

## The *Summa Theologiae* and the Reformed Traditions

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### 1. Luther and Thomas Aquinas: A Conflict over Authority?

On 10 December 1520 at the Elster Gate of Wittenberg, Martin Luther burned his copy of the papal bull *Exsurge domine*, issued by pope Leo X on 15 June of that year, demanding of Luther to retract 41 errors from his writings. The time for Luther to react obediently within 60 days had expired on that date. The book burning was a response to the burning of Luther's works which his adversary Johannes Eck had staged in a number of cities. Johann Agricola, Luther's student and president of the Paedagogium of the University, who had organized the event at the Elster Gate, also got hold of a copy of the books of canon law which was similarly committed to the flames. Following contemporary testimonies it is probable that Agricola had also tried to collect copies of works of scholastic theology for the burning, most notably the *Summa Theologiae*. However, the search proved unsuccessful and the *Summa* was not burned alongside the papal bull since the Wittenberg theologians – Martin Luther arguably among them – did not want to relinquish their copies.<sup>1</sup>

The event seems paradigmatic of the attitude of the early Protestant Reformers to the *Summa* and its author. In Luther's writings we find relatively frequent references to Thomas Aquinas, although not exact quotations.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the person of Thomas Luther could gleefully report on the girth of Thomas Aquinas, including the much-repeated story that he could eat a whole goose in one go and that a hole had to be cut into his table to allow him to sit at the table at all.<sup>3</sup> At the same time Luther could also relate several times and in different contexts in his table talks how Thomas at the time of his death experienced such grave spiritual temptations that he could not hold out against the devil until he confounded him by embracing his Bible, saying: "I believe what is written in this book."<sup>4</sup> At least on some occasions Luther

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 423 ff.

<sup>2</sup> All the references of Luther to Thomas Aquinas have been carefully analysed by Denis R. Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas. The Angelic Doctor in the Thought of the Reformer* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> WATR 2, 192, 14 -193, 2 (12 July 1532): „Sanctus Thomas hatt so einen großen bauch gehabt, das er auf ein mal eine gantze gans hatt konnen essen, und man hatt im müssen ein tisch ausschneiden, das er den bauch in das loch liget, raumb zu haben am tisch zu sitzen.“ Cf. Janz, *Luther on Aquinas*, op. cit., 7.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. WA 38, 148 13ff (1533): "... Sanct Thoma Prediger ordens, der doch selbst an seinem ende auch verzweivelt und sprechen must widder den Teuffel: Ich glaube, was inn diesem

seems to speak approvingly of Thomas' taking refuge in faith grounded in the Bible in the face of spiritual crisis (*Anfechtung*), one of the central topics of Luther's own existential understanding of faith. While Luther could refer to Thomas as a "Sophist"<sup>5</sup>, "not worth a louse"<sup>6</sup>, he could also at different stages in his life speak of Thomas as "Divus Thomas", "this holy man"<sup>7</sup> or as a man of "great genius"<sup>8</sup> who had tragically been misunderstood.

What Luther actually knew of Thomas Aquinas' theology is a matter of debate.<sup>9</sup> While anti-Protestant polemic at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century had been eager to describe Luther as an "ignoramus" with regard to his knowledge of scholastic theology and especially of Thomas Aquinas,<sup>10</sup> later research Catholic scholars, most notably Joseph Lortz, lamented the fact that he had known only so little of Aquinas because otherwise he would not have felt obliged to reject Thomas and the whole of scholastic theology as an aberration from orthodox doctrine.<sup>11</sup> Had Luther not been trained at Erfurt and Wittenberg in the *via moderna* but at Cologne, the German capital of the *via antiqua* in the Thomist tradition, so the argument goes, the outcome of what became the "Reformation" might have been quite different.

However, is it true that Luther knew so little of Thomas Aquinas and the scholastic tradition? A careful study would suggest otherwise. Denis R. Janz has shown in his meticulous survey of all the texts where Luther refers to Aquinas that his knowledge was by contemporary standards quite impressive. Janz can ascertain that Luther had extensive knowledge of Thomas' theological writings, though perhaps not of his commentaries on Aristotle. He concludes: "Comparatively speaking, his acquaintance with these writings fell far below the level of a contemporary such as Cajetan. And yet it may have been equal or better than that of some Thomists such as Prierias."<sup>12</sup> From secondary sources Luther probably knew Aquinas

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Buch (meinet die Biblia) stehet. Cf. also WA 48, 691, 18ff (unknown date): Thomas Aquinas im moriturus disputavit cum diabolo, et cum vinceretur ab eo, hatte er die bibel bey sich und sagte: En habes librum, bey dem bleib ich!"

<sup>5</sup> WA 10 I, 115, 7ff (1522).

<sup>6</sup> WATR 2, 193, 3 (1532).

<sup>7</sup> WA 1, 658ff.

<sup>8</sup> WA 40 III, 112, 35ff.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the overview provided by Janz, *Luther and Thomas Aquinas*, 96-98.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the debate between Heinrich Denifle, *Luther und Luthertum in der ersten Entwicklung*, 2 vols (Mainz: F. Kirchheim 1904/1909), vol I, pp. 522-590, who propounded the view of Luther as an „ignoramus“ and Heinrich Boehmer, *Luther and the Reformation in the Light of Modern Research* (London: G. Bell, 1930), pp.159-163. (original German edition: *Luther im Lichte der neueren Forschung*, [Leipzig: Teubner 1910]) who tried to demonstrate that Luther had read the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologiae*, in addition to the commentary on the *Sentences*.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Lortz, *Die Reformation in Deutschland*, 2 vols (Freiburg: Herder) 1939.

<sup>12</sup> Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas*, op.cit. 111.

through his reading of Pierre d'Ailly and especially of Gabriel Biel who, as Thomas Farthing has shown, reliably reports on the *Sentences Commentary* and the *Summa Theologiae* – apart from the teaching on sin, grace and justification where Biel presents an Occamist version as that also endorsed by Thomas.<sup>13</sup> However, this alone cannot account for the fact of Luther's sometimes rather pointed criticism of Thomas' views on these matters. Rather, it seems not unlikely, as Janz can show, that Luther had first hand knowledge of Aquinas through his writings, very probably also of the *Summa theologiae* – even if he should not have been among the Wittenberg theologians who were reluctant to part with their copies of the *Summa* for the book burning at the Elster Gate. This is not only suggested by circumstantial evidence – there were 40 copies of the *Summa theologiae* alone in the four libraries at Erfurt when Luther studied there<sup>14</sup> – but also by a careful analysis of the points which Luther challenges when he refers explicitly to Thomas Aquinas. This seems to suggest that he knew all parts of the *Summa*. Janz summarizes his findings in this way:

“It is important to underscore the fact that Luther did not utterly despise the *Summa theologiae* or regard it as worthless. One senses here a grudging recognition of greatness even in a book which contained, from his point of view, great error. And we recall too that Luther did *not* want to burn it along with other books of scholastic theology and canon law in 1520.”<sup>15</sup>

Another observation seems to be relevant here. Luther's discussion of doctrinal points where he refers to Thomas is usually, even when critical, quite measured. As doctrinal opinions, Thomas' views have to be taken seriously, even where Luther disagrees with Thomas. How are then such strong statements to be understood where Luther condemns Thomas as “the source and stock of all heresy, all error and of the obliteration of the Gospel (as his books demonstrate)”<sup>16</sup>. Denis R. Janz has plausibly defended the thesis that, whatever Luther might have to criticize in Thomas' opinions, the main target of his attack and the accompanying

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<sup>13</sup> John Farthing, *Thomas Aquinas and Gabriel Biel: Interpretations of German Nominalism on the Eve of the Reformation* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1988). A detailed account of Luther's relationship to Biel is provided by Leif Grane, *Contra Gabrielem: Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit Gabriel Biel in der Disputatio Contra Scholasticam Theologiam, 1517* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1962). Cf. also G. Graham White, *Luther as Nominalist. A Study of the Logical Methods Used in Martin Luther's Disputations in the Light of their Medieval Background* (Helsinki: Schriften der Luther-Agricola Gesellschaft 30, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Paul Lehmann, *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz*, Vol 2: Erfurt (München: C.H. Beck, 1928), 799f.

<sup>15</sup> Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas*, 110.

