

SCHOLASTICISM PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC: MEDIEVAL SOURCES AND METHODS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY REFORMED THOUGHT

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Introduction

It is a curious phenomenon that the post-Reformation period of Reformed theology is one of the least known in the history of Christian thought and, at the same time a period in the interpretation of which there are many hidden agendas. The former is primarily due to the fact that Post-Reformation Reformed theology for too long has been a victim of the attempt of modern historians and theologians to claim the Reformers as the forerunners of modernity, whereas post-Reformation theology itself was presented as a highly obscure period characterized by the return of medieval dialectic and Aristotelian logic to the Protestant classroom and, therefore, as a distortion or perversion of Reformation theology.¹ The latter is the result of the fact that Reformed theology of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been and still is 'the whipping boy for many a theologian who is cutting his teeth on a new thesis of his own'.² Time and again the theology of the post-Reformation period is read exclusively in the light of modern issues and not on its own terms and in the light of its own concern and context. Too often, the term 'scholasticism' was associated solely with the Middle Ages, with scholars /458/ failing to incorporate the modified form of scholasticism, which had

¹ For a synopsis of the history of scholarship on Reformed orthodoxy, see Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena to Theology*, Grand Rapids 1987, 82-97 (henceforth *PRRD*, I); idem 'Calvin and the "Calvinists": Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities Between the Reformation and Orthodoxy', part I, in *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995), 345-375; idem, part II, in *Calvin Theological Journal* 31 (1996), 125-160; Willem J. van Asselt & Eef Dekker, eds., *Reformation and Scholasticism. An Ecumenical Enterprise*, Grand Rapids 2001, 11-43.

² See R.D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism. A Study of Theological Prolegomena*, St. Louis/London 1970, 23.

flourished during the Renaissance in the Italian and Spanish universities being incorporated in the research. The reformers and their heirs, however, did not work in an intellectual vacuum. We need, therefore, to take in account all the intellectual forces that were at work during the late Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Reformation, if an adequate identification of Reformed scholasticism is to be achieved.

In this paper I propose to examine first of all the ways in which post-Reformation Protestant scholastics defined their own theological enterprise in the face of other religious groups. Secondly, we will examine the doctrinal sources and methods they used for establishing and preserving their theological identity. Thirdly, we will ask what view of the tradition of Christianity was implied by the way post-Reformation doctrinal thought perceived the historical past and, on this basis, constructed its own identity. As a final issue I will note the relationship between systematic or dogmatic theology and spirituality in the era of Reformed orthodoxy. Although this issue is not a 'source' in the proper sense, I want to include it among the factors that gave the Reformed orthodox their specific identity. The focus of this paper is on Reformed scholasticism, while passing over Lutheran scholasticism, because, with some variation, the same applies to this form of scholasticism as does to Reformed scholasticism.³

Finally, a remark about our use of the term 'Reformed' in the expression 'Reformed thought' or 'Reformed scholasticism' should be made. I regard it as more appropriate to refer to the theologians from this post-reformation period, and the tradition in which they stood, with this term, rather than with the name 'Calvinist' or 'Calvinism'. Thereby we seek to indicate that the term 'Reformed' has a broad scope. We are dealing with a complex movement: the designation of this movement as 'Calvinism' is suggestive, rather than illuminating, and denies the progress of this theology. Furthermore, the word 'Calvinist' has its background in the sociology of religion, rather than in theology. The introduction of the term 'Calvinist' appears to have been an attempt to stigmatize Reformed theology as a foreign influence in Germany.⁴

³ A good overview of the Lutheran tradition is provided by C.H. Ratchow, *Lutherische Dogmatik zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung*, Gütersloh 1964/1966. Cf. also Preus, *Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, St. Louis/London 1970.

⁴ See Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, Oxford 1987, 6.

Why did Reformed theologians adopt scholastic method?

