Two veritable theological giants in the Christian Church, separated by hundreds of years between them and whose theologies could hardly have been more different, Karl Barth and St. Thomas Aquinas, are, I shall here argue, both similar in their approaches to Theological method. Surprisingly their disagreements can trace their lineage back to one fundamental disagreement about the way in which philosophy and theology are related to each other. Each of these thinkers was, in his own way, systematizing his theology in response to the crisis of culture with which he was faced. Each was a challenging and innovative response to the intellectual atmosphere before them. This paper shall focus on the respective Hermeneutical approaches to Biblical interpretation that each of them adopt, comparing and contrasting them with a view to teasing out and obviating this fundamental disagreement between them.

My interest in pursuing this comparative contrast between these two geniuses of Christian doctrine comes partly by my own curiosity about Karl Barth, and his dialectical theology, and in part, a wonder about what to make of it in light of my own scholastic tendencies. I am thus, to come out of the closet, a neo-scholastic who finds Thomas Aquinas among the most endearing of Christian teachers. As such my project is in part, also, to rehabilitate Thomas Aquinas as a biblical exegete, and a Christian theologian, rather than merely a Christian philosopher. His Biblical hermeneutic is in part inherited from the tradition of the Church, and also became, in his hands, tailored to the needs of the Church in an atmosphere of divisive dissent. That is to say, in other words, that Aquinas constructed his Biblical hermeneutic so as to find in it the resources necessary for apologetic theology. The enterprise and discipline of apologetics in Christianity, being one of my principle academic and intellectual interests, and being greatly aided by following the lead of thinkers like Aquinas and Bonaventure, contributes, therefore, to my desire to pursue the topic of this research paper.
Finally, one of my interests has been to pursue a criticism of Neo-orthodox theology, which has become the brand name for Karl Barth's dialectical theology. My principle problem with Karl Barth is that he eradicates the grounds on which apologetic theology must find its footing. Instead of admitting the possibility of a 'natural' knowledge of God vested in all men, Barth goes so far as to reject even the Medieval doctrine of analogy which, according to Aquinas, is how we must always speak about God. My trouble with Barth, therefore, is that his system thus articulated is irrational, since he cannot predicate anything about God at all, and thus is always consigned to speak and think in the tension of paradox. However, given that this is a peculiar interest, my paper will endeavour to do more than simply critique Barth by toeing the line of neo-scholastic sophistry. Instead, I wish to fairly explicate Barth's hermeneutic, and Aquinas' along with it, so as to make it possible to easily compare and contrast both of these great theologians. I will argue that both thinkers are profoundly engaged with the dialectical atmosphere of their day, and that this in large part explains the great divergences between them. Thus, on my way to sketching out their respective views I will fill out their biographical portraits in order to situate each thinker in their respective cultural crises, to which each respond.

Though neither of these great minds should need much by way of introduction, for their names are hardly unknown to Christians, Protestant and Catholic, still it is necessary to repaint their portraits and to put each into a wider perspective than they are often placed. Though Karl Barth, "the most prolific [of Protestant theologians] since Martin Luther,"¹ is well remembered, he is often well remembered for being a Christian who became "one of the founders of the Confessing Church, which resisted the capitulation of the "German Christians" to Nazi

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¹ Porter, *Dialectical Theology and Exegesis*, 215.
propaganda." Though this image isn't incorrect, it is incomplete. Thomas Aquinas, called the Angelic doctor of the Church, is remembered today, if at all, precisely as an intellectual giant who baptized Aristotle. He is revered by Catholics as the progenitor of proper and laudable method in theology, prescribed especially since Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* where it was said that Thomas so revered the Church Fathers that "... in a certain way [he] seems to have inherited the intellect of all." 

The doctrines of those illustrious men, like the scattered members of a body, Thomas collected together and cemented, distributed in wonderful order, and so increased with important additions that he is rightly and deservedly esteemed the special bulwark and glory of the Catholic faith. 

