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Relocating Richard Hooker - Theological Method and the Character of Anglicanism

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Abstract

The coherence of Anglicanism's claim to be both 'catholic' and 'reformed' has often been challenged, with the tradition regularly characterised as more one than the other, or as steering a middle way between the two. Such competing interpretations frequently influence and / or advance readings of Richard Hooker, one of Anglicanism's foremost theologians, who is often characterised as essentially catholic, basically reformed, or a proponent of a third way between the two. Most such characterisations of Hooker, and the presumptions of tension or even incoherence within Anglican identity on this point, assume that 'catholic' and 'reformed' are opposites on a theological spectrum, fundamentally divergent or even irreconcilable, such that Hooker and Anglicanism must be located on that spectrum. This study argues that closely reading Hooker alongside a representative theologian of each tradition (the catholic Thomas Aquinas and the reformed John Calvin) reveals the notion of such a spectrum is fundamentally flawed and so attempts to locate Hooker and / or Anglicanism in relation to it are misplaced. Tracing the accounts of the three theologians on theological method (defined as the authority of, and relationship between, scripture, tradition, and reason) reveals substantial and surprising continuity between the three theologians in an area where it is often argued they disagree. The investigation thereby yields a fresh reading of Hooker as *both* catholic *and* reformed (not one or the other, or a middle way between the two), with a coherent and realistic theological method. Likewise it shows that Anglicanism can claim a coherent theological method and a genuinely catholic and reformed identity, with those categorisations as mutually enhancing not mutually exclusive. The possibilities and limitations of this theological method and account of Anglicanism are illustrated by application to contemporary disputes about faith and reason; authority in the church; and the definition of marriage.

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Abbreviations

ACL   'A Christian Letter of Certain English Protestants with Richard Hooker's Autograph Notes,' *FLE*, IV.1-80.

Antidote   John Calvin, 'Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent with the Antidote.' In *John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*. 9 vols., III.18-188. Translated and edited by Henry Beveridge. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009.

CD   Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. 13 vols. Edited by G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-75.

Certainty   Richard Hooker, 'A Learned Sermon of the Certainty and Perpetuity of Faith in the Elect,' *FLE*, V.59-82.

Commentaries John Calvin, *Commentaries*. Translated and edited by Joseph Haroutunian. London: SCM, 1963.

CRH   *A Companion to Richard Hooker*. Edited by W.J.T. Kirby. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

CThJ   *Calvin Theological Journal*

Decrees   *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. II: *Trent to Vatican II*. Edited by Norman P. Tanner. London: Sheed and Ward, 1990.

de trin.   Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate* (*Exposition of Boethius' book on the Trinity*). The edition used is Maurer's two-volume translation: *Faith, Reason and Theology: Questions I-IV of his Commentary on the* de Trinitate *of Boethius* and *The Division and Methods of the Sciences: Questions V and VI of his Commentary on the* de Trinitate *of Boethius*. Translated by Armand Maurer. Toronto: Pontifical Institution of Medieval Studies, 1986-7.

de ver.   Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* (*Disputed Questions on Truth*). The edition used is the three-volume translation, *Truth*. Translated by Robert W. Mulligan, James V. McGlynn, Robert W. Schmidt. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994.

DER   *Documents of the English Reformation, 1526-1701*. Edited by Gerald Bray. London: James Clarke, 2004.

DF   Richard Hooker, 'The Dublin Fragments: Grace and Free Will, the Sacraments, and Predestination,' *FLE*, IV.99-167.

div. nom.   Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Blessed Dionysius's* On The Divine Names. Translated by Harry C. Marsh, 'Cosmic Structure and the Knowledge of God: Thomas Aquinas' *In Librum Beati Dionysii* De Divinis nominibus expositio.' Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1994.

EHR	*English Historical Review*
Fides et ratio	John Paul II, 'Encyclical Letter on the Relationship between Faith and Reason' (14th September 1998). Accessed 16th August 2020. http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/ hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html.
FLE	Richard Hooker, *Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*. 7 vols. General Editor W. Speed Hill. Vols. I-V: Cambridge, Mass.: Bealknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977-1990; Vol. VI: Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993; Vol. VII: Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998.
HJ	*Heythrop Journal*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
in Gal.	Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*. Translated by F.R. Larcher. Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, 1966.
Institutes	John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2 vols. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.
JAS	*Journal of Anglican Studies*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
Jude I	Richard Hooker, 'The First Sermon upon Part of St Jude,' *FLE*, V.13-35.
Jude II	Richard Hooker, 'The Second Sermon upon Part of St Jude,' *FLE*, V.36-57.
Just.	Richard Hooker, 'A Learned Discourse of Justification,' *FLE*, V.105-69.
Laws	Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: A Critical Edition with Modern Spelling*. 3 vols. Edited by A.S. McGrade. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
Lumen Gentium	Second Vatican Council, 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' (21st November 1964). https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/ vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.
metaphys.	Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the* Metaphysics *of Aristotle*. 2 vols. Translated by John P. Rowan. Chicago, Ill.: Henry Regnery, 1961.
OHA	*The Oxford History of Anglicanism.* 5 vols. Gen. ed. Rowan Strong. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016-9.

OHST	*The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*. Edited by John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
Pride	Richard Hooker, 'A Learned Sermon on the Nature of Pride,' *FLE*, V.309-61.
PRRD	R.A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca.1520 to ca.1725.* Second edition. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003.
Remedy	Richard Hooker, 'A Remedy against Sorrow and Fear,' *FLE*, V.363-77.
RHCCC	*Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*. Edited by A.S. McGrade. Tempe, Ariz.: 1997.
Romans	John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Romans and Thessalonians*. Translated by Ross Mackenzie. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960.
SCG	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*. 4 vols. Translated by the English Dominican Fathers. London: Burns & Oates, 1923-9.
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SRH	*Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to an Edition of his Works.* Edited by W. Speed Hill. Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western University Press, 1972.
S.Th.	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. 5 vols. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Notre Dame, Ind.: Christian Classics, 1981.
Suppl.	Walter Travers, 'A Supplication Made to the Privy Council,' *FLE*, V.189-210.
Treatises	John Calvin, *Theological Treatises*. Edited by J.K.S. Reid. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.
Works	*The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr Richard Hooker*. Seventh edition. 3 vols. Edited by John Keble. Revised by R.W. Church and F. Paget. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888.

A note on citations

References to primary texts are generally in the body of the dissertation text, except where introductory or editorial material is being cited; in that case, there will be a footnote with reference to the appropriate volume and page number.

Hooker's *Laws* is cited by book, chapter, and section number (e.g., II.2.4). These divisions were Keble's but are replicated in both the Folger Library and McGrade editions. The structure of references to Hooker's other works varies as they are laid out in different ways; but as well as the abbreviated title and any reference to a subdivision within the text, references always include details of the cited text from the Folger Library edition by volume, page, and line number (e.g., V.25.22-3).

Quotations from Hooker's *Laws* are taken from the three-volume McGrade edition, which uses modernised English spelling. Quotations from Hooker's other works are taken from Volumes IV and V of the Folger Library edition, but I have modernised the spelling. Something of the complexity and elegance of Hooker's prose is admittedly lost in that process, but it makes for consistency and easier reading.

Quotations from Calvin's *Institutes* are cited by reference to book, chapter, and section number (e.g., III.7.2) and from his other works by page reference to the edition cited.

Quotations from Aquinas's works follow the standard conventions, thus the larger *Summa* is quoted by part, question, article, and section of the article; hence I.1.1, *resp*. is a reference to the body ('*responsio*') of the first article of the first question of the *prima pars*.

Declaration

This work is submitted to Durham University in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, no part of which has been previously submitted to any other university.

Statement of Copyright

Acknowledgements

Inevitably, the burden of working for a doctoral thesis falls not just on its writer but on those around them; so I am glad to say a few thank yous at the outset.

Introduction

In 1948, a committee of Anglican bishops asked, 'Is Anglicanism based on a sufficiently coherent form of authority to form the nucleus of a worldwide family of churches, or does its comprehensiveness conceal internal disputes which may cause its disruption?'[1] Anglicanism's identity, the character of the Church of England and of those churches with which it shares historic roots and contemporary connections in the Anglican Communion,[2] is crowded, disputed territory.

Adopting the language of that still topical question, dispute and disruption seem to be prevalent, exacerbated by three trends. First, as Anglicanism has become less Anglocentric, with churches in different countries becoming organisationally distinct from the Church of England with their own local leadership and local forms of worship, it has become more diverse in belief and practice.[3] Secondly, Anglican diversity has been magnified by different attitudes to the role of women in ministry and the rapid legal and cultural recognition of homosexual people and relationships in many countries.[4] Thirdly, moves towards greater unity with other Christian churches have often run into difficulty because Anglicans have seemed unable or unwilling to offer a coherent account of their theological stance. As Stephen Sykes pointed out, this causes exasperation among Anglicanism's ecumenical partners; if Anglicans themselves cannot identify clearly what their communion believes, it is hard to delineate areas of (dis)agreement with others.[5]

Some Anglicans claim Anglicanism has no distinctive theology because it believes only what Christians generally believe and differs only in non-essential points from the other branches of Christianity.[6] Again, Sykes highlighted the incoherence of what he branded the 'no special doctrines' claim, pointing out there are clear organisational differences underpinned by theological disagreements (for instance, Anglicanism retains a distinct order of bishops but not a single central

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[1] *The Lambeth Conferences, 1867-1948* (London: SPCK, 1948), 84; cf. Stephen Sykes, *Unashamed Anglicanism* (London: DLT, 1995), 168-9.

[2] For general introductions to Anglicanism see William Jacob, *The Making of the Worldwide Anglican Church* (London: SPCK, 1997); Kevin Ward, *A History of Global Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[3] Jacob, *Worldwide Anglican Church*, esp. 292-3, 296-9; David Hamid, 'The Nature and Shape of the Anglican Communion Today,' in *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Ian T. Douglas and Kwok-Pui Lan (New York: Church Publishing, 2001), 85-7.

[4] See e.g. William L. Sachs, *Homosexuality and the Crisis of Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Ward, *Global Anglicanism*, esp. 296-318.

[5] Stephen Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1974), 74-5; cf. P.D.L. Avis, 'Anglican Ecclesiology,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. P.D.L. Avis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 239-41.

[6] For instance, H.R. McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism: A Study of Theological Method in the Seventeenth Century* (London: A&C Black, 1965), v, 1.

authoritative figure).[7] The hollowness of the 'no special doctrines' approach risks fuelling the sense of incoherence.

Of course, plenty of Anglicans *have* made claims about their tradition's character and three broad accounts can be easily identified.[8] For some, Anglicanism is fundamentally *reformed*, emphasising the Bible as source of theological truth and rejecting elements of Roman Catholicism's doctrine and structure. For others, Anglicanism is rather a local variation of *catholic* faith, looking less towards the reformation and more towards its pre-reformation inheritance, sharing most (though not all) of the Roman Catholic Church's doctrines and practices.   For yet others, and this is probably the most pervasive view among Anglicans themselves, Anglicanism occupies a moderate middle ground, a *via media* ('third way') between reformed and catholic traditions, drawing on the best of both while avoiding the worst extremes of either.   Each interpretation has given rise to diverse literature, movements, and organisations within the tradition. A representative sample might include Church Society ('maintain[ing] the character of the Church of England as … one of the Reformed Churches of Christendom'[9]); Anglican Catholic Future ('embody[ing] the Catholic Faith in the Church of England'[10]); and the *Via Media* blog ('the historic Anglican perspective of the "Via Media" '[11]). Anglicanism's multiple self-characterisations led one of the tradition's foremost figures to name a book *Anglican Identities*, a revealing plural if ever there was one.[12]

Usually underlying these multiple accounts of Anglicanism are the different stories they tell about the Church of England in the sixteenth century.[13] They see the Church of England in this period either as fundamentally breaking with Rome and joining a continental family of emphatically reformed churches; or severing itself from formal association with the catholic hierarchy while retaining many pre-reformation structures and practices; or forging a distinctively English third way between 'reformed' and 'catholic' options.

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[7] Sykes, *Unashamed Anglicanism*, x-xi, 102-9; cf. R.D. Williams, *Anglican Identities* (London: DLT, 2004), 1.

[8] For short surveys of the three strands see Stephen Spencer, *The SCM Studyguide to Anglicanism* (London: SCM, 2010), esp. 4-6; David L. Edwards, *What Anglicans Believe in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Continuum, 2002), 90-2.

[9] 'Objectives of Church Society,' accessed 26th May 2020, https://churchsociety.org/docs/about_us/CS%20Objectives.pdf.

[10] 'Anglican Catholic Future: About,' accessed 26th May 2020, https://www.facebook.com/pg/AnglicanCatholicFuture/about/?ref=page_internal.

[11] 'Background,' accessed 26th May 2020, https://viamedia.news/about-viamedia/; cf. common introductory works such as Samuel Wells, *What Anglicans Believe: An Introduction* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2011), 41.

[12] Williams, *Anglican Identities*.

[13] Good surveys are Avis, 'Anglican Ecclesiology,' 241-250; Mark D. Chapman, *Anglican Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), esp. 1-9, 12-18.

Such stories often draw on different interpretations of the central figure of this study, Richard Hooker (1554-1600). Each of these characterisations is applied to Hooker as well to Anglicanism, seeing him and it as fundamentally reformed, essentially catholic, or occupying a distinctive middle ground.[14] This study relocates Hooker's theological character more precisely, thereby yielding one coherent and clear account of Anglicanism which would help Anglicanism's internal debates and ecumenical dialogue. It does this by contesting a fundamental theological misconception underlying many characterisations both of Hooker and of Anglicanism: the (often unacknowledged or ill-articulated) presumption of a kind of theological spectrum with 'reformed' and 'catholic' at opposite poles. On that basis identifying Hooker, and Anglicanism, becomes a matter of situating them as closer to one pole or the other, or somewhere (perhaps equidistant) between the two. And neither Hooker nor Anglicanism, on this view, can coherently claim to be catholic *and* reformed, for these two perspectives are divergent, perhaps even irreconcilable.

This study's central argument is that the debates about Hooker's and Anglicanism's identity need to be reframed because this notion of a spectrum where 'catholic' and 'reformed' are opposite poles is flawed. This is demonstrated by a close reading of Hooker alongside a representative theologian of each of the 'reformed' and 'catholic' traditions: John Calvin (1509-64) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) respectively.

One contested theological topic, theological method, is examined in each author. Theological method may be defined as the question of how theological claims are grounded and interrogated. Theological method focusses particularly on the sources of our knowledge of God, how they relate to one another, and what authority they are accorded.[15] A theological method is at least implied in many decisions or practices a church adopts (for instance, an informed debate about whether or not a church should celebrate marriage between persons of the same sex should entail some judgment of the biblical evidence, consider what authority should be afforded to the church's traditional practice, and assess what role should be accorded to insights from disciplines other than theology.

As we will see, while Calvin and Aquinas are often thought to diverge sharply on theological method (as on many other issues), and in particular the place of three 'theological warrants' – scripture, tradition, and reason – there is in fact surprising and substantial convergence between them. Demonstrating this means that Hooker need not be identified as closer to either or

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[14] Examples include respectively Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason: Reformed Theologian of the Church of England* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1997), ix-xii; John Keble, 'Editor's Preface,' *Works*, I.cxv; Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 9, 225-30.

[15] Paul L. Allen, *Theological Method: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 1.

somewhere between them; rather, Hooker's fundamental congruity with both emerges. The plausibility of this analysis becomes clearer when set against recent retrievals of his thought which emphasise that it has both reformed and Thomist roots. This interpretation will be further advanced when seen alongside similar retrievals of Aquinas and of Calvin which show they are much less antagonistic than often supposed. The substantial weight of contemporary reformation scholarship which increasingly identifies the sixteenth-century Church of England as emphatically within a wider reformed milieu which draws on medieval theological roots further reinforces the argument.

Through this close comparative reading in the light of contemporary retrievals of all three theologians, we will see more clearly not just what Hooker himself thought, but also identify the weakness of many interpretations of Hooker and of different categorisations of Anglicanism (and, indeed, the weakness of many interpretations of Calvin and of Aquinas). This study is thus an exercise in *historical* theology, excavating more precisely the theological characters of Hooker, Calvin, and Aquinas. But it also has a *constructive* aspect, identifying an account of Anglicanism which is clear, coherent, faithful to at least one plausible interpretation of its formative sixteenth-century past and drawing on the thought of its one indispensable theologian. This will undergird as theologically coherent and legitimate the claim of Anglicanism to be both catholic and reformed, categories which are not mutually exclusive but mutually enhancing. So it also has *ecumenical* potential: tracing a clearer account of Anglican identity will highlight genuine recent convergence in discussions between the different churches but also of areas of continuing *dis*agreement.[16]

Chapter one introduces the three theologians with brief bibliographic and biographical sketches. It outlines three standard interpretations of Richard Hooker as a theologian of catholic, reformed, or middle-way sensibilities, respectively in sympathy with Aquinas or Calvin, or occupying a position between them. After exploring the definition of theological method and the theological warrants, it suggests why comparing these three theologians may be both legitimate and fruitful.

While a key contention of the argument is that much difficulty is caused by conceiving the theological warrants as somehow separate or in tension, some way of organising the material is needed. So chapters two, three, and four consider the relationship between *scripture* and *reason* in Aquinas, Calvin, and Hooker respectively. This is pursued initially by asking what, if anything, human beings may know naturally about God by reason without the aid of scripture, before exploring the effects of the Fall on human reason and the use of philosophy in theology. Such

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16 See *Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Avis, and *Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, eds. R. David Nelson and Charles Raith (London: Bloomsbury, 2017) for good surveys of ecumenical dialogue over the past century.

debates often characterise Aquinas as very positive about reason and Calvin as much less optimistic about it, whereas both attribute reason real but limited theological capacity and insist on the need for revelation to convey essential theological truths. These chapters then address scripture, its sufficiency and authority, again showing that (despite the common view that scripture is more central in Calvin's method than Aquinas's) they agree substantially. Both could be said to hold a *sola scriptura* theological method *if* defined as meaning God's revelation in scripture is the unique source of distinctively Christian doctrines which requires other warrants to clarify and codify. Each chapter ends by identifying reasons why the convergences between these theologians have often been overlooked, in particular the tendency of subsequent interpreters to misunderstand the nuance of Aquinas's and Calvin's accounts and thereby magnify differences. Locating Hooker then ceases to be an exercise in comparing him with two divergent or even irreconcilable theologians.

The thesis is developed in chapter five which explores the third theological warrant, *tradition*. The place of tradition in official Roman Catholic theology has been problematic for reformed theology since the sixteenth century. However, it will be shown that Aquinas's restrained understanding of tradition is not uncongenial to reformed concerns. Hooker converges with both Aquinas and Calvin on this point, all three drawing a vital distinction between tradition in the first four centuries of Christian history (where it has much greater formative authority in doctrine) and afterwards. The chapter concludes by identifying why this congruence has been missed, in particular the distorting consequences for readings of Aquinas of official Roman Catholic theology at and after the Council of Trent in the late sixteenth century and the distorting consequences of Hooker's appropriation by John Keble in the nineteenth.

What emerges from the first five chapters is therefore a plausible but realistic theological method which all three theologians share, albeit with some differences of tone and emphasis; and Hooker should be relocated within *both* the catholic and reformed traditions as articulated by Aquinas and Calvin. This can undergird a coherent account of Anglicanism as both catholic and reformed. Some possibilities and limitations of this interpretation of Hooker's method, as it might be articulated in contemporary Anglicanism, are explored in the final chapter. Three examples are explored to show this account could contribute to *theological* controversy (the debate about faith and reason); to *ecumenical* debates about authority by delineating areas of agreement and disagreement on authority in the church; and, while not resolving the present *ethical* impasse, at least provide a clearer framing of the dispute about whether Christian marriage could be extended to couples of the same sex.

Locating Aquinas's, Calvin's, and Hooker's theological methods more precisely will relocate Richard Hooker's theological identity, demonstrating one coherent account of Anglicanism as emphatically catholic and reformed. This will yield a fresh, comparative reading of all three theologians, contributing insights to contemporary debates about each of them and some possibilities for more informed theological and ecumenical dialogue. Before considering in detail the ways that Hooker's, Aquinas's, and Calvin's theological methods converge, chapter one maps the terrain by setting out some of the ways that each theologian has been (mis)interpreted in subsequent theological debate, beginning with the elegant but elusive Richard Hooker.

Chapter One
Location, Location, Location

Introduction

This study contends there is at least one mode of Anglican theology which can claim coherence as catholic and reformed, rooted in a plausible reading of one of the tradition's foremost theologians, Richard Hooker. This chapter locates the debates about Hooker, particularly on his theological method. After introducing Hooker and tracing briefly his life and writings, it discusses some of the different ways he has been characterised. These interpretations reflect and resource differing models of Anglicanism (catholic, reformed, middle way). A brief excursus to define key terms in theological method follows. The chapter then explains why it is meaningful to compare Hooker with Calvin and Aquinas as representatives of the Anglican, reformed, and catholic traditions. It shows how, on theological method, Calvin and Aquinas are often thought to differ, before tracing how recent retrievals of these two theologians suggest that, far from being theological opposites, they are far more congenial to each other's perspectives than many suppose. Finally, the chapter highlights the many accounts of the sixteenth-century Church of England and of Hooker in particular which identify ways they were emphatically reformed but drew significantly on the pre-reformation catholic inheritance, including Aquinas.

Richard Hooker

Richard Hooker (1554-1600) is the one indispensable thinker in Anglophone theology.[1] Partly this is because his work's range and influence spread more widely than questions about Church of England or indeed about theology, as indicated by a brief glance at the use made of Hooker in works about literature, language, law, politics, and philosophy in early modern England. Hooker's erudite pen drafted one of the first substantial English non-fiction works, a fine example of the language's developing prose style: C.S. Lewis called Hooker's 'style … for its purpose, perhaps the

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[1] P.D.L. Avis names him 'supreme, by common consent' among 'the great formative theologians of Anglicanism,' *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 6; cf. Mark D. Chapman, 'many would regard [him] as the Anglican theologian *par excellence*,' *Anglican Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 7; Diarmaid MacCulloch says Anglicanism found in Hooker 'an Anglican saint': 'Richard Hooker's Reputation,' *EHR*, 117 (2002): 811. W. Bradford Littlejohn concludes that 'the Anglican Communion … came to see Richard Hooker as summing up everything that it admired about itself,' *Richard Hooker: A Companion to his Life and Work* (Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade, 2015), 4; cf. Philip B. Secor, *Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1999), xiii, xviii.

most perfect in English.'[2] Hooker's interest in law, including a period of pastoral ministry in the Inns of Court, prompted a substantial contribution to the development of English legal theory, constitutional thought, and philosophy.[3]

But, of course, Hooker is best-known as articulating (perhaps even inventing) what it means to be an Anglican Christian, describing (or shaping) the Church of England's distinctive identity and character. In the face of internal dispute or external pressure, Anglicans often look to Hooker for help. Hooker is quarried for an explanation of what lends distinctiveness and coherence to Anglican institutions and to this particular shape of Christian belief and practice.[4]

However, locating the character of Hooker's thought has proved elusive. Hooker is prayed in aid by very different visions of Anglicanism;[5] labelled an eirenic consensus-seeker on the one hand and a skilful partisan polemicist on the other;[6] his theology is regarded by some as systematic and by others as hopelessly confused.[7]

Hooker's life and works

In some ways the amount of scholarly ink spilt disputing Hooker's theological outlook is rather surprising, as a brief account of his biography and bibliography demonstrates. Richard Hooker's life was nearly contemporaneous with Elizabeth I's reign.[8] But Hooker, although well-connected, never held high office in the church, the academy, or politics. Born in Exeter he came under the patronage of John Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury. After studying in Oxford, he became a Fellow of Corpus Christi in 1579 and was ordained. From 1585 to 1591 he was Master of the Temple, a London church with strong links to the legal community. The Temple years were marred by

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[2] C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 462; cf. Rudolph P. Almasy, 'Richard Hooker's *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*,' in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 592-610.

[3] So Ethan Shagan, 'The Ecclesiastical Polity,' in *The Oxford Handbook of English Law and Literature*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 337-52; cf. P.A. Dominiak, 'The Architecture of Participation in the Thought of Richard Hooker,' (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2017), 239-64; and older W.J. Cargill Thompson, 'The Philosopher of the "Politic Societie": Richard Hooker as a Political Thinker,' *SRH*, 3-76.

[4] Most introductory works on Anglicanism pay him homage; e.g. Samuel Wells, *What Anglicans Believe: An Introduction* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2011), 42.

[5] Thus Hooker was claimed by the Oxford Movement a preserver of the catholic heritage of the Church of England, and by contemporary evangelicals as an archetype of a thoroughly reformed Church of England: see the outstanding and detailed survey by Michael Brydon, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker: An Examination of Responses, 1600-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4-15. Cf. Chapman, *Anglican Theology*, 104-7; MacCulloch, 'Reputation.'

[6] For opposing views depicting Hooker respectively as eirenicist and polemicist, contrast Alan Suggate, 'The Anglican Tradition in Moral Theology,' in *Worship and Ethics: Lutherans and Anglicans in Dialogue*, eds. Oswald Bayer and Alan Suggate (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), 2, with Cargill Thompson, 'Political Thinker,' 14-15.

[7] This debate is well charted by Dominiak, 'Participation,' 33-37.

[8] For biography see Lee W. Gibbs, 'Life of Hooker,' *CRH*, 1-26; Secor, *Hooker*, is the only full modern biography but the reliability of its account is marred by the author's tendency to 'reconstruct' events by stitching together different texts from Hooker while 'recreating' their historical context.

protracted public dispute with a colleague, Walter Travers,[9] over whether the Church of England was sufficiently reformed. Hooker moved to be Rector of Bishopsbourne, a country parish in Kent, where he died in 1600. Hooker was respectable, bright, and erudite; but he never became a particularly prominent or influential theological figure in his lifetime in England, and he is not widely studied in other Christian traditions.[10]

If Hooker's biography is not that untypical of a promising young priest in Elizabethan England, nor does a Hooker bibliography,[11] by itself, explain why he is worth studying. His principal work bears the weighty title *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* and its occasion is a seemingly dry debate about church organisation. The Preface and the first four books of the *Laws* were published in 1591, Book V in 1597. The final three books were not published until five decades after Hooker's death, Books VI and VIII in 1648, Book VII in 1661. Alongside the *Laws* this study draws on his other writings: a handful of sermons, fragments of incomplete works, and some manuscript notes in reply to various critics. Hooker's entire corpus is now available in the critical Folger Library edition, while the *Laws* has also been recently rendered in a more accessible modern translation.

The bare bones of Hooker's biography and bibliography, then, give little clue about the significance for Anglican theology he was later to acquire. During his own lifetime, much of his work was unpublished; at best he might be regarded as an elegant but not necessarily influential or prominent commentator: he was 'a loner who died comparatively young and in a country parsonage.'[12]

Hooker then and now

Nonetheless, despite his relative lack of prominence in his lifetime, Hooker was a disputant in a vital debate raging in Elizabethan England about the Church of England's fundamental theology and identity. The controversy was whether England should retain the settlement imposed by Elizabeth I or whether its teaching and worship should be further adapted along the lines of the reformed churches of the continent.[13] In particular, the argument focussed on whether the church should retain the hierarchy of ordained priests overseen by bishops or replace it with presbyters of equal rank chosen by each local congregation. To navigate a debate which has generated significant controversy, we avoid terms like 'Anglican' and 'Puritan' which admit many different

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[9] On the debate with Travers see Littlejohn, *Hooker Companion*, 26-9; Richard Bauckham, 'Hooker, Travers, and the Church of Rome in the 1580s,' *JEH*, 29.1 (1978): 37-50; Secor, *Hooker*, 151-206.

[10] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700* (London: Penguin, 2004), 506.

[11] On the publishing history of Hooker's works, see *CRH*, 28-49.

[12] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 508.

[13] For a good introduction to this period see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603*, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 24-54.

meanings and have been contested on multiple grounds. To adopt hopefully more precise and less polemically charged terminology we call 'conformists' those who, like Hooker, held that Christians could legitimately 'conform' to the doctrine, worship, and structure of the Church of England as embodied in the Elizabethan settlement. 'Presbyterian' describes those who held the contrary view that the Church of England needed further reformation including the substitution of 'presbyters' for priests and bishops.[14] Those debates were (are) often conducted through the prism of whether the Church of England was, or should be, 'catholic' or 'reformed', or about the relationship or balance between these two elements. For now it suffices to say that by 'catholic' we mean those beliefs and practices which can be clearly identified with the Roman Catholic Church. Likewise, 'reformed' will describe beliefs and practices which can be clearly traced to those who had advocated a break with the Roman church.[15]

This apparently obscure dispute about church governance (or *Ecclesiastical Polity*, as Hooker's title put it) was a proxy for much more fundamental theological disputes over, notably, the role of scripture and the means of human salvation. Hooker argued that the Church of England should continue broadly along the lines not just of the structures and practices but also the doctrines espoused under Elizabeth in the Articles of Religion and the *Book of Common Prayer*. His opponents, such as Thomas Cartwright (much of the *Laws* being a response to Cartwright's arguments)[16], demanded these doctrines and practices be further reformed.

But Hooker not only reveals much about the Church of England in his lifetime; for as Brydon and then MacCulloch have shown,[17] from soon after his death Hooker was cited by an astonishing range of commentators in support of a bewildering range of sometimes directly contradictory opinions. To some extent the argument about where to locate Hooker has been a reflection of (and proxy for) Anglicanism's contested identity. We can identify three broad categorisations.

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[14] On terminology: Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 1-7; Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7-9.

[15] This is quite a broad definition of 'reformed', the term often being used more specifically to distinguish those Protestant denominations other than the Lutheran, for instance. However, a key development in recent scholarship has been identifying that the reformed were a much wider and diverse group than often supposed, though sharing many key theological concerns (such as justification by faith, rejection of the papacy as then conceived, an insistence on vernacular worship and scriptures). Some of the reformed were presbyterians, but some were not. It is this broader, second sense I adopt. See R.A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7-9; so also S.W.P. Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6-10.

[16] On Cartwright see Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), esp. 139-53, 427-31.

[17] Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 1-20; MacCulloch, 'Reputation.'

The first category is those, beginning with Hooker's presbyterian opponents, who thought he (dangerously or pleasingly) steered too close to the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic church. One of those opponents inquired venomously, 'shall we do you wrong to suspect … that you would deem her Majesty to have done ill in abolishing the Romish religion, and banishing the Pope's authority?' (*ACL* 20, IV.20-1, 24-5). Hooker's belief that Roman Catholics might go to heaven (*Just.* 9, V.117-8; condemned by Travers in *Suppl.*, V.200-2),[18] and his argument that key pre-reformation practices such as kneeling at communion might legitimately be maintained (*Laws*, V.6.83), undermined (in their eyes) his reformed credentials. Later, the Oxford Movement, arguing the Church of England was closer to Rome rather than to the reformed, the break with Rome notwithstanding, appropriated this characterisation of Hooker as catholic sympathiser: 'humanly speaking, we owe it' to Hooker and his successors 'that the Anglican church continues at such a distance from that of Geneva, and so near to primitive truth and apostolical order.'[19]

Within this first categorisation of Hooker as in sympathy with the catholic tradition (defined over against the reformed) we can also include those who emphasise Hooker's debt to the legacy of Aquinas, whose outlook they suggest he shares. Hooker's opponents believed that most medieval theologians were dangerous: 'school divinity hath banished from us … sincere divinity'; of Hooker they alleged, 'in all your discourse … the ingenuous schoolmen, almost in all pointes have some finger' (*ACL* 20, IV.65.5, 13, 16 18). More recently, Hooker's debt to Aquinas is emphasised by Munz, Marshall, and Joyce, for whom Hooker 'owes much to the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition.'[20] This first conception of Hooker, then, is of a catholic-minded theologian drawing heavily on Aquinas.

The second categorisation reacts against the attribution of the 'catholic' label to Hooker and insists he is thoroughly reformed. It begins with a persuasive historical critique highlighting Keble's fancy (if not downright deceptive) footwork: to buttress his categorisation of a catholic-leaning Hooker, for instance, Keble must spend time 'clarifying' why Hooker did not overtly advance the catholic

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[18] R.D. Williams, *Anglican Identities* (London: DLT, 2004), 24.

[19] John Keble, 'Editor's Preface,' *Works*, I.cxv.

[20] Peter Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Christian Thought* (London: Routledge, 1952), 49-62; J.S. Marshall, *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition* (London: A&C Black, 1963), e.g. 50-52, 55, 113, 172; A.J. Joyce, *Richard Hooker and Anglican Moral Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 240, cf. 238. Joyce's categorisation appears unfortunately unclear on this point. While insisting that 'Hooker stands solidly (although neither slavishly nor uncritically) within the tradition of reformed Protestantism', she contends 'he has no hesitation whatsoever in drawing upon the wisdom and insights of traditions that reformed Protestantism rejected out of hand', 244. Since she makes so much of Hooker's resonance with Aquinas, she presumably includes Aquinas's 'wisdom and insights' in those 'traditions reformed Protestantism rejected out of hand,' and thus defines his Thomist sympathies over against his reformed ones; as we shall see, this is a false dichotomy, for neither Calvin nor Hooker, at least for the most part, rejected Aquinas's insights.

stance that church government was mandated by scripture and tradition.[21] Reacting against those who sought to distance Hooker (and the Church of England) from the reformed perspective, Atkinson, Kirby, Littlejohn, and a recent collection of essays demonstrate how Hooker fits within the spectrum that may reasonably and most accurately be described as reformed.[22] Thus for Atkinson, 'Hooker's aim was … to demonstrate the Church's commitment to reformed theology and to argue that this was his commitment as well.'[23] This second depiction of Hooker is of a reformed thinker within a European reformed consensus on doctrine.

The third categorisation, perhaps the most predominant, certainly in popular Anglican thinking[24] and to some extent in scholarly literature, holds Hooker embodied or perhaps even articulated[25] a distinctively Anglican *via media*, a middle way.[26] Usually this is presumed to mean he takes the best of Roman Catholicism on the one hand and continental Protestantism on the other while avoiding their perceived extremes. This was classically (if comically) expounded in rhapsodic prose by the editor who described Hooker 'steer[ing] a middle way between the excesses of Romanist and Radical Protestant' because of the 'love of balance, restraint, moderation, measure … innate in the English temper.'[27] Less sentimentally, this reading finds contemporary supporters in, for instance, Lake, Booty, and Gibbs.[28] Thus for Gibbs, Hooker advances a '*via media* theology that utilises insights derived from both the Magisterial Reformers and Tridentine Roman Catholicism, and yet which creates a genuine *tertium quid* by rejecting other teachings from both of these traditions as erroneous.'[29] This third image is of Hooker as proponent of a middle way between catholic and reformed extremes.

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[21] Keble, 'Preface,' I.lxvii-lxix; Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 14-15.

[22] Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing), 129-32; the works of W.J.T. Kirby, e.g. 'Richard Hooker as an Apologist of the Magisterial Reformation in England,' *SRH*, 219-36; W. Bradford Littlejohn, 'The Search for a Reformed Hooker: Some Modest Proposals,' *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 16.1 (2014): 68-82; *Richard Hooker and Reformed Orthodoxy*, eds. W. Bradford Littlejohn and Scott N. Kindred-Barnes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017).

[23] Atkinson, *STR*, xxi.

[24] For example, Wells, *What Anglicans Believe*, 46, 94; there is even a blog named after by 'the historic Anglican perspective of the "*Via Media*" ,' https://viamedia.news/about-viamedia/. Accessed 23rd October 2018.

[25] Thus Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 230.

[26] A substantial problem with this view is that the label 'Anglican' is woefully anachronistic when applied to the sixteenth century; the Church of England thought itself as a reformed branch of the Church with strong links to reformed partner churches on the continent. On this debate see Anthony Milton, 'Introduction: Reformation, Identity, and Anglicanism,' *OHA*, I.6-7; Milton, 'Attitudes towards the Protestant and Catholic Churches,' *OHA*, I.333-51; S.W.P. Hampton, 'Confessional Identity,' *OHA*, I.210-11.

[27] P.E. More, introduction to *Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England*, eds. P.E. More and F.L. Cross (London: SPCK, 1935), xxii.

[28] Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 9, 225-30; John Booty, 'Hooker and Anglicanism,' *SRH*, 208-11; Lee W. Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Scripture and Tradition,' *HThR* 95.2 (2002): 227-35; Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Justification,' *HThR* 74.2 (1981): 211-20.

[29] Gibbs, 'Scripture and Tradition,' 234.

So, three depictions of Richard Hooker: empathically reformed; leaning towards the catholic view; advocate of an Anglican middle way. What all three categorisations share is the presumption of a spectrum in which 'catholic' and 'reformed' are at opposite poles; locating Richard Hooker theologically then becomes an exercise in where on that spectrum he is placed. In turn such categorisations underpin accounts of Anglicanism as catholic, reformed, or a *via media* balance, and thus the accusation of tension within, or incoherence of, Anglican identity.

Excursus: theological method

To locate Richard Hooker's theology more precisely, thereby offering a coherent and grounded account of Anglican theological identity, this thesis focuses on one case study, Hooker's theological method. A theologian's method includes, in particular, what they consider to be the sources of theological knowledge and how these relate. These are often called 'theological warrants' and usually include at least scripture, tradition, and reason.[30] Many accounts of Anglicanism focus on theological method and draw on Hooker in doing so: 'It is a commonplace of Anglican self-understanding to refer to the triple authority of Scripture, reason, and tradition. For at least one hundred years, Richard Hooker has been identified as a principal and original source of this position.'[31] The 'triple authority' or 'three-legged stool' is closely related to its rhetorical cousin, *via media* accounts of Hooker and of Anglicanism. On this view, the tradition is distinguished from the reformed and catholic viewpoints because it holds all three warrants in a kind of tension.

By contrast, both proponents and opponents of the *via media* view usually assume a reformed account of theological method gives unique, perhaps exclusive, place to scripture: 'the Bible, I say, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants,' wrote William Chillingworth (1602-44).[32] A graduate of Trinity College Oxford, and briefly a Roman Catholic seminarian at Douai, Chillingworth's aphorism has become a maxim of reformed theological method, echoing the earlier reformers' insistence on the exclusive centrality of scripture in theology. This *sola scriptura* theological method is often held as a defining feature of reformed theology[33] and as resisting the (presumed) view of Roman Catholic theologies which imply a substantial or even equal role for one of the other

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[30] Good introductions to theological method and the theological warrants include A.N. Williams, *The Architecture of Theology: Structure, System, and* Ratio (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 79-116; *The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology*, eds. Mike Higton and Jim Fodor (London: Routledge, 2015); *Scripture, Tradition and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Richard P.C. Hanson*, eds. Richard Bauckham and Benjamin Drewery (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).

[31] W. David Neelands, 'Hooker on Scripture, Reason, and Tradition,' *RHCCC*, 75 (though Neelands is not agreeing with the encapsulation).

[32] William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846), 463.

[33] See Bruce Gordon, 'The Bible in Reformed Thought, 1520-1750,' in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012-6), III.462-88.

warrants.[34] After all, a key Roman Catholic text holds 'Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture comprise a single sacred deposit of the Word of God entrusted to the Church' (*Fides et ratio*, 55). As well as tradition, Roman Catholic theology is often accused of giving too much weight to reason at the expense of scripture.[35] On such readings, the more weight Hooker gives to reason and tradition, the further from a reformed perspective (and the closer to a catholic one) he must be.

However, as we will see, the debate is much more complicated. Chillingworth himself sounds an initial cautionary note.   His aphorism on scripture may be frequently cited,[36] but less well-understood is that he was not advocating a simple biblicism. In fact, Chillingworth was actually advancing a much more nuanced theological method which saw reason as essential: 'You that would not have men follow their reason, what would you have them follow?'[37]   While Chillingworth is not the object of this study, he reveals the crucial point that it is hard to imagine a theological method which does not make some use of warrants other than scripture. So the reformed, even while insisting on a *sola scriptura* theological method, did not take this to mean that scripture alone could be legitimately used in theology; the mere presence of other warrants in a theological method does not, by itself, render it antithetical to reformed concerns.

Anticipating the argument of ensuing chapters, some initial reflections on key terms will help root these debates.   Theological method can be understood as principally epistemological, being concerned with the sources by which human beings may know God. (A key point to be returned to is that this epistemology must be understood more widely than just cognition or intellectual knowledge; for the Christian, this knowledge of God also entails emotion and action and may result not just in knowing more but in being saved.) Two broad categories are often cited as yielding knowledge of God: *reason* and *revelation*. They may be distinguished initially by the source of the knowledge that they yield. As a working broad definition we might say that reason's source is generally held to be some evidence, information, experience, or reflection which is accessible to human beings by themselves by some natural faculty or capability without the aid of any other source.   In many theological methods, reason, though it yields knowledge only available in principle to any human being on the basis of something naturally accessible to them, may also yield

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[34] For an excellent survey of the emergence of such views see Mark A. Noll, *In the Beginning was the Word: The Bible in American Public Life 1492-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. 8-17, 75-93 – which, despite its title, includes much excellent analysis of attitudes to the Bible in Europe as well as North America.

[35] A fairly typical example is W.G.B.M. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God: Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Leuven: Peters, 2000), 215.

[36] As for instance by Norman Sykes, 'The Religion of Protestants,' in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963-70), III.175-82.

[37] Chillingworth, *Religion of Protestants*, 133; cf. Jane Neish, 'Reason, Faith, and Religious Unity: A Study in the Thought of William Chillingworth' (M.A. diss., McMaster University, 2003), 63-99.

knowledge of God. I might, for instance, be moved simply by reflecting on the evidence of my own senses to speculate there may be a God; for this beauty is not made by a human individual, is unlikely to be the random outcome of natural processes, and so is most likely to have some other cause such as a deity.

However, such a definition of reason and its theological potential is controversial. Sometimes reason appears to be conflated with 'philosophy.' Historically there is a complex relationship between theology and philosophy [38] and a wariness among many theologians about using philosophical material in theology. This wariness has longstanding roots, going back at least Paul's injunction against philosophy in Colossians 2.8, and the question attributed to Tertullian (*c.*155-*c.*240), 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?'[39] The reformers were full of polemic about the over-use of reason, often epitomised in the accusation of over-use of philosophy;[40] and indeed one of the most pungent charges made by Hooker's adversaries was that he was an Aristotelian, undergirded by the presumption this meant he relied too much on a pagan philosopher and not enough on the Christian scriptures.[41] A key issue to be addressed is what 'philosophy' means and how (if at all) may it be admissible in Christian theology. This is, as we will see, part of a broader need to define reason in distinctively Christian terms. This study contends reason (understood to include but go beyond philosophy, however that is defined) is permissible in theological method and plays a broadly similar part in Aquinas's, Calvin's, and Hooker's methodology, but it must be understood in the particular way it is (it will be argued) common to all three.

Reason may be initially contrasted with revelation by considering their sources. A repeated refrain in our three theologians is, while humans by reason alone may reach some knowledge of God, the fullness of what Christianity teaches about God cannot be understood by human reason alone. Another source is required, God's own self-disclosure.[42] In particular, where reason may yield generic knowledge say of the existence of God's existence, it cannot yield specifically Christian knowledge such as that God become human in Jesus Christ. So I can know by reason that I did not

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[38] A good introduction to the issues is *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Anthology*, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-24.

[39] Tertullian, *De preascriptione haereticorum*, vii.7-9, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to AD325*, 10 vols., ed. Alexander Roberts (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986-90), III.246.

[40] As, for instance, by Calvin, who accused many patristic writers of 'com[ing] far too close to the philosophers' (*Inst.* II.2.4) – though we will see that his position was rather more nuanced than this blunt condemnation might suggest.

[41] So the *Christian Letter* condemns Hooker for over-reliance on Aristotle in a passage which describes the latter 'unto divinity [as] is darkness unto light' (*ACL* 20, IV.65.14).

[42] See Ben Quash, 'Revelation,' *OHST*, 327. See also Gerald O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation of God's Self-Revelation in Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

make myself; I might (on some accounts) know by reason that God made me; I cannot know by reason that this God is triune. Revelation is the essential source of such latter knowledge.[43]

As with reason, though, the meaning of revelation needs further unpacking. Is scripture alone the source of revelation?[44] If so, is it the *text* of scripture – but what about textual variations, different translations, never mind competing interpretations?[45] Does it, as some *sola scriptura* accounts appear to suggest,[46] mean scripture is the *only* source of theological knowledge, such that any role for the other warrants is suspect, especially if they are conceived as additional or even separate sources of revelation? Can tradition be legitimately used in theological method, and if so, how?[47] Given the reformers' emphasis on the authority of scripture, some might conclude that any method which makes substantial use of reason and / or tradition is antithetical to a key reformed concern. On that view, if Hooker were to draw extensively on a catholic theologian he might be accused of pulling away from the reformed perspective, and *vice versa*. But much of the misplaced debate about where to locate Hooker and Anglicanism theologically has suffered because of failure to grapple adequately with the capacity and function of the theological warrants or to consider in sufficient depth how Hooker and his interlocutors define and use them. Moreover, as we will see, many commentators appear to envisage the three warrants as distinct or somehow autonomous when any coherent theological method is likely to use all three; the key to its coherence and plausibility will be whether it demonstrates how each of the warrants functions not least in relation to one another. What we will see is all three have similar, well-worked out accounts of the warrants and their relationship; and, in particular, that they do all share a nuanced but clear belief in *sola scriptura*,[48] so long as we are clear about exactly in what ways they thought scripture was singular.

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[43] See Andrew W. Moore, 'Reason,' *OHST*, 394. See also David A. Pailin, 'Reason in relation to Scripture and Tradition,' in *Scripture, Tradition, and Reason*, eds. Bauckham and Drewery, 207-38; Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 87-9.

[44] There is a substantial literature about how God's revelation in Jesus Christ relates to scripture. Despite the repetition of much of the material between volumes, a good way into the debate is O'Collins, *Revelation*, and the sequels Gerald O'Collins, *Inspiration: Towards a Christian Interpretation of Biblical Revelation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), and Gerald O'Collins, *Tradition: Understanding Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[45] Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 9-11.

[46] Good introductions on scripture in theological method are F.F. Bruce, 'Scripture in relation to Tradition and Reason,' in *Scripture, Tradition, and Reason*, eds. Bauckham and Drewery, 35-64; Stephen E. Fowl, 'Scripture,' *OHST*, 345-60.

[47] Good introductions on tradition in theological method are Williams, 'Tradition,' *OHST*, 362-77; Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 84-7; Richard Bauckham, 'Tradition in relation to Scripture and Reason,' in *Scripture, Tradition, and Reason*, eds. Bauckham and Drewery, 117-45; O'Collins, *Tradition*.

[48] The phrase, rendered 'scripture alone', appears rarely in the early reformers and there is considerable dispute about its meaning; see Williams, 'Tradition,' 364-6.

Reading Hooker with Calvin and Aquinas

To locate Anglicanism's identity and Richard Hooker's theology more precisely, this study argues all three categorisations of them (catholic, reformed, middle way) have serious flaws, in part precisely because they rely on often assumed rather than argued definitions about what catholic and reformed might mean. To do this, it proceeds by a close reading of Hooker's theological method alongside close readings of the texts of two interlocutors: the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (*c*.1225-74) and the reformation theologian Jean Calvin (1509-64). Their lives and works are now briefly outlined before showing why they may be fruitfully compared with Hooker.

Born in Italy to a noble family, Aquinas was sent to school at the Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino; his father, a benefactor of the monastery, perhaps hoped his son would one day become abbot. In 1239, as war reached Monte Cassino, the putative Benedictine was sent for a liberal education at Naples, and decided instead to become a Dominican – a youthful rebellion, albeit of a rather niche sort. After an abortive attempt at dissuading him through kidnapping (which he endured) and the offer of a prostitute (which he declined), Aquinas was allowed to pursue his vocation, studying then teaching in Paris and Naples.[49] His great unfinished work, the *Summa Theologiae*, begun in the late 1260s but incomplete at his death in 1274[50] will be central to this study, while drawing on other treatises including his shorter *Summa Contra Gentiles* from the early 1260s, as well as two works from the late 1250s, his *de veritate* ('Disputed Questions on Truth'), and his *de trinitate* (a commentary on a work of the sixth-century philosopher Boethius).[51]

Where Aquinas ended up in France having grown up in Italy, Calvin was born in France but ended up in Geneva. As well as these international connections, they also share the experience of complex familial expectations. Initially intended by his father to train as a priest, Calvin studied scripture and the liberal arts in Paris before his father changed his mind and decided his son should pursue a legal career. During the 1530s, the young lawyer was exposed to reforming ideas in Orleans while his father was excommunicated after accusations by a cathedral chapter of shady financial dealings. Calvin increasingly spoke and published in favour of reform of church doctrine and practice. Calvin then accepted an invitation to become a 'reader' in the church in Geneva

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[49] Short biographies can be found in Brian Davies, *Aquinas: An Introduction* (London: Continuum, 2003), 1-5; Fergus Kerr, *Thomas Aquinas: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1-19. A more substantial biography is Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, rev. edn., 2 vols., trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003-5), esp. I.1-296.

[50] On the larger *Summa* (distinguished from the shorter *Summa Contra Gentiles*), see *The Cambridge Companion to the* Summa Theologiae, eds. Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, I.142-59.

[51] For introductions to Aquinas's works, see Davies, *Aquinas*, 239-47; Kerr, *Aquinas*, 21-30; Torell, *Saint Thomas*, I.330-61.

where he became a pastor and polemicist in the reformed cause until his death.[52] Calvin's great systematic theology, the *Institutes of Christian Religion*, first published in 1536, went through several French and Latin editions before the final Latin text of 1559. Alongside the *Institutes*, this study also considers other works such as his polemic tracts against Roman Catholicism, his instructions about church structure and ritual, and his biblical commentaries.[53]

Having briefly set out Hooker's, Aquinas's, and Calvin's life and works, three reasons are now adduced to show why the three-way comparison can be both legitimate and fruitful exercise.

First, Hooker's theology is often located with reference to its similarity to (or difference from) Aquinas or Calvin, so they are obvious conversation partners. Reading them closely alongside each other will help us see that, on theological method, Richard Hooker was both a Calvinist and a Thomist at the same time, neither close to one rather than the other, nor steering a middle course between them, and that he could be so because there is considerable and surprising agreement between the two. In other words, 'catholic' and 'reformed', at least when applied to Aquinas and Calvin, need not be opposites.

Secondly, these three theologians have in some senses been widely seen as representative of their respective strands of Christianity. Of course, 'Thomist' is not synonymous with 'catholic', any more than 'Calvinist' is with 'reformed' or indeed 'Hookeresque' with 'Anglican.'[54] Hooker's views were not held by everyone in the Church of England of his time. In particular, presbyterians like Travers and Cartwright repeatedly argued Hooker departed on key points from their church's teaching. Aquinas's theology was one medieval option and was challenged by other catholics: the Dominican's work was immediately countered by Franciscan opposition, for instance,[55] and his singular dominance in Roman Catholicism's official theology can be dated to his adoption by Pope Leo XIII in 1879.[56] Calvin is only one figure in a very pluriform field of reformed thinkers, and his views differed in significant ways from those of other reformers.[57]

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[52] A good short biography is Alexandre Ganoczy, 'Calvin's Life,' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-23. Fuller biographies include A.E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) and Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2011).

[53] For a survey of Calvin's works see Wulfert de Greef, 'Calvin's Writings,' in *Cambridge Companion to Calvin*, ed. McKim, 42-55.

[54] Thus Williams, 'Tradition,' 375, highlights the similar ways Aquinas and Calvin are considered specially authoritative in their respective traditions.

[55] Paul J. Griffiths, 'Catholic Traditions,' in *Cambridge Companion to the* Summa, eds. McCosker and Turner, 296-7; Torrell, *Aquinas*, I.303-9.

[56] Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after his Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), esp. 4-12; Griffiths, 'Catholic Traditions,' 297-300.

[57] Gordon, *Calvin*, 233-49, is a good short account of some of the reformers' disagreements.

So Hooker's position (however defined) is not equated with *the* 'Anglican' position (if such a thing exists). Rather, the starting-point of this study is that Hooker represents *one* widely-recognised theologian within the stream of Anglican theology who can legitimately and fruitfully be compared with *one* representative theologian from each of the streams of catholic and reformed theology to demonstrate potential convergence between the three traditions they represent. Those traditions are, of course, much wider than these three theologians; but they are all cited frequently and with some authority in accounts of those traditions. So we have seen how Hooker has been appropriated by a range of subsequent Anglican theologians. For Aquinas, Pope John Paul II wrote that 'the merits of Saint Thomas' thought' make 'him the guide and model for theological studies' (*Fides et ratio* 43). Likewise for Calvin, the World Council of Reformed Churches (which includes, from these isles, the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church) claims 100 million adherents in 105 countries (and thus is the largest denominational umbrella after the Roman Catholic and Orthodox). It traces its 'roots in the 16th-century Reformation, and particularly in the theology of John Calvin.'[58] Without claiming a unique place for them, all three are often cited within their churches as articulating something significant about its church's identity and theology. The interplay of their thought will tell us something about possible convergences and divergences between those traditions more generally.

Thirdly, and suggestively for our purposes, recent readings of all three theologians demonstrate their theologies are considerably more nuanced than many subsequent interpretations have argued, and so they may be less antagonistic than often supposed. What each theologian actually said may differ considerably from what subsequent interpreters say he said; shades of grey are often painted in sharper contrast by their successors. There are obvious parallels in the way that Aquinas and Calvin have both been subsequently (mis)interpreted and contemporary efforts to retrieve their actual thought from beneath the weight of secondary scholarship and subsequent (mis)use; this is indicated by recent substantial treatments by theologians within their respective traditions entitled *After Calvin* and *After Aquinas*.[59]

So on Aquinas, Fergus Kerr has reminded us that there are *varieties* of Thomism(s).[60] Movements such as the continental *nouvelle théologie* sensibility have, for example, challenged longstanding

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[58] World Council of Reformed Churches, 'About Us' and 'History,' accessed 23rd October 2018, http://wcrc.ch/about-us and http://wcrc.ch/history. Calvin's place in the reformed tradition is complex; see, for instance, Carl Trueman, 'Calvin and Calvinism,' *Cambridge Companion to Calvin*, ed. McKim, 225-8; Muller, *After Calvin*, 63-102.

[59] Muller, *After Calvin*; Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

[60] Kerr, *After Aquinas*, vi-viii, 207-10; Fergus Kerr, 'The Varieties of Interpreting Aquinas,' in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Kerr (London: SCM, 2003), 27-40; cf. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 1-17.

interpretations of Aquinas.[61] Congar, for instance, recognising the legitimacy of some reformed concerns about the place of tradition in theological method, offering a reading of Aquinas intended to be more congenial to that reformed perspective.[62] Similarly, aware of the dangers the reformed see in over-emphasising the capacity of human reason, an Anglophone strain of Dominican thought (represented by Victor Preller and Denys Turner) concludes that some 'philosophical' passages in Aquinas are over-stated; for reason's capacity is always limited and such passages are in fact much less important than they are often argued to be.[63] And some contemporary theologians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, are demonstrating the possibility of reading Aquinas in a way congenial to Protestant concerns: a recent book *Aquinas Among the Protestants* making the case from the former tradition,[64] the widespread use of Aquinas by John Webster from the latter.[65]

Similarly, Muller among others shows that Calvin is not always accurately characterised by subsequent interpreters.[66] For example, as we will see, natural human knowledge of God plays a considerably greater part in Calvin's theological scheme than, say, Karl Barth was willing to acknowledge. Probing beneath Barth's account to Calvin's actual words thus reveals 'natural theology' as a point of continuity rather than contrast with Aquinas.[67] Moreover, as Muller shows, there is a wide range of reformed opinion, not a single monolithic theological bloc;[68] echoing Kerr, there are varieties of Calvinism(s). And just as a number of scholars have advanced readings of Aquinas which see him as in surprising sympathy with reformed concerns, so too reformed scholars have offered readings of Calvin which emphasise his continuity with Aquinas's concerns.[69] Recently Nathan Barczi demonstrates substantial similarity in Aquinas's and Calvin's

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[61] On this sensibility see Gabriel Flynn, 'Introduction,' in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal In Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-12; A.N. Williams, ''The Future of the Past': The Contemporary Significance of the *Nouvelle Théologie*,' *IJST* 7.4 (2005): 347-50.

[62] Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), 142-5.

[63] Victor Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God: A Reformulation of Thomas Aquinas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), vii, 22-5; Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3-25.

[64] *Aquinas among the Protestants*, eds. Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018).

[65] For instance, in John Webster, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2014), where Aquinas is the most-cited writer in the index after Augustine, appearing more times than Barth or Calvin. That Webster is clearly willing to identify areas of his continuing *dis*agreement with Roman Catholic theologies (see John Webster, 'Purity and Plenitude: Evangelical Reflections on Congar's Tradition and Traditions,' *IJST* 7.4 (2005): 410-12) makes his affinity for Aquinas even more revealing.

[66] Muller, *After Calvin*, 3-8, 63-104.

[67] *PRRD*, I.272-6.

[68] E.g. Muller, *After Calvin*, 3-24; the range of reformed opinion is covered in great detail in his four-volume *PRRD*.

[69] A.N. Williams offers tantalising footnote hints of such convergence in *Architecture of Theology*, 95 fn.18, 103 fn.27. More substantial treatments of ways Calvin echoes Thomas are Arvin Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985); R.A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 34-42, 56-5.

understanding of scripture in theological method, while Rowan Williams highlights their convergence on Christology.[70]

Likewise with Hooker, recent retrievals of his thought try to probe beneath subsequent and often superficial characterisations. This is in the context of a wider reassessment of the theological contours of later sixteenth and early seventeenth century England; as Hoyle reminds us, 'we now agree it is all very complicated and there is more to it than we first thought.'[71] Far from being a trite statement of the obvious, this pithily summarises a wider and often obscured feature of the debate, which is that the labels 'reformed' and indeed 'Anglican' are much wider, diverse, and elusive categories than often recognised. Hampton highlights the different shades of reformed opinion, for not all reformed theologians had exactly the same emphases or looked to precisely the same forebears. So 'identifying a writer as Reformed does not mean that they will hold all and only those theological views held by their predecessors within the tradition.'[72] This means that to judge whether Hooker is reformed, we must probe his argument in detail and compare it closely with that of a reformed thinker(s). And when we compare Hooker with Calvin, we see striking convergence in many ways with him but also with Aquinas.

Taken together, these forays into the multiple meanings of reformed in reformation England, combined with the recent retrievals of Aquinas and Calvin suggesting greater convergence between supposedly divergent opinions, create an interpretative backdrop against which it is now plausible to argue that a conformist theologian in the later sixteenth-century Church of England might be read in a way which was both reformed and catholic, both Thomist and Calvinist.[73] Some recent scholarship has shown that Hooker might be so categorised.[74] Schwöbel comes close to this, showing the similarities between Aquinas and first Calvin and then Hooker,[75] concluding that 'while the influence of Thomas [on Hooker] is not to be denied, it is a mistake to set it against the

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[70] Nathan Barczi, 'A Light to my Path: Calvin and Aquinas on the Doctrine and Metaphysics of Scripture,' (M.A. diss., University of Nottingham, 2010), 1, 15; R.D. Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 142-56.

[71] D.M. Hoyle, *Reformation and Religious Identity in Cambridge, 1590-1644* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 4.

[72] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 8. Hampton's work converges with a range of scholarship such Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*; Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 13-15; Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), esp. 1-8, 245-7.

[73] As indeed Hampton does for the later seventeenth century: *Anti-Arminians*, 222-7, 267-72.

[74] The possibility of a three-way convergence is tantalisingly alluded to in Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 138 fn.3; W.J.T. Kirby, 'Reason and Law,' *CRH*, 264 fn.53, 270 fn.70. More substantial is Dominiak, 'Participation,' 26-27, 83 fn.140, 160, 283; P.A. Dominiak, 'Hooker, Scholasticism, Thomism, and Reformed Orthodoxy,' *RHRO*, eds. Littlejohn and Kindred-Barnes, 103, 117-9.

[75] Christoph Schwöbel, 'Reformed Traditions,' in *Cambridge Companion to the* Summa*, eds. McCosker and Turner, 323-5.

influence of the magisterial reformation.'[76] Grislis makes the connection explicit: 'For his theological framework, Hooker relied upon the thought of Thomas Aquinas and of John Calvin.'[77] Against that backdrop, this study suggests the best categorisation of Hooker's theology is not reformed (defined in opposition to catholic) nor catholic (defined in opposition to reformed) nor as some equidistant figure between them, but as a theologian who is thoroughly reformed and thoroughly catholic, both a Calvinist and a Thomist.

Summary

Challenging the presumption of a catholic-reformed spectrum of thought into which Richard Hooker must be fitted will help us move past the inadequacies of the readings offered in the categories outlined above and help relocate his theology more precisely. By reframing the debate about catholic and reformed interlocutors, this study shows Anglicans how their tradition can be both catholic and reformed, not midway between the two or indeed one rather than the other. Chapter two now contests the first limb of many accounts of Aquinas, of Hooker, and of Anglicanism: that Aquinas is uncongenial to a key reformed concern by affording human reason too great a capacity in his theological method at the expense of scripture.

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[76] Schwöbel, 'Reformed Traditions,' 325.
[77] *FLE*, V.631.

Chapter Two
Knowledge of God in Aquinas

Introduction

Characterisations of Anglicanism and of Hooker often assume catholic methodologies give reason and tradition a much greater place than reformed ones. This chapter challenges that assumption as applied to Aquinas by exploring his understanding of two theological warrants, *scripture* and *reason*, showing that, while Aquinas gives reason significant weight in theology this is not at scripture's expense. Scripture's function and authority are unique, such that Aquinas could, if carefully defined, be said to hold a *sola scriptura* view of theological method congenial to the views of a reformer like Calvin. Reason for Aquinas is useful but limited, particularly because it can only yield general truths about God such as his existence and not distinctive Christian truths such as the Trinity; that knowledge comes only by God's revelation in Christ recorded uniquely in scripture.

This chapter begins by examining one theological warrant, *reason*, showing, for Aquinas, it can yield only limited knowledge of God. Two themes are then explored: the significance of the Fall for Aquinas's account of reason, and his understanding of philosophy. These show Aquinas less optimistic about human reason (and therefore less antagonistic to key reformed concerns) than often supposed. Next, the crucial dialectic between reason and revelation is explored. Finally, Aquinas's account of *scripture* as the principal locus of divine revelation is considered, examining his view of its sufficiency and its authority. Far from being over-reliant on reason, Aquinas gives scripture a unique place in theological method as the sole source now available of the saving knowledge of God; and so he could be said to have a real (though nuanced) belief in *sola scriptura*.

Natural knowledge of God in Aquinas

Introduction

A useful starting-point for a discussion of reason in theological method is the question of natural theology.[1] Topham's definition is fairly typical: 'natural theology is a type of theology which relies on reason (which is natural), unaided by any evidence derived from God's revelation through

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[1] Good introductions are *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, eds. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

scriptures, miracles or prophecies (which is supernatural).'[2] The phrase 'natural theology' is controversial, only entering the discourse relatively late,[3] so we adopt the less encumbered term 'natural knowledge of God.'[4] Following Topham's definition, this can be posed as the question of whether human beings can attain knowledge of God by their own natural reason without the aid of supernatural divine revelation, and if so what knowledge this might yield.

There is a widespread presumption that Aquinas is very positive about the possibility of natural knowledge of God, representing a wider optimism about human reason, and thereby differing markedly from Calvin's more pessimistic view. For example, Harrison distinguishes 'a relatively Thomistic account of human nature' in the Catholic tradition from the 'reformers' focus on human depravity' which leads to a 'mitigated scepticism' about human reason.[5] While coming from a scientific rather than strictly theological perspective, Harrison reflects a broad range of theological and historiographical writing which has often asserted a gap between Calvin and Aquinas or their traditions more generally on this point.[6] Harrison says 'in the hands of Aquinas, a theory of cognition that evoked natural rather than divine light' emerged.[7] Even to frame the issue that way is a false step, since it supposes there is some antagonism between the two 'lights' – which, as we will see, Aquinas does not. Probing Aquinas's account of the possibility and limitations of natural knowledge of God, we see the real but circumscribed place for reason in his theological method.

The possibility of natural knowledge of God

Aquinas certainly believes human reason can naturally attain some truths about God.[8] In particular, Aquinas thinks humanity can by reason alone discern that God exists. Aquinas starts (as Calvin does) with Romans 1.20: 'Ever since the world began, God's invisible attributes, that is to say his everlasting power and deity, have been visible to the eye of reason in the things he has made'

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2   Jonathan R. Topham, 'Natural Theology and the Sciences,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, ed. Peter Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 59; so also, for instance, Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas's Natural Theology in* Summa Contra Gentiles II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

3   A good brief overview is A.E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 158-70. There are various claims to the first use of the term (see *OHNT*, ed. Re Manning, 9-136), but certainly it became much more prominent after William Paley's 1802 work, *Natural Theology*.

4   Reformed theologians in particular seem to prefer the phrase alongside or in lieu of 'natural theology': e.g. Edward Adams, 'Calvin's View of Natural Knowledge of God,' *IJST* 3.3 (2001): 282; Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (London: Routledge, 2016), 221-8.

5   Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7.

6   See for instance Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen, 'Introduction: The Reception, Critique, and Use of Aquinas in Protestant Thought,' in *Aquinas among the Protestants*, eds. Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), esp. 2-4.

7   Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 41.

8   See Brian Davies, 'God,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the* Summa Theologiae, eds. Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 85-9; Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The Divine Science of the* Summa Theologiae (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 2-5.

