

EARLY THOMIST RECEPTION OF AQUINAS'S CHRISTOLOGY:  
HENRY OF GORKUM

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Medieval reflection on Christ is not among the popular subjects in present-day theology or philosophy. Whatever we do know about the subject concerns the period between roughly 1150 and 1275, from Peter Lombard to Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, and certainly not the later medieval period. It is my contention, however, that for some particular reasons the period of late medieval theology, usually seen as a period of decline and decay, is in fact very interesting. This is not because of new and daring enterprises in theology or christology, but because of the opportunity it offers to test our interpretation of the great scholastics. Do those scholars who are closer to them in time and mentality than we are, interpret Thomas Aquinas' christology, for instance, in the same way as we do? And even more interestingly, in the case of contemporary conflicting interpretations, can they be a guide to solving present-day conflicts? If so, what may we learn from this medieval christology, in our ongoing attempt to glimpse an understanding of Jesus Christ? Such an attempt, as undertaken in this paper, only makes sense against the background of my growing conviction that medieval christology does have an important contribution to make.

In this study I will look at the interpretation of Aquinas's christology as taught to his students by the fifteenth century artist and theologian Henry of Gorkum. We will study a typical piece of 'scholastic' theology; i.e. a type that is didactic in purpose, from which we may learn the essentials of the way in which Aquinas was interpreted in one of the leading theological environments of those days: Cologne, in Germany.

I will do so in two steps, each divided into a further two stages. First, Aquinas's christology, and then Henry's interpretation of it. With respect to Aquinas, I will begin with an impression of the historical merits of Aquinas's christology, and follow up with an outline of my own interpretation of it, stressing its linguistic and apophatic character. Next, regarding Henry of Gorkum, I will start by giving some biographical data, and then continue by studying his interpretation of Aquinas's christology against the background of his theology of naming God.

**1. Aquinas's christology: an impression of its historical merits**

There are at least three points on which Aquinas's christology is credited

with special merit:

a) Aquinas was the first to provide a systematic solution to the dispute around the three theories for the hypostatic union that Peter Lombard mentions in his *IV Libri Sententiarum* (Book III, d. 6).<sup>1</sup> Bonaventure says that, in his day, it is common opinion that one must interpret the incarnation according to what later became known as the subsistence theory: Christ's human nature subsists in Christ's divine person. This theory was held by such people as Robert of Melun, Alain de Lille and William of Auxerre. Aquinas's endorsement of this subsistence theory which, according to Bonaventure, followed a general pattern, also meant a systematic refutation of the other two: the so-called *habitus* theory (Hugh of St. Victor, John of Cornwall et al.) and the *assumptus-homo* theory (Peter Abelard, Peter of Poitiers et al.).<sup>2</sup>

b) Aquinas was, after a long time, the first to draw the resurrection of Christ again into explicit theological consideration. Peter Lombard devotes no separate attention to the subject that Paul deems so crucial to Christian faith (1Cor 15). Aquinas, however, adds a new section (*distinctio*) in his commentary on Peter Lombard, and in the *Summa Theologiae* integrates the resurrection in his account of the things that '*per ipsum Salvatorem nostrum, idest Deum incarnatum, sunt acta et passa*'.<sup>3</sup>

c) Aquinas was the first of the scholastics to give a systematic account of what were later called the mysteries of the life and passion of Christ. In fact, he was the first to divide christology into two parts, the first of which is more speculative in nature, dealing with the hypostatic union and its consequences, the second concerning the history of Christ's salvific acts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> So says e.g. A.M. Hoffmann, the editor of the German translation of Aquinas's christology in the *Summa Theologiae* (*Des Menschensohnes Sein, Mittleramt und Mutter, Deutsche Thomas-Ausgabe*, vol. 26 (Graz etc. 1957), pp. 435-609).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. my *Christ the 'Name' of God. Thomas Aquinas on naming Christ* (Louvain: Peeters, 1993), chapter 4; the work of Walter H. Principe and also Lauge Olaf Nielsen, 'Logic and the Hypostatic Union: Two Late Twelfth Century Responses to the Papal Condemnation of 1177', in *Medieval Analyses in Language and Cognition. Acts of the symposium 'The Copenhagen School of Medieval Philosophy'*, ed. by Sten Ebbesen & Russell L. Friedman (Copenhagen 1999), 251-79.