<sup>16</sup> So Luther in his treatise *Wider den neuen Abgott und alten Teufel, der zu Meißnen soll erhoben werden* (1524), WA 15, 184, 29ff.: „... Thomas von Aquin, der born und grundsuppe aller ketzery, irthum und vertilgung des Evangelii (wie seyne bucher beweysen) ...

polemic is the *status* which was ascribed to Thomas not only by those who would happily have been identified as Thomists but also, at least in Luther's view, by the authorities of the Roman church. It is certainly no accident that this critical view of Thomas' authority received support from the fact that Luther's main opponents in the controversy triggered by the critique of Indulgences in the 95 theses were Dominican Thomists: Konrad Wimpina, Johannes Tetzel, Silvester Prierias and Cardinal Cajetan. Luther's main protest against the authority ascribed to Thomas becomes already clear in his response to Prierias' attack on Luther's views in the 95 thesis in *De Potentiae Papae Dialogus* (1518). In this response, *Ad dialogum Silvestri Prierias de potestate pape responsio*<sup>17</sup> Luther sharply attacks Prierias' habit of only referring to the authority of Thomas to refute his views and he responds by adducing arguments from Scripture, from the Fathers, from canon law and from reason against Prierias' "Thomist" authority – a truly catholic response:

“You Thomists are to be gravely reprehended that you dare putting the opinions and often false meditations of this holy man before us in place of articles of faith, and you only care for that, just as you consider nothing beyond Thomas as worthy of your reading, so you do not want to see anything false in him ...”<sup>18</sup>

Consequently, Luther argues, the Thomists regard anyone who seems to contradict Thomas as a heretic.<sup>19</sup> Instead of Thomas alone – Luther speaks often of the “naked opinions” of the Thomists – a theological judgement must be based on the Fathers who themselves refer to Scripture which presents Christ as the only teacher.<sup>20</sup> In 1518 Luther saw the unique status accorded to Thomas by some of his followers as a case of *misplaced authority*, conflating the authority of one important theologian with that of other teachers of the church, of Scripture

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<sup>17</sup> WA I, 647-689.

<sup>18</sup> WA 1, 658, 1ff: „Vos Thomistae graviter estis reprehendendi, qui sancti huius viri opiniones et saepius falsas meditationes nobis pro articulis fidei audetis statuere, et id unice curatis, ut sicut nihil praeter Thomam dignamini vestra lectione, ita nihil vultis in eo falsum videre“.

<sup>19</sup> WA 1, 662, 3ff: „Ideo ignosco tibi, quod me haereticum vocas, sciens hunc esse morum Thomistarum, ut hereticus esse, velit nolit, cogatur (dumtaxat apud Thomistas) qui opiniones Thomae non fuerit secutus“.

<sup>20</sup> Typical is the following comment by Luther on penance as a habit of the soul, combining his criticism of the use of Aristotle and his challenge to Thomas as sole authority by contrasting it with the catholic authorities of Scripture, the Fathers, the canonical law and rational arguments, basing and in this way subordinating all those on Christ as the only teacher of the soul. WA 1, 648, 32ff: „Secundum, habitualis illa poenitentia, nec a vobis intelligibilis nec vulgo tradibilis, nulla est apud me, sed a vobis conficta ex Aristotele, praesertim si qualitatem quandam in anima perpetuam at ociosam intelligitis: aut doce am ex Scriptura, Patribus, Canonibus, rationibus. Nolo (ut scias) te autem S. Thomam nudos habere magistros in his rebus, quae ad animam pertinent, quae solo verbo dei vivit at pascitur, ideoque unus est eius magister Christus ...“

and, ultimately, with that of Christ. In this connection Luther's critique of Thomas acquires for him a fundamental theological significance. If Thomas is referred to as the decisive authority for the teaching of the church, this calls the primary authority of Christian faith into question: the Gospel of Christ as it is witnessed in Scripture as the mode of divine communication by means of which God creates faith by through the word and the Spirit. If the appeal to the authority of Thomas has these consequences, it is no longer a case of misplaced authority but of *displaced foundations*. The appeal to a human word has displaced the Word of God, God's self-presentation in Christ and through the Spirit, and reliance on human work has displaced the sole trust in God's work.

Luther's engagement with Thomas on questions of method and substantive questions of doctrine falls into this pattern. Where he engages with Thomas and the *Summa* on specific theological issues, which do not seem to touch on this fundamental question, he treats him like another important theologian whose opinions are to be taken seriously, so seriously that they have to be criticized. Where Luther suspects that appeal to Thomas in dealing with doctrinal matters is a symptom of misplaced authority leading to displaced foundations, his criticism can be savage, as in the case of the accusation of doing theology on the basis on Aristotle and not on the basis of God's self-disclosure as testified in Scripture. The most trenchant criticism in this fundamental respect assumes that Thomas, in following Aristotle, has displaced faith with human virtue. This is a fundamental distortion of the understanding of justification because it replaces trust in God's work in Christ with the exercise of human virtue as described by Aristotle.

“Paul says: Nobody fulfils the commandments but faith alone. Love is nothing but faith. There Thomas is in error with his followers, that is with the Aristotelians, who say that somebody becomes virtues through practice. Just as a harp player becomes a good harp by long practice, so these fools think they achieve the virtues, love, chastity and humility though practice. It is not true. They become deceivers and the devil's martyrs ...”<sup>21</sup>

Luther's criticism reflects a situation where the traditional contest of the plurality of *viae* of doing theology – the University of Wittenberg, founded only in 1502, offered the *via Thomae* (represented by Andreas Karlstadt who, however, as early as April 1517 savagely criticized Thomism in his 151 Theses in the name of Augustine) and the *via Scoti*, and, in 1508, added

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<sup>21</sup> WA 10 III, 92 17ff: „Paulus sagt niemand erfüllet die gebott dann alleine der glaube. Die liebe ist nichts denn der glaube. Do irret Thomas mit den seinen, Das ist mit dem Aristoteli, die do sagen, durch unbung wirt einer virtuosus, wie ein Harpffen spyler durch lange ubung wirt ein gut Harpffen spyler, so meinen die narren, die tugende, lieb, keuscheit, demut durch ubing zu erlangen, es ist nit war, gleyssner and des teuffels merterer werden draus ...“

the *via moderna* in the statutes of the university<sup>22</sup> – was gradually replaced by the dominance of the Thomist way. The Thomist way, however, was no longer one way among others for interpreting the paradigmatic textbook, the Sentences by Peter Lombard, but it became *the* way, based on its own paradigmatic textbook, the *Summa Theologiae*.

## 2. Varieties of Reform and Diversities of Reception

During the time of the Reformation the *Summa Theologiae* replaced Peter Lombard's *Book of Sentences* in the institutions of catholic theological learning and training. 1526 the *Summa* was introduced as the authoritative doctrinal textbook at Salamanca, followed by Leuven at the end of the century. Cajetan's commentaries on the *Summa*, the first on the entire work, published between 1507 and 1522, became the commentary which served as the template for the whole "period of the commentaries", the second phase in the reception of Thomas' thought.<sup>23</sup>

The period of the commentaries coincided with the Tridentine reforms in the Roman Catholic Church, and the *Summa*, interpreted in the style of Cajetan's commentary, became one of the most important instruments of Catholic reform. It is not surprising that legend tells us that a copy of the *Summa Theologiae* lay next to the Bible on the altar at the Council of Trent.<sup>24</sup> Tridentine Catholicism must be regarded both as a reform movement within the Roman Catholic church and as a doctrinal response to the challenges of the Reformation. The attempt at securing the foundations for the Roman Catholic church is combined with the critical reaction to the formation of the Protestant churches. In this context the *Summa Theologiae* was used both as a foundational work and as a critical instrument, the bulwark against Protestant aberrations. In this sense the *Summa* became both a catholic and a Roman work,

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Denis R. Janz, *Luther and Late medieval Thomism. A Study in Theological Anthropology* (Waterloo, On, Canada: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1983), p. 112.

<sup>23</sup> Following R. Garrigou-Langrange O. H. Pesch hat distinguished four periods in the development of Thomism: a) the period of the *defences* which found its most impressive representative in John Capreolus (app. 1380-1444) work *Libri quattuor defensionum theologiae divi doctoris Thomas de Aquin*; b) the period of the *commentaries*, inaugurated by Cajetan leading to more than 90 commentaries on the whole *Summa*, 218 on the prima pars, 108 on the prima secundae, 89 on the secunda secundae, and 148 on the tertia pars; c) the period of the *disputations* following the Council of Trent, supplementing the commentary with additional disputations; d) the period of *Neothomism*, starting in the middle of the 18th century in Italy with a primarily *philosophical* emphasis against the challenges of the Enlightenment and German Idealism. Cf. O. Pesch, "Thomas von Aquino/Thomismus/Neothomismus", in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol 32 (2001), 430-474, 459-461.

<sup>24</sup> James A. Weishepl, 'Thomism' in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol 14, pp. 126-135, p. 134.

the Roman Catholic classic. This, in turn, shaped the way theologians in the churches of the Reformation referred to the *Summa Theologiae*. It was only rarely seen as representing a common tradition of the catholic church and of the churches of the Reformation, but most often as the theological authority on which Roman Catholics based their arguments for not following Protestant reforms.