(Revised English Bible) (*S.Th.* I.2.2, *s.c.*). Because we can proceed from effects to causes, since things exist we can infer that something caused their existence (*resp.*), and (as we will see) rather more than that. Drawing on Romans 1.20,[9] Aquinas holds 'the existence of God … can be known by natural reason' (*ad.* 2); hence, 'the existence of God could be demonstrated through the things that are made' (*s.c.*). (Later, Aquinas will put this even more explicitly: 'God is known by natural knowledge through the image of his effects' (I.2.2, *ad.* 2).) Aquinas next turns (I.2.3), to the (in)famous 'Five Ways' in which he suggests God's existence could be demonstrated rationally. The 'fifth way', for example, infers the existence of a creator from the motion of a harmonious universe with multiple, complex working components. Aquinas returns to Romans 1.20 elsewhere; for instance 'we come through knowledge of temporal things to that of things eternal (I.79.9, *resp.*), and 'we can easily perceive that God exists by means of principles implanted in us by nature' (*de trin.* I.1.3, *ad.* 6). Reasoned reflection on our surroundings can help us know something about God.

Aquinas makes this same point – that observation of the relationship between (divine) cause and (created) effect yields knowledge of the former which is what we call 'God' – at the outset of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Thus, 'sensible things, from which the human reason takes the origin of its knowledge, retain within themselves some sort of trace of a likeness of God … effects bear within themselves, in their own way, the likeness of their causes.' Therefore as it considers the divine action 'human reason … can gather certain likenesses of the divine truth' (*SCG* I.8.1).[10]

This knowledge of God is accessible naturally not just because it is inferred from evidence which is accessible to everyone on the basis of humanity's senses but also because it is accessible to anyone whether or not they know anything of the Christian apprehension of God. Quoting Augustine approvingly, Aquinas says 'the knowledge of God by natural reason can belong to both good and bad … "many who are not pure can know many truths" ' (I.2.3, *ad.* 3). Whether or not a person has access to the supernatural evidence of God's existence such as the Christian scriptures, they have access to the natural evidence of God's existence namely the caused effect of the creation. As Helm concludes, 'by reason alone, starting from self-evident principles, any sufficiently intelligent rational person may demonstrate that God exists. This is what Aquinas thought Paul was teaching in Romans 1.'[11]

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[9]   See Eugene F. Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 124-46 for a close reading of Aquinas on this key passage.

[10] R.D. Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), esp. 6-10.

[11] Paul Helm, 'Nature and Grace,' in *Aquinas among the Protestants*, eds. Svensson and David VanDrunen, 231.

Human reason starts by speaking of God as we encounter God's effects; this is the way of causality or *via causalitatis*, the first of Aquinas's threefold way, *triplex via*, of knowing God, drawing on the earlier language of the sixth-century theologian Pseudo-Dionysius.[12] This first way gives rise to two others. We must then take away from what is said any attribution to God of something non-godly; for instance, we cannot speak of him as being changed because this would subject God to time. This is the way of removal or *via remotionis* (see, especially, *SCG* I.14.4).[13] Finally, what remains must then be magnified or conceived perfectly; so, 'the perfection of all things must pre-exist in God in a more eminent way' (I.4.2, *s.c.*), for example, he must be perfect life and perfect wisdom (*ad.* 3). This is the way of eminence or *via eminentiae*.

The *triplex via* shows Aquinas's chain of natural reasoning yielding truths about God, beginning with, but going substantially beyond, the assertion of God's existence. The *via causalitatis* tells us more than that God exists; it yields the knowledge that God *creates*, and more:

> Our natural knowledge takes its starting point from the senses. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things … because they are his effects and depend on their cause, we can be led by them so far as to know of God whether he exists, and to know of him what must necessarily belong to him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by him (*S.Th.* I.1.12, *resp.*).

The scope of what we might know as 'what must necessarily belong' to God is quite broad.[14] For example, God's engagement with creation is not just in making it, but in governing or guiding it towards its ultimate purpose: 'some intelligent beings exist by whom all natural things are directed to their end' (I.2.3, *resp.*) And, as *SCG* Book I describes, many of God's characteristics and attributes can be demonstrated logically by reasoned inference alone (I.15-I.102).[15] So, says Aquinas, by reason we can know not just that God creates and guides the creation but also that he has no body (I.20), is good (I.37-42), loves (I.91). As chapter three will show, there is not a significant gap between Aquinas and Calvin on this point; for Calvin too asserted humans could know much about God on the basis of reason alone.

The limits of the natural knowledge of God

Human beings can therefore know naturally many things about God: his existence, creativity, and so on. But, against those who characterise Aquinas's account as somehow optimistic about human

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[12] See Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 166-7 fn.26; cf. te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 76-9.

[13] Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 40-57.

[14] Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 75-7.

[15] Kretzmann, *Metaphysics of Creation*, 4.

reason, compared with a more negative view typical of reformed theology, we will see that the scope of this natural knowledge of God through reason, though real, is tightly circumscribed.

To see this we return first to the opening questions of the larger *Summa*, which Williams aptly calls 'essentially a miniature treatise on theological method.'[16] Aquinas, at the outset of the *Summa*, insists there are strict limits to the natural knowledge of God:

> Man is directed to God, as to an end that surpasses the grasp of his reason … but the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for man's salvation that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation (I.1.1, *resp.*).

Here, Aquinas sets out a key limitation of natural knowledge of God: reason cannot learn the truths which are essential for human salvation. There is a central distinction between the truths about God humanity can discover by natural reason, and those truths about its salvation it cannot. Truths in this second category can only be learned by divine revelation.[17]

Again, the *triplex via*, while conceptualising ways in which humans can naturally know God, serves itself as check on reason's place in our knowledge of God. For while we can certainly generate knowledge of God by our own reason, that knowledge has to be refined. For example, by *causation* we can say that God creates; this is genuine knowledge of God yielded by reason. However, by *remotion* we must refine that knowledge; for instance, we must consider what it might mean to speak, on the basis of creation, of a subject which is not part of that creation. Hence, for example, if time is created, the creator cannot be subject to time so cannot be prone to change (which entails a 'before' and an 'after'). And *eminence* then requires us to consider what it might mean to say that the creator possesses perfectly any good thing which exists imperfectly in the creation. Thus, a human being may be wise, but only imperfectly and not all the time; but the wisdom which exists imperfectly in the creature must subsist perfectly in the creator. This demonstrates an intrinsic limitation to reason's usefulness; the knowledge yielded by reason has to be refined, 'purified' even, if it is to be as true as it can be to the subject of the discourse. Even where Aquinas sounds confident about what reason can yield, he is profoundly aware of its limitations.

Aquinas's caution about what reason can deliver, demonstrated in the careful conceptualisation of the *triplex via*, is underpinned by a more foundational principle. It emerges, for instance, a few questions later during a rather dense discussion of whether humans can naturally see the divine

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[16] A.N. Williams, *The Architecture of Theology: Structure, System, and* Ratio (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 118.

[17] Thus, for instance, Brian Davies, 'Is *Sacra Doctrina* Theology?', *New Blackfriars* 71 (1990): 141-2.

essence. Aquinas says 'to see the essence of God is possible to the created intellect by grace, and not by nature', and 'it is impossible for any created intellect to see the essence of God by its own natural power' (*S.Th.* I.12.4, *s.c.*, *resp.*). What is important here is the reason underlying this conclusion. Aquinas holds that 'the knowledge of every knower is ruled according to its nature', and if 'the mode of anything's being exceeds the rule of the knower, it must result that the knowledge of that object is above the nature of the knower.' Since God is his own nature, and only God is God's nature, it follows that no other being can know him fully. Hence, just as the sun is supremely visible but the bat cannot see it because of the excess of solar light, so too humans cannot see God who so exceeds their nature (I.12.1, *resp.*). Knowledge yielded by the *triplex via* is therefore limited both by the need to refine the language but also by its fundamental inadequacy to speak of its subject.

Aquinas elsewhere argues that, because God's nature so far exceeds ours, it is not possible for our nature to know his: 'by its immensity, the divine substance surpasses every form that our intellect reaches. Thus we are unable to apprehend it by knowing what it is. Yet we are able to have some knowledge of it' (*SCG* I.14.2). Thus, 'however much a rational creature knows … God, it can never know him as perfectly as he can be known' (*de ver.* 20.4, *resp.*). The ontological gap between the human and the divine is a fundamental boundary to our reason's natural knowledge. For there to be knowledge, 'there must be some proportion between the knower and the knowable' (*de trin.* I.1.2, *obj.* 2), but this knowledge is 'as the effect to the cause'; so there is 'no proportion … such that the creature … knows [the creator] perfectly' (*ad.* 2). Thus, Davies concludes 'this divine nature is something that Aquinas holds to be knowable *up to a point*';[18] and te Velde highlights Aquinas's 'constant conviction … that the human intellect cannot in any way penetrate or grasp the essence of God by means of concepts which it forms in knowing the natures of sensible reality.'[19]

So: for Aquinas, there is natural knowledge of God accessible to human reason. But it is less extensive than Harrison suggests, being tightly circumscribed in its scope. While undoubtedly Aquinas believes that reason can know God, Aquinas repeatedly emphasises reason's limits, restricting what it yields to fairly generic attributes such as existence, creativity, and so on, and always with the caution that in treating something far beyond our grasp, our language, even when refined through the *triplex via*, will be limited and inadequate.

At the outset of his *de trinitate*, Aquinas emphasises the profoundly limited reach of humanity's natural knowledge of God to explain the need for another source of knowledge of God using the

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[18] Davies, 'God,' 86, emphasis added.
[19] Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 74.

metaphor of illumination and contrasting two kinds of light, natural and divine. Thus, 'the intellectual light that is connatural to the mind also suffices to know some truth' (*de trin.* I.1.1, *s.c.*),[20] he writes, but it 'cannot know … the truths of faith which transcend the facility of reason … without being divinely illumined by a new light supplementing the natural light' (*resp.*).[21]

As Whidden describes, where the *de trinitate* uses the imagery of different kinds of light revealing different kinds of truths, the larger *Summa* similarly evokes the concept of the *imago Dei*. Thus, 'man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men,' but this natural aptitude is distinguished from 'the image [which] consists in the conformity of grace' (*S.Th.* I.93.4, *resp.*) by which we might truly know and love God. In other words, there is a hierarchy of knowledge of the divine, with humanity's natural knowledge ascending only to the lowest level. Its natural aptitudes are limited; as Whidden goes on, 'the cognitive limitation imposed on humans by the requirement that knowledge comes through our corporeal senses … restricts our ability to know things about God.'[22]

This careful distinction between two kinds of light or two aspects of the *imago*, with different sources illuminating humanity with different kinds of knowledge, undermines notions that reason's natural light might equal or supplant the light of divine illumination. Elsewhere, Aquinas couches this as a distinction between 'two modes of truth' (*SCG* I.3.2) or 'twofold truth concerning the divine being, one to which the inquiry of the reason can reach, the other which surpasses the whole ability of the human reason' (*SCG* I.4.1).[23] Rather, divine illumination is needed to show us what natural illumination cannot: 'truths we can know under our own power, without divine illumination' are limited.[24] Something else, divine light, is needed to extend our natural knowledge to reach the higher truths.[25] Nonetheless, these are not two separate truths, or truths about a different subject; they are rather dual aspects of the single truth of the same divine subject.[26]

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[20] This is what Whidden, in an outstanding study of the theme of illumination in Aquinas, categorises as the natural light of the intellect: David L. Whidden, *Christ the Light: The Theology of Light and Illumination in Thomas Aquinas* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2014), 25-6.

[21] Whidden, *Christ the Light*, esp. 1-36.

[22] Whidden, *Christ the Light*, 26.

[23] Kretzmann, *Metaphysics of Creation*, 11-3.

[24] Whidden, *Christ the Light*, 7.

[25] Whidden, *Christ the Light*, 26. This reading of Aquinas on the need for revelation to supplement the limited natural knowledge of God is shared, for instance, by Bruce D. Marshall, '*Quod Scit Una Uetula:* Aquinas on the Nature of Theology,' in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 4-5; Rudi te Velde, 'Understanding the *Scientia* of Faith: Reason and Faith in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*,' in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr (London: SCM, 2003), 60-2; Davies, *Thought*, 11-2; Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in* Summa Contra Gentiles I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35-6; Mark D. Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom: The Hierarchy of Philosophical Discourses in Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 197-200.

[26] Cf. Rogers, *Aquinas and Barth*, 185.

Returning to the opening questions of *de trinitate*, where Aquinas begins to discuss the kind of truth which requires divine illumination, we read:

> All natural reason gets its power from the first principles which it knows naturally. But the fact that God is three and one cannot be deduced from naturally known principles, which are drawn from the senses, because in the sensible world we find nothing similar to there being three persons with one essence (I.I.4, *s.c.*).

In other words, reason can only know what reason can know, in particular what it can infer from the evidence of human senses; 'the human understanding of itself is sufficient for knowing certain intelligible things, viz., those which can come through the senses' (*S.Th.* I-II.109.1, *resp.*). This includes, as we have seen, some key insights such as God's existence, creativity, and so on. But supernatural enlightenment is needed for 'such things as surpass natural knowledge' (*ad.* 3). The natural knowledge of God accessible to the senses remains rather generic, disclosing God's existence and some divine attributes, but it cannot reveal the distinctive Christian truths about God (such as God's triune nature) which are not disclosed through the evidence of the senses.[27] Those truths, variously called doctrines or truths of faith, are learnable only from another source, divine revelation received by faith. Hence, Aquinas says, 'those things which are above nature … are made known to us by Divine authority' (*resp.*).

The 'things above nature', which natural reason cannot disclose, are those distinctively Christian insights about God. Thus, for example, 'one may know by demonstration the unity of the godhead, and, by faith, the Trinity' (II-II.1.5, *ad.* 4). This distinction, between generic truths about God knowable by reasoned reflection and specific truths of the Christian faith knowable only by revelation (II-II.1.5, *resp.*), recurs repeatedly in Aquinas. For instance, as well as God's triunity, Jesus's incarnation and resurrection are discernible only by faith through revelation (e.g., II-II.1.6, *resp.*, *ad.* 1).[28] Aquinas elsewhere couches this same distinction as between knowledge of God's 'existence' and God's 'providence', the latter including 'all those things which God dispenses in time for human salvation,' notably the redemption wrought by Christ's incarnation and passion (II-II.1.8, *resp.*). There is obvious resonance here with Calvin's distinction, also seen in Hooker, between knowledge of God as Creator and as Redeemer.

While, through the *triplex via*, we can discern genuine knowledge of God, it is limited both by the inherent need to refine reason-able language so it applies to the Creator as opposed to a creature, and is also limited to rather generic truths about God, not the specific Christian truths such as the

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[27] Cf. Davies, *Thought*, 188-90.
[28] Davies, *Thought*, 298.

Trinity and Christology. Such 'propositions that belong uniquely to revealed theology's subject matter' are 'not available to unaided reason'; 'divine mysteries' must be discovered other than by natural reason.[29] As Kretzmann writes, 'reason unsupported by revelation could have come up with many' of those generic propositions about God; but only 'up to the point at which the theism being argued for begins to rely on propositions that are initially accessible to reason only via revelation and becomes distinctively Christian.'[30] This is far from the expansive optimism which Harrison and others attribute to Aquinas. We will see the contours of Aquinas's account of the natural knowledge of God are broadly the same as Calvin's. Before turning to revelation in more detail, though, we need to examine further the ways Aquinas considers reason to be limited, as these relate to two themes where he is often contrasted with Calvin: the Fall, and philosophy.

Reason and its limitations

The circumscribed capacity of reason in Aquinas's account of the natural knowledge of God already undermines the notion that he has an expansive view of reason contrasted with a more limited one in Calvin. But on two further specific questions many scholars suggest Aquinas and Calvin differ. These are: (1) the effects of the Fall on human reason, and (2) the place of philosophy in theology. Each is analysed in turn, showing (1) Aquinas believes the Fall seriously impairs humanity's ability to reason about God, and so cannot be said to diverge dramatically from Calvin on that point; and (2) Aquinas is quite discriminating in his use of philosophy in theology which is always governed by theological concerns, such that he cannot plausibly be characterised as giving philosophy and therefore reason excessive weight in theological method.

The Fall

Among Harrison's central contentions is that Calvin believes the Fall radically diminishes human reason's capacity whereas Aquinas believes the impact of the Fall on reason is considerably less. Harrison argues that Calvin 'reject[ed] the Thomist idea that the Fall only entailed a loss of supernatural gifts', believing that the natural gifts of reason were also lost, such that 'the mind lost the capacity to acquire true knowledge.'[31] By contrast, says Harrison, Aquinas

> insist[s] that our inherent capacity for knowledge – our 'natural light' – had survived the
> Fall intact. Adam, in his innocence, he explained, had been possessed of both 'natural

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[29] Brian Davies and Elenore Stump, 'Introduction,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, eds. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7, 8.
[30] Kretzmann, *Metaphysics of Creation*, 7, 8.
[31] Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 61, 60.

gifts' and 'supernatural gifts.' Only the latter had been lost as a consequence of the Fall. Crucially, reason was one of the natural gifts that remained.[32]

Harrison's characterisation of Aquinas and Calvin is already thrown into doubt by the rather limited capacity of reason in Aquinas we have outlined. We will later see his characterisation of Calvin is wrong, because the latter did not believe that reason's light was totally extinguished by the Fall; and readings of Aquinas like this are off the mark.

Harrison begins by citing Aquinas's distinction between the natural and the supernatural gifts of humanity, arguing only the latter were lost at the Fall, leaving the natural gifts (notably reason) unimpaired.[33] But the passage in question does not quite say that, as Aquinas is not talking about the natural gifts. Aquinas's point is that the 'subjection of the body to the soul and of the lower powers to reason was not from nature; otherwise it would have remained after sin'; and, later, 'the primitive subjection by virtue of which reason was subject to God, was not merely a natural gift, but a supernatural endowment of grace' (*S.Th.* I.95.1 *resp.*). This article, in other words, does not deal with reason's *natural* operation at all, only its (now lost) *supernatural*, pre-Fall operation; it cannot help Harrison's argument that the *natural* abilities, which the article does not treat, were not lost at the Fall.

If this passage does not help Harrison's case, the next two passages he cites positively hinder it. While Aquinas does say 'the light of natural reason … is never forfeit from the soul,' he immediately adds, 'yet, at times, it is prevented from exercising its proper act.' Aquinas seems to have in mind where the mind is either 'deliberately turned away' or 'busy about things which it loves more' (II-II.15.1, *resp.*). As Aquinas goes on to say, 'lust gives rise to blindness of mind'[34] while 'gluttony … makes a man weak in regard to the same intelligible things' (II-II.15.3, *resp.*). So, Harrison is right to argue that sin cannot remove the natural operation of reason ('never forfeit from the soul') but wrong that reason is not severely affected. Indeed, he himself seems to concede that Aquinas *does* think the natural operation of reason *is* diminished by the Fall; in a footnote, Harrison says 'the intellectual faculties are not "altered", but are merely "impeded." '[35] The relegation of this inconvenient point to a footnote illustrates the problem Harrison's argument faces here; for it is clear from the passage Harrison quotes that, for Aquinas, reason loses its supernatural

[32] Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 43.
[33] Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 43.
[34] This metaphor of the mind as blinded, of course, is also crucial to Calvin; see p.78.
[35] Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 43 fn.109. The source of these two terms is unclear; Harrison does not cite a source, but it is certainly not *S.Th.* II-II.15.3.

powers, and its natural powers are diminished. Even to call the intellectual faculties 'impeded' is to say that they do not function as intended.

The next passage Harrison cites in this confused footnote also undermines his assertion that Aquinas considers the Fall has little or only minimal impact on reason's natural operation. Aquinas says 'because of sin the reason, *especially with regard to moral decision*, is blunted' (I-II.85.3, *resp.*). Harrison emphasises those words in his footnote to argue that the effects of sin are primarily on reason's moral rather than intellectual abilities. Quite how such a clear distinction can be drawn on the basis of Aquinas's text is unclear. This article is about the widespread effect of sin on reason's abilities. Sin affects reason so it cannot function properly and this in turn causes humanity to sin further because it is less able to reason to proper moral decisions. So it is implausible to suggest that sin affects moral decision in a worse way than it does intellectual capacity; the whole point of the article is that sin affects all aspects of reason. Indeed, in the preceding article, Aquinas sets out the basic point: 'sin cannot entirely take away from man that he is a rational being', but 'the good of nature … is diminished by sin' (I-II.85.2, *resp.*).[36]

Harrison defends the distinction (that reason, being natural, is unaffected by sin because only the supernatural gifts were lost at the Fall) arguing reason 'was insulated from the supernatural privations that had followed the Fall.'[37] This distinction is untenable, as seen by reading on in the same question (I-II.85). Aquinas goes on to other effects of sin such as death. Very strictly speaking, it might be possible to argue that death is a supernatural rather than a natural feature of humanity, because human beings *in their created nature* should not die, and they only do so after the Fall because God removed the supernatural incorruptibility which prevented death (I-II.85.6, *resp.*). Yet it would be strange to assert that death leaves the natural sphere unaffected; death clearly has an effect in the natural sphere because it robs the natural person of their life. So, returning to article 3, reason's natural operation is clearly impeded by the loss of its supernatural gifts; from this comes ignorance and concupiscence, for example (I-II.85.3, *resp.*).[38]

Similarly, Aquinas's discussion of what the first human knew emphasises the Fall's consequences for reason. So, 'in the state of innocence there could be not only no error but not even false opinion of any sort' (*de ver.* 18.6, *resp.*). Thus, 'by the strength of his own reason … he was protected from the deception which comes from within, as when someone reasons incorrectly, but it was by the

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[36] Cf. A.N. Williams, 'Argument to Bliss: The Epistemology of the *Summa Theologiae*,' *Modern Theology* 20.4 (2004): 508-9.

[37] Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 44.

[38] Cf. Williams, 'Argument to Bliss,' 514.

divine aid, which he had at that time for all necessary matters, that he was protected from deception' (*ad.* 7.). Error and confused opinion, for Aquinas, are evidence of reason's fallen state; as, for instance, where he cites a range of Jewish, Greek, and pagan authors on the question of whether God has a body and labels them all as wrong (*SCG* I.20.34-6; cf. I.4.3).

Sin's effects on reason are also identified as a key factor in the need for divine revelation. Thus, McInery asks whether Aquinas, 'in speaking so confidently of reason, overlook[s] the consequences of sin?' No: 'if the only way open to us for the knowledge of God were solely that of the reason, the human race would remain in the blackest shadows of ignorance.'[39] We need revelation to teach us because in our fallen state we struggle to reach even those truths about God we could in principle attain naturally. So, 'the truth about God such as reason could discover would only be known to a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors' (*S.Th.* I.1.1, *resp.*; cf. *SCG* I.4.1, 2).[40] Similarly, at the very point where Aquinas praises reason's capacity to discern divine truths ('most knowable by nature') this is immediately qualified (such truths are 'owing to a deficiency on our part … not apparent to us', *de trin.* III.1, *resp.*).

This 'diminishing' of the power of natural reason is also obvious, as Whidden highlights, from Aquinas's insistence that natural reason has to be redeemed by Christ: one of the 'aspect[s] of sin' is 'the loss of the light of reason.'[41] Our minds as well as our bodies need to be healed by divine grace; for example, 'the end for which Christ's miracles were worked was the health of the rational part, which is healed by the light of wisdom'[42] and 'Christ, when he willed, changed the minds of men by his divine power' (*S.Th.* III.44.3, *ad.* 1). Again, Aquinas says that reason must be restored by grace since 'it is not entirely subject to God, [so] the consequence is that many disorders occur in the reason' (I-II.109.8, *resp.*).

Moreover, Aquinas explicitly *rejects* the assertion there is no sin in reason (*de ver.* 15.3, *objj.* 1, 2, 4). Insisting 'there is sin in reason', Aquinas says that sinful actions result from sinful choices; a choice needs reason to present the will with different options from which to choose: 'sin comes not only from passion, but also from choice. But choice consists in an act of reason' (*s.c.*). A flawed action, he says, can be traced back to flawed reasoning (*resp.*, *ad.* 7). Elsewhere, Aquinas says that

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[39] Ralph McInery, 'On Behalf of Natural Theology,' *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 54 (1980): 71; cf. Angus Brook, 'Thomas Aquinas on the Effects of Original Sin: A Philosophical Analysis,' *HJ* 59.4 (2018): 725-9.

[40] F.C. Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 56-7.

[41] Whidden, *Christ the Light*, 205.

[42] Whidden, *Christ the Light*, 205-6.

the intellect moves the will (*S.Th.* I-II.9.1, *resp.*) and concedes that 'sometimes … the reason is not entirely engrossed by the passion' (I-II.10.3, *resp.*), indicating reason often *is* engrossed by passion and then moves the will in the wrong direction. As Oliver concludes, 'because of humanity's fallen state, even the achievement of that which is proportionate to our nature is beyond our grasp.'[43]

For sin further diminishes reason which is already limited by finitude: reason is unable to reach many truths about God; sin exacerbates this condition by making it harder for reason to reach those truths it could naturally attain. As Marshall says, 'sin makes this problem much worse, but since we are creatures, finite and contingent … we would have this problem without the burden of sin.'[44] The inherent limitations of reason's capacity caused by human finitude already act as a caution against arguments which assert Aquinas is over-optimistic about reason's capacity. While Harrison is right that the power of reason is not entirely removed, it is severely impeded; and, as we will see, far from distinguishing Aquinas from Calvin, this is a point of convergence between them.

Philosophy

The previous section argued, on the question of the Fall's effect on our reason, Aquinas is not as optimistic as those who want to distinguish him from Calvin often suppose. This section argues the same is true on a second topic where they are often thought to diverge: whether and how philosophy can be used in theology. Again, Harrison's argument will be used as an example of a wider tendency which depicts Calvin and Aquinas diverging on this point.

Harrison posits a pre-reformation 'concord' between philosophy and theology, lauding the 'masterful synthesis' of the two he sees in Aquinas compared with what he sees as the reformers' tendency to resist the use of philosophy.[45] Similarly, 'Protestant critics often regard [Aquinas] as simply too philosophical to be a faithful theologian.'[46] Indeed, in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,[47] Aquinas makes what seems like a startlingly audacious claim about philosophy. He says that the terms *metaphysics*, *first philosophy*, and *divine science* or *theology* refer to the same discipline (*metaphys.*, Prologue; cf. VI.1.1167-8). But challenging those who hold 'philosophy plays a dominant role in the thought of Thomas,' Kilby rightly insists that any 'impression of

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[43] Simon Oliver, 'The Parallel Journey of Faith and Reason: Another Look via Aquinas's *De Veritate*,' in *Faithful Reading: New Essays in Theology in Honour of Fergus Kerr*, eds. Simon Oliver, Karen Kilby, and Tom O'Loughlin (London: T&T Clark: 2012), 124.

[44] Marshall, '*Quod scit una uetula*,' 4; Williams helpfully delineates the respective problems caused by finitude and by sin for our knowledge of God in *Architecture of Theology*, 8-9.

[45] Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 70.

[46] Svensson and VanDrunen, 'Introduction,' 3.

[47] On this work see Leo Elders, *Thomas Aquinas and his Predecessors: The Philosophers and the Church Fathers* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 54-9.

philosophical dominance … begins to wobble under closer scrutiny.'[48] This is not to say that Aquinas does not use philosophy, which he clearly does. Indeed he wrote widely on the work of Aristotle and other philosophers, and drew on philosophical concepts or writings in his more overtly theological works. The key issue, as Kilby identifies, is *dominance*, that is, whether convictions held on some philosophical ground (perhaps, for instance, because they were advanced by a favoured philosopher like Aristotle) ever unduly condition or even distort Aquinas's theology. Moreover, simply citing or being influenced by a philosophical source does not necessarily connote agreement to it in every particular.

This section argues Aquinas draws on philosophy in theology but in a careful, circumscribed way. Even the highest form of philosophy, first philosophy or metaphysics, is limited in what it can yield. Aquinas is quite careful to say there is more to theology than even first philosophy can *naturally* attain: we must avoid 'including the contents of faith within the bounds of philosophy' (*de trin.* II.3, *resp.*). To demonstrate the limited capacity of philosophy for Aquinas's method we can identify two ways Aquinas thinks philosophy is useful in theology by distinguishing its use as a *source* and as a *tool*, before considering how it is limited by Aquinas's wider methodology.

As a *source*, philosophy can yield real, but tightly circumscribed, knowledge of God, and in particular cannot attain to those truths which are beyond natural reason. It is thus distinct from the knowledge of God which comes from revelation and does not carry the same kind or level of authority.[49] This distinction is elided by Harrison in his assertion that

> until the end of the sixteenth century … 'Authority' extended not only to ecclesiastical councils, the Doctors of the Church, and the deposit of scripture, but encompassed Aristotle, Galen, and other ancients. To a large extent, then, the secular writers of antiquity came to share the privileged status accorded to scripture and the Fathers.[50]

This broad formulation risks the inference that theological authority is a singular, undifferentiated entity incorporating scripture as one 'privileged' source among many which include not just what might be described as tradition (councils and doctors) but also philosophy (Aristotle, Galen, *et al.*). It also does not reflect Aquinas's careful account of different kinds of authority and the use that can be made of them in theology. In a pivotal passage Aquinas contrasts scripture with all other forms of authority. So while theology 'makes use of these authorities' (which includes philosophy and the doctors of the church) they yield only 'extrinsic and probable arguments.' By contrast, theology

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[48] Karen Kilby, 'Philosophy,' in *Cambridge Companion to the* Summa, eds. McCosker and Turner, 62; cf. Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas After His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 60-88.

[49] Per Erik Persson, *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 151.

[50] Harrison, *Bible and Science*, 69.

'properly uses the authority of the canonical scriptures as an incontrovertible truth' (*S.Th.* I.1.8, ad. 2).

Again, speaking of metaphysics, Aquinas says 'since this science is about first causes and principles, it must be about God; for God is understood in this way by all inasmuch as he is one of the causes and a principle of things' (*metaphys*. I.3.64). For Aquinas 'some things may be learned from philosophical science' because 'they can be known by natural reason' (*S.Th.* I.1.1, *ad.* 2). Theology 'makes use also of the philosophers *in those questions which they were able to know by the truth of natural reason*' (I.1.8, *ad.* 2, my emphasis). Aquinas gives philosophy some authority, but it is far from accorded 'privileged status' alongside scripture. For all its real usefulness, philosophy is severely restricted in what it can yield in precisely the same way that all knowledge generated by human reason alone is. Thus, it is at best a 'handmaiden' to theology, a lesser science supporting a greater (I.1.5, *ad.* 2), the connection between the Latin *ancilla* and our adjective *ancillary* usefully illustrating philosophy's secondary and subordinate place. Likewise, Aquinas says that some 'truths about God have been provide demonstratively by the philosophers, guided by the light of natural reason' (*SCG* I.3.2) (he identifies God's existence and his unity) while other 'truths about God … totally surpass man's ability' (I.3.3).

Indeed, and ironically, Aquinas here uses a definitely Aristotelian concept, the subalternation of the sciences, to demonstrate the *limits* of philosophy in theology.[51] Subalternation, broadly, is where one discourse borrows its principles from another. Thus, says Aquinas following Aristotle, some disciplines (he names geometry and arithmetic) rely on self-evident principles which are evident to all. But others must borrow the principles of another discipline (he names optics borrowing from geometry, and music from mathematics). Likewise, says Aquinas,

> sacred doctrine … proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher science, namely, the science of God and the blessed. Hence, just as the musician accepts on authority the principles taught him by the mathematician, so sacred science is established on principles revealed by God (*S.Th.* I.1.2, *resp.*; cf. *de trin.* I.2, *ad.* 5).

Again, we revert to the foundational dichotomy in Aquinas's theology between the truths of God which are knowable by human reason and those which are not; philosophy can teach the former truths, but not the latter. Sacred doctrine receives its principles *not* from human reason, but the knowledge of God which only God and the blessed know; here Aquinas uses Aristotelian philosophy to define philosophy's limits.

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[51] On subalternation and theology see te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 25-7; Rik van Nieuwenhove, 'Assent to Faith, Theology, and *Scientia* in Aquinas,' *New Blackfriars* 100 (2019): 415-6.

Philosophy's limits are further demonstrated by the difficulty of learning even the truths of natural reason philosophically. Aquinas writes,

> our manner of knowing is so weak that no philosopher could perfectly investigate the nature of even one little fly. We even read that a certain philosopher spent thirty years in solitude to know the nature of the bee. If, therefore, our intellect is so weak, it is foolish to be willing to believe concerning God only that which man can know by himself alone.[52]

Elsewhere, Aquinas points out that to reach philosophically even these natural truths is a painstaking task which only those with the time, training, and inclination for advanced philosophical study could accomplish. Moreover, metaphysics is the last philosophical discipline to be learned, requiring mastery of lesser sciences first. Thus,

> to know the things that reason can investigate concerning God, a knowledge of many things must also be possessed … metaphysics, which deals with divine things, is the last part of philosophy to be learned. This means we are able to arrive at the … aforementioned truth only on the basis of a great deal of labour spent in study (*SCG* I.4.3; similarly *de trin.* III.1, *resp.*).

So, 'the divine mercy provide[d] it should instruct us to hold by faith even those truths which the human reason is able to investigate' such that 'all men would easily be able to have a share in the knowledge of God, and this without uncertainty and error' (*SCG* I.4.6; cf. *S.Th.* I.1.1, *resp.*). Aquinas then beautifully asserts that because of this divine mercy instructing us, 'one old woman knows more about these things that pertain to the faith than heretofore all philosophers.'[53] Aquinas, then, considers philosophy as a *source* to be useful but limited. It can help us understand some truths about God, but only very limited ones, and only rather unreliably. This indicates the difficulty of saying Aquinas is over-indebted to philosophy.

Philosophy, of course, is also a useful *tool* for Aquinas who often uses philosophical concepts or terms to clarify or explain a doctrinal truth. He says that philosophy can 'throw … light on the contents of faith' by offering elucidations or clarifications (*de trin.* II.3, resp.). A single example will suffice. The principal reason Aquinas asserts that God is love is that he is called this in scripture (I John 4.16) (*S.Th.* I.20.1, *s.c.*). Having established the scriptural source of this truth, Aquinas further justifies it using philosophical terms (appetite, motion, and so on) (*resp.*) and then uses philosophical concepts (such as effects resembling causes) to explain how we love only because we are enabled by God (I.20.2, *resp.*). Here philosophy is used to elucidate truths already

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[52] Thomas Aquinas, *The Apostles' Creed*, trans. Joseph B. Collins, ed. Joseph Kenny, accessed 28th November 2019, https://dhspriory.org/thomas/english/Creed.htm.

[53] Sermon 14 in *Thomas Aquinas: The Academic Sermons*, ed. Mark-Robin Hoogland (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 202. On this image see Marshall, '*Quod Scit Una Uetula*,' 1-2.

held on scriptural grounds. But, in using philosophy as a tool in this way, Aquinas is doing nothing other than what Christian theologians and councils had done since at least the second century (and, arguably, only what many of the authors of the Bible did, such as St John's appropriating the concept of the *logos* to articulate Christ's identity). Notably, the Nicene Creed appropriates the term *homoousios*, which appears nowhere in scripture, to say that the Son and the Father are both divine.[54] Calvin follows this logic in justifying the use of terms like *homoousios* drawn not from scripture but from philosophy (*Inst.* I.13.3-5). To use philosophy as a tool, then, does not mark Aquinas out from the tradition generally, including the reformed tradition represented by Calvin.

So far, we have shown, far from being over-reliant on philosophy, Aquinas asserts it has only limited theological capacity. It can be used as a tool to elucidate or articulate things which are known by other means (notably the truths of revelation). It can certainly yield truth about God, but only within limits. Yet a further argument could be advanced against Aquinas: that, for all his conceptual distinction between what philosophy can and can't yield, he nonetheless fails in practice to distinguish adequately between the two and gives philosophy an excessive priority in his thought. To rebut this accusation we consider three ways Aquinas safeguards against over-reliance on philosophy: first, Aquinas's use of Aristotle as perhaps the most notable test-case for his wider views; secondly, the way philosophy generally must be subordinated to basic Christian doctrinal truths; and, finally, the context in and purpose for which the theologian draws on philosophy.

First, Aquinas is certainly indebted to Aristotle; frequently he refers to 'the Philosopher' and appropriates his arguments. Aristotle is the first (*S.Th.* I.1.2, *resp.*) and most frequently cited philosophical authority in the larger *Summa*. So, for instance, Elders argues Aquinas is heavily indebted to Aristotle and adopts his philosophy almost entirely.[55] But this is misleading. For Aquinas, philosophy must be handled with care. After all, he says, 'the philosophers themselves … in their rational search for the goal of human life and the means to attain it fell into many shameful errors' and 'disagreed with each other so much that scarcely two or three were of the same opinion' (*de trin*. III.1, *ad*. 3). Sometimes this means Aquinas will favour Aristotle. For example, as Kretzmann notes, Aquinas rejects several Stoic and Platonist accounts of 'natural theology' (*S.Th.* II-II.94.1, *resp.*) while noticeably not rejecting the views of Aristotle on this point.[56] Again, as

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[54] On its meaning and possible provenance see P.F. Beatrice, 'The Word "Homoousios" from Hellenism to Christianity,' *Church History* 71.2 (2002): 244-72.
[55] Elders, *Aquinas and his Predecessors*, 24.
[56] Kretzmann, *Metaphyics of Theism*, 40-1.

Elders says, Aquinas carefully prefers Aristotle's account of the 'first good' to that of Plato's (*de ver.* 21.4, *resp.*).[57]

Nonetheless, Aquinas does not follow Aristotle inevitably or invariably; he was 'not an uncritical reader of Aristotle's works.'[58] For instance, there is arguably a clear contrast between Aristotle and Aquinas in their conceptions of the distinction between essence and existence.[59] Kilby charts how Aquinas pulled away from some of his contemporaries such as Sieger of Brabant who were thought to be 'wholly committed Aristotelians.'[60] And even Elders notes that alongside such rather niche issues as whether they considered virginity is desirable,[61] there is some tension between them on more vital issues.[62] For instance, while Aristotle believes there is 'an orderly cosmos which has no beginning'[63] Aquinas believes only God is without beginning.[64] Aquinas holds this on the basis of scripture, articulated in the Athanasian Creed and the teaching of St Jerome (*S.Th.* I.10.2, *s.c.*; I.10.3, *resp.*). The precise details of these disagreements are less important than the fact of their existence; it is clear Aquinas does not follow slavishly everything Aristotle said simply because Aristotle said it.[65]

Moreover, Elders's insistence that Aquinas 'was well aware of the difficulties which the introducing of Aristotelian doctrines in philosophy and theology would bring' [66] also risks misrepresenting how Aquinas thought Aristotle (and philosophy in general) could be used. Aquinas did *not* introduce Aristotelian doctrines into theology, at least not in the sense of believing things solely on the basis that Aristotle did. We show below that, for Aquinas, the sole source of our distinctively Christian knowledge of God was revelation; any form of natural knowledge of God by reason, including philosophy, could not attain distinctively Christian truths about God such as his trinity or incarnation or passion.[67] As Kilby puts it, Aquinas has 'theological reasons for granting a certain role to philosophy, [rather] than philosophical reasons for taking theological positions.'[68]

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[57] Elders, *Aquinas and his Predecessors*, 21, 24.
[58] Simon Oliver, 'Reading Philosophy,' in *The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology*, eds. Mike Higton and Jim Fodor (London: Routledge, 2015), 80.
[59] Joseph Owens, 'Aristotle and Aquinas,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 38-40.
[60] Kilby, 'Philosophy,' 67.
[61] Elders, *Aquinas and his Predecessors*, 27.
[62] Elders, *Aquinas and his Predecessors*, 23.
[63] Oliver, *Creation*, 36.
[64] Cf. Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom*, 190.
[65] Cf. Denys Turner, 'How to be an Atheist,' *New Blackfriars* 83 (2002): 332.
[66] Elders, *Aquinas and his Predecessors*, 28.
[67] See, e.g., Persson, *Sacra Doctrina*, 228.
[68] Kilby, 'Philosophy,' 66.

Secondly, Aquinas holds wider doctrinal commitments which regulate the use of philosophy in theology. Returning to the *triplex via* shows philosophy can only be used if its conclusions are refined and, one might say, purified by doctrinal commitments. There is a lot more that must be said about God than that he is the first cause, for example; so to say we can trace from effects to causes must emphasise ways in which the cause differs from the effects. The ways of remotion and eminence are in some sense an intrinsic safeguard against any language about God, including philosophical language, which makes excessive claims for itself.[69]

Similarly, Jordan cites the term *verbum* or *logos* ('word') as a good example of Aquinas adapting the meaning of a philosophical term in response to a scriptural or doctrinal principle.[70] Christianity shares with its philosophical antecedents the use of this term to mean something like the principle or cause which underpins and generates all things. But in the hands of St John and his Christian successors its meaning is radically shifted, not least because the Word becomes embodied in human flesh and dies in the person Jesus of Nazareth. So although Aquinas like many Christian theologians draws on philosophical terms or concepts their meaning is often redefined in the light of revelation, and this is a key safeguard in preventing philosophy having an unduly influential effect. Similarly, as Jordan puts it, 'no Christian should be satisfied to speak only as a philosopher'[71] because there is so much more to theology than simply philosophy.[72] Indeed, Aquinas also says explicitly that 'if philosophy is contrary to faith, it must not be accepted.'[73] So Aquinas says more about God than just what philosophy yields, and where a philosophical concept conflicts with a theological one he adapts or rejects it.

We see this by framing this question of whether Aquinas is unduly indebted to philosophy within the broader debate about philosophy in theology. It can be asserted that early and / or medieval theology is distorted by its debt to pagan philosophy. Barth's rhetoric, for example, is very suspicious of philosophy; 'the Christian Church certainly does not number Aristotle among its ancestors' (*CD* I/1, §1.11).[74] But Williams identifies a wide range of Christian convictions which are simply inconsistent with elements of the Platonic worldview which prevailed through the patristic period.[75] Similarly Stead, while more willing than Williams to adduce philosophical

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[69] Te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 80; Davies, *Thought*, 42-4.

[70] Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom*, 33-9.

[71] Mark D. Jordan, 'Theology and Philosophy,' in *Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Kretzmann and Stump, 233.

[72] Jordan, 'Theology and Philosophy,' 235.

[73] Sermon 14, *Academic Sermons*, 203.

[74] For an overview, see James Kincade, 'Karl Barth and Philosophy,' *The Journal of Religion* 40.3 (1960): 161-9.

[75] A.N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6-18.

influence on early theologians, also identifies fundamental points of difference between theology and pagan philosophy. For Stead, 'Christianity borrowed largely from philosophy' in developing *structures* of belief but 'there are relatively few points at which philosophical work is incorporated into the accepted structure of Christian teaching', not least because of Christianity's 'commitment to the Bible as a sacred book.'[76] Many theologians, including Aquinas, drew on philosophical concepts or language, but the nuance of their appropriation shows they did not imbibe pagan philosophical worldviews wholesale or uncritically. In, for instance, asserting the divine creation of a material world, the 'First Cause' taking on flesh in the Incarnation, and the redemption of human bodies as well as souls or minds, they were relying on the truth of revelation and differing in some key respects from elements of pagan philosophical perspectives.

Thirdly, what Aquinas is doing in using philosophy has a very different context and goal to what is often understood by philosophy now or as conceived by some of his critics. Aquinas could not really conceive of a philosophy which did not somehow point to the divine; the notion of a freestanding system of philosophy, unrelated to the truths of revelation, was alien to the philosophy he encountered and appropriated. Metaphysics, for Aquinas, reached great heights yet was always lacking; it could gesture at that which was beyond itself but only barely, and it could give little insight into it. Our ultimate end cannot be reached 'through a speculative science, it will come through the light of glory' (*de trin*. 6.4, *ad*. 3).[77] Theology in some sense can be seen as the completion or extension of metaphysics, discerning by God's revelation that which could be hinted at (but no more) by human reason.[78] Theology alone 'will satisfy the thwarted inquiry of the metaphysician'; and while it might 'very difficult to distinguish textually between … metaphysics and theology' in a writer like Aquinas, 'of course, spiritually, there is every difference between a philosophy pursued according to nature and the divine gift of grace.'[79] Aquinas's deployment of philosophy in theology is regulated by a distinctively Christian purpose: to draw out the truths of Christian faith so that the believer may grow in faith towards that ultimate destination of union with God which will be granted to the blessed.

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[76] G.C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 79, 93. That Williams will admit much less influence of philosophy on early Christian theology and explicitly criticises elements of his account (Williams, *Divine Sense*, 8 fn.7) adds weight to the significance of their convergence on the methodological point.

[77] Cf. Whidden, *Christ the Light*, 207-11.

[78] Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom*, 170.

[79] Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom*, 178.

Summary

Oliver rightly concludes, 'the Church's teaching was to be preferred [to philosophy] because it was based on the witness of Scripture, the teaching of the tradition, and wider doctrinal concerns regarding the nature of God's grace and freedom.'[80] Aquinas does use philosophy, in the sense of first philosophy or metaphysics, as part of his theology. He thought philosophy could, with some difficulty and for some people, yield genuine knowledge of God. But it is always limited in what it can deliver; while not separate from, or opposed to, *sacra doctrina*, philosophy is a different mode or kind of knowing.[81] So Aquinas does not accord philosophy the same status as distinctively theological sources such as scripture; and he is always discriminating and critical in its use. In many ways he is simply doing what many theologians (including Calvin) do in appropriating philosophical concepts or terms to draw out a theological truth derived from another source (revelation, scripture, tradition). And, as we will see more fully when we consider Calvin's use of philosophy in chapter three, arguments like Harrison's wrongly characterise Calvin too: philosophy is not a significant point of disagreement between Calvin and Aquinas.

Reason and revelation

So far, we have established that, despite characterisations of his thought as excessively indebted to reason, Aquinas has a clearly circumscribed account of reason in his methodology. Even on key issues like the effects of the Fall and the usefulness of philosophy he is not as optimistic about reason as often supposed. As well as the real but limited possibility of knowledge by the natural illumination of reason, there is a need for a different source of knowledge of God, the supernatural illumination of God's revelation: 'for Aquinas … faith includes believing some truths that God has revealed which we humans would be unable to grasp on our own.'[82]

A helpful starting-point is the opening article of the larger *Summa* which establishes the distinction between *theologia* and *sacra doctrina*, which we might render 'theology' and 'holy teaching' respectively. As Davies highlights, *theologia* (literally, 'talk about God') is a broader category than *sacra doctrina*. *Theologia* 'includ[es] natural theology as practised by people such as Aristotle, whom Aquinas certainly did not think of as being in receipt of *sacra doctrina*.'[83] The distinction between *theologia* and *sacra doctrina* is essentially that between the knowledge of God which

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[80] Oliver, 'Reading Philosophy,' 82.
[81] Nieuwenhove, 'Assent and *Scientia*,' 423-4.
[82] C. Stephen Evans, 'Faith and Revelation,' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 330.
[83] Davies, '*Sacra Doctrina*,' 141.

comes, respectively, from reason and from revelation. The difference can be conceived in three ways: the two kinds of knowledge are distinct in their *sources*; their *contents*; and their *effects*. To chart the distinction we begin with a point Aquinas in the first article of the larger *Summa* (*S.Th.* I.1.1), before examining other texts which further illustrate his view.

So, first, the two kinds of knowledge of God differ in their *source*. In the opening article of the *Summa*, Aquinas contrasts 'knowledge revealed by God' with 'philosophical science built up by human wisdom', and says we must 'be taught divine truths by divine revelation' (*S.Th.* I.1.1, *resp.*). Elsewhere, Aquinas states

> There is a twofold mode of truth in what we profess about God. Some truths about God exceed all the ability of the human reason … But there are some truths which the natural reason also is able to reach … In fact, [while] such truths about God have been proved demonstratively by the philosophers, guided by the light of natural reason, there are certain truths about God which totally surpass man's natural ability (*SCG* I.3.2-3).[84]

Some truths are knowable naturally by human reason; some truths are not. The source of this second kind of truth is not human reason but divine revelation. 'Those things which are beyond man's knowledge may not be sought for by … reason' but 'they are revealed by God' (*S.Th.* I.1.1, *ad.* 1). Again, 'sacred doctrine derives its principles not from any human knowledge, but from the divine knowledge' (I.1.6, *ad.* 1).

The distinction in the sources of our knowledge of God is further borne out by in Aquinas's image of our need for God to teach us some truths we cannot discover by reason. Aquinas says that 'revelation elevates us to know something of God of which we should otherwise be ignorant' (*de trin.* VI.3, *resp.*).[85] Again, in his account of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Aquinas writes that for some matters 'reason does not suffice, unless it receive in addition the prompting or motion of the Holy Ghost' (I-II.68.2, *resp.*). The image of God teaching us what we need to know recurs elsewhere (e.g. II-II.2.3, *resp.*). We need to be *taught* something we do not already know:[86] Aquinas in the same passage uses the analogy of the medical student who lacks knowledge and must be instructed in their work by a senior physician who has the necessary knowledge.

Again, as Hahn demonstrates, Aquinas sees Christ as our principal teacher. This becomes clear in his treatment of the Lord's work in the *tertia pars* of the larger *Summa* which reaches its climax in

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84 Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas*, 77-9.
85 See, e.g., Pim Valkenberg, 'Scripture,' in *Cambridge Companion to the* Summa, eds. McCosker and Turner, 50; Persson, *Sacra Doctrina*, 35.
86 So, e.g., Whidden, *Christ the Light*, 27-31.

question 42. Christ comes, that question says repeatedly, among other things to teach us *doctrine* (see, for instance, *S.Th.* III.42.2, *ad*. 2).[87] The distinction of sources shows us that reason cannot teach us *sacra doctrina*, for which we need the knowledge of revelation or divine illumination, the teaching which comes from God through Christ.

Secondly, the two kinds of knowledge of God are distinct not just in their *sources* (reason and revelation) but in their *content*. Aquinas writes, 'theology included in sacred doctrine differs in kind from that theology which is part of philosophy' (*S.Th.* I.1.1, *ad*. 2). As we have seen, the knowledge of God attainable by natural reason is circumscribed; it yields real, but limited and rather generic, insights. The knowledge the philosopher and the theologian could achieve by natural reason is the same; but only the recipient of revelation can attain vital further knowledge. 'The human mind,' says Aquinas, 'does not reach a knowledge of what God is (*quid est*) but only that he is (*an est*)' (*de trin*. I.3, *resp*.). The truths Aquinas thinks can be are demonstrably provable by reason include God's existence, his unity, and so on (*SCG* I.3.2). But for Aquinas, truths about what God is (*quid est*) cannot be proved demonstrably by reason and come only by revelation. These include, for instance, the doctrine of the Trinity ('that God is both threefold and one is solely an object of belief. There is no way of proving it demonstratively', I.4, *resp*.; cf. *SCG* I.3.2-3; *S.Th.* II-II.2.8).

As well as the understanding that God is Trinity, the doctrines of the person and work of Christ are, for Aquinas, received only by revelation and not reason. This is clear from Aquinas's stated structure in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. He says that Books I-III consider 'divine things according as the natural reason can arrive at the knowledge of divine things through creatures. This way is imperfect, nevertheless, and in keeping with reason's native capacity.' In Book IV, Aquinas says he will turn to 'those divine things that have been divinely revealed to us to be believed, since they transcend the human intellect' (*SCG* IV.1.9). Aquinas then specifies that these 'things about God Himself which surpass reason and are proposed for belief' include 'the confession of the Trinity … the work of the Incarnation and what follows thereon … the ultimate end of man, such as the resurrection and glorification of bodies, the everlasting beatitude of souls' (IV.1.11). The same doctrines are enumerated in the larger *Summa* (*S.Th.* II-II.2.7-8).

The same point is emphasised in a much less well-known work than either *Summa*, Aquinas's commentary on a late fifth- / early sixth-century work attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names*. Here, Aquinas says 'in the teaching of faith we are not able to rely on the principles

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[87] Michael Hahn, 'Thomas Aquinas's Presentation of Christ as Teacher,' *The Thomist* 83.1 (2019): 78-81.

of wisdom' but can only rely on revelation (*Div. nom.* I-1, 279). While Aquinas does not list clearly what teaching can be found only by revelation it would be consistent with his enumerations elsewhere to identify the specific doctrines of the Christian faith. This interpretation is also consistent with other parts of the same text; for instance, Aquinas later identifies the teachings that God is triune, he can be called Father, he became incarnate (I-2, 283-5). Aquinas explicitly states 'it is in itself not possible to us either to speak or think' of the Trinity and of the equality of the Father and the Son (I-3, 290). From these texts we can therefore see the distinctive Christian doctrines of God can, for Aquinas, only be delivered by revelation; and this sets apart those doctrines derived from the generic truths about God accessible to reason.

The third distinction between the two sorts of knowledge is that they can be distinguished not just by their *source* (reason and revelation) or *content* (generic truths and Christian doctrine) but by the purpose or *effects* of the knowledge. Here we draw particularly on two analyses advanced by Simon Oliver.[88] At the opening of the larger *Summa* Aquinas writes

> man is directed to God, as to an end that surpasses the grasp of his reason … but the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, beside philosophical science built up by human wisdom (*S.Th.* I.1.1, *resp.*).

Our ultimate end or goal is beatitude, union with God in blessedness (*S.Th.* I-II.1.7, *s.c.*); and blessedness 'can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence' (I-II.3.8, *resp.*).[89] 'The human intellect,' says Aquinas, 'knows no more of God than *that He is*' (*ibid.*); to attain this vision of the divine essence is not something we can achieve: 'man cannot attain happiness by his own powers' (I-II.5.5, *s.c.*, *resp.*). So to know our end, never mind how to reach it, we need revelation: 'the natural power of the created intellect does not avail to enable it to see the essence of God … it is necessary that the power of understanding should be added by divine grace' (*S.Th.* 1.12.5, *resp.*).[90] Something must be added which the human cannot naturally attain. Sometimes this is called grace and / or illumination (as in this article); sometimes revelation (as in I.12.13, *add.* 1-3). However described, it comes from a source other than reason.[91] Aquinas repeats the point elsewhere; for instance, 'sacred scripture is divinely ordered to this: that through it, the truth necessary for salvation may be made known to us' (*de trin.* VI.3, *resp.*).

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[88] Oliver, 'Faith and Reason'; and Simon Oliver, '*Salus* and *Sanctus*: On Salvation as Health and Well-being,' Durham University Catholic Theology Research Seminar, 10th October 2019.

[89] 'Happiness' is a widespread but weak translation of what Aquinas calls *beatitudo*. It is considerably more than simply feeling good. Te Velde, for example, revealingly puts happiness in speech marks – *Aquinas on God*, 155-6. Good discussions of what Aquinas means by *beatitudo* are te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 155-60; Davies, *Thought*, 227-30; Jean Porter, 'Happiness,' in *Cambridge Companion to the* Summa, eds. McCosker and Turner, 181-93.

[90] Davies, *Thought*, 252-3.

[91] Whidden, *Christ the Light*, esp. 32-5; cf. Rogers, *Aquinas and Barth*, 45.

Thus, 'in respect of our last end' Aquinas says that even the wisest person must be 'moved by the yet higher promptings of the Holy Ghost' (I-II.68.2, *ad*. 1), and that our journey to blessedness needs the Spirit to guide us (*resp*.). Again, as Hahn shows, the principle purpose of Christ's doctrine is to teach us salvation. For example, Aquinas says that Christ's doctrine 'was the only way to salvation' (III.42.2, *resp*.). So Hahn rightly characterises 'Christ's human task of teaching about God and himself through the use of words and images, which task has as its end the bringing of other human beings to salvation.'[92] As Aquinas concludes, our ultimate happiness cannot be attained by natural reason, only when we are taught it by God (II-II.2.3, *resp*.); and 'in order that a man may arrive at the perfect vision of heavenly happiness, he must first of all believe God, as a disciple believes the master who is teaching him' (*ad*. 1). In this image of the divine teacher, all three features which distinguish revelation's knowledge from reason's are clear: source (we must believe something beyond our reason which is taught by God); content (we believe that doctrine which God teaches); effects (this teaching the necessary gift which leads us to salvation).

The distinction between the effects of reason's knowledge of God and revelation's can also be couched in terms of what belief is generated by each route. Aquinas distinguishes between three different kinds of belief (II-II.2.2, *resp*.). As Kerr explains, reason may lead us to believe that God exists, what Aquinas calls *credere Deum* (a basic belief for example that God exists; the generic level of this belief being evident from the translation in the Dominican edition of 'believing in *a* God'). But there is then *credere Deo* (believing God, something more akin to believing what God communicates); and then *credere in Deum* (believing in God, which entails trust and faith).[93] This latter sort of belief entails not just knowing something, but an act of the will in assenting to it.[94] And, crucially, as Rogers points out, this act of will is made possible only by God's revelation which exceeds the natural cognition of our reason.[95]

So unlike the knowledge of God conferred by reason, that conferred by revelation brings *salus* or salvation,[96] which, as Oliver points out, may in both Latin and Greek refer to salvation, health, healing, or wholeness.[97] As Oliver goes on, this for Aquinas is beyond natural human capacity, hence the need for divine revelation.[98] Indeed, Aquinas writes that 'the perfection of the rational creature' entails 'a supernatural participation in the divine goodness' we 'cannot attain unless …

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[92] Hahn, 'Christ as Teacher,' 62; Hahn cites a range of other texts to the same effect.

[93] Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 67; Oliver, 'Faith and Reason,' 136-7; Bruce D. Marshall, 'Aquinas as Postliberal Theologian,' *The Thomist* 53.3 (1989): esp. 379-87.

[94] Oliver, 'Faith and Reason,' 140-4; so also Nieuwenhove, 'Assent and *Scientia*,' 420-3.

[95] Rogers, *Aquinas and Barth*, 179-80.

[96] Persson, *Sacra Doctrina*, 35.

[97] Oliver, '*Salus* and *Sanctus*,' 5.

[98] Oliver, '*Salus* and *Sanctus*,' 14-15.

taught by God' (*S.Th.* II-II.2.3, *resp*.) Rejecting the view that it is 'unnecessary for salvation to believe anything above the natural reason' (*obj.* 1), Aquinas insists that 'natural knowledge does not suffice for its perfection, and some supernatural knowledge is necessary' (*ad.* 1). The fact that this question follows immediately from a discussion of the articles of faith set down in the creeds (II-II.1.6-10) further supports the case that, for Aquinas, revelation alone can yield the distinctively Christian knowledge of God necessary for redemption, and lead us *credere in Deum* which results ultimately in blessedness.

We see here a clear distinction in the content of the knowledge of God delivered by natural reason and by divine revelation, with the distinctive doctrines of Christian faith delivered only by the latter and unknowable to the former. They are distinguished by source (revelation and reason), content (generic concepts of God and specific Christian doctrines), and effect (only the latter brings salvation). The clear distinctions in Aquinas's account undermine arguments he is excessively indebted to reason, since he is so clear about its function and limits.

However, further attention must now be given to the relationship between reason and revelation in Aquinas's thought to establish clearly that they are not to be conceived in tension. This is a risk of accounts like Harrison's which understate the distinctive centrality of revelation in Aquinas's thought by over-emphasising the authority of reason and tradition. Such views, in turn, exacerbate an over-reaction by others who feel that, despite all the conceptual nuance in Aquinas (or perhaps because of it), he nonetheless still leans too far towards reason. There is more than a hint of that accusation in Barth, for example, when he is adamant about the independence of revelation from reason. For Barth, it is essential that we consider 'the Word of God as the act of God's free love and not as if the addressed and hearing man were in any way essential to the concept of the Word of God.' Barth feared that in the anxiety to avoid one side of the debate on the reason-revelation dialectic 'we throw ourselves into the arms, e.g., of Aristotle or Thomas', since he is 'suspicious of the other side too' (*CD* I/1, §6.2)![99] To conclude our discussion of reason and revelation we now set out some further considerations which safeguard the centrality of revelation for Aquinas, who, notwithstanding the substantial if limited place for reason he sets out, can be defended against the kind of challenge Barth seems to be making here. This section will examine three related points: whether revelation and reason risk being set against each other; understanding reason as created rather than autonomous; and the implications of distinguishing how reason operates under the conditions of faith. In each case, the conclusions drawn about Aquinas's method will be set alongside considerations advanced from a reformed perspective by John Webster. This will show

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[99] Cf. Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 24-5.

how, if understood in this way, Aquinas's account converges with some key reformed concerns rather than being inimical to them.

First we can draw on the helpful distinction, identified by Turner, between a *diversitas* and an *oppositio*.[100] Briefly, *diversitas* considers different aspects of something or refers to two different kinds of thing, whereas *oppositio* considers something from the same angle or on the same basis or refers to two kinds of the same thing.[101] Consider (my example, not Turner's or Oliver's) the drink I will pour at the end of writing this chapter. If I say 'this drink is gin' and you say 'this gin is in an Ikea glass' we are talking about fundamentally different things, there is a *diversitas*. The truth of one statement does not affect the truth of the other (it would still be gin were it in a Dartington crystal glass rather than a cheap Ikea one). But if I say 'this drink is gin' and you say 'this drink is whiskey' this is an *oppositio:* we are drawing a conclusion about the same thing (this drink) in the same way (what kind of drink it is). And the two things cannot both be true at the same time: if it is gin, it is not whiskey.

Apply this distinction to the present discussion of scripture and reason, we conceive the distinction as a *diversitas* rather than an *oppositio*. Admittedly, we are talking in both cases about a mode of knowledge; and, indeed, knowledge of the same (divine) subject. *But* the way we come to this knowledge, its purpose and effects, are fundamentally different. And the end result of the knowledge of God yielded by each route is also fundamentally different. Unaided by revelation, reason alone would reach only to the notion of a creative and providential divine being; it could not tell us of God's triune nature, his love for the world in redeeming it through the life of Christ, and so on. *But*, crucially, these two kinds of truth run (to adopt Oliver's phrase) in parallel. It is *not* that the more I know of God by reason the further I move from the God of revelation, and *vice versa*; they are just not comparable in that sense.

Once we understand reason and revelation are different kinds of thing, rather than opposite kinds of the same thing, that we are dealing with *diversitas* rather than *oppositio*, it becomes much easier to preserve the centrality of revelation. For it is not the case that the more reason there is the less revelation there must be (or, indeed, the more weight we give to reason the less we give to scripture). Rather, it is that we need to understand the distinct, co-operative ways reason and revelation work in our knowledge of God.

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[100] Turner's mature statement of his position on this distinction – and how it has evolved in dialogue with Fergus Kerr from his initial critique of Kerr – can be found in Denys Turner, 'Reason, the Eucharist, and the Body,' in his *God, Mystery, and Mystification* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 45-68.

[101] Oliver, 'Faith and Reason,' 133-4.

While not (so far as I am aware) couching the dialectic between reason and revelation as a *diversitas*, Webster uses different language to the same effect. For Webster, both reason and revelation have their proper place in theology, and, crucially, these must be understood alongside each other, not as competitive or even as separate. His good short account of revelation is clear that it is revelation which saves us.[102] But he cautions us against 'a competitive understanding of the transcendent and the historical'[103] which can readily map on to these debates about revelation and reason by seeing them as contradictory or in tension. Indeed, he explicitly identifies the 'temptation to magnify grace by eliminating the work of reason as if reason were by nature an aggressor.'[104] The grace of revelation, though, is not contradictory to the nature of reason; both have their function in the economy of grace.[105]

Secondly, it is essential to recognise that, for Aquinas, reason is *not* some autonomous human faculty or capacity. This is, at root, the simple product of our being created. Reason, like revelation, comes from God; it is a divine gift we have it at all. This becomes clear, for instance, at the outset of Thomas's discussion of grace (*S.Th.* I-II.109-14). Thus, while 'without grace, man of himself can know truth' (I-II.109.1, *s.c.*), the existence and operation of this faculty requires divine action: 'the act of the intellect or of any created being whatsoever depends upon God … as it is from him that it has the form whereby it acts … as it is moved by him to act' (*resp.*). Thus, Aquinas continues, 'Every truth by whomsoever is spoken from the Holy Ghost as bestowing natural night' (*ad.* 1; cf. *ad.* 3). The natural light of reason, just as much the supernatural light of revelation, is a God-given gift, dependent on the action of the Holy Spirit both to confer it on us and to move it to any right knowledge at all. Note that Aquinas does not here say that we need the Spirit to guide our reason only in supernatural matters, but in *all* matters: that is, we need God's help to know natural as well as supernatural truths. So Whidden says that the natural light of our intellect 'is not an autonomous light, but one implanted in us by God.'[106] Similarly, 'all our knowing and reasoning, inasmuch as they are acts, owe a great deal, and in some sense all, to God's action in us.'[107] This insistence on the divine provenance of reason goes a considerable way to justifying its place in theological method, for it is not a possession or capacity we own or can control; like revelation, albeit in a different way, our reason is itself a gift from God. This is a much richer (and more overtly theological) account of reason than simply an individual human capacity.

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[102] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 12-6.

[103] Webster, *Scripture*, 21.

[104] John Webster, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 129.

[105] Webster, *Scripture*, 123.

[106] Whidden, *Christ the Light*, 23, cf. 65.

[107] Williams, 'Argument to Bliss,' 509; similarly: 'in any knowledge of truth … the proximate and principal cause of knowledge is the … intellect. But God alone bestows this power, and he alone moves it,' Matthew Cuddeback, 'Thomas Aquinas on Illumination and the Authority of the First Truth,' *Nova et Vetera* 7.3 (2009): 591.

