

Analytic Perspectives on Method and Authority in Theology

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Analytic Theology as Confessional Theology with a Linguistic Edge

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Abstract: Clarity about analytic theology's theological authorities and their relative order will secure analytic theology's place at the systematic theological table. Indeed, working on this issue suggests that analytic theology has the potential to be the best kind of confessional theology because not only can it receive and regulate classic sources of authority, but it has an advantage over other forms of systematic theology in the realm of philosophy of language. This paper makes two contributions towards this goal. Firstly, it proposes "hermeneutical confessionalism" as a way for AT practitioners to order theological authorities. It is a confessional approach for determining the relative weight and significance of various theological authorities for the task of analytic theology. This model is warranted by the hermeneutical trajectories set by the reception of theological pressures in the New Testament, the early "Rule of Faith" and the Seven Ecumenical Councils. This historically realist and ecclesial approach for ordering theological authorities is set over and against other models in which theological sources have little explicit theological ordering and are mostly treated launching pads for thought experiments. Secondly, I suggest that analytic theology may be able to develop theological outcomes that are not possible for other forms of systematic theology. This is possible because it has a historical affinity with, and the skill set to deploy, precise and theologically invested forms of language as theological resources. Such possibilities originate in analytic theology's direct pedigree from 20th century analytic philosophy, and from its affinity with some proto-analytic theologians from the Middle Ages. These points about the necessity of sophisticated uses of language as a theological authority and working within the hermeneutical bounds of creedal Christianity are demonstrated via a case study. The case study makes a number of relevant points for ordering and developing theological authorities particular to analytic theology. I conclude by making a final suggestion for research to do with Personalism.

Keywords: analytic theology, theological norms, theological method, Grillmeier, pneumatology, Trinity, personalism

1 Introduction

In what follows below, I initially work through some definitional issues to do with theological authorities and their relative order in the theological task. Subsequently I outline my understanding of analytic theology's aims, approach to knowledge and style, because these all influence its theological authorities and their order. I then describe the work of Grillmeier as it relates to these issues, before describing a case study that brought together analytic theology and the spirit of Grillmeier's work. This case study was a form of confessional analytic theology. The case study is subsequently critiqued with a view to arguing that analytic theology may be able to develop and deploy linguistic theological authorities in ways that are unavailable to other forms of systematic theology.

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Before proceeding, it is worth noting that the question of theological authorities and how to order them is neither un-biblical nor passé. In his own times Jesus had debates over the theological authority of religious traditions as these relate to the Scriptures (Matthew 15). Today, these issues persist within denominations as demonstrated by Paul Avis' work *In Search of Authority: Anglican Theological Method from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*. Working on the issue of how a movement such as AT navigates these questions is important because without a clear understanding of these, it will be like other theological movements that give the impression of "always searching and never finding."¹ So, what are theological authorities and how do theologians (analytic and otherwise) order them?²

2 Definitions

2.1 What are theological authorities?

Michael Rea, a prominent member of the analytic theological movement, has provided a number of helpful definitions for theological authorities. To start with, authorities are "sources of information or directives."³ These authorities may be "a *communicator* (e.g., a speaker or institution); it might be *the product of a communicative act* (e.g., a text or gesture); or it might be something like a cognitive faculty (e.g., reason, or sensory experience)."⁴ The scope of *theological* authorities pertains to the domain of theology.⁵ For Rea, the value of an authority in theology is that it provides a "*decisive reason for believing* a proposition."⁶ This reason, or warrant, entails disbelieving contrary propositions on the matter.⁷ Hence, theological authorities are both positive and negative guides for "belief-guiding."⁸

A number of contemporary Protestant theologians take what Rea calls "*the product of a communicative act* (e.g., a text or gesture)" as their foundational theological authority – the Christian Scriptures. For these authors, such as Kevin Vanhoozer, God has authorized this set of texts as the instrument that warrants both beliefs as well as its role in being relatively primary over sources of authority.⁹ These authorized texts generate biblical-theological judgments and concepts that function to advance and regulate the truth to do with a given matter, and also function as the measure of other theological claims on the same matter.¹⁰ These biblical-theological judgements and concepts provide the material and boundaries for generating judgments and concepts in the systematic-theological domain. Vanhoozer argues for the unity yet discontinuity that exists between biblical-theological judgments and concepts and systematic theological ones:

biblical theology describes what the biblical authors are saying in terms of their original historical contexts in their own particular terms and concepts; systematic theology searches out the underlying patterns of biblical canonical judgments

¹ Avis, *In Search of Authority*, xvi.

² Due to word length considerations, I will focus these around, but not limit myself to, how these relate to christological authorities because these are clearest in the works of the leading contemporary analytic theologian, Oliver Crisp. The following are representative of his work in Christology: Crisp, "Did Christ Have a Fallen Human Nature?"; *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered*; "The 'Fittingness' of the Virgin Birth"; *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology*; *Revisioning Christology*; *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ*.

³ Rea, "Authority and Truth," 875. Italics original.

⁴ Ibid. Italics original.

⁵ Ibid., 874. See Coolman, "On the Subject Matter of Theology in the *Summa Halensis* and St. Thomas Aquinas."

⁶ Rea, "Authority and Truth," 875. Italics original.

⁷ Ibid. Italics original.

⁸ Ibid., 874-75.

⁹ "To have authority is to exercise an office and to do so because someone has authorized it." Koyzis, *We Answer to Another*, 138, cited approvingly in Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, 86.

¹⁰ Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, 126. He draws upon Yeago's judgment/concept distinction from Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma." On the mechanics of how the Bible generates theology, see Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 30 ff.; Kuruvilla, "The Aquedah"; and "Pericopal Theology."

and suggests ways of embodying these same judgements in our own particular cultural contexts, with our own particular terms and concepts.¹¹

Vanhoozer notes that there may also be biblical authorization of systematic-theological concepts developed by corporate entities such as church councils:

...authorities being authorized to decide things. There is a certain parallel between church councils and orchestra conductors. In both cases decisions need to be made about how to perform the script or score, respectively. The text is supremely authoritative, but conductors and church councils alike have to make decisions as to how to interpret it if the society in question – orchestra or church – is to act in harmony. A church council is not an individual, as in a conductor, but rather a corporate personality.... The Council of Nicaea displayed canon consciousness when it made its theological judgement affirming the Son as the same substance as the father. *The Council of Nicaea made explicit what Christians are authorized to say on the basis the prophets and apostles.* We ought ... to conclude ... that the Nicene Creed was a great performance, a theological judgment that rightly explicated the implicit logic of the biblical account of the person and work of Jesus Christ...¹²

Vanhoozer's account is helpful for providing an example of how a Protestant might flesh out the details of Rea's account of authority in theology. However, a stronger view of God's providence as it relates to the early church's role in the development of the canon, hermeneutics and doctrine is required. This is not the only way to go about this work. The history of Christianity, its reception of ideas, texts and the development of concepts – are all highly relevant for the hermeneutical model I propose for ordering authorities in AT.¹³ This is necessary because we need to realistically account for the historical processes that inform the ordering of theological authorities. Such an account is particularly important for AT, because analytic theologians often start their investigations from Christian theological concepts rather than from biblical-theological studies or sustained exegesis.¹⁴ In order to provide a stronger touchstone for provoking a discussion on, and eventually a model for, ordering theological authorities in AT, particularly conciliar concepts, I turn to a classic investigation into to historical development and significance of theological authorities for christology by Aloys Cardinal Grillmeier.¹⁵

2.2 A classic position on theological authorities and their functions

The following section outlines relevant aspects of Grillmeier's *Christ in Christian Tradition* for the sake of AT. This work has been chosen because of its affinity with AT's work within creedal Definitions (especially Chalcedon) and interest in christology. In addition, it is relevant for a broad and compelling range of reasons.

¹¹ Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, 126. It is important to note that for Vanhoozer, theological authority pursues a distinctive "good." It is aimed at human flourishing: "God's Word authorizes certain ways that human beings are to live in order to flourish. This is worth pondering; the primary purpose of authority is to provide persons with what is needed to help others to flourish." Ibid., 87. I will highlight this line of thought in Grillmeier's work later in this essay.

¹² Ibid., 136. Italics original. See Vanhoozer and Treier, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture*; on propositions see Vanhoozer, "Love's Wisdom: The Authority of Scripture's Form and Content for Faith's Understanding and Theological Judgement," and Yandell, "On not confusing incomprehensibility and ineffability: Carl Henry on literal propositional revelation." For more on Vanhoozer's view of the development of doctrine see "The Apostolic Discourse and Its Developments." For a fine discussion on Yeago and Vanhoozer's work, see Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*.

¹³ This is influenced by Francis Watson, *Gospel Writing*. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*; Ayres, "Irenaeus Vs. The Valentinians." Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*. For the importance of hermeneutical reception as this relates to these see the debates described in Kaplan, Grant, "Vatican II as Constitutional text of Faith."

¹⁴ Timothy Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology : A Philosophical Essay*.

