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THE UNITY OF THE TRIUNE GOD: REVIVING AN ANCIENT QUESTION*

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I

CHRISTIAN FAITH in the divine Trinity begins with the Church's confession of the one God. There is nothing puzzling or mysterious about this observation. For many generations of Christians it would have seemed too obvious for comment. On each Lord's day, and on other major feasts, we solemnly confess that the God whom we worship is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And we begin that confession of faith in the Trinity with the words, "We believe in one God." Only then do we go on to say who that one God is: the Father almighty, the one Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life. Everything we say about these three stands securely guarded by that beginning: "we believe in one God." Well before the Creed itself came to be, and later entered into the liturgy, Christians understood this confession of the one God to be their birthright as inheritors of the faith of Israel, and to mark them off in a primordial way from the pagan world in which they lived.

In this light it is perhaps curious that Trinitarian theology has been much concerned, for over a half-century, with where it ought to "start," or begin. This question has especially preoccupied Catholic theologians, and has tended to have a clear

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shape. It concerns the order of presentation, that is, the sequence in which we take up the topics we think we need to talk about when we speak of the triune God. As is well known, this worry stems from a long tradition in Catholic theology of adhering to a relatively stable order of presentation on this very basic theological topic. First we present a series of questions, or chapters of a treatise, on the divine essence, the divine perfections, or "the one God," and then we present a series of questions or chapters on divine processions, relations, and persons, or "the triune God." First *De Deo uno,* then *De Deo trino.* It is imperative, we now often assume, to reverse this traditional order of presentation, or at any rate not to preface our Trinitarian theology with a consideration of the divine essence or of the one God. On overturning the old order of presentation depends, it is claimed, a Trinitarian theology that does justice to authentic Catholic faith in the triune God-a theology, that is, which presents the Trinity as the living heart of the mystery of salvation, and not as an arcane puzzle to be revered by traditionalists or disdained by the avant-garde. [1]

Exactly why the order in which we present theological topics should have such great weight is, however, less clear. In any complex intellectual undertaking the sequence of topics can, no doubt, be pedagogically useful and suggestive. If one is concerned

[1] See already the *Katholische Dogmatik* of Michael Schmaus, who begins the whole work (after a general introduction to dogmatic theology) with a long "Erster Hauptteil" on "Gott der Dreieinige," which starts with detailed discussions of the triune God's "self-opening" *(Selbsterschliepung)* in creation (which reveals his existence) and in the history of salvation (which reveals his "personal self"), before proceeding to a consideration of God's essence and attributes, understood as "the fullness of life belonging to the tri-personal God" *(die Lebensfulle des dreipersonlichen Gottes).* I follow here the sixth edition of Schmaus's *Katholische Dogmatik,* vol. 1 (Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1960), but this opening volume was originally published (at less than half its ultimate length) in 1938. In any case Schmaus was evidently committed to "starting with the Trinity" well before Karl Rahner's 1960 essay "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise *De Trinitate"* (subsequently published in *Theological Investigations4,* trans. Kevin Smyth [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 77-102), to which Rahner later added two sections in order to make up his contribution to *Mysterium Salutis* II, "Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte" (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1967), 317-401; published in English as *The Trinity,* trans. Joseph Donceel, 2d ed. (New York: Crossroads, 1997).

about a topic not getting sufficient attention, or getting the wrong kind of attention, it makes sense to put that topic up front, and to underline what one thinks especially needs to be said about it. Doing this, however, is no guarantee that the topic will get the right kind of attention, or even enough attention. Still less does the order in which the claims are presented either establish or preclude any logical relationship between them. Whether statements are consistent with one another or not, whether one implies another or not, and so forth, has nothing to do with the order in which they are mentioned or brought up.

The application of these commonplaces to Trinitarian theology is not hard to discern. A Trinitarian theology which does justice to Catholic faith will have to exhibit, at minimum, the *consistency* of some quite basic propositions. Among these are surely the following: there is one God; there is one divine essence; the one God is the Father; Jesus Christ is God; the Holy Spirit is the Lord; the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are three persons (this perhaps an implication of the preceding three statements); these three persons are not the same as each other; these three persons are the same as the one God; these three persons are the same as the one divine essence.[2] Whether these statements are logically consistent with one another has nothing to do with the order in which they are presented and explained. It may be easier to *understand* an explanation of their consistency if the explanation proceeds in a certain order, but that will vary from one reader to another, and as such is a matter over which the author has very little control. Theologians reflecting on the Trinity will also, no doubt, undertake their work not only in an effort to display basic logical relations, but with a particular persuasive purpose, an eye toward what, as they see it, readers most need to be convinced of. Even so, whether the explanation succeeds, whether it actually displays the consistency of basic Trinitarian statements, floats quite free of the order in which it

[2] For an account of Trinitarian reflection which explicitly understands the task in terms of the consistency of certain elemental statements, see John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent,* part I, ch. 5, §2: "Belief in the Holy Trinity" (ed. Ian T. Ker [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985], 83-95).

proceeds. Nor need the order of presentation have any impact on the content of the explanation itself.

The history of Trinitarian theology gives clear evidence on this last point. Saint Thomas, for example, offers in book I of the early *Scriptum* on the *Sentences* pretty much the same explanation of how these basic Trinitarian propositions (and others) hold together as he does in the later *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* (some interesting technical matters aside). He manages to do this even though in the *Scriptum* he follows the Lombard's order of presentation, offering a detailed account of the Trinity at the outset (most of distinctions 2-34) before he considers the divine perfections at the end of book I (distinctions 35-48), whereas in the *Summa Theologiae* he takes the step, recently much maligned, of treating the divine essence first. Surely it would be odd to say that essentially the same Trinitarian theology-the same explanation of how basic Trinitarian propositions hang together-is logically coherent in the *Scriptum,* and incoherent in the *Summa,* simply because it is presented in two different places.

It seems, then, that Trinitarian theology can begin at any pertinent point. The one God, the one Lord Jesus Christ who took flesh for our salvation, the unity of the divine essence, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the two processions in God, the two visible missions enacted at the Annunciation and at Pentecost-all these and countless others are perfectly suitable topics for the first chapter of a book on the Trinity. We need not, then, begin where the Creed begins, with the one God. That the most ancient and basic ecumenical dogma does begin here might, of course, be a weighty recommendation that we follow its lead. But since the order of presentation has no logically necessary bearing on the success or failure of what a Trinitarian theology aims to do, the recommendation rightly remains optional. If, however, we did (mistakenly) suppose that a particular order of presentation was necessary for a successful Trinitarian theology, it becomes much more difficult to understand how we could claim that it was misleading, let alone wrong, to begin with the one

God.[3] The ecumenical Creed, after all, begins there, and if we thought we had to choose a single place to start, the Creed presumably ought to trump current theological opinion, no matter how widespread. All the more so, if we suppose that we should cleave to the rule that the law of prayer gives us the law of belief (and *a fortiori,* of theology), since the ecumenical Creed is also the Church's solemn liturgical profession of faith.

Wherever we begin in presenting a theological understanding of the Trinity, what we say in our Trinitarian theology will have to square, in the clearest and most explicit way we can manage, with the creedal statement "we believe in one God." In the long history of Christian theology, the unity of the triune God has been regarded with remarkable consistency to be among the most basic

[3] Recent Orthodox theology in particular has sometimes claimed that to begin with the one God just is to begin (rightly) with the person of the Father, since the Creed says "we believe in one God, the Father … ". Rahner had already said something similar. "[I]f one begins with the treatise *De Deo Uno* and not with *De Divinitate Una,* one is concerned at once with the Father, the unoriginated origin of the Son and the Spirit" ("Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise *De Trinitate,"* 102; this claim is central to the earlier essay *"Theos* in the New Testament," *Theological Investigations* 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O.P. [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974], 79-148). But this cannot be quite right. The Father is the one God, of course, but since the Son is "God from God," he must be other than the Father, yet not another God than the Father is, since, if what the Creed says is true, there is only one God. The Son, in other words, must be God just as much as the Father is, and so must be the one God just as much as the Father is. The same goes, in its own way, for the Holy Spirit, assuming that the Spirit is also true God.

With this suggestion also sometimes goes the idea that what unites the divine triad, making the three to be one God, is the *person* of the Father, rather than the one divine essence possessed in common by the three. Thus Rahner: "the immediate unicity of the divine nature … considered as one numerically is of itself far from providing the foundation of the three-fold *unity* of God" ("Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise *De Trinitate,"* 102). This too seems implausible. Even among creatures, what unites three numerically distinct persons, making them to be one in this or that respect, cannot itself be one of the three, but has to be common to or shared by all three. This goes *a fortiori* for the divine three, since they, unlike created persons, possess the same nature in such a way as to be one God, and not simply three individuals of one kind. It is the Father, to be sure, who causes what is common to the three-his own divine essence-to be possessed by another, and with that other, by a third. The Father can, in that sense, be thought of as the principle or source of unity among the divine persons. He brings it about that the Son and the Spirit possess in an originate way the very same essence he possesses unoriginately. But it is their possession of his essence, and not he himself, as a person numerically distinct from the other two, that primarily unites them so as to be one God.

questions theology has to face. Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and Augustine already see clearly that the coherence of Christian faith as a whole-or more precisely, our ability to perceive its coherence, and thus to believe with understanding-is a stake in this question. Scotus later puts the issue in his characteristically lucid way. When it comes to the triune God, "there are two things which are of the substance of [Christian] faith," of which the first is "that there are only three persons and [only] one God."[4]

As Scotus and many others before and since have observed, the elemental Christian conviction that there are three divine persons and only one God confronts faith's quest for understanding with a problem about identity. We may not call it that, and may not formulate it in a precise way, but the problem is intuitively apparent to anyone who attends to what he is saying when he professes the Creed. We believe that the one God is the Father. We believe, equally, that Jesus Christ is "true God." We believe, further, that Jesus Christ is not the Father; he is, rather, "God *from* God." But this seems impossible. Taken together, that is, it seems impossible for all three of these basic Christian convictions to be true. Identity or sameness is transitive: if A is identical with B, and B is identical with C, then A is identical with C. If Jesus Christ is (the one) God, and the one God is the Father, then, it would seem, Jesus Christ is the Father.[5] Since ancient times,

[4] Scotus, *Lectura* I, d. 2, p. 2 (no. 164): "Book I of the *Sentences* treats chiefly of two things which are of the substance of [Christian] faith: first, that there are only three persons and [only] one God, and second, that these persons do not exist by themselves, but one person produces another, and these two [produce] the third. Regarding these two matters there cannot be divergent opinions" *([D]uo sunt de substantia fidei de quibus principaliter tractatur in I libro Sententiarum, scilicet quad sint tantum tres personae et unus Deus, et quad hae personae non sunt a se, sed una persona producit aliam et duae tertiam. Circa hoc autem non est licitum varie opinari) (Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia,* vol. 16 [Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950- (=Vat. ed.)], pp. 166.26-167.3).

[5] In Scotus' formulation, "Those things which are simply identical with one and the same thing are simply identical with each other ... but those things which are in the divine nature [viz., the three persons] are simply identical with one and the same thing, namely the divine nature. Therefore they are simply identical with each other. As a result there will be no distinction [in God], given the unity of the divine nature" *(Quaecumque uni et eidem sunt simpliciter eadem, inter se sunt simpliciter eadem ... sed quaecumque sunt in natura divina, sunt simpliciter eadem eidem simpliciter, quia naturae divinae; igitur inter se sunt simpliciter*

Trinitarian theology has thought it essential to dispel the specter of incoherence at this quite basic point, and offer a plausible explanation of the unity of the triune God.

All the more remarkable, then, that Trinitarian theology for a half-century or more has paid so little attention to this question. At least two generations of Catholic and Protestant theologians alike have thought of their own time as one of great renewal and vitality in Trinitarian theology, after a greater or lesser period of inexcusable and destructive neglect. Yet a striking feature of this self-described renewal has been the neglect of a matter perennially considered indispensable to vital Trinitarian theology.

This neglect goes beyond the evident demise of the treatise *de Dea uno* in Catholic theology, by whatever name it might be called, as well as of its Protestant parallels. The admonition to "start" with the Trinity has had the effect, it seems, not so much of relocating sustained reflection on the one God as of killing it off altogether, though we can hope the effect is temporary. The deeper problem lies within Trinitarian theology itself. Though a great deal is now written about the Trinity, surprisingly little of this writing pauses to consider in detail how it is that the three distinct persons are one God, let alone to regard it as a fundamental question of Trinitarian theology. For the most part, the unity of the triune God seems simply to be assumed, or insisted upon as a kind of afterthought. Indeed being too preoccupied with the oneness of God can, in recent discussions, be marked down as a telling sign that one has lost track of the Trinity as a mystery of salvation, and become a "mere monotheist."[6]

Recent Trinitarian theology has, however, been greatly concerned about a different problem, a unity of a different sort. Most writing on the subject, especially among Catholic

eadem. Igitur nulla erit ibi distinctio, supposita unitate naturae divinae) (Lectura I, d. 2, p. 2, q. 1 [no. 136]; Vat. ed., vol. 16, p. 159.9-10, 16-19). This is, not by accident, the first objection Scotus introduces when he takes up the question, "Whether it is possible that there be a plurality of persons with unity of essence" *([U]trum possibile sit cum unitate essentiae esse pluralitatem personarum)* (Vat. ed., vol. 16, p. 159.6-7). Cf. Aquinas, *STh* I, q. 28, a. 3, obj. 1 and ad 1.

[6] See Rahner, "Der dreifaltige Gott," 319 *(Trinity,* 10).

theologians, has regarded the unity of "the economic Trinity" and "the immanent Trinity" as the main problem facing Trinitarian theology. This, I want to suggest, is a serious mistake.

II

The language of "immanent" and "economic" has become so pervasive in Catholic Trinitarian theology that to question it might seem tantamount to questioning faith in the Trinity itself. But that cannot really be right, since Trinitarian doctrine and theology got along quite well for most of their history without thinking in these terms, still less in terms of two Trinities, one "immanent" and the other "economic." The Greek Fathers did sometimes speak of the history of salvation as God's *oikonomia,* or household management of his creation, but not, so far as I know, of an "economic Trinity" or a Trinity "according to the economy." The contrast term was *theologia,* what we say about the very God who freely creates and rules what he has made. To speak of a "theological" Trinity would have been redundant. As a result the contrast with an "economic" Trinity could not even anse.

In the form in which Catholic theology now generally takes it for granted, the distinction between an "immanent" and an "economic" Trinity evidently arose in the nineteenth century. To my knowledge the precise origin of this formula, in particular who is responsible for first using it, has not been established. On this matter, though, the prodigious Freiburg dogmatician Franz Anton Staudenmaier (1800-1856) sheds a considerable amount of light. A student in Tiibingen of Johann Sebastian Drey and the young Johann Adam Mohler, Staudenmaier became an important figure in the remarkable renaissance of Catholic theology in Germany after 1815, and was the first Catholic theologian to attempt a critical and systematic assimilation of Hegel.[7]

[7] See Peter Hiinermann, *Franz Anton Staudenmaier* (Graz: Styria Verlag, 1975), an anthology of texts with a substantial introduction on Staudenmaier's life and work. On Staudenmaier's Trinitarian theology, see idem, *Trinitarische Anthropologie bei Franz Anton Staudenmaier* (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 1962). There is very little on Staudenmaier in English. For some helpful remarks see James Tunstead Burtchaell, C.S.C., "Drey, Mohler and

Staudenmaier devotes the second volume of his dogmatics, which appeared in 1844, to the doctrine of God. There he offers several pages on "the correctness of the distinction between an essential Trinity and a Trinity of revelation." [8] Yet he begins by arguing that one could only think such a distinction important on account of "a debased faith and a way of thinking which has wandered off into superficiality and emptiness."[9] According to this unfortunate cast of mind, we must acknowledge that God exhibits himself to us as Father, Son, and Spirit, but we should deny that "to this Trinity of revelation there also corresponds an immanent essential Trinity." [10] Staudenmaier's target here is first of all those Protestant (he says "rationalist") theologians of his own time who hold that God is Trinitarian "only in his relation to the world," and deny that God is, as Staudenmaier puts it in his characteristically Hegelian way, "Trinitarian in himself and for himself." At most, God's threefold way of revealing himself to us requires us to believe that an essentially "unipersonal" God has made an "eternal decision" to present himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for our benefit. [11]

the Catholic School of Tiibingen," in Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Patrick Sherry, and Steven T. Katz, eds., *Nineteenth Century Religious thought in the West,* vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 111-39.

[8] The title of §80: "Richtigkeit des Unterschiedes zwischen Dreieinigkeit des Wesens und Dreieinigkeit der Offenbarung" (Franz Anton Staudenmaier, *Die christliche Dogmatik,* vol. 2 [Freiburg: Herder, 1844], 475).

[9] "[E]in Resultat eben sowohl des gesunkenen Glaubens als des in Oberflachlichkeit und Leerheit hineingerathenen Denkens" (ibid.).

[10] "Ob der Offenbarungsdreieinigkeit auch eine immanente Wesensdreieinigkeit entspreche" (ibid.).

[11] Thus Staudenmaier's summary of the position to which he objects: "There was an eternal decision and intention of a uni-personal God eventually to reveal himself to the world in the modes of Father, Son, and Spirit. But only to reveal himself, not really to be Father, Son, and Spirit as distinct persons. For God is trinitarian only in his relation to the world, not in himself and for himself" *([E]s ewiger EntschluP und Vorsatz des Einpersonlichen Gottes gewesen sei, sich dereinst in den Modis van Vater, Sohn und Geist der Welt zu offenbaren. Aber nur zu offenbaren, nicht wirklich Vater, Sohn und Geist nach dem Personenunterschied zu sein, denn nicht an sich und fur sich, sondern nur in seinem VerhiiltniP zur Welt sei Gott trinitarisch)* (Staudenmaier, *Die christliche Dogmatik,* 2:476). Here Staudenmaier cites Schleiermacher's student and editor Friedrich Lucke (cf. ibid., n. 1. On the debate over the "immanent" and "economic" Trinity in Protestant theology after Schleiermacher, see Christine Axt-Piscalar, *Der Grund des Glaubens: Eine theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Verhiiltnis van*

Talk of an "immanent" and "economic" Trinity in Catholic theology thus appears to have its roots in an early reaction against nineteenth-century Protestant theologians influenced by Schleiermacher, who invented the notion of an "immanent Trinity" precisely in order to deny that there was any such thing. As often happens in theology, an idea introduced by the debased was assimilated by their opponents in the very process of attempting to refute them. So Staudenmaier, having criticized "rationalist" theologians for coming up with the contrast between an "immanent" and an "economic" Trinity, proceeds to argue against them on their own terms. "It will nonetheless be necessary to indicate the reasons why the revealed Trinity as such could not be thought without the essential Trinity. "[12]

Staudenmaier's basic motive is much the same as that of later theologians who, down to our own time, have sought to articulate and defend the Church's creedal faith in terms of an immanent and an economic Trinity. What we see of God in this world, in the history of revelation and salvation, is not mere appearance, but must be real in God. This goes especially for the personal relationships among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that we perceive in time. By way of this economic Trinity (or "Trinity of revelation," in Staudenmaier's terms), we must be able to know God "as he is in himself," a knowledge, moreover, we can obtain in no other way. The Trinity we know in the economy must, as it were, go all the way down in God, to that divine *arche* beyond which it is not possible to go. Otherwise revelation becomes an act of deception on God's part, and God in himself simply "an Other" from what appears to us in revelation, a nameless and unknowable monad. [13]

Glaube und Trinitiit in der Theologie Isaak August Darners (Tiibingen: J. C . B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990).

[12] "Es wird nunmehr aber nothwendig sein, die Griinde anzugeben, warum die Offenbarungstrinitiit fiir sich nicht gedacht werden konne, ohne die Wesenstrinitiit" (Staudenmaier, *Die christliche Dogmatik,* 2:476).

[13] Without an immanent Trinity corresponding to the economic, "the God whom we know and want to know through revelation will be, in himself, an Other from the one whom he reveals himself to be" (ibid.). In that case, "for real and true Godhead we have no name in the teaching of revelation itself; this Monad is the absolutely Unknown" (ibid., 2:477). *(Gott,*

In this light the unity of the "economic" with the "immanent" Trinity becomes a basic problem for Trinitarian theology, perhaps the most basic. This problem must be resolved at the outset before the whole enterprise can proceed. Staudenmaier does not here deal with the issue, as Karl Rahner later would, by saying that the two are simply identical, that the economic Trinity just is the immanent Trinity, and conversely.[14] But he comes close. "*Everything* which is posited in the revealed Trinity could not be posited in this way were it not posited in the same way in the essential Trinity" (emphasis added).[15] Not just some things, but all things we find to be true of Father, Son, and Spirit in time-certainly everything essential to our salvation-must go all the way down in God. What happens among the three persons in the history of salvation, it seems, is not simply what they have eternally known and decided to do, but in some way belongs to them as such, to "an absolute and eternal inner relationship of the divine nature." Of this primordial Trinitarian situation the economic Trinity is, as Staudenmaier puts it, "only the self-manifestation, the stepping-forth."[16]

To be sure, a lot of Catholic Trinitarian theology in the century or so after Staudenmaier made no use, conceptually or

den wir durch Offenbarung kennen und kennen wollen, an sich selber ein Anderer sein soil, den der, als welchen er sich offenbart ... haben wir fur die eigentliche und wahre Gottheit in der Offenbarungslehre selbst keinen Namen; die Monas ist das schlechthin Unbekannte.)

[14] Cf. Rahner, "Der dreifaltige Gott," 328 *(Trinity,* 22).

[15] Staudenmaier's original formulation is yet more circuitous: "Denn Alles, was in der Offenbarungstrinitiit gesetzt ist, ist so gesetzt, daG es nicht so gesetzt sein konnte, ware es nicht so in der Wesenstrinitiit gesetzt" *(Die christliche Dogmatik,* 2:478).

[16] "[D]ie Offenbarungstrinitiit nicht ist, wenn die immanente Wesenstrinitiit nicht zuvor schon ist. Jene ist nur das Hervortreten und Sich-manifestiren eines absoluten und ewigen innern Verhiiltnisses der gottlichen Natur" (ibid., 2:477-8). Precisely how Staudenmaier himself understands these claims, so often reiterated in later Trinitarian theology, and just how his views are connected to those of others who think in the same terms, are important questions, but I will not try to answer them here. It cannot, at any rate, be said that Staudenmaier is among those theologians of the economic and immanent Trinity who ignore the unity of God. This he understands in terms of God's "absolute life," and sees the divine unity as at least in some way consequent upon the Trinity of persons: "Tri-personality makes the one essence of God a living unity" *(Durch die Dreipersonlichkeit ist das Eine Wesen Gottes eine lebendige Einheit)* (ibid., 2, §79 [sic-the text erroneously repeats this § number], p. 470; cf. §§76-78). Thus Schmaus (cf. above, n. 1) is not really original on this score.

even verbally, of a distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity, and pursued the chief questions of Trinitarian theology in other terms. Many, though not all, took the well-established distinction between "procession" and "mission" to be basic for a coherent understanding of the triune God and his acts of creation and redemption, and ignored the language of "immanent" and "economic."[17] In any case Staudenmaier has no ownership of these terms. No one is compelled to give the words the same conceptual content he does, even if the patterns of thought he articulates have become pervasive, and tend to generate assumptions about what the words mean. Why, though, should it be a problem to think about the Trinity in this way in the first place? In particular, why should it interfere with a rigorous account of the unity of the triune God?

III

A number of questions might be raised about whether various efforts solve what recent Trinitarian theology seems to regard as its most basic problem are coherent on their own terms. There is reason to think the standard strategies for showing the "immanent" and the "economic" Trinity to be identical are by turns self-contradictory, much ado about the obvious, or purchased at fearsome theological cost.[18] Our present concern, however, is only whether this modern manner of thinking about the Trinity helps us, or even allows us, to offer a plausible account of the unity of the three divine persons, that is, of faith in the one God.

Theologians who rely on these categories in order to understand the Church's faith in the triune God typically underline the clear distinction of persons with which the scriptural economy of salvation confronts us. The Father, the Son

[17] These two distinctions are not the same, nor do they map directly onto one another. I will return to this point.

[18] On this see my essay "The Trinity," in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology,* ed. Gareth Jones (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 183-203, especially 193-97.

Jesus, and the Holy Spirit act in various ways with respect to one another, and thus cannot be confused with one another. So, for example, at Jesus' baptism he hears the voice of another address him: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; cf. Matt 3:17). Jesus does not speak to himself ("I am my beloved Son ... "). Similarly the Holy Spirit descends and remains upon Jesus in the form of a dove; Jesus does not descend and remain upon himself Gohn 1:32-33). Given the unity of the economic with the immanent Trinity (however explained and defended), this unmistakable economic distinction of persons must also belong to God immanently; it must be present at that *arche* behind which it is not possible to go.

So far so good, but how shall we understand these three persons, who appear in the economy as irreducibly distinct individuals, to be one God? Simply showing that the immanent three are just the same persons as the economic three, while obviously correct, is no help with the question of how the three are one God. Adding that the three persons are one God immanently, so they must also be one God economically, is no explanation, but precisely the state of affairs that needs to be explained. The unity of the economic and immanent Trinity, it seems, contributes nothing to an understanding of the unity of the triune God. They are two quite distinct problems.

The reason for this is not hard to see. The distinction of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father and from each other does not arise within the economy of salvation. The actual economy of salvation, and the decision that there be an economy in the first place, both presuppose the distinction of the three persons from one another. The Son and the Spirit enter the actual economy of salvation, and before that the decision to have an economy at all, with their distinction from the Father and each other already securely in place. Otherwise the Trinitarian economy of salvation is mere appearance, and the source of the appearances remains unknown-the sort of "rationalist" or "Sabellian" position against which Staudenmaier and others after him rightly protest. If we are going to think about the Trinity in terms of the economic and the

immanent, we have to hold that there is an "immanent" or "essential" Trinity, and not only a Trinity of the revealed economy. Theologians who think in these terms have, however, tended not to notice two important consequences of this affirmation.

A) Personal Identity in God Does Not Depend on the Economy

To affirm an "immanent" Trinity is to say that Father, Son, and Spirit are already distinct from one another-as distinct as they can possibly be-apart from, or prior to, the economy of salvation. Distinction, however, depends upon identity. That is: you are a person distinct from me just because you are a person, and you have at least one property that I lack. You are a person distinct from every other actual and possible individual (person or not) because you have at least one property unique to you, and thus possessed by no other actual or possible entity. This property is constitutive of your personal identity or uniqueness; it makes you the particular individual you are (there may be many such properties, and it may be that not all are equally important to your identity). This applies to the divine persons as well. Since they must be distinct from one another apart from any possible economy of salvation, each divine person must have whatever is constitutive of his identity-whatever makes him to be the unique person he is-apart from any economy. For our purposes we need not decide exactly what the identity-constituting properties of the persons of the Trinity are. But if, to take a standard position, one divine person alone has the relational property of paternity, another alone that of filiation, and a third alone that of (passive) procession, then these three properties belong to the unique identity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit respectively, and distinguish each from the others, even if there are no creatures.

In the counterfactual terms often favored by the Scholastics, the answer to the following question must be yes: "If there had been no economy, would Father, Son, and Holy Spirit still be

divine persons distinct from one another?" The theological purpose of reflection on counterfactuals is not to engage in idle speculation, but to help isolate the real reason why a doctrinally significant state of affairs obtains. Take, by way of comparison, the question widely debated in medieval and early modern theology, "If Adam had not sinned, would God still have become incarnate?" In both cases the consequent of the conditional isolates a basic Christian doctrine (the real distinction of the persons of the Trinity; the incarnation of God), and the conditional asks whether what this doctrine teaches would still obtain if the counterfactual situation specified in the antecedent had come to pass (no economy of salvation; no sin). If yes, then the factual situation which has actually come to pass (the present economy of salvation; the sin of Adam) cannot be the reason why what the doctrine teaches obtains (the distinction of divine persons; the incarnation). If no, then the situation which has actually come to pass is the reason (or at least a reason) why what the doctrine teaches obtains. In the case before us, then, to answer "yes" is to say that an economy of creation and salvation is not the reason why the persons of the Trinity are distinct from one another; that reason must be sought apart from any possible economy.[19]

As a result, whatever distinctions the persons of the Trinity exhibit among themselves in the actual economy would obtain in just the same way were there no economy at all, and no decision to have one. What Father, Son, and Spirit indicate in the economy to be constitutive of their personal identities would constitute the identity of each in just the same way were there no creation and no redemption. And so whatever is true of the three in virtue of their enactment of an economy must be an addition, a

[19] There was, of course, vigorous disagreement among the Scholastics about whether this incarnational conditional (in Aquinas's formulation, "[U]trum, si non fuisset peccatum, Deus incarnatus fuisset" [*STh* III, q. 1, prooem.]) ought to be given an affirmative answer. By contrast no Scholastic theologian, so far as I am aware, posed a question such as "Whether, if there had been no economy of redemption, the persons of the Trinity would still be distinct from one another"-because, presumably, the answer was too obvious to make counterfactual reasoning worth the trouble.

supplement, to whatever needs to be true of the three in order for them to be just these persons really distinct from one another. The economic attributes of the divine persons cannot contribute at all to making them the unique persons they are, or to making them actually distinct from one another. At most these economic attributes can exhibit distinctions which already obtain. And this means that the "economic Trinity" cannot be the same as, identical with, or otherwise confused with the "immanent Trinity."

Of course the *persons* who make us present to themselves in the economy of salvation are just the same persons, and distinguished in just the same way, as they would be apart from this or any other economy. But this means that no feature of the economy as such-nothing belonging *only* to the economy-is identical with any feature or attribute needed to distinguish the divine persons from one another. The persons of the Trinity do not, as it were, become more distinct from one another in the economy than they would be without it, nor do they acquire their personal identities in virtue of anything that happens in the economy. If the persons present in the economy are just the same as the persons who are the "immanent" Trinity, then they cannot add or acquire any identity-constituting property in this, or any possible, economy. On the contrary: whatever is proper to the economy, or more comprehensively, what would not be were there no order of creation and redemption, is not identical with, or the same as, any divine person. Nor is anything belonging to the economy alone the same as any property *(proprium)* by which each of the divine persons is distinguished from the others, and in which he has his unique personal identity.

Just because the distinctions among the persons of the Trinity are not themselves mere economic appearance, the "immanent Trinity," far from being identical with the economic appearances, is, one could say, what remains after everything belonging only to the economic appearances has been factored out. In Rahner's terms, the "immanent Trinity" is the triune God as he is "setting

aside his free self communication." [20] The immanent Trinity is what we arrive at, in other words, by "setting aside" everything belonging only to the economy. If, as Rahner rightly insists, we must hold firmly to the Trinity apart from the economy in just this sense, then his own axiom regarding the identity of the immanent and the economic Trinity must be false.[21] The economy of salvation-indeed the whole order of creation and redemption-is what the triune God does, not who the triune God is.[22]

B) Personal Identity in God Must Be Understood apart from the Economy

The identity of each divine person and the resulting distinctions among the three must be thought of by us, therefore, without reference to the economy of salvation. Consequently, our understanding of how the three persons are one God must not be infiltrated or "contaminated," as it were, by terms and concepts that refer only to the economy. The economy of salvation as such contributes nothing to understanding either the distinction or the unity of the divine persons.

This may seem like an obvious, and serious, mistake-a stronger claim than is either needed or warranted. Surely we rely on the economy of salvation in order to know the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in their personal uniqueness and distinction from one another, and so to know that the one God is these three persons. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* insists, "[T]he whole divine economy makes known both what is proper to the

[20] "[U]nter Absetzung von seiner freien Selbstmitteilung" (Rahner, "Der dreifaltige Gott," 383 *[Trinity,* 101]).

[21] For more on this last point see Bruce D. Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 263-65.

[22] I develop this thought in "The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God," in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering,* ed. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 246-98.

divine persons, and their one divine nature."[23] To claim that the economy contributes nothing to our understanding of the distinction and unity of the persons of the Trinity is, it seems, clearly incorrect.

This objection takes "understand" in the sense of "come to know." Taken with that meaning, no doubt we do "understand" the divine persons by way of the economy of salvation. The economy teaches us that they are distinct, what the identity of each is, and that they are the one God.[24] But to say that we have to conceive of personal identity in God without reference to the economy is not to claim that we *come to know* the identity, distinction, and unity of the divine persons apart from the economy. It is to claim, rather, that we have to *account for* their identity, distinction, and unity apart from the economy. Where "understand" has the sense of "account for" or "explain," the economy contributes nothing to our understanding of these Trinitarian mysteries-once again, the economy as such, whatever belongs only to the triune God's free action in creation and redemption, rather than to the acts of generation and spiration in which Father, Son, and Spirit have their identities, their distinction, and their unity.

When we want to "understand" in *this* sense, the economy as a whole cannot possibly help us. The identity, distinction, and unity we want to account for are precisely those which obtain when everything belonging only to the economy has been factored out. We seek to grasp an identity, distinction, and unity that must be presupposed to this, and to any possible, economy. Nothing economic as such, nothing contingent, makes Father, Son, and

[23] CCC, §259 (cf. §236): "God's works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. So it is, analogously, among human persons. A person discloses himself in actions, and the better we know a person, the better we understand his actions."

[24] Exactly how the economy teaches us these Trinitarian mysteries, and in particular the role of propositional knowledge in this teaching, as opposed to that of the sheer economic events themselves, is another matter, but not our present concern. On this see Bruce D. Marshall, *"Ex Occidente Lux?* Aquinas and Eastern Orthodox Theology," *Modern Theology* 20 (2004): 23-50, especially 38-41; and "The Trinity," 196-97.

Spirit to be the unique persons they are, or to be the one God they are. So in the nature of the case nothing economic can account for-get to the root of-either their unity or their personal identity. Precisely as the action of three whose personal identity and distinction does not depend at all on that action, the economy itself shows us that neither their distinction nor, *a fortiori,* their unity as the one God can be explained at all in its own terms.

We need, then, conceptual means for apprehending the distinctions among the divine persons, and their unity as God, other than the means we use to apprehend the totality of their activity in creation and redemption. We need, in other words, a way of thinking about the Trinity that permits us to grasp the identity, distinction, and unity of the persons as we come to know it in the economy of salvation, without implying that whatever happens in the economy is in any way necessary for, or constitutive of, their identity, distinction, and unity.

The traditional disjunction between the eternal processions of the divine persons and their temporal missions serves just this conceptual and logical purpose. The distinctions among the persons of the Trinity are fully secured by the two divine processions, that is, by the noncontingent coming forth of the Son from the Father, and of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son.[25] A temporal mission adds something created to an eternal procession, and so to the distinct divine person who is the term of that procession. The mission of each person sent (the Son and the Holy Spirit) includes both his eternal procession and himself as the person who proceeds. Mission, however, supplements that procession and the resulting personal identity with a specific relationship to the creature. In St. Thomas's formulation, often repeated and amplified: "Mission not only involves procession from a source, it specifies a temporal term for the procession.

[25] There is controversy as to *how* the processions establish the personal distinctions, e.g., whether the relations of origin arising from the processions do the work of securing personal distinction, or whether the two distinct modes of origination themselves *(secundum intellectum* and *secundum voluntatem)* do this work. We need not pursue this question here, but an adequate account of the unity of the triune God would have to address it.

Mission, therefore, is exclusively temporal ... [it] includes an eternal procession, and adds something to it, namely a temporal effect."[26] By this means the triune God makes one of his number present and available in a saving way to intelligent creatures. Thus the Son's mission adds to his procession from the Father the flesh he assumes in Mary's womb, and the Spirit's mission adds to his procession from the Father and the Son the sanctifying grace by which he unites us to the Son and to himself.

A mission is obviously not identical with a procession. It would not have occurred to a theologian thinking about the triune God primarily in terms of eternal procession and temporal mission, rather than of economic and immanent Trinity, to say that the missions just are the processions, and conversely. That is, in fact, the beauty of the idea. Working in terms of procession and mission gives us conceptual tools for explaining quite clearly how the distinctions among the divine persons do not arise from the economy of salvation, but are presupposed to it. The created reality mission "adds" to procession (as Aquinas puts it) is precisely what has to be subtracted, factored out, in order to arrive at the processions themselves, and thereby at the identity, distinction, and unity of the persons who proceed and the one from whom both proceed. Mission includes procession, but procession does not include mission; procession is necessary for mission, but mission is not necessary for procession; the divine processions and the persons who are their subjects and terms are constitutive of, but not constituted by, the saving missions they freely undertake.

So understood, the dependence of mission on procession gives us a way of knowing the eternal processions and persons from the economic missions, without implying that mission is at all constitutive of procession or personal identity in God. The basic principle that links knowledge of mission to knowledge of procession is this: a divine person can be sent in time only by

[26] *STh* I, q. 43, a. 2, ad 3: "[M]issio non solum importat processionem a principio, sed determinat processionis terminum temporalem. Unclemissio solum est temporalis. Ve!, missio includit processionem aeternam, et aliquid addit, scilicet temporalem effectum."

another person from whom he proceeds eternally. Thus, because the economy presents the Son as sent by the Father, he must proceed eternally from the Father, and because the economy presents the Holy Spirit as sent by both the Father and the Son, he must proceed eternally from both the Father and the Son. Since the economy presents the Father neither as sent by the Son nor as sent by the Spirit, but rather as sender of both the Son and the Spirit, the Father must proceed eternally from no other person, and be the one from whom both the Son and the Spirit eternally proceed.[27]

What warrant, though, do we have for accepting this epistemic link of mission to procession in the first place? Having a mission places the person being sent in a middle position between two terms: the one who sends, and the one to whom he is sent. Mission thus involves a motion, a coming forth or "procession," of the person sent. The person on a mission comes forth *from* the sender, and *to* the term, of the mission (the term being the person or object upon whom the mission has an effect). In human affairs one person can be sent forth by another in various ways, usually implying some kind of disparity or inequality of authority between sender and sent. One person orders another to do a job for him, or one person goes to do a job for himself after having consulted with another about how to go about it, so that the consultant sends his client forth to do the job. Among the divine persons, though, there is no disparity in authority, or indeed any inequality. If one divine person is to be sent by another (as the Son and the Spirit both are, according to the scripturally depicted economy of salvation), he must come forth from the one who sends him in a fashion which involves no inequality between the person sent and the one sending. The only way of "coming forth" which meets this requirement is simply the eternal procession of one divine person from another, the noncontingent act of

[27] For a more detailed account of the pattern of missions and its epistemic significance, and in particular of the relationship between the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit (where there is, as Aquinas acknowledges, a sense in which the Spirit sends the Son in time, yet the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Son; cf. *STh* I, q. 43, a. 8, sc), see Marshall, *"Ex Occidente Lux?"* 30-42.

generation or spiration which terminates in the very person of the Son or the Holy Spirit. The only sort of "coming forth" there can *be* in God is origin-eternal, person-constituting procession.