The concrete ways of referring to the *Summa*, however, depended on the specific character of the ecclesial context in which reference to it was made, i.e. on the character of the reformation in a given context. John Calvin is in his theological work evidently a second generation Reformer who could presuppose the work of the first generation and was concerned with determining the further course of the Reformed movement, primarily in the context of its spreading and increasing pluralisation. Owen Chadwick has underscored this difference: “Luther married an ex-nun, Calvin the widow of an Anabaptist; and the difference is symbolic.”<sup>25</sup> In addition, Calvin, like Melancthon, belonged to those theologians trained in the tradition of humanism whose knowledge of scholastic theology, in which they were never trained, was limited. Therefore a minimum of references to Thomas can be found in Calvin.<sup>26</sup> This seem surprising, to say the least, because systematically one can point to many structural similarities and common problems, treated by both Thomas in the *Summa Theologiae* and by Calvin in the *Institutes*<sup>27</sup>, often overlooked and misconstrued by Catholic and Protestant interpreters alike. Calvinist theology on the continent before the rise of Reformed Scholasticism, so it would seem, developed in its major strands without an extensive critical engagement with Thomas’ *Summa*. This, however, implies that the early Calvinists had no qualms about any agreement of their doctrines with the teaching of the *Summa*. The need for critical engagement, it seems, did not arise.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Qwen Chadwick, *The Reformation*, The Pelican History of the Church, vol. 3 (Harmondsworth, 1964, 1978), p. 83.

<sup>26</sup> Denis R. Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas*, p. 111f. referring for the documentation to Armand LaVallee, *Calvin’s Criticism of Scholastic Theology*, (Harvard University Dissertation, 1967), p. 263.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Arvin Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin and Contemporary Protestant Thought. A Critique of Protestant Views on the Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington D.C. : Christian University Press, 1985)

<sup>28</sup> A good example is the doctrine of God proposed by Girolamo Zanchi, Professor at Heidelberg and one of the most prolific scholars in the Reformed tradition in the second half of the 16th century in his *De natura Dei*. Where Thomas was not quoted as an authority above Scripture and where he was not regarded as the symbolic figurehead of Tridentine reform agreeing, with the *Summa*, e.g. on the concept of divine simplicity in ST Ia qu 4, was a matter of theological truth and nothing else. Cf. Harm Goris, “Thomism in Zanchi’s Doctrine of God”, in: Willem van Asselt and Eef Dekker (eds.), *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), pp. 121-139.

The situation in England provides a different picture. As early as 1522 Henry VIII. had attacked Luther's critique of sacramental theology in *De captivitate Babylonica* in his *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, probably with the underlying intention of gaining Roman support for his marriage plans. A long drawn out and particularly acerbic exchange followed in which Luther robustly polemicized against Henry as the "king of lies" and the "king by God's disfavour".<sup>29</sup> The peculiar character of the English Reformation, being not a primarily theological event which triggered political consequences, but a political process, finding its theological foundations after the event in a measured approach to reform, determined the mixture of continuities and discontinuities in its relationship to the magisterial theologians of the Roman church, most notably Thomas Aquinas. It may also be that the lasting influence of some of the refugees from the Continent was a factor in establishing a positive attitude towards Aquinas. In 1547 Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) fled to Oxford. His teaching, though not Thomist in any strict sense of the word, showed remarkable parallels to Aquinas and he frequently refers to Aquinas to support his own doctrinal position.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the enduring influence of Martin Bucer (1491-1551) who emigrated to Cambridge in 1549 laid some of the foundations for a positive attitude towards Thomas and his *Summa*, since as a Dominican monk Bucer had received his first philosophical and theological training through the writings of Thomas.<sup>31</sup> For the attempt at developing a particularly Anglican theology of worship and church order, most often associated with the work and influence of Richard Hooker (c1554-1600) however, it seems Thomas Aquinas with his *Summa* is in many ways a natural ally. In the English context, in which the disparities between different strands of the Reformation with regard to questions of church order was far more dominant than the contrast to the Roman Church, Thomas could be referred to without immediately engaging with Thomist theology as a key element of Tridentine Roman Catholic identity definition. The

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Dorothea Wendebourg, "The German Reformers and England", in: *Sister Reformations/Schwesterreformationen. Die Reformation in Germany and England* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 94-132, esp. pp. 96-112.

<sup>30</sup> John Patrick Donnelly, "Calvinist Thomism", *Viator* 7 (1976), pp. 441-55. This article summarizes and develops some of the findings of Donnelly's monograph, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought vol 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Marin Greschat, *Martin Bucer: A Reformer and His Times*, translated by Stephen E. Buckwalter (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 24. With regard to the difficult question whether Thomist elements in Bucer's thought might have influenced Calvin, David Steinmetz, on the basis of a comparative study of the exegesis of Romans 9 comes to the twofold conclusion that there are Thomist elements in Bucer's exegesis but that this did not have influence on Calvin. Cf. David C. Steinmetz, "Calvin among the Thomists" in: David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp. 139-154).



dominant feature of the *Summa*, construing a dialectical continuity between nature and grace from a theological stance, that could be supported by philosophical arguments, made the *Summa* an important resource for theologians with a non-sectarian outlook like Hooker, without in any way compromising their views on the *theological* foundations of authority in the church. Earlier research has tended to see Hooker's *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, the first four books of which were published in 1594 (the fifth 1597; the last three after his death), simply as an application of the teaching of the *Summa* to the situation of English church and society at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. More recent research has emphasized with particular reference to the question of natural law, so central in the *Summa* and the *Lawes*, that, while the influence of Thomas is not be denied, it is a mistake to set it against the influence of the magisterial Reformation.<sup>32</sup> The true contrast appears between Thomas and the Reformers and the radicalism of Walter Travers and Thomas Cartwright and others in the context of the debates surrounding the Admonition to Parliament 1592. With regard to the influence of the *Summa* H.R. McAdoo could roundly state:

“Hooker’s writings on law and reason stem from the *Summa Theologica*, which together with the emphasis on practical divinity also found in the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, play a recurring role in the development of theological method as the century progresses.”<sup>33</sup>

The structural analogies to the *Lex-tractatus* of the *Summa* (ST I-IIae, qq. 90-108) and the direct references to both Thomas and Aristotle in the first book of the *Lawes* provide ample evidence for this statement. And yet, this does not constitute a contrast to the teaching of the Reformers, if we bear in mind that for Hooker the term law unites what Luther distinguished as law and gospel, so that the “divine law” as in Thomas Aquinas also embraces what Luther distinguished as Gospel from the law in the one will of God the creator. However, if one accepts the substantive continuity of views on the law between Hooker and the Reformers on the Continent which called neither the sufficiency of scripture for salvation into question nor collided with the principles of *solus Christus*, *sola gratia* and *sola fide*, there is neither a basis for accusing Hooker of promoting “Romishe doctrine” as it was done in the Admonition controversy, nor for construing his theology and ideas on the polity of the church as an anticipation of what the nineteenth century then construed as the *via media* of Anglicanism.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. W.J. Torrance Kirby, “Richard Hooker’s Discourse on Natural Law in the Context of the Magisterial Reformation”, in: *Animus* 3 (1998), pp. 30-49.

<sup>33</sup> H.R. McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism. A Survey of Anglican Theological Method in the Seventeenth Century* (London: A. & C. Black, 1965), 8f.

<sup>34</sup> With regard to the Church of England Patrick Collinson has rightly spoken of “the damaging mistake of writing the history of that Church in the anachronistically dichotomous terms of an Anglicanism not yet conceived and an alien Puritanism not yet clearly disowned.”

The enduring influence of the *Summa* as a formative factor in what became Anglican theological method is, perhaps with some degree of exaggeration, celebrated by McAdoo:

“No picture of the development of theological method in the seventeenth century which hopes to achieve a degree of verisimilitude can fail to take account of the influence of the *Summa Theologica*. Nor can it fail to note that the point of entry of its influence is mainly though not entirely in connection with the function of reason and in connection with matters involving certain clearly defined aspects of practical divinity, such as law, acts and happiness considered as the ultimate good. The influence of the *Summa Theologica* preceded and reinforced the quest for a reasonable theology as this went in other directions, impelled by other influences and evoked by varying situations. It strengthened the search in circumstances different from its own origins, for that which it was itself designed to be, a theology of synthesis in which the claims of faith and reason were not mutually exclusive.”<sup>35</sup>

This judgment, which McAdoo can support with his findings from the writings of Archbishop John Bramhall (1594-1663) (1588-1679) and Bishops Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), Robert Sanderson (1587-1663) and John Wilkins (1614-1672), also indicates that the influence of the *Summa* is primarily to be found in matters of theological method, and questions of theological cosmology and anthropology, sometimes, as in the case of Bramhall, as a means of criticising the ‘new philosophy’ of a Thomas Hobbes and its underlying views of human nature and society. It does not so much extend to matters of Christology or soteriology where, as in the case of Hooker, the continuity with the questions and answers of the Reformation is essentially maintained. The question, however, remains, whether a kind of pragmatic Thomism is at least one ingredient of the “spirit of Anglicanism”.