¹⁵ When I refer to conciliar concepts or conciliar dogmatic formulas I take Pawl's view that this includes the definitions of the creeds, their concepts, hermeneutical pressures as well as the literature that attends these declarations. Ibid., 12-14. Pawl writes: "[c]all the conjunction of the teachings from the councils concerning the incarnation Conciliar christology. The conjuncts of this conjunction come from definitions and expositions of the faith, creeds, canons, and anathemas of the councils. If such conciliar statements include other documents –for example Chalcedon's Definition of Faith accepts Cyril's Second letter to Nestorius and his letter to John of Antioch, as well as Leos' Tome to Flavian (Tanner, 1990 [*Decrees*], 85) – then I will include Christological teachings from those conjuncts as Conciliar Christology too." Ibid., 12.

These include (1) its compatibility with Rea's understanding of what theological authorities are, (2) its status as a classic authority on the reception and selection of christological norms, (3) its ecumenical breadth, (4) it is more recent and less cumbersome than John Henry Newman's approach to the question,¹⁶ (5) the fact that many of its germane ideas are relevant to AT, (6) it awaits further development and application for the sake of constructive AT.

In *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Grillmeier provided a description of the developments that shaped the primary theological authorities for Western and Eastern theology.¹⁷ In addition, he made some remarkable reflections on what it means for Chalcedon to be taken as a starting point –and not the “end” –for contemporary theological reflection.¹⁸ He concluded that Chalcedon was supremely normative over other theological authorities both in terms of its material theological content and hermeneutical value for how to interpret other sources for the task of theological reasoning. Therefore, it is a necessary theological authority, yet, it is not necessary and sufficient because each age will present Christians with unique demands. The “insufficient” aspect of this equation (necessary yet not sufficient), means that other components will be required in the task of systematic theology. These will include the integration of new truths from revelation, as well as the use of new tools for this work –in our day this includes the tools of analytic theology and philosophy of religion, for example.¹⁹

For Grillmeier, theological authorities included the Old Testament (OT), New Testament (NT), doctrinal formulas and concepts (such as the *homoousios* from the First Council of Nicaea and the definition of the Council of Chalcedon), as well as further “[contemporary] reflection, with the help of [more recent] philosophical concepts and approaches.”²⁰ These worked together to serve the hermeneutical pressures driven by the reception of the NT witness to the uniqueness of God at work in Jesus for human salvation.²¹ In other words, authorities are ordered according to a hermeneutical principle intended to maintain and consolidate realist knowledge of God, Jesus and human salvation.

The best illumination of the “pure picture of Christ, as it is drawn by the Bible,” is the theological outcome generated by the use of creeds as primary theological authorities.²² Grillmeier rightly identified the fact that stand alone texts from the Bible cannot present this vision of Christ by themselves alone. Only the scope of the creeds and their theological/philosophical concepts could capture the truth about Jesus. He wrote that the proclamation of the church Fathers captured the truth about Jesus without diminution: “we believe that to a certain extent we have made it clear that the simple, original proclamation of Christ, the revealer and bringer of salvation, the proclamation of Christ the Son of God can be heard in undiminished strength through all the *philosophoumena* of the Fathers.”²³

Therefore for Grillmeier, the continuous christological tradition from Jesus through to the Council of Chalcedon had a number of goals as a theological authority. Its negative function as the primary authority was to limit the speculative possibilities to do with the person of Christ –he was only one person God the Son in the flesh.²⁴ More positively, its role as the theological norm provided a hermeneutical lens that opened up the richness of both the OT and NT with respect to Christ and salvation.²⁵ To his mind, creedal theological formulas served as vehicles that: (1) preserve the uniqueness of the message about Jesus and the

¹⁶ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.

¹⁷ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 556.

¹⁹ Sullivan reflects Grillmeier's view that the creeds are not the “end” of theological reflection and dogmatic proposals. Sullivan draws on *Lumen gentium* no. 25 and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 88 in order to make the case that in each age, reflection on Scripture will require the Church, under the influence of the Spirit and the Lordship of Christ, to state fresh truths from Scripture and thus develop intrinsically related doctrinal propositions. Sullivan, “The Definitive Exercise of Teaching Authority,” 504-506.

²⁰ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 556.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²² *Ibid.*, 557.

²³ *Ibid.*, 555. Italics are original to Grillmeier.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 551.

²⁵ “A biblical hermeneutic must be designed to reveal more and more the fullness of the faith of the Old and New Testaments, and not to conceal it ... the Fathers believed that they were fighting for the picture of Christ, as it was drawn by the bible.” *Ibid.*, 556.

requirement to have faith in him,²⁶ (2) preserve the historical facts about Jesus from the gospels and from apostolic proclamation,²⁷ (3) correspond faithfully to the appropriate intellectual desire to understand Jesus and salvation,²⁸ (4) underscore and communicate the theological significance of the incarnation, namely, that in the person of God the Son, God himself acted in a surprising and new way to achieve human salvation.²⁹

Given the material content and explanatory power of historically authorized formulae such as the Chalcedonian Definition, they had an ongoing and contemporary role. These were vital and normative for the church as it moved forward, from age to age and across cultures.

These *philosophoumena*, these technical concepts and formulas (though their technical character should not be exaggerated), are not an end in themselves. They have a service to perform in the faith of the church. They have a service to preserve the Christ of the gospels and the apostolic age for the church of posterity. In all the christological formulas of the ancient church there is a manifest concern not to allow the total demand made on men's faith by the person of Jesus to be weakened by pseudo-solutions. It must be handed on undiminished to all generations of Christendom.³⁰

This view of the ongoing primary significance of Chalcedon played a central role in Grillmeier's understanding of contemporary development and communication of Christian doctrine. Writing in the context of Rahnerian novelty and experimentation post-Vatican II, he urged theologians to both norm their theology with, and also to reflect the content of, a biblical hermeneutic and its reception in the "christological tradition."³¹ At the same time he warned theologians to avoid the speculative and novel proposals of his own time because they did not conform to "the church's picture of Christ in the patristic period."³²

In my estimation, the strength of Grillmeier's work lies in two areas in particular. Firstly, in recognizing and respecting the theological thrusts and pressures that were recognized and received by the earliest Christians. By means of receiving certain texts and not others, together with the theological pressures inherent to these texts, the early Christians developed theological claims that in turn functioned as hermeneutical rules for interpreting the Scriptural canon itself. Rowe has argued for this more recently. With respect to trinitarian doctrine for example, he argues that "there is an organic continuity between the biblical testimony and the early creeds, and that the creeds can serve as hermeneutical guidelines to reading the bible because it is in fact the biblical text itself that necessitated the creedal formulations."³³ Hence, "[t]here is an *exegetical necessity* to trinitarian doctrine."³⁴

The second great strength of Grillmeier's work is reckoning with the range of receptive activities by the early church. These include the selection of some texts as scriptural and the rejection of others.³⁵ In the same way they deployed the Rule of Faith from the first two centuries of Christianity for the sake of

²⁶ "Now these formulas of the church, whether they are the *homoousios* of Nicaea or the Chalcedonian Definition, represent the *lectio difficilior* of the gospel, and maintain the demand for faith, and the stumbling block which Jesus puts before men. This is a sign that they hand on the original message of Jesus." Ibid., 555-56. Italics are original.

²⁷ "They are intended to preserve the Christ of the Gospels and the apostolic age for the faith of posterity." Ibid., 555.

²⁸ Ibid., 556.

²⁹ "Now these formulas clarify only one, albeit decisive, point of belief in Christ: that in Jesus Christ God really entered into human history and thus achieved our salvation." Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 555-56. Italics are original to Grillmeier.

³¹ Ibid., 556. He noted that there are gaps in the years leading up to Nicaea, and this is a field that requires further research: "We have been concerned to outline the development of belief in Christ from its beginning to its first climax in a council of the church. We cannot claim to have given a full and exhaustive description, or the only correct interpretation of course. Because of a lack of literary sources, important periods of the history of christology lie in almost total darkness, particularly the time from Origen to the Council of Nicaea and beyond." Ibid., 555. The ongoing pressure posed by this highly relevant question for theological authorities remains in play today, though some advances have been made.

³² Ibid., 557.

³³ Italics are Rowe's. Rowe, "Luke and the Trinity: An Essay in Ecclesial Biblical Theology," 4. See Rowe's own synthetic work in Christopher Kevin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*: 137. See also Poplutz, *Erzählte Welt*.

³⁴ Italics are Rowe's. Rowe, "Luke and the Trinity," 4. See Rowe's "The Trinity in the Letters of St Paul and Hebrews;" also Marguerat, *Les Actes Des Apotres (1-12)*.

³⁵ Watson, *Gospel Writing; and Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*.

providing the hermeneutical lens for interpreting the Scriptures.³⁶ All of these occurred within the common and liturgical life of the church.³⁷ This second point on hermeneutical reception, together with the first, on the theological pressures inherent within the select texts received by the church will be relevant to my proposal for ordering theological authorities for AT. Though both these will be included in a model for ordering theological authorities, they need to be complemented by a richer range, and view of, theological language (beyond mere terms such as *homoousios*) as a theological norm. I will argue that AT is uniquely positioned to provide linguistic theological norms such as analogies and metaphors. Before moving on from Grillmeier, it is worth noting that he attempted to provide his account of theological authorities within a larger picture that suggests some points of affinity with AT and the larger metaphysical picture within which to locate theological authorities.

