Explosive Theology:
A Reply to Jc Beall's "Christ – A Contradiction"

Timothy Pawl
University of St. Thomas (Minnesota)

1. Introduction

I am honored to be a part of this symposium. I have had many conversations with Jc Beall over the last few years about Christology; each has been illuminating. I hope for many more in the years to come.

In this brief reply, I will discuss just a few aspects of Beall's project. And, since I'm an analytic philosopher by training, I will focus primarily on places where we disagree. I ask, then, that the reader allow me a moment to say a word of appreciation before we dive into the standard fare for philosophy articles.

Beall aims both to present an account of logic and to apply it to the Fundamental Philosophical Problem of Christology (401).[1] The application of the account of logic to the Fundamental Problem yields a view that he calls "Contradictory Christology." In addition, he aims to defend Contradictory Christology as having a place at the table of potential solutions to the Fundamental Problem (430). In my estimation, Beall has succeeded in these aims. He does illuminate the role of logic and present his preferred account of it. In fact, his presentation should be praised for being accessible to an interdisciplinary audience. Beall shows how this view of logic, First-Degree Entailment (FDE), when applied to Christology, can undergird his Contradictory Christology. Again, he is to be commended for the perspicuity of his presentation. I'm happy to see another leaf put into the table to allow Contradictory Christology a place as one among many potential options. If, after allowing Contradictory Christology a seat at the table, we discover that it is a viable method of response to the Fundamental Problem, then those invested in affirming the standard Christian view of the incarnation will have another method available for answering objections, to mix metaphors mid-sentence, another arrow in the quiver.

In what follows, I will first present another aim of Beall's, on which I will lean in my two main points. Those two points, briefly, are: first, that even on Beall's account of logic, there is good reason to think that theological contradictions are *theologically* problematic, and second, even on Beall's account of logic, we can still find a path from theological contradiction to every contradictory pair of propositions being true (this inference from one contradiction to the truth of all propositions is called "explosion"). I will also discuss a minor point, Beall's response to an objection

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[1] All parenthetical references to page number that do not include an author and year are to Beall's article in this symposium.

based on my work. But before those two major points and one minor point, a framing word on Beall's aims.

2. Viability and Motivation

Beall aims to show Contradictory Christology to be "both viable and motivated" (402). Viability and motivation are sensitive to background beliefs. A thinker who reads the book of Genesis in a literalist fashion, concluding that the universe was created some six thousand years ago in six consecutive 24-hour days, will find different theories of the origin of dinosaur bones viable and motivated than someone who thinks the earth is much older. We need to ask, then: to whom is Beall attempting to show Contradictory Christology viable and motivated? He wants to show that Contradictory Christology deserves a place at the table. Which table? The table of those attempting to *defend* against the Fundamental Problem. The Witch-King of Angmar had no seat at the Council of Elrond.

Since he takes steps to show that what he says is consonant with the early councils, I suspect that he wants to motivate Contradictory Christology not just to some defenders, but, more specifically, to those who are committed to Conciliar Christology, or some subset of the doctrines of Conciliar Christology (perhaps Chalcedonian Christology, to which Beall refers at points). In fact, he claims of Contradictory Christology that it is intended to be compatible with Conciliar Christology (420).

One measure of his success in attaining his aims, then, is whether or not his view sits in tension with the work of the councils, or the theological views common to those at the councils. For insofar as it does sit in tension, it will be less viable to those who accept the councils, and they will be less motivated to affirm his Contradictory Christology. One answer to the question, "What ought we to do with this infernal ring?" is "Offer it obsequiously in tribute to Sauron for our wretched and miserable lives." But even if the Witch-King intoned this strategy in his most charismatic and affable voice between sips of tea, he'd be speaking to no avail in that group. Similarly, one way to resolve the philosophical problems that arise from the Incarnation is to give up on its defense and to deny that the Incarnation occurred. We can put a chair behind that surrender placemat at the table; motivating someone at the council to sit in it will prove tricky.

3. The Objection of Being Hermeneutically Suspect

Beall foresees a type of objection that I'd be inclined to run at precisely this point. He labels it "the objection of being hermeneutically suspect." I have claimed that it is an uncharitable read of the church fathers to see them as explicitly affirming contradictions. In a single sentence that I cite (2016, 153; Tanner 1990, 162), they list five seemingly contradictory pairs of predicates apt of the one Christ. It is much more

charitable, I believe, to understand those predicates as in some way consistent than it is to see the fathers as affirming explicit contradictions.