<sup>3</sup> *STh* III prol.; see Wilhelmus G.B.M. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God. Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Leo Scheffczyk, 'Die Stellung des Thomas von Aquin in der Entwicklung der Lehre von den Mysteria Vitae Christi', in *Renovatio et Reformatio. Wider das Bild von 'finsternen' Mittelalter. Festschrift für L. Hödl* ed. by M. Gerwing (Münster 1985), 44-70; id., 'Die Bedeutung der mysterien des Lebens Jesu für Glauben und Leben des Christen', in *Die Mysterien des Lebens Jesu und die Christliche Existenz*, ed. by Leo Scheffczyk (Aschaffenburg: Patloch, 1984), 17-34; Gerd Lohaus, *Die Geheimnisse des Lebens Jesu in der*

There are of course more salient features in Aquinas's christology. I will mention only four: Aquinas's position on the motive for the incarnation<sup>5</sup>, Aquinas's denial of Mary's immaculate conception<sup>6</sup>, Aquinas's admission of a kind of knowledge in the human soul of Christ which is of an experiential nature<sup>7</sup>, and Aquinas's position on the single subsistent being of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. The linguistic and apophatic character of Aquinas's christology

There is yet another remarkable characteristic of Aquinas's christology, that I worked out for myself some years ago. It concerns three general features of Aquinas's christology:

- 1) Aquinas's christology is distinctly linguistic in character
- 2) Aquinas's christology forms the apex of his theology, and therefore definitively characterizes his conception of theology
- 3) Aquinas's christology bears a distinctly apophatic character.

Let me briefly dwell on each of these points.

### 2.1 Aquinas's christology is distinctly linguistic in character.

To elucidate this point I should like to mention Aquinas's attention to grammatical modes of signification, such as the difference between concrete and abstract terms, between subject-term and predicate-term. There is also his attention to theories of predication and the logic of reduplication. On a more theological level, there is his attention to the names that Christ receives in Holy Scripture. In his commentary on Isaiah, Aquinas designs preaching schemes centred around the names of Christ, and employs them as exegetical principles in an explanation of the meaning of the Old Testament

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*Summa Theologiae des heiligen Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg etc. 1985); Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Le Christ en ses Mystères. La Vie et l'Oeuvre de Jésus selon Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Desclée, 1999), 2 vols.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rudolf Haubst, *Vom Sinn der Menschwerdung. Cur Deus homo* (München: Hüber Verlag, 1969); A. Michel, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, s.v. 'incarnation'.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ulrich Horst, *Die Diskussion um die Immaculata Conceptio im Dominikanerorden. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der theologischen Methode* (Paderborn etc.: Schöningh, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Johannes Theodorus Ernst, *Die Lehre der hochmittelalterlichen Theologen von der vollkommenen Erkenntnis Christi. Ein Versuch zur Auslegung der klassischen Dreiteilung: Visio Beata, Scientia Infusa und Scientia Acquisita* (Freiburg etc., 1971)

<sup>8</sup> A. Patfoort, *L'unité d'être dans le Christ d'après Saint Thomas. A la croisée de l'ontologie et de la christologie* (Paris 1964); Schoot, 'Name' of God, chapter 5.

and, for example the letters of Paul.. Sometimes they also are used as principles for the organization of theological *quaestiones*. Most fundamental, of course, is the way in which Aquinas, for example in his commentary on John 12, pictures Christ as being himself the name of God, the one who proclaims his God and makes him present among the nations; for Aquinas, Christ is the manifestation, the revelation of the good news, the good news in person. Further, and most importantly for his speculative christology, there is the distinction between two properties of terms, the distinction between signification and supposition. Signification roughly means what we understand by connotation, whereas supposition coincides with denotation. Sometimes words are used to stand for, to supposit for, an individual thing, and sometimes words signify an aspect of that thing; they are used to describe the thing indicated. In this vein the subject-term of a sentence has supposition, and the predicate-term signification, as in ‘Peter is courageous’.