He is not, however, remembered for being a thinker whose insights were drawn from, and relevant to, biblical theology. This oversight needs to be rectified in order to appreciate his relevance for the development of hermeneutics. 

Beginning with Karl Barth, whose background was that of a German Protestantism deeply influenced by Friedrich Schleiermacher going into the mid twentieth-century, we can begin to fill out this portrait, which is a precondition for comparing Barth with Aquinas. He was born in Switzerland, May 10, 1886, in the populated city of Basel, from which he later migrated, with family, further south to the city of Berne, where he began his education. He was raised in a line of theologians, as both his father "and grandfathers on both sides had studied

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5 Porter, *Dialectical Theology and Exegesis*, 215.
6 Cunningham, "Karl Barth," 183.
theology and been ministers." It was at the University of Bern that Barth attended the lectures of his father, Johann Friedrich Barth, who had accepted a teaching position as a "professor of early and medieval church history," and it was there that Barth took his first steps toward making "a huge impact on the theological world." He learnt the venerable method of historical criticism and was profoundly influenced by the thinking of Immanuel Kant, a topic to which we shall return in due course. In the pursuit of his education Barth eventually went through four different universities, the second of which, after the university of Bern, was the university of Berlin. Interestingly Barth had chosen the university of Berlin over the university of Marburg, considering the university of Marburg to be, among other things, "too liberal." Yet, in a twist of irony, it was at the university of Berlin that he studied under the tutelage of Adolf von Harnack, easily "the leading liberal scholar" of that era. Adolf von Harnack propounded the view that Christianity, properly apprehended, was a-historical, and thus not truly Jewish in nature; it was essentially free from the constraints of either dogma or liturgy. Harnack thus hailed Marcion himself as "the first protestant" principally because Marcion's contribution represents the first attempt to "reduce the Gospel message, church organization, and ritual to their bare core in order "to know nothing save Christ the crucified one." Harnack's view of Christianity was therefore as of a thing, considered formally, entirely plastic. Barth became especially attracted to liberal thinkers like Adolf von Harnack, and liberalism therewith. His education, however, was very

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8 Porter, Dialectical Theology and Exegesis, 215.
9 Porter, Dialectical Theology and Exegesis, 215.
10 Porter, Dialectical Theology and Exegesis, 216.
11 Porter, Dialectical Theology and Exegesis, 216.
12 Porter, Dialectical Theology and Exegesis, 216.
13 Karen King, What is Gnosticism?, 66.
14 Karen King, What is Gnosticism?, 66.
well balanced, as he "studied with some of the most influential theologians and biblical scholars of his time, both conservative and liberal."\[^{15}\]

Eventually he returned to the University of Bern, and finally pursued the last lap of his educational formation at the university of Tübingen.\[^{16}\] Like his father, and his father's father before him, Barth took up the mantle of pastoral work. He brought with him to the pulpit all the baggage of the liberalism he had inculcated, including the view that Jesus of Nazareth was, far from being God incarnate, actually merely "an examplary man."\[^{17}\] He had also imbibed views friendly to National Socialism in Germany, since he, in step with the leading liberal thinkers of his day, believed that Socialism would accomplish the ideal of realizing heaven on earth.\[^{18}\] It was in the midst of ministry, however, that Barth witnessed firsthand the failure and inadequacy of the Gospel of liberalism. His sermons seemed to fall stillborn from the pulpit because they had not the power to move, or even to touch, the people in the pews. Barth became influenced, in this time, by existentialists like Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, and it was in this time that he began to radically rethink "the relationship of God to humanity."\[^{19}\] This radical rethinking led him to read the Bible with new eyes, such that in 1916 he began a "serious theological investigation of the Bible, including an intense study of Paul's letter to the Romans."\[^{20}\] His commentary on Romans, published three years later, reflected a "radical departure from theological liberalism,"\[^{21}\] and was a work for which he continues to be remembered today. In moving away from liberalism Karl Barth was keen on emphasizing the infinite otherness of God, and his unknowability by any human means. Man was not able of his own accord or with the power of his own reasoning

