



# AQUINAS

## AMONG THE PROTESTANTS

Edited by  
Manfred Svensson  
David VanDrunen

WILEY Blackwell



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# Introduction: The Reception, Critique, and Use of Aquinas in Protestant Thought

*Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen*

Since Martin Luther described Thomas Aquinas as “the source and foundation of all heresy, error, and obliteration of the Gospel” (Luther 1899, 184, ll. 32f), there would not seem to be much point in writing about the place of the medieval theologian in Protestant thought. At the same time, the lack of significant works on Aquinas and Protestantism is intriguing. Many regard Aquinas as a sort of official Roman Catholic thinker, and thus we might expect him to be at the forefront of intellectual exchanges between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Yet this has rarely been the case. Protestants are aware of his importance, but too often rely on second-hand accounts of his thought. Shallow Protestant understanding of Aquinas surfaces not only in discussions about Roman Catholicism but also in intra-Protestant debates. In some quarters, merely affirming that human beings have some rational access to God or to the moral law is regarded as sufficient evidence of being a “Thomist.” Needless to say, this state of affairs fosters neither interesting polemics nor critical appreciation of Aquinas in Protestant circles.

There was a time, however, when Protestant theologians and philosophers read Aquinas’s work widely. Describing these authors as “Thomists” would be misleading, but they paid careful attention to his writings and would often side with him on important questions. Few went as far as the Strasbourg Lutheran theologian Johann Georg Dorsch, who in the title of his work (1656) presented Aquinas as a “confessor of the evangelical truth according to the Augsburg Confession.” But they felt no need to apologize for quoting Thomas favorably. The present volume seeks to unpack the

different ways in which such significant interaction with Aquinas took place through the history of Protestant thought. It also explores the prospects of fruitful engagement with Aquinas in different fields of inquiry today.

One fundamental goal of the book is simply to set the record straight. The widespread impression that Aquinas is an irrelevant figure for the history of Protestant thought has dominated not only Protestant historiography but also Roman Catholic accounts of the Reformation and Protestant intellectual life. Histories of Thomism also betray this assumption by focusing exclusively on Roman Catholic affairs. Several contemporary developments place us in a good position to leave this ecumenically shared ignorance behind. And once the historical record is set straight, many different possibilities for contemporary reception, engagement, and critique become available. Even intra-Protestant relations may benefit.

The present introduction first reviews some common critiques of Thomas from contemporary Protestant writers. We then survey developments in scholarship – on both Aquinas and the history of Protestant thought – that have made renewed interaction with Aquinas possible. Finally, this introduction presents a brief history of how Protestants have received Aquinas and begun to reengage with his work in recent years.

## **Protestant and/or Modern Critiques**

It is not easy to establish how criticism of Aquinas emerged among the Protestants. With the exception of Luther, most early Protestant critics of his thought seem to have been rather marginal authors (see, for instance, the discussion of Hooker's critics in Kirby 2005, 11–28). The lack of an unambiguous evaluation of Aquinas in the sixteenth century is quite understandable. For one thing, the fact that Aquinas is and was commonly perceived to be the preeminent Roman Catholic theologian creates an interesting dynamic that can play out in two opposite directions. On the one hand, it can create the general perception that Aquinas is Protestantism's chief adversary; on the other hand, when Aquinas and Protestant thinkers share similar views, it can point to Aquinas as a significant witness to the catholicity of Reformation insights. For another thing, Aquinas's authority even in medieval and later Roman Catholic circles was only gradually established. After significant controversies over his orthodoxy (the so-called *Correctoria* controversies), Pope John XXII canonized him in 1323 (he was the first



scholastic doctor to be canonized). The lifting of previous condemnations in the following year settled the question of his orthodoxy, but it was still only Dominicans who seriously studied his thought. His *Summa Theologiae* replaced Lombard's *Sentences* as the standard textbook of theological study only in the sixteenth century, and in 1567 Pope Pius V proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church. The vitality of Thomism as a distinct philosophical and theological tradition, however, is in some sense an even more recent phenomenon, dependent to a significant degree on the renewal of Thomistic studies prompted by the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879).<sup>1</sup>

But as much as that encyclical and the surrounding renewal helped to advance the study of Thomas within the Roman Catholic tradition, it probably contributed to the growing opposition to his work in Protestant circles. The rise of Aquinas's authority coincided with the German *Kulturkampf* and was contemporaneous with the emergence of Kant's perceived status as "philosopher of Protestantism" (Graf 2003, 136–7). Some stereotypes of that period – which criticized the medieval theologian from the standpoint of a self-sufficient modern Protestantism – have obviously also gained traction among Protestants who would not regard Kant as their patron saint.