So, if there is going to be a divine mission, the coming forth of a divine person which has a *creature* as its term (or more precisely, which terminates in a change wrought in the creature by a new relation to that person), it has to include the eternal procession by which that divine person is already constituted and in which he already has his unique personal identity. In fact, if a divine person is to have a mission at all, the temporal coming forth of sent from sender in which the mission consists must be the very same coming forth as the eternal procession by which that person originates from the Father (and, as the case may be, from the Son). The temporal procession or coming forth must, in other words, be numerically identical with the eternal procession. The Son, for example, does not come forth twice from the Father, once by eternal generation and then, by a separate act of origination, in time. Rather his mission adds to the already constituted term of eternal generation in God-the Son himself in his unique personal identity-a relationship to a created reality, in the Son's case that of humanly inhabiting the fruitful womb of the Virgin Mary. One and the same procession, we could say, becomes a mission when to the eternal coming forth of one divine person from another is added, by the free action of the Trinity, a temporal term, a specific and abiding relation to created reality.[28]

[28] So, by way of summary, St. Thomas: "The concept of mission involves two elements. One is the relation of the person sent to the one by whom he is sent, the other is the relation of the person sent to the endpoint to which he is sent. Now, that someone is sent displays, in some way, a coming forth of the person sent from the one who sends him.... Therefore mission can belong to a divine person insofar as it implies, on the one hand, a coming forth that consists in origination from the one who sends, and on the other hand a new way of existing in something else. Thus the Son is said to be 'sent' by the Father into the world, insofar as he begins to be in the world in a visible way by means of the flesh he assumes" (*[I]n ratione missionis duo importantur, quorum unum est habitudo missi ad eum a quo mittitur; aliud est habitudo missi ad terminum ad quem mittitur. Per hoc autem quad aliquis mittitur, ostenditur processio quaedam missi a mittente . ... Missio igitur divinae personae convenire potest, secundum quad importat ex una parte processionem originis a mittente, et secundum quad importat ex alia parte novum modum existendi in aliquo. Sicut Filius dicitur esse missus*

In just this way, while temporal mission is not the same as eternal procession (since it makes a real addition to the procession), knowing the mission of a divine person requires knowing the eternal procession included in it. Knowing a mission just is grasping, by way of a particular created reality, the eternal procession and person to which the creature is joined to constitute the mission. Distinguishing and relating procession and mission gives us what we were looking for: a way of saying how we come to know the divine persons in their identity and distinction from the economy of salvation, without saying that the identity and distinction of the persons is in any way constituted by the temporal economy. More briefly: mission necessarily includes procession, but procession does not at all include mission. As a result we can come to know procession from mission, but we cannot account for procession and personal identity in God except by factoring out everything which pertains to mission alone.

Of course none of this explains, or even begins to explain, how the three divine persons can be the one God. But it at least helps us see what a genuine explanation might consist in. We will need to offer an account of how there can be processions in God. In Scotus's helpfully precise formulation, we need to understand how the one divine essence can be possessed by a person who proceeds, or is produced.[29] The events of the saving economy-more precisely, the temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit-introduce us to the processions. In so doing, they also introduce us to the question of how there can be processions in God. But they offer no resources for answering that question-for giving an account of how there can be processions in God-since the completed processions are wholly presupposed to what the missions add economically.

a Patre in mundum, secundum quad incoepit esse in mundo visibiliter per carnem assumptam) (STh I, q. 43, a. 1).

[29] Cf. Scotus, *Lectura* I, d. 2, p. 2, q. 3 (no. 148): "[U]trum cum ratione essentiae divinae in aliquod stet ipsum posse produci" (Vat. ed, vol. 16, p. 162.14-15).

Theologians at least as far back as the Cappadocians and Augustine have seen this clearly, and so have understood Trinitarian theology as a three-part problem, which cannot be further reduced. The parts of the problem are the one God, the two processions, and the two missions. Trinitarian theology therefore has both the task of showing how the personal distinctions arising from the two processions fit together with the temporal missions, and that of showing how these personal distinctions fit together with the one eternal God. Taking Trinitarian theology to be merely a two-part problem, theologies preoccupied with showing how the internal three fit with the external three are, at best, no help in understanding the unity of the triune God.

IV

Theologies of the immanent and economic Trinity are, in fact, often rather less than useless on this score. They encourage us to think of the fundamental question about God's unity-the question whether there can be processions in the one God-as a meaningless speculative matter, unrelated to the economy of salvation and our experience within the economy, and thus wisely ignored. Especially in Catholic theology Rahner has perhaps fueled this disinclination to offer a rigorous account, apart from the economy, of either the distinction of persons or their unity as the one God. In particular he dismisses the long-running debate over "whether a person in God is constituted by 'relation' or 'procession'" -the heart of medieval and (much of) modern reflection on what makes for identity, distinction, and unity in God-as a quarrel over mere "verbalisms," distinctions without a difference concocted by "naively clever minds" to numb themselves against "the pain of having to venerate the mystery [of the Trinity] without penetrating it." With that he invites the truly "critical reader" to follow him in avoiding "the conceptual subtlety of 'classical' Trinitarian theology (from Thomas to, for

example, Ruiz de Montoya)." [30] This advice, one has to say, has often been heeded.

In fact theologies of the immanent and economic Trinity not only decline, for the most part, to attempt an informative account of the triune God's unity; sometimes they seem to rule out the one God altogether. Naturally this is not their intention. But the urge to suppose that everything which belongs to the persons of the Trinity in the economy goes all the way down in their immanent divine life, which just seems to go with thinking about the Trinity in these terms, regularly threatens to make the unity of God unintelligible.

The urge just mentioned often takes the form of seeking to "ground" the economic Trinity thoroughly in the immanent, and to see the economy as the more or less natural "manifestation" or

[30] Trinitarian theology must avoid wanting to hide the "paradoxical" character of the Trinity from itself "durch eine gewaltsame Subtilitiit von Begriffen und Begriffsunterscheidungen, die das Geheimnis nur scheinbar weiter erhellen, in Wahrheit aber nur Verbalismen bieten, die fiir *naiv* scharfsinnige Geister wie Analgetika wirken zur Betiiubung des Schmerzes, das Geheimnis undurchschaut verehren zu miissen. Wenn man sich z.B. traditionell dariiber streitet, ob eine Person in Gott durch die «Relation» oder die «Prozession» konstituiert wird, so ist ein solcher Disput ein Streit um Verbalismen, die sachlich nicht mehr wirklich unterschieden werden kiinnen. Wenn also die folgende Darstellung fiir den Leser dem Anschein nach die begriffliche Subtilitiit der «klassischen» Trinitiitstheologie (von Thomas an bis z.B. Ruiz de Montoya) nicht einzuholen scheint, dann ist der kritische Leser gebeten, wenigstens als mit einer Miiglichkeit damit zu rechnen, daB eine solche griiBere Armut und «Ungenauigkeit» vielleicht doch absichtlich angenommen worden ist" ("Der dreifaltige Gott," 346 [emphasis in original]; *Trinity,* 47-48). Rahner is not alone, of course, in sometimes wanting to convince his readers by appeal to their vanity.

The massive *Commentaria ac Disputationes in primam partem S. Thomae de Trinitate* of Diego Ruiz de Montoya, S.J. (1562-1632) appeared in 1625. Matthias Joseph Scheeben (a theologian Rahner elsewhere seems to appreciate) rates it "the most outstanding major work" on the Trinity, "with regard to both positive and scholastic theology *[das positiv und scholastisch vorziiglichste Hauptwerk]" (Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik,* book 2, §680 (Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. 4, ed. Michael Schmaus [Freiburg: Herder, 1948], 291).

As John Slotemaker points out, Rahner himself does in fact opt for relation rather than procession as person- and identity-constituting in God, though without seeming to appreciate (perhaps unsurprisingly, given the remark just cited) the implications of that decision, especially regarding his stated preference for the "Greek" Trinitarian tradition over the "Latin" Uohn T. Slotemaker, "John Duns Scotus and Henry Harclay on the Non-Necessity of Opposed Relations: The Impact of Opposed Relations on the Filioque" ([unpublished manuscript]).

expression of these immanent grounds. If one state of affairs grounds another simply by being necessary for the other, or included in it-as the divine processions are necessary for and included in the divine temporal missions-then the notion that the Trinitarian processions and persons "ground" the economy is innocuous. But nowadays theologians regularly reach for a lot more.

"Kenosis" is one aspect of the saving economy that some theologians seem especially concerned to extend all the way back into the Trinitarian *arche.* Hans Urs von Balthasar is a case in point, although he in turn picks up ideas from Karl Barth and Sergei Bulgakov, among others, and develops them in his own way.[31] Catholic theologians looking for kenosis incipient at the heart of the Trinity can follow an already well-marked path.

The incarnate Son's kenosis, his act of perfect self-giving to the Father on the cross for our salvation, he undertakes as a human being *(secundum quad homo-in* virtue of the human nature he has assumed-as Scholastic theology often put it). So far, no doubt, all are agreed. For Balthasar, though, it seems as though the human obedience unto death of the incarnate Son is not enough. In order to be adequately "grounded" in God, or to have sufficient saving depth, the economic event of the Son's human obedience, his kenosis as a human being, must manifest a pre-existing kenosis which belongs to the Son as God *(secundum quod Deus,* in Scholastic terms). It is not yet enough, moreover, to see this kenotic event in God as only the free decision of Father, Son, and Spirit that the Son will assume human flesh and death for our salvation.[32] The only adequate ground of the Son's human

[31] For Balthasar's reliance on both of these theologians in his understanding of kenosis, see, e.g., *Mysterium Paschale,* trans. Aidan Nichols, O.P. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 35 (Bulgakov), 79-82 (Barth). See below, n. 34.

[32] Here, we might note in passing, Scheeben is surely right to point out that the Son's existence in our flesh, let alone the decision to accept this temporal mission, cannot itself be regarded as kenotic. The Son still, and forever, has our flesh, but Philippians 2 clearly insists that he does not now exist in a state of kenosis, but of exaltation. It must, therefore, be the acceptance of liability to suffering and death, of flesh in its fallen state and not of flesh as such, in which the kenosis of Philippians 2 properly consists. "One cannot apply the saying of the Apostle, 'he emptied himself,' to the incarnation as such. Otherwise the Son of God would

obedience is a kenosis which just goes with being the eternal Son, a kenosis interior to the very procession by which he exists as a person distinct from the Father. This "immanent" kenosis consists, Balthasar suggests, in the Son's willingness to let himself be produced, to be God *from* God, while "letting" the Father be the God from whom he is. "'The Son is already a co-worker in his own generation, in that he allows himself to be generated, and holds himself ready to be generated' .... Consequently we can already see within the Trinity the source from which will issue the obedience of the incarnate Son to the Father."[33]

On this view, the Son's eternal filial kenosis in allowing himself to proceed from the Father is fully matched by a paternal kenosis of the Father in bringing the Son forth. The Father begets the Son by fully emptying himself, "dispossessing" himself even of his divinity in order to hand everything that he is over to the Son. "With Bulgakov, one can designate the self-utterance of the Father in the generation of the Son as a first, inner-divine 'kenosis' which supports everything, because in [this generation] the Father divests himself without remainder of his divinity, in order to give it over to the Son as his own."[34]

have to exist in a state of self-renunciation and self-emptying even now, in heaven. This it has never occurred to anyone to think" *(Auf die Inkarnation als solche kann man die Worte des Apostels 'exinanivit semetipsum' nicht anwenden; sonst mu(?teder Sohn Gottes auch noch jetzt im Himmel in einem Zustand der Selbstentiiu{?erung, Selbstentleerung sich befinden, was niemanden je in den Sinn gekommen ist)* (Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Die Mysterien des Christentums,* §64 *[Gesammelte Schriften* II, ed. Josef Hofer, 2d ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1958), 350 (my translation)]; cf. Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity,* trans. Cyril Vollert, S.J. [St. Louis: B. Herder, 1946], 423-24).

[33] *Theodramatik,* vol. 4, *Das Endspiel* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1983): "«Schon die Zeugung wird vom Sohn mitbewirkt, indem er sich zeugen laBt, sich bereithalt, gezeugt zu werden» ... Damit wird innertrinitarisch schon sichtbar, woraus der gehorsam des menschwerdenden Sohnes an den Yater sich ergeben wird" (76); cf. *Theo-Drama,* vol. 5, *The Last Act,* trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 87 In the quoted phrase Balthasar appropriates, as often in this volume, the words of Adrienne von Speyr.

[34] *Theodramatik,* vol. 3, *Die Handlung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1980): "Man kann, mit Bulgakow, die Selbstaussprache des Vaters in der Zeugung des Sohnes als eine erste, alles unterfassende innergottliche «Kenose» bezeichnen, da der Yater sich darin restlos seiner Gottheit enteignet und sie dem Sohn iibereignet" (300 [my translation]); cf. *Theo-Drama,* vol. 4, *The Action,* trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 323.

In *The Lamb of God,* first published in Russian in 1933, Bulgakov directly anticipates much of what Balthasar has to say about an eternal, mutual kenosis of the Father and the Son

The twofold kenosis by which the Father begets and the Son is begotten gives rise, Balthasar maintains, to an infinite "distance" *(Abstand)* and "separation" *(Trennung)* between the two, a distance which simply goes with being the Father and being the Son. Rooted in the Son's eternal procession from the Father, this infinite distance grounds, and, it seems, alone can ground, both the Son's gift of himself to the Father on the cross and among the dead, and the Father's gift of the Son to us there (in the sense of Rom 8:3). "The divine act which brings forth the Son ... is the positing of an absolute, infinite distance, within which every other distance which can appear in the finite world is included and embraced, up to and including sin."[35]

It may seem as though Balthasar here exaggerates, and that it is not necessary to take the needed identity of the immanent with the economic Trinity so far.[36] We can, one might argue, decline to follow him to the point of seeing the eternal generation of the Son as a protokenosis, while still holding that the decisive events of the saving economy require some kind of parallel in the

as the "ground" of the temporal kenosis which takes place in the incarnation. "Unfathomable for the creaturely spirit is this *begetting* of the Son by the Father, of the Person by the Person. This begetting power is the ecstasy of a going out of oneself, of a kind of self-emptying, which at the same time is self-actualization through this begetting .... Spiritual sonhood consists precisely in the Son's depleting Himself in the name of the Father. Sonhood is already *eternal kenosis*. ... The sacrifice of the Father's love consists in self-renunciation and in self-emptying in the begetting of the Son. The sacrifice of the Son's love consists in self-depletion in the begottenness from the Father, in the acceptance of birth as begottenness .... The *sacrifice* of love, in its reality, is pre-eternal suffering" (Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God,* trans. Boris Jakim [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008], 98-99; cf. 177).

[35] "Dieser gottliche Akt, der den Sohn hervorbringt, als die zweite Moglichkeit, an der identischen Gottheit teilzuhaben und sie zu sein, ist die Setzung eines absoluten, unendlichen Abstands, innerhalb <lessen alle moglichen andern Abstande, wie sie innerhalb der endlichen Welt bis einschlieG!ich zur Siinde auftreten konnen, eingeschlossen und umfangen sind" (Balthasar, *Theodramatik,* 3:301 [my translation]; cf. *Theo-drama,* 4:323). And: "Hell is possible only in the embrace of the absolute and real separation of the Father and the Son" ("Holle nur umfangen von der absoluten und wirklichen Trennung von Yater und Sohn moglich ist") (Balthasar, *Theodramatik,* 3:302-3 [my translation]; cf. *Theo-drama,* 4:325). The "absolute separation" of which Balthasar speaks here is not tied up with the economy of salvation alone, but already belongs to the "gesture" *(Gebiirde)* by which the Father immanently utters and produces the Son.

[36] We can leave aside for now the fact that identity does not, strictly speaking, admit of degrees: either A is identical with B, or it is not.

immanent Trinity. Balthasar may go too far, but it still seems that there must be immanent facts or events which are more or less the same as their economic counterparts-which resemble them enough for the immanent occurrences to ground the economic ones, and the economic to manifest the immanent.

That Balthasar and many others strive to locate the events of salvation history ever more deeply within God's triune life is not, I think, an accidental exaggeration, but follows from the way modern theology often thinks about the Trinity in the first place. More precisely it stems from the widespread eclipse, in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Trinitarian theology, of the carefully worked-out distinction between procession and mission by the much more malleable and imprecise distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity.[37]

The logic of procession and mission enables us to know, by means of the economy of salvation, the eternal coming forth of the divine persons, the resulting relations among them, and thus their noncontingent personal identities. At the same time, the logic of this distinction ensures that no event in the freely enacted economy of salvation will be the same as any property by which a divine person has his unique identity from all eternity. If we get the distinction of procession from mission right, the eternal sequence of processions in God can, as Aquinas puts it, "be concluded infallibly" from the sequence of temporal missions, even though the temporal missions are in no way included, already primordially emerging, in the processions.[38]

It is unsurprising that Balthasar and others, having lost track of the logic of procession and mission, should be at a loss to say how God's saving economy could teach us about the persons of the Trinity as such, *unless* the events of the economy were somehow identical with events constitutive of God's "immanent" life. Unless what happens in time is simply the manifestation or "stepping-

[37] The older distinction is, to be sure, often eclipsed precisely by the assumption that it is the same as the newer one.

[38] Aquinas, *De Potentia,* q. 10, a. 4, ad 14: "If the Holy Spirit is sent by the Son, it can be concluded infallibly that he exists from the Son eternally" *([I]nfallibiliter concludi patest, si Spiritus Sanctus a Filia mittitur, quad aeternaliter ab ea existat).*

forth" (in Staudenmaier's terms) of what already happens eternally in God, rather than a radically novel and contingent addition to these eternal events, we fear that the immanent Trinity will disappear. We will have no way to keep the Trinity manifest to us in the economy of salvation from becoming mere appearance, the manifestation of an otherwise unknown God.

As a result the Trinitarian theology of the last two centuries often finds itself confronted by a quandary of its own making. Having insisted on an immanent or essential Trinity irreducible to the economic appearances, theologians then paradoxically insist on identifying the two-on finding everything salient in the economy already actual in the deepest interior of God's triune life. Framing the issue in the terms offered by those who deny that we could have any access to an "immanent Trinity" (if there were one), theologians find themselves compelled to identify the two in order to say how we could posit-know about-the needed immanent Trinity in the first place. Thus the restless quest, from Staudenmaier to Balthasar and beyond, to find ever more primordial immanent parallels for the saving events of the economy.

To be sure, the language of immanent and economic Trinity as such need not have these unhappy results. But the best hope of avoiding them is to recover the logic of procession and mission, where we know the divine persons in their eternal processions and relations precisely by their free and wholly contingent addition to these processions of something entirely new-a creature. In just this way we avoid any need to see the kenosis we perceive in the economy as inherent in the eternal being and identity of the Son and the Spirit, let alone of the Father.

Even if we could make sense of the idea that the personal productions in God are inherently kenotic acts, one is perplexed as to how the result, as Balthasar pictures it, can be squared with the Church's creedal faith in the one God, despite his frequent assurances to the contrary.[39] Two human persons may dislike each other intensely, but the distance between them will always be

[39] I hope to return to the question whether an inner-Trinitarian or "immanent" kenosis is even conceivable, in an article on St. Thomas and the renewal of Trinitarian theology.

finite. Conversely, no matter how close they are to each other, the distance between them will always be enough for them to be not only two persons, but two human beings. They are of the same essence, but only generically, not numerically. If the distance between the Father and the Son is inherently infinite, then it is (infinitely) greater than the distance possible between any creatures. All the more, then, should Father and Son be of the same essence at most generically, not numerically. They should be two gods, not one. Infinite distance or separation between Father and Son seems not, in other words, to be compatible with the creedal *homoousion* and the scriptural texts that back it (e.g., John 10:30), which the tradition has consistently taken to mean a numerical, and not simply specific or generic, unity of essence.[40] Otherwise Father and Son would be two gods, just as Peter and James are two human beings. Similarly, if the Father "dispossesses" himself of his divine essence in order to bequeath it to the Son, it becomes difficult to say what the Father's essence, if any, now is, but in any case it is hard to see how it could be numerically identical with the Son's.

Perhaps it would be better, then, to abandon the thought that every decisive event in the saving economy depends on a parallel "immanent" event already having taken place in God, a primeval happening in the innermost recesses of the divine processions which already embraces and includes whatever happens in time. If Father, Son, and Spirit are to be one God, themselves each identical with one and the same divine essence, they must enjoy the greatest unity possible among subjects (persons or particulars) really distinct from each other. As such the unity of the triune

[40] Thus Aquinas, *Super Ioannem,* c. 17, lect. 3 (no. 2214), with reference to John 10:30: "The Father and the Son are of the same nature in number, while we are of one nature in species" *(Pater enim et Filius sunt eiusdem naturae numero, nos autem sumus unum in natura secundum speciem).* Cf. *Super Ioannem,* c. 14, lect. 3 (no. 1887); c. 16, lect. 4 (no. 2114) (*S. Thomae Aquinatis Super Evangelium S. Ioannis Lectura,* ed R. Cai, 5th ed. [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1952]). This is not merely a Scholastic technicality. Thomas cites St. Bernard of Clairvaux *(De consideratione* 5.8) as his authority for the claim that the triune God is *maxime unus:* "Among all those things which are said to be one, the unity of the divine Trinity holds first place" *(Inter omnia quae unum dicuntur, arcem tenet unitas divinae Trinitatis) (STh* I, q. 11, a. 4, sc).

God must surpass, in fact infinitely surpass, even the greatest unity possible among creatures. In order to enact the economy of salvation they freely give us, the divine persons do not need to be infinitely distant from each other in their "immanent" divine life. They need only be really (that is, numerically) distinct, and at the same time be individually, and jointly, the one God.

How then should we think about the unity of the triune God? My purpose here has been to clear the ground for an answer to this question, by suggesting why the question has lately been neglected in Trinitarian theology, and where a rigorous and informative answer should be sought: in reflection on processions, relations, persons, and essence in God, and not on the contingent events of the economy of salvation.

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GOD THE FATHER: THE HUMAN EXPRESSION OF THE HOLY TRINITY

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SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, at the start of his discussion of the Holy Trinity in the *Summa Theologiae,* makes the following statement: "Cum de Trinitate loquimur, cum cautela et modestia est agendum"-"When we speak of the Trinity, we must proceed with caution and restraint."[1] We exercise our theological intelligence when we speak about the Trinity, but this use of reason is modest. It is quite different from the aggressive and acquisitive form we are accustomed to in our modern science, as well as in our politics, journalism, and philosophy, in which we torture both nature and one another in order to ferret out the facts. Theological intelligence is more like poetic thinking and like philosophy in the ancient manner, where we spend our time and do our best but know that in the end our only hope is for grace and not for payment. What we manage to see is a gift we have received and not a fee we can demand.

Let us begin our theological reflection by distinguishing between God as Trinity and God as Creator, that is, God taken simply as one and as the origin of all that is. This distinction is present in the Scriptures and in the faith of the Church, which together comprise what Aquinas calls *sacra doctrina,* the sacred teaching that we reflect on theologically. The distinction is also present in Christian prayers. In order to highlight the contrast between Trinity and Creator, I will consider a specific hymn, the

[1] *STh* I q. 31, a. 2.

Te Deum. Perhaps reflecting on a prayer will help us maintain the appropriate *cautela et modestia* in our theological project.

I. THE *TE DEUM*

Consider the word *Father* in this prayer. The word is used in two ways. At the start of the prayer it is used to designate God as one and as Creator. Later it is used to designate God as the Father within the Holy Trinity. We begin with the very first stanza of this hymn, where the term *eternal Father* is used to name God as the creative cause of the world:

Te Deum laudamus,
Te Dominum confitemur.
Te aeternum Patrem omnis terra veneratur

The word *Patrem* is used in apposition with *Deum* and *Dominum,* God and Lord, the one who has dominion. God is addressed as the Father of the created world, which in this line is represented by the earth, *omnis terra,* which venerates him. We praise and confess God and the Lord, and the whole of creation turns toward and venerates him as its eternal Father. The "we" of *laudamus* and *confitemur,* furthermore, are not just we who are singing this hymn, but we who speak for the whole created order. We turn to the Father of us all.

In the next stanza we speak about the celestial choirs of angels, which are spelled out in their orders and kinds.[2]

Tibi omnes angeli,
Tibi caeli et universae potestates,
Tibi Cherubim et Seraphim
incessabili voce proclamant.

The voice of the angels is not just unceasing but incessable; it is not only a voice that *does* not stop, but one that *could* not end.

[2] One should note also the rhythmic usage of the second person pronoun, *te, tibi,* and *tu,* throughout the prayer.

Angels, with their intelligence and their lack of shadow and limitation, are never consciously absent from God, they never turn their minds entirely to anything else, even if they are sent on a mission by him, and they inevitably respond to his presence by praising him. What do the angels say? They sing what Isaiah the prophet recorded:

> Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus,
> Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
> Pleni sunt caeli et terra
> majestatis gloriae tuae.

All this is done in the domain of angels. Next in the prayer, we move downward from the articulated angelic choirs to the apostles, prophets, and martyrs, and finally to the holy Church. We turn to a human counterpart to the angelic choirs, one made up of intelligent but embodied substances in their corporate identities. This community is also articulated and as the Church it finds its domicile here on the earth:

Te	gloriosus	*apostolorum*	chorus,
Te		*prophetarum*	laudabilis numerus,
Te		*martyrum*	candidatus laudat exercitus.
Te			per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur
		ecclesia.	

To this point, the praise of the angels and of the Church have been directed to God as Creator, the Father who is at the beginning and at the heart of all that is, the Lord toward whom everything is turned in praise. So far we in the prayer have been addressing the *Godhead-Deum, Dominum, Patrem.* But at this point the register changes. We now have a more exact personal name of the "you"-the *te* and the *tibi-that* has been addressed so far. We now declare:

PATREM immensae maiestatis;
Venerandum tuum verum et unicum FILIUM;
Sanctum quoque Paraclitum SPIRITUM.

The Holy Trinity comes to light in the words of the prayer. God the Creator now becomes addressed as God in his own internal life, not simply in his dominion. There is a powerful shift in the use of the word *Father, Pater,* which is reinforced by the prosody of the line in which the word appears. He is the Father of immense majesty, but even though he is addressed in such grandeur, he is not simply the same as the one addressed at the beginning of the hymn. He is not just the eternal Godhead, the simple conjunction of all perfections and the origin of "everything," because now he is contrasted to the Son and the Spirit Paraclete. A new context has been introduced, and within it a new difference comes to light. He *is* the same, but he is not manifested simply as he was before.

What is the difference that is now introduced? The Father who is now addressed is not just the origin and center of the world, but also the origin and center of a life within the Godhead itself. The internal life of God had not been mentioned until now. There is a procession, a going forth within God, and it is different from the procession and return of creation. When we refer to *Filium* as *tuum,* we are saying that the Son is "yours" in a way different from how the world, heaven and earth, are the Lord's, and how all of creation is "yours." But in this section of the prayer, in this Trinitarian stanza, the one being addressed is still the Father, not the Son or the Spirit, who are said to be "of" the Father.

This relation of persons within the Holy Trinity is also expressed by the location of the nouns that name the persons. The word *Patrem* is at the head or the origin of the sentence in which the Trinity is declared, while the words *Filium* and *Spiritum* are at the conclusion of their respective poetic lines. The Father is the source and the giver, the Son and the Spirit receive.

In the next stanza, suddenly, the addressee changes. The person prayed to is no longer the Father but the Son, and the Son as Incarnate, as the Christ:

Tu	Rex gloriae	CHRISTE.
Tu	Patris sempiternus es	FILIUS.
Tu	ad liberandum suscepturus hominem non horruisti virginis uterum.	
Tu	devicto mortis aculeo, aperuisti credentibus regna coelorum.	
Tu	ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria Patris. Iudex crederis esse venturus.	

In this stanza, there are two instances of the word *Father,* but they are now said in a context in which we are addressing Christ. These tokens of the word are no longer in the vocative case, no longer in the second person, as the two previous uses were. They are grammatically in the third person, even though they signify the first person in the Trinity. We say to Christ that he is the eternal Son of the Father and that after his work of Incarnation and Redemption he sits at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father. Here we speak *about* the Father as we speak *to* the Son.

The hymn now concludes with a petition to Christ that we may be enrolled among those who are saved:

Te ergo quaesumus tuis famulis subveni,
quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.
Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari.

In the *Te Deum,* the word *Pater* is used four times. In the first usage we address God as Creator and in the following three we address or speak about God the Father within the Trinity. In this prayer God is addressed as Father in two different ways, and we can reflect theologically on these two ways, distinguishing and contrasting them with one another.

It is appropriate to speak about God the Creator as Father, even though we are addressing the Godhead as such and not the first person of the Trinity, because God as such is the origin of the world. Gilles Emery, O.P., commenting on St. Thomas's theology of the Trinity, says, "It is in their unity of essence and of operation that the three divine persons together are Father of the creature," and he quotes Aquinas saying that God the Father addressed in the Lord's Prayer is the Trinity ("Tota Trinitas dicitur Pater Noster").[3] It would not be appropriate for us to use the word *Filius* or even the word *Spiritus* to name God as Creator, to address the Godhead initially. The word *Father* has a welcome and helpful ambiguity, reflecting the two contexts in which it is used: in regard to God's first work *ad extra,* and in regard to his life in himself, *ad intra.* In the faith of the Church, these two approaches to God are interwoven but never confused. Both mysteries are part of our faith, but we believe that God as Creator is more accessible to human reason than God as Trinity. As Thomas Prufer writes, "The world implies God, but it does not manifest him as he is in himself."[4]

It is precisely in the distinction between God as origin of the world and God as origin of a life within himself that the truth of the Trinity comes to light for us. The Arian heresy blurred this distinction; it considered the Son as the first and highest of

[3] Gilles Emery, O.P., "Le Pere et !'oeuvre trinitaire de creation selon le Commentaire des Sentences de S. Thomas d'Aquin," in *Ordo sapientiae et amoris: Image et message de Saint Thomas d'Aquin a travers /es recents etudes historiques, hermeneutiques et doctrinales,* ed. Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira, O.P. (Fribourg: Editions universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1993), 94. The full contextual citation is: "C'est clans leur unite d'essence et d'operation que !es trois personnes divines sont ensemble Pere de la creature; le Dieu Pere invoque clans la priere du Seigneur, c'est la Trinite comme notre unique principe: 'Tota Trinitas dicitur Pater Noster'." See also *STh* I, q. 33, a. 3. Thomas says that the name *Father* is used most properly for the personal relation in the Trinity, and only secondarily in regard to creation and for relations among created things. Our approach in this essay, however, is to move from what is first for us to what is first in itself, and so we have begun with God as Creator and have gone on to distinguish the procession within the Trinity from that of creation. This procedure is more in keeping with a phenomenological style of thinking, which, when it is exercised in topics such as these, can be called a theology of disclosure.

[4] Thomas Prufer, "A Protreptic: What Is Philosophy?", in John K. Ryan, ed., *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 2 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 3-4.

creatures. The Church rejected this understanding and said that there is another kind of origination in God, one which remains within the Godhead and does not descend to something less. Creation is not the only procession possible for God; it is not the only and not the highest kind of generosity and exuberance possible for divine plenitude, the goodness of God the Father.[5] The Church reaffirmed the distinction between two kinds of origin, and she did so by contrasting the Trinity with creation. She did so not simply in her own voice but as the echo of what was said by the authors of the Scriptures and by Christ himself, the Word incarnate.

II. GOD AS CREATOR

If God is understood as Creator, the One from whom all things come and by whom they are sustained and directed, he is understood by us in terms of the things he has made. He is manifested in his works and presented to us through them. He is implied by the world. He is the beginning and ruler of things in the world, so he is before and beyond all of them, and we think of him and approach him as such. We think of him in his majesty, strength, and wisdom, in his omnipotence, as these attributes are dimly reflected in the world and the things in it. As rational beings, we use our language to speak and think about God as Creator and to pray to him as such, but our human language has to be very much adjusted if it is to be used in speaking about and praying to the God who created us.

In our normal and standard use of language, we speak, with one another and with ourselves, about particular things and events. We talk about this or that person, this or that object, this or that episode, or this or that opinion. When we speak this way, the world as a whole remains as an unnamed background for our partial discourse. Our normal use of language is contextualized by

[5] Gilles Emery, O.P., speaks about the primacy, plenitude, *fecondite,* and *fontalite* of God, as expressed by St. Bonaventure: "Trinite et unite de Dieu clans la scolastique Xlle-XIVe siecle," in Pierre Gisel and Gilles Emery, 0. P., eds., *Le christianisme est-ii un monotheisme?* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001), 210-11.

the whole of things. On rare occasions, however, when we become reflective and philosophical, we twist and stretch our language to name the whole of things itself. We might call this whole the world, the universe, the cosmos, or "the all, *to pan,"* to use the Greek philosophical term. This whole includes all the things that are, and among them it also includes our knowing of the world and our speaking about it. But God as Creator is not part of this whole; he is not even the best and most powerful part. He is before and beyond what we name when we use such words to name the world and its parts.

The whole contains things of great power and splendor. The psalmist marveled at the sun, moon, and stars, the snow and rain, the mountains, valleys, seas, and rivers, the plants and animals, and finally the race of men, with their actions and works. We now know about galaxies and supernovae, dark stars and black holes, quarks and gluons. We also have hints of the mysterious energy or energies that underlie all these things, the energy that takes on such varied forms, both detectable and hidden, and that coalesces into such fascinating kinds of matter and mass, both living and inert. God as Creator is not any of these things, not even their fundamental energy. He is "outside" them, but outside in a distinctive way. In St. Augustine's phrase, all these things are not God but they tell us about him, and when they speak they say one thing: they simply declare, "He made us [ipse fecit nos]."[6] If the things in the world are so stunning, how much more so is the one who made them all, the one from whom they come?

If we try on our own to name the God who made the world and all things in it, we always come up short, because our words are naturally suited to distinguishing and naming things within the whole; our words are suited to "the naming of parts."[7] The various things we respond to by using language come to light in contrast with other things in our articulated experience: we name apples and trees, friends and foes, you and me, things and opinions. To use a phrase found in St. Athanasius, the various

[6] St. Augustine, *Confessions* 10.6.

[7] Henry Reed, "Naming of Parts," *New Statesman and Nation* 24, no. 598 (8 August 1942): 92.

things we name in the world are "mutually incompatible"[8] and are manifested as such in the distinctions we make among them. One thing is not another, and the names we use designate not just the thing but what the thing is; they capture and carry the thing's intelligibility, precisely by distinguishing that thing from others. Our language serves us very well in such naming (that is what we have it for), but it begins to wobble when we try to name the whole itself, because the whole is not differentiated in our experience the way more particular things are. It is not differentiated from another whole. There is nothing for us to contrast it to.

And yet, the whole of things *is* differentiated, in a way. It can be distinguished from its parts, and as such it has a kind of natural, thoughtful presence for us. It comes to light as the context or matrix for all the things within it, and if we try hard enough we can manage to think and speak about this whole when we become philosophical. Still, this kind of distinction is not the kind that allows us to name *this* sort of thing in opposition to *that* sort of thing. Speaking about the whole already puts a great strain on our language.

But the origin of everything, the creative first principle, is even harder to name. This source is somehow prior to the whole of things. It is prior also to the energy that is beneath, behind, and within everything. The origin itself is glimpsed as the truly unnameable and the truly unknowable, so different is it from things that have come to be and can more easily be named. This origin, moreover, is utterly simple, without any of those parts and aspects that correspond to the words that we use in our standard discourse.[9] The origin is glimpsed as transcendent, and if we have

[8] St. Athanasius, *Contra Gentes,* §29, *inA Select Library ofNicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* second series, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 19.

[9] According to some ways of thinking, we might be permitted to speak *to* this origin in prayer but ought not speak *about* it as though we could *judge* what it is. See Hilary Pumam, *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life: Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas, Wittgenstein* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2008). In an interpretation of Martin Buber's thought, Putnam says: "It is impossible to describe God, or to theorize about him.... What one can do is speak *to* God, or rather, to enter into an 'I - You' relation with God, a relation in which all the

any serious idea of the transcendent God, the first thing we know about him is that we cannot have an idea of him; if we did, he would not be the truly transcendent God. Some have thought that we shouldn't even have a pronounceable name for him, because this would suggest that we are able to use such a word to possess his intelligibility.[10] But even if we do not go this far, every believer would acknowledge God as that than which nothing greater can be thought or named, and although we may use words to speak about him, we know him as that which is beyond our knowing and naming. We know he is the origin of "all this," which proceeds from him, but such knowledge implies that he is not part of "this," and that he is not nameable as one of the kinds of things we find and name within the whole of things. Nor is the whole itself comparable to him.

We know the origin as the source and ruler of the things that are, and the world's things, events, and forces, whether beautiful or terrifying, give us just hints and guesses-hints followed by guesses-concerning the source from which they come. God is known to us *only* as the origin of things and their ruler, only as refracted in and through the things that are; he is implied by the world. He is known as the great silence behind the harmonies and noises of the world, the silence from which they come and in which they have their being.

III. THE HOLY TRINITY

To think of God as the Holy Trinity is to think of him as being an origin in a different way. God is now spoken of, in our language and with our words, not only as the origin of the world and of the things that are, but as being the origin of a life within himself. The title of one of the chapters in St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles* contains the words, "That there is

partial 'I - You' relations … are bound up and fulfilled without being obliterated" (ibid., 65).

[10] This, of course, is the issue of the Tetragrammaton. In this view, we are permitted an abbreviated written name for God, but it serves less as a transcription and more as an indication of the name that we are forbidden to pronounce.

generation ... in divinity [Quod sit generatio ... in divinis]."[11] God generates life within himself. He is an origin within himself; he is not just the origin of the whole of things. Such bold human discourse about what is in God is made possible for us through the Scriptures, and it involves a further modified use of the word "origin." This way of being an origin is entirely different from being the source of the things that have been made. It is different from the refraction of God's power through the whole of things, different from its being presented through the world in which we live and through the various things that we name and understand. Not only the origin but also the term of this activity, the Son or the Word, as well as the Holy Spirit, are beyond the whole that is the world. This kind of life is even more distantly beyond the power of our speech than is the origin of the world. And yet, we are able to speak about this life because of what was said to us by Jesus Christ, who brought to completion the things that had been said about God in the Jewish Scriptures.

Our speech about the life of the Holy Trinity involves a further modification or troping of human language. As we have observed, the first and natural human speech is focused on things in their distinction from one another. A second level of speech arises when we begin to think philosophically or religiously about the whole of things and about the best things in the whole. Such speech involves modifying the vocabulary and dimensions of our original language. A third level of speech occurs when we begin to speak about God, not as the best and highest entity in the whole, but as the mysterious and creative origin of everything that is. The fourth level of language, the one we are investigating now, is introduced when we begin to speak about the relationships that exist within God himself, relationships that are radically different from the world's relation to that which brought it into being out of nothing. Each of these levels involves a shift in the meaning of such terms as *being* and *one, nature, relation, person, origin, give,* and *receive.* The terms are not used univocally across all these

[11] *ScG* IV, c. 2, title. See also *STh* I, q. 27, a. 2: "Utrum aliqua processio in divinis generatio dici possit" ("Whether any procession in God can be called a generation").

levels. Each level also tropes our prepositions, the "angular" words that serve like hinges in a sentence, words such as *from* and *to, with* and *in.* The way the Son is with the Father is not like the way one man is with another. Many theological problems are caused by our failure to distinguish the theological meaning of words from the standard, worldly meaning. [12]

God as the origin of the Holy Trinity is God the Father. More precisely, he is, to use the Pauline phrase often found in the theological writings of St. Athanasius, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." [13] If Christ had not spoken of God as his Father, and if Christ had not been raised from the dead, we would not have had an inkling of God as the source of a community within his own being. God is distinguished into God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and we are enabled, in faith, to name and to address these three persons in God. God is not differentiated into three gods but remains one, and yet there are

[12] On prepositions in discourse about the Trinity, see Emery, "Le Pere et !'oeuvre trinitaire," 101-2. On verbal adjustments in theological speech, we might note an elegant paradox in the Christmas hymn *Christe, Redemptor omnium.* Its first stanza declares that Christ in his eternal life was "natus ineffabiliter." The *Word* was *ineffably* born, born in a manner that *words* cannot express.