I think, all in all, that the linguistic character of Aquinas’s christology cannot be denied. The evidence is overwhelming, especially in the more speculative section of his christology. We will return to this shortly.

## *2.2 Aquinas’s christology forms the apex of his theology, and therefore definitively characterizes his conception of theology.*

Each interpreter of Aquinas’s thought is of course well aware of the discussion about the architecture, or order, of the *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>9</sup> Especially in the days in which Roman Catholic theology discovered the concept of history, and rediscovered the centrality of what was called the Christ-event, a number of typical questions were put to Aquinas. How do you already know what grace is, before you even begin to question the person and work of Christ? Why do you devote attention to his person only at the end of your *Summa*? But also: why do you speak about Father, Son and Spirit before even dwelling upon Jesus of Nazareth?

These questions were partly answered by Edward Schillebeeckx, who in his *De Sacramentele Heilseconomie* ventured the thesis that the *Tertia Pars* in fact forms the point of culmination, the high point of Aquinas’s theological project. Aquinas’s conception of theology is theocentric, certainly, but the question that was formulated a couple of years ago at a conference at Notre Dame is certainly pertinent: isn’t Dominican theology just as christocentric as Franciscan theology is always claimed to be?<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See also the contribution to this volume by Brian Johnstone.

<sup>10</sup> K. Emery jr. and J. Wawrykow, *Christ among the Medieval Dominicans: representations of Christ in the texts and images of the Order of Preachers* (Notre Dame:

Well, one way to check the position of the christology as contained in the *Tertia Pars* vis-à-vis the doctrine of God and the Trinity as contained in the *Prima Pars*, is to check the way in which questions 12 and 13 of the *Prima Pars*, where Aquinas talks about our knowledge of God and our naming of God, are in fact applied in the *Tertia Pars* as well. Do the things Aquinas says about proper and improper speech, about metaphorical and analogical language, about propositions about the divine, apply in christology as well? And indeed, as it turns out, they do. We will return shortly to this as well.

### *2.3 Aquinas's christology bears a distinctly apophatic character.*

Our third and last point, divine hiddenness, is a structural principle of Aquinas's conception of theology.<sup>11</sup> The way in which Aquinas employs the word *mysterium*, for example, organizes Scripture, articles of Faith, the sacrament of the Eucharist and christology in one interdependent whole. Both on the levels of signification and of supposition Aquinas seems well aware of the inadequacy, amid all the richness, of human interpretation and naming of the divine. In the final analysis, it is exactly Aquinas's way of analysing the being of Christ, through a grammatical and logical analysis of propositions that contain the word *est*, as well as his interpretation of the definition of the council of Chalcedon, that confirms this interpretation of Aquinas's views. The unity of Christ incarnate is located exactly in the 'space' where no description can be given, where only pointing may be appropriate, or a nod

This interpretation of Aquinas's christology is not obvious. It goes against the tendency to put Aquinas before the cart of anti-modernism - to invest Aquinas with the apologetics of faith. It is not so much the deficiency of the knowledge of faith which is focused upon, but its relative efficiency. In this regard it is extremely interesting to learn about the way Henry of Gorkum interpreted Aquinas. Of all arguments, the weakest one is the argument from authority, the argument that says: 'he said so as well'. But it is nice to see that one historical voice agrees, and not the least among them, because Henry was the first of Aquinas' commentators. Let me explain.<sup>12</sup>

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Notre Dame Press, 1998);

<sup>11</sup> Cf. William J. Hoya, 'Die Unerkennbarkeit Gottes als die letzte Erkenntnis nach Thomas von Aquin', in *Thomas von Aquin. Werk und Wirkung im Licht neuerer Forschungen*, ed. by A. Zimmermann (Berlin etc. 1988), 117-39 [Miscellanea Mediaevalia 19].

<sup>12</sup> The following was published at greater length in 'Language and Christology: the case of Henry of Gorkum († 1431), Thomist', *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 68 (2001), 142-62.