3 The larger picture

For Grillmeier, the use of each of these norms and their dynamic relationship with Scripture must be “fully illuminated” by belief in Christ.³⁸ By this he is referring to a matrix of three important meta-ideas that give contours and restraints to the pursuit of rational explorations of faith. He lists these out as the larger Christian *Weltanschauung* (philosophical perspective/worldview), the boundaries for knowledge set by the *mysterium Christi*, and deepening faith.³⁹ Though he did not expand on how these boundary-setting norms interact with the theological authorities described above, they were clearly essential for ordering theological authorities and employing a distinctive use of language to preserve these. Therefore, in the same way that there is an ongoing interaction between the Creeds and Scripture, so there is also another axis of interpretation in play; namely, on the one hand between the deeper notions of worldview, the mystery of Christ, and vital faith; and theological concepts on the other. I take up this suggestive line of thought later in the final portion of this paper where I suggest that a Christian Personalist metaphysic must be the larger context for “Confessional” AT.

In the section above I outlined Grillmeier’s historically realist position that doctrinal formulae serve as primary theological authorities. Grillmeier made his case primarily by means of arguing for the value of conceptual theology. The related issue of a hierarchy of theological authorities now needs to be clarified and worked out. I will subsequently present a model of AT that is carried out in the spirit of Grillmeier’s work.

4 Ordering theological authorities

In order to resolve theological dilemma, or propose a theological concept, a theologian needs a *decisive* reason for discerning which of a number of competing propositions corresponds to reality.⁴⁰ The reasons for preferring one proposition over another one are provided by theological authorities that exist within an inter-connected cluster of a number of theological authorities. There are authority relationships amongst theological authorities. These form hierarchy relationships in which some authority or authorities norm the interpretation, use and value of others. Therefore, authorities need to be understood in relative relationships

³⁶ Irenaeus employed a Rule of that Faith that was intended to help people order the direction of their interpretation and liturgical use of Scripture in such a way that it presented the Christ in his proper relationship to God and the world. He argued that the thrust of Scripture was like a blueprint that allowed all the mosaic pieces of Scripture to present a brilliant image of Christ the king. See Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.8.1. Commenting on Irenaeus’ work, Holsinger-Freisen writes that Irenaeus’ “[h]ermeneutical mechanics become increasingly noticeable when one supposes that Scripture attests not only divine propositions but also, in some way, a divine narrative. At the same time, narrative theologies are found wanting if they lack an ontological anchor in dogma. Truth claims (e.g., the doctrine of God as a triunity) are related within a narrational world....” Holsinger-Freisen, *Irenaeus and Genesis*, 220. Holsinger-Freisen continues: “and thus meaningful for Christian living.” Ibid.

³⁷ Cassingena, *Les Pères De L’église Et La Liturgie*.

³⁸ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 1, 556.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Rea, “Authority and Truth,” 876.

to one another, and as part of a cluster of resources for theological reasoning. Rea suggests three factors that shape the relative significance of the authorities to one another. These are “the concept of one being [logically or rationally] *prior* to another, the concept of someone being a *source or supplier* of reasons, and the concept of a source of reasons being *more authoritative than* another.”⁴¹ The first element in authority relationships –logical or rational priority– is self-explanatory.⁴² The second, being a supplier of reasons is also clear. The third element, however, gets to the guts of theological ordering relationships. The *more authoritative than* relation, is defined as:

A is more authoritative than B (for person C, in a domain D) if, and only if, A and B are both sources of reasons for belief or action C in D, and the reasons supplied by A have priority for C in D over the reasons provided by B.⁴³

Grillmeier’s scholarly work was not ignorant of these issues, though he may have lacked Rea’s clarity. Once he had established the summative value of theological concepts and doctrinal formulas (because they efficiently secured and produced authentic and robust christology), he needed address the subsequent question beyond the intrinsic value of past churchly doctrinal formulas.⁴⁴ Turning from the past to the future, he needed to address the constructive forward-looking question of how to determine which conciliar concepts, or theological proposals are most weighty for the sake of theology. That is, how does one determine which particular strands of conciliar hermeneutics are most influential for theological reasoning and articulation?

Grillmeier addressed these questions by proposing a criterion of impact. For him, assessing the impact of a theological authority upon the church is the basis for its status in an authority relationship with other theological norms. Impact is what determines the relative order of theological authorities for the theological task. The impact, and hence authoritativeness, of a given theological norm is measured across three planes of life and authority: the ecclesial, spiritual and theological.⁴⁵ His fundamental idea was that a theological authority is a “good” with reference to truth, thus it is articulated as truth and fruitfully promotes the truth. In other words, the greatest “good” is revealed by the degree to which it serves the larger ideas of Christian truth and salvation in the community of recipients.⁴⁶

Grillmeier’s holistic emphasis for testing the relative significance of theological proposals for the whole church as a corporate organism and organization, is consistent with his comments that theological task takes place within the larger Christian *Weltanschauung*, the boundaries for knowledge set by the *mysterium Christi*, deepening faith.⁴⁷

In retrospect, Grillmeier’s testing of the impact of an idea in the context of the three larger qualifiers prevents theology from falling into a number of dangers. From a Thomistic perspective these include: dissent, not conducting systematics in the boarder context of active faith, selectivity with respect to historically valid authorities and claims, and arbitrary opinions. These problems are forms of theological

⁴¹ Ibid., 878.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 880.

⁴⁴ “Each generation of Christian history has contributed something towards the appropriation of the *mysterium Christi* which deserves the consideration of posterity. To allow only the questions which are live issues for the present –and perhaps only for the present– to determine the interpretation of the *mysterium Christi* would be a dangerous limitation to our understanding of Christ.” Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, xxiii. In other words, the early church was on track, so in order to keep our own reflections in order and in the right direction, we must follow their lead. “...if we are to proclaim the *mysterium Christi* in the language of our time, we must first have understood what the Fathers wanted to say in the language of their time. The inward, intellectual struggles of the ancient church testify that the christological writers of that church were concerned with something vital, namely the very nature of Christianity.” Ibid.

⁴⁵ Grillmeier, “The Reception of Chalcedon in the Roman Catholic Church,” 386-87.

⁴⁶ “‘Reception’ therefore means the acceptance or adoption of some ‘good’ by a group of people which did not itself create this ‘good’.” Ibid., 386. Because reception “means acquiring possession of some ‘good,’” Grillmeier wrote that “[a] conciliar decree cannot therefore be regarded merely as a law to be accepted. The best test of the importance of a council is the service it renders to truth and salvation in the Church.” Ibid.

⁴⁷ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 1, 556.

non-conformism suited to those who have only “a kind of opinion in accordance with his own will.”⁴⁸ To my mind, AT may be especially prone to non-conformist opinions and arbitrary claims because of the value it places on reason’s use of logic in a non-confessional context.⁴⁹ A number of historical examples of theology falling into dissent, doubt, selectivity, and arbitrariness may be highlighted. The impact of these has often been significant. If these dangers and the negative impact are taken as a criterion of the validity of a theological proposal, then the Filioque controversy serves as a historic warning to those who explore the issue of theological ordering.⁵⁰

The Filioque controversy is a classic case of confusing the relative order of theological authorities and also the issue of theological dissent. In the filioque case, ecclesiastical authority was taken to trump theological Christian authority. The root problem was overstepping a theological authority with ecclesial authority. This was pointed out by the Eastern theologians who, in the words of Siecienski, argued that “even if the *filioque* was orthodox (which it is not), its addition to the creed was prohibited by Canon 7 of the Council of Ephesus, which forbade anyone ‘to produce or write any other creed except the one which was defined by the holy fathers who were gathered together in the holy Spirit at Nicaea.’”⁵¹ The deep problem that this debate exposed was that differing approaches over how to order theological authorities led to differing views about God’s nature. “At issue were,” Sciescenski notes, “key questions about the monarchy of the Father, the eternal relationship between Son and Spirit, the transferrable (or non-transferrable) nature of hypostatic qualities, and the exact nature of the relationship between the economy ... and theology.”⁵² Thus, the theological warrant, authority and role of the Filioque clause itself raises “...the deeper question” of “whether the two halves of Christendom, in their diverse approaches to the trinitarian mystery, had come to differing, and ultimately incompatible teachings about the nature of God.”⁵³

The Filioque case raises a key question for AT practitioners and the AT movement. Namely, should an AT theologian accept the addition of the Filioque clause? At first glance, it seems to me that there is at least one methodological reason to do with ordering theological authorities, as well as an ecumenical one for not doing so. This serves as more than a test case for how thoughtfully (or not) analytic theologians select and deploy historically significant theological authorities. It can be stated more pointedly: if AT practitioners value creeds and their ecumenical endorsement, where do they stand on the Filioque?⁵⁴ Their answers will reveal a great deal about the difference between receiving versus selecting theological authorities. For example, for some AT practitioners, such as myself and other Anglicans and Roman Catholics, there is no opportunity to decide whether or not one will endorse the filioque, it has been decided by the Church. The question is what kind of model is appropriate for holding to the Filioque with integrity. For others, who do not believe themselves to be bound by the Filioque, addressing this question may point out some unexplored assumptions to do with ordering theological authorities for AT. In an effort at ecumenical AT, I will return to pneumatology later in this essay and will propose a model for recognizing the Spirit’s personal properties aside from employing the Filioque. That comes later, for now the question to be addressed for now is *how does AT currently relate to and order theological authorities? Is AT’s use of theological authorities sufficiently strong to define it as a form of Christian systematic theology?*

⁴⁸ Ibid., 555-56. Summa, II-II, q.5, a.3, c. cited in M. V. Dougherty, “Opining the *Articuli Fidei*: Thomas Aquinas on the Heretic’s Assent to the Articles of Faith,” 10. I do understand the flip side of this question which is “how do we avoid merely parroting the theological ghosts and illusions of the past”? On this issue, see Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 108-11.

