We would do well to think...about how dearly Catholic theology must pay for schisms and heresies. When Protestantism proclaimed that "Scripture alone" was valid and used it exclusively, the Catholic Church was forced to stress the rights of tradition and reason, which forced her into taking a certain stand in opposition, stressing once more the already hypertrophied philosophical side. And when, the third time around, modern philosophical and theological agnosticism and fideism denigrated and distorted God's natural creation, the Church once more was forced into opposition. The Catholic Church and her theology have taken a great deal of abuse for this, when, apparently so loudly and one-sidedly, she took on the role of defending nature and reason. But she really was faced with heresies that—presuming to stand on Scripture, claiming historical revelation for itself—did indeed foreshorten the work of creation and thus undercut the work of redemption too. Of course, the opposition between the two sides: with Protestantism as defender of revelation in Scripture and Catholicism as the sole defender of revelation in nature, was never total. If that had been the case, then Protestantism would have chosen the infinitely better part by far, for the other part (natural revelation) would still have to be implied and presupposed, whereas Catholicism would have had to dispense with the exalted heights of revelation, not even being able to content itself with the full meaning of nature. For that too would have been lost, since its true and final meaning can only be found in revelation. But of course, we never came to such a pass, and the alternatives were never narrowly drawn. On the contrary, Vatican I defended the duplex ordo and therefore the totality of reality in God.

INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter of this book, I argued that all truth formulated for polemical reasons may be partial—albeit true. What this means is that, for example, Councils may make less than balanced or comprehensive statements. Because of this, such statements may need to be supplemented

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1 A much shorter and different version of this chapter and parts of the next was published in Thriving in Babylon, Essays in Honor of A.J. Conyers, eds. David B. Capes and J. Daryl Charles (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 69–100.

2 Balthasar, Theology of Karl Barth, 265.
with statements from another Council or from other sources. Balthasar makes this point clear: “Even though, of course, the truth of the Councils of Trent and Vatican I will never be overtaken or even relativized, nonetheless there are still other views and aspects of revelation than those expressed there. This has always happened throughout church history, when new statements are brought forth to complete earlier insights in order to do justice to the inexhaustible riches of divine revelation even in the earthen vessel of human language.”

In the epigraph to this chapter, Balthasar illustrates this very point with respect to the Catholic Church’s defense of nature and reason against “modern philosophical and theological agnosticism and fideism [that] denigrated and distorted God’s natural creation.”

Typical of the abuse that the Catholic Church has taken for this defense is found in the following statement against the scholastic tradition by Dutch Calvinist philosopher, Herman Dooyeweerd, “The Bible does not permit any view of nature, in distinction to grace, in which human reason in its apostasy from God, becomes the main stay of a ‘philosophia et theologia naturalis’. It does not sanction any view in which the… intellect which is apostate from Christ in the sense of thinking according to the ‘flesh’ is declared to be sovereign.” Reduced to its essential point, Dooyeweerd writes elsewhere that natural reason is nothing other than what the Holy Scripture refers to as the ‘unspiritual mind’ [Col. 2:18], ‘the apostate, fallen understanding’ [Eph. 4:17–18]. That is the key reason why Dooyeweerd rejects, as he puts it, “every philosophical standpoint that leans upon the ‘naturalis ratio’ as a supposed self-sufficient Archimedean point.” So, created human nature is totally corrupt ever since the fall,

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4 Balthasar, Theology of Karl Barth, 11–12.
5 Berkouwer correctly notes that Dooyeweerd initially regarded his philosophizing as “Calvinistic philosophy,” but eventually stepped back from using “Calvinistic” as typically characteristic of his philosophy” (Zoeken en Vinden, 21). For Dooyeweerd’s explanation regarding the reference to his philosophizing as Calvinistic philosophy, see Herman Dooyeweerd, De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee, I, (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1935), 483–484. But in the English translation of this work by D.H. Freeman & W.S. Young as A New Critique of Theoretical Thought, I, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1953), 516. Dooyeweerd explicitly distances himself from referring to his philosophizing as Calvinistic, 524.
6 Dooyeweerd, De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee, I, 484. ET: New Critique, 516.
7 Herman Dooyeweerd, “Het Dilemma voor het Christelijk Wijsgeerig Denken en het Critisch Karakter van De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee,” in Philosophia Reformata, 1, 1936: 3–16, and for this quote, 16.
8 Dooyeweerd, De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee, I, 484. ET: New Critique, 522.