Beall raises two problems for this objection. The first problem is that it is my view, not Contradictory Christology, that is an uncharitable reading of the fathers. He writes,

> Either the conciliar fathers used the key predicates (e.g., 'passible' and 'impassible,' etc.) in non-standard and yet undefined ways or they used the predicates in their standard ways with their standard but glaringly contradictory consequences (420).

In Beall's judgment, the latter disjunct is the more charitable reading. What we have here is a disagreement about what charitable reading looks like in this case. Against my view, he writes:

> the fathers are not simply using key terms in a non-standard way; *they knowingly left their usage completely undefined*. We don't get the special definitions (satisfaction conditions) until Pawl's early twenty-first century work (420, his emphasis).

There we have it. Either the fathers meant the terms in a non-standard way, or they meant them in their standard, glaringly contradictory way. Is it more charitable to read them as knowingly not telling us the meanings of their terms, or is it more charitable to read them as really meaning to accept true contradictions?

This reasoning against my view of the dictates of charity strikes me as too strongly put for three reasons. First, did they knowingly leave the usage undefined? I don't have evidence that they did. I say in my discussion of this objection (2016, 169-170) that they *might* have meant what Beall calls my "special definitions" of the predicates, for all I know. But I don't have reason to think that they did leave them undefined, and I don't see any historical evidence ushered by Beall to show that they did. Perhaps they defined their usage in other texts, or in the Acts of the very councils. Some of these guys wrote a lot! Second, were my preferred aptness conditions for the terms non-standard back then? Again, I confess ignorance. It is important to remember the dialectic here, though. I haven't claimed that these aptness conditions were standard back then. I claimed that they *might have been*. Beall claims that they were not, but he doesn't offer any evidence that this is true. Third, is he right that we had to wait until the 21st century to get the truth conditions I provide? Here I think we can show that he is wrong. I owe a debt of gratitude to Richard Cross for translating the following passage and bringing it to my attention. It is a long passage that I have broken up into two parts (the second part comes later), in which we see Gabriel Biel (died 1495) give the same style of truth conditions that I prefer:

> It can be said about things privatively opposed that a negation included in the privative term either removes [*privat*] a disposition in relation to every one of a subject's natures, or in relation to a specified nature of the subject. For example, 'impassible' either implies merely

'that is, "a *suppositum* not having a passible nature"', or it implies merely 'that is, "a *suppositum* having an impassible nature"'. In the first case, 'nature' is distributed; in the second [it is] not, but is taken determinately. (III, d. 7, q. un. (III, 161.34.49))

Here's what Biel means:

- Distributed (1st) sense of "impassible": *x* is impassible if and only if *x* is a suppositum that does not have a nature that can be causally affected.
- Determinate (2nd) sense of "impassible": *x* is impassible if and only if *x* is a suppositum that has a nature that cannot be causally affected.[2]

Biel's second sense is very close to my preferred definition of impassible:

- Pawl's sense of "impassible": *x* is impassible if and only if *x* has a concrete nature that it is impossible for some other thing to causally affect (Pawl 2016, 159)

At the time of writing my (2014) article and my (2016) book to which Beall is responding, I wasn't aware of any smoking gun quotations from earlier thinkers who understood the terms as I define them. So, no shame on Beall for not knowing of the Gabriel Biel case; it isn't that he missed a case I offered. Nevertheless, Biel's claim is a counterexample to Beall's claim that we had to wait until the 21st century. Moreover, Biel isn't presenting his understandings of these terms as if they are novel. Might there be even earlier examples of people understanding the terms as I do? Richard Cross tells me that there are; I'm looking forward to seeing his forthcoming book on the Reformation debates about the Incarnation.[3] To summarize, Beall's first problem with my objection both goes under-justified (in the first part) and is subject to counterexample (in the second part).

Beall's second problem with my objection is that it "overlooks" the possibility that the predicates were really meant as contradictory, and that such a contradiction is required for Christ to play his unique role (420). Here I am sympathetic to Beall's point. I did not consider Christ's unique role and whether it would *require* some true Christological contradictions. As he has carefully argued, it is a possibility that is worthy of consideration. But I balk at the claim that I've "overlooked" it. I did discuss accepting the contradiction in an earlier part of the book, in Chapter 4, Section IV.a, where I call such a response to the Fundamental Problem the "boldest" response, pointing to Beall himself as one of some "very able philosophers who defend the claim

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[2] I have changed the definitions so that they do not include the word they are defining. In doing so, I have made an assumption about what impassibility requires. If a reader thinks that passibility is something other than ability to be causally affected, the reader is free to substitute in her preferred understanding of the term. What's important here is not so much the understanding of the term – whether passibility requires ability to be causally affected, or mere ability to feel emotion – but rather the logical form of the explanation of the term, that is, where the negation goes.

