
History of the Church he makes the case for the retention of some sense of the
theological and even the eschatological in the writing of *Church* history. He
claims that we may not be aware of the exact end of God's providence, but we,
as believers, must be aware that there is a providential direction and should not
keep that out of our histories of the Church.

Bedouelle does not merely theorize about this or suggest how it might be
done, he writes several historical chapters himself as examples about how it can
be accomplished. Thus the book is divided into two main sections: first, the
"manual" of factual information, and second, the "essay," or the argument for
the inclusion of some theological awareness. The manual, or historical chapters
(nos. 3-15), are prefaced by the author's disclaimer that they are a very summary
overview; in fact, however, they are surprisingly informative. The chapters on
the Renaissance and Reformation are particularly insightful and helpful. Here
Bedouelle shines-his wide reading and knowledge of art and music are brought
to bear in a manner that thrills the teacher of Western Civilization, the person
who will most benefit by reading this book. Bedouelle knows that we cannot
understand the society of the time without understanding every aspect of that
society. Yet, he can be critical. While he is sympathetic to a scandalized and
angry Luther, he perceptively calls him "a muddle-headed genius." He also places
the Christian humanism of Erasmus between its ease with paganism and its
unease with the "indignant vigor" of Protestantism, a dilemma not entirely
overcome by the humanists. The section on the debate between Bossuet and
Leibniz, over the real issues of what would become Revolution, is also lively and
instructive. There is also a very fine summary of Christian intellectual currents
that emerged after the Second World War.

Running throughout the book is the idea that there is always conflict
between the prevailing secular world and the faith as proposed by Jesus Christ
and his Church. Bedouelle notes, "The challenges encountered by the Church
throughout its history do not seem to disappear, but rather to surface in other
forms" (183). By way of emphasis, he adds two chapters on the Eastern
Churches and on the development of Protestantism since the Reformation. These
chapters, in contrast to the previous summaries, are intensely detailed. Bedouelle

says that he wants the reader to know more about the Eastern Churches and about the Reformed Churches since the Reformation, with a view toward reconciliation, and that these are two areas which Christians know very little about.

Where Bedouelle is most successful-and where he is helpful to any teacher of the humanities-is in his synthesis of political acts, religious engagement, and artistic manifestation. One is reminded of the great Christopher Dawson, who could see in such works as "Piers Plowman" their relevance to history. Bedouelle knows theology, and this makes him a better historian.

It is, perhaps, precisely in Dawson's historical approach that he might find what he is calling for. Dawson demonstrated that the history of the Church is both cyclical and linear. It is cyclical in the sense that it experiences both notable achievement and notable decline in regular three-hundred to four-hundred-year periods. But Dawson noticed that this cycle of rise and fall is not merely repetitive; the Church is actually making progress through it all. The teachings of the Fathers and Doctors, the decisions of councils and popes, the heroic feats of its martyrs and saints were indelible and would continually mark the Church and bring it (and civilization) to places it had not been before.

Three things are necessary for this sort of history to be written. First and most basically, any historian, either secular or ecclesiastical, needs to understand the theological content of the Church in order to explain why things happened in the past as they did. Edward Gibbon and David Hume could not even begin to write an accurate history of the Fall of Rome or the Middle Ages because they did not understand the religion or religious feeling of the time. Theology did not matter to them, and they thought that it should not matter to the people of the early Church or the Middle Ages, either. It is not enough to explain *what* happened in the Crusades; it is important to understand *why* they happened, and only a knowledge of man as a moral being and the Church as a mediator between God and man is going to bring the historian to that level of accuracy.

Second, historians must not forget that the human story is about humans, who sin and practice virtue, who are selfish or generous, who despair and hope, who find (or at least seek) some meaning in life, who make moral choices. The moral imperative, however misguided it might be at times, must not be artificially left out of any account claiming to be history. The Jesuit scholar Martin D'Arey made a convincing case for this in his *The Meaning and Matter of History* (1959). Human beings, he said, are not machines or ciphers. Nor are they passive witnesses to a greater drama, as was Karl Barth's position. When G. K. Chesterton was asked whether he thought mankind grew better or worse or remained the same, he answered that it was like asking whether Mr. Smith got better or worse or remained exactly the same between the age of thirty and forty. "It then seemed to dawn on (the questioner) that it would rather depend on Mr. Smith; and how he chose to go on. It had never occurred to him that it might depend on how mankind chose to go on" *(The Everlasting Man).*

Third, and most importantly, historians of the Church must be aware of the overriding providence of God at work. The human drama is being played out

with the end-the Second Coming of Jesus-a future reality. How this happens is mysterious and sacramental and the Church historian must not take refuge by explaining every event as the finger of God at work.

Bedouelle reiterates much of this. It is regrettable that the present volume is uneven on a few levels. It is unevenly translated: a few of the chapters read as if they have been translated by a college freshman, while some chapters are soaring in both their phrasing and their vocabulary. The book suffers from editorial flaws, such as poor hyphenation (even one-syllable words are frequently hyphenated) and inconsistency in the mention of names (some are given full names [e.g., Sigrid Undset], while others are not [e.g., Mauriac, Bernanos, Bultmann]). On a more substantive level, the content is varied in its detail (as noted above), and the defense of historical theory is far too brief. The author can be down-to-earth at times, and ethereal at others. To appeal to Jacques Maritain and Hans Urs von Balthasaar in an attempt to *clarify* what one is claiming is to tread on swampy ground indeed.

My own hope is that Bedouelle will write two separate books: one, a book like D'Arcy's, explaining his theory about the writing of Church history; second, a history of the Church such as was written by Christopher Dawson. The reader of Bedouelle's current book should not neglect to read D'Arcy and Dawson as well.

JOHN VIDMAR, 0.P.

Providence College
Providence, Rhode Island