Webster also emphasises reason's createdness. Defining and justifying the place of reason in theological method in the face of some reformed critique, Webster argues, 'reason is created, fallen, and redeemed … because creatures are *creatures*, they have reason because they have God … Creaturely reason is contingent. It is not original or self-founding after the manner of the uncreated divine reason.'[108] This is no more or less than Aquinas's position: our reason differs from God's in many ways, and we have it only because he gives it to us. Both are 'a sphere of God's activity.'[109]

Thirdly, reason for Aquinas appears to operate in a slightly different way when it is moved by faith in God. In a remark which has caused some controversy, Aquinas says that the atheist does not believe in God in the same way a Christian believer, 'for they do not believe that God exists under the conditions that faith determines' (*S.Th.* II-II.2.2, *ad.* 3).[110] Kerr is certainly right to say that Aquinas here envisage reason operating differently for the believer; for *credere in Deum* requires an act not just of the intellect but of the will.[111] This act of will, an act of faith, then opens up new truths to the reason (II-II.2.3, *add.* 2-3). One of the principal effects of faith is enlightening the mind with the truths of doctrine, such as the Trinity and Christ's incarnation, and Aquinas gives a strong hint that this includes an ability for the believer to properly construe the meaning of scripture (II-II.8.2, *s.c.*, *resp.*). Our union with God, Aquinas adds, relies on the gift of knowledge (II-II.9.2, *ad.* 1). In short, reason when exercised by the believer, exercised in faith, allows the supernatural enlargement of our understanding so that we may see the truths necessary for salvation.[112] Reason under the conditions of faith is directly dependent on God who infuses it with grace through faith, while reason more generally is indirectly dependent on God as created and moved by him.

Thus defined, reason's use in theology – or, better, in *sacra doctrina*, that specific element of theology which cannot also be called metaphysics – can only be practised by the believer and not the mere philosopher. And this finds resonance with what Webster calls 'theological reason', which always 'is subject to the divine calling and the divine assistance.'[113] Indeed, Webster explicitly prays Aquinas in aid of this notion of reason, noting how Aquinas always conceives *sacra*

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[108] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 124.

[109] Webster, *Scripture*, 127.

[110] There is an interesting debate about whether 'God' as known by natural reason alone is the same subject as 'God' as known by natural reason plus revelation – is the 'god of the philosophers' the same thing as the 'Christian' god? Te Velde (*Aquinas on God*, 3) and Turner (e.g., *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God*, 17-20) seem to say 'yes'; Kerr seems to say 'no' (*After Aquinas*, 67). Oliver offers a mediating reading of Turner and Kerr in 'Faith and Reason,' 135-7. We need not settle that question here, since whether or not both routes yield knowledge of the same divine being, our point is that reason operates differently in theology when it is practised under the condition of faith.

[111] Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 66-7; cf. Victor Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God: A Reformulation of Thomas Aquinas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 228-30.

[112] Cf. Williams, 'Argument to Bliss,' 10-11; Oliver, 'Faith and Reason,' 142-4.

[113] Webster, *Scripture*, 127; cf. *Domain of the Word*, ix.

doctrina as an exercise of creaturely reason but reliant always on divine grace.[114] Reason then in this sense is God-given and God-guided, far from the caricature of reason as some confident expression of autonomous human capacity against which many reformed writers (such as Barth) understandably react.

The reason-revelation dialectic is crucial to Aquinas. The reading of that dialectic offered in this section shows the centrality of revelation in Aquinas's account of the knowledge of God, in that revelation alone yields the saving truth which God alone can teach us, while preserving a real if limited place for human reason within its natural sphere of teaching us generic truths about the divine. The coherence of this account is further demonstrated when we understand its richness. So the two sources of knowledge of God are not in competition but complementary; ultimately God is the author of our reason (created gift) as he is of revelation (supernatural gift); and reason in *sacra doctrina* operates in a distinct way. We can already see how this richer account would go some way to answering the reformed critique (or challenging arguments like Harrison's) that reason is somehow independent of, or undermines, revelation. Developing this argument alongside Webster's account of theological reason shows how Aquinas can be interpreted as congenial to reformed concerns about the centrality and uniqueness of revelation without undermining the real function reason has in his method. To address where this revelation is now found, the next section moves from one theological warrant, *reason*, to another, *scripture*.

Scripture in Aquinas's theological method

Introduction

A key concern of reformed theological method, as we saw in the quotation from Chillingworth (pp.13-4) and the concerns of Barth, is to maintain the unique centrality of scripture. This section traces Aquinas's account of scripture. First, it shows (because this will become a key point in suggesting parallels with Calvin) how Aquinas sees scripture as correcting our natural knowledge of God. Then, secondly, we return to the question of where we find revelation, showing for Aquinas revelation is closely identified with scripture. Finally, and here congruence with Calvin seems harder initially to demonstrate, it discusses how scripture is held to be authoritative.

Scripture corrects the natural knowledge of God

Before turning to the question of scripture's sufficiency (thereby returning to the crucial relationship of revelation and scripture), note that Aquinas thinks scripture also works in our natural

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[114] Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 137-42.

reason's sphere. This is further evidence that Aquinas does not conceive the theological warrants as somehow in competition or tension.

At the outset of both *Summae* Aquinas insists it is safer and quicker to learn by revelation even things we can know by natural reason, because if left to reason alone, only a few humans would find out the necessary truths about God which reason can yield, and then only slowly, partially, and with many errors (*S.Th.* I.1.1, *resp.*, *ad.* 1; *SCG* I.4). Later, Aquinas reminds us that 'human reason is very deficient in things concerning God,' so we should 'accept by faith not only those things which are above reason, but also those which can be known by reason' (*S.Th.* II-II.2.4, *resp.*). For example, consider the second question of the *Summa*. Aquinas discusses what we can know about God by nature. The basic, simplest reason for believing we can know God is not that this can be said naturally by reason about itself (though Aquinas clearly thinks that), but because St Paul writes in the Bible that we can know God naturally in that now-familiar text, Romans 1.20 (I.1.2, *s.c.*). And even where Aquinas is sometimes thought to be very confident about reason's powers, in offering through the 'Five Ways' a rational demonstration of God's existence, his initial basis for believing God's existence is again, revealingly, a scriptural one, 'I am that I am' (Exodus 3.14, quoted in I.2.3 *s.c.*).[115]

So scripture for Aquinas can correct or even supplant reasoned inferences; we can learn by revelation in scripture what we could also learn in principle by reason. Hence the old lady who knows God's revelation having more awareness of the truth than the philosopher, even though the latter's natural reason is much more sophisticated. This, as we will see, is a key element of Calvin's account, who thought scripture corrected the defective sight of reason even with its natural sphere. But scripture and reason play different roles in the sphere of the saving knowledge of God which comes to us only by revelation. In the natural sphere of reason, both reason and scripture can serve as sources of knowledge. But in the sphere of revelation, while reason is useful, it cannot function as a source of knowledge; scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) is that source, as we now see.

Scripture's sufficiency

We have seen throughout this chapter that Aquinas has a clear methodological distinction between natural knowledge of God, accessible in principle to all human beings, yielding through reason a substantial but generic account of God. By contrast, that knowledge of God which tells us the saving truths of faith comes only by divine revelation. Yet this at once begs a further question:

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[115] Thus Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas*, x.

where is this saving knowledge found?[116] The previous section showed a fuller understanding of reason and revelation in Aquinas goes a considerable way to demonstrating his congruity with reformed perspectives which insist on revelation alone as the distinctive source of our saving knowledge of God. But this congruity would be undermined if Aquinas thought there were many media of this revelation, where the reformed tradition has emphasised scripture as sole source of this knowledge.

We can contrast three kinds of account here. Harrison, as we saw, thought Aquinas gave privileged status in theology to a range of sources[117] and this would appear to undermine the centrality of revelation (and certainly of scripture). O'Collins, while not directly analysing Aquinas, nonetheless from a Roman Catholic perspective argues that revelation is in some sense ongoing and may include revelation through for instance art and music[118] and that in particular revelation specifically requires the papal magisterium to authoritatively pronounce on it.[119] But this is a much broader definition than Aquinas's. A second kind seen, for instance, in Valkenberg, adopts a more limited but still fairly wide view of authority in Aquinas. After commenting briefly on why *sola scriptura* is a not unproblematic maxim, we will challenge Valkenberg's account of Aquinas in some detail, and thereby (by implication) also contest the wider view of Harrison and O'Collins. Instead, by drawing on a third kind of reading of Aquinas articulated by Davies, we will see how, provided this is understood carefully, Aquinas can be said to adopt a *sola scriptura* view of theological method.

Immediate problems, of course, arise with *sola scriptura* approach if this is taken to mean scripture needs no other theological warrant alongside it. Three can be identified straight away. First, there is a complex history of the church deciding what counted as scripture; in some sense, the *tradition* of the church chronologically precedes scripture, so an account of scripture which gives no place to tradition at all will fall down on those simple historical grounds.[120] Secondly, even to receive the revelation of scripture requires *reason*. As Oliver indicates, 'revelation always has to have something to do with our reasoning, otherwise how could we recognise revelation and make sense

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[116] Leo Elders, 'Aquinas on Holy Scripture as the Medium of Divine Revelation,' in *La Doctrine de la Revelation Divine de Saint Thomas D'Aquin: Actes du Symposium sur la Pensée de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), 133.

[117] Harrison, *Bible and Science*, 69.

[118] Gerald O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation of God's Self-Revelation in Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 66-73. O'Collins seems alert to the danger of this definition, in insisting that such contemporary revelation by a range of media 'does not essentially bring anything essentially new' to the faith (*Tradition: Understanding Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, 45). But from a reformed perspective it would still be a concerningly wide definition.

[119] O'Collins, *Revelation*, 132. This is rightly criticised by Andrew Loke, 'Review of Gerald O'Collins' *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation of God's Self-Revelation in Jesus Christ*,' *JTS* 69.1 (2018): 385-6.

[120] Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 80-2.

of it?'[121] Thirdly, the meaning of biblical passages is contested; both those who asserted that the Son was subordinate to the Father and those who insisted that they were equal could claim support from texts in John's Gospel, a debate Aquinas traverses in *SCG* IV.1-15.[122] In some sense, therefore, other theological warrants are needed alongside scripture; the key issue is tracing the function and authority of each warrant.

A fourth difficulty is that the category of *revelation* cannot be entirely equated with scripture, if only because Jesus of Nazareth was himself God's revelation to us. Barth, with all his strongly reformed emphasis on scripture, insists as much when he talks about 'the revelation attested *in* scripture' (*CD* I/1, §8.1); the category of 'revelation' is clearly in some sense broader than scripture. We can, of course, exclude for us today the revelation of the physical, personal presence of Christ in history which the apostles experienced, though for those who *did* encounter the physical Jesus of Nazareth this encounter itself was (at least potentially) revelatory.[123] Nonetheless, identifying these four factors helps locate the key problem of any account of scriptural sufficiency: it cannot be taken to be entirely identical with revelation, nor can any plausible account be offered which does not at least include some place for the other theological warrants. So: what is Aquinas's view of scripture's sufficiency? This helps frame the question in the language of the debate about revelation: does anything apart from scripture now reveal the saving knowledge of Christ essentially for our redemption? What is (are) the source(s) for what Aquinas calls *sacra doctrina*? Davies wryly notes that anyone asking that is 'very likely to feel short of an answer,' for Aquinas 'does not have much to say about which enunciations count as *sacra doctrina*.'[124]

In contesting the moderate formulation of Valkenberg we will also see the weakness of the more expansive view of Harrison and O'Collins. Valkenberg adopts a more moderate view than Harrison of what 'enunciations' for Aquinas carry such authority. Valkenberg cites Aquinas's comment that 'individual facts are treated of in sacred doctrine … to establish the authority of those men on whom this sacred scripture or doctrine is based' (*S.Th.* I.1.1, *ad.* 2). Valkenberg says Aquinas's

> reference to divine revelation serves mainly to support the authority of holy men – to whom Aquinas sometimes adds women – as witnesses and transmitters of revelation. This indicates how the authority of textual sources (*auctoritates*) in holy teaching (*sacra doctrina*) proceeds from the authority of teachers who have received a special ability to explain God's revelation to us. These teachers are the prophets and the Apostles from

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[121] Oliver, 'Reading Philosophy,' 79; cf. Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 89.

[122] As he does with the question of whether the Holy Spirit is divine, *SCG* IV.15-23; see Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 85-7.

[123] Hahn, 'Christ as Teacher,' 77-80.

[124] Davies, '*Sacra Doctrina*,' 143.

> the Bible, but also the Bishops, the Saints and the Doctors of the Church. For Aquinas, they are all included in Holy Scripture.[125]

Indeed, though Valkenberg does not quote it, Aquinas's commentary on Dionysius also suggests scripture requires some additional authorities. There, Aquinas says the truths of the incarnation are 'understood through the divine benignity' in scripture 'but also any deifying lights, i.e. any other divine verities, the hidden tradition of our leaders, namely of the other apostles and other doctors after them' (*div. nom.* I-2, 285). Later, Aquinas refers to the necessity not just 'of things which are handed down in sacred scripture, but also things which were said by the holy doctors' (II-1, 304).

Unlike Harrison (who, recall, included extra-Christian sources in his list of Aquinas's theological authorities), Valkenberg at least limits the scope of revelation to Christian authorities. Valkenberg comes closer to conceiving a *sola scriptura* view in Aquinas, but there is still a question about how elastic the definition of 'scripture' is here. For example, there might be considerable disagreement between denominations about who counts as a 'saint' or a 'doctor', and on what criteria. Furthermore, neither the specific text that Valkenberg cites nor similar texts from the *Divine Names* which might be prayed in aid quite argue for that broad an interpretation of scripture.

In the text from *S.Th.* I.1.2, Aquinas nowhere uses the words 'authorities' or 'teachers.' The reply to the second objection which Valkenberg draws on is clearly referring to *those persons who are named in scripture*. Indeed, the objection it rejects is that sacred doctrine cannot be a science because it treats of individual persons. Aquinas's claim for authority here is for the *scriptural texts themselves*; facts about individuals are included 'to establish the authority of those men through whom the divine revelation is based' (I.1.2, *ad*. 2). It is not a wider, generic claim about the authority of subsequent teachers but a narrow, specific claim about the authority of figures named in the scriptural texts. This article cannot ground a general claim that authoritative revelation can be found other than in the scriptural texts.

Turning to the passages from *Divine Names*, again, Aquinas's definitions are narrower than might first appear. The first passage limits 'deifying lights' to what 'has been given to us clearly along with the succession of divine expressions, i.e., insofar as it is handed down in holy scripture' (*div. nom.* I-2, 285). The second likewise ends on a restrictive note, considering authoritative only those 'who preserved sacred scripture unspotted' (II-1, 304). What emerges from these passages is a

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[125] Valkenberg, 'Scripture,' 51; similarly, Piotr Roszak, 'Revelation and Scripture: Exploring the Scriptural Foundations of *Sacra Doctrina* in Aquinas,' *Angelicum* 93.1 (2016): 204-5.

sense that the authority of subsequent teachers is derivative, dependent on their preserving the teaching of scripture.

To understand Aquinas's account more fully, moreover, we must consider the vital passage where Aquinas discusses the sources of theological authority. He writes, 'our faith rests upon the revelation made to the apostles and prophets who wrote the canonical books and not on the revelations (if such there be) made to other doctors' (*S.Th.* I.1.8, *ad.* 2). Now, Valkenberg argues that this simply excludes as authoritative pre-Christian philosophical texts, but includes 'teachers of the church' who 'may be said to be part of scripture.'[126] But this is not what the passage says. It insists that *all* authorities outside of the canonical texts are secondary. 'The authority of the doctors of the church' just as much as 'the authority of philosophers' is *at best* 'probable.'[127]

A similar theme emerges elsewhere, for example in Aquinas's discussion of whether, in the state of perfection before the Fall, a child immediately after birth would be perfect such that it possessed the full bodily strength of an adult.[128] This may not seem an obvious topic for revealing Aquinas's theological method, but there is a little nugget there. Aquinas writes, 'by faith alone do we hold these things which are above nature, and what we believe rests on authority' , and he then defines this as 'the authority of scripture' (I.99.1. *resp.*; cf. I.101.1, *resp.*).[129]

So, as Davies rightly argues, a clear pattern emerges in Aquinas's thought which restricts *sacra doctrina* or revelation to a very narrow definition which is almost entirely scriptural. For the most part *sacra doctrina* is almost entirely interchangeable conceptually with *sacra scriptura*; that is, sacred doctrine and sacred scripture are almost entirely coterminous.[130] There is no real distinction in the opening questions of the larger *Summa* between *revelation*, *scripture*, and *sacred doctrine* (they are used interchangeably in *S.Th.* I.1.3, *resp.*, for instance, and elsewhere).[131]

Elsewhere, Aquinas writes 'the principles from which this teaching proceeds are those which are received through the revelation of the Holy Spirit and handed down in holy scripture' and 'divine

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[126] Valkenberg, 'Scripture,' 54.
[127] So Kilby, 'Philosophy,' 63; cf. Nicolas M. Healy, 'Introduction,' in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to his Critical Commentaries*, eds. Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum (London: T&T Clark, 2006).
[128] Incidentally, Aquinas says not – before the Fall, we would have perfectly only those abilities appropriate to our age.
[129] Elders, 'Aquinas on Scripture,' 137-8.
[130] Davies, *Thought*, 12; so also Rogers, *Aquinas and Barth*, 42.
[131] Roszak, 'Revelation and Scripture,' 209; cf. Davies, '*Sacra Doctrina*,' 144; Marshall, '*Quod Scit Una Uetula*,' 6; Valkenberg, 'Scripture,' 48. A fuller treatment is Christopher T. Baglow, 'Sacred Scripture and Sacred Doctrine in Saint Thomas Aquinas,' in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, eds. Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum (London: T&T Clark, 2004), esp. 1-6.

revelation is contained in sacred scripture' (*Div. nom.* I-I, 271). He speaks of 'revelation proceeding from the Holy Spirit in the apostles and prophets' (I-1, 279). A plain reading, in the light of Aquinas's wider account just discussed, clearly indicates he means only those writings which derive from the apostles and prophets, namely scripture.[132] Moreover, the close connection between *sacra doctrina*, revelation, and scripture is further emphasised by the emphasis on *teaching*. Scripture alone is the source of Christ's teaching; 'access to revelation is given in the words of canonical scripture and especially in the teaching of Christ contained there.'[133]

Aquinas's repeated emphasis on revelation being something which comes through prophets and apostles, and the clear distinction he makes between those persons and all later doctors of the church (*S.Th.* I.1.8, *ad.* 2), underscores the point. Scripture alone is the means God has chosen to deliver this saving knowledge,[134] though this does not mean it stands completely alone. As Persson concludes, while for Aquinas 'scripture is both normative, clear, and sufficient', its meaning is not always immediately apparent or readily accessible.[135] So a clear account of scriptural sufficiency can be traced in Aquinas, but something more needs to be said; some other warrant is needed to draw out scripture's meaning.

Here we must distinguish between a *source* in theology and a *tool*. We can, returning to Turner's analysis, consider the difference between scripture and reason as a *diversitas* rather than an *oppostio:* the two warrants have very different functions in theological method, so need not be conceived as in tension. Aquinas, as we have seen, considers that the only *source* of divine revelation is the sacred scripture. Williams helpfully highlights that many discussions of the warrants seem to assume they

> function in relation to a theological argument or conclusion in comparable ways. That is, scripture grounds claim X while reason grounds claim Y. The oddity of this assumption emerges when one begins to seek examples of reason's deliverances: exactly where has a Christian doctrine been asserted on the basis of reason alone?[136]

Scripture alone, as the record of God's revelation, can ground a true doctrinal assertion.[137] This is Aquinas's position; doctrine comes from scripture and nowhere else.[138] Similarly, from a reformed perspective Ballor speaks of Aquinas holding the view that scripture is materially sufficient (i.e.,

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[132] Davies, '*Sacra Doctrina*,' 145; Davies also cites in support Aquinas's maxim that *canonical scripture alone is the rule of faith*: 147 fn.10; so also Elders, 'Aquinas on Scripture,' 137.
[133] Davies, '*Sacra Doctrina*,' 144; similarly Marshall, '*Quod scit una uetula*,' 6.
[134] Cf. Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas*, 66.
[135] Persson, *Sacra Doctrina*, 58.
[136] Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 87.
[137] Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 83, cf. 94.
[138] Cf. Baglow, 'Scripture and Doctrine,' 3, and Persson, *Sacra Doctrina*, 83.

that everything needed for our salvation is contained therein; it is sufficient as a *source* of saving knowledge).[139]

This is not to deny reason's legitimate use in clarifying or expressing scriptural truths. As Aquinas writes, 'nothing is handed down in this doctrine other than what is found in holy scripture', but with this crucial qualification, 'he [i.e. Denys] does not say *in* holy writings but *by* holy writings, since whatever can be elicited from these things which are contained in holy scripture are not foreign to this doctrine, although they themselves are not contained in holy scripture' (*div. nom.* I-1, 280). There is, then, need for other warrants: but as tools, not sources. So Williams concludes of Aquinas, even where 'this supposedly rationalistic theologian is supposedly most confident of the reach of human reason, Aquinas actually gives it a straitened role, and one which is almost entirely regulatory.'[140] That is to say, reason can help us articulate scripture and show which kinds of doctrinal inference from scripture are and are not permissible for sacred doctrine. A parallel can be seen in Lash's notion of the need for a 'a set of protocols against idolatry.'[141] Reason can help us test a reading of scripture and ensure that reading is consistent with its scriptural source, that the subject of our discourse really is the Christian God there revealed. Reason can adjudicate, but it cannot ground, doctrinal claims; it is a tool, not a source.

But, of course, we might immediately ask how we judge which exercise of reason does this, or rather *whose* exercise of reason. Here again we are led to the question of tradition. Harrison and O'Collins, and to a lesser extent Valkenberg, define this quite broadly, suggesting a range of reasoning authorities of the past might be counted as authoritative; we must defer fuller argument to the discussion of tradition. For now, it is clear Aquinas could not support a notion of *sola scriptura* in the sense that scripture stood alone theologically and required no other warrant or tool; but he could support a notion of *sola scriptura* in the sense that scripture was the sole *source* of our saving knowledge of God, albeit one which requires additional tools to interpret. Scripture is sufficient in the sense that all we need to know for our salvation is contained therein, and Aquinas could be said to hold a *sola scriptura* view thus defined.

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[139] Jordan J. Ballor, 'Deformation and Reformation: Thomas Aquinas and the Rise of Protestant Scholasticism,' in *Aquinas among the Protestants*, eds. Svensson and VanDrunen, 59.

[140] Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 107.

[141] Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and End of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 194; on this concept see Paul D. Murray, 'Theology "Under the Lash": Theology as Idolatry Critique in the Work of Nicholas Lash', *New Blackfriars* 88 (2007): 17-18.

Scripture's authority

If the unique authority of scripture is affirmed by Aquinas, a more complicated question centres on where scripture's authority is derived. Calvin (in)famously appeared to assert that scripture's authority derived from itself, that it was *autopistis*. Before turning to Calvin's account in chapter three we briefly trace Aquinas's view, to show how it is not necessarily inimical to Calvin's.

For Aquinas, 'holy scripture … has strength and power in that the apostles and prophets were moved to speak by the Holy Spirit revealing to them and speaking in them (*div. nom.* I-1, 279). And 'since holy scripture is all wise and most true sincere revealed and handed down by God who is all truth and all knowledge, holy scripture is maximally to be believed' (283). *Sacra doctrina*'s knowledge of God comes only from God, 'as he is known to himself alone and revealed to others' (*S.Th.* I.1.6, *resp.*; cf. *add.* 1, 2). And, as we have seen, scripture alone is the source of this revelation.

Yet how are we to know that scripture is the source of divine revelation? On what basis do we attribute it that authority? Again, some of that discussion must be deferred until chapter five. But how in general might one know what scripture is?

Here we are left with an apparent gap in Aquinas's reasoning. Aquinas's belief in the authority of scripture seems to be a matter of assumption rather than argument.

> Sacred scripture … can dispute with one who denies its principles only if the opponent admits some at least of the truths obtained through divine revelation; thus we can argue heretics from texts in Holy Writ … [but] if our opponent believes nothing of divine revelation, there is no longer any means of proving the articles of faith by reasoning (*S.Th.* I.1.8, *resp.*).

Here we can draw again on Turner, who similarly argues that on questions of faith a Thomist cannot really argue with an atheist, at least not a coherent atheist, because there simply is no common point of departure to argue from.[142] By analogy, the question of scripture's authority, being essentially about whether there is God with such authority in the first place, is not something which can be argued for, but can only be accepted and then subsequently interrogated.

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[142] Turner, 'How to be an Atheist,' 317-25; Turner, *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God*, 254-9.

Thus, Rogers concludes,

> sacred doctrine primarily communicates the authority of those individuals from whom we receive divine revelation; it does not try to establish rationally this authority … the knowledge that is most proper to sacred doctrine … only comes through a person's belief in divine revelation that has been entrusted to prophets and apostles.[143]

Essentially this is an act of the will rather than the persuasion of the argument; here we return to Kerr's analysis of *credere in Deum*. One accepts as true that these persons received divine revelation, it cannot be argued for; and then, having accepted that principle, begins to reason from the texts they wrote.

This case for scripture as not needing any investigable grounds for its authority may be buttressed if we recall the concept of subalternation. For Aquinas 'subalternate sciences employ principles that are presupposed and believed on the authority of higher sciences' and those principles 'are believed on the word of him who reveals them to us through his witnesses, in much the same way as a physician accepts the testimony of a scientist when he says that there are four elements' (*de trin.* II.2, *ad.* 5). Applied to this question, Aquinas's view of subalternation would suggest that scripture's authority cannot be rationally grounded or argued for it simply must be accepted by faith in the one whose utterance it is.[144]

While (so far as I know) Aquinas does not use the language of *autopistis*, he comes quite close in effect (if not in terminology) with Calvin's position that scripture needs no other source to authenticate itself, but is itself the ground of its own authority. Aquinas's refusal to justify the authority of scripture on rational grounds points towards an understanding not too dissimilar from Calvin's.

Summary

To conceive the purpose of scripture and reason in Aquinas's method, therefore, we must move away from the idea that they are somehow two kinds of the same thing which could in principle be opposed to one another. Aquinas *does* give reason a substantial place in his theological method; but this need not be at the expense of God's revelation, and in particular, the revelation in scripture. While reason may properly lead us to know that God exists, it is scriptural revelation, as expounded by the church, which is the sole ground of our saving knowledge of the Christian God. And in that sense Aquinas has a *sola scriptura* theological method. But this immediately gives rise to a further

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[143] Paul M. Rogers, 'Thomas Aquinas, Prophecy, and the 'Scientific' Character of Sacred Doctrine,' *New Blackfriars* 100 (2016): 93; cf. Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 83.

[144] Cf. Nieuewnhove, 'Assent and *Scientia*,' esp. 423-4.

question. To say that revelation is 'scripture as expounded by the church' raises the issue of what exposition of scripture is consider definitive and authoritative. And that means we must interrogate the function of the third theological warrant, only briefly alluded to so far, *tradition*. We return to that question in chapter five, but ensuing chapters will test whether this account of *scripture* and *reason* in Aquinas converges with that of Calvin and of Hooker. Before that, the final part of this chapter asks: if Aquinas conceives only a limited function for reason and believes in the unique authority of scripture, why has this so often been overlooked?

Obscuring Aquinas's method

This chapter argues characterisations of Aquinas as somehow inimical to a reformed position because Aquinas attaches too great a weight to reason and too little to scripture are flawed. Three related reasons why Aquinas's position has been misinterpreted are now adduced. These are: (1) misunderstandings of the significance of the *structure* of Aquinas's works with a resulting over-emphasis on some of Aquinas's more philosophical themes (notably the 'Five Ways'); (2) misunderstandings of the meaning of *scientia*; (3) a widespread failure to understand Aquinas's commitment as a *scriptural* teacher and theologian. This section traces how Aquinas's method has often been misinterpreted as excessively indebted to a narrowly-defined view of reason at the cost of scripture in each of these ways. This reading finds particular support in some of twentieth-century interpretations of Aquinas re-evaluated some of his views which demonstrate a theological method like his may not be as opposed to reformed concerns as sometimes supposed.

In the wake of the First Vatican Council (1869-70), Pope Leo XIII wanted to 'organise the course of philosophical studies' in universities and named Aquinas 'a singular safeguard and glory of the Catholic church.'[145] Leo thought a Thomist philosophical curriculum would help resist the threat of modernist thinking and restore the physical and natural sciences (as well as philosophy and theology) to a proper footing. The co-option of Aquinas as official Roman Catholic teaching, associated with resistance to new questions and a strong emphasis on the transmission of propositional formulae, alongside the identification of Aquinas as a philosopher, resulted in 'a monolithic neo-Thomism which had become as remote from contemporary concerns and the needs

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[145] Leo XIII, 'Encyclical Letter on the Restoration of Christian Philosophy,' in the English Dominican *S.Th.*, I.ix, xv.

of the twentieth-century church as it was arguably distant from the spirit of Thomas himself.'[146]

By the middle twentieth century, notably in the Low Countries and France, a theological sensibility called the *nouvelle théologie* emerged which challenged the prevailing interpretations of Aquinas. It called for greater emphasis on the laity in worship and mission, a renewed concern for the study of scripture, and, crucially, an urgency to read the texts of key thinkers themselves rather than subsequent manuals or commentaries. Alongside the *nouvelle théologie* was an Anglophone strain of Thomism, influenced by Anglo-American Dominican thought, identifiable in the works of Preller and Turner. While not endorsing the *nouvelle théologie* on every point,[147] this interpretation of Aquinas also emphasises his theological character, not least by a strong emphasis on the place of faith in theological reasoning and a vision of Aquinas as far more than just a philosopher.[148] While not necessarily an aim of such movements, their readings of Aquinas reveal him to be broadly congenial to key reformed concerns and indicate why this convergence has often been overlooked.

First, the structure of both *Summae* sometimes misleads readers into assuming philosophy is both more important and more autonomous for Aquinas than it actually is. Both works begin with substantial discussions of what can be known of God by natural reason, before moving on to specifically Christian account of God. Twenty-five of the first twenty-six of the larger *Summa*'s opening questions are not distinctively Christian in either content or grounding. Only in I.27, turning to the Trinity, is Aquinas dealing with a distinctly Christian element of the doctrine of God reliant explicitly on revelation. From the reformed perspective, Barth, for example, was uneasy about this kind of structure, opting to begin his dogmatics with a discussion of the Trinity; as he says, an unusual structural move (*CD* I/1, §8.1). The risk of doing otherwise, and beginning with generic discussion of the one God, was for Barth too great; it meant that one might end up talking about something other than the Christian God. Barth is rather censorious not only of all the medieval tradition (apart from Lombard and Bonaventure) but also of Calvin and Melanchthon for beginning with the one God and only later in their systems discussing God's triunity. Connected with this structural criticism is the notion that Aquinas's emphasis on the rational demonstrability of God's existence somehow suggests he has a theological method heavily influenced by philosophy at the expense of scripture. The so-called 'Five Ways' in I.2.3 are sometimes cited as 'purely

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[146] A.N. Williams, 'The Future of the Past: The Contemporary Significance of the *Nouvelle Théologie*,' *IJST* 7.4 (2005): 349; see also Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 1-16; Gabriel Flynn, 'Introduction: The Twentieth-Century Renaissance in Catholic Theology,' in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth Century Catholic Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-22.

[147] Turner, for example, believes it has not adequately understood the pronouncements of the First Vatican Council on theological method – see his *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God*, 14-7.

[148] Turner, *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God*, ix-xv.

philosophical chains of inference.'[149]   Some commentators and many textbooks assume that Aquinas's principal purpose is to demonstrate that God's existence can be proved without recourse to distinctively Christian theological truths.

Whether or not Aquinas thought it could be, [150] it is increasingly accepted that rational demonstration of God's existence is not Aquinas's main concern. Nor is Aquinas trying to establish a set of propositional, philosophical truths about God on the basis of reason alone.[151] In this, Kerr and Turner (who disagree on the question of whether Aquinas thought God's existence must be rationally demonstrable) concur: Kerr cautions against reading the Five Ways 'extracted from their theological context';[152] Turner agrees that they 'could not fairly be conceived as intended to stand on their own' except 'within that wider philosophical and theological context.'[153] This tendency to isolate philosophical proofs from theological context is dated by Edwards not to Aquinas but to subsequent interpreters.[154] And on the reformed side, Eugene Rogers reads the *Summa* as far more congenial on the knowledge of God to a reformed perspective than often supposed;[155] Sudduth, like Kerr and Turner, cautions against reading the Five Ways in 'unfair' isolation from their broader context[156], namely, Aquinas's very limited account of reason in the opening articles of the *Summa* and his consistent emphasis that there are truths about God only revelation yields. Moreover, the backdrop of the richer and more thoroughly theological account of reason advanced in this chapter tells against seeing Aquinas as primarily a philosopher or as having an excessive place for reason in his theological method. The tendency (at least since the First Vatican Council onwards) to wrench specific discussions from Aquinas's wider scheme means the philosophical aspects of his work are excessively heightened; putting those aspects in their wider context helps retrieve an Aquinas who is far from uncongenial to reformed concerns (in this case, about the limits of philosophy's usefulness and the need for revelation).

Secondly, Aquinas insists that *sacra doctrina* can be called *scientia*, which to modern and post-modern ears may sound rather cold, as though it is a largely a set of propositions generated by rational observation or experiment; Barth (while arguing theology could be called *scientia*) is aware of this problem (*CD* I/1, §1.1). But *scientia*, as Burrell says, does not readily translate into its

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[149] Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 64.
[150] Contrast Turner, *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God*, esp. 16-17 (who thinks Aquinas does believe that) with Kerr, *After Aquinas*, esp. 64-6.
[151] Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 87.
[152] Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 64.
[153] Turner, *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God*, 241.
[154] Daniel Edwards, 'Catholic Perspectives on Natural Theology,' in *OHNT*, ed. Re Manning, 183.
[155] Rogers, *Aquinas and Barth*, esp. 183-202.
[156] Sudduth, *Reformed Objection*, 186.

'current modern language cognates.'[157] We have already seen how this knowledge does not derive from autonomous human reason, but ultimately only from God's sharing God's knowledge of himself with us. *Scientia* is not just a body of propositional knowledge, autonomous from divine revelation or the experience of the believer, which must be 'downloaded.' As one of Aquinas's editors puts it, it has *ontological* as well as *epistemological*[158] effects; it is something which, to paraphrase another commentator, 'beds in' to the mind and affects the believer's life, rather than being a static body of knowledge.[159]

In fact, when we consider Aquinas in the round we might be see that this *scientia* goes far beyond cognitive propositions. Some commentators do emphasise his work as a preacher himself and as a *teacher* of preachers.[160] But it is rarely mentioned, for example, that he was a poet and hymn-writer.[161] Read Aquinas's apparently 'philosophical' work alongside his sermons or poetry and there might appear to be a tension; certainly the styles are different. But to see these aspects of Aquinas's works as separate, or to ignore one at the expense of the other, is to divide what Aquinas unites.[162] Aquinas would not have seen a contradiction between talking about God on the basis of reason and on the basis of revelation, any more than he would have seen a contradiction between speaking about God in the language of Aristotelian philosophy or the language of the liturgy. An Aquinas whose philosophy is seen against this wider backdrop would be far from the champion of autonomous reason that many of his interpreters and critics have suggested.

Finally, the *nouvelle théologie* and subsequent writers have helped recover an understanding of Aquinas as a *biblical* theologian as well as (perhaps more than) a philosopher.[163] This can be seen clearly in the recovery of Aquinas's trinitarian thought. Emphasis on what can only be learned about God through revelation in scripture is helping us see Aquinas for the scriptural theologian and

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[157] David B. Burrell, 'Aquinas's Appropriation of *Liber de causis* to Articulate the Creator as Cause-of-Being,' in *Contemplating Aquinas*, ed. Kerr, 83.

[158] Introduction to *The Division and Methods of the Sciences: Questions V and VI of Aquinas's Commentary on the* de Trinitate *of Boethius*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institution of Medieval Studies, 1986-7), x.

[159] Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas*, 54-5; cf. Williams, 'Argument to Bliss,' 510-1, 518-9.

[160] Vivian Boland, 'Truth, Knowledge, and Communication: Thomas Aquinas on the Mystery of Teaching,' *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19.3 (2006): 294-6.

[161] Exceptions are rare, such as Paul Murray, 'Aquinas on Poetry and Theology,' *Logos* 19.2 (2013): 68-9, 71; on his hymns, T.F. Tout, 'The Place of St Thomas in History,' in *St Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Aelred Whitacre (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf&Stock, 1926), 16-7.

[162] Cf. Nieuwenhove, 'Assent and *Scientia*,' 423, arguing that Aquinas does not embody a post-Kantian or post-Barthian separation of faith and reason, or of theology and philosophy; or, we might add, poetry and prose.

[163] E.g., Kilby, 'Philosophy,' 67; Valkenberg, 'Scripture,' 60; the connection with Aquinas's own work as teacher is highlighted by Peter M. Candler, 'St Thomas Aquinas,' in *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Justin S. Houlcomb (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 2006), 63-4.

teacher he really was,[164] not merely a philosopher or dealer in abstract arguments.[165] Attending, for example, to the significance of the Trinity in Aquinas's theology, as a doctrine inaccessible to reason alone, further emphasises both the use of and the constraints on reason in his method.[166] And greater attention to Aquinas's biblical commentaries is helping see his use of philosophy in a clearer perspective by calling attention to the governing scriptural focus of his thought.[167]

Summary

Williams rightly challenges 'the fiction of an Aquinas serenely confident of the powers of natural human reason.'[168] Aquinas certainly believes natural reason has powers; it can teach that God exists and identify many divine attributes. But these powers are God-given and God-guided, even within their natural sphere. And alone reason can teach us nothing of the saving knowledge of God, the truths particularly about the Trinity and the Incarnation. Such knowledge only comes from God by revelation. The source of this revelation is scripture, and only scripture (though that does not mean no other tools are needed to draw out scripture's meaning; hence there is a need for tradition and for reason in theological method). Aquinas therefore can be said to have a *sola scriptura* method in that sense, and so is far from uncongenial to reformed concerns on that point, as Ballor and Webster among others have recognised. And even on supposedly divisive issues such as the effects of the Fall, the place of philosophy, or the way scripture's authority is established, we have shown there is far less distance between Aquinas and the reformed perspective than often supposed.

Reasons why this convergence has often been overlooked can be readily identified, notably failure to see Aquinas's use of reason in the context of his wider theological commitments as a biblical teacher who believed that scripture alone taught us the divine truths of Christian faith. This has been exacerbated by the tendency of subsequent interpreters (not least since Vatican I) to over-emphasise, without sufficient context or nuance, the function of reason in Aquinas's thought. Read in the light of the *nouvelle théologie* and others, Aquinas can emerge as someone with a strong

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[164] A good example is Jean-Pierre Torell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 2 vols., trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003, 2005), I.55-74.

[165] For instance, Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), esp. 23-7.

[166] Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 182-3; Joseph Wawrykow, 'Franciscan and Dominican Trinitarian Theology (Thirteenth Century): Aquinas and Bonaventure,' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, eds. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 190-4.

[167] Thus Thomas Prügl, 'Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture,' in *Theology of Aquinas*, eds. Van Nieuwenhove and Wawrykow, 399, 405.

[168] Williams, 'Argument to Bliss,' 505-6.

biblical and spiritual flavour who is not the champion of reason or philosophy as such, but conceives them in a wider pattern of God's gift of reason and God's grace of revelation.

The first limb of many characterisations of Hooker and Anglicanism, that Aquinas gives a much greater capacity to reason than the reformed, has been contested in this chapter by a close reading of Aquinas. Chapter three turns to challenge the second limb of those characterisations, arguing, conversely, that Calvin attributes a much greater capacity to reason than often supposed.

Chapter Three
Knowledge of God in Calvin

Introduction

'Calvin fundamentally disagreed with the great medieval Dominican Thomas Aquinas on the nature of theology.'[1] This assessment by one of Calvin's more thoughtful recent biographers reflects an earlier historiographical trope which characterised Calvin as fundamentally in tension with Aquinas, embodying a longstanding view that catholic and reformed theologies are divergent, perhaps even irreconcilable.[2] If accurate, this would render implausible the claim that Anglicanism could be coherently catholic and reformed; and its (and Hooker's) theological identity was either incoherent or must be positioned on a catholic-reformed spectrum.

However, a few pages before, the same biographer rightly emphasises Calvin's initial definition of theology as 'knowledge of God and of ourselves' (*Inst*. I.1.1).[3] It fails to spot the obvious echo of Aquinas's similar phrase, at the outset of his great work, of theology's subject, namely God and everything else in relation to God (*S.Th.* I.1.3 *ad.* 1, I.1.7 *resp.*).[4] This obvious resonance in their opening discussions of theological method should alert us to the possibility the two theologians might have more in common than often supposed.

Chapter two demonstrated such congruence by showing Aquinas's theological method was far from uncongenial to reformed concerns; in particular, he is much less optimistic about the role of reason in theology than often supposed. This chapter, turning to Calvin, applies the converse argument to the reformer: that, far from being in tension with Aquinas, his reformed account of theological method is substantially similar to Aquinas's catholic one, not least because Calvin, while aware of its limitations, was much less pessimistic about reason's role in theology than often supposed. Such

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[1] Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (London: Yale University Press, 2011), 62.

[2] For good accounts of the changing reception of Aquinas by Protestant thinkers, see Christoph Schwöbel, 'Reformed Traditions,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the* Summa, eds. Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 319-42; Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen, 'Introduction: The Reception, Critique, and Use of Aquinas in Protestant Thought,' in *Aquinas Among The Protestants*, eds. Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 1-23.

[3] Gordon, *Calvin*, 59.

[4] Others have, such as McNeill's edition of the *Institutes*, I.37 fn.3. Calvin uses the phrase *sacra doctrina* ('holy teaching') in the 1536 edition, but *sapientia* ('wisdom') in the final 1559 edition. It is beyond our present scope, but it would be interesting to explore whether this was a significant change. That Gordon cites the 1536 wording makes it even odder that he immediately moves on to argue that Calvin fundamentally disagrees with Aquinas, without even pausing to note the echo of Aquinas's language here.

convergence would help ground a reading of Hooker and an account of Anglicanism as both catholic and reformed.

While this chapter can be somewhat shorter than the last, which has already covered many of the general questions about definitions and problems, it follows the same structure. It begins by demonstrating Calvin believes humans can naturally know something of God by their reason, although this is limited to generic truths such as God's existence. In this respect, and on the effects of the Fall and using philosophy in theology, we next see that Calvin does not substantially differ from Aquinas. Turning then to revelation shows Calvin, again like Aquinas, conceives revelation as the sole source of our saving knowledge of God and of Christian doctrine. We then discuss the role of scripture in more detail, examining its sufficiency and its authority, showing that, some differences of terminology notwithstanding, on these points too there is no significant difference between the two. Reasons why this convergence have been obscured by misreadings of Calvin are then adduced. A shared theological method emerges as plausible and coherent, conceiving scripture as the sole source of our distinctly Christian knowledge of God, and reason as having a real but limited role; this shared theological method could undergird the possibility of a catholic and reformed reading of Hooker and of Anglicanism.

Natural knowledge of God in Calvin

Introduction

An earlier generation of commentators held Calvin thought human beings could naturally attain only little or no knowledge of God and thus diverged sharply from Aquinas. So, Niesel wrote that anyone who thought that Calvin could be called a natural theologian 'can hardly be regarded as a serious scholar.'[5] Niesel continued, any 'knowledge of God we may acquire from his works and deeds is subjective and unreal' and a 'monstrous deception.'[6] In less strident terms Wendel agrees, writing of Calvin's 'categorial refusal to admit any positive knowledge of a God in fallen man.'[7] More recently, Harrison, asserting a sharp distinction between Calvin and Aquinas on this point, conceives Calvin as dismissive of human reason's natural powers.[8] Harrison says Calvin thinks the

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[5]   Wilhem Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1956), 48.

[6]   Niesel, *Calvin*, 43, 46.

[7]   François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Collins, 1963), 163. Cf. T.H.L. Parker: 'God can now be known only by the special, redemptive illumination' of revelation, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969), 48.

[8]   Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7; likewise Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 308.

Fall meant our 'mind lost the capacity to acquire true knowledge.'[9] But chapter two showed Aquinas was not unduly optimistic about human reason's capacities. He thought it yielded some knowledge of God, but not the distinctive knowledge of salvation which comes only by revelation. To challenge further those accounts which contrast Calvin and Aquinas, we first examine Calvin's positive treatment of reason's natural knowledge of God and then his account of its limitations.

The possibility of natural knowledge of God

'Ever since the world began, God's invisible attributes, that is to say his power and deity, have been visible to the eye of reason, in the things he has made' (Romans 1.20, Revised English Bible). Glossing this passage, Calvin in his 1539 commentary[10] writes, 'since [God's] majesty shines forth in all his works and creatures', they 'clearly demonstrate their creator,' and the mere existence of anything is 'a demonstration of God's existence' (*Romans*, 31). Calvin continues, 'God has put into the minds of all knowledge of himself … he has so demonstrated by his works his existence as to make men see clearly that there is a God' (32). Romans 1.20 is for Calvin, as it was for Aquinas, a vital text demonstrating humanity can naturally infer the existence of a creator from the creation.

Calvin makes the same point at the outset of his great systematic theology, the *Institutes*. 'No one can look upon the world without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God,' he says, 'for quite clearly the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves.' Not only our awareness that we do not generate our own capacities, though, prompts us to infer the existence of a deity: our 'miserable ruin … compels us to look upward' because we are 'so stung by the consciousness of our own unhappiness' (*Inst*. I.1.1). At the start of his great work, then, Calvin clearly sets out the possibility we could, on the basis of reasoned reflection on our own situation, conclude there is a God.[11]

Later, Calvin describes this instinctive awareness of God's existence as a *sensus divinitatis* or 'awareness of divinity': 'there is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity … God has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty' (I.3.1).[12] The phrase recurs in I.3.3 and I.4.4, for instance, denoting a general ability

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9   Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 60.
10 For background to Calvin's biblical commentaries see Gordon, *Calvin*, 103-20.
11 This reading of Calvin is found, for instance, in W.J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 71, 103-4; Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Durham, N.C.: The Labyrinth Press, 1991), esp. 2-3; Michael Sudduth, 'Calvin, Plantinga, and the Natural Knowledge of God: A Response to Beversluis,' *Faith and Philosophy* 15.1 (1998): 93, 99; Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 218-22.
12 Paul Helm, 'John Calvin, the "*Sensus Divinitatis*", and the Noetic Effects of Sin,' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 43.2 (1998): esp. 89-97.

among humans to know by reason that God exists.[13]   In these opening chapters, as Adams concludes, 'Calvin argues that there is a knowledge of God accessible to all human beings.'[14]

Indeed, were Calvin sceptical about any natural knowledge of God, it would be hard to explain why he consistently insists that knowing naturally God's existence is not only possible but widespread: 'there is no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep-seated conviction that there is a God' (I.3.1).   The *sensus divinitatits* 'can never be effaced and is engraved on men's minds.'   It does not have to be taught, but is innate, 'not a doctrine that must first be learned in school' but 'naturally inborn in all, and is fixed deep within, as it were in the very marrow' (I.3.3).[15]   Some 'seed remains which can in no wise be uprooted' (I.4.4), the *semen religionis* which remains implanted in all human hearts.[16]

Natural reason then, unaided, can certainly demonstrate the existence of a deity.   However, Warfield notes, the knowledge it yields is 'far from a mere empty conviction that such a being as God exists.'[17]   For as Aquinas demonstrates through the *via causalitatis*, the fact that something exists which did not make itself immediately suggests the existence of a creator.   We can, for Calvin, know naturally that God not just exists but that God creates.   Humanity can naturally 'perceive that there is a God and that he is their maker' (V.3.1).   And then a number of other attributes of this God can be found out by reason.   God's 'eternity, power, wisdom, goodness, truth, righteousness and mercy' are obvious for Calvin, because (for example) he bears with us despite our sins so must be merciful (*Romans*, 32).   Again, 'no long or toilsome proof is needed to elicit evidences that serve to illuminate … that divine majesty' (*Inst.* I.5.9).

More than God's creativity can be known by reason from the creation, though.   The beauty and wonder with which Calvin depicts the material world suggest he is a far cry from the rather dry, systematising figure in some characterisations.[18]   Creation, for Calvin, is 'this most beautiful theatre', and 'although it is not the chief evidence for faith, yet it is the first evidence in order … wherever we cast our eyes, all things they meet are works of God' (I.4.20).   Calvin lifts up his eyes

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[13]   Helm, '*Sensus Divinitatis*,' 91.

[14]   Edward Adams, 'Calvin's View of Natural Knowledge of God,' *IJST* 3.3 (2001): 280; cf. *PRRD*, I.276.

[15]   Parker, discussing the *sensus divinitatis*, makes much of the phrase 'God has implanted' to say there is no natural knowledge of God because it shows that the knowledge is put in our minds by God – *Knowledge of God*, 32-6.   That misses the point.   What is crucial for the argument is not that this awareness is God-given – Aquinas would hardly have disagreed that we have reason only because God gave it to us – rather, it is that this awareness resides in the reason of all human beings, without requiring access to a specifically Christian source of revelation.

[16]   Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'The Reformed Tradition,' in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd edn., eds. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 204.

[17]   B.B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), 36-7.

[18]   Such as by Newman; see J. Todd Billings, 'The Catholic Calvin,' *Pro Ecclesia* 20.2 (2011): 130.

beyond earth, seeming particularly interested in astronomy, pointing to the heavenly bodies as witnesses of a creative power.[19] So he reflects on 'the greatness of the Artificer who stationed, arranged, and fitted together the starry host of heaven in such wonderful order that nothing more beautiful in appearance can be imagined' (I.4.21). Later, Calvin highlights the beauty of colour and scent in the material world (III.10.2).[20]

Sticking with the astronomical theme, Calvin next argues reason delivers still more than the knowledge of divine creativity; it teaches us providence, too, God's energy sustaining and upholding the creation. Calvin's discussion of providence indeed begins with 'the presence of the divine power shining as much in the continuing state of the universe as its inception'; even the 'unwilling', says Calvin, acknowledge a guiding hand, not just a creative one, at work (I.16.1). Similarly, in his *Genevan Catechism*, Calvin explained that calling God creator 'did not merely imply that God so created his works once that afterwards he took no care of them', but also entailed understanding 'the world … is preserved by him', and that God was wisdom and goodness as well as power (*Treatises*, 94). The harmony and order which governs the stars and the planets demonstrates some divine providential ordering (*Inst.* I.5.2).[21]

As McGrath concludes, 'a general knowledge of God may be discerned from his creation,' without 'appeal to specifically Christian sources of revelation.'[22] The older notion of Niesel and Partee, or its more recent instantiation in say Harrison, is hard to justify after even a cursory reading of these opening chapters of the *Institutes* and associated texts. Far from believing our reason useless in theological method, Calvin repeatedly asserted all humans have in principle a *sensus divinitatis* which yields not just awareness of God's existence but can also demonstrate a range of divine characteristics.[23] Yet the knowledge yielded by unaided reason is nonetheless firmly limited, as we now see.

The limits of natural knowledge of God

The limitation of our natural knowledge of God is underpinned, early on in the *Institutes*, by Calvin's account of God's infinity and of divine accommodation. He writes, God's 'infinity ought to make us afraid to try to measure him by our own senses' so God chooses to 'descend' to our low

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[19] Helm, *Ideas*, 23-4.

[20] A.N. Williams, *The Architecture of Theology: Structure, System, and* Ratio (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 196.

[21] Bouwsma, *Calvin*, 104 emphasises Calvin's fascination with the celestial bodies.

[22] A.E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 152-3.

[23] Helm, '*Sensus Divinitatis*,' 92-3.

state and accommodates knowledge about him to our very limited capacities (*Inst*. I.13.1).[24] There are obvious resonances here with Aquinas. Calvin is highlighting the strict ontological divide between the human knower and the divine subject; our limited minds lack the loftiness to truly know the infinite divine. All our reason's knowledge of God is going to be inherently limited by 'our slight capacity' (I.13.1). Moreover, Calvin says, 'the poverty of human speech' (I.13.5) means we must find terms to use of God even though they are inadequate to their subject and must be used cautiously. Thus, the term 'person', when applied to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, must be used so we are not silent, but even so it is still an 'improper expression' (I.13.5). This sounds akin to the *via remotionis*; we must subtract a good deal of what we mean by 'person' if we are to apply it to God, and even then our speech will remain inadequate.

Not least because of the gap between human mind and divine subject, all natural knowledge of God is inherently limited in *scope*; *clarity*; and *effects*. On each of these points, addressed in turn, we see Calvin's account closely matches Aquinas's.

First, the natural knowledge of God is always limited in *scope* for Calvin; the truths yielded by reason alone are fairly generic and there is nothing distinctively *Christian* about them. Most obviously, adherents of Islam or Judaism, and a number of pre-Christian philosophers, might say the same about God as the account Calvin has, by reason alone, sketched. Cicero, as Calvin noted, believed pagans could by reason conceive a deity in broadly similar terms (I.3.1). This is only a 'slight taste' (I.5.15) of what we need to learn about God. There is much more knowledge of God beyond what reason can naturally attain. So, says Calvin, even 'Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the rest of the patriarchs' grasped only partial insights, knowing that 'kind of knowledge by which one is permitted to grasp … that God is who founded and governed the universe.' But, says Calvin, 'I am not yet speaking of the proper doctrine of faith whereby they had been illumined unto the hope of eternal life.' There is, says Calvin, that 'other inner knowledge … whereby God is known not only as the Founder of the universe and the soul Author and Ruler of all that is made, but also in the person of the Mediator as Redeemer' (I.6.1). This is the beginning of Calvin's account of the *duplex cognitio Dei*: the twofold knowledge of God, the knowledge of God as Creator (which is accessible to reason alone) and the knowledge of God as Redeemer (which is not).[25] Recall

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[24] Cf. Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 156.

[25] This characterisation of Calvin's thought as shaped by the distinction between knowledge of God as creator and as redeemer can be traced back to Edward A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), esp. 41-9. It now pervades the scholarship, see for instance I. John Hesselink, 'Calvin's Theology,' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 78; R.A. Muller, '*Duplex cognitio Dei* in the Theology of Early Reformed Orthodoxy,' *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10.2 (1979): 54; Helm, *Ideas*, 7.

Aquinas's insistence on another kind of knowledge of God alongside that which philosophical knowledge could yield and we see the emerging convergence between his and Calvin's thought.

Moreover, the knowledge of God attainable naturally is limited in its *clarity*. At the outset of the *Institutes* Calvin sets out the possibility of natural knowledge of God, but he immediately continues with a cautionary note. As Steinmetz points out, Calvin distinguished sharply between what natural knowledge of God could offer *in principle* and what humanity tended to gain from it *in practice*.[26] Calvin believed natural reason could yield much truth in principle, but in practice it did so only imperfectly: 'because all of us are inclined by nature to hypocrisy, a kind of empty image of righteousness itself abundantly satisfies us' (I.1.2). He adds, 'if men were taught only by nature, they … would be so tied to confused principles as to worship an unknown God' (I.15.12). So, says Calvin, even in this sphere of that knowledge we can attain naturally, 'it is needful that another and better help be added to direct us aright' to God (I.6.1), who 'foresaw his likeness imprinted upon the… universe would be insufficiently effective' (I.6.3). Even at its best, then, natural reason's operation is always confused and unclear. Recalling Aquinas's insistence that reason's natural knowledge is often hesitant or erroneous makes the convergence with Calvin clearer still.

Thirdly, natural knowledge of God is limited in its *effects* as well its scope and clarity. Natural knowledge of God remains at an earthly level; it cannot reach to the heavenly, supernatural truths which are connected with Christ.[27] We cannot be saved by this natural truth; rather, for Calvin it serves to make us *inexcusable*, to give us just enough awareness of God to be aware of our sinfulness, but not enough to show us redemption. Hence, glossing Romans 1.20, Calvin says, the divine 'power and deity have been visible to the eye of reason' and our 'conduct, therefore, is indefensible.' He continues, 'the consequence of having this evidence' is that no-one can 'allege anything before God's tribunal for the purpose of showing they are not justly condemned' (*Romans*, 31). Calvin returns to the theme in *Institutes* I.5: 'our conscience itself always convicts us of both baseness and ingratitude' (I.5.14; cf. I.5.1, I.3.1). Calvin adds, 'what is … known of God … from the creation of the universe' goes no 'farther than to render them inexcusable' (I.5.14). The natural knowledge of God, then, convicts us of our guilt; it provides no remedy. Natural knowledge of God is distinguished, says Calvin, from that knowledge 'which alone quickens dead souls' (I.6.1; so also *Romans*, 31). At its best, it might prompt us to ponder our situation and, aware of our sinfulness, turn to more moral conduct (*Inst*. I.2.2; I.3.1). It might even prompt us to worship and praise God

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[26] David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 29-30.
[27] Paul Helm, *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

(I.5.10).[28] But, as Grabill rightly concludes, it remains limited; Calvin never 'den[ies] … a legitimate natural revelation of God,' but 'insists rather on its inefficacy with respect to justification.'[29] Recalling Aquinas's view that the knowledge of God gained by reason does not yield the knowledge of salvation, which requires another source, shows the further overlap between his and Calvin's accounts of reason's limitations.

Summary

Postema rightly concludes, 'Calvin's view of God's revelation in nature … is at least rather close to that of Aquinas.'[30] Human reason, unaided, can learn a good deal about God. Yet this knowledge is limited; as Adams, who reads Calvin broadly along the lines outlined here, says, Calvin is 'deeply pessimistic about the outcome of God's natural revelation.'[31] Reason may reveal the existence of a creator, and even some divine attributes; but it does not reveal the doctrines of the Christian God and it cannot bring us salvation. Seeing the convergence of Aquinas's and Calvin's thought on the possibilities and limitations of natural knowledge, we begin to see the wider congruence of their theological method; yet as they are often supposed to differ on two further matters, the effects of the Fall on reason and the role of philosophy in theology, we next address each in turn.

Reason and its limitations

Introduction

Characterisations of a reformed-catholic spectrum in theological method often assert that the Fall plays a significantly lesser role, and philosophy a significantly greater one, in catholic perspectives. We have challenged that argument as it might relate to Aquinas, who has a clear sense of the Fall's very serious effects on natural reason and gives philosophy only a limited role in theology governed by clear theological constraints. This section makes the converse argument, that Calvin thinks the Fall, though serious, does not completely eradicate reason's capacity; and that his conception of philosophy in theology is not dissimilar to Aquinas's.

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[28] David C. Steinmetz, 'The Theology of John Calvin,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, eds. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 120.

[29] Stephen J. Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 77; similarly, e.g., *PRRD*, I.274, cf. Wolterstorff, 'Reformed Tradition,' 204-5.

[30] Gerald J. Postema, 'Calvin's Alleged Rejection of Natural Theology,' *SJT* 24 (1971): 426; so also Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 40-1

[31] Adams, 'Natural Knowledge of God,' 290.

The Fall

The reformed tradition, emphasising the effects of the Fall, sometimes gives reason little place in theological method and considers natural knowledge of God to be either unreliable or impossible. Thus, Barth wrote: 'reason … is incurably sick and incapable of any serious theological activity.'[32] More recently, Peter Harrison tries to distinguish Aquinas from Calvin on this point, arguing Calvin, unlike Aquinas, believed the Fall resulted in our total depravity and the loss of natural gifts (such as reason) as well as supernatural gifts.[33] For Calvin, Harrison says, 'human nature was totally depraved' so 'no faculty of the human mind … retained its prelapsarian perfection.'[34] Harrison describes 'a Calvinist view of human nature, which significantly limited the efficacy of reason and the light of nature.'[35] Chapter two contested such readings of Aquinas, while this section challenges similar interpretations of Calvin.

Harrison's reading of the Fall's effects for Calvin begins with humanity's state before the Fall. In that state, reason, Calvin claims, was adequate to all earthly, natural situations; humanity, in its 'first condition excelled … so that its reason … sufficed for the direction of his earthly life' (*Inst.* I.15.8). The Fall affected both humanity's natural and supernatural operation. 'Man's depravity seduces his mind' (I.2.2), and humanity is 'by nature so blind … that of himself he has no power to be able to comprehend the true knowledge of God as is proper' (*Treatises*, 27). Our supernatural gifts, says Calvin, including the ability to direct ourselves to salvation and bliss, were 'stripped' while the natural gifts were 'corrupted' (II.2.12).[36] This passage is vital to Harrison; it indeed says the natural light of reason 'is choked with dense ignorance', so we lost our 'soundness of mind'.[37]

But the key point Harrison overlooks is Calvin's distinction between the supernatural gifts ('lost') and natural ones ('corrupted'). Calvin repeatedly states that what is lost completely is our ability to direct ourselves to salvation. So, humanity's 'whole nature is so imbued with depravity that he of himself possess no ability to act upright' (*Treatises*, 198), but this specifically relates to 'the grounds of salvation and the method of attaining it' (197). Again, Calvin's emphasis is that only by divine illumination may we 'come to the right knowledge of our salvation (27). Total depravity (a

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[32] Karl Barth, 'No! Answer to Emil Brunner', in Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: Centenary Press, 1946), 96.

[33] Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.

[34] Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 59.

[35] Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 65.

[36] There may be an intriguing difference here between the two theologians on the question of humanity's *supernatural* capacity before the Fall. Calvin appears to hold that Adam naturally enjoyed the life of the blessed before the Fall (*Inst.* I.15.3-4, 8), whereas Aquinas holds that Adam did not, but enjoyed some intermediate knowledge of Gof greater than ours but less than the blessed's (*S.Th.* I.94.1, *resp.*). That debate, though, is not germane to our purpose, which is to demonstrate the convergence of their view on humanity's *natural* condition after the Fall.

[37] Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 60.

phrase which is not at all prominent in Calvin and represents a later development of his thought[38]) is really about *soteriology* not *epistemology*; it is that condition which means we are unable to find our salvation for ourselves, not an assertion we lack any properly human functions at all.

Of course, Calvin, as Helm notes, does think the Fall led to 'a moral rupture between the Creator and mankind with (among other things) noetic consequences.'[39] But generally, Calvin is very careful to stress our natural reason's ability is very seriously impaired rather than lost completely. Returning to the passage Harrison cites in support of his argument that natural reason is destroyed by the Fall, we see Calvin did not say that at all. Calvin explicitly says reason 'could not be completely wiped out' and it was only '*partly* weakened and *partly* corrupted'; while our minds are no longer 'whole and sound,' nonetheless 'something of understanding and judgment remain' (*Inst.* II.2.12). Thus, Wendel refers to Calvin's 'discreet formula' which insists on humanity's not-quite-total depravity: the image of God is corrupted and defaced rather than eradicated. [40]

Elsewhere, even where Calvin is describing our depravity rather stridently ('nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden') he still maintains God's image in humanity was 'corrupted' but 'not totally annihilated and destroyed' (I.15.4; cf. *BLW*, 49). Reason's soundness may be 'gravely wounded by sin' (*Inst*. II.2.4), but it still 'intelligent enough to taste something of things above' (II.2.13). The light of reason is dimmed but not extinguished; we are short-sighted rather than blind, hence the repeated metaphor of our need of spectacles (I.6.1, I.14.1, for instance). Our mind, even 'though fallen and perverted from its wholeness is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God's excellent gifts' (II.2.15); God's image is defaced, but not destroyed. [41] Elsewhere, says Calvin, St John 'denies emphatically the light of the intelligence is entirely extinct'; while 'the light of reason which God gave men is obscured by sin', some sparks remain (*Commentaries*, 131). The effects of sin on reason are clearly serious, for Calvin, but not utterly fatal. There has to be enough reason left to humanity, at least, to realise its own guilt; that is the key point of Calvin's exegesis of Romans 1.[42]

Harrison's argument that Calvin believes human reason has no capacity at all, and that this distinguishes him from Aquinas's much more positive account, is clearly flawed. We saw Aquinas was quite circumspect in his account of fallen reason, noting the many ways it was now inadequate. This section shows Calvin, similarly, conceives reason as deeply flawed and corrupted (but not

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[38] For a good discussion and further references see Partee, *Calvin*, 126-9.
[39] Helm, '*Sensus divinitatis*,' 100.
[40] Wendel, *Calvin*, 185.
[41] J.T. McNeill, 'Natural Law in the Theology of the Reformers,' *Journal of Religion* 26.3 (1946): 179.
[42] E.g. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 29; Sudduth, 'Response to Beversluis,' 96-100.

completely removed) after the Fall. As Helm says, 'for all his stress on the deep and dramatic effects of the Fall, Calvin does not say that [it] has completely eradicated the *sensus*.'[43] Even Niesel, who does not share Helm's view that Calvin believes there is true natural knowledge of God, agrees that the fall corrupts rather than destroys reason.[44] The Fall, then, for Calvin as for Aquinas, has seriously debilitating consequences for reason, though it does not remove it from us entirely; there is consensus, rather than divergence, between them on this, as on the role of philosophy in theology we next address.