[3] Cross, Richard (forthcoming) *Communicatio Idiomatum: Reformation Christological Debates.* Oxford University Press: Oxford.

that there are some true contradictions" (84). (The previous sentence may seem to conversationally imply that Beall has missed this section of my book. If so, I hereby cancel that implication; one thing I appreciate about Beall is how carefully he reads the texts he discusses.)

In that section, when discussing the possibility of a true contradiction in Christology, I don't think that I say anything with which Beall will disagree. I note that there are certain inference forms, forms found in classical logic, but not found in Beall's preferred logic, which, if they were universally valid, would imply explosion – that is, would imply that from a contradiction, one can derive any other proposition. I furthermore noted, autobiographically, that I just can't see my way around thinking that these forms are, in fact, all universally logically valid. Beall should agree: Pawl, the poor guy, can't see how Disjunctive Syllogism (for any propositions *P* and *Q*, if *P or Q is true* and *P is false*, then *Q is true*) is invalid. The other two forms needed to derive explosion, which I referred to as "Conjunctive Elimination" and "Disjunctive Introduction," are accepted by Beall as logically valid (408). It must be Disjunctive Syllogism, then, which fails to be universally logically valid. Just to reiterate, though: for the life of me, I can't see how that's not universally valid.[4] This may well be a defect on my part. Be that as it may, it is a defect shared by many other people. I don't see this as "overlooking" Contradictory Christology, but rather looking at it, seeing that it requires the logical invalidity of Disjunctive Syllogism, and judging that to be a reason to deny Contradictory Christology. Beall, of course, judges the validity of Disjunctive Syllogism differently than I do, and so the reasoning I give in that section will not be persuasive to him. In fact, I see him as an expert that I should defer to on this topic! But, alas, what's a guy to do?

For the remainder of this brief article, I want to consider two worries I have about Beall's Contradictory Christology. Both worries accept, for argument, that FDE is the correct logic, not classical logic. Both worries attempt to show that even if FDE is the correct logic, there's still reason to think that Contradictory Christology will be unable to stop the contradictions from spreading by means of explosion. In short, the first worry attempts to motivate that Theology's theory-specific consequence relation is one that allows for explosion. The second worry attempts to motivate that even if theology's theory-specific consequence relation does not allow for explosion, some truths derivable in theology serve two masters, are subject to two different theories, and some of those other theories have theory-specific consequence relations which undergird explosion.

4. Does Theology's Theory-Specific Consequence Relation Allow for Explosion?

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[4] I do not mean that I don't see what one says here if one believes in FDE. Here's what one says: "Suppose that *P* is both true and false, and that *Q* is just false. In such a case, both premises of the Disjunctive Syllogism are true. The disjunctive premise has a true disjunct, namely, *P*, so it is true. *P* is false, so the second premise is true. But the conclusion is false, since *Q* is false and not true. So, there is a possible situation, given FDE, in which the premises are all true, but the conclusion is false. Thus, that inference form is invalid. What's not to understand, Pawl?"

On to the first worry. Beall saves his Contradictory Christology from explosion by noting that not all consequence relations, and, importantly, not the consequence relation relevant to Theology, allow one to derive from the conjunction of some proposition and its negation to the truth of any proposition whatsoever. There are different theory-specific consequence relations, only some of which behave like classical logic insofar as they satisfy exhaustion and exclusion—meaning, respectively, that for any proposition, it is either true or false, and no proposition is both true and false (414). Which theories allow explosion? Beall lists multiple examples, including mathematical theories (414). For instance, the arithmetic consequence relation, as Beall notes, "builds in explosion by narrowing the class of logical possibilities down to the ones that the theory takes to be (theoretically) possible" (428). In addition to mathematical theories, "much of physical theory, biological theory, [and] many metaphysical theories" preclude the possibility of contradictions (416). He says elsewhere that "explosion looks to play a dominant role in many – perhaps most—of our theories" (427).

Suppose we grant to Beall both that logic itself does not preclude true contradictions and that some theory-specific consequence relations *do* preclude true contradictions. Here's a question at this junction: how do we determine which theory-specific consequence relations preclude true contradictions or build in explosion, and which do not?