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\[^{15}\] Porter, *Dialectical Theology and Exegesis*, 216.
\[^{16}\] Porter, *Dialectical Theology and Exegesis*, 216.
\[^{17}\] Porter, *Dialectical Theology and Exegesis*, 216.
\[^{18}\] Porter, *Dialectical Theology and Exegesis*, 216.
\[^{19}\] Porter, *Dialectical Theology and Exegesis*, 217.
\[^{20}\] Porter, *Dialectical Theology and Exegesis*, 217.
\[^{21}\] Porter, *Dialectical Theology and Exegesis*, 217.
faculty to know God, but rather God revealed himself to man. It was precisely this reorientation of theological language which earned Barth's view the title of a dialectical theology "which does not resolve the dialectic as in Hegel, but leaves them in tension as in Kierkegaard."\textsuperscript{22} Barth had not yet received his doctorate at this point, and yet "on the strength of his Romans commentary, [he was] invited to a new teaching position"\textsuperscript{23} at the University of Göttingen, though, ironically, he was "prohibited from giving lectures in systematic theology."\textsuperscript{24} Nevertheless, it was in Germany that he began to develop and elucidate his dialectical theology and dialectical hermeneutic, and that he found himself standing in opposition to National Socialism. As opposed to his professors, like Adolf von Harnack, Barth "realized that the Jews and Christians were in an "indissoluble bond" on the basis of covenant,"\textsuperscript{25} and this vision moved Barth to become, for instance, "the primary author of the so-called Barmen Declaration."\textsuperscript{26} It was in the light of a cultural and socio-political \textit{verschieben} that Barth's theology came together, as, "in many ways, his theology is a direct, personal, and fulsome response to these issues and events."\textsuperscript{27}

As Barth's theological views developed in strict and uncompromising opposition to the liberalism which was in vogue, he became convinced that one of the fundamental commitments of his dialectical theology was that "theology should original in the church with no philosophical or other presuppositions."\textsuperscript{28} This commitment is clearly articulated in \textit{Die Kirchliche Dogmatik} (the Church Dogmatics). This work was to be Barth's \textit{magnum opus}, comparable, perhaps, even to St. Thomas' \textit{Summa Theologica} in breadth, ingenuity, and perhaps almost in influence.

Ironically, both remained unfinished. Before moving into a more elaborate discussion of Barth's

\textsuperscript{22} Porter, \textit{Dialectical Theology and Exegesis}, 218.
\textsuperscript{23} Porter, \textit{Dialectical Theology and Exegesis}, 218.
\textsuperscript{24} Porter, \textit{Dialectical Theology and Exegesis}, 218.
\textsuperscript{25} Porter, \textit{Dialectical Theology and Exegesis}, 219.
\textsuperscript{26} Porter, \textit{Dialectical Theology and Exegesis}, 218.
\textsuperscript{27} Porter, \textit{Dialectical Theology and Exegesis}, 215.
\textsuperscript{28} Porter, \textit{Dialectical Theology and Exegesis}, 219.
dialectical hermeneutic, we must pause to sketch out the portrait of the Angelic Doctor to whom Barth will be compared.

About Thomas Aquinas, perhaps less needs be said. He is certainly remembered and venerated in the Catholic tradition as the prince of the scholastics, the Dominican who overshadows even St. Dominic, and the Peripatetic in the heart of Paris who would, with his wisdom, illuminate Aristotle's philosophy as much by Christian doctrine as Christian doctrine by Aristotle's philosophy. He was a Mendicant, in the order of St. Dominic, born "in the castle of Roccasecca,“29 Italy, in 1225,30 or 1227.31

At the age of five, according to the custom of the times, he was sent to receive his first training from the Benedictine monks of Monte Cassino. Diligent in study, he was thus early noted as being meditative and devoted to prayer, and his preceptor was surprised at hearing the child ask frequently: "What is God?"32 That very question, which so often occupied the young saint's mind, would come to command the direction of Aquinas' whole theology. Though his aristocratic family seems to have spared no effort to dissuade him from joining a begging order, Aquinas pursued voluntary poverty with such force of will that his family's ploys were met with failure at every turn. Once, for example, his brothers detained him and tempted him "by bringing prostitutes to his chamber; he is said to have chased the women away with a firebrand."33