Some of the predominant critiques of Thomas are modern and not specifically Protestant. But there are also Protestant critiques that come from exactly the opposite front: while his enlightened despisers criticize Thomas for holding philosophy captive to theology, Protestant critics often regard him as simply too philosophical to be a faithful theologian. Two other difficulties make this inquiry all the more complex. On the one hand, Protestant critiques of Aquinas are not easy to separate from critiques of Roman Catholic theology as a whole. On the other hand, Protestants often resemble Roman Catholics in viewing Aquinas through a textbook Thomism that presents him as merely the author of the five ways to prove the existence of an unmoved First Cause and as the supreme proponent of a system of morals centered on natural law. Perhaps the first of these points invites Protestants to ask how to profit from the work of Aquinas without being Roman Catholic, while the second point invites Protestants to move together with Roman Catholics toward a more nuanced understanding of Aquinas.

One recurring critique of Thomas that emerges from this mixed background is that he divides reality into two levels. A specifically Protestant impetus animates this critique, inasmuch as some (by no means all) Protestant theologians rejected the idea that God gave the so-called *donum superadditum* to human beings as a gift added to their original constitution.<sup>2</sup> Some Protestants regarded the Roman Catholic division between natural

and supernatural gifts – both being present from the very creation of humanity – as unnecessarily dualistic. Since Thomas is one representative of this position, these Protestants have interpreted such dualism as a defining feature of his thought. Thus his account of the relationship of nature and grace, of the relationship between philosophy and theology, and of the *praeambula fidei* have all suffered the impact of this reading. Some Protestant quarters have leveled the accusation that Aquinas thus made nature autonomous in a way that prefigures modern developments. Indeed, this topic recurs remarkably often among Protestant authors who are otherwise very different from each other (see, for instance, Tillich 1972, 192–4 and Dooyeweerd 1979, 115–21).

It may be argued that this sort of critique has sometimes rested upon an accurate perception of the kind of Thomism that one could find in contemporary Roman Catholicism. As the thought of Aquinas himself has reemerged from the fruitful twentieth-century engagement with his work, however, interpreting Thomas as if his views were identical to that sort of Thomism can only be regarded as a caricature. To these changes in scholarship on Aquinas we now turn.

### **Changes in Contemporary Scholarship**

Several gradual changes have taken place that help to account for the growing contemporary Protestant interest in Aquinas. What follows is no exhaustive explanation. Many contemporary scholars have been inspired to engage with Aquinas for reasons that cannot be grouped under these general tendencies. Paying attention to the following changes in scholarship, however, is helpful for understanding how the critiques discussed above have lost much of their force. First, a modified image of Aquinas and of late-medieval Thomism has emerged from recent historical scholarship. Second, contemporary scholars of Protestant scholasticism have overturned previously prevailing assumptions about Reformation and post-Reformation history in their relationship to the medieval intellectual tradition. Third, changes in the contemporary Christian intellectual climate are important to consider. Let us briefly look at each of these.

We have already referred to the kind of images of Aquinas that have prevailed in Protestant literature, images that many Thomistic textbooks did actually transmit. But that picture of Aquinas belongs to an age gone by. If the nineteenth century was the great era of discovery of the ancient world,

something similar happened with the Middle Ages in the twentieth century. The twentieth century witnessed a major effort to complete critical editions of great medieval works. Thanks to this discovery of the medieval world, our picture of Aquinas has become far more complex. The works of several great Thomists of the twentieth century, including those by Martin Grabmann (1909–11), Marie-Dominique Chenu (1964), and Ferdinand van Steenberghen (1955), contributed greatly to the study of Aquinas in his historical context.