The theological meaning of scriptural words presupposes that human language has been elevated into a new context, and such elevation occurs not simply through metaphor but also, and more fundamentally, through analogy based on causation. Analogy works even in the shifts and tropes of meaning that occur in language used within the world; words used in one domain or one level of abstraction are adapted for usage in others. Metaphysics develops analogies to allow us to speak about first and highest substances, and Christian metaphysics develops analogies that let us speak about *esse subsistens* as the cause of the being of things. We go even beyond this extreme when we speak about God's own internal life, but we do so only because the words of Scripture and its associated Tradition allow us to do so: the meanings of the words "relation" and "reception" when said of the Trinity are different from what we mean when we speak of the relation of the world to God or the reception of finite *esse* from the Creator. This extension of analogy into the discourse used in expressing revealed truth is, however, made possible for us through the mediation that occurs in Christian metaphysics, which serves as a bridge between worldly speech and revelation. Thomas Prufer says, "Creation *(ex nihilo* and *ex liberalitate)* seems in fact to have become known only through *ratio naturalis gratid sanata" (Recapitulations: Essays in Philosophy* [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993], 33). Because Scripture takes us so far beyond what we could know even by reason healed by grace, the theology of the Trinity has to adhere carefully to what Scripture and Tradition say and how they say it. Theological reflection is governed by the words used in revelation.

[13] St. Athanasius, *Contra Gentes,* §27.

three persons living his life. God the Father begets and speaks God the Son, the Word, and both together "spirate" or breathe the Holy Spirit in charity.[14] There are reciprocities within the divine nature. The divine nature is communicated and received in this intense donation and reception, in this benevolence and thanksgiving, but it is not given as something separate from the giver; the Trinity involves giving oneself and not giving something one has, and for that reason we can say, as Christ said, that the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father.[15]

God is one and purely simple, but he is not alone. There is generation, speaking, giving, and reception in God, and they are all simply God.[16] We can name this life and even come into its

[14] *STh* I, q. 37, aa. 1-2. There could not have been such charity if there were not two persons to achieve it; charity, *amor benevolentiae,* is not simply love of oneself. The Holy Spirit is said to be the "amor unitivus duorum" (*STh* I, q. 36, a. 4, ad 1). Love is based on understanding or intellect, and so the Holy Spirit proceeds not just from the Father but also from the Father as understood, that is, also from the Word, the two acting as one principle. See *STh* I q. 27, a. 3, ad 3: "Nihil enim potest voluntate amari, nisi sit in intellectu conceptum" ("For nothing can be loved by the will unless it has been conceived in the intellect").

[15] *STh* I, q. 42, a 5: "Utrum Filius sit in Patre, et e converso" ("Whether the Son is in the Father, and conversely"). See John 10:38 and 14:10.

[16] The simplicity of the divine nature plays the decisive role in Aquinas's theology. It is the first topic treated in the *Summa Theologiae* (*STh* I, q. 3) after the question on the existence of God, and it exercises a governing role over all the other issues Aquinas discusses, including those of the Trinity. Aquinas uses the category of relation to discuss the divine persons, because relation does not add an *aliquid* but only an *ad aliquid* to what it modifies; its sense-unlike that of the other predicaments-does not essentially connote "inherence in" anything, and so it does not compromise the divine simplicity. See *STh* I q. 28, aa. 1 and 2. The divine simplicity underscores the monotheism of Christian faith. It also may lead to the doctrine of the Trinity, because if there is to be intelligence and love in God, they must be somehow equivalent to the divine nature-they must be "the Godhead again"-or else they would be attributes inhering in the divine nature and would thereby compromise its simplicity.

If God is to "speak" and to "love," he must do so in such a way that he remains simply God and does not become something other than what he is. A difference of persons allows this to happen (no other modality of being would allow it except perhaps the category of relation, but even then it is specifically the relation of persons). Difference in personhood does not mean difference in divinity. A trinity of personal subsistence is compatible with being one God. Furthermore, the Trinitarian way is more truly the way of being a person, and more truly the way of speaking and loving, than is our way. It is the paradigmatic way of being a person.

presence in faith; we can glimpse it, even though we cannot understand it; and we can hope to become affiliated with it, through Christ and through the charity of the Holy Spirit, even though it is beyond anything we might have anticipated in our own way of taking things.[17] This life subsists apart from the things that have been made and it would subsist even though such things had not been made. It is comprised of a kind of energy or power different from that which naturally enlivens the whole of things.

Christ spoke of this life when he said, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22). He referred to it when he said, "The Father and I are one" Gohn 10:30), when he declared, "Everything that the Father has is mine" Gohn 16: 15), and when he said, while addressing the Father, "Everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine" Gohn 17:10). He also referred to this life when he spoke about the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, and said, "He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears.... He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you" Gohn 16:13-14).[18] Christ also spoke about this life in the Holy Trinity when he used the phrase from the Book of Exodus, "I am *[egoeimi],"* to refer to himself Gohn 8:24, 28), and when he said, "Before Abraham came to be, I am" Gohn 8:58; cf. John 15:15).

[17] We hope to become affiliated with the Trinitarian life not only in the beatific vision but also in our present state, where we can resemble Christ's being as an image of the Father; once again, the term of all such activity is the Father, who is the first origin. See Bruce Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 267: "The act by which we come to have true beliefs concerning the divine persons is therefore apparently not an end in itself, but serves the Trinity's purpose of making us bearers of Christ's image." Also, ibid., 269: "We cannot be bearers of Christ's image without sharing in his own correspondence to the Father, and so bearing, like him if imperfectly, the imprint of the Father himself.... Conformed to the Son by the indwelling Spirit's love, we share Jesus' own sonship, his own complete likeness to the Father; we become by adoption what he is by nature. In this way the Spirit gives us a share-as much as we can take-in God's own life." Marshall exploits the theme of truth as correspondence, but I think that a treatment of the truth of disclosure or manifestation would be a helpful complement to his study.

[18] See also John 16:15: "Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you."

Christ revealed the Holy Trinity by more than just the words he used. His Resurrection into glory, following his bitter passion and death, is a nonverbal indication to us that the life in God is different from the life we encounter here. His Resurrection from the dead is not an outcome of the latent energy of the world. It manifests a source and resource beyond that, and it reveals this source more fully than creation does. The Resurrection crowns the created world, not just by exploiting its full potential, but by going beyond it; it reveals what creation is by exceeding it. It brings being and life, not just out of nothing, but out of the deeper nihilism of sin and death, and thus saves us from both desperation and ironic cynicism.

The natural energy we live with evolves into marvelous complexity, but it is necessarily accompanied by entropy and decay. Natural life ends inexorably in death; it could not be lived in any other way. The Resurrection of Christ acts counter to this; it establishes a form of life and truth that will not suffer decline. It overcomes the ultimate trivializing power of death.[19] It goes beyond the ebb and flow of cosmic powers, and it exceeds even the persistence of the literary expression of the truth of things, which can last longer than bodily life. But the Resurrection does not just manifest a mysterious capacity for renewal in the powers of the world, nor does it just disclose a potential that was there in the first creation. It reveals what is "behind" creation. The Resurrection is more than the work of a spiritual power; it is not something that an angelic being could accomplish. Rather, it is a new intervention analogous to creation and it manifests the life within God himself, because it was accomplished in one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, even though it was the work of the Trinity itself. It is not the work of a separate form but of *esse subsistens,* and, more than that, it exhibits the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the relationship between them and the Spirit, the giver of life. It provides a glimpse of the

[19] Robert Spaemann, *Das unsterbliche Gerncht: Die Frage nach Gott und die Tiiuschung der Moderne* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2007), 177: "Der Tod ist der Sieg der Trivialitiit.... Der Tod ist der Sieg der Faktizitiit iiber jede mi:iglicheSinnerfahrung" ("Death is the triumph of the trivial. ... Death is the triumph of facticity over any possible experience of meaning").

Holy Trinity, and we would enjoy more than such a fleeting glance if we were better disposed to take it in, if our eyes of faith were more sharply focused than they customarily are.

This conjunction of the Trinity and the Resurrection is brought out in the mystery of the Transfiguration, as described in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.[20] In the Transfiguration, the voice of the Father identifies Jesus as his beloved Son; it thereby differentiates him from Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, with whom Peter wanted to equate him. The voice makes a distinction. The cloud that overshadows the three apostles, and from which the voice is heard, represents God's glory and more specifically the Holy Spirit. These Trinitarian elements are then related to the Resurrection by Jesus himself when he, during the descent from the mountain, instructs his disciples to tell the vision to no one "until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."[21] Only then will they begin to understand what happened. The Resurrection will reveal the significance of what they have experienced. It will allow the apostles and the Church to speak about God the Father the way Christ spoke about him.

IV. THEOLOGICAL SPEECH ABOUT THE TRINITY

The divine essence is not the source of the three persons in God. There is no impersonal origin for the Holy Trinity. The first and unoriginated source of Trinitarian life is God the Father, and so Christianity is a radically monotheistic religion.[22] For Christian faith, divinity is God the Father, not a divine essence that is prior to him. The divine nature is personated in the beginning, and in

[20] Matt 17:1-12; Mark 9:2-13. The reference to the Resurrection is not mentioned in Luke.

[21] Matt17:9.

[22] We tend to think of monotheism as a better and higher religion than polytheism, and rightly so, but monotheism taken by itself, as monadic, can also be misleading and it is not without its dangers. The doctrine of the Trinity may be the truth that the human mind is seeking when it formulates its many gods, with the dim understanding that somehow the divine must contain community and relations.

the beginning the Father speaks the Word and begets the Son.[23] As St. Athanasius writes, "In the Trinity one Godhead is recognized, and so in the Church one God is preached, the Father of the Word."[24] What Aquinas calls *esse subsistens,* in all its simplicity, is not silent and solitary, but speaks and is spoken, gives and is received. It is not the divine nature but the Father, as a person, who speaks the Word.[25]

In a way we could never have known without revelation, in a way that transcends the alternatives of choice, chance, and necessity within the created world, God is necessarily a Trinity. The divine nature cannot but be expressed and shared, in truth and in generosity, in the Word and in the Spirit, and it is the Father who expresses the Word and who, with the Son, presents the Spirit or the Gift.[26]

[23] See Gilles Emery, O.P., *Trinity in Aquinas* (Ave Maria, Fla.: Sapientia Press, 2003), 192: "Thomas proposes the famous formula: 'It is because he is Father that the Father begets (Quia Pater est, generat),' and not the inverse proposition (the Father is Father because he begets). What Thomas rejects ... is that the supposit to whom belongs the notional act could be thought in a pre-relational or essential manner (as subsisting essence), independently of his constitution as a person, that is to say independently of his personal relation."

[24] St. Athanasius, "Letter LIX, to Epictetus," §9.

[25] See Robert Sokolowski, "Revelation of the Holy Trinity: A Study in Personal Pronouns," in *Ethics and Theological Disclosures: The Thought of Robert Sokolowski,* ed. Guy Mansini, O.S.B, and James Hart (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 162-77. Reprinted in *Christian Faith and Human Understanding: Studies in the Eucharist, Trinity, and the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

[26] On the Holy Spirit as Gift or *Donum,* see *STh* I, q. 38, a. 2, "Utrum Donum sit proprium nomen Spiritus Sancti" ("Whether 'Gift' is a proper name of the Holy Spirit"). On the "necessity" of the divine processions, see *STh* I, q. 41, a. 2: "Quod autem potest sic vel aliter esse, longe est a natura divina, sed hoc pertinet ad rationem creaturae: quia Deus est per se necesse esse, creatura autem est facta ex nihilo" ("Whatever can be in one way or another is far removed from the divine nature, but it does pertain to the sense of being a creature: because God exists through himself and necessarily, but the creature is made from nothing"). The title of the article is, "Utrum actus notionales sint voluntarii" ("Whether the notional acts are voluntary").

The necessity within God, however, is not simply comparable to the necessity found in creatures, especially material beings. Material being involves distinctions among necessity, chance, and that which is for the most part (this triple distinction is what makes room for human choice). Natural and worldly necessity, therefore, has to be played off against three alternatives: the accidental, that which is for the most part, and the chosen. Divine necessity is not defined in this way. It is not contrary to the accidental; it is beyond both worldly

It may seem audacious for us to say such things, to think that we can express such necessities about God, as though we could in our own voice comprehend them and declare how God himself must be. How are we capable of expressing such identities and differences? Aren't we presuming to bring human reason into the Holy of Holies? In fact, however, we "know" these things only in faith, because of the words Christ has spoken, whether in his own voice or through his gospel and his apostles, which are like a double echo of his presence. We haven't *gone* into the Holy of Holies; we have been drawn in by God's providence and grace, and we respond as beings with reason. Whatever we say is simply a paraphrase of what we have been told in the New Covenant, a covenant that calls for obedience but also brings understanding. We can glimpse necessity and meaning in these words (words whose meanings have been transformed from their usage in our standard speech), but part of what we understand is that we can understand this only through grace and in faith. A distinctive kind of acceptance is required if we are to register such things; faith is not simply like the belief we may have in other people and what they tell us. In faith we believe because God has spoken to us, and ultimately we have faith not just in Christ but in the Father, who speaks to us in his Word and who inspires us to believe through his Spirit. This understanding comes to those who accept and believe, not to those who simply exercise their ingenuity. Human reason is truncated without this received understanding of the Holy Trinity; without it, what we come to as the first and the last remains indecisive; and the doctrine of the Trinity explains why philosophy can discover itself within Christian faith without posing a destructive threat to it.

As we have observed, when we speak of God as the creative source of the world, we understand that he is beyond our understanding, which is naturally outfitted to work within the world. We dare not think that the names we fashion could capture and carry the intelligibility of God. Before we resign ourselves to

necessity and accidentality. We should take care not to import human and finite categories into our thinking about necessity in God. Divine choices are not like human choices.

apophatic silence, however, we should also remember that the Sacred Scriptures, and particularly the Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament, have indeed expressed something of how God is to be understood, even in his own life. They manifest something of God as he is in himself. The Gospels are a consecrated speech, inspired by the Holy Spirit.[27] They are not just *our* words. They do capture and carry something that none of our own words could possibly have done. They do so because they have documented the life, words, and work of the person of the Son, as well as the effect he had on the people about him and on those who came immediately after. The Word of God has become incarnate and hence a part of the world that he created. As such a part, he *can* be spoken about, even in his divinity (he can also be depicted). He has become part of the human conversation, both as a speaker and listener and as someone spoken about. And since this part of the world, this man Jesus Christ, is the Word of God, the Gospels do "contain" and "transmit"-they capture and carry-at least a glimpse of the intelligibility of God, one that is appropriate for our present state. They tell us what we need to know, or what God willed that we ought to know, and part of what they tell us concerns the relationships within God himself. They tell us something of what

[27] It is not just the words of Christ, but the entire Gospels and Epistles as well as the entire Scriptures that are sacred. The Scriptures, of course, are *writing,* which seems essential to the revelation of the Incarnation. The salvific words and work of Jesus needed to be made manifest in order to effectively be what they were. The human race could not have been redeemed in secrecy, and so the Resurrection required not only the empty tomb but also the appearances of Christ as risen (see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* [Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2003]).

For the same reason, the *written* Gospels also seem to be a necessity in the order of salvation; how could the death and resurrection of Jesus become present to men without having been "captured" by the four Gospels (not just one but four, each with its own perspective), along with the subsequent verbal presentation by the Epistles (which in turn are buttressed by the Acts and the Apocalypse)? The oral tradition alone would not enjoy the fixity that writing permits. Both spoken and written words, both the oral tradition and the Scriptures-in fact, the two in combination-seem essential to the full being of the redemptive action of God in Christ. The development of writing seems to be a *praeparatio evangelica,* but not just writing at any stage in human history. It seems that revelation needed the kind of combination of speech and writing that existed at the time of Christ. It is hard, for example, to see how our present form of speaking and recording could have been appropriate for this role.

it is for God to be and how he necessarily is: in God there is neither plurality of gods nor solitude of person, and the ability to know this is what makes us persons ourselves.[28] Neither we nor our minds are adequate to what God tells us through these written words (we cannot comprehend the necessities they contain), but we can make ourselves less inadequate by the response we make to the grace offered us by God the Father through the Scriptures and the Church.

The Gospels and the faith of the Church tell us about God the Father because they tell us about the Son, and the Son is totally transparent toward the Father. The Son is consubstantial with the Father. He is identified with the same essence or intelligibility as the Father, and so if we see the Son we have seen the Father, we have seen the Godhead, but we first see it as having been received

[28] Faith shows us that there is "difference" in God himself (contrary to the monadism of Neoplatonic thinking), and this divine differentiation is the ultimate source of difference in created being. See the remarks about this ontology of difference and plurality, as found in Aquinas, in Emery, "Trinite et unite de Dieu," 218-19.

Human beings can be established as persons in various contexts: (1) when they are recognized as agents with legal standing; (2) when they are recognized as moral agents, whether in reality or in dramatic depictions, as one of the *dramatis personae;* (3) when they are acknowledged in the human conversation, with its grammatical formulation of the first, second, and third person; (4) when they are recognized as rational agents or, as I have formulated it, as "agents of truth" (see Robert Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 1). But the Christian theological tradition played a major role in defining what we in the modern age consider persons, with the dignity and status of having been created by God and related to the incarnate divine person of Christ. See Robert Spaemann, *Personen: Versuche uber den Unterschied zwischen 'etwas' und 'jemand'* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1996), 27: "Was wir heute 'Person' nennen, ware ohne die christliche Theologie unbenennbar geblieben" ("What we now call 'person' would have remained unnameable without Christian theology"). Spaemann goes on to say that it is conceivable that the disappearance of this theological dimension "auf die Lange auch den Personenbegriff wieder zum Verschwinden bringen wiirde" ("would also over time make the concept of person disappear again").

To paraphrase what Spaemann goes on to say: Homer sees man as the place where greater powers contest one another. Plato dislodges Homer and claims that it is reason that works in us, a rationality that Socrates discovered as present in human affairs and speech. But both Plato and Aristotle (with his doctrine of the active intellect) still see the core of reason as something trans-human. In Christianity, the achievement of and the response to truth become highly "personalized." This occurs, in part at least, because of the incarnate Logos, who speaks with human beings, with those who were his contemporaries and with us. We are each of us responsible. An ironic stance toward the human condition is no longer appropriate.

by the Son.[29] This is so because the Son is simply the Word of the Father, the Father in his divinity understood and expressed. The Son is not the expression of an abstract divine nature because there is no such thing as an abstract divine nature; the beginning is the divinity that is the Father. As Aquinas says, "The Son is not born of nothing, but of the substance of the Father *[Filius non est genitus de nihilo, sed de substantia Patris]."*[30]

As St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas have shown, faint images of this identification between the Father and the Word can be found in human thinking and speech, where an entity can be mirrored in a concept or a word without being duplicated.[31] A tree understood and named is not *another* tree but one and the same tree existing differently. Likewise, God the Father understood and expressed in the Logos is not another God but the same God divinely spoken. Among men a son is another man, but in God the Son is not another God. Seeing Christ in his divine nature is seeing him not just in his own divinity, but in the divinity received from the Father.[32] We see the Father in him.

The Word of God recorded in the Gospels, therefore, is not just the presence of Jesus Christ the Son of God, but the presence

[29] See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia,* q. 2 a. 5: "Unde potest dici, quod paternitas est divina essentia prout est in Patre, non prout est in Filio: non enim eodem modo est in Patre et Filio, sed in Filio ut ab altero accepta, in Patre autem non" ("And so we can say that paternity is the divine essence insofar as it is in the Father, not as it is in the Son: for it is not in the Father and the Son in the same way. It is in the Son as received from another, but not so in the Father"). See Marshall, *Trinity and Truth,* 279: "Though other than the Father, the incarnate Son fully possesses everything the Father can give to another without ceasing to be himself. To him belongs, in the creedal formulation, the Father's own *ousia* or essence, everything (numerically, not just generically) which makes the Father God." Marshall goes on to say that the Son is "full possessor of the Father's own will and knowledge, but in the mode of recipient, not of giver."

[30] *STh* I, q. 41, a. 3.

[31] Aquinas discusses various created things that might express the relations in the Trinity, and says, "Inter omnia tamen expressius repraesentat processio verbi ab intellectu" ("Among all the possibilities, however, the procession of the word from the intellect represents [the divine generation] most distinctly") *(STh* I, q. 42, a. 2, ad 1).

[32] In the Incarnation, the two natures of Christ are not "natures" in the same way. Christ shares a human nature that is also shared by other men. He is one human being among many. But the Logos is not one God among three. There is and there could be only one divine nature, only one God.

in him of the Father. Because of the beauty of the incarnate Word, which is visible even to human understanding, we might be tempted to focus our attention and admiration on him simply, as being, for example, a sublime moral teacher; but this would be to cut short what God has revealed to us. Our Christian faith goes through Christ to God the Father, who is the origin of the world and the origin of life in the Holy Trinity. Our minds and hearts do not come to rest until they reach this beginning, and all the elements of our faith, such as the Church, the Eucharist, and the Creed, need to be related to the Godhead, the one true God, if they are to be properly aligned.

The being of God, moreover, is not just a matter of speculative truth. There is one intelligence in the divine nature and the Trinity, but there is also one will in the three divine persons. The Trinity involves not just thinking and wording but love and action as well, expressed in the Holy Spirit. Within the Trinity, the Son could not say, "Thy will be done," because the Son's will is the same as the Father's. Only in the Incarnation can that prayer be said, because in the Incarnation there are two wills, that of the Logos and that of the human nature of Christ. In the Incarnation there is the possibility of aligning one will with another; Christ says, "Not my will but thine be done," and he teaches us to pray in a similar manner. A kind of obedience becomes possible in the Incarnation that does not exist in the Trinity, because in the Trinity the will of the Father is not something different from the will of the Son.[33]

Our human thinking takes place in our intellect, but it needs external, spoken words. In human thinking the "internal word" or the "word of the heart" (the *verbum interior* or the *verbum cordis)* needs the stimulus and support of the "external word" (the *verbum exterius).*[34] *We* cannot think without speaking or picturing

[33] See Heb 5:8: "Son though he was, he learned obedience through what he suffered."

[34] On the need of spoken words for human intelligence, and on the role of syntax in such verbal usage, see Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person,* 31-67, 300-303. The "internal word" is discussed in ibid., 286-94. See also Spaemann, *Das unsterbliche Gemcht,* 51: "Wir kiinnen die Grammatik nicht suspendieren, ohne uns selbst durchzustreichen" ("We could not suspend grammar without eradicating ourselves").

in some manner or form, at least in our imagination, but in the Holy Trinity the Father's speaking of the Internal Word does not stand in need of anything external. We might, however, draw a comparison and say that the created world is something like an external word spoken by God.[35] It serves to manifest him and his wisdom to others beyond himself, and these others are also persons in their own way, precisely because they are datives of such manifestation. The Incarnation is an even more pronounced *verbum exterius,* which speaks more eloquently than the cosmos about the divine nature that it reveals. The world and the incarnate Son are like external words that make the intelligibility of God manifest to those who have the heart, the ears, and the eyes to receive it. The created world and the incarnate Word are freely and gratuitously spoken; they are not needed for the internal speech and love of the Holy Trinity, but they are necessary for *us* if we are to believe and know about the divine nature, about God the Father. They have a necessity for us, if not for God. Our own spoken words, therefore, even in their evanescence and fragility, can serve as reminders and images to us of the Word that was with God and that was God in the beginning.

I conclude with a quotation from Robert Spaemann that will bring us back to the start of this essay, where I spoke about God as Creator of the world. Spaemann is discussing the problem of evil in a world created by God, and he says the following: "The

[35] Aquinas says that we should not consider the created world as a word that God speaks; creation is directed toward being and not showing ("non ordinatur ad manifestationem sed ad esse"). Scripture does not say that God speaks by creating but that he is known through what he creates ("Et ideo numquam dicitur quod Deus loquatur creando creaturas, sed quod cognoscatur") *(Super epistolam ad Hebraeos lectura,* c. 1, lect. 1 [Marietti ed., n. 15]). Aquinas distinguishes creation from revelation and the Incarnation, both of which can be seen as forms of speaking. My citation from Aquinas is from the *reportatio vulgata,* which is given online in the *Corpus Thomisticum;* the Marietti edition is slightly different. I am grateful to Guy Mansini, O.S.B, for this reference and for his remark in a recent lecture: "God creates by means of words but what he creates are not words."

On the other hand, St. Bonaventure says, "Every creature is a divine word, because it speaks of God; the eye perceives this word *[verbum divinum est omnis creatura, quia Deum loquitur; hoc verbum percipit oculus]" (Commentarius in librum Ecclesiastes,* cap. 1 *[Opera Omnia,* vol. 6 (Quaracchi: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1893), 16b]).

proclamation of the New Testament, that God is love, loses its point when it is so frequently repeated that we have forgotten *of whom* this is being said. The first predicate of God is power *(die Macht)."* [36] The power of God, the *potentia dei,* creates the world and so it surpasses all the energies and possibilities of the universe. It does not just shape what is there but calls things into being; it creates them from nothing. It is the simple omnipotence of God. In another way, however, the power of God is a *potentia generativa,* as Thomas Aquinas calls it. This power is not directed to the world but remains within God himself. It is the origin of the life of the Holy Trinity, and as such, Aquinas says, it pertains to the omnipotence of the Father, the *omnipotentia Patris,* the Father who is the beginning and the end of all things. [37] We praise this life when we give glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, and we express this praise from within the created world, with its flow of change and time, as we introduce temporal distinctions in our prayer and say that it was so in the beginning, that it is now, and that it ever shall be, Amen. [38]

[36] Spaemann, *Das unsterbliche Gerncht,* 22: "Die Botschaft des Neuen Testaments, class Gott die Liebe ist, verliert ihre Pointe, wenn sie so oft wiederholt wird, bis man vergessen hat, von wem dies gesagt wird. Das erste Pradikat Gottes ist die Macht."

[37] *De Pot.,* q. 2 a. 5: "Potentia generandi pertinet ad omnipotentiam Patris, non autem ad omnipotentiam simpliciter" ("The power to generate pertains to the omnipotence of the Father, not to omnipotence as such"). For the *potentia generativa,* see the title of q. 2, "De potentia generativa in divinis" ("On the generative power in God").

[38] An earlier version of this article was given at the annual meeting of the Academy of Catholic Theology, May 2009.

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BONAVENTURE'S ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AND AN "INDEPENDENT" *DE DEO UNO*

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IT HAS BEEN CUSTOMARY, and indeed almost inevitable, for Bonaventure to be read in comparison with his Dominican contemporary Thomas Aquinas. Their historical position-contemporaries at one of the most decisive turning points in the history of theology-invites the comparison. So too does the magisterial regard for these two "glorious doctors" of Scholastic theology, as Pope Sixtus V called them, and Pope Leo XIII echoed.[1] The papal approbation of Thomism, from *Leo'sAeterni patris* to Pius Xi's *Studiorem ducem,* prompted Bonaventureans-as well as the followers of other schools-to insist on the legitimacy of these schools, but also to highlight, where possible, their congruency with the thought of Aquinas.[2]

Etienne Gilson took a sharply different tack, concluding his book *The Philosophy ofSt. Bonaventure* with the judgment that "it must be clear that [St. Bonaventure's doctrine] can never be properly comparable in any point with the doctrine of St. Thomas

[1] Sixtus V, *Triumphantis Hierusalem* 10; quoted in Leo XIII, *Aeterni patris* 14.

[2] One sees examples of this in many of the *scholia* appended by the editors of the critical edition of Bonaventure's works *(Opera omnia,* 10 vols. [Quaracchi: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902]) to various questions and treatises.

Papal approbation of Thomism did not end with Pius XI, of course; Pius XII's *Humani generis* and John Paul H's *Fides et ratio* naturally come to mind. But it was the earlier documents that especially prompted followers of other schools-most notably Suarezians and Scotists, but also Bonaventureans-to undertake the *rapprochement* with Thomism. This may be seen, for example, in the debate about the binding force of the Twenty-Four Thomistic Theses.

Aquinas."[3] Gilson's admonition was not immediately heeded by the majority of scholars writing about Bonaventure. However, beginning in the 1960s, as Thomism began to be abandoned as the normative tradition in Catholic philosophy and theology, different readings of Bonaventure emerged. Wayne Hellmann well expresses the shift:

> My earliest attempts to read the theological and mystical works of St. Bonaventure ended in nearly complete frustration. I could not grasp ... whence he came nor where he was going. I was about to concede defeat when two students of the Seraphic Doctor [viz., Leon Veuthey and Romano Guardini] opened new doors for me. . . . They both taught me I could not read Bonaventure in a linear and merely logical way, as I had been trained in my manual theology and in the texts of St. Thomas to which I had been earlier exposed.[4]

The dominance of this shift is such that, in the past forty years, in English-language scholarship at least, the reading of Bonaventure's thought in markedly non-Thomistic ways has become the norm.

During this same time, certain systematic theses have been attributed to Bonaventure almost as a matter of course that would have seemed odd to earlier generations of scholars. For example, it is commonly said that Bonaventure holds that the primary reason for the incarnation was the perfection of creation, rather than redemption from sin-even though the only time he specifically addresses the question, he gives precisely the opposite answer.[5] Another example, and the one pertinent to this essay, is the claim that Bonaventure has nothing that could be called a treatise *de Dea uno.* Jay Hammond puts it this way:

[3] Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure,* trans. Dom Illtyd Trethowan and F. J. Sheed (London: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 494.

[4] J. A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M.Conv., "Preface," in idem, *Divine and Created Order in Bonaventure's Theology,* trans. J. M. Hammond (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 2001), xv. Hellmann's book is a translation of his dissertation, published in Munich in 1974; the preface was written in 2001.

[5] III *Sent.,* d. 1, a. 2, q. 2. See, e.g., Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., "The Meaning of *convenientia* in the Metaphysics of St. Bonaventure," *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974): 74-100; Ilia Delio, O.S.F., "Revisiting the Franciscan Doctrine of Christ," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 3-23, esp. 9-15.

Nowhere does Bonaventure develop an independent treatment of the divine nature separated from a consideration of the divine persons. Rather, he consistently approaches God's existence by considering how the unity of the divine nature and the plurality of the divine persons are ultimately reconciled and explained by the firstness of the Father who is the fecund source of both. In approaching the mystery of the Trinity in this manner, he significantly adjusts the Augustinian model which begins with the unity of the divine nature *(de deo uno)* by following the Eastern approach of beginning with the divine persons *(de deo trino).*[6]

Zachary Hayes makes the same claim, even more starkly: "The systematic treatment of the doctrine of the trinity constitutes the whole of Bonaventure's doctrine about God."[7] And Ilia Delio draws out a rhetorical comparison with Aquinas: "Whereas Thomas Aquinas devoted over 100 pages of his *Summa theologica* to the discussion of the one God, Bonaventure never developed an independent treatment of being nor a treatise on the one God."[8]

The factual claims made by Hammond ought to be distinguished from the interpretative claims. It is quite true, as a matter of fact, that Bonaventure has no independent treatise on the

[6] *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* 2d edition, s.v. "Bonaventure." The origin of this standard claim is Zachary Hayes, "Introduction," in Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity,* trans. Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., Works of Saint Bonaventure 3 (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1979), 32 and n. 4.

[7] Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., "Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God," in Kenan B. Osborne, ed., *The History of Franciscan Theology* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1994), 55.

[8] Ilia Delio, O.S.F., "Is Creation Really Good? Bonaventure's Position," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 83 (2009): 7. The implication is that Aquinas is interested in the one God in a way that Bonaventure is not. But the facts can be construed differently. Leaving aside the question of whether Aquinas's treatment of the one God can be seen properly as "independent" of his treatment of the Trinity, one should still note the relative lengths and placement of those treatments. In the translation of the *Summa* by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, questions 2-26 of the *Prima Pars* (on the divine essence) run 132 pages; the treatment of the Trinity, which follows immediately in questions 27-43, runs 80 pages. The whole of Bonaventure's disputed questions *On the Mystery of the Trinity*-which treats both the unity of the divine essence and the Trinity of persons-runs 160 pages in Zachary Hayes's translation (evenly divided between the two subjects). No doubt Aquinas has a great deal to say on the subject of the one God; he also has a great deal to say on the subject of the Trinity. What Bonaventure says about the one God is said in proximity to his treatment of the Trinity. But the same is true of Aquinas.

divine nature. When he deals with the subject, he does so in close proximity to his treatment of the divine persons. For example, the treatment of the divine being in chapter 5 of the *Itinerarium* is paired with the treatment of the Trinity in chapter 6; and in the disputed questions *On the Mystery of the Trinity* the first article of each question deals with the divine being, while the second deals with the Trinity. What this implies about the independence or lack thereof of these treatments is another question.[9]

The second sentence in the quotation from Hammond is the most important.[10] Hammond's claim is that when Bonaventure speaks about God's existence he does so not by a kind of independent, "merely logical" deduction, but by relating the unity of the divine nature and the plurality of the divine persons, drawing both back to the primacy of the Father. This cannot be done directly; a philosopher who deduces the unity of the divine nature, and the properties thereof, is not deducing the Father. Rather, the claim is that what one can know of the divine nature has to be seen in its relation to the Trinity, or it is not understood properly. As Hammond and Hayes present it, not only does Bonaventure decline to write a treatise on the divine nature, but one would misconstrue his thought on God if one were to try to lift a treatment of the classic topics of *de Deo uno* from his work.

[9] With respect to Aquinas, one may ask whether his treatments *de Deo uno* and *de Deo trino* are properly understood as independent of each other. With respect to Bonaventure, it must be noted that he obviously does speak about the one God. Chapter 5 of the *Itinerarium* may or may not be an "independent" treatment of the divine being, but it certainly is a treatment of the divine being-namely, the existence and the properties of that being. Moreover, texts like this contain no obvious reference to the Trinity at all. We know where to look in Aquinas for his treatment of the one God-most famously, perhaps, questions 2-26 of the first part of the *Summa Theologiae.* So too, the student of Bonaventure knows exactly where to look for Bonaventure's treatment of the one God.

[10] The usefulness of the de Regnon paradigm in the third sentence depends on the accuracy of the previous claims, and at any rate will not be discussed here. Much has already been written on this topic. Note that Hayes does not seem to agree that one should align Bonaventure with an Eastern approach (Hayes, "Introduction," 32). Hellmann too seems to prefer not to make such a claim (Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order,* 83 n. 94). Cousins, on the other hand, holds to precisely this interpretation (Ewert H. Cousins, "St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas, and the Movement of Thought in the 13th Century," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 14 [1974]: 405-6).

I contend that claims such as these constitute, or contribute to, misconstruals of Bonaventure's thought. In fact, Bonaventure's theological project is not unlike that of Aquinas, in the sense that both theologians would have their readers consider certain topics having to do with the one God-namely, his existence, his knowability, and his properties-the intelligibility of which is not immediately dependent upon our knowledge of the Trinity.[11]

A full-fledged argument for my position would require a demonstration that the relationship between Bonaventure's treatments *de Deo uno* and *de Deo trino* is like the relationship between Aquinas's treatments of the same. My aim in this paper is more modest: it is to show that when Bonaventure proposes arguments for the existence of God-the first part of a classical treatment *de Deo uno-he* presents them as independent of the knowledge of the Trinity, both in what is required for their demonstration and in the *terminus* of the arguments.[12]

A correlation of the relevant texts reveals that Bonaventure consistently conceives of three types of arguments for the existence of God. I shall look at each type in turn. My concern is not so much with the validity of the arguments[13] as with the kind of knowledge of God that is available through each of them. For each type of argument I shall briefly describe it and the knowledge of God that results from it. I shall then show that this knowledge is not dependent on the knowledge of the Trinity, contrasting my view, where appropriate, with those of authors who are more in line with the position expressed above by Hammond and Hayes.

[11] On the impossibility of excluding a discussion *de Deo uno* from the Christian theology of God, see Bruce Marshall, "The Unity of the Triune God: Reviving an Ancient Question," *The Thomist* 74 (2010): 1-7.

[12] For a related analysis of the divine properties, see Sebastien Perdrix, "Les *Questions disputees sur le mystere de la Trinite:* Le *De Dea uno* de saint Bonaventure?" *Revue thomiste* 107 (2007): 591-624.

u For this, see esp. R. E. Houser, "Bonaventure's Three-Fold Way to God," in R. E. Houser, ed., *Medieval Masters: Essays in Honor of Msgr. E. A. Synan* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1999), 91-135. An abbreviated version of the same is available in Tim Noone and R. E. Houser, "Saint Bonaventure," in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2005), sect. 5, "God," available at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bonaventure/.

In so doing, I hope to begin to illuminate the way in which one can speak of a Bonaventurean doctrine *de Dea uno.* [14]

I. THE TEXTS

There are three principal texts in Bonaventure that deal with the arguments for the existence of God: book 1 of his commen-

[14] There is a dogmatic reason-specifically, a Catholic dogmatic reason-to doubt the claims of a vast difference between Bonaventure and Aquinas on this point. Turning again to *Aeterni patris,* one may state Leo XIII's view as follows: the Scholastics generally undertook the great and divinely ordained work of collecting, systematizing, perfecting, and passing on the seminal work of the Fathers, and Bonaventure and Aquinas were the two most glorious teachers of this theology. Such a work, according to Leo, holds a distinctive, providential place in the Church. Consider the great Fathers of the Church: Augustine, Jerome, Chrysostom, Basil ... all these are geniuses of the Christian faith, and of perennial value. But Scholastic theology bears a distinct mark: in Leo's words, it "binds together by the fastest chain human and divine science" *(AP* 16). That is, what we find in Scholastic theology is a normative way of approaching the understanding of the faith-interpreting the Scriptures, understanding the Fathers, refuting heresies, etc.-and this by a rightly ordered theological method, based on true first principles, and appealing to true philosophy. In the view of Leo, one could imagine that Bonaventure and Aquinas might come to different conclusions to various theological questions; but as the most glorious practitioners of Scholastic theology, it would be very strange indeed if a whole topic-the existence, knowability, and properties of the one God-were of interest to one, and not the other.

Leo's judgment does not constitute a dogma. If dogma is the magisterial articulation of the content of faith, while theology is the attempt to understand the faith, then we can say that the Church issues dogmas, but it does not dogmatize, or canonize, a particular theology. Nevertheless, the Church is a teaching Church, and in the course of teaching the faith it uses not only dogmas, but also theology. Implicitly, and at times explicitly, the Church urges believers to understand the truths of the faith in specific ways. In other words, one of the distinctive magisterial acts of the Church is the approbation of a particular theology-that is, a particular way of understanding the faith. That theology does not become dogma, certainly, but there are elements of it that cannot be doubted if one is to maintain the faith of the Church.