The late sixteenth century phenomenon of 'confessionalization' by which both Lutheran and Reformed communities defined themselves by explicit and extensive doctrinal formulations, represents the inevitable outcome of a quest for self-definition.⁵ After the Reformation, in the period extending roughly from 1565 to 1700, Protestantism faced the crisis of being forced to defend its nascent theology against attacks from the highly sophisticated Roman Catholic theology. This theology, which until the middle of the sixteenth century could be conceived in either scholastic or rhetorical terms, was driven by the Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545-63) into a second period of scholasticism, a current of Catholic theology and philosophy which was dominated by the Spanish and Italian schools. First the Dominicans and later the Jesuits took the lead in this neo-scholastic movement.⁶ The Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) in particular subjected the views of the Reformation to continuous and incisive criticism. He combated the Protestants in his monumental work *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos* (1586), a work that was often reprinted, and which provoked more than two hundred reactions from both Lutheran and Reformed quarters.⁷ Bellarmine's offensive was scholastic in nature, so in order to combat him and other Roman Catholic polemical theologians, use had to be made of the same scholastic /460/ apparatus. In the course of this debate an increasingly detailed elaboration of the Reformed (and Lutheran) theological position came into being. By having recourse, in pursuing this elaboration, to the scholastic tools that had developed to such a high level of sophistication during the course of the centuries, a theological system was built up that excelled in the precision with which its ideas were formulated.

Another factor of some importance with regard to the development of Reformed scholasticism was of an ecclesial and pedagogical nature. Protestantism faced also the problem of institutionalisation and of passing from its beginnings as a protest movement within the

⁵ E. g. Heinz Schilling (ed.), *Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland: das Problem der "Zweiten Reformation"*. *Wissenschaftliches Symposium des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 1985*, Gütersloh 1986; idem, *Civic Calvinism in Northwestern Germany and the Netherlands: Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries*. *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, 17, Kirksville, Mo., 1991.

⁶ See M.A. Mullet, *The Catholic Reformation*, London-New York 1999, 47-68. See also R. Scharleman, *Aquinas and Gerhard. Theological Controversy and Construction in Medieval and Protestant Scholasticism*, New Haven 1964.

⁷ See Eef Dekker, 'An Ecumenical Debate between Reformation and Counter-Reformation? Bellarmine and Ames on liberum arbitrium', in: Willem J. Van Asselt & Eef Dekker (eds.), *Reformation and Scholasticism. An Ecumenical Enterprise*, Grand Rapids 2001, 141-154.

Catholic Church to a self-sufficient ecclesiastical establishment with its own academic, confessional, and dogmatic needs. After the first and second generation of theologians, who had played such an important role in the establishment of the Reformed church, had passed away, the new generation faced the task of giving expression to the significance of the Reformation in a new ecclesial and academic context. On the one hand, the quest was to find a way of showing forth, in the light of the Christian tradition, the catholicity of Reformed faith. On the other hand, the confrontation with the theological tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and opinions of Arminian and Socinian opponents, obliged the Reformed thinkers of the seventeenth century to offer a definition of self-identity in order that its bounds might be defined. In this situation the need for self-identification became urgent. Doctrine, therefore, provided the most reliable means by which they might identify themselves over and against each other.

Although the Reformation was rooted in the question of authority that had been answered with the language of *sola scriptura*, i.e. the priority of Scripture as the ultimate norm of doctrine over all other grounds of authority, the phrase *sola scriptura*, however, should not be taken as a condemnation of tradition as such. As H.A. Oberman has observed, the Reformation principle had as its point of departure the late medieval debate over the relation of Scripture to tradition⁸ and assumed that tradition was a sub-ordinate norm (*norma normata*) under the authority of Scripture (*norma normans*). In this way the Protestant mind allowed place both for a use of tradition and for a churchly set of confessions and catechisms as a standard of belief. According to Richard A. Muller, it is 'entirely anachronistic to view the *sola scriptura* of Luther and his contemporaries as a declaration that all of theology ought to be constructed anew, without any reference to the church's tradition of interpretation'.⁹ For the reformers and their Protestant orthodox followers the point of debate with their Roman Catholic opponents was not on the authority of Scripture as such; rather the question was how the scriptural rule functioned in the context of other claims of authority: whether of tradition or churchly *magisterium*.

