




Logic, Metaphysics, and Theology: Aquinas, Analytic Thomism, and the Contemporary Relevance of P. T. Geach

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 <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.107.241>

Abstract

Contemporary theology finds itself under increasing pressure to justify its intellectual credibility in a cultural context marked by suspicion toward metaphysics, relativized truth claims, and appeals to “mystery” that often function as substitutes for argument. Within this landscape, logic is frequently regarded as either irrelevant or even harmful to faith, as though rational coherence necessarily diminishes divine transcendence. Against this assumption, the present study revisits the classical Christian conviction that faith and reason are not rivals but collaborators, and that theological mystery presupposes intelligibility rather than contradiction.

This article offers an extended and systematic examination of the relationship between logic, metaphysics, and theology through an explicit dialogue between Thomas Aquinas and contemporary analytic Thomism, with particular focus on P. T. Geach’s chapter “Logic in Metaphysics and Theology” in *Logic Matters*. Against prevailing currents of relativism, anti-metaphysical theology, and the fragmentation of spirituality, the article argues that logical rigor is not an external constraint on theology but a necessary condition for its intelligibility, doctrinal integrity, and spiritual credibility. By situating Geach firmly within the Thomistic tradition, the study demonstrates how analytic Thomism constitutes a genuine retrieval and renewal of classical theology, capable of responding to intellectual, pastoral, and spiritual challenges in culturally plural and postcolonial contexts where appeals to mystery, tradition, and lived religious experience often coexist with deep intellectual contestation.

Keywords: logic and theology, analytic Thomism, metaphysical realism, religious language, mystery and contradiction.

Introduction

The core claim of this article is that P. T. Geach’s account of logic constitutes a contemporary analytic retrieval of Thomas Aquinas’s understanding of theological intelligibility. Far from imposing an external rational framework upon theology, Geach clarifies how logical coherence is intrinsic to theological discourse itself, safeguarding doctrine from incoherence without diminishing its mystery. By rearticulating classical Thomistic insights through the tools of modern analytic philosophy, Geach demonstrates that logical rigor functions as a condition of meaningful theological speech rather than as a rival to faith. The core of this study argues that such an analytic–Thomistic approach offers a constructive response to contemporary theological suspicions toward logic, revealing continuity rather than rupture between classical metaphysical theology and present-day concerns about credibility, intelligibility, and trust. The role of logic in



theology has once again become a contested issue in contemporary theological discourse. In many academic, pastoral, and even ecclesial contexts, logic is regarded with suspicion. It is often perceived as reductive, overly abstract, or incompatible with the language of mystery and lived faith. This suspicion is not accidental. It arises within a broader cultural climate marked by relativism, a widespread rejection of metaphysical realism, and an increasing separation between spirituality and doctrine. In many contemporary religious settings, particularly within societies marked by cultural plurality, colonial legacies, and strong traditions of lived religiosity, the tension between intellectual coherence and spiritual authenticity is especially acute. Appeals to mystery, ritual, or tradition frequently function as substitutes for explanation, while philosophical reasoning is sometimes perceived as culturally alien or epistemically suspect (Hector, 2011). These dynamics are not limited to Western contexts and are especially salient in African and other postcolonial religious landscapes. At the same time, the Church faces a growing credibility gap, particularly among younger generations and educated laity, who are acutely sensitive to intellectual inconsistency.

Ratzinger explicitly warns that Christianity becomes incredible when it appears to demand the sacrifice of reason, noting that modern believers reject faith when it seems logically incoherent (Ratzinger, (2004). In such a context, theology that lacks clarity or coherence is often dismissed not as mysterious but as confused or evasive. The question, therefore, is not whether theology can afford to engage logic, but whether it can afford not to (Dummet, 1981).

Within this context, the work of P. T. Geach (1972, pp. 41–55)—especially his reflections on logic in metaphysics and theology—offers a timely and incisive corrective. Far from proposing a rationalistic reduction of faith, Geach (1972, pp. 41–55) retrieves a classical insight deeply rooted in the Christian intellectual tradition: that faith seeks understanding, and that understanding presupposes logical coherence (Stump, 2003). This article contends that Geach’s (1972, pp. 41–55) position is best interpreted within the framework of analytic Thomism, a movement that employs the methods of analytic philosophy in service of Thomistic metaphysics and theology.

The central thesis of this study is that logic, properly understood, serves theology by safeguarding meaning, preserving doctrinal truth, and sustaining a spirituality grounded in reality. To demonstrate this claim, the article proceeds by examining Aquinas’s (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) understanding of *sacra doctrina*, expanding on the doctrine of analogy, clarifying the distinction between mystery and contradiction, situating Geach (1972, pp. 41–55) within analytic Thomism, and drawing out the pastoral and spiritual implications of this synthesis for theology today.