### **3. The Age of Confessional Division and the Return of Metaphysics: Rejections and Retrievals**

The time of the Reformation is the age of rhetoric. When contentious issues arise that cannot simply be solved by an appeal to authority, the hour of rhetoric has come. Of the seven liberal arts it is rhetoric which becomes the paradigmatic discipline in the time of Reformation.<sup>36</sup> This is particularly true of the countries of the Reformation where rhetoric experiences an exceptional flourishing and in academic education and in all areas of society where the right course of action needed to be negotiated between parties maintaining different authorities or cultivating different forms of appeal to authority. Philipp Melanchton is the key figure in the

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Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. IX.

<sup>35</sup> McAdoo, *Spirit of Anglicanism*, p. 383f.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Joachim Knape, *Allgemeine Rhetorik. Stationen der Theoriegeschichte* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000).

rhetorical transformation of education which also extended to all areas of academic study and society. His reordering of doctrinal arguments, relying exclusively on rhetoric and dialectics, summarized in the structuring of the doctrinal content by the *loci* of rhetoric became the standard procedure of the exposition of Christian doctrine for the Lutheran Reformation. Calvin's training as a lawyer brought with it a rhetorical influence, and in the Calvinist circles the anti-Aristotelian polemics of Peter Ramus (1515-1572), together with his emphasis on the distinction between rhetoric and dialectics (logic), gained widespread support. Confessional differentiation and the, often unsuccessful, negotiation of the possibilities of inter-confessional political cooperation goes hand in hand with the rise and fall of rhetoric. The age of rhetoric is followed by the age of metaphysics. Was it the disappointment with the dominance of rhetoric, which remaining on the surface of meaning, rather than plumbing the depths of the connection between meaning and being, which prompted the metaphysical revival at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century? In philosophy it is clearly a frustration with a methodical virtuosity that seemed disengaged from the questions of the nature of reality which found its clearest expression in the rejection of a Ramist understanding of rhetoric and logic.<sup>37</sup> In theology it was the feeling that the very content of faith, the *res fidei*, was in danger of being lost in mere words.<sup>38</sup> The rediscovery of Aristotelian metaphysics in Protestant philosophy in Germany occurred before Francesco Suarez (1548-1617) and his *Metaphysicae disputationes* became known, but it received an important second impulse through the new turn to metaphysics in the Catholic territories.<sup>39</sup> Thomas Aquinas became the 'new classic' in the Catholic revival of metaphysics – after all both Suarez and Vasquez (1551-1604) both devoted their lives' work to writing commentaries on the *Summa* – and the Protestant philosophers, especially from a Lutheran background, had no difficulty in regarding Thomas as the greatest teacher of the medieval times, in spite of all the theological differences.<sup>40</sup> The

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<sup>37</sup> The founder of the philosophical school in Altdorf, Philipp Scherb wrote *Dissertatio pro philosophia peripatetica adversus Ramistas* (1590). Cornelius Martini (1568-1621) who is seen as the founder of metaphysics in German Lutheranism and whose *Metaphysica commentatio* (1605) was one of the most influential textbooks saw the refutation of Ramus and his followers as the mission of his life. Cf. Max Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1939), 35.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Carl Heinz Ratschow, *Lutherische Dogmatik zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung* Teil I (Gütersloh: Güterloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1964), p. 14f.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between the metaphysical revival in Protestantism and the metaphysical reorientation of the Jesuits, exemplified by Suarez, cf. Robert Scharlemann, *Thomas Aquinas and John Gerhard* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 13-43.

<sup>40</sup> Wundt, op. cit., p. 12, writes that especially the Lutherans regarded Thomas as the greatest teacher of the Middle Ages and emphasizes that the Protestant theology 17th century was not

revival of a ‘scholastic’ philosophy in Protestant territories and the establishment of a ‘scholastic’ theology in the tradition and in the territories of the Reformation occurred almost simultaneously, and the two developments could support and reinforce one another.<sup>41</sup> Thomas and the Protestant philosophers and theologians were united in their return to Aristotelian metaphysics and in their reliance upon a scholastic mode of intellectual inquiry. In Thomas’ case the scholastic approach is elaborated in the disputational style of the *Summa*, in the case of the Protestant philosophers and theologians of the 17<sup>th</sup> century it is expressed in their use of a systematic mode form of exposition and their employment of numerous distinctions, normally proceeding from the “onomatology”, the analysis of the concepts in their relation to the phenomena, to the pragmatology, the analysis of the signified phenomena according to the principles of Aristotelian metaphysics, normally employing the scheme of four causes. Although the boundaries between philosophy and theology were still a matter of debate and philosophers included theological questions as matter of course in their metaphysics, while theologians not only employed the methods of philosophy in theology but also wrote themselves philosophical textbooks. The philosophy which was cultivated especially in the Lutheran theologians interpreted itself as a “received philosophy” (*philosophia recepta*) which attempted to summarize and systematize the core of the metaphysical tradition against philosophical innovations which they regarded as both philosophically and theologically destructive. A good example is the *Vade mecum sive Manuale philosophicum* (1654) of the Hebrew scholar, Lutheran polemicist against Bellarmine and the Semi-Ramism of the Calvinist Schools, and philosopher Johann Adam Scherzer (1628-1683), one of the teachers of Leibniz. The philosophical ecumenism of the Aristotelian schools is documented in the fact that Scherzer bases his philosophical definitions on the collection of the catholic theologian John Thierry *Definitiones philosophiae in schools celebriores* (Cologne 1644), supplemented from similar collections by Dominican and Jesuit

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infected by the modern prejudice that the philosophy of the middle ages is essentially catholic and has nothing to say to Protestants. This is connected to the rejection of nominalism by Reformed and Lutheran theologians alike which is aptly summarized by Donnelly: “... when Protestants came to recast their theology in to a scholastic form, they rather consistently avoided nominalism as a base. Insofar as the roots of Protestant scholasticism go back to the Middle Ages, they tend to go back to the *via antiqua* and Thomists. Protestant fruit grows well on the Thomist tree, even better than on the bad nominalist tree.” John Patrick Donnelly, “Calvinist Thomism”, *Viator* 7 (1976), pp. 441-455, p. 454.

<sup>41</sup> Vgl. Walter Sparr, „Die Schulphilosophie in den lutherischen Territorien“, in: *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, begründet von Friedrich Überweg. Völlig neubearbeitete Ausgabe, herausgegeben von Helmuth Holzhey, Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts, vol. 4: Das Heilige römische Reich deutscher Nation. Nord- und Ostmitteleuropa (Basel: Schwabe & Co, 2001), pp. 475-588.

theologians.<sup>42</sup> It is hardly surprising that in such a collection the *Summa* is frequently directly and indirectly referred to. The continuing presence of the *Summa* as an important part of the received philosophy of the Lutheran metaphysicians should not detract from the differences that have to be noted in more strictly theological matters. While Thomas regards theology as *scientia speculativa* the Lutheran theologians understood theology as a *scientia eminens practica* (M. Chemnitz and many others) or even as *sapientia eminens practica* (D. Hollaz) insofar as it leads sinful humans through faith and sanctification to eternal life, and reconstructs analytically the steps necessary for reaching this goal. The interest of the Lutheran theologians in the renewal of metaphysics is still more specifically motivated. As Walter Sparn has shown, the Lutheran theologians have a special interest in their reception of Aristotelian metaphysics.<sup>43</sup> Their question is how distinctive claims of a Lutheran Christology that the union of the person of Christ exists as the co-existence of essentially disparate substances which nevertheless communicate their attributes to one another, a Christology of radical personal union which is normally summarized in the catch-phrase *finitum capax infiniti*, can be metaphysically grasped in its own significance and appropriately related to the view of reality as it is developed in a metaphysical view of reality. How can the “new language” which Luther had seen as necessary for Christology be metaphysically related to the “received language” of Aristotelian metaphysics. In this way a tension is introduced into the relationship of a christologically based theological metaphysics and the universal claims of metaphysics which one cannot find in the same way in Catholic or Calvinist metaphysics of that time. This means that Lutheran theologians refer to the theology and philosophy of the tradition, including the *Summa*, not only selectively, as theologians in the tradition of the Reformation, but also critically with regard to their specific Christological criteria.

