

On the Ecumenical Work of Reforming Christology: *Sacra Doctrina, Analogia Entis, and Kenosis*

THOMAS JOSEPH WHITE, O.P.
Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas
Rome, Italy

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK Angela Franks, Ian McFarland, Joshua Ralston, and Chris Tilling for their generous comments on my book *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology*. The wonderful professionalism of engagement and theological verve that each of their essays demonstrates are impressive and stand somewhat in disproportion to my theological merits. The topics we are engaging with are important ones for the understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church's common confession of faith, as well as ways that academic theology seeks humbly to understand that mystery. There is, perhaps happily, too rich a content in the essays for me to respond to comprehensively. Given the ecumenical context of our discussion in this format, I would like to address three topics briefly: *sacra doctrina* in the Thomistic tradition, *analogia entis* as it relates to ecumenism, and topics in kenosis, particularly with regard to the renewal of dyotheletism and what I take to be the helpful traditional use of the communication of idioms when speaking of God's human suffering and kenotic love.

Sacra Doctrina

Catholics in the Thomistic tradition and Protestants influenced in noteworthy ways by Barth do often have clear substantive disagreements theologically, to be sure. However, they do not always understand one another in the terms each other would easily recognize. I think it is important to make a few comments about Thomistic self-understanding regarding

the practice of theology as a normative discipline and how it relates to Scripture, Tradition, dogma, and philosophy, as well as normative claims about orthodoxy and heresy.

As anyone recognizes, Aquinas is only one theologian among many in the Catholic tradition. Evidently, no one who is a member of the Catholic Church is required intellectually to be committed to Thomistic interpretations of commonly held doctrine, let alone to Aquinas's own distinctive philosophy. What then do Catholic Thomists make, methodologically, of the inherent theological pluralism within their own Church, and how does it relate to argumentative claims Thomists sometimes propose regarding the supposed insufficiencies of alternative theological viewpoints, or the conceptual advantages of Thomistic positions in Christology?

First let us simply note some levels of authority that Aquinas himself recognizes in question 1 of *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, and questions 1–2 of ST I-II. My list below is affected by an interpretation of Aquinas made in light of the Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, but it is not for that reason, I think, artificial or extrinsically imposed.

- (1) God reveals himself in free self-disclosure and self-communication by way of grace, teaching us through the medium of the prophets and apostles, and this teaching is found in Scripture and early apostolic Tradition. It is received, transmitted, and understood within the living tradition of the Church. The whole Church is assisted by the Holy Spirit in this process to understand and receive the teaching of God revealed in Christ faithfully down through the ages, not without the assistance of the apostolic college, the episcopal authorities of the Church acting in communion with the see of Rome.
- (2) This teaching is itself codified at times in dogmatic universal pronouncements, which are not identical with primal revelation as such but which seek to promote and protect right understandings of integral elements of it. The dogmatic teaching of Chalcedon, for example, is not identical with scriptural revelation but is taken to indicate something perennially true about the ontology of Christ which is revealed implicitly in the New Testament. Most Catholic theologians agree that the Church understands this kind of dogmatic teaching as infallibly expressive of divine revelation, and irreformable. This does not mean that the teachings given in these locales are comprehensive or fully adequate, but they do indicate core confessional truths, manifest implicitly or explicitly in Scripture, that must be preserved

through the ages, even if such conciliar teachings also can be reinterpreted in various ways in subsequent ages, *in new theological and philosophical formats*. The latter formats, novel though they may be in each age, need to preserve sufficiently the acquisitions of the Church's previous claims. This includes whatever is essential in the ontological content of the classical dogmatic tradition.¹ Of course theologians working with the magisterium of the Church try to work out over time what is essential in the ontological signification of the past teachings as they are interpreted within the horizon of new contexts.

- (3) There are different schools of theology within the Catholic Church, for example, Augustinian, Syriac, Byzantine Eastern Catholic, Bonaventurian, Thomist, Scotist, Suarezian, Rahnerian, Balthasarian, and so on. This is not a comprehensive list. *These distinct schools of thought all have a common commitment to the two levels indicated above: divine revelation and its doctrinal formulations*. They are united within the Church by this common confession of faith, and come to distinct interpretations of that revelation. It is true that sometimes members of one of these schools argue that the position of another school leads implicitly toward a heretical position inadvertently. Aquinas seems to have thought this about Alexander of Hales's theology, as leading inadvertently toward a problematic form of Nestorianism, for example. And I think this about Rahner's Christology, clearly. More often, however, they accuse them of being wrong theologically, which is not an identical charge. Neither of these forms of argumentation entails the accusation of heresy of course. Heresy amounts to a willful defense of a teaching condemned by the Catholic Church or the willful denial of a proposition taught by the Church. By contrast, theological error is something most theologians traffic in at some time, perhaps even daily, despite their best intentions, and has to do with the struggle to understand the truth of revelation within diverse traditions, some of which may promote less perfect, erroneous or deficient understandings. Of course some also think that the various positions of major schools each have it partly right or are compatible or convergent tending to a mutual consideration of mystery, or are equally inadequate. A Catholic Thomist, then, who claims that a Scotist Trinitarian theologian who refuses to think of the persons in the Trinity as subsistent relations is

¹ One may think here of John Henry Newman's explorations on the topic of the continuity that takes place in the development of doctrine, and of Yves Congar's understanding of actualizing tradition in *Tradition and Traditions* (*La tradition et les traditions*, 2 vols. [Paris: A. Fayard, 1960–1963]).

doctrinally outside the Catholic Church is not speaking reasonably. The Thomist can argue however that the Scotistic view of the Trinitarian persons is problematically univocalist, that is, erroneous, or the Scotist can argue that the Thomist holds a view of divine persons that is incoherent. Both are arguing about the actual content of what they already agree on (the dogmatic confession of Trinitarian faith) but have distinct and partially incompatible accounts of that content. I take it that Barthians and Thomists are often doing something analogous, if not precisely identical (since Barthians are not Catholic, typically, and believe in reformable dogmatic ecclesial claims).

- (4) How do distinct philosophies relate to the distinct schools? It is true that distinct philosophical views emerge among various theologians and their followers. Aquinas famously believed in the real distinction and composition of essence and existence in all creatures and in its non-distinction in God, a view Scotus and Suarez each reject in distinct ways. Aquinas's view on this point has many implications for his theology of creation, the Trinity, and the hypostatic union. Henry of Ghent and Scotus, meanwhile, have irreconcilable anthropological notions of the way human beings formulate concepts, and make use of these distinct ideas in their reflections on the eternal Son as the *Verbum* of God. Balthasar and Rahner differ deeply on the nature of anthropology, natural knowledge of God, and the possibility of metaphysics in a post-Kantian setting. What should we make of all this diversity that is so deeply interrelated to the diverse "philosophies" used within theology?