Methodology and Scope

This study adopts an analytic–theological methodology, combining the conceptual precision of analytic philosophy with the metaphysical and doctrinal framework of Thomistic theology. Methodologically, it proceeds through close textual analysis of primary sources—principally the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) and P. T. Geach’s (1972, pp. 41–55) *Logic Matters*—supplemented by critical engagement with representative secondary literature in analytic Thomism. The article does not aim at an exhaustive historical reconstruction of Thomism or analytic philosophy; rather, its scope is deliberately focused on elucidating the logical conditions for meaningful metaphysical and theological discourse. By situating Geach (1972, pp. 41–55) within the Thomistic tradition, the study seeks to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of logical rigor for systematic theology, pastoral credibility, and spiritual formation, while remaining attentive to the legitimate limits of reason in relation to revealed mystery.



Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) on *Sacra Doctrina* and the Role of Logic

For Thomas Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2), theology—*sacra doctrina*—occupies a unique epistemological status. In the opening question of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) asks whether sacred doctrine is a science. His answer is affirmative, though carefully qualified. Sacred doctrine is a science not because it proceeds from principles evident to natural reason, but because it proceeds from principles known through divine revelation and accepted in faith (ST I, q.1, a.2). This characterization has profound implications for the role of logic. Logic does not supply theology with its first principles (Davies, 1992); revelation does. Yet once these principles are received, theology must reason from them coherently. Logic thus functions as an instrumental discipline, ordering theological discourse and ensuring that revealed truths are articulated without contradiction or confusion.

Aquinas's (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) theological method is inseparable from his use of logical distinctions. Throughout the *Summa*, Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) carefully distinguishes between essence and existence, act and potency, substance and accident, nature and person, and absolute and relative predication. These distinctions are not mere conceptual refinements; they are necessary for preserving the intelligibility of doctrines such as divine simplicity, the Trinity, and the Incarnation.

Crucially, Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) never invokes mystery as a justification for logical incoherence (Lonergan 1992). On the contrary, he insists that even the most profound mysteries of faith must be expressed in a manner consistent with the principle of non-contradiction. God cannot be both simple and composite, finite and infinite, in the same respect. Where apparent tensions arise, Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) resolves them through careful logical and metaphysical analysis.

For Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2), therefore, logic is not opposed to faith but serves it. It enables theology to remain faithful to revelation while speaking intelligibly to human reason. This Thomistic vision provides the foundation upon which analytic Thomism, and Geach's (1972, pp. 41–55) contribution in particular, is built.

Metaphysics, Being, and the Analogy of Being

Aquinas's (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) understanding of theology presupposes a robust metaphysics of being. Theology speaks about God as being itself (*ipsum esse subsistens*), as first cause, as pure act, and as the fullness of truth and goodness. Such claims are unintelligible apart from metaphysical realism.

Central to Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2)'s metaphysical theology is the doctrine of the analogy of being (*analogia entis*). Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) holds that terms applied to God and creatures are neither purely univocal nor purely equivocal, but analogical (ST I, q.13, a.5; McCabe, 1987). When we say that God is good or wise, we affirm a real similarity grounded in God as the cause of all perfections, while also acknowledging an even greater dissimilarity. This doctrine is often misunderstood or marginalized in contemporary theology, sometimes dismissed as obsolete or metaphysically naïve. Yet Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) insists that without analogy, theological language collapses. Univocal predication reduces God to a creature; equivocal predication renders God unknowable. Analogy alone preserves both transcendence and intelligibility. What is often overlooked is that analogy presupposes logical discipline (Klima, 2002). Analogical predication requires careful attention to logical form, reference, and predication. Without such attention, theological language becomes unstable, oscillating between anthropomorphism and agnosticism.



In many contemporary theological approaches that eschew metaphysics, God-talk is reduced to narrative, symbol, or praxis. While these dimensions are not without value, they cannot substitute for metaphysical claims without undermining theology's capacity to speak truthfully about God. Aquinas's (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) doctrine of analogy, supported by logical rigor, remains indispensable for theology's credibility.

Literature Review

Analytic Philosophy, Thomism, and the Place of P. T. Geach

Classical Thomism and Its Twentieth-Century Reception

Scholarly engagement with Thomas Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) in the twentieth century has taken diverse and sometimes competing forms. Neo-Scholastic Thomism, dominant in Catholic institutions prior to the Second Vatican Council, emphasized systematic exposition and doctrinal stability but was often criticized for conceptual rigidity (Owens, 1963; Gilson, 1957) and limited engagement with contemporary philosophy (McInerny, 1990). In reaction, post-conciliar theology frequently distanced itself from Thomistic metaphysics, favoring historical, phenomenological, or hermeneutical approaches.

Despite this shift, a sustained scholarly consensus has emerged that Aquinas's (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) metaphysical realism and logical rigor remain indispensable for theology's intelligibility. Authors such as Gilson (1956) and Owens (1963) underscored the centrality of being (*esse*) in Aquinas's thought, laying the groundwork for later analytic engagement. This retrieval of Aquinas as a metaphysical realist prepared the soil for analytic Thomism.