The presentation of Aquinas's thought has also undergone several shifts in emphasis. Etienne Gilson (1952), for instance, has presented the act of being as the central feature of everything that is, the first principle of metaphysics, thus dissociating Thomas from what he described as the essentialist position of Suárez and Wolff (which, Gilson claimed, had dominated the later Thomistic school).<sup>3</sup> In addition, many Thomists began to stress the centrality of virtue for Aquinas's moral thought, over against the perceived "legalism" of the manualistic tradition (Pinckaers 1995; Hall 1994; Porter 1990). Law certainly continues to be a topic on which Aquinas has much to say, but it seems right to conclude that today writers have recovered an "integrationist" approach to his thought – including law and virtue, both resting on a philosophical and theological account of human nature.<sup>4</sup> Something similar can be said of the relation between philosophy and theology. In the mid-twentieth century, Gilson could still lament the tendency of historians "to imagine the middle ages as peopled by philosophers rather than theologians" (1957, 156). Not only have scholars corrected this misperception, but recent work on Aquinas has also demonstrated special interest in his biblical commentaries. Introducing a compilation on these commentaries, Nicholas Healy writes that "the commentaries have been quoted and discussed with increasing frequency by theologians that would not necessarily regard themselves as specialists in Thomas, by constructive as well as historical theologians, and by not a few who are from Christian traditions other than Roman Catholic" (2005, 2). Even a cursory glance at these developments can help us to understand why Protestants today with full integrity can display interest in the study of Aquinas.

One important development in this context is that scholars have increasingly recognized and studied the role of Augustine in Aquinas's work (Dauphinais, David, and Levering 2007). If formerly writers stressed Aquinas's opposition to a conservative Augustinian tradition, they are now more attentive to the tensions between his work and that of the radical Aristotelians in the Faculty of Arts in Paris. This is certainly significant for

the way Protestants engage his thought. Although much contemporary Protestantism has an interest in retrieval of the past, Protestants easily jump from the Reformers to the patristic period, and especially to Augustine. Since the Reformation itself is frequently described as an Augustinian movement, this change in Aquinas's image cannot but profoundly impact the way Protestants relate to his thought. The Reformation was indeed an Augustinian movement, but the Augustinian treasure was widely disseminated in the later Middle Ages and Aquinas can safely be regarded as an important representative of that tradition.

The kind of literature that presents Aquinas's thought as hardly more than a superficially baptized Aristotelianism has often ignored this. Aristotle was indeed "the Philosopher" for Aquinas, and there is no point in ignoring or lamenting that fact. But as with so many other thinkers and schools of the thirteenth century, he was involved in the complex task of being Augustinian and Aristotelian at the same time. Furthermore, we are now aware of the extent to which the early Protestants themselves held Aristotle in high esteem (in addition to the partly outdated survey by Petersen 1921, see also Freedman 1993 and Scheible 2010). If they were, in several ways, involved in bringing Aristotelian and Augustinian themes together, they cannot have considered Thomas an alien figure for being involved in such a project. Protestants may still object to aspects of Aquinas's thought, but today we can recognize him as a fellow voice in the broad Augustinian tradition.

Equally significant developments have taken place in the understanding of late medieval Thomism. This is the Thomism that confronted the Reformation, and thus it is in some sense more central than the work of Aquinas himself for understanding the first Protestant reactions to his thought. The problem can be stated precisely in relation to Thomas's Augustinianism. An Augustinian understanding of grace appears unambiguously in the mature work of Aquinas, in contrast to the somewhat semi-Pelagian tendencies of his early *Commentary on the Sentences* (Janz 1983, 34–59; Porro 2014, 553–70). This development is all the more important if we consider the enormous continuity in Aquinas's thinking. The Thomistic school did not recognize this development, however, until the work of the great fifteenth-century Parisian master John Capreolus. He was the first important Thomist to take notice of the self-corrections present in Aquinas's work, which led him to describe the *Summa* as analogous to Augustine's *Retractations*. Gregory of Rimini, whom Luther valued above all the scholastics, also was confident that he had Thomas on his side in the

anti-Pelagian protest. As Denis Janz has shown, however, Luther was never confronted with the Augustinian Thomism of Capreolus. A shift had taken place in the German Thomistic school towards positions less remote from the Pelagian error, and serious misrepresentations on the part of Andreas Karlstadt shaped Luther's views of Thomas (Janz 1983, 60–120). In brief, the Augustinian side of Aquinas's thought has not been entirely absent from the Thomistic tradition, but Luther did not come across it. These claims have not always received the attention they merit. The significant scholarship of Denis Janz is completely omitted, for example, by McGrath's (2005) influential work on the intellectual origins of the Reformation (see, however, his critical review of Janz 1989 in McGrath 1992). Much research is still needed on the diverse currents of medieval thought, and specifically on Thomism, in relation to the several Reformers. But taking this background into account encourages a more nuanced reading of the fiercest early Protestant attacks against Thomas.