First, differences among the schools do not arise only or even primarily from their respective philosophies. *They arise from different conceptions of the truth about the mystery of revelation itself.* That is to say, differences of opinion in various schools arise *principally* from diverse conceptions of the *formal objects* of faith as such (i.e., from diverse conceptions of the Trinity or Incarnation) rather than the *philosophical instruments* of *sacra doctrina*.

That being said, differences among the schools do arise *in part* due to distinct philosophical commitments. Scotus and Ockham come to very distinct views of the Trinity and the psychological analogy in part because of the ways they understand divine simplicity, which are related in turn to their metaphysical views about composition in creatures and the truths we can infer about God from those compositions.²

² See the study of Russell L. Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Theology from Aquinas to*

On this view, *there is no point in Catholic theological history at which non-Christian philosophical ideas were taken up into the practice of theology uncritically, without being discussed, vetted, reformulated and reconsidered in light of Christ and the New Testament revelation.* The use of *ousia* metaphysics in the fourth century, for example, already entails a reformation of ambient philosophical concepts in view of the exposition of a distinctively Christian, Trinitarian confession of faith at Nicaea.³ The medieval project of trying to understand philosophical notions in Aristotle or Avicenna within a Christian context (substance, relation, and so forth) took place overtly by critique of these philosophical concepts, conducted in light of Christ and the apostolic Tradition. This *was the main point* of the dispute of how to critically receive and evaluate the Aristotelian heritage in the high Middle Ages.⁴ The modern Catholic use of the classical terms like “essence,” “person,” “relation,” and “nature” in creedal formulations retains a decidedly ontological signification, but distinct schools of thought interpret in varied ways how we might best preserve their use. Many modern Catholic theologians seek to preserve classical ontological significations while transposing them into modern philosophical idioms. Walter Kasper, for example, has quite impressively sought to make use of ideas from both F. W. J. Schelling and the Frankfurt school to articulate a commitment to classical Nicene Chalcedonian dogma in modern ontological idioms.⁵ Rahner seeks to do something analogous in developing his own Thomistic version of transcendental anthropology.⁶

Note three sub-presuppositions here:

First, Catholics can agree with Protestants at least in some ways when the latter claim that “there is never any nature that does not presuppose grace”: philosophical reflection in the Catholic theological tradition presupposes always already an ongoing reformation of all prior philosophical notions

Okham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

³ See for example the helpful analysis of Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), and Brian Daley, *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2018).

⁴ See on this point the analysis of Russell L. Friedman in *Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University: The Use of Philosophical Psychology in Trinitarian Theology among the Franciscans and Dominicans, 1250–1350*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁵ See Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. M. J. O’Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

⁶ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. W. V. Dych (New York: Seabury, 1978).

in light of Christ. This is not a novel view, as any historian of patristic or medieval theology should rightly attest.⁷

Second and simultaneously, grace does presuppose nature: there are no philosophically innocent theologians. Every theologian makes some use of philosophical and indeed metaphysical notions, whether modern or classical, even if he also seeks to baptize them within a theological format, as presumably Barth has tried to do (however successful one thinks he is) with Kant and Hegel, or Schleiermacher with his modern metaphysics of consciousness, or Eberhard Jüngel with Heidegger. I take it that none of these thinkers operates without at least an implicit commitment to philosophical and metaphysical positions, and none can rightly be understood without some philosophical analysis as such. I am not convinced therefore of the epistemological possibility of a post-metaphysical theology, but only of options among alternative metaphysical influences.

Third, all this need not lead to the conclusion that medieval ontology in general or Thomism in particular must represent the apex of faith. The idea that “older is better” or “newer is better” is misleading. What is best is what is true, not what appears earlier or later in time.

Where does this leave us?

Based on the account I am offering, there is no tradition free from the philosophically influenced reading of the New Testament or the patristic tradition. Professor Tilling’s reading of Paul’s ontology in relational terms is influenced by the Barthian tradition, and by that very measure, I think one can perceive in it the shadow of Hegel’s *Logic*. That does not mean his relational analysis of covenant in Paul is erroneous, but it does mean that, if I am correct, we should treat skeptically any claim of Protestant theologians to provide us with chemically pure interpretations of Scripture that are free from the taint of or dependence on frameworks of reception

⁷ If one presses this argument, from the Barthian side, it can become self-defeating. Let us agree that the grace of Christ and his covenant is the backbone of the creation, such that all that is given in creation is always already given from, for, and unto the mystery of the covenant of grace. This means all natural unfolding of creation is in some way anticipated and taken up into the dynamic history of election. By this very measure it becomes possible conceptually to posit that, “because grace is everywhere” in human culture, human culture will have evolved naturally under grace, so as to anticipate and be able to signify *something of the reality of God naturally*, only after and from the effects of grace. If by a “doctrine of lights” one presses the idea that cultures “outside” the historical sphere of overt Christian confession can anticipate something (anything) of the truth about God, then one is very close to a form of thinking compatible in principle with the First Vatican Council.

through the medium of a theological tradition that has itself assimilated philosophy (however critically or uncritically).

Neither Schleiermacher's nor Barth's use of post-Kantian ontological categories indicates a theological problem per se, based on what I have mentioned above. As I have argued elsewhere, a Catholic theologian can think of Barth in particular as a helpful resource for thinking about how to express many biblical and traditional Christian claims in a distinctively modern context and idiom.⁸ If one interprets him as successfully "modern and orthodox" on various points of theology, this does not make him better or worse than Athanasius or Aquinas, but it means we have a right and responsibility to compare them among themselves and with others to think about what we take to be the best formulations ontologically, in light of Tradition, and in accord with Scripture and common doctrine (like Chalcedon), as well as sound philosophical practices.

