Thomistic Simplicity and Distinguishing the Immanent and Economic Trinities

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Abstract: I argue that there is a discrepancy between the Thomistic doctrine of divine simplicity and affirming the immanent-economic distinctions in the Trinity. Since God is an absolutely simple essence whose essence it is to exist, and since the simple God exists as pure act—lacking all potential—there exist no real distinctions in God, such as physical or metaphysical parts, and there exist no divisions in the life of God, who exists in atemporal eternity. Per the immanent-economic distinctions in the Trinity, the Son is submissive to the will of the Father in the latter but not the former. This appears to be a distinction in the life of the Triune God, which is not acceptable per divine simplicity. After examining the Trinity doctrine and christology of Thomas along with possible solutions to the problem posed, I conclude that said solutions fail to eliminate the discrepancy between Thomas's account of simplicity and the immanent-economic distinctions in the life of the Trinity.

Keywords: Doctrine of the Trinity, Immanent-Economic Trinity, Divine Simplicity, Divine Attributes, Thomas Aquinas

Introduction

Thomas Aquinas is well known as one of the premier Christian teachers of what is now known as the classical-theist model of God.[1] On this model, God enjoys the attributes of aseity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and immensity, moral perfection, and he creates *ex nihilo*. However, Thomas also affirms that God enjoys

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[1] I understand "model of God" in light of Oliver Crisp's recent discussions on models and model building in theology. He defines a *model* as a, "simplified conceptual framework or description by means of which complex sets of data, systems, and processes" pertaining to God "may be organized and understood" (Crisp 2021, 9). On this definition, a model of God would be a representational framework for making sense of and analyzing the phenomena of God's self-revelation.

the attributes of simplicity, immutability, impassability, and atemporal eternity, which are the distinctive markers of CT (Rogers 2000, 5–7; Mullins 2021a, 85).[2]

One of the core doctrines for Thomas's CT is the doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS). The DDS, at least in Thomas's articulations, can be expressed in the following way.[3]

> **The DDS**: (i) God lacks all composition and is made up of no parts, be those parts physical or metaphysical. (ii) There exist in God no distinctions, be those distinctions between essence and existence, act and potency, substance and attribute, essence and accident, genus and differentia, or form and matter. (iii) God is identical with all of his intrinsic features, and all of said features are identical with one another.

God exists, per the DDS, as an absolute simple in whom there is no division, such that his essence and existence are identical, and that God is identical with all of his intrinsic features.[4] It naturally follows from the DDS that God is immutable, impassible, and atemporal. In Thomas's *Summa Theologica*, the DDS is what motivates his insistence on these other classical attributes.[5]

It is no secret that the DDS and CT have come under severe scrutiny by analytic philosophers of religion and theologians in recent years.[6] These critiques have focused primarily on identifying God with a property or abstract object (Plantinga 1980), an entailed modal collapse of absolute necessity (Mullins 2013; Mullins 2016), and a contradiction that arises with other classical divine attributes, such as omniscience (Schmid and Mullins 2021). Others have also argued that the DDS is incompatible with basic affirmations of the doctrine of the Trinity (McIntosh 2020). Those who affirm the DDS have developed responses to several of these critiques,

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[2] Though all who would identify as classical theists will affirm these four distinctive attributes of God, many differ on how to formulate these doctrines, and some even disagree on the denotations as well as the connotations of these attributes.

[3] This understanding of DDS can also be found in Rogers (1996), Rogers (2000), Dolezal (2011), Duby (2016), and Schmid and Mullins (2021). It can also be found in Wittman (2016), who shows the importance of Thomas's DDS for his, Thomas's, ethical theory.

[4] This is not to say that *all* models of divine simplicity make these claims. For example, Oliver Crisp has recently argued for a "parsimonious" account of the DDS. On his model, God is metaphysically simple without being absolutely mereologically simple. See (Crisp 2019a, 558–73) or (Crisp 2019b, 53–75). However, this view is not affirmed by Thomas.