Analytic Philosophy and the Question of Metaphysics

Analytic philosophy, particularly in its mid-twentieth-century Anglophone form, was initially marked by suspicion toward metaphysics. Logical positivism, represented by figures such as A. J. Ayer, dismissed metaphysical and theological statements as cognitively meaningless. However, the decline of verificationism and the resurgence of metaphysics in analytic philosophy (Quine, 1951; Kripke, 1980) reopened the possibility of serious engagement with classical metaphysical questions (Quine, 1951; Kripke, 1980). Within this renewed metaphysical landscape, several philosophers trained in analytic methods began to recognize affinities between analytic rigor and Thomistic metaphysics. The emphasis on clarity, logical form, and semantic precision proved especially conducive to the retrieval of Aquinas's (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) carefully articulated distinctions.

The Emergence of Analytic Thomism

The term *analytic Thomism* gained prominence through the work of John Haldane (1993), who defined it as the application of analytic philosophical methods to Thomistic metaphysical and theological questions (Haldane, 1993; Feser, 2014). Analytic Thomists reject both the historicist marginalization of Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) and the reduction of his thought to pre-critical metaphysics. Instead, they present Aquinas as a philosopher whose insights can be articulated with contemporary precision. Key contributors to analytic Thomism include G. E. M. Anscombe, Peter Geach (1972, pp. 41–55), John Haldane (1993), and David Oderberg (2007). Their work collectively demonstrates that Aquinas's metaphysics of act and potency, essence and existence, and analogical predication can withstand and even benefit from analytic scrutiny.



P. T. Geach (1972, pp. 41–55): Between Analytic Philosophy and Thomism

P. T. Geach (1972, pp. 41–55) occupies a distinctive position within this movement. Trained as an analytic philosopher and deeply influenced by the philosophy of language and logic, Geach nevertheless maintained a lifelong engagement with Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2). His work resists the dichotomy often posited between analytic philosophy and classical metaphysics.

In *Logic Matters*, Geach confronts the assumption that logical analysis is inherently hostile to theological discourse. On the contrary, he argues that logic is a necessary condition for meaningful metaphysics and theology. This position places him in continuity with Aquinas's (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) insistence that theology must respect the principles of reason even as it transcends them in content.

Scholars such as Haldane (1993) and Oderberg (2007) have highlighted Geach (1972, pp. 41–55)'s role in demonstrating that analytic philosophy can serve, rather than undermine, metaphysical realism. Geach's critique of incoherent God-talk aligns closely with Aquinas's rejection of equivocation and contradiction in theological language.

Assessment of the Secondary Literature

The secondary literature increasingly recognizes analytic Thomism as a credible and fruitful approach to contemporary metaphysics and theology. While critics caution against excessive formalism, proponents argue convincingly that logical rigor enhances rather than diminishes theological depth. Within this literature, Geach (1972, pp. 41–55) is widely regarded as a pivotal figure who bridges analytic philosophy and Thomistic theology.

This article builds upon that scholarly consensus, arguing that Geach's treatment of logic in metaphysics and theology constitutes not merely a philosophical contribution but a theologically significant retrieval of Aquinas's (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) vision for faith seeking understanding.

Analytic Thomism: Retrieval and Renewal

Analytic Thomism emerges in the twentieth century as a response to both the decline of classical metaphysics and the limitations of certain strands of modern philosophy. Figures such as G. E. M. Anscombe, Peter Geach (1972, pp. 41–55), John Haldane (1993), and David Oderberg (2007) sought to recover Thomistic insights using the tools of analytic philosophy. Analytic Thomism is characterized by its commitment to logical clarity, metaphysical realism, and fidelity to Aquinas's (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) central doctrines. It rejects the view that Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) is merely a historical figure whose relevance is confined to the medieval period. Instead, it treats Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) as a living interlocutor whose insights can be articulated with contemporary philosophical precision.

Within analytic Thomism, logic is not an end in itself but a means (Anscombe and Geach, 1961; Haldane, 2010) of safeguarding meaning. Analytic Thomists insist that metaphysical and theological claims must be logically coherent if they are to be meaningful. This insistence reflects not positivism but a conviction that truth is intelligible. Geach (1972, pp. 41–55) occupies a central place within this movement. His work exemplifies how modern logical analysis can be placed at the service of classical theology without distorting its content.



P. T. Geach (1972): *Logic in Metaphysics and Theology* (1972, pp. 41–55): *Logic in Metaphysics and Theology*

P. T. Geach's chapter "*Logic in Metaphysics and Theology*" in *Logic Matters* (1972) constitutes one of the most significant twentieth-century attempts to articulate the indispensable role of logic within philosophical theology. Written against a backdrop of widespread suspicion toward metaphysics and theological realism, Geach's intervention is neither apologetic nor defensive. Rather, it is diagnostic: he identifies a deep confusion in modern theological discourse regarding the nature and function of logic.

Logic as a Condition of Meaning

At the heart of Geach's argument lies a fundamental claim: logic is a condition for meaningful discourse (Geach 1972; Alston, 1989), not an optional methodological overlay. Geach insists that when theology makes claims—about God, creation, incarnation, grace—it is making assertions that are either meaningful or not, coherent or incoherent. Logic, therefore, is not concerned primarily with piety or orthodoxy, but with whether theological language succeeds in saying anything at all.