If one surveys the whole field of Protestant school theology in the 17<sup>th</sup> century one finds that the *Summa* could be referred to constructively as part of the received tradition in all philosophical matters and critically in those theological questions where the teaching of the Reformation differed from the theology of the *Summa*. A good example for this is the theology of the Reformed scholastic John Owen (1616-1683), sometimes referred to as “Cromwell’s Archbishop”, in whose works we find apart from frequent references to the

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<sup>42</sup> A list of the works referred on which the manual is based provided by the introduction by Stephan Meier-Oeser in the reprint of the *Vade mecum* in the edition of 1675: *Vade mecum sive Manuale philosophicum*. Neudruck der Ausgabe Leipzig 1675. Herausgegeben mit einer Einleitung von Stephan Meier-Oeser (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996), VII- XVII.

<sup>43</sup> Walter Sparn, *Die Wiederkehr der Metaphysik. Die ontologische Frage in der lutherischen Theologie des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1976).

*Summa* many structural analogies to Thomas' thought.<sup>44</sup> Owen can refer constructively to the *Summa* in his doctrine of God and in his Christology. He can even adopt the notion of infused habits in order to describe the operation of grace in regeneration and sanctification.<sup>45</sup> With regard to the doctrine of justification he remains, as his *Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (1677) amply demonstrates, adamant that the notion of infused habits has no place in a doctrine of justification in the tradition of the Reformation.

There is, however, one theologian in the Lutheran tradition, who claimed Thomas' support exactly for those questions where the teaching of the churches of the Reformation and the teaching of the Roman-Catholic church had the most decisive differences. Johann Georg Dorsche (sometimes called Dorsch, 1597-1659) was Professor at the universities of Strasbourg (since 1627) and Rostock (since 1653). During his time in Strasbourg he was the teacher of Philipp Jacob Spener, the founder of pietism. Dorsche (sometimes also Dorsch) must have made the discovery that Thomas Aquinas is closer to the teachings of the Reformation than contemporary Thomist teaching would suggest relatively early on. Already in Strasbourg he started to make excerpts from Thomas' writings, not only of the *Summa* but also of his exegetical writings and the commentary on Dionysius. He discussed his findings with the former Dominican Johann Gerhard Schobenius. In 1656 he published at last the fruit of his researches, the voluminous work with the title *Thomas Aquinas, Confessor veritatis evangelicae Augustana Confessione repetitae*.<sup>46</sup> The work is by no means a simple attempt to reclaim Aquinas for the Protestant cause. It is a highly differentiated and sophisticated conversation with Thomas which results in three observations: a) Thomas argues for hypotheses with which the Lutheran doctrine could be defended; b) those elements of Catholic doctrine which are now claimed as infallible because they contradict Lutheran teaching are of lesser importance for Thomas; c) Thomas would regard the Lutherans where they diverge from his own teaching not as heretics. Formally the work follows the four

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Christopher Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013). For the Thomist influence on Owen cf. also Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998) and Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen, Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Cleveland's interpretation of sanctification in Owen's *Discourse on the Holy Spirit*, *ibid.* pp. 99-116.

<sup>46</sup> A digital version of Dorsche's work can be found: <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/id367808935>. In his article, "Lutherische Orthodoxie und mittelalterliche Scholastik. Das Thomas-Verständnis des Johann Georg Dorsch" Winfried Zeller gives a carefully documented and detailed summary of Dorsche's argument, in: Winfried Zeller, *Theologie und Frömmigkeit*, Gesammelte Aufsätze, Bd. 2, ed. Bern Jaspert (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1978), pp. 103-121.

volumes of Cardinal Bellarmin's *Disputationes* against the heretics, but it is not an exercise in confessional controversy. Dorsche seeks to establish that Thomas' teaching is much closer to the evangelical truth which had been "repeated" by the Augsburg Confession than anti-Lutheran polemics from the Thomists would suggest. The Augsburg Confession itself is rarely referred to but always treated as a statement of the catholic truth of Christian faith and not as a particular document of Lutheran teaching. Much more emphasis is placed on those medieval and contemporary catholic authors which would support Dorsche's reading of Thomas. Although the eight sections of Dorsche's work cover the whole of Christian teaching (Scripture, Christ, the Office of the Pope, the church, the sacraments, the original state of humanity, sin and regeneration) one can distil from it Dorsche's reading of Thomas' understanding of what the Lutherans regarded as the core of their teaching in the so-called exclusive articles. The principle *sola scriptura*, Scripture alone, is supported with statements from the Summa that we may not assert anything about God which can be found, literally or substantively, in Scripture.<sup>47</sup> This applies especially to everything that can be said about salvation.<sup>48</sup> Because Christ is in both natures the mediator, his suffering can be the ground of our salvation so that Christ alone (*solus Christus*) is perfect mediator between God and humanity.<sup>49</sup> The most extensive treatment is devoted to the principle that we are saved by God's grace alone (*sola gratia*). Justifying grace, even according to Thomas,<sup>50</sup> is not necessarily an infused habit of grace. God can accept humans into his grace. And although Thomas regards predestination as an act of the divine intellect, it is nevertheless an act of God's considered will (*actum voluntatis deliberatae*). Dorsche here tries to show that divine intellect and divine will are not to be regarded as in any sense mutually exclusive. With regard to justification he can applaud Thomas' statement that Christ's resurrection is the cause of our justification.<sup>51</sup> With regard to the crucial Lutheran doctrine that we are justified by faith alone (*sola fide*) Dorsche quotes those passages from Thomas where he speaks, following Paul, about faith alone and adduces multiple reference from the church fathers to justify this statement. This presupposes a view of faith where according to Aquinas faith and charity may not be separated as two different habits.<sup>52</sup> If justifying faith is perfect faith then it includes charity in the fullest sense. There are, however, also numerous points where Dorsche notes

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. ST I q. 36 a 2 ad1. In this and the subsequent footnotes I follow Dorsche's references to Aquinas' writings.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. In Dionys. Lib. De divin. nom., c.1.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. ST III q. 48 a 5.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. ST II-I q. 110 a.1; III q. 2 a. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. ST Ad Rom. 5, lect 1.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. ST II-II q. 4 a. 4 and a. 5 ad 3.

differences. They are, albeit, interesting differences because they raise the question whether Thomas occasionally contradicts his own teaching. Can one say with Thomas that the believer can be certain of his faith while denying that the certainty of faith includes certainty of grace?

Dorsche's recommendation of Thomas Aquinas as the confessor of evangelical truth, which presents many more convergences between Thomas and the teaching of the Augsburg Confession than we can enumerate here, is in the context of the 17<sup>th</sup> century so interesting because it does not claim continuity of Lutheran Aristotelian metaphysics with Thomist Aristotelian metaphysics (the whole work never refers to strictly theological issues) but because it discovers the agreements between Aquinas' teaching and that of the Lutherans in relation to the truth of the gospel. There is relative agreement, relative to the evangelical truth, which allows for differences of doctrinal interpretation. This is the highest possible compliment a Lutheran theologian can pay to the *Summa* and its author.

#### **4. 'Scholasticism' – The Shadow Cast by the Enlightenment and the Rise of Historical Consciousness**

The Enlightenment interpreted itself as the age of illumination which carried the torch of reason into the recesses of authoritative traditions which had held human reason captive to the heteronomous rule of religious traditions and alien authorities. The light of reason celebrated in this self-congratulatory way cast a shadow which created the view of the Middle Ages as the dark ages and turned scholasticism with Thomas Aquinas as its chief representative into a by-word for philosophical obscurantism, lost in conceptual sophistry and bound to the alien authority of the church. This is especially true of the view of scholasticism which became prevalent among Protestant philosophers and theologians following the enlightened approach to philosophical and theological matters. The appeal to use one's own reason as opposed to the authority of others or to start from experience as opposed to received traditions produced a mirror image which seemed so evident in its negative connotations that it did not require any rational justification.<sup>53</sup> The new approaches in philosophy and theology tried to establish self-evident foundations beyond the acquired knowledge of a received tradition. "Scholasticism" became a pejorative term, denoting everything that was opposed to one's own orientations and was rejected as "a grave disease of the human spirit" (D. Diderot), "false philosophy" (D. Hume), or "learned gibberish" (J. Locke). Much of Luther's polemics against

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<sup>53</sup> For a comprehensive history of the use of the term „scholasticism“ cf. H. Schmidinger, "Scholastik", in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, vol. 8, 1992), cols. 1332-1342. For references of the above quotations cf. col. 1339f.