This being said, we should I believe treat the acquisitions of the great Tradition as having a greater weight than lone innovations, if only because the popularity of the "common doctors" suggests, by their widespread acceptance and use, the possibility of a greater accord with the *sensus fidei* of all the baptized. Augustine is a reference in part because he helps us get to the Church's common thinking regarding the truth of divine revelation, and he does so by making constructive use of the ambient pre-Christian philosophical heritage. The same could be said of many notable theological "doctors" of the past. This means that newer ideas should, as John Henry Newman said, be subject to assessment by association with the various references of the Tradition in those instances where the latter displays "chronic vigor."⁹

There is admittedly an outstanding difference between Barth and the Catholic tradition at least on this point: whether the Christian critique and reformation of all non-Christian forms of ontology may give rise to a "philosophy on Christian soil," or a Christian philosophy, that is fully assimilated to and compatible with the scriptural deposit of faith and the dogmatic Tradition but susceptible in principle to extraction for the purposes of teaching philosophy (or metaphysics) as a distinct field of

⁸ See Thomas Joseph White, "The Crucified Lord: Thomistic Reflections on the Communication of Idioms and the Theology of the Cross," in *Aquinas and Barth: An Unofficial Catholic Protestant Ecumenical Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 157–92.

⁹ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on Development of Christian Doctrine* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1989). Chronic vigor is the seventh of the famous seven notes of authentic development.

reflection.¹⁰ *After Christ and in his light* is it possible for there to be a philosophical ontology as such? Concretely speaking, can one teach a class on philosophy in a seminary that offers metaphysical analysis of what a living thing is, or a human person, or philosophical arguments for the existence of God, and so on? Here Catholic theologians most typically hold that such philosophical instances of thought are possible and even salutary, especially given the effects of sin (original, personal, collective) on human intellectual endeavors outside of grace. Due to the effects of sin and the need for grace, non-Christians may be unlikely to interest themselves in or accept such a Christian philosophy, but if grace presupposes and must heal and rehabilitate nature in the light of Christ, then some re-formation in philosophy is necessary even on—and especially on—Christian soil.¹¹ Relatedly, the Catholic Church teaches that there are *praeambula fidei*, philosophical and moral truths accessible to reason in principle but difficult to attain to in our fallen state, that the Church teaches to assist human reason but that are philosophical as such.¹² She also teaches that there are “reasons of credibility,” derived from signs of the truth of revelation, in things like ongoing miracles or the moral witness of the saints, that designate obliquely the truth of the Christian faith to human reason in *extrinsic* ways that do not provide the grace of faith as such but do show its rationality or non-irrationality.

This last point does remain an outstanding topic of division, but how important is it? Regarding this question, I will now turn to the second section.

The *Analogia Entis* and Ecumenical Theology

Clearly the engagement between Erich Przywara and Karl Barth in the early 1930s was an occasion of elevated ecumenical encounter and gave rise to subsequent conversations of great importance, not least in virtue of Balthasar’s famous book, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, as well as in many

¹⁰ I take it as a matter of historical fact, on this point, that Aquinas for example does think that there are philosophical demonstrations of the existence of God. See Lawrence Dewan, “The Existence of God: Can It Be Demonstrated?,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 10, no. 3 (2012): 731–56.

¹¹ There are famous twentieth-century disputes on the nature of Christian philosophy, a concept that appears in the papal encyclical of John Paul II *Fides et Ratio*. I propose ways of thinking about this theme that take some inspiration from Jacques Maritain in an appendix of my book *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity*, 2nd ed. (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2016).

¹² First Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*; 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§36–38.

other instances.¹³ Nevertheless, we should ask ourselves whether either Przywara or Barth rightly identified the theologically essential differences between Protestantism and Catholicism. Is Barth correct to say for example in *Church Dogmatics* (CD) I/1 (*Doctrine of the Word of God*, part 1) that the use of the *analogia entis* presents the only reason not to be Catholic?¹⁴

I would like to suggest two errors that were made in this debate, and refer to one intervention that acts as a remedy. The first error as I see it, and perhaps the most consequential, stems from Przywara, who famously claimed that the *analogia entis* is the “fundamental form of Catholic theology.”¹⁵ When most Catholics speak, admittedly somewhat vaguely, of an *analogia entis*, they mean to refer to the human ability to know something of God by way of natural philosophical reflection. (Incidentally, this is how I almost always use the term as well.) Przywara does not mean this alone, however, as John Betz has repeatedly and rightly pointed out.¹⁶ Importantly, Przywara’s definition includes philosophical knowledge of God by way of metaphysical reflection and analogical discourse. However, this form of knowledge is itself, for Przywara, taken up into a larger Catholic thought-form that includes properly theological reflection on the mystery of the Trinity and Christ, as well as the Virgin Mary, the Church, and the sacraments. In fact he is referring by this term to ontological similitudes between the Trinity and creatures that emerge in a variety of instances, in the rhythm of creation (characterized in part by the metaphysics of the real distinction), by the history of human beings under grace, by the Incarnation in the two natures of Christ, by the fiat in grace of the Virgin Mary, by the life of the Church in the Holy Spirit.¹⁷

What is significant for our purposes is that Przywara claimed that the study of this structure of ontological similitude that is evinced both in the

¹³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. E. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

¹⁴ See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, vol. I/1 (London: T & T Clark; New York: Continuum, 2004), xiii: “I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of Antichrist, and I believe that because of it it is impossible ever to become a Catholic.”

¹⁵ See the expression of this idea as expressed after his debate with Barth in Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. J. Betz and D. B. Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 348–99 (pt. 2, ch. 2: “The Scope of Analogy as a Fundamental Catholic Form”).

¹⁶ See John R. Betz, “Erich Przywara and Karl Barth: On the *Analogia Entis* as a Formal Principle of Catholic Theology,” in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or Wisdom of God?*, ed. T. J. White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 35–87.

¹⁷ See Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics*, 185–91, 234–37, 493, for example.

orders of nature and grace and that is known philosophically and theologically is the essence of Catholic theology. If I understand him rightly this means that the essence or formal object of Catholic thought is the study of the similitudes between the Trinity and creatures, making use of a sound metaphysics. He contrasts this, in turn, with what he takes to be “essential” to Protestantism, a distrust of human mediations, behind which Przywara posits a latent oppositional mode of thinking between God as sovereign agent and the human agency of persons, their natural powers even under grace, their cooperation in the order of sanctification, and so forth.¹⁸ One suspects he is suggesting that there is an implicit meta-ontology that lies behind the doctrine of justification in Luther’s early theology, which is reflected in the subsequent Lutheran and Reformed refusal of various facets of the Catholic tradition, such as instances of authoritative doctrinal clarification, Mariology, theories of instrumental sacramental theology, and so forth.