When the Church-not only Leo XIII-gives firm and constant approbation to Scholastic theology, therefore, and in particular to the thought of Thomas Aquinas, one may naturally ask, what are the elements of that theology that are regarded as certain, and invariably a part of any complete theological synthesis? I suggest that one such element is the distinction, though not the complete separation, between the subject of the one God and the subject of the Trinity. If, then, a theology is to have truly ecclesial significance, it must incorporate as one of its elements a properly differentiated treatment of the one God. If this is true, It follows that if the Church holds up Bonaventure's thought as an exemplar for the highest achievements of theology, the claim that Bonaventure has no "independent" treatment of the one God is dogmatically dubious.

tary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard; the first of his disputed questions on the mystery of the Trinity *(De mysterio Trinitatis);* and *The Journey of the Mind to God (Itinerarium mentis in Deum),* especially chapters 1, 3, and 5.[15] I shall give here an outline of these various texts, before dealing with their content in detail.

A) The Commentary on the Sentences

The testimony from the *Sentences* commentary is found largely in part 1 of distinction 3 of book 1, on the knowability of God. The four questions asked are whether God can be known by a creature (I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un., q. 1), whether God is knowable through creatures (ibid., q. 2), whether the knowledge of God through creatures is available to man in every state (ibid., q. 3), and what of God is knowable through creatures-specifically, whether the Trinity of persons with the unity of essence is knowable through creatures (ibid., q. 4). In addition to this, a later distinction-on the essential properties and attributes of the Trinity and the unity (I *Sent.,* d. 8)-contains a question on whether the divine being is so true that it cannot be thought not to be (I *Sent.,* d. 8, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2).

A quick summary of the content of this testimony is as follows. The mind of the rational creature is formed in such a way that it 1s able to know God. Specifically, it knows God through the

[15] The fourth principal text concerning the one God-book 1 of the *Breviloquium-does* not deal with the arguments for the existence of God.

At first glance, the *Breviloquium* seems to support the contention that Bonaventure's doctrine of God is wholly concerned with the Trinity. However, one must pay attention to the way Bonaventure argues in this book. See *Brev.,* prol.6.6: "Because theology is, indeed, discourse about God and about the First Principle, as the highest science and doctrine it should resolve everything in God as its first and supreme principle. That is why, in giving the reasons for everything contained in this little work or tract, I have attempted to derive each reason from the First Principle, in order to demonstrate that the truth of Sacred Scripture is from God, that it treats of God, is according to God, and has God as its end" (Bonaventure, *Breviloquium,* trans. Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M., Works of St. Bonaventure 9 [Saint Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 2005], 22-23). Sometimes the reason given on a particular point refers to a Trinitarian distinction in the First Principle, but often enough it refers simply to the unity of the divine essence.

relationship it naturally has with him. This is essentially an argument from illumination (I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un., q. 1).[16] Moreover, the rational mind is able to know God on the basis of its sense knowledge, which points to God as the "craftsman and cause" of the sensible creature, understood as a shadow (which points in a confused way to the reality of its cause) or a vestige of God (which points to its efficient, formal, and final cause in God) (ibid., q. 2). Man in every state (innocence, fallen, *viator, comprehensor)* is able to know God, but there is a difference between knowing God *in* creatures-recognizing his presence and influence in them-which is proper to the blessed but may be had partially by the *viatores,* and knowing God *through* creatures-coming to the knowledge of him through the medium of creatures-which is proper to the *viatores* and most proper to man in the state of innocence (and still possible, though darkly, for man in his fallen state) (ibid., q. 3). The Trinity, however, is not knowable through creatures; at most, the trinity of appropriations-unity, truth, and goodness-is so knowable (ibid., q. 4). Finally, Bonaventure presents what amounts to an ontological argument, on the basis of the transcendental truth, that the divine being cannot not be (I *Sent.,* d. 8, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2).

B) Disputed Question 1 on the Mystery of the Trinity

The disputed question has two articles. The first asks whether the existence of God is an indubitable truth. The arguments here are strictly philosophical, and of three kinds: illumination (which show that the knowledge of God is naturally implanted in us), aitiological (that is, proclaimed by every creature), and ontological (showing that God cannot be thought not to be). The second article asks whether the doctrine of the Trinity is a congruous and necessary belief. The arguments here require faith; they uncover what it is that the eyes of faith can see by looking at the world, at Scripture, or at God himself. The testimony of the whole question may be outlined as follows:

[16] See esp. the responses to the fourth and fifth objections.

De myst. Trin., q. 1, a. 1: Whether the existence of God is an indubitable truth of reason

- Illumination argument: "Every truth that is impressed in all minds is an indubitable truth."
- Aitiological argument: "Every truth proclaimed by all creatures is an indubitable truth."
- Ontological argument: "Every truth which, in itself, is most certain and most evident is an indubitable truth."

De myst. Trin., q. 1, a. 2: Whether the doctrine of the Trinity is credible (i.e., congruous for belief and worthy to be believed)

- The book of creatures: creatures are either vestiges or images of God
    - Vestiges point to the Trinitarian appropriations
    - The rational soul, as image, points to the Trinitarian relations
- The book of Scripture: the testimony of faith
    - In the Old Testament, the Trinity is presented figuratively
    - In the New Testament, the Trinity is presented clearly
- The book of life: the light that shines on our minds
    - In the innate light of nature, thinking of God most highly, we see that he is able to produce an eternal beloved and cobeloved
    - In the infused light of grace, thinking of God most reverently, we see that he does will to produce this eternal beloved and cobeloved

C) *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*

The division in the *ltinerarium* is a little different from that in the disputed questions. The guiding principle is the distinction not between reason and faith but between knowing God *through* and knowing him *in* what is below the soul, the soul itself, and what is above the soul (echoing the distinction made in I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un., q. 3). For our purposes, we need only be concerned with the first type of knowledge, knowing God *through* these things. As in the disputed question, there are three different kinds of argument, depending on whether one is looking at the world, the soul, or God himself. Strictly speaking, Bonaventure here is not trying to prove the existence of God as much as he is showing how the knowledge of God comes in these various ways. Yet there is no doubt about this knowledge. In each stage of knowing God

through Bonaventure makes it clear that one who does not see this is blind.[17]

	Knowing God *through*	Knowing God *in*
what is below the soul	chap. 1: the consideration of God through his vestiges in the universe	chap. 2: the consideration of God in his vestiges in this visible world
the soul	chap. 3: the consideration of God through his image imprinted on our natural powers	chap. 4: the consideration of God in his image reformed through the gifts of grace
what is above the soul	chap. 5: the consideration of the divine unity through its primary name which is Being	chap. 6: the consideration of the most blessed Trinity in its name which is the Good

D) Correspondences

Bonaventure combines, in one level of the *ltinerarium,* considerations that the disputed question divides between reason and faith. So, in the first chapter of the *ltinerarium* we look at the sensible world. Reason deduces from it the existence of a first principle, and faith regards the things in the world as vestiges that point to the power, wisdom, and goodness of the first principle-that is, the Trinitarian appropriations. Likewise, in chapter 3 of the *ltinerarium* we look at the natural illumination of the soul. Reason discovers that there must be a God who is the

[17] See, e.g., the end of chapter 1: "Therefore, whoever is not enlightened by such great splendor in created things is blind; whoever remains unheedful of such great outcries is deaf; whoever does not praise God in all these effects is dumb; whoever does not turn to the First Principle after so many signs is a fool. Open your eyes, therefore; alert the ears of your spirit, unlock your lips, and apply your heart that you may see, hear, praise, love, and adore, magnify, and honor your God in every creature, lest perchance, the entire universe rise against you" *(!tin.* 1.15 [Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum,* trans. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., Works of Saint Bonaventure 2 (Saint Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1956), 49]; see also *!tin.* 3.7 and 5.4).

object of the soul's powers, while faith regards the relation of the powers of the soul as an image of the Trinitarian relations. Chapter 5 of the *Itinerarium* corresponds very simply to the ontological arguments in the disputed question. The following is a summary of the correspondences, including the correspondences of both texts with the *Sentences* commentary.

Itin. 1: Through the vestiges of God in the visible world (i.e. sensible creatures) one sees

- the existence of the first principle
  (=*De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 1 [aitiological argument])
  (= I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un, q. 2)
- the Trinitarian appropriations
  (=*De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 2 [the book of creatures])
  (= I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un, q. 4).

Itin. 3: Through the image of God (i.e., the rational soul) one sees

- God as the object of its powers
  (=*De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 1 [illumination argument])
  (= I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un, q. 1)
- the Trinity by the relationship of its powers
  (=*De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 2 [the book of creatures]) [18]

Itin. 5: Ontological argument for the existence of the highest Being
  (=*De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 1)
  (= I *Sent.,* d. 8, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2)

The correspondences between texts I have identified here shows that when Bonaventure talks about arguments regarding the existence of God, he consistently raises the same topics, despite differences in the structure and purpose of the texts in which these arguments appear.

It is now appropriate to look more specifically at each type of argument, to discover the sort of knowledge that is gained, or aimed at, in each.

[18] In the portion of the *Sentences* commentary with which I am concerned here, Bonaventure does not speak of seeing a reflection of the Trinity in the relationship of the powers of the rational soul. He does speak about this elsewhere in the *Sentences* commentary, however: II *Sent.,* d. 16, a. 1, q. 1, when, in speaking about man as the image of God, he describes the intrinsic origin, order, and distinction of the powers of the rational soul as related to the intrinsic distinction and order of the divine persons.

II. ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

In the disputed question Bonaventure begins with illumination arguments, then moves to the aitiological and finally the ontological. Moreover, in the *conclusio* of article 1 he suggests that following such a pattern is to move from the certain to the more certain to the most certain. The same order of arguments is evidenced in the *Sentences* commentary, though there is no indication that Bonaventure places any weight upon that order.[19] In the *Itinerarium,* by contrast, he begins with the aitiological, then moves to illumination and then the ontological. Overall, there is no doubt that the ontological argument is paramount, in the sense of being the culmination of one's thinking about God. It is not clear that there is any great difference between beginning with aitiological and beginning with illumination arguments.[20] I would simply suggest the following. When Bonaventure wishes to demonstrate the existence of God, he begins by establishing the capacity of the human intellect to know God, which leads immediately into an illumination argument. He then goes on to make a stronger demonstration of the existence of God by looking at something that is outside the human mind, and therefore is more recognizable as an effect-and this is the basis of an aitiological argument. The mind trained in this way is more capable of grasping the surest argument of all, which is the ontological argument, showing that God cannot be thought not to be. By contrast, when Bonaventure is presenting the order of reality that leads us to God, he begins with the sensible world, moves to the soul itself, and from thence to God: thus is explained the order of the *Itinerarium.*

I shall begin with his aitiological argument, for no other reason than that it is the point of most obvious comparison with the

[19] At the same location in the *Sentences* commentary, Bonaventure says that the natural progression in the ascent to God the first step is the consideration of visible creatures, the second step the consideration of invisible creatures, and the third step the move from the soul to God himself (I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un., q. 2, ad 4).

[20] For an emphatic argument that the order is significant, see Thomas R. Mathias, "Bonaventurian Ways to God through Reason: I," *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976): 227-29.

thought of those like Aquinas who are supposed to have a very different sense of the doctrine *de Deo uno.*[21]

A) The Aitiological, or Cosmological, Argument

"Every truth proclaimed by all creatures is an indubitable truth."[22] The Christian tradition commonly acknowledges that one can know of God through sensible creatures. For those thinkers who hold that all human knowledge begins in the senses, this is in fact the only way to demonstrate God's existence-and indeed, it is the one type of argument for God's existence that has received approval as dogma.[23] It has become common to speak of this type of argument as "cosmological," because it arises from the apprehension of the world, but R. E. Houser suggests that the term "aitiological" is better, since the nature of the proof is to move from effect to cause.[24]

Bonaventure lays out the possibilities for such an argument in the *Sentences* commentary. If one looks at those "special" qualities of creatures that are intrinsically limited and thereby imperfect, one can rise to a correct knowledge of God by "removal"-that is, by denying that God possesses such qualities. For example, looking at a body one comes to realize that God himself is not a body. If one looks instead at the general, transcendental qualities of creatures, one can rise to a proper knowledge of God by "superexcellence" -that is, by acknowledging that God possesses such qualities in the highest degree. For example, recognizing that beauty is a general quality of creatures one comes to affirm that God is the most beautiful.[25] Furthermore, through the sensible effect one comes to the knowledge of God as its cause-either in an indistinct way, such that we simply know that it has a first

[21] One common topic that will not be dealt with here is Bonaventure's explanation of why some people do doubt the existence of God.

[22] *De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 1 (Hayes, trans., 107).

[23] Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius* 2.1.

[24] Houser, "Bonaventure's Three-Fold Way to God," 94.

[25] I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un., q. 2, ad 1.

cause; or in a more determined way, such that we know God as its efficient, formal, and final cause.[26]

Bonaventure elaborates on the way one is thus able to know God in *De mysterio Trinitatis*[27] and the *ltinerarium.* All in all, he makes two kinds of arguments from sensible creatures. For example, he says in the disputed question:

> If there is being by participation, there is also being by essence, since one cannot speak of participation except with respect to some essential property which is had from another, since everything that exists accidentally is to be reduced to that which exists of itself. But every being other than the first being-which is God-has being by participation; the first being alone has being by essence. Therefore, etc.[28]

Such proofs hearken back to the way of superexcellence identified in the *Sentences* commentary. They recognize a transcendental but necessarily deficient quality of creatures and infer the existence of the perfect form of that quality in perfect being. From posterior being we infer prior being, from contingent being we infer necessary being, etc.[29]

The other kind of argument is as follows, taking an example from the *ltinerarium:*

> The observer considers things in themselves and sees in them weight, number, and measure ... mode, species, and order, as well as substance, power, and activity. From all these considerations the observer can rise, as from a vestige, to the knowledge of the immense power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator.[30]

As is the case in the *Sentences* commentary, to see a creature as a creature is to know that it has a cause. The *Sentences* commentary in one place speaks of that cause as efficient, formal, and final, and in another place speaks about the philosophical recognition

[26] Ibid., ad 4.

[27] There is a close parallel to this in *Hexaemeron* 10.12-17-indicating the continuity between Bonaventure's early and late writings on this subject.

[28] *De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 1, arg. 17 (Hayes, trans., 111). Most of the arguments in *Hex.* 10.12-17 are of this type.

[29] Noone and Houser, "Bonaventure," 5.2. One finds this kind of argument *inltin.* 1.13.

[30] *!tin.* 1.11 (Boehner, trans., 45).

of the Trinitarian appropriations.[31] In the *Itinerarium* Bonaventure brings these considerations together and says that to recognize creatures as vestiges of God is to see that they point to the divine power, wisdom, and goodness-the three Trinitarian appropriations-as their cause.

Perfect being and the Trinitarian appropriations: these are the things to which one comes through the knowledge of sensible creatures.

If one reads Bonaventure's theology as sharply distinct from the kind of theology one finds in Aquinas, then, since the argument from sensible creatures is the sole Thomistic argument for the existence of God, one might be inclined to give little weight to Bonaventure's proofs from sensible creatures as proofs. Support for such a reading was articulated by Etienne Gilson:

> The proofs from the sense world in the systems of St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas are not really comparable. If the idea of God is innate, the world of sense cannot enable us to construct it, but only to discover it within ourselves: and the idea itself must of necessity be our real, if unrecognized, starting-point. Looked at more closely, the starting-point turns out to be the goal. If we have in us the idea of God, we are sure that He exists, for we cannot not-think Him as existent.[32]

Gilson's claim was that the aitiological argument in fact depends on the illumination or the ontological argument. More broadly, we can say that there is a way of reading the aitiological argument that finds in it no demonstration of a new knowledge of God that somehow regulates our knowledge of him, but only an exemplification of a more general truth of the relationship between God and creatures. Thus Hayes, following Gilson, says that the aitiological argument "may be seen as an indication of how, in Bonaventure's view, the reality of God is somehow involved in all human cognitive activity."[33]

Different ways of reading the aitiological argument are possible. Houser, for example, speaks of Bonaventure's proofs as

[31] I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un, q. 2, ad 4; I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un., q. 4, resp. and ad 1 and 3.

[32] Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure,* 126.

[33] Hayes, "Introduction," 71-72.

containing both a participation premise and an empirical premise. Insofar as there is an empirical premise, there is something gained in the apprehension of actual creatures that allows us to construct an argument for the existence of God-something that we would not know if we did not actually know creatures. [34] On this point, Houser differs from Gilson. Nevertheless, it is fair to conclude from both points of view that the perfect being disclosed in this argument is known in virtue of his relationship to creatures.

Insofar as the aitiological argument attains a knowledge of God as perfect being in relation to creatures, one must then ask whether Bonaventure construes this in a Trinitarian fashion or not. He certainly conceives of God's causality with respect to creatures as triadic, consisting of efficient causality, exemplar causality, and final causality. [35] The unity of a creature traces back to God's efficient causality, the truth of a creature to God's exemplar causality, and the goodness of a creature to God's final causality. [36] Yet although these three types of causality are appropriated to the different persons of the Trinity, [37] they are the common act of the divine nature, and intelligible in that aspect. As Bonaventure says, "Although the metaphysician is able to rise from the consideration of created and particular substance to that of the universal and uncreated and to the very notion of being, so that he reaches the ideas of beginning, center and final end, yet he does not attain the notions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." [38]

It is possible, and reasonable, in Bonaventure to distinguish the kind of relationship between God and creatures attributed to these different kinds of causality. By efficient causality, God

[34] Houser identifies this as a knowledge of the creature's partial perfection. Briefly, to know a creature is in part to recognize the division within it between act and potency. A creature reaches its perfection insofar as it is perfectly in act. When we see the partial actualization of some creatures, or the full actualization but still the division of act and potency in others (i.e., angels), we come to know the partial perfection that points to the existence of the divine pure perfection. See Noone and Houser, "Bonaventure," 5.2.

[35] See, e.g., *Hex.* 1.17.

[36] I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un., dub. 3; see also *Brev.* 2.1.2

[37] *Brev.* 1.6.4.

[38] *Hex.* 1.13 (Bonaventure, *Collations on the Six Days,* trans. Jose de Vinck, The Works of Bonaventure [Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1970], 7).

causes to be something that is other than himself. By exemplar causality, God causes to be something that bears his image. Both must be kept in mind as one looks at Bonaventure's aitiological argument: the arguments both demonstrate the existence (and properties) of the God who is other than man, and unfold the way in which the creature participates in the Creator. To be sure, Bonaventure does regard exemplar causality as "central," [39] but there is no reason to emphasize this to the point of obscuring efficient, or final causality. Some scholars, noting that for Bonaventure the principle of divine exemplarity is the Word, have claimed that the *terminus* of the knowledge of sensible creatures is the Word as exemplar. [40] In light of the above testimony, it appears rather that this *terminus* is the triadic causality proper to the one God. [41]

The knowledge of the Trinitarian appropriations raises a different kind of question about the natural knowledge of God and the knowledge of the Trinity. [42] For Bonaventure, the principal *ratio* of the appropriations is that they are those properties that, although common to the three persons, bear between them a relationship that is analogous to the relationship between the divine persons. Thus the only properties worthy of the name of

[39] That is, exemplar causality is appropriated to the Son, whom Bonaventure describes as the center of the Trinity (e.g., *Hex.* 1.14-15).

[40] See, e.g., Ilia Delio, O.S.F., "Theology, Metaphysics, and the Centrality of Christ," *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 260-63; idem, "Bonaventure's Metaphysics of the Good," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999): 229: "Without Christian revelation the philosopher is unable to reduce reality to a first principle"; ibid., 242-43: "Since Christ is the One in whom ultimate truth and goodness is found, it is Christ and not the Father who is the metaphysical ground of reality." Cf. Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), 98-101.

[41] On the proper order of consideration of the causes, see *Brev.* 2.5.2: "In the book of creation [the First Principle] manifests itself as the effective Principle, and in the book of Scripture as the restorative Principle. Now, the restorative Principle cannot be known unless the effective Principle is also known. Thus it follows that Holy Scripture, even though it is concerned mainly with the works of restoration, must necessarily also deal with the works of creation, insofar as they lead to the knowledge of the first effective and recreating Principle" (Monti, trans., 72). I am grateful to Joshua Benson for bringing this text to my attention.

[42] For a helpful comparison of Bonaventure and Aquinas on the doctrine of the appropriations, see Gilles Emery, O.P., *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas,* trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 312-37.

appropnat10ns are those that reflect order and origin-most notably, power, wisdom, and goodness, which reflect among them something like the order and origin of the Trinitarian persons.[43] However, this still must be sharply distinguished from knowledge of the Trinitarian relations. The pagan philosopher is quite capable of rising from the knowledge of sensible creatures to the consideration of a God who possesses supreme power, wisdom, and goodness; he does not thereby know the Trinity. It is the theologian who, knowing the Trinitarian relations, sees the appropriations as reflective of the Trinity. The lesson of the *Breviloquium* is instructive. The first part of the *Breviloquium* deals with three topics: the plurality of the divine persons, the plurality of the divine manifestations, and the plurality of the divine appropriations. The topic of appropriations is therefore raised in the context of an explicit consideration of the Trinity-in other words, the doctrine of the appropriations comes out of Trinitarian theology. However, when it comes to the treatment of the specific appropriations of power, wisdom, and goodness,[44] Bonaventure explains them without any reference at all to the relations of the divine persons. The properties that the Christian calls divine appropriations are properties that are philosophically knowable and capable of being discussed as such, even though the recognition of them as appropriations and the ultimate use of the doctrine presupposes a knowledge in faith of the Trinity of persons.

Hammond comments that "within the very metaphysical structure of the vestige one finds traces of the Trinity. The analogical triad of power, wisdom, and benevolence already alludes to the horizontal order [i.e., the order of the Trinitarian relations]."[45] The question is, in what sense are the appropriations "traces" of the Trinity? My contention is that the point of the

[43] I *Sent.,* d. 34, a. un, q. 3. See Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order,* 50-52.

[44] *Brev.* 1.7-9.

[45] Jay M. Hammond, "Order in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum,"* in Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order,* 232, commenting on chapter 1 of the *Itinerarium.* See also Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order,* 113: "When Bonaventure writes that every creature has *unitatis, veritatas, bonitatas,* and also *mensura, numerus, pondus,* he reveals that the doctrine of the Trinity stands behind every ontological reflection."

doctrine of the appropnat1ons is not to give a metaphysical correlate to what is known in faith of the Trinity. Rather, when Bonaventure speaks of the Trinitarian appropriations as a terminus of the knowledge of sensible creatures, he means that there is something about these properties that can and should be known in a philosophical way, which can then be integrated into a theological consideration.

B) The Illumination Argument

Less familiar to us, perhaps, are illumination arguments for the existence of God, though these are not unknown in the Christian tradition. As creatures exist only by participation in the divine being, so rational creatures know only by participation in the divine knowledge. It is natural enough, then, to ask whether that participation is such as can allow for a direct knowledge of God through that which is innate to the mind-though the Catholic philosopher and theologian will bear in mind the various condemnations of ontologism by the magisterium.[46]

When Bonaventure looks at the *acts* of the soul he sees that intrinsic to them is an orientation to God.[47] For example, he says in the disputed question,

> Boethius writes: "The desire for the true and the good is implanted in the minds of men." But an inclination toward the true and the good presupposes knowledge thereof. Therefore, there is impressed in the minds of men a knowledge of the true and the good and a desire for that which is most desirable. But that good is God. Therefore, etc.[48]

This is of a piece with his general epistemology.[49] For our soul to know or desire truly, God must be present to it as a kind of object

[46] That Bonaventure was not an ontologist, in the nineteenth-century understanding of the term, was famously demonstrated by Ignatius Jeiler in the *scholion* to the Quaracchi edition of the *Itinerarium* (Bonaventure, *Opera omnia* 5:315-16 *[scholion* 7-9]).

[47] This is the very nature of what it means for the rational soul to be made in the image of God: that God is related to it as its object (see I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un, q. 1, ad 1; and esp. *De sc. Chr.,* q. 4).

[48] *De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 1, arg. 3 (Hayes, trans., 108).

[49] See esp. *De sc. Chr.,* q. 4.

that moves our knowledge or desire:[50] we judge the truth or goodness of a thing in light of the natural orientation of our soul to God. No knowledge of the Trinity is implied here; Bonaventure is simply claiming that there is a kind of presence of God that is in between his simple creative presence and the infused presence of grace. And it is this that guarantees our knowledge of the true and the good.

In the *Itinerarium* he uses the same argument, but in terms of the *powers* of the soul. He says, "the memory leads us to eternity, the intelligence to Truth, and the elective faculty [i.e., the will] to the highest Good."[51] The powers of the soul thus individually point us to the Trinitarian appropriations.

If it was tempting, in the realm of the aitiological argument, to elide the natural knowledge of triadic structures with the knowledge in faith of the Trinity, it is all the more tempting here. One might easily regard the individual powers of the soul as intelligible by reference to the individual divine persons.[52] Yet such a temptation ought to be resisted. We certainly do see Bonaventure identifying a correspondence between the powers of the soul and the Trinitarian appropriations-specifically, the divine eternity, truth, and goodness. However, this should be read as an elaboration of what it means for God to be the object of these powers. Memory is an image of the divine eternity; what does this mean? For Bonaventure, it means that because of its orientation to eternity the memory receives the impression of simple forms, as well as the changeless principles and axioms of the sciences.[53] The intellect is joined to eternal Truth; what then? It has some knowledge of perfect Being, it is strengthened by the divine light, and it is informed by the divine exemplarity.[54] The

[50] Ibid. Note that to call God a "moving [i.e., efficient causal] principle" of our knowledge suggests the importance of his efficient causality with respect to us. Hayes's translation of *ratio motiva* as "motivating principle" risks obscuring this note (Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ,* trans. Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., Works of Saint Bonaventure 4 [St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1992], 134). I am grateful to R. E. Houser for pointing this out to me.

[51] *Itin.* 3.4 (Boehner, trans., 69).

[52] See Hammond, "Bonaventure," *NCE* 2:488.

[53] *Itin.* 3.2.

[54] *Itin.* 3.3.

will participates in the divine goodness-and by that fact judges things to be more or less good and desires the highest Good.[55] Indeed, much can be known about God from the soul's orientation toward him. But all of it pertains to the unity and properties of the divine essence, not to the Trinitarian relations.[56]

Finally, again in the *Itinerarium,* Bonaventure says, "if one considers the order, the origin, and the relationship of these faculties [i.e., the powers of the soul] to one another, he is led up to the most blessed Trinity Itself."[57] In other words, when we look at the soul with the eyes of faith we see that the relations of the powers of memory, intellect, and will form a natural image of the Trinitarian relations. Here Bonaventure's concern is certainly with the Trinitarian background of natural knowledge, not the unity of the divine essence. We have here a natural image of the Trinity, which is not recognized except by one who knows the reality of the Trinity in faith. It is important, however, to distinguish this from that knowledge of God which is gained by considering the individual powers of the soul.[58] From his *Sentences* commentary on, Bonaventure consistently uses two distinct senses of *"imago Dei."* In one sense, the rational soul as the image of God reveals God as not only its cause but its object.[59] In a different sense, the soul is the image of God insofar as it is like him in configuration-that is, the order and arrangement of the powers

[55] *Itin.* 3.4.

[56] Cf. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites,* 127: "As Trinitarian image, [man's] faculties of memory, understanding and will should in their depths be open to and rooted in the transcendent power, wisdom and goodness of the Trinity." One must be precise in the sense in which one describes man as bearing the image of the Trinity.

[57] *Itin.* 3.5 (Boehner, trans., 69).

[58] Hammond repeatedly distinguishes between philosophical and theological considerations here, yet seems to elide them too much when he says, "The mind *is* an image in the vertical order [i.e., in the philosophical relation to the First Principle] *because* of its horizontal order [i.e., reflecting the Trinitarian order] of memory, intellect and will" (Hammond, "Order in the *Itinerarium,"* 237; emphasis in original).

[59] *Imago* in this sense is distinguished from *umbra* (shadow) and *vestigium* (vestige): "Creatures are called 'shadow' with respect to those properties which point to God as some kind of cause, the *ratio* of which is undetermined; 'vestige' with respect to those properties which point to God under the *ratio* of a triple cause, efficient, formal, and final, such as one, true, and good; 'image' with respect to those qualities under the *ratio* not only of cause, but of object, which are memory, intelligence, and will" (I *Sent.,* d. 3, p. 1, a. un., q. 2, ad 4).

of the soul reflects the order of the divine persons.[60] These two senses are both on display in chapter 3 of the *Itinerarium.* The powers of the soul have God as their object; and their relationship to each other is an image of the divine relations. One is not obliged to reduce one to the other, or to say that what we know of God because the soul is oriented toward him is the same as what we know of God by the Trinitarian configuration of the powers of the soul.

C) The Ontological Argument

Finally, we come to the ontological argument, which Bonaventure regards as the most certain of all.

The fault of ontological arguments for the existence of God is that they move impermissibly from thought to reality. Just because one has a certain idea of God, it does not follow that he exists. Bonaventure's version of the ontological argument, both in the disputed question and in the *Itinerarium,* attempts to avoid this pitfall by specifying the condition under which one has the relevant idea of God. This condition is the proper understanding of the transcendentals.[61] For example:

> No one can be ignorant of the truth that "the best is the best," and no one can think that this is false. But that which is best is the most complete being, and every being that is complete to the highest degree by that very fact exists in actuality. Therefore, if the best is the best, the best exists. It can be argued in a similar way: If God is God, then God exists. But the antecedent is so true that it cannot be thought not to be. Therefore it is indubitably true that God exists.[62]

[60] *Imago* in this sense is distinguished from *similitudo* (likeness): "'Image' means a conformity in quantity, while 'likeness' means a suitable comparison in quality. Thus 'image' means some configuration ... but 'likeness' means the same quality in different things" (Bonaventure, II *Sent.,* d. 16, a. 2, q. 3). Man bears the *similitudo Dei,* of course, by the gift of grace.

[61] The *Sentences* commentary makes its ontological argument on the basis of the transcendental truth, the disputed question on the mystery of the Trinity uses the transcendental good, and the *Itinerarium* uses the transcendental being (see Noone and Houser, "Bonaventure," *SEP* 5.3).

[62] *De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 1, arg. 29 (Hayes, trans., 113).

Again, from the *Itinerarium,*

> He therefore who wishes to contemplate the invisible things of God in relation to the unity of his essence should fix the attention of his soul on Being Itself and see that Being Itself is so absolutely certain that it cannot be thought not to be, because the most pure Being Itself does not come to our mind except in full flight from non-being, as also the absolute nothing does not, except in full flight from being.[63]

The highest truth is being itself, and cannot not exist. The highest goodness is the most complete being, and likewise cannot not exist. Finally, the notion of being itself entails the notion of most pure being, which is completely opposed to nonbeing, and therefore cannot not exist. From each of these arguments, Bonaventure goes on to say that the highest truth, the highest goodness, and the most pure being is God. When Bonaventure says, "If God is God, then God exists," this is not, as Houser points out, an empty tautology. It means "if the entity to which the term God refers truly possesses the divine essence," it cannot not exist.[64] The argument turns on the right knowledge of the most pure form of the transcendentals.

Interestingly, Bonaventure uses a similar argument to demonstrate that God is a Trinity.

> Good is said to be self-diffusive, and therefore the highest good is most self-diffusive.... [But] the diffusion that occurred in time in the creation of the world is no more than a point in comparison with the immense sweep of the eternal goodness. From this one is led to think of another and a greater diffusion-that in which the diffusing good communicates to another His whole substance and nature.[65]

If God is good, then God is a Trinity. This is not a philosophical demonstration of the Trinity, for the only way one will have the relevant sense of God's goodness is by faith. But the guiding

[63] *Itin.* 5.3 (Boehner, trans., 81-83).

[64] Noone and Houser, "Bonaventure," *SEP* 5.3; cf. Josef Seifert, *"Si Deus est Deus, Deus est:* Reflections on St. Bonaventure's Interpretation of St. Anselm's Ontological Argument" *Franciscan Studies* 52 (1992): 215-31.

[65] *!tin.* 6.2 (Boehner, trans., 89).

principle is the same as in the philosophical ontological argument: if one has the right knowledge of the term "God," the reality of God-whether his existence, seen by reason, or the Trinity, seen by faith-will be understood as self-evident.[66]

Because of this similarity in argument, one might, again, be tempted to elide the distinction between knowing the divine being and knowing the Trinity.[67] In this view, to know God philosophically requires a kind of proximity to him, the fulfillment of which is to know him in the fullness of his Trinitarian reality. An analytical knowledge of the divine attributes is not what is called for, but rather a knowledge in wonder that leads into the deeper knowledge of the Trinitarian relations.

For myself, I think it is important *not* to make this elision. Textually, there is no hint of a Trinitarian formulation. The terminus of the philosophical itinerary is the divine being, which must be known in a certain way and in its own right. It is true that a similar argument is used to say that God is Trinity, but it must be noted that in the passages quoted above there are two distinct arguments from the divine goodness. When we have the right conception of the divine goodness as the completeness of the divine being, we know that the good God exists. When our conception of the divine goodness contains the notion of the perfect self-diffusion of goodness, we know that God is the Trinity. But having the latter conception of goodness requires an attunement to God that is only possible through grace.[68]

Furthermore, in chapter 5 of the *Itinerarium,* Bonaventure moves from the existence of God to an enumeration of the divine

[66] The same argument is made in the disputed question: *De myst. Trin.,* q. 1, a. 2, speaking about "the book of life."

[67] Cf. Delio, "Bonaventure's Metaphysics of the Good," 231: "While Bonaventure affirms that God is absolute being, it is precisely on this point that he crosses the threshold from philosophy to theology .... One can no longer talk about being as the ground of reality without talking about God, and one can no longer talk about God who is Trinity without talking about the good. In the *Itinerarium,* therefore, Bonaventure shifts from a metaphysics of being to a metaphysics of the good and thus establishes the basis of a theological metaphysics."

[68] See Gregory F. LaNave, "Knowing God through and in All Things: A Proposal for Reading Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum," Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009): 267-99, esp. 292-96.

properties-primacy, eternity, simplicity, actuality, perfection, and unity. Not only is this the classical progression of a doctrine *de Deo uno;* it tells us that Bonaventure requires us to attend to the reality of God in such a way that the knowledge of the divine being can genuinely-though not completely-flourish without requiring knowledge of the Trinity. [69]

III. BONAVENTIJREANS AND AQUINAS

The argument of this article has been a caution against a certain kind of reading of Bonaventure, a reading that, as I suggested at the beginning, is heavily invested in distinguishing him from Aquinas. [70] This reading has a good number of adherents, including some of the most influential contemporary Bonaventure scholars in the English-speaking world. However, there is not, among this group of scholars, much written by way of extensive textual commentary on the arguments for the existence of God. I am not, therefore, arguing against a given, fixed interpretation of a defined set of Bonaventure's texts. Clearly, I would oppose anything so stark as Hayes's claim,

[69] Cousins implicitly disagrees with this sort of view. He discusses the divine properties as laid out in *Itinerarium* 5 in terms of a "coincidence of opposites," and goes on to say that "Bonaventure's doctrine of opposites is rooted in his Trinitarian theology .... Hence at the very base of Bonaventure's thought, in the inner life of the mystery of the Trinity, there is an archetype for all of the opposites within the created universe" (Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites,* 94; see also 88). See also Hammond, "Order in the *Itinerarium,"* 246.

[70] Hayes reveals a methodological ambiguity in his own reading of a related point in Bonaventure: "It is clear that for Bonaventure, the person of Christ becomes the basic clue as to the nature of God. At the same time, the term 'God' already has some content which Bonaventure draws largely from the philosophical-theological tradition; particularly relative to such notions as perfection, relation, and change. If one were entirely consistent in working from the Christological starting point, would it not be true that such notions would receive their primary content from the mystery of Christ?" (Hayes, "The Meaning of *convenientia,"* 79 n. 13). In other words, those who are drawn to reading Bonaventure as if one cannot talk about God without talking about Christ have to confront the fact that Bonaventure does not do so. Hayes goes on to admit that he is bothered by Bonaventure's consistency with the common Scholastic tradition: "In the treatment of the present question [i.e., the incarnation], the reader gains the impression that certain common teachings of the Scholastic tradition *play a greater role than need be the case"* (ibid.; emphasis added).

quoted above: "The systematic treatment of the doctrine of the trinity constitutes the whole of Bonaventure's doctrine about God." Other claims, however, are more ambiguous. For example, Hellmann writes,

> The human stands in the midst of the world and searches the point from which all things begin, and thereby the point where all things are to end. This point is the *divina essentia,* the *natura divina,* or the *divinum esse.* This is the *primum.* The full understanding of this *primum* leads to the vision of the divine order of persons. The order of persons is the horizontal order. The vertical converges into the horizontal, and these two instances of order correspond to our two-fold understanding of God. [71]

Hellmann acknowledges that one can talk about the *divina essentia,* and that this is distinct from, though related to, what one says about the divine persons. The question is, what does he mean by saying that "the full understanding [of the divine essence] ... leads to the vision of the divine order of persons"? In light of Bonaventure's arguments from the existence of God, this could mean that what we know of the one God by nature prepares us to know him as Trinity; but it cannot mean that the knowledge of the one God is simply opaque until he is known as Trinity.

On one level, therefore, I am arguing against statements from a variety of scholars that either misconstrue or tend to misconstrue the "absence" of a Bonaventurean *de Deo uno.* It is also worth pointing out a family resemblance among these statements, which goes more to the question of how the reading of Bonaventure should or should not be distinguished from one's reading of Aquinas. Much has been written about Bonaventure's understanding of the relationship between theology and philosophy. The common opinion is that they are distinct ways of knowing, but that there is an incompleteness to philosophy without the contribution of theology. [72] Within this common

[71] Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order,* 55.

[72] See Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., "Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure," *The Journal of Religion* 58 supplement (1978): 582-596; Gregory F. LaNave, "God, Creation, and the Possibility of Philosophical Wisdom: The Perspectives of Bonaventure and Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 812-33; Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 32-34.

agreement, however, there are at least two different ways of regarding what would classically be called "philosophical theology."

One approach-the one I favor-is to regard the objects of natural reason as knowable in their own right (not perfectly, but really) and to include them in theology as part of what we know that helps us to understand the things of faith.[73] This I would call a "scientific" reading, for it understands both Bonaventure's philosophy and his theology along the lines of Aristotelian *scientia.* Each science has its proper principles and light, and thus can come to proper conclusions. Furthermore, that which is known philosophically can be propaedeutic to theology, or enter it as a body of certain knowledge that theology incorporates into its own reasoning.

Another approach is to emphasize that there is no *telos* of natural reason as such, and so to regard the fruits of natural reason as of interest chiefly as they evoke the mysteries that are the matter of faith and theology. I call this a "symbolic" or an "evocative" reading, for it urges us not to stop at the intelligibility of naturally knowable things but to regard them as symbols that are evocative of the divine truth.[74]

Applied to the question of the one God in Bonaventure, the difference between the two approaches is that the scientific reading seeks to delineate that which can be known of the one God-his existence, knowability, and properties-while the symbolic reading seeks to move from this knowledge to the

[73] See I *Sent.,* pro., q. 1, ad 5-6.

