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Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed critically that we Western Christians today “are otherworldly or we are secularists, but in either case we no longer believe in God’s kingdom.”¹ I cited this commentary of his on the petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come!,” in my systematic theology in order to explain what it would mean to believe in the Christian sense, again, “after Christendom.”² What comes as gift from God the Father to this earth upon which stood the cross of his Son, is, in Bonhoeffer’s words, “the new Earth of the promise on the old Earth of the creation. This is the promise: that one day we shall behold the world of the resurrection...” where, noting the Trinitarian formulation, “God alone will be the Lord as the Creator, the crucified and resurrected One, and the Spirit that reigns in his holy community.”³ As Bonhoeffer analyzed our contemporary Christian “lack of belief in God’s kingdom,”³ he asked, “Why should we be ashamed that we have a God who performs miracles, who creates life and conquers death...? *If God is truly God—then God is God, then God’s kingdom is miraculous, the epitome of miracles.* Why are we so anxious, so cautious, so cowardly? God will shame us all one day... We will feel shame before the miraculous God.”⁴ Why should we be ashamed of the God who comes? My case along these lines is that it is progressively unbaptized divine simplicity which makes us ashamed in this precise way of the God whose kingdom comes.

At the outset of my book about this crisis which the gospel of Christ brings upon classical metaphysics, it was explicitly noted that the work was an addendum to my systematic theology, *Beloved Community*. It presupposed, therefore, the lengthy argument made therein for Trinitarian perichoresis as the ontological account (not theoretical explanation) of eternal divine being. The implied revision of classical simplicity therewith had everything to do with coming to terms with the collapse in the West of classical Christian culture and theology. The follow-up book on simplicity intended to make explicit the implied revision. I am cheered that Duby can imagine that some of my statements to this end can at least “sound inspiring” to those subscribing to the project.

1. Paul R. Hinlicky, *Beloved Community: Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 659.

2. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, Vol. 12: Berlin: 1932-1933 ed. Larry L. Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 296.

3. *Berlin*: 1932-1933, 33.

4. *Berlin*: 1932-1933, 346, emphasis added. For an alternative trajectory for the future of Reformed Theology along these eschatological lines, see Philip G. Ziegler, *Militant Grace: The Apocalyptic Turn and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

Lest I sound like a mere “grandstander,” however, a further word on this historical context of doing theology in the West “after Christendom” is in place. In his study of the rise of the natural sciences in Protestant thought, John Dillenberger showed how classical Christian culture from Thomas on had wedded itself to Aristotelianism (in which physics, biology and metaphysics form an integrated whole). As this synthesis unraveled before the advance of science, Dillenberger concluded that “the Roman Catholic analysis of the period from the Reformation to Schleiermacher is that it represents the secularization of the West variously brought on by Luther, Kant and Descartes. For the Protestants, there seemed no alternative but to push through to a fresh beginning.”⁵ Well, as Duby makes plain, not *all* Protestants. But I am among those who hold to the latter alternative, even though I am sympathetic with critics, beginning with Dillenberger himself, who fault liberal Protestantism for tossing out the Reformation theology of the Gospel with the bathwater of Aristotelianism (thus following Descartes and Kant more than Luther, not to mention Calvin⁶). Manifestly, to pursue a fresh beginning for theology in the West “after Christendom” differs decisively from Duby’s labor for the restoration of Reformed Scholastic Orthodoxy.

In spite of the fairly objective first several pages in Duby’s review describing my book, things go south rapidly as he delineates his five points against me. It would be tedious beyond telling to provide detailed refutations of his allegations of my scholarly incompetence, disorganization, unclarity, etc.⁷, when the deeper reason that these apparent deficiencies enter his mind is that I argue in genealogical, pragmatic and hermeneutical way rather than in his preferred scholastic idiom.

Alas, then, just as I feared our dialogue is “an interaction of two monologues,” as Slavoj Žižek wrote against John Millbank in their battle royale; does Žižek’s explanation apply to us? “[A] pure confrontation of positions is never possible: no formulation of differences is neutral, every attempt to delineate the confronted positions already formulates them from the standpoint of one position.”⁸ Such sterile confrontation is indeed a pity in as much as my book from the very first page acknowledged the historical achievement of Thomas’ “classical” doctrine of divine simplicity for blocking platonic emanationism. Granting that, the point of my genealogical examination of recent

5. John Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science: A Historical Study* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1960), 190.