Przywara’s ideas are interesting and perfectly appropriate to explore within the context of a robust ecumenical conversation. But I think he in fact misled Barth by his characterization of the “fundamental form” or essence of Catholic theology. Let us return to our consideration of *sacra doctrina* from the first part of this essay. What is the formal object of Catholic theology? Medieval theologians expended great effort arguing about this topic, presenting diverse theories, some saying Christ the Word made human, others saying the Church’s life and her sacraments.¹⁹ Aquinas’s view is that the proper object of theology is God the Holy Trinity.²⁰ The fundamental form or essence of theology then is the study of God, revealed in Christ. Aquinas then stipulates that one must understand all things in light of the Trinity, which is why the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed functions as a reference for core principles, as it allows us to read Scripture correctly in a Trinitarian light, and interpret the scriptural revelation in a Trinitarian perspective.²¹

What none of the medievals—or anyone before or since Przywara—has ever claimed is that the formal object of theology is the study of the ontological similitudes between the Trinity and the creation. That is not a ridiculous suggestion, and indeed it has some potential connections to Aquinas, as I have just intimated. But note the difference. In Aquinas it is

¹⁸ Przywara, *Analogue Entis: Metaphysics*, 348–53.

¹⁹ See Ulrich G. Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, trans. by M. J. Miller (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 120–81.

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 1; II-II, q. 1, a. 1.

²¹ ST I, q. 1, a. 7.

clear that theology “looks” first and foremost at the Trinity and interprets the world in light of the ultimate truth revealed in Scripture, making some measured use of philosophical ontology within theology. Przywara seems to invert the order of procession; the philosophical study of the analogy of being, which has roots in Greek philosophy, anticipates a rhythm of being we will discover again at a higher level, in the domain of revealed truths about Trinitarian ontology. It may be possible to defend his claim, from a Thomistic point of view, but what Przywara does is give us the impression that if we begin with the right metaphysics we will reach to the right theology.²² The study of philosophical ontology inaugurates the engagement with revelation itself.

Barth’s reaction is equally nebulous or disputable, to my mind. It seems clear enough that the classical disputes stemming from the Reformation era are about mediation: is there an episcopal structure stemming from apostolic times that is an essential part of the constitution of the Church? Are there seven sacraments, or only two, and what is a sacrament? In what sense is it a sign and instrument of grace or is it? Can Church councils be said to formulate irreformable doctrines that are free from error and in what sense is it true to say that the Church preserves infallible teaching? Are the Virgin Mary and the “saints” exemplars of the life of grace, whose actions under cooperative grace manifest the saving power of Christ’s action in the world, or is this Catholic superstructure an extrinsic scaffolding obscuring the true face of Christ? The Reformation “*solus*” regarding Scripture, justification by faith alone, and grace alone (meaning God acting prior to and above human cooperation) work to assure a more restricted view of mediation, presumably in view of the greater manifestation of the glory of God alone and the centrality of Christ as the unique mediator of salvation.

Many classical Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican divines reserve a place for the measured use of philosophy within dogmatics, including philosophical arguments as such for the existence of God and the determination of what we might say or not say about his attributes. Barth presented the rather novel claim in *CD* I/1, however, that the *core differences* between Catholic and Protestant theology stem from the *analogia entis*, initially interpreted largely as “natural theology,” which then creeps into every facet of Catholic theology.²³

²² Perhaps his idea could be restated in a more measured way: “Without a realistic sense of philosophical ontology one will not be able to cooperate well with the articulation of the theological mystery.” But his view seems to go further than this.

²³ See Barth on the *analogia entis* in *CD* I/2 (London: T & T Clark, 1963), 144–46, esp.

This is, historically speaking, a very novel claim. It may be defensible, especially if one thinks that Przywara's account of *sacra doctrina* as "the fundamental form of theology" in the Catholic tradition is correct. However, Przywara's claim amounts to nothing more than a very brilliant and eccentric thought experiment, one held by virtually no one before him or since. But Barth takes it as insightful and constructs a counterreaction, which is somewhat similar in content, but distinct in method.

It is distinct in method because the fundamental core of Reformed theology, according to Barth, is determined by knowledge of God procured only by revelation and only by the consistent activity of the Holy Spirit, without *any* contribution from philosophy. We should note the dialectical reaction here: if Przywara suggested that philosophical metaphysics set the tone for Catholic theology as a kind of initiation, Barth reacts by denying any role to specifically philosophical or metaphysical knowledge of God as such even *within sacra doctrina*. Neither of these positions seems to reflect that of Aquinas, who thinks that theology studies God the Holy Trinity, and can make use of philosophy as a subordinate science, in the service of theology.²⁴ Many Reformed theologians, especially in the Protestant scholastic traditions, have a similar view, and arguably there is a good bit of harmony here between Aquinas and Calvin himself.

However, this now all seems to be obscured. What the Reformation is about, we are told after the Barth–Przywara debate, is a new Barthian idea of unilateral divine activity without human agency, allied with an

144–45: "E. Przywara purports to give us final clarity in the matter when he writes that there are contained 'in the Catholic doctrine of the *analogia entis* the possibilities of a true incarnational cosmos, including body and soul, community and individual, because in their totality. . . . They are 'open' to God. From the standpoint of the Catholic doctrine of the *analogia entis* creation it is totality is the vision, mounting from likeness to likeness, of the God who is beyond every likeness. It is, therefore, a receptive readiness for Him. In its final essence it is, as it were, already Mary's 'Behold, the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to Thy word' (*Religionsphil. Kath. Theol.* 1926, p. 53)."

²⁴ ST I, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2: "This science can in a sense depend upon the philosophical sciences, not as though it stood in need of them, but only in order to make its teaching clearer. *For it accepts its principles not from other sciences, but immediately from God, by revelation.* Therefore it does not depend upon other sciences as upon the higher, but makes use of them as of the lesser, and as handmaidens: even so the master sciences make use of the sciences that supply their materials, as political of military science. That it thus uses them is not due to its own defect or insufficiency, but to the defect of our intelligence, which is more easily led by what is known through natural reason (from which proceed the other sciences) to that which is above reason, such as are the teachings of this science" (emphasis mine).

idea about the absence of any natural knowledge of God in the human community. Now we can only gain access to the classical Reformed “*solus*” if we also acknowledge these new Barthian truths. Is this correct, however, simply as a reading of the Protestant tradition? It is powerful and intriguing, surely, but I think it falls into the same category within the Protestant community that Przywara’s thought falls into within the Catholic community. That is to say, it is an eccentric and deeply original proposition, with the difference that it has been far more influential among Protestants than Przywara’s idea has been among Catholics. And with one other very important difference: the methodological extensiveness of Barth’s proposal. Effectively, what Barth proposed in *CD* I/1 is related methodologically to the Christological ontology of election, covenant, and creation that he develops later in *CD* II/2 (*Doctrine of the Word of God*, part 2), III/1–2 (*Doctrine of Creation*, parts 1–2), 1–2, and IV/1–2 (*Doctrine of Reconciliation*, parts 1–2). Here he does assimilate and reformulate all kinds of philosophical notions from modernity in a creative and innovative way, ideas from Hegel, Kant, Sartre and others. So one could believe that those constructive proposals are all somehow logically dependent upon or conceptually intimately related to the ideas of the start, regarding “natural theology” and the conditions of theology. This means that if one is committed to ideas from Barth’s later Christology one is also likely to see this as somehow connected to his earlier ideas of revelation.