Geach's target is not mystery but nonsense. He argues that many modern theological statements fail not because they transcend human understanding, but because they violate basic logical principles, rendering them unintelligible. In this sense, Geach's work echoes Aquinas's insistence that theology, though grounded in revelation, must remain accountable to reason (Aquinas, 1947).

Critique of Theological Confusion and Category Mistakes

A recurring concern in Geach's analysis is the prevalence of category mistakes in theology (Ryle, 1949). These occur when predicates appropriate to one logical category are applied to another without clarification. For example, speaking of God as both personal and impersonal in the same respect, or affirming mutually exclusive attributes without qualification, results not in paradox but in contradiction.

Geach is particularly critical of the tendency to celebrate contradiction as a sign of depth. He warns that such rhetoric undermines the very possibility of theological truth. Where Aquinas resolves apparent tensions through distinctions—absolute and relative predication, essence and relation—Geach shows that abandoning such distinctions leads to semantic collapse.

Mystery, Paradox, and Non-Contradiction

Geach devotes considerable attention to distinguishing genuine theological mystery from pseudo-mystery. Genuine mystery, he argues, refers to truths that exceed our capacity for full comprehension while remaining logically coherent. Pseudo-mystery, by contrast, relies on the deliberate suspension of logical standards (Turner, 1995).

This distinction aligns closely with Aquinas's treatment of divine mysteries such as the Trinity and the Incarnation. For Aquinas, these doctrines are mysterious because of the limitations of human intellect, not because they involve contradictions. Geach's contribution is to restate this insight using the tools of modern logic, thereby exposing



appeals to contradiction as intellectually irresponsible. This distinction also aligns closely with Eastern Orthodox theology, which consistently affirms that divine mysteries exceed human comprehension without entailing logical contradiction. The Orthodox tradition maintains that doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation are *hyper-noetic* (beyond intellect), not *alogical* (against reason). God is known as incomprehensible (*akataleptos*), yet not irrational; mystery arises from the finitude of human understanding rather than from incoherence within divine reality itself (Lossky, 1976).

This conviction is classically expressed in the distinction between essence and energies, articulated by figures such as Gregory Palamas (Palamas, 1983). While God's essence remains inaccessible, God's energies are truly communicative and intelligible, preserving both divine transcendence and rational integrity. As John of Damascus (Damascus, 1983) insists, theology may confess mysteries that surpass reason, but it must never affirm what contradicts it. In this sense, Orthodoxy shares Aquinas's conviction that apparent paradoxes signal epistemic limitation, not ontological inconsistency.

What Peter Geach contributes is not a revision of this shared Christian insight, but its reformulation within the framework of modern analytic logic. By clarifying the difference between *mystery* and *contradiction*, Geach exposes appeals to logical inconsistency as a category error—one that undermines theological credibility rather than safeguarding divine transcendence. His work thus converges with both Thomistic and Orthodox instincts: reason is not abolished by revelation, but purified and stretched by it.

Logic, Metaphysical Realism, and God-Talk

Geach's defense of logic is inseparable from his commitment to metaphysical realism. He rejects the view that theological language functions merely expressively or symbolically. To speak meaningfully about God presupposes that God is real and that human language, though limited, can refer to divine reality. In this respect, Geach stands firmly within the Thomistic tradition. Like Aquinas, he maintains that theological predicates apply to God analogically. Logical analysis ensures that such analogical predication avoids equivocation. Without logic, analogy degenerates into either univocity or equivocity—both of which Aquinas rejects.

Theological and Pastoral Significance of Geach's Argument

While Geach writes as a philosopher, the implications of his argument are unmistakably theological and pastoral. A theology that abandons logical coherence forfeits its claim to truth and risks alienating precisely those who seek intellectual honesty in matters of faith. Geach's insistence that logic matters is therefore not a call to rationalism, but to responsibility. It calls theologians to speak carefully about God, aware that unclear language does not protect mystery but obscures it. In an era marked by skepticism toward religious discourse, Geach's work provides a crucial resource for restoring theological credibility.

Geach within the Analytic Thomist Trajectory

Finally, Geach's contribution must be understood within the broader trajectory of analytic Thomism. His work demonstrates that analytic philosophy, far from being hostile to classical



theology, can serve as a powerful ally. By bringing logical precision to bear on Thomistic metaphysics, Geach exemplifies how modern philosophical tools can renew rather than replace the theological tradition.

In this sense, *Logic Matters* represents not merely a philosophical text, but a methodological proposal: theology flourishes when faith, metaphysics, and logic are held together in disciplined harmony.

Mystery Versus Contradiction: Logical Coherence and Theological Depth: Logical Coherence and Theological Depth

The distinction between mystery and contradiction constitutes one of the most decisive points of contact between Thomistic theology and analytic philosophy. It is also one of the most misunderstood areas in contemporary theological discourse. Appeals to mystery are frequently invoked to justify conceptual ambiguity or even outright contradiction, particularly in discussions of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and divine attributes. Both Aquinas and Geach offer a rigorous corrective to this tendency.