Philosophy

The previous section demonstrated, despite's Harrison's claim that they differ on the effects of the Fall, in fact Aquinas and Calvin are closely aligned. Turning now to use of philosophy in theology, we now see that Harrison is wrong to suggest substantial divergence between the two. Harrison, recall, held that Calvin and the reformers undid the 'masterful synthesis' of philosophy and theology seen in Aquinas.[45] Indeed, an earlier generation of scholars insisted there is little or no place for human reason and specifically for philosophy in Calvin's thought.[46] And indeed there are a number of points where Calvin appears dismissive of philosophy. For example, several authors cite his rather sweeping declaration that many theologians 'have come far too close to the philosophers', and he names 'all the ancients save Augustine' as overly accommodating to philosophical ideas (*Inst.* II.2.4).[47]

Calvin, it is true, does not cite philosophers in quite the same way that Aquinas does; there is no real equivalent to Aquinas's frequent recourse to the authority of what 'the Philosopher said.' Nonetheless, Calvin's view of philosophy is rather more nuanced, as a closer look at II.2.4 reveals. First, Calvin is specifically here challenging what he sees as patristic confusion on the particular question of whether the will is free. To say he is cautious about the effects of philosophy on this particular matter is hardly to make a wider case that he is suspicious about philosophy as such. And it was not just philosophy, Calvin thinks, which has caused the problem about free will; it was the patristic authors' fear that insisting the will was not free might result in slothfulness (II.2.4). Moreover, addressing the will's freedom elsewhere, he is quite happy to cite Aristotle to support his

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[43] Helm, '*Sensus divinitatis*,' 89; cf. Schreiner, *Theater of Glory*, 71, 120.

[44] Niesel, *Calvin*, 185.

[45] Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 70.

[46] A good (although dated) survey with references is Mary Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf&Stock, 1988), 99-100.

[47] Harrison, *Fall and Science*, 60; cf. Parker, *Knowledge of God*, 38.

argument (*BLW*, 140). In other words, this single passage cannot quite bear the weight Harrison among others wants to put on it as a general dismissal of philosophy.

Secondly, in this same chapter of the *Institutes*, we find Calvin asserting philosophy can be used. For example, human understanding is 'intelligent enough to taste something of the things above' (II.2.13). We can sometimes see 'the admirable light of truth shining' in 'secular writers' because all truth has a single divine source; 'the Spirit of God is the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it whenever it shall appear' (II.2.15).[48] We can rightly be helped by 'physic, dialectic, mathematics, and other like disciplines, by the work and ministry of the ungodly' (II.2.16). Indeed, we may even discover truths about God in philosophy; 'one can read competent and apt statements about God here and there in the philosophers … the Lord indeed gave them a slight taste of his divinity' (II.2.18).

More broadly, Calvin clearly knew and made of use of philosophy in his work. He was a student of philosophy.[49] He adopted a number of scholastic forms in his writing.[50] As Steinmetz points out, Calvin became familiar with the languages and concepts of ancient philosophy through his study of arts and law at Paris, Orleans, and Bourges.[51] So Calvin can, as Raith shows, navigate complicated philosophical terrain, such as his discussion of Plato, Themestius, and Aristotle on natural law.[52] But while quoting these debates, Calvin is clear there are governing theological concerns against which these philosophical discussions must be tested: notably, as Raith says, Calvin's discussion of natural law is governed by his convictions about sin and grace, which are theological concerns 'outside the realm of philosophy proper.'[53]

Similarly, as Engel,[54] Helm,[55] and Partee[56] show, Calvin is both sophisticated and critical in his appropriation of philosophical sources. For instance, even on the question of the will's freedom, he was quite happy to cite philosophers he approved of while a few sentences later condemning theologians who draw excessively on philosophy. His account of the *sensus divinitatis* has overt

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[48] Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 147, cites further examples.
[49] Gordon, *Calvin*, 12, 24.
[50] J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 35; Helm, *Ideas*, 3.
[51] David C. Steinmetz, 'Calvin as Biblical Interpreter among the Ancient Philosophers,' *Interpretation* 69.2 (2009): 142.
[52] C.D. Raith, 'Calvin's Theological Appropriation of his Philosophical Sources: A Note on Natural Law and *Institutes* 2.2.22-23,' *CThJ* 47.1 (2012): esp. 40-3.
[53] Raith, 'Philosophical Sources,' 48.
[54] Engel, *Calvin's Anthropology*, 99-110.
[55] Helm, *Ideas*, 4.
[56] Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, esp. 13-22.

echoes of Cicero's.[57] Yet his use of Cicero is nuanced: indeed Calvin audaciously first prays Cicero in aid of his view that 'our wicked opinions and evil customs' quench the glimmers of morality in our nature then immediately dismisses Cicero's notion that we can acquire virtue for ourselves (*Inst.* II.2.3). Calvin goes on to explain that we cannot do this 'except by the grace of the Saviour' (II.2.8). Cicero, then, is a philosopher who is a permissible source for Calvin but not one to be used uncritically; Calvin's belief in salvation by Christ means he will not accept elements of Cicero's philosophy which are uncongenial to his wider theological commitments.[58]

Again, as Engel shows, Calvin will draw on Plato or Aristotle, but only where it suits. Unlike Luther, say, Calvin is happy to use Aristotelian categories such as the four causes or the distinction between matter and form.[59] At the same time, he is reluctant to rely too heavily even on Plato, the 'most religious' and 'most circumspect' of the philosophers, who nonetheless still goes awry (getting lost in his discussion of spheres, for instance) (*Inst.* I.V.11), and attempting to impose his philosophically-devised category of forms on the divine.[60] Again, like Aquinas, Calvin is also prepared to use philosophical terms where it helps to clarify the meaning of a theological argument. There is, for example, a long justification of the use of the philosophical term *hypostasis* which Calvin says helps articulate the doctrine of the Trinity (I.13.2-5, 20), as well as the use of several other predicates of God using non-scriptural terms such as infinity.[61]

But Calvin is reluctant to use the Aristotelian language of first cause and prime mover, 'after the manner of the philosophers', because he thinks this does not accord with belief in divine providence and thereby risks the believer's solace (I.16.3). There is an intriguing combination of pastoral and biblical concerns here which outweighs for Calvin the philosophical conception. The philosophers are lacking, Calvin complains, because 'they never even sensed the assurance of God's benevolence towards us' (II.2.18) and did not have the revelation which comes from Christ and the Holy Spirit (II.2.19-20).[62]

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[57] David C. Steinmetz, 'The Scholastic Calvin,' in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, eds. Carl Trueman and R.S. Clark (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 25.

[58] Helm, *Ideas*, 4; Bouwsma, *Calvin*, 99.

[59] Engel, *Calvin's Anthropology*, 94-7; cf. 'Introduction' to *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice Against the Pelagians*, ed. A.N.S. Lane, trans. G.I. Davies (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), xxiv-ix.

[60] Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 30; cf. Steinmetz, 'Calvin Among the Ancient Philosophers,' 145-6.

[61] Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 156-7.

[62] Unhelpfully, the Battles and Lewis Edition – *Institutes* I.200 – appears to suggest this is Calvin criticising Aquinas by inserting a reference to *S.Th.* I.19.6. That is not clear in the text; and in any case Aquinas very obviously believes in divine providence, as he says a few questions later (*S.Th.* I.22.1, *resp.*). It may be that he differed from Calvin's assessment of Aristotle; but that is a tangential point. The key issue is that for Calvin and for Aquinas a doctrinal commitment must outweigh any apparent philosophical insight.

Moreover, like Aquinas, Calvin considers the use of philosophy in theology to be different from the philosophical enterprise as such. At the outset of the second book of the *Institutes*, Calvin writes of 'certain philosophers … while urging man to know himself, propose the goal of recognising his own worth and excellence', which leads only to 'empty assurance and … pride' (*Inst.* II.1.1). By contrast, the Christian must consider themselves as wholly dependent on God and utterly unable to boast about their own abilities; such robust self-examination demands humility and a recognition that we can intrinsically know nothing ourselves to elevate us from our fallen state (II.1.2-3). Even the best philosophers, Calvin thought, could not attain knowledge of salvation by their own reason; and indeed their work was wrongly-focussed inasmuch as it might tend toward human self-satisfaction. Thus, while 'one can read competent and apt statements about God here and there in the philosophers', they nonetheless could not direct their thought rightly to know the truth which only comes from God (II.2.18-19). It is true Calvin is more pungent than Aquinas in his references to philosophers and philosophy; but this should not obscure the fundamental congruity between them: philosophy by itself can yield only partial knowledge, and its usefulness is always limited.

What we see here, then, is Calvin using philosophy but only within limits and constrained by his theological commitments. For example, the pastoral needs of the flock for comfort, and his robust insistence on divine providence, mean Calvin will cite Aristotle on the freedom of the will but resist the language of first cause. Like Aquinas, Calvin does use philosophy, seeing some philosophers on some points as conveying truth to us, truth they only have because of its divine origin (they have drunk from the divine fountain of wisdom, as he puts it).[63] The key point is that he is 'positive, albeit critically so'[64] about many philosophers and does not regard knowledge gained from philosophy to be inadmissible in principle. Rather, it must be tested and weighed against wider theological commitments.

Summary

This discussion of Calvin's commentary on Romans and the opening chapters of the *Institutes* shows that Calvin clearly believes reason can access by itself some knowledge of God. This knowledge is limited in scope, clarity, and effects: it tells us only of God as Creator not as Redeemer; it is often horribly confused; and it does not save us. But it is real knowledge, accessible even to fallen humanity and even to those such as the ancient philosophers who knew nothing of Christianity, and can be discerned from looking at the wondrous beauty of the earth and heavens or through the liberal arts. Philosophy is useful as a source and tool for such knowledge, albeit if used

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[63] So Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, 91; Helm, *Calvin's Ideas*, 4-5.
[64] Raith, 'Philosophical Sources,' 44; cf. *PRRD*, I.365.

critically and within theologically-driven constraints; and even after the Fall sufficient capacity remains in reason to discern some truths about God. As Helm concludes,

> Calvin may thus quite properly be said to have a natural theology, so long as one bears in mind the diverse meanings of that expression … innate, properly functioning capacities common (i.e., natural) to all people, which when brought to bear on the common world of sense experience, the natural world, yield a grasp that there is one God and creator of this entire world who is to be worshipped and served.[65]

So, the relationship between Aquinas's thought and Calvin's cannot be conceived 'as a matter of championing natural theology versus condemning it.'[66] Approaches to theological method (or Anglican identity) which set them at odds misrepresent them. And, like Aquinas, Calvin believes humanity's natural knowledge of God, while real, is limited; and it does not at all suffice to convey the truths of God as Redeemer necessary for our salvation. That knowledge must come to us from a source other than our own reasoning; hence the need for revelation, to which we now turn.

Reason and revelation

As we have seen, Calvin, like Aquinas thought that humanity could know naturally many truths about God. But since this knowledge is limited, alongside the knowledge of God accessible to reason must be another source of a different kind of knowledge of God. For Calvin, as for Aquinas, this is revelation.

Calvin believes there is a *duplex cognitio Dei*, a twofold knowledge of God, which has obvious echoes of Aquinas's belief in a 'twofold mode of truth' about God (*SCG* I.3.2-3). Calvin is clear about the limitations of natural reason's knowledge of God, it can only take us so far into the truth. Reason, then, cannot teach us that knowledge of God which only comes from revelation, the illumination of the Spirit. As Muller notes, the evidence of the *Commentaries* suggests that long before the final version of the *Institutes* quoted above Calvin was discerning from John's gospel this reason-revelation dynamic, the twofold knowledge of God.[67] Calvin says humans 'above all living beings hav[e] been endowed with reason and intelligence … some intuition of the eternal light', but this is 'the common light of nature which is far inferior to faith' (*Commentaries*, 133). The knowledge of faith requires a higher illumination than the natural light of reason. So, there is a distinction between 'any kind of knowledge of God', which reason may attain, and 'the knowledge

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[65] Helm, '*Sensus divinitatis*,' 93.
[66] Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 41 fn.21.
[67] Muller, '*Duplex cognitio Dei*,' 54.

which transforms us into the image of God, the beginning and end of which is faith' (*Commentaries*, 137). This knowledge of faith is not accessible to us by reason because it requires knowledge of Christ's divinity, and 'natural reason can never guide men to Christ'; so philosophy cannot lead us to these saving doctrinal truths (*Commentaries*, 132). The knowledge of God attainable by reason does not lead us to understand that Christ is the redeemer or mediator who alone restores fallen humanity; therefore, Calvin says, 'the salvation of men is hopeless unless God comes to their add with a new help' (*Commentaries*, 131).

The dialectic between reason and revelation is also obvious when Calvin moves from the generic knowledge of God as Creator in Book I to the knowledge of God as Redeemer in Book II, a move which mirrors Aquinas's progression from generic knowledge of God in the earliest chapters of the *Summae* to the uniquely Christian doctrines of God. In Book I, Calvin writes of the 'kind of knowledge by which one is permitted to grasp … that God is who founded and governed the universe'; but this knowledge is not 'the proper doctrine of faith whereby they had been illumined to the hope of eternal life.' For that knowledge which leads to faith and salvation we need some 'other inner knowledge … which alone quickens dead souls, whereby God is known not only as the Founder of the universe and the soul Author and Ruler of all that is made, but also in the person of the Mediator as the Redeemer' (*Inst*. I.6.1). As Calvin says elsewhere,

> Our mind is too rude to be able to grasp the spiritual wisdom of God which is revealed to us through faith … But the Holy Spirit by his illumination makes us capable of understanding those things which would otherwise far exceed our grasp … by sealing the promises of salvation in our hearts (*Treatises*, 105).

So, says Calvin, 'the way to the Kingdom of God is open only to him whose mind has been made new by the illumination of the Holy Spirit'; human wisdom cannot reach such truths (*Inst*. II.2.20). He continues we 'have need of new revelation' and can 'understand God's mysteries only insofar as … illumined by God's grace' (II.2.21). He quotes Augustine approvingly on 'the inability of the reason to understand the things of God' (II.2.25). And the believer's knowledge of the things of faith comes only when they are persuaded by the Spirit, not by any exercise of natural reason (III.2.14).[68]

Specifically, Calvin continues, repeating the motif from his commentary on John, 'we cannot by contemplating the universe infer that God is Father,' and 'no knowledge of God apart from the Mediator has … power unto salvation (II.6.1). Salvation comes only through the revelation of Christ; 'unless God confronts us in Christ, we cannot come to know that we are saved' for 'apart

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[68] Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 184; cf. Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 261-2.

from Christ the saving knowledge of God' is inaccessible (II.6.4). The knowledge of our salvation in Christ can only come by divine revelation;[69] the truth of our redemption is, again, closely connected with the incarnation as the means Christ uses to save us (II.12.4). The saving understanding of God as Trinity likewise only comes by revelation (e.g., I.13.21-2).[70]

It is important to note, though, because much of the debate is couched in terms of tension between reason and revelation (and in particular between reason and scripture), that, while Calvin considers reason and revelation to yield different kinds of knowledge of God, he does not consider them as fundamentally in tension. This is in part because *both* reason and revelation come ultimately from God; there are not two bodies of knowledge of God, but two kinds of knowledge of the one God, distinct in their method of transmission and their effects, but not their ultimate origin. As Adams points out, for Calvin, *God* is the author of our natural knowledge of God: it is *God* who has made creation tell of his glory, God who has implanted the seed of awareness of him in human hearts.[71] We are instructed by God in nature (e.g., I.5.15) just as much as by revelation, albeit in a different way and to different effects.

Moreover, what is revealed is more than just doctrinal propositions, a further point of convergence with Aquinas. As Dowey wrote, 'all too often Calvin is dismissed … as the theologian of an intellectualized and logically severe faith, without appreciation of this inner core of deep Christian experience.'[72] Against such characterisations, two particular features of Calvin's thought can be identified. First, even the *natural* knowledge of God can yield more than propositions: the beauty and intricacy of creation cannot just evoke belief that God exists, nor merely prompt us to guilt, but also result in wonder, praise, and even love of God. The display of God's creativity and providence in the beauty and ordering of the cosmos should 'bestir' us 'to trust, invoke, praise, and love' God, and as we are 'invited by the great sweetness of his beneficence and goodness, let us study to love and serve him with all our heart' (I.4.22). The natural knowledge of God, then, includes (but goes beyond) the cognitive.

Secondly, if natural knowledge of God yields more than just cognitive truths, how much more does revelation leads us to more than just propositional knowledge. For Calvin, revelation does not just convey doctrines but also shows us our salvation and so can evoke a loving and trusting response to the good news of God's redemptive work for us. Calvin says faith is 'a firm and sure knowledge of

[69] Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 177-9.
[70] Cf. Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 148-50; McGrath, *Calvin*, 155.
[71] Adams, 'Natural Knowledge of God,' 281-2.
[72] Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 183.

the divine favour toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit' (III.2.7).   In the same passage, Calvin writes that this revelation is the assurance of God's benevolence towards us such that we find our security in him. It is hardly a purely cognitive or logical or legal mind which reminds us that in response to revelation our love for God is kindled when his 'abundant sweetness' 'utterly ravishes one and draws one to itself' (III.2.41) and refreshing, sustaining, nourishing hope is nurtured in us (III.2.41). Thus, Helm writes of 'Calvin's sustained polemic against faith as mere assent. Faith involves assent, because it has propositional content, but it goes beyond assent, involving trust, reliance upon God's promise, and hence reliance upon God.'[73] This characterisation of revelation (whether the generic revelation through creation or the specific revelation in Christ) as being much more than just merely propositional knowledge is of course matched, albeit in different terms, in Aquinas. For Aquinas, we saw, knowledge of God does not just move the intellect or mind, it also moves the *will*.

These passages from Calvin reveal a cluster of concerns, then, which closely mirror Aquinas's account of reason and revelation. Reason may tell us that God created and governs, but only revelation can tells us that he redeems; this knowledge of redemption, attainable only by divine revelation, is what saves us; and it saves us by illuminating the saving truths in particular about the person and work of Christ. But if such truths cannot be found by natural reason, where then are they to be found? Here we must turn from revelation to Calvin's account of scripture.

Scripture in Calvin's theological method

Introduction

The claim reformed theologies can be distinguished from catholic ones by their emphasis on *sola scriptura* is common but misleading.[74] Chapter three showed Aquinas believed scripture alone taught us the saving truths of God; while other theological warrants, notably reason, were needed as tools to draw out its meaning, scripture alone could ground doctrinal claims. Now we will see that Calvin broadly shares that view. After examining the role of scripture in aiding *natural* knowledge of God, this section considers first the question of scripture's sufficiency, and secondly its authority, showing the broad convergence of Aquinas and Calvin (some differences of language

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[73]   Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 14; so also Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 183-5.

[74]   As Williams notes, it is rare to find a serious theologian who actually argues that this means scripture alone may be legitimately used in theological method – and attempts to do so usually falter in the face of inconvenient truths such as the late origin of the canon or the different interpretations of scriptural texts: *Architecture of Theology*, 83.

notwithstanding).   A shared account of *sola scriptura* emerges, demonstrating catholic and reformed views need not be set in opposition.

Scripture corrects natural knowledge of God

A preliminary point is for Calvin, as for Aquinas, scripture does not just teach us things we cannot know by reason; it also teaches us things we *could* know by reason. This reminds us the warrants were not separate or autonomous for these authors; while they had distinct roles, and different levels of authority, they were not to be considered in isolation from each other.

Even in its natural sphere, says Calvin near the start of the *Institutes*, human reason does not operate as effectively as it could.   So 'although the Lord represents both himself and his everlasting kingdom in the mirror of his works', human dullness and stupidity mean we often do not recognise him (*Inst.* I.5.1).   Our reasoning often goes awry, as witnessed by the diversity and error which mar many of our opinions (I.5.12-13).   Our eyes cannot always see the 'many burning lamps shin[ing] for us in the workmanship of the universe to show forth the glory of its Author', even though they could in principle; hence God reveals this to us through the illumination of the Spirit (I.5.14).

Calvin continues with the image of scripture as a pair of spectacles which helps us see more clearly what we could, with perfect natural sight, in fact see without it:

> Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision … can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds … clearly shows us the true God … besides these common proofs he also put forth his Word, which is a more direct and more certain mark (I.6.1).

Foreseeing the marks he had placed in the natural world would prove inadequate, Calvin explains, God implants his Word so we can avoid reading the evidence of reason wrongly, and can navigate the labyrinth of the created order so it leads us to him rather than some false deity (I.7.3). So while 'the knowledge of God' is 'quite clearly set forth in the system of the universe', it 'is nonetheless more intimately and also more vividly revealed in his Word' (I.10.1).

Thus, Steinmetz concludes, 'Calvin suggests that creation can be reclaimed as source by believers who view the world with the light of faith and not merely with the light of natural reason.'[75]   The book of scripture helps us read the book of nature properly, which our natural reason alone cannot do.   Scripture and reason then do not stand separately; there is a relationship or dialectic between

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[75]   Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 30.

them. Scripture can help make up the insufficiency of reason's operation in the sphere of natural knowledge of God, bringing correction and clarity to the confused reasoning of the mind. But if scripture corrects what we might in fact know by reason, its principal purpose, as we now see, is to deliver those truths we could not know by reason at all.

Scripture's sufficiency

The previous section emphasised that for Calvin, as for Aquinas, the saving truths of Christian faith come to us only by revelation. This then prompts the question where this revelation is to be found. To provide some manageable way of navigating the terrain we defer until later the role of *tradition*; for now, we ask: for Calvin, does scripture alone reveal this truth to us?

Calvin does not equate revelation and scripture as wholly synonymous. He carefully says the scriptures 'set before us' God's Word, not that they are identical with it (*Inst*. I.13.7).[76] God's revelation to us in the first instance is Christ; the *Genevan Catechism* says we must learn that Christ is revealed to us by God as the means of our redemption (*Treatises*, 92), a point which recurs for instance in the commentary on St John's Prologue.[77] For Calvin, the light which comes into the world (John 1.9) is the light of Christ's divinity, knowledge we could never know for ourselves that God has become incarnate and redeemed us in Christ (*Commentaries*, 131-2). For the apostles, access to that revelation came through the personal presence of Jesus, Calvin points particularly to the example of St Thomas as one who encounters that personal revelation.[78]

Of course, in the absence of direct physical access to the historical Jesus, the definition of Christ as revelation still begs the question of where we *now* access that revelation. And, while not collapsing revelation into scripture,[79] Calvin nonetheless holds that scripture alone now constitutes the definitive witness of that revelation, ruling out both tradition and reason as sources of this saving communication: 'we should seek our rule of faith, not from the word of God, but from the tradition of the church, ought not to be accepted' (*BLW*, 52). He condemns 'arrogant pseudoprophetic windbags' who hold there are extra-scriptural sources of doctrine (*Commentaries*, 86). Our own reason is inadequate 'to understand the things of God' (*Inst*. II.2.25). On matters of faith, only the scriptures are 'apt and able to show us the way clearly and certainly' (*Commentaries*, 97). So while

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[76] See Partee, *Calvin*, 58-9.
[77] On this commentary see Barbara Pitkin, *Calvin, the Bible, and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), esp. 71-2, 83-94.
[78] So Pitkin, *Calvin, Bible, and History*, 86-7, 91.
[79] Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 155.

Calvin's exegesis of John 1 reminds us that the Word, God's revelation to us, is a broader category than the text of scripture,[80] in practical terms scripture is now our sole source of this revelation.

This point recurs in his *Commentaries*; glossing Jeremiah 7, for example, Calvin says the word of God alone points us to 'true religion' (*Commentaries*, 78; so also 79, 82). On I Peter 1.25, Calvin asks 'What then is the Word of God which gives us life: what but the law, the prophets, and the gospel?', resisting those who dishonour God's word by turning away from scripture, insisting 'we must not look for the Word of God anywhere except in the preaching of the gospel' (*Commentaries*, 83). So, 'scripture is adequate and sufficient for our perfecting. Therefore, anyone who is not satisfied with scripture, hopes to know more than he needs or is good for him' (85). The Word of God is our only 'norm', 'touchstone', and 'source of sound teaching' (86-7), and 'if we would know Christ, we must seek him in the scriptures' (104). The revelation which leads to salvation comes only from scripture; scripture's purpose is to reveal to us the truth of our salvation in Christ.[81]

Turning to the *Institutes* demonstrates the same point. 'Let us not take it into our heads,' Calvin cautions, 'to seek out God anywhere else than in his sacred word'; we can only 'conceive him to be as he reveals himself to us, without inquiring about him anywhere else than from his word' (*Inst.* I.13.21). He repeatedly insists on this: for instance, 'the human mind because of its feebleness can in no way attain to God unless it be aided and assisted by his sacred word' (I.6.4). This, of course, does not mean without scripture one can know nothing of God – as we have seen, Calvin thinks we can know much about God by reason alone – but does mean there are some truths we cannot reach without scripture's help.

These truths, as *Institutes* I.6 makes clear, are the saving doctrines of Christian faith. Calvin here considers that knowledge of God 'which alone quickens dead souls' (the link with salvation being traced) and relates particularly to the 'person of the Mediator as the Redeemer' (I.6.1). 'No one,' says Calvin, 'can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of scripture' which alone can yield 'the specific doctrine of faith and repentance that sets forth Christ as mediator' (I.6.2). Only the scriptures, Calvin says, can point us towards us Christ as our only ground of salvation (this is the theme of II.10.2-23). Scripture 'proclaims that to become our redeemer he was clothed with flesh' (II.12.4). As Murray concludes, 'Christ as the incarnate word is never brought into contact with us apart from scripture.'[82] Similarly, Calvin writes, since reason

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[80] So J.T. McNeill, 'The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin,' *Church History* 28.2 (1959): 132-3.

[81] Randall C. Zachman, 'John Calvin,' in *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Justin S. Houlcomb (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 2006), 124-5.

[82] John Murray, *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty* (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 1979), 40.

cannot even know its own nature, so it certainly cannot unaided know the divine nature; hence the doctrine of the Trinity, too, can come only from scripture (I.13.21-22).[83]

To leave the account there, to say that scripture alone was, for Calvin, the ground of our saving knowledge, of the specifically Christian account of God, the doctrines of faith, would be true enough, but insufficient. It would expose Calvin to the charge of an unrealistic theological method which can be levelled at many *sola scriptura* accounts. Particularly, on this last point about the Trinity, much of the doctrine is couched in language (person, nature, substance) which is clearly not derived from scripture. So some commentators such as van den Belt argue that the phrase itself should be abandoned.[84]

But probing Calvin's account further reveals that, while he does use the phrase 'scripture alone' (e.g. *Inst.* I.7.1, III.17.18)*,* he does not mean scripture is the only theologically authoritative source. Again, Calvin's account of the Trinity in *Institutes* I.13 demonstrates why. Only scripture can be our 'sure rule for both thinking and speaking'; but we can, even must, use terms from outside scripture to explain its meaning (I.13.3, 5) and to combat heresy (I.13.4). So, says Calvin, nothing 'prevents us from explaining in clearer words those matters in Scripture which perplex and hinder our understanding, yet which conscientiously and faithfully serve the truth of Scripture itself, and … renders the truth plain and clear' (I.13.3).[85] As Zachman concludes, for Calvin scripture's authority and sufficiency meant that it alone was 'the normative source and limit for the … teaching of the Church in subsequent generations.'[86] Only scripture can ground our knowledge of the saving doctrines of faith, but that does not mean other warrants cannot be used; scripture is, to use later phrases, *materially* sufficient, contains everything needed for salvation, but not *formally* sufficient.

What Calvin is particularly challenging here is the notion that some other source than scripture reveals to us God's saving doctrine. He 'especially repudiate[s] their desire to make certainty of doctrine depend not less on what they call *unwritten* than on the Scriptures. We must ever adhere to Augustine's rule, "Faith is conceived from the Scriptures" ' (*Antidote*, 69). We will need to return to this question in discussing tradition, but the essential point here is Calvin is *not* resisting any role for other warrants in theology; rather, he is insisting that outside the text of scripture there can be no legitimate source of doctrine. Calvin is rejecting the notion 'unwritten' traditions of the apostles carried similar authority to the written tradition in scripture. *Sola scriptura*, as Lane says, is

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[83] Helm, *Ideas*, 36 rightly says Calvin and Aquinas agree on this point.
[84] Henk van dan Belt, '*Sola Scriptura*: An Inadequate Slogan for the Authority of Scripture,' *CThJ* 51 (2016): 204-5.
[85] Cf., e.g., Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 95 fn.18; Helm, *Ideas*, 37-40.
[86] Zachman, 'Calvin,' 116.

therefore in some sense a negative proposition, ruling out the notion tradition (or indeed any other warrant) carries equal weight to scripture and resisting the principle that some other warrant can ground doctrine.[87]

Moreover, Calvin is sensitive to the obvious problem there can be more than one plausible interpretation of a biblical passage. The possibility of plausible but wrong interpretations is evident, for Calvin, in the way many Jews responded to the life of Christ; rightly reading the scripture as saying there was only one God, they then wrongly assumed this meant Christ could not also be God; they were unpersuaded by the possibility that belief in one God could be held alongside belief that Christ was God (*Commentaries*, 89). Calvin's account of how to judge between competing interpretations is revealing. 'Holy Scripture contains a perfect doctrine,' he insists, it is the sole and complete record of the revelation of saving truth, but 'a person who has not had much practice in it has good reason for some guidance and direction, to know what he ought to look for.'[88] This guidance comes from testing doctrines, and this 'public testing of doctrines has to do with the common consent and polity of the church' (*Commentaries*, 87). Again, Calvin writes that in cases of uncertainty 'believers should seek a remedy by coming together and reasoning' (88).

This question of the role of the church and its tradition in shaping permissible interpretations of scripture will be considered in chapter five. For now, it suffices to say that if we are to speak of Calvin as holding a *sola scriptura* account of scripture this must be carefully defined. Such an appellation does not (as Belt says) need to be rejected, just nuanced. The things of faith can come to us not by our reason but only by revelation; and the only source now available of this revelation is scripture. Scripture is the sole source of our saving knowledge of God, but that does not mean the other warrants have no role in theology; rather, their place is ancillary, in drawing out the meaning of scripture. In that sense Calvin is very similar to Aquinas; for both of them believe in *sola scriptura* if that is understood as scripture being the sole source of our saving knowledge of God. And, on the related question of how we know scripture is authoritative, there is also much more in common between them than often supposed.

Scripture's authority

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[87] A.N.S. Lane, '*Sola Scriptura*? Making Sense of a Post-Reformation Slogan,' in *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*, eds. D.F. Wright and Philip Satterthwaite (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 323.

[88] John Calvin, 'Subject Matter of the Present Work,' *Inst.*, I.6; cf. Zachman, 'Cavin,' 118-22.

On the question of how we know scripture is God's revelation to us, our sole source in matters of doctrine, Calvin insists scripture needs no external source (such as tradition) to ground its authority. Famously, he writes

> Scripture is indeed self-authenticated [*autopiston*], hence it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning … we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God, but we affirm with utter certainty … that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God … we seek no proofs … [this] is a conviction which requires no reasons (*Inst.* I.7.4).

Having specifically ruled out reason as a basis for determining scripture's authority, he will also explicitly deny tradition such a role. Calvin writes it is 'utterly vain' to 'pretend that the power of judging scripture so lies with the church that its certainty depends on churchly assent' (I.7.2) and it 'never depends upon the definition or decree of men' (I.7.3). Scripture's authority is so self-evident it leaps off the page as one reads it. The writings of Demosthenes, Cicero, Plato, and Aristotle may delight or move us; but when scripture is read, 'such vigour as the orators and philosophers have will nearly vanish.' He adds 'it is easy to see that the Sacred Scriptures … breathe something divine' and so it is 'vain to fortify the authority of scripture by arguments [or] by the common agreement of the church' (I.8.1).

Thus far, what Calvin says might well thought to be in tension with Aquinas, who did not make a similar claim that scripture authenticates itself. Nonetheless, probing Calvin's view in more detail reveals a curious twist: while he is adamant that neither tradition nor reason grounds scripture's authority, nonetheless he insists that both warrants support that claim.[89] So, he says, 'the best reason agrees' that scripture is divinely authoritative, and then adduces a range of evidence (the so-called proofs) such as scripture's antiquity, consistency, and so on (this is the thrust of *Institutes* I.8). The authority of the church is evidence for scripture's authority: 'the consent of the church should not be denied its due weight' (I.8.12). So there is something of a tension here; scripture needs no other proof, yet proofs there are.

Further probing, though, will help us see there is no contradiction between the claim of scripture's self-authentication and the existence of proofs of its authority based on the other warrants. First, we consider what 'self-authenticating' means, and secondly examine Calvin's distinction between how believers and unbelievers receive scripture.

First, 'self-authenticating' (*autopiston*) is not an easy or obvious term, nor even a common one in Calvin's writings. Van den Belt argues that it has been overstated and misunderstood in the

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[89] *PRRD* II.77, II.258.

reformed tradition, and frequently mistranslated.[90] Reading *Institutes* I.7.5 more closely we see Calvin writes 'those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated.' So here we see Word and Spirit are for Calvin intimately connected. Again, we only believe 'scripture is from God' when we are 'illumined by his power.' Self-authentication cannot just mean the brute assertion that scripture's authority comes only from scripture; rather, it is scripture as illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Thus, for Calvin, 'the Spirit's witness and Scripture's *autopistia* … are closely related … Scripture only becomes self-convincing to believers through that witness; the *autopistia* depends on the *testimonium*.'[91] This is a nuanced definition of *autopistis* and crucially it does not mean scripture authenticates itself in some kind of brute autonomous self-attestation. The problem, van den Belt holds, is that subsequently the reformed tradition separated the *autopistia* of scripture from the *testimonium* of the Spirit, attributing self-authentication to the text in itself rather than (as Calvin understood it) the text as received by the Spirit-illuminated believer.[92]

Indeed, to support van den Belt's reading, we see the interconnectedness of the scripture's authority and the spirit's witness recurring frequently in Calvin. For example, Calvin says 'the scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven as if there the living words of God were heard' (I.7.1), and to be persuaded of this we must 'seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons … that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit.' Calvin continues,

> the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what they had been divinely commanded (I.7.4; cf. I.9.3).

The essential interdependence of word and spirit is highlighted when Calvin insists that 'without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Word can do nothing' (III.2.33) and 'the Word of God is not received by faith' until 'the mind's real understanding is illuminat[ed] by the Spirit' (III.2.36). In other words: *autopistis* does not, for Calvin, means scripture needs nothing else to be held authoritative; we only can accept its intrinsic authority if the Spirit works to reveal it to us.[93]

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90 Henk van dan Belt, 'Scripture as the Voice of God: The Continuing Importance of *Autopistia*,' *IJST* 13.4 (2011): 438.
91 Van den Belt, 'Scripture,' 438.
92 Van den Belt, 'Scripture,' 440-2.
93 E.g. Partee, *Calvin*, 59-62; McNeill, 'Word of God,' 133-4; Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 108.

Secondly, Calvin is emphatic that scripture's authority is revealed by the Spirit only to believers. For the believer, the evidence or proofs for scripture's authority (or 'props', Calvin's word, e.g. I.8.11) serve principally to provide evidence for the believer of things already accepted by faith: 'once we have embraced it devoutly as its dignity deserves', the props are 'very useful aids' which can offer 'wonderful confirmation' of the authority of scripture we have already accepted (I.8.2). By contrast, for the unbeliever, the evidence of the church might lead them to accept scripture's authority; 'the universal judgment of the church … is of very great value.' Indeed, 'those who have not yet been illumined by the Spirit of God are rendered teachable by reverence for the church so that they may persevere in learning faith in Christ from the gospel' (I.7.3). What we see here is that the testimony of the church cannot render scripture authoritative for the unbeliever, but it can nonetheless render it plausible, worth 'persevering' with.

The claim that scripture authenticates itself is thus rather a difficult one, requiring very considerable nuance if the term is to be applied to Calvin. The text alone can neither persuade the believer nor the unbeliever of its authority; the former requires the illumination of the Spirit to convince them, the latter external evidence to render it plausible. Note the weaker claim made for the 'proofs': they do not persuade someone the scripture is God's word, they merely provide arguments to show such a claim is not implausible.[94]

Chapter four will show this is broadly Hooker's account too, and arguments that Hooker moves outside a reformed perspective on scripture's self-authentication are misguided.[95] It is also broadly consistent with Aquinas's view, as the editor of the McNeill-Battles edition[96] and Helm note.[97] While Aquinas does not (so far as I know) have a word which is similar to *autopistis*, he nonetheless also thought that faith could only be kindled by God's supernatural work in the believer's heart (*S.Th.* II-II.6.1, *resp.*).[98] For Aquinas, that inward conviction is made possible to the believer by trusting the *speaker* of the scriptures. Since only God knows God, only God can reveal God; and scripture is God's revelation of the perfect knowledge of himself. Its authority is therefore not independent, but relies on the self-knowledge and authority of the one who speaks it.[99]

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[94] Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 69.
[95] While I broadly agree with Dominiak that Calvin and Hooker are, contrary to some readings, largely in tune on this point, his characterisation that for Calvin 'Scripture has ultimate and independent autopistic authority' is infelicitous – P.A. Dominiak, 'The Architecture of Participation in the Thought of Richard Hooker,' (Ph.D. diss, Durham University, 2017), 160.
[96] *Inst.,* I.78 fn.11.
[97] Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 64-70.
[98] Thus Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 66.
[99] Helm, *Ideas*, 247.

This is Calvin's view too; the authority of scripture is precisely not the authority of the written text as such but the authority of its author.[100] He writes we are only persuaded of scripture's authority when 'we are persuaded beyond doubt that God is its author' 'the highest proof of scripture' is that 'God in person speaks it' (*Inst.* I.7.4; cf. I.7.5, I.9.2). Glossing II Timothy 3.16-17, Calvin says 'many have doubts as to the author of scripture' and 'only those illumined by the Spirit have the eyes to see … the author of the Scriptures is God' (*Commentaries*, 85). If we can speak of scripture's self-authenticating authority, then, this must mean the authority conferred on it by God who is its author and who by his Spirit inspires the believer to recognise this authority, a point common to Calvin and Aquinas.[101]

Summary

Notions that scripture is sufficient in theology (*sola scriptura*) and is self-authenticating (*autopistis*) lead some to conclude that Calvin's account of the warrant differs fundamentally from Aquinas's, and is cited to argue for a reformed-catholic spectrum into which Hooker and Anglicanism must be slotted. But this section has shown how, when Calvin's account is read closely, they in fact have much in common and that both these terms must be applied with careful nuance. Calvin, like Aquinas, thinks scripture is now our only record of God's revelation in Christ, and so excludes reason or tradition as *sources* of doctrine; but those warrants are useful *tools* in elucidating scripture's meaning or judging which possible interpretation of scripture is right. Calvin, like Aquinas, thinks scripture's authority is not undergirded by any internal or external evidence, but only by the authority of the divine speaker whose speech it is; this insight only comes to the believer and only by the inward witness of the Spirit. The 'proofs', as Calvin calls them, may be useful supports for the argument but they will never persuade someone of the authority of scripture. So Calvin's account of scripture, far from diverging from Aquinas's, is broadly in line with it.

Obscuring Calvin's convergence with Aquinas

Introduction

This chapter shows, on the relationship of reason and scripture, Calvin and Aquinas are far from in tension or even opposition. Their accounts of the purpose and relationship of these two warrants are broadly similar. If so, why has this convergence been missed? This chapter demonstrates some of the reasons; in particular, defining phrases like *sola scriptura* and *autopistis* carefully reveals

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[100] Cf. Bruce Gordon, 'The Bible in Reformed Thought, 1520-1570,' in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012-16), III.473.

[101] The close connection with Aquinas is identified for instance by Helm, *Ideas*, 248-51; McNeill, 'Word of God,' 139.

they are not, as commonly supposed, ways in which Calvin differs from Aquinas. Three further factors are now adduced in this section to show how Calvin's own rhetoric, misreadings of Aquinas, and the influence of Karl Barth on readings of Calvin have all contributed to the mistaken belief that Calvin's and Aquinas's theological methods are in tension. Identifying these problematic influences will clear space for a convergent reading of Calvin and Aquinas to emerge more clearly.

Calvin's rhetoric

First, Calvin himself is partly responsible for the frequent perception that he is in tension with Aquinas. For example, their common approach to philosophy is masked by their different use of the word. Where Aquinas will cite 'the Philosopher' as a legitimate source, Calvin rails against those who 'philosophise beside the point' (*Treatises*, 94) and parodies 'the giddy imagination of the philosophers' (*Inst*. I.2.18).

The reputation not just of secular philosophers but also of medieval theologians appears to wilt under Calvin's polemical assault. Lane's comprehensive study shows that Calvin treated Augustine in particular and the Fathers in general as authorities while regarding many medieval theologians as opponents.[102] Calvin makes 1,078 references to Augustine and (say) 133 to Ambrose, but only six to Aquinas.[103] He makes 'sweeping claims to the support of Augustine'[104] (e.g., 'I have no occasion to use any other words than his,' *Inst*. III.22.8) alongside a sweepingly condemnatory characterisation of medieval theology as 'mere sophistry … so twisted, involved, tortuous, and puzzling, that scholastic theology might well be described as a species of secret magic' (*Treatises*, 233). He particularly condemns the 'Schoolmen' who have 'fabricated' a number of doctrines (*Inst*. IV.17.13) (such as transubstantiation, IV.17.14) by being over-indebted to philosophy at the expense of scripture (IV.17.26). This overwhelming preponderance of classical rather than medieval sources, and his rhetoric against medieval writers, can lead to a conclusion that Calvin is antagonistic to medieval theology in general.[105]

However, Calvin's relationship with medieval theology and Aquinas in particular is more complicated than his own sweeping generalisations might suggest. A basic reason why Calvin prefers the Fathers is simply that this was both safe and contested terrain. Safe, because all sides of the reformation debates agreed in principle that antiquity represented a period of special doctrinal consensus; contested, because the nub of many arguments was which side could most convincingly

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[102] A.N.S Lane, 'Calvin's Use of Fathers and Medievals,' *CThJ* 16 (1981): 161.
[103] Lane, 'Fathers and Medievals,' 175 fn.16, 180 fn.216.
[104] Lane, 'Fathers and Medievals,' 171.
[105] E.g. Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 10.

claim antiquity's support.[106] By contrast, a major driving force behind the reformation was the belief that the theology and practices of medieval Christianity had seriously distorted key elements of its doctrinal and ritual inheritance from the early church. The medieval period, then, was much more difficult terrain for a reformer like Calvin.[107]

Even so, Calvin is as discriminating in his use of theological sources (of whatever period) as he is of his philosophical ones. For instance, Calvin thought even most patristic writers had inadequately articulated a doctrine of human free will by their desire to sound philosophically coherent (*Inst.* II.2.4). And even Augustine, who Calvin so frequently cites, is sometimes left to one side; Calvin rather sidelines his biblical exegesis, for instance.[108]

Examining Calvin's actual attitude towards medieval theologians reveals the same discriminating approach. For instance, he is sometimes quite critical of Peter Lombard (*c.*1096-1160); yet he complains that after Lombard, 'the schools have gone from bad to worse' (*Inst.* III.11.15). He also, revealingly, distinguishes Lombard as (presumably relatively) 'sane and sober' when compared with 'the later Sophists' (III.15.7).[109] This distinction between the earlier and later medievals is crucial for a proper understanding of Calvin's attitude to Aquinas. For Calvin, even when criticising Lombard, says he 'disagree[s] with the sounder Schoolmen', but 'differ[s] from the more recent Sophists to an ever greater extent, as they are farther removed from antiquity' (II.2.6). As Muller adds, where criticising a particular medieval theologian, Calvin usually refers to them with *scholastiques* cognates rather than the *Sorboniques* or *sophistes* cognates he deploys when condemning a generic school or style of theology which he associates with the later medieval period and the schools of the Sorbonne he considers it emerged from.[110] While disagreeing on some specific points with Lombard and Aquinas, then, Calvin nonetheless appears to exculpate them from his sweeping condemnation of later medieval thought.[111] Indeed, the McNeill-Battles edition of the *Institutes* exacerbates the problem by adding footnotes to refer to Aquinas where no such reference is made in Calvin's text, 'leaving the impression that there is more direct engagement and

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[106] As they were in the dispute between Hooker and his opponents, see John K. Luoma, 'Who Owns The Fathers? Hooker and Cartwright on the Authority of the Primitive Church,' *Sixteenth Century Journal* 8.3 (1977): esp. 49-50, 57, 59.

[107] I am grateful to Kenneth Padley for this point.

[108] Lane, 'Fathers and Medievals,' 172.

[109] So Lane, 'Fathers and Medievals,' 180.

[110] R.A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38-42.

[111] See the editor's comment at *Institutes*, I.263 fn.35.

opposition between Calvin and Thomas than the text actually sustains.'[112] So, as Ballor notes, 'recent scholarship has increasingly questioned whether Calvin is directly engaging Thomas's work … rather than versions of Thomism represented by late medieval figures.'[113]

Calvin's rhetoric then has served to mislead; his pungent criticism of specific theological views, and his generic distaste for later medieval theology (particularly that of the Sorbonne) has meant subsequent commentators have failed to see his discriminating approach to his interlocutors. When understood in his broader polemical stance which privileged the patristic over the medieval, and the specific focus of his ire, it becomes clear he is much less antagonistic to Aquinas than some commentators (or indeed his own rhetoric) might suggest.

Misreadings of Aquinas

Ballor's argument connects with a second factor which has led to presumed disagreement between Calvin and Aquinas, namely some of the ways the latter has been (mis)read by subsequent theologians. For if Calvin is reacting against the kind of medieval scholastic theology he saw in the post-Aquinas schools, arguments of a gap between him and Aquinas often also rely on comparing Calvin with the Aquinas of subsequent interpreters rather than Aquinas himself.

Here we can re-emphasise the thrust of chapter two, which argued subsequent interpretations of Aquinas had aggravated the suggestion of a divergence between him and Calvin. For example, when read closely alongside each other, Calvin and Aquinas are in fact far closer on a range of controversial topics (such as the effects of the Fall on human reason, or the role of philosophy in theology) than often supposed. But the presumption of a gap between them has sometimes been exacerbated by failure to attend to Aquinas's text itself, and instead is a reaction against certain kinds of Thomism quite removed from Aquinas's own view. In other words: if one compares Calvin's theology with certain kinds of later nineteenth-century neo-Thomisms, one might conclude that (say) Aquinas was excessively confident in the powers of human reason at the expense of scripture. However, drawing on the insights of Aquinas studies in the wake of the *nouvelle théologie* we see (for example) Aquinas was a much more biblical theologian, and much less confident in reason's powers, than often supposed. Comparing the Aquinas thus retrieved with Calvin reveals considerably less divergence between the two, since they share a real but limited role

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[112] Jordan Ballor, 'Deformation and Reformation: Thomas Aquinas and the Rise of Protestant Scholasticism,' in *Aquinas Among The Protestants*, eds. Svensson and VanDrunen, 38; cf. Arvin Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985), 38-40.

[113] Ballor, 'Deformation,' 37-8; cf. Vos, *Aquinas and Calvin*, 150-7.

for reason in theological method and both assert scripture alone is our source of the saving truths of faith.

Barthian readings of Calvin

The effect of Karl Barth on readings of Calvin, thirdly, is a factor which has contributed to the notion of a gap between Calvin and Aquinas and has in particular promoted the misguided view that Hooker must be positioned on a spectrum between them. Thus Voak argues Hooker steps outside the reformed perspective because, like Aquinas but apparently unlike Calvin, he considered human reason alone could yield substantial knowledge of God.[114] But examining in more detail the effects of Barth on readings of Calvin, we see how the affinity of Calvin's views with Aquinas's on this point has been masked.

This becomes clear when we trace the effects of Barth's view on the reformed tradition's attitude to the possibility of natural knowledge of God. The famous debate between Barth and Brunner is a useful way to navigate the terrain.[115] Brunner was prepared to say that, within circumscribed parameters, there was a possibility of natural knowledge of God accessible to reason: 'God … leaves the imprint of his nature on what he does. Therefore the creation of the world is at the same time a revelation, a self-communication of God.'[116]

Barth witheringly rejected Brunner's claim with a famous 'No!'. For Barth, any kind of natural knowledge of God would entail 'man himself possess[ing] the capacity … to inform himself about God, the world, and man.'[117] Barth strenuously rejects such a possibility; for when 'natural theology is allowed to become of interest' then the discussion is 'no longer centred on theology.'[118] For Barth, any starting-point other than the concrete revelation of God in Jesus Christ will result in something other than theology; that is, the subject spoken of will no longer be the living God but some human projection or distortion: there can be no 'possibility of reckoning with a knowledge of the God of the apostles and prophets which is not given in and with his revelation', so there can be no ' "Christian" natural theology' (*CD* II/1, §26.1).[119] On Barth's account, the reformed

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[114] Nigel Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 128.

[115] A.E. McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 90-132; the length of McGrath's treatment of their dispute rather undermines his assertion that 'it cannot be regarded as a landmark discussion,' 91.

[116] Emil Brunner, 'Nature and Grace,' in Brunner and Barth, *Natural Theology*, 25; cf. McGrath, *Brunner*, 113-21.

[117] Karl Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God according to the Teaching of the Reformation*, trans. J.L.M. Haire and Ian Henderson (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), 9.

[118] Karl Barth, 'No!,' 76.

[119] Cf. John Webster, *Karl Barth*, 2nd edn. (London: Continuum, 2004), 76-83; McGrath, *Brunner*, 127-32.

perspective is intrinsically hostile to Aquinas who, as we saw, clearly *did* believe there was potential for some natural knowledge of God apart from the specific revelation in Christ witnessed in the scriptures. Underpinning Barth's view is his suspicion of the capacity of human reason to know anything about God at all: it is 'incurably sick and incapable of any serious theological activity.'[120] For Barth, Romans 1.19-20 indicated only a hypothetical possibility of natural knowledge of God, a knowledge now inaccessible because of sin and the Fall.[121]

Whether Barth's view is in fact so hostile to Aquinas's has been questioned;[122] but his stance that there is no natural knowledge of God now accessible to reason is certainly widespread in the reformed tradition. A typical example is Wolterstorff's assertion that 'a negative attitude to natural theology' is 'one of the most salient features' of the reformed tradition 'going all the way back to its founder, John Calvin.'[123] This is the so-called 'reformed objection to natural theology.'[124]

This reformed objection to the possibility of natural knowledge of God, though, cannot properly be traced to Calvin. The first clue is Barth's own slightly embarrassed reading of Calvin. Barth tries to argue Calvin's failure to reject natural knowledge of God outright is explicable only because of 'the practical non-existence' of Aquinas in the sixteenth century: for that generation, Barth holds, there was not a sufficiently serious Thomist threat which needed to be countered, whereas now 'we are not in a position to repeat their statements without … making them more pointed.'[125] Of course, the problem for Barth is not actually that Calvin is unclear or inadequately robust; it is that Calvin would not agree with him. As we have seen, Calvin, like Aquinas, did believe some natural knowledge of God was possible. However, as McGrath notes, the force of Barth's views has led to a 'disturbing tendency to read Calvin through Barthian spectacles' which has 'led to theological prejudices compromising historical scholarship' because of their 'highly selective readings of Calvin.'[126] By contrast, the argument of this study fits with a broad range of contemporary scholarship which shows Calvin, unlike Barth and the 'reformed objection', asserted natural knowledge of God in his theological method: hence Sudduth, for whom Barth's distorting influence means 'Calvin's positive view of the natural knowledge of God' has been 'marginalise[d] or

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[120] Barth, 'No!,' 96.
[121] Barth, 'No!,' 105-6; cf. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th edn., trans. E.C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 47.
[122] Notably by Eugene F. Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), esp. 182-202.
[123] Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Introduction,' in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 7.
[124] Alvin Plantinga, 'The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology,' *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 54 (1980): esp. 51-3; cf. Parker, *Knowledge of God*, 32-6; Niesel, *Calvin*, esp. 40-6.
[125] Barth, 'No!,' 101.
[126] McGrath, *Brunner*, 99.

ignore[d]' within much of the contemporary reformed tradition.[127] Similar views emerge in, for instance, Muller, Schreiner, Postema, and Grabill.[128]

Exploring the Barth-Brunner dispute and its effects thus reveals the distorting influence of Barth's reading of Calvin, a distortion Barth himself appears to recognise in his rather unconvincing attempt to excuse Calvin of the latter's failure to reject with sufficient force and clarity the possibility of natural knowledge of God. Calvin is clear: human reason can know some things about God without additional divine revelation, and reason (though seriously diminished by the Fall) has not lost entirely its natural capacities.

Summary

Taken together, these factors help explain why the presumption of an antagonism between Aquinas and Calvin has emerged. Calvin's rhetoric can sometimes mislead readers into thinking he is generally hostile to medieval theology, when in fact he has good reason for focussing on the contested yet shared territory of patristic witness, and he is usually careful to indicate he is opposing particular theologians or schools (notably the Sorbonne) rather than Aquinas. Subsequent readings of Aquinas have sometimes magnified points of difference when comparing Calvin and Aquinas directly on (say) the role of reason demonstrates congruity. And Barth had a seriously distorting effect on characterisations of Aquinas and Calvin by arguing the reformed tradition was hostile to the idea of natural knowledge of God and (wrongly) characterising Calvin in that light. Isolating these factors reveals the essential continuity between Aquinas and Calvin on the relationship of scripture and reason in theological method and the possibility of a catholic-reformed consensus.

Summary

Characterisations of Anglicanism and of Hooker which rely on presumed antagonism of catholic and reformed perspectives have now been challenged on two limbs of their argument. Chapter one contested the first limb of such arguments by showing Aquinas, far from being uncongenial to reformed concerns, gave human reason a much more circumscribed place in his theological method than often supposed and held to the unique authority of scripture as the source of the saving doctrines necessary for Christian faith. This chapter challenged the second limb of those arguments by showing that Calvin's view is broadly similar. In particular, it demonstrates that Calvin

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[127] Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (London: Routledge, 2016), 47.

[128] See Muller, '*Duplex cognitio Dei*,' 51-62; Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*; Postema, 'Natural Theology,' 423-4; Grabill, *Natural Law*, 70-97.

conceives natural reason as yielding real if limited knowledge of God and uses philosophy in theology albeit discriminatingly. It shows that, for Calvin as for Aquinas, revelation is the only way we can know the truths necessary for our salvation, the distinctly Christian truths about God; that these are now found only in scripture; and scripture's self-authentication, far from being an independent assertion that it authenticates itself, is a much more complex concept, reliant on the testimony of the Spirit and the divine authorship rather than the text as such. On reason and scripture, then, Calvin has more in common with Aquinas than often supposed. Reasons why the congruity between Aquinas and Calvin has been frequently overlooked were identified, notably the distorting effects of some readings of Aquinas and Calvin (especially Barth's reading of the latter) and Calvin's own occasionally misleading polemic.

If this account of Calvin and Aquinas is broadly right it has profound implications for how Richard Hooker, and Anglicanism, can be conceived. For if there is no catholic-reformed spectrum in the way many characterisations suppose, we need not place Hooker (or Anglicanism) somewhere on that spectrum, but instead see him (and it) as plausibly both catholic and reformed. So the next chapter turns to Hooker's account of the theological warrants scripture and reason, showing how he shares substantially the theological method we have shown Aquinas and Calvin have in common.

Chapter Four
Knowledge of God in Hooker

Introduction

Many characterisations of Anglicanism and of Hooker depict them as essentially reformed or fundamentally catholic or some balancing-act between the two.[1] The possibility of a tradition's or theologian's being both catholic and reformed has often been considered incoherent or even impossible, because of a widespread presumption that 'catholic' and 'reformed' refer to opposite points on a spectrum. On such accounts, the greater the tradition's or the theologian's catholic affinities, the less reformed they must be, and *vice versa*. However, earlier chapters sought to reframe the debate by advancing the argument that, on plausible readings of one catholic and one reformed theologian, the assertion of such a spectrum is itself wrong. Since on theological method Aquinas and Calvin are broadly convergent, this chapter situates Hooker in the confluence of the theological streams represented by Aquinas and Calvin and thereby shows the plausibility of interpreting him and his tradition as both catholic and reformed.

This chapter follows the pattern of the previous two to excavate Hooker's account of the relationship between two theological warrants, *scripture* and *reason*. It begins by tracing the limited but genuine knowledge of God which Hooker thought available to unaided reason, and then turns to the effects of the Fall and the use of philosophy in theology; both examples demonstrate the real but circumscribed place of reason in his theological method. Next it discusses Hooker's account of revelation as the sole source of those truths about God, essential for our salvation and delivering Christian doctrine, which even at its most powerful reason could never discover. Finally, it addresses the sufficiency and authority of scripture. Here, against claims Hooker diverges from the reformed consensus on scripture, we show that (1) Hooker does hold to a *sola scriptura* view if this is understood as meaning scripture is the sole source of our saving knowledge of God, and (2) while Hooker does not say scripture is self-authenticating he is nonetheless congruent with Calvin. Reasons this convergence has been overlooked are then adduced. Throughout, the congruity of Hooker's stance with both Aquinas's and Calvin's will be identified. Hooker emerges as both catholic and reformed, with a plausible and coherent theological method.

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[1] Good short surveys of the different characterisations are, e.g., Mark D. Chapman, *Anglican Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 104-7; W. Bradford Littlejohn, 'The Search for a Reformed Hooker,' *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 16.1 (2014): 69-70. Fuller surveys are Michael Brydon, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker: An Examination of Responses, 1600-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4-15, and Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Richard Hooker's Reputation,' *English Historical Review*, 117 (2002): 773-812.

Natural knowledge of God in Hooker

Introduction

Hooker's presbyterian opponents thought him dangerously unsound on the capacity of human reason. The *Christian Letter* of 1599 accused Hooker of holding 'in contempt the doctrine and faith' of the Church of England (*ACL* Pref., IV.7.19-20), in particular by believing some 'natural light, teaching knowledge of things necessary to salvation, which knowledge is not contained in holy scripture' (*ACL* 3, IV.11.31-2).[2] Were this true, Hooker would certainly be outside the reformed consensus embodied in the Church of England's Articles of Religion to which all its clergy had to subscribe.

Following Hooker's presbyterian opponents, many subsequent commentators have concluded that the substantial place of reason in Hooker's methodology means he cannot be within the reformed consensus on theological method. Hence, for instance, Voak concludes, 'the degree of knowledge that Hooker ascribes to mere natural persons was … controversial … in Reformed England.'[3] However, this section, considering first the possibilities and then the limitations of natural reason's knowledge of God, shows this characterisation is wrong and that Hooker is not distant from Calvin. Hooker held reason could know some things, but only within clear limits, about God; in this he is consistent with views of both Aquinas and Calvin already traced.

The possibility of natural knowledge of God

Certainly, Hooker believed that human beings could, by their own reason and without recourse to a specifically supranatural source such as revelation, know some things about God. In 1582/3, in 'the earliest works which remain from Hooker's pen,'[4] his two sermons on the letter of Jude, Hooker, describing 'the condition of Pagans and Turks,' asserts

> at the bare beholding of heaven and earth the infidel's heart by and by doth give him, that there is an eternal, infinite, immortal, and ever-living God; whose hands have fashioned and framed the world … that it must be God which hath built and created all things (*Jude* I.9, V.23.21-4, 26-7).

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2   On the *Letter* and Hooker's response see *FLE*, IV.xiii-xliv.
3   Nigel Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 129; similarly H.C. Porter, 'Hooker, the Tudor Constitution, and the *Via Media*,' *SRH*, 103-7; A.J. Joyce, *Richard Hooker and Anglican Moral Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 72-97.
4   *FLE*, V.1. On Hooker's sermons and notes, which generally receive much less attention than the more famous *Laws*, see *FLE*, V.657-82 and Corneliu C. Simut, *The Doctrine of Salvation in the Sermons of Richard Hooker* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2005).

This universal knowledge of God's existence, and key attributes of his infinity and so on, is accessible to those without specific knowledge of Christianity and is accessible by reason ('the light of natural reason hath put this wisdom in his reins,' V.24.3-4).

Turning to the larger and later *Laws*,[5] Hooker near the start of his work asserts, as Aquinas and Calvin had, the possibility that, whether or not someone were a Christian, reasoned reflection on evidence accessible to their senses could lead them to conclude that God exists. This shared starting-point should alert us to the congruity of their views. Hooker writes

> The wise and learned among the heathens themselves, have all acknowledged some first cause, whereupon originally the being of all things depends … They all confess therefore in the working of that first cause, that counsel is used, reason followed, a way observed, that is to say, constant order and law is kept, whereof itself must needs be author to itself (*Laws*, I.2.3).

Citing the beliefs of Homer, Plato, Anaxagoras, and the Stoics (who of course did not have the benefit of Christian revelation) in some sort of primal agency or first cause, Hooker believes God's existence and creativity can be learned naturally by reason alone. Hooker glosses Romans 1 to argue for this generic natural knowledge of God accessible to reason: 'by attentive consideration of heaven and earth, we know of mere natural men the Apostle testifies how they knew … God' (III.8.6; cf. Pref. 3.10). Hooker's interpretation of Romans 1 echoes Calvin's and Aquinas's, both of whom argued for a natural knowledge of God accessible to reason on the basis of the marks of the Creator being implanted in the creation.

But, again like Aquinas and Calvin, Hooker in these opening chapters of the *Laws* also establishes that this natural knowledge attainable by reason goes beyond God's existence and creativity. So, reason by itself can discern 'constant order and law' are at work (I.2.3), which hints at a continuously operating divine hand: it can be 'discerned that the natural generation and process of all things receives order', an order called 'Providence' (I.3.4). Again, Hooker says 'the minds, of even mere natural men, have attained to know, not only that there is a God, but also what power, force, wisdom, and other properties that God has, and how all things depend on him' (I.8.6). Even those who are not near to God can discern many truths about God, such as that humans have higher goals than the sensual, inclining or desiring something more (I.5.2-3).[6]

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[5] On the context of the *Laws*, see McGrade, 'Introduction,' *Laws*, I.xv-xxviii; on its contents, I.xxxii-cv.
[6] Cf. P.A. Dominiak, 'The Architecture of Participation in the Thought of Richard Hooker' (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2017), 62.

Thus, Kirby says, 'there is a natural knowledge of God as maker of all things, but not as Redeemer.'[7] Reason can know much about God for Hooker, but, in the light of the argument of earlier chapters, this does not distinguish him from Aquinas or Calvin.[8] Next we show Hooker sees this knowledge as circumscribed, as Aquinas and Calvin did.

The limits of natural knowledge of God

For Hooker, natural knowledge of God was seriously circumscribed. Thus, in his 1586 sermon on *Justification*, Hooker says 'the light of nature causes the mind to apprehend those truths which are merely rational', which he contrasts with 'that saving truth which is far above the reach of human reason' (*Just*. 26, V.138.1-4).[9] This, of course, is precisely the distinction drawn by both Calvin and Aquinas: human reason may lead to some genuine knowledge of God but only within limits. For Hooker, natural knowledge of God is limited in its *scope*; its *clarity*; and its *effects*.

On the *scope* of this natural knowledge of God, Hooker is clear from the outset that it is genuine but limited. So, for example, Hooker reminds his readers that the gap between divine subject and human knower is so great that our reason is simply inadequate to deliver much knowledge of God:

> Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the most High … our soundest knowledge is to know that we know him not indeed as he is, neither can know him … our safest eloquence concerning him is our silence … his glory is inexplicable, his greatness above our capacity and reach (*Laws*, I.2.2).

Hooker here echoes both Calvin and Aquinas in his general assertion that the ontological gap between human and divine results in an epistemological divide which cannot be bridged from the human side. For instance, while God's oneness and simplicity are discernible by reason, the knowledge 'in God a Trinity personal … subsists' is something 'far exceeding the possibility of man's conceit' (I.2.2). The generic knowledge of God's oneness is therefore evident to anyone by reason, but God's threeness cannot be known by reason.

Again, Hooker thinks we can discern naturally that something is wrong within the created order; even the heathen can see that there is some 'defect in the matter of things natural.' However, 'the true original cause thereof' is not something that can be discerned by reason; to learn that this defect

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[7] W.J.T. Kirby, *The Theology of Richard Hooker in the Context of the English Reformation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2000), 16.
[8] Kirby, *English Reformation*, 14-7.
[9] On the 'twofold epistemology' articulated in Hooker's preaching see Simut, *Sermons*, 129, 133-6, 142; though Simut seems at best careless with his terminology, for instance, he incongruously says that for Hooker 'nothing of God's reality can be known by the reason of man' (247), which seems hard to square with the notion of a twofold knowledge with real but different truths yielded by reason and revelation.

is the product of 'divine malediction, laid for the sin of man … was above their merely natural capacity and understanding' (I.3.3). Later, Hooker repeats the 'mysteries of our religion are above the reach of our understanding, above the discourse of man's reason' (V.63.1). Here then Hooker crucially distinguishes between the kinds of knowledge of God reason can deliver, and those kinds of knowledge of God it is simply inadequate to attain.

On the *clarity* of this natural knowledge of God, Hooker is clear human reason is inadequate to the task of knowing God. Indeed, if Voak were right to parse Hooker as controversially optimistic about reason, it would be hard to account for Hooker's question in his sermon on *Pride,* 'Do we think it so easy for men to define what law doth warrant?' (V.337.16-7). Again, he observes, 'how hard it is oftentimes for even the wisest and skilfullest to see what is justice and what is not' (V.339.7-9). So, Hooker says we lack 'right understanding' of divine 'equity and justice' (V.346.19-20). The point recurs in the *Laws*, for instance where Hooker notes, 'so far as the natural understanding even of sundry whole nations been darkened, that they have not discerned … gross iniquity' (*Laws*, I.12.2). These are observations about human reason's power in relation to the *natural* order, the sphere of natural knowledge. Since human reason is so limited in clarity in the *natural* sphere, how much more must it be confused and unclear in the *supernatural* sphere.