Towards the end of his life, St. Thomas confided to his faithful friend and companion, Reginald of Piperno, the secret of a remarkable favour received at this time. When the temptress had been driven from his chamber, he knelt and most earnestly implored God to grant him integrity of mind and body. He fell into a gentle sleep, and, as he slept, two angels appeared to assure him that his prayer had been heard. They then girded him about with a white girdle, saying: "We gird thee with the girdle of perpetual virginity." And from that day forward he never experienced the slightest motions of concupiscence.  

Whether or not these stories are altogether true rather than the product of embellishment, behind them lies, and in them is reflected, the true character of St. Thomas as the pious monastic mendicant that he was, and one whose appetite for both learning and praying were, it seems, insatiable.

Being a mendicant meant to be involved in three principle tasks: "*legere, praedicare, disputare:* "to teach, to preach, and to dispute."  

The mendicant order was established, at least in part, to combat heresy and to encourage people to remain within the boundaries of orthodoxy (hence disputation was involved in the Dominican vocation). However, the Scholasticism which was born of this mendicant agenda marked a move away from a monastic or wholly contemplative reading of scripture, and suggested instead a new approach "influenced by the works of Aristotle" which was aimed, to some degree, to combat false opinion. This represented a new "scientific" approach to reading and using the scriptures, which brought with it "a whole new range of biblical technologies to the study of scripture" not least among which was the *Glossa Ordinaria*. The background against which Aquinas formulated his thinking

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35 Daniel Kennedy’s article reads: "he declared that he had learned more in prayer and contemplation than he had acquired from men or books (Prümmer, op. cit., p. 36)."
38 Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 61.
involved, therefore, on the one hand, a new way to engage the Scriptures, and on the other hand
the introduction or re-introduction of Aristotle into the Latin west.

St. Thomas is remembered as a systematic theologian, a master of philosophical
technology, but he has not been remembered either as a pietistic monk nor a masterful biblical
exegete. The reason is clear: if Thomas is simply regarded as a "Christian Aristotelian," and it
was Aristotle, not Christ or the scriptures, who set the agenda for systematic theology, then how
could St. Thomas be "worth consulting on the question of the understanding of scripture?"\(^\text{40}\) The
response can come only with a rehabilitation of St. Thomas as something other than the cold
detached intellectual, which, due to the modern use of his work by neo-scholastics, has
overwhelmingly become the impression we have been given of him. Though it was in part thanks
to Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* that Aquinas is so highly venerated and a resurgence of
interest in his thought took place in the twentieth century, still, the use made of him as a typical
model for systematic theology left the deplorable impression that he had been nothing other than
a cool systematiser. In the words of Peter M. Candler "the price paid for the revival of Aquinas
was Thomas himself."\(^\text{41}\) We remember St. Thomas, therefore, as the author of *Summae* rather
than the author of biblical commentaries. However, of course, St. Thomas wrote extensive
commentaries on scripture as well, including "Isaiah, Job, and the Pauline Epistles; *lecturae* on
John and Matthew; a *postilla* on the Psalms; cursory commentaries on Jeremiah and
Lamentations; and a commentary on the Song of Songs,"\(^\text{42}\) to say nothing of the *Catena Aurea* or
the way in which he clearly appeals to scripture throughout his discursive reasoning in all his
writings. We must recognize that in the thirteenth century there just was no conception of

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\(^{40}\) Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 63.
\(^{41}\) Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 64.
\(^{42}\) Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 64.
theology apart from scripture, anymore than it was conceivable for a theologian to be anything but an expositor of the scriptures.

Bonaventure even said "Sacred Scripture, which is called theology" and Thomas Aquinas the reverse "Theology which is called Sacred Scripture." Indeed "in the thirteenth century, the title given to a professional theologian was magister in sacra pagina," and therefore, inevitably, the distinction between being a scholastic theologian and being a biblical exegete is anachronistically contrived.