Whatever our answer to that question is, it shouldn't require us to become experts in every theory to check for ourselves whether it requires explosion. Rather, we should trust the judgment of the expert theorists. I suspect that this is what Beall has done, rather than becoming an expert himself in physical theory, biological theory, and many of our other theories. If, as is true for very many disciplines, there hasn't been an explicit, formal consensus on the niceties of the consequence relations the theory allows, then trusting the experts is more a matter of seeing *how* they reason than a matter of seeing their official pronouncements on whether there can be true contradictions. So, how do the theologians reason? Do they reason in theological contexts with theory-specific consequence rules that, together with FDE, would yield explosion, were there a true contradiction in the theory? That is, do we see, both now, and throughout history, theologians using inference forms like Disjunctive Syllogism without being called out for using them? If the clear practice of theologians is one that allows for rules that yield explosion, then Contradictory Christology will not be a viable and motivated option in theology. And this is true whether those rules are part of logic itself, as Classical Logic says, or whether those rules are part of the theory-specific consequence rules, as FDE allows.

By my lights, the overwhelming majority of theologians employ inference rules that would preclude true contradictions in their theological work. Consider what Gabriel Biel says, immediately following the quotation I employed above (with my emphasis):

> In the first case [the distributed sense of impassible], privatively opposed things do not pertain to the same thing, *because they imply contradictories* [said] of the same thing. In the second way they can,

through divine power, pertain to the same thing, and do not in this way imply contradictories. In the case at hand, all these privative terms are taken in the second way. *For if we take them in the first way they are not properly speaking privatively but contradictorily opposed.* So [the terms] are defined in these ways: the 'impassible' is a *suppositum* subsisting in an impassible nature; the 'immortal' is a *suppositum* subsisting in an immortal nature. Whence, just as the same *suppositum* can subsist in two natures, one of which is mortal, and the other immortal, so the same *suppositum* can be mortal and immortal. Therefore what are privatively opposed do not pertain to the same thing according to the same nature; they can, however, pertain to the same thing according to diverse natures. (III, d. 7, q. un. (III, 161.34.49))

Here Biel reasons as follows: either the predicates should be understood in the distributed (1st) sense, or in the determinate (2nd) sense. If distributed, then they imply contradictories. *But that can't be!* So, not distributed. So, we must understand them in the determinate sense. Here, he uses both Modus Tollens and Disjunctive Syllogism. And I'll bet my office chair that no one has ever called him on that. Moreover, this isn't just true of Biel: examples abound of theologians employing inference rules in their theological reasoning that, along with FDE, would imply explosion. All of the early church disputes concerning Christological heresies of which I am aware include Modus Tollens-style arguments, showing (or attempting to show) a false implication of the heretical views. I know of very few responses that questioned the logic.

Martin Luther (1971, 256), for instance, wrote: "there are syllogisms that are valid in logic, but not in theology."[5] But he wrote this in a disputation where he also employed many inference rules that would yield explosion. In short, (almost) everybody in the debate, all the experts, treated theology as being a discipline the theory-specific consequence relations of which include inference rules that imply explosion, and so preclude true contradictions. In my view, then, trusting the experts leads us to judge that the theory-specific consequence rules of theology include rules that allow explosion. As such, Contradictory Christology has not safeguarded the true contradictions from spreading and ruining everything.

Perhaps Beall could claim that the theologians have been consistently misunderstanding their own consequence relations. They have misjudged the proper consequence relation for their discipline. In the face of such a claim, though, the viability and motivation of Contradictory Christology plummets. The traditional Christology once handed down, which so many theologians were and are at pains to defend, was itself arrived at through careful reasoning and argumentation. That reasoning and argumentation involved inference rules such as Modus Tollens and Disjunctive Syllogism, as is clear in a reading of Athanasius's works against the Arians, Leo's *Tome*, and many other seminal works. If all that reasoning was theologically invalid, and we now see that, that will take much of the impetus away from those who intend to defend it, whether through accepting contradictions or not.

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[5] Dahms (1978) is another thinker who questions the application of logic to theology.

5. Smuggling Explosives

The second worry. Suppose that I'm wrong about the theory-specific consequence rules of theology. Suppose that, unbeknownst to me (and just about every theologian ever), theology and its sub-theories do *not* allow the validity of inference forms such as Disjunctive Syllogism in that domain. Even still, Contradictory Christology is not yet out of the blast range. For I now intend to smuggle some implications outside their contradiction-friendly confines, into realms that behave as classical logic dictates. Or, put otherwise, I want to derive some truths in the Christological domain that can be employed in other domains with more robust (i.e., classical) consequence relations, in the hopes of deriving an explosion over there. One last way of putting the point: I intend to take theological claims, derive results from those claims according to our theology-specific consequence relation, then import those results to another relevant theory which does include explosion in its theory-specific consequence relation. I need a partner in crime; go grab some blasting caps.