[5] See Rogers (2000, 26), and Burns (1993, 1–26).

[6] Most notable have been Plantinga (1980), Hughes (1989), Moreland and Craig (2017), Mullins (2013, 2016), and Schmid and Mullins (2021).

though how successful they are is highly debated.[7] However, these criticisms are not the focus of what follows, nor will they factor into the investigation that follows.

Rather, in what follows, I articulate a discrepancy between the DDS, as understood by Thomas, and affirming the immanent-economic distinctions (IT-ET distinctions) in the doctrine of the Trinity. Since God is a simple essence whose essence it is to exist, and since the simple God exists as pure act—lacking all potential—there exist no real distinctions in God, such as physical or metaphysical parts, and there exist no divisions in the life of God, who exists in atemporal eternity. I focus specifically on the Son's relation to the Father in the IT and ET in order to develop my argument, though implications for how the Spirit relates to the Father and Son are paramount as well. Per the IT-ET distinctions in the Trinity, the Son is submissive to the will of the Father in the latter but not the former. This appears to be a distinction within the life of the Trinity, which is not acceptable per the DDS. After examining the Trinity doctrine of Thomas along with possible solutions to the problem proposed, I conclude that said solutions fail to eliminate this discrepancy. I will now turn my attention to distinguishing the immanent and economic trinities.

The Immanent-Economic Trinitarian Distinctions

Before explaining the differences between the immanent and economic trinities, I should first provide a basic definition of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.[8] A traditional Trinity doctrine will affirm the following propositions.

> T1. There is but one God, i.e., one divine essence.
> T2. The one God is three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
> T3. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.
> T4. The Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit, the Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son.
> T5. There are not three Gods.

Such a definition is consistent with the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, and it is affirmed by Thomas.[9]

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[7] Rogers (2000, 2020), Dolezal (2011), and Duby (2018). Rogers, however, affirms that the problem of a modal collapse is a legitimate problem for the DDS, and one that has yet to be satisfactorily solved (Rogers 2000).

[8] For a useful history of the development of the Trinity doctrine, see Holmes (2012).

[9] For a sustained argument that such doctrines of God and the Trinity were those upheld by those involved with the Council of Nicaea, and that these are the doctrines affirmed by Thomas, who builds

The *immanent trinity*, or *ontological trinity*, refers to how the divine persons relate to one another *ad intra*, apart from creation. The *economic trinity* refers to how the divine persons relate to one another in creation and the economy of salvation. Many theologians and philosophers take these categories to be synonymous with the more classical categories of *divine processions* and *divine missions*. The former term refers to the relations of origin of the divine persons, and the latter term refers to these relations in creation and redemption. However, some theologians, such as Fred Sanders, offer a word of caution against investing too much in the IT and ET categories. Sanders writes,

> At first glance, discourse about the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity seems like simply a modernized translation of the patristic distinction between *oikonomia* and *theologia* . . . Such a distinction was crucial in resisting Arians, whose denial of the deity of the Son was expressed as seeing the Son's incarnate mission (his *oikonomia*) as revelatory of his essential being (his *theologia*, or in their view, his lack of it). While the language of economic Trinity and immanent Trinity can be used to make that sort of distinction, on its own it tends in another direction, as can be seen by the peculiarity of its construction and by its hazy origins. (Sanders 2016, 145)

By its peculiar construction and "hazy origins," Sanders is referring to how the Lutheran theologian Johann August Urlsperger (1728–1806) coined the categories as a means of denying that the missions reveal the processions (Sanders 2016, 146–48).[10] The Father, Son, and Spirit are only such in the ET; they are not such in the IT, and there are no relations of origin, according to Urlsperger. As a result of these conclusions and other Trinity doctrines that have departed from the traditional articulation of the Trinity, some theologians, such as Bruce Marshall, have suggested that the ET and IT categories compete with the mission-procession categories and should be abandoned in favor of the classical categories (Marshall 2010). Others, such as Giles Emery, have maintained that the ET and IT categories maintain some usefulness (Emery 2011, 178). For the purposes of this paper, I will heed Sanders's word of caution in investing too much into these categories, though I will also follow Emery in continuing to use them. For my purposes, the ET will be used synonymously with the divine missions, and the IT will be used synonymously with the divine processions.