Mystery as Epistemic Excess, Not Logical Failure

For Aquinas, mystery (*mysterium*) refers to truths revealed by God that exceed the natural capacity of human reason to comprehend fully, not truths that violate reason's fundamental principles (Aquinas, 1947). Divine mysteries surpass understanding because of the finitude of the human intellect, not because they are internally incoherent. The human mind can grasp *that* such truths are the case, even if it cannot grasp *how* they are so. This epistemic framing of mystery is essential. Aquinas consistently maintains that theological propositions must remain logically coherent if they are to be meaningful. The principle of non-contradiction is not suspended in theology; rather, it functions as a necessary condition for affirming any truth about God. Without this principle, revelation itself would become unintelligible.

Contradiction as the Collapse of Meaning

Contradiction, by contrast, does not signal depth but semantic failure. To affirm that something both is and is not in the same respect is not to gesture toward transcendence, but to negate meaning itself. Geach (1972, pp. 41–55) emphasizes that contradictory statements do not express truths beyond reason; they fail to express anything at all. Geach is particularly critical of the theological rhetoric that celebrates contradiction as a form of paradoxical wisdom. Such rhetoric, he argues, confuses psychological impressiveness with logical significance. While paradox can legitimately indicate the limits of conceptual grasp, contradiction undermines the very possibility of reference.

Case Study: The Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity provides a paradigmatic illustration of the mystery–contradiction distinction. Christianity affirms that God is one in essence and three in persons (Aquinas, *ST I*, q.30, aa.1–4; Davies, 1992). Superficially, this formulation may appear contradictory. Aquinas resolves this appearance by attending carefully to the logical structure of predication: unity and



plurality are affirmed of God in different respects—essence and relation (Aquinas, 1947, ST I, q.30, aa.1–4).

This doctrinal formulation is mysterious because it exceeds our capacity to imagine or fully conceptualize divine life, yet it is not contradictory because it does not affirm mutually exclusive predicates in the same respect. Geach's logical analysis reinforces this Thomistic insight by clarifying how distinctions of predication preserve coherence without reducing mystery.

The Incarnation and Logical Distinction

A similar analysis applies to the doctrine of the Incarnation. The claim that Christ is fully divine and fully human is not a contradiction, provided that divinity and humanity are understood as distinct natures united in one person (Aquinas, *ST* III, q.2). Aquinas's careful articulation of nature and person prevents confusion between what Christ is and who Christ is (Aquinas, 1947, *ST* III, q.2, aa.1–6). Here again, logic functions not as a reduction of mystery but as its guardian. Without logical distinction, the Incarnation would dissolve either into monophysitism or into a mere moral union. Logical coherence preserves doctrinal meaning.

Contemporary Misuses of Mystery

As will be further examined in the objections raised in §9.1 and §9.2, contemporary appeals to mystery often arise within post-metaphysical and apophatic theological frameworks that are wary of metaphysical and logical claims. In many culturally embedded religious traditions, mystery plays a central role in sustaining reverence, identity, and communal memory. However, when mystery is invoked to suspend all criteria of meaning, it risks undermining both interreligious dialogue and internal theological accountability.

In contemporary theology, appeals to mystery are often used defensively, particularly when doctrinal claims appear implausible or culturally contested. While such appeals may stem from a desire to protect transcendence, they risk fostering anti-intellectualism and eroding theological credibility. Geach's insistence on logical clarity offers a salutary correction. Mystery does not exempt theology from rational accountability; it heightens the responsibility to speak carefully. As analytic Thomism demonstrates, humility before mystery and commitment to coherence are not opposing virtues but complementary ones.

Pastoral and Spiritual Consequences

The pastoral implications discussed here anticipate the concerns addressed in §8.3, where postmodern critiques of logic are considered, and in §9.4, where questions of pastoral credibility are taken up explicitly. The distinction between mystery and contradiction is not merely academic. It has direct pastoral and spiritual consequences. Believers who encounter incoherent theological explanations often experience confusion or alienation. Conversely, a theology that respects both mystery and logic fosters trust and invites deeper engagement.

By preserving the intelligibility of doctrine, logical coherence enables mystery to be encountered as an invitation rather than an obstacle. In this way, the Thomistic–analytic account of mystery supports a spirituality that is both reverent and resilient. The implications of this synthesis extend beyond academic theology into pastoral practice and spiritual life. The separation of spirituality



from doctrine is a defining feature of contemporary religious culture. Many seek spiritual experience without commitment to doctrinal truth.