⁴⁹ Stump critiques analytical philosophy and theology for being overly rationalistic and narrowly concerned with certain kinds of propositional forms of knowledge. Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 25 ff. Crisp worries that AT may be regarded by some as non-confessional. “That missing ingredient is confessionalism (understood as an approach to theology which is a confession of its truth), and an ecclesial focus for doing theology.” Crisp, “Analytic Theology as Systematic Theology,” 161.

⁵⁰ This case here serves as an illustration of problems to do with theological ordering, and not as a denial of the validity of its theological judgements and concepts. However, the case could be made that Grillmeier’s criterion of impact does provide a reason for rejecting the filioque in the absence of an excellent case for arguing for it.

⁵¹ Siecienski, *Filioque*, 5.

⁵² Ibid., 5-6.

⁵³ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁴ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, xii, n.1.

4.1 Why do theological authorities and their ordering matter to AT?

As noted above, Grillmeier's qualifiers are intended to prevent theology from a number of errors: namely, falling dissent, lack of faith, selectivity, and arbitrary opinions. These dangers need to be borne in mind as a discussion of AT and its theological authorities is carried out. The question of theological authorities is particularly important because to my mind many of the critiques of AT circle around these questions.⁵⁵ Essentially they boil down to the question of whether or not AT is especially prone to two dangers: (1) mis-ordering theological authorities by according undue primacy to reason and ontological *a priori*, and (2) that this dis-order may result in *mere* theological opinion or individualistic selectivity rather than fruitful realist faith.⁵⁶

4.2 AT and the question of theological authorities

The constructive section that follows outlines my interpretation of AT in light of Grillmeier's work. I point out how its approach to theological authorities and ordering them for the sake of knowledge is influenced by its origins in analytic philosophy (AP). Throughout this section I note (1) that its mode of knowledge and style or argumentation may shape the way it handles theological authorities; (2) AT may be better placed to work with linguistic tools than are other forms of ST (systematic theology); (3) best-practice AT is "Confessional" AT because this is the kind of AT that does the best job at receiving, integrating and ordering the confessional sources of theological knowledge noted by Grillmeier; (4) a confessional approach will be in a good position to avoid the problems associated with mis-ordering theological authorities noted above: schism, dissent, doubt, selectivity, and arbitrary opinions. I bring these points together with a case study. The case study is an example of a partially successful confessional form of AT. It is partially successful in that demonstrates logical force in the context of confessional constraint, yet it was unsuccessful in its use of theological language. Thereby it suggests that AT's linguistic background may be the basis for developing and employing the Christian use of language as an important theological norm.

4.3 Analytic Theology, Analytic Philosophy, and the primacy of propositional knowledge

AT's theological authorities and their ordering are influenced by AT's background in analytic philosophy (AP). In what follows, I make the case that it is unsurprising to find that warranted propositions, reason and logic (together with Creds) are the primary epistemic *as well as* theological authorities for AT. For this reason, the strengths and potential weaknesses of AT are related to its pedigree within the AP family.

Indeed, AT has an evolutionary connection to AP: Gasser argues that "analytic theology is the most recent stage of a continuous intellectual debate – one might also say the next natural step – whose development stems from the analytic tradition of the 1950s."⁵⁷ A definition of analytic philosophy (AP) itself is elusive due to the complexity and evolution of this movement. Vrahimis has highlighted the variegated nature of AP at the 1958 landmark Royaumont Colloquium – the historical attempt to bring analytic and continental philosophy into meaningful conversation with each other. The plurality within AP, as evidenced at the Colloquium, has led Vrahimis to rightly claim that there is only "a quasi-unity of 'analytic

⁵⁵ See summaries of these in Rea, "Analytic Theology Roundtable: Replies to Bitar, Couenhoven, and Wood;" Gasser, "Toward Analytic Theology;" Coakley, "On Why Analytic Theology Is Not a Club." See also the points made in Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 25 and Crisp, "Analytic Theology as Systematic Theology," 161.

⁵⁶ Keith Yandell's work in "How Many Times Does Three Go Into One?" is an example of AT that avoids the charge of disregarding orthodox theological authorities, however, their norming role and significance for ordering propositions and theological claims is somewhat ambiguous. He ultimately argues for a "complex" view of the Trinity that is quite unique and may be at odds with the hermeneutic recommended by creedal trinitarianism.

⁵⁷ Gasser, "Toward Analytic Theology: An Itinerary," 44.

philosophy', in which Oxford linguistic analysis partakes."⁵⁸ For Vrahimis, the unity of AP remains an open question.⁵⁹ However, core interests of this movement may be identified as various kinds of propositions, negations, logical relationships between propositions, truth, proofs, a priori/a posteriori clarifications and arguments.⁶⁰

Eleonore Stump writes that analytic knowledge is prioritizes knowledge *that*.⁶¹ For Stump, knowledge *that* occurs when "propositional beliefs [are] appropriately related to facts."⁶² In this way of thinking, "belief itself is generally taken just as an attitude towards a proposition."⁶³ For AP it is "axiomatic ... that all (or virtually all) knowledge is knowledge that something or other is the case."⁶⁴ Stump writes that "[i]t is not just attitudes towards propositions that are central to knowledge in the analytic approach; it is also the discerning of patterns among propositions."⁶⁵ Knowledge, therefore, "is a matter of discerning the appropriate relations among propositions, especially the inferential relations between properly basic beliefs and beliefs ultimately based on them"⁶⁶ For AP, as Stump understands it, there is a priority upon the propositions themselves, processing the propositions logically, and discerning the nature of these patterns yields knowledge *that* something is the case.⁶⁷ A higher order question treats what authorities determine the patterns and relationships between theological truths, or propositions. Though this question was implicitly addressed in Stump's *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers*, a more direct and fuller treatment of this question is required. Below, I will do just that, and address question of theological authorities for AT.

As we transition to AT, I will first show that analytic theologians have firmly placed themselves in the AP family of thinkers by adopting many of their priorities, methods and concerns. Indeed, some have been explicit about this dependence or generative influence.⁶⁸ One implication is that AP's approach to knowledge and ordering authorities that establish that something counts as knowledge is influential upon AT's. It is not surprising to see the following common features between AP and AT: a methodology in which reason has a very prominent role geared towards ordering syllogisms of propositions with the goal of either

⁵⁸ Vrahimis, "Royaumont Colloquium," 185. Preston, *Analytic Philosophy*.

⁵⁹ "The puzzling unity of analytic philosophy ... remains to this day highly problematic." Vrahimis, "Royaumont Colloquium," 185. See McGregor, "Introduction: The Analytic Engagement with Continental Philosophy."

⁶⁰ Monk, "The Temptations of Phenomenology: Wittgenstein, the Synthetic a Priori and the 'Analytic a Posteriori'." Consider the red/green patch problem as a demonstration of these classically analytical concerns. Ibid., 318-23. Frege's linguistic turn may be taken as the origin of AP, and its material point of departure from the continental tradition, Kerr, "Aquinas and Analytic Philosophy," 127-28. Its leading exponents have historically included Frege, Russell, Quine, Davidson, Wittgenstein, and Putnam. Ibid.

⁶¹ "There is something suitably called 'Dominican' about the way analytic philosophy characterizes things. It characterizes by means of designations summarizing a cluster of abstract properties." Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 47. Stump also discusses other forms of knowing, such as knowing *of*, *who* and knowing *how* when she discusses second person accounts. Ibid., 76-79. See: Stump, "Second-Person Accounts and the Problem of Evil;" Stump, "Narrative and the Knowledge of Persons;" Senor, "Suffering for Human Flourishing."