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primarily off of Augustine's doctrine, see Ayres (2004). Ayres's study is one of the most useful to date on the pro-Nicene doctrine of God.

[10] Though Sanders acknowledges that other older histories of theology also identify Urlsperger as the originator of these categories, he draws the majority of his material on him from Stolina (2008, 170–94).

The trinitarian persons seem to relate to one another differently in the ET than they do in the IT. In the ET, we see roles of submission amongst the persons in order to effect redemption and salvation for humanity. This classically has been articulated as the Son's being *sent* for the purposes of redemption and the Spirit's being *sent* to indwell the church. In the IT, traditionally understood, there are no such roles of submission or subordination. Though the Father eternally begets the Son, and though the Father and the Son eternally spirate the Spirit, the persons enjoy both ontological and functional equality amongst themselves.[11] The roles served by each of the persons in the missions, however, are not done so arbitrarily. The Son is sent by the Father because it is fitting since he is eternally generated by the Father. The missions in other words, reveal the processions in the divine economy; the ET reveals the IT.

Before moving forward, some further delimitations for my argument are in order. Though there has been much debate amongst recent philosophers and theologians over whether or not the processions should be affirmed and how the divine persons relate to one another in the IT, my argument does not hinge on these debates. My focus remains on the DDS and Trinity doctrine as articulated by Thomas, though I also note important commentators on his work. Since Thomas affirms the eternal processions, my argument presumes that point—though said presumption is not necessary for it. Furthermore, debates concerning competing models of the Trinity—such as Latin, social, relative-identity, etc.—are also irrelevant to the argument of this paper, though such debates are indeed important.

The DDS and the IT-ET Distinctions

It would be helpful, prior to proceeding, to re-articulate the DDS as understood by Thomas.

> **The DDS**: (i) God lacks all composition and is made up of no parts, be those parts physical or metaphysical. (ii) There exist in God no distinctions, be those distinctions between essence and existence, act and potency, substance and attribute, essence and accident, genus and differentia, or form and matter. (iii) God is identical with all of his intrinsic features, and all of said features are identical with one another.

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[11] Though I adopt here the *filioque* language of the Western church, neither my argument nor its premises hinge on it. My argument still holds for the Eastern church, which denies the *filioque*.

For Thomas, there exists no room in God for any distinctions in his essence, though distinctions between the persons are necessary per the orthodox Trinity doctrine. There are only distinctions between the subsistent relations that just are the persons of the Trinity, and such relations do not require distinctions in the divine essence (Vidu 2021, 92–106; and Duby 2022, 62–87).[12] Since there is no real distinction between God's essence and God's existence, there can be no distinctions in the life of God.[13] As a matter of fact, to speak of "the life of God" might even seem odd since "life" seems to presume a duration of sorts. Being atemporal, God does not experience any form of endurance or perdurance; he experiences no sort of duration since duration supposes temporality. Were God temporal then he would be mutable, and a mutable God cannot be a simple God. Indeed, God's simplicity seems to be the basis for his immutability, atemporality, and impassability. However, I do not suppose any sort of temporality in my use of the phrase "the life of God." Rather, I merely use it as a more lay-friendly way of talking about God's existence.