Perhaps within the logic of Barth’s overall *oeuvre* such connections are indeed essential and must be maintained to make use of any of his later ideas, but personally I doubt it. In fact it is fairly simple to articulate an argument to the contrary. Take Barth’s theology of the relation of the divine and human essences of Christ in *CD* IV/2, which posits a relational account of the divinity and humanity of Jesus within a dynamic view of the unfolding of the covenant in time so that the Incarnation is the place where God’s Trinitarian pre-history, or eternal identity, is manifest to us precisely in God’s Filial human life. It would be possible to develop a more ontologically rich account of these very ideas in conversation with the classical Chalcedonian tradition (Barth in conversation with Maximus and Aquinas, for instance), and to make use of concepts developed on “Christian philosophical soil” to do so. This could be done in conversation with Hegelian notions of relation and divine-event ontology, and Kantian ideas about the limitations of human knowledge, as a moment of explication of the “novelty” of revelation in Christ. But the articulation of all these ideas could include a more overt set of reflections about the philosophical warrant of ideas of Maximus, Aquinas, Kant, Hegel, and so forth, and this

“moment of philosophical reflection” is lacking in Barth, by design. I do not think this helps his case, in the end, but rather weakens it considerably, because his notions of topics like “relation” and “event” in God seem slightly incoherent and under-examined. Whether or not I am right about this, I do not think my judgment should be considered “Church dividing,” and I think it is a very serious error within Protestant theology to think that it is. There are many Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican theologians who would agree with me and other Catholics, as they themselves accept that there is a place for overt philosophical reflection within *sacra doctrina*.

The person who saw things similarly and who sought to put the debate in the right framework was Gottlieb Söhngen.²⁵ Söhngen’s essays on the controversy famously influenced Barth who indicated in a somewhat nebulous way that, if Söhngen’s view of the *analogia entis* was correct, he had no difficulty with the doctrine.²⁶

Some take Söhngen’s view to be a kind of Catholic reformulation of the idea of natural knowledge of God made in concession to Barth’s theology, one that anticipates the later theories of Vatican I offered by Balthasar in his book on Barth. However, Söhngen is well versed in modern scholastic theology and his analysis of the debate is based, as I see it, on the kinds of points I have been making above. Catholic theology studies the object of revelation, God himself, and in doing so, seeks to unfold the *analogia fidei* as understood in Catholic thought, which is the likeness or resemblance found between the mysteries, the *nexus mysteriorum*.²⁷ It can do so by making use of philosophical knowledge of God or creatures, now placed in subordinate service to theological reflection. The latter process presupposes that the philosophical ideas of human culture, including evolving Christian intellectual culture, be analyzed and reformulated in light of divine revelation and ultimately in view of a Christological center of theological reflection on Scripture. The Church’s Tradition and way of reading Scripture provide normative points of reference for the understanding of Scripture as a unified text and as a text understood in a unified coherent

²⁵ See Gottlieb Söhngen, “The Analogy of Faith: Likeness to God from Faith Alone?,” trans. K. Oakes, *Pro Ecclesia* 21 (2012): 56–76, and “The Analogy of Faith: Unity in the Science of Faith,” trans. K. Oakes, *Pro Ecclesia* 21 (2012): 169–94. The originals appeared in the German theology journal *Catholica* in 1934. However one interprets Barth’s claims that he had buried the debate, I agree with Keith Johnson that he in fact held out against natural theology for the duration of his theological career.

²⁶ See the analysis of Balthasar, *Theology of Karl Barth*, 328–34.

²⁷ I have offered a sympathetic recent interpretation of this point in Söhngen in “The *analogia fidei* in Catholic Theology,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 22 (2020): 1–26.

way down through time (in Church doctrine). Söhngen was critical of the Przywarian definition of theology, and rightly so. Balthasar in turn also followed Söhngen in his adjudication, as did the most famous doctoral student of Söhngen, Joseph Ratzinger.²⁸

In the first section of this response essay I have argued that a Thomistic understanding of *sacra doctrina* rightly understood has a place for contributions from philosophical ontology, critically assimilated in light of divine revelation.

In this second part of the essay I have argued that this conception of the use of philosophy within *sacra doctrina* is not Church dividing. Przywara and Barth together have bequeathed us a legacy of thinking that it is or must be. However, I think that this legacy is something of a poisoned chalice, one that Protestants and Catholics together should refuse to drink from. The terms of agreement and disagreement should be re-evaluated, including in Christological conversation. *Ecclesia semper reformanda est*. Surely if Barthians hold that conciliar definitions such as those of Nicaea and Chalcedon are reformable in principle, they must consider Barth's own "dogmatics of the Church" as reformable in principle as well (unless Barth has become a paper pope, on the so-called *analogia entis*). Of course I am not suggesting that Catholics and Protestants have no significant theological divisions among them, but only that these need not and should not be framed in terms of the *analogia entis*. Catholics and Protestants can and should argue about the truth or falsehood of diverse Christological ontologies, and about the value of various philosophical ontologies, whether classical or modern, but *those* arguments need not be Church dividing. Referring back to my hierarchical degrees from the first section of the essay: one can agree on Chalcedonian principles in Christology while belonging to distinct schools of thought that in turn harness concepts from diverse philosophical traditions. There are arguments worth having between the schools, but they are not arguments about the truth of the common creedal confession of faith *per se*.

²⁸ See Balthasar's criticism of Przywara on this point in *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 2, *The Truth of God*, trans. A. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 94n16, and the logically congruent remarks on 273n109. For Ratzinger, see *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 74–79, 137–61, and "In the Beginning . . .": *A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, trans. B. Ramsey (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Pope Benedict XVI, encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), §§10 and 13.