“scholasticism”, which after the Council of Trent had become synonymous with Catholic thought could be repeated in an entirely new sense, especially when Luther was celebrated as a precursor of the autonomy of the individual subject confronting the authorities of state and church head-on. It was Hegel, the self-consciously Protestant philosopher who summarized the rejection of “scholasticism” as loss of freedom and independence which was a truly damning judgement when the course of the human spirit through history is construed as a history of the actualisation of freedom.<sup>54</sup>

The more Protestantism aligned itself with modernity, supposedly inaugurated by the Reformation, the less interest it could develop for scholastic philosophy and theology, except as a negative mirror image of its own programmatic orientations. The loss of Protestantism’s own “scholastic” philosophy and theology in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a side-effect of such a view. The philosophical critique of the Enlightenment by the Romantics did not lead to a recovery of Thomas Aquinas and the *Summa* as a conversation-partner for Protestant thought. The rise of historical consciousness and the self-interpretation of Protestant theology as a primarily historical discipline leads to a new engagement with the sources of medieval thought and a thorough reassessment of Thomas’ achievement in the *Summa*. Adolf Harnack’s judgement in his magisterial *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* is characteristic for this view of Aquinas. After a meticulously researched and concisely documented exposition of Thomas’ thought and its transformations in later medieval times he comes with regard to his doctrine of grace to the conclusion that it remains consistently ambivalent. On the one hand it is a look back on Augustine, on the other hand, it points forward to the dissolution which Augustinianism should undergo in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. From a religious view-point, Harnack contends, Thomas intends to insist on the sole efficacy of divine grace; but the way in which he develops this theme already points in the opposite direction.<sup>55</sup>

It is not surprising that the elevation of Thomas Aquinas as the authoritative teacher of the church in Pope Leo XIII. Encyclical *Aeterni Patris Unigenitus* (1879, DH 3139f.), the inauguration of the *Editio Leonina* by the same Pope and the declaration of the normative status of 24 philosophical Thomist theses by the Congregation for Studies (1914, DH 3601-3624) did not help a constructive engagement with the *Summa* by Protestant theologians. The prescription by the *Codex Iuris Canonici* of 1917 that philosophy and theology should be taught according to the doctrine, method and principles of St. Thomas (can. 1366) seemed to

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Schmidinger, „Scholastik“, col. 1339.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, 3. Bd: Die Entwicklung des kirchlichen Dogmas II/III* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]), 4th ed. 1910 (1st ed. 1889). On the doctrine of grace cf. Esp. pp. 624-644. Harnack’s conclusion on pp. 642f.)

support all Protestant prejudices about the character of Roman Catholic theology. The coalition between Neo-Thomism and Anti-Modernism contradicted the self-understanding of modern Protestant theology of the time. The more Catholic philosophy and theology distanced itself from the heritage of modernity and positioned Thomas as the anti-dote against all modern aberrations, the more Protestant philosophers and theologians aligned themselves to the Kantian heritage and to the legacy of German idealism. In response to catholic views of Kant as the low point of the history of philosophy, Kant was celebrated as the “philosopher of Protestantism”<sup>56</sup>.

## 5. The Analogy of Grace

The decisive turning-point in Protestant theology, inaugurated with the second edition of Karl Barth’s *On Romans* (1922) which found its magisterial expression in the *Church Dogmatics* is often connected with Barth’s strictures against the *analogia entis* and an “invention of the Antichrist”<sup>57</sup> which is occasionally read as a wholesale rejection of the Catholic tradition, and so implicitly of Thomas Aquinas and the *Summa*. Barth himself distanced himself from this remark at the end of his life as being nothing more than a literary flourish which slipped into his pen while viewing St. Peter in Rome from the Monte Pincio.<sup>58</sup> In order to understand its significance, one must take the context of this remark into account. It is Barth’s self-criticism of his own *Christian Dogmatics* (1927) which in the preface to *Church Dogmatics*, five years later, he regards as a renewed continuation of the tradition “Schleiermacher-Ritschl-Herrmann” which he now considers to be the certain downfall of Christian theology. Theology is therefore confronted with a choice of either “the play with the *analogia entis*, legitimate only on Roman-Catholic ground, between the greatness and misery of an allegedly natural knowledge of God in the sense of Vatican I, or a Protestant theology which nurtures itself from its own sources and stands on its own feet, finally liberated from such secular misery”.<sup>59</sup> From this context, it is clear that Barth here regards the *analogia entis* as the Roman-Catholic version of doing theology on “secular” foundations instead of starting with

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<sup>56</sup> Friedrich Paulsen, *Kant, der Philosoph des Protestantismus* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1899).

<sup>57</sup> K. Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik I/1* (Zürich: TVZ 1932), VIII.

<sup>58</sup> „Ich habe das niedergeschrieben auf dem Monte Pincio in Rom selber, Habe da im Morgenglanz zwischen 5 und 6 Uhr am Morgen den Petersdom gesehen, und dann ist mir das so in die Feder gerutscht: aha! Das ist die analogia entis, da drüben!, und das sollen die in Deutschland nur hören! Es war mehr so ein bißchen literatenhaft, wie ich das so hingeschrieben habe.“ Conversation with students in Wuppertal, 1.7.1968, in: *Gespräche 1964-1968*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe IV, 28 (Zürich: TVZ, 1996), 484f.

<sup>59</sup> KD I/1, VIII.

the founding event God's revelation in Christ. *Analogia entis* is here regarded in unison with modern theology of the "line Schleiermacher-Ritschl-Herrmann" as the Roman-Catholic variety of what Barth sees as the attempt of "natural theology", basing theology on "natural", non-theological foundations. In this way, it can be regarded as an invention of the Antichrist, the counter-figure of Christ. In the next paragraph Barth, confronts the accusation, already levelled against the *Christian Dogmatics*, that he walks on the well-trodden paths of "scholasticism" so that his theology displays "catholicizing tendencies". Barth deals with that ironically by admitting that the history of the church does not start for him in 1517, that he is able to quote Anselm and Thomas without signs of revulsion. The most interesting and the most beautiful problems of dogmatics start, he contends, where one would have to end if one believed the "fairy tale" of the "barren scholasticism" and the "Hellenic thought forms of the church fathers".

This twofold perspective mirrors the treatment of Thomas Aquinas and the *Summa* in the *Church Dogmatics*. Where Barth sees in Thomas a representative of "natural theology", he is sharply critical, obviously oblivious of the fact that in Aquinas one cannot find a concept of pure nature that could be interpreted in a secular way, in the way of the "natural" in Barth's understanding of "natural theology".<sup>60</sup> Where he deals with the *Summa* apart from this specific context, his reading is highly appreciative and engages Thomas in constructive argument. Where Barth leaves the modern paradigm of Protestant theology behind (and in this sense does theology in a post-modern fashion) he is the Protestant theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whose work contains by far the most frequent references to Thomas Aquinas and the *Summa*.

It was Hans Urs von Balthasar, after all the translator of Henri de Lubac's *Catholicisme* (1938) and *Surnaturel* (1947) into German, who spotted Barth's misunderstanding of "nature" in Aquinas and who sensed the proximity (or can one speak of analogies?) of Barth's theological endeavour and the interpretation of Thomas Aquinas of the *nouvelle théologie* which Balthasar had encountered during his years of study with de Lubac at Fourvière. As the *Church Dogmatics* unfold Barth's understanding of grace developed in a way which shows many parallels with the distancing of the *nouvelle théologie* from Neo-Thomist formulae. If God's revelation in Christ is to be understood not only in an epistemological but in an ontological sense, then the incarnation cannot remain external to God's being. One must then assume a real communication of divine being and act in Jesus Christ if the full divinity of

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Eugene Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and Natural Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1995).

Christ is not to be compromised. Since Christ is the incarnate creative logos, the “being together of God and man” in Christ, the fulfilment of all history in this particular historical story, the Christ event illumines the way in which the being of the whole created order is from the beginning directed towards grace. Barth can therefore say that salvation is more than being. Created being strives for and is lacking grace which it cannot possess itself but which can only come towards it from God, because grace is in its very nature participation in the being of God as something other than God.<sup>61</sup> The analogy in this way proceeds from grace to being, from the Incarnation and God’s saving grace in Christ to God’s grace in his creative, conserving and governing action. From this Christological focus, Barth would seem to share the main thesis of de Lubac that nature and grace cannot be understood as two separate realms, but that nature must be understood as being directed towards grace as its fulfilment. He would, however, have resisted the way in which this view is generalized in some forms of transcendental Thomism. The analogy rests on its Christological foundation and can only be extended towards all humans on this particular basis; it is only anthropologically inclusive because it is christologically exclusive. If one reads Barth’s conversations with the *Summa* in the “small print” of the *Church Dogmatics* one can follow the different stages of this *rapprochement*.<sup>62</sup>