However, if there is a real distinction between the immanent and economic trinities, then this would seem to require a distinction in the life, or existence, of God. As mentioned earlier, in the ET, the Son submits to the will of the Father in order to effect the redemption and salvation of humanity. In the IT, there are no submissive relations or subordinations whatsoever in God, be they ontological or functional; the persons are equal since they equally share in the perfect and undivided divine essence. The persons, according to Thomas, are numerically identical to the divine essence (Thomas 1981, Pt. 1, Q. 39, Art. 1; Vidu 2021, 98; Duby 2022, 76–87). To put the discrepancy more clearly: The IT refers to a state of affairs in which there are no submissive/subordinate relations between the divine persons, and the ET refers to a state of affairs in which there are submissive/subordinate relations in God. Thus, there seems to be a clear distinction in the life of God between his immanent life and his economic life. In more classical terms, there seems to be a clear distinction between the processions and the missions.

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[12] See also Wawrykow (2011, 193). Wawrykow points out that, for Thomas, "The relations (paternity, sonship, spiration, and procession) are real, and distinguish the persons. But as is proper to God, they are identical with the divine essence."

[13] "By "real distinction," I mean the following: "To say that there is a real distinction between some thing A and some thing B is to say that there is an extramental feature in reality that makes them distinct" Mullins (2016, 52). A "real distinction" is distinguished from a "conceptual distinction." A "conceptual distinction" is this: "To say that two things are conceptually distinct is to say that there is no extramental feature in reality that makes them distinct. The distinction exists in our minds only" Mullins (2016, 52).

However, it is important first to ask if Thomas affirmed such real distinctions. This answer seems to be "No."[14] According to him, the missions reveal the processions. But this claim, on its face, does not erase the apparent distinctiveness between the missions and the processions. For an act *x* can reveal act *y* and act *x* can remain distinct from act *y*. However, for Thomas, God is simple, which means that there is no distinction between who God is and what God does. God's being is identical to his act, and there exist no distinctions between the acts of God. Rather, God is a single act with multiple effects. On this, what would distinguish the missions from the processions would only be the effects of the former. In Thomas's own words,

> Hence *mission* and *giving* have only a temporal significance in God; but *generation* and *spiration* are exclusively eternal [atemporal]; whereas *procession* and *giving*, in God, have both an eternal and a temporal signification; for the Son may proceed eternally as God; but temporally, by becoming man, according to His visible mission, or likewise by dwelling in man according to his invisible mission . . . Mission signifies not only procession from the principle, but also determines the temporal term of the procession. Hence mission is only temporal. Or we may say that it includes the eternal procession, with the addition of a temporal effect. For the relation of a divine person to His principle must be eternal. Hence the procession may be called a twin procession, eternal and temporal, not that there is a double relation to the principle, but a double term, temporal and eternal (Thomas 1981, Pt. 1, Q. 43, Art. 2).

According to this passage from the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas seems to claim that the only thing that distinguishes the processions and the missions are the temporal effects of God's eternal single act. The processions and the missions are an identical act but with differing effects, namely the latter's having a temporal effect (Duby 2022, 130). So, there is no real distinction between the two acts on this claim. One may even wonder if what Thomas is really saying is that the missions are identical

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[14] Some, such as Thomas McCall, argue that Thomas does affirm a real distinction between the processions and the missions in the triune life, lest the Son's subordination to the Father be eternal or necessary. However, McCall does not deal with those statements in Thomas that seem to imply that the distinctions between the acts of the processions and missions are only conceptual distinctions. All that might really distinguish the two, per Thomas, is the temporal effects of the acts. However, as noted in the body of this paper, it is unclear if Thomas intends to identify the missions simply as the temporal effects of the processions. If so, then the processions and missions are not distinct acts in God. What does seem clear for Thomas, though, is either all that distinguishes the processions from the missions are the temporal effects, or the distinctions are merely conceptual. For McCall's claims, see McCall (2021, 120–21).

to the temporal effects of the processions. Whether the distinctions between the processions and missions are only conceptual, or whether the missions just are the temporal effects of the processions, one thing seems to be clear for Thomas: the missions and processions are not truly distinct acts performed by God—they can't really be distinct actions of God if all that differs between them is their effects. God's simplicity does not allow for that.