[74] By "symbolic theology" in this context I do not mean the fact that Bonaventure makes copious use of symbols in his theology. (See Hammond, "Order in the *Itinerarium,"* 197-98, on Bonaventure as a "master of symbolic theology" in this sense.) Nor do I use the term as Bonaventure himself occasionally does, to denote the kind of theology that proceeds solely from sensible creatures (see, e.g., *Itin.* 1.7: *"Uesus* Christ] has taught the knowledge of truth in its threefold theological sense, so that through symbolic theology we may rightly use sensible things, through literal *fpropriam]* theology we may rightly use intellectual things, and through mystical theology, we may be rapt to ecstatic experiences" [Boehner, trans., 43]. See also Leonard J. Bowman, "A View of St. Bonaventure's Symbolic Theology," in *Thomas and Bonaventure,* ed. G. McLean, *American Catholic Philosophical Association* 4 [1974], pp. 25-32). Rather, I mean a distinctive way of including in theology the things that can be known in the natural light of human reason.

knowledge of the Trinity-not deductively, but evocatively, and in an ordered and systematic way. In the latter view, whatever we conclude about God as first cause or about the existence of God and his properties is not to be construed as a "separate" doctrine *de Deo uno.* In fact, the intelligibility of creation itself is not sought as any kind of *telos* for the human mind, but only as the natural pole that corresponds to the revealed knowledge of Trinitarian exemplarity. On this reading, Bonaventure's arguments about God are not meant to demonstrate anything about the one God, but to evoke the Trinity in an ordered way.[75]

It is commonly, and truly, noted that Bonaventure's theology in general is thoroughly Trinitarian and thoroughly Christological. Every reader of Bonaventure must note his repeated invocations of the Trinity. There is no doubt that the Trinity is more central to his thought than is the unity of the divine essence. The fact is evident in the *Itinerarium,* as the consideration of the divine being in chapter 5 gives way to the superior consideration of the Trinity in chapter 6. But the best hope for seeing the implications of Bonaventure's Trinitarianism is in a scientific sense of his theology. And the same sense informs his treatment of the existence and nature of the one God.[76]

[75] "One should trace back to their dynamic Trinitarian source all elements within Bonaventure's system in order to grasp them in their depth and organic context" (Cousins, "God as Dynamic in Bonaventure and Contemporary Thought," 139).

Indeed, a symbolic reading of Bonaventure is interested in the proofs in one sense, and in another sense not. It is entirely appropriate, in the symbolic view, to ask what may be known in the natural light of human reason, for this is oriented to and suggestive of the revealed truth. Therefore it is important to know how human reason points to God as the ultimate reality it can know in its natural light, which then can be seen in its evocative relationship to the revealed reality of God. At the same time, there is no way in which this natural knowledge of God will provide *any* completion to human understanding, and one must be careful about allowing what is thus known to define one's understanding of God. In the symbolic view, the real terminus of these arguments is the Father, the fecund source of the divine plurality as well as of creation. But the Father cannot be known as such through human reason alone, and this limits what one can claim with surety in the arguments.

[76] This article was originally given at the annual meeting of the Academy of Catholic Theology, May 2009.

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"SAY NOT THREE": SOME EARLY CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO MUSLIM QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TRINITY

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IN OCTOBER 2007, a group of Muslim intellectuals, scholars, and clerics issued a statement that has come to be known as *A Common Word between Us and You.* The title comes from a phrase from the Qur'an exhorting Christians and Muslims to find agreement in their worship of the one God. According to the official website of the group who formulated and endorsed the statement, it was written in direct response to Pope Benedict XVI's address to the faculty at the University of Regensburg in September of the previous year, and is the result of Muslims who have "unanimously come together for the first time since the days of the Prophet r[sic] to declare the common ground between Christianity and Islam."[1] This is a very bold statement, and may signal the beginning of a new era in relations between Muslims and Christians.

But what exactly is new about this endeavor, and how ought Christian theologians to respond to it? It is true that such a joint effort of this kind among Muslims is revolutionary and may ultimately serve the same purpose in articulating traditional views in contemporary language for like-minded Muslims that *Nostra Aetate* has for Roman Catholics. For this its drafters are to be highly commended. It has taken great courage to make this public statement at a time when the Islamic *ummah* is roiled by internal

[1] "Introduction to 'A Common Word between Us and You,'" the official website of *A Common Word* (http://www.acommonword.com), accessed 14 May 2010.

divisions and large parts of it are deeply suspicious of what it perceives as the Christian West. From the longer perspective of history, the initiative itself is unique, and the drafters of the text have taken full advantage of modern technology to spread their message, making it possible that it will influence Muslims worldwide. What is not new is the content of the statement. A careful reading of the text reveals that it very closely follows the approach past Muslim apologists have taken, namely, it emphasizes the call to a common understanding between Muslims and Christians based on what is similar between the Qur'iin and the Holy Bible, while clearly rejecting the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. It seeks to formulate concord upon a common monotheism while calling upon Christians to reject their own "heretical" distortion of that monotheism.

In particular, the *Common Word* statement stresses that Christians and Muslims agree that central to their religions is love of God and love of neighbor, and that this is expressed in worship of the one God. Indeed, this crucial doctrine can provide a firm foundation upon which to build a more stable and peaceful society. In support, the *Common Word* quotes a key passage from the Qur'iin, found in *Siira* 3 *(Al-clmriin):64:*

> Say: "O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: worshipping only God, and not associating any partners with Him, and not taking one another as lords apart from God." And if they turn away, then say: "Bear witness that we are the ones who have surrendered (to God)." [2]

The Muslim confession of belief in one God, in Arabic *tawhid,* is identified here as a common point of agreement between Muslims and Christians. In this verse, *tawhid* is defined as a monotheism that does not allow any other being to be associated with God,[3] nor to be addressed as "lord"; that is, it prohibits giving to anyone

[2] Translations of the Qur'an, unless otherwise noted, are mine. This verse is quoted in *A Common Word,* 13-14.

[3] This also forms the basis for the Islamic rejection of any notion that human beings are made in the image of God, a teaching that has important theological and practical implications. See, for example, the work of David Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), especially 128-39 on the relationship between God and creation.

or anything else the sovereignty that properly belongs to God. Traditionally, this has been interpreted by Muslim thinkers as a dear condemnation of polytheism. Read together with other verses of the Qur'an, it is also understood to preclude the Christian profession of the Trinity and the Incarnation as formally defined by the early Church councils.[4] More will be said about this below. It has long been recognized that what unites Muslims and Christians is monotheism, what divides us is *Trinitarian* monotheism. *A Common Word,* in keeping with many earlier Muslim apologetical texts, reiterates this point, exhorting Christians to recognize the truth of the Qur'an and to abandon any false beliefs that compromise *tawhid.*[5]

The idea that monotheism is the common ground on which Muslims and Christians can build better global relationships has been at the center of many modern efforts to find social unity. For this reason, the Islamic concepts of the *ahl al-kitiib* ("People of the Book/Scripture") and "Abrahamic Religions" have been employed by a multitude of theologians (as well as politicians) and become popular ways of conceptually integrating Muslims into communities of Christians and Jews. In the same vein, *A Common Word* has elicited the call from many well-intentioned Christians and others (some perhaps not so well-intentioned), to act in the spirit of cooperation and desire for world peace, leaving aside complex theological discussion. Whether out of fear it will lead to compromise, discouragement over the dialogue process so far, or lack of confidence that doctrinal formulations are meaningful, the point is made on all sides that such conversation is bound to be unproductive, and is therefore useless.

I would argue, though, that many Christians, whether they have ignored or endorsed and promoted the statement, have not fully grasped its radical call to abandon "heretical" Trinitarian monotheism, and the implications of such a move. Yet this is exactly where the rubber hits the road, so to speak, and has done

[4] See, for example, *TafsiTal-Jaliilayn* on *Siiras* 3:64, 80; 9:31; 18:102; *TanwiTal-Miqbiis min TafsiTIbn 'Abbas* on *Siiras* 3:64; 9:31; *TafsiTIbn KathiT* on *Siira* 3:64; etc.

[5] For example, *Siiras* 4:171-72; 5:116-17; 43:59, 63-64, among others have been important for Muslims apologists from the earliest centuries. *A Common Word* quotes or refers to these verses throughout.

so from the beginning. For centuries Christians living in close proximity to Muslims have recognized that we share a great deal in common principles and values, and at times this has even been enough to build a common society, as was found in Cordoba, Baghdad, and elsewhere. This is not a new insight. What remains at the heart of the disagreement between the two religious communities is how we speak about God's oneness and what does and does not violate the grammar of monotheism. The *Common Word* statement offers us a renewed opportunity to take up the Christian doctrine of Trinitarian monotheism in light of the Muslim challenge that it is a kind of "monotheistic heresy." As a contribution to this question, I will offer some observations about a few of the earliest written testimonies reflecting on the crux of the issues, in order to provide a foundation for the present-day discussion. I am convinced that attention to these early thinkers, men who first encountered Islam and sought to make sense of it, will prevent contemporary theologians from "reinventing the wheel" and even help us to avoid falling into some of the traps set by modern sensibilities and sensitivities.

I. "BELIEVE IN ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGERS AND SAY NOT 'THREE'" *(Sara 4 [al-Nis.1']:171)*

Although the information we have of the first encounters between Muslims and Christians is scant, it is apparent that Christians recognized the central challenge of the Qur'an to their faith as being focused on the nature of God and the relationship between Creator and creation. This, of course, had been at the heart of the struggle in the early centuries of Christianity that had come to a head especially in the Christological councils of Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451). Islamic thought seemed to many to be a continuation of this debate but from a new angle. More specifically, Christian thinkers recognized that the question raised by Islam was: is the God of Israel's prophets, the Creator of all who has revealed himself to humanity, the same triune God of Christian confession who became incarnated? Or is this God

rather the Absolute One who is unlike any creature and has spoken his divine word in the last days through Muhammad?

For Muslims, the problem is summarized in *Siira* 4 *(al-Nisa'):l* 71:

> 0 People of the Scripture, do not exaggerate in your religion, nor say [anything] about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is [only] Allah's Messenger and His Word *[kalimatuhu],* which He cast into her, and a Spirit from Him *[rilhun minhu].* So believe in Allah and His Messengers and say not "Three." Refrain, it is better for you. Allah is truly One God, glory be to Him! How is it He could have a son? To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on the earth.

Traditional Muslim commentators on this verse, such as Ibn Kathir (d. 1373),[6] connect it closely to *Siira* 5 *(al-Ma'ida):72-73:*

> For they are unbelievers *(kafara)* who say that Allah is the Messiah, the Son of Mary. And the Messiah said: O, Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Surely the one who associates *(yushrika)* other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him [entrance into] Paradise and his dwelling is the Fire.... For they are unbelievers who say that Allah is the third of three, And there is no god except the One God; and if they do not refrain from what they say then those who are unbelievers among them will be severely punished.

Elsewhere the Qur'an states that on the Day of Judgment Jesus will be asked by God: "O clsa, son of Maryam, did you say to the people: 'Take me and my Mother as gods apart from Allah?'", to which he will reply that it has not been given to him to say what is false" (5:116). This and other verses have led some to conclude that the Qur'an is concerned with a group of Christians who acknowledged a trinity of a Father, Mother (Mary), and Son Gesus), and is therefore not a critique of orthodox Christians.[7]

While the current debate as to whether the Christians of the Qur'an are an identifiable group who held views quite different from accepted orthodoxy, and what the significance of this is for qur'anic exegesis, may be of interest to scholars, it can cause us to

[6] Isma'Il Ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'iin al-'.azim* (Cairo: Matba'ah Mustafa Muhammad, 1356/1937).

[7] An excellent study of some of these issues and attendant scholarly view is found in Jane Darnen McAuliffe, *Qur'iinic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), esp. 13-36.

overlook the deeper intention of the text. At its heart, the Qur'iin is a critique of any notion that God is, much less chooses to become, like anything in creation. This is the truest meaning of *la iliih illaAlliih-"there* is no god but God." Conversely, nothing in creation bears any resemblance to God, including human beings. To say otherwise is the worst of all *sins-shirk.*

Lest we miss the point, the verses cited above and a multitude of others draw an explicit connection between Christian belief in the Trinity and conviction that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, and *shirk,* identifying those who hold such beliefs as *mushrikiin* (associators/polytheists) and *kdfiriin* (unbelievers).[8] Over the centuries, Muslim and Christian scholars have debated the truth and implications of this correlation. Parallel to the Christological disputes, one can see struggles among Islamic scholars to understand the divine attributes, the *sifiit Allah* and especially to articulate the relationship between God's Word, the Qur'iin, and God's being.[9] In this paper, I will look more carefully at how some Christians who first encountered the qur'iinic critique of the Trinity understood it and more specifically how they responded to it. It should be of interest to the modern theologian that records of the earliest conversations between Muslims and Christians do not focus on the qur'iinic characterization of specific aspects of Christian beliefs (for example, whether or not Christians worship Mary as a god); rather, they take on the general concern that belief in the Trinity and Incarnation are shirk-associating others with God and not giving God the absolute worship and honor that is his due.

[8] For an overview of this problem see Gerald Hawting, *"Sirk* and 'Idolatry' in Monotheist Polemic," in *Dhimmis and Others: Jews and Christians and the World of Classical Islam,* Israel Oriental Studies 17, ed. Uri Rubin and David J. Wasserstein (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, Inc., 1997), 107-26.

[9] This is well-traveled ground. Some of the most informative studies of the various aspects of the questions can be found in Richard M. Frank, "The Neoplatonism of Gahm ibn Safwiin," *Le Museon* 78 (1965): 395-424; Morris S. Seale, *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers* (London: Luzac and Co., Ltd, 1964); and Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Ka/am* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), as well as my forthcoming article: "Some Reflections on the Early Discussion concerning the *Sifiit Alliih."*

This consideration gives us a further insight as to why many Christian theologians in the first centuries of Islam regarded Muslims as adhering to another heretical Christian sect, probably related to Arianism, and, as far as we have documentation, engaged them on the level of theology, rather than on legal and practical issues such as polygamy, inheritance, governance, war, etc. It was well understood by these writers of the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries that the real point of contention was how to speak of the one God who is Creator and who has been revealed to humanity, in ways that uphold the singularity of his deity; from this concern all other practical applications flowed.[10] I would argue that they "got it right," and we would do well to take another look at the insights that they gained from these encounters as we continue the project of articulating Christian faith in the context of a diversity of religions and, in particular, a diversity of monotheisms. This issue is all the more urgent since one of these monotheisms is vocally and emphatically anti-Trinitarian.

II. ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS AND THE *HERESY OF THE ISHMAELITES*

The first Christian writer of interest here is St. John of Damascus (d. 749), who needs little introduction. His inclusion of Islam in his *De Haeresibus* was perhaps the Christian commentary on Islam that was most widely read in the West until modern times. John has been accused, unjustly I believe, of many things because of this. His critique of Islam, and especially of Muhammad, is quite harsh. But the few short pages in which he summarizes the beliefs of the followers of Muhammad are surprisingly accurate. John's synopsis of the Muslim version of Jesus' conception, birth, his being taken up to heaven instead of suffering crucifixion, and Jesus' own teaching that he was not God, reveal a good knowledge of the Qur'iin on these topics.

[10] An overview of these themes and authors is found in Rachid Haddad, *La Trinite divine chez !es theologiens arabes 750-1050,* Coll. Beauchesne Religions 15 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985).

John follows his summary with a response to the "Ishmaelites" who say that Christians are "associators" (ETatptaaTa<;) when they claim that "Christ is the Son of God and God." [11] They maintain, he says, that this false teaching is the result of Christians having added to the Scriptures through the use of allegory, as well as through deception by the Jews. [12] The Damascene's famous response is that the Word and the Spirit must be inseparable from the one in whom they have their origin, so

> if, therefore, the Word is in God it is obvious that he is God as well. If, on the other hand, th[e Word] is outside of God, then God, according to you, is without word and without spirit. Thus, trying to avoid making associates to God you have mutilated Him. For it would be better if you were saying that he has an associate than to mutilate him and introduce him as if he were a stone, or wood, or any of the inanimate objects. Therefore, by accusing us falsely, you call us *Associators;* we, however, call you *Mutilators* [Coptas] [13] of God. [14]

In a few strokes John goes to the heart the problem: what does it mean to deny the possibility of the Trinitarian relationship in God? He answers that to strip God of life and word is to make the divine being more akin to a stone, and this is much worse than to say God is like human beings in trying to explain the relationship between God's life, word, and being. John's obvious point here is that if God is who Christians believe he is, one, living, and communicating to creation, then the Spirit and the Word must be God. The problem is not whether God is one, but the inner nature

[11] Daniel Sahas, John *of Damascus on Islam: The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites"* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 137.

[12] John puts forward the qur'iinic accusation that the Jews have deceived Christians by adding prophets to the Scriptures to mislead them. This charge is made in several verses, such as *Siira* 5:13, 41; 2:75; and 4:46, where the Jews are said to have altered *f:yuharrifiina)* or forgotten *(nasii)* words of the original revelation. In the later eighth and ninth centuries the Muslim principle of *tahr'if* (alteration) became more developed as theologians sought to give an account of the variations between the Qur'iin and the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, which the Qur'iin teaches have the same origin in the heavenly Preserved Tablet *(al-lawh al-mahfik [Siira* 85:22]). For a fuller account of this principle, see Sandra Toenies Keating, "Refuting the Charge of *Tahrif:* Abii Rii'ita (d. ca. 835) and His *'First* Risiila *on the Holy Trinity,"'* in *Ideas, Images and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam,* ed. Sebastian Giinther (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 41-57.

[13] Korrrnc; (Sahas, John *of Damascus on Islam,* 36).

[14] Ibid., 137.

of the one God as it has been communicated to human beings. This, of course, the Damascene lays out in great detail in his *De Fide Orthodoxa.*

John's approach had wide-reaching influence among Christians living under Muslim rule through a number of his later disciples, notably Theodore Abu Qurrah in the Melkite Church and the Syrian Orthodox Archdeacon Nonnus of Nisibis in Armenia.[15] Those who read their writings in Arabic, Greek, and Armenian recognized the usefulness of John's insights for apologetical and catechetical purposes as they carried on their engagement with Muslims. As we shall see below, in different ways, most Christian apologists from the first centuries of Islam made a defense of the Trinity central to their theology, only turning to other topics after they had established this doctrine.

Ill. A TRACT ON THE TRIUNE NATURE OF GOD: "AGAINST THE MUSLIMS"

This brings us to our second unknown writer, who was probably active around the same time as John of Damascus but takes a rather different approach. Over a century ago, Margaret Dunlop Gibson edited and translated part of a seventh- or eighth-century codex from the Monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai desert containing an Arabic version of the Acts of the Apostles, the seven Catholic Epistles, and an anonymous treatise that one might call "Against the Muslims."[16] The treatise, which still awaits careful scholarly analysis, likely represents one of the very earliest

[15] See Sidney H. Griffith, *Theodore Abii Qurrah, the Intellectual Profile of an Arab Christian Writer ofthe FirstAbbasid Century,* The Dr. Irene Halmos Chair of Arabic Literature Annual Lecture (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1992); and A. Van Roey, *Nonnus de Nisibi, Traite Apologetique, etude, texte et traduction,* Bibliotheque du Museon, vol. 21 (Louvain: Bureaux du Museon, 1948).

[16] Gibson gave the title "On the Triune Nature of God" to the text, although this is somewhat misleading. See *An Arabic Version ofthe Acts ofthe Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles from an Eighth or Ninth Century Ms. in the Convent of St Catherine on Mount Sinai with a Treatise on the Triune Nature of God,* ed. and trans. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, Studia Sinaitica 7 (London: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1899), 74-101 (Arabic), 2-61 (English); and J. Rendel Harris, "A Tract on the Triune Nature of God," *The American Journal ofTheology* 5 (1901): 75-86.

attempts in Arabic to counter the claims of the Qur'an discussed above that Christians are *mushrikiin-those* who associate others with God.

At first glance "Against the Muslims" appears to be a long chain of biblical quotes reminiscent of *testamonia* lists, which demonstrated the truth of the Christian claim that Jesus Christ has fulfilled the prophecies of the Jewish Scriptures, evidence that might be useful for convincing a Jewish reader that Jesus is the Messiah. J. Rendel Harris has pointed out that the treatise draws heavily on previous apologetical writings directed against the Jews (for example, Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew,* Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa's *Adversus Judaeos,* and the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila).* He even suggests that its main value consists in its preservation of excerpts of some previously unknown anti-Judaic and apocryphal texts.[17] In conclusion, Harris claims it simply reveals "that the eastern church stood toward the Moslem in much the same position that they had occupied from the beginning toward the men of the synagogue."[18] In his opinion, the text is of little use for scholars of Islam.

I would argue that he has been too quick to dismiss efforts of the author as simply throwing Jews and Muslims into the same basket, for "Against the Muslims" points us in the right direction for understanding the earliest perceptions of Islam by Christians. In several places the author informs us that his intention is to counter charges of polytheism, particularly the belief that there are multiple "lords." He admonishes his reader: "Say not that we believe in two Gods *(allahayn),* or that we say there are two Lords *(rabbayn).* God forbid! Verily God is one God and one Lord in His Word and His Spirit."[19] This is certainly intended to call to mind the charge of *Siira* 3 *(Al-clmriin):64* quoted above. Read through the lens of this Christian apologetical goal, it becomes clear that "Against the Muslims" identifies the most significant point of contention with the Muslim rejection of the triune nature of God revealed through the Incarnation. For this reason, the

[17] Harris, "A Tract on the Triune Nature of God," 76-77.

[18] Ibid., 86.

[19] Gibson, *A Treatise on the Triune Nature of God,* 16 (English) and 88 (Arabic).

author was apparently confident that he could respond to the new challenge Islam presented by reformulating in Arabic many arguments defending the Trinity that had been used previously against another community who questioned its coherence, the Jews.

"Against the Muslims" moves beyond mere reformulation, though, pointing out the continuity between what Muslims and Christians believe, and directing the reader's attention to the logical implications of accepting past prophecy and revelation. In one passage, the author confronts his reader directly, stating: "The prophets and saints of God have shewn that God and His Word *(kalimatuhu)* and His Spirit *(ruhuhu)* established all things and gave life to all things, and it is not fitting for anyone who knows what God hath sent down to His prophets, that he should disdain to worship God and His Word and His Spirit, one God." [20] Those familiar with the Qur'iin would recognize this as an allusion to any number of verses, such as *Siira* 4 *(al-Nisa'):171* quoted above, denying the possibility of multiplicity in God. Here, the quriinic verses are not disputed, but rather used in support of Trinitarian monotheism: if one believes that by his Word and his Spirit God has created and sustains all things, then it is not *shirk* to worship that Word and Spirit. On the contrary, anyone who believes what God has sent down to the prophets is required to acknowledge that the Word and Spirit are God, else they attribute God's creative power or life-giving spirit to something other than God.

This type of argumentation is repeated throughout the treatise. In one particularly interesting passage, the Christian author writes:

> The Christ said to the children of Israel : If ye believe not in me, believe in my work which I do Uohn10:38]. The Christ created, and no one can create but God. You will find in the Koran: "And he spake and created *(khalaqa)* from clay like the form of a bird, and breathed *(nafakha)* into it, and lo! It became a bird by the permission of God. "[21]

[20] Ibid., 24 (English) and 95 (Arabic).

[21] Ibid., 12 (English) and 84 (Arabic); Harris, "A Tract on the Triune Nature of God," 85.

This is a reference to *Sara* 3 *(Al-cImriin):49* in which Mary is told that her child will be a messenger *(rasiil)* performing signs *(ayiit)* to confirm the revelation to previous prophets. Although the Qur'an emphasizes that Jesus only creates "with God's permission," our writer uses the text to draw a direct line from Jesus, the Messiah, to God who creates the birds of the air through his Word and Breath. If only God creates and give life, then the Qur'an itself is a witness to Jesus' divinity.

Near the end of "Against the Muslims" the author offers a brief profession of faith addressed to God, summarizing his point: "I believe in You and Your Word and Your Holy Spirit, one God and one Lord, as You have sent down and demonstrated to human beings in Your Books. . . ."[22] The statement is thoroughly Christian-three Persons, one God, one Lord-yet appealing to Muslim sensibilities-a revelation sent down and found in the Books, one God, his Word and his Spirit. At this point, the text turns immediately to the necessity of baptism for the forgiveness of sins, taught by Christ.[23] If one accepts part of what has been given in revelation through the prophets, the writer argues, then one is obligated to follow it in its totality.

It is noteworthy that the author of this text takes for granted a common belief with Muslims in the one God of the Prophets-what remains to be demonstrated is the truth of the Trinity revealed through the Incarnation. He does not attempt to discredit the Qur'an, but instead uses what he sees as further evidence of the Trinity overlooked by Muslims in their own sacred text. In other words, he identifies an opening to Trinitarian monotheism in the Qur'an's description of Allah as a creating and revealing God, an opening for authentic theological exchange.

IV. MAR TIMOTHY AND THE CALIPH AL-MAHDI

Perhaps the first account of an extensive discussion between a Muslim and a Christian is the well-known conversation between the Nestorian Catholicos, Mar Timothy, and the Caliph al-MahdI

[22] My translation. Gibson, *A Treatise on the Triune Nature of God,* 32 (English) and 103 (Arabic).

[23] Gibson, *A Treatise on the Triune Nature of God,* 32-36 (English) and 103-7 (Arabic).

(775-85) dated in the year 781.[24] The original text is in Syriac (although later Arabic translations exist) and has long been recognized as containing the major themes and the earliest answers given by Christians to Muslims who were asking them to clarify their faith. This is well-trodden ground, and it is not necessary for us to examine Timothy's responses in detail here.[25] It is enough to note that the Caliph's questions begin with the Incarnation and how God can beget a son without genitals or sexual intercourse (which implies that God has a body like creatures), moving to the question of the relationships between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The typical challenge presented to the Christian respondent in this context is how to express the relationships among the persons of the Trinity without succumbing to tritheism. Like others, Mar Timothy draws on the work of previous writers to develop formulae useful for Christians living with Muslims and needing to defend themselves against efforts to convert them to Islam. But although he sees that the "new Jews," that is, the Muslims, present a challenge for discerning truth from falsehood just as in previous times, and many useful parallels can be drawn with the past, Timothy recognizes it is not enough simply to translate old arguments. Rather, the situation requires Christians to return to the very foundations of their faith in order to meet the questions and articulate the fullness of Christian faith.[26]

[24] Alphonse Mingana, "The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi," in *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic, and Garshuni, Edited and Translated with a Critical Apparatus,* vol. 2 (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1928), 1-162. See also Hans Putman, *L'eglise et l'islam sous Timothee I (780-823)* (Beyrouth: Dar al-Machreq editeurs, 1975).

[25] See for example Sidney H. Griffith, *Syriac Writers on Muslims and the Religious Challenge of Islam* (Kottaym: St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 1995}; "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: from Patriarch John III (d. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286)," in *25'h Wolfenbuttler Symposion* "Religionsgespriiche im Mittelalter," 11-15 June 1989, ed. Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewohner (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), 251-73; and "The Prophet Muhammad: His Scripture and His Message according to the Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac from the First Abbasid Century," in *La vie du Prophete Mahomet,* Colloque de Strasbourg (octobre 1980) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 99-146.

[26] Griffith, "Disputes," 264. Reference to the "new Jews" is found in Timothy's *Letter 40.* See Thomas R. Hurst, "Letter 40 of the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I (727-823): An Edition and Translation" (M.A. Thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1981), 48.

Central to the argument Timothy develops in the discussion with al-Mahdi is that it is not contradictory to describe God as one and three, but is rather necessary for truthful belief about God. He begins by arguing that just as the Caliph is physically one, always existing along with his word (or knowledge) and his spirit, so God also is one, existing eternally with his Word and his Spirit. A further comparison can be made with the sun, its light, and its heat. This analogy has its limitations, Timothy notes, as do all comparisons between God and the created world. Yet what the analogy illustrates is that blasphemy lies not in claiming three persons in God, but rather in saying that there was a time when God was without his Word and his Spirit, that is, without knowledge and life. In fact, he argues, Scripture makes clear that God cannot be Creator without his Word and his Spirit.[27]

Later in the dialogue, after Timothy praises Muhammad for leading his people away from polytheism to *tawhid* (the belief that God is one), the Caliph states that it is obvious that Timothy should "accept the words of the Prophet" that "God is one and that there is no other one besides Him."[28] Mar Timothy answers, "This belief in one God, 0 my sovereign, I have learned from the Torah, from the Prophets and from the Gospel."[29] But the God revealed is one *triune* God. In the ensuing discussion, Timothy marshals a wide variety of arguments from Scripture and Pythagorean number theory to build on his previous point about the unity of God and the nature of the relationships between the divine persons so that they remain coequal, coeternal, unmixed, unconfused, and uncircumscribed.[30]

The account concludes with Mar Timothy's amicable departure from the Caliph's presence, leaving his reader to ponder several points. First, it is clear that he identifies a common belief with his Muslim interlocutor in the unity of God, and that this has been revealed through the Old and New Testaments. To the extent that Muhammad preached this, Timothy acknowledges that it is true. One does not find in Mar Timothy's discussion any disparaging

[27] Mingana, "The Apology of Timothy," 22-23.

[28] Ibid., 62.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 24-27, 63-90.

remarks about Muslim practices or Muhammad. [31] He further leaves aside the question of the authorship of the Qur'an and its relationship to Muhammad, focusing instead on what he sees as the central issue: the necessity of professing the triune God revealed in the Incarnation.

Timothy's conversation with the Caliph continues in the vein of John of Damascus-he recognizes theological agreement with his Muslim questioner in *tawhid,* but does not shy away from arguing for the authority of Jewish and Christian Scripture as proof of for the Incarnation and Trinity. He continues to maintain that it is *Trinitarian* monotheism that has been revealed in the Scriptures. What is different about Mar Timothy is the respect he shows the Caliph, and his apparent decision to steer clear of criticizing the practices of Muslims (likely in order to avoid direct confrontation with someone who holds his life in his hands!). This approach would come to be incorporated in later writings and accounts of such discussions in Arabic, which were readily accessible to Muslims, unlike Greek and Syriac texts.

V. ABO RA'ITA AL-TAKRITI AND *TAHRJF*

Habib ibn Khidma Abu Ra'ita al-Takrm, the Jacobite (Syrian Orthodox) Christian who died sometime around 835 in Takr"it near Baghdad, carries on this apologetical tradition, but adds a new dimension by emphasizing philosophical, rather than scriptural, proofs. Abu Ra'ita belongs to those who came to be known as *mutakallim iin,* "the ones who make arguments about religion," and was apparently well known in his day as a controversialist as far away as Armenia. [32] I have argued elsewhere that Abu Ra'ita's signal contribution to Arabic Christian theology

[31] This, in spite of the fact that it was written in Syriac. This may be evidence for the historicity of this conversation, since if this text reflects an actual conversation, Timothy would have been careful in the presence of the Caliph to avoid inflammatory remarks. Other texts in Syraic, Greek, and Coptic commonly show less restraint, especially if the author believes they will not be accessible to arabophone Muslims. See the excellent overview by Griffith, "The Prophet Muhammad."

[32] Sandra Toenies Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth" in the Early Islamic Period: The Christian Apologies of Ab ii Raita,* HCMR 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), esp. 1-65.

is his introduction of certain philosophical terminology in Arabic into discussions on the Trinity precisely in response to some apparently intractable problems in theological debates with Muslims. One particularly difficult issue involved the use of Scripture in defense of Christian doctrine. At the root of the problem is the qur'anic charge of *tahrif,* the claim that Christians and Jews have changed *(ghayyara)* and altered *(harrafa)* their Scriptures, making them unreliable.[33] Judging by the literature that begins to appear in the time between John of Damascus and Abu Ra'ita, Muslim thinkers were continuing to develop the idea of *tahrif* and using it in their apologetics as an answer to the claim that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures in fact support Trinitarian doctrine.

The charge of *tahrif* is found in several places in the Qur'an and is usually associated with an affirmation that Muhammad is a true prophet and his message is from God. The initial function of the charge was probably that of a defense against Jews and Christians who did not accept Muhammad as a prophet like those of the Old Testament. In response, the Qur'an states that first the Jews and then the followers of Jesus have hidden the true revelation predicting the coming of another final prophet. By the end of Muhammad's life the concept is used to account for any discrepancy between the Torah and the Gospels, and the messages he received. As a consequence, all verses interpreted by Christians as pointing to a triune God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ are deemed by Muslims as rooted in error.[34]

The distortion of true revelation is identified in the Qur'an in a number of ways: as *kitmiin* or *labs* ("hiding and concealing" or "disguising" the true revelation), *layy* ("to twist" the pronunciation of the text so its true meaning is obscured), *nisyiin* ("forgetting, overlooking" part of the text), or most seriously, *tabdil,* the substitution of a word for another word. Understandably, the gravity of the offense of altering the Scripture or its meaning lies in intentionality-verses may be accidentally

[33] For a complete survey of this problem in Abu Ra'ita's writings, see Keating, "Refuting the Charge of *Tahrif.*"

[34] Ibid., 41-44.

forgotten, but God will punish the deliberate concealment of revelation. In the effort to account for discrepancies among the "Books," many Muslim scholars reached the same conclusion: any scriptural text that compromises *tawhid* is the result of some form of *tahrif* and should be rejected as unsound. [35] Thus it became impossible for Christians to refer to scriptural evidence in support of their doctrines, even though the Qur'an acknowledged them as "People of the Book/Scripture."

For our purposes, it is enough to note that Muslim thinkers begin to employ the charge of *tahrif* against Christians more systematically as Islamic theological thought developed in the eighth and ninth centuries. As a result, whereas earlier Christians such as the writer of the tract "Against the Muslims" and Mar Timothy relied heavily on scriptural arguments and spent a great deal of their apologetical energy demonstrating that scriptural evidence was on their side, by the beginning of the ninth century argumentation shifts away from Scripture to metaphysics. This change strongly suggests that Muslims were using a more developed notion of *tahrif* in oral debates.

Extant Christian texts reveal a move from emphasis on Scripture to argumentation drawn from philosophical sources, and in this Abu Ra'ita leads the way. In his most influential work, *On the Holy Trinity,* Abu Ra'ita again takes up the Muslim demand that Christians recognize their common belief in the one all-powerful Creator God of the prophets, and abandon a belief in the Trinity that leads to *shirk.* In response, Abu Ra'ita takes advantage of the Hellenistic ideas that were beginning to be translated into Arabic in his day, beginning a systematic response to Muslim objections by demonstrating that it is not contradictory to say God is one and three, drawing on Aristotelian and Pythagorean arguments that would have been familiar to his readers. Abu Ra'ita then makes a novel move, adopting one of the Arabic terms being employed by translators for tbtWTTJC::

[35] One should also note that this is the period in which extensive criteria were being developed to determine the authenticity of the *isniid* (chain of transmission) of a *hadith* (oral tradition concerning Muhammad). Neither Christians nor Jews could produce a reliable chain of transmission for their own Scriptures, casting doubt on their reliability in Muslim eyes.

(individual property) to explain how to understand the three *hypostases*.[36]

The term he uses is *sifa,* also commonly translated as 'attribute'. In a nutshell, Abu Ra'ita argues that just as Muslims speak of the divine attributes (the *sifiitAllah)* of living, knowing, and wise, Christians recognize that these attributes are persons *(aqaniin)-the* Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Further, it is only because of these attributes that God lives, creates, communicates, sends prophets, etc., as even the Muslim sacred book states. Without the *sifiit* God is lacking. Thus, rather than being contradictory in saying that God is both one and three, Christians recognize the true necessity of the Trinity.

Throughout the entire treatise Abu Ra'ita demonstrates that if Muslims accept the basic principles of logic put forth by the philosophers, they should accept the Trinity as well. The Old and New Testaments have not been distorted; rather, Muslims have not followed out the full implications of belief in one God who creates and communicates with his creation. Christians know this truth because they have received and accepted God's perfect revelation in the Incarnation.

Abu Ra'ita's remaining works in response to Islam on the Incarnation and proof of the truth of Christianity place the Trinity at the center. For him, since God's power to create and communicate flow directly from the triune nature, a foundation exists with Muslims on which to build a conversation. Like many other writers answering the challenge of Islam, he assumes a commonality with Muslims in their belief in one God and in the prophets, and treats it as "seeds of the word."

CONCLUSION

One could go on to multiply evidence, but I think it is possible to make some general observations based on the texts we have looked at here.

First, the consensus that arises out of the earliest encounters between Muslims and Christians-be they Chalcedonian,

[36] Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth,"* 147-215.

Nestorian, Miaphysite/Jacobite, speakers of Arabic, Greek or Syriac-is that the dividing line between the two communities is Trinitarian monotheism. For Muslims, belief in the Trinity compromises *tawhid* and leads one to gravest of all sins, *shirk,* in associating what is not God with God. This is the result of a distortion of previous Scriptures that has now been corrected by the Qur'an. The only solution for Christians is to recognize this and abandon the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Christian response in the texts presented here is that when Muslims follow out the full implications of monotheistic belief in a God who creates and communicates with his creation they will see that Trinitarian monotheism is necessary. Without it, God is neither creator nor revealer; he has no personal relationship to creation and remains remote. As John of Damascus said, Muslims may call Christians "Associators," but according to Christian doctrine, the Muslims are "Mutilators." For this reason, Christian writers responding to Islam emphasize the necessity and logical consistency of Trinitarian doctrine.

Second, although accounts of the discussions between a Muslim and a Christian end with one or the other "winning" the debate, the impasse remains. One rarely hears that the arguments result in the conversion of an individual to the opposing religion. Even Abu Ra'ita's move away from scriptural evidence to philosophical proofs was apparently more successful for strengthening Christians than altering Muslim allegiance. Not much has changed since those earliest debates. In the end, we may not be able to overcome the impasse, but it is critical to know where it lies. Knowing where our difference lies has enormous implications for how one regards the way in which to proceed in contemporary relations, dialogue, and the goals of evangelization and mission, preaching and teaching, even the theological enterprise.

In keeping with the Islamic traditions of Sharica, *A Common Word* emphasizes the human obligations to God and one another. God's commands, according to the Qur'an, make clear how we are to live as creatures and servants of God (cf. *Slira* 51 *[Dhariyat]:56).*For the most part, Christians and Jews can agree

with these requirements. But the Christian response must be that in the Incarnation, God has revealed the perfection of human beings and human community-that God's very self is made known as a loving triune community who has healed the broken relationship with humanity through divine self-sacrifice. God is not simply the omnipotent, omniscient Lord of all creation, the merciful and just judge; God is the triune Lord who loves and calls those who bear within themselves the divine image.

We do well to remember the insights of the first Christians who encountered Muslims as Islam was being formulated and codified. They saw that the most important belief that united them was also what divided them most deeply-not doing good works, not a common claim to a spiritual father in Abraham or that God communicates to human beings, not even a common belief in love of God and love of neighbor. All of these may be of great value in finding common ground on which to promote peaceful communities, and in this sense the *Common Word* initiative is an important step in the right direction. But *A Common Word* also reminds us of what the early Christian apologists recognized in their engagement with Muslims: the significance of the radical teaching of the Trinity. The confession that there is one God *is* what we have in common, but what makes Christian faith unique (and true) is the recognition that Christ reveals to us the triune nature of God-that God is in his very nature relational, and so God's self-sacrificial love for us is possible. That makes all the difference.[37]

[37] An earlier version of this article was given at the annual meeting of the Academy of Catholic Theology, May 2009.