⁶² Italics in quotes from Stump are original throughout this work. Ibid., 48.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ For Stump, analytic philosophy is a foundationalist approach to knowing. "Foundationalism comes in different species, but they all share a certain account of the structure of knowledge. ... Knowledge is ... a matter of believing a proposition that is true and properly basic for a knower or a proposition derived by the knower in an appropriate way from a properly basic belief." Ibid. However, though a number of prominent AT practitioners have been foundationalist (such as Plantinga and Alston), Quine and Bonjour were analytic philosophers who were not committed to foundationalism as a theory of knowledge.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "On all these theories of knowledge, then, knowledge is a matter of having an attitude towards a proposition, of knowing that; and, with the possible exception of basic beliefs, knowledge requires suitable pattern processing of propositions. Furthermore, excellence in a knower will include the knower's ability to see subtle or hard to recognize patterns among propositions and to be quick in the processing of such patterns." Ibid., 49.

⁶⁸ McCall, *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology*.

accepting or negating these propositions and the conclusions that their relationships yield.⁶⁹ Below I pursue the question of the methodological significance for theological authorities that follows on from the observation that the origins and concerns of AT are influenced by AP.

4.4 Analytic Theology: A method and style for propositional knowledge

In what follows, I outline my interpretation of AT's purposes, core concerns, approach to knowledge, and style of expression. The purpose of AT is to describe reality correctly; Rea claims the aim of AT is thus "to provide such true explanatory theories as we can in areas of inquiry (metaphysics, morals, and the like) that fall outside the scope of the natural sciences."⁷⁰ Therefore, to my mind this is a project that pursues metaphysical realism.⁷¹ I take metaphysical realism as entailing that: "[a] realist about X holds that discourse about X is apt for truth or falsity... the realist's opposite number is the non-cognitivist or non-factualist, who holds that seeming statements about X do not function in a generally descriptive way –do not, despite appearances, actually say what sort of things there are or actually ascribe properties –but rather have some other linguistic function."⁷² This form of realism reflects the primary concerns of philosophy of religion, which is the interrogation of truth claims, and the warrants for knowledge of truths.⁷³ This concern is expressed in Pawl's recent work *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay*. Pawl defended the doctrine of the Incarnation against the charge of incoherence. This brought out AT's focus on propositions, as Pawl did his work by establishing propositions within a model of the Incarnation that is analytically defensible. He wrote: "[a]nd even if there is no agreed upon consensus [on a model for the metaphysics of the incarnation], the claim that the doctrine has no literal meaning at all –and so does not even rise to the dignity of being false –is a danger that one might hope to extinguish by providing a model that does, at the very least, allow a truth-value to be assigned to the propositions in question."⁷⁴ The concern for realism and propositions means that AT is at least a better companion for confessional theology, such as Grillmeier's, than a number of forms of continental philosophy, which recoil from making ontological metaphysical claims and are decidedly "non-metaphysical" forms of theology.⁷⁵

The realist concerns, and propositional focus of AT have been made above. The next point to make is that a quest for realism and a concern for propositions requires attention to how propositions are related

⁶⁹ Analytic theologian Norman Kretzmann expresses the priority of reason in AT as follows: "[r]eason is the bridgehead from which intellectual access to God must begin, but quite a lot of the bridge has long since been built and is still in place, and the most efficacious use of the intellect in these circumstances is in the inspection, repair improvement, and extension of the bridge..." Kretzmann, "Trinity and Transcendentals," 100.

⁷⁰ Rea, "Introduction," 4.

⁷¹ This emphasis is particularly strong if, like McGrew, the discipline's propositions will arise from the basic units of data taken from the realms of history (which includes New Testament data) and the sciences. McGrew, "Convergence Model," 126-27.

⁷² Railton and Rosen, "Realism," 30. For the profound ethical implications of various forms of realism, see Schweiker, "Love in Search of Realism."

⁷³ The question of the legitimacy of this and related questions and its methods are currently hot topics. This is due to a number of factors including the pressures around religious pluralism, the inclusivism/exclusivism debate, the failure of the secular private/public divide, as well as the modernist assumptions that drove the methodologies for assessing truth-claims. Markham, "Truth in Religion," 220.

⁷⁴ Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 29. See also Stump's work on making claims via "expository prose" which are "non-narrative propositions" *Wandering in Darkness*, 78. On Stump's work and relationship between syllogistic logic and narrative logic as it pertains to epistemology and analytic philosophy see Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual*, 27-28. See also *ibid.* 47, 53-56, 138 ff.

⁷⁵ See the excellent discussion of these issues in Bradley Onishi's "The Beginning, Not the End: On Continental Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies."

to one another, and what these relationships yield.⁷⁶ This is evident in the work of Eleonore Stump. Stump states “excellence in a knower will include the knower’s ability to see subtle or hard to recognize patterns among propositions and to be quick in the processing of such patterns.”⁷⁷ Discerning these patterns will allow the knower to recognize the contours of each proposition more clearly, and also to relate to these as knowledge within a larger reality.⁷⁸

The concern for propositions and “proposition processing,” carried over from AP, shapes AT’s discourse into a style of syllogistic expression. This does not mean that someone is “logical” or an analytic philosopher because they syllogism, however, the point here is that AT has at least borrowed its style of expression from AP. Importing a style is reflective of the high regard in which AT holds the tools of AP. Rea embodies the priority of propositions and syllogisms as he lays these out for novices to the discipline. P1 is particularly instructive due to the emphasis on formalization and logical relations:

- P1. Write as if philosophical positions and conclusions can be adequately formalized in sentences that can be formalized and logically manipulated.
- P2. Prioritize precision, clarity, and logical coherence
- P3. Avoid substantive ... use of metaphor and other tropes whose semantic content outstrips their propositional content.
- P4. Work as much as possible with well-understood primitive concepts, and concepts that can be analysed in terms of these.
- P5. Treat conceptual analysis (insofar as possible) as a source of evidence.⁷⁹

The question of how to order propositions, and by what authorities they must be ordered stems directly from AT’s concern for true and warranted propositions and correct propositional attitudes. Hence the question of authoritative norms in AT is closely connected to its basic purposes. The question that I would like AT to explore is how norms such as theological concepts in Creeds and their hermeneutical trajectories relate to the nature and qualities of analytical syllogisms for the sake of theology. For example, how does the Definition of Chalcedon (and its attendant literature) shape the nature of the propositions, the quality and kind of logical connections between these, and ultimately the results of these syllogisms? Is reason the norm that AT will employ for these? Surprisingly, AT as a whole has not done enough to explicitly address the issue of theological authorities and their relative weighting. This question cannot go unattended because theological authorities may direct or misdirect people, either towards or away from, what counts as truths about God.⁸⁰ The point I make below is that AT must employ uniquely Christian theological authorities in order to be more than AP.

⁷⁶ For some, a proposition is a belief that something is the case. Buchanan, “Is Belief a Propositional Attitude?” 1. However, I follow David Vander Laan’s lead on singular propositions and how they relate to an entity: “If a proposition is directly about an entity, then that proposition bears a relation to that entity. But serious actualism entails that nothing is related to a non-existent entity (since there are no non-existent entities). So no proposition can be directly about non-existent entities.” Vander Laan, “Singular Propositions and Serious Actualism,” 81. Hence, history will be the basis for the propositions that will drive this work. See the outstanding work by Genoviva Marti, “Sense and Reference,” 686.

⁷⁷ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 49. Italics original. However, in Stump’s case she is uniquely aware of other modes of knowledge and their normative role on AT. For example she writes that “...if we boil a story down just to non-narrative propositions ... we cannot convey by means of expository prose alone even a simulacrum of a second person experience.” Ibid., 78.

⁷⁸ Ibid. See also Stump, *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers*.

⁷⁹ Rea, “Introduction,” 5-6. “On the surface,” writes Rea, “these prescriptions might seem to be just stilted expressions of fairly commonsensical virtues that we all ... aim to inculcate in our undergraduates.” Ibid., 6.

⁸⁰ Sullivan, “The Definitive Exercise of Teaching Authority.”

4.5 Analytic Theology: its authorities and ordering

AT in the Christian tradition is not merely a remix of AP. Just as there is a divide between analytic and continental philosophy, so there is a great ditch between AT and AP. AT is theistic, where in the past many AP practitioners were either notoriously atheistic or agnostic. This has placed AP in tension with Christian theology in the past. For example, John Haldane cautioned against the theistic AP of Christian philosophers. He claimed it was “something to be avoided as a serious threat to one’s grasp of God, goodness and truth.”⁸¹ Kerr has noted that the relationship between AP and Thomism is fraught with a number of tensions and that this accounts for the discontinuities between these movements. For him, these include from mutual disinterest, AP’s thoughtless use and interpretation of Aquinas when this occurs, assumptions about AP’s native atheism.⁸² To my mind, we do not need to be wary of AT if it is taken in concert with a holistic approach to confessional theology, whereby the insights of AT are taken to necessarily relate to the seven ecumenical councils as a whole.⁸³

Recent Christian AT, embodied in the many of the authors I interact with in this essay, is a thoroughly trinitarian and theocentric manifestation of certain interests intrinsic to AP.⁸⁴ One powerful reason for its theistic impulse is its interaction with proto-AT theologians of the middle ages such as Anselm and Aquinas.⁸⁵ Indeed, one could suggest that the seven ecumenical councils and the medieval theologians provide the bridge between AP and AT on a number of substantive and methodological fronts.⁸⁶ But, how significant is this creedal (and scholastic) bridge?