Since God's act is identical with God's being, God just is his single eternal act. In the missions, we see the Son submitting to the Father, though he does not do so apart from creation and the economy of redemption. This does not simply seem to be a temporal effect of God's singular act; rather, the Son seems to be performing a distinct act that he did not perform in the IT. But since the Son is numerically identical with the divine essence, then this seems to be a distinct act that God performs in the ET that he did not perform in the IT. Does Thomas intend to say that the missions, which include the Son's submission to the Father, are only a temporal effect of the processions? This would be an odd thing to claim, since a submissive act is one that seems to require intentionality. In other words, the Son would be intending to act in a certain way in the state of affairs circumscribed by the ET that he did not intend to do in the IT. How might Thomas respond to this? Naturally, he would point to the two natures of the incarnate Christ to answer this challenge.

According to Thomas, the Son is only subservient to the Father *qua* his human nature. Echoing Augustine and John of Damascus on this, Thomas argues in the *Summa Theologica*,

> As we are not to understand that Christ is a creature simply, but only in His human nature, whether this qualification be added or not, as stated above (Q. 16, A. 8), so also we are to understand that Christ is subject to the father not simply but in His human nature, even if this qualification be not added, and yet it is better to add this qualification in order to avoid the error of Arius, who held the Son to be less than the Father (Thomas 1981, Pt. III, Q. 20, Art. 1).[15]

For Thomas, the Son is only subject to the Father in his human nature, and the Son's human nature is only a temporal effect of the processions. The Son's submission, therefore, is only a temporal effect; it is not a distinct act of the Son that he does not perform in the IT.[16]

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[15] See also Augustine (1990, 87–91) and Damascus (2012, 59).

[16] Essential to Thomas's understanding of the missions, though not pertinent to my argument in this paper, is the concept of "the effect of grace." According to Thomas, this "effect of grace" is the temporal effect of the Triune life that enables humanity to take hold of the persons in their salvation

However, this claim does not resolve the discrepancy under investigation. Simply put, natures do not act because natures do not have intentions. Rather, intentional acts are performed by personal agents. Thomas himself affirms this: "Now to act is not attributed to the nature as agent, but to the person, since *acts belong to supposita and to singulars*, according to the Philosopher (*Metaph.* i. 1)" (Thomas 1981, Pt. III, Q. 20, Art. 1). But perhaps this move on my part is too quick, and I need to pay more attention to the traditional claims about the Son performing some acts *qua* his divinity and others *qua* his humanity. Timothy Pawl rightly states, "Part of the difficulty for 'qua' moves is explaining how such clauses work, metaphysically speaking" (Pawl 2016, 120). After noting some of the recent challenges to making these *qua* moves in the more recent philosophical literature, he expounds four ways that the use of *qua* can work.[17] Pawl writes, "It could modify the whole predication (the whole assertion, 'C is P'), it could modify the subject alone, it could modify the predicate alone, or it could modify the copula binding the subject to the predicate" (Pawl 2016, 120). He denies the success of the first two ways, arguing that the third and fourth have a higher likelihood of success, though they also have their own hurdles to clear, namely that they require one to understand "that seemingly intrinsic predications are actually relational, either in the predicate or in the copula" (Pawl 2016, 151). While these strategies might work to clarify how the incarnate Christ might perform certain actions *qua* one nature and other actions *qua* his other nature, they do not seem to aid in solving the specific problem that I have in mind.

In agreement with Chalcedonian Christology, Thomas affirms that Christ is a single person with two distinct natures; Christ is not two persons, though he is a composite *hypostasis*.[18] So, when Christ—a single subject—acts, he acts as a single subject. So, how can Thomas claim that his act of submission to the Father is only an act of his human nature? Thomas answers,

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and redemption. Gilles Emery, in his illuminating study of Thomas's Trinity doctrine, emphasizes the effect of grace in the missions. However, he seems to want to say that the missions are themselves not reducible to the temporal effects of God's inner life: "The missions of Son and Holy Spirit are also distinct in reference to their effects" Emery (2007, 388). For Emery's full discussion of Thomas on the missions, see: Emery (2007, 360–412).