A spirituality detached from truth risks becoming subjective and unstable. Logical coherence in theology supports a spirituality grounded in reality, capable of sustaining faith amid doubt and suffering. Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2)'s vision of the spiritual life integrates intellect and will, truth and love. Logic serves charity by preventing falsehood. Distorted images of God often arise from illogical theology, leading to spiritual confusion or disillusionment. A coherent theology fosters trust, particularly among those who struggle intellectually with faith. A common example of spiritual disillusionment arises when God is presented through internally contradictory theological claims—for instance, when God is preached as perfectly loving and merciful, yet simultaneously portrayed as arbitrarily punitive, emotionally reactive, or unjust in judgment. A believer who is taught that God *commands unconditional forgiveness* while also *withholding mercy unpredictably* may experience deep confusion: the image of God no longer appears coherent or trustworthy. For intellectually reflective believers, this illogical theology often produces not deeper reverence, but alienation. Faith comes to be perceived as requiring the suspension of reason rather than its fulfillment, leading some either to compartmentalize belief from rational life or to abandon religious commitment altogether.

By contrast, a coherent theological framework articulates divine justice, mercy, freedom, and providence in a logically consistent manner and helps believers trust that God is not arbitrary but intelligible *without being reducible*. Such coherence does not eliminate mystery; rather, it reassures the faithful that mystery is not contradiction. For those who struggle intellectually with faith, logical consistency becomes a bridge to trust, allowing them to assent to belief without feeling that they must betray reason in order to be faithful.

Objections and Responses: Logic, Metaphysics, and Contemporary Theology

Objection from Post-Metaphysical Theology

A first major objection to the analytic–Thomistic retrieval of logic and metaphysics arises from post-metaphysical theology. Influenced by Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian philosophy, this approach argues that metaphysics—particularly ontological claims about being—inevitably objectifies God and reduces divine mystery to conceptual mastery (Marion, 1991). From this perspective, theology should abandon metaphysical language in favor of narrative, praxis, or event-based discourse. A post-metaphysical theologian would argue, for example, that describing God as *ipsum esse subsistens* (subsistent being itself) already submits God to the category of *being*, thereby enclosing the divine mystery within a human ontological framework. Influenced by Martin Heidegger, such a theologian would claim that this language participates in the “onto-theological” project of Western metaphysics, in which God functions as the highest explanatory principle of beings rather than as the radically Other. Instead of speaking of God as *being*, theology should attend to God as an event that interrupts human history—such as the call of conscience, the ethical demand of the Other, or the narrative encounter of revelation—without stabilizing this encounter into metaphysical propositions. In this view, theological truth is not something to be conceptually possessed but something that happens, calls, and transforms.

Response. While this concern rightly warns against rationalistic objectification of God, it rests on a false dichotomy between metaphysics and mystery. As Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) makes



clear, metaphysics does not comprehend God's essence but articulates the conditions under which meaningful God-talk is possible. Analytic Thomism, following Geach (1972, pp. 41–55), does not claim exhaustive knowledge of God; it insists only that theological statements must be logically coherent to be meaningful. Far from objectifying God, metaphysics protects divine transcendence by preventing equivocation and conceptual confusion.

Objection from Apophatic and Negative Theology

A second objection draws upon apophatic theology, which insists on the radical transcendence and ineffability of God. From this perspective, God cannot be grasped by human intellect nor adequately expressed through conceptual language, since every concept necessarily limits what it seeks to define. Apophatic theology therefore maintains that all affirmative predicates—whether metaphysical, moral, or juridical—fail to capture the divine reality and risk reducing God to the measure of created being.

Knowledge of God is thus achieved not through conceptual affirmation but through negation, silence, and reverent unknowing, whereby God is approached precisely as that which exceeds every category of human understanding. Any attempt to articulate divine reality in positive or determinate terms is regarded as provisional at best and idolatrous at worst, insofar as it substitutes human constructs for the incomprehensible mystery of God.

On this view, any affirmative theological claim risks misrepresenting the divine by assimilating God to creaturely modes of being. Apophatic theologians argue that God is not merely difficult to conceptualize but fundamentally beyond conceptual grasp, such that even the most refined metaphysical predicates fail to capture the divine reality. As Turner (1995) emphasizes, God is “beyond being” and therefore beyond the reach of univocal language or discursive reasoning.

From this perspective, logical precision may appear not only inadequate but spiritually dangerous, encouraging an idolatrous confidence in concepts and subtly domesticating the mystery that negative theology seeks to preserve. The apophatic tradition thus presents itself as a necessary corrective to rationalist excess, calling theology to epistemic humility, reverent silence, and an awareness of the limits of human understanding before the incomprehensible God.

Response. Classical apophatic theology, however, does not reject logic; it presupposes it. Aquinas (1947, ST I, q.1, a.2) explicitly affirms the *via negativa* while simultaneously maintaining that true affirmative statements about God are possible analogically. To say that God is ineffable is not to say that theological language is meaningless. The denial that creaturely concepts apply univocally to God does not render theological language meaningless; instead, it requires careful distinctions concerning mode of predication, reference, and signification. Indeed, the very claim that God transcends being and language is itself a meaningful, truth-apt assertion, one that implicitly relies upon logical coherence and conceptual discipline.

Geach (1972, pp. 41–55) clarifies this point by distinguishing between the limits of comprehension and the conditions of intelligibility. Logical coherence is required precisely to avoid collapsing apophatic theology into silence or contradiction. While God cannot be comprehended exhaustively by the human intellect, discourse about God must still satisfy minimal logical norms if it is to function as discourse at all.