Concerning scripture, Aquinas had inherited what Henri de Lubac already demonstrated was the standard approach to the scriptures in the Middle Ages; namely, the appeal to a model according to which scripture could be divided into a four-fold sense. This four-fold sense of scripture, or rather the approach to scripture according to which it contained four senses, found it's pedigree in the Middle Ages beginning with John Cassian in 435 A.D., who was the first to clearly distinguish each one of the four. They are distinguished as follows, here by Augustine of Denmark:

\[ \text{Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.} \]

This roughly translates to "The literal sense shows what happened, the allegorical what you are to believe, the moral what you are to do, the anagogical where you are destined." Henri de Lubac, who was "a Peritus" at Vatican II, overturned the notion entertained by some scholars that in "the early Middle Ages there were two currents of biblical interpretation" one being

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43 Montague, Understanding the Bible, 49.
44 Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 64.
46 Montague, Understanding the Bible, 49.
47 Montague, Understanding the Bible, 50.
allegorical, and the other being literal or historical. Instead, in Lubac's judgment, the theologians throughout the Middle Ages recognized these four senses of scripture. St. Thomas inherited this same exegetical paradigm, but also contributed something new to it. He did so by expanding the literal sense of scripture. As George T. Montangue explains, the literal sense before Aquinas "concerned not the author's intended meaning as we understand the literal sense today but rather the events narrated, what happens in the text." For Aquinas, however, this may have been unsatisfying precisely because he recognized that it was only with the literal sense of scripture that one could engage in disputations with others, as Aquinas himself explains that the literal sense is that "from which alone can any argument be drawn." Therefore, he had a vested interest, given his threefold vocation as a Dominican friar, in mining as much out of the literal sense of scripture as he could. Therefore, Aquinas not only allows the literal sense to be that which the author intends, but thereby expands the horizons of literal exegesis by suggesting that the principal author, God himself, may intend immediately more than one thing in any given passage, just as a human author could intend more than one thing in any given passage.

Since the literal sense is that which the author intends, and since the author of Holy Writ is God, Who by one act comprehends all things by His intellect, it is not unfitting, as Augustine says (Convess. xii), if, even according to the literal sense, one word in Holy Writ should have several senses.

Moreover, even concerning the human author, Aquinas maintains that it is intelligible to suggest that the human author could have himself intended all of those meanings which are contained in the literal sense;

48 Montague, Understanding the Bible, 50.
It is not inconceivable that Moses and the other authors of the Holy Books were given to know the various truths that men would discover in the text, and that they expressed them under one literary style, so that each truth is the sense intended by the author."51

To take but one mundane example, "John's story of the cure of the man born blind is surely, at the symbolic level that is part of the intention of the text, a catechesis on baptism"52 and this sense, for Aquinas, is also subsumed under the literal. Thus, "one of the most significant moves of Aquinas is his proposal that the author's intention extends to metaphor as well."53

For Aquinas, the scriptures communicate knowledge of God to man by leading him into the beatific vision, thus reducing man to a "beatific union"54 with the author of scripture. This idea of manuductio, that the scripture leads one to a knowledge of God, is essentially reflective of the conviction that scripture is essentially all about answering the question "what is God?" The content of the scripture is first and foremost God's knowledge of God's self which "cannot be entirely comprehended but only intimated by participation"55 and which we are lead into (manuductio) by engaging the scriptures. This activity recognizes that reading scripture "hands over" the reader of scripture to the pedagogy of the Holy Spirit, who "conducts" the soul toward beatific vision."56 Scripture, insofar as it is considered revelation, is thus better construed as a verb than as a noun; "scripture is the "traditioning"... of divine revelation."57 Moreover, sacred scripture as revelation is not merely the activity of the private interpreter, but rather is the activity of the Catholic Church.