[17] The challenges he cites come from Morris (1987, 48–49); Van Inwagen (1998, sec. 4); and Holland (2012, 174).

[18] Thomas here seems to draw from insights of John of Damascus. See Damascus (2012, 51–53, and 57–60). To claim this is to claim that the incarnate Christ is a composite of the divine Son, a human rational soul, and a human body. Christ, thus, has two complete and perfected natures, each nature equipped with its own natural will and natural energies (Damascus 2012, 57–58).

> Nevertheless action is attributed to the nature as to that whereby the person or hypostasis acts. Hence, although the nature is not properly said to rule or serve, yet every hypostasis or person may be properly said to be ruling or serving in this or that nature. And in this way nothing prevents Christ being subject or servant to the Father in human nature. (Thomas 1981, Pt. III, Q. 20, Art. 1)

According to Thomas, the Son performs his submissive act to the Father *qua* his human nature but not in his divine nature. Since this is a human act and not a divine act, it is not a distinct act performed by the Son, in his divinity, one which he does not perform in the IT.

But this does not seem to solve the apparent problem. To say that the Son performs action x according to his human nature but not according to his divine nature is to say that the Son acts one way *qua* his humanity and another way *qua* his divinity. But how is this not for a single subject to act in two distinct ways, regardless of natures, especially since even Thomas states that persons, not natures as agents, perform actions—as noted above? And what exactly does it mean for a single subject S to perform x according to one nature but $\sim x$ in a different nature, especially when S enjoys both natures "simultaneously."[19] More specifically, how are these distinct actions, though they be according to distinct natures, not really distinct actions for S, especially considering that S, in our case, is the person of the Son?

Thomas might offer up something like the following as a response. S is able to perform x according to one nature and $\sim x$ according to another nature without there being a distinction in S's actions since action x is according to one will, which belongs to a particular nature, and $\sim x$ according to another will, which belongs to a different particular nature.[20] Since S performs x and $\sim x$ according to distinct wills, each will belonging to a distinct nature, there is still no division in S's actions. In the words of John of Damascus, from whom Thomas draws,

> And since Christ, Who in His own person wills according to either nature, is one, we shall postulate *the same object of will* in His case, not as though He wills only those things which He willed naturally as God (for it is no part of Godhead to will to eat or drink and so forth), but as willing also those things which human nature requires for its support, and this without involving any opposition in judgment, but simply as the result of the individuality of the natures. (Damascus 2012, 58; italics mine)

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[19] I use quotation marks around *simultaneously* because the divine nature, per Thomas, is atemporal and so cannot experience simultaneity in any literal sense.

[20] Mullins (2016) notes this as well, and he highlights that this has been a contended claim throughout Christian history, including contemporary philosophy of religion. See Mullins (2016, 167 fn. 36).

Perhaps it is the case, as Damascus argues, that the Son wills with two volitions but does so in the same manner of willing, resulting in the same object of both wills (Damascus 2012, 57–58). But how might such willing and acting work? Thomas offers the following analogy.

> For an inanimate instrument, as an axe or a saw, is moved by the craftsman with only a corporeal movement; but an instrument animated by a sensitive soul is moved by the sensitive appetite, as a horse by its rider; and an instrument animated with a rational soul is moved by its will, as by the command of his lord the servant is moved to act, the servant being like an animate instrument, as the Philosopher says (*Polit*. i. 2, 4; *Ethic*. viii. 11). And hence it was in this manner that the human nature of Christ was the instrument of the Godhead, and was moved by its own will. (Thomas 1981, Pt. III, Q. 18, Art. 1)