Beall writes that, according to Contradictory Christology, "Christ is mutable; Christ is not mutable. It is true that Christ is mutable; it is false that Christ is mutable" (418). Here we have a true contradiction in a domain, theology, the consequence relation of which, according to Contradictory Christology, allows for some true contradictions without explosion. At this point, we can use Conjunction Elimination to derive both that *Christ is mutable* and that *it is false that Christ is mutable*. And we can use Disjunction Introduction to derive *Christ is mutable or 2+2=5*. But, importantly, even though 2+2=5 is squarely in the arithmetic domain, we cannot use the theory-specific consequence relations of arithmetic, which include Disjunctive Syllogism, to derive that *2+2=5* from *it is false that Christ is mutable* and *Christ is mutable or 2+2=5*. Contradiction averted.

One might wonder at this juncture when one is allowed to use a theory-specific consequence relation. Abstractly put, if the domain of sentence A is arithmetic, and the domain of sentence T is theology, can we rightly use the theory-specific consequence relations of arithmetic that are not theology-specific consequence relations to form the argument: A or T, but not A, so T? If we can, is that because there are more tokens of arithmetic atomic sentences in the premises (i.e., 2) than there are theology atomic sentences in the premises (1)?[6] Or perhaps we can only use the intersection of the theory-specific consequence rules? In this case, we could only use the rules that both arithmetic and theology agree upon. Since they don't agree on Disjunctive Syllogism (recall we are assuming in this second worry that theology does not include in its consequence relations any rules that, together with the rules of FDE, would imply explosion), we can't use it. I'm interested to hear the answers to these questions, but for the moment, I'll simply assume that Beall has this worked out; he's

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[6] This would be a bad way to go. For we can disjunctively introduce a conjunction, and so introduce in more tokens of (false) arithmetic atomic propositions. For instance, *Christ is mutable or (2+2=5 and 2+3=6 and 2+4=7 . . .)*. Here we'd have more atomic arithmetic propositions than atomic theological propositions, but the proponent of Contradictory Christology should still disallow the use of Disjunctive Syllogism here.

a sharp guy. We can't derive 2+2=5 from our theological premises through any logical shenanigans. Conceded. Nevertheless, I think that we can still make mischief for Contradictory Christology. Let's try our hand at smuggling some explosives.

According to Contradictory Christology, Christ is not mutable, in the ordinary sense of that term. Christ cannot, and did not, change. Now, one question here is, "what did that look like, in real life?" Someone put a nail next to the flesh of his blessed hand, then struck the nail with a hammer. Did the nail pierce the skin? Yes, it did. But did it also not pierce the skin, owing to the fact that to be pierced is to change, and Christ did not change? Given that Contradictory Christology is an attempt at a general answer to the Fundamental Problem, what holds for mutability should hold for materiality, and for all the other instances of difficult predicates for Christology: passible, contingent, temporal, etc. What does it look like for something not material—not material in the sense of being the contradictory of material; not material in the same sense that the number 2 or the form of Courage is not material— to be struck? It seems to me that the contradictions proliferate at an astounding rate. He bled and he didn't; he walked on water and he didn't; he had a body and he didn't. Everything he did in life that required being incarnate is also something that he did not do, owing to the fact that he was not material, passable, mutable, and temporal. As another autobiographical note, I have a hard time picturing in my mind what it would look like to be around Jesus.

Even if we can't imagine what such a scenario would look like, we can still derive some truths about what's happening around Jesus. Jesus has no body, does not change, is not temporal, and is not causally affected. And Jesus is a living human (true man), in exactly the same sense that I am a living human. So, there is a living human who has no body, does not change, is not temporal, and is not causally affected. There's a living adult human who did not pass through adolescence (sure, he also *did* pass through adolescence; but to *pass through* adolescence is to change, and it is false that he changed). We could multiply cases, but I don't see a need. What we see here is that there are scads of truths about a living adult human that will sit poorly with contemporary biology and physics. Now quick: write a few of those bad boys down and shove the paper under your shirt – we're going to O'Shaughnessy Science Hall.