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ORIGINAL JUSTICE, ORIGINAL SIN, AND THE FREE-WILL DEFENSE

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THE "FREE-WILL DEFENSE" is one of the most enduring and powerful approaches Christian philosophers and theologians have employed in addressing the problem of evil. According to this approach, in its most basic form, God created human beings with intellect and will so that we could enter into loving relationships with God and with one another, as well as enjoy the broader privilege (which other nonrational inhabitants of the world do not enjoy) of making and exercising rationally contemplated as well as genuinely free choices. Such choices, however, cannot be constrained by other agents or causes influencing us to act in certain ways; even God, via an exercise of omnipotence, cannot create human beings such that we always *freely* choose to do what is good.[1] Consequently, we human beings freely have chosen and continue to choose to do what is *not* good; that is, we make morally deficient choices with negative

[1] *Pace* J. L. Mackie, who famously argues that it does remain within the scope of omnipotence to create human beings such that we always freely choose the good (see J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64 [1955]: 200-212). Proponents of the free-will defense obviously disagree with Mackie on this point. See, for example, Stephen T. Davis, "Free Will and Evil," in Stephen T. Davis, ed., *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy,* 2d ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 77; and Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 75-77. John Hick argues that while God could have created human beings such that we always freely act rightly in relation to one another, he could not have created human beings such that we always freely act rightly in relation to God (see John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love,* 2d ed. [1977; reprint, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007], 271-75).

consequences, most notably, inducing harm in others.[2] Thus, as it is often described, the free-will defense shows how the existence of God is compatible with the existence of evil because (1) human beings, rather than God, are the cause of evil, or at least a significant class of evils, what are called "moral evils"; and (2) the existence of moral evils and all their negative consequences are still insufficient to outweigh the great good that free will is-that good again, being the fundamental ability, which all human beings possess, to make genuinely free choices and carry out those choices unimpeded.[3]

Construed in this most basic form, the free-will defense still suffers from significant defects. First, it cannot account for the existence of "natural evils" such as sickness, disease, natural disasters, and even death that do not necessarily result from the choices of moral agents. Second, it remains ambiguous at best whether free will really is the sort of good robust enough to outweigh all instances of its misuse, particularly when we reflect on the most heinous instances of its misuse on both an individual and a global level. Of course, whether free will *in fact* constitutes such a good is something only God, or an omniscient mind, could know; thus, for all we know, the very existence and exercise of free will does (or will) outweigh all instances of its misuse. Furthermore, it fully remains within the scope of omnipotence to bring good out of evil, whether moral or natural.[4] Yet it still

[2] We also fail morally insofar as we refrain from doing what we ought to do. Such failures to act rightly also can induce harm in others (and in ourselves).

[3] In other words, essential to the goodness of free will is the ability to bring about states of affairs in the world, whether good or bad. Thus, by continually intervening and preventing us from bringing about bad states of affairs by way of our free choices, which presumably God could do, God also would be violating an important aspect of our freedom. For an elaboration of this point, see Michael J. Murray, "Theodicy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology,* ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 262-65.

[4] I take this claim to be central to any genuine theodicy, although it clearly can be difficult to defend, since so many of the evils we encounter in the world are not manifestly connected to greater goods. The best way to defend the claim, then, is first to defend a robust conception of divine omnipotence as well as providence, and then draw inferences about God's ability and willingness to bring good out of evil, thereby dispensing with the ultimately fruitless empirical task of demonstrating the connection between various evils and the greater goods that result from them (leaving open the possibility that some evils are *not* connected to greater goods).

remains difficult to exonerate God from being indictable (even if not directly) for the existence of moral evils when we see such a preponderance for moral evils in the free choices that human beings make and carry out. One could argue that only an unjust or unloving God would endow human beings with the sort of free will that enables us consistently to bring about evils of such massive quantity and severity-all with his permission.

Consequently, if the free-will defense is to succeed, it needs a more significant theological underpinning. In particular, it needs to incorporate specific Christian doctrines so that it can deal more effectively with the objections just enumerated, and therefore constitute a more powerful overall response to the problem of evil. In this article, I advance and defend two such doctrines, as officially promulgated and interpreted by the Catholic Church: the doctrine of "original justice" and the doctrine of "original sin."[5] According to the first doctrine, God not only created human beings so that we could function in the natural world; he also supplied us with an additional grace that enabled us to function properly and optimally, in harmonious relationships with ourselves, each other, and with God. Thus, according to this doctrine, God imparted his own goodness to human beings in order to ensure, in a way different from cancelling or overriding our own free will, that we attain maximal human flourishing (short of the beatific vision in this life) and thus live in a world without having to experience evil, whether moral or natural. According to the second doctrine, human beings lost the grace with which we were originally endowed when we freely abandoned our privileged relationship to God and thereby became remarkably susceptible not only to suffering evil but also to doing evil. This occurred because, most profoundly, we experienced precisely the sort of interior damage to our natures that resulted from being deprived of original justice. It is in this "fallen," dysfunctional state-a state of original sin-that all human beings, as possessors of the same damaged nature, continue to exist.

[5] For an official exposition of these doctrines, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc.; Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 95-105.

In this article, therefore, I advance a more theologically robust and informed free-will defense, which allows me to address the problem of evil in a more theologically robust and informed way. In doing so, however, I do not claim to offer a comprehensive response to the problem of evil, or full-blown "theodicy"; instead, I offer a partial response, which I place in the service of a full-blown theodicy.[6] Moreover, my own approach is explicitly Thomistic, insofar as I formulate much of it drawing on Aquinas's own formulations of the doctrines of original justice and original sin, or the human being as created and fallen. Structurally, the article consists of three main sections. In first section, I consider and critique a recent, expanded free-will defense offered by Peter van Inwagen, which also incorporates the doctrines of creation and the Fall. I then introduce key aspects of Aquinas's own thought in order to make the requisite improvements to this approach. In the second section of the article, I consider some main objections to my own Thomistic approach, as I will have formulated it so far: in particular, that the doctrines of original justice and original sin are unintelligible from the standpoints of moral psychology and evolutionary biology. I also begin to consider the objection that there is no intelligible way of explaining the transmission of original sin. In the third and final section of the article, I respond to these objections, offering a final defense of my central claim that the free-will defense is best served when it is wedded with a specifically Thomistic construal of the human being as originally created in a state of original

[6] In the contemporary literature, Alvin Plantinga has made a technical distinction between a "defense" and "theodicy," the former aiming to show the mere logical compatibility of God and evil, the latter aiming to offer a positive (that is, true) explanation of the coexistence of God and evil; see Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 27-28. Similarly, Peter van lnwagen argues that while a defense and theodicy are both, formally speaking, "a story according to which both God and evil exist," "a theodicy is a story that is told as the real truth of the matter," while "a defense is a story that, according to the teller, may or may not be true, but which the teller maintains, has some desirable feature that does not entail truth-perhaps (depending on context) logical consistency or epistemic possibility (truth-for-all-anyone-knows)" (*The Problem ofEvil,* 7). As we will see, van lnwagen offers a defense, while I offer a theodicy (at least in part), since I think theodicy is the more ambitious and valuable project. To keep things simple, however, I will refer throughout the article to the "free-will defense" without further employing the technical distinction between a defense and theodicy.

justice, but now subject to defects (both bodily and spiritual) that are the inherited consequences of original sin.

I. THE EXPANDED FREE-WILL DEFENSE

A) Peter van Inwagen's Free-Will Defense

In *The Problem of Evil,* based on his 2003 Gifford Lectures, Peter van Inwagen offers his own expanded or "more sophisticated" free-will defense that he claims undermines the philosophical argument against God's existence from evil in its "global" form. Van lnwagen's strategy, more specifically, is to offer a version of the traditional free-will defense that incorporates the Christian story of creation, fall, and atonement-a story which he claims is internally coherent, plausible, and hence "true for all anyone knows. "[7] By advancing this story-or more specifically, placing it on the lips of a "Theist" addressing a hypothetical audience of "ideal" or neutral agnostics-van Inwagen claims to induce sufficient doubt that one of the main premises of the argument from evil is true, namely, that "if there were a God, we would not find vast amounts of horrendous evil in the world." [8] If, given the details of this story, there is (or would be, for neutral agnostics in particular) no reason to accept this premise as true, then, van Inwagen claims, "the global argument from evil is a failure. "[9]

The main details of this story, as van Inwagen tells it, are as follows. For millions of years God guided the course of evolution so as eventually to produce a species that served as the immediate predecessors of human beings. Then, "in the fullness of time," God took the whole population of our immediate predecessors (who had formed a small breeding community) and "miraculously

[7] For details of the story, see van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil,* 84-90.

[8] Ibid., 91.

[9] Ibid. For van Inwagen, the "global" concerns the totality of evil that exists, while the "local" argument concerns particular singular horrible events. He offers a different response to the latter than he does to the former, even though his response to the former informs his response to the latter. In this article, I do not address the local argument directly either, although, like van Inwagen, I do think it is deserving of its own response.

raised them to rationality," affording them the gifts of language, abstract thought, and disinterested love, as well as, of course, free will, which is necessary for love.[10] God also took these new human beings and brought them into mystical union with him, in a state comparable to the beatific vision. In this privileged state, these human beings lived in perfect harmony with one another and with God; they also possessed "preternatural powers," which enabled them "to protect themselves from wild beasts (which they were able to tame with a look), from disease (which they were able to cure with a touch), and from random, destructive natural events (like earthquakes), which they knew about in advance and were able to escape."[11] Consequently, there was no evil in the world to which human beings were subject.

But then, unexpectedly, human beings separated themselves from their union with God, and the result was "horrific." They now faced destruction from the random forces of nature, and became subject to old age and natural death. Further generations of human beings "fell" even further, as they "drifted further and further from God" into evils such as idolatry, war, murder, slavery, and rape.[12] As a result, "a certain frame of mind had become dominant among them, a frame of mind latent in the genes they had inherited from a million or more generations of ancestors" that became wedded to rationality; all of this, in turn, formed "the genetic substrate of what is called original or birth sin: an inborn tendency to do evil against which all human efforts are in vain."[13] God then looked out over his ruined world, and the plight of human beings, and decided to set in motion a "rescue operation," whose main goal was to bring it about that human beings once again love God. But "since love essentially involves free will," God cannot enforce his rescue plan; human beings

[10] Ibid., 85. Throughout the article, I will refer to the "first" human beings without specifying how many first human beings there were (whether one or many; van Inwagen clearly thinks there were many). Occasionally, however, when discussing Aquinas, I will follow his lead and refer only to the first human being, since Aquinas typically has only one human being, Adam, in mind. I discuss more specific issues surrounding the origins of human beings in the second and third sections of the article.

[11] Ibid., 86.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 86-87.

must want to be rescued, and cooperate with God.[14] Moreover, human beings must recognize that they need to be rescued, which in turn means that they must know what it is like to live in a world without God, "in a world of horrors."[15] Thus, God cannot cancel all of the evil in the world, because if he did he would undermine his own plan of reconciliation. The gift of free will is (as God knows) "worth it," since "an eternity of love depends on this gift, and that eternity outweighs the horrors of the very long but, in the most literal sense, temporary period of divine-human estrangement."[16] Moreover, evil eventually will come to an end. "Every evil done by the wicked to the innocent will have been avenged, and every tear will have been wiped away."[17] The only suffering that will remain will be merited, in particular by those who refuse to cooperate with God's rescue operation and remain forever, by their own choice, in hell.

Van Inwagen's purpose in telling this story is to offer an expanded free-will defense that explains why we continue to encounter the sorts of evils we do in the world, both in quantity and in kind. Van Inwagen does not claim personally to believe all of the story's details, but whether he doubts of any its details is irrelevant, he says. The story simply needs to be possibly true, or "true for all we know," and plausible enough so as to cast doubt on the claim that God and evil (considered on its global scale) cannot coexist. Yet, despite what van Inwagen claims here, it also remains true that if the story he offers proves to lack some internal coherence, or fails in some of its details in properly explaining how human beings find themselves in a fallen state for which they remain directly responsible, then we do not have sufficient reason to doubt that God and evil cannot coexist (since the original free-will defense cannot account for the sorts of evils that we find in the world). The story, even if it is not demonstrably true or false, needs to stand up under critical rational scrutiny. Thus, it is worth examining crucial aspects of the story in more detail-for our present purposes, those aspects

[14] Ibid., 87.
[15] Ibid., 88.
[16] Ibid., 90.
[17] Ibid., 89.

that deal with the creation of human beings and their subsequent fall.[18]

Regarding those aspects of the story that deal with the creation of human beings, the most remarkable is the claim that human beings, once they emerged through divine intervention in the course of evolutionary history, not only possessed full powers of rationality, but also possessed preternatural powers that enabled them to protect themselves from disease, death, and the random forces of nature that railed against them. This claim may strike us as utterly wild and fantastic, not simply because we currently do not possess these powers (the story offers a reason why this is the case), but rather because their modes of operation seem utterly inexplicable. How, precisely, were the original human beings able to exercise these powers in such a way that they were able to escape disease, death, and the impositions of natural forces? In van Inwagen's story, the suggestion is that these human beings were able to tame wild beasts "with a look," cure diseases "with a touch," and escape from natural disasters because "they knew about [them] in advance." But this constitutes further description, not explanation. Moreover, the description itself is more fitting of powers possessed not by a human being but some other sort of being altogether.

There are several points to consider regarding the claim about what happens to human beings as a result of the Fall, or the separation of human beings from the privileged relationship they enjoyed with God. According to the story as van lnwagen tells it, not only did human beings lose their preternatural powers, but they also began to inhabit a certain frame of mind "latent in the genes they had inherited from a million or more generations of ancestors," which eventually formed the "genetic substrate" of what we now deem original sin-the inclination towards evil

[18] To my knowledge, no one yet has engaged van Inwagen on the specific details of the story he tells as part of his response to the global argument from evil. However, van lnwagen's response to the local argument, and his additional response to the problem of animal suffering, have received some critical attention. See John Martin Fischer and Neal A. Tognazzini, "Exploring Evil and Philosophical Failure: A Critical Notice of Peter van Inwagen's *The Problem of Evil," Faith and Philosophy* 24 (2007): 458-74; and William L. Rowe, "Peter van Inwagen on the Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008): 425-31.

(moral evil in particular) which all human beings possess. All of this occurred, of course, because of a primal misuse of free will, which caused human beings to cease operating according to their initial design conditions. On one level, then, we need to raise the question, which van Inwagen never addresses, of why human beings, who enjoyed an uninterrupted mystical union with God, would sever themselves from this union in the first place. On another level, we need to raise the question of how, more precisely, this primal misuse of free will triggered such drastic and seemingly unrelated consequences. That human beings presently suffer from death and disease because of a primal misuse of free will, for example, can be difficult to explain. That a positive genetic alteration occurred in human beings as a result of a primal misuse of free will also can be difficult to explain. Moreover, if human beings are now, at bottom, genetically predisposed to commit certain evils, then it becomes difficult to see how human beings can remain responsible for those evils, as well as to see how human beings, with this genetic predisposition, have not transmuted into another sort of being, or acquired a new sort of nature altogether.

There are other noteworthy aspects of van Inwagen's story-for example, his claims about a "rescue plan" and what it means to live in a horror-filled world-but for economy's sake we need to offer clarifications and make improvements on his claims about creation and fall more specifically in order to make the expanded free-will defense more intelligible. At stake, again, is the intelligibility of the claims that moral and natural evils arise in human history because of a primal abuse of free will, and that human beings continue to suffer and do evil as result, not haphazardly but regularly. (We will leave aside, for the most part, the claim that the gift of free will is worth the cost of all the moral evil that exists in human history). Further defending these claims is particularly important, since the doctrine of original sin as traditionally conceived, and interpreted in a novel way by a noted philosopher such as van Inwagen, continues to come under fire by modern thinkers who view it as hopelessly outdated and

unrealistic (as well as subversive).[19] I will address some of the main objections these thinkers offer in the third section of the article, but first, we need to prepare for that important step by developing an alternative account of creation and fall, offered by Aquinas, which resembles but also surpasses van Inwagen's account in important respects, and is therefore worthy of continued exposition and defense.

B) A Thomistic Free-Will Defense

In the *Summa contra Gentiles,* Aquinas calls our attention to the chief consequences or "penalties" that he claims afflict all human beings as a result of the Fall:

> Now, the human race commonly suffers various penalties, both bodily and spiritual. Greatest among the bodily ones is death, and to this all the others are ordered: namely, hunger, thirst, and others of this sort. Greatest, of course, among the spiritual penalties is the frailty of reason: from this it happens that man with difficulty arrives at knowledge of the truth; that with ease he falls into error; and that he cannot entirely overcome his beastly appetites, but is over and over again beclouded by them.[20]

Here, Aquinas offers an accurate description of the plight of human beings in our current condition. We do suffer bodily, not just in the sense that we hunger and thirst (this is part of the normal, proper functioning of an animal), but that we can die

[19] Ian McFarland deals with this issue in "The Fall and Sin," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology,* ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 140-59. I will address some of what McFarland says in this chapter below.

[20] *ScG* IV, c. 52. (All quotations from the *Summa contra Gentiles* are taken from *Summa contra Gentiles,* book 4, trans. Charles J. O'Neil [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957; repr., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975]). My own exposition and subsequent defense of Aquinas's position on original justice and original sin is informed by the following helpful accounts: Rudi A. te Velde, "Evil, Sin, and Death: Thomas Aquinas on Original Sin," in *The Theology ofThomas Aquinas,* ed. Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 143-66; Oswin McGrath, "St. Thomas' Theory of Original Sin," *The Thomist* 16 (1953): 161-89; P. DeLetter, "Original Sin, Privation of Original Justice," *The Thomist* 17 (1954): 469-509; and T. C. O'Brien, trans. and ed., *Summa Theologiae,* vol. 26, *Original Sin,* Blackfriars ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill /London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964), in particular appendices 7-9.

from hunger and thirst, which means that our bodies are corruptible, oriented toward death rather than life. We also suffer "spiritually," insofar as we often lack the requisite knowledge of the truth (moral knowledge in particular) and are often overrun by unwieldy, "beastly appetites" or desires, when they exceed the governing power of our reason.

An objector might protest that Aquinas has wrongly diagnosed the current human condition: there is nothing wrong with us; it is purely natural for human beings to suffer bodily as well as spiritually, in the sense that our powers of intellect and will often fail us, especially since they are often subject to inordinately strong passions or desires. In fact, Aquinas agrees with this claim in one sense. He recognizes that human beings naturally can experience bodily and spiritual malfunction because we are composite substances, made up of different parts-an immaterial soul united to a material body-and the existence and operations of the body can interfere with the existence and operations of the soul.[21] This occurs, most notably, when sensory experience, from which all knowledge begins, interferes with reason's ability to grasp the true natures of things (by virtue of introducing the possibility of error), and the "sensible appetite," drawn as it is to sensory or bodily pleasures, often becomes insubordinate to reason's governing power.[22] And yet, Aquinas rejects the view that human beings, as created by God, were left in this purely natural state. Appealing to divine providence and goodness, Aquinas claims that in creating human beings, God removed any "failure of nature" that would have prevented our "superior" spiritual nature from governing our "inferior" bodily nature, precisely in order to ensure optimal human flourishing. Aquinas concludes, then, "taking into consideration divine providence and the dignity of human nature on its superior side," that whatever defects, bodily or spiritual, that we experience in our current state are penalties. Thus, we also can conclude that "the human race was originally infected with sin."[23]

[21] *ScG* IV, c. 52.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

On Aquinas's view, then, God not only created the human being with the requisite parts (soul and body) and powers (intellective, sensory, and appetitive), but he also provided an additional grace-the grace of original justice-that ensured that the parts and powers of the human being would function properly and harmoniously, when they were properly aligned with one another: the "lower" powers subject to the "higher" powers, the body subject to the soul, and the human being (his reason m particular) subject to God:

Thus, then, according to the teaching of the faith, we set it down that man from the beginning was thus established by God: As long as man's reason was subject to God, not only did the inferior powers serve reason without obstacle, but the body also could not be impeded in subjection to reason by any bodily obstacle-God and His grace supplying, because nature had too little for perfecting this establishment. [24]

Original justice is therefore a supernatural gift, a habit *(habitus)* not of any particular power of the soul but of the soul itself, which was freely given to the human being by God in order to perfect the human being as a body-soul composite endowed with the requisite attending powers. [25] As perfective of the nature that the human being possesses, the grace of original justice also enabled (or, as it turns out, would have enabled) the human being to attain a distinctly supernatural end-unending life with God, or full participation in the divine life-beyond what he can attain by nature alone. And clearly, in order to reach this end, freely and easily, without impediment, the human being in his original state not only needed to be internally ordered (his parts and powers properly aligned), he also needed to be directly ordered to God, serving (knowing and loving) God with his entire being. [26]

[24] Ibid. For comparable accounts, see *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 95, a. 1 and *Quaestiones Disputatae De Malo,* q. 4, a. 1.

[25] As O'Brien points out, although Aquinas does not explicitly use the term, he thinks of original justice as a habit since it opposes the "corrupt habit" of original sin *(STh* 1-11, q. 82, a. 1, ad 1).

[26] As we will see below, Aquinas denies that the first human being enjoyed the beatific vision, although he would have enjoyed it eventually had he not sinned. As punishment for original sin, all human beings are denied the beatific vision, unless they receive sanctifying grace *(De Malo,* q. 5, a. 1). Nevertheless, the beatific vision remains the final end of all human

As Aquinas further understands it, original justice also includes sanctifying grace, which serves as the "root" of original justice.[27] The first human being was clearly created in this state of grace, but God further intended that all human beings be created, or born, in this state of grace, since sanctifying grace, along with original justice, were supposed to be propagated along with human nature itself, "conferred on man immediately on his receiving a rational soul."[28] But of course, the divine purpose was thwarted by primal sin, itself the source of original sin. Consequently, by freely ceasing to serve God with his entire being, the first human being not only was deprived of his own "proper and personal good-namely, grace, and the due order of the parts of the soul; he was deprived as well of a good related to the common nature."[29]

All human beings, therefore, by virtue of being severed from the divine source (and grace) that would enable them to function properly and even optimally-a consequence of a primal, tragic misuse of free will-are now internally misaligned, subject to significant physical and spiritual dysfunction. In the human being's original state, the soul not only served as the life-giving "form" of the body, it did so uninterruptedly, which means that the body was fully infused with the soul's life-giving power. But because the body is no longer wholly subject to the soul through the ordering grace of original justice, human beings experience all sorts of significant bodily defects, such as sickness, physical suffering, and death. Moreover, "all the powers of the soul," Aquinas writes, "are left, as it were, destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue."[30] No longer wholly subject to God, reason is deprived of knowledge, or its "order to the true," and therefore is subject to *ignorance.* The will

beings, insofar as all human beings desire happiness, and "final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the divine essence" (*STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 8). (All quotations from the *Summa Theologiae* are from *Summa Theologica,* trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province [New York: Benziger Bros., 1948; repr., Allen, Tex.: Christian Classics, 1981]).

[27] *STh* I, q. 100, a. 1, ad 2. See also *De Malo,* q. 4, a. 2, ad 1 of the third set of objections.

[28] *STh* I, q. 100, a. 1, ad 2.

[29] *ScG N,* c. 52

[30] *STh* I-II, q. 85, a. 3.

is deprived of justice, or its "order to the good," and is therefore subject to *malice.* No longer wholly subject to reason, the "lower" parts of the soul, or our appetitive drives (the irascible and concupiscible appetites) are respectively deprived of fortitude and temperance, and thus are subject to *weakness* and *concupiscence,* or desire unrestrained by reason.[31]

It is important to emphasize that Aquinas's description here of the penalties and "wounds" associated with original sin, which afflict all human beings, do not constitute any actual deterioration or change in the essential properties of our natures. The powers and operations of the soul in particular remain fully intact: they are neither eradicated nor even diminished by sin.[32] However, the full inclination to virtue that the first human being originally possessed is diminished in us. Thus, while we are not *directly* disposed towards sin and vice-in the sense that none of our powers are so disposed-we nevertheless are *indirectly* disposed towards sin and vice, since we are no longer constrained by original justice, "which hindered inordinate movements."[33] Moreover, we can further diminish the natural inclination to virtue through own individual efforts-our personally sinning, or (we should add) committing moral evils-by which we become "more easily inclined to sin again."[34] Thus, deprived of original justice, itself the most fundamental "good of nature," we human beings still possess all of the requisite parts and powers that enable us to function on some level. But those parts and powers, bereft of any organizing principle, can and do malfunction, and often do so drastically. In other words, deprived of original justice, we lack the organizing principle we need in order to remain (as the human being once did) in an ordered, harmonious state. We remain, in short, subject to bodily and spiritual failure.

We are now in a position to judge the merits of Aquinas's "story" of creation and fall, as incorporated into the free-will

[31] For Aquinas, while original sin is "formally" the privation of original justice, the "material" element of original sin is concupiscence, or "the inordinateness of the other powers of the soul [which] consists chiefly in their turning inordinately to mutable good" *(STh* I-II, q. 82, a. 3).

[32] See *STh* I-II, q. 85, a. 1.

[33] *STh* I-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad 3.

[34] *STh* I-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 1.

defense, in comparison with van lnwagen's story. First, Aquinas does not assign the first human being any special preternatural powers: the first human being remains recognizably human, insofar he possessed all of the same parts and powers that we do. The grace bestowed in the state of original justice lies, again, in the due ordering of those parts and powers, insofar as the first human being also was duly ordered to God. And it was the due ordering of those parts and powers that enabled the first human being to remain invulnerable to suffering and death as well as fully ordered to virtue. Thus, second, although the choice of the first human being to sunder himself from his ordered relationship to God is difficult to conceive (although, as we will see, not totally inexplicable), the consequences of that choice are not: the human being, along with human nature itself, became subject to significant internal malfunction, both physically and spiritually, once the human being ceased to subject himself to the source of his very being and goodness, and was thereby deprived of the ordering grace that God had provided him. As a result, all human beings now perpetually malfunction, as human history and experience readily bear out, which means we once again stand in desperate need of God's grace.

Third, on Aquinas's account, the damage done to human beings, and to human nature more specifically, is *metaphysical* and not merely *biological.* It consists in a metaphysical lack or privation of the needed habit or principle within human nature, or the due ordering of the parts and powers within human beings that should be present but is in fact absent.[35] This does not negate the fact that we do function differently now on a biological level than the first human being did in the prelapsarian state: the fact that we are now liable to death and bodily corruption clearly shows otherwise. Moreover, while Aquinas does hold that original sin, *qua* privation of original justice, is transmitted to the first human being's posterity by way of biological propagation-because that is how human nature, in part (the body or "flesh"), is transmitted-he does not think of original sin as constitutive of

[15] Here, Aquinas clearly follows Augustine in defining evil as a privation of good *(privatio bani).* See in particular *STh* I, q. 48, a. 1; and *De Malo,* q. 1, a. 1.

our biology (or genetic make-up) in some positive sense.[36] There is no "genetic substrate" of original sin, no biological accretion or formation of a positive inclination to moral evil that was previously latent (prior to primal sin) but is now active within us. On Aquinas's account, although human beings are ill-disposed to virtue and indirectly inclined to vice, we can point to no part or power in ourselves that has been corrupted or destroyed by sin. As a result of the Fall, our nature was not fundamentally altered; rather, our "nature was left to itself."[37] In short, we are damaged because of what we have *lost.* For fallen human beings, then, living the moral life becomes arduous, and even treacherous, but not impossible as such.

Van Inwagen certainly points us in the right direction in offering an expanded free-will defense that incorporates a story of creation and fall. However, I submit that the free-will defense is best served by the superior story of creation and fall, or original justice and original sin, that Aquinas offers us. It shows us how and why human beings are liable to suffer and do evil, thereby accounting for moral and natural evil. It also shows us that we find so much evil in the world not only because we are bereft of the ordering and preventive power of original justice, and thus liable to suffer and do evil, but also because, as Aquinas claims, we can further decrease our inclination to virtue (and thereby increase our inclination to vice) by continuing to commit evils, misusing the powers of intellect and will that God has given us. Moreover, on Aquinas's view, there is no created deficiency within human agency, or within the human being more generally, that would alleviate human responsibility for evil: by virtue of first endowing human nature itself with original justice, God removed any defects that consequently would have led any human being to suffer and do evil. Evil, whether moral or natural, is therefore not something that God causes or for which he remains causally responsible; in fact, it is something that God opposes, since it deprives his creation of the full measure of goodness with which he originally endowed it.

[36] See *De Malo,* q. 4, a. 1, and *STh* I, q. 83, a. 1, ad 2.

[37] *STh* I-II, q. 17, a. 9, ad 3.

This expanded free-will defense does not totally alleviate God's responsibility for evil. Not only did God bring human beings, along with their intellective and volitional powers, into the world in the first place-thereby creating the very possibility of evil in human history-but he also allows evil to persist (even if he prevents much evil from occurring).[38] This is why van Inwagen incorporates other narrative features within his free-will defense (such as our needing to recognize that we live in a horror-filled world, and God's putting in place a plan to rescue us from evil). I have similar views on these matters. For example, I believe God bears direct responsibility for evil by becoming incarnate and healing the damaged natures that human beings possess, thereby bringing good out of the worse sort of evil.[39] But as I said at the beginning of the article, I am only offering the expanded free-will defense, in its Thomistic form, as part of a more comprehensive response to the problem of evil, or genuine theodicy. In the remainder of the article, then, I continue to defend this expanded free-will defense, which entails noting some important objections (including some already noted) and responding to those objections in turn.

II. OBJECTIONS TO THE EXPANDED FREE-WILL DEFENSE

A central objection to any free-will defense based on an original fall from grace goes as follows: How can we intelligibly explain that fall as a deliberate choice made by the first human beings, who were created good (and in a state of grace), to sunder

[38] None of what I am arguing entails holding that God is not the cause of the *things* that cause or suffer evil, including the evil actions that human beings carry out. This may seem to cause a problem for the free-will defense: Brian Davies, for example, citing passages from Aquinas (e.g. *STh* I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 4), denies that the free-will defense is a feasible way to exonerate God because "the notion of human freedom which is central to this defence (freedom independent of God's causal activity) is a mirage" (Brian Davies, *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* [New York: Continuum, 2006], 129). And yet, since Davies, following Aquinas, also argues that God's ongoing causal activity does not necessitate human choices, the free-will defense remains viable, even if it must be qualified. The greater issue here, I claim, concerns God's ongoing responsibility for the evil that exists.

[39] I discuss other important components of this response in Paul A. Macdonald Jr., "God Incarnate and the Defeat of Evil," *Modern Theology* 25 (2009): 159-85.

themselves from God, who is himself an incommensurate good? John Hick, who fundamentally opposes the free-will defense in its traditional, specifically Augustinian form, puts the objection this way: "The basic and inevitable criticism is that the idea of an unqualifiedly good creature committing sin is self-contradictory and unintelligible" since "it is impossible to conceive of wholly good beings in a wholly good world becoming sinful."[40] The further criticism, however, concerns not only the moral make-up but also the moral psychology of the first human beings: there seems to be no intelligible motivation or reason for the first human beings to make such a choice. Thus, Joseph Fitzpatrick, a more recent opponent of the traditional, Augustinian position, claims the following:

> For the will to change there is needed some account of *motivation* or *reasons for changing* and it is here that a defender of Augustine's position must begin to struggle. To describe it simply, as Augustine does, as a lapse or failing of the will is to beg the question, for the question is: How could such a will lapse or fail? What could possibly have caused the will, motivated it, provided it with reason, to change or lapse? Can a perfectly good will change without it being already prone to evil, and if prone to evil, already implicated in sin?[41]

These are important critical questions, since they can be directed against any free-will defense that deliberately excludes sin from created humanity and locates any susceptibility to sin and do evil in fallen humanity, as a primary consequence of primal sin (i.e., the original sinful act performed by the first human beings). As I mentioned above, van Inwagen does not consider or address these sorts of questions, and his account of the Fall suffers as a result.

In order better to defend my own account, I address these questions (and the overall objection they constitute) in the section that follows. But for the moment, it is worth noting that they highlight an important, positive feature of the free-will defense, in its more specifically Augustinian and Thomistic form. When Augustine famously argues that there is no "efficient" or positive cause for evil in the will (especially in the will as originally created

[40] Hick, *Evil and the God of Love,* 62-63, 250.

[41] Joseph Fitzpatrick, "Original Sin or Original Sinfulness?" *New Blackfriars* 90 (2009): 461.

good), but only a "deficient" cause, he not only is denying that evil itself is a substance (his doctrine of evil as *privatio bani);* he also is denying, for good theological reasons, that evil (and hence willing evil) is rational.[42] There is, at bottom, no intelligible reason for evil itself, or why evil needs to exist at all. To assign evil, and hence primal sin, an efficient cause is to justify it, and thereby to affirm that *by itself* it is necessary, insofar as it contributes something positive on its own to God's good creation. On some level, then, if we are to defend the goodness of God as well as the goodness of God's creation, we cannot locate an efficient cause in the wills or minds of the first human beings-so understood as a predisposition to commit sin and evil, or a manifest desire to commit sin and evil-and must instead understand the primary explanation for primal sin to be some sort of *failure* that leads the first human beings as rational creatures to turn from God, the supreme good, toward finite things, which are lesser goods.

A second objection concerns the compatibility, or lack thereof, of the expanded free-will defense with evolutionary biology. If one accepts the data and insights of evolutionary biology, one also has to accept that physical suffering and death predate the emergence of human beings in evolutionary history: in short, suffering and death, particularly in the animal kingdom, are constitutive of the evolutionary process. As Daryl Damning, in his recent book, *Original Selfishness: Original Sin and Evil in the Light of Evolution,* writes, a material universe such as ours operates according to certain natural laws in which the perpetual and often violent cycle of life, suffering, and death is biologically necessary for new life to be born and species to emerge:

> The result [of God creating a material universe in which we live] has been billions of years of "nature red in tooth and claw" that scandalize many thinking people . . . . However, these eons of bloodshed were not gratuitous, but absolutely unavoidable given the ground rules of natural laws in general and competitive Darwinian evolution in particular. Nor are pain and death merely

[42] See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 12.7. Here Augustine discusses the angelic fall specifically, but since human beings, like angels, possess a rational nature (including free will), and imitate the angelic fall, we can adapt Augustine's insights about the angelic fall in order better to understand the human fall.

unfortunate byproducts of the process: they play essential, *constructive* roles in the evolution of life.[43]

According to Damning, the ability to feel pain and the suffering that accompanies it is particularly obvious from an evolutionary standpoint, when we consider that it is only by being able to feel pain and undergo suffering that an animal is able to avoid danger and seek safety in numbers, thereby promoting its own survival value (and, more accurately, that of its species). Moreover, death is necessary, because "it is obvious that crowding and exhaustion of resources would have brought evolution to a halt billions of years ago if literally nothing ever died."[44] Finally, death is also necessary for species to evolve, because it is only through death that undesirable genes are eliminated (a requirement for natural selection to work). On the cellular level, cells need to die so that animal life can function normally and properly, and over the course of evolution, highly complex bodily organisms such as ourselves finally can emerge and continue to survive.

According to Ian McFarland, all of this serves as a sufficient refutation of any traditional theological understanding of the Fall:

> It is now beyond dispute that there was no point where human existence was characterized by immunity from death, absence of labour pains, or an ability to acquire food without toil. Nor are the facts of evolutionary biology consistent with the descent of all human beings from a single ancestral pair (monogenesis) . . . . The geological record makes it clear that natural disasters, disease, suffering, and death long antedate the emergence of the human species. It follows that such phenomena cannot be interpreted as the consequence of human sin.[45]

McFarland also notes that "in light of these difficulties, there has been a strong trend in modern theology to dehistoricize the fall."[46] Even a strictly moral fall seems to be more explicable in a world in which disease, death, and disaster already existed.

Again, I will offer a full response to this objection in the section that follows, but it is important to note that none of what

[43] Daryl P. Damning and Monika K. Hellwig, *Original Selfishness: Original Sin and Evil in the Light of Evolution* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2006), 77.

[44] Ibid., 78.

[45] McFarland, "The Fall and Sin," 143.

[46] Ibid.

McFarland (or Damning before him) claims about evolutionary history *refutes* an historical Fall, as traditionally understood. For example, against what McFarland claims, it still seems possible, and hence *not* "now beyond dispute," that human beings, at some very early stage in their existence, were immune from experiencing the natural evils, including death, that have beset them for the vast majority of their existence, and even predated their entrance into evolutionary history. At bottom, traditional claims about an historical Fall from grace are theological in nature: just as these claims cannot possibly be scientifically proved, they cannot be scientifically disproven either, unless they are construed so narrowly that their compatibility with the best scientific insight becomes impossible. Otherwise, traditional theological belief and scientific insight do remain compatible, although it certainly requires some effort to show how this is the case.

The final objection concerns the transmission of original sin. On one level, there are difficulties surrounding the transmission of original sin if human beings have a polygenetic versus a monogenetic origin. In other words, if all human beings descend not from a single pair of human beings, but from multiple pairs of human beings or lineages, separated by space and (possibly) time, then it becomes that much harder to explain both the origins of sin and its inherited consequences. On another level, there are difficulties surrounding what it means to say that the consequences of original sin are inherited. How is human nature itself changed as a result of the Fall such that all human beings, by virtue of possessing the same nature, are damaged as a result?[47] Related to this are issues concerning the mechanism of transmission: whatever change the first human beings experienced in themselves as a result of primal sin is not necessarily the sort of thing that could or even should be transmitted to subsequent generations, especially through purely natural means. Even if we hold, as I argued above following Aquinas's lead, that the defects associated with original sin are not positive additions to our

[47] Peter King poses this central question and explicates various medieval responses to it in "Damaged Goods: Human Nature and Original Sin," *Faith and Philosophy* 24 (2007): 247-67.

nature, but privations of what ought to be present in our nature but are no longer present, the question remains, what is it about human nature, as graced with original justice, that would have been transmitted had primal sin not occurred? If we cannot explain how original justice, as a positive addition to our nature, would have been transferred, then we cannot explain what it means to say that the absence of original justice has been transferred.

I take this objection concerning the transmission of original sin to be the most difficult to address. And yet, I also think that issues concerning the precise beginnings of human beings in natural history are not as significant as issues concerning the metaphysics of human nature-in particular, how it is that a primal misuse of free will could effect the sort of change that becomes constitutive of human nature itself, and hence is transmitted to all human beings who possess that metaphysically shared nature. I will begin to address these issues as well in the section to come.

III. DEFENDING THE EXPANDED FREE-WILL DEFENSE: RESPONSES TO OBJECTIONS

A) Original Sin the Result of a Failure in Moral Reasoning

The first objection I discussed above concerns the psychology of primal sin. Not satisfied with the traditional Augustinian (and as we will see, Thomistic) claim that the cause of primal sin is deficient, opponents of the Augustinian position reject such a choice as unintelligible. Hence, we should now investigate what it means to say that primal sin is only deficiently caused, even if it does not arise from any actual deficiencies (or privations) in created human nature.