4.6 AT and its theological authorities

Is AT materially and formally more than a theistic variation on the methods and interests of AP? If we say that AT is a constructive systematic theological movement in its own right – then what do we mean by that? Does it have clear and determinative theological authorities? If so, how is AT and the ordering of theological authorities practiced? What is left to be desired?

4.7 A meaning-full theological movement?

Oliver Crisp has recently argued that the majority of work in AT may be included within the broader undertaking he calls ST.⁸⁷ To my mind, formal and material theological authorities play a crucial role in the decision about whether or not AT may be taken to be ST. Crisp concluded that AT did meet the threshold for ST because its leading and representative proponents were clearly participating in a *Shared Task* notion of ST which includes the formal employment of Christian theological authorities. Crisp defined *Shared Task* as a

[c]ommitment to an intellectual undertaking that involves (though it may not comprise) explicating the conceptual content of the Christian tradition (with the expectation that this is normally done from a position within that tradition, as an adherent of that tradition), using particular religious texts that are part of the Christian tradition, including sacred scripture, as well as human reason, reflection, and praxis (particularly religious practices), as sources for theological judgments.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Haldane, “Thomism and the Future of Catholic Theology,” 16, cited in Kerr, “Aquinas and Analytic Philosophy?,” 123.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Here I am critically interacting with Merold Westphal’s work in “Hermeneutics and Holiness.” It is important to note that there are *a priori*, *a posteriori* and *a fortiori* versions of holism.

⁸⁴ Abraham writes: AT is “the articulation of the central themes of Christian teaching illuminated by the best insights of analytic philosophy.” Abraham, “Systematic Theology as Analytic Theology,” 55.

⁸⁵ For example, see Stump’s work on Aquinas in *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers*; and also her volume *Aquinas*. Crisp, deals with Anselm and Aquinas in his *The Word Enfleshed*. This kind of work needs to be explored further by Protestant theologians in particular.

⁸⁶ Crisp’s work may be taken to suggest this in “Analytic Theology as Systematic Theology.”

⁸⁷ Ibid., 157. Italics are original.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 160.

In other words, for Crisp AT qualifies as ST because it is interested in clarifying and developing the core concerns of Christian theology by means of conversation with historically authoritative Christian resources.⁸⁹ However, this claim is ambiguous with reference to the extent to which theological claims are ordered by theological authorities. Crisp appears to suggest that vastly different forms of ST are equally valid forms of Christian ST, irrespective of how their theological judgments and concepts are normed.⁹⁰ I wonder if this is too soft a definition. It may fall into a “conversation partner” approach to theological sources.⁹¹ This approach involves a selectivity in which the theologian feels at liberty to “tune out” some conciliar hermeneutical pressures in favor of others. This allows the theologian to privilege any given theological norm over others, for any number of reasons which may have little to do with historic Christianity. This selectivity may yield eclectic theological results, for arbitrary reasons. Worse of all, the theological results may have no real referent.

The issue of selectivity highlights the fact that the ordering of theological sources matters as much as the sources themselves. One way forward is to order then according to creedal hermeneutics and its inbuilt logic. Creedal hermeneutics and its logic allow other sources of theological knowledge to be rightly ordered with respect to the core doctrines of the faith, which is whatever the creeds say about Trinity, Christology, soteriology, pneumatology, the church and eschatology. This ordering permits the clarity afforded by the “propositional processing” that yields knowledge *that* something is the case: a theological truth.⁹² The warrant for ordering propositions in theology according to creedal hermeneutics has been suggested by Edwards and Daley. To my mind, their work echoes Grillmeier’s understanding of the ongoing role of the Creeds.

Edwards aligns with Grillmeier’s emphasis on reception and the primacy of theological concepts and their hermeneutical implications for further theological claims. Edwards argues that (1) the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 AD) is a primary theological authority, (2) subsequent ecumenical Creeds that were essentially clarifications and applications of the content and hermeneutics intended and required by the Nicene formula.⁹³ I agree with this on historical grounds. I also concur with its entailment that the Chalcedonian formula was not advanced in order to develop a constructive theology of the person of Christ. It was rather “a formal agreement on the boundaries of orthodox faith Christian concerning the person of Christ, but clearly not intended to break new theological ground.”⁹⁴ In other words, the Definition of Chalcedon may be thought of as a particular interpretation of Nicaea, or as a faithful reception of the hermeneutical intent of the Nicene Creed. For this reason, (and drawing upon Grillmeier’s work) Daley refers to the formula as “ballpark” and “dogmatic” rather than “speculative.”⁹⁵

4.8 The significance of hermeneutics for theological authority in AT

Grillmeier and Daley are correct to highlight the ongoing value of both the content of the creeds and their hermeneutical value for ordering theological claims. This is highly relevant for AT and its practitioners (as it is to theologians of all stripes). At times, AT practitioners are happy to take creedal statement as its launching pads and work in a manner that treats theological authorities as “conversation partners.” In these cases it is not clear to me that the hermeneutics of the creeds are taken as a primary theological norm for the work that follows. Working within, and developing, the ongoing hermeneutical significance of this equation may indeed be a weakness in AT. Gasser writes:

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Hasker, *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God*; Van Inwagen, “Relative identity and the doctrine of the Trinity;” Rea, “Material constitution and the Trinity;” Rea and Brower, “Does the problem of material constitution illuminate the doctrine of the Trinity;” Lane Craig, “Defending the consistency of the doctrine of the Trinity;” Yandell, “How many times does three go into One?”

⁹² Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 78

⁹³ Edwards, “The First Council of Nicaea,” 1552-67.

⁹⁴ Daley, “Unpacking the Chalcedonian Formula,” 169.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Here he draws on the work and terminology of Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 1:545.

4.9 Analytic philosophical theology should take more seriously the worry

that its own methodological approaches are subject to ideological abuse ... the analytic tradition has always paid more attention to experience and the senses than to the interpretation of texts and narratives. Major sources of religious life, however, are related to the reading of, or listening to the reading and expounding of, sacred texts. Here it might be helpful for analytic thinkers to learn from their continental counterparts who are more concerned about issues pertaining to hermeneutics, textual criticism and interpretation.⁹⁶

It seems that AT may need to pay more attention to the hermeneutical trajectories that have previously been received by the Christian church.⁹⁷ Gasser's concern is particularly relevant to the lack of emphasis on normative hermeneutical traditions in Crisp's description of ST movements and even within AT. In that work Crisp differentiated various schools of ST as "intellectual cultures" that have common Christian sources.⁹⁸ For Crisp, what sets these apart from one another has to do with the personal preferences of the participants. The same seems to apply to being an AT practitioner –it seems that this merely means being a theologian concerned with certain methodological issues or affinity groups, rather than being driven by a vigorous theological tradition.

Though I agree that there are different theological cultures and that these all have their own temperamental interests and forms of expression, these are not all equally valid, nor do they qualify equally as ST. What sets some apart from others is their choice to inhabit a Christian worldview, to own certain theological authorities and how they norm (or not!) their "particular texts ... particular thinkers, and privilege certain intellectual virtues and approaches" according to the content and hermeneutical trajectories of our common theological sources.⁹⁹ To my mind, this exemplifies why some confessional theologians may find AT lacking. Perhaps AT has not really matured beyond the earlier, "thin," kind of AT that merely indicates a commitment to a set of intellectual tools and virtues rather than to theological claims and their norming hermeneutic validity over all that follows.¹⁰⁰ It seems to me that we are at the threshold of a new stage in the development of AT. Clarifying the nature, qualities and relationships amongst various theological authorities is intrinsic to the question of what is AT, *and to its future*.

Thomas McCall has argued that if AT is going to be theological it must be shaped by the norms suitable to the discipline of theology.¹⁰¹ On this view, AT is primarily distinguished from AP largely by its sources of knowledge, not primarily by the kind of questions it asks. Hopefully McCall's followers will demand that AT be more than merely a philosophical procedure, it is compressively and theologically grounded, oriented and shaped by ordering its sources along confessional lines.¹⁰² In what follows, I provide an example of my own work in AT in the spirit of McCall's recommendations, however, it is done in a strongly confessional mode as per Grillmeier's work.

⁹⁶ Gasser, "Toward Analytic Theology: An Itinerary," 52.

⁹⁷ Daley, "Unpacking the Chalcedonian Formula."

⁹⁸ Crisp, "Analytic Theology as Systematic Theology." One wonders how well this accords with epistles driving forward particular theological judgments as proposed by Richard B. Hays, "The Faith of Jesus Christ," 18, cited in Stewart, "Narrative World, Rhetorical Logic, and the Voice of the Author in 4 Ezra," 376-77.