Without such norms, apophatic theology risks collapsing either into silence, which precludes theology altogether, or into performative contradiction, where claims about ineffability undermine their own intelligibility. Analytic-Thomist clarity, therefore, does not negate apophatic humility but secures it, ensuring that reverence for divine mystery does not dissolve into conceptual incoherence. Properly understood, logical rigor serves apophatic theology by preserving the meaningfulness of negation, safeguarding transcendence without sacrificing truth.

Objection from Postmodern Critiques of Logic

A third objection arises from postmodern philosophy, which questions the universality and neutrality of logic itself. From this viewpoint, logical systems are historically conditioned, culturally situated, and implicated in structures of power (Kripke, 1975). In postcolonial contexts, this suspicion is often intensified by the association of logic and rationality with Western epistemic dominance.

Response. While it is true that logical systems are historically developed, this does not entail that logical principles are merely arbitrary. Analytic philosophy has demonstrated that basic logical norms—such as non-contradiction—are conditions for meaningful discourse as such (Kripke, 1980). Aquinas’s use of logic is not culturally oppressive but ontologically grounded: contradiction undermines meaning itself. Analytic Thomism acknowledges historical and cultural context while maintaining that truth claims, including theological ones, presuppose logical intelligibility.

Contemporary Challenges and the Thomistic Response

The synthesis proposed in this article—drawing together Aquinas’s theology of *sacra doctrina* and the analytic Thomist retrieval exemplified by Geach—responds in a sustained way to several of the most pressing challenges confronting contemporary theology. These challenges are not merely theoretical; they shape pastoral practice, theological education, and the credibility of Christian faith in the public sphere.

Relativism and the Crisis of Truth

One of the defining features of the contemporary intellectual landscape is the erosion of confidence in objective truth (Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q.1; Plantinga, 2000). Relativism, in its epistemological and moral forms, holds that truth claims are ultimately expressions of perspective, culture, or power rather than correspondences to reality. Within theology, this tendency often manifests as a reluctance to affirm doctrinal truth beyond contextual or narrative frameworks.

The Thomistic response, renewed through analytic rigor, is not to deny historical or cultural mediation, but to affirm that mediation does not abolish truth. Aquinas maintains that truth is grounded in being (*veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei*), and that human knowledge, though finite, is genuinely referential. Analytic Thomism reinforces this claim by showing that meaningful discourse presupposes stable truth conditions. Without such conditions, theology dissolves into rhetoric or sentiment.

By insisting on logical coherence, the Thomistic tradition resists relativism not through authoritarian assertion, but through intellectual accountability. Theology remains open to development and deeper understanding, yet anchored in truth that transcends individual or cultural preference.



Anti-Intellectualism and the Fragmentation of Faith

A second challenge is the growing anti-intellectualism within both secular culture and religious communities. Within this climate, faith is increasingly presented as a matter of personal experience or affective resonance rather than truth (Alston, 1991). Religious belief is often justified primarily by its emotional resonance or therapeutic value, while doctrinal claims are treated as secondary, optional, or even obstructive to authentic spirituality. Such tendencies reflect broader cultural suspicions toward metaphysics and rational discourse, which are frequently dismissed as elitist, abstract, or pastorally irrelevant. Analytic Thomism reinforces this insight by demonstrating that precision, conceptual clarity, and logical coherence are not inimical to spiritual depth but are among its necessary conditions.

By carefully distinguishing concepts, evaluating arguments, and clarifying theological claims, analytic approaches help prevent the conflation of faith with sentiment or ideology. In doing so, they safeguard theology from collapsing into either fideism or subjectivism, both of which undermine the intelligibility and communicability of religious belief.

The consequences of neglecting this intellectual dimension are evident in the fragmentation of faith, wherein belief, practice, and understanding become increasingly disconnected. When doctrinal formation is minimized, religious commitment often lacks the resources to endure doubt, suffering, or sustained intellectual challenge. Spirituality, severed from truth-claims that can be articulated and examined, risks becoming transient, fragile, or resistant to critical reflection.

By contrast, a Thomistic account of faith integrates intellect and will, doctrine and devotion, contemplation and action. Within this framework, logical coherence is not merely an academic virtue but a pastoral asset. It equips believers to articulate and defend their faith with humility, to engage competing worldviews without fear, and to sustain a resilient form of discipleship capable of withstanding both cultural skepticism and personal crisis. In this way, the recovery of intellectual seriousness within theology emerges not as a retreat into abstraction, but as a necessary condition for the renewal and unity of faith in the contemporary world.

Post-Metaphysical Theology and the Loss of Ontological Reference

Post-metaphysical theology, influenced by continental philosophy, often rejects ontological claims about God in favor of language focused on event, narrative, or ethical transformation. While these approaches rightly emphasize God's transcendence and the limits of human concepts, they risk severing theology from any stable reference to being.