While these preceding two changes in scholarship concern the pre-Reformation era, developments in post-Reformation scholarship are equally significant for renewed Protestant engagement with Aquinas. Throughout much of the twentieth century, both liberal and conservative Protestant scholars assessed post-Reformation theology and philosophy very negatively. They viewed Protestant scholasticism as a deflection from the more biblical theology of Luther and Calvin. In more recent decades, a number of prominent historical theologians, including David Steinmetz, Richard Muller, and Willem van Asselt, have challenged this view. Their work has changed perceptions not only of Protestant scholasticism but also of the Reformers themselves. These scholars have demonstrated the significant continuity between the Reformers and their scholastic successors, and have argued that the latter, while reincorporating scholastic method in theology, did not break substantively with the early Reformers. Their scholarship has also generated new appreciation for the continuity between early Protestant thought and the medieval heritage. This new appreciation of the medieval heritage has in turn brought attention to the place of Aquinas in Protestant thought.

Alongside these changes in the way we view the past, at least two changes in the current intellectual climate deserve mention. First, ecumenical dialogue has led to a renewed reciprocal reading of each other's traditions. Just as the image of Luther and Calvin has undergone significant modification among Roman Catholic scholars (Pesch 1971; Zachman 2008), so also with the image of Thomas among the Protestants. Many people justifiably

suspect that ecumenical politeness can lead to giving up well-grounded insights, but, as Theodor Dieter (2008) has exemplarily shown with respect to the Reformation's relation to medieval theology, an ecumenical disposition can also go hand-in-hand with intellectual integrity. A recent volume on the historical problems we have just sketched, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, is aptly subtitled *An Ecumenical Enterprise* (van Asselt and Dekker 2001). The present volume is not primarily a contribution to ecumenical theology, its chief concern being the role Aquinas can play in the vitality of Protestant thought. But it has benefited from some of these efforts and it may also contribute to them in its own way.

Beside ecumenism in the strict sense, we find something which is not wholly unrelated and yet distinct: the fact that Protestants and Roman Catholics face many similar intellectual challenges, and that at least some of these challenges can be faced together while relying on their common tradition. It is thus not surprising to find, for instance, that the well-known Roman Catholic Thomist Ralph McInerny wrote the preface to two works intending to reintroduce Aquinas to Protestant readers (Vos 1985 and Geisler 2003). The possibility of such collaboration rests on the fact that a robust Christian philosophical community now exists across the Christian traditions. The well-known renewal of "Christian philosophy" since the latter part of the twentieth century has in fact been a source for a more than historical interest in the thought of Aquinas. For example, many have pointed out that Alvin Plantinga draws on Calvin for his contemporary defense of warranted Christian belief, but fewer people note that Plantinga himself calls it "the Aquinas/Calvin model" (2000, 161–2, 241–90). Also Nicholas Wolterstorff has emphasized the profound difference between Enlightenment evidentialist apologetics and the medieval project of natural theology, thus calling for a more tempered view of the differences between Aquinas and Calvin (1986, 58). Contemporary Christian philosophy is of course no uniform movement. Yet the intense work being done in philosophical theology has led even many who in no sense can be considered Thomists to look with interest to Aquinas as a prime example of a philosophical theologian. And while contemporary philosophical theology is by no means limited to the world of analytic philosophy, a significant portion is, and that may provide a stylistic reason to appreciate Aquinas. If concern for careful argument, clear reasoning, and acceptance of a sometimes highly technical vocabulary are characteristic elements of analytic philosophy and theology, it can come as no surprise that its practitioners are appropriating Aquinas fruitfully (Crisp and Rea 2009).

As this section has discussed, a number of striking developments in theological, philosophical, and historical scholarship over the past half-century have undergirded the fledgling contemporary renewal of Protestant interest in Aquinas. Enriched views of Thomas, late-medieval Thomism, and Reformation and post-Reformation theology, have broken down entrenched caricatures about Aquinas, the nature of early Protestant thought, and the relationship between them. Furthermore, the growth of ecumenical theology and the “Christian philosophy” movement have provided incentives for many Protestants to reconsider the relevance of Aquinas. The times indeed seem ripe for a thorough study of Thomas’s place in historic and contemporary Protestant thought.