In defense of the Augustinian position, and sensitive to the objection we are now considering, Scott MacDonald argues that primal sin is deficiently caused insofar as it originated in the failure of primal sinners (including angels and humans) "to pay attention to the reason they had for loving God above all things,

namely, their knowledge that God is the highest good."[48] In other words, while primal sin was surely motivated by considerations of finite, mutable goods as distinct from God as the highest good, primal sin also resulted from a failure in moral deliberation, or practical reasoning. Primal sinners left out of their practical reasoning certain known facts about God (e.g., his perfect goodness); they did not leave God out of such reasoning altogether, for this would be impossible for them in their original gifted state. Coupled with their perception of other created, finite goods, this led primal sinners to direct their love-inordinately, of course-toward those goods, thereby failing to guard against sin. MacDonald further argues that such a choice fits with our common intuitions and experience of moral agency: it is not that we merely forget certain reasons when acting in certain ways, we also often fail to attend to those reasons altogether. As a result, those reasons remain "inoperative" for us. Culpability for primal sin lies, therefore, in the first human beings' choosing to act without having the requisite reasons before their minds, which again, remains possible for beings created good but also finite and mutable.

MacDonald's analysis is helpful, because it brings to the fore two central claims concerning the psychology of primal sin that opponents of the traditional Augustinian view overlook: (1) deficient causality can play an intelligible role in explaining the act of primal sin, since it is operative in other instances of moral agency, and (2) deficient causality need not be preceded and explained by deficiencies in human nature. Thus, it is once again worth returning to Aquinas, who incorporates both of these claims in his own moral (and theological) psychology of evil and sin. Consider, for example, the lucid analogy he draws in contemplating the question "Whether good is the cause of evil?" in his *Quaestiones Disputatae De Malo:*

[48] Scott MacDonald, "Primal Sin," in *The Augustinian Tradition,* ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 120. Following Augustine, MacDonald holds (even if only for the sake of argument in his case) that primal sinners include angels and human beings.

If then there is a craftsman who ought to cut a piece of wood straight according to some rule, if he does not cut it straight, which is to cut badly, this faulty cutting will be caused from this defect, that the craftsman was working without a rule and measure. Likewise, pleasure and everything else in human affairs ought to be measured and ruled according to the rule of reason and divine law; hence non-use of the rule of reason and divine law is presupposed in the will before its disordered choice. And indeed there is no need i:o seek a cause of this non-use of the aforementioned rule because the liberty of the will itself, thanks to which it can act or not act, suffices for this.[49]

In light of MacDonald's analysis above, we can interpret Aquinas's important remarks here as follows: just as the craftsman has knowledge of the rules concerning proper cutting, but can fail to incorporate that knowledge (or aspects of it) in choosing to cut, leading him to cut in a crooked rather than in a straight manner, so primal sinners had knowledge of the divine law but failed to incorporate that knowledge (or aspects of it) in choosing to act, leading them to act in a disordered rather than in an ordered manner-in other words, to sin. Furthermore, that primal sinners, on analogy with the craftsman, failed to use a known rule of reason in acting is ultimately explicable in terms of "the liberty of the will itself"; no further explanation is required. In MacDonald's terms, such failure requires no further explanation because primal sinners were, at bottom, "manifesting primal moral agency."[50]

Aquinas also makes it clear that failing to attend to the right reasons, or failing to follow a known "rule" or law for acting, is not in itself sinful or evil: "just as the carpenter does no wrong in not always having in hand a measure but in proceeding to cut without using the measure," so "likewise the fault of the will does not consist in not actually giving heed to the rule of reason or divine law but in proceeding to choose without employing the rule or measure."[51] For primal sinners, then, failing to attend to their knowledge of God, or the divine law-their "non-use" of that knowledge, and the rule to which they were subject-was

[49] *De Malo,* q. 1, a. 3. (All quotations from *De Malo* are taken from *On Evil,* trans. John A Oesterle and Jean T. Oesterle [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995]).

[50] MacDonald, "Primal Sin," 132.

[51] *De Malo,* q. 1, a. 3.

not, in itself, sinful or evil. Primal sinners became culpable when they proceeded to act "without actual consideration of the rule" when they could (and should) have done otherwise.[52] Thus, primal sin also clearly lies in an act of will, namely, primal sinners' ceasing to submit and conform themselves to God and aligning themselves instead with finite goods. In this case, there is no antecedent sin or flaw in the will that serves as an efficient cause for sin: with Augustine, Aquinas claims that "the will is the cause of sin inasmuch as it is deficient."[53]

An objector might say that while we intelligibly can explain the carpenter's acting on the basis of a failure in reasoning, or negligence of a known rule, we cannot do the same with the first human beings, because their immediate knowledge of God would necessarily exclude such failure or the possibility of such negligence. Van lnwagen clearly remains vulnerable to this objection, because he holds that the first human beings enjoyed the same sort of "mystical union" with God that Christians hope to experience in the beatific vision. Aquinas explicitly argues, however, that the first human being did not enjoy the beatific vision of God because such knowledge indeed would rule out sin as a rational possibility: by virtue of being so "firmly established" in knowing and loving God, the first human being could not willingly turn away from God.[54] Consequently, Aquinas argues instead that the knowledge of God the first human being possessed was, like the knowledge of God human beings now possess, based on God's effects-albeit intelligible effects received not through the mediation of the senses but "by the radiation of the first truth."[55] Such knowledge of God was therefore more perfect than the knowledge human beings possess now, but less perfect than the knowledge of God the blessed possess in heaven. As such, the possibility-however unlikely-of the first human

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid. For a more thorough defense of Aquinas's claims about the defect in moral reasoning giving rise to the defect in the act of sin (for which the human being, rather than God, is causally responsible), see W. Matthews Grant, "Aquinas on How God Causes the Act of Sin without Causing Sin Itself," *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 455-96.

[14] *STh* I, q. 94, a. 1.

[55] Ibid.

being's failing to attend to the relevant aspects of that knowledge and proceeding to sin remained.

B) *Original Sin Compatible with Evolutionary History*

Turning to the second objection: What are we to make of the claim that suffering and death predate the arrival of human beings within evolutionary history? The account I have been defending so far with Aquinas's aid leaves open the possibility of the following claim: the fact that human beings, as created in a state of grace with original justice, were not susceptible to death and other defects associated with bodily existence (e.g., being subject to disease and the physical suffering that accompanies it) does not contradict the further fact that other sentient beings, including the human being's immediate evolutionary predecessors, were indeed susceptible to death and other bodily defects. Aquinas (who obviously was ignorant of evolutionary history) argues that in one sense death and bodily defects are natural to human beings (minus the grace of original justice) because human beings, like all living things, are form-matter composites, and matter is naturally corruptible.[56] Thus, even though the form of the human being, his rational soul, is (unlike the forms of other living things) incorruptible of itself *(per se),* the human being *qua* form-matter composite is naturally corruptible, and hence naturally mortal.[57] Once again, divine goodness and providence ensured that whatever natural defects human beings were subject to by virtue of being spiritually and materially composed would not impede their ability to attain their supernatural end: God removed these defects by supplying the grace needed fully to order the body to the soul, so that the body would uninterruptedly remain ontologically subordinate to the soul, and be pervaded by the soul's uninterrupted life-giving power.

Clearly, God's creation of the first human beings-on this expanded account, uniting a rational soul to the body along with the ordering grace of original justice-is a miraculous event, an

[56] *STh* I-II, q. 85, a. 6.

[57] Ibid. See also *STh* I, q. 75, a. 2.

act of divine intervention within evolutionary history. However, as in van Inwagen's account, it is entirely compatible with what we know about the trajectory of evolutionary history. Here, van Inwagen wisely points out (in further defense of his own view) that immediate divine intervention actually *explains* the genesis of rationality. In short, rationality, which sharply distinguishes human beings from their evolutionary ancestors, simply does not seem to be the sort of phenomenon that could have evolved naturally over time, through the selective pressures of evolution alone.[58] On the Thomistic account I am defending, God's affording the first human beings the additional grace of original justice also is clearly miraculous, even though it too fits within the scope of evolutionary history. Original justice, which pertained not only to the individual soul but also to human nature itself (as it was intended to be propagated), ensured that the first human beings enjoyed an uninterrupted, harmonious existence within the natural world. Again, the first human beings possessed the same metaphysical parts and employed the same powers that we currently possess and employ.

Thus, as I argued in the first section of the article, God's miraculous creation of the first human beings in a state of original justice does not require overinflating the first human beings with the sorts of "preternatural powers" that make them unlocatable within the course of natural history, suitable for inhabiting an Edenic paradise alone.[59] For example, it is entirely consonant with the Thomistic picture that I have offered that human beings always have been susceptible to pain, because pain is part of the normal, healthy functioning of sentient animals, including human beings. Being susceptible to pain, however, is not the same thing as experiencing pain: pain, while not itself a privation or evil,

[58] Van Inwagen admits that "it could ... be a discovery of evolutionary biology that the genesis of rationality was not a sudden, local event, and such a discovery would imply the falsity of the expanded free-will defense. But no such discovery has been made" (*The Problem of Evil,* 93).

[59] The larger idea here is that the first human beings enjoyed a harmonious relationship with their natural environment, even though they did not inhabit a special, utopian environment. Here I depart from Aquinas, who argues that paradise was indeed a "corporeal place" (*STh* I, q. 102, a. 1).

nevertheless can signify an underlying privation or evil, such as sickness and disease.[60] So by virtue of not experiencing sickness or disease, the first human beings would not have experienced the pain (often severe pain) associated with sickness and disease, as well as other physical ailments. Furthermore, we do not need to deny that the first human beings had to protect themselves from natural disasters, which would require that they exercise particular intellectual ingenuity (albeit more practical than speculative) and physical fortitude. But such effort is not, in itself, a form of suffering, or an evil. Successfully managing the threat that natural disasters posed to them-rather than merely effortlessly evading such disasters altogether, as van Inwagen suggests-would have been entirely possible, presuming that human beings had the requisite ontological constitution and ordering of mind and body, afforded to them by the grace of original justice, to do so.

These speculations aside, the greater challenge evolutionary biology poses to the free-will defense is its claim that animal life was, for billions of years, subject to suffering and death, because the evolution of life-including the emergence of complex animals such as ourselves-could not have occurred without such suffering and death. In order to deal with this challenge, and thereby supplement his own expanded free-will defense, van Inwagen tells a further story (which, once again, is "true for all anyone knows") according to which any world God could have made that contains higher-level (conscious) sentient creatures "either contains patterns of suffering morally equivalent to those of the actual world, or else is massively irregular."[61] In other words, given God's aims in creating a world with higher-level sentient creatures, including ourselves, it is plausible that God was faced with the option of creating a world with the same patterns of "morally equivalent" suffering that the actual world contains *or* creating a world "in which the laws of nature fail in some massive way"-for example, a world in which God continually intervenes

[60] Patrick Lee makes this point effectively in "The Goodness of Creation, Evil, and Christian Teaching," *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 239-69.

[61] Van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil,* 114.

in order to ensure that all higher-level sentient creatures ongoingly exist in a hedonic utopia (in which no animals prey on one another or suffer from sickness or disease).[62] For all we know, massive irregularity is a defect at least as great as (if not greater than) the defect of containing vast amounts of animal suffering; thus, God would have reason not to create a world that is massively irregular.[63] But God also would have a reason to create a world such as ours if we further stipulate that this world contains a greater good, such as the sheer diversity of animal life (including intelligent life such as our own) that both depends on the existence of higher-level sentient creatures and outweighs all of the animal suffering that exists.

Van Inwagen's "anti-irregularity defense" hangs on the claim that, for all we know, not even an omnipotent being could create an ordered, law-governed world consisting of higher-level sentient life (including our own) in which no animal suffering-particularly the sort of suffering that constitutes evolutionary history-exists. I find this claim plausible, but for our present purposes, I think that it is more useful to highlight those aspects of van Inwagen's defense that concern divine *goodness* rather than divine *power.* As van Inwagen suggests, it seems entirely commensurate with God's goodness for God to allow billions of years of animal suffering (much of it, we should add, consisting of the suffering of lower-level sentient life) in order to bring about a greater good-that good being the full realization of all levels of being, all of which reflect the divine goodness in their own way. More specifically, it remains fully within the scope of God's goodness for God to create a range of finite things that are both good and mutable, subject to corruption and death. Like Augustine before him, Aquinas claims that "the perfection of the universe *requires* that there should be inequality in things, so that every grade of goodness may be realized," including good things that can and do fail in goodness-and "it is in this that evil

[62] Ibid.

[63] Or, as van Inwagen also points out, these two worldly defects are incomparable, in which case God cannot be faulted for creating a world that contains vast amounts of animal suffering.

consists."[64] But in creating such things, God does not become the intentional cause of evil, or suffering and death more specifically. I take the Augustinian and Thomistic point to be that since God only wills what is good, and what is good possesses being (and vice versa), then God only wills that finite and mutable things achieve the fullness of being, actualizing the potentialities with which they have been endowed or which they come to possess.

The further fact remains that in a material world such as ours, where diverse species, over the course of evolutionary history, all have struggled to survive, it must be the case that particular forms of animal life, in actualizing their full potentiality, and therefore being the sorts of good things that they were created to be, caused (even if they did not always directly inflict) suffering and death in other forms of animal life. As Brian Davies writes, "there is always concomitant good when it comes to evil suffered, for evil suffered only occurs as something thrives at the expense of something else."[65] Here, Davies is making a general point about evil suffered, but applied to our current concerns, his point translates as follows. Whatever suffering and death occurred over the course of evolutionary history was always coupled with a concomitant good, namely, the thriving of one species at the expense of another. Furthermore, God allowed suffering and death to occur only because, in his infinite goodness, he first willed that all animal life achieve the good ends for which it, in all of its wondrous diversity (and gradations of being), was created, or enabled to come into being.

Moreover, that God can bring further good out of such evil is demonstrated by the remarkable fact, on the account I am now defending, that animal life evolved to such a high level of complexity that it was capable, through its own evolved potentiality, of housing and helping realize the operations of a rational soul, thereby providing precisely the sort of materiality necessary for the emergence of human life. This does not mean that all prehuman animal life was created for a singular end, namely, the eventual creation of humanity. Surely, all prehuman

[64] *STh* I, q. 48, a. 2 (emphasis added).

[65] Davies, *The Problem of Evil and the Reality of God,* 181.

animal life had (as all current animal life has) diverse, individual ends to obtain, as generously arranged by divine providence. But in fulfilling those ends, prehuman animal life also made possible the sort of greater good that evolution, without the guiding hand of providence, as well as the direct intervention of providence, could not possibly yield: a being endowed not only with a body but also a soul and its attending powers-most notably, intellect and will. Furthermore, it was only this sort of being, by virtue of possessing the requisite parts and powers, that God could raise to an even higher ontological plane, which occurred when he graciously endowed this being with original justice, and therefore made this being fully human.

C) Explaining the Transmission of Original Sin

The final objection I noted above concerns the problem of transmission: how, exactly, are the consequences or penalties that accrue as a result of the Fall, to which the first human beings became subject by committing primal sin, transmitted to all other human beings? Related to this is the pressing question concerning how a primal act of will could and should bring about such drastic changes within the lives of the first human beings (where the punishment, perhaps, does not fit the crime). We should start with the latter question first, focused as it is on primal sin and its immediate consequences. One line of response goes as follows: perhaps primal sin did not by itself bring about any immediate consequences, but instead, those consequences accrued over time. MacDonald argues that primal sin, on the modified Augustinian view that he defends, "might be a mere peccadillo and only the beginning of a process the later stages of which introduce profound moral corruption"; thus, "we might distinguish, then, between primal sin and what we might think of as moral fall."[66]

A more promising line of response, however, is to insist that primal sin, as a moral fall, does bring about immediate, drastic consequences, but that the manifestations or evidences for those consequences visibly accrue over time, in individual human

[66] MacDonald, "Primal Sin," 128.

histories. On the Thomistic account I have been defending, the primary consequence or penalty for primal sin is the total loss of original justice, which is accompanied by various penalties. Once subject to these penalties, the first human beings may have not (and probably would have not) immediately perceived them as such, even if they perceived that their relationship with God had changed. That is, they would not have immediately perceived that they lacked the ordering and preventative power of original justice, but only subsequently perceived evidence for this as they became susceptible, each in his or her own individual life, to disease, suffering, and death, as well as moral failure. They also, it is important to note, were susceptible to ignorance, malice, etc., and even capable of accruing a stronger propensity for sin (given the wide-open possibility of becoming not only morally deficient but also morally depraved). That this same process unfolds, to varying degrees, in all subsequent human lives is testimony to the fact that the consequences or penalties for primal sin accrue not only to the primal sinner but to human nature more generally.

This assumes, of course, that the penalties Aquinas claims immediately accrue as a result of primal sin are fitting or deserved. I think this claim is entirely plausible. Consider the following analogy. In a casual friendship, which by nature lacks a significant degree of intimacy and mutual trust, any failure by one of the parties to uphold that friendship remains relatively insignificant, in the sense that any "wound" that failure might inflict would be slight. The more serious the friendship, however, the more opportunity there is to inflict, and even bring upon oneself, significant harm, especially through violating the bonds of intimacy and mutual trust. Now, the relationship that the first human beings enjoyed with God, in which they were established in a state of original justice, was the most intimate relationship they could enjoy short of the beatific vision. Consequently, the failure on the part of the first human beings to maintain that relationship fully-to cease to know and love God with their entire being, or (in Augustinian terms) to turn from God as the highest good toward goods that are finite and mutable-should indeed be counted as a significant failure, and therefore most

certainly should have had lasting and serious consequences, including (most drastically), their being deprived of original justice. We need not think of the deprivation of original justice only as something that God imposes (a penalty in the strict sense); it is rather as a natural consequence of the failure of human beings to maintain the full standard of existence, or privileged ontological status, that they had been afforded by God.

The issue remains, of course, how these consequences or penalties, even if justly appropriated to the first human beings, also have been transmitted to all human beings, by virtue of being predicated not just of the first human beings but of human nature more generally. As I mentioned above in explaining Aquinas's view, transmission clearly requires that all human beings are biologically related to their original ancestors, because the transmission of human nature occurs through generation, which is a power of human nature. And while it is easier to see this transmission if all human beings derive from a single pair of ancestors rather than multiple pairs or lineages, it certainly remains possible that the first human beings, however many in number, all committed primal sin, which means that all human beings, whatever their specific biological ancestry (which, of course, is impossible to determine), are subject to the same consequences or penalties. It is, of course, impossible to know demonstrably which state of affairs obtained.[67] As a result, it is more beneficial to respond to concerns surrounding the transmission of original sin by reflecting on the metaphysics of original sin and human nature itself.

We must begin by reminding ourselves that the "wounds" that Aquinas says are predicated of both the first fallen sinner and all of fallen humanity are not constitutive of being in any positive sense: they are not things or even qualities of things (substances or accidents). Thus, in one sense, there is quite literally nothing

[67] We therefore cannot rule out monogenism, which always has been the official teaching of the Catholic Church (and which Pius XII, in *Humani Generis,* suggests is the only position those in the Church can adopt). More recently, Gerald O'Collins and Mario Farrugia have noted that monogenism is still being entertained by a number of molecular biologists (Gerald O'Collins and Mario Farrugia, *Catholicism: The Story of Catholic Christianity* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 191).

(or perhaps better: *no thing)* for the first human beings to transmit to their descendants. All human beings share in the Fall, then, to the extent that they lack original justice, with which the first human beings and human nature more generally were generously endowed. But there is more that we can say here. On Aquinas's view, human beings are soul-body composites in both their prelapsarian and their postlapsarian states (the difference being the respective presence or absence of original justice). But soul and body are clearly not the same kind of thing: again, the soul is immaterial and incorruptible while the body is material and corruptible, so unlike the body, the soul is not naturally generated. Aquinas holds (as Catholic teaching still holds) that the soul is created immediately by God, in both the first human beings and all subsequent human beings.[68] Thus, because of the Fall, the soul of every human being, as immediately created by God and united to a body, is deprived of the gift of original justice.

The question then becomes: How, more precisely, would original justice have been transmitted to all human beings had the first human beings (and their descendants) chosen not to fall? Since, as we saw above (section I), Aquinas claims that original justice is "a gift conferred by God on the entire human nature," as an accidental quality of that nature (not of the individual human being), it follows that all descendents of the first human beings who share that nature also would have been born in a state of original justice.[69] Furthermore, since the "root" of original justice, the subjection of reason to God, is effected by sanctifying grace, this too would have been present in all descendants of the first human beings. And yet, such grace would not have been transmitted naturally: it "would have been conferred on man immediately on his receiving a rational soul [in] the same way the rational soul, which is not transmitted by the parent, is infused by God as soon as the human body is apt to receive it."[70] Thus, we

[68] See *STh* I, q. 90, a. 3.

[69] *STh* I, q. 100, a. 1.

[70] Ibid., ad 2. Aquinas thought that the rational soul was not infused at birth but later on in the development of the fetus. But we need not agree with Aquinas here, holding instead that the rational soul is infused immediately at conception (thereby affirming, with Catholic teaching, that a human being exists at the moment of conception).

can conclude that since sanctifying grace would have been infused by God in the soul of every human being the same way the rational soul is infused by God in the body of every human being, original justice too, which "pertained radically to the essence of the soul," would have been immediately conferred on the soul with the creation of the soul, or the fusing of the soul with the body.[71] Or put another way: God would have continually bestowed the principle or habit of original justice on every human being directly, presuming that all subsequent human beings, guarding the gift that God bestowed upon their nature, continued to retain their innocence before him.

On one level, this explains the primary mechanism of the transmission of penalties. For each and every postlapsarian human being, God refrains from doing what he otherwise would have done, had sin never entered the world: conferring original justice on the soul when he creates the soul. But then the question arises: Why does God refrain from doing this, and how can this inaction on God's part be just? The answer to this question, which Aquinas also provides, is that all human beings, by virtue of possessing a common nature, are subject not only to inherited penalties but also to an inherited *guilt.*[72] It remains a basic tenet for Aquinas (which should also strike us as plausible) that "a penalty [such as death] is not justly inflicted except for a fault. Therefore, in every single one of those in whom one finds this penalty one must of necessity find a fault."[73] Consequently, a further answer to the question of why all human beings are subject to the same penalties, or defects of body and soul, is that all human beings are, in some sense, deserving of these penalties. By virtue of possessing a metaphysically shared nature, we also all belong in one human community, and so share in the sin of the first human beings (their original failure to retain the grace with which they had been provided) even though this sin does not stem from our own acts of will. For Aquinas, it stems from the will of the first human

[71] *STh* I-II, q. 83, a. 2, ad 2.

[72] Thus, that original justice "is not given to this soul by God is not on His part but on the part of human nature in which there is an impediment incompatible with it" *(De Malo,* q. 4, a. 1, ad 11).

[73] *ScG* IV, c. 50.

being, "who, by the movement of generation, moves all who originate from him, even as the soul's will moves all the members to their actions. "[74] Thus, in short: if all are implicated in primal sin, then all are guilty for it, and deserving of the same penalties.

IV. CONCLUSION

A defense of the claim that all human beings are guilty of sin they did not personally commit is surely necessary if we are to make full sense of the claim that all human beings are subject to the same penalties associated with that guilt: explaining the transmission of penalties also requires explaining the transmission of guilt. However, this latter task, while important, simply lies beyond the scope of this article. Explaining the transmission of guilt associated with original sin requires delving even more deeply and carefully into a mystery of faith that remains open to rational investigation but also never can be fully penetrated by reason's probing eye.[75]

A further lingering issue, which I have touched on briefly at different points in the article, concerns the value of free will itself. Even if we affirm that free will is of supreme value (which I think it is), we cannot demonstrably determine, by some sort of cost-benefit analysis, whether its value ultimately outweighs all instances of its misuse, and particularly the suffering induced through its misuse. At bottom, faith tells us that God's decision to afford us the gift of free will was good and wise. But faith also tells us that God bears responsibility for affording us a gift he foreknew (or at least anticipated) that we would fail to use as he intended. [76] As Christian salvation history testifies, God acts in

[74] *STh* I-II, q. 81, a. 2.

[75] *Al;* Aquinas points out, the doctrine of original sin is really the reverse side of the good news of the gospel: "the more grievous the sin, the more particularly did Christ come to blot it out" (*STh* III, q. 1, a. 4). As such, independent of any philosophical reasons, there are still good theological reasons for holding to a robust doctrine of original sin.

[76] Even if we hold that God does not have foreknowledge, properly speaking, but some lesser grade of knowledge-a highly probabilistic awareness of the future-we cannot also hold that God was, at the time of creation, entirely ignorant of how human beings could misuse their free will, since God created free will knowing that it could be (and perhaps, most likely would be) misused.

human history at decisive points in order to reorient and restore those aspects of our natures that have been damaged as a result of our willingly perpetrating evil and also unwillingly suffering evil, whether moral or natural. Thus, a more full-blown theodicy will buttress the expanded free-will defense with other important claims about divine providence. This sort of theodicy also will move away from giving reasons why God allows evil to persist towards explaining more fully how he defeats the evil that he allows to persist.

Although clearly more work needs to be done on this topic, the work I have accomplished here allows us to affirm some significant claims. First, the expanded free-will defense, as I have explicated and defended it, offers a viable account of how creatures, rather than the Creator, are directly responsible for the existence and ongoing suffering and perpetrating of evil in human history, which means that we not only have reason to doubt that God and evil cannot coexist, but we also have a positive reason actually to *believe* that God and evil (particularly on the global scale) can coexist. Second, the expanded free-will defense, as undergirded by the doctrines of original justice and original sin, serves as a viable component of a more comprehensive response for the problem of evil, and, thus, should be put in the service of a genuine Christian theodicy.[77]

[77] I owe thanks to two anonymous readers for the extremely helpful feedback they provided.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. By GILLES EMERY, O.P. Translated by FRANCESCA MURPHY and GILLES EMERY. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. 464. $150.00 (cloth), $45.00 (paper). ISBN 978-0-19-920682-7 (cloth), 978-0-19-958221-1 (paper).

This volume will doubtless prove a classic on Thomas's Trinitarian thought. It evinces speculative acumen and great historical erudition. Emery places Thomas's doctrine within medieval theology and demonstrates its relation to the patristic debates, which Thomas knew well. Emery's control of the medieval problematic, Albert, and Bonaventure is extraordinary. The book illumines the relevance of the questions and their ordering in Thomas's *Summa Theologiae.* Although Emery follows broadly the order of the *Summa Theologiae,* he employs all Thomas's major Trinitarian writings as well as his scriptural commentaries (esp. on the Gospel of John) to illuminate, expand, and complement that masterful summary. This expanded treatment helps to point out Thomas's development and to interpret the sometimes abbreviated text of the *Summa Theologiae.* Overall Emery seeks to link harmoniously the speculative doctrine of the Trinity in itself (immanent) to the Trinity's effectuation of man's salvation (economic).

An initial chapter notes that, although the *Summa Theologiae* starts from the divine persons to explain our salvation, Thomas's exegetical commentaries argue to the immanent Trinity, the persons' divinity, from their workings in the economy: our re-creation and divinization occur because the Holy Spirit leads to the Son, who leads to Father. The second chapter stresses the mystery of the Trinity: it is known only through revelation. At best theologians defend it, showing that it is not contrary to reason, that personal distinctions are compatible with divine simplicity. A third chapter compares the structures of the commentary on the *Sentences,* the *Compendium, De Potentia,* and the two *Summae* in their presentations of the Trinity. Though each work has advantages, the *Summa Theologiae* represents the culmination ofThomas's thought. Treating Thomas's central argument, Emery dedicates separate chapters to the processions, the relations, and the persons (qq. 27-29). Against Arians and Sabellians, who linked God's actions to external natures, the origin of the persons was traced to actions giving rise to immanent processions, which must be consubstantial to the divinity since no accidents exist in God. After the first

procession of knowing (Logos) is recognized as an immanent act1v1ty, 1t 1s identified with generation (Son). The second procession raises difficulties since love carries the lover outside himself. After early hesitations both *Summae* interpret the good loved as dynamically immanent in the lover as volition's term and fruit. Although both processions involve intellect and love "concomitantly" (I *Sent.),* Thomas uses the *modes* of knowing and loving *(De Pot.)* to establish their order as relations of origin. The two processions constitute a "circle" since God, understanding himself, conceives the Word through which he loves himself. This immanent "circulation" excludes every other procession. Anticipating question 41, Emery introduces notional acts as actions of the persons in generation and spiration, since the Trinity can be envisaged from many different angles. These acts are produced by the divine nature as their principle, not the divine will, as Arius imagined, although God's will is concomitant with his nature. "The power through which the Father begets must be designated as the divine nature itself in the person of the Father" (76).

The chapter on relation traces its development from the Arian crisis to Augustine and Boethius; all relied on the Father-Son relation to reject a difference of nature between them. Relation can be either real, if both terms belong to the same "order," or "logical" (elswhere called "rational"). God's relation to the world is logical insofar as he is not enriched by it; it implies no indifference. Since Father and Son are consubstantial, they belong to the same order; their relation is real. While Thomas rejects Gilbert de la Porree's "extrinsic relation," condemned at Reims, for impugning God's simplicity, he borrows Albert's insight that relation has a "minimal degree of being" since Aristotle's relation does not inhere *in* a subject but involves "an ec-stasis, a 'pure outward referring,"' which does not modify or perfect its subject (I *Sent.).* Yet insofar as relations exist in and through a subject and all that is in God is his essence, the relations are identified with an "absolute" in God. Both aspects can be joined since the divine essence transcends all genera, possessing all their perfections. Relation's notion includes both common essence and the persons' mutual connections. What prevents the same relations from being predicated of all the persons is the relative opposition in paternity, filiation, spiration, and procession. Already present in the Cappadocians, "opposition" was developed by Anselm and the Scholastics as a principle of distinction with regard to origin. Indeed "relative opposition" indicates how the persons are inseparable as well as distinct. Hence paternity can be identified with the Father, filiation with the Son, and procession with the Spirit, whereas (active) spiration, which is relatively opposed to procession, belongs to Father and Son as the Spirit's common principle.

Chapter 6 handles question 29, the lynchpin of Aquinas's presentation in which the Boethian definition of person, "individual substance of a rational nature," is transmuted into "subsistent relation." The primary substance existing in itself is designated *subsistence.* Since "subsistence is the same thing as the subsisting reality" *(STh* III, q. 2, a. 3) and is employed by Latin theology to translate *hypostasis,* this ambivalence allows Thomas to avoid Augustine's

understanding of person as an "absolute name" equivalently designating a substance. Instead, person is "what is distinct in an individual nature," and in God the relations which distinguish Father, Son, and Spirit are identical with the divine essence and are subsistent as the divine nature is. Hence persons subsist. Thomas's originality consists in integrating personal distinction and essence in the divine relation, which enjoys "the prerogatives of the absolute in the mode of the hypostatic incommunicability." "What relation naturally signifies is a form, a reference to another; whereas what person naturally signifies is a concrete subject, a subsistent" (117). Upon that base Thomas assimilates other current definitions and expounds an analogous notion of person, "a distinct subsistent in an intellectual nature," which applies to God, men, and angels, without identifying created persons with relation. Question 40 compares relations and persons. In God they are identical, and both are the divine essence. The relative properties of paternity, filiation, and procession designate abstractly the reality of the persons. Relations, not just origins, determine personal distinctions; thus, contrary to the Franciscan position that the Father is Father because he engenders, Thomas held that the Father engenders because he is Father. The person exercising the action cannot be conceived apart from the relation that he is.

Chapter 7 examines language appropriate to maintain essential unity with personal diversity. Trinity, *alius* (not *aliud),* distinction (not diversity or difference), etc., are explained. "Transcendental multiplicity" is lauded as Thomas's insight which resolved the debate raging from Roscelin to Albert about applying numbers to God: "one" means undivided being; it excludes division, not plurality, since multiplicity means a plurality of indivisible unities. Moreover, since the persons are the nature, they are not three gods; yet each personal property serves as "a quasi principle of individuation." This distinction supports Lateran IV in rejecting Joachim of Fiore's "supreme reality" which engenders, is engendered, and proceeds. Though some Fathers employed terminology imprecisely, the Father engenders and the Son is engendered. Yet "God" besides designating the essence, can "represent" a person, as "God born of God." Chapters 8-10 consider the persons of Father, Son, and Spirit, illuminating their personal properties and relations to creatures. Though "Father" is the first person's proper name as principle, source, and *auctor* of the Son, it is applied analogously to the whole Trinity as principle by creation, grace, and glory. Thus all creatures can address the Trinity as "our Father." The three persons are one principle of creation and the action of adoption, like that of creation, is one. Yet personal modes of action permit describing the Father as *auctor,* the Son as exemplar, and the Spirit as the one imprinting the resemblance to the Son; hence the Father is said to act alone through the Son in the Spirit. He is seen as the source and end of creation as well as of the Trinitarian processions. Unlike Bonaventure who interpret the Father's unbegottenness as primal fecundity *(qua* unbegotten, he engenders), Thomas understands that property negatively as "principle without principle."

Thomas treats the second person primarily as Word, not as Son, since the intellectual analogy with a *species,* a concept, facilitates showing how the Word remains in God and prepares his involvement in the economy. The Father knows himself and all created things in the single Word who is one with God and distinct from the Father. While Thomas distinguishes the essential act of *intelligere* from the notional act of *dicere,* an analogy exists between immanent procession and external creation since the Father utters all creatures in uttering his Word. So the Father is said to make all through his Word, although creation's formal principle is the divine essence. Since the Word expresses the Father in eternity, he fitly reveals him in time. Indeed man is perfected in Wisdom insofar as he participates in the Word, and a unity of creation and salvation ensues. Sonship through participation in the Word is predicated analogously for creation, grace, and glory. Correspondingly the personal name "Image" is predicated of the Trinitarian relation of origin, creation, and redemption. The Word is the Exemplar in which creation pre-existed, the first-born of all creation, and by participation men are created and recreated in him. Patristic witnesses understood the Spirit as the Son's image, and men develop toward this Image who descends in participation to them. Thomas understood him as Holy Spirit, Love, and Gift. Though "holy," "spirit," and "gift" apply to the Trinity, they serve as personal names befitting him as communion of Father and Son as well as love's impulse. As proceeding Love, he is love's imprint or blossoming fruit-that is, not Father and Son's mutual love but the Love proceeding from their mutuality. The Father loves himself and all creation in the Spirit. Thomas integrates the Trinitarian procession as creatures' origin with the efficacy of the divine essence so that the Spirit's impulsion permeates creation. "Gift" is the Spirit's proper name and eternal property insofar as in eternity he is the aptitude for being given, the basis of actual givenness in time. Father and Son give, free creatures receive; the capacity to love and know is inscribed in the divine image, yet created grace is required to raise nature to communion with God. Created grace enjoys a relative priority as uncreated grace's disposition, but uncreated grace, the Spirit as Gift, possesses an absolute priority. Since one acts as one is, the Spirit deifies, making us God's friends, assuring continuity between revelation and ecclesial practice, and leading to the Son, the Spirit's principle, and through him to the Father. All act together while "each of them exercises this action in the distinct mode of his personal character" (266). A separate chapter treats the Spirit's procession from Father and Son. Thomas insisted on *Filioque* to prevent heresy, uphold the Son's dignity, and preserve creation's filial form because he found *Filioque* in Scripture and tradition. He bolstered his position by speculative arguments based on distinction by relative opposition, the Word's precedence over Love, and necessary order in plurality. The Spirit proceeds *principally* from the Father insofar as the Son accepts his spiration from the Father, yet Father and Son act as one principle. "From the Father through the Son" expresses their distinction, "from Father and Son" their unity. Respecting the Greek Fathers, Thomas suspected Byzantine theologians of ignorance or bad faith, but never deemed them heretics. A brief chapter sees a

synthesis of Trinitarian theology in *perichoresis,* reciprocal interiority of the three persons based on unity of nature, relational correlates, and immanent processions. Communal immanence grounds the Trinity's common action in history: "the persons act within one single operation" (309).

Chapter 13 studies appropriation, "the disclosure of the persons through the essential attributes" (329) intended to render faith more evident. Melding Bonaventure's and Albert's positions, Thomas says that while we must first know the divine substance before understanding the persons, revealed knowledge of the persons is required before essential attributes can be appropriated. Similarity between essential attributes and personal properties generally provides the basis for appropriation and Thomas takes over traditional triads: *aeternitas-species-usus,* unity-equality-connection, power-wisdom-goodness, through-with-in him (efficient-formal-final causes). Emery notes how these four aspects correspond to the *Summa Theologiae's* structure treating God-in-himself, his unity, Trinity, and creation. The next chapter examines creatively Thomas's effort to bind theology to the economy. As God (Father) does everything through his Word and in the Spirit, the persons *qua* divine are involved in God's relation to creation. The Son is called "engendered Creator," and the eternal processions are the cause and patterns *(rationes)* of creation's procession. "The three persons act through their common nature, each person bringing his own property into play" (346). Each "acts within the distinct mode of this relationship to the other persons within this common action" (349). Distinct modes of action are in play, the Father acting through the Word in the Spirit. Action corresponds to being, and their modes of being are distinct since each person is the same being, the divine essence, "after a distinct relation" (353). There is one principle of action but three subjects of creative action. The Son receives his power of acting, like his being, through the Father and thus is said to be "the subject of an action (an operation) distinct from that of the Father" (355). This "relational mode of action" (ibid.) both grounds the universe's plurality as a positive good and gives the economy a Trinitarian structure, with men returning to God through grace.

The final chapter explains missions through the *imago Dei,* man's capacity to know and love God analogically, that is, by nature, by grace, and in glory. Divine person becomes present in new ways for man's sanctification; the visible missions manifest what the invisible missions intend for sanctification. A divine person can only be sent by his principle; the Father sends the Son and both send the Spirit. Yet the whole Trinity sends the Son and Spirit insofar as they create the effects in which the missions become observable. The new modes of presence are due to graces received, which allow creatures to possess the divine persons, present as known in the knower and beloved in the lover. This presence allows ever greater assimilation to God until glory is attained. While sanctifying grace is a participation in the divine nature, an experiential relation to the Son and Spirit is attained through the gifts of wisdom and love, sanctifying grace's formal effects. Through them the divine persons are given to be enjoyed by those in whom they abide. They are present as objects of activity exist in acting subjects,

and they bring about deification. Thus the eternal persons are involved fully in the economy. Theology and economy are united.

Questions remain. What is a mode in Aristotelian thought? How does it act? In the economy does Jesus or the Trinity work miracles? Does God or the Father think the first procession and generate the Son? Is *conceptio* (*STh* I, q. 27, aa. 1-3) adequately rendered as "concept"? If the divine processions are known only by revelation, why does Thomas designate knowledge of "divine persons" supernatural only in question 32? Does question 29 really succeed in reconciling relation with substance? Wouldn't Boethius's definition make God's substance a person (cf. *STh* III, q. 3, a. 3, ad 1-2)? Is the natural-supernatural distinction adequate? Emery provides answers. This reader might wish to dispute some of them or might find alternative accounts more persuasive. Nevertheless, Emery's book represents a noteworthy contribution to the study of Aquinas's Trinitarian doctrine.

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Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology. By MARILYN McCORD ADAMS. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 334. $31.99 (paper) ISBN: 978-0-521-68600-6.

The combination of philosophy and theology can make for a good brew, and in the hands of an expert does not disappoint. Such is the case with Marilyn McCord Adams, now Distinguished Research Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and former Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford and Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. A sequel to her *Horrendous Evils and the Good of God* (1999) the present volume is a Christological explication of her basic theodicy, essayed in the earlier work. In fact, Christology makes it work; thus the unnerving title of her first chapter: "Christology as Natural Theology." If this sounds like a blurring of the boundaries between the two disciplines, it is, with a backward glance to the medieval doctors but a determination to harvest their fruit following the century of horrors. Nevertheless, it is a principled blurring, not so much in regard to what is proper to each discipline, but in the integral uses of philosophy made by theologians to propound the coherence of the faith. Coherence is at the heart of the matter and persuasive in its own right.