⁸ H.A. Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents*, New York 1966, 54-55; idem, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology. Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, Durham NC, 1983, 371-393. For Oberman, the question of authority in the later Middle Ages rests on differing views of tradition. In one view ('Tradition I'), Scripture is identified as the unique source of revealed truth and as the sole norm for Christian doctrine, including its interpretative tradition; in the other view ('Tradition II') tradition is more than the ongoing churchly interpretation of the biblical revelation: it contains truths handed down orally in the church from the time of the apostles but never placed in written form.

Against this background it becomes clear why Reformed (and Lutheran) theologians in developing their theology could draw upon medieval sources. In order to point out and justify their own position within the Catholic tradition they adopted a set of definitions and divisions of theology derived from the medieval tradition. This apparent regression to pre-Reformation scholasticism, however, was not a simple return to a medieval approach to theology, but a move forward towards a critical reappropriation of aspects of the Western tradition in order to develop a restatement of the Catholic roots of Reformed thought. Moreover, far from breaking down at the close of the Middle Ages, scholasticism underwent a series of modifications that enabled it to adapt to the renewed Aristotelianism of the Renaissance.¹⁰

The scholastic influence on Reformed theology, therefore, is to be interpreted as a result of the Renaissance revival of scholasticism. The extensive reappropriation of the technical language of medieval and Renaissance scholasticism by Reformed theologians was also /462/ helpful in order to give their theological formulations the precision needed to distinguish themselves from the tenets of Arminianism and Socinianism. Therefore, the institutionalisation and codification of church and doctrine associated with Reformed orthodoxy resulted in a confluence of patristic, medieval, and Reformation thought in a synthesis designed to meet the needs of the hour.¹¹

This process can be illustrated by looking at the development of the Reformed dogmatic systems. Whereas early Reformed theologians like Henry Bullinger, Peter Martyr Vermigli, John Calvin, and Wolfgang Musculus had not provided a rationale for the systematic organisation of Reformed doctrine, this organisation became necessary in the later academic setting of post-Reformation theology. For the sake of debate at an academic level, it was important to establish institutes of learning. The establishment of the academy of Geneva in the year 1559 was a major achievement in this regard. Many theologians received a thorough theological education through that academy, so that Reformed theology eventually earned itself a permanent place in the academic world.¹² The Genevan academy also served as a model

⁹ Muller, *PRRD*, II, 51.

¹⁰ See C.B. Schmitt, 'Towards a Reassessment of Renaissance Aristotelianism', in C.B. Schmitt, *Studies in Renaissance Philosophy and Science*, London 1981. See also J. Platt, *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism. The Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology, 1575-1650*, Leiden 1982; D.C. Steinmetz, 'The Scholastic Calvin', in Carl R. Trueman & R.S. Clark, *Protestant Scholasticism. Essays in Reassessment*, Carlisle 1999, 16-30; R.A. Muller, *Ad Fontes Argumentorum. The Sources of Reformed Theology in the Seventeenth Century*, Utrecht 1999.

¹¹ See Muller, *PRRD*, I, 53-55.

¹² See Antonie Vos, 'Scholasticism and Reformation' in: Van Asselt & Dekker (eds.), *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 99-119. Vos argues that Reformed scholasticism is only to be understood in the broader

for other centres of Reformed theology in Europe. These universities provided the forum where difficult dogmatic questions were debated. It was only when Reformed academies and universities were established that formal discussion of the status and task of theology and its connection with other disciplines, especially philosophy, became urgent. In the prolegomena to their dogmatic systems, the Reformed theologians explicitly set out the premises, presuppositions, or principles of their system of thought and provided an interpretative paradigm.¹³