### 3. Henry of Gorkum: biographical data

The first commentators on Thomas Aquinas' came from the Netherlands. Master Henry of Gorkum (Gorkum is a small town in the Netherlands between Utrecht and Rotterdam) completed his studies in Paris, and made a considerable career in Cologne, from 1419 onwards. Henry transposed what he took to be the central theological insights of Thomas into a literary form that was fit for educating students. What are these insights? In summarizing the *Summa Theologiae* and in writing a tract called *De divinis nominibus*, how did Henry introduce his students to the work of the person whom he deemed the most important theologian since Augustine?<sup>13</sup>

Henry must have been born in 1377 or 1378 in Gorkum (Gorinchem), which at the time belonged to the Utrecht diocese, and died in Cologne in 1431. The exact date of birth is unknown and postulated by Weiler, because Henry's licentiate in the arts in Paris, is dated 1398. Henry was to study the arts, and subsequently to act as *Magister artium* between 1398 and 1402, and to become a student of theology. There are no records left of a Parisian licentiate in theology, but he must have obtained one, since he was able to receive his licentiate and doctorate in Cologne only shortly after his moving there in 1419. In 1410 he had resumed teaching the arts in Paris, but he left the city, which was in turmoil due to wars, famine and the plague, for a relatively quiet Cologne. Being a secular priest, Henry served as parish priest there, and being a well-respected scholar, he was professor of theology at the university. Next to this, Henry was famous for founding a school for young students, to provide for a good preparation for enrolling in the faculty of arts, and at the same time to provide an opportunity to further the cause of a renewed Thomism. For that was the cause for which Henry left Paris - since 1407 dedicated once more to realism instead of nominalism - for Cologne, where the original nominalism from the early beginnings of the university had to compete with a *via antiqua* which was growing stronger and stronger.

The conflicts concerning the *via antiqua* and the *via modernorum* seem to be first and foremost conflicts concerning the way in which learning should be organized: by studying and explaining the works of Aristotle or by a method that is less concerned with commenting on authoritative texts and

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<sup>13</sup> *Tractatus de divinis nominibus*, in: *Tractatus consultatorii* (Cologne: H. Quentell, 1503), fol. 1-19r; Cf. A.G. Weiler, *Heinrich von Gorkum († 1431). Seine Stellung in der Philosophie und der Theologie des Spätmittelalters* (Hilversum etc. 1962), pp. 93-94 and 138-49. Henry's (Heinrich von Gorinchem) *Quaestiones in S. Thomam*, was reprinted from a 1473 edition (Esslingen) by Minerva, Frankfurt 1967.

more with a *modus quaestionis* and a terminist treatment of logical issues: study of the *parva logicalia* (in Cologne: supposition, ampliation, appellation, obligations, insolubles and consequences) and analysis of scientific demonstration. Cologne in fact had found a compromise, but the *via antiqua* was dominant. Attempting to avoid the controversial theological consequences of nominalism, and possibly faithful to the views of the Parisian chancellor Jean Gerson, Henry applied himself to providing an education with a large number of writings, the paramount purpose of which must have been didactic in nature: logical works, philosophical works and most of all theological works. The latter include a *Lectura super Evangelium*, a compendium of the *Summa Theologiae* entitled *Quaestiones in S. Thomam*, *Conclusiones super IV Libros Sententiarum*, an adaptation of the *Supplementum IIIae Partis Summae Theologiae S. Thomae Aquinatis*, a number of treatises including treatises on the divine names, predestination and the Eucharist, and a treatise against the Hussites.

In historical respect it is rather important that Grabmann and Weiler credit Henry with being the first commentator of the *Summa Theologiae*, and with being the first to put Aquinas in a central place in his teaching, about a century before Paris would do so, and cause Spanish Thomism to flourish.<sup>14</sup> The *thomistarum coloniensem monarcha*, as he was called, seems to have been well-respected, a scholar with a clear mind, engaged in putting before his students the essentials of philosophical and theological learning, without undue sophistry, idle speculation or craving for polemics; an irenic and practical man, always willing to solve problems or intervene in academic or political matters; moreover someone who never sought originality or personal prestige. We will shortly encounter this.

