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Title: Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes – In dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, and Wolf Krötke. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York, 2007

Corpus Thomisticum – Bibliographia Thomistica <https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/bt/index3.html>

This is a work of dogmatic theology whose purpose, according to the author, is to give an account of the theological work which the doctrine of the divine attributes undertakes in the doctrine of God, within the context of three twentieth-century Protestant theologians: Swiss-Reformed Karl Barth, and Jüngel and Krötke, both Lutheran. — Contents: Introduction. Ch. 2 on the reception of the doctrine of the divine attributes by the three authors: a survey of Barth's reading of Post-Reformation Protestant Orthodox theologians (Polanus, Wollebius, Quenstedt and Van Mastrich), Krötke's critique to Gregory of Nysa and Pseudo-Dionysius, and Jüngel's critique of Thomas Aquinas. Ch. 3 devoted to the divine attributes according to Barth, Ch. 4 to the same according to Jüngel, Ch. 5 to Krötke. The author summarizes his findings and own position in the Conclusions. — The book is not without merit because the task it undertakes is complex and the examination of the doctrines concerned is attentive, contributing to the study of the views of Protestant theology on the theological issue of the divine attributes in general and of these authors in particular. However, it has two major failures, which severely limit the scope of his contribution: — First, all of Holmes' references to the metaphysical tradition and to classical and medieval theology, particularly to Aquinas, are taken from the three authors studied. He has not developed his own reading of Thomistic teachings, but sticks to the –openly wrong– interpretation of Thomism that dates back to the 14th and 15th centuries and that has permeated Protestant thought ever since. An example: his interpretation of *S. Th. I, q. 2, art. 2, ad 2*. Following Krötke, Holmes asserts that, for Aquinas, “the total natural knowledge of God is nothing more than the explanation of the essence of God” (p. 41). He fails to notice that Aquinas is talking about the meaning of the word “God,” not about God's essence. He incurs in the same misreading when discussing Jüngel's critique to Aquinas (p. 106-110). Jüngel is in dialogue with Descartes and Kant and reads Aquinas and the metaphysical tradition –wrongly– through them, and Holmes follows suit. As a result, he accuses much of the tradition –including Aquinas– of semi-nominalism! — Second, he does not draw the ultimate –and grave– consequences for the possibility of a human knowledge of God that these authors' theological works entail. A few examples: following Barth, Holmes criticizes Aquinas for maintaining that the one is diverse from the multiple, and that God is diverse from man. For Barth, instead, “just as God's being (oneness) is as we encounter it in revelation (threeness), God's being (simplicity) is as we encounter it in his perfections (multiplicity).” If God is to be spoken of as simple, –Holmes concludes– multiplicity must be included. If God has become man in Jesus Christ, God becomes identical with man. He fails to point to the contradiction *in terminis* of these assertions in particular and of dialectic thought in general, which Barth adopts in his theological works. — Following the three authors studied, Holmes treats the doctrine of the divine attributes as an integral part of Soteriology, since “God communicates his attributes to the creature in the event of justification,” and Revelation is “the unity of God's act and God's being.” The divine attributes –love and freedom (Barth), justice and mercy (Jüngel, Krötke)– are “short-hand ways of recounting who God as the glorious one is as he is attested in Scripture; or, essential shortforms of the way in which God in his glory presents himself among and for us in Jesus.” But if we gather all knowledge of God from the Gospel, then whoever does not believe in the Scriptures cannot have any knowledge of God whatsoever, which is evidently false. Moreover, if our created nature is useless for the knowledge of the God who –according to Scripture– has created us for a life of intimacy with Him, this would point to an injustice on the part of God, which would contradict the words of Scripture. — Finally, the main contention of the book is that the attribute of glory is “the chief sum of the attributes (Barth) or that which is shown forth in them” (Krötke), and that it issues at the Cross, which “is all that can and must be said of God” (Jüngel). But if glory is “the divine mode of being, which is identical with the history in which God reveals himself in a human existence,” then it is also identical with God. The doctrine of the attributes becomes devoid of all conceptual content and language about God becomes problematic. Holmes would contribute considerably to the study of these authors if he addresses these questions in future publications.

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