The construction of such prolegomena, however, was one of the last tasks undertaken in the historical development of theological system. It arose out of the body of doctrine as a justification and /463/ formulation of the system. In this dialectical process of interaction between prolegomena and system the Reformed theologians tried to establish their own theological and academic identity by looking back at themselves and their work. At the same time, they sought to set the stage for the theological task by asking what the presuppositions were on which Reformed theology could stand.¹⁴ It is also worth noting that the Reformed theologians, in their prolegomena, distinguished several rather different genres of theological discussion. They made distinctions between textual or exegetical study, preaching, catechetical theology, positive or doctrinal exposition, polemical or elenctical theology, and the detailed or 'scholastic' form of theology in the academy.¹⁵ Seventeenth-century Reformed theologians were, therefore, by their own definition, not always engaged in scholastic theology: some of their work, the most academic, would qualify as scholastic, other of their works would be exegetical, catechetical or homiletical.¹⁶

One of the fundamental issues in the prolegomena of the Reformed orthodox systems was the issue of the meaning and use of the term 'theology', its parts and divisions, its subject and object. Reformed theologians started their prolegomena by asking elementary questions such as: What is theology? What is the theologian? What are the sources of theology? What is theology's relation to reason and philosophy?

movement of the history of the university. See also Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620*, Aldershot UK, 1995. For the attempt to situate the European (including the Reformed) universities in their social and political context, see H. De Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe*. Vol. II: *Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800)*, Cambridge UK 1996.

¹³ Muller, *PRRD*, I, 53.

¹⁴ See Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 74.

¹⁵ See, for example, F. Burman, *Synopsis theologiae et speciatim oeconomiae foederum Dei ab initio saeculorum usque ad consummationem eorum*, Amsterdam 1699, I, ii, 42.

¹⁶ See the discussion in Muller, *Ad Fontes Argumentorum*, 25.

In answering these questions explicitly the orthodox theologians tried to express their own sense of theological identity and their nascent academic culture through a shared recollection of the theological past. In examining the models of historical and contemporary scholasticism they tried to establish a theology of their own and, at the same stroke, attempted to claim continuity with the theology of the Western Catholic Church. Therefore, it can be said that the development of theological prolegomena was one of the most important contributions of Protestant scholasticism to the formulation of theological identity within the Lutheran and Reformed churches.

/464/ The reception of Aristotle in Reformed theology

Some other comments on earlier research are in order here, to identify more precisely the real shape of Reformed scholasticism and the way in which the Reformed theologians themselves formulated their theological identity. The first concerns the popular myth that the use of Aristotle by Protestant scholastics was a radical break with the Reformation approach to theology. According to popular scholarly mythology, Aristotle and Reformation theology are mutually exclusive. Since the early 1960s, however, the work of Paul Kristeller, Charles Schmitt and Heiko Oberman has served to debunk this mythology surrounding Aristotelianism and Scholasticism.¹⁷ L.M. de Rijk's work on the *logica modernorum*, i.e. the independent development of medieval logic, could also be mentioned here.¹⁸ These authors have shown that in the Middle Ages Aristotelian logic was not only expanded far beyond the boundaries at which Aristotle had left it - and even in part independently of the body of Aristotelian writings -, but also that its inner structure was transformed.

Secondly, the occurrence of a syllogism as such in Reformed systems is no indication of Aristotelianism. The history of medieval logic makes clear that what was studied in connection

¹⁷ P.O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains*, New York 1961; C.B. Schmitt, *Studies in Renaissance Philosophy and Science*, London 1981.