51 Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 75.
52 Montague, Understanding the Bible, 59.
53 Montague, Understanding the Bible, 57.
Consequently whoever does not adhere, as to an infallible and Divine rule, to the teaching of the Church, which proceeds from the First Truth manifested in Holy Writ, has not the habit of faith, but holds that which is of faith otherwise than by faith.\footnote{St. Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologica}, accessed on December 16, 2012, http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3005.htm}

Thus, the content of the scriptures, insofar as the content is revelation, is God's self knowledge, and "sacred scripture is not only something that tradition "hands on"... scripture itself "hands over divine revelation,"\footnote{Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 67.} and the Church herself hands over both sacred scripture and divine revelation therewith. Thus, Thomas Aquinas' hermeneutic is inexorably bound to seeing the handing on of scripture, which becomes revelatory in the living \textit{traditio} of the Catholic Church, as the handing on of revelation. Revelation, then, is simply the knowledge of God, which is intimated by participation in the \textit{traditio} of scripture as an activity of the Church. With this vision Thomas offers us an engaging hermeneutic which is inexorably bound up with his systematic theology. The whole of the content of his systematic theology, one might say, just is an elucidation of the scripture \textit{qua} revelation, and thus his hermeneutic comes in the packaging of systematic theology.

Moreover, concerning systematic theology, St. Thomas treats it as being a science. He explains in the \textit{Summa Theologica}:

\textbf{I answer that}, Sacred doctrine is a science. We must bear in mind that there are two kinds of sciences. There are some which proceed from a principle known by the natural light of intelligence, such as arithmetic and geometry and the like. There are some which proceed from principles known by the light of a higher science: thus the science of perspective proceeds from principles established by geometry, and music from principles established by arithmetic. So it is that sacred doctrine is a science because it 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.\textsuperscript{60}

Thus, for Aquinas, it may be no exaggeration to say that all theological language is 'about' God, and that "God is the object of this science."\textsuperscript{61} It is necessary at this juncture to address the question of 'what God is' according to the determination of Aquinas. Here, it is essential that we grasp both the idea of God in Aquinas as "subsistent existence,"\textsuperscript{62} and therewith that we understand Aquinas' doctrine of analogy. To begin with, to subsist is to undergird existence, and to be the very ground of the possibility of existence, and this profoundly philosophical notion is licensed, as far as Aquinas is concerned, in Exodus 3:14 where God reveals himself as "The One who Is."\textsuperscript{63}

How, then, can one speak of God, if God is not a being, but our speaking is always about beings? Thomas see's the problem;

It is impossible that anything should be predicated of both creatures and God univocally... but the terms are not used purely equivocally either... for, if that were so, nothing would be knowable or demonstrable concerning God from our knowledge of creatures;... we have to say, then, that terms are used of creatures and God analogously, that is, according to an ordering between them.\textsuperscript{64}

In other words, Aquinas, influenced as he was by the thinking of pseudo-Dionysius, recognizes that it was "befitting for Holy Scripture to use corporeal images"\textsuperscript{65} for, as pseudo-Dionysius says, "the ray of divine revelation is not extinguished by the sensible imagery wherewith it is veiled."\textsuperscript{66}

Thus, though there may be an infinite gap between creature and creator, this, far from being an

\textsuperscript{65} Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 71.
\textsuperscript{66} Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 71.
obstacle to theology, provides theology with the correct means to speak about God, "for what He is not is clearer to us than what He is... therefore similitudes drawn from things farthest away from God form within us a truer estimate that God is above whatsoever we may say or think of Him."\(^{67}\)

This brings us at last to the question of a natural theology. Since God is the object of theological discourse, one might at this point wonder what grounds theological discourse. As was already seen, however, theology as a science "is established on principles revealed by God."\(^{68}\) Does that mean, however, that all speech about God depends on revelation? Not for Aquinas. On the one hand, Aquinas believes that, as he quotes John Damascene as saying "knowledge of the existing God is naturally inserted in all."\(^{69}\) On the other hand, Aquinas explains that

That God exists is not self-evident... A thing can be self-evident in either of two ways: on the one hand, self-evident in itself, though not to us; on the other, self-evident in itself, and to us... Therefore I say that this proposition, "God exists," of itself is self-evident, for the predicate is the same as the subject, because God is His own existence as will be hereafter shown (3, 4). Now because we do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us; but needs to be demonstrated by things that are more known to us, though less known in their nature — namely, by effects.