Already I have made a misstep. This book is only in the broad sense a Christologically informed theodicy. Admittedly, to speak of the divine goodness in light of a "horror-infested world" (42) seems like an exercise in theodicy. But to her credit Adams possesses a healthy sense of divine transcendence (the legacy of her beloved medieval doctors) "because God has no obligations to creatures and hence no need to *justify* Divine actions to us" (43). Nevertheless, classical theodicy is not convincing. That evil exists to enhance the cosmos or others rather than the "horror-participants" (45) themselves is unthinkable. Adams' option is to offer an explanatory regime (as contrasted with a justificatory one) for how God in Christ makes good on the horrors for all who undergo them, an *"eventual beatific intimacy with God"* (47). Enter Christology. It is by God's unitive and assimilative aims in Christ that God shares in the horrors and as such Christ is the "horror defeater" (53). For us horror-participants Adams waxes confessional: "If God takes God's stand with the cursed, the cursed are not cut off from God after all!" (41).

Her philosophical and theological provenance? Adams is a metaphysical realist (and down deep believes in a correspondence theory of truth) although skeptical on matters of epistemic decidability; hence her option for coherence as *"a method of pursuing truth"* (11). As an Anglo-Catholic it is the doctrine of the Incarnation that captures her theological imagination, especially as articulated by turn-of-the-twentieth-century British theologians with their correlative worldview of a sacramental universe. Yet, skeptical realism remains to the extent that since only God is fallible, wronged-headed theological views, even if embedded in Holy Scripture, are simply wrong. This matters, for Adams is an avowed Christian universalist and in this soteriologically driven book proffers an understanding of the cross that departs from most classically orthodox Christian confessional traditions. But first to her Christological program.

The hypostatic union sets the agenda, Chalcedonian in form, elaborated by the medievalists and qualified by modern and contemporary sensibilities. Adams's own succinct formula is that Christology should be *"metaphysically high"* (2) and "materially low to medium" (79). Holding to the former it is indeed "Christ the Divine Word [who] assumes a human nature ... one person or supposit and two natures" (2)-one could not be more Scholastic!-but whose humanity is more like ours in regard to its developmental capacities. As with historic orthodoxy the concern is that the two natures of Christ enable the soteriological intent of God saving humankind through one who is like us in all things but sin. The low materiality of the incarnation is to ensure "sharing the horrors" as the necessary precondition of the Savior as "horror defeater." This proceeds in three stages (Stage I, Stage II, Stage III): to establish a relationship of organic unity between the horror participant and God, to offer healing and meaning to such participation, and to recreate a relation to the material world free of horrors. Incidentally, as if to make the point about the interrelationship between the two disciplines, Adams's language and terminology is part philosophy and part theology with a certain colloquial edge-for example, "jobs" as a descriptor of Christ's soteriological office (77). For those who work

in traditional dogmatics it takes some getting used to. Others can decide as they read.

The challenge of this Christological project is to take seriously the need to psychologize the person of Christ while maintaining a relatively classical metaphysics. Here the theologian is on the lookout for how Adams negotiates the path between "right-wing" and "left-wing" liberal Anglican Christologians. There is little sympathy for the latter (the likes of William Temple and John Hick) who undo any metaphysical predication of divinity in Christ (one can even say "substantial divinity"). The former (back to the turn-of-the-twentieth-century) had the proper intention in their concern that the doctrine of the Incarnation means that Christ enters into all aspects of our humanity. However, their efforts on the heels of various forms of kenotic Christology combined with their rejection of metaphysics was a failed venture. Adams, nevertheless, continues in their footsteps by employing their utilization of biblical criticism and psychological theory (especially more contemporary developmental psychology and object-relations theory) in concert with a recovery of metaphysics.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, her metaphysical retrieval is of medieval Aristotelianism with a nod to Richard Swinburne whom she eventually critiques. In her judgment this provides a "theological systematic flexibility ... about the contents of the Divine and human natures" (139) in the hypostatic union. Since these contents are not prescribed by Chalcedon (except that they are *"distinct without confusion")* and since the medievals lacked an account of the developmental aspects of Christ's human nature, Adams provides such content "by other systematic desiderata, by Scriptures and the results of their historical and text-critical analysis, by reason, and by experience" (139). She can even agree with Swinburne that "the Divine nature is mutable and passible" but only to the extent that it exercises "self-determination over whether and how it changes" (142). So, with her Anglican ancestors Adams chooses to be innovative in her own manner, not slavishly repeating the medievals, but drawing on them for the metaphysical substrate of her own very contemporary project, one that exceeds these forbearers in positing an even greater vulnerability of Christ's humanity to the horrors of this world. In her words: "the developmental process that Christ goes through must be *messy"* (67).

For all its philosophical sophistication the resulting theological construct may give one pause. Certainly it is welcome that Adams retrieves the categories of substance and supposits. The medievals, following Aristotle, still have something to contribute to systematic theology, which is not always appreciated in contemporary theology. However, the metaphysical argument that a substance or accident can exist in another supposit as its ultimate subject ("via an ontological dependence relation" that may be true of any substance [140]), is true enough but not sufficient to explicate the saving mystery of Jesus Christ. Adams considers this a boon in order to achieve the low materiality that her soteriology requires of the Incarnation. But is it adequate for the theological

explanation of the hypostatic union? For her, this affirmation allows each nature to be about really distinct things. I will return to this question.

The fruits of this soteriological model of the Incarnation, in which Christ is vulnerable to horrors so as to overcome them, can be measured on personal, cosmological, and eschatological planes. The personal dimension will appeal to pietists of all stripes for it concentrates on Christ as the inner teacher. Here again, Adams's initial appeal is those turn-of-the-twentieth-century Anglicans who emphasized our personal identification with Christ, even our "progressive surrender to the Spirit of the Incarnate One" (146) that reconstitutes our inner selves, in the words of R. C. Moberly-"Christ in us; ourselves realized in Christ" (147), a play on Paul's "I-not-I-but Christ" (Gal 2:20). Adams develops this well through the notion of the "inclusive personality," essentially a functional metaphysics of interrelational psychology between persons. Although metaphysically grounded in the hypostatic union this is a dynamic functional union between the Christian and the Spirit of Christ appropriated interestingly (in terms of Trinitarian appropriation) to Christ the "Inner Teacher" rather than to the third person.

The coherence of this project (as in the subtitle of the book) would not be credible if it did not embrace the cosmos. Indeed it does, marking well an extensive soteriology as well as an intensive one. After reviewing medieval debates over the necessity of the Incarnation Adams argues for its conditional necessity based upon the assimilative and unitive aims of the divine decision to create such a world as this one. This casts Christ as the center of the cosmos by virtue of his two natures (a Bonaventurian move), the "*via media* between Divine immanence and Divine transcendence" (194), and the "cosmic Recreator" (189). This has both ecclesiological and eschatological consequences. Christ's cosmic headship leads to concentric ecclesial circles, from all humanity for whom Christ defeated the horrors to those wrestling, congregating, and missioning their acceptance and participation in his work. Eschatologically, this commits Adams to a robust doctrine of the resurrection and cosmic renewal since Stage-III-horror defeat requires each and every person to be made anew in a material creation as a horror-free zone without social dysfunction.

Adams concludes by processing this Christological coherence in its sacrificial and Eucharistic aspects. The former means that God sacrifices Godself to us in Christ, a "a connection-reinforcing" gifting intended to be a target for our anger in which "Horrors for horrors"-"for once-creatures give as good as they get, for we return by destroying the very same gift that God offered: the Word-made-flesh, God's own self!" (281). Indeed! This is extended into the Eucharist where by impanation (not transubstantiation or consubstantion) Christ's risen humanity is hypostatically united to the substance of the bread. Therefore, Christ's Body is present according to its (nonextended) human nature and (extended) bread nature, the latter as an "*aversion* and a *propitiation* sacrifice to absorb and serve as a target we bite and chomp and tear with the teeth, returning horrors for horrors to God" (309).

Adams is a universalist and eschews traditional notions of atonement by exchanging horrendous evils for sin as the primary nonoptimal category for humanity. (I employ her terminology.) Therefore, "the Savior's job is to rescue us, not fundamentally from sin, but from horrors" (32), with the former understood "in terms of dysfunction that is derivative from the metaphysical mismatches God has set up in creation" (79). In this scenario the soteriological project with all the density of Incarnation prescribes that in Christ *"God participates in the horrors that God has perpetrated on us!"* (41). What is one to think of this?

Certainly it will have its appeal to some. At the beginning of the twentieth-first century this broad theodicy will register. However, when Adams distinguishes between Christ dealing with the "sin-problem" with "His *Divine* nature, which is sinless" and "horrors" mainly through his human nature without an "a commitment to Christ's utter sinlessness," we realize that we are in revisionist theological territory (79). We are-albeit unintentionally-in the realm of a postmodern Nestorianism. The Chalcedonian *distinct without confusion* is here overdrawn and the mediation of divine saving agency through the instrumentality of Christ's graced and deified human nature in both atoning death and heavenly glory is diminished. But for a well-argued alternative *Christ and Horrors* is a rich and provocative read.

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Perfecting Human Actions: St. Thomas Aquinas on Human Participation in Eternal Law. By JOHN RZIHA. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009. Pp. x + 300. $ 39.95 (paper). ISBN-978-0-8132-1672-0.

During the last thirty years St. Thomas's moral philosophy and moral theology have enjoyed a comeback that forty years ago no one would have thought even remotely possible. Sent into exile after Vatican II by the majority of Catholic moral theologians, Aquinas has returned and is-slowly but surely-making his salutary intellectual presence felt again. However, this presence has a profundity and complexity to which our current academic culture, as fast paced and impatiently disinclined to speculative contemplation as it is craving for short-term public effects, has the hardest time accommodating itself. Hence, it is not too surprising that most interpreters of Aquinas's moral theory-not altogether unaffected by the current academic climate-have tended to identify one single, albeit important, component for the center of his moral

thought. At best, such a component is regarded as the key to understanding the rest of his moral thought; at worst, it is regarded as the sole aspect worthy of a current reconsideration. The competing candidates for such an exclusive center have been happiness, practical reason, the natural law, the new law, the virtues, or the supernatural virtue of charity. And so Aquinas's moral theory has been presented by different interpreters, though simultaneously and hence quite incompatibly, as primarily, or even exclusively, a virtue ethics, a natural-law ethics, a eudaimonian ethics, and an ethics of the Christian life as the life of charity.

In refreshing contrast, John Rziha, associate professor of theology at Benedictine College, in a competent and indeed masterful study, understands these various elements of Aquinas's moral theory as integral components of a complex, but perfectly coherent whole. He is able to achieve this task by rightly identifying the single capstone that sustains the coherence of the complex whole of Aquinas's moral thought and supports each constituent part-the eternal law. Rziha's book is to be welcomed as not just an important, but indeed an overdue contribution to the contemporary recovery of Aquinas's moral theory. More importantly, this study is of surpassing importance in advancing the correct understanding of the relationship between human freedom and natural law. During the latter half of the twentieth century, this relationship was discussed in highly controversial terms and was regarded by the vast majority of Catholic moral theologians as aporetic, with the predictable consequence that most-in order to safeguard the dignity of human autonomy and responsibility--embraced and elevated human freedom and bracketed and even jettisoned the natural law. Rziha shows that on Aquinas's terms an aporetically conceived either-or between human freedom and the natural law is not only unnecessary but the result of an insufficient conceptual analysis that in turn is due to the uncritical adoption of deficient Enlightenment assumptions. The agonistic stalemate between human freedom and the natural law arises from a failure to understand the natural law as a distinct mode of human participation in the eternal law, a mode that presupposes free choice, a potency which itself arises from the participation in the eternal law of human reason, will, and sense appetites. Through the potency of free choice, human beings are able to determine (by way of the intellect) and to choose (by way of the will) the proper means to achieve the happiness (the proper human perfection) to which human beings are ordered by the eternal law. The achievement of happiness is the achievement of freedom and the achievement of perfect happiness (the beatific vision) is the achievement of perfect freedom. Hence freedom, that is, human perfection, is achieved in no other way than by participating in the eternal law through those operations that are directed to the end of human perfection, the achievement of perfect happiness. Rziha successfully demonstrates that, according to Aquinas's moral theory,

> [t]he eternal law functions to give a simple and universal foundation to many diverse elements (principles) that come together in the

> complex understanding of human action and morality. No single created principle of morality (whether it be reason, nature, virtue, law, happiness, grace or the gifts) acts as a proper foundation of Thomas's theological moral theory. All of these principles work together in Thomas's moral theory because they cause different modes of participation in the eternal law. In other words, when the eternal law directs humans to their end, it directs them to their end by means of each of these principles. Each of these principles causes actions in their own particular way as ordered by the eternal law. (281)

Rziha's lucidly written and well-documented study displays all the characteristics of a competent and learned interpretation of the thought of the *doctor communis* according to the highest standards of current Aquinas scholarship. The book gives evidence not only of a fine interpretive as well as conceptual command of the relevant texts in Aquinas's vast corpus, but also of a commendable familiarity with the most important recent English and French (though only marginally Italian and not at all German) literature on Aquinas's metaphysics of participation, moral philosophy, and moral theology.

The book is divided into five well-organized chapters that carry the argument forward in a clear and concise way. Not unlike an ellipsis, Rziha's study has a twofold conceptual center: the metaphysics of participation and the theology of the eternal law. Because the former is an indispensable conceptual prerequisite of the latter, Rziha discusses first the metaphysics of participation, then considers participation in the eternal law, and subsequently turns to the two modes of such a participation, the first as "moved and governed," and the second as cognitive participation, to conclude the study with a final chapter in which he illustrates the difference Aquinas's understanding of participation in the eternal law makes in three areas of moral theology.

In the first chapter, "The Notion of Participation," Rziha offers a helpfully informative account of how the notion of participation was recovered in twentieth-century Thomist metaphysics. His analysis is appropriately selective in focusing on those thinkers around whom the development took its essential turns: Cornelio Fabro, L.B. Geiger, John Wippel, and Rudi te Velde.

The second chapter, "Participation in Eternal Law," with its 83 pages, is by far the longest of the book and forms the heart of Rziha's interpretive case. It would take too long to enter into the complexity of Aquinas's account as discussed in proper detail in this chapter. Rziha's lucid analysis and discussion of the privileged role instrumental causality plays for Aquinas in accounting for a genuine human participation in the eternal law lays the groundwork for his salient analysis in the last chapter of the noncompetitive relationship between divine agency and human freedom as participated theonomy. Consistently distinguishing between (without, however, separating from each other) a natural and a supernatural participation in the eternal law, Rziha unfolds the overarching role of the eternal law as the divine exemplary cause of all human actions: "The eternal law as the governing *ratio* of God directs humans to act for the divinely

intended end: participation in divine goodness by means of the act of happiness. The eternal law directs humans to this ultimate end by means of intrinsic and extrinsic principles" (110). The extrinsic principles are law and grace, the intrinsic principles are the virtues (acquired and infused). Hence, "the eternal law is the ultimate extrinsic principle of action" (98).

In the third chapter, "Moved and Governed," and in the forth chapter, "Cognitive Participation," Rziha spells out in detail how Aquinas understands that human beings participate in the eternal law: first, as moved and governed by God's exemplary causality on the movements of the entire soul (by way of virtue and grace); and second, as having a certain knowledge of this divine exemplar, that is, a cognitive participation in the eternal law (by way of wisdom and faith).

In the fifth and final chapter, "Application to Contemporary Morality," Rziha indicates-all too briefly, though-the difference an explicit recourse to human participation in the eternal law makes for three important areas of moral theology. One may hope that this final chapter will form the kernel of a future work in its own right, for each of the three areas addressed is in and of itself of surpassing importance for the contemporary moral debate *intra et extra muros ecclesiae.* First, Rziha considers the natural law in relation to human freedom and convincingly shows that the notion of participation allows for a noncompetitive relationship between the human agent and God. Human agents are true causes of their actions, but these actions, by participating in God's wisdom, are nevertheless moved, guided, and eventually perfected by God. Aquinas's account of genuine human freedom as participated theonomy offers a most salutary and constructive alternative to the unsustainable and in the meanwhile intellectually bankrupt, though culturally dominant, modern contrastive, competitive, and ultimately atheistic concept of moral autonomy as moral sovereignty, that is, as freedom over against and ultimately from God.

Second, Rziha turns to public and political discourse about morals and argues that indeed "Christians can enter into the political debate using arguments based solely on natural reason, and because these arguments are based on natural reason, humans in other traditions have the capacity to understand them" (271). Yet his position on this hotly debated matter remains carefully nuanced. While entering political debates using arguments based solely on natural reason is possible for Christians, the result of such an approach, Rziha reminds his readers, will always be, quite predictably and at best, mixed. After all, natural reason is subject to error and ignorance on account of its fallenness and its natural weakness. Hence, Rziha thinks it necessary for the precepts of human reason to be judged by the divine law. This, after all, is not only possible, but indeed eminently reasonable, because the eternal law is the source of the natural law as well as of the divine law. He concludes: "In contemporary society, this means that natural reason must be judged to be in conformity with Church teaching. In judging natural reason by the new law, inasmuch as the reason is truly directed by the Holy Spirit, it is directed by the eternal law" (273). Rziha seems, though mostly by implication, to make the important point that, informed by the new

law, the Church's teaching is communicable to and intelligible in public discourse, precisely because natural reason and the divine law have their common source in the eternal law. In consequence, magisterial teaching that is based on natural reason as informed and directed by the Holy Spirit and addresses all persons of good will is always per se communicable to and intelligible for natural reason (and therefore in public discourse), albeit-due to ignorance and error--{)ften not persuasive.

Third, but all too briefly, Rziha makes the salient suggestion that spiritual discernment of God's will (as a form of supernatural guidance by the Holy Spirit) on the path to Christian perfection is also best understood by way of human participation in the eternal law. This represents an ever-so-brief, but most pertinent reminder of the fundamental truth, largely forgotten in post-Vatican II theology, that moral and ascetical, or mystical, theology are-if one wishes to follow the *doctor communis-components* of one single *sacra doctrina* that considers humanity in its ordination by the eternal law to the final, supernatural end of the beatific vision.

Rziha's book is to be commended for a variety of reasons. First, it provides a helpful introduction to participation metaphysics for newcomers to this important but long-neglected strand of Aquinas's metaphysics. Second, throughout all chapters of his book, Rziha pays careful attention to the way Aquinas understands how the human being participates in the eternal law not only by way of the intellect and the will, but also by way of the sense appetites (passions). The passions, an often-neglected but indispensable part of Aquinas's anthropology, thus receive due attention. Rziha also shows how the natural inclinations, a crucial factor of human embodied existence and closely related to the passions, only become fully intelligible when discussed as a particular mode of human participation in the eternal law. Last but not least, Rziha offers a clear and nuanced account of God's efficient, final, and exemplary causality in general and, in particular, of the interplay between the three kinds of causality as they inform the various modes of participation in the eternal law. The clarity of the analysis in addition to the perspicuity of the prose make the book an ideal addition to the works required in upper undergraduate and postgraduate courses in departments of theology or philosophy on Aquinas's moral thought.

In summary, the case Rziha makes is absolutely essential for a correct interpretation and a proper appreciation of the surpassing strength of Aquinas's moral theory. While other Catholic moral theologians and moral philosophers before Rziha-especially in the wake of the promulgation of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (see esp. *VS* 44, where Pope John Paul II cites Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter *Libertas Praestantissimum* (20 June 1888): "[T]he natural law is *itself the eternal law,* implanted in beings endowed with reason, and inclining them *towards their right action and end;* it is none other than the eternal reason of the Creator and Ruler of the universe" -have rightly pressed the centrality, indeed, the indispensability of the concept of participated theonomy for Catholic moral theology, Rziha is the first to show comprehensively on the basis of Aquinas's works that participation in the eternal

law is the one concept that orders and integrates all constituent principles of Aquinas's moral thought. Rziha offers his argument by way of a comprehensive interpretation of Aquinas's moral theology. This case he wins hands down. And this achievement by itself makes the book an indispensable contribution to the full recovery and proper understanding of Aquinas's moral theology. At the same time, however, Rziha's study amounts to an urgent invitation to contemporary Thomist philosophers and theologians to follow up with a constructively argued speculative re-articulation of Aquinas's insight into the abiding truth of the eternal law as God's wisdom guiding all things to their proper ends, in order to shed light from a higher source on the dark landscape of a late modernity littered with the countless ruins of collapsed and abandoned post-Enlightenment moral experiments *etsi Deus non daretur.* To put it more bluntly: any natural-law ethic in the footsteps of the Enlightenment project that disregards the eternal law (and hence divine providence and governance, in short, the primacy of divine agency as efficient, final, and exemplary cause) and the various human modes of participation in it, only one of which is the natural law, is doomed to fail-sooner or later.

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Catherine of Siena: Spiritual Development in Her Life and Teaching. By THOMAS McDERMOTI, 0.P. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2008. Pp. 368. $27.95 (paper). ISBN 978-0-8091-4547-8.

One of the outcomes of the feminist movement of the twentieth century is the increased attention paid to the mystical experiences of women in Christian history. Scholarly and popular books, journal articles and dissertations provide theological and historical studies that have enriched our understanding and appreciation for medieval women such as Hildegaard of Bingen, Gertrude the Great, Julian of Norwich, Angela of Foligno, Catherine of Genoa, and Marguerite Porete, to name but a few. Catherine of Siena, canonized saint and doctor of the Church, has been one of the most popular and frequently studied among these female mystics and is the subject of the current book by Fr. Thomas K. McDermott, O.P., professor of spirituality and director of spiritual formation at Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis.

This volume, which includes an appendix, substantial notes, and an index is essentially McDermott's doctoral dissertation made accessible to the wider readership through some careful editing. This is no mere inspirational meditation on the spirituality of St. Catherine, but a serious study of her doctrine and it is

a significant contribution to the corpus of Catherinian studies. His work will be of invaluable assistance to anyone attempting a comprehensive appreciation of the doctrine of the woman who is, as McDermott describes her, a "doctrinal mystical theologian" (2). By this he means, "she is a mystic who experiences contact with God and who then communicated this experience, affective and experimental, to others-often through images" (ibid.). While the final product bears the limits of any thesis-turned-book, it is a work that must influence any serious student of the Virgin of Siena and those interested in late-medieval spirituality or mysticism.

McDermott's central thesis is that the notion of spiritual development "is not the only theme found in Catherine's writings, but is undoubtedly the most important" (ibid.). He traces this theme of spiritual development through Catherine's works, most particularly the *Dialogue.* Here he makes what is perhaps his strongest contribution. His methodology is carefully to analyze Catherine's writings to discover therein the doctrinal foundation for her teaching about how a person grows in the life of virtue, prayer, and union with God. While proceeding from the classical understanding of the spiritual life as having a certain organic structure, that is, progressive stages of growth and development, McDermott does not impose established categories or terminology on Catherine's thought, but seeks to discover from *within* the text her doctrine of growth and development.

Because Catherine's spirituality is so diffuse in themes and images, many authors and commentators have chosen one or another theme or image to unlock the theological richness contained in her writings. Some have even alleged that Catherine's writings are so personal and affective that it is not possible to discern any theological "plan" in her works. However, with remarkable intellectual sobriety, McDermott has kept his promise that despite these problems he will "present Catherine's principal teachings as they relate to spiritual development in a clear and systematic fashion" (80).

Chapters 2 and 3 form the core of the work. Chapter 2 offers a survey of Catherine's writings in order to discover the contours of her theology of the spiritual life. Displaying a masterful grasp of earlier Catherinian studies and commentaries, McDermott produces a clear outline of the foundational theological themes and images of Catherine's doctrine. Most important for his argument is Catherine's use of the image of the Bridge which he sees as the "primary image to illustrate the human person's spiritual development towards union with God" (94). This Bridge is none other than Christ himself, what McDermott comes to refer to as the "Christ-Bridge."

Describing the layers of meaning of the bridge as found in the *Dialogue,* McDermott recognizes Catherine's emphasis on the life of virtue. Humility, charity, patience, and discernment enjoy pride of place in her view rather that a consideration of the Commandments. Hers is an anthropology most definitely positive and optimistic and she is convinced that "love follows knowledge," thus acknowledging the role of reason and the intellect in the journey of the soul towards God. The great obstacles to spiritual development, Catherine insists, are

disordered self-love and self-will. For Catherine, the antidotes to these obstacles are the way of self-knowledge and holy desire.

Chapter 3 is McDermott's *tour de force.* Here he not only shows how Catherine's notion of stages of spiritual development flows from her own mystical encounter with God, he manages to give a clear explanation of the meaning of the three steps on the Christ-bridge for those going the way of common charity (the *scaloni generali)* and the three steps for those going the way of perfect charity (the *scaloni particulari).* Catherine's complex use of these images has daunted earlier authors and McDermott is singular in managing a coherent and theologically consistent explanation of them. He admits that "Catherine's teaching on the stages is incredibly rich but also tangled, repetitive and sometimes appears contradictory" (150). Undaunted by the challenge, he traces in the *Dialogue* a clear doctrine of spiritual development that is neither alien to nor identical with the classical three stages or ages of the spiritual life, that is, the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive. In the *Dialogue,* Catherine's account of this progression of stages or states is embedded in her understanding of the image of the Bridge, more precisely, the "Christ-Bridge."

Along the way, McDermott offers some important commentary on recurring issues in the theology of the spiritual life. For example, he is aware of the danger of taking what Catherine offers as a theological doctrine to be a map by which an individual can plot his or her progress in the spiritual life. "The spiritual journey is something fluid, not mechanical, making distinctions difficult; elements of one stage can overlap into the next" (152). "[O]ne's spiritual development can never be neatly contained in any of the spiritual stages" (150). There is the further thorny issue of reading all of Catherine's teaching as autobiographical. Likely generated by the late-twentieth-century feminist emphasis on "lived-experience," some commentators read the *Dialogue* as a biographical account of Catherine's own interior experience rather than a treatise intended to communicate a doctrine of the spiritual life. McDermott is able to avoid this error and the eighty-six pages of ample footnotes (235-321) provide the necessary documentary support for his argument. His focus is less on the genre of "pious literature" and more on serious academic studies.

One of the limits of most books which begin as dissertations is style. Conceived in environs of the academy and marked by technical language, it is never easy to transform such an *opus* into a reader-friendly text. McDermott's style sometimes betrays some of the heaviness of the academic, but must be judged, overall, as a readable account of a serious theological topic.

What are the limits of this work? In his account of Catherine's doctrine on prayer (129-30), McDermott fails to offer a broader theological understanding of the relationship between mental prayer, vocal prayer, and liturgical prayer. Does Catherine understand the Divine Office, the Mass, and the sacraments as "vocal prayer," as McDermott suggests? And what of the doxological "ultimate purpose" of prayer being the glory of God rather than simply "loving union with God?"

As a fellow Dominican, I would take issue with McDermott's notion that the early friars did not let "the regular life with its monastic observance stand in the

way of 'being useful to others."' Though the principle of dispensation was an innovation employed by Saint Dominic in establishing the way of life of the preaching friars, the good of souls and the good of the regular life were never pitted against one another, but fed and energized one another. The *communion/mission* dynamic dates to the very beginnings of the Order of Preachers. The problem of seeing regular observance as a potential obstacle to the apostolic mission of the Order came much later.

In spite of any shortcomings, McDermott's work can only be considered a success. In methodology and content he has acquitted himself as a master of his subject. Since Origen, in his biblical commentaries, began the tradition of discerning the inner "structure" of the spiritual life in order to make possible coherent discourse on the subject, theologians have considered the issue of "development" in the spiritual life. McDermott has not simply appplied an already established outline to the work of Catherine, but has discovered her theological vision from within. As a precedent for a new direction in the study of mystical writers of the past, his study is outstanding. Young scholars in the field of spiritual theology would do well to take note.

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Vital Conflicts in Medical Ethics: A Virtue Approach to Craniotomy and Tubal Pregnancies. By MARTIN RHONHEIMER Edited by WILLIAM F. MURPHY, JR. Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009. Pp. viii + 162. $24.95 (paper). ISBN 978-0-8132-1718-5.

The title of this profound work provokes skepticism because the phrase "virtue approach" seems to suggest a way to avoid moral principles, redefine moral objects based on one's motives, the trumping of subjectivity over objectivity, or simply a lack of realism. Such is not the case with this book, in the author's view. Rhonheimer claims he is not a proportionalist, nor a teleologist, nor a denier of the basic moral teachings of the Church concerning abortion, euthanasia, or other received norms taught by sacred Scripture and the Tradition. He does attempt to show that the moral methodologies that have seemingly underpinned the Holy Office's decree against craniotomy and perhaps tubal pregnancies are wrong. He attempts to show that the principle of double effect, with its appeal to direct action with indirect consequences not willed, does not apply to these moral problems. Or does it?

Originally written in German, this book was presented to the Congregation of the Doctrine and Faith. Then-Cardinal Ratzinger asked the author to publish this work. With this translation, the English speaking world has a chance to see

if Rhonheimer has either homogeneously or heterogenously evolved the moral teaching of theologians and the conclusion of the Church on abnormal pregnancies: that is, when the fetus is in the wrong place, or the head is too large (cephalopelvic disproportion), or the body is too large, or there are multiple babies that cannot leave the womb naturally, or when the feet are first in line to the leave the womb and the fetus also cannot leave. In modern medical practice, Cesarean sections are performed for fetuses who are too large in one way or another, but in less fortunate areas of the world other methods may be employed such as crushing the skull (or skulls in the case of multiple babies).

When fetuses are in the wrong place, they either die naturally or doctors who have the requisite technology may use salpingectomy or salpingotomy (also salpingostomy) and the drug methotrexate, which kills the trophoblast, which keeps the fetus alive. In all cases, other than C-sections, the babies are killed to save the life of the mother. Can it be possible that killing fetuses that are going to die and will kill the mother may not be direct killing but have another moral object? Would these killings be under the rubric of abortion?

In his footnotes, Rhonheimer tries to show that many of his critics over the years have misunderstood his ideas or have applied St. Thomas Aquinas's teaching erroneously. While he is presenting a new action theory and applying it to craniotomy and resolutions to tubal pregnancies that also kill the fetuses, he is also answering theologians and critics alike such as Noldin, Prummer, Bouscaren, May, Diamond, Knauer, Sgreccia, The German Catechism, Bockle, Flannery, Dewan, Long, and Grisez, as well as late-nineteenth century authors such as Avanzini, Eschbach, and Waffelaert among others. The reader would do well to read the text without the footnotes first. Once he understands Rhonheimer's main arguments, then he may find it very helpful to go back to the footnotes dealing with the critics to fill in and receive a more complete idea of the overarching theses.

Rhonheimer lays down a challenge to theologians: "Should a person die to safeguard a moral principle: an innocent should not be killed directly?" (xv). The problem posed is this: is the moral object of saving the life of the mother by craniotomy, and other death-dealing actions on a morally certain dying fetus, an abortion condemned by the Church? Or, is the moral object a morally good object, taking the life of the fetus in this special irrational and absurd context and at the same time saving the life of the mother, all of this taken as a unity? If the former, we have therapeutic abortion; if the latter, we have a life-saving moral act.

The Church's teaching on the subject began with late-nineteenth-century decrees of the Holy Office and approved by Pope Leo XIII concerning a fetus with a large head. The question was posed: can this kind of fetus be expelled or be aborted to save the life of the mother? The decision was that this cannot be safely taught; later teaching ruled that this could not be done because it brings about the death of the fetus directly, even if it does save the life of the mother. It should be noted that these decisions were made before medical doctors learned about the procedure called a C-section, and before the invention of the X-ray, and other ways of seeing inside the body of a mother. In 1902, a similar question

whether a premature fetus can be removed from an ectopic pregnancy (i.e., a pregnancy in which the fetus is in the Fallopian tube), was answered in the negative. The Church was always concerned about saving the life of the child and the mother, if at all possible.

Rhonheimer claims these decision were based upon a flawed moral action theory, drawn from a number of theologians at the time who claimed that direct killing of a fetus meant abortion, which is intrisically evil. He does all in his intellectual vigor to show that physical killing does not necessarily mean one intentionally kills a fetus, supporting his argument with certain sentences found in the encyclical letters of John Paul II *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae,* and two texts from Pius XII.

As the century moved on, the Jesuit Bouscaren saw that one could perform several therapeutic interventions on the pathology of the body of a woman even if a fetus would die as a result. He distinguished a therapeutic intervention from killing a fetus by using the terminology "direct and indirect" causality. One can directly remove a cancerous womb, or a damaged Fallopian tube which will kill the mother if not removed. If a fetus happens to be there, it dies as a result of the operation, but such a death is caused indirectly by the doctor, not directly.

Rhonheimer attempts to refute such argumentation. He notes and agrees with the following teaching from *Evangelium Vitae:* "the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral" *(EV* 57.4). He then quotes, from the same work, "The deliberate decision to deprive an innocent human being of his life is always morally evil and can never be licit either as an end in itself or as a means to a good end" *(EV* 57.5), and the pope's words, "'[P]rocured abortion by whatever means it is carried out' is defined as 'the deliberate and direct killing ... of a human being"' *(EV* 58.2). From these texts, he derives an important conclusion: "In other words, the action that admittedly causes the death of the fetus (in some way) without, however, involving a decision to deprive the child of its life or the choice to kill it as a means to an end is not a 'direct abortion"' (32). He then cites a portion of *Veritatis Splendor* 78: "By the object of a given moral act, then, one cannot mean a process or an event of the merely physical order, to be assessed on the basis of its ability to bring about a given state of affairs in the outside world. Rather, that object is the proximate end of a deliberate decision which determines the act of willing on the part of the acting person." And he concludes with a passage from the same paragraph: "In order to be able to grasp the object of an act which specifies that act morally, it is therefore necessary to place oneself *in the perspective of the acting person."*

From these statements, Rhonheimer concludes that in dealing with the situation of a fetus who will die and a mother will also die along with it if nothing is done, the killing of the fetus is neither direct nor intentional, so it cannot be part of the moral object. Rather the moral object of any action that kills a fetus when it is going to be dead shortly and the woman will also die if nothing is done is a direct saving of a life. The pathological condition of the tube or the womb or the head of the fetus is a single and individual pathology. By removing the cause in one way or another, namely, the fetus, one is not

intending to kill the fetus but intending to save the mother's life. Nor is one shortening the life of the embryo because it is already a mortal threat to the life of the mother and will certainly die itself. In the final analysis, whatever is done to the fetus physically to destroy it is solely for the sake of saving the life of the mother, which is the moral object of the action. This is not a direct killing because it lacks an intention to kill, even though the action of killing is physically immediate.

From Rhonheimer's perspective, the gravid fetus is outside of the perspective of justice and its rights thereof. Killing is moral or immoral depending upon the circumstances of justice according to St. Thomas *(STh* II-II, q. 64, a. 7). In the circumstances considered here, the fetus is a physical event and a pathological situation and not equal to its mother; n or is the mother above its fetus from the perspective of justice. Both are in a state of dying. Killing the fetus is similar or analogous to a natural event that kills many people, like an earthquake. But there is a difficulty, namely, an earthquake may kill many people but it is not a person who kills.

Saint Thomas speaks of killing people as a disorder because it is an effect of original sin, whether natural or something done by an individual to another. In his *Questiones quodlibetales* 9,7,2 (15) he puts it this way: "There are some actions which, absolutely considered, involve a definite deformity or disorder, but which are made right by reason of particular circumstances, as the killing of a man ... involves a disorder in itself, but, if it can be added that the man is an evil doer killed for the sake of justice ... it is not sinful, rather it is virtuous" (translation taken from Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus, General Moral Principles,* vol. 1 [Chicago, Ill.: Franciscan Herald Press 1983], 149).

One can rightly defend oneself from an attacker, with due proportion, without willing to kill him or her *(STh* II-II, q. 64, a. 7). A gravid fetus in the womb is not a wilful attacker or an aggressor but a threat to the mother by reason of something pathological. One can never take the life of an innocent person, that is, be an efficient cause of its death. The issue here is whether one can be an efficient cause of the fetus's death-that is, crush its skull, remove it from a Fallopian tube-and at the same time not will the death.

Choosing to do a good action such as operating on an appendix may occasion the death of the patient. If there is no negligence on the part of the doctor, there is no injustice done. The doctor sets in motion something physically violent (inserting a knife to take out an infected appendix to prevent it from bursting and sending its potentially lethal poisons throughout the body) but because of unusual circumstances the patient died of a stroke. The doctor was only the efficient cause of an operation, but he was an occasional cause of the death. But can one really efficiently cause a death and not choose it?

Soldiers or police choose to defend their country or city from grave harm. They have the potential of killing to protect the common good in serious and grave circumstances. They are authorized to kill. If they pulled a trigger thinking only of the common good they are defending, why would they be so careful in their aim? Is it reasonable to think that a sniper can kill by not intending death when he does all he can to get the sights of his gun aimed at the skull or heart

of his enemy? It may or may not be a reluctant choice but he is an efficient cause of his enemy's death.

To be sure, the situation of a gravid fetus is grim and unreasonable. But there are some problems that have no moral solution. As *Dignitas Personae* says about another problem: "there seems to be no morally licit solution regarding the human destiny of the thousands and thousands of 'frozen' embryos which are and remain the subjects of essential rights and should therefore be protected by law as human persons" *(DP* 19e).

One must bow before the will of God and wait. In the case of craniotomy, doctors eventually discovered the Cesarean section. In the case of expelling the fetus before its due time, science discovered ways to keep babies live in the ICU and learned when to get them out of the wombs of their mothers without being so early as to cause their death.

Mothers who died with their children when they followed the Church's old-fashioned teaching witness not to a mere ethical principle but to the virtue of religion, which recognizes that God is the Lord and author of life. They sacrificed themselves to God by the virtue of religion in obedience to the Church. They also believed that the Church's authorities are enlightened by the Holy Spirit not merely by reason alone but by faith.

When a pope makes a decision about a particular moral or doctrinal problem, one does not have to agree with the method he followed to get to the conclusion. One bows before the conclusion even if it is not infallible and then seeks to find reasons why the conclusion may be true. And if new reasoning is in continuity with the past, then it does not overturn moral conclusions but advances or deepens them. *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae* did not teach a new moral methodogy but rather reaffirmed certain fundamental moral principles about moral objects in general and specifically, then offered some insights from a Thomistic moral theology as guidance. But the purpose of these two documents was not to advance a new method of fundamental moral theology or even to discover new moral species.

If a duck quacks, flies, reproduces, and tastes like a duck, it is a duck. If direct physical violence kills a dying fetus in the womb, it hastens its death and so comes under the radar of abortion; one cannot do this without intending what one is really doing. Rhonheimer's position, while brilliantly posed and argued, seems to be lacking a certain moderate realism about killing and the way people normally intend. Saint Thomas has the following to say as a caveat: "We must say that man is constituted master of himself by his free will. Of his own free will, therefore, man is allowed to dispose of things of his life. But the passage from this life to a happier life, does not lie within the power of man's free will but, rather, within the power of Almighty God" *(STh* 11-11 q. 64, a. 5, ad 3).

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