## **Aquinas in Protestant History**

### *The Reformation*

“The story of Thomas Aquinas and Protestantism has yet to be written, and it is not identical with the story of Thomas and Luther” (Steinmetz 1995, 58). David Steinmetz’s statement is still valid in both of its emphases: the story has yet to be written, and the story is not about Luther alone. A view of history that tends to exalt great figures has easily seduced people to read much of Protestantism through the lens of Luther’s anti-Aristotelianism and anti-Thomism. As a matter of fact, both his anti-Aristotelianism and his anti-Thomism merit a more nuanced interpretation than is common (Dieter 2001; Janz 1989). All the more nuance is required once we remember that Luther’s views are not necessarily representative of the whole Reformation movement. His is a significant voice to which Protestants always give ear, but it is only one voice in the large sixteenth-century network of Reformers.

It is not contemporary Protestants alone who need to be reminded of this. Since the beginning of the Reformation Roman Catholic accounts of Protestantism have suffered from an exclusive concentration on Luther. His earliest opponents were all Thomists (Bagchi 1991), and since then an almost uninterrupted tradition of abrupt opposition between Thomism and Protestantism has followed from this exclusive concentration on Luther. If contemporary Protestants tend to ignore the older Protestant familiarity with Aquinas, general histories of Thomism are equally silent about this phenomenon. Romanus Cessario’s *A Short History of Thomism* is

a good example. His work not only omits any mention of Protestant appreciation of Aquinas (which might be understandable for a *short* history), but he explicitly states that, because of the Reformation, the study of Aquinas retreated from the countries lost to Rome (2005, 36–37, 67).<sup>5</sup> There was a time when people made similar statements about Aristotle, whereas today scholars are aware of the enormous extent to which Aristotle's work remained the common standard of science until late in the seventeenth century. Charles Schmitt observed that between 1550 and 1650 the tradition of commentaries on Aristotle's works was stronger in Protestant than in Roman Catholic countries (1987, 26). We will surely never come to a point where writers will make similar statements about Aquinas, but a significant correction on Aquinas in Protestantism is already under way.

Reflection upon two of Luther's colleagues in Wittenberg highlights some complexities of the case. On the one hand stands Andreas Karlstadt, a former Thomist who later became a leading figure of the Radical Reformation. As mentioned, current scholarship suggests that this ex-Thomist's misrepresentation of the Thomistic school may have influenced Luther to lump Aquinas together with the rest of the scholastics. On the other hand stands Philip Melancthon. One might easily assume, given his Aristotelianism, that he would have a favorable disposition towards Aquinas. But that expectation presupposes a monolithic "Aristotelico-Thomism" which is a much later construct (on its problematic nature see Owens 1993). As reported by his close friend Joachim Camerarius, when Melancthon studied in Tübingen Aristotle was associated with the *via moderna* rather than the *via antiqua* (Oberman 1989, 424). Except for the years immediately following his arrival at Wittenberg (Kuropka 2002, 24–9), Melancthon remained an Aristotelian throughout his career as a Reformer, without ever being a Thomist. Reformation polemics, however, naturally led him to study Aquinas, and the results are a mixture of polemics and moderate appreciation. The polemical side prevails, yet Melancthon does not lump Aquinas together with all the scholastics as a Pelagian, but mentions him as a special case: the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1967, 152) discusses him as one of the "reasonable among the recent ones." This distinction among the medieval scholastics carried over into Protestant scholasticism, which consistently viewed Aquinas as among the *saniores* or *prudenciores*. However, when Melancthon quoted Aquinas positively he often had a polemical intent. Charles Arand notes, for instance, that Melancthon sometimes referred to Thomas to show that "even Aquinas" had taught his position (2010, 187). But elsewhere Melancthon simply



makes positive use of Aquinas, though not always acknowledging it, as a significant voice in the exegetical tradition. Timothy Wengert has described the parallels between Melancthon's and Aquinas's commentaries on the Gospel of John as "abundant and striking" (1987, 95).