#### **4. Henry of Gorkum: his interpretation of Aquinas's theology and christology**

##### *4.1 The prologues of De divinis nominibus*

'Thy Name and thy memory is what my soul longs for'. It is this very quotation of Isaiah 26 that is chosen by Henry to act as the thread of his exposition of the divine names. In the general prologue he says that, whenever the soul forms a name of God in the hiddenness of the mind, it gives room for God himself. For this reason each devout person will say:

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<sup>14</sup> M. Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben. Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Scholastik und Mystik*, vol. 2 (München, 1936), p. 443; vol. 3 (München, 1956), p. 412.

‘Thy name and thy memory is what my soul longs for’ (f 1r).

However, all names are deficient, since God is ever greater than all human knowledge of him. Both divine excellence and weakness of human understanding cause the inadequacy and the plurality of divine names. For novices in theology and others to speak more easily and confidently about God without fault, Henry collects insights concerning the divine names in a handbook of study. ‘Whenever we speak of the divine, we should act cautiously and modestly’, Henry says.<sup>15</sup>

Henry’s concern is with his students, and in line with this, with the public character of theology of speech about God. It is quite clear that *De divinis nominibus* is best interpreted as concerning not only divine names, but all speech about God. The contents of Henry’s treatise confirm this. The treatise is subdivided into three parts, the first of which covers the contents of *STh* I, q. 13 (*de nominibus Dei*), the second the theology of the Trinity, and the third the theology of Christ incarnate. Henry intends to proceed by propositions formulated on the basis of authentic sayings and rules, subjoining their causes and expositions. Henry formulates some 39 propositions. The rules that he mentions are most interesting. Some of them will be examined later on, but in general one has to concede that their formulation stems from a practice of teaching in which a certain kind of theology has become dominant and is translated for the needs of students: the theology of Thomas Aquinas.

In his prologue to the third distinction, Henry equates the name of God with the name of Christ that he deems most fundamental: Jesus. Henry dives into the middle of Aquinas’s *sermo de Deo Salvatore* (*STh* III, prol.), i.e. question 37, article 2: *Utrum convenienter fuerit Christo nomen impositum*, to come up with to a number of insights regarding the name Jesus. It belongs to those names that are imposed by God. They always signify a divine gift bestowed upon the one named: Abraham, Peter. Such is the case with Jesus as well, since Christ was gifted with the grace to save all human beings. All the names that are attributed to Christ in some way signify the name Jesus. For example, Emmanuel signifies the cause of salvation, that is, the union of divine and human nature in the person of the Son by which he has become God with us. The eucharistic names of Christ are explicitly mentioned, and finally Henry concludes by quoting the letter to the Philippians (2, 10): in the name of Jesus every knee will bend etc. What our soul longs for is thus especially the name of its saviour, of Jesus; the name that the Song of Songs (1, 2) calls ‘an oil poured out’.

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<sup>15</sup> ‘quia ex verbis inordinatis prolatis incurritur heresis’, ‘ideo cum de divinis loquimur cum cautela et modestia est agendum’ (f. 1r).



From the contents of these prologues it may confidently be concluded that the christological part of this treatise, on naming the divine, constitutes its climax. In this respect Henry shows himself to be a faithful student of Aquinas, whom he quotes, but never bothers to mention. According to Henry, there is an evident link between Aquinas's treatise on divine names, on the divine persons and on God the saviour, since all of them revolve around language *in divinis*: its inadequacy, its truth, its rules and its spirituality.