Kenosis

Having made these comments about revelation, dogma, schools of theology, philosophy within theology, and the necessary distinctions between them, I would like to treat one topic of substantive theological disagreement in view of constructive conversation. Here I should first thank Angela Franks for composing what is surely the most substantive Balthasarian engagement of my book, and for her many substantive comments of appreciation, proposed (re)interpretation, and respectful criticism.

Let me begin with a stipulation and then I will make three basic claims, all too succinctly, due to the constraints of our format.

The stipulation with a caveat: It is natural to think that the profound existential confusion and moral evil experienced by many in the twentieth century should be the occasion for the Church to meditate theologically upon the crucifixion of God so as to make progress in understanding the mystery of the Trinity revealed by the Cross. My own presentation of the cry of dereliction seeks in its own way to acknowledge this facet of modern theology, albeit in a Thomistic light, and I take it that my own analysis bears some resemblance to (and takes inspiration from) that of Pope John Paul II, not only in the passages cited by Professor Franks from *Salvifici Doloris* but also from another well-known passage in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.²⁹ I disagree with her, then, as to how closely my perspective corresponds to the theological perspective elaborated in those documents, and would argue that the views expressed in them are very close to those of Aquinas, as well as influential twentieth-century Thomists, such as Charles Journet.³⁰

²⁹ John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), §26: "Jesus' cry on the Cross, dear Brothers and Sisters, is not the cry of anguish of a man without hope, but the prayer of the Son who offers his life to the Father in love, for the salvation of all. At the very moment when he identifies with our sin, 'abandoned' by the Father, he 'abandons' himself into the hands of the Father. His eyes remain fixed on the Father. Precisely because of the knowledge and experience of the Father which he alone has, even at this moment of darkness he sees clearly the gravity of sin and suffers because of it. He alone, who sees the Father and rejoices fully in him, can understand completely what it means to resist the Father's love by sin. More than an experience of physical pain, his Passion is an agonizing suffering of the soul. Theological tradition has not failed to ask how Jesus could possibly experience at one and the same time his profound unity with the Father, by its very nature a source of joy and happiness, and an agony that goes all the way to his final cry of abandonment. The simultaneous presence of these two seemingly irreconcilable aspects is rooted in the fathomless depths of the hypostatic union." This passage bears remarkable similarities to Aquinas's analysis in *ST* III, q. 46, aa. 6–8.

³⁰ See, for example, Charles Journet, *Les Septs Paroles du Christ au Croix* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1954), 88–90.

This being said, history is not destiny in theology. Barth proved that in the face of Schleiermacher and Harnack. The reflections on the dereliction of Christ crucified found in Catherine of Siena, Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure, Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross, and Teresa of Avila should matter to us as much as those found in Balthasar or von Speyr, and their views differ notably from the latter (and sometimes from one another). If Barth, Balthasar, and/or von Speyr are set up as a unique guiding canon to the whole tradition, one may wonder rightly about the method and criteria at work. I do not think these criteria in Balthasar come primarily either from mystical experience or from an insight related to the Barth's rejection of natural theology. I think they come from another source.

Hegel's Christology and the Ontology of Freedom

Surely Hegel is one of the most underrated theologians in modern theological studies, even among those who are most influenced by him. This influence is indirect, mediated through the post-Hegelian Trinitarian theologies of the twentieth century.³¹ This is true above all when one thinks of his proposals regarding kenosis in God that stem in great part from his theological innovation with regard to the communication of idioms. Hegel knew of the seventeenth-century debate between the Giessen and Tübingen schools of thought regarding the communication of idioms and the predication of the attributes of the divine and human natures to the person of Christ. Both schools presuppose some version of the *genus majestaticum*: the idea that certain properties of the divine nature may be attributed to the human nature of Christ.³² In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel inverts the perspective of the Tübingen school regarding the *genus majestaticum*. Whereas they speculated on how or in what way the attributes of the deity might be communicated to the

³¹ See the pertinent analysis of Bruce Marshall, "The Absolute and the Trinity," *Pro Ecclesia* 13, no. 2 (2014): 147–64.

³² The former school held that the Son of God made man simply concealed his divine prerogatives during the course of his earthly life, while the other held that he in some sense suspended their use by way of a kenotic self-abandonment of divine properties. Like Aquinas and Calvin, I take it that the very idea of an attribution of the divine attributes (like omnipresence) to the human nature is itself problematic and contrary to the mainstream use of the communication of idioms in patristic representatives such as Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, Leo the Great, and John Damascene. They attribute natural properties of each nature not to the alternative nature but only to the person of the Son, who genuinely subsists in each nature, such that the natures are united but not confused.

humanity, Hegel speculates on how the attributes of the humanity might be communicated to the divinity, a view later referred to as the *genus tapeinoticum*. In virtue of the Incarnation, God is able to take attributes of human finitude, such as temporality, suffering, and death, into his own divine life and being. The foundation for this capacity of the deity is located in God's freedom, his capacity to identify even with his ontological contrary by way of self-exploratory diremption.³³

Barth rightly identified problems with this view in CD IV/1, §59, but sought to reformulate the idea in what he acknowledged in turn to be a very novel way.³⁴ The condition of possibility of God taking on human attributes into his own life and essence as God is not grounded in a developmental history of God in the economy, but arises from an eternal pre-condition in the life of the Trinity, in which the eternal kenotic life of the Son from the Father anticipates (by analogy we could say) the temporal historical life of the Son as human.³⁵ Balthasar in turn basically adopts this view from Barth, with additional ideas from Bulgakov (who was himself also deeply dependent upon Hegel's conception through the mediation of Thomasius).³⁶

³³ For a characteristic example, see "The Consummate Religion," in Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, One-Volume Edition: The Lectures of 1827*, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, J. M. Stewart (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 452–69, at 468–69: "God himself is dead," it says in a Lutheran hymn, expressing an awareness that the human, the finite, the fragile, the weak, the negative are themselves a moment of the divine, that they are within God himself, that finitude, negativity, otherness are not outside of God and do not, as otherness, hinder unity with God. Otherness, the negative, is known to be a moment of the divine nature itself. This involves the highest idea of spirit. . . . This is the explication of reconciliation: that God is reconciled with the world, that even the human is not something alien to him, but rather that this otherness, this self-distinguishing [of the divine nature through diremption], finitude as it is expressed, is a moment in God himself." On historical aspects of the communication of idioms in the Tübingen school, see also Walter Kasper, *The Absolute in History: The Philosophy and Theology of History in Schelling's Late Philosophy*, trans. K. Wolff (New York: Paulist Press, 2018), 459–65.