The Thomistic response affirms that metaphysics does not domesticate God but prevents theology from becoming unintelligible. Aquinas's metaphysics is explicitly apophatic in orientation: God exceeds every concept precisely because God is the fullness of being. Analytic Thomism clarifies that abandoning metaphysics does not preserve mystery; it eliminates the conditions under which mystery can be meaningfully confessed.

By recovering metaphysical realism, the Thomistic tradition enables theology to speak about God as real, not merely as a symbol or horizon of meaning. This recovery is essential if theology is to retain its distinctive identity among the human sciences.



Pastoral Credibility and the Demands of the Present Era

Finally, contemporary theology must address a crisis of pastoral credibility. Many believers—especially young adults—are not rejecting faith per se, but incoherence. They are acutely sensitive to contradictions, evasions, and appeals to mystery that function as substitutes for explanation.

In contexts where religious life remains deeply embedded in culture, ritual, and community—as is the case in many African societies—the credibility of theology depends not only on fidelity to tradition but on its capacity to articulate belief in ways that are intellectually responsible and publicly intelligible. The Thomistic–analytic synthesis proposed here responds to this concern by reframing logic as a service to faith and charity. Clear thinking becomes an expression of respect for both God and the believer. A theology that speaks coherently fosters trust, invites engagement, and supports mature discipleship.

In this sense, the Thomistic response to contemporary challenges is not defensive or nostalgic. It is constructive and forward-looking, offering a framework in which theology can engage modern questions without surrendering its commitment to truth. By uniting metaphysical realism, logical rigor, and spiritual depth, the Thomistic tradition—renewed through analytic philosophy—remains a vital resource for theology today.

The recovery of logic and metaphysics has significant implications for theological education. Seminaries and universities must resist the marginalization of philosophical formation. Analytic Thomism offers a model for integrating classical wisdom with contemporary philosophical tools. Such integration equips future theologians and ministers to articulate faith coherently and to engage critically with contemporary culture.

Conclusion: Original Contribution and Contemporary Significance

This study has argued that the retrieval of logic within theology, as articulated by Thomas Aquinas and renewed through analytic Thomism, is not a nostalgic return to pre-modern categories but a necessary response to the intellectual, pastoral, and spiritual challenges of the present era. By placing P. T. Geach's reflections in *Logic Matters* in explicit continuity with Aquinas's understanding of *sacra doctrina*, the article has sought to demonstrate that logical rigor functions not as a constraint upon faith, but as a condition for its intelligibility, credibility, and vitality.

The originality of this contribution lies in three interrelated claims. First, the article has shown that Geach's work should be read not merely as an exercise in analytic philosophy of religion, but as a theologically significant retrieval of Thomistic principles concerning truth, meaning, and non-contradiction. By situating Geach within the analytic Thomist tradition, the study clarifies his role as a bridge figure who demonstrates how contemporary logical analysis can serve classical metaphysical realism without distortion or reduction.

Second, the article advances the claim that the distinction between mystery and contradiction is not a secondary or technical concern, but a central criterion for responsible theological discourse today. In a context where appeals to mystery are frequently used to shield conceptual ambiguity, the Thomistic–analytic insistence on logical coherence emerges as a form of intellectual humility rather than rational domination. Mystery, as Aquinas and Geach both insist, transcends reason without negating it.

Third, the article highlights the pastoral and spiritual implications of this synthesis. By arguing that logical incoherence undermines spiritual credibility, the study reframes logic as a service to faith,



charity, and ecclesial trust. In an era marked by the fragmentation of belief and the rise of subjectivist spirituality, a theology grounded in metaphysical realism and logical clarity offers not rigidity, but stability and depth.

Taken together, these contributions suggest that analytic Thomism provides a viable and fruitful framework for contemporary systematic theology—one capable of engaging post-metaphysical, apophatic, and postmodern critiques without abandoning the Church's commitment to truth. Far from closing theological inquiry, the disciplined use of logic opens a space in which faith can be articulated honestly, mystery can be confessed meaningfully, and theology can once again speak with confidence to both the academy and the Church.

In reaffirming that logic matters because truth matters, and that truth matters because God is real and knowable, this study proposes that the future of theology depends not on the abandonment of rational clarity, but on its renewed integration within a living tradition of faith seeking understanding. By situating Thomistic metaphysics and analytic clarity within the broader task of meaningful religious discourse, the article contributes to ongoing conversations in religion, philosophy, and culture concerning how faith traditions can remain both intellectually credible and culturally rooted in a plural world.

This study is limited by its primarily conceptual and synthetic methodology, which privileges Thomistic and analytic sources and therefore does not engage extensively with empirical, sociological, or comparative theological perspectives. Additionally, its focus on Western philosophical theology may underrepresent non-Thomistic or non-Christian traditions that approach truth and rationality through different metaphysical frameworks.

Future research could extend this framework by examining how analytic–Thomistic approaches to truth function within non-Western or interreligious contexts, particularly in dialogue with Islamic, Jewish, or Eastern Christian metaphysics. Further studies might also explore the practical implications of this integration for theological education, pastoral reasoning, and public discourse in increasingly secular and pluralistic societies.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: *The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.*



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