¹⁸ L.M. de Rijk, *Middeleeuwse wijsbegeerte. Traditie en Vernieuwing*, Assen 1981 (2nd. ed.) [French ed.: *La Philosophie au Moyen Age*, Leiden 1995]; idem, *Logica Modernorum. A Contribution to the History of Early Terminist Logic*, 3 vols., Assen 1962-1967. Central to terminist logic is a contextual approach of propositions, i.e. an interest in semantics and in how terms signify in different propositional contexts. Major contributions of the terminists were the distinctions between signification (which refers to a verbal sign that stands for an object of knowledge) and supposition (which includes the connotations and denotation of terms), and between categoremata (nouns and verbs) and syncategoremata (prepositions, conjunctions, and adjectives). The terminists saw semantics as the chief area in which Aristotelian logic was deficient. See also M.L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition 400-1400*, New Haven-London 1997, 276-277, 289-291.

with syllogistic reasoning, goes beyond the original Aristotelian syllogistic. This is even more true in the case of the Reformation era. Although under the influence of an emphasis on rhetoric, a large portion of genuine medieval contributions to logic and semantics fell /465/ into oblivion, the part in which syllogistic reasoning was addressed functioned completely. The seventeenth century Reformed theologians could manage quite complex pieces of reasoning under the heading of a syllogism. But syllogistic reasoning was often seen as an explicit form of everyday inference, which every rational being performs.¹⁹ Even when the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Protestant academies used terms like 'Aristotelian' or 'Peripatetic' in their logic instruction books, it almost never meant that they were, in a strict sense, following Aristotle.²⁰

Furthermore, it is clear that, with regard to the reception of Aristotle by Reformed theologians, one should be careful to distinguish between formal aspects and aspects related to content. Appropriation did occur, but so did antithesis.²¹ Even Aristotle's logic was only received from the medieval tradition in an in fact not very Aristotelian form, while his concept of God and his views on the eternity of the world were sharply denounced by Reformed theologians. Therefore, Aristotelianism is an exceedingly problematic concept if it is used like a 'broad brush' in order to describe the identity of seventeenth century Reformed theology. It should rather be avoided if used unspecified.

Medieval sources

It is also worth noting here that the Reformed theologians of the post-Reformation era were quite aware of the double meaning of the term 'scholasticism'. On the one hand, they could use it to describe and appreciate a method; on the other hand, it was used to refer to a certain type of *late* medieval, speculative theology or /466/ even contemporary theology. In the latter

¹⁹ Cf. Gisbertus Voetius' reasoning with respect to the universality of atonement, explained in W.J. van Asselt and E. Dekker (eds.), *De scholastieke Voetius. Een luisteroefening aan de hand van Voetius' Disputationes Selectae*, Zoetermeer 1995, 161-165.

²⁰ See J.S. Freedman, 'Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy Instruction at Central European Schools and Universities during the Reformation Era (1500-1650)', in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 137 (1993), 213-253.

²¹ See D. Sinnema, 'Aristotle and Early Reformed Orthodoxy: Moments of Accommodation and Antithesis', in W.E. Helleman (ed.), *Christianity and the Classics. The Acceptance of a Heritage*, Lanham-New York-London 1990, 119-148, esp. 123-128.

sense, for example, Calvin used it in his *Institutio* when referring to the 'scholastics'.²² Calvin's attack was not on the older scholastic tradition but on a strain of contemporary scholastic theology viewed by Calvin as problematic in view of its extreme nominalism. Luther's critique and reaction on scholasticism was itself scholastic. He often used a scholastic argument to counter another scholastic argument. For example, in his *Babylonian Captivity*, Piere d'Ailly is invoked to demonstrate that transubstantiation can not be defended by applying Aristotelian physics to the presence of Christ. Moreover, in his discussion on free will Luther exchanged subtle scholastic distinctions of the meaning of 'necessitas' with another alleged enemy of scholasticism, Erasmus.²³

Therefore, the scornful way in which Luther and Calvin treated this late medieval form of scholasticism is not to be taken as an overall hermeneutical principle to read scholasticism. The alleged aversion of the scholastic tradition on the part of the reformers ought not to be exaggerated. It is, furthermore, not insignificant that Calvin had never uttered a negative statement against the work of his successor Beza, nor had Luther objected to Melancthon's teaching. Erwin Iserloh understood Luther's thought as a reaction against speculative, semi-pelagian, late nominalistic theology, while, at the same time Luther drew positively on nominalism in the less speculative forms in which he received it from the Augustinian tradition.²⁴ In addition, Francois Wendel, Alexandre Ganoczy, David Steinmetz and Heiko Oberman have found 'scholastic' elements in Calvin's thought.²⁵ The basic opposition of Luther and Calvin to 'scholasticism' is often confined to late medieval nominalism in its semi-pelagian form.