A positive approach to Thomas seems to have taken root slightly earlier and above all more explicitly in the Reformed tradition than in Wittenberg. Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr Vermigli deserve mention as particularly important for their actual knowledge of Aquinas. Bucer's early reforming work shows traces of repudiation of his Dominican training. But these traces are moderate; there is only one sentence of Luther-like repudiation of Aquinas. Scholars have characterized his mature work, in contrast, as a creative synthesis of Luther's insights, Erasmian irenicism, and aspects of his Thomistic heritage. This heritage, moreover, is present both in specific doctrines like predestination and in the overall systematic conception of his theology (Leijssen 1979). In the case of Vermigli, historians have long recognized his link to Aquinas as an important feature of his intellectual profile. Unlike the former Dominican Bucer, Vermigli was an Augustinian canon, who became familiar with the thought of Aquinas and Gregory of Rimini during his studies in Padua. While the influence of Gregory was more significant than that of Aquinas for Vermigli's view of predestination, Thomas remained a significant source throughout his career (James 1998, 106–51). In the words of John Patrick Donnelly, Vermigli cannot fairly be called a Thomist, but "there is a strong scholastic substratum in his theology, that depends upon Saint Thomas more than upon any other medieval theologian" (1976, 443). With Vermigli we meet a link between the Reformation and later Protestant scholasticism, to which we now turn.

### *Protestant Scholasticism*

A brief survey of the Reformation leaves the impression that Aquinas is present in significant ways but that his influence is scattered and difficult to systematize. Even the most superficial look at Protestant scholasticism leaves us with the opposite impression: here it is the wealth of information that makes it hard to give an accurate picture of Aquinas's presence in early modern Protestant theology. An older scholarship stressed the (real or apparent, significant or minor) Scotist and Occamist elements in the thought of the Reformers, a perspective still championed by Vos (2016) and others. Today, however, the majority of scholars see the Thomist understanding of things as the prevailing position among early Protestants in

important areas of philosophy and theology (Muller 2012; Rehnman 2002, 34–7; Sytsma 2012), though the eclectic manner of this appropriation should certainly be stressed (Muller 2001). Whatever the outcome of such discussions, the fact is that Thomism is at least one of the significant intellectual traditions to which early Protestant theologians and philosophers adhered. As Bernard McGinn's recent introduction to the *Summa Theologiae* puts it, "a complicated adoption and rejection of medieval scholasticism in general and of Thomas in particular" characterized Protestant scholasticism (2014, 151).

A complete survey of Aquinas's presence in Protestant scholasticism is still far from possible. Among other things, it would require a renewal in the study of Lutheran scholasticism matching the present renaissance of studies on Reformed scholasticism. The chapters in this book offer several case studies that shed light on specific ways Thomas's thought was received in the traditions of Hooker, Gerhard, and Zanchi. Since people can mean different things when they praise or criticize the Protestant scholastics as Thomists, we make some general observations at this point.

First, in what way did Protestant scholastics regard Aquinas as an authority? Aquinas is the *doctor communis* of the Roman Catholic Church, a status he never attained even among the Protestants congenial to his philosophy and theology. Indeed, Protestants usually pride themselves in not having any such *doctores communes*. But appeal to authorities (as well as interpretation of authorities and discernment among authorities) is of course a standard feature of scholastic methodology (Schönberger 1991, 103–8), and in this specific sense Aquinas functioned as an authority for the Protestant scholastics. "Thomism," however, might be an inadequate label when we try to describe the significance of Aquinas for these early modern Protestants. The term already existed, but *thomistae* were mostly Dominicans, and in any case authors who followed Thomas very strictly. Some Protestant writers had a strong predilection for Aquinas, but they responded to an intellectual culture too eclectic for them to be labeled as Thomists. This relieves us of the difficult duty of giving an adequate description of Thomism. What we are dealing with is simply an important number of cases of reception and positive appropriation of the thought of Aquinas, and mostly of Aquinas as just one very significant representative of a broader tradition. This point could be illustrated with Protestant scholastics (such as Francis Turretin) who quote abundantly from the whole tradition and from Aquinas in particular, but also with authors who tend to remain more silent about their sources. Franciscus Junius, for instance,

opens his theses on the judicial statutes of Moses with a definition of law that is almost *verbatim* the definition given by Thomas (whom he does not quote) in *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter ST) 1a 90.4. Junius simply introduces it as the standard definition, “a certain common and analogical rationale” (Junius 2015, 38).