⁹⁹ Crisp, "Analytic Theology as Systematic Theology," 161.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 164. However, he also describes the more recent and more theologically robust version of AT (ibid., 161), and in his own recent work, Crisp serves a model for ordering theological authorities for the sake of constructive AT. As Crisp works through a number of christological issues in his *The Word Enfleshed*, he makes explicit a number sources and their relative ordering. Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ*.

¹⁰¹ McCall, *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology*, 161.

¹⁰² McCall was one of my Ph.D. supervisors at TIU. I am grateful to Dr. McCall for his input, and am also deeply grateful to Dr. Keith Yandell for his influence on my work via the courses he taught on epistemology, analytic theology, and philosophy of religion at TIU during my time at TIU.

4.10 An unfinished work of “Confessional” AT

Below I critique an example of *Confessional* AT. It is a model of AT from a Grillmeier-like vantage point. In order to avoid offending anyone, I have chosen to critique an example out of my own earlier work in AT.¹⁰³ This was carried out in the context of “Third Article Theology,” thus it was fuelled, resourced and bounded by historic Christian norms: the Scriptures, the hermeneutics at work in the “Rule of Faith,” the seven ecumenical Creeds.¹⁰⁴ This was in tandem with the constructive movement known as “Spirit-Christology” and “Third Article Theology.”¹⁰⁵ I deliberately worked within the ecumenical historical boundaries set by “Third Article Theology,” which recognizes the value of creeds over that of the historical-critical method. This was an explicit exercise in the theological interpretation of Scripture. From the outset of the project the primary theological authority were the ecumenical creeds as they bounded and directed the interpretation of Scripture.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the question was approached with a conciliar mindset and it also pursued a valid conciliar question. This was further strengthened by my own approach as an Anglican committed to the 39 Articles and the liturgy of *A Prayerbook for Australia* (1995).

Hence, it is a work in *Confessional dogmatics* and reflects most of Grillmeier’s concerns. For Crisp this is “theology ... oriented to the object of the discipline (God) who is the agent that gives us the material by means of which the subject-matter of the discipline is organized, namely, Holy Writ ... It presumes that any interaction with other, non-theological disciplines should be at the behest of theology, and for particular purposes that are ancillary to the central dogmatic task of unfolding the Christian faith for the life of the church.”¹⁰⁷ Crisp identifies this kind of “Confessional” work with the work of Webster.¹⁰⁸ Whilst I agree with this, I identify it more closely with that of Thomas Joseph White because of his historically attuned understanding of revelation and the development of dogma, as well as the range of ecclesial resources he employs for his theology.¹⁰⁹

The theological problem the essay addressed was the perceived truncation of God the Spirit’s personal individuation relative to that of God the Father and God the Son. “Inner-trinitarian sequentialism,”¹¹⁰ as follows: “[t]he Spirit does not have a comparable inner-Trinitarian action nor a relational/personal impact relative to the Father and the Son. Because the Spirit lacks a particular and particularizing action and hence relative relations to the Father and the Son, his personhood is relatively truncated from a systematic point of view.”¹¹¹

The logical question I asked bounced off the creedal claim that a theology of the eternal begetting and personal constitution of the Son is strictly warranted based upon the activity God the Father sending God the Son into salvation history. However, I noted that the same logic was not applied equivalently to the Nicene Creed’s line: “he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.”¹¹² I addressed this question by applying a number of norms.

The first theological authority I explored in the sequence of the investigation was a theological norm stated in a form that suggested a logic, or symmetry to it. I started here because the essay was concerned

¹⁰³ Harrower, “A Third Article Proposal About the Third Person of the Trinity.”

¹⁰⁴ I followed the fundamental norms for third article theology as laid out by Habets in his introductory essay to the volume. Habets, *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*.

¹⁰⁵ O’Byrne, *Spirit Christology and Trinity in the Theology of David Coffey*; Habets, “Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo;” Weinandy, “The Filioque: Beyond Athanasius and Thomas Aquinas: An Ecumenical Proposal.”

¹⁰⁶ In addition, a specific focus was given to the person of the holy Spirit, thereby prizing one avenue of enquiry over others, however, this was a legitimate concern of the Council of Constantinople (381 AD) given the problem of the *pneumatomachoi* who denied the divinity of the Spirit.

¹⁰⁷ Crisp, “Analytic Theology as Systematic Theology,” 161.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology*.

¹¹⁰ The problem is pointed out and outlined in Weinandy, “The Filioque: Beyond Athanasius and Thomas Aquinas: An Ecumenical Proposal.”

¹¹¹ Harrower, “A Third Article Proposal About the Third Person of the Trinity,” 97-98.

¹¹² This developed a question that Fred Sanders had regarding my work in Harrower, *Trinitarian Self and Salvation: An Evangelical Engagement with Rahner’s Rule*. See his comments in the Foreword, xiii.

with the robustness of the operative assumption that it is logically necessary to strictly and consistently align trinitarian missions in history with trinitarian eternal relations and person-constituting properties in God himself. What was taken for “logic” (which is not really logical *per se*, but stated as an expression presuming logic) was the “strict realist” reading of Rahner’s Rule.¹¹³ However, the “logic” of the strict realist interpretation of Rahner’s Rule was not the primary material theological authority in terms of its dogmatic significance – that belonged to Scripture interpreted within Western creedal Christianity. This was further served by the norms of Third Article Theology (TAT). The results of this theological interpretation of Scripture were promising.¹¹⁴ When I looked into the biblical detail that generated this creedal claim about the ascension and session of God the Son, I found that in Luke-Acts the ascension and session of the Son presumes a strong relationship with the Spirit who enables the seating of the same Spirit-anointed Messiah at the right hand of the Father.¹¹⁵ However, I needed a concept to express something ontological and relational to do with the Spirit-Son relationship. I found this in a retrieval of Cappadocian theology by Najeeb Awad.¹¹⁶ The result of co-ordinating the theological authorities as I did lead to including an individuating property for the person of the holy Spirit within the life of the Trinity. It was included into a Western model of the inner life of the Trinity as: “God is the Father, Son, and Spirit in whom non-temporal acts individuate the persons and establish relations of opposition. These acts and relations include the Spirit establishing the Son alongside the Father, and the Father’s reception of the Son.”¹¹⁷

What matters for our purposes here is that a creedal and Third Article Theology “theological interpretation of Scripture” was the foundational theological authority for this essay, it was followed by a theological norm as its secondary theological authority (Rahner’s Rule), and by the retrieval of Cappadocian theology. The project modelled a restrained form of confessional AT. It did not fall into the mistakes flagged earlier: mere opinion or selectivity when it comes to theological judgments and concepts.¹¹⁸ The best way to ensure these do not occur is by way of *ressourcement*. This means looking back into the tradition and re-deploying the best of the past in order to bring about flourishing in the life of the church, including theology.¹¹⁹ To my mind, the hermeneutical confessionalism this generates will contribute to best-practice Christian AT, it is continually refreshed by dynamic *ressourcement*.

This fresh redeployment entails a form of substantive, not merely formal, confessionalism.¹²⁰ It is best developed by way of strong *ressourcement* – the kind argued for by De Lubac. He was a Jesuit who worked at the forefront of the French Roman Catholic *nouvelle theologie* movement in the 20th century. He argued for a thorough and comprehensive re-deployment of the church Fathers in his classic text from 1938, *Catholicisme: les aspects sociaux du dogme*. He wrote: “I seek only to understand them, and listen to what they have to tell us, since they are our fathers in the faith, and since they received from the church of their time the means to nourish the church of our times as well.”¹²¹ This work is noted for its “discursive commentary on the Christian past, the goal being not so much *wissenschaftlich* analysis as retrieval and commendation of largely forgotten habits of thought and spiritual practice. Their texts were directed to contemplative intelligence, their chief aim being edification by directing the church to the treasures of

¹¹³ Rahner, *The Trinity*; Rauser, “Rahner’s Rule.” I summarize Rahner’s view in Harrower, *Trinitarian Self and Salvation*, 26-72.

¹¹⁴ For an analogy of how this works, I like to say that theological authorities are the larger rhetoric that shapes how we interpret the Bible. This is influenced by Witherington’s description of how the rhetoric of Pauline epistles generates ideological claims. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 94 ff, 371 ff.

¹¹⁵ I followed Aquinas and Weinandy’s confessional approach. See Thomas Aquinas ST. I, q. 43, a.1. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*; Emery, “Theologia and Dispensatio: The Centrality of Divine Missions in Thomas’s Trinitarian Theology;” Weinandy, “The Filioque: Beyond Athanasius and Thomas Aquinas: An Ecumenical Proposal;” Weinandy, *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship*.

¹¹⁶ This work of retrieval was from Awad, *God without a Face?*. The ecumenical import of this retrieval is that the distinction between the persons of the Son and the Spirit does not require the Filioque clause.

¹¹⁷ Harrower, “A Third Article Proposal About the Third Person of the Trinity,” 111.

¹¹⁸ The language of theological judgments and concepts follows Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma.”

¹¹⁹ Webster, “*Ressourcement* Theology and Protestantism;” “Purity and Plenitude: Evangelical Reflections on Congar’s Tradition and Traditions.”