When it comes to the content rather than to the method of scholasticism, we can easily see that in fact a wide variety of thoughts were available. A mainstream of Augustinianism may be discerned, which runs through theologians like Anselm, Bonaventure and Duns Scotus to Luther, Calvin, Gisbert Voetius and Francis Turretin. Another observation is that the influence of Scotism was at least as important as Thomism in the post-Reformation period. There is increasing evidence available that Scotism played an important role in

²² See R.A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin. Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition*, Oxford 2000, 46-52, 58-61. Here Muller discusses the references to 'scholasticus' and its French equivalents in Calvin's *Institutes*, 1539-1560.

²³ For more examples of Luther's recourse to scholastic distinctions, see D.V.N. Bagchi, 'Sic et Non: Luther and Scholasticism', in Trueman and Clark, *Protestant Scholasticism*, 3-15.

²⁴ E. Iserloh, *Geschichte und Theologie der Reformation im Grundriss*, Paderborn 1983 (3. Aufl.), 26-27, 95.

²⁵ F. Wendel, *Calvin. The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, ET by Philip Mairet, London-New York 1969, 127-129.

Reformed scholasticism, which is not to say that *all* Scotist tenets are evidenced. In this connection we can think of the crucial concept of will developed by Scotus and the notion of radical contingency, concepts which were absent in classical Antiquity. Ulrich Leinsle has pointed out that the metaphysics available to the theologians of the seventeenth century bears Scotistic traits. The school metaphysics of the early seventeenth century was not stamped by the thomistic-aristotelian concept of being, but by the concept of being developed in the Scotist tradition. In his opinion, later medieval scholasticism was very easily, but incorrectly, identified with Thomism.²⁶ It is also worth noting that even in cases where a Reformed scholastic used at first sight Thomistic terms - e.g. in the doctrine of God - he conveys in fact Scotistic concepts.²⁷

Finally, we could point to the way in which Roman Catholic theologians like F. Suárez (1548-1617) were widely read by the Protestant scholastics and were taken over in matters about which there was no significant dispute, for example large portions of the doctrine of God, or almost a complete agreement on christology. The fact that writings of people like Suárez were used by the Reformed theologians points at two things: first, that there is no absolute schism between Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians in the scholarly sense, and second, that if the Protestant theologians were not already aware of the great medieval theologians, they would definitely become aware of them by reading their Roman Catholic colleagues and opponents.²⁸

/468/ Spirituality

Although it could be argued that this issue cannot properly be included among the 'sources' of Reformed orthodox theology, it nevertheless played an important role in shaping Reformed identity. It was very clear to the Reformed orthodox that rightly formulated doctrine would relate directly to the life and identity of the church and the individual believer. In the history of scholarship Reformed scholasticism has been viewed as 'dry', 'rigid', 'dead', 'speculative', 'rationalistic' and unrelated to spirituality. The possibility that there was a unity of learning and

²⁶ See U.G. Leinsle, *Einführung in die scholastische Theologie*, Paderborn 1995, 197-200.

²⁷ See for example F. Turretin's use of 'scientia simplicis intelligentiae' in the doctrine of God's attributes in his *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, Geneva 1688, locus tertius, quaestio 13 (234-240). With this Thomistic term Turretin conveys the Scotistic concept of 'scientia necessaria'.