#### 4.2 *The first distinction of De divinis nominibus*

One of the features of the treatise that supports this conclusion is the absence of an essential part of question 13 of Aquinas's *Prima Pars* of his *Summa Theologiae* in Henry's first distinction. Henry catalogues and considers different concrete names, but fails to mention article 12 of q. 13 that, apart from some rather vague remarks in proposition 10, seems to be missing. The reason for this is simple, but telling. Article 12 concerns the question whether affirmative propositions may be formed about God. Aquinas's main tool in composing an affirmative answer is the distinction between signification *secundum rem*, and signification *secundum rationem*, i.e. between supposition (denotation) and signification (connotation). Each proposition affirms a real identity between that which is denoted by the subject term, and connoted by the predicate-term. The fact that the proposition is composed of several terms is due to our mode of understanding and signification, but does not *eo ipso* imply a real composition in the subject about which the proposition is formed. Therefore no violation of God's simplicity is committed. In the course of his determination Aquinas employs the rule that predicate-terms are to be interpreted formally, and subject-terms materially. This is the same distinction between signification and supposition but formulated in different words: predicates signify or connote the form, whereas subject-terms supposit or stand for (denote) the existing thing. The distinction between supposition and signification can be omitted by Henry in his first part, since it is the basic insight underlying all analysis of christological language. In other words, as he must be economical in this short treatise, Henry must have thought: I will shortly come to those matters when discussing christological language. And indeed, he does so. For *in christologicis* a clear distinction between supposit or person and natures, between the interpretation of the subject-term and the predicate-term, between supposition and signification is fundamental. For this reason, Henry selects Aquinas's questions on whether Christ is a *compositum*, on the *communicatio idiomatum*, and on the being of Christ.

From this and other elements we may conclude that Henry is well aware of the christological relevance of the general treatise of the divine names.

#### 4.3 *The third distinction of De divinis nominibus*

In the course of his treatment of christological language, Henry unfolds thirteen propositions, in all respects according to the order of the *Tertia Pars*.<sup>16</sup> The first proposition could be translated as: ‘A sound foreknowledge of the mode of union of the Word Incarnate is the most favourable proem for rightly speaking about the divine incarnation’.<sup>17</sup> Nothing could better reach the heart of the matter. The twofold stress on the fact that knowledge of the mode of the union precedes the rest is telling. Henry considers questions 2-15 as presuppositions for christological language. For that is the part which Aquinas subsumes under ‘*de modo unionis Verbi Incarnati*’ (*STh* III, q. 2 prol.). Questions 16-26 are ‘*de his quae consequuntur unionem*’ (*STh* III, q. 16 prol.), and one expects Henry to count these as belonging to the ‘favourable proem’ as well. As a result one has to notice that all propositions Henry formulates belong to this area. Consequently, everything that follows has to be regarded as a prolegomenon, a proem to actual christological language. This is quite important to note, since otherwise one might be tempted to discard this kind of reflection on account of its lack of historical or soteriological interest: it does not intend to do that job nor suggest that it should not be done at all, it just considers it fruitful to formulate a proem so that the conditions of possibility of ‘*loquendi recte de divina incarnatione*’ will be fulfilled. How important that is for Henry is the subject of the first lines, where he says that from such knowledge all ability depends on discerning between language fitting or unfitting for the mystery of the incarnation.<sup>18</sup> One should note the use of *sermones convenientes et disconvenientes*. Henry ends his treatment, saying that, on the basis of this material, a perceptive reader will be able to judge which christological language to prefer.<sup>19</sup> At the end of the third prologue he talks about

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<sup>16</sup> The order is as follows: the hypostatic union (1-3), the grace and knowledge of Christ (4-5), the *communicatio idiomatum* in speaking about Christ (6), the being of Christ (7), the will and operations (8), prayer and priesthood (9), predestination and adoration (10), mediator and son of his virgin mother (11), nativities (12), and sorrow and joy on the cross (13). One easily recognizes the original order of treatment in *STh* III.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Modum unionis verbi incarnati sane precognoscere, pulcherrimum est prohemium loquendi recte de divina incarnatione’, f. 13v.