Thus, not only is the knowledge of God inserted in some way in all of us, but it lies in us as an innate idea which awaits demonstration without the appeal to revelation. Aquinas is committed to the possibility, and even the necessity, of such a demonstration, and thus of a natural theology, insofar as natural language can begin even in the absence of revelation to speak about God by analogy to that which he has made.

\(^{67}\) Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 71.  
\(^{69}\) Candler, "St. Thomas Aquinas," 66.
To return, then, to Karl Barth, we can begin to see just how radically Barth's dialectical hermeneutic contrasts rather sharply with that of Aquinas, and yet points of superficial convergence will not be hard to find. First of all Karl Barth constructs and proposes a fundamental principle in his doctrine of the Word of God, which he suggests is three-fold, consisting of "Scripture... revelation... and preaching."\(^{70}\) This doctrine, according to Barth, finds no analogy in any other doctrine apart from that of the Trinity. However, it looks as though one might identify at least a metaphorical similarity between this three-fold word of God, and the Dominican three-fold vocation of legere, praedicare, disputare, especially when one considers that a more literal translation of the Latin legere is simply 'to read'.

Although Barth is probably the single most careful protestant theologian about "doing theology in accord with scripture,"\(^{71}\) thus even denying that hermeneutics can be discussed without getting one's hands dirty with the task of actual exegesis,\(^{72}\) yet his theology of the bible itself parts ways strikingly as much with the 'right' as with the 'left' of his day. On the one hand, Barth recognizes scripture to be the word of God only "to the extent that God causes it to be His Word, to the extent that He speaks through it."\(^{73}\) Thus, it need not be, for instance, inerrant, as the Bible isn't intrinsically the Word of God, but becomes the word of God by reason of God's initiative to illuminate what God says about man, in the pages of the text, to the reader. In fact, Barth maintains that to suggest that the bible is inerrant is to slip "into Docetism,"\(^{74}\) which is no light charge. Only in the act of being read by God to man, as though he himself mediated the meaning from the page to the mind, like a father reading his child a story, can the biblical text

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\(^{70}\) Cunningham, "Karl Barth," 185.  
\(^{71}\) Cunningham, "Karl Barth," 185.  
\(^{72}\) Cunningham, "Karl Barth," 184.  
\(^{73}\) Cunningham, "Karl Barth," 186.  
\(^{74}\) Cunningham, "Karl Barth," 190.
become in substance the one everlasting Word of God. Thus, Barth admits candidly that the Bible is open "to all kinds of immanent criticism, not only in respect of its philosophical, historical and ethical content, but even of its religious and theological." He thus expresses no qualms about employing the historical critical method per se, but does seem to think that its application must be restricted by the boundaries of the project of exegesis. The commanding rule of exegesis, which for Barth takes priority over any general hermeneutic, is none other than the person of Jesus Christ. In other words, the scripture comes together into a unity precisely because it's object, Jesus Christ, is a unity. Thus, "the Old and New Testaments are to be understood as testimonies looking forward and backward, respectively, to Jesus Christ." According to Barth "God has acted to give himself in Jesus Christ by the Spirit as the ground of theological knowing."

We might be tempted to think, at first blush, that Barth and Aquinas are in considerable and significant agreement. They both believe that hermeneutics is an ecclesiastical and pastoral discipline, they both agree that theology is a science whose principles come 'from above' or 'from a higher knowledge', and they agree on many more points besides. Though one can certainly identify relatively trivial disagreements, such as on whether scripture, read literally, can be in error, still the chief disagreement concerns the relationship of philosophy to theology, of man's language to God's knowledge. Where Aquinas sees philosophy as the preamble to theology, or even as a kind of 'natural' theology, Barth says "there never has actually been a philosophica christiana, for if it was philosophia it was not christiana, and if it was christiana it was not