On the *effects* of this natural knowledge of God, Hooker also emphasises reason's limitations. If human reason is insufficient to investigate adequately natural matters, it certainly cannot enquire into supernatural ones (e.g., *Laws*, I.8.1). In particular, reason cannot discern by itself the truths we need for our salvation. Since all human works are impure, Hooker writes, 'what possibility is there … to be saved' by any natural means? Therefore, 'there rests … no way to salvation, or if any, then surely a way which is supernatural' (I.11.5). So, 'the light of nature is never able to find out any way of attaining the reward of bliss'; and 'from salvation therefore and life all flesh being excluded' by any natural means, God alone can deliver saving truth (I.11.6). We may naturally desire to overcome our condition, but we cannot naturally discover the means to achieve this.[10]

Summary

Assertions such as Voak's that Hooker is overly optimistic about the possibilities of human reason are therefore questionable. Although Hooker attributes much potential to unaided human reason, it is always limited, and can never attain the saving knowledge of God. This account is consistent

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[10] W.J.T. Kirby, 'Reason and Law,' *CRH*, 259-60.

with Calvin's reformed views.[11]   Despite categorisations of Hooker which assume the more catholic his account of reason is the less reformed he must be,[12] when the limitations Aquinas places on natural knowledge of God, and the possibilities Calvin attributes to it, are properly understood, Hooker emerges as firmly within their convergence. We next turn to the Fall and to philosophy in theology, showing here too Hooker shares the accounts of both theologians.

Reason and its limitations

Introduction

Chapter two showed Aquinas is often considered uncongenial from a reformed perspective because of his supposed failure to give sufficient weight to the effects of the Fall on human reason or by his excessive use of philosophy in theology. Similar arguments are made about Hooker, notably by his presbyterian opponents and those later commentators who characterise him as outside the reformed consensus on these questions. The plausibility of such comparisons has already been severely challenged by showing that Aquinas gives more weight to the Fall than often supposed, and Calvin rather less; and similarly that Calvin, like Aquinas, uses philosophy in theology but only within the limits of doctrinal commitments. Tracing Hooker's view on both questions locates him firmly within that reformed, catholic consensus.

The Fall

Hooker's presbyterian opponents believed he did not give sufficient weight to the Fall's effects on the operation of human reason. The *Christian Letter* accused Hooker of 'pretend[ing] the natural way of finding out laws by reason' could 'guide the will unto that which is good' whereas they thought that humanity 'hath no such reason without the grace of God … in the state of corruption, as in deed all men naturally now are' (*ACL* 5, IV.19.7-11). This broader view that Hooker gives insufficient account to the effects of the Fall on reason is followed by contemporary commentators such as Voak, who argues it is 'quite mistaken' to see Hooker as within the reformed perspective on this point.[13] Voak adds that 'Calvin and Aquinas disagree' about 'the nature and extent' of the

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[11]   Thus Kirby, 'Reason and Law,' 263-4; Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason: Reformed Theologian of the Church of England* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1997), 11-7.

[12]   For instance J.S. Marshall, *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition: An Historical and Theological Study of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity* (London: A&C Black, 1963), 55.

[13]   Voak, *RHRT*, 149.

corruption caused by the Fall, and that Hooker follows Aquinas against Calvin in holding only a 'relatively moderate conception' of this corruption.[14]

Of course, the notion that human beings could naturally know some things by reason, even about God, does not itself indicate divergence from the reformed perspective, since Calvin (as chapter three showed) believed as much. Furthermore, Hooker also believed this capacity was severely diminished by the Fall. Preparing his response to the *Christian Letter*, Hooker wrote

> There are certain words as Nature, Reason, and Will and suchlike which wheresoever you find named you suspect them presently as bugs words, because what they mean you not in deed as you ought to apprehend. You have heard that man's Nature is corrupt his reason blind his will perverse. Whereupon under colour of condemning corrupt nature you condemn nature (*ACL* 5, IV.17.23-9).[15]

Here Hooker is arguing that the presbyterians have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. Hooker would agree that reason does not now operate properly because of the Fall, but this does not mean it is incapable of *any* proper operation at all. Elsewhere he points out that 'to make nothing evident of itself to man's understanding were to take away the possibility of knowing anything at all' (*Laws*, I.8.4). Hooker insists that just because reason is severely limited, it does not mean it should be condemned (III.8.5). If reason really did have no capacity at all after the Fall, humans would literally know nothing at all without revelation; a ludicrous assertion, since even a sixteenth-century presbyterian could think for themselves.

However, as Grislis points out, while Hooker will not condemn nature outright in the way his opponents do, he nonetheless is clear that sin seriously affects the ability of reason.[16] Thus, 'There neither is, nor never was any mere natural man absolutely righteous in himself, that is to say, without sin' (*Just.* 1, V.105.24-106.1; cf. Just. 7, V.116.5-6). Sin, as Hooker states in an undated funeral sermon,[17] corrupts nature (*Remedy*, V.376.21-3), in particular diminishing reason's ability to conceive good ends or means properly. So, rather than seeking that eternal life which is fear's only true remedy, 'corrupt nature's suggestions are for the safety of temporal life' (V.376.26-7).

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[14] Voak, *RHRT*, 144; the unclarity of Voak's assessment is apparent because he almost immediately goes on to say that Hooker and Calvin 'hold similar views on the devastating consequences of the Fall,' *RHRT*, 150.

[15] On this passage see Barry G. Rasmussen, 'Presence and Absence: Richard Hooker's Sacramental Hermeneutic,' in *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W.J.T. Kirby (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2003), 170; Dominiak, 'Participation,' 105-7.

[16] Egil Grislis, 'The Role of Sin in the Theology of Richard Hooker,' *Anglican Theological Review* 84.4 (2002): 882-4.

[17] *FLE*, V.263.

Developing this theme elsewhere, Hooker insists reason's capacities in the supernatural sphere were severely diminished by the Fall. Thus, 'the minds of all men being so darkened as they are by the foggy damp of original corruption, it cannot be that any man's heart living should be … enlightened in the knowledge … of that wherein his salvation stands' (*Certainty*, V.71.16-20). He says elsewhere, 'all flesh must of necessity fall down and confess, We are not dust and ashes but worse, our minds from the highest to the lowest are not right … not capable of that blessedness which we naturally seek' (*Pride*, V.312.24-7). Hooker makes the same point in the *Dublin Fragments*, part of his response to the *Christian Letter*, when he says the 'natural powers and faculties therefore of man's mind are through our native corruption so weakened and of themselves so averse from God' (*DF* 2, V.103.13-7). It is hard to square this emphatic language with the argument Hooker somehow underestimates the effects of the Fall, at least as far as it removes entirely reason's ability to find a way to our salvation.[18]

But it is not just the supernatural possibilities of reason that Hooker believes are affected by the Fall; reason's operation in the natural sphere is also severely impeded. Hooker insists the Fall upends the proper hierarchy in the mind:

> Whereas the orderly disposition of the mind of man should be this, perturbations and appetites all kept in awe by a moderate and sober will; will in all things framed by reason; reason directed by God; this Babylonian had his mind as it were turned upside down … wilfulness tyrannized over reason, and brutish sensuality over will (*Pride*, V.314.15-23).

This disorder in human nature means reason's natural operation is diminished even within its natural sphere: so, 'man degenerating and transgressing … loses the benefit of things which in the world working according to their natures might otherwise have yielded him, and now do not' (*Proverbs*, V.416.20-3). As Almasy says, this insistence on the limitations of fallen reason in its natural sphere is a clear point of convergence between Calvin and Hooker[19] (and, indeed, Aquinas).

Again, precisely at a moment in the *Laws* where Hooker is praising reason's capacity, he simultaneously emphasises its limits:

> The search of knowledge is a thing painful … the root hereof divine malediction wherewith the instruments being weakened wherewithal the soul (especially in reasoning) does work … by reason of that original weakness in the instruments, without which the understanding part is not able in this world by discourse to work (*Laws*, I.7.7).

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18 Cf. R.D. Williams, *Anglican Identities* (London: DLT, 2004), 24-5.
19 Rudolph P. Almasy, 'Richard Hooker's Worries about the Mind: The Path to Certainty,' *Perichoresis* 11.1 (2013): 36-7.

In the same passage Hooker blames Satan, our over-hasty wills, and sheer habit as factors which mean we cannot now reason properly. Elsewhere he summarises this point: our 'evil moral disposition … permits not the mind to see what does shine before it' (V.63.2). Hooker deploys the metaphors of blindness (I.8.1, III.9.3) and sleepiness (*ACL* 5, IV.18.15-22) to make the same point. In the natural sphere of its own operation, then, the Fall diminishes reason's ability; so, Hooker asserts, 'lewd and wicked custom … may be of force even in plain things to smother the light of natural understanding' (*Laws*, I.8.11). Hooker's chastened account of fallen reason is far from the optimism about the warrant many interpretations assert. As Almasy rightly concludes, 'Hooker does indeed worry about the mind, the mind as vulnerable, changeable, deceivable, fragile, and full of curiosity and doubt … easily perplexed, agitated, plagued by too much mental activity.'[20]

Indeed, and perhaps unsurprisingly given Hooker's interest in law,[21] Hooker argues there are specific implications of the Fall for the framing of human law. Even in circumstances where we could have discerned what laws to follow, Hooker says, our fallen minds now cannot readily discover or do the right. So he urges law-makers to remember that fallen human wills are 'obstinate, rebellious' and that laws must be aimed at 'man … in regard of his depraved mind' (I.10.1). He continues, 'even those laws of reason which (man retaining his original integrity) had been sufficient to direct each particular person in all his affairs and duties are not sufficient … now that man and his offspring are grown thus corrupt and sinful (I.10.13).'[22] The need for the establishment of positive human laws to govern natural concourse is, for Hooker, a product of the weakening of reason in its natural sphere attributable to the Fall, and is further evidence that he holds a far less optimistic view of reason than often supposed.

So, against Hooker's presbyterian opponents and authors like Voak, Williams rightly contests the depiction of Hooker as diverging from the reformed consensus on this point.[23] Partly, as Bouwsma highlights, this is because scholars have often over-estimated Calvin's pessimism about the fallen mind, in particular because they take 'total depravity' to mean that humanity has no natural capacity at all. But when Calvin's position is understood properly, says Bouwsma, we can see Hooker

> shared Calvin's belief in the total depravity of fallen humanity, which means, of course, not that there is nothing good left in human beings, but that there is no privileged area

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[20] Almasy, 'Hooker's Worries,' 46.

[21] On Hooker's contribution to legal theory see Ethan Shagan, 'The Ecclesiastical Polity,' in *The Oxford Handbook of English Law and Literature 1500-1700*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), esp. 344-7.

[22] Cf. McGrade, 'Introduction,' *Laws* I.xli.

[23] Williams, *Anglican Identities*, 26; cf. Ranall Ingalls, 'Sin and Grace,' *CRH*, 152.

> of the personality left untouched by original sin, notably including the operations of the mind.[24]

For Hooker, the Fall's effect is total, diminishing the whole human person including its reason; so Hooker praises reason, but emphasises repeatedly the problems caused by sin for reason both in the supernatural sphere (it cannot find any way to salvation) and the natural sphere (its ability to regulate human life and interaction being much diminished). As Dominiak rightly concludes, 'Hooker retains a sanguine but humble appraisal of the "natural light of reason" because he takes the epistemological limitations of sin seriously.'[25]

Philosophy

Having contested characterisations of Hooker as diverging from the reformed perspective on the effects of the Fall, we now challenge assertions that his use of philosophy in theology diverges from the reformed perspective. Again, the basis of this case is that the catholic and reformed perspectives of Aquinas and Calvin are far more congenial than often supposed. Hooker's approach is now shown to be firmly in keeping with that catholic-reformed consensus.

A surprising but revealing starting-point is a disagreement over whether God gives sermons directly to the preacher or whether it is permissible to use other, non-scriptural sources. Hooker thought sermons come from 'the wit of man', human constructions attempting to elucidate divine truth. He recognises sermons can fall short: 'oftentimes accordingly taste too much of that overcorrupt fountain which they came' (*Laws*, V.22.10), namely, the fountain of every human's corrupt mind. Quoting this passage, the author of the *Christian Letter* challenged Hooker, insisting sermons were 'the pure word of God' and 'the seed is the gift of God, and this is done by the grace of God' (*ACL* 12, IV.34.10, 15-6). The relevance of this disagreement is that the presbyterians argued that philosophy could not be used in preaching. They objected to those 'sermons … who instead of the pure Word of God do most curiously bring into the pulpit Poets, Philosophers, Rhetoricians, Physicians, Schoolmen … they think may appear fine and smooth to their hearers' (IV.35.3-6). This was a strand of their broader criticism that Hooker made use of both classical philosophers (especially Aristotle) and medieval scholastics: 'in all your discourse, the patriarch of philosophers … and the ingenious schoolmen, almost in all points have some finger' (*ACL* 20, IV.65.18). Particular ire was reserved for Aristotle, who they considered 'unto divinity [as] is darkness to

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[24] William Bouwsma, 'Hooker in the Context of European Cultural History,' *RHCCC*, 52.
[25] Dominiak, 'Participation,' 144.

light,'[26] and they accused Hooker of being 'another Aristotle by a certain metaphysical and cryptical method' (*ACL* 21, IV.72.14-5).

Hooker's autograph notes on this passage repeat his assertion that 'Sermons are framed by the wit of man' (*ACL* 12, IV.34.5). And his reasoning is intriguing: it is that his presbyterian opponents are in fact *undermining* the authority of scripture by elevating the authority of sermons to the same degree. If 'sermons be the word of God in the same sense that the scriptures are his word … then we must hold Calvin's sermons are holy scripture' (IV.32.8-10). By contrast, Hooker asks, 'should we even impart the most peculiar glory of the word of God to that which is not his word?' (*Laws*, V.22.10). Hooker's insistence on the priority of scripture, and his refusal to accord the same authority to sermons, indicates a wider methodological point: while philosophy never carries the same weight as scripture in theology, that does not mean it cannot be useful.

On some points, Hooker certainly does use philosophical sources. For example, he believed that pagan philosophers could have learned of God's existence by natural reason, a belief he shares, of course, with Calvin, so can hardly be said to be diverging from the reformed perspective. Again, he calls Aristotle 'the Arch-Philosopher' and 'the mirror of human wisdom' (I.4.1, I.10.3). So, for example, he cites approvingly Aristotle's account of the good and the beautiful (I.8.1-3).

Hooker also challenges his opponents' exegesis of the New Testament to argue that philosophy is a permissible interlocutor in theology. He depicts his opponents' position as resisting all philosophy on the basis of St Paul's warning to 'beware of philosophy' in Colossians 2.8. But, says Hooker, this misreads the passage which is a warning against 'that philosophy, which to bolster heresy or error casts a fraudulent show of reason', not against 'that philosophy, which is true and sound knowledge attained by natural discourse of reason' (III.8.3). He continues that Colossians 2.8 is a warning to be selective in the use of philosophy, 'to be armed with that true and sincere philosophy … against that deceitful and vain' (III.8.7).

Hooker also cites patristic precedent for the critical appropriation of philosophy in theology; for which 'many great Philosophers have been unsound in belief' yet 'many sound in belief have also been great Philosophers.' For many of the ancient fathers it was 'needful to use the principal instrument' of heretics and pagans, namely 'the light of reason'; hence, 'in the Fathers' writings there are sundry sharp invectives against Heretics, even for their very philosophical reasoning'

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[26] See Rudolph P. Almasy, 'Rhetoric and Apologetics,' *CRH*, 145-7.

(III.8.8). So as Kirby says, Hooker appeals to 'the authority of philosophy in general and of Aristotle in particular'[27] adducing both a scriptural basis and the early church to justify this appeal.

But Hooker's relationship with Aristotle and philosophy is more complicated than simple appropriation; as we have already seen, there is a conceptual distinction between philosophy which is useful and philosophy which is not. For instance, he is happy to draw on Aristotle's account of necessary and contingent causes in his discussion of predestination (*DF* 19-23, IV.123-8), but we then hear no more about Aristotle's views on providence and Hooker turns at once to deal at length relevant scriptural passages. Here then is a vital clue: Hooker is happy to draw on Aristotle as a *tool* where his concepts help clarify or elucidate something, but as the *source* for Christian doctrine he turns rather to scripture.

Indeed, as Lane does with Calvin, McGrade points out Hooker makes far more references to patristic literature than either scholastic or classic sources – four times as many, in fact.[28] Moreover, if we consider specifically where references to (say) Aristotle appear, we Hooker's appeals to the Philosopher are largely confined to matters other than Christian doctrine. As McGrade goes on to note, Aristotle appears mostly in Hooker's discussions of the natural knowledge of God accessible to all in Book I, his treatment of honour in Book VII, and his discourse on the state and civil law in Book VIII.[29] And, like Calvin, Hooker considered himself on safer ground when appealing to the patristic era. A particular principle from the medieval period is dismissed as simply 'scholastic invention', in part on the grounds that 'the Fathers have it not' (*DF* 17, IV.118-9). And perhaps the single most striking example of Hooker's critical approach to his philosophical and scholastic sources is his outright rejection of transubstantiation in *Laws* V.67. He believes even to discuss transubstantiation or consubstantiation is vain and useless (V.67.6) and neither the witness of scripture nor of antiquity supports either approach (V.67.8-11). The simple words of Christ recorded in scripture suffice for Hooker, to prove that Christ is present in the sacrament, the manner of his presence not being something susceptible to human investigation. The quantitative and qualitative preference for scripture and the patristic era, then, further undermines the notion that Hooker is overly indebted to philosophy.

Furthermore, where Hooker discusses explicitly how the theologian can draw on philosophy, he is at pains to express its limitations. So, in similar terms to Calvin, Hooker cites Homer, Anaxagoras, Plato, and the Stoics as evidence that some pagan philosophers rightly inferred the existence of a

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[27] Kirby, 'Reason and Law,' 262.
[28] A.S. McGrade, 'Classical, Patristic, and Medieval Sources,' *CRH*, 52.
[29] McGrade, 'Sources,' 77-9.

first cause by reason alone. Yet, he says, those heathens did not know as much about the first cause as a Christian does; their disordered thinking is revealed in the occurrence of polytheism, pantheism, or demon-worship (I.3.4, I.4.3). And no pagan philosopher could know by reason the saving truths which were above reason (I.11.5).

And, in similar terms to Aquinas, Hooker points out that even where philosophical learning is principle possible it is a difficult and unreliable way of knowledge. So, considering the hereafter, Hooker writes,

> They are, says St Augustine, but a few and they endued with great ripeness of wit and judgment free from all such affairs as might trouble their meditations, instructed in the sharpest and subtlest points of learning, who have, and that very hardly, been able to find out but only the immortality of the soul. The resurrection of the flesh what man did ever at any time dream of? (*Laws*, I.12.2).

Philosophy, then, is severely limited. It requires effort, intelligence, and time to study, which of course few people have. It can only falteringly apprehend truths (such as the immortality of the soul) which are in principle within its reach; it cannot attain at all other truths (such as the resurrection of the body) which are intrinsically beyond its grasp. Part of the need for divine revelation, Hooker says, is that reliance on natural reason alone would lead to 'the certain loss of infinite thousands of souls most undoubtedly now saved' (I.12.2). Indeed, in a passage reminiscent of Aquinas's image of the little old lady, Hooker concludes

> Our Saviour made choice of 12 simple unlearned men, that the greater their lack of wisdom was, the more admirable they might appear, which God supernaturally endued them with from heaven … They studied for no tongue, they spoke with all; of themselves they were rude, and knew not so much as how to premediate, the spirit gave them speech and eloquent utterance (III.8.10).

Philosophy is, then, for Hooker, permissible as a tool in theology. It can reach some useful truths, and it can provide useful language or concepts for theology. But Hooker is far from the uncritical appropriator of philosophy that his presbyterian opponents suggest. He places it within strict limits and its use is always governed by wider theological commitments.

Summary

On these two contested questions, the effects of the Fall on reason and the place of philosophy in theology, Hooker is considerably less positive about reason than many observers assert. Hooker believes in the total depravity of the fallen person, in the sense that all aspects of the person, including the mind, are severely diminished. Hooker's critical and selective use of philosophy is constrained by scriptural and methodological commitments. Hooker's methodological stance puts

him firmly within the terrain occupied by both Calvin and Aquinas, and so is best depicted as both catholic and reformed in his account of reason. And reason's limitations, both inherent in its nature and because of the Fall, mean that there are truths which humans need to learn which they cannot learn for themselves; hence the need for revelation, to which we turn next.

Reason and revelation

Introduction

A.S. McGrade observes, Hooker 'has the unusual distinction of being severely criticized for both hypo- and hyper-rationalism.'[30] By this he means that some critics fear Hooker elevates human reason over the supra-rational elements of Christian faith, namely those aspects of knowledge which come from revelation; while others contend reason is essentially overwhelmed by Hooker's insistence on the need for some other source of knowledge. The purpose of this section is to challenge both kinds of critic by tracing the sophisticated dialectic of reason and revelation in Hooker, in which each has a distinct (though not separate) purpose in our knowledge of God. By considering first the need for revelation and then the shape of reason, we see how Hooker (like Aquinas and Calvin) both believes revelation alone delivers the saving truths of faith which reason cannot attain and also that his account of reason is much richer than often realised.

The need for revelation

The 'hyper-rationalist' position is represented by, for instance, Porter, who categorises the *Laws* as 'a celebration of "our natural faculty of reason." '[31] Similarly, Munz says Hooker 'established the complete autonomy of reason over the whole of life.'[32] But tracing Hooker's account of the need for revelation belies such characterisations, for Hooker clearly believes reason alone can only reveal certain truths: natural, not supernatural ones. As with Calvin and Aquinas, Hooker's belief in the inherent limitations of reason is closely connected with his assertion that we need revelation for those saving truths of faith. Thus, Hooker writes in an early sermon that the 'doctrine of salvation' must be 'looked for by faith' in Christ, but this is 'a thing improbable to a natural man', so God 'sent immediately from himself to reveal these things unto the world' (*Jude* I.5, V.18.3-5, 12-4, 18-

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[30] A.S. McGrade, 'The Coherence of Hooker's Polity: The Books on Power,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24.2 (1963): 166.

[31] Porter, 'Tudor Constitution and *Via Media*,' 103.

[32] Munz, *Place of Hooker*, 62, cf. 54-5.

9). As Simut notes, the sermons demonstrate Hooker's insistence that we lack the ability to gain salvation by ourselves as it is beyond our capacity, hence the need for God to reveal it to us.[33]

Elsewhere, Hooker insists there is 'no saving knowledge possible, without the sanctifying Spirit of God … to find out supernatural laws there is no natural way, because they have not their foundation or ground in the course of nature' (*DF* 7, IV.106.15-17). This supernatural or saving knowledge, says Hooker, is those 'mysteries of our redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ' which could not be discovered 'had not God himself revealed the same' (IV.106.22-6). So in 'matters above the reach of the reason, and beyond the compass of nature … only faith is to judge, by God's revealed law what is right' (*DF* 9, IV.108.19-20).

Similarly, turning to the *Laws* reveals a clear distinction, a twofold knowledge of God, where reason delivers natural truths about God but only revelation can deliver the supernatural truths needed for salvation. Thus, in addition to 'sensual' and 'intellectual' laws, Hooker conceives a category of 'spiritual and divine' laws which are 'somewhat above the capacity of reason' (*Laws*, I.11.4). This category includes in particular those truths about our redemption through Christ, 'which could not have entered into the heart of man as much as to conceive or to imagine, if God himself had not revealed it extraordinarily' (I.11.5). 'Laws therefore concerning these things that are supernatural … have not in nature any cause … but were by the voluntary appointment of God ordained besides nature' (I.11.6). So, Hooker continues, while 'the law of reason does somewhat direct man how to honour God as their Creator', only 'divine law' can teach us there is 'an everlasting Saviour' (I.16.5). The resonance with Calvin's distinction between the knowledge of God as Creator, accessible to reason, and the knowledge of God as Redeemer, attainable only by revelation, is clear.[34]

Alongside the truths of our redemption, 'articles about the Trinity are matters of faith, and must be believed' (III.3.2, cf. I.14.2); such articles of faith can only reach us by revelation (III.3.3). In these matters of faith, Hooker continues, reason is no source and we rely wholly on revelation. Recall the 'bare beholding of heaven and earth' can, for Hooker, prompt reason to conclude in the existence of a creative God. But, as Hooker explains elsewhere, this 'bare contemplation of heaven and earth' yields only one sort of knowledge of God, and is not

> sufficient to give as much as the least spark of light concerning the very principal
> mysteries of our faith; and whatsoever we may learn by them, the same we can only

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[33] Simut, *Sermons*, 111, 160, 173.
[34] Kirby, *English Reformation*, 14-7.

> attain to know according to the manner of the natural sciences, which mere discourse of wit and reason finds out, whereas the things which we properly believe, be only such as are received upon the credit of divine testimony (V.22.5).

The distinction is drawn clearly between contemplation of the creation which may yield some knowledge of God and the need for 'divine testimony' to reveal the mysteries of faith which reason cannot grasp.

A useful example of the distinction is Hooker's comparison of Festus and St Paul, glossing Acts 25.19. St Paul, inspired by God (by 'the special operation of God's good grace and spirit'), could speak of Christ's passion and resurrection. By contrast, 'Festus a mere natural man, an infidel, a Roman … heard him, but could not reach to that whereof he spoke; the suffering and the rising of Christ from the dead he rejects as idle superstitious fancies not worth the hearing' (III.8.6). The distinction between the inspired believer's knowledge and the mere natural person's illustrates Hooker's broader concept of the limits of what the intelligent outsider can infer by reason (Festus) when compared with the knowledge available by revelation to the believer (Paul). Voak's assertion that Hooker attributed a controversial degree of knowledge to the natural person is therefore flawed: the natural person, unaided by revelation, can only attain generic and faltering knowledge of God.

The charge of hyper-rationalism, and the attendant characterisation of Hooker as outside the reformed perspective, is therefore hard to sustain when his account of revelation is traced. Unlike the wide potential for reason in matters other than those pertaining to salvation, Hooker consistently insists on the need for saving knowledge of God from a source other than human reason, and repeatedly emphasises that we cannot discover the articles of faith or the truths of our redemption from reason alone.[35] To challenge the converse accusation of hypo-rationalism is the next task.

The shape of reason

If Hooker clearly is not hyper-rationalist because he is adamant about reason's weakness and the need for revelation, neither is he hypo-rationalist, as further probing his account of reason shows. Accusations of hypo-rationalism are levelled, for instance, by Hillerdal, who brands Hooker a 'philosophical failure' who 'failed in his attempt to reconcile reason with revelation', specifically because revelation overwhelms reason and so Hooker 'only seemingly remains the philosopher who uses nothing but reason where all the time he has supposed … the light of revelation.'[36] This is an odd accusation; Hooker, as we have seen, no more tries to be a philosopher who relies only on

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[35] W. David Neelands rightly critiques Munz's accusation of hyper-rationalism for failing to grasp this distinction – 'The Theology of Grace of Richard Hooker,' (Th.D. diss., Trinity College Toronto, 1988), 120-2.

[36] Gunner Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation in Richard Hooker* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1962), 148.

reason than Aquinas does. On Hillerdal's underlying critique, that reason is somehow supplanted or overwhelmed by revelation, a fuller tracing of the shape of reason will show Hooker has a rich conception of reason. For, like Aquinas and Calvin, Hooker, though aware of reason's limits, grounds its role in theology in a rich theological base, while also emphasising that revelation and reason, distinct in their function and their authority, must nonetheless not be separated or conceived over against each other.

The most basic grounding of reason's authority and its complementary role to revelation is because both reason and revelation come from God. This principle is established at the outset of the *Laws*:

> There are but two ways whereby the spirit leads men into all truth: the one extraordinary, the other common; the one belonging but to some few, the other extending itself to all that are of God; the one that which we call by a special divine excellence Revelation, the other Reason (Pref. 3.10).

Both reason (the ordinary means of natural knowledge, common to all humans) and revelation (the extraordinary means of supernatural knowledge, available only to the believer) are in principle legitimate and complementary sources of divine truth because they both flow from a single divine source. And this gives to both reason and revelation a kind of integrity: divinely-given, but distinct.

Specifically, as Dominiak's outstanding study demonstrates, for Hooker the legitimate place of human reason in theology is grounded on the theological premise that reason is a created, God-given gift. Following Aquinas, Hooker sees reason as an effect in us which resembles our divine cause (I.5.2, V.56.1); but also one which God must guide if it is to work properly. Thus, glossing Romans 2.14, Hooker defines 'the light of reason' as the means by which 'God illuminates everyone which comes into the world' (I.8.3). The divine origin of this faculty is made clear. But it is not that reason is given to humanity and then acts as an independent capacity; its abilities are dependent upon the continuous, divine creative gift. Hence, 'concerning the force of man's natural understanding … there is no kind of faculty or power in man or any other creature, which can rightly perform the functions allotted to it, without perpetual aid and concurrence of that supreme cause of all things' (I.8.11).[37] As Dominiak concludes, 'gratuitous divine donation and activity are required even for natural knowing.'[38] Indeed, to devalue the potential of human reason, as Hooker's opponents do, is to debase the work of God itself, which in creation bestows and sustains reason, that reason in turn resembling and participating in the divine reason which causes it. The source of reason is 'God himself, who being that light which none can approach to, has sent out

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[37] For these references and analysis see Dominiak, 'Participation,' 133-4.
[38] Dominiak, 'Participation,' 134.

these lights whereof we are capable, even as so many sparkles resembling the bright fountain from which they rise' (III.8.9); so it is theologically dangerous to demean those 'sparkles' of reason, as the presbyterians do in reducing the source of knowledge of God to scripture alone (II.1.4).[39]

The divine activity which guides our reasoning is of course the Holy Spirit.[40] Voak and Kirby, disagreeing about Hooker's reformed credentials, both agree on the importance of the pneumatological aspect of his account of reason. Reason requires 'the special grace of the holy ghost' to 'concur … to the enlightening of our minds' (III.8.15), and 'the discourse of reason' must be 'aided with the influence of divine grace' (III.8.18).[41] If the Spirit is needed to guide reason in natural matters, how much more in supernatural ones. Thus, Hooker writes, 'touching the force and use of man's reason in things divine', he argues nothing 'could be done, without the aid and assistance of God's most blessed Spirit' (III.8.18). As Stafford suggests, one of Hooker's key arguments against the presbyterians was they risked separating the Spirit from the operation of human reason;[42] whereas, for Hooker, understanding reason to be a gift in creation and dependent on the Spirit for its operation allows us to see its legitimate, theologically-grounded role.

One area where Hooker may be rather clearer than either Aquinas or Calvin is that he insists explicitly that the exercise of reason in shaping doctrine must always be *corporate*, not individual. Hooker expresses a repeated aversion to the attribution of theological authority to any one individual, whether a prominent named individual within a tradition or an individual believer's private conscience.[43] At the outset of the *Laws* he fears that the elevation of Luther and Calvin within their churches 'too much authorised the judgments of a few' (Pref. 4.6). 'Nature,' Hooker observes warily, 'worketh in us a love of our own counsels. The contradiction of others is a fan to inflame that love' (Pref. 2.6; cf. 5.3). This fear of private judgment suggests that what is needed is public and communal judgment; hence, in Book VIII, Hooker limits even the power of the monarch, who can in many cases only act with the consent of Parliament or Convocation (VIII.3.3, VIII.6.11). Chapter five will show the corporate discernment of the church through its councils, particularly the first four ecumenical councils, has special authority in decision-making.[44] Hooker here advances the debate by emphasising reason's corporate dimension. Chapter six will suggest

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[39] Dominiak, 'Participation,' 203-5; cf. W. David Neelands, 'Hooker on Scripture, Reason, and Tradition,' *RHCCC*, 88.

[40] M.E.C. Perrott, 'Richard Hooker and the Problem of Authority in the Elizabethan Church,' *JEH* 49 (1998): 49.

[41] Cf. Nigel Voak, 'Richard Hooker and the Principle of *Sola Scriptura*,' *JTS* 59.1 (2008): 124-5 with Kirby, 'Reason and Law,' 269-70.

[42] John K. Stafford, 'Richard Hooker's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,' (Ph.D. diss., University of Manitoba, 2005), 115-6.

[43] Williams, 'Foreword,' xxiii; Perrott, 'Authority,' 54-5.

[44] This might find resonance with Calvin's comments that disputed matters should be settled by believers reasoning together: *Commentaries*, 88-9.

this understanding reason as a corporate act of the church's discernment could be a major benefit of Hooker's approach when considering contemporary debates about faith and reason. But it also further undermines the case that Hooker's conceives reason as excessively autonomous, for it is never the lone act of a thinking individual.[45]

Hooker's account of reason, moreover, cannot be treated in isolation from his wider theological vision. Hillerdal appears to think it can, when he expresses surprise that Hooker can move from discussing the capacity of reason to emphasising the need for grace, puzzled by Hooker's 'sudden, astonishing references to the grace of God.'[46] But, as Neelands replies, Hooker 'has all along recognized that reason must be aided by faith in matters theological, both because of its disorder through sin, and because of its limitations in approaching the infinite being.'[47] So Hillerdal, as Neelands argues, is identifying a problem (the reciprocal relationship of reason and revelation) which would not have occurred to Hooker, for whom reason and revelation had distinct functions but which, if operating rightly, would be co-operative since both were given to humanity by the same divine source. Reason, in other words, is *never* simply an autonomous human capacity for Hooker precisely because it is created, a gift of God in its origins, and so need not (cannot) be considered in isolation from its divine source.[48] That does not mean Hooker must fall into a hypo-rationalist position, because he does have a rich and vibrant account of reason as a distinct human capacity,[49] just not one which is independent of its divine source or guide. In fact, the strands identified here of reason as a corporate act of the church rather than an individual possession, grounded in God's gift and guided by the Spirit, complementary to (and not in competition with) divine revelation, point to a nuanced, sophisticated account of reason and revelation.[50]

Summary

Hooker's account of the reason-revelation dialectic mirrors that we have already demonstrated in Aquinas and Calvin, where revelation is essential as the sole source of saving truth; and so Hooker

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[45] Cf. P.A. Dominiak, 'The Logic of Desire: A Reappraisal of Reason and the Emotions in Richard Hooker's *Lawes*,' *Renaissance and Reformation Review* 16.1 (2014): 42, and Rudolph P. Almasy, 'Richard Hooker's *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*,' in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose, 1500-1640*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 596. This also indicates it differs from that tendency, identified by Simon Oliver, 'Reading Philosophy,' in *The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology*, eds. Mike Higton and Jim Fodor (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 73, to define reason as the mental cogitating of an autonomous individual.

[46] Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation*, 119.

[47] Neelands, 'Theology of Grace,' 129. Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation*, 109 is also wrong to say that Hooker believes that the Fall affects human reason but Aquinas does not.

[48] Neelands, 'Theology of Grace,' 130.

[49] Dominiak, 'Participation,' 152-4.

[50] A good short account of the complementary, non-competitive relationship of scripture and reason is Almasy, 'Hooker's *Lawes*,' 596-7; cf. W.J.T. Kirby, ' "The sundrie waies of Wisdom": Richard Hooker on the Authority of Scripture and Reason,' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c.1530-1700*, eds. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith, and Rachel Judith Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 165, 172-3.

can be conceived as firmly within that catholic-reformed consensus.[51] At the same time, neither of the twin accusations McGrade identifies as levelled against Hooker – that he either gives reason so great a capacity it stands almost independently as a theological source (Munz, Porter), or that it is so overwhelmed by revelation it has little value (Hillerdal) – is borne out when the shape of his reason-revelation dialectic is understood. In fact, Hooker has a coherent and nuanced account of reason and revelation which sees them as both as necessary, complementary, and divinely-given.[52] Reason never collapses into revelation, since it remains the act of the creature exercising a natural capacity; but although reason remains distinct it is never separate from revelation because both flow from a single divine source, allowing Hooker to 'yoke the apparently conflicting truths of reason and revelation.'[53] The integrity and mutuality of reason and revelation emerges further in the discussion of scripture where it becomes clear that revelation always needs our reason to be apprehended, so from the broader category of revelation to the more specific question of scripture we now turn.

Scripture in Hooker's theological method

Introduction

Hooker has often been understood as moving away from the reformed consensus on the function of scripture in theology, of rejecting a *sola scriptura* account of theological method. This section challenges that characterisation by showing his account of scripture is firmly within a reformed perspective. In particular, Hooker thought scripture alone was the ground of our knowledge of God's saving revelation and the essential doctrines of Christian faith. After considering how the function of scripture in the natural knowledge of God shows how the theological warrants should not be conceived as separate or in tension, we then address the sufficiency of scripture to show Hooker shares a *sola scriptura* principle provided this is properly nuanced. In particular, the distinction between *doctrine* and *discipline* emerges as a key concept for Hooker which guarantees the unique sufficiency of scripture within the field of doctrine. Finally the question of scripture's self-authentication is explored to show that, despite assertions of divergence, here too Hooker can be seen as broadly in line with Calvin's reformed stance.

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[51] Affinity with Aquinas need not mean divergence from Calvin here see, e.g., W.J.T. Kirby, 'Grace and Hierarchy: Richard Hooker's Two Platonisms,' in *RHER*, ed. Kirby, 34-5.

[52] Cf. Andrea Russell, 'Richard Hooker: Beyond Certainty,' (Ph.D. diss., University of Nottingham, 2009), 136.

[53] *FLE*, V.673.

Scripture corrects natural knowledge of God

Before considering the more contested questions of sufficiency and authority, we note that accusations Hooker overestimates reason's theological potential or divides reason and scripture are further undermined when we recall that scripture, for Hooker, plays a helpful part in the sphere of natural knowledge. At the outset of the *Laws* Hooker explains why scripture is 'fraught with the precepts' of laws which could in principle be discovered by natural reason. As we will see, scripture's principal purpose is not to deliver those laws. Nonetheless, it helpfully does so for two reasons: first, *clarity*: because some such laws are 'such as we could not easily have found out, and then the benefit is not small to have them readily set down to our hands'; secondly, *certainty*: 'the evidence of God's own testimony added to the natural assent of reason concerning the certainty of them does not a little comfort and confirm the same' (I.12.1).[54]

The complementarity of revelation and reason, indeed, of scripture and reason, is emphasised by Hooker's fairly fluid movement between appeals to each warrant in the natural sphere.[55] Hence, for example, in the middle of a reflection of what may be discerned by natural reason he happily switches to cite Moses and Psalm 19 as evidence for his claims about the natural order (I.3.2).[56] And the ability of scripture to operate in the natural sphere undermines those claims[57] that reason and revelation are separate entities operating in separate arenas with reason operating autonomously in the natural sphere and scripture operating without reason in the supernatural sphere.[58]

Scripture, then, for Hooker as for Calvin and Aquinas, is useful in correcting the natural knowledge of God available to reason; the congruence of their thought is further demonstrated by their shared approach to scripture's sufficiency as the sole source of saving knowledge of God, as we now show.

Scripture's sufficiency

A common interpretation of Hooker is that he departs from the reformed perspective because he does not adopt a *sola scriptura* account of theological method. Thus, his presbyterian opponents accused Hooker of moving outside the reformed view embodied in the Church of England's formularies:

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54 Cf. W. Bradford Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker: A Companion to his Life and Thought* (Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade, 2017), 89-90.

55 Neelands, 'Scripture, Reason, and Tradition,' 86-90; Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought form Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 151-60.

56 Dominiak, 'Participation,' 110.

57 E.g., Peter Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (London: Routledge, 1982), 54.

58 Here I disagree with Simut, who says that, for Hooker 'Christians are not to look to Scripture for answers that belong to reason' (*Sermons*, 206); Hooker is quite clear that scripture also teaches us many things we could know by reason – so, e.g., Joyce, *Anglican Moral Theology*, 113-4.

> How then agree you with the belief of our Church: which affirms, that holy scripture teaches all things necessary to salvation? … shew us, whether nature teaching anything touching Christ … or that cases and matters of salvation be determinable by any other law than of holy scripture? (*ACL* 3, IV.13.9-3, 125-6).

Some contemporary writers like Voak agree; 'Hooker was implicitly rejecting the reformed, and more generally Protestant, principle of *sola scriptura* and making reason a necessary addition to Holy Scripture in matters of Christian doctrine.'[59] Others argue that Hooker is firmly within a reformed perspective on this question; thus, LeTourneau, who insists that on scripture's sufficiency 'Hooker belongs to the reformed tradition.'[60] This section will show that Hooker's theology is rightly characterised by the interpretation represented by LeTourneau, and wrongly by the presbyterians and Voak. Tracing Hooker's account of scripture, both on the immediate dispute in the *Laws* about church polity and his wider theological method, shows that, properly understood, Hooker endorses a *sola scriptura* principle entirely consistent with the reformed view articulated in Calvin and the catholic perspective represented by Aquinas.

The question of whether the Church of England should continue to be led by a threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons or replace it with a single level of presbyters as in Calvin's Geneva may not be an obvious way to address the question of scripture's function in theological method. But it was the presenting issue of Hooker's dispute with the presbyterians. And just as today Anglican debates about gender and sexuality are in fact much deeper disagreements about the authority and function of the Bible, so in Hooker's day this question of church order was grounded in more fundamental dispute about theological method.

Hooker understood the *Laws* to embody his 'careful endeavour' to uphold 'the present state of the Church of God established among us' (Pref. 1.1). In particular, he opposes those 'persuaded … that every Christian Church stands bound to put down bishops, and in their rooms to elect an Eldership … for the government of each parish' (Pref. 4.6). Underlying this presbyterian demand, says Hooker, is a methodological presumption

> ye suppose the laws for which ye strive are found in scripture .. the very main pillar of your cause, [is] that scripture ought to be the only rule of all our actions and consequently that the Church orders which we observe being not commanded in scripture, are offensive and displeasant to God … and therefore That in Scripture there must of necessity be found some particular form of polity Ecclesiastical, the laws whereof admit not any kind of alteration (Pref. 7.4-5).

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[59] Voak, '*Sola Scriptura*,' 96; so also Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 153-5.
[60] Mark LeTourneau, 'Richard Hooker and the Sufficiency of Scripture,' *JAS* 14.2 (2016): 136; similarly W.J.T. Kirby, 'Hooker as an Apologist of the Magisterial Reformation in England,' *RHCCC*, 227-32.

The root of the presbyterian case, therefore, is not a claim about church order so much as a claim about scripture: that the Church of England must abandon bishops because the Bible sets out a presbyteral form of church government which must invariably be followed.

Exploring Hooker's rebuttal can begin by considering possible counter-arguments he does not in fact deploy. So one obvious approach would be to accuse the presbyterians of historical inaccuracy, as indeed Hooker does. The emergence of a presbyteral form of church government can be traced, with some precision, to the particular circumstances of sixteenth-century continental Europe;[61] so Hooker can 'rip up to the very bottom, how and by whom your discipline was planted, at … this age we live in' (Pref. 1.2). Hooker proceeds with that ripping-up exercise by a lively and not entirely complimentary account of Calvin's instituting of presbyterianism in Geneva in the 1530s and 1540s (Pref. 2). He goes on to say that claims of scriptural or still less antique justification for presbyterianism as a binding model are hard to square with the near-universal evidence of episcopal church order dating back over a thousand years: 'a very strange thing, sure it were, that such a discipline … should be taught by Christ and his Apostles in the word of God, and no Church have ever found it, nor received it to the present time' (Pref. 4.1); and he challenges the presbyterians to find an example of non-episcopal church order since the New Testament (Pref. 4.2).

A second, not unconnected approach would be to argue scripture *does* lay down rules about the form of church government and says churches should be led by bishops not by presbyters. Now, Hooker certainly thinks that episcopacy can claim scriptural antecedents. Episcopacy, Hooker says, 'best agrees with the sacred scripture' (III.11.16) and 'the first bishops of the Church of Christ were his blessed apostles' (VII.4.1, cf. VIII.4.3). Yet Hooker consistently and repeatedly refuses to argue that bishops are *demanded* by scripture. He accepts that, given the situation in Geneva, Calvin had some justification in abandoning episcopal order (Pref. 2.1-4). Hooker argues that it is 'altogether too late' to re-impose bishops on the Scottish and French churches (III.11.16). He insists that, even in churches with bishops, that structure could temporarily be dispensed with, for instance by allowing the ministry of those who were not ordained by priests (VII.14.11).[62] What Hooker denies here is more significant than what he affirms: he refuses to mount a defence of bishops on the basis that they are demanded by scripture.[63]

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[61] See Robert Kingdon, 'The Calvinist Reformation in Geneva,' in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, 9 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005-9), esp. VI.90-6.

[62] K.P.J. Padley, 'Early Anglican Ecclesiology and Contemporary Ecumenism,' *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 9.1 (2009): 6-7.

[63] For this reading of Hooker on episcopacy see, e.g., M.R. Somerville, 'Richard Hooker and his Contemporaries on Episcopacy: An Elizabethan Consensus,' *JEH* 34 (1984): 183, 187; A.S. McGrade, 'Episcopacy,' *CRH*, 486-8.

While Hooker does deploy the historical and scriptural counter-arguments (the presbyterian discipline is relatively recent and is not obviously in the New Testament), in fact his principal ground for opposing the presbyterians is a more fundamental point of theological method.[64] The presbyterian case, says Hooker, asserts 'Scripture everywhere favours that discipline' (Pref. 3.13), and underlying this is a deeper argument that 'only one law, the scripture, must be the rule to direct in all things' (II.1.3). Thomas Cartwright, quotes Hooker, says 'the word of God contains whatsoever things can fall into any part of man's life' and 'the Word of God directs a man in all his actions'[65], such that 'by scripture we must of necessity be directed in every … thing which is incident into any part of man's life' (II.3.1).

Now, contends Hooker, this view is unsustainable even when framed in its own terms. If humans could only ever act in ways laid out in scripture, we would sin every time we picked up a straw (Introduction to Book II) or whenever we slept or accepted a drink, since such acts are done by 'natural desire, without … reference to any commandment of God' (II.2.1). Indeed, the Bible praises figures such as Abraham and Job who followed God before the revelation of Christ: are they to be condemned simply because they lacked the New Testament (II.4.6), along with all those too young or lacking the capacity to know scripture (II.8.6)? Moreover, many aspects of human life, such as the rules of commerce, are not set down explicitly or fully in scripture (Pref. 8.4). It would be a rather cruel deity who gave us such an incomplete account of our duties.

Moreover, since human reason is a divine gift, it demeans or ignores God's graciousness to say he has not communicated with his creatures by media other than religious texts. His opponents, say Hooker, would 'restrain the manifold ways which wisdom has to teach men by,' including nature, conscience, and experience (II.1.4). But, Hooker adds, 'scripture is not the only law whereby God has opened his will' (II.2.2). That God has ordained more than one means of divine self-communication tells against the sufficiency of scripture if the Bible is understood as the sole source of *any* true knowledge, as the presbyterians seem to allege.[66]

Turning to Hooker's positive account of sufficiency, towards the end of Book II he addresses the distinction between the two different kinds of knowledge. In some ways 'the very light of nature alone may discover some truths' (II.8.2). But others require a different source: 'nature is no sufficient teacher what we should do that we may attain to life everlasting. The insufficiency of the light of nature is by the light of scripture … fully and … perfectly herein supplied' (II.8.3). This

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[64] P.P. Hobday, 'Richard Hooker and *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*,' *JAS* 18.2 (2020): 223-4.
[65] Quoted in *Laws* I.105, I.106.
[66] Cf. Chapman, *Anglican Theology*, 115-6.

scriptural light makes good the deficiency of our natural light and is perfect and sufficient for its purpose of supernatural illumination of saving truth, as Hooker expounds poetically:

> The testimonies of God are true, the testimonies of God are perfect, the testimonies of God are all-sufficient to that end for which they were given … God did thereby intend to deliver … a full instruction in all things necessary to salvation, the knowledge whereof man could not by nature otherwise in this life attain to (II.8.4).

Here Hooker establishes his *sola scriptura* theological method: scripture alone teaches us the saving knowledge of God which our reason could not attain (so also III.14.3),[67] an account firmly within the reformed perspective. As Voak, rightly (but rather surprisingly, given his insistence that Hooker separates himself from the reformed view of scripture, observes) Hooker 'as with the Reformed tradition' asserts 'Holy Scripture is necessary for Christian doctrine.'[68] Grislis makes the point even clearer: for Hooker as for the reformed generally, the Bible was 'the exclusive deposit of divine revelation.'[69]

Hooker's insistence on scripture's sufficiency for its purpose is demonstrated further by his approach not just to his presbyterian opponents but also his catholic ones. For as well as rejecting the presbyterian view that scripture alone was the source of true knowledge of God, Hooker also rejects what he takes to be the contemporary catholic view that scripture was *insufficient* by itself to reveal the truths necessary to salvation. Hooker contended we ought not to 'seek for any revealed law otherwise than only in the sacred scripture,' and should not 'stand bound to yield to traditions … the same obedience and reverence we do to his written law, honouring equally' both scripture and tradition (I.13.2). So he considers it 'dangerous' to 'add to the word of God uncertain tradition, so the doctrine of man's salvation may be complete … whatsoever to make up the doctrine of man's salvation is added, as in supply of the scripture's insufficiency, we reject it' (II.8.5). He considers both catholic and presbyterian methodologies 'repugnant to truth' because Rome teaches 'scripture to be so insufficient, as if, except traditions were added, it did not contain all revealed and supernatural truth, which absolutely is necessary for the children of men in this life to know that they may in the next be saved' (II.8.7; cf. III.14.5). Neither sixteenth-century presbyterianism nor sixteenth-century catholicism, says Hooker, properly apprehends sufficiency; the former extends its scope too far and exclude reason; the latter renders it too narrow so as to require tradition.[70] This allows us to see the error of the presbyterians' charge: Hooker did not argue that natural knowledge

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[67] So R.D. Williams, 'Foreword,' *CRH*, xix.
[68] Voak, '*Sola Scriptura*,' 123.
[69] Egil Grislis, 'Scriptural Hermeneutics,' *CRH*, 274.
[70] Cf. Ranall Ingalls, 'Richard Hooker as Interpreter of the Reformed Doctrine of "Sola Scriptura",' *Anglican and Episcopal History* 77.4 (2008): 360-1.

was needed to supplement or replace scriptural knowledge of the truths of salvation; he did not think the truth of salvation could be found other than through scripture.

Scripture's perfection, its sufficiency for its purpose, is developed in Book III when Hooker turns to the vital distinction between *doctrine* and *discipline*. We can trace this distinction in three ways: the content of each sphere; the source of knowledge within each sphere; and whether there can be change in each sphere. We consider each in turn.

The *content* of *doctrine* Hooker defines as 'matters of faith … necessary to salvation' (III.2.2). Doctrine, Hooker says, covers 'things which supernaturally appertain to the very essence of Christianity' (III.1.4, cf. III.3.3) and includes, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity (I.2.2, III.2.1) and the person and work of Christ (III.1.4; cf. *Jude* I.5, V.17-8). Hooker enumerates the 'points of doctrine, as for example the unity of God the trinity of persons, salvation by Christ, the resurrection of the body, life everlasting, the judgment to come' (III.10.6; cf. *Just.* 16, V.123.1-23).

Such matters are distinct from *discipline*,[71] they are 'of a different nature from Ceremonies, order, and the kind of church government' (*Laws*, III.2.2). Matters of discipline he also calls 'things indifferent' (e.g. II.4.4, from the Greek *adiaphora*), by which he does not mean unimportant but indifferent to salvation; he prefers the term 'matters accessory' (cf. II.4.3, III.3.3).[72] The distinction between his view and the presbyterians', Hooker concludes, is that he does not consider church government to be a matter of doctrine, but they do; 'matters of discipline and church government are (as they say) matters necessary to salvation and of faith, whereas we put a difference between the one and the other' (III.2.2); for 'there be no necessity' that the Bible should 'prescribe any one particular form of church government' (III.4.1).

A key implication of Hooker's classification of church government differing from the presbyterians' is that doctrine and discipline differ, secondly, not just in content but in *source*. The knowledge of the saving doctrines of Christian faith relies on 'the heavenly support of prophetic revelation, which does open these hidden mysteries that reason could never have been able to find out' (I.11.6). This prophetic revelation is of course a reference to scripture, as Hooker elsewhere makes clear; 'in scripture God … also reveals whatsoever we neither with safety be ignorant of, nor at all be instructed in, but by supernatural revelation from him'; these 'articles of Christian faith … if scripture did not comprehend, the Church of God should not be able to measure out' (III.3.3)

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[71] Good accounts of the vital the doctrine-discipline distinction are Chapman, *Anglican Theology*, 117-20 and Ingalls, 'Reformed Doctrine,' 362-5.

[72] Chapman, *Anglican Theology*, 117.

Again, the description of the articles of faith as 'articles of evangelical doctrine' (III.10.6) emphasises this close connection between scripture and doctrine. Hooker insists: 'Scripture teaches us all supernaturally revealed truth, without the knowledge whereof salvation cannot be attained … that saving truth which God has discovered to the world by revelation' (III.8.13).

Later, in Book V, Hooker speaking about worship identifies scripture as God's revelation, insisting on the centrality of reading scripture in church services: 'the Church as a witness preaches his mere revealed truth by reading publicly the Holy Scriptures' (V.19.1). The reading of scripture in worship, says Hooker, is essential and powerful because scripture alone is where we now find the divine revelation:

> The Word of God is his heavenly truth touching matters of eternal life revealed and uttered to men; to prophets and apostles by immediate divine revelation, from them to us by their books and writings … when we name the Word of God, always to mean the scripture only (V.21.1).

The close identification of revelation with scripture, in the sense of where we now find doctrine, also recurs in his other works. Thus, 'that which ties us to' Christ is 'our faith in the promised salvation revealed in the word of truth' (*Jude* I.11, V.25.22-23). Again, the 'simplicity of faith which is in Christ takes the naked promise of God's bare word and on that it rests' (*Certainty* 3, V.77.16-17). Elsewhere, Hooker states that 'the writings of the evangelists and the apostles are the foundation of Christian faith' (*Just*. 15, V.122.28-30).[73]

Doctrine, then, must be grounded on scripture, and scripture alone. By contrast, says Hooker, in matters of discipline scripture is not a clear or binding source. Here the methodological difference between Hooker and his presbyterian opponents becomes clear: *sola scriptura* is certainly Hooker's view, in the sense that the truths of revelation needful for salvation are found only there; but this does not mean scripture must regulate all aspects of life. While the presbyterians seek a form of church government in scripture, Hooker does not: 'Scripture does not require of me to make any special choice' (*Laws*, II.4.4) in church government because 'in things indifferent there is a choice' (II.4.3). That choice can certainly be *informed* by scripture, as Hooker says, believing that bishops can claim some New Testament pedigree (VII.4.1-3). Nor is *tradition* is binding in matters of discipline, even though Hooker considers episcopacy is 'from ancient times … universally established' (VII.5.8).

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[73] Simut, *Sermons*, 111.

For the government of the church, like all matters of discipline, is not for Hooker determined by scripture or tradition but by *reason*.[74] Matters other than doctrine are 'left … to the careful discretion of the churches' and 'must by reason be found out' (III.9.1). The continued ordering of the church by bishops, its provenance in scripture and tradition notwithstanding, is 'not absolutely necessary, but of a changeable nature' and 'stand[s] in force, rather by the custom of the church, choosing to continue in it.' For Hooker, in matters of discipline, 'the Church has power to alter with general consent and upon necessary occasion, even the positive laws of the apostles' (VII.5.8). As Graves observes, Hooker rejects both the presbyterian and advanced episcopalian arguments that scripture determined church government and instead insisted church order was justified by 'politic autonomy', that is, the right of each national church to decide its own order.[75] The sufficiency of scripture, for Hooker, meant it was the sole source of matters of faith; but in other matters, reason (drawing on, but not determined by, scripture and tradition) was the decisive source.

Thirdly, doctrine and discipline are distinct because the former may not *vary* but the latter may. Thus, Hooker says doctrines 'have been since the first hour that there was a Church … and till the last they must be believed', and 'to make new articles of faith no man thinks it lawful' (III.10.6). By contrast, matters of discipline admit of different solutions. Just as what matters is where a path is headed rather than the material it is made from, so too churches can achieve the same goal of order by different means: 'the matter of faith is constant, the matter contrariwise of action daily changeable' (III.3.3). So, 'laws (forasmuch as they are not … necessary to salvation) may … also be changed as the difference of times or places shall require' (III.10.6; cf. III.10.3-4).

So: matters of doctrine and discipline are distinct in their content, source, and variability; this distinction underscores the centrality of scripture as the sole ground of saving doctrine. Understood rightly, as Cocksworth highlights, Hooker's account preserves the *sola scriptura* principle by limiting the sufficiency of scripture to doctrine:

> Although Hooker was committed to the sufficiency of scripture he was clear that scripture does not claim to be sufficient in all things, just to be sufficient in what it is meant to be – the means by which God speaks of who he is and … how we can know God and be part of what God is doing.[76]

So Hooker does not, as the presbyterians held and Voak implies, believe that reason is a *ground* of the saving knowledge of God. Nature did not teach anything essential to salvation, for Hooker; this

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[74] Hobday, 'Hooker and *MMC*,' 232.

[75] Daniel F. Graves, ' "*Iure Divino*"? Four Views on the Authority of the Episcopacy in Richard Hooker,' *Anglican and Episcopal History* 81.1 (2012): 55.

[76] Christopher Cocksworth, *Holding Together: Gospel, Church and Spirit: The Essentials of Christian Identity* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 32.

comes only by revelation in scripture. But scripture's sufficiency is bounded; it is the sole rule of faith, containing the deposit of revelation which alone grounds saving doctrine, but it is not the sole rule of life, as though it were the only instruction we needed to live.

Sola scriptura, moreover, does not mean scripture stands alone: as Hooker notes, any theological method would be incoherent if it did. Hooker's opponents demonstrate that themselves; as Hooker observed on the *Christian Letter*, 'they are matters of salvation … you handle in this book. If therefore determinable only by scripture, why press you upon me so often with human authorities … why cite you so many commentaries books and sermons?' (*ACL* 3, IV.13.1-4). For Hooker, while scripture is the sole source of saving doctrine it needs other warrants if its riches are to be mined. The presbyterians, Hooker says, believe in crucial doctrines such as the coeternity of the Father and the Son and the procession of the Spirit because such doctrines 'found express literal mention in the scriptures' (*ACL* 2, IV.10.20.25-6). But this, says Hooker, is a puzzling claim. If, for instance, the coeternity of Father and Son were so clearly contained in scripture, it is hard to account for the fourth-century disputes. As Hooker says,

> that ancient strife which was between the Catholic fathers and Arians, Donatists, and others … the scripture they both believed, the scripture they knew could not give sentence on both sides … it does not yet appear that an argument of authority of man is in divine matters worth nothing (*Laws*, II.7.6).

As Hooker says earlier, the articles of faith are 'in scripture nowhere to be found by express literal mention, only deduced they are out of scripture by collection' (I.14.2).[77] While not very specific about this act of deduction or collection, Hooker does emphasise it is an act of reason: 'Exclud[ing] the use of natural reasoning about the sense of holy scripture concerning the articles of our faith' will mean the text 'being misconstrued breeds error: between true and false construction, the difference reason must show' (III.8.16). Hooker stresses we do 'not add reason as a supplement of any maim or defect' in scripture, but 'as a necessary instrument without which we could not reap … that fruit and benefit which it yields' (III.8.10). Reason's use, then, is instrumental and regulatory rather than generative; it does not ground doctrine, which only scripture can, but does guide the church to the proper interpretation of the biblically-grounded articles of faith.[78]

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[77] A similar observation that such beliefs are not set down 'literally and verbatim' in the Bible so have to be 'deduced' from scripture is cited by Keble (*Works*, I.xc and fn.2). The comment is not included in the Folger edition on the basis that it appears only in the 'less accurate transcription' of the text in the Trinity College Dublin manuscript (*FLE*, IV.xlvii). However, it does reflect Hooker's view; so Grislis, 'Hermeneutics,' 280-2, and Cocksworth, *Holding Together*, 32-3.

[78] Cf. Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 151.

The legitimacy of this use of reason can be further seen when we recall reason is not the autonomous thinking of an individual, but the corporate, God-given, and Spirit-guided discerning of the church. And 'the guarantor of … congruence' between scripture and reason's interpretation of it is 'that the same God who inspired Scripture also created the instrumental reason with which we … comprehend it.'[79] Of course, this prompts the further question of which interpreters or interpretations are permissible in the shaping of doctrine from scripture, a question we defer until the discussion of tradition in chapter five. For now, it suffices to say that Hooker clearly does have a broadly reformed account of scripture in which scripture is the sole source of our saving knowledge of God.

Arguments such as Voak's and Gibbs's that Hooker departs from the reformed belief in *sola scriptura* cannot be sustained. For Hooker, scripture's sufficiency or perfection is real, but it is limited to its essential purpose, the delivery of doctrine. As Kirby notes, challenging Voak and defending Hooker's reformed credentials on this point, the key affirmation of *sola scriptura* is not that other theological warrants have little or no authority; rather, it means no warrant other than scripture generates the doctrine of faith, and on that definition Hooker is firmly reformed.[80] Scripture does not deliver the laws of church discipline or everyday life; and the doctrine it contains still needs reason to elucidate and frame in propositional form the saving message it alone delivers. Nonetheless, this is still a *sola scriptura* account, mirroring Calvin's and indeed Aquinas's, in the nuanced sense that scripture alone is the source of the saving knowledge of God which reason could never discover. As Kirby concludes,

> Knowledge of God the Creator is not to be confused with the knowledge of the Redeemer … Hooker's credentials as a reformer stand forth when he maintains that only through the supernatural revelation of the Scriptures is it possible to hope for a participation in the divine nature. Scripture alone can reveal the supernatural way of salvation.[81]

On the question of where we now find the saving knowledge of God, then, Hooker is firmly within the reformed perspective. On a second question, how we know the authority of scripture, Hooker is also thought to depart from it, the next section situates him firmly within the reformed milieu.

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[79] W. Speed Hill, 'Scripture as Text, Text as Scripture: The Case of Richard Hooker,' *Text* 9 (1996): 98.

[80] W.J.T. Kirby, ' "Grace hath use of nature": Richard Hooker and the Conversion of Reason,' in *Richard Hooker and Reformed Orthodoxy*, eds. W. Bradford Littlejohn and Scott N. Kindred-Barnes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 131-3.

[81] Kirby, 'Reason and Law,' 267.

Scripture's authority

The presbyterians did not just think Hooker undermined the reformed principle of scripture's sufficiency; they accused him of rejecting the reformers' view that scripture authenticates itself, grounds its own authority. They accused Hooker of believing scripture's authority is dependent upon the church, not its own inherent self-authentication:

> what certainty of salvation can we have … if the scripture cannot assure us that it is the Word of God? Tells us therefore if your meaning be not that the authority of the church must do that which the scripture cannot do, namely to assure us that they are the Word of God (*ACL* 4, IV.15.21-5).

Echoing the presbyterian charge, Voak and LeTourneau among others agree Hooker refuses to say scripture self-authenticates and here 'move[s] beyond decisively outside the boundaries of the reformed orthodoxy.'[82]

Certainly, Hooker bluntly asserted scripture did not straightforwardly authenticate itself. Thus, while 'all believe that the Scriptures are sacred, and that they have proceeded from God,' he writes, and 'have for this point a demonstration sound and infallible', yet 'it is not the word of God which does or possibly can assure us, that we do well to think it his word' (*Laws*, II.4.2). This seems, at first glance, contrary to Calvin's assertion that scripture grounded its own authority (*Inst.*, I.7.4).

However, probing Hooker's account more deeply shows convergence with the reformed perspective even on this point.[83] We begin with the grounding of scripture's authority in its divine authorship, a belief foundational to Aquinas's and Calvin's account of scripture too. Grislis, for example, states 'Hooker shared with the mainstream of the Church of England … the central Reformation affirmation of the *sola scriptura*,' which was founded on 'an unwavering belief that God was the author of the scriptures.'[84]

Indeed, in language reminiscent of Calvin's formulation,[85] Hooker says scripture is a 'means more durable to preserve the laws of God' than pre-scriptural oral tradition; and it was established 'not without precise direction from God himself … God takes this act to himself' (I.13.1). Again, Hooker insists 'Scripture being with Christian men being received as the word of God … we hold that [God's] speech reveals there what he himself sees, and therefore the strongest proof of all' (II.7.5). This finds obvious resonance with Calvin's insistence the authority of the Word derives

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[82] Voak, '*Sola Scriptura*,' 127; cf. LeTourneau, 'Sufficiency,' 137, 168.
[83] See, for instance, W. David Neelands, 'The Use and Abuse of John Calvin in Richard Hooker's Defence of the English Church,' *Perichoresis* 10.1 (2012): 15-9.
[84] Grislis, 'Hermeneutics,' 274.
[85] A connection identified by Grislis, 'Hermeneutics,' 275 and LeTourneau, 'Sufficiency,' 141.

from the fact it is divine speech (*Inst*. I.7.5). It also coheres with Aquinas's view: 'holy scripture is all wise and most true since revealed and handed down by God, who is all truth and all knowledge' (*Div. nom.* I-1, 283). For all three theologians, then, the initial reason to treat scripture as authoritative is because it is divine speech.

Next, though, it must be asked how we recognise this text is divine speech. Here the presbyterians assert the only ground for this recognition is scripture itself. But Hooker believes this cannot be right. Recognition of scripture's function as the sole source of saving truth requires 'the presupposal of knowledge concerning certain principles whereof it receives us already persuaded,' including, 'the sacred authority of scripture', a principle 'which point is confessed impossible for the scripture itself to teach' (*Laws*, I.14.1; cf. II.4.2). We must be 'persuaded by other means that the scriptures are the oracles of God' (I.14.2). The sheer implausibility of the presbyterians' case is obvious, says Hooker. If scripture did authenticate itself, then surely everyone would accept its authority, which is not the case (III.8.13).[86] Moreover, the argument becomes incoherent if pressed; for if scripture authenticates itself, which part of it?   If, so that part of scripture itself would need *another* part of scripture to authenticate it, and so on, in an infinite chain of reciprocal authentication (II.4.2).