Within Protestant orthodoxy, however, a few authors could well deserve the title of “Thomists.” We have already mentioned Dorsch’s *Thomas Aquinas, Called Angelic Doctor, Shown to be a Confessor of the Evangelical Truth in Accordance with the Augsburg Confession*. Donnelly called Dorsch “the ne plus ultra” of Lutheran Thomism, corresponding to the “Calvinist Thomism” he diagnosed in Zanchi (1976, 442). Published in 1656, Dorsch’s voluminous work sets out to prove that Aquinas was a good Lutheran. Whoever approaches this with later prejudices and labels in mind will be surprised not to find any trace of an “Aristotelico-Thomism”: Dorsch discusses Aquinas on his own terms, as a significant author in the Christian intellectual tradition, with almost no reference to Aristotle in his 800 pages. Furthermore, written after the Thirty Year’s War, it is not a work of irenic but of polemical theology against Rome. “The most truthful argument, and the less exposed to odious contradiction, is the one formulated from the sayings of the adversaries,” he writes at the outset (1656, 1). If Thomism is the right label for someone like Dorsch, this Thomism definitively does not promote accommodation to Roman Catholicism, but is rather a part of confessional polemics. This kind of explicit predilection for Aquinas, however, is as rare as the anti-Thomism we find in Luther. The common approach is simply that of a positive appropriation that includes critical engagement. Even where Aquinas is the predominant medieval influence on Protestant authors, typically Protestant accents tend to emerge.

The preceding paragraph could give the impression of an exclusively theological reception, at the cost of Aquinas’s role as philosopher (which would obviously lead us to stress the importance of Aristotle again). There is philosophical reception of his thought, however, not only of his philosophy insofar as he incorporated it into his theological work but also of his exclusively philosophical texts. In 1618, for instance, the treatise *De ente et essentia* was republished in Jena by the Lutheran professor Michael Wolf, who used it for his own teaching (Wundt 1939, 37). Two years later his student Kaspar Ebel finished a commentary on this treatise (1677, 1407–1812). In 1629 Ebel became the successor of the better known Goclenius in Marburg. Ebel is one of those unusual scholastics who decided to remain in the Faculty of Arts for the whole of their careers (Schüling 1970). On the

whole, however, Aquinas was arguably less central as a philosopher in Protestant than in Roman Catholic circles. Or, to put it positively, for Protestant orthodox Thomas was, perhaps surprisingly for us, more important as a theologian.

These are stunning cases for those who have grown accustomed to the narrative of Protestant anti-Thomism. But they should be put in perspective: Protestants had much appreciation for Thomas, but in contrast to the Roman Catholic scholastics they did not see the task of commenting on Thomas's work as their life's labor. One way of putting things into the right perspective is to consider the introductions to the study of theology that many Protestant scholastics published (see Niedel 2006 for a survey of the genre). In such treatises on the study of theology Aquinas is mostly treated more generously than the other medieval scholastics. *De studio theologiae* by Thomas Barlow (John Owen's tutor) may well serve to summarize the attitude towards Aquinas that we find in this period. In order to make a useful reading of the Scriptures, he tells his students that they should furnish themselves with various questions about religion. With this goal, he cannot do better than to send them "to the Master of the Sentences, or Thomas Aquinas's Summs." He does not believe that the resolutions are always wise, but they will "furnish a wise Man with many Material Questions, and with some very Material Answers." But to ensure this happy result, he sends students to Calvin and Zanchi (Barlow 1699, 76).

### *Modern Protestantism*

From critique and appreciation, we move to an era of ignorance. Since the end of the age of Protestant scholasticism and the rise of the so-called age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, Protestantism has been mostly negligent in its relationship to Aquinas and its critiques often prejudiced, although it must be said that this is a common feature of the era and not a distinctively Protestant one. Writers who mentioned Thomas had not necessarily read him. The following observation about Kierkegaard could apply to many modern Protestants: "the fact that Kierkegaard did not read Thomas is no accident but rather a result of what Kierkegaard thought he knew about Thomas" (Olivares 2008, 183).