6. For an alternative trajectory for the future of Reformed Theology along eschatological lines, see Philip G. Ziegler, *Militant Grace: The Apocalyptic Turn and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

7. My engagements with primary sources are documented in my preparatory studies, clearly referenced in *Divine Simplicity* and *Beloved Community*, especially my *Divine Complexity: The Rise of Creedal Christianity*, (St. Paul, MN: Fortress Press, 2010). Duby’s criticism misses the point that my book on simplicity deliberately engages with the *secondary* literature to expose for examination the often presupposed, if not concealed theological judgments made in ostensibly historical studies, such as his, which treat as inevitable and necessary what in fact is contingent and a choice.

8. Slavoj Žižek and John Millbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* Ed. C. Davis (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2009), 247.

scholarly literature on simplicity is to impress upon the reader a two-fold historical fact: 1) there have been a variety of doctrines of simplicity, not mutually compatible, making the notion of simplicity, minimally, ambiguous; 2) Thomas' Christian baptism of simplicity, for all its historical significance, has not only proved to be unstable, but it is in no position today to face the radical challenges put to Christian theology by contemporary metaphysics.⁹ Revision therefore is inevitable (as Jordan Barret recognizes¹⁰), while restoration impales the would-be restorer on the same dilemma that destabilized Thomas's synthesis: unprincipled oscillation between vacuous apophatism or cataphatic necessitarianism.

What I wish readers to see is that Duby charges me with a lack of clarity because I do not join him in impaling myself on the horns of this dilemma. Manifestly, engaging it "clearly" would entangle me in the very project I am trying to expose, overcome and leave behind. No thank you! Yet he might have fleshed out my case a little further to show readers the denouement to which previously baptized, now apostasizing simplicity comes. In my book I showed how this was articulated for the modern West by Spinoza: the novelty of a creation of creatures other than God cannot possibly occur to the timelessly perfect being. Now, if theologians wish to play on the field of the philosophers, they must play by their rules as Spinoza, then Kant insisted. Already wise Thomas conceded that on purely philosophical grounds, simplicity tends towards an eternal creation as an implication of God's timeless perfection (also the view of Origen), just as Spinoza came to think of God and world as *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* respectively. Thomas deflected this necessitarian implication only by resort to biblical revelation and the strong creator-creature distinction that accompanies it.

But such a cut and paste job cannot be stable. In historical fact, it collapsed. My refusing to engage Duby's "hard questions," or to own up to the implications of divine composition he imputes to me, thus amounts to faulting me for not joining his project of protological metaphysics as if to provide scaffolding for Christian doctrine. Readers of my antecedent work, *Beloved Community*, would have known the sustained argument why Christian theology today should simply leave protological metaphysics behind and argue in hermeneutical and pragmatic ways in theology that is, as per Bonhoeffer, eschatologically oriented.

His accusation, then, is lame that I affirm a divine ontology without giving a protological account of it. What I affirm in place of that is a modest, non-speculative doctrine of the immanent Trinity as providing the condition for the possibility of the fitting but free advent of the Trinity of revelation. Simplicity in this revision thus becomes a doctrinal rule to speak of the economic Trinity as of the one creator,

9. See Brent Adkins and Paul R. Hinlicky, *Rethinking Philosophy and Theology with Deleuze: A New Cartography*, (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

10. Jordan P. Barrett, *Divine Simplicity: A Biblical and Trinitarian Account* by (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017). The subtitle indicates the revisionism. See my review essay forthcoming in *the International Journal for Systematic Theology*.

redeemer and fulfiller of all that is not God, yet under the epistemic proviso that the truth of this speech is established only as the Kingdom comes. Then “God alone will be the Lord as the Creator, the crucified and resurrected One, and the Spirit that reigns in his holy community.”

What difference does this make? The one who believes with Jesus does not point to heaven above but lives in expectation of the promised heaven which comes on the earth. In the latter stance I see the way forward for Christian theology after Christendom.