The recognition of scripture's authority, Hooker identifies, hinges on 'by what means we are taught it' (III.8.14). Voak advances several reasons to argue Hooker diverges from the reformed on this point. Critiquing these reasons shows Voak is wrong and Hooker is clearly within a wider reformed consensus.

Voak concludes Hooker 'rejects the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic solution … Holy Scripture is authenticated by the Church.'[87] Certainly Hooker rejects the view 'we have no other way but tradition' to discern scripture's authority; but nonetheless 'the first outward motive leading men so to esteem of the Holy Scripture is the authority of the Church' (III.8.14). Indeed, Hooker continues, the 'voice and testimony of the church acknowledging scripture to be the law of the living God is for the truth and certainty thereof no mean evidence' (V.22.2). Likewise, Calvin did not think the external 'evidences' of scripture's authority were unimportant or without weight.[88] So while it is true Hooker did not believe tradition was the source of scripture's authority, he does not consider tradition (or indeed other evidence external to scripture) unimportant, and in this he agrees with

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[86] Speed Hill, 'Scripture as Text,' 95-6.
[87] Voak, '*Sola Scriptura*,' 130; cf. 123-4.
[88] As Muller notes, 'Calvin, almost paradoxically, devotes more space to a discussion of the external evidences' than to explaining 'why such evidences are unnecessary,' *PRRD*, II.258.

Calvin, rather undermining Voak's wider argument of divergence between Hooker and the reformed perspective.[89]

Voak's second, third, and fourth arguments are that Hooker also rejects 'the Reformed position that Holy Scripture is a self-authenticating first principle,' and 'the Reformed view that scripture can be infallibly authenticated … [by] the internal witness of the Holy Spirit,' because for Hooker 'scripture can only be authenticated by inferential reasoning based on objective evidence.'[90]

To counter Voak's arguments we note initially that Hooker distinguishes between what might persuade the sceptic that scripture's authority was at least an intellectually coherent notion from what persuades the believer to accept it as saving truth. So while he does say 'a demonstration sound and infallible' reveals scripture's authority (II.4.2), he is clear this is essentially an argument for justifying scripture's authority to the non-believer: the Fathers 'maintain the authority of the books of God by arguments such as unbelievers themselves must needs think reasonable' (III.8.14). By contrast, for the believer, Hooker is clear there is 'no proof but by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which assures their heart therein.' What Hooker resists is the notion this can occur other than by the Spirit working through human reason: 'motives and inducements … are notwithstanding ineffectual of themselves' to prove scripture's authority 'if the special grace of the holy ghost incur not to the enlightening of our minds', and the Spirit directs our reason to accept in faith the scripture's authority (III.8.15).[91] What we see here then is a co-operation of the Spirit and reason to persuade the believer of scripture's authority.[92]

Moreover, as chapter three showed, to say Calvin believed in scripture's self-authentication is a complex claim which needs considerable further nuance. For instance, Calvin was adamant that the witness of the Spirit was essential for recognising scripture's authority; that authority did not reside in the text itself. Furthermore, Calvin did not separate inner witness from external evidence; as Muller observes, 'Calvin never claimed the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit' operated 'apart from the various external evidences.'[93] What we see in Hooker is the same; the Spirit moves from the 'inside out' to persuade the believer, while the external evidence may persuade from the 'outside in.' Hence Kirby rightly criticises Voak's characterisation: ' "infallible demonstration" is in fact the inner testimony of the Spirit' and that this 'corresponds to arguments for scripture's

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[89] Ingalls, 'Reformed Doctrine,' 359, 366.
[90] Voak, '*Sola Scriptura*,' 134.
[91] So Kirby, ' "sundrie waies" ,' 172-3.
[92] Ingalls, 'Reformed Doctrine,' 368-9; Stafford, 'Holy Spirit,' 115.
[93] *PRRD*, II.255.

authentication … in Calvin.'[94] As Stafford says, this may be 'a more refined argument than Calvin' but is 'consistent with Calvin's language.'[95]

So far, we have argued suspicion of Hooker's reformed credentials on scripture's authority is misplaced. When Hooker's co-operative account of reason and the Holy Spirit is grasped, and Calvin's nuance on *autopistis* is appreciated, there is in fact no substantial tension between them. But Voak then advances a further claim: that Hooker's approach is 'completely different' from Aquinas's, because Aquinas believes scripture's authority is 'incapable of demonstration.'[96] But, of course, Aquinas did not mean there were no rational arguments which pointed to scripture's authority. It is difficult to say precisely, since Voak cites the larger *Summa* (I.1.8) but unfortunately does not specify which part of the text he is referencing, but he may be referring to Aquinas's assertion that 'this science does not argue in proof of its principles' (*resp*.). What Aquinas means by this is that unless one's interlocutor will grant something of the possibility of faith – namely, will accept the possibility God exists and communicates – no amount of rational persuasion will convince them of the things of faith: 'if our opponent believes nothing of divine revelation, there is no longer any means of proving the articles of faith by reasoning' (I.1.8, *resp*.). What Voak has failed to see here is the distinction between the believer and the unbeliever; there is the possibility of demonstration, but only to the believer (or, at the very least, someone prepared to believe). This, of course, is precisely the point Hooker is making; no amount of rational argument will ultimately persuade the unbeliever unless it is joined to the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit in that person's heart. Voak's argument that Hooker diverges from Aquinas here is no more convincing than his argument that Hooker diverges from Calvin.[97]

It is certainly true, though, that while in substance he and the reformer converge, Hooker sounds a little more reticent than Calvin about asserting scripture's inherent authority, and resists the use of the word or concept *autopistis*. Two possible reasons for this can be adduced. First, as we saw, Hooker is profoundly wary of attributing too much authority to any individual (*Laws*, Pref. 2.6, 4.6,

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[94] Kirby, 'Conversion of Reason,' 132.
[95] Stafford, 'Holy Spirit,' 203; cf. Ingalls, 'Reformed Doctrine,' 368-9, who like Stafford sees Hooker as consistent with Calvin, but fails to identify as Stafford does the link between the authority of scripture and the witness of the Holy Spirit. LeTourneau, 'Sufficiency,' 153-4 tries to argue rather tortuously that Voak is half-right because Hooker departs from Calvin in separating the witness of the Spirit from the authenticity of Scripture. (This characterisation is also advanced by Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 154). But this is precisely what Hooker does not do: Hooker is explicit in III.8.15 that Spirit and reason work together to persuade the believer of scripture's authority.
[96] Voak, '*Sola Scriptura*,' 133 fn.100.
[97] Cf. Dominiak, 'Participation,' 166-74.

5.3).[98] Particularly he condemns the *autokataktritoi* (III.8.8 and *Jude* I.11, IV.26.11), literally those who judge themselves, for setting up their own personal opinion about matters of faith over against the received teaching of the church. This leads to heresy, division, and a particular form of circular, insular, exclusive reasoning. It promotes a kind of canon within a canon, an attention to only those aspects of doctrine which the presbyterians wish to emphasise (*ACL* 18, IV.49.6-8, 13). And there were, for Hooker, real dangers in the establishment of this sort of self-selecting, exclusive dogma: 'when the minds of men are once erroneously persuaded that it is the will of God to have those things done which they fancy' the consequences can include polygamy, cruelty, destruction of property and livelihoods, and even the killing of those with whom they disagree (*Laws*, Pref. 8.12).[99] So Hooker is deeply resistant to anything which suggests there is any individual or personal source of authority apart from the formal, public teaching of the church; for a sub-group or individual to establish further tests of orthodoxy is divisive and destabilising.[100]

Secondly, perhaps part of the problem with asserting scripture's self-authentication is it can sound like the work of a single event or moment. But this is not, for Hooker, how the Spirit normally works in people; it is rarely the case that we immediately accept the authority of scripture in a moment and all else immediately becomes clear. Rather, in *Laws* III.8.13-14, Hooker depicts an unfolding process where we initially accept scripture on the basis of the church's witness, then the Spirit persuades us inwardly of the scripture's inherent authority, before we are further drawn to understand rightly scripture's meaning. This, as Russell notes, is an image which recurs elsewhere, as Hooker's lovely description that 'God does nothing else but lead us along by the hand' from one aspect of scripture to another, so that by seeing one part fulfilled and then others in turn, he 'settled us upon the rock of an assured hope' (*Jude* I.5, V.18.26-8).[101]

Summary

Hooker's presbyterian opponents contended he departed from reformed principles on the place of scripture in theology, an interpretation which is followed by contemporary writers such as Voak and to some extent LeTourneau, because Hooker is said to depart from the reformed emphases of *sola scriptura* and scripture's self-authentication. In part, such flawed interpretations arise because they

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[98] This wariness may also help account for his apparent unwillingness, unlike many of the reformers, to say we can know with certainty we are saved, a question a wider comparison of him and Calvin could usefully explore; see Russell, 'Beyond Certainty,' 158-71, and Shuger, 'Faith and Assurance,' *CRH*, 229-36.

[99] McGrade suggests Hooker has specifically in mind Anabaptist-inspired anarchy; *Laws*, I.xxxiv.

[100] Joyce, *Anglican Moral Theology*, 55-7 is one of the few contemporary writers to spot this link.

[101] Russell, 'Beyond Certainty,' 158-60. This may well be a further point of convergence with Aquinas who similarly uses the image of the teacher leading the student by the hand, especially on the reading of scripture: see Peter M. Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 4-5.

see Calvin and Aquinas as at odds, a premise earlier chapters contested. That characterisation becomes less convincing when we trace the common features of Hooker's and Calvin's account of scripture, which include a belief in *sola scriptura* if defined as scripture being the sole source of the saving knowledge of God which reason alone cannot discover, a principle Hooker happily maintains while insisting scripture's sufficiency relates only to doctrine, not other matters such as church order. Hooker converges with Aquinas too; sharing vital elements of his view such as the divine authorship as the ground of the text's authority, and the co-operative roles of the Holy Spirit and human reason in guiding us to recognise the authority and right interpretation of the text. So on the function of scripture in theological method, and indeed on the functions of reason and scripture more generally, Hooker is firmly consistent with both Calvin and Aquinas, sharing a catholic and reformed theological consensus. But if this is so, it prompts the question why this convergence has so often been missed; the final section of this chapter adduces reasons for this failure.

Obscuring Hooker's convergence with Calvin and Aquinas

Introduction

As with previous chapters, a number of reasons can be identified for the failure to see the convergence between Hooker and Calvin and Aquinas. Seven are now adduced to demonstrate that, once a number of misconceptions are corrected, the plausibility of the reading of Hooker advanced here, which characterises him as both catholic and reformed, can emerge more clearly. These are: (1) misreadings of Calvin and Aquinas; (2) distortions of Hooker's views by those appropriating him to advance their own visions of Anglicanism; (3) Hooker's attitude to Calvin; (4) Hooker's attitude to Aquinas; (5) the wider meaning of 'reformed' in sixteenth-century England; (6) Hooker's attitude to Rome; and (7) the integrity of Hooker's method.

Misreadings of Calvin and Aquinas

To apply the basic point of this study, many accounts of Hooker rely on the presumed contrast or even irreconcilability of Aquinas's and Calvin's theological methods. For example, they assume Calvin by 'self-authentication' means something which puts him at odds with Aquinas's approach, and therefore Hooker is said to reject the reformed stance (e.g., Joyce);[102] follow it rather than Aquinas's (e.g., Atkinson);[103] or steer some middle way between catholic and reformed extremes

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[102] Joyce, *Anglican Moral Theology*, 116, 146; against Joyce, see Littlejohn, 'Reformed Hooker,' 76-8.
[103] Atkinson, *STR*, 93, 108-9.

(e.g., Gibbs).[104] But, as chapters two and three showed, the notion Calvin and Aquinas are opposed on many topics is misplaced and they are in fact more congruent than supposed. What we can see is a process of divergence over the years as Calvin and Aquinas have been appropriated in different ways which have conceived points of difference where the original theologians were not in fact at odds. For example, as chapter three showed, if Calvin's account of reason is read through the prism of Barth's views on natural theology we should certainly think him much more pessimistic about that warrant than Aquinas. Again, as chapter five will demonstrate, if Aquinas's account of tradition is read through the later sixteenth-century interpretation of the Council of Trent then we would conclude it was very uncongenial to reformed concerns. What then happens is Hooker is located against a backdrop of later (mis)readings of Calvin and Aquinas which may be quite distinct from those theologians' original texts. Recovering (say) a pre-sixteenth-century account of Aquinas on tradition, or a pre-twentieth-century account of Calvin on reason, allows us to see the greater congruity of their theological methods and removes the need to situate Hooker on a presumed spectrum between them.

Anglican appropriations of Hooker

Just as Calvin and Aquinas have been interpreted in ways which suit other agendas (e.g. Calvin by Barth, Aquinas by Trent), so too Hooker. Almost certainly the most egregious and successful of these appropriations, which chapter five will discuss, is John Keble's, who depicted Hooker as essentially a forerunner of the Oxford Movement.[105] For now a simple comparison will suffice. Atkinson, for example, is an Anglican evangelical who wants a recovery of Hooker's 'explicitly reformed outlook' to 'lead to a rediscovery of the Church of England's true theological heritage.'[106] But to assert a reformed Hooker, for Atkinson, seems to entail rejecting any notion of congruity with Aquinas.[107] Conversely, Joyce rightly identifies a tendency in some evangelical appropriations of Hooker to over-emphasise his connections with the reformed (for example, she rightly sees him as quite suspicious of the congregationalism which marked many continental reformed churches).[108] Yet in turn she appears to appropriate Hooker for a reading of Anglicanism which is much less sympathetic to the reformed, for instance by highlighting his affinity with Aquinas while failing to identify his congruence with Calvin.[109] When the intention of those appropriating Hooker can be identified, some of the imbalances in their accounts can be demonstrated, and characterising Hooker need not be seen as a competitive exercise.

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[104] Lee W. Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Scripture and Tradition,' *HThR* 95.2 (2002): 230.
[105] See Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 199-201, and MacCulloch, 'Reputation,' 809-10.
[106] Atkinson, *STR*, xii.
[107] Atkinson, *STR*, xviii.
[108] Joyce, *Anglican Moral Theology*, 13-4.
[109] Joyce, *Anglican Moral Theology*, 52-66 (on Calvin), 238-40 (on Aquinas).

Hooker's attitude to Calvin

However, it is not just later appropriations which have contributed to misreadings of Hooker; his own prose can sometimes mislead the reader. This may be particularly true of Hooker's attitude to Calvin, which is nuanced in detail but sometimes rather spicy in tone.

The *Christian Letter* accused Hooker of 'singling out' Calvin as an 'adversary' of the Church England (*ACL* 19, IV.57.18-9) and departing from the respect in which Calvin had been held by Hooker's patrons, Bishop Jewel and Archbishop Whitgift (IV.55.1-2). It is certainly true that Hooker was sometimes rather rude about the Genevan reformer; he is somewhat dismissive of Calvin's education (as trained in law but self-taught in theology), and his unflattering description of Calvin as 'incomparably the wisest man that ever the French Church did enjoy' (*Laws*, Pref. 2.1) is a barely-concealed jibe.[110] Nonetheless, the *Letter* misses the nuance of Hooker's treatment of Calvin, as does Joyce. She argues that Kirby and Atkinson are wrong to see Hooker as advancing a theology 'wholly consistent' with Calvin's.[111] Yet Hooker is very precise in what he opposes in the Preface: what 'Calvin did for the establishment of his discipline, seems more commendable than that which he taught for the countenancing of it' (Pref 2.7). Hooker does not think the establishment of a presbyterian polity unjustified; he does think the insistence after the fact that such a polity was established because it was required by scripture an unacceptable methodological move, since (for Hooker) scripture regulates only matters of doctrine, not discipline.[112] Joyce does not appear to grasp the nuance of Hooker's discriminating attitude to Calvin and so fails to see his wide (though not complete) convergence with the Genevan.

Indeed, as Bauckham argues, focus on the rhetoric of the Preface obscures the many ways Hooker actually agrees with Calvin. In twelve of the fifteen direct references to Calvin through the *Laws* Hooker claims to be endorsing the reformer's views.[113] Of course, it might be possible that Hooker is misreading or misappropriating Calvin, and this relatively small number of direct references to Calvin proves little by itself.[114] Nonetheless, Bauckham's argument should point us beyond the polemic of the Preface to examine in detail the nuance of Hooker's theology and (as this chapter argues) its broad convergence with Calvin's.

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[110] Here I agree with Joyce, *Anglican Moral Theology*, 53-4, who argues that many analyses have missed the irony of Hooker's account of Calvin – including, for instance, P.D.L. Avis, 'Richard Hooker and John Calvin,' *JEH* 32.1 (1981): 23-4.

[111] Joyce, *Anglican Moral Theology*, 60; though she rightly notes that Kirby and Atkinson underestimate the sardonic elements of Hooker's depiction of Calvin, 59 fn.68.

[112] Cf. Avis, 'Hooker and Calvin,' 26-7.

[113] Richard Bauckham, 'Richard Hooker and John Calvin: A Comment,' *JEH* 32 (1981): 29; so also Avis, 'Hooker and Calvin,' 25-6.

[114] So Bauckham, 'Hooker and Calvin,' 30.

Hooker's attitude to Aquinas

If Hooker's attitude to Calvin can easily be read wrongly, so too his attitude to Aquinas. The *Christian Letter* had famously brandished Hooker as overly indebted to scholastic theology, which 'hath banished from us the true and sincere divinity' (*ACL* 20, IV.65.5,13). Certainly Hooker owes much to Aquinas, who he calls the 'greatest of the school divines' (*Laws*, III.9.2). Hooker's account of law (especially I.3)[115] and his Christology (especially V.51-6)[116] can be convincingly shown to echo Aquinas's.

However, Hooker did not adopt Aquinas's positions simply because they were Aquinas's, and was quite happy to reject Aquinas's views where they were uncongenial to his reformed commitments. Hooker rejected what he took to be the scholastic position on habitual grace (a 'new Scholastic invention … vain, and unnecessary' (*DF* 17, IV.119.1-2)) as a principle deriving from 'the Schoolmen who follow Thomas' and not from scripture (IV.118.23-4, 29-31).[117] Hooker also thoroughly rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, which he says is nowhere justified by scripture (*Laws*, V.67.9, cf. *Just.* 11, V.119.25-9) or tradition (*Laws*, V.67.11-2).[118]

Moreover, whereas the presbyterians seemed to treat scholasticism as a single category to be rejected (e.g. *ACL* 20, V.65-8), Hooker (as Simut notes) appears to be alert to the distinction between Aquinas's views and those doctrinal developments of the later scholastic period or the sixteenth-century focussing most of his ire on the latter.[119] Chapter three demonstrated Calvin takes a similarly discriminating approach. Hooker's clear rejection of key tenets of Roman Catholicism demonstrates he is wrongly characterised if his broad use of Aquinas is taken to infer a general adherence to scholastic theology or Aquinas specifically.

The meaning of 'reformed'

Connected with the failure to examine the nuance of Hooker's relationships to Calvin and Aquinas is a more fundamental mischaracterisation of 'reformed' which is now being corrected by several strands of contemporary scholarship.

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[115] McGrade, 'Sources,' 60; W.J.T. Kirby, 'Richard Hooker and Thomas Aquinas on Defining Law,' in *Aquinas among the Protestants*, eds. Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 91-2.

[116] W. David Neelands, 'Christology and the Sacraments,' *CRH*, 369-73.

[117] On the ambivalence of Hooker's attitude to Aquinas on justification see Debora K. Shuger, 'Faith and Assurance,' *CRH*, 236-42, though she also argues he diverges from the reformed tradition on this point too, 221-2; cf. Simut, *Sermons*, 298-308, who locates Hooker among the reformed on this point.

[118] The simplicity and bluntness of Hooker's rejection of transubstantiation is clear, so I follow J.R. Parris, 'Hooker's Doctrine of the Eucharist,' *SJT* 16.2 (1963): 156-7 and Bryan D. Spinks, *Two Faces of Elizabethan Anglican Theology: Sacraments and Salvation in the Thought of William Perkins and Richard Hooker* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 153-4. Consequently I disagree with Neelands's assertion that Hooker's opposition to it was 'minimalist' and that the presbyterians' suspicion of him justified; 'Christology and Sacraments,' 376.

[119] Simut, *Sermons*, 237-9, 261.

R.A. Muller has been pivotal in demonstrating that 'reformed' was a much broader and more fluid category than often understood.[120] In relation to Reformation England, as Hampton's crucial study reminds us, 'the Reformed tradition was a broad church, encompassing a wider range of views than it has often been given credit for,' and so 'identifying a writer as Reformed does not mean they will hold all and only those theological views' held by a particular other reformer or reformers.[121] Hence the need to read alongside each other and in detail the specific authors being compared.[122]

Hooker's reformed character has also been obscured by failure to grasp what it meant to call the sixteenth-century Church of England 'reformed.' Milton rightly delineates the Church of England's of the 'unambiguously reformed character,'[123] but this can easily be obscured by its retention under the Elizabethan settlement of elements of pre-reformation order. As Hampton writes, the reformation Church of England was 'committed to a range of liturgical practices and ecclesiological claims that appeared decidedly eccentric from the perspective of the wider European Reformed movement.'[124] The reformation Church of England, of course, retained government of the church by bishops, some pre-reformation clerical garments, cathedrals, kneeling to receive communion, and invented Choral Evensong; with rare exceptions such practices were largely abandoned elsewhere in reformed churches.[125] The idiosyncrasies of England's reformation, however, as MacCulloch and Quantin reminds us, should not blind us to the emphatically reformed character of the Church of England.[126] The recent contemporary scholarship of Milton, MacCulloch, and Hampton, against the backdrop of Muller's expansion of 'reformed' as an historical and theological category, helps us see that just because Richard Hooker was clearly a conformist – the *Laws* is a substantive theological defence of the polity and practices of the Church of England in his day – does not mean he could not also be reformed.

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[120] *PRRD*, I.28; cf. R.A. Muller, 'John Calvin and Later Calvinism: The Identity of the Reformed Tradition,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, eds. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 130-2.

[121] S.W.P. Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7-8.

[122] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 8.

[123] Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-40* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 12. So also, e.g., Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 13-15; Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1-8; S.W.P. Hampton, 'Confessional Identity,' *OHA*, I.210-1.

[124] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 8.

[125] Rare but not unheard-of: see Hampton, 'Confessional Identity,' 220-1.

[126] E.g., Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Putting the English Reformation on the Map,' in his *All Things Made New: Writings on the Reformation* (London: Penguin, 2017), 209-15; Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 88-9.

Similarly, recent scholarship is belying the presumption that, in the sixteenth century, to be reformed was to be not catholic. Certainly the reformers rejected a range of teachings and practices associated with the sixteenth-century Roman Catholic Church. But these does not mean they were rejecting outright the theology of, say, Aquinas; chapter three showed Calvin's thought, consciously or not, has clear points of convergence with Aquinas. So, for example, where Atkinson and Joyce essentially argue that the more Thomist we conceive Hooker the less reformed he must be, and *vice versa*, it is now becoming clearer that Hooker can be situated within 'the Reformed tradition' which was 'often Thomistic virtually from its outset.'[127] Thus, for example, Dominiak shows considerable congruity between Aquinas and Calvin on the controversial topic of whether scripture is self-authenticating,[128] and Kirby the convergence of their accounts of a twofold knowledge of God.[129]

This retrieval in recent scholarship of the complexity of the definition of 'reformed' and its application to sixteenth-century England, as well as the debt of the reformed tradition to Aquinas, yields a broader definition of 'reformed', making it more plausible to situate Hooker within it while showing how he could be simultaneously catholic and reformed.

Hooker's attitude to Rome

A further factor obscuring Hooker's reformed credentials is his attitude to the Roman Catholic Church. Hooker's deputy and sparring-partner at Temple Church, Walter Travers, accused Hooker of failure to condemn Rome (*Suppl.*, V.208.8-10), while the *Christian Letter* said Hooker 'would be glad to see the backsliding of all reformed churches to be made conformable to that wicked synagogue of Rome' (*ACL* 20, IV.68.1,7).

Indeed, Hooker had preached that 'many of our fathers lying in popish superstitions yet by the mercy of god to be saved' (*Just.* 10, V.118.21-2; cf. *Just.* 9, V.118.4-6),[130] which was the cause of Travers's complaint (*Suppl.*, V.200-2).[131] Moreover, Hooker resisted those who 'make the Church of Rome utterly no church at all' because of its serious doctrinal errors (*Laws*, III.1.10, cf. V.68.5-9). This insistence Roman Catholics might be saved, and that Rome was still a genuine Christian church, prompted Travers and other opponents to challenges Hooker's reformed credentials.

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[127] W. Bradford Littlejohn and Scott N. Kindred-Barnes, 'Introduction,' *RHRO*, eds. Littlejohn and Kindred-Barnes, 25.

[128] P.A. Dominiak, 'Hooker, Scholasticism, Thomism, and Reformed Orthodoxy,' *RHRO*, eds. Littlejohn and Kindred-Barnes, 116-9; cf. his 'Participation,' 208, 270.

[129] Kirby, 'Defining Law,' esp. 91-5.

[130] Simut, *Sermons*, 184-90.

[131] Richard Bauckham, 'Hooker, Travers and the Church of Rome in the 1580s,' *JEH* 29.1 (1978): esp. 41-4; see *FLE*, V.261-69 for background on the controversy.

In fact, though, while Hooker was certainly pastorally generous towards Rome and its adherents, he was adamant in his reformed convictions about its fundamental doctrinal flaws. Thus, he condemned its doctrine of justification ('the doctrine professed in the church of Rome does bereave men of comfort,' *Just.* 9, V.117.25-6) and so breaking from it was entirely proper ('corrupted as she is and refusing to be reformed … we are to sever ourselves from her', *Just.* 9, V.117.29-118.1). Standard reformation polemic about the Israelites departing from Babylon as a metaphor for the reformed's departure from Rome followed (*Just.* 10-11, V.118-9).[132] Even as Hooker insists that Rome is still a genuine church he is blistering about its doctrinal faults ('gross and grievous abominations') (*Laws*, III.1.10). We saw how Hooker roundly rejects Roman Catholic teaching about transubstantiation and chapter five will show how he condemns what he sees as accretion of papal power and the methodologically flawed scriptural exegesis which underpins it. Hooker's generosity towards Roman Catholicism and its adherents, then, should not mislead us into thinking Hooker departed from the substance of the reformed consensus.

Hooker's theological integrity

A final factor which may account for some misreadings of Hooker is that he is a writer of considerable integrity whose nuanced positions are easily misunderstood or distorted. For instance, while he is entirely happy to say scripture is the sole source of doctrine he is unwilling to say that scripture needs no other warrant to draw out its meaning; the nuance of his *sola scriptura* convictions means he is open to being interpreted in different ways. He rejects the argument of his presbyterian opponents that scripture alone is theologically authoritative not just because he thinks they are wrong but because he thinks they are dishonest, accusing him of relying on sources other than scripture even as they cite extra-scriptural sources against him (*ACL* 3, IV.13.1-6).

Again, Hooker accepts the legitimacy of both presbyteral and episcopal forms of church government while being unwilling to insist that either is mandated perpetually by scripture or essential to the church but also because he does not believe those claims can be honestly grounded methodologically or historically (*Laws*, Pref. 4.1, 4.4). This nuance can be lost by those who say he is an advocate of one form of church government, when in fact he makes only the fairly restrained claim that episcopacy is not an illegitimate form of church polity and so should not lightly be cast aside;[133] or allows him to be depicted a champion of reason over against scripture when actually he simply asserts, as Calvin and Aquinas do, that reason has a legitimate theological function which does not diminish the centrality and uniqueness of scripture. Hooker's integrity, then, leaves him

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[132] Bauckham, 'Hooker and Rome,' 40-41.
[133] Hobday, 'Hooker and *MMC*,' 225-6.

open to misunderstanding or attack, and this has helped generate contradictory interpretations of his thought which make locating him theologically a difficult matter of navigating contested terrain.

Summary

Cumulatively, this section demonstrates a range of reasons why Hooker's theological identity has been misunderstood. The nuances of the appellation 'reformed' and of Hooker's attitude to Calvin, Aquinas, and Rome, along with the tendency to compare him with subsequent interpretations of Aquinas and Calvin rather than those authors directly, combine to obscure his congruity with both those theologians and the possibility, even plausibility, of a sixteenth-century Church of England conformist adopting a theological stance which was both catholic and reformed. Moreover, Hooker's integrity means he is not always easy to situate in a debate where (for instance) he at least appears much more realistic than some of his interlocutors. Subsequent appropriations of Hooker to justify contemporary accounts of Anglicanism, moreover, have often heightened points of tension between the catholic and reformed traditions and diminished the possibility of seeing them as congruent. Identifying these factors helps us see the plausibility of relocating Hooker not as the defender of any one type of later Anglicanism, nor as uncritically following either Aquinas or Calvin, but emerging as within a firmly catholic and reformed consensus they both share.

Summary

Richard Hooker's reputation has been contested territory since the presbyterians accused him of departing from the reformed consensus and subsequent Anglicans have appropriated him in aid of their own versions of Anglicanism.[134] This chapter closely reads his texts, building on the readings of Aquinas and Calvin in earlier chapters, demonstrating the possibility of reading Hooker as both catholic and reformed on his account of scripture and reason. The investigation shows Hooker follows both Calvin and Aquinas in attributing real but limited capacity to reason as a source of some knowledge of God, but maintains a *sola scriptura* view of theological method because scripture alone is the source of God's revelation, which is the only source of that knowledge of God which generates Christian doctrine and yields salvation. Reasons this convergence has been overlooked was adduced, including failure to see Hooker's nuanced approach to his interlocutors or to recognise that nuance in pursuing a partisan reading of his theology. On *scripture* and *reason*, then, Hooker, Calvin, and Aquinas have much more in common than often supposed, and the next chapter will test that whether this is also true of their accounts of a third warrant, *tradition*.

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[134] For examples see Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 5-18.

Chapter Five
Tradition in Hooker, Calvin, and Aquinas

Introduction

By the late 1580s, Richard Hooker was already skating on theologically thin ice with his presbyterian opponents, who already suspected him dangerously unsound on two theological warrants, *scripture* and *reason*, particularly as they related to salvation. The dispute with his deputy at Temple Church, Walter Travers, ended up before the Privy Council.[1] By 1599, Hooker was also in the presbyterians' sights on a third theological warrant, *tradition*.[2] That year's *Christian Letter* complained his account of tradition would 'disgrace … the English Church' (*ACL* 4, IV.16.3-4). In particular, they 'suspect[ed] the underpropping of a popish principle concerning the church's authority above the Holy Scripture' (IV.16.2-3). The presbyterians accused Hooker of departing from the reformed *sola scriptura* principle by making scripture reliant on tradition.

The previous three chapters have demonstrated that, despite the accusation of the presbyterians and many subsequent writers, Hooker's theological method need not be characterised on a reformed-catholic perspective because, at least as traced in Aquinas and Calvin, those theological methods are fundamentally congruent in their accounts of *scripture* and *reason*. This chapter continues the account of their theological methods by making the same claim about *tradition*, thereby challenging characterisations of Hooker which rely on the presumption Aquinas articulates a more positive view of tradition and Calvin a more negative one.

For each theologian in turn, the relationship of tradition and scripture in their method is examined, before the role of church councils is explored. Convergence is demonstrated on those points where divergence is often argued. A key conceptual distinction emerges between the operation of tradition in the earliest Christian centuries and subsequently. Finally, reasons why this convergence has been overlooked are identified, notably that (1) the catholic definition of tradition endorsed by the sixteenth-century Council of Trent embedded a divergence between catholic theology and reformed thought which was not indicated by Aquinas's method, and (2) John Keble's

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[1] See Lee W. Gibbs, 'Life of Hooker,' *CRH*, 11-3; Richard Bauckham, 'Hooker, Travers and the Church of Rome in the 1580s,' *JEH* 29 (1978): 37-50.

[2] On tradition see Mike Higton, 'Tradition,' in *The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology*, eds. Mike Higton and Jim Fodor (London: Routledge, 2015), 192-202; A.N. Williams, 'Tradition,' *OHST*, 362-76; A.N. Williams, *The Architecture of Theology: Strucure, System, Ratio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 84-7; Richard Bauckham, 'Tradition in relation to Scripture and Reason,' in *Scripture, Tradition and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Richard P.C. Hanson*, eds. Richard Bauckham and Benhamin Drewery (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988) 117-145.

appropriation of Hooker has, misleadingly but successfully, resulted in a widespread belief that Hooker diverged from the reformed on this question. Here too Hooker can be best characterised as within a clear catholic-reformed continuity embodied in Aquinas and Calvin. It also traces a realistic, shared understanding of tradition which upholds the sufficiency of scripture while accommodating the historical realities of doctrinal development, while indicating that recovery of the earlier account of Aquinas might help resolve elements of the ongoing dispute about tradition today.

Tradition in Aquinas's theological method

Introduction

The presumption of a sharp divide between catholic and reformed perspectives on tradition has coloured much of the debate. Thus, Valkenberg contrasts 'the Catholic methodological principle of scripture and tradition as more or less separate sources of revelation' with 'the Reformed methodological principle of scripture being the sole critical norm in theology.'[3] The assertion of official Roman Catholic theology that 'Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture comprise a single sacred deposit of the Word of God entrusted to the Church' (*Fides et ratio*, 46) is thus problematic. In Valkenberg's formulation, there is a risk that catholic perspectives separate the two warrants and confer on tradition some autonomous authority; *Fides et ratio* suggests that scripture and tradition are both components of the Word. Neither view would be congenial to the reformed concern with the uniqueness of scripture as the sole source of the saving knowledge of God. However, as we will now see, neither the separation of the two warrants nor the attribution of equal authority to them is Aquinas's view, and so his method is not intrinsically uncongenial to the reformed perspective.

Aquinas on scripture and tradition

An initial problem, as Persson identifies, is that Aquinas never describes precisely what constitutes tradition or how it operates in theological method; he even writes of the 'tradition of sacred scripture,'[4] which might sound uncomfortable for the reformed, by conflating the two warrants or suggesting tradition somehow has priority over scripture. But Aquinas, as Persson continues, is both sparing and casual in his use of the word 'tradition': it can refer to human traditions such as the

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[3]   W.G.B.M. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God: Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 215.

[4]   Per Erik Persson, *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 45.

canons, say, or even his own teaching.[5] Probing Aquinas's account more deeply reveals a clear sense of what tradition is and how it functions which is not uncongenial to reformed concerns.

Before examining tradition, recall that the key dialectic in the opening chapters of the larger *Summa* is between reason and revelation. While reason can naturally know some truths about God ('the existence of God and other like truths can be known by natural reason': *S.Th.* I.2.2, *ad.* 1) revelation alone delivers the saving truths of the Christian faith ('certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to us by divine revelation': I.1.1., *resp.*).

Harrison, as we saw, attributed to Aquinas a fairly expansive account of tradition's scope and authority to include as sources of revelation a range of extra-scriptural and indeed non-Christian sources, while Valkenberg, restricting the range to Christian sources, still suggested Aquinas had an expansive definition of what counted as authoritative tradition.[6] In fact, as chapter two argued, Aquinas effectively restricted revelation almost entirely to scripture. The contrast between reason and revelation is almost (though not entirely) equivalent to the contrast between reason and scripture: Aquinas differentiates 'philosophical science' from 'other knowledge – i.e., inspired of God', namely 'scripture' (I.1.1, *s.c.*).

The discrimination between scripture as the deposit of revelation and all other, and therefore lesser, sources of authority is made clear in what I think is the single instance where Aquinas, explicitly and concisely, addresses all three theological warrants and their relationship (*S.Th.* I.1.8).[7] Aquinas begins, 'sacred scripture has no science above itself' (*resp.*), asserting the priority of that warrant in the hierarchy of theological method.

In his dense but vital reply to the second objection (references in the next two paragraphs are all to I.1.8, *ad.* 2), Aquinas continues, 'the argument from authority based on divine revelation is the strongest,' and therefore 'the authority of the canonical scriptures' is alone 'an incontrovertible proof' in theology. Again, Aquinas is establishing scripture's primacy, because only the divine speech, and no merely human utterance, can carry the authority of the divine speaker. He simultaneously establishes a meaningful but ancillary role for another warrant: reason. Thus, 'sacred doctrine makes use even of human reason,' but only 'to make clear other things that are put

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[5] Persson, *Sacra Doctrina*, 47.

[6] Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 69; Pim Valkenberg, 'Scripture,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the* Summa Theologiae, eds. Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 51.

[7] See Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 10-4; cf. Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science of the* Summa Theologiae (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006),19-20.

forward' by revelation. Here Aquinas explicitly rules out reason as a source or ground of doctrine, though it may clarify or articulate a revealed doctrine.

Only after discussing scripture and reason does Aquinas then turn to tradition, in the single explicit reference to that warrant in the opening questions of the *Summa*. The uniqueness of this reference alone should give pause to the argument that Aquinas gives tradition a substantial weight in his theological method. Here, Aquinas says 'the authority of the doctors of the church' may 'properly be used' in theology. But its authority is immediately qualified. Its authority is 'merely probable' compared with the 'incontrovertible proof' of scripture. And, just as reason cannot generate doctrine, neither can tradition; for 'our faith rests upon the revelation to the apostles and prophets, and not on the revelations (if any such there be) made to other doctors.' Valkenberg and Harrison are wrong to assert that any authority other than scripture can be counted as revelation; Aquinas very clearly establishes the absolute priority of revelation which is almost entirely equated with scripture (cf. I.1.2, *ad.* 2).[8]

The insistence that no other warrant can ground matters of faith or doctrine recurs elsewhere. For instance, Aquinas says that 'Holy Writ is the rule of faith, to which no addition or subtraction can be made (II-II.1.9, *obj.* 1). Similarly, glossing Galatians 1.8-9, Aquinas writes 'nothing is to be taught except what is contained, either implicitly or explicitly, in the Gospels and epistles and Sacred Scripture' (*in Gal.*, 10).[9] The 'implicitly,' of course, highlights the question of who determines what is 'implicit'; even so, the key principle is that scripture alone grounds doctrine. Hence, as Davies notes, '*sacra doctrina* and *sacra scriptura* can be used interchangeably … access to revelation is given in the words of canonical scripture and especially in the teaching of Christ.'[10]

Part of the key to understanding tradition's function as theological warrant, then, is to contrast it with the function of revelation, Aquinas insisting that scripture alone is the source of revelation. In other words, we define tradition by first defining revelation, conceiving the scriptural deposit of revelation as the sole source of saving truth. Read this way, Aquinas could be considered congenial to reformed concerns; indeed, Sytsma cites Hooker's contemporary, the reformed theologian William Whitaker (Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, 1580-95), who 'appealed positively

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[8]   David S. Sytsma, 'Thomas Aquinas and Reformed Biblical Interpretation,' in *Aquinas among the Protestants*, eds. Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 60.
[9]   Sytsma, 'Biblical Interpretation,' 59.
[10] Brian Davies, 'Is *Sacra Doctrina* Theology?', *New Blackfriars* 71 (1990): 144; cf. Nicolas M. Healy, 'Introduction,' in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to his Critical Commentaries*, eds. Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 18; Persson, *Sacra Doctrina*, 51-3, 79-80.

to Aquinas's opinion on the canonical authority and perfection of scripture.'[11] Sytsma highlights numerous examples of Whitaker quoting Aquinas, including the scriptural commentaries, to support this reading.[12]

Nonetheless, any *sola scriptura* principle (even this moderately-framed version of scripture as the sole source of saving doctrine) poses further questions, as Williams reminds us. First is the historical problem. We need not investigate in detail the questions of when and how the canon was formed[13] to realise that, as a matter of brute historical fact, the Bible did not exist as a collection of texts, to which definitive and unique authority was attributed, for several centuries after Christ. Thus 'the lateness of any attestation of the … canon' must 'pose serious questions to the notion of scripture as solely authoritative'; moreover, scripture's limits, at least in the sense of recognition of what was and was not scripture, were set by the church's decision; so, 'ecclesial determination' of the canon 'is already evidence that scripture has never and can never … stand alone.'[14]

Secondly, as Aquinas's phrase about doctrines 'contained implicitly' in scripture hints, scripture admits of multiple interpretations. Again, Williams points out, the Bible 'did not make the Spirit's identity clear and one cannot construct any coherent pneumatology solely' from the biblical texts.[15] The early church only came over time to attribute divinity to the Holy Spirit, ruling out interpretations of scripture which suggested he was subordinate to the Father, and relying heavily on extra-scriptural practices (notably the glorification of Father, Son, and Spirit in the liturgy) to justify the claim.[16] And Aquinas himself recognises that scripture does not stand alone; for while 'the truth of faith is confessed in Holy Writ,' it is 'diffuse … under various modes of expression, and sometimes obscurely' (*S.Th.* II-II.1.9, *ad*. 1). Hence the gloss on Galatians where Aquinas says all doctrine is contained in scripture 'implicitly or explicitly.'

The problems of the canon and interpretation lead some theologians, notably in the contemporary Roman Catholic church, to expand that 'implicit' doctrine to include a wide range of beliefs whose scriptural provenance is, at least, open to challenge. For example, Sytsma's (and Whitaker's) interpretation of Aquinas could be contrasted with Elders's. Elders agrees that Aquinas sees scripture alone as the source of doctrine. But he argues this is not a *sola scriptura* view because

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[11] Sytsma, 'Biblical Interpretation,' 58.
[12] Sytsma, 'Biblical Interpretation,' 57-61.
[13] On which see, e.g., Joseph Verheyden, 'The New Testament Canon,' in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012-5), I.389-411.
[14] Williams, 'Tradition,' 366.
[15] A.N. Williams, *The Architecture of Theology: Structure, System, and Ratio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 86.
[16] Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 86-7.

Aquinas draws on the witness of the Fathers and subsequent doctrinal developments such as the assumption of Mary as essentially scriptural.[17] If so, the reformed would find it hard to accept Aquinas's account. It begs the question of which Fathers are authoritative, and how to handle disagreements between patristic texts; and, potentially, an almost limitless range of beliefs might be said to be 'implicit' in scripture. Indeed, the very circumstances which give rise to the problem indicate a difficulty: for, scriptural evidence could be adduced to support *both* the equality of the Father and the Son *and* the subordination of the Son to the Father. How to judge which of these 'implicit' doctrines is right? Elders's position might be suspected of veering towards a 'two-source' theory of doctrine, or risking a sense that tradition *now* can judge which scriptural interpretation is right, both problematic for a reformed perspective.

Although we contest Elders's account of Aquinas, and suggest Sytsma and Whitaker more faithfully characterise Aquinas, Elders rightly identifies to the need to inject more nuance into the debate than merely asserting Aquinas upheld *sola scriptura*, even on the carefully-defined account we advance here. Unless Aquinas was unrealistic either in assuming the canon always existed or there was only one plausible interpretation of scripture, there must be some role for another warrant in shaping doctrine; and by examining his account of creeds and councils we see how he thought tradition functioned in defining *sacra doctrina* and the possibility of a very precise account of tradition which avoids those problems but maintains the *sola scriptura* principle.

Councils and creeds

Even a *sola scriptura* view of theological method is going to have to give some account of the formation of doctrine in the period before the canon was fixed and how some kinds of interpretation of scripture were accepted as doctrinally binding while others were ruled out. Here we trace Aquinas's account to show the discrimination in his account of tradition which accords specific priority only to certain elements of tradition with tightly-drawn conditions.

It is important to note initially that Elders's account of tradition reads the warrant more expansively than Aquinas's text itself suggests in terms of the warrant's scope. We have noted the firmly circumscribed account of the authority of 'doctors of the church.' To this we can add the distinction (which becomes much clearer in Hooker) between the use of tradition in grounding *practice* and grounding *doctrine*. For example, one of the examples Elders cites in support of the argument for affording extra-scriptural tradition considerable weight is Aquinas's reliance on

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[17] Leo Elders, 'Aquinas on Holy Scripture as the Medium of Divine Revelation,' in *La Doctrine de la Revelation Divine de Saint Thomas D'Aquin: Actes du Symposium sur la Pensée de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), 138-9.

patristic witness to justify veneration of images,[18] but a more precise account of Aquinas's rationale will show the weakness of Elders's argument here.

Aquinas certainly does say that the lack of scriptural evidence does not mean that 'Christ's image is not be adored' (*S.Th.* III.25.3, *obj*. 1). Since 'scripture does not lay anything down concerning the adoration of images' (*ibid*.), Aquinas cites the teaching of John Damascene and Basil as sufficient grounds to justify the practice (*s.c.*). And he goes on, 'the apostles, led by the inward instinct of the Holy Ghost, handed to the churches certain instructions which they did not put in writing' which were followed 'by the faithful as time went on' (*ad*. 4).

But Aquinas's wider methodological constraints tradition's standing in theology to merely 'probable,' that is, of considerably less standing than the authority of scripture. So here a tradition can be followed *because* there is no scriptural evidence. Moreover, veneration of images is essentially a ritual, rather than a doctrine, and attributing greater weight to tradition in the sphere of *ritual* does not diminish the *sola scriptura* account of scripture as the sole source of *doctrine*. Hence Persson rightly infers a distinction in Aquinas between unwritten tradition's legitimate use in 'the sphere of the activity and outward ordering of the church,' and 'specifically scriptural tradition' with its 'primary reference to the substance of faith.'[19] (Elders's other example, the assumption of Mary, is more problematic because this clearly is a doctrine rather than a practice, as discussed in chapter six).

So: the appeal to tradition in the case of veneration of images does not help Elders's argument, which appears (problematically from a reformed perspective) to conceive tradition being afformed a major part in the shaping of doctrine.

Aquinas, as Davies notes, is clear about scripture's need for authoritative interpretation. Thus, returning to a key passage, Aquinas says that because scripture's meaning is sometimes 'difficult' and 'obscure', believers need 'a clear summary from the sayings of Holy Writ' which is not an 'addition' to it but 'something taken from it' (*S.Th.* II-II.1.9, *ad*. 1). This collects the truth of faith so they can be more conveniently presented to the believer (*resp*.), and also helps combat heresy by clarifying contested points of doctrine (II-II.1.9, *s.c.*). And Aquinas defines tightly what counts as this kind of scriptural 'collection': only the symbols of faith, the creeds, endorsed by the decision of general councils (II-II.1.9, *s.c.*; II-II.1.10, *s.c.*). This brief but significant pair of articles highlights a

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[18] Elders, 'Aquinas on Scripture,' 138.
[19] Persson, *Sacra Doctrina*, 45-6.

crucial element in Aquinas's account of tradition: special authority is attributed only to the creeds as formulations of ancient councils which clarify the permissible interpretation of scripture. Hence, Davies concludes,

> *sacra doctrina* is, for Aquinas, the content of scripture. And for him it is also the content of the creeds since, in his view, all the creeds amount to a restatement of what is in scripture – a pocket Bible, so to speak … To make the truth of faith quickly accessible to everyone, so he continues, the creeds are needed. But these add nothing to what is already contained in Scripture. They merely summarise or highlight with a view to the needs of those who hear them.[20]

Aquinas, then, methodologically constrains tradition, conceiving it as dependent on, and ancillary to, scripture. It cannot be a source or ground of doctrine, and it does not operate autonomously; it can only (like reason) be accorded instrumental use in drawing out scripture's meaning. Revelation is found in scripture as interpreted by the creeds of the ancient church.[21]

This would go some way to meeting reformed concerns about the authority of scripture, but not wholly so; for, by itself, it leaves open the question of *what* teachings are convergent with scripture. It might even be possible, on this view (as the Council of Trent and later Roman Catholic teachings appear to) to allow for the invention or discovery of *new* fundamental doctrines. This would not meet a key reformed concern, which, as we will see, was to stop the articulation of new doctrines which had limited or no scriptural grounding, and to end rituals or practices (even longstanding ones) which undermined key doctrines. Without further nuance, even this limited account of tradition entails substantial divergence from the reformed.

However, further probing Aquinas's method suggests some resolution. Part of the answer is to assert a point of break or change in theological method. Before the creeds and the canon were fixed, there was a fluid period of doctrinal development in which tradition did have a greater role; for instance, a crucial appeal was made to the ritual practice of praising the Father, Son, and Spirit for asserting the divinity of the Spirit. But it might be possible to secure wider agreement to an account of tradition which limited that functioning of the warrant to the conciliar definitions of the key doctrines of faith and the canon of scripture.[22] While this, as we will argue, is not inconsistent with Aquinas's account, two questions must first be addressed: the question of error and the question of definition.

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[20] Davies, '*Sacra Doctrina*,' 144.

[21] Cf. Bruce D. Marshall, 'Aquinas as Postliberal Theologian,' *The Thomist* 53.3 (1989): 376.

[22] So, e.g., Bauckham, 'Tradition,' 127.

A first question is whether a church council can err. Asserting this possibility is a key principle of the Reformation, articulated in Articles XXI-XXII of the Articles of Religion (*DER*, 296-7) and reflected in Calvin's insistence on the fallibility of all human institutions including church councils (e.g., *Inst.* IV.8.11-12). Yet Aquinas insists that 'the universal church cannot err' (*S.Th.* II-II.1.9, *s.c.*). There is an apparent tension between Aquinas's insisting the church cannot err and Hooker's and Calvin's insisting it can.

A second question is which councils are considered authoritative.[23] Aquinas does not explicitly consider which councils are authoritative or why. As we shall see, Calvin does suggest a set of criteria which might command widespread support. But Aquinas does not explicitly tackle the question.

A resolution may be found in the meaning of 'universal.' For one way to read Aquinas's account is to consider only 'universal' the first four ecumenical councils. This minimalist view would attribute authoritative status to tradition only as defined by the first four councils, which would incorporate the canon of scripture and the key Christological and Trinitarian beliefs of the church. Indeed, Aquinas hints at this interpretation when he refers to the Council of Ephesus (431) as insisting that no new creed be formulated (II-II.10, *obj.* 1), such that any formulation of faith must be tested against the creeds already agreed (*ad.* 2). Since, as we will see, in fact the reformed tradition generally *does* accept the formulations of the first four councils, this might provide a practical and theological resolution to the question of tradition while maintaining a *sola scriptura* account.

This might also help resolve the first question of whether a council can err. Aquinas says the creed 'is published by the authority of the universal church, therefore it contains nothing defective' (II-II.1.9, *s.c.*). All Aquinas is actually saying here is that the creed does not *in fact* contain anything defective. So the question could be resolved by agreement that the first four councils did not *in fact* err, without having to answer the question of whether a council can err *in principle*.

As we will see, this kind of minimalist account of tradition, conceiving a fundamental change in theological method after the first four councils, would accord with Calvin and Hooker. It would maintain the principle that scripture alone revealed the saving truths of faith, while giving due account to the historical reality that doctrine was not settled in Jesus's lifetime and that what we have come to call the Bible did not exist for several hundred years. But it would also, as we will

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[23] Williams, 'Tradition,' 373-4.

see, represent a striking departure from what appears to be the post-Trent position in the Roman Catholic Church.[24] It would rule out the possibility of substantial revision of the creeds and conciliar definitions, which some Christians might want. And in attributing authority to the definition of faith at Chalcedon it would exclude those churches which do not endorse that formulation. Nonetheless, it suggests there is prospect for consensus on the question of tradition which affirms both *sola scriptura* and historical reality.

Summary

Claim's like Elders's that Aquinas makes a broad appeal to tradition as a supplement to scripture are, then, problematic when Aquinas's actual methodology is traced. In fact Aquinas gives tradition a much more restricted role: useful for justifying particular practices but not a source of doctrine. A minimalist reading of the concept of the 'universal church' yields an account of tradition which might meet reformed concerns, as well as alerting us to the possibility of a distinction between Aquinas's thought and that of official Roman Catholic theology. As Healy concludes, Aquinas

> does not anticipate the later Roman Catholic doctrine of two sources of revelation, Scripture and church tradition … Scripture alone is the basis of our faith, and of itself gives us knowledge sufficient for our salvation, to which nothing new can or need be added.[25]

So, Aquinas can be read in a way consistent with reformed concerns and with a *sola scriptura* principle on the question of tradition, and the congruity of this reading of Aquinas with Calvin's account is next demonstrated.

Tradition in Calvin's theological method

Introduction

As with *reason*, accounts of *tradition* often assert that Aquinas holds a catholic view where tradition carries substantial weight in theology, whereas Calvin articulates a reformed view where it is attributed little capacity. The first limb of such characterisations has been contested by showing Aquinas's constrained use of tradition. This section challenges the second limb of such arguments by tracing Calvin's critique of tradition which includes a positive account of its function in theology. After sketching some general features of Calvin's account, it turns to consider the issues

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[24] The possibility of that contemporary Roman Catholic teaching and Aquinas's may not coincide on the question of tradition is noted, for instance, by Andrew Wood, 'Thomas Aquinas and Joseph Ratzinger's Theology of Divine Revelation's Transmission: A Comparative Study,' (M.Phil. thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2015), 57.

[25] Healy, 'Introduction,' 18; cf. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 15.

identified in the discussion of Aquinas's, notably the role of councils and the creeds, to argue that considerable convergence can in fact be adduced between Calvin and Aquinas.

Calvin on scripture and tradition

Earlier generations of scholarship conceived Calvin as attributing little or no capacity to tradition in theology. Thus, Tavard (a Roman Catholic) said Calvin's emphasis on scripture 'destroy[ed] all tradition.'[26] Warfield (a Protestant) shared this analysis, concluding that the reformer 'repudiates … the entire Romish argument' about the relationship of scripture and tradition, in particular by rebutting the 'Roman controversialists … endeavouring to prove that the authority of scripture is dependent upon the church's suffrage.'[27] But if we read Calvin more carefully, we will see he does in fact use tradition; as Balserak says, it is not a question of whether or not Calvin appeals to tradition, the question is in what ways and with what constraints.[28]

Tracing Calvin's sometimes pungent polemic about tradition reveals two particular concerns: that tradition may undermine the authority of scripture; and that it may attribute too much authority to humans.

First, Calvin fears attaching too much weight to tradition risks undermining scripture's unique authority. Hence the *Genevan Confession* asserts the church must 'follow scripture alone as rule of faith … without mixing it with any other thing that might be devised by the tradition of men' (*Treatises*, 26). Similarly, Calvin depicts the reformer's task as restoring the church 'to the exact standard of the Word of God' (*Treatises*, 187).

Likewise, in the *Institutes*, Calvin insists that only the revelation in scripture conveys divine communication because it alone is divine speech. Hence, Moses and the prophets speak only what is divinely given (*Inst*. IV.8.2, 3, 5-6). Superlatively, Christ speaks with the divine voice: 'it is not written of any other but him alone, "Hear him!" ' (IV.8.1). Thus 'God deprives men of the capacity to put forth new doctrine,' (IV.8.9), because Christ alone is our 'schoolmaster' (IV.8.1, 9). God 'has fulfilled all functions of teaching in his son that we must regard this as the final and eternal testimony from him' (II.8.7). Since only Christ knows the Father's mind, 'to whom alone the secrets of the Father are revealed', it is to him we must listen; those who 'would attain the

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[26] G.H. Tavard, *Holy Writ or Holy Church: The Crisis of the Protestant Reformation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1959), 107.

[27] B.B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), 94, 93.

[28] Jon Balserak, 'The Authority of Scripture and Tradition in Calvin's Lectures on the Prophets,' in *The Search for Authority in Reformation Europe*, eds. Helen Parish, Elaine Fulton, and Peter Webster (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 37; cf. J.P. Mackey, *The Modern Theology of Tradition* (London: DLT, 1962), 174.

knowledge of God should always be directed by that eternal Wisdom' (IV.8.5). And, of course, it is only in scripture that we find the saving words of Christ.[29]

The words of scripture, therefore, as uniquely the word of Christ and therefore of God, are the defining authority in theology, to which all other authorities can only be ancillary; hence Calvin's accusation that his

> opponents locate the authority of the church outside God's Word, but we insist that it be attached to the Word, and … the church should … not devise anything of itself but should set the limit of its own wisdom where Christ has made an end of speaking (IV.8.13).

As Helm notes, the Word in scripture is alone invested with the authority of being God's own speech; for 'Calvin doctrine is essential to religion, and true doctrine is to be found in Scripture.'[30] Calvin's concern for the priority of revelation, then, leads him to a certain suspicion of theological methods which attribute too great an authority to sources other than scripture.

This unease, secondly, is magnified by Calvin's fear that tradition as a warrant is open to serious abuse by flawed and fallible human institutions and individuals. This is one of the reasons Calvin is adamant councils can err. Assertion of too great an authority to councils can, in fact, become a claim of authority by those who constitute them: 'since these men … constitute the councils, they actually claim for themselves' the power to shape doctrine. This in turn risks church leaders 'coin[ing] dogmas after their own whim' (IV.8.11).[31] Calvin continues, the 'riches of the church are always far from that supreme perfection of which our adversaries boast', and 'sensible people see how perilous it is if men once be given such authority' (IV.8.15).[32]

Importantly, there is also a *pastoral* dimension to Calvin's unease with tradition; it is not just a concern about theological method as such, but about the effects of too high a doctrine of tradition on the believer.[33] The believer's firmness in faith, their conviction of their relationship with God, will be undermined if it rests on something mutable or manipulable. Christ had warned that 'those who boast the title of pastors and teachers' would cause the greatest injury to the faithful (IV.9.4). This is a key concern in his 1543 attack on the Dutch theologian Pighius, *The Bondage and*

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[29] Randall C. Zachman, 'John Calvin,' in *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed Justin S. Houlcomb (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 2006), 124-5.

[30] Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 247.

[31] There is obvious resonance here with Hooker's fear of individuals privileging their own judgment; e.g. *Laws,* Pref. 2.6, 5.3.

[32] Cf. Helm, *Ideas*, 269.

[33] On the often-overlooked pastoral concern in Calvin's writings see Shawn D. Wright, 'John Calvin as Pastor,' *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13.4 (2009): 4-17; cf. Balserak, 'Scripture and Tradition,' 40, 46.

Liberation of the Will.[34] And if key beliefs cannot be identified with certainty, or shift as a result of church leaders' decisions, 'what will be the stability of faith … if it should depend on the approval and decision of human beings?' (*BLW*, 53). As Balserak concludes, Calvin's anxiety about tradition flows in part from his fear of the consequences of putting doctrine into the hands of institutions and individuals, where it becomes 'insecure, malleable, and liable to abuse.'[35]

Nonetheless, Calvin's concern about tradition should not obscure the appeal he makes to it. So, he contrasts tradition, a 'weak and shady … foundation for faith' (*BLW*, 52) with scripture's 'solid and constant reliability' (57). Yet there is greater nuance in his account; for after rejecting the view that 'God is not to be heard in scripture alone but through the tradition of the church' (55), he then insists he must not be 'understood as though I leave no place for the agreement of the church in questions about the faith', only that teaching must be 'tested by reference to scripture' (64). The issue in this passage is not whether tradition has a role, but what kind of appeal may be made to it; what Calvin rejects is theological methods which appear to 'give scripture second place' (65).[36]

Indeed, the importance of tradition is illustrated when Calvin does not just accuse Pighius of risking elevating tradition over scripture, but also argues that Pighuis misrepresents the tradition.[37] Through Book III and Book IV of *Bondage*, Calvin seeks to rebut, point by point, Pighuis's appropriation of Augustine; thus, while Pighius 'proposed to make [Augustine] his ally', Calvin asserts 'Augustine supported our position' (*BLW*, 87).[38] Calvin is not claiming that the tradition as such is authoritative; rather, that Augustine's interpretation of scripture is right, and challenging Pighius's account of that interpretation. Even Augustine had to be tested against scripture, but could be cited authoritatively where consonant with the church's teaching.[39] And Calvin's principal charge against Pighius remains that he is advancing unscriptural doctrine (e.g., *BLW*, 50); the assertion Pighius is misreading the tradition is an important but ancillary criticism. Calvin was, in many ways, arguing for 'a new way of understanding the church's tradition,'[40] where it was firmly subordinated to scripture; not demanding the abolition of tradition as such.

Importantly, moreover, Calvin is quite prepared to appeal to tradition particularly in the sphere of ritual and custom. Calvin makes this clear in his response to the Council of Trent's account of

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[34] Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (London: Yale University Press, 2011), 62. 162.
[35] Balserak, 'Scripture and Tradition,' 40.
[36] Cf. J.F. Peter, 'The Place of Tradition in Reformed Theology,' *SJT* 18 (1965): 295; *PRRD*, II.16-77
[37] A.N.S. Lane, 'Introduction,' *BLW*, xxi-xxiv.
[38] See B.A. Gerrish, 'Calvin in Christian Theology,' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 291-4.
[39] Gordon, *Calvin*, 106-8.
[40] Jane Dempsey Douglas, 'Calvin in Ecumenical Context,' in *Cambridge Companion to Calvin*, ed. McKim, 307.

tradition which, as we will see, could be read as grounding doctrine in both scripture and unwritten tradition:

> Though we grant that the Apostles of the Lord handed down to posterity some customs which they never committed to writing; still, first, this has nothing to do with the doctrine of faith (as to it, we cannot extract one iota from them), but only external rites (*Antidote*, 70).[41]

Indeed, Calvin appeals widely to tradition (or, more usually, scripture and tradition) in discussions about church practice. Thus, he rejects the practice of auricular confession in his 1539 *Reply* to Cardinal Sadolet:[42] 'take this for our answer … it was neither commanded by Christ nor practised by the ancient church' (*Treatises*, 238). He opposes withholding the cup from the laity because *not only* scripture records Christ gave both bread and wine to his disciples *but also* the earliest centuries of practice attest the laity receiving both (*Inst.* IV.10.14; IV.17.45-50). Arguments on the same twin grounds are made against Roman Catholic claims for the papacy (IV.6.6) and mandatory clerical celibacy (IV.12.23-7). Indeed, in the sphere of custom, an appeal to tradition alone could be decisive; hence Calvin opposes keeping holy water in churches throughout the week because there is no evidence from the apostolic period for the practice (IV.10.20). The reformers, indeed, conceived themselves as reclaiming, not abandoning, tradition.[43]

Far from rejecting tradition outright, then, as Tavard (critically) and Warfield (approvingly) held, Calvin is quite happy to pray it in aid,[44] especially in matters of practice rather than doctrine. And even in matters of doctrine (such as the issues about salvation and free will at stake in the debate with Pighius) tradition has a place. It does not communicate revelation and therefore is not a source of doctrine; but a scriptural interpretation attested by earlier Christians can be good evidence for the shape of a particular doctrine. So long as the appeal to tradition is couched in that limited way, Calvin is quite happy to use it himself. To address the problems of canon formation and doctrinal formulation we have identified, though, we must turn to Calvin's account of church councils.

Councils and creeds

The previous section suggested Aquinas's understanding of the councils and creeds provided a potentially fruitful way to give an account of tradition which might go a good way to meeting

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[41] On the *Antitode* see Theodore W. Casteel, 'Calvin and Trent: Calvin's Reaction to the Council of Trent in the Context of his Conciliar Thought,' *HThR* 63.1 (1970): 100-14.

[42] On their correspondence, see Gordon, *Calvin*, 96-8.

[43] E.g., R.A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 51, 72-5.

[44] Cf. R. Ward Holder, 'Calvin and Tradition: Tracing Expansion, Locating Development, Suggesting Authority,' *Toronto Journal of Theology*, 25.2 (2009): 219-20.

reformed concerns, rather than depicting Aquinas and the reformed as divergent on this point. This section suggests that, similarly, Calvin's account of the councils may help isolate a particular form of tradition as commanding special authority.

When turning to church councils in the fourth book of the *Institutes*, Calvin is sensitive to the possibility he may be misinterpreted as giving tradition and church authority short shrift: the fact I shall here be rather severe does not mean that I esteem the ancient councils less than I ought. For I venerate them from my heart, and desire that they be honoured by all' (IV.9.1). Indeed, Calvin thought such gatherings necessary to resolve doctrinal disputes; 'the best and surest remedy is for a synod of true bishops to be convened' (IV.9.13) in cases of controversy, and these councils have 'determining authority' (IV.9.8) – that is, can determine what is right doctrinal application of scripture. Calvin, moreover, at least in the early part of his career, thought a council the obvious way to try and resolve the dispute between the reformers and Rome, though he doubted whether a council called by the Pope would actually criticise the Roman position.[45] Nonetheless, certainly the councils of history have a part to play in theology. However, as Peter notes, this provokes a further problem. The assertion that councils have authority can simply shift the debate back a stage, from the question of whether councils have authority to the question of *which ones* do, 'unless one introduces another criterion to determine that only certain councils are true.'[46] While Calvin himself does not trace this in a schematic way, we can identify three characteristics of true councils which might help enumerate which councils which carry 'determinative authority' in the shaping of doctrine. These are *consonance with scripture*, *early date*, and *widespread recognition*. Each is addressed in turn.

The first characteristic is *consonance with scripture*. A council, for Calvin, may adjudicate between competing interpretations of scripture, and establish as doctrinally true a single interpretation. Hence Calvin's assertion about the propriety of Nicaea's declaration that Father and Son were both divine, and endorsing the extra-biblical term 'consubstantial' to articulate that relationship, thereby ruling out Arius's interpretation of scripture while enshrining Athanasius's. Calvin, admitting the word was not found in the Bible, defended its introduction into doctrinal formularies, saying

> when it is so often asserted in Scripture that there is one God, and further, when Christ is called so often the true and eternal God, one with the Father – what else are the Nicene fathers doing when they declare them of one essence but simply expounding the real meaning of scripture? (IV.8.16).