<sup>18</sup> ‘a tali cognitione dependet tota ars discernendi inter sermones convenientes et disconvenientes circa mysterium incarnationis dum pretendimus Deo attribuire propositiones vi incarnationis noviter emergentes’, f. 13v.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Ex quibus potest sollers lector perpendere quos sermones catholicos debeat proferre,

propositions ‘containing the art of enunciating faithfully the language (*sermo*) emerging because of the incarnation’.<sup>20</sup> The expression *sermones* must be taken literally. Henry is engaged in explaining and interpreting the very wording of fundamentally sound propositions concerning Christ. The first proposition explains how the mode of the union should be understood, and the other propositions indicate what kind of words and propositions fit that mode. Were the mode to be otherwise, other locutions would be needed. ‘Union’ and ‘assumption’, and their different forms, are key words in christology, but they possess highly different semantics. What can be said with the one, cannot be said with the other and *vice versa*. For instance, the one who unites can be said to be the one united, whereas the one who assumes cannot be said to be the one assumed; it can truly be said that human nature is united to divine nature or that divine nature is united to human nature, but to say that divine nature is assumed by human nature is not correct. Thus a number of semantic differences are brought to the fore, entailing a different True/False analysis of certain propositions. Such is Henry’s linguistic interpretation of *STh* III, q. 3, contained in his second proposition. Easily done, he says, for someone who has the right conception of the mode of the hypostatic union. The same linguistic reading is undertaken concerning the subject of *STh* III, q. 4 on ‘that which is assumed’ in the hypostatic union. In proposition 4 he does so by analysing the terms ‘person’, ‘human being’, ‘carnal body’ and ‘soul’ when employed in the expression ‘*Filius Dei assumpsit ...*’.

Propositions 4 - 12 all regard the truth or falseness of a large number of expressions about Christ. The most important of these is proposition 6, Henry’s interpretation of *STh* III, q. 16: This proposition states that, if one applies some rules that are common in the sciences to the holy incarnate union, it will be easy to speak justly in the communication of property-terms.<sup>21</sup> In the course of his treatment, Henry identifies six rules of a semantic nature, the application of which facilitates the analysis of propositions about Christ. The first two of these are most important, since they lay out the principles of supposition and signification. They are taken literally from *STh* III, q. 16 a. 1. The first concerns the logical status of the subject-term [e.g. this tree is x], and the second of the predicate-term [e.g. x

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scilicet consurgentes ratione incarnationis salutifere, quod fuit tercium peragendam in hac compilatione’, f. 18v.

<sup>20</sup> ‘propositiones artem continentes fideliter enunciandi sermonem vigore incarnationis emergentem’, f. 13v.

<sup>21</sup> *Communicatio idiomatum* or exchange of property-terms is possible *in christologicis* because of the personal union of both natures in Christ. Thus it is true to say that ‘This man (Christ) is omnipotent’, as well as ‘The Son of God is suffering’.

is a tree]. The first could be paraphrased as: ‘Every concrete name with connotation, can denote something which belongs to the class connoted’.<sup>22</sup> The second as: ‘Of everything that belongs to a certain nature a predicate-term may truly and properly be said which concretely connotes that nature’.<sup>23</sup> The distinction of these two main modes of signification already animated the very reflection on the mode of the union, since a distinction was made there between supposit or person, the object of supposition, and natures, the object of signification. But now the linguistic reading is developed in full, interpreting “*Deus est homo*” and “*Homo est Deus*”. On grounds of the second rule mentioned, the predicate-term *homo* can truthfully be said of *Deus*, since the predicate-term connotes a nature by which the supposit of *Deus* exists, even though *Deus* does not signify or connote that (human) nature. The truth of *Homo est Deus* depends on both rules: the subject-term is taken to stand for the supposit of both human and divine nature, the latter of which is signified by the predicate-term. Thus the constitution of the linguistic rule of the *communicatio idiomatum* is laid out. For it is on the basis of the truth of both propositions mentioned, together with the rules of supposition and signification, that it can be said that (the Son of) God was passible, was mortal and is temporal, or that this man is impassible, immortal and eternal. Having outlined the communication of property-terms, Henry for the first and only time in this treatise, except for the prologues, employs a prayerful and vocative style. It indicates the awe and mystery that he encounters.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> ‘Nam regula est quod nomen significans naturam communem in concreto potest supponere pro quolibet contentorum in natura communi’, f. 16r.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Secunda regula est quod de quolibet supposito alicuius nature potest vere et proprie predicari nomen significans illam naturam in concreto’, f. 16r.