But this situation began to change almost as soon as the Roman Catholic Thomist revival emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. The work of the German jurist Rudolph von Jhering provides one of the most interesting early testimonies of this slowly emerging change. In 1860 Jhering

published a two-volume work on the ends of law. But he writes in the second edition (1886) that Wilhelm Hohoff's critical review of his work convinced him that Aquinas had fully grasped the "practical and social" as well as the "historical part of law." Jhering confessed his own previous ignorance on Aquinas, but added these revealing lines:

I wonder how it is possible that, once they had been uttered, truths like these could ever be forgotten again by our Protestant science. From what wrong tracks it would have kept itself if it had taken this to heart. I would maybe not have written this book myself if I had known them, since the main positions that interested me were already vocalized by this amazing thinker with perfect clarity and concise wording.<sup>6</sup> (1886, 161)

Jhering was correct in his assessment of "Protestant science." Protestant philosophy gave little attention to Aquinas at this time and the treatment of his theology was negligent, to say the least. The approach of Adolf von Harnack and Reinhold Seeberg, the two liberal historians of dogma from Berlin, illustrate this point. While both commend Aquinas as a great thinker, their praise is very restrained; they make some grandiloquent judgments, but their critiques do not rest on any substantive discussion of Aquinas. Thus Harnack writes that in Aquinas "the seeds of the destruction of absolute theology" are already present, and that in him the relation of reason to authority is "marked by a quite special amount of confusion" (1899, 157, 160). Seeberg writes a bit more appreciatively about Aquinas as "the first to make a careful analysis of the conception of faith," but he judged that "Thomas can scarcely be called a man of genius" (1904, II, 103, 99).

Although old prejudices continued to circulate during the twentieth century, several more interesting Protestant approaches to Aquinas emerged. They might be ordered according to the degree to which the authors emphasized their Protestant allegiance or related their Protestant convictions to their views of Aquinas. There is, first, the explicitly Thomist philosophy and theology of some Anglican authors such as Eric Lionel Mascall and the early Austin Farrer. Both were distinguished philosophical theologians who appropriated different versions of contemporary Thomism. But as members of the Anglo-Catholic movement they did not see their own cases as those of *Protestant* Thomists. The case of Per Erik Persson is somewhat different. His *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Thomas Aquinas* (original Swedish 1957, English translation 1970) was positively received by Roman Catholic Thomists (see, for instance, Wippel 1972 and

Moreland 2013). But if he himself can be called a Thomist, his is the work of a self-consciously Lutheran theologian.

Second, we can mention the place of Aquinas in some “postliberal” currents, encompassing under this label both the Yale school and Radical Orthodoxy. These are ecumenical movements, in the case of Radical Orthodoxy primarily involving Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Indeed, a Roman Catholic theologian (Marshall 1989) has made the most explicit case for Aquinas as a postliberal. But some significant Protestant voices exist within both movements, and the influence of works such as William Placher’s *The Domestication of Transcendence* (1996) or John Milbank’s and Catherine Pickstock’s *Truth in Aquinas* (2001) extends to much contemporary Protestant thought. Although we cannot deal with this here, we do note that some scholars have critiqued Radical Orthodox readings of Aquinas (e.g., DeHart 2012) and that others have questioned the place it assigns to the Reformation in its genealogy of decadence (e.g., Grosse 2013). Whatever one thinks of these movements, they witness to the attention Aquinas receives in circles with more contemporary intellectual roots (more continental in the case of Radical Orthodoxy, more analytic in the case of the Yale school) than those of the Anglo-Catholic authors mentioned above.

Third, the more explicitly Protestant approach of some contemporary theologians and apologists (Gerstner 1994; Geisler 2003) goes beyond the usual interaction with Aquinas’s philosophical theology to assert that Aquinas stands in substantive agreement with Protestant soteriology. Both Protestant (Reymond 1997) and Roman Catholic (Beckwith 2013) writers have challenged the accuracy of such claims, but the very existence of the discussion testifies to the renewed interest in Aquinas as a fellow Augustinian whose work forms part of Reformation Christians’ own history and tradition.

As the contributions to the present volume make clear, the three kinds of approach we have mentioned do not exhaust contemporary Protestant engagement with Aquinas, but merely reveal some of the many reasons why this engagement is taking place. As Protestants have gained increasing historical understanding of their own traditions, as Protestants and Roman Catholics of many stripes have entered into serious conversations with one another, and as Christians of various confessions have looked for helpful resources to address the challenges of postmodernism and secularism, the time has been ripe for revived Protestant exploration of Aquinas and his relation to Reformation Christianity. When we consider this contemporary Protestant engagement with Aquinas, we find roughly the same types of approach as in the classical period of Protestant theology: a few cases of