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[45] Casteel, 'Calvin and Trent,' 95-9, 115-7.
[46] Peter, 'Tradition,' 297.

Councils, then, says Calvin, should be attributed significant authority; but 'scripture would stand out in the higher place, with everything subject to its standard (IV.9.8). So councils are considered authoritative 'insofar as they agree with the rule of the Word,' which, for Calvin, upholds the unique authority of scripture while still recognising an appeal to tradition in the form of conciliar decisions: 'we still give to councils … such rank and honour as is their due' (*Treatises*, 255).

Of course, this immediately raises the further question of how we know whether a council was in fact consonant with scripture. As McNeill observes, there was considerable medieval debate about whether councils were in principle capable of error or whether any had, in fact, erred.[47] Calvin clearly believes a council could propound a false, unscriptural doctrine (*Inst.* IV.8.10); 'I deny it to be always the case that an interpretation of scripture adopted by a council is true and certain' (IV.9.13). Calvin clearly believed councils capable of error. This risks the charge, levelled by Tavard, of self-contradiction; in attempting to uphold the authority of scripture but resisting the attribution of certain authority to councils, does Calvin in fact substitute individual judgment for corporate? How then is there to be any stable or shared doctrine if each individual chooses which beliefs to adhere to, which ecclesial judgments to uphold?[48]

Certainly some of Calvin's discussion is vulnerable to that accusation. He attaches much weight to individual conscience (*Commentaries*, 87-8), and insists that God may be found in small meetings of believers as much as general councils (*Inst.* IV.9.2). Personal conscience plays a significant role in Calvin's thought, as Bosco shows.[49] Calvin, though, is alert to this risk; 'you will say I degrade everything, so that every man has the right to accept or reject what the councils decide' (IV.9.8; cf. *Antidote*, 74). And, as Bosco highlights, the appeal to conscience is more complicated than an assertion that an individual's thoughts and feelings are always a reliable guide to the truth.[50] So while the emphasis on personal judgment is more guarded than sometimes argued, Calvin's framework for judging councils further safeguards against sliding into individualism.

The second characteristic of authoritative councils is *antiquity*. Calvin thinks the closer the stream of doctrine is to the spring of revelation the purer the doctrinal water will be. Hence his pungent contention to Sadoleto

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[47] *Inst.* II.1158 fn.10.

[48] Tavard, *Writ or Church*, 109, cf. Eduardo Echevarria, 'Revelation, Faith, and Tradition: Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue,' *CThJ* 63.1 (2014): 42-4.

[49] David L. Bosco, 'Conscience as Court and Worm: Calvin and the Three Elements of Conscience,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14.2 (1986): 333-55.

[50] Bosco, 'Conscience,' 341, 350-1.

> Our agreement with antiquity is far closer than yours … all we have attempted has been to renew the ancient form of the church which, at first distorted and stained by men of indifferent character, was afterwards criminally mangled and almost destroyed by the Roman pontiff and his faction (*Treatises*, 231).

Again, Calvin asks, 'how much corruption could a long succession of years bring?' (*Inst.* IV.9.4). So, methodologically, the earlier councils are to be preferred, and particularly, and revealingly, those he goes on to enumerate: 'we willingly embrace and reverence as holy the early councils, such as those of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus I, Chalcedon … as they relate to the teachings of faith.' He considers they meet both criteria: both consonance with scripture (they 'contain nothing but the pure and genuine exposition of scripture') and antiquity ('the church has degenerated from the purity of that golden age') (IV.9.8). Here then Calvin at least implicitly asserts a break point in the development of doctrine, with the first four councils as distinctively authoritative.

This sense of a decisive shift in the operation of tradition is reinforced Calvin's response to Pighius on the interpretation of Galatians 1.9, 'if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed.' Pighius argued this meant unwritten, oral tradition had apostolic status alongside the words of scripture, since the Greek παραλαμβανω carries the particular connotation of transmission by oral means. According to Calvin's reading of Pighius, 'this was a tradition because Paul speaks not of writing but of word of mouth' (*BLW*, 60).

Calvin contests Pighius's interpretation, insisting that revelation in doctrinal matters is contained solely in the text of scripture, not the assumption of other extra-scriptural oral traditions. So he agrees 'the apostles at first bore witness by word of mouth (*BLW*, 60); but 'the whole of their gospel was faithfully reduced to a summary which could be fully sufficient,' and 'after it had been reduced to written form God sealed as his word' this writing down was necessary because of the human tendency to 'seek for a new form of religion if they were not held back … by fixed boundaries of teaching' (61). Calvin's insistence on the need for fixed written boundaries may be significant; for the canon of scripture is just such a boundary. There was a period when the scriptures were not written down in a single collection; but, once they were, the church had settled on the boundary of the deposit of revelation and this source is in a sense put beyond reach of alteration. This would resolve the historical problem of tradition existing before scripture, by asserting that the more fluid notion of revelation only existed before the fixing of the canon. The first four councils would command the higher authority to regulate doctrine but only before both canon and the parameters of doctrinal formulation were fixed unalterably.

Calvin's third criterion, hinted at (but not made explicit) in his account is that for a council to have this kind of determinative doctrinal authority it must be not only ancient and consonant with scripture, but must also command *widespread recognition*. This might be a way of parsing the 'universal church' at least broadly consistent with Aquinas. Intriguingly, it also links to Hooker's account. Calvin, we saw, singled out the first four councils (*Inst.* IV.9.8; cf. *Antidote*, 58); McNeill, revealingly, observes, 'Calvin names with full authority (as faithful to scripture) the four general councils commonly held of special authority, e.g. by Anglican writers such as … Hooker.'[51] Calvin, like the Anglican tradition, affords doctrinal authority only to the most ancient councils partly because they are commonly recognised as such.

This reading of Calvin may be further reinforced by his criticism of some Roman Catholic councils, where a principal accusation is that they are insufficiently representative. Thus, writing of the Roman Catholic bishops, 'since these men constitute the councils, they actually claim for themselves everything they contend to be due to the councils' (*Inst.* IV.8.10).[52] The unrepresentativeness of councils made up only of Roman bishops is further exacerbated by the manner of their selection: he calls for 'a synod of true bishops', but questions whether the Roman bishops can be truly authoritative because 'the people's right in electing bishops has been taken away' (IV.5.2). By contrast with the unrepresentativeness of councils in his own time, Calvin asserts that part of the authority of the Apostles' Creed flows from its widespread recognition: 'something all Christians hold in common' (*Treatises*, 92). The criterion of representativeness and widespread recognition is generally evident in Calvin's scheme and suggests a third strand to his test of which councils have determinative authority.

Calvin's response to the Council of Trent further bears out this definition of determinative councils. He contrasts the first four councils with Trent (*Antidote*, 58). The latter cannot claim to be a true council, he thinks. Partly he believes some councils like Trent have sought to supplement the text of scripture by appealing to unwritten tradition.[53] So, Calvin says, they 'ordain in doctrine that we are not to stand on scripture alone, but also on things handed down by tradition' (67), and even 'if supported by no authority of Scripture,' by appealing to a tradition they can develop doctrine 'which they insist should have the same authority as the Law and the Prophets' (68). While this may be a legitimate reading of Trent, it is quite far from Aquinas's more constrained account of tradition. So Trent among other later councils fails the test of consonance with scripture, because it appears to ground doctrine in a source other than scripture.

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[51] *Institutes*, II.1171 fn.8.
[52] Cf. Casteel, 'Calvin and Trent,' 102, 113.
[53] Casteel, 'Calvin and Trent,' 103.

Furthermore, Calvin continues, Trent cannot claim real authority because it is unrepresentative and thus, he suggests, fails to meet even Rome's description of a council. It claims it is ecumenical and universal, Calvin argues, but 'had it been only a Provincial Council they should have been ashamed of the fewness of its members. Why, then … shall we regard this as a Holy Council?' (57). Again, he demands, 'they contend that a Council cannot err because it represents the Church. What if the latter point were denied to be true?' (33). Trent, therefore, also fails on the second criterion of widespread recognition, and so Calvin will not accept its claim to authority.

By contrast to Trent, the four named councils have special authority because they meet all three criteria. This is made explicit where Calvin contrasts Nicaea I (325) and Nicaea II (787). Nicaea I, says Calvin, meets all three criteria: scriptural consonance ('simply expounding the real meaning of scripture', *Inst.* IV.8.16); early date (IV.9.8); and wide recognition (its 'eminence has been recognised by the consent of all', IV.9.10). Nicaea II, Calvin argues, not so: it was 'perverting and mangling the whole of scripture' by authorising 'not only images but also the worship of them': for Calvin, this breach of the second commandment suffices to condemn it as unscriptural (IV.9.9). Whether or not one agrees with Calvin on that, the methodological point (repeated in *Antidote*, 75) is clear. The lack of scriptural consonance renders Nicaea II unsound, and neither can it claim antiquity or general recognition.

Similarly, the Creeds, for Calvin, represent determinative doctrinal authority as agreed statements of the first four councils. He explicitly endorses the Apostles' Creed and, by implication, his affirmation of the first four councils indicates endorsement of the Nicene Creed (although he queries the complexity of the latter's language).[54] The formulations of the first four councils carry special doctrinal weight for Calvin which subsequent ones do not.[55]

What emerges from this discussion of Calvin is that closer attention to the role of councils (and the doctrinal formulations they generate) yields an account of tradition which could maintain the reformers' emphasis on *sola scriptura* alongside an acceptance of the facts of canonical and doctrinal formulation in the earliest Christian centuries. As Lane says, 'Calvin respected the first

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[54] Cf. Stephen M. Reynolds, 'Calvin's View of the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds,' *Westminster Theological Journal* 23.1 (1960): 36.

[55] There is, as Reynolds, 'Calvin's View of the Creeds,' 33-5 notes, less clarity about Calvin's view of the Athanasian creed; nonetheless Calvin only concludes that because it lacks conciliar endorsement and so assent to it cannot be required of the believer. Moreover, both Aquinas and Hooker are somewhat ambivalent about it. Hooker acknowledges all three (*Laws*, V.42.6) and in particular argued against those who wanted the Athanasian Creed removed from the liturgy (V.27.1, V.35.1). However, like Calvin, he refrained from claiming conciliar endorsement for it (V.42.2). Again, Aquinas appeared to draw a distinction between the Athanasian Creed (an 'explanation of faith') and the other two (which he calls 'symbols') (*S.Th.* II-II.1.10, *ad.* 3). Even on this relatively tangential debate there is notable convergence between them.

four general councils … councils are a good way to settle doctrinal disputes, but they are not given any automatic infallibility.'[56] Calvin indeed calls them the four 'great councils' (*Antidote*, 58) and accords their formal conciliar definitions doctrinal authority because they meet the triple test of consonance with scripture, ancient date, and widespread recognition. No subsequent council can claim such authority. As Bauckham concludes, 'the church's recognition of the canon … created a real break, which gave the origin of the tradition, in its written form, a uniquely normative status in relation to the rest of the tradition.'[57] Calvin appears to cite such a constrained kind of tradition in doctrine while rejecting the notion of other 'traditions' defining doctrine.

While this account might both meet reformed concerns and reflect the historical reality, it would pose problems notably for the Orthodox, who attribute authority to the first seven councils, as Roman Catholics do to twenty-one.[58] But Pelikan's monumental study recognises that the first four councils are more widely accounted authoritative. He cites Gregory the Great and Justinian as representative figures showing 'both Greeks and Latins' appealing to the criterion of universality in privileging these four.[59] Perhaps, then, the determination of the first four councils might command widespread support, as these councils are specially honoured by the broadest range of Christians, even if there is disagreement about whether and which subsequent ones should be likewise recognised.

Summary

Calvin insisted 'we neither condemn nor impair the authority of the church; nor do we give loose reins to men to dare what they please' (*Antidote*, 77). So he is far from the critic of tradition depicted by Tavard and Warfield. He is certainly cautious about it, even suspicious at times, fearful in particular that the assertion of 'unwritten traditions' may be pastorally destabilising and accrete corrupting authority to some individuals or institutions. But he is certainly prepared to cite tradition in support of or opposition to practices and rituals. And on the appeal to tradition in doctrine, his nascent scheme of three criteria to test conciliar authority suggests a historical shift between how tradition operated before the fixing of the creeds and after. Such an account, preserving scripture's material sufficiency as the sole source of doctrine while accommodating the historical realities, might be methodologically plausible while commanding widespread ecumenical support. It is at least not inconsistent with Aquinas, who likewise had a constrained place for tradition in matters of doctrine; and, as we next show, it is consistent with Hooker's approach too.

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[56] A.N.S. Lane, 'Calvin's Use of Fathers and Medievals,' *CThJ* 16 (1981): 173.
[57] Bauckham, 'Tradition,' 127.
[58] Williams, 'Tradition,' 374.
[59] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 5 vols. (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1971-89), I.335, cf. I.333.

Tradition in Hooker's theological method

Introduction

Readings of Hooker on tradition often presume he must be located somewhere on a spectrum between the catholic and reformed poles citing Aquinas and Calvin as representatives of those perspectives. Thus, following Hooker's presbyterian opponents, Marshall advances a Thomist reading of Hooker, saying 'Hooker, unlike Calvin, does accept tradition.'[60] By contrast, Atkinson contends for a reformed Hooker diverging from Aquinas: 'Hooker's view of tradition … was closer to a Reformed understanding than Marshall was prepared to admit.'[61] Gibbs meanwhile presents Hooker as advocating a 'distinctive *via media*' in this debate.[62] So far, this chapter has contested all these assertions by demonstrating the substantial congruity of Aquinas's and Calvin's views on tradition. This section situates Hooker within that catholic-reformed convergence, first by considering Hooker's account of tradition in light of the vital doctrine-discipline distinction, before showing demonstrating the coherence of his account of councils and creeds with that of Aquinas and of Calvin.

Hooker on scripture and tradition

Hooker is a defender of the *status quo*.[63] The *Laws*'s central argument is that no further reformation of the English Church is necessary: there is 'no law of God, nor reason of man' which demands adjustment of the Elizabethan Settlement (*Laws*, Pref. 1.2). Indeed, a substantial part of the *Laws* is a defence of continuing with existing church practice. Book V justifies retaining a range of ritual or custom which the presbyterians wanted reformed or abolished; Book VII argues for continuing the government of the church by bishops which the presbyterians wanted replaced by a system of local ministers.[64]

But, notably on how the church should be governed, it must be recalled (as chapter four showed) that Hooker's defence of the settlement was not based on scripture. While bishops were implicit in the New Testament evidence, Hooker relied on the wider methodological argument that the church's polity was mutable, a matter of *discipline* not *doctrine*.[65] In this sphere of discipline, though, Hooker does not claim decisive authority for tradition, as we now see.

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[60] J.S. Marshall, *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition: An Historical and Theological Study of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity* (London: A&C Black, 1963), 55.

[61] Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason: Reformed Theologian of the Church of England* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1997), 75.

[62] Lee W. Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker's via Media Doctrine of Scripture and Tradition,' *HThR* 95.2 (2002): 228.

[63] Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Richard Hooker's Reputation,' *English Historical Review* 117 (2002): 799.

[64] Cf. Mark D. Chapman, *Anglican Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 107, 120.

[65] Cf. Chapman, *Anglican Theology*, 120-3.

Hooker makes a carefully circumscribed appeal to tradition to undergird the claims of episcopacy. Longstanding use ('the ancienter, the better', Pref. 4.5) is a good argument to continue a practice. Tradition, says Hooker, is those 'ordinances made in the prime of Christian religion, established with that authority which Christ hath left to his church for matters indifferent' (V.65.2). So, Hooker asserts, episcopacy was 'from ancient times … universally established', claiming it was divinely instituted, coming 'to the Apostles by a very Divine appointment' (VII.5.8) who then transferred their authority on their successors (VII.4.1, cf. VIII.4.3). Tradition carries weight: the novelty of the presbyterian polity tells against it ('till yesterday [n]ever heard of'), while the antiquity of the episcopal polity is a significant factor in its favour ('some wicked thing has undoubtedly bewitched us, if we forsake that government, the use whereof has for many years approved') (VII.1.4).

Yet Hooker's appeal to tradition is heavily qualified. Tradition is not attributed to Christ, here, nor is the argument about tradition *as such*: the appeal is to the discretion of the church to decide, in which it can judge longstanding use as a factor. Moreover, any particular church polity 'is not absolutely necessary, but of a changeable nature … the Church has power to alter with general consent and upon necessary occasion even the positive laws of the apostles' (VII.5.8).[66] And 'the church has authority to establish … at one time' a form of government 'which at another … it may abolish, and in both do it well' (V.8.2). Even when a tradition has scriptural provenance it has no binding force, so the New Testament evidence for bishops is not 'any reason sufficient wherefore all churches should forever be bound to keep them without change' (III.10.17).[67] So, for Hooker, 'episcopacy was ordained by the Apostles, warranted by scripture, and the best available church government', but this 'did not involve the assertion of its perpetual necessity.'[68]

Indeed, the limited place of tradition is further emphasised by Hooker's insistence that, in matters of discipline, the *status quo* carries significant but not overwhelming weight: existing arrangements are 'requisite to be observed till like authority see just and reasonable cause to alter them' (V.65.4).

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[66] Here, even in the later Book VII where Hooker offers the strongest case for retaining bishops, he adamantly refuses to insist that episcopal order is indispensable or unalterable. As M.R. Somerville, 'Richard Hooker and his Contemporaries on Episcopacy: An Elizabethan Consensus,' *JEH* 34 (1984): 177-80 argues, this tells against the notion that Hooker changed his mind between the earlier and latest books. Hooker was quite prepared to claim divine sanction for bishops (see Daniel F. Graves, ' "*Iure Divino*"? Four Views on the Authority of the Episcopacy in Richard Hooker,' *Anglican and Episcopal History* 81.1 (2012): 47-60). However, the assertion that bishops are indispensable to church life because of scripture and / or tradition is a demonstrably later development, and inconsistent with Hooker's methodological principle that church government was not to be decided conclusively by either of those warrants (see K.P.J. Padley, 'Early Anglican Ecclesiology and Contemporary Ecumenism,' *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 9.1 (2009): 6-7, and Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-40* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 450-61).

[67] Thus Nigel Voak, 'Richard Hooker and the Principle of *Sola Scriptura*,' *JTS* 59.1 (2008): 125-6; Egil Grislis, 'Scriptural Hermenuetics,' *CRH*, 289.

[68] Somerville, 'Elizabethan Consensus,' 183; cf. A.S. McGrade, 'Episcopacy,' *CRH*, 485-6.

Reasonable cause is a vital principle for Hooker, for the key warrant for retaining bishops is neither scripture nor tradition but reason. Recall that 'in things indifferent there is a choice' (III.9.1). And Hooker states that episcopacy only 'stand[s] in force, rather by the custom of the church, choosing to continue in it' (VII.5.8). Now, Hooker thinks there are very good reasons for having bishops; 'prelacy must needs be exceedingly beneficial to the church' (VII.18.4). McGrade identifies a range of reasons Hooker cites, such as the usefulness of identifiably senior figures to witness to senior counterparts in the state (VII.18.9) and to care for clergy (VII.18.11-2.).[69] Note the appeal here is not to tradition as such but to reasoned choice, in which the evidence of longstanding use is significant but not decisive.[70]

For, if Hooker thinks there are good reasons for having bishops, he also thinks there could be good reasons for dispensing with them. Hooker certainly thinks traditional practices can be temporarily dispensed with if circumstances demand; for instance, while the church 'has not ordinarily allowed any other than Bishops to ordain', 'there may sometimes be very just and sufficient and reason to allow ordination without a Bishop' (VII.4.11).[71] More than this, there are circumstances in which Hooker concludes the outright abolition of the episcopate could be necessary. For instance, he can conceive of an episcopate so 'proud, tyrannical, and unreformable,' its abolition is justifiable (VII.5.8).[72] He acknowledges that Calvin was justified in establishing presbyterianism in Geneva, given the disorder in the city which the bishops had fled (Pref. 2.1-7), and accepts it is too late to re-impose bishops on Scotland and France (III.10.6). The temporary or even, in extreme circumstances, permanent, dispensability of the episcopate shows that, for Hooker, tradition is not a binding authority.

So the argument of Marshall and others who characterise Hooker as giving substantial weight to tradition is difficult to square with Hooker's circumscribed use of the warrant in matters of discipline. And on doctrinal questions the warrant's usefulness is even more tightly-drawn. Hooker writes

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[69] McGrade, 'Episcopacy,' 497-501. McGrade's essay is a rare and fine example of a discussion of episcopacy which focusses not on the theological debate about justifying episcopacy but the practical and pastoral reasons for bishops (though it begins with a very unflattering description of the faults of the Elizabethan episcopate).

[70] Here I disagree with W.J.T. Kirby, ' "The sundrie waies of Wisdom": Richard Hooker on the Authority of Scripture and Reason,' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c.1530-1700*, eds. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith, and Rachel Judith Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 174-5, who appears to suggest tradition rather than reason is the principal reason for retaining bishops.

[71] Padley, 'Early Anglican Ecclesiology,' 6-7, traces the statutory basis for, and historical record of, clergy ministering in Reformation England who had not been ordained a bishop.

[72] Graves, 'Episcopacy,' 49.

what scripture does plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next whereto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the church succeeds. That which the Church by her ecclesiastical authority shall probably think and define to be true or good, must … overrule all inferior judgments (V.8.2).

Gibbs cites this passage as evidence of Hooker steering between Roman and reformed extremes, rejecting the models of tradition standing alongside scripture or scripture standing alone. Moreover, Gibbs asserts that this tradition is essential alongside the other warrants in spiritual matters and that this tradition includes the whole of Christian history.[73] But this is not Hooker's understanding. Hooker is establishing a hierarchy of authority in theology with scripture first and reasoned conclusions from scripture second. Only thereafter is tradition mentioned and it is considerably less reliable than scripture and reasoned conclusions from scripture; indeed 'probably think and define' sounds similar to Aquinas's formulation of 'probable' authority. What Hooker seems to mean is that an ecclesial decision may be considered authoritative only on matters where scripture or reasoned conclusions from scripture are silent.

Indeed, the limited place of tradition is further reinforced when this passage is considered in the wider context of Hooker's methodology. The word 'tradition' is almost always pejorative for Hooker, used to contrast human constructions with divine commandments (e.g., II.6.3). Outlining the benefits of the written deposit of revelation and his resistance to any other source of revelation, he asks

whether we be now to seek for any revealed law otherwise than only in the sacred scripture, whether we do now stand bound in the sight of God to yield to traditions urged by the Church of Rome the same obedience and reverence as we do to his written law, honouring equally and adoring both as Divine: our answer is, no (I.13.2, cf. I.4.5, II.8.5-6).

Gibbs appears not to recognise Hooker's clear distinction that tradition is useful (not decisive) in matters of discipline and does not have authority in matters of doctrine, where scripture is materially sufficient for the saving truths of faith. The conceptual doctrine-discipline distinction is vital to conceiving Hooker's account of tradition rightly. As Luoma says, 'For Hooker, tradition is not a body of truths which is a rival to revealed doctrine. It is a body of ordinances established by the authority which Christ has given to his church in things indifferent … binding until the church has cause to change them.'[74] Tradition has, for the most part, only a limited and advisory role in things indifferent. The weight of antiquity and widespread use is significant, but a practice can be

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[73] Gibbs, 'Scripture and Tradition,' 234.
[74] J.K. Luoma, 'Who Owns the Fathers? Hooker and Cartwright on the Authority of the Primitive Church,' *Sixteenth Century Journal* 8.3 (1977): 55.

adjusted where a reasoned case can be made for change. For instance, the kiss of peace can be abandoned for although it was culturally widespread in the first century it would be scandalous in Elizabethan polite society (Pref. 4.4). As we shall see in a moment, with one important exception, there is no real appeal to tradition in grounding doctrine.

The clarity of Hooker's account helps rebut Fox's claim that he is simply inconsistent. Fox's critique seems to be that Hooker has ruled out appealing to tradition or scripture to uphold the role of bishops in the church, then partly reverses course by a form of appeal to tradition grounded on the longstanding continuity of episcopal government, but this self-contradictory defence of bishops collapses and Hooker is forced to resort to a brute appeal to the civil power's authority to decide the church's polity.[75] Fox concludes, 'Hooker cannot have it both ways. Either tradition is important or it is not.'[76] Eppley critiques Fox's argument particularly by challenging his reading of Hooker on the civil power's role.[77] While not disagreeing with Eppley's response, a more methodological rebuttal of Fox's criticism can also be advanced. Few plausible theological methods could make no use of tradition; the issue is not whether or not tradition is important but what authority is attributed to it and how it functions. In fact, Hooker is not confused about tradition's function and Fox appears to have missed the nuance of his account. There is no inconsistency because in matters of discipline tradition can never decide a question by itself, it can only advise the church's decision-making bodies, who can decide to continue or abandon the tradition.

This section has challenged Fox's charge that Hooker's supposed inconsistency means he has no basis for his argument except appeal to the civil authority, as well as Gibbs's interpretation that Hooker steers between extremes. What emerges is a clear and consistent account of tradition strikingly similar to Aquinas's and Calvin's. Tradition carries the least weight of the warrants and is always merely ancillary, whether to reason in the sphere of discipline or to scripture in the sphere of doctrine. In matters of discipline there may be variety and change, because reason, although informed by tradition, must judge the circumstances. In matters of doctrine, while asserting scripture's material sufficiency, Hooker nonetheless conceives (as do Aquinas and Calvin) a particular role for one form of tradition, as the next section shows.

Councils and creeds

Earlier it was argued that Aquinas and Calvin afforded councils, particularly the earliest and most widely-recognised, a distinctive place in the formation of doctrine, so a theological method might

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[75] Rory Fox, 'Richard Hooker and the Incoherence of "Ecclesiastical Polity",' *HJ* 44 (2003): 57.
[76] Fox, 'Incoherence,' 52.
[77] Daniel Eppley, 'Royal Supremacy,' *CRH*, 523-30, offers a fuller rebuttal of Fox's argument.

be at least consistent with theirs if it invested the first four councils only with determinative authority in matters of doctrine. Hooker shares their perspective.

Hooker, with his emphasis on corporate consensus and fear of private decision-making, naturally finds councils an appealing prospect. However little they expected it would realistically be fulfilled, Kirby notes that Calvin and Hooker both say the gathering of a general council might be the best way to address the church's contemporary disputes.[78] So, recognising 'the urgent necessity of mutual communion for the preservation of our unity,' Hooker thinks it would best fit with 'those heavenly precepts, which our Lord and Saviour … gave us concerning peace and unity, if we did all concur in desire to have the use of ancient councils again renewed' (I.10.14; similarly, Calvin, *Inst.* IV.9.13). Councils, says Hooker, are the most convenient way to gather the church's wisdom particularly in matters of worship and order, although there can still be differences in the practice of different churches (*Laws*, IV.13.1-4, 18).[79]

On the role of councils in determining doctrine, though, Hooker is more constrained. Luoma and Gibbs argue that Hooker, unlike his presbyterian opponents, gives weight to the sweep of Christian history: 'Hooker is willing to gather his consensus from throughout the history of the church; Cartwright, only from the first five centuries.'[80] This characterisation is misleading, though. Initially, we noted that the preponderance of references in Hooker was to prefer the patristic to the medieval by a factor of four to one.[81] More substantially, while drawing on a range of sources, Hooker specifically prioritises the first five centuries as uniquely authoritative in the formation of doctrine. Thus, he refers to 'the space of five hundred years after Christ' where the church 'was troubled with nothing else saving only with care … to preserve this article from the sinister construction of heretics' (the article being belief in Christ's two natures) (*Laws*, V.62.1). No other authority is quoted in that chapter except the decisions of the first four councils which are cited by name. Hooker elsewhere lists as decisive for Christological definition the 'four most famous ancient general councils' (V.54.10) and the three ancient creeds (V.42), specifically citing the endorsement of the council as the ground of the Nicene Creed's authority (V.42.6).

Indeed, Hooker explicitly accords those councils particular authority in regulating permissible interpretations of scripture: 'any conclusion drawn erroneously', that is 'falsely collected out of

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78 W.J.T. Kirby, 'The Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy in the Thought of Richard Hooker,' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1987), 79 fn.1, 195-6.

79 Andre A. Gazal, ' "That Ancient and Christian Liberty": Early Church Councils in Reformation Anglican Thought,' *Perichoresis* 17.4 (2012): 82-3.

80 Luoma, 'Hooker and Cartwright,' 57; cf. Gibbs, 'Scripture and Tradition,' 234.

81 McGrade, 'Sources,' 52; indeed, Luoma, 'Hooker and Cartwight,' 56 recognises this emphasis.

scripture', can be 'found repugnant to the word of God' by 'the consent of the universal church, in the councils, or in her contrary uniform practice' (VII.9.2).[82] An example of the latter might be, for example, a claim that scripture did not support the divinity of the Spirit, which would be inconsistent by the uniform practice of trinitarian baptism. The connection is here drawn, as it is in Aquinas's definition of *sacra doctrina*, with the material sufficiency of scripture as the source of our saving doctrines of faith, but it is scripture as interpreted by the first four councils which framed the ancient creeds.[83]

Furthermore, as Neelands notes, Hooker is defending the settlement of the Elizabethan church which afforded particular authority to the first four councils only.[84] Section 20 of the Act of Supremacy 1559, a provision Hooker quotes directly (*Laws*, VIII.3.3), limits the church's power to judge heresy to 'only such as heretofore have been determined … to be heresy by the authority of the Scriptures, or by the first four general councils' (*DER*, 326-7). Indeed, Hooker grounds the claim that the Church of Rome is still a genuine if flawed church in part on the recognition that it preserves the Christological and Trinitarian doctrines espoused by the first four councils, defending the Church of England on the same basis.[85] Again, Article VII of the Articles of Religion held that the three ancient creeds 'ought thoroughly to be believed and received' (*DER*, 289). Indeed, while Hooker certainly does draw on many theologians from many centuries, he attributes determinative doctrinal authority only to the creeds; no modern paraphrase of the creeds, still less a new one, would carry the same authority (a 'gloss or paraphrase devised by ourselves … could not be of the like authority and credit': *Laws*, V.42.6).

Hooker was, of course, adamant (like Calvin) that councils could err. This, indeed, is enunciated in the Anglican formularies; Article XXI states councils 'may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture (*DER*, 297). Hooker repeatedly asserts this; for instance, 'companies of learned men, be they never so great and reverend, must yield to reason' (*Laws*, II.7.6). Even were there universal agreement of 'ten thousand general councils … yet one demonstrative reason alleged [would] overweigh them all; inasmuch as for them to be deceived it is not impossible' (II.7.5); and he condemns the 'grievous abuse which has been of councils' (I.10.14). Nonetheless, we only need assert the first

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[82] Gazal, 'Early Church Councils,' 83-4.

[83] Thus Gazal, 'Early Church Councils,' 83; Christopher Cocksworth, *Holding Together: Gospel, Church and Spirit: The Essentials of Christian Identity* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 39-40.

[84] W. David Neelands, 'Christology and Sacraments,' *CRH*, 371.

[85] Gazal, 'Early Church Councils,' 83.

four councils were free of error *in fact* in their interpretation of scripture, not that councils are *in principle* immune.

We conclude this section by noting the congruity of Hooker's account of determinative councils with Calvin's. The first four councils are accorded authority because they declare the meaning of scripture, and because of their early date. They are also, as Dominiak highlights, authoritative because they are the most widely recognised, and Trent's unrepresentativeness is for Hooker as for Calvin reason why it cannot claim general authority (VIII.6.7).[86] Indeed, Hooker insists 'to make new articles of faith and doctrine no man thinks it lawful' (III.10.6). This reinforces the sense of the first four councils belonging to a distinct period of doctrinal formulation; after this, the deposit of revelation and the boundaries of permissive interpretation are fixed, and so neither tradition nor reason cannot be used to ground a new doctrine or even an interpretation of doctrine which is inconsistent with the formulations of the earliest Christian centuries. Aquinas, of course, attributed authority to the councils up to his own day; but by drawing on and tightening his definition of the 'universal' church his account could also be read consistently with Hooker's and Calvin's.

Summary

Yves Congar, considering the ecumenical dispute about tradition, wrote

> The doctrine of tradition is one of those few points – I consider them to be few – where Anglicanism would be able to play the role of "bridge Church" that it dreams of having. For, while it is thoroughly scriptural, it has nevertheless a very positive attitude towards … Tradition and the ministry.[87]

While being intrigued by what the other points might be, and without necessarily agreeing with Congar's wider account, his judgment reflects the thrust of this investigation of tradition and indeed theologically method more generally. Any Anglicanism drawing on Hooker would take tradition and the ministry seriously, while limiting tradition's role in forming doctrine to the early councils; alongside maintaining the material sufficiency of scripture as the source of doctrine, and emphasising that no one form of ministry was required of every church. On that reading, Hooker is broadly convergent with Calvin and Aquinas; and readings of Hooker which situate him in relation to their presumed disagreement on tradition have missed this vital congruity.

This account of tradition might address reformed concerns about the risks of affording tradition or ecclesial institutions as having too widespread or autonomous authority, with the consequent danger

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[86] Dominiak, 'Participation,' 77.

[87] Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naesby and Thomas Rainborough (London: Burns & Oates, 1966), 465.

of corrupting doctrine and destabilising personal faith they perceived. It might also help resolve the criticism of Tavard and Echevarria that, in rejecting an account of tradition which gives it determinative doctrinal authority, the reformers simply opened the door to everyone's following their own private interpretation of scripture. Tradition in the limited sense of the first four councils alone is privileged over both personal judgment and all subsequent tradition; scripture as interpreted by those councils and their creeds is the test for, and safeguard of, doctrinal coherence and orthodoxy. The next section addresses why, in readings of Hooker, this presumption of a disagreement between Calvin and Aquinas has often arisen.

Obscuring the convergence of Hooker, Calvin, and Aquinas

Introduction

As earlier chapters argued that Hooker's account of *scripture* and *reason* can best be situated within a reformed-catholic consensus represented by Aquinas and Calvin, this chapter argues Hooker's account of *tradition* can similarly be relocated. As with the first two warrants, this discussion of the third warrant demonstrates the distorting effects of presuming divergence between Aquinas and Calvin, with the widespread but flawed characterisation of Aquinas attributing greater and Calvin lesser weight to tradition. Two factors can be identified which have obscured their convergence on tradition in particular: the effects of the Council of Trent on understandings of the Roman Catholic Church's view of tradition; and the influence of John Keble on how Hooker is read.

The Council of Trent

A major difficulty in many interpretations of all three theologians is the effect of the Council of Trent on understandings of tradition in Roman Catholic theological method. By examining the different ways its formulation of theological method has been received and critiqued, we will see how it affected readings of the Roman Catholic tradition, and how some theologians in both the reformed and catholic traditions have tried to resolve the tension it exacerbated.

On 8th April 1546, leading Roman Catholic bishops at the Council of Trent agreed the Decree on Scripture and Tradition.[88] Considering whether scripture alone sufficed as the source of doctrine, the Council concluded that

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[88] The Council of Trent met from 1545 to 1563, at Trent and Bologna in Italy, to consider the church's teaching in the light of Reformation challenges. The classic account is Hubert Jedin's magisterial work, *A History of the Council of Trent*, 2 vols., trans. Ernest Graf (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957-61); though John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (London: Bealknap Press, 2013) is a more accessible overview.

> the truth of salvation and the rule of conduct … are contained in written books and unwritten traditions, which were received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself or … handed on as it were … at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit … the council accepts and venerates with a like feeling … all the books of both the old and the new testament … as well as traditions concerning both faith and conduct (*Decrees*, II.263).

Later official Roman Catholic formularies follow similar lines, Vatican II, for instance, declaring that doctrine 'bas[es] itself on sacred scripture and tradition' (*Lumen Gentium*, 14). These appear to be what Oberman called a 'Tradition II' view, that scripture and tradition are both deposits of revelation and complementary, necessary sources of doctrine. This he contrasted with 'Tradition I' views, associated with the reformers, of scripture alone as deposit of revelation and source of doctrine.[89] This suggests serious divergence between catholic and reformed perspectives.

One approach to resolving this tension has been to contest the common interpretation of the decree and suggest it does not, in fact, instantiate a two-source theory of doctrine. Geiselmann, notably, advanced a reading of the decree which suggested it was not uncongenial to reformed concerns. In particular, Geiselmann made much of the wording of the final decree which differed from earlier drafts. It replaced the formulation *partim-et-partim* (revelation contained *partly* in scripture and *partly* in tradition) with the apparently more ambiguous phrase that revelation was transmitted through scripture *and* tradition.[90] Against Geiselmann, though, the weight of scholarship now argues the key consideration is that the decree was emphatically designed to rule out the reformers' insistence on the material sufficiency of scripture.[91] In particular, Jedin noted, the Council rejected the explicit opportunity to endorse a formulation, backed by about a third of the bishops, that was consistent with asserting scripture's material sufficiency.[92] *Et* or *partim*, the key point is that both the text itself and most of its subsequent interpretation appears, in Bireley's words, to declare 'that there were two sources of divine revelation' in response to 'the Protestant notion of "scripture alone".'[93] The Tridentine decree, then, has largely been seen as adopting a 'Tradition II' model and is a cause of tension with the reformed.

Calvin, certainly, understood Trent that way; as Casteel observes, 'nowhere in Reformation literature are the essential theological issues which divided Rome from the reformers more lucidly

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89 Heiko A. Oberman, 'Quo Vadis? Tradition From Irenaeus To *Humani Generis*,' *SJT* 16.3 (1963): 238-42.

90 So Matthew L. Selby, 'The Relationship between Scripture and Tradition according to the Council of Trent,' (M.A. diss., University of St Thomas, 2013), 5-14; I have not quoted Geiselmann directly as I have been unable locate a copy of the article Selby cites.

91 Jedin, *Trent*, II.75; cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *God's Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*, eds. Peter Hünermann and Thomas Söding, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 2008), 64, 68.

92 Jedin, *Trent*, II.64.

93 Michael Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 48.

delineated' than in the Tridentine decrees.[94] Commenting on the decree, Calvin says it makes 'scripture …a nose of wax, because it can be formed into all shapes' (*Antidote*, 69). Calvin particularly rejected the formulation about scripture and tradition; 'we especially repudiate their desire to make certainty of doctrine depend not less on what they call unwritten than on the scriptures' (*Antidote*, 70). As Casteel explains, while Calvin 'grants some authority to unwritten tradition' (largely on matters of ritual) he could not accept the Tridentine formulation which appeared to undermine scripture's uniqueness as 'the final and authoritative norm.'[95]

Likewise, Hooker too is critical of Trent.[96] He believed it could not claim to be representative and so had no binding authority.[97] On Trent's substance, Hooker rejected its account of penance in particular (*Laws*, VI.1.3,VI.6.10-4). More broadly, he challenged the Roman tendency to afford tradition an analogous or equal authority to scripture (I.13.2). So both Calvin's and Hooker's accounts would be very difficult to reconcile with Trent's formulation. And whatever Trent's precise meaning, as Congar notes, reformed-catholic *rapprochement* became considerably harder because of this formulation and its subsequent interpretation, with the 'atmosphere getting progressively more and more awkward.'[98]

If Geiselmann's attempt to reconcile the Tridentine formulation and the reformed perspective does not persuade, though, it does point in a more promising direction, indicating there may be Roman Catholic views of tradition more congenial to reformed concerns. Several figures associated with the *nouvelle théologie* sensibility grasped those concerns and tried to recover what they saw as a pre-Tridentine account of tradition which gave the warrant less weight. Congar, for example, adopted what he saw as Augustine's distinction between practices and customs, where tradition could be definitive, and doctrines, where it could not.[99] That distinction, of course, is mirrored in Calvin's and Hooker's approach.

Congar also perceived the danger tradition might become 'static, mechanical, inert' if considered in isolation from scripture as an autonomous warrant; and traced this problematic account of tradition to Trent, rather than Aquinas.[100] This problem, the *nouvelle* theologians thought, was exacerbated further in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hence Williams identifies '*nouvelle*

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[94] Casteel, 'Calvin and Trent,' 91; cf. Gordon, *Calvin*, 174-5.

[95] Casteel, 'Calvin and Trent, 103, 105.

[96] Gazal, 'Early Anglican Councils,' 84-5.

[97] Eppley, 'Supremacy,' 527-8.

[98] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 145.

[99] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 54-5.

[100] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 141; cf. 162, 363; so also Peter M. Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 27-8.

théologie's challenge to a fossilised neo-scholasticism'[101] which it perceived as rigidly imposing a monolithic, stifling space in which tradition could become little more than the repetition of not uncontroversial theological formulae without real reference to their scriptural or historical sources. Moreover, Congar seems to accept the notion of a break in the patristic period after which doctrine was fixed and tradition no longer carried formative weight for doctrine.[102]

Webster, from the reformed perspective, recognises Congar's reading of tradition as a major step towards reformed concerns.[103] It also chimes with Oberman's view that Trent marked the point at which Tradition II superseded Tradition I as the dominant understanding within Roman Catholicism. Tradition II, for Oberman, gave extra-scriptural oral tradition authority alongside scripture, whereas Tradition I saw scripture alone as the source of doctrine.[104] Aquinas, for Oberman, holds a Tradition I view.[105] The possibility of reading Aquinas, and the catholic view before Trent, in this way, suggests the reformed and catholic perspectives could be reconciled, sharing an account of tradition which asserted scripture's material sufficiency.

Indeed, both Hooker and Calvin appear to draw a distinction between Trent and its antecedents. Thus, while Hooker blames Aquinas's 'scholastical invention' and 'phantasy' for what he considers a dangerous account of penance (*Laws*, VI.4.9, cf. VI.1.3), he nonetheless expresses even more impatience with 'those who pretend to follow Thomas [but] differ from him' (VI.6.10). The distinction recurs in Hooker's discussion of sacraments, where he thinks Aquinas's successors far more at fault than the angelic doctor himself (VI.6.11). Likewise Calvin, as chapter three showed, at a number of points drew the same distinction between Aquinas and later scholastic theology. Greater awareness of pre-Tridentine views of tradition may help further rapprochement on this question; as van den Belt says, 'popular understanding too easily equates Trent's decisions with the much more diverse and complicated positions of medieval theology.'[106] And Congar certainly envisaged the possibility of a shared rediscovery of Aquinas as a ground for possible consensus.[107]

The Tridentine formula, then, exacerbated differences between reformed and catholic perspectives, contributing to a sense of inevitable opposition between them on scripture and tradition. Efforts to

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[101] A.N. Williams, ''The Future of the Past': The Contemporary Significance of the *Nouvelle Théologie*,' *IJST* 7.4 (2005): 353.
[102] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 25.
[103] John Webster, 'Purity and Plenitude: Evangelical Reflections on Congar's *Tradition and Traditions*,' *IJST* 7.4 (2005): 404.
[104] Oberman, 'Quo Vadis?,' 234-41.
[105] Oberman, 'Quo Vadis?,' 234 fn.1, 240-1.
[106] Henk van dan Belt, '*Sola Scriptura*: An Inadequate Slogan for the Authority of Scripture,' *CThJ* 51 (2016): 205.
[107] So Yves Congar, 'Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Spirit of Ecumenism,' *New Blackfriars* 55 (1974): esp. 198-200.

retrieve a pre-Tridentine perspective have been part of a wider movement towards greater agreement between reformed and catholic theologians on tradition, which became more pronounced in late twentieth-century ecumenical dialogue. Thus, a key 1964 conference recognised 'misunderstandings and disagreements' arising from 'our long history of estrangement and division' but pointed to 'possibilities of a new understanding of some of the most contested areas of our common past.'[108]

Nonetheless, even read this way and with the divisive effects of Trent and its subsequent appropriation corrected, problems remain in reconciling the catholic and reformed views. Some of these focus, as chapter six will discuss, on authority in the church. And there is still anxiety that tradition is still conceived as too autonomous; Webster, for instance, feared that Congar had not fully grasped the depth of the divide which opened up at the Reformation and, despite moving towards the language of scripture's sufficiency, still attributed too great a capacity to tradition.[109] A key Anglican-Roman Catholic report acknowledged that despite much progress, 'a necessary consensus has not been achieved,' particularly on 'the relationship between Scripture, Tradition, and the exercise of authority.'[110]

So: Trent's formulation, which at least could be read as giving tradition similar or even equal status to scripture as containing divine revelation and grounding doctrine, caused almost immediate problems for the reformed, including Hooker and Calvin. Subsequently, understandings within the traditions have diverged further and this has inevitably led to Hooker being located on that spectrum. There is a possibility, as Congar, Oberman, and others foresaw, that retrieving a pre-Tridentine account of tradition attributed to Aquinas might go some way to meeting reformed concerns and make consensus attainable. Nonetheless, for all the promising potential of reading the traditions (and Hooker, Calvin, and Aquinas) as much closer than often supposed, as Webster observed, and the next chapter discusses, difficulties remain in reconciling the two perspectives.

John Keble

If the Council of Trent shaped (even distorted) readings of Aquinas by exacerbating the view he was uncongenial to reformed concerns, John Keble's role in the reception of Hooker has had a similar effect on how the latter is perceived. Tracing Keble's influence identifies a major factor in the frequent underestimation, until roughly the late 1980s, of Hooker's reformed credentials. As

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[108] *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, ed. P.C. Rodger and L. Vischer (London: SCM, 1964), 55.
[109] Webster, 'Purity and Plenitude,' 408-9.
[110] Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission II, *The Gift of Authority*, accessed 22nd August 2020, https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105245/ARCIC_II_The_Gift_of_Authority.pdf, paras. 1-3.

Russell notes, Hooker's influence in Anglicanism since the nineteenth century is 'as much an accolade to the Oxford Movement's championing of Hooker as it is to the great man himself.'[111]

Keble was, of course, one of the leading lights of the Oxford Movement which, in the nineteenth century, sought to assert a more catholic identity in the Church of England by emphasising or recovering ritual and practices which pre-dated the break with Rome.[112] By the mid-1830s, Keble, increasingly disillusioned with the reformers, was turning to Hooker for evidence of such continuity.[113] Keble then produced a major new edition of Hooker's works and wrote a prominent Preface depicting Hooker as the Movement's forerunner and a defender of the Church of England's catholic identity in the face of reforming pressure.[114] Keble felt that Hooker had to be 'rescued from the unpleasant association, and discreditable praise' of those who thought him a reformer.[115] The Preface sought to rescue Hooker (and Anglicanism) from what Keble saw as an unfortunate identification with the reformed, establishing an agenda for the 'recovery' of a 'catholic' Hooker who supported the retention of catholic practices and, thus, a buttress for Keble's argument that other practices not so retained should be restored, such as prayer for the departed.[116] Indeed, Keble portrayed Hooker as an advocate of the ancient church and only a half-hearted reformer: 'Hooker's sympathy with the fourth century rather than the sixteenth is perpetually breaking out.'[117]

Keble's problem, however, is that Hooker's real views are, inconveniently, perpetually breaking out from underneath Keble's depiction of him. The distorting effect of Keble on Hooker's character, the minimising of reformed elements in Hooker's works, is obvious from the repeated strains both in the Preface and the text itself. So, Keble had to admit that he cannot 'affirm … that this view of Church ceremonies is any where expressly set down … by Hooker', though he insists that 'surely something like it lies at the root' of Hooker's account.[118] Keble's ingenuity, though, runs into real problems in Hooker's text itself. So, Keble argued Hooker 'insist[ed] on the divine origin and indispensable necessity' of bishops;[119] but, as we saw, Hooker adamantly refused to insist that bishops were either necessary or indispensable. The gap between what Hooker actually said and what Keble wished Hooker had said is apparent in the Preface where he went to considerable

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[111] Andrea Russell, 'Richard Hooker: Beyond Certainty,' (Ph.D. diss., University of Nottingham, 2009), 1.

[112] See Peter Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, ed. Stewart J. Brown, Peter Nockles, and James Pereiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[113] Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 125.

[114] On Keble's edition see MacCulloch, 'Reputation,' 808-11, and P.G. Stanwood, 'Works and Editions I,' *CRH*, 33-4.

[115] John Keble, 'Editor's Preface,' *Works*, I.cxv.

[116] Keble, 'Preface,' I.lxx, I.ci.

[117] Keble, 'Preface,' I.cii.

[118] Keble, 'Preface,' I.ci.

[119] Keble, 'Preface,' I.lxxvi; for the Movement's views on church government see Kenneth L. Parker, 'Tractarian Visions of History,' in *Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, eds. Brown *et al.*, 153-6.

lengths to try and explain away the large number of passages in the *Laws* which assert that bishops, although useful and divine in origin, were nonetheless not mandatory.[120] Keble presents the evidence in a contentious way; for instance he tried to minimise the significance of Hooker's insistence that clergy who were not ordained by a bishop could nonetheless minister in the Church of England (*Laws*, VII.14.11). And where a passage simply cannot be explained away – notably, Hooker's acceptance that bishops cannot realistically be re-imposed on churches which had abandoned them (III.11.16) – Keble egregiously omitted the offending text.[121]

The success of Keble's appropriation of Hooker, then, though difficult to justify from Hooker's actual thought, nonetheless had a wide influence on subsequent interpretations of Hooker. As MacCulloch noted, 'on the whole, the effect of Keble's magisterial edition was to cement Hooker firmly into Victorian High Church tradition.'[122] More particularly, as Nockles concludes, one effect of the Movement was to heighten the function of tradition in a way which went beyond the reformers' more constrained use of the warrant: 'in their hands, antiquity became an absolute standard and final court of appeal, rather than … merely a corroborative testimony to the truth of the Church of England's formularies and the teaching of her standard divines.'[123]

Summary

Keble's magnification of the role of tradition, and the appropriation of Hooker to emphasise or even retrieve pre-Reformation practice and thought, contributed to the interpretation of Hooker as diverging from the reformed by giving substantial weight to tradition (and indeed in other respects such as his sacramental theology[124] or soteriology). Keble was, in particular, highly effective at imputing distance between Hooker and Calvin: 'humanly speaking, we owe it' to Hooker and his successors 'that the Anglican church continues at such a distance from that of Geneva, and so near to primitive truth and apostolical order.'[125] This in turn misled subsequent readers into assuming that Hooker consciously distanced himself from the reformed, and that his theological character, whatever else it might be, could not be consistent with Calvin in particular. Equally, the Council of Trent and subsequent official Roman Catholic theology made increasingly distant the possibility of reformed-catholic consensus on the relationship of scripture and tradition, in particular because the

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[120] Keble, 'Preface,' I.lxxvi-lxxxv.
[121] MacCulloch, 'Reputation,' 780. This is not an isolated example. For instance, Keble, 'Preface,' I.lv, questioned the authenticity of the *Jude* sermons because of the reformed tenor of their treatment of on justification: see Bauckham, 'Hooker and Rome,' 37.
[122] MacCulloch, 'Reputation,' 811; cf. Michael Brydon, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker: An Examination of Responses, 1600-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13-6.
[123] Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 144; cf. James Pereiro, ' "A Cloud of Witnesses": Tractarians and Tractarian Ventures,' in *Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, eds. Brown *et al.*, 204-5.
[124] Neelands, 'Christology and Sacraments,' 383.
[125] Keble, 'Preface,' I.cxv.

possibility of asserting the material sufficiency of scripture receded. This in turn exacerbated the notion that Hooker must be characterised on a reformed-catholic spectrum. But isolating the effects of Keble and of Trent allows us to see the possibility of an account of tradition, drawing on Aquinas and Calvin, which is both catholic and reformed, and reflects more accurately Hooker's thought.

Summary

This and the previous three chapters have traced the authority and function of scripture, reason, and tradition in the theological methods of Aquinas, Calvin, and Hooker. After some concluding remarks on tradition, some wider conclusions are drawn about their theological method as a whole.

With the precise exception of the formative tradition of the first four councils and their formulations, which settle the canon of scripture and the framework of permissible interpretations of the Bible on doctrine, tradition more generally does not have a role in shaping fundamental doctrine. In matters other than doctrine, tradition has a wider function, but even here subject to the superior authority of reason; so, while on matters of discipline scripture and tradition must be attended to, a reasoned argument must be made for the retention or alteration of a practice.

Failure to grasp the fundamental congruity of Aquinas, Calvin, and Hooker on this point can be attributed to two particular factors. The Council of Trent and its successors prompted a very different account of tradition from that found in Aquinas, appearing to confer on it greater and more autonomous authority than he or the reformers did, and this (rather than Aquinas) was in fact what many reformed theologians were reacting against. And Keble has mislead subsequent scholarship, by putting more distance between Anglicanism and the reformed than there is in Hooker.

The theological method which emerges from this discussion asserts a nuanced *sola scriptura* principle in which scripture is now the sole source of our saving knowledge of God and the only ground for doctrine. This means scripture is materially sufficient and is the sole deposit of God's saving revelation, though other warrants are needed to interpret and apply what is deposited. Scripture's authority is derived from its communication of divine speech, recognition of which may be prompted by reflection on the evidence of the church's witness but must also be evoked in the hearer or reader by the witness of the Spirit. Neither reason nor tradition can ground doctrine, though reason can know some things about God without the aid of revelation, and the Fall diminishes but does not eradicate reason's capacity. This means that the fruit of human reason, say

philosophy, can in principle be used to clarify or elucidate doctrine, but only within the parameters generated from scripture.

What emerges from the investigation so far, then, is a shared theological method which is coherent and realistic (allowing for the fact that the church chronologically precedes the canon, and that scripture is capable of more than one interpretation). But it also has some limitations, to anticipate the argument of the next chapter. Perhaps the most obvious is the delineation of the distinction between unchanging doctrine grounded in scripture alone and changeable discipline grounded in reasoned decision-making: for, when it comes to a controversial proposal such as same-sex marriage, whether it is a matter of doctrine or discipline is essentially the ground of disagreement.

Conceived this way, the tracing of the theological methods of our three theologians allows Hooker, and Anglicanism, to be characterised as both catholic and reformed, rather than as one or the other or a *via media* between them. However, as well as locating Hooker's, Calvin's, and Aquinas's theology more precisely, the theological method we have argued is shared by all three could be applied fruitfully to some contemporary debates, as the next chapter shows.

Chapter Six
Possibilities and Limitations

Introduction

Earlier chapters demonstrated the plausibility of characterising Hooker, and Anglicanism, as both catholic and reformed by identifying a striking convergence in the theological methods of Hooker, Calvin, and Aquinas. Fundamental to that method is a vital distinction between two kinds of subject, what Hooker calls 'doctrine' and 'discipline.' The first category is the saving truths of Christian faith, such as God's being three persons or the person and work of Jesus Christ as both human and divine. Here, scripture is the deposit of God's revelation to us and the sole source of saving knowledge. Reason cannot attain this knowledge alone, limited by both finitude and sin; but it can elucidate or articulate such knowledge, and it is conceived as something much richer than the autonomous thinking of the individual. Tradition, in the sense of the interpretive framework of scripture articulated by formal conciliar definitions of the first four general councils and expressed in the ancient creeds, sets the parameters of doctrine. The second category includes, for instance, the details of church worship and government, what is sometimes called the *adiaphora* or (in Hooker's phrase) 'things accessory.' In this sphere, scripture and tradition are indicative but not binding; the church by make decisions based on reason. This conceptual distinction underlies the theological methods of all three theologians.

This chapter turns from the historical and methodological aspects of this model to some possible contemporary applications. It examines how this theological method could contribute to three debates: about faith and reason; ecumenical disputes about authority in the church; and the tensions, in Anglicanism in particular, about whether Christian same-sex marriage is a permissible development. In part, just as we argued Calvin, Aquinas, and Hooker are sometimes surprisingly congruent on questions where they are often thought to disagree, this chapter shows there are sometimes similarly surprising points of agreement between apparently opposing sides of contemporary debates. For example, we will see that the reformed and Aquinas might be much closer in their understandings of Mary, the Lord's mother, than Aquinas and contemporary official Roman Catholic teaching. Again, we will find that some contemporary philosophical defences and critiques of reason could have more in common than supposed, were reason defined in the way these three theologians conceive it. While reading those contemporary debates through the prism of this shared theological method cannot, of course, by itself resolve every dispute – as we will see,

the role of the papacy and the definition of marriage are not easily resolvable by appeal to this method alone – it nonetheless indicates shared terrain on which matters could be discussed, at least thereby clarifying the grounds of agreement or disagreement.

So, first, the chapter considers the contemporary debate about faith and reason. Here we identify some suspicion of reason's role in theology from both within and outside Christian theology. Identifying further features of Aquinas's, Hooker's, and Calvin's accounts of reason shows that it is a much richer capacity than just intellectual or scientific cogitation. Conceived this way, an account of reason can bring Aquinas, Calvin, and Hooker together with the concerns of some not immediately obvious conversation partners, for instance, some second-wave feminist critiques of reason, and also some wider philosophical fears about tendencies to define reason too narrowly. This will demonstrate the potential for fruitful dialogue between the theological method advanced here and wider contemporary theological and philosophical concerns.

Secondly, this shared theological method will emerge as a useful lens for exploring issues in some contemporary ecumenical dialogue. The convergence of these three theologians may itself suggest greater potential convergence between traditions than often supposed; and, more specifically, on authority in the church they have more in common than may be assumed. While identifying potential progress here, though, continuing difficulties are raised when this method is applied, in particular where Anglicans have risked departing from key aspects of their own tradition. While this does not itself rule out further institutional convergence, it does identify some serious problems from Anglicanism's reformed heritage for some proposals about the papacy in particular.

Then, thirdly, the chapter addresses the definition of Christian marriage, with particular (though not exclusive) reference to Hooker, whose method is often appropriated by those arguing for or hesitant about changes to Anglicanism's understanding of marriage. Here a critical problem emerges, which is that Hooker's vital distinction between doctrine and discipline does not provide an exhaustive list of what kind of issues falls under each rubric; and so this method alone cannot resolve the question of whether a change in the understanding of marriage is possible. Nonetheless, within limits, it could nonetheless help delineate the issues at stake and identify the ground on which the question might be addressed.

These applications can be only indicative, since in the space available we can make only brief reference to complex debates and vast bodies of literature, and can only offer exemplary rather than extensive references to our three theologians. Nonetheless, bringing their theological methods into

dialogue with some contemporary texts and problems indicates ways where the convergence of Hooker, Aquinas, and Calvin might at least shed some fresh light on familiar themes; the debate about faith and reason is the first.

Faith and Reason

This section brings our three theologians into dialogue with a range of contemporary philosophical and theological discussions on the relationship of faith and reason, particularly by showing their rich account of reason can help address some concerns both about the rationality of faith and about the use of reason in theology.

The place of reason in Christian theology has, most obviously, been challenged from outside the tradition by those (some associated with the 'New Atheist' movement[1]) who consider that faith and reason are either in tension or effectively opposed. On the one hand, Stephen Pinker argues that one of the achievements of the Enlightenment was to 'energetically apply the standard of reason to understanding our world, and not fall back on generators of delusion like faith, dogma, revelation, authority, charisma, mysticism, divination, visions, gut feelings or the hermeneutic parsing of sacred texts.'[2] Pinker thinks that faith is intrinsically *irrational*: 'to take something on faith means to believe it without good reason, so by definition a faith in the existence of supernatural entities clashes with reason.'[3] Our theologians would contest those definitions of faith and reason; for now, it suffices to note that there is a quite prominent strand of contemporary thought which asserts religion's basic irrationality and therefore could see no role for reason in theology.

On the other hand, and perhaps more surprisingly, some *Christian* accounts appear to reach similar conclusions. Barth, as we saw, expressed some suspicion about attributing excessive capacity to reason, in part because this may result in idolatry and the construction of a theological vision which is distant or even removed from that revealed by God, notably in Christ and the scriptures.[4] So, he begins his systematic theology warning that dogmatics is 'not to allow itself to take its problems from anything else but Scripture' (*CD* 1/1, §8.1). This appears to limit theology to working only

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[1] See Phil Ryan, *After the New Atheist Debate* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), esp. 1-20, and Michael Ruse, *Monotheism and Contemporary Atheism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[2] Stephen Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (London: Penguin, 2019), 8.

[3] Pinker, *Enlightenment Now*, 30.

[4] See John Webster, *Karl Barth*, 2nd edn. (London: Continuum, 2004), esp. 53-4.

with the data of revelation; and Barth went as far as asserting that 'reason … is incurably sick and incapable of any serious theological activity.'[5]

In the face of both internal and external accounts which oppose or separate reason and faith, a more nuanced critique of reason's theological capacity emerges in some theologians who might loosely be described as influenced by second-wave feminism.[6] A frequent and legitimate critique is that too much theology is, or has been, written by men to the exclusion of women's voices and perspectives.[7] Hooker, Calvin, and Aquinas cannot really answer that legitimate challenge. Some feminist theologians seem to suggest the tradition is so irredeemable that the only way forward is to more or less completely *replace* it.[8] But others, such as Tanner, suggest that feminist theologies may be most effective at challenging patriarchal dominance of the tradition if they look to *refresh* understandings of that tradition rather than reject them:[9] in this work of retrieval 'the tasks of feminist theology become a specification of the tasks that characterise theology generally.'[10] Moreover, critiques influenced by such feminisms will in fact be seen as converging with some contemporary readings of Hooker, Aquinas, and Calvin.

Among the tasks proposed by both feminist critiques and also by an intrinsic desire to understand these three theologians more fully is the need to recover a richer notion of what they understood by 'reason.' We can identify four areas of engagement: these are reason conceived as (1) biblical; (2) experiential/pastoral; (3) corporate; and (4) material. In each case we briefly state an aspect of feminist critique and then give examples of how resources to resolve the problem raised can be found *within* the lives and theological methods of Hooker, Aquinas, and Calvin.

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[5] Karl Barth, 'No! Answer to Emil Brunner', in Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: Centenary Press, 1946), 96.

[6] On the links between theology and second-wave feminism see, e.g. Melissa Raphael, 'A Patrimony of Idols: Second-Wave Jewish and Christian Feminist Theology and the Criticism of Religion,' *Sophia: International Journal of Philosophy and Tradition*, 53.2 (2014): 241-259, and Els Maeckelberghe, 'Across the Generations in Feminist Theology: From Second to Third Wave Feminisms,' *Feminist Theology* 8.23 (2000): 63-9. For introductory surveys of feminist theology generally see, e.g., *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology*, eds. Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Sheila Briggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). More detailed treatments include, for instance, *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition and Norms*, eds. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1997).

[7] E.g., Pamela Sue Anderson, 'Feminist Theology as Philosophy of Religion,' in *CCFT*, ed. Parsons, 40-1.

[8] A tendency recognised by Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female in Western Philosophy*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 1993), xix-x, 2-3. One writer who comes close to this position is Grace M. Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), who appears to argue for a straightforward rejection of much of the classic Christian tradition: 6 fn.1, 21, 25, 31, 255, 265.

[9] Kathryn Tanner, 'Social Theory Concerning the "New Social Movements" and the Practice of Feminist Theology,' in *Horizons*, eds. Chopp and Greeve Davaney, 188-90; cf. Pamela Sue Anderson, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 53, 60.

[10] Tanner, 'Practice of Feminist Theology,' 184; similarly Anderson, 'Philosophy of Religion,' 42.

A first critique concerns the *biblical* nature of reasoning, the fear that the stream of theology can often appear distant from the well of scripture which ought to be its principal source. A recurring example is the accusation that Christian theology has, in pursuit of both philosophical coherence and earthly hegemony, conceived an essentially privileged and male deity, with insufficient attention to the scriptural vision of God.[11] For some feminist theologians, fresh engagement with scripture is a vital task, as attending to the pluriform voice of scripture will expose and challenge the dominance of patriarchal imagery and belief.[12]

The methodological issue here is that reason in theology must be grounded in constant re-engagement with scripture, in the sense that one of the key reasons we have the capacity to think is so that we can reflect on the revelation witnessed in scripture. All three theologians are, in fact, profoundly biblical. Earlier chapters showed the importance of the Bible in their theological methods; moreover, scripture's centrality is further shown by recalling that they engaged with scripture not just for doctrinal or methodological dispute but as part of a pattern of life and work in which they read and expounded scripture in a variety of contexts. For example, Calvin's and Aquinas's commentaries tend to be given much less attention than their systematic theologies, and Aquinas as an interpreter and teacher.[13] Likewise, Hooker's sermons are less attended to than the larger *Laws*, and even where they are the focus is usually on the sermons which primarily deal with controversies about salvation rather than those with more obviously spiritual or pastoral themes.[14] Recovery not just of the biblical emphases of these theological methods but also their wider scriptural engagement, seen particularly by examining works other than the *Institutes*, *Summae*, or *Laws*, will suggest they were operating with a richer concept of reason as constantly engaging with biblical material while handling, say, philosophical or historical sources, or contemporary disputes in the church.

Secondly, alongside renewed attention to the relationship of scripture and reason, feminist theologies often emphasise the place of *experience*. Their most obvious criticism is that the

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[11] Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 255.

[12] See Bridget Gilfillan Upton, 'Feminist Theology as Biblical Hermeneutics,' in *CCFT*, ed. Parsons, 99-104 for a good introduction and further references.

[13] On these two as expositors of scripture see, e.g., Peter M. Candler, 'St Thomas Aquinas,' in *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Justin S. Houlcomb (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 2006), 63-4; *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[14] The one major study of Hooker's sermons, Corneliu C. Simut, *The Doctrine of Salvation in the Sermons of Richard Hooker* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2005), traces Hooker's account of controversial soteriological issues through the sermons; Andrea Russell, 'Richard Hooker: Beyond Certainty,' (Ph.D. diss., University of Nottingham, 2009), 156-219 also focusses on the sermons about salvation. John K. Stafford, 'Sorrow and Solace: Richard Hooker's Remedy for Grief,' in *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W.J.T. Kirby (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2003) 131-47, is a fine and relatively unusual example of attention to one of the lesser-known and more obviously pastoral sermons, delivered on the occasion of an unnamed woman's funeral.

experience of women, along with other historically or currently disempowered groups, is widely under-represented in theological discourses. But this can be broadened into a wider point, that there is a danger of seeing reason as somehow divorced from the contexts in which reasoning takes place. Alasdair MacIntryre reinforces this critique; 'what historical enquiry discloses is the situatedness of all enquiry,'[15] namely, that one cannot abstract some function or capacity called 'reason' from the specific contexts and circumstances in which reasoning takes place.