<sup>24</sup> ‘O pie Iesu quam recte dixisti ore: “Mirabilis facta est scientia tua ex me” [Ps 138, 6], quia almiflua tua incarnatione priorum phylosophorum scientia obstupuit audiens veritates ante insolitas ut quod immortale est mortale, eternum est temporale, omnipotens est infirmus, superdives est egenus, immensum est in virginis utero clausum, Virgo peperit, Deus esurit etc.’, f. 16v. The rule that he formulates, silently quoted from *STh* III, q. 16 a. 4, seems incomprehensible without the latter’s context. Aquinas stresses that it is forbidden to reserve the human predicates for *Christus homo* and the divine predicates for *Christus Deus*, even though one has to distinguish between the different meanings of the predicates. All predicates are truthfully said of *Christus homo* as well as of *Christus Deus*: ‘Regula tamen est notanda qua dicitur quod “in propositione in qua aliquid de aliquo predicatur, non solum attenditur quid sit illud” quod predicatur et “de quo predicatur, sed etiam secundum quid”. Unde de eodem supposito et subiecto predicantur in concreto ea quae sunt nature divine, et ea quae sunt nature assumpte. Sed tamen dicuntur [distinguuntur - HS] ea secundum quam predicantur predicata’, f. 16v.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Quia vero regula est, quod unius rei est tantum unum esse simpliciter. Hinc est quod impossibile est multiplicari illud esse quod pertinet ad ipsam personam aut hypostasim

## 5. Conclusion

Considering Henry's presentation of Aquinas's first part of his *sermo de Christo*, on the conditions of possibility of actual speech about Christ, it may be concluded that in no respect whatsoever does Henry innovate, or even improve, on Aquinas. On the contrary, he stays very close to his hero. The interesting part of his explanation, however, is the way in which he brings out clearly the logical and linguistic underpinnings of Aquinas's treatment.

Henry considers the topic of the divine names to be at the heart of Aquinas's theological authorship. This is important both in a historical and a systematic respect. The oldest of known commentators guides us in interpreting the work of Aquinas. Moreover, for Henry it is evident that Aquinas's more general analysis of divine names applies to Christ as well. In this respect Henry renders explicit what the *Summa Theologiae* leaves only implicit. While Aquinas's (and Henry's) *sermo de Christo* is devoted solely to names that are attributed to Christ incarnate, supposing prior treatment of names for the Eternal Son in the course of trinitarian theology, the main emphasis is on (composed) propositions of which *STh* III q. 16 and 17 are the best examples. But Henry shows excellently why Aquinas can say that qq. 16 and 17 flow forth from a prior understanding of the mode of the hypostatic union: the latter works with a distinction between signification and supposition which guides the explicit analysis of propositions in qq. 16 and 17. This entails a third and last point of interest of Henry's treatise. If Aquinas's general treatise on divine names applies to the *sermo de Christo* as well, then this also goes for the negative, apophatic character of Aquinas's general treatise. Once again it makes explicit what in the *STh* III remains implicit, and for which one has to adduce Aquinas's commentary on Isaiah, for example, where he quotes Proverbs (30, 4): 'What is his name, and what is the name of his son, do you know?'

Henry shows Aquinas's christology to be linguistic, to be centred around names and naming, to be intrinsically connected with the general doctrine of God, and to be apophatic in character. The interest is more in what he shows

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secundum se. Et quia in Christo est tantum una hypostasis cui natura humana coniungitur hypostaticè et non accidentaliter, hinc est quod Christo secundum humanam naturam non advenit novum esse personale, sed solum nova habitudo esse personalis preexistentis ad naturam humanam, ut scilicet illa persona iam dicatur subsistere, non solum secundum naturam divinam, sed etiam humanam. Sicut si post constitutionem persone fortis advenirent forti pedes, manus vel oculi, non adveniret forti aliud esse sed solum quaedam relatio ad huiusmodi', f. 17r.

than in what he says, in how he selects from the *Summa Theologiae*. The things he says do not improve on Aquinas, but form a precious key to the larger corpus of Aquinas's christology and theology.