## **6. New Beginnings: From Protestant Thomas Studies to Ecumenical Conversations with Thomas the Theologian**

A new era of engagement of Protestant theologians with Thomas Aquinas and the *Summa theologiae* began in the years before Vatican II, gathered momentum through the Council and has continued ever since. Protestant studies on Thomas have their correlate in studies by Roman-Catholic theologians on Luther, or comparative studies of Thomas and Luther on issues which had been regarded as confessionally deeply divisive.<sup>63</sup> In all these studies there is a conscious attempt to avoid the confessional stereotypes that had characterised the respective other. This, however, necessitates avoiding some of the long-established strategies

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<sup>61</sup> This is a summary of part of the argument of KD IV, I p. 7. Hans Urs von Balthasar quotes this passage in the second edition of his *Karl Barth* (Cologne: Jakob Hegner, 1962), p. III as evidence for the fact that Barth had buried the hatchet in his war against the *analogia entis*.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Bruce L. McCormack and Thomas Joseph White, O.P., *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: An Unofficial Catholic-Protestant Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 2013).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Stephan H. Pfürther, *Luther und Thomas im Gespräch. Unser Heil zwischen Gewissheit und Gefährdung* (Heidelberg: Kerle, 1961); Otto Hermann Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin: Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs*, (Ostfildern: Grünewald 1985 [1965]).

of making Thomas and his theology the standard of Roman-Catholic identity definition after the Reformation and against the different varieties of modernist thought after the Enlightenment. In this respect, historical research, attempting to see Thomas in the context of his times has an important critical function for theological interpretation.

The beginning of a new era of Protestant Luther studies is marked by a study from Sweden, Peer Eric Persson's *Sacra Doctrina. Reason and Revelation in Thomas Aquinas* (1957). Here we find what becomes characteristic for the new era of Protestant Thomas research, a conscious turn to Thomas the theologian, disregarding the function Neo-Thomist training programmes ascribed to Thomas as the primary philosophical resource for the refutation of modernist errors. Consequently, the *Summa* cannot simply be interpreted as a collection of propositions. The theses that Thomas defends can only be understood in the context of the overall argument, and what Thomas does in arguing for a specific thesis is just as important than what he says in the thesis. The key concepts of "reason" and "revelation" appear in this way as embedded concepts which cannot be properly understood without their references to Scripture, to the tradition of the teachings of the church and without the use of philosophical distinctions and theories. Attention for the whole of the *Summa* demonstrates that it is organized on the matrix of the different, but connected ways in which God is present for the world as its transcendent cause. Some of the most important results appear as by-products of this strategy of interpretation, i.e. that for Thomas tradition is not a second independent source of doctrinal judgement complementing Scripture (as the Council of Trent posited against the Protestant *sola scriptura* principle) but is treated by Thomas as the interpretive effect of the understanding of Scripture and so becomes an interpretative tool for understanding Scripture.<sup>64</sup>

In German-speaking contexts the first monograph on Thomas is Thomas Bonhoeffer's study on Thomas' doctrine of God as a problem of language, which, in the heyday of the Word-of-God-theologies, appeals to Thomas in order to solve the problems surrounding this understanding of theology. The author surprises the Protestant reader when he announces on the first page that Thomas' *Summa* is the "most accomplished Christian dogmatics we have"<sup>65</sup> and talks about "the classic Christian dogmatics" on the next page. This presupposes a hermeneutic strategy which reads the Thomas as a pre-Reformation theologian (not as "a

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Per Erik Persson, *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation*, trans. by Ross MacKenzie (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 69f.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Thomas Bonhoeffer, *Die Gotteslehre des Thomas von Aquin als Sprachproblem* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1961), 1

voice in the choir of post-Tridentine theologians”)<sup>66</sup> who invites Protestant theologians to read him as Protestant theologians.

While Bonhoeffer does not refer to Roman-Catholic Thomas research but tries to elucidate Thomas’ doctrine of God by means of post-Heideggerian hermeneutics, Ulrich Kühn’s study *Via Caritatis. Theologie des Gesetzes bei Thomas von Aquin*<sup>67</sup> places his interpretation of the law in Aquinas in the context of Roman Catholic research. The specific perspective of his interpretation consists in the fact that he inquires about Thomas’ theology of the law from the perspective of the Lutheran distinction of law and gospel. Carefully following the interpretation of the law from the *Commentary on the Sentences* in the context of salvation history through the *Summa contra Gentiles*, where it is developed in the context of a metaphysics of creation, Kühn interprets the lex-tractatus of the *Summa theologiae* as the integration of these aspects in a view of the law which leads humans on the way of charity. The free devotion to God in love, developed from the perspective of the calling of the human creature to be its own law and so to correspond to the will of God, is interpreted as the end which God intends from the beginning through the law of nature, which he preaches in the old law and fulfils it through the interior power of the Holy Spirit in the new law.<sup>68</sup> The achievement of ST is therefore the systematic integration of the emphases of the *Commentary* and ScG in the unifying perspective of the way of love. Kühn admits that the emphasis of Reformation theology on the *iustitia extra nos posita* in Christ as the content of the gospel is missing in Thomas.<sup>69</sup> God’s mercy is not seen as the final acquittal of the sinner because of Christ, but it leads us through the merit of Christ as cause and instrument on the way of loving God. Nevertheless, Thomas can, according to Kühn, be seen as a theologian of the Gospel, as an evangelical theologian, since the way of love is rooted in the love in which God bestows being and the direction towards communion with God on the human creature.<sup>70</sup> And so Kühn can claim Thomas from the Protestant side as one “our own fathers in faith”<sup>71</sup>.

The questions surrounding the lex-tractatus of the *Summa*, its anthropological presuppositions and the implications of this anthropological view for the theology of grace have played a major role in the Protestant interpretation of the *Summa*. Hans Vorster analysed the understanding of the freedom of the will in the *Summa* and in Luthers *On the Bondage of*

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<sup>66</sup> op.cit., 3

<sup>67</sup> Ulrich Kühn, *Via caritatis. Theologie des Gesetzes bei Thomas von Aquin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 220

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p.259f.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

*the Will*.<sup>72</sup> The result of his interpretation is to show that Luther argues against an understanding of the freedom of the will, exemplified by Erasmus, where human freedom can independently compete or cooperate with divine freedom and can in this way contribute to the constitution of salvation, whereas in Thomas, Vorster shows on the basis of the *Summa* human freedom is embedded in the principal and comprehensive causality of divine action. Are Thomas' and Luther's conceptions of freedom therefore compatible? The question returns in Rochus Leonhardt's inquiry into the doctrine of beatitude in Thomas writings<sup>73</sup>. If achieving beatitude is dependent on human activity, although God's beatitude is the source and measure of all beatitude (ST I, 26), free will as an implication of human rationality (ST I, 93, 6) must be considered as a prerequisite for realizing the human destiny. Is this compatible with the crucial Protestant conviction that God is the sole author of salvation? To demonstrate this is the aim of Stephan Gradl's study *Deus beatitudo hominis*<sup>74</sup>. Gradl offers a careful analysis not only of the beatitude-doctrine in ST I-II, q. 1-5, but also of the presuppositions and implications of Thomas' view of beatitude in ST I and ST III. The result is truly provocative:

“Thomas doctrine of beatitude, conceived in this way is [his] doctrine of justification. It is an explication of that which according to Luther is the only legitimate subject-matter of theology – the relationship between sinful and lost man and the saving and justifying God.”<sup>75</sup>

If this can be substantiated, then the relationship between Thomas and Protestant theology cannot be restricted to the question of the compatibility of their respective teaching. The question must be raised whether Thomas teaching offers constructive inspirations for a Protestant theology of happiness.<sup>76</sup>

Compensating for a perceived lack of the Protestant tradition by going back to Thomas Aquinas is also the avowed intention of Stefan Lippert's “rational reconstruction” of the lex-tract in ST II-I.<sup>77</sup> Placed in the area where systematic theory and theory of law interconnect, it

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<sup>72</sup> Hans Vorster, *Das Freiheitsverständnis bei Thomas von Aquin und Martin Luther*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965).

<sup>73</sup> Rochus Leonhardt, *Glück als Vollendung des Menschseins* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1998).

<sup>74</sup> Stefan Gradl, *Deus beatitudo hominis. Eine evangelische Annäherung an die Glückslehre der Thomas von Aquin* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).

<sup>75</sup> Op. cit. p. 154: “Thomas' derart konzipierte Glückslehre ist Rechtfertigungslehre. Sie ist Entfaltung dessen, was gemäß Luther der einzige legitime Gegenstand der Theologie ist – der Beziehung zwischen dem sündigen und verlorenen Menschen und dem ihn rettenden und rechtfertigenden Gott.“

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Op. cit. Pp. 364-383.

<sup>77</sup> Stefan Lippert, *Recht und Gerechtigkeit bei Thomas von Aquin* (Marburg: Elwert, 2000).

is the attempt offering Thomas' view of justice and law in the *Summa* as an enrichment to Protestant theology which, in Lippert's view, left natural law theory prematurely to Catholics and secular theorists.