According to Thomas, Jesus' human nature is the instrument of his divine nature.[21] At first glance, this might seem like a plausible solution. Indeed, there does seem to be a unification of both wills and sets of operations on Thomas's examples. However, the analogies fail in one critical aspect: both the rider and the horse are two distinct subjects, or persons, and the same goes for the master and servant. The rider might be construed as S_1 and the horse as S_2, or we might consider the master in the master-servant analogy to be S_1 and the servant to be S_2. Either way, we have two distinct subjects, two distinct "persons" in these analogies. As a result, the distinct acts and wills of S_1 and S_2 are as distinct as the persons. Such is not what Thomas wanted to affirm.[22]

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[21] Duby provides a helpful summary explanation of the view that Christ's humanity is an instrument, *organum* of the Son in (2022, 157–60). He helpfully shows how this idea develops in the thought of Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus, and Thomas Aquinas. J. David Moser has drawn careful attention to this claim in Thomas's christology in his recent article. The focus of Moser's argument is that Thomas uses this instrumentalist understanding of Christ's two natures to explain how Christ's human actions save humanity. Such a view, he notes, affirms that "an ontological hierarchy exists in Christ" (Moser 2021, 321). Richard Cross, drawing from Scotus, has noted some problems for Thomas's instrumentalist view in (2002), though Moser claims that these have been sufficiently dealt with by Barnes (2012, 313–28). The jury, however, still seems to be out on this debate.

[22] R. T. Mullins persuasively argues that this christological tradition, in spite of its careful metaphysical and logical distinctions, has not really avoided the problem of Nestorianism here, what he refers to as "the Two Sons Worry." One of the problems that Mullins notes is that the three-part compositional christology of Chalcedon is problematically vague and ambiguous (Mullins 2021b, 169). According to the Chalcedonian and neo-Chalcedonian christologies, Christ's two natures each have their own mind and will. This becomes particularly problematic due to the "acceptance of

When applied to the Son's submission to the Father, the problem becomes clear. According to Thomas, the Son—*qua* his humanity—wills to submit to the Father's will. The Son does not—*qua* his divinity—will to submit to the Father. However, it does not seem to matter by which nature the Son wills to submit to the Father. Though it may be by his human will in the incarnation, the Son—nevertheless—wills something distinct from what he wills in the IT. In the Incarnation, the person of the Son is still a unified single subject, though he has two natures. But it is the Son, as a single subject, that wills submission to the Father, not the human nature apart from the person of the Son. If the human soul wills something distinct from the Son, then the human soul wills as a distinct subject, or person. Pawl's strategies of applying the *qua* move to the predicate only or to the copula does not seem to work for this specific action. Not only this, but the wills work together, according to Thomas, in such a unity that the action of the person of Christ is a single theandric act. The two wills always agree with each other, per Thomas. If the Son only submits *qua* the human will, then there seems to be a disagreement of sorts between the human and divine wills, since the former wills to submit and the latter wills not to submit. Though Thomas would desire to avoid such a conclusion, it seems to be the case that we have conflicting wills and actions performed by a single simple subject, namely the Son—since there is no person that is Christ but the simple Son.

Since Thomas's analogies of the horse-and-rider and the master-and-servant fail, and since the submission of the Son seems to imply competing wills in Christ for this particular issue—and potentially dual subjects in Christ—it is unclear to me, then, in what way the Son submits to the will of the Father without this submission infringing upon the DDS. Perhaps there is a way to answer this predicament by appeal to the two wills and two centers of operation in Christ, but this currently does

substance dualism that is widely affirmed in the Christological deposit of the ecumenical councils" (Mullins 2021b, 171). How, on this view, are there not two sons in Christ? He notes several attempts in the tradition to solve the Two Sons Worry, such as "the assumption relation" (Mullins 2021b, 171–74) and "the unity of consciousness" (Mullins 2021b, 174–78). Neither of these attempts, however, are successful, and the Worry still stands, he argues, for the Chalcedonian and neo-Chalcedonian three-part christology. A better account of the hypostatic union is needed for this model if it is going to successfully overcome the Two Sons Worry. Perhaps the real issue with Thomas's analogies given here are not the analogies themselves, but the particular model of the Incarnation that Thomas wants to defend, along with its commitment to classical theism. See also Mullins (2016, 166–75), and Bayne (2001).

not seem to be the case.[23] Rather, there still seems to be, on this account, two distinct acts performed by the Son, which is not allowed on the DDS.