Though we've come to the claim that some fully functioning living adult human had no body through our theological reasoning, that claim itself is squarely a biological claim. More generally, take any claim about humans that, prior to reading this article, you thought was surely a biological claim. Maybe that all living humans have functioning circulatory systems or that all living humans have certain parts (brain stems, for instance). Those are things discovered by biology, taught in biology books, etc. If these claims aren't part of biological theory and subject to the biology-specific consequence rules, well, I don't know what is. By a strike of sweet serendipity, the contradictories of these claims are among the claims that you scrawled down in our mad dash to get out of the Theology Department in the John Roach Center with our theological fulminates.[7]

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[7] The John Roach Center used to have the much grander name, "Albertus Magnus Hall." Alas, times have changed.

I've belabored this enough. I hope the point is clear. Biology has the inferential machinery such that contradictions lead to explosion. And Beall has given us the means by which to derive some properly biological claims from theological premises. Since the claims are part of biological theory, we should be able to use our biology-specific consequence relations on them. That, in turn, leads to explosion. The precautions, the contradiction proof bunkers, the "Disjunctive Syllogism Not Welcome" signs surrounding the theology faculty offices, all for naught.

In reply, maybe the inference forms I've used in this section are also ruled out by the Theology-specific consequence relation. For instance, I reasoned like this, "Christ is immutable, and an immutable thing cannot go from being one way (e.g., preadolescent) to being another (adult); so Christ did not go from being preadolescent to being an adult." Maybe the correct consequence relation for Theology does not warrant such inferences. After all, Beall does say in response to an objection which attempts to deduce something problematic for his Christology that the correct Christology-specific consequence relation does not contrapose (424).[8] That is, when discussing Christological topics, we cannot derive from "if P, then Q" to "if not-Q, then not-P." Perhaps, then, none of these other inference rules belong in Theology either. Two responses to this reply.

First, Beall allows for a similar sort of inference in his own work. For instance, he accepts his P0, a sort of communication of idioms, which says "Something that has (or exemplifies) a nature N has whatever properties are entailed by having nature N" (401). Christ has a human nature, which entails having the property of having a working circulatory system. Christ has the divine nature, which entails being immaterial, and (since immaterial) entails having no working circulatory system.[9] Moreover, the communication of idioms uncontroversially allows for inferences like the following: "Mary bore Christ, and Christ is God; so Mary bore God" or "Christ created the stars, and Christ is a man; so a man created the stars."[10] Thus, theology uncontroversially allows an inference like the following: "Christ has no circulatory system, and Christ is a man; so a man has no circulatory system." In short, it seems to me that the sorts of inference I've used here should be allowed in theology.

Second, suppose that the relevant inference forms are not allowed. That is, suppose, for just one instance, that the correct theology-specific consequence relation forbids uncontroversial uses of the communication of idioms. In such a case, Contradictory Christology again becomes unmotivated for the proponent of traditional Christology. If the sorts of arguments accepted at Ephesus against

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[8] I'm not sure how this works. Beall goes on to say that "It is true that logical entailment . . . contraposes" (424), and that "logical consequence governs all cases whatsoever; logic is topic-neutral, universal, and is not at all subject to a particular corner of reality" (427). He also says on the same page that logical consequence "is part of every consequence relation involved in any of our theories" (427). So, it looks to me as if logical consequence is part of the consequence relation of theology. But then since logical consequence contraposes, it looks to me as if the theology-specific consequence relation should contrapose too, contra what Beall says.

[9] Here I am not using my preferred understanding of "immaterial," which would not entail that a thing has no functioning circulatory system, but only, with Biel, that it has at least one nature that has no functioning circulatory system.

[10] The former is the justification the Orthodox party gave against the Nestorians at Ephesus; the latter is an uncontroversial example going back at least to Aquinas (*ST*. III q.16 a.4), but likely farther.

Nestorius and at Chalcedon from Leo's Tome are deemed not permissible in theology by Contradictory Christology, the sought compatibility between Contradictory Christology and Conciliar Christology is lost.

6. Conclusion

As I noted earlier, Beall's aim was merely to secure a place at the table for Contradictory Christology, not to defend it against objections. I think he has succeeded in that goal. There's a sense, then, in which my above worries have outstripped the limits of what he intended to do. I hope that doesn't seem unfair. Beall's larger project is defending the merits of Contradictory Christology against the other potential responses. My goal was to provide a few worries he will have to consider in his larger project. I look forward to seeing what he produces, and to trying to cause more explosions.[11]

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[11] I thank Jc Beall and Thomas McCall for helpful comments on this article.

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