¹²⁰ Crisp, “Analytic Theology as Systematic Theology,” 161-62.

¹²¹ de Lubac, *Catholicism*, xiii. See interesting parallel’s with Hooker’s “Anglican” work in Harrison, “Prudence and Custom: Revisiting Hooker on Authority.”

meaning which lay ready to be discovered in earlier apprehensions of divine revelation. Often this was accomplished simply by loving re-presentation of the sources...”¹²² This seems to be in line with recent developments in Evangelical theology, assuming that Evangelicals are “legitimate heirs of the apostolic faith expressed for all orthodox Christians in the Creed of Nicaea.”¹²³ This needs further clarification in further work on theological authorities in AT, but I flag it for now as a necessary ecclesial demand upon the movement. In what follows, I point out how this kind of *ressourcement* from the middle ages may have helped out my earlier effort at AT.

4.11 Critique of earlier version of Confessional AT

The pneumatological case study I described above could have been taken further and given more theological weight by means of appropriating and exploring some linguistic tools and methods from the past with the help of AP. In other words, it did not sufficiently employ the fullest version of AT. Had it employed AP’s linguistic tools it may have unpacked theological concepts latent within the Christian tradition by means of analogy or metaphor. In this case, it would have introduced another theological authority in any number of forms of religious language in order to advance its proposal. This may have advanced the project’s pneumatological insight further and hence provided a more robust offering for constructive AT. In sum, it was an attempt at AT that did not take seriously enough its heritage in AP’s ability to deal with language. This was ironic given the emphasis on heritage to do with the Christian confessions.

One helpful way to deploy linguistic sources could have been done in conversation with work by proto-AT practitioners from the Middle Ages, such as Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. AT would do well to pursue their thought for the sake of methodology and substance.¹²⁴ With special reference to trinitarian theology, this would mean paying attention to the debates about, and uses of, the linguistic tools to do with the “psychological analogy” for the Trinity in the Middle Ages.¹²⁵ This would help to provide precise terminology by which to state “the metaphysics of identity and distinction in the Trinity.”¹²⁶ Just as importantly though, the systematic significance, weight and interpretation of this linguistic device must be clear. The Dominican and Franciscan debates of the high middle ages demonstrate that when analogy has been given different levels of authority it has normed theology in different theological conclusions.¹²⁷

I believe that AT is particularly well placed to deal with issues of language such as metaphor and analogy. Its background in AP suggests that confessional AT may indeed be in the best position to re-deploy linguistic tools in order to retrieve significant theological authorities from the past and subsequently develop the most robust theology for today.¹²⁸

4.12 Next steps for confessionalist approaches to AT

This line of thinking above leads me to make the point that best-practice AT must be confessional with a strong orientation towards *ressourcement* from both Christian thinkers and from analytic philosophers.

¹²² Webster, “*Ressourcement* Theology and Protestantism,” 483-84.

¹²³ George, “The Faith We Confess.” He continues: “Despite [the] aversion to creedalism, evangelicals today are finding that the historic creeds of the church are a resource for faith and spiritual life. Evangelicals are engaged in a process of retrieval for the sake of renewal.” Ibid., xxii. See also Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 46-47.

¹²⁴ Crisp has recently made a suggestion in this direction. See Friedman and Nielsen, *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400–1700*; Ebbesen et al., *Medieval Analyses in Language and Cognition*.

¹²⁵ Friedman, *Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University: The Use of Philosophical Psychology in Trinitarian Theology among the Franciscans and Dominicans, 1250–1350*; *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham*, 3.

¹²⁶ Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham*, 3.

¹²⁷ Friedman, “Medieval Trinitarian Theology from the Late Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Centuries,” 199.

¹²⁸ See Emery et al., *Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages*. Friedman, “Medieval Trinitarian Theology from the Late Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Centuries;” Coolman, “On the Subject Matter of Theology in the *Summa Halensis* and St. Thomas Aquinas.”

This has a number of implications for AT, namely, it will follow Webster's lead and be more deliberate in its *ressourcement* from the tradition. It will do more than merely be confined by the tradition, but rather, it will explore and awaken the best of it for today. Surely this constructive ecumenical direction is in line with the theological pressures that the Gospels and the remainder of the New Testament place upon us.¹²⁹ If AT is going to be a strongly ecumenical enterprise, then *ressourcement* has a lot to offer.

4.13 The warrant for a richer use of language as a theological norm: A personalist corrective?

The case study above suggested that it is acutely important that AT's strength, namely, its precision and focus on logic, is matched by a complementary –though ministerial – and well-grounded use of language. Some grounds for this are found in the medieval tradition, as per my example above. However, more can be said on this issue. Attention to issues to do with language points to a deeper issue that confronts AT. This has to do with AT's metaphysical starting points. Though I do not have space to articulate it in this essay, I believe that AT would benefit from a Christian Personalist correction.¹³⁰ Personalism is a worldview in which “all of reality is grounded in the triune, personal God who reveals himself objectively and yet personally in revelation to man as his image-bearer... [Therefore], reality is ultimately personal.”¹³¹ Cole explicitly notes that personalism rejects reductionism of various forms because the category of person is the minimal description for human and for God.¹³² This correction would be helpful across the topics I touched on in this work, including the use of theological norms, and particularly the use of language.

A Christian Personalist metaphysic would aid the hermeneutical confessionalism I have recommended for AT. A personalist approach would benefit AT because it can advance the basic worldview advanced by both Scripture and the seven ecumenical creeds, as well as providing a relational warrant for ordering theological authorities including the use of language.¹³³ In addition, personalism would highlight the intrinsic connection between human personhood and consciousness as these pertain theological reflection and its tools. Finally, personalism also provides a strong warrant for confessional AT by urging *ressourcement* from the thought of persons in the past. Interestingly, the personalism of Emmanuel Mounier, Karol Wojtyła, Juan Manuel Burgos has not been brought into direct conversation with AT.¹³⁴ If this research program were attempted, it would provide the higher order metaphysical context within which AT could more robustly employ a number of key norms and linguistic tools for speaking about God. This would hopefully yield a robust worldview, set of norms and language to speak about God in a manner that is truthful and helpful for theology, discipleship and mission. This will aid Protestant theology today as it attends to the metaphysical context for its theological tasks.

5 Conclusion

Understanding the alignment between theological authorities, how to interpret them, and their relative order is acutely important for Christian AT. If AT's strength –its precision and logical rigour, is matched by a foundationally receptive and dependent posture towards conciliar sources, it will be in a strong position to claim that it is legitimate Christian “theological theology.” In the service of this, this essay has explored the

¹²⁹ Rowe, “Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics.”

¹³⁰ Here I have in mind the particular personalism of work of a number of Spanish and French speaking philosophers and theologians including Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques Maritain and Juan Manuel Burgos. See Burgos, *Introducción Al Personalismo*; Emmanuel Mounier, *Le Personnalisme*; Maritain, Mounier, and Petit, *Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier (1929-1939)*. These have great affinity the works of Karol Wojtyła and Graham Cole.

¹³¹ Hibbs, “Where Person Meets the World: Personalism in the Language Theory of Kenneth L. Picke.”

¹³² Cole, “Personalism,” 667.

¹³³ Ibid.; Cole, “Exodus 34, the Mithras and the Doctrine of God.”

¹³⁴ However, I do note that in a very early work of AT, Norman Kretzmann called for a new metaphysical movement for Protestant theology in conversation with Aquinas and philosophical tools. Kretzmann, “Trinity and Transcendentals,” 98-100.

significance of theological authorities and their ordering for AT. I have pointed out the work of Grillmeier and others who suggest a number of reasons for accepting a confessional and hermeneutical approach to ordering theological authorities. This methodology aims at truth and lively faith in the task of theology, and is based upon the hermeneutical lines of thought that arise from the reception of the New Testament, the second century Rule of Faith and from the Seven Ecumenical Creeds. I believe that this hermeneutical approach to ordering theological authorities is also served well by retrieving other undervalued resources in both the scholastic theological tradition and twentieth century analytical philosophical traditions. This suggests that analytic theology has a potentially fruitful and under-explored field for enquiry in the realm of the theological use of language. More impressively, this may enable the development of new linguistic theological authorities. These theological authorities could be *unique to analytic theology and not easily available to other forms of systematic theology*. Furthermore, proto-AT thinkers in the Middle Ages are models and sources for both the potential of language as a theological norm and for carrying out this work *within the hermeneutical-confessional model for ordering theological authorities*.

The model I provided is a thoroughly “confessional” approach to AT, carried out in the spirit of Grillmeier’s work. This methodology could go some way towards securing AT’s status as an excellent form of ST. A number of areas of research may take this essay further. The more immediate project would be to explore the work of Christian scholastics in the middle ages in order to investigate the weight and worth of various theological norms, especially the use of theological language. The second is a more foundational metaphysical project that would investigate the metaphysical basis for securing the status of knowledge for claims that are dependent on the realm of language, such as analogy and metaphor.

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