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75 Cunningham, "Karl Barth," 189.
76 Cunningham, "Karl Barth," 186.
philosophia." While Aquinas affirmed that "we are unable to speak of God except in the language we use of creatures," Barth objects that "one cannot speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice." Barth advances against theologians like Aquinas that "men affirmed it [Christianity] with a secret sovereignty which already seemed to make it questionable whether what was being affirmed was still Christianity." Whereas Aquinas suggests that "reason should prepare the minds of men to receive the faith by proving the truths which faith presupposes" and thus philosophy is treated as a "praeambula fidei," Barth has "excommunicated [philosophy] as not merely an alien but an enemy."

The whole difference between Barth and Aquinas is, in short, the radically different attitudes they take to the relationship of philosophy to theology, of language to revelation, of reason to faith. Barth, in his time, is arguing against the tradition "originating with Descartes, and extending through Locke, Kant, Schleiermacher, Harnack and many others." This enlightenment foundationalism sought to ground theology and talk of God in the language of man, whereas Barth sought to ground all theology and talk of God in Jesus Christ. His theological epistemology, which will allow for absolutely no natural theology, "eschews all

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78 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics I/1 p.6
81 Thompson, "Remaining Loyal to the Earth," 183.
human foundations" and suggests that "the ground for the knowledge of God is not only given by God, but is God in his self-revelation." Thus, though he entirely dismisses speaking about God intelligibly in the secular language game, he appeals to a kind of "theo-foundational" epistemology. Though Barth admits that "if we open our mouths, we find ourselves in the province of philosophy" yet he looks to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ to ground all talk of God, which in the arena of dialectical reasoning must always be expressed in the tension of paradox. He suggests that the whole problem of philosophy is that, where "the theological way of knowing is 'motivated wholly by the power of the primordial movement from above to below... the faux pas of philosophy has been to reverse this order, believing that it has started from below with creation and the light of independent human reason."  

Keeping in mind the background against which Barth was led to formulate so strong an uncompromising division between theology and philosophy, which was an enlightenment philosophy bequeathed to it by thinkers like Kant, one can begin to sympathize with Barth. The whole problem with natural theology, from his perspective, was that it conceded to the enlightenment too much, as "Christian theology, when justifying itself by an analogy from the human being to the divine being, grounded God in man." Barth's whole dialectical project was to divorce man from any 'God grounded in man', and instead introduce man to a God who is wholly

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other. For Barth, as long as God was grounded in man, the enlightenment had won, and theology must look for its credentials in the realm of philosophy, and consequently biblical hermeneutics must adopt a method not given to it by the person of Jesus Christ. Moreover, Barth was also engaged "in correspondence with Adolf von Harnack" on this point of the priority of revelation. Harnack, being the enlightenment optimist that he was, was at a loss even to understand Barth's epistemology as rational; it had departed too much from the deliverances of the enlightenment. For instance, concerning Kant:

While much is made of the influence of Kantianism or neo-Kantianism on Barth it is clear that in Barth's view Kantian idealism could not get passed its antithesis with realism, and theology admits no more of a proof from practical reason than it did from pure reason. Kantianism may be helpful in its critique of realism, but it has no privileged philosophical status with Barth. Though Barth wasn't a Kantian, the only way he could see his way through to being something other than a Kantian was to reject the enlightenment suppositions on which Kant was building.

Thomas Aquinas adopted Aristotle in response to a crisis of culture in which heresy was a growing concern, and yet felt free to do so, treating Aristotle as a prolegomena to the Sacra Pagina. In Aquinas' context this posed no problem, as it allowed philosophy, still subservient to theology, to elucidate theology and prepare the way for it by laying out a natural theology. By Barth's time, however, the enlightenment had come, and the heresy with which he was faced was that of a Gospel of liberalism, supportive of national socialism. "In a world full of Nazis one can
be forgiven for being a Barthian,"93 especially because, as Barth explains, "we must think in our time for our time."94

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93 Cunningham, "Karl Barth," 196.
Bibliography