orthodoxy with praxis and piety during this period has been inadequately acknowledged and examined in studies on seventeenth-century Reformed theology.²⁹ Analysis of the theology of prominent Reformed scholastics like Gisbert Voetius and his successor Peter van Mastricht, however, shows that this bifurcation does not stand. Contrary to this typical way of viewing Reformed scholasticism the theology of Voetius and Van Mastricht displays an orthodoxy arising out of a scholastic training as well as a profound spirituality and intensely practical drive that impinged on the development of Reformed identity in the era after the Reformation.³⁰ Virtually all of the theologians of the era understood the discipline of theology either as a mixed 'speculative' and 'practical' discipline or as a purely 'practical' discipline. The term 'praxis' refers to discussions in which the entire discipline of theology was understood as goal directed: theology, as a praxis or practical discipline, was directed toward the goal of human salvation. 'Each doctrine taught in the theological system of the day (not merely, for example the doctrine of God, but each individual divine attribute; not merely the doctrine of the last things, but each sub-category of the doctrine) was to be known for itself as a truth of God and for the sake of the goal of salvation toward which it directed the human knower.'³¹ Each doctrine, therefore, would have a direct impact on the shaping of faith and /469/ the Christian life. In this sense, Christian life or 'practice' did function among the sources of Reformed orthodox theology.

Conclusion

A number of concluding observations immediately suggest themselves. First, as far as the issue of identity is concerned, the polemical stance of the seventeenth-century Reformed theologians compelled all of them to shape their own identity in the face of rival theological movements. Their aim was not primarily to construct 'new doctrine' but to make sense of a received body of doctrine in order to clarify their own identity within the Christian tradition. The focus was on the inner relation of doctrines to one another and to their outer relation to philosophy and the

²⁸ For the (critical) reception of F. Suárez in seventeenth-century Reformed philosophy and theology, see Aza Goudriaan, *Philosophische Gotteserkenntnis bei Suárez und Descartes im Zusammenhang mit der niederländischen reformierten Theologie und Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Leiden 1999, esp. 124-130.

²⁹ See on this O.J. de Jong, 'De Nadere Reformatie binnen Nederland', in O.J. de Jong, W. van 't Spijker and H. Florijn (eds.), *Het eigene van de Nederlandse Nadere Reformatie*, Houten 1992, 10.

³⁰ See, for example, Gisbertus Voetius' inaugural oration, *De pietate cum scientia coniungenda*, Utrecht 1634 (edited and Dutch translation by Aart de Groot, Kampen 1978); Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, 2. vols., Amsterdam 1682-1687.

documentation of their validity on the basis of Scripture and tradition. For this purpose, the linguistic and logical tools of medieval and Renaissance scholasticism were used as a scientific method of research and teaching. As such these tools did not have a doctrinal content, neither did they use Aristotelian logic as its foundation.

Secondly, as far as the broader question of historical foundation is concerned, it is clear that during the period after the Reformation, a theology developed in Reformed circles, which sought to identify its historical position in such a way that the continuity with the Reformation, and with the age-old tradition of Christian theology since the apologists, could be brought to expression. This self-definition provided an ideological justification for its continued existence and was characterized by a confessional orthodoxy more strictly defined in its confessional boundaries than the theology of the Reformers. At the same time, this Reformed theology was much broader and more diverse in its use of materials of the Christian tradition, particularly the medieval scholastic doctores.³²

Finally, Reformed Scholastics did not view their systems as a mere reproduction of the medieval systems or as a mere repetition of the Reformation. Rather they considered themselves to be representatives of a Protestant-Catholic theology bearing a distinctive stamp. They were aware of the fact that their theology arose out of the teaching of the Reformers, the scholastic background of the Reformation itself, and the renewed scholasticism of the Dominicans and Jesuits and, of the Italian and Spanish universities. For a very long time, then, theologians from different traditions could still understand what the other said. Reformed, Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians made use of the same scholastic apparatus in order to shape their own identities. Although the polemical stance of these theologians in the seventeenth century compelled all of them to emphasize their theological differences, they had much in common, both theologically and philosophically.

³¹ See Muller, *Ad Fontes Argumentorum*, 22.

³² See R.A. Muller, 'Vera Philosophia cum Sacra Theologia nusquam pugnat: Keckermann on Philosophy, Theology, and the Problem of Double Truth', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15/3 (1984), 341-365.