### **7. The *Summa theologiae* in the Protestant tradition: From Foe to Friend?**

A comprehensive history of the reception of the *Summa* in the Protestant tradition in its various strands has not yet been written. We could offer only a few examples from a complex and multi-layered process.<sup>78</sup> The most recent developments however show that there is a certain progression in the way in which Thomas is treated in Protestant theology: from conflict and contradiction to the question of compatibility, finally to considerations whether Thomas and the *Summa* can be reclaimed as an enriching part of the heritage bequeathed by 1500 years of theological and theological reflection on Christian faith before the Reformation to the Protestant way of doing theology. If Protestantism is interpreted as an entirely new beginning in the history of Christianity, as Protestants were sometimes tempted to do, they thereby leave the preceding centuries of Christian history to the Roman-Catholic church which neither Luther nor any other Reformer ever considered as a possibility. In fact, the specific points that make Protestant theology Protestant will be lost, if they cannot be understood in the context of the prevenient debates in the history Christian thought and life. It has also become clear from our brief survey that the respective concerns of the present of theology shape the way in which theologians relate to the past and construe the narratives connecting the past and the present. Thomas studies in particular, and not only from a Protestant perspective, create the impression that the past and with it Thomas and the *Summa theologiae* are constantly changing due to the interests and concerns of the present. It is here that collaboration between historians and systematic theologians and philosophers is necessary. It is not that historians are exempt from the changing of the past in step with contemporary interests, but the histories of their discipline create a heightened awareness for the problem. However, systematicians and philosophers are also able to contribute to this cooperation by reminding historians that important thinkers in history did not write their works as sources for future historical research, but in order to defend truth claims that need to be taken seriously across the centuries. In fact, it is their truth claims and the convictions

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<sup>78</sup> For a more comprehensive view of the contentious history of the reception of Thomas cf. Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas. Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).



which motivated their actions which turned the work of theologians (and, of course, other agents in history) into “sources” for later generations.

If we consider whether there is a specific set of criteria which has shaped the Protestant reception of Aquinas and the *Summa* it seems best to refer to one distinction which Luther made in *De servo arbitrio* which seems to lie at the roots of typically Protestant concerns in relating to the history of Christian doctrine and also to Thomas Aquinas and the *Summa*. Luther states: “It is necessary to have an absolutely certain distinction between the power of God and our power, between God’s work and ours, if we want to lead a pious life.”<sup>79</sup> This distinction stands behind the exclusive particles of the Reformation, insisting that salvation and faith can only be constituted by God alone in Christ through the Holy Spirit and can in no way be regarded as a human work. It is this distinction which lies at the critique Luther levelled at the practice of the late medieval Roman church and the theologies which legitimized such practices. It is this distinction which shapes the relation between divine and human work determines the logic of divine-human cooperation in the Protestant tradition. There is no cooperation between God and humans in the constitution of salvation and faith, this is the work of God alone; but the constitution of faith aims at enabling humans to cooperate with God on the basis of this categorical distinction and relationship. Protestant theology would be ill-advised to leave the notion of divine-human cooperation to the Roman-Catholic and the Orthodox traditions. The life of faith is a life that is enabled to do the will of God on the basis of what God has done and does and which given to us in faith in the clear awareness that our “natural” capacity for acting in obedience to the will of God is utterly perverted by sin.

Thomas teaching on these matters seems to be clear. Fergus Kerr points out that Thomas was fond of quoting Isaiah 26:12 “Lord, thou hast wrought all works in us” (ST I, 105.5) and states:

“Indeed, when Thomas speaks of ‘co-operation’ between creatures and God, he almost always rules out the picture of two rival agents on a level playing field. On the contrary, he sees it as the mark of God’s freedom, and ours, that God causes everything in such a way that the creature ‘causes’ it too.”<sup>80</sup>

The Protestant engagement with Thomas always revolves around the question whether the distinction between God’s action and human action as the basis for their relationship has been consistently maintained in the whole of Thomas’ theology, and whether it is consistent with his employment of philosophical theories like those of Aristotle. If it were to be shown, as

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<sup>79</sup> „Oportet igitur certissimam distinctionem habere, inter virtutem Dei et nostrum, inter opus Dei et nostrum, si volumus pie vivere.“ (WA 18, 614, 15-16)

<sup>80</sup> Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 143.

many, especially Catholic, studies of Thomas Aquinas and the Reformers suggest, that “the unresolved and perhaps unresolvable difference over the question of grace between Lutheran and pre-Reformation theologies”<sup>81</sup> can be resolved in the case of Thomas, and that the real difference exists between Lutheran and Catholic *post*-Reformation theologies, then, what Fergus Kerr calls “the most intractable division in the history of Western Christianity”, would become more tractable and, if such a comment may be permitted to a Lutheran, Thomas Aquinas would appear as an not easily underestimated resource for Roman-Catholic church reform.

Does this also apply to the thorny questions surrounding the problem of “natural theology” and the relationship of reason and revelation? For Luther Christian faith implies certainty because it is constituted in the threefold self-giving of the triune God. “Is there anything more miserable than uncertainty?”<sup>82</sup>, asks Luther. Because of its constitution in God’s revelation the certainty of faith cannot be deceived: “fidei est non falli”.<sup>83</sup> Ultimately, the certainty of faith, which implies certainty of salvation, rests on the fact that God is truth and can neither lie nor be deceived. The passive constitution of faith is therefore the foundation for any form of active knowing in matters theological. The role of reason in theology is thereby defined by its relationship to faith. Reason does not have a constitutive role for faith, its function rests in explicating and elucidating what can be known in faith, as it is disclosed by the respective and internally related lights of nature, grace and glory. It seems difficult to see here an “intractable division”, since Thomas states in the *Summa* on the relationship between theology and other science: “... other sciences derive their certitude from the natural light of human reason, which can err; whereas this derives its certitude from the light of divine knowledge, which cannot be misled.” (ST I, 5 r)<sup>84</sup> If, as Thomists today insist in unison, there is no concept of pure nature in Thomas, so that nature appears as an embedded concept, which receives its meaning and end in the framework of God’s creative action, and if there is no pure reason, so that reason is equally directed towards illumination by the light of the *scientia divina*, if the Aristotelian concepts of nature and reason have already undergone a conceptual

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<sup>81</sup> Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 148.

<sup>82</sup> „*Quid enim incertitudine miserius?*“, WA 18, 604, 33. Cf. Christoph Schwöbel, “Offenbarung, Glaube und Gewißheit in der reformatorischen Theologie”, in: Eilert Herms and Lubomir Žak (eds.), *Grund und Gegenstand des Glaubens nach römisch-katholischer und evangelisch-lutherischer Lehre* (Tübingen/Rome: Mohr Siebeck/Lateran University Press, 2008), pp. 214-234.

<sup>83</sup> WA 18, 651, 7

<sup>84</sup> „*aliae scientiae certitudinem habent ex naturali lumine rationis humanae, quae potest errare; haec autem certitudinem habet ex lumine divinae scientiae, quae decipi non potest*“.

re-formation by being systematically embedded in the architecture of the *Summa*,<sup>85</sup> it would appear to be time that some of the “anxieties”<sup>86</sup> of Reformed theologians can be laid to rest. Surveying the examples of the interpretation of the *Summa theologiae* in the Protestant tradition one wonders whether the time has come not to focus primarily on contrasting and comparing the *Summa* with the various conceptions of Protestant theology, but to take their common self-understanding seriously in assessing them as theological explications of the *fundamentum fidei*, given in God’s revelation and witnessed in Scripture and its interpretive traditions. This would mean to view the *Summa* and the various Protestant expositions of Christian doctrine not primarily in relation to one another as if they were self-sufficient systems of thought but to view them (and their mutual relations) in relation to what they all see as their respective and common ground and subject-matter. Could it be that such a way of seeing the *Summa* in the Protestant tradition would find increasingly that Thomas Aquinas, the *doctor angelicus* could legitimately be regarded as a *doctor evangelicus*?

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<sup>85</sup> Wilhelm Steinmetz has argued that pars I of the *Summa* has a double focus on the doctrine of the Trinity and on the image of the trinitarian God in humans. Such a reading of pars I, paying attention to its architectural matrix, could help to overcome misunderstandings based on a de-contextualized reading of some of the quaestiones, e.g. of quaestio 3 on the “theistic proofs”. Cf. Wilhelm Steinmetz, *Die Architektonik der Summa theologiae des Thomas von Aquin. Zur Gesamtsicht des thomasischen Gedankens* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. The section „Barthian Anxieties“ in Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas*, loc.cit., 139-144.