³⁴ See Barth, CD, IV/1 (London: T & T Clark, 1961), 157–357.

³⁵ See for example Barth, CD, IV/1:129; 177; 179.

³⁶ See, in this regard, the important notion of a Trinitarian inversion in Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 3, *The Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, trans. G. Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 183–91 and 521–23. The processions of the Son and the Spirit are supposedly inverted in the economy: due to this kenosis of the Son, during the time of his Incarnation and prior to the resurrection, the Son proceeds from the Spirit and is utterly relative to him not merely in his human instincts of mind and heart (i.e., in virtue of Christ's capital grace), but rather in his very person and being as Son. Likewise consider the thematic argument

Balthasar rightly saw that, if this account is to be defended, it requires an exploration of the “similitude” or analogy between the Son as God and the Son in his human dereliction in ways that are not previously anticipated in the classical Christian tradition. This is especially the case since, in light of the move Hegel and Barth make, we now seek to identify the eternal mutual relations of persons in the Trinity based on the kenotic human actions and sufferings of Jesus. The Son’s obedient self-offering to the Father in the abandonment is the outward economic face of an inward immanent Trinitarian love of mutual freedom, characteristic of the eternal differentiation of the Father and the Son. Freedom of mutually self-giving *wills* (in the plural) seems now to become the condition for an understanding of all divine and human ontology.

Thus we are faced with the obligation to undertake a rejection or radically dialectical reassessment of key elements of the patristic and medieval tradition. Most notably, Balthasar realizes that the psychological analogy for the processions of the Son and Spirit according to a likeness of Word and Love from the Father will have to be abandoned (though it is arguably biblical in origin).³⁷ Consequently the central theological motive in all of Western Trinitarian theology is in fact displaced in modern Catholic theology, in light of the novel insights of Hegel and Barth. Traditional theology of the unity of God, based on the study of the shared divine attributes, and in particular the unity of will in the three persons, is also now rethought in light of an ontology of primal reciprocal freedom.³⁸

of Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, B. Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 247–63, who interprets the Third Council of Constantinople in a kenotic way, so that the human consciousness of Christ in his historical life, suffering, and dereliction is *commensurate* with his divine self-emptying love. The distinction of natures is reinterpreted as a diremption of the divine nature into a human form.

³⁷ See the very clear remarks in *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 2, *Truth of God*, trans. A. Walker, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 128–34, where Balthasar distances himself from the psychological analogy and then proposes an alternative conception of divine self-emptying love (134–37).

³⁸ See Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 2:94–95, 173–218, 273n109. Likewise, see *Epilogue*, trans. by E. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 89–90: “How can Jesus say of himself, ‘I am the Truth’? This is possible only because all that is true of in the world ‘hold[s] together’ in him (Col. 1:17), which in turn presupposes that the *analogia entis* is personified in him, that he is the adequate sign, surrender, and expression of God within finite being. To approach this mystery we must try to think: In God himself the total epiphany, self-surrender, and self-expression of God the Father *is* the Son, identical with him as God, in whom everything—even everything that is possible for God—is expressed. Only if God freely decides in the Son to bring forth a fullness of non-divine beings can the Son’s essentially ‘relative’ and thus ‘kenotic’ act in God be

Of course one can argue that all this represents the right way to go. However, my suspicion is that we should return to Hegel and ask whether he interpreted the communication of idioms correctly, and whether Barth and Balthasar made the right decision to try to develop this new “school” of analogy. Hegel departs in problematic ways from the classical tradition in this domain, and in turn there are problems with the decision to assimilate, reformulate, and “correct” his thought Christologically, in the way these later theologians undertake to do. In the final part of this essay I will explain briefly what I take the better option to consist in.

Dyothelitism and the Christological analogia entis

There is of course a likeness between the human nature and activity of Christ as human and his divine nature and activity as Lord and God. The former is reflective in some way of the latter, even when the Son voluntarily suffers, is crucified, and dies. The dyothelitist principle established by the Third Council of Constantinople, following Maximus the Confessor, notes that there is a distinction of two natures in Christ and thus also a distinction of two activities (or natural operations) and wills. However, it is also the case that each “set” of operations is attributed only to one subject and person, the eternal person of the Son, who is truly divine and acts as Lord and truly human and acts and suffers as man.³⁹ The human actions and sufferings are therefore also (1) subordinate to the divine actions and (2) expressive of the Son’s personal identity and nature as God. In short, all that Jesus does and suffers in his human nature, life, and operations is indicative of his divine Sonship and at least obliquely indicative of the divine work he is accomplishing with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

It follows from this that the mode in which Jesus is human (his distinctive way of subsisting in human nature) is utterly personal and filial, due to the hypostatic union. His nature, grace, actions and sufferings *as human* are always *revelatory* of his personal being as Son, who exists in personal filial relation to the Father and to the Spirit (in distinct ways) in all he is and does. So, to respond to one question of Professor Franks’s essay: is Jesus’s beatific or immediate vision as man (by which he knows the Father immediately and intuitively in the heights of his human intellect by grace) specifically the same as ours or is it filial? We should say theologically that it is distinctly human in species or kind, but filial in mode. If Jesus’s beatific

seen as a personal act (*esse completum subsistens*) within the act of creation that gives to everything its real identity (*esse completum sed non subsistens*)."

³⁹ I have tried to give greater articulation to this idea in "Dyothelitism and the Consciousness of Christ," *Pro Ecclesia* 17 (2008): 396–422.

vision is not specifically of the same kind as ours then God has not truly identified with us in our condition as human and realized our salvation as one of us from within our human condition. Here the famous claim of Gregory of Nazianzus to Apollinarius applies: what God has not assumed he has not saved. However, if Jesus has this immediate vision as a human being, he also has it in a filial way, much as he is humanly free but also acts freely as the Son of God, always from and in relation to his Father and in conformity with his own divine willing. When the Son is humanly conscious of God, he is humanly conscious of the Father being his Father, and of being the Son of the Father, and of being the co-principle of the Father's Spirit, whom he wishes to send upon the world.⁴⁰

If we recognize that the human nature of God as human can and does reveal his divine identity and the relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit truly, in Jesus's human life, suffering, death and exaltation, it is because we recognize that these human actions take on this distinctive filial mode of expression proper to the Son made man.