To summarize what I've said so far: It seems that the Son relates to the Father in one distinct way in the processions and in another distinct way in the missions. According to the DDS, God's act and being are one and the same; they are identical. God's indivisible being is identical to his indivisible act. If, however, there is a distinction in how the Son relates to the Father in the ET and how he relates to the Father in the IT, then the DDS, as understood by Thomas, seems to be contradicted. In this case, either the DDS may be denied, the IT-ET distinctions may be denied, or both may be denied; but they cannot both be affirmed.

Some Possible Solutions

Perhaps, though, there is no contradiction here. Perhaps the missions are actually identical to the processions. Would there be any problems in affirming this? On its face, the answer is "Yes." Let's suppose that the processions and the missions are identical to one another. What do we then make of the Son's submission to the Father in the missions? If the IT and ET are identical to one another, then the result seems to be an eternal, immutable subordination of the Son to the Father. However, it is unclear what the nature of this subordination is. At first, one might assert that this subordination is only functional and thus has no ontological implications for the Son's nature. However, this cannot be the case for the one committed to the DDS. Per the DDS, the essence and act of God are identical. What the Son does is identical to the Son's essence. On this, it would seem that this subordination, since submission is an action, would be identical to the Son's being. The Son's subordination to the Father, at this point, becomes ontological. Such an ontological subordination in the Trinity might even have the implications that the Son and Father have distinct essences (Yandell 2009, 157–61; and McCall 2010, 178–80). Several different thinkers throughout the Christian tradition have posited that the Son is subordinate to the Father in his being, but all of them have been demonstrated to be heretics, and I do not think, therefore, that we should be willing to follow their lead on this point.[24]

Perhaps, however, there is no subordination whatsoever of the Son to the Father, not even in the divine missions. On this route, there seem initially to be no negative

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[23] Again, one might be willing to adopt the options offered by Pawl, and these might be able to offer a solution to this particular problem, but many—as Pawl notes—will not be willing to pay the costs of making such moves. Indeed, paying such costs does not seem a wise move to this author.

[24] For more challenges that face eternal-functional subordinationist models of the Trinity, see McCall (2010, 175–88).

ontological implications concerning the Son's being. The problem we face on this position, however, is what to make of the multiple statements in the New Testament that describe Jesus as submissive to the Father's will. It would require a very impressive routine of hermeneutical gymnastics in order to interpret these passages as not claiming a submission of the Son to the Father, and it does not seem to be the case that such a routine would merit any medal—be it silver or bronze, or even one simply for participation. So, this does not seem to be a productive route either.

One could deny either the DDS or the IT-ET distinctions, or they could deny both, and this would provide them with a way forward. However, Thomas never wanted to make such a move, and many following him would be resistant to such a decision as well. There currently does not seem to be a clear path forward on resolving the tensions between the DDS and the IT-ET distinctions, or at least not in the way that Thomas conceives of these doctrines. Perhaps either or both Thomas's DDS and the IT-ET distinctions could be reformulated in such a way that they are compatible with one another. Such a route very well might be the way forward, but this would require articulations of these doctrines that would not cohere with the Thomas's project, and it is not my intention to pioneer such a path. My point in this paper has been to identify what seems to be an incoherence in the DDS and IT-ET distinctions as posited by Thomas. Perhaps there is a way of reconciling these doctrines, but that burden shall fall on the shoulders of someone else. Should such a possibility of reconciliation not be the case, then one will need to dispense either with the Thomistic understanding of the DDS, the Thomistic understanding of the IT-ET distinctions, or with both. One cannot, however, maintain both if this discrepancy remains.

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