Attending to the wider circumstances in which our three theologians lived will show how their thought emerges *within* specific contexts and must, to some extent, have been informed by them. In particular, all three had *pastoral* charges, responsibility for nurturing the Christian faith of a particular community. Aquinas was perhaps above all a *teacher* who made the didactic purpose of his great work clear in the prologue to the greater *Summa*.[16] As Candler notes, 'the pedagogical culture in which Thomas studied and taught cannot be abstracted from [his] "form of life" .'[17] Hooker was of course a parish priest, in the rather rarefied atmosphere of Temple Church as well as Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire, and Kent.[18] Calvin drafted detailed instructions including something like a sixteenth-century ministers' rota setting out the times of sermons and including the instruction of 'little children' in the catechism (*Treatises*, 62).[19] Calvin's great systematic theology includes considerable detail about the practical business of organising local churches, which occupies most of the fourth book of the *Institutes*.[20] It seems implausible that these three theologians maintained some sort of distinction between the different ways or contexts in which they taught and thought about faith. While the precise influence of that pastoral ministry on their theology cannot of course be identified, the broader point holds; their reasoning was not abstracted from their experience but was worked out in specific locations and communities of learning and pastoral care.[21]

This insistence that reason cannot be abstracted from particular contexts but must be rooted in experience prompts a third point: this experience is not just individual; in theology, reason is never

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[15] Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), xii.

[16] Vivian Boland, *St Thomas Aquinas* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 14-7, 39-78 connects both Aquinas's own teaching and his views on pedagogy.

[17] Peter M. Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 4-5.

[18] See Philip B. Secor, *Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1999, 101-14, 199-220, 278-306. Secor's highly idiosyncratic account does include the basic details of Hooker's career and useful further references.

[19] Cf. Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2011), 126-8.

[20] See Dorothea Wendebourg, 'The Church in the Magisterial Reformers,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. P.D.L. Avis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 233-5.

[21] An excellent overview of female and feminist theologies which emphasises the embedded and embodied practices of reasoning is Elaine Graham, 'Feminist Critiques, Visions, and Models of the Church,' in *Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Avis, 527-51.

simply the act of the autonomous (usually privileged) individual but something essentially *communal*; it is the reasoning of the church. Some feminist critiques 'protest against the illusion that human beings are separate and separable items, called individuals, merely collected together dispassionately in random groups.'[22] Oliver and Higton also point out the essentially communal context of theological reason.[23] So too MacIntryre, who suggests that reason has too often been defined as the 'ideal rationality' of 'a socially disembodied being' which simply 'ignores the inescapably historically and socially context-bound character' of all reasoning.[24]

One obvious concern in our three theologians is their recourse to the shared reasoning of some corporate body. All three, notably, say that a church council has a particular role in discerning theological truth in the church, however impractical or flawed such a gathering might be in practice. Aquinas, for example, considers it essential to the truthfulness of doctrinal statements like the creeds that they are drawn up 'in the person, as it were, of the whole Church, which is united together by faith' (*S.Th.* II-II.1.9, *ad.*; cf. *s.c.*). This quotation has been been drawn on in later Roman Catholic theology to emphasise the corporate element of reasoning and decision-making which, since the Second Vatican Council, has become more prominent under the conception of the *sensus fidelium*, the consensus or sense of the faithful.[25] This theme is perhaps even more pronounced in Hooker who considers the community's reasoning to be vital.[26] He is, notably, determined that the monarch alone cannot make laws; legislation requires the communal consent of the public's representatives, consent which must be given by the whole of the body not just a part (*Laws*, VIII.6.5).[27] Calvin, too, his emphasis on personal conscience notwithstanding, also thought there was specific merit in reasoning together (for instance, his call for a 'synod of true bishops', *Inst.* IV.9.13). Calvin hoped, early in his career, that a council might bring reconciliation either with Rome and / or among the reformed.[28]

It is important not to over-state this case; as McGrade notes on Hooker, for instance, the definition of those whose opinion was sought excluded significant groups including women and those without

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[22] Susan Frank Parsons, 'Redeeming Ethics,' in *CCFT*, ed. Parsons 212.
[23] Simon Oliver, 'Reading Philosophy,' in *The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology*, eds. Mike Higton and Jim Fodor (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 73 and Mike Higton, 'Reason,' in *Routledge Companion*, eds. Higton and Fodor, 11-3, 15-6.
[24] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 3-4.
[25] See Anthony Ekpo, 'The Sensus Fidelium and the Threefold Office of Christ: A Reinterpretation of *Lumen Gentium* No. 12,' *Theological Studies* 76.2 (2015): 330-46.
[26] R.D. Williams, *Anglican Identities* (London: DLT, 2004), 32-5; so also Mike Higton, *The Life of Christian Doctrine* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020), 103-4, cf. 123-5.
[27] So Daniel Eppley, 'Royal Supremacy,' in *CRH*, 524.
[28] Theodore W. Casteel, 'Calvin and Trent: Calvin's Reaction to the Council of Trent in the Context of his Conciliar Thought,' *Harvard Theological Review* 63.1 (1970): esp. 116-7.

property.[29] One challenge of feminist critiques, among others, is that the church must to attend to which voices are being heard and to consider more carefully which voices are being overlooked or excluded.[30] This was not a particular priority for our theologians, and more work is clearly needed to establish where and how the range of voices is heard. Nonetheless, the broader point is that reason in Christian theology is always exercised communally.

MacIntryre's reference to disembodiment suggests a fourth area where the account of reason needs refining, namely, its relation to the *material*. Susan Frank Parsons epitomises a concern to move beyond narrowly Cartesian notions of being as dependent simply on cogitation to realise that reason is something practiced by persons who, among other things, have bodies.[31] She asks 'whether this tool of reason, detached as it was from embodiment and place, could ever bring about justice'?[32] This reflects a wider concern in feminist theology about the failure to attend to women in particular as having bodies, and a concern that reason is defined as something without reference to the physicality of the reasoner; thus, Jantzen criticises the epitomising of the self as rational and therefore disembodied.[33] Aspects of her critique would be highly problematic for our theologians, such as her apparent insistence that doctrines of God which assert God is rational and disembodied must be radically overhauled.[34] But Jantzen's criticism, with feminist theologians more generally, of theologies which ignore the embodiment of the reasoner poses further grounds to reconsider the meaning of reason. In fact, as we can see, Aquinas, Calvin, and Hooker all conceive reason in material terms; both as an act of an *embodied* person, not just an intellectual one, but also as engaging with a material creation. In other words, contemporary critiques which rightly identify the risk of conceiving reason as merely abstract and intellectual – and thereby privileging some sorts of reasoner over others – might find unexpected resonance with the earlier tradition which Aquinas, Calvin, and Hooker represent.

For reason's material dimensions are seen in all three theologians. For Aquinas and Hooker this can be particularly identified in their sacramental theology. So, as Candler highlights in his reading of Aquinas's account of holy communion, one of the effects of the sacrament is that it re-orders our minds.[35] For instance, the outstretched arms of the priest teach us, wordlessly, of Christ's love

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[29] A.S. McGrade, 'Richard Hooker on Anglican Integrity,' *Anglican Theological Review* 9.3 (2009): 428.
[30] See, for instance, Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Sheila Briggs, 'Introduction,' in *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology*, eds. McClintock Fulkerson and Briggs, 1-2; Margaret D. Kamitsuka, *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4-18.
[31] Frank Parsons, 'Redeeming Ethics,' esp. 210-2.
[32] Frank Parsons, 'Redeeming Ethics,' 211; Anderson, *Feminist Philosophy of Religion*, 127-30.
[33] Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 31.
[34] Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, esp. 25, 28-30, 274.
[35] Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction,* 140.

shown in his outstretched arms on the cross (*S.Th*. III.87.5, *ad*. 5); the physical movement towards the altar embodies our journey towards holiness (III.87.3, *ad*. 1).[36] Turner similarly says, 'as Thomas sees it, you could not even begin to work out what you meant by 'rationality' independent of the conception of bodies' and this in particular means reason has a sacramental 'shape.'[37] Aquinas's emphasis on the sacraments as means of teaching indicates a wider definition of reason than the merely propositional or cognitive.

For Hooker, likewise, the material of the sacraments was instructive. As Neelands notes, Hooker rejects the presbyterian view that teaching can be accomplished solely by instruction and prayer (*Laws*, V.50.1); in fact, to paraphrase Hooker, while the sacraments do more than teach the mind they certainly do not do less than that (V.57.1; V.58.1).[38] And Williams draws attention to a seemingly rather obscure dispute with the presbyterians about whether communicants, particularly those suspected of papist sympathies, should be subjected to some kind of examination or test before being admitted to communion. Among the reasons Hooker advances for not imposing such a test is that, if admitted to the sacrament, 'they will learn the mystery of gospel-like behaviour when leisure serves them' (IV.68.8).[39] Hooker saw the sacraments as capable of helping people 'learn', means whereby something of God's truth might be revealed, even in such apparently unpropitious circumstances as the tentative outward conformity of the wavering adherent.

Indeed, not just the sacraments but human bodies themselves were useful for teaching.[40] Hence Hooker's poetic defence of singing in worship, and particularly the benefits of singing the Psalms, on account of the 'admirable facility which music has to express and represent' the mind to itself, and which can either confirm or change our thinking (V.38.1). Hooker's emphasis not just on the sacraments but the physical aspects of ritual, and ritual as something which teaches us, indicates, as Dominiak argues, that 'the rational human self does not exist … as an isolated or dispassionate unit.'[41] Hooker's defence of retaining elements of pre-reformation ritual is grounded, in part, on a richer notion of reason than that advanced by his presbyterian opponents, who risked reducing teaching simply to the verbal and cognitive.

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[36] Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction*, 153; similarly Mark D. Jordan, *Teaching Bodies: Moral Formation in the* Summa *of Thomas Aquinas* (New York, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2017), 52, cf. 54-6, 60-1.

[37] Denys Turner, 'Faith, Reason, and the Eucharist,' in *Redeeming Truth: Considering Faith and Reason*, eds. Lawrence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons (London: SCM, 2007), 17, 25; cf. 26-31.

[38] W. David Neelands, 'Christology and the Sacraments,' *CRH*, 375-6; similarly, P.A. Dominiak, 'The Logic of Desire: A Reappraisal of Reason and the Emotions in Richard Hooker's *Lawes*,' *Renaissance and Reformation Review* 16.1 (2014): 46-7.

[39] So Williams, *Anglican Identities*, 34; cf. Higton, *Life of Doctrine*, 103.

[40] Dominiak, 'Logic of Desire,' 48. Hooker's understanding of reason as more than cognitive is also emphasised by Russell, 'Beyond Certainty,' e.g. 136, 198-218, 202-3, 212-8.

[41] Dominiak, 'Logic of Desire,' 42.

Of the three theologians Calvin is perhaps most likely to be suspected of underplaying this material dimension of reason. Since the material aspects are seen most clearly in Hooker's and Aquinas's sacramental theology, this suspicion in part arises because Calvin's sacramental theology is sometimes thought to be less attentive to the material aspects of sacraments. Oliver, for example, fears in Calvin a 'tendency towards a spiritualised and gnostic existence that lacks any genuine notion of corporeality', emphasising 'purely spiritual and non-corporeal' aspects of Christian life.[42]

This is an understandable concern (in rejecting transubstantiation and consubstantiation, Calvin was certainly ruling out obvious ways to secure the physical importance of the sacraments), but we can refine Oliver's critique following Billings's discussion. For instance, Billings wonders whether Oliver's claims about Calvin might be adjusted when the clear distinction between Calvin and Zwingli is made clear – the former having a much more participatory account of the sacraments than the latter.[43] Specifically, for instance, Calvin warns against 'too little regard for the signs', in language with a physical flavour ('savour', 'relish'), and he insists that we 'should not think that the life we receive from him is received by mere knowledge' (*Inst.* IV.17.5).[44] Calvin's sacramental theology, very different from Aquinas's on the means of the change in the elements, also differs from, say, Zwingli in its emphasis that we receive more than just knowledge and that the elements are more than just symbolic. Calvin thus demonstrates a sacramental theology which is not simply cognitive; and indeed we have seen in Hooker that rejecting transubstantiation and consubstantiation need not imply a sacramental theology unconcerned with the physical.

Reinforcing Billings's emphasis on Calvin's view of the materiality of the sacraments is Calvin's very sensuous account of the material creation and its potential for us. So, Calvin wonders at 'the greatness of the Artificer who stationed, arranged, and fitted together the starry host of heaven in such wonderful order that nothing more beautiful in appearance can be imagined' (I.4.21). This should result in us 'bestir[ring] ourselves to trust, invoke, praise, and love'; 'invited by the great sweetness of his beneficence and goodness, let us study to love and serve him with all our heart' (I.4.22). What Calvin envisages here is more than just mere intellectual cogitation and something more experiential and emotional in response to the material universe.[45]

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[42]   Simon Oliver, 'The Eucharist before Nature and Culture,' *Modern Theology* 15.3 (1999): 343, 347.

[43]   J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and The Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 104.

[44]   Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 135.

[45]   A.N. Williams, *The Architecture of Theology: Structure, System, and Ratio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 196.

The emphasis on the material elements of the sacraments, then, is for Calvin set clearly in a wider context about the potential for matter to do more than just imply cognitive propositions. The capacity of reason, to link back to earlier discussions about creation and the knowledge of God, is only part of a foundational claim about *creation*; for our reasoning is itself a God-given gift. The *triplex via* may achieve something like this for Aquinas; all our abilities are divinely-given. The *via causalitatis* frames our understanding of reflecting our rational divine cause in having, among other things, the capacity to think;[46] the *via remotionis* highlights the context of our thinking is different from the divine, not least because we have *bodies*. And here, as Lewis famously observed of Hooker,

> Few model universes are more filled – one might say, more drenched – with Deity than his … it is this conviction which enables Hooker, with no anxiety, to resist any inaccurate claim that is made for revelation against reason, Grace against Nature, the spiritual against the secular.[47]

What Lewis sees in Hooker is the refusal to separate different spheres of life or sources of knowledge. They are, rather, fundamentally one because they are *created* and *given* by God; flowing from the same divine source, they cannot, ultimately, be opposed. Here we see the methodology we have traced in Calvin, Aquinas, and Hooker bringing together some perhaps unlikely conversation-partners – C.S. Lewis and feminist theologians – to identify a key contribution that our three theologians' theological method can offer, namely, a wider and richer definition of reason. This reason is intrinsically not the autonomous thought of a single individual (usually a privileged one, in some way), but a communal effort of engagement with scripture, experience, matter and (we might add) conducted by Christians in everyday ministry and discipleship of different forms. So reason, in some sense, is an act of the church as it reads scripture together, shares the sacraments, and engages with the practical needs of local communities; ecclesial, theological reason is far wider a concept than reason narrowly conceived as intellectual or equated solely with modern scientific method.

Such an account might cohere with philosophical attempts to reclaim a richer notion of reason. If Pinker represents a contemporary thinker who is suspicious of any claim that religion could be rational, a rather different view of reason is advanced by Stephen Toulmin. In many ways Toulmin is, like Pinker, trying to re-establish the benefits of reason in the face of contemporary challenges; he sets out to address the 'sudden loss of confidence in our traditional ideas about rationality', and

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[46] Williams, *Architecture of Theology*, 17-9, 221.
[47] C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 459.

says reason has been increasingly 'sidelined' in public discourse.[48] Toulmin thinks that one of the key problems with defending reason is that its definition has become narrower and in some circumstances is equated almost entirely with 'scientific method', an 'enthronement of mathematical rationality.'[49] However, as Toulmin notes, such conceptions do not do justice to the range of human experience and we need some broader definition of reason which recovers the complexity and variety of reason, it sources and expressions. Reason, for Toulmin, cannot be reduced simply to that knowledge which is attainable by the methods of mathematics or the natural sciences.[50] The account of reason in Hooker, Aquinas, and Calvin likewise emphasises that variety of sources and shapes of genuine knowledge.

Other contemporary defences of reason also recognise the value of such a broader definition. For example, one theme which emerges is the risk that an excessively abstract notion of reason, detached from individual thinking and feeling persons, can result in a failure to appreciate the dignity of persons and therefore to nurture individuals, communities, or the natural environment. Specifically, as one critique of a New Atheist thinker posits, labelling religion as a single and irrational entity may result in the loss of elements of religious tradition which may in fact be very desirable, such as the emphasis on human dignity in some forms of monotheism.[51] Reason, on these views, must take into account more than just abstract cogitation. Such accounts of reason will be deprived of a key ally if religious belief is simply cast aside as intrinsically irrational. In other words: some contemporary defences of reason are, distinct from any Christian doctrinal concerns, urging just such a broader vision of what reason means that we have argued can be found both in some feminist theological critiques and in our three theologians.

Bringing these critiques into conversation with Hooker, Calvin, and Aquinas yields a much richer and more theologically-grounded account of our reason than is often attributed to those particular theologians – or attributed to reason in theology generally, either by internal critics of reason's role in theology or external proponents of theology's intrinsic irrationality. There remain some quite striking differences; many feminist theologians argue for a very different doctrine of God, say, than Aquinas, Calvin, and Hooker would be prepared to countenance; and our three theologians do not attend to the variety of voices or the embodied experience of women that contemporary feminist theologians rightly suggest we should. Nonetheless, conceived in this way, reason and faith will be seen as not so opposed as a contemporary, post-Enlightenment definition of reason (whether

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[48] Stephen Toulmin, *Return to Reason* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.
[49] Toulmin, *Return to Reason*, 83, 205.
[50] E.g. Toulmin, *Return to Reason*, 13, 214.
[51] Lynne Rudder Baker, 'Dennett on Breaking the Spell,' in *The Philosophy of Daniel Dennett*, ed. Bryce Hubner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 335-6, 340-2.

advanced by the sceptic or the believer) might suggest. The sceptic may see reason is concerned with the whole of human experience, not just rational cogitation (as if thought ever could be separated from thinker). The believer might grasp that reason has reflection on scripture and the lived experience of the Christian community at its heart. Drawing on some feminist critiques and others, then, we recover more clearly the methodology and practice of reason in our three theologians. This may help resist contemporary tendencies to separate faith and reason and retrieve reason's place in Christian theology. Moreover, the brief reference to contemporary philosophical discussions (Pinker and Toulmin) suggests that there might be allies *outside* the Christian tradition in the task of reclaiming a richer, more nuanced account of reason. Having demonstrated the potential of the theological method we have traced for the debate about faith and reason, we turn next to show its usefulness in considering ecumenical debates about authority in the church.

Authority in the Church

The previous section showed how the theological method of our three theologians could aid contemporary debates about faith and reason by helping recover a much richer notion of that warrant, in dialogue with a range of theological and philosophical interlocutors. This section now suggests how it could contribute to a more inward-focussed debate: contemporary ecumenical discussions about authority in the church, with particular reference to official dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. This will show that, despite much progress between the two traditions, applying the method we have distilled reveals that from a reformed perspective, and to some extent from Aquinas's perspective, there remain serious problems for Anglicanism with the present structure of the Roman Catholic Church, notably the papacy.

The greater warmth and co-operation between denominations in the second half of the twentieth century can only be welcomed.[52] Official Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue raised the prospect of greater institutional unity between the two churches, and foresaw a distinctive role for the Bishop of Rome in some form of future, reconciled institution. Thus, *Gift of Authority*, the 1998 report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), concluded Anglicans could 'be open to … under certain clear conditions … the exercise of universal primacy by the Bishop of

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[52] See Charlotte Methuen, 'Ecumenism,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglican Studies*, eds. Mark D. Chapman, Sathianathan Clarke, and Martyn Percy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 464-77.

Rome.'[53] As ARCIC said, 'the question of authority … is at the heart of our sad divisions.'[54] Of course, Anglicanism only exists because it specifically repudiated the authority of the papacy, and the most obvious means of formal institutional reconciliation might well entail Anglican acceptance of a role for the papacy in leading a reconciled church.

What this study of theological method shows, though, is that reconciliation on that basis would be seriously problematic from the reformed perspective articulated by Hooker and Calvin on at least two grounds. First, the Roman Catholic Church, since the First Vatican Council in 1870, claims for the Pope 'ordinary … immediate … full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole church throughout the whole world' (*Decrees*, II.814). Even though official dialogue has suggested welcome refinement of this power, for instance emphasising the language of pastoral support and challenge rather than control,[55] Anglicanism simply has no equivalent for this claim, and, as we will see, longstanding grounds for believing it deeply problematic.

A second problem is the infallibility which is attributed to the papal office in certain circumstances.[56] Vatican I declared 'when the Roman pontiff speaks ex cathedra … he possess … that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his church to enjoy … such definitions are of themselves, and not by the consent of the church, irreformable' (*Decrees*, II.815). Again, while official dialogue has highlighted the contours of this power in helpful ways (for instance, it is 'hedged about with very rigorous conditions'[57]), it remains deeply problematic, not least given the reformers' clear commitment that the church can err (see Articles XX and XXII (*DER*, 296-7)).

While resisting categorisations of Hooker as advocating a 'three-legged stool' in theological method, we can nonetheless conveniently trace Hooker's view of the papacy by showing his uncomfortableness with claims of papal authority in relation to the three theological warrants in turn. Hooker's views on this point are largely contiguous with Calvin's. So, both contested the appeal to *scripture* for the papacy's claims by challenging the exegesis of the key passages in Matthew's gospel, 16.16-8 and 18.18. They argued that these did not confer unique authority on Peter, but to all the apostles and their successors (plural), hence 'the grand original warrant whereof

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[53] Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Gift of Authority* (1998), accessed 28th August 2020, https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105245/ARCIC_II_The_Gift_of_Authority.pdf, para. 62.

[54] *Gift*, preface.

[55] ARCIC, *Authority in the Church I* (1976), accessed 28th August 2020, https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105230/ARCIC_I_The_Authority_of_the_Church_I.pdf, paras. 11-2, 21.

[56] ARCIC, *Walking Together on the Way* (2017), accessed 28th August 2020, https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/344839/walking-together-on-the-way-spck-2018.pdf, pars. 134, 137.

[57] *Authority I*, para. 24(c).

the guide*s* and prelate*s* in God's church, first his Apostle*s*, and afterwards other*s* following *them* successively' (*Laws*, V.4.1, cf. V.77.8, VI.4.15; cf. *Inst.* IV.6.4, IV.6.7, IV.68-13).

Both also challenged the papacy's appeal to *tradition*, arguing Rome's power was a later, political achievement rather than a historic right, charting the emergence of Rome's claim to sole overarching authority from a much more dispersed pattern of authority, spread among several senior and more autonomous bishoprics, in the earlier centuries (*Laws*, VII.8.9, cf. VIII.7.4-5; cf. *Inst.* IV.6.1, IV.6.16, IV.7.1, IV.7.19, IV.7.21).[58]

Hooker in particular also rejected any appeal to *reason*, because he considered it dangerous and corrupting, both morally and spiritually, to concentrate such authority in one individual, as we saw in his aversion to the prominence of Luther and Calvin (*Laws*, Pref. 2.7, 4.7). This emerges again in his treatment of penance, where he fears that the appropriation of aspects of the power of absolution to the papacy results in both financial and spiritual corruption of the papal court and catastrophic pastoral consequences for the penitent (VI.5.9, VI.6.7). Calvin also contended the unreasonableness of papal claims by highlighting the difficulty of one individual overseeing such a wide geographical area (*Inst.* IV.6.2).

While both Hooker and Calvin contested the appeal to each warrant in Roman Catholic claims about the papacy, the more fundamental methodological point is of course Hooker's insistence that no one form of church government is binding perpetually on all Christians.[59] Good arguments, as we have seen, can be made for bishops or presbyters leading the church. But as church government is a matter of discipline, not doctrine, no particular form can be demanded. Hooker is unwilling to accept a *necessary* claim to papal authority, and while he might under strict conditions accept a *discretionary* argument for it, it is hard to see the Roman Catholic Church reformulating the papacy in a way congenial to the reformed critique. In particular, the claim to infallibility is simply inconsistent with Hooker's (and the Anglican formularies') insistence that the church can err.

A possible objection we can anticipate is the argument that Calvin, unlike Hooker, thought scripture did set out a binding form of church government. Now, Calvin is clear that there must be some form of church order, 'this human ministry which God uses to govern his church' (*Inst.* IV.3.2). Calvin appeals to biblical material justifying ministries of preaching (IV.3.3), apostolic or oversight

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[58] Cf. Andre A. Gazal, ' "That Ancient and Christian Liberty": Early Church Councils in Reformation Anglican Thought,' *Perichoresis* 17.4 (2012): 85.

[59] Cf. Daniel F. Graves, ' "*Iure Divino*"? Four Views on the Authority of the Episcopacy in Richard Hooker,' *Anglican and Episcopal History* 81.1 (2012): 49.

ministries (IV.3.6), pastors and teachers in particular churches who also administer the sacraments (IV.3.7). He even, as Hooker noted, appealed to scripture specifically to justify the establishment of a presbyterian order in Geneva (*Laws*, Pref. 2.7). But Calvin never goes so far as to say that a particular form of church government is universally mandated in scripture.[60] Calvin's draft ecclesiastical ordinances for Geneva only say 'it will be good' to establish this order, not that it is necessary (*Treatises*, 59). In his discussion of different ministries, the titles and roles Calvin adduces from scripture to some extent overlap and are interchangeable (*Inst.* IV.3.8). Calvin is quite happy to respect the institutions of the papacy and episcopate in their ancient (though not their sixteenth-century) forms (IV.4.3, IV.6.16, IV.7.19, e.g.). So Calvin does not lay down one form of church government as scripturally binding, and would not disagree with Hooker on that point.[61]

So while Hooker and Calvin insisted they respected the papacy in what they considered its ancient form, they were highly critical of its contemporary claims. Following this critique of authority in the reformers, *Gift* met substantial resistance from some Anglicans, not least because it appeared to commit Anglicanism to accepting the authority of an institution which, in its present form, runs counter to much of the Anglican and reformed tradition including about the fallibility of the church. In particular, some critics noted, even a heavily revised account of infallibility would be difficult to accept because of the Anglican insistence that the church could err.[62]

Intertwined with the papacy's claims are the two doctrines which claim infallibility, namely, that Mary was conceived without sin and was bodily assumed into heaven without dying.[63] As Lane observes, this is difficult from a reformed perspective not just on substantive but also methodological grounds: 'a dogma like that of the Assumption condemns scripture and early tradition to material insufficiency.'[64] Moreover, as Reid notes, the reformed tradition broadly does not think that new articles of faith can be formulated and so no new doctrines (including these about Mary) can be held binding on the whole church.[65] This, in fact, was Hooker's view; he thought that

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[60] Thus K.P.J Padley, 'Early Anglican Ecclesiology and Contemporary Ecumenism,' *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 9.1 (2009): 5.

[61] For Calvin, only the preaching the word and celebration of the dominical sacraments were essential to the church, and so varieties of ministry could be allowed: 'ministry itself … is not a distinguishing mark of the church,' A.J.G. van der Borght, *Theology of Ministry: A Reformed Contribution to an Ecumenical Dialogue* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 53.

[62] S.W.P. Hampton, 'Protestants Betrayed,' *The Tablet*, 22nd May 2009, 727; Martin Davie, ' "Yes" and "No" – *The Gift of Authority*,' in *Unpacking the Gift: Anglican Resources for Theological Reflection on* The Gift of Authority, ed. Peter Fisher (London: Church House Publishing, 2002), 40, cf. 52-8.

[63] ARCIC, *Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ* (2004), accessed 28th August 2020, https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105263/mary-grace-and-hope-in-christ_english.pdf, 58-9.

[64] A.N.S. Lane, 'Scripture, Tradition, and the Church: An Historical Survey,' *Vox Evangelica* 9 (1975): 48, cf. 50.

[65] J.K.S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture: A Study of the Reformation and Post-Reformation Understanding of the Bible* (London: Methuen & Co., 1957), 117.

some of the Marian dogmas were probably true, but could not be enforced as mandatory doctrine since they were not obviously 'collected' from scripture (*Laws*, II.7.5).[66]

From the Roman Catholic perspective, Ratzinger agrees that *sola scriptura* is an inadequate formulation, in part because the Marian dogmas are not found directly in scripture. Ratzinger goes on to say that neither are the key Christological and Trinitarian doctrines.[67] Ratzinger's view has commendable clarity; he does not shy away from historical or theological realities. Unlike Geiselmann (see pp.175-6), he does not try to interpret post-Tridentine Roman Catholic official theology in a way congenial to reformed concerns. This is for two reasons: Ratzinger does not believe that this is the right reading of that tradition, nor does not think those concerns can be met in a way consistent with Roman Catholic teaching. In other words, Ratzinger thinks that Trent rules out any *sola scriptura* account of theological method and thinks further that no such method could be consistently held by those who believe in the Roman Catholic position on scripture, tradition, and the need for a papal magisterium to determine doctrinal questions.

The example of the Marian dogmas highlights the gap between the reformed and Roman Catholic traditions in our day on theological method. If the argument of this study is right, a key plank of reformed theological method is that no new fundamental doctrines can be adduced after the first four councils. If so, these dogmas mean reconciliation remains difficult. Moreover, if the reformed cannot accept the concept of a pope with power to make binding doctrinal judgments, an appeal to that authority is unlikely to succeed. As with *Gift,* ARCIC's work on Mary, while containing much useful analysis, was felt by some Anglicans to over-state the possibility of agreement.[68]

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[66] Given that clear exposition of Hooker's views, it is surprising that Michael Nazir-Ali and Nicholas Sagovsky say Hooker 'says nothing specifically about Mary' and call this a 'significant silence': 'The Virgin Mary in the Anglican Tradition of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,' in *Studying Mary: Reflections on the Virgin Mary in Anglican and Roman Catholic Theology and Devotion: The ARCIC Working Papers*, eds. Adelbert Denaux and Nicholas Sagovksy (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 138. This may indicate a tendency in Anglicanism to elide real differences in pursuit of ecumenical agreement.

[67] Joseph Ratzinger, in Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), 32-3. While Ratzinger was particularly expressing concern about ways the Tridentine formulations were being interpreted, the point holds more widely. Specifically, Ratzinger was discussing contemporary dialogue between Protestants and Roman Catholics, and was insisting there was divergence between their understandings of theological method, reflected in the disagreements about authority in the church.

[68] In particular, the declaration that the both the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches could agree that the Marian dogmas are 'consonant with the teaching of the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions' (*Mary*, para. 60) was immediately challenged by some Anglicans. See Martin Davie, 'Mary – Grace and Hope in Christ – An Evangelical Anglican Response,' in *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ (ARCIC II): Essays by the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England* (London: CHP, 2008), 53-64. Even a more positive essay in the same volume still recognises the depth of the problem, though believes it solvable: Thomas Seville, 'Scripture and Authority in the Roman Catholic Church – with reference to the two Marian Teachings regarded as Dogma,' in *Mary: Faith and Order Advisory Group Essays*, 79-84.

Nevertheless, having identified, in Hooker and Calvin, serious reformed concerns about the direction of travel proposed in *Gift* and *Mary*, a curious counterpoint emerges, which is that there are some real concerns from a *catholic* perspective too, notably in Aquinas. It is not easy to ground ecclesiological argument from Aquinas, who (unlike the reformers) tends to treat the institutional shape of the church as a given and offers no real critique of it. Aquinas certainly gives the pope in the context of a council some definitive doctrinal role (*S.Th.* II-II.1.10, *resp.*) including the possibility of authorising new definitions of doctrine (*add.* 2, 3). But there remains unclarity in his account; for instance, he does not seem to address the possibility that a council and a pope might disagree, and the papacy's authority is very much couched in terms of the operation of councils – which is not easy to square with Vatican I's claim that the pope's ability to declare doctrine infallibly does not require the consent of the church. Moreover, as Horst notes, there is considerable distance between the papacy in Aquinas's day and the later institution, particular the latter's claim to infallibility.[69] There is, at least, some tension between Aquinas's views and the current conception of papal authority.[70]

Where Aquinas's view of the papacy is not straightforwardly in accord with contemporary Roman Catholic teaching, his account of Mary diverges markedly from it. For example, he explicitly rules out the notion that Mary was conceived without sin (*S.Th.* III.27.1, *resp.*; III.27.2, *ad.* 2). Some later Roman Catholic writers found this position embarrassing because of its straightforward inconsistency with the Marian dogmas, hence the interpolation of a two-page editorial 'explanation' in the English Dominican edition of the *Summa* before Aquinas's discussion of Mary.[71] Indeed, this divergence was recognised by several critical Anglican responses to *Mary* who cited Aquinas in support.[72] Some Roman Catholic writers acknowledge this gap too; for instance, Walsh insists that 'the need to affirm Mary's dependence on Christ, the universal source of grace for humans, that makes Thomas unable to accept' the doctrine of the immaculate conception.[73]

Indeed, a number of recent writers in both traditions indicate how much work there is to still do. We have already seen some Anglican critiques of official ecumenical reports. Some Roman Catholic theologians also expressed concerns that some quite fundamental disagreements had not

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[69] Ulrich Horst, *The Dominicans and the Pope: Papal Teaching Authority in the Medieval and Early Modern Thomist Tradition*, trans. James D. Mixson (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 2, 19, 21.

[70] Indeed, one of Calvin's editors makes an intriguing case that Aquinas and Calvin are closer in their accounts of the papacy than Aquinas and contemporary Roman Catholic thought: *Inst.* II.1105, fn.8.

[71] *S.Th.* IV.2155-6.

[72] David Hilborn, 'Scripture, Authority and the Marian Dogmas: An Evangelical Perspective,' in *Mary: Faith and Order Advisory Group Essays*, 88.

[73] Liam G. Walsh, 'Thomas Aquinas on the Doctrine of Original Sin and the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception,' in *Studying Mary*, eds. Denaux and Sagovsky, 122-3. So also Jordan, *Teaching Bodies*, 38-40.

been adequately reflected in late twentieth-century ecumenical documents. As we saw, Ratzinger argued that attempts to find rapprochement risked eliding substantial remaining differences; for instance, he was uneasy about whether Roman Catholics could accept the claim of scripture's material sufficiency. The most recent ARCIC report not only honestly identifies areas of potential mutual learning, but also areas of continuing disagreement: 'the distance to be travelled is considerably greater than the optimism of the early days suggested.'[74]

This suggests, then, that attending to Hooker, Aquinas, and Calvin reveals surprising convergence, which might be a springboard for consensus between the traditions. The apparent division between Aquinas's thought and official contemporary Roman Catholic formulations gives rise to an intriguing possibility; that Anglicanism could be catholic and reformed in the sense of in substantial accord with Aquinas as well as the reformed tradition, but that it could not simultaneously sit in the reformed tradition and within contemporary Roman Catholic official understandings.

As Aulen noted, infallibility and the Marian dogmas 'have widened the distance between Rome and evangelical Christendom.'[75] On our application of these three theologians, it is hard to see progress towards institutional unity without one or other side of the dialogue fundamentally revising its convictions about scripture's (in)sufficiency and the (in)fallibility of ecclesial authority. However, even identifying that problem may be an ecumenical service, for it delineates the serious methodological and substantive concerns which need to be addressed if moves towards greater unity are to be properly grounded. It also exposes a risk that some Anglican contributions to ecumenical dialogue have over-emphasised areas of common ground and perhaps not attended sufficiently to voices within their tradition which would be cautionary or even suspicious about proposed developments.[76] Anglicanism's position could evolve to accommodate the kinds of developments proposed by *Gift*; certainly a case for papal primacy could be made on the basis it was a reasoned change to the church's polity, reason governing the church in matters of discipline. The strength or weakness of the reasons for change would be the key judgment. It is harder to see how the direction of travel of *Mary*, which touches on doctrine rather than discipline, could be accommodated; Hooker's method is fairly clear that no new binding doctrines can now be promulgated, for the key parameters of faith are now settled, and neither tradition nor reason can now ground a new fundamental doctrine. Any pursuit of these more controversial proposals should

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[74] *WTW*, para. 5. See Ormond Rush and Jamie Hawkey, *Walking Together on the Way: Anglican and Roman Catholic Commentaries on the ARCIC Agreed Statement* (London: SPCK, 2018).

[75] Gustaf Aulen, *Catholicity and Reformation*, trans. Eric Wahlstrom (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 17.

[76] This may not be the only example of Anglican ecumenists trying to elide serious theological differences; see, K.P.J. Padley, 'Eternal Progression and Temporal Procession of the Holy Spirit,' *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 18.4 (2018): esp. 340-2.

be deliberate and with clearer awareness of the extent to which they depart from Anglicanism's foundational principles – for, as Ryrie wryly observes, 'this post-Reformation English Church was, first and last, a Protestant church', an 'inconvenient … but inescapable' provenance which some later Anglicans have appeared to overlook or even deny.[77]

The Definition of Marriage

While earlier sections suggested this method's potential to advance debates about faith and reason and authority in the church, this section turns to a third example, the question of Christian same-sex marriage, where more limitations emerge. Perhaps the most prominent dispute within Anglicanism today is how the Communion responds to intimate relationships between persons of the same sex. In particular, the rapid equalisation of rights under the civil law for people whatever their sexual orientation, which in some countries includes the extension of marriage to couples of the same sex, has provoked controversy.[78] This section begins by critiquing Kathryn Tanner's appropriation of Hooker's method to undergird a case for Christian same-sex marriage,[79] shows how Joyce's view of Hooker's moral theology might strengthen that case, but then draws on some wider arguments to suggest that even if reinforced by Joyce's insights Tanner over-states the case, and that the best this method can actually yield is a more refined set of questions.[80]

As Jordan notes, perhaps the key question is what warrants we must rely on in considering whether a change is permissible or desirable.[81] Tanner's essential case is based on Hooker's distinction

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[77] Alec Ryrie, 'The Reformation in Anglicanism,' in *Oxford Handbook of Anglican Studies*, eds. Chapman *et al.*, 37.

[78] For background to historical and theological developments in Anglicanism on same-sex relationships see Mark D. Chapman, ' "Homosexual Practice" and the Anglican Communion from the 1990s: A Case Study in Theology and Identity,' in *New Approaches in History and Theology to Same-Sex Love and Desire*, eds. Mark D. Chapman and Dominic Janes (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2018), 187-205; Andrew Goddard, 'Sexuality and Communion,' in *Oxford Handbook of Anglican Studies*, eds. Chapman *et al.*, 413-25; William L. Sachs, *Homosexuality and the Crisis of Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Ranging more widely across denominations, a good introduction is *Authorizing Marriage? Canon, Tradition, and Critique in the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions*, ed. Mark D. Jordan (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[79] By this, I mean the possibility that a church could solemnise the marriage of a couple of the same-sex during an act of worship broadly similar to that of a couple of the opposite sex, or bless during an act of worship a civil same-sex marriage in the same way as it would that a couple of the opposite sex.

[80] This section focuses on Hooker, as some of the Anglican literature on same-sex relations explicitly cites his theological method; further work would be needed on how Aquinas and Calvin have or might be appropriated in such debates, but if the general conclusions of this thesis holds (i.e., that there is no substantial difference in their theological methods), we might for the moment presume some similarity on this topic. I have not been able to find any serious scholarly work appropriating Calvin in this debate, though there is a recent article citing Luther's understanding of marriage to justify a contemporary change in marriage discipline: Sini Mikkola, 'Luther, Same-Sex Marriage, and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland: A Gender-Sensitive Historical Analysis,' *Religions* 11.1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010048.

[81] Mark D. Jordan, 'Arguing Liturgical Genealogies, or the Ghosts of Weddings Past,' in *Authorizing Marriage*, ed. Jordan, 103.

between doctrine and discipline and the different role the warrants play in each sphere.[82] Changes of discipline, including the rites of the church and details of polity and worship, are permissible for Hooker; as Tanner rightly identifies: 'insofar as those rites and those details are not necessary means to the ends of the church – salvation – they are changeable.'[83] Thus, she argues the extension of marriage to couples of the same sex would simply be a change of discipline and therefore it can be effected by the church using its reason. Since, in matters of discipline, there may be both variety over time and between national churches, it would be consistent with Hooker's methodology for a national church to change its discipline in this way:

> what would need to be changed about the rite to cover same-sex unions (e.g., changes of pronoun, of scriptural texts perhaps) arguably involves incidentals and not substance (i.e., matters with a necessary connection to ends) and therefore falls under the rubric of changeable positive law.[84]

The marriage rites themselves, Tanner argues, would not be changed; their effect would simply be extended to incorporate previously excluded persons.[85] Tanner certainly makes a nuanced case, consistent with the reading of Hooker in this thesis, of a vital distinction between doctrine and discipline with reasoned argument allowing alteration in the latter sphere.

Tanner's reading of Hooker clearly could undergird a change to the details of the marriage ceremony (for instance, by dispensing with a ring). This would be a change of ritual, and therefore clearly a matter of discipline, and one where the church can legitimately adjust its practice for good reason. But is the gender of the parties to marriage really a 'thing indifferent', or something essential to the rite, such that it cannot conceivably be changed?

Unlike Tanner, Joyce offers a careful reading of Hooker's account of marriage without reference to these present debates. Nonetheless, her argument could reinforce Tanner's and in particular address that question about whether the gender of the parties to a marriage is something intrinsic to it. Joyce does not rely so much on the doctrine-discipline distinction, but Hooker's sense that means must be related to their ends; in that context,

> the logic of his account of the moral law leaves open, at a theoretical level at least, the possibility that if our understanding of what constitutes human perfection were subject to modification, there would be scope for a concomitant adjustment in our understanding of the law that relates to human nature.[86]

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[82] Kathyrn Tanner, 'Hooker and the New Puritans,' in *Authorizing Marriage*, ed. Jordan, esp. 124-5.
[83] Tanner, 'New Puritans,' 125.
[84] Tanner, 'New Puritans,' 125.
[85] Tanner, 'New Puritans,' 127.
[86] A.J. Joyce, *Richard Hooker and Anglican Moral Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 243.

Whether or not an implicit reference to the dispute about same-sex marriage, this could be read as a clearing the methodological undergrowth for a change in the church's practice. What Joyce seems to imply is that, since not all human beings can find fulfilment in an intimate relationship with a person of the opposite sex but might find it in such a relationship with a person of the same sex, the moral law could be reframed or expanded to accommodate that situation. In other words: if we no longer conceive the perfection of humanity's intimate relationships as exclusively heterosexual, then the church could recognise as morally permissible, and perhaps bless, same-sex relationships.

The case, then, is that Hooker's theological method, with its emphasis on changing laws in response to changing understandings of goals or outcomes, might allow for a development such as Christian same-sex marriage. It would be combined with Tanner's assertion that marriage was a matter of discipline, by combining the possibility of evolution in that sphere with the possibility that Joyce identifies of laws being altered to meet new circumstances. As Tanner indicates, the new circumstances would presumably be (1) the possibility of faithful, committed same-sex relationships, a possibility not apparent in either Hooker's day or that of the biblical authors; and (2) the recognition of the harm done to couples of the same sex by denying them the grace and blessing of the church's ritual affirmation of their relationships.[87]

As Tanner notes, though, 'such alterations would of course be improper if they violated divine law set forth in scripture,'[88] because even in the sphere of discipline a clear scriptural prohibition over-rides the church's discretion in matters of discipline ('against scripture nothing be admitted in the church': *Laws*, III.3.3). One example appears to be Hooker's insistence that, while the civil law may prohibit cousins from marrying, the church ought not to impose such restrictions because scripture does not (III.9.2). But Tanner argues, for example, that the Bible does not prohibit faithful same-sex relationships, a concept the canonical texts appear not to consider.[89] Rather (Tanner does not spell this out, but it seems to be the point) what scripture prohibits are practices which, while they incidentally occur between persons of the same sex, are in fact immoral on other grounds (such as the abuse of a relationship of trust). Tanner believes that, in the absence of a clear scriptural prohibition, such matters fall within the sphere of discipline and therefore are capable of change.

But even were the question of potential scriptural prohibition satisfactorily resolved, a further one emerges. For Hooker, the natural moral law is perpetually valid, and this conceives both sex and

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[87] Cf. Tanner, 'New Puritans,' 126, 130.
[88] Tanner, 'New Puritans,' 133.
[89] Tanner, 'New Puritans,' 133-7.

marriage as only morally permissible between persons of the opposite sex.[90] Williams rightly expresses

> doubts whether [Hooker] could have entertained any idea that the moral law set out in scripture was anything other than everlastingly valid and, despite arguments to the contrary, I can't see him easily accepting alternatives to patriarchy as the basis of human (and therefore ecclesial) government.[91]

What appears to underly Williams's hesitation, articulated more strongly in McGrade, is a circumspection about asking Hooker questions which simply could not have arisen in his day.[92] Hooker recognisably addresses questions we still face today, such as about the scope or means of human salvation, or the role of the Bible in theology. So should we want to know how Hooker might address such questions we can refer back to his works. As this investigation has argued, we can see enough of the contours of his method to apply it to very different circumstances; so, for example, a change in a church ritual or practice which Hooker himself did not envisage could be grounded in reasoned argument on the basis that Hooker thinks neither scripture nor reason bind the church in the sphere of discipline. But the extension of marriage to same-sex couples is a move he could not have imagined, and it makes it hard to claim him convincingly for any contemporary proposal here.

Moreover, were Joyce trying to interpret Hooker's methodology as underpinning an extension of the rite to same-sex couples, her argument is undercut by her own reading of Hooker's explanation of the purposes of marriage, which mentions procreation only (V.73.1).[93] Could a relationship which could not even in principle be procreative therefore be what scripture envisaged when it speaks of marriage? This, of course, would not necessarily be an argument against the recognition of same-sex relationships as such, but it would raise a serious question about whether the category of marriage was apposite.

What Hooker can perhaps generate is clearer questions. Is this proposed development a matter of doctrine, in which case it must be grounded in scripture consistently with the scriptural interpretation embodied in the doctrinal formulae of the first four councils? If a matter of discipline, is it nonetheless a prohibited development because it directly contradicts a clear

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90 Some recent interpreters of Aquinas (such as Adriano Oliva) argue his account of natural law could accommodate or even support same-sex sexual relations; a reasonably temperate (but still highly critical) overview is Thomas M. Osborne, 'Review of *Amours*: *L'Église, les divorcés remariés, les couples homosexuels*, by Adriano Oliva,' *The Thomist* 80.1 (2016): 137-40.

91 R.D. Williams, 'Foreword,' *CRH*, xvi.

92 McGrade, 'Hooker on Anglican Integrity,' 417, 426-7.

93 Joyce, *Anglican Moral Theology*, 220-2.

scriptural injunction? And even so is there something intrinsic or natural to marriage (such as the possibility, at least in principle, of procreation) which rules out its extension to same-sex couples? If it is not ruled out on these grounds, can a compelling, reasoned case for change be made in all the circumstances? One might plausibly argue for no change to the church's marriage discipline; for its expansion to include same-sex couples; or for what we might dangerously call a *via media*, that is, the liturgical blessing of same-sex relationships while retaining marriage as a distinctively heterosexual union. But one has to do this with real caution, because Hooker cannot here be asked the *substantive* questions, only the *methodological* ones; and his methodology does not yield a clear-cut answer about how to handle such debates.

So despite the ingenuity of arguments like Tanner's, even if buttressed by Joyce's sophisticated account of Hooker on moral law, we here reach the limits of what even the fruitful convergence of catholic and reformed theological method we have identified can achieve. Indeed, we are probably at or even beyond the limits of the convergence between our three theologians; since Aquinas considered marriage a sacrament, he might well place it firmly on the side of fundamental doctrine and therefore unchangeable, and it is hard to discern what Calvin might contribute to the methodological discussion. So I follow Williams and McGrade in a cautious approach; given the opaqueness of the boundaries between doctrine and discipline, it is very hard to say how Hooker might respond to any particular proposed development in this sphere and could plausibly be prayed in aid by more than 'side' to the debate.[94] Hooker may help us rightly locate the questions; but proponents of whatever answer will need to make a case on some other basis than claiming Hooker as an ally. But perhaps even persuading protagonists to ask the same questions might be progress.

Summary

This chapter can only sketch some of the ways the reading of Aquinas, Hooker, and Calvin this study advances might contribute to some contemporary debates, and suggest possibilities for further work. Moreover, several limitations to the model I have contended can be drawn from Aquinas and Calvin through the prism of Hooker have already emerged. The discussion of same-sex marriage indicated one: it is far from clear how Aquinas and Calvin could contribute to this debate, and even Hooker (who perhaps emphasises the distinction of doctrine and discipline more strongly and systematically than the others) nowhere enumerates clearly what is a matter of doctrine and what a matter of discipline, or how to categorise questions which may arise. This means his method is

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[94] McGrade, 'Hooker on Anglican Integrity,' 424-5.

open to being appropriated by both sides of the same-sex marriage debate, and ultimately this method by itself cannot resolve that question. Were other issues to arise where there was not agreement about which side of the doctrine-discipline divide the matter fell on, further work would be needed. But it does at least help clarify the vital question: to identify whether a proposed development would be a change of doctrine or of discipline, which then indicates what role the warrants should play depending on how the issue is categorised.

A further obvious problem is that, while Hooker gives considerable weight in matters other than doctrine to the church's reasoned-decision making, he is operating with a very specific model of what 'church' means. Hooker is envisaging each *national* church in a '*Christian*' nation making decisions in matters of discipline – hence his famous assertion that the Parliament of England can legitimately make decisions for the Church of England because it essentially represents the same community in different guises (*Laws*, VIII.6.11). He does not examine in detail the possibility that the country might not be 'Christian' in that a substantial proportion, perhaps even a majority, of citizens who are not at least outwardly adherents of the national church. Nor does he really consider the possibility of a country having more than one Christian church. Nor, again, does he address the possibility of inter- or supra-national church structures.

On the other hand, there may insights in Hooker's methodology which could help mitigate the problem of the gap between our historical and social circumstances and his. So his insistence on the inclusion in principle of every citizen in the church's life might suggest the importance of the church listening to a wide range of voices, including those who do not profess to be adherents. And his insistence that lay Christians have a legitimate role in the church's decision-making, which suggests the importance of drawing lay people into both formal structures and also intra- and inter-denominational dialogues.

Another potential problem is that this methodology does not allow for revisions of fundamental doctrines, and assumes that the outline of those doctrines is in some sense fixed and perpetually binding. This is not, of course, to say that there is nothing more to be said about (for instance) Christology; but it does mean that, on Hooker's model, all subsequent discussion of the person and work of Christ must ultimately be consistent with the framework established by the first four councils. So this method would probably not appeal to those who would want to argue for more radical revision of the Church's creeds and formularies.

Without wanting to claim more for this method than is realistic (the dispute about same-sex marriage is not going to be resolved, straightforwardly, by an appeal to one sixteenth-century theological method, however coherent), it nonetheless would help delineate some of the issues and refocus the debate. It would help ecumenically by identifying real points of convergence and divergence in dialogue between churches. And on the relationship of faith and reason, it helps conceive reason more richly and therefore show that some of the criticisms of the warrant are not intrinsic to it but are reactions against an emaciated view of it. This refined definition may mean the legitimacy of drawing on reason in theology can be maintained. Greater clarity on what is actually at stake in all these debates, as well as a model of engagement across traditions which highlights the possibility of theologians considered radically different being conceived as much more in harmony, would be significant in itself. However, it also prompts some wider reflections, particularly on the identity of Anglicanism, which, in drawing together the threads of this investigation, the conclusion will address.

Conclusion

Anglicanism's claim to be both catholic and reformed has often been considered surprising, incoherent, or implausible. Consequently, the tradition and its foremost theologian, Richard Hooker, have usually been categorised as either more catholic, more reformed, or steering some path between them. Chapter one introduced Hooker, outlined different interpretations, and showed why comparing him with the catholic Thomas Aquinas and the reformed John Calvin might be a legitimate and fruitful exercise. That comparison illuminates the fundamental structural problem of many interpretations of Hooker which assume an inevitable opposition or tension between those two theologians and traditions. Through this study, by reading these theologians closely and comparatively on the theme of theological method, the widespread and surprising convergence of their thought emerges which allows us to conceive both Hooker and Anglicanism as thoroughly and coherently catholic and reformed. This conclusion reviews the argument of the study, suggesting ways that reframing the debate in light of that convergence might help us conceive Hooker, and Anglicanism, in a fruitful way faithful to what is at least one vital and early strand of the tradition.

Chapters two, three, and four explored two theological warrants, *scripture* and *reason*, in Aquinas, Calvin, and Hooker respectively. This demonstrated Aquinas's and Calvin's congruity on several themes where they are thought to differ, and Hooker situated within that convergence. These include grasping their common assumption of real but limited natural knowledge of God and recognising that Aquinas is less optimistic (and Calvin less pessimistic) about reason than often supposed. All three share the *sola scriptura* principle in the sense that scripture alone is the source of our saving knowledge of God, dependent for its authority on the divine authorship which the Spirit prompts the believer to apprehend, providing knowledge which unaided human reason could never attain. The distinct but complementary roles of reason and scripture as God-given communicators of knowledge emerge, not in tension but performing different functions (scripture as source, reason as instrument).

The discussion of a third warrant, *tradition*, in chapter five advances this reading. Many interpretations of Hooker, focussing on the appearance of equal status given to scripture and tradition at the Council of Trent, have failed to notice Aquinas's much more chastened view of the warrant as having merely probable and ancillary authority. Delineating Aquinas's actual account of tradition, and identifying Trent rather than Aquinas as the real target of reformed polemic, unlocks the possibility of a shared view of that warrant, where all three theologians make a precise and

limited appeal to tradition, affording a uniquely authoritative place only to those elements of doctrine attributable to the most widely-recognised and oldest ecumenical councils, the four great councils of the first four Christian centuries. This preserves scripture's unique authority while accommodating the historical circumstances of the formation of the canon and creeds.

As chapters two to five indicated, notions that a writer like Hooker could be coherently catholic and reformed, and that Anglicanism can plausibly define itself as both, should be much less surprising than they appear to be. Narrow definitions and misunderstandings of these two terms, and failures to grasp the nuance of the theologies of Calvin and Aquinas (nuances often overlooked or marginalised by subsequent interpreters), have contributed to the assumption that Hooker could not be both catholic and reformed. But in fact, as Williams says, often 'it is the very notions that prompted accusations of Catholic sympathies which are most strongly rooted in the concerns of the magisterial Reformation.'[1] The appropriation of Hooker by partisan accounts of Anglicanism has further exacerbated the erroneous presumption of inevitable catholic-reformed tension. Isolating these factors allows a more direct engagement between Hooker, Calvin, and Aquinas which emphasises the fundamental congruity of their theological methods.

Read this way, Hooker emerges as both emphatically reformed and thoroughly catholic, advocating a nuanced *sola scriptura* principle and a rich but carefully-circumscribed account of reason, and far from the defender of custom for custom's sake he sometimes appears to be.[2] If nothing else, this study should indicate the need to put a further, final nail in the coffin of accounts of Anglicanism which claim a distinctive 'triple-cord' or 'three-legged stool' in theological method, since the warrants have different roles and authority in theological reasoning, and this method, shared with Aquinas and Calvin, is not distinctively Anglican at all. Its rhetorical cousin, the patronising assertion of a theologically or temperamentally superior *via media* between reformed and catholic poles, should likewise be laid to rest.

This reading of Hooker also resonates with and reinforces the wider retrieval, notably by Hampton and Griesel, of a vibrant but often overlooked strand of reformed Anglicanism which remained a

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[1] R.D. Williams, *Anglican Identities* (London: DLT, 2004), 27.
[2] Even a sophisticated analysis like MacCulloch's struggles to avoid caricature, as with his amusing aside that 'After reading Book V … one feels that if the parliamentary legislation of 1559 had prescribed that English clergy were to preach standing on their heads, then Hooker would have found a theological reason for justifying it': Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Richard Hooker's Reputation,' *EHR* 117 (2002): 799.

vital tradition well into the eighteenth century[3] which also had a clear Thomist flavour.[4] At its origins, and for about the first century of its settled existence, Anglicanism was largely clear in its identity not as some middle way between perceived extremes but as both catholic and reformed, and this was possible because catholic and reformed were not opposite points on a spectrum but different expressions of a broadly shared core of theology. This method conceived God's revelation in scripture as the unique source of saving truth, while giving due weight to the need for our God-given reason in the church's theological discerning, and offering a historically plausible reading of tradition's place in theology by prioritising only the conciliar formulations of the first four centuries as binding doctrinally on all Christians.

This investigation also reinforces those strands in Roman Catholic, Reformed, Anglican, and ecumenical discourse which increasingly emphasise the historically-overlooked convergence between catholic and reformed, especially between Aquinas and Calvin.[5] While this study focuses on theological method, it suggests that other themes where dispute between the two has usually been asserted, notably justification and salvation, should be freshly investigated. It suggests that Hooker, whose views on justification have been interpreted as variably as has his theological method,[6] would be a useful prism for a fresh examination of that problem, and hints that a greater degree of convergence between Aquinas and Calvin may be found there also.

The clarity of the theological method which emerges from this account of Hooker's reformed and catholic character could not only offer much-needed clarity to Anglicanism's ecumenical posture, which our ecumenical partners would welcome, it could also contribute to some contemporary debates, as the sixth chapter suggested. *Theologically*, areas of real potential emerge; for instance, it could ground a deep theological account of reason which would respond to the challenge of those who are suspicious of reason's place in theology (whether a certain kind of neo-Barthian theologian or a certain kind of contemporary atheist). It also suggests some surprising possibilities for fruitful conversation with unexpected interlocutors: for instance, this account of reason would address aspects of justified critiques, advanced by second-wave feminisms, of some understandings of reason which perpetuate the notion of the warrant as a disembodied, purely intellectual, capacity

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[3] S.W.P. Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II toGeorge I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 267-74; Jake Griesel, 'John Edwards of Cambridge (1637-1716): A Reassessment of his Position within the later Stuart Church of England,' (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2019), 239, 241-2.

[4] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 221-7, 272.

[5] For instance, *Aquinas among the Protestants*, eds. Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018); P.A. Dominiak, 'Hooker, Scholasticism, Thomism, and Reformed Orthodoxy,' in *Richard Hooker and Reformed Orthodoxy*, eds. W. Bradford Littlejohn and Scott N. Kindred-Barnes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 116-9.

[6] Good overviews of how Hooker can be situated in that debate are W. David Neelands, 'Predestination,' *CRH*, esp. 189-219, and Debora K. Shuger, 'Faith and Assurance,' *CRH*, 221-50.

exercised largely by men. So too *ecumenically*, it would at the very least refine areas of disagreement (notably about the papacy) and clarify the need for considerable further work if Anglicanism is to advance towards greater institutional unity with the Roman Catholic Church while remaining faithful to its own reformed roots. On other matters this method is more limited; so *ethically*, on Christian approaches to same-sex marriage, by itself it can do little to advance the debate beyond clarifying the key methodological question is whether same-sex marriage is a matter of doctrine (in which case the Bible must be held to be decisive and the church's teaching could not change) or not (in which case neither scripture nor tradition is decisive and a reasoned decision to change the church's discipline could be made). There are, then, possibilities but also limitations to the theological method which emerges from this investigation of Hooker.

Relocating Hooker also helps relocate Anglicanism's theological identity. At least, it can undergird the historical and theological plausibility of Anglicanism's claim to be both catholic and reformed. But where, if anywhere, can Anglicanism's distinctiveness be located? For if there is (as this study argues) nothing intrinsically distinctive about its theological method since that is clearly shared with theologians of other traditions, so the *via media* falls away, does this mean reverting to what Sykes rightly branded the frustratingly unspecific (and disingenuous) 'no special doctrines' account?[7]

Shortly after being nominated as Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams (who, like Sykes, highlights the inadequacy of the 'no special doctrines' view[8]) was asked to describe Anglicanism's distinctiveness, and replied:

> Anglicanism is a Church that has tried to find its unity less in a single structural pattern, or even a confession of faith, than in a pattern of preaching and ministering the sacramental action … If you are looking for a Christian identity that is dependent neither on a pyramidal view of authority nor on highly specific confessional statements, there's a lot to be said for Anglicanism.[9]

Williams is not just making a structural or procedural claim but a *doctrinal* one, albeit in some sense a negative one. For it is a *doctrinal* claim to say that the church must be governed by a papal magisterium which has the power to adjudicate questions of doctrine; or that such questions must be referred back to some confessional text to which subscription is demanded. The doctrinal claim of Hooker, and of Anglicanism, is by contrast that there is *no* doctrinal necessity for one particular form of church government, and the *only* essential doctrines which can be demanded of Christians are those grounded in scripture as interpreted authoritatively by the first four ecumenical councils

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[7] Stephen Sykes, *Unashamed Anglicanism* (London: DLT, 1995), x-xi, 102-9.
[8] Cf. Williams, *Anglican Identities*, 1.
[9] 'What we need now: gratitude,' *Church Times*, 6th December 2002, 15.

(as the Thirty-Nine Articles say).[10] No particular form of church government, nor subscription to any other articles as doctrinally binding, can therefore be mandated. This yields a tradition which is committed to the shared and fundamental truths (particularly about Christ, the Trinity, and human salvation) which almost all Christians have held in common, but which gives a good deal of room for diversity in modes of government, styles of spirituality, preferences in worship, and even structures at the local level. Of course, a possible corollary of this insistence on a few fundamental doctrines and generosity in all else is, as recent experience shows, not just diversity but disagreement and division.

More positively, Anglicanism's comprehensiveness, as Newey suggestively posits, could lie in the Chalcedonian-like way it can embrace or 'comprehend' distinct traditions without seeing them as inherently contradictory.[11] This need not mean those two elements need to be merged or mixed, or cherry-picked to create a third thing (the *via media* as a sort of ecclesiological equivalent of a Christological *tertium quid*[12]) which is neither catholic nor reformed.[13] Nor need it mean that emphasising one will inevitably be at the expense of the other (any more than assertion of Christ's humanity *necessarily* entails diminishing his divinity).[14] In the same way, to emphasise the uniqueness of scripture in theological method need not be to the detriment of a significant place for reason. Hooker, whose account of Chalcedonian Christology embodies the best of his poetic, theologically astute, and historically alert writing, would have approved.

On this reading, the Church of England would be at its best if it embraced *both* its catholic *and* its reformed heritage, rather than assuming that closeness to one of these inevitably entailed distance from the other. The frustratingly sterile presumption of an inevitable stand-off between traditional parochial forms of church life and newer 'pioneering' modes might be one debate where it would help to see that more of one does not necessarily mean less of the other, while indicating that both sides of the argument could deepen their own tradition by learning from the other's. Conceiving

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[10] Cf. Oliver O'Donovan, *On the Thirty-Nine Articles: Conversations with Tudor Christianity*, 2nd edn. (London: SCM, 2011), 49.

[11] Edmund Newey, 'The Form of Reason: Participation in the Work of Richard Hooker, Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth and Jeremy Taylor,' *Modern Theology* 18.1 (2002): 19-20.

[12] Gibbs attempts a reading of Hooker as propounding a *via media* which creates a *tertium quid* (a third thing mixing two others which blends some but not all of the original characteristics of each) between a kind of reformed view and a kind of catholic view: Lee W. Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Scripture and Tradition,' *HThR* 95.2 (2002): 229. This reading of Hooker seems rather implausible, given his commitment to a Chalcedonian orthodoxy, on which see Williams, *Anglican Identities*, 27-32.

[13] Edmund Newey, 'The Covenant and the *Via Media*: Compatible or Contradictory Notions of Anglicanism?,' in Pro Communione: *Theological Essays on the Anglican Covenant*, ed. Benjamin Guyer (Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick, 2012), 52-6.

[14] This is a key argument of Williams's recent monograph on Christology, which identifies the surprising congruity of Aquinas and Calvin on this point: R.D. Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), esp. 127-8, 144-50.

Anglican comprehensiveness in this register could also help move beyond other frustrating impasses, as a recent theological account of how cathedrals can faithfully serve potentially competing constituencies has suggested.[15]

Whether the Church of England, or the Anglican Communion, is willing to embrace this kind of identity is, of course, another question. Certainly the failure of the proposed Anglican Covenant, whatever one's view of that initiative's merit, suggests there is little appetite for wide commitment to any one model of Anglicanism. But if Anglicans are willing to embrace it, there is a rich and potentially fruitful account of the tradition's origins and character to hand in the work of Richard Hooker. It goes beyond stale theological and historiographical tropes such as the *via media* and the 'three-legged stool' to yield a rich account of Anglicanism which could help it handle internal debates and ecumenical dialogue with, if nothing else, a much greater degree of clarity.

Relocating Richard Hooker as a catholic and reformed theologian may help undergird a coherent Anglicanism, resistant to narrowly or competitively partisan interpretations, clearer and more reliable as an ecumenical partner, perhaps even a resource to other traditions, prompting refreshed readings of Aquinas and Calvin within the contemporary Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions those formative theologians helped shape. Read this way, the clarity and coherence of Richard Hooker's catholic, reformed Anglicanism offers something to other Christian traditions as well as the Anglican variety of Christianity which he articulated so elegantly.

98,537 words

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[15] Simon Oliver, 'The Cathedral and Rooted Growth,' in *Holy Ground: Cathedrals in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Stephen Platten (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2017), 29-33.

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