To recognize this, however, is to acknowledge also the difference of the human nature *qua* nature from the divine, as it is truly man that God has become, and indeed God has become human precisely to express his inner mystery of Sonship in flesh and blood, within our human sphere. This presupposes difference and analogical dissimilitude of the two natures, not only likeness. There is no strict identity between the humanity of God and his divinity, nor can there be.

However, I think it is just this that is compromised by Hegel's innovative use of the communication of idioms, since he transmits the human attributes into God and evacuates the divine attributes, or at least makes them disposable at the discretion of God's evolving freedom in history. Barth does something very different but arguably more radical, since he renders the human attributes "always, already" present in God as the condition of possibility for the personal differentiation of the Father and the Son.⁴¹ In various ways, Pannenberg, Balthasar, Jüngel, and Moltmann are all downstream from this decision, and commonly adopt this way of proceeding, albeit in various ways and with significant, interesting differences between them.

What emerges in all these thinkers, due to this primal conceptual decision, is what may be termed a form of "inverted monophysitism," in which

⁴⁰ John 15:26: "But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me."

⁴¹ I argue this at further length in "Crucified Lord."

the divine nature of the Son is conceived of not in terms of analogical similitude, but in fact by way of univocity. Simply put, the properties and characteristics of the human nature of Jesus, particularly in his voluntary acts of freedom, obedience, suffering, dereliction, experience of abandonment as separation, and death, are transposed onto the divine nature, as indicative of a polarity in God that exists between the Father and the Son eternally. I do not think this inverted monophysitism comes from a close reading of St. Paul, but from the Christology of Hegel, and I take it that this is a matter of historical fact, not speculation, and one that can be verified readily not by an attentive historical study of the New Testament, but by a close historical-critical study of Barth and Balthasar in their proximate intellectual context.⁴²

I am in no way denying that these thinkers aspire to read Scripture in harmony with the Chalcedonian tradition, and I am not claiming that they are necessarily less orthodox or more philosophical than Aquinas. They take up other options as theologians, making proximate use of philosophical ideas critically, and therefore simply present us with a distinctive school of thought, or perhaps two schools of thought. What I am claiming, however, is that what their schools argue on this point is in fact disadvantageous to a better understanding of Scripture regarding the kenotic suffering of Christ as indicative of the inner reality of the Trinity (which it is in some way).

This argument allows one to return to the question of a need for analogical reflection in both Chalcedonian Christology and metaphysics as distinct but interrelated modes of reflection. To her great credit, Professor Franks attempts at manifold points in her substantive essay to defend the well-foundedness of the Christological analogy of human and divine action

⁴² I would note in passing here that although Joshua Ralston takes me to be focused particularly on the dangers of Nestorianism in modern theology (in the wake of Schleiermacher and Rahner), it is in fact the case that I am equally concerned about the dangers of an “inverted monophysitism” in modern kenotic theology that in practice if not always in theory risks to collapse the distinction of natures, characterizing the divine nature of the Son by reference to his human mode of being, thus projecting irreducibly and uniquely human traits onto the transcendent divine nature. I agree with Prof. Ralston that this theological tendency can have very detrimental effects on the Church’s theological conversation with adherents of modern Judaism and Islam, who would tend to see in this kind of inverted monophysitism the danger of a human projection in Christianity that obscures one’s rightful acknowledgment of the transcendence of the divinity of God. This is not to say that I advocate for any form of Nestorianism, classical or revised. John Damascene’s Chalcedonianism is a model in this respect, for dialogue between Western and Eastern Christians, and for conversation with Muslims regarding the transcendence of God.

and nature in Balthasar. She would probably agree with much of what I say about analogy, dyotheletism, and the need for probity in the domain of Christological transposition of human attributes onto the divine. We no doubt agree about the benefit of some of Balthasar's aspirations, and especially that he wanted to speak about the *analogia entis Christi*.⁴³ However when he speaks of the eternal Son under the auspices of human actions and sufferings, I take it that he is in fact speaking univocally of the divine nature in human terms. This kind of discourse could be metaphorical at best, but of course followers of Balthasar do not interpret him this way, nor should they, if they wish to defend Balthasar's own (to my mind implausible, problematic) claims. If God is incomprehensibly but truly one in being and one in will, as the Church basing herself on Scripture teaches is the case, then there is no eternal obedience, surrender, infinite distance, separation, self-emptying, or suffering in God. To the extent that we use these notions to describe the inner life of the Trinity, I think we step out of the world of the Bible and into a new form of univocity theory, in which all-too-human attributes are hypostatized. Instead we should return to the use of the psychological analogy, and the theology of divine attributes, as a way to understand the eternal processions of the Word and Spirit, who each possess in themselves eternally from the Father the indiminishable plenitude of divine life. The Tradition provides us already with this distinctive theological analogy of what is proper to the inner life of the Trinity. However, in *sacra doctrina* as I understand it, we can press forward with this analogy of the immanent eternal life of the Trinity to ask more overtly the question that the post-Hegelian theologians ask. How does the mystery of the Cross reveal God, the Holy Trinity? Might we offer new answers to this question, other than those presented by Balthasar, even if we also remain in dialogue with his great work?

What then would be the way forward in a deeper dialogue between Thomists and Balthasarians? We would need to think about Christological principles and how we each hold to them, especially the interpretation of the communication of idioms and the teaching of the Third Council of Constantinople regarding dyotheletism, and we would *also* need to talk about analogical terms for the divine nature and what should and can, or should not and cannot be prescribed of the eternal nature and life of God.

I take it that many ideas of Barth in *CD* II/1 regarding attributes of

⁴³ It is interesting to notice how with this term from Balthasar we are somehow back to Przywara's non-philosophical usage of the notion of the *analogia entis*, but now from the top down, as it were, knowing all being in light of the mystery of Christ.

the one God could be of help in this conversation. In that volume Barth engages in profound conversation with figures like Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas in considering the Church's confession *de Deo uno*: on the oneness of God, in his freedom, eternity, sovereignty, universal presence and so forth. This reflection has a grounding in the classical tradition even as it engages with modern questions in a creative way. As such it can contribute to an ongoing discussion of the Church's common confession of the *unity* of the Triune God, and the *real distinction* of the divine and human natures of the incarnate Lord. In pursuing such topics together, Protestant and Catholic theologians alike can contribute together in fraternal collaboration to the responsibilities and work of Christology. N.V