

## Editorial

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## Editorial

For nearly fifty years there has been a movement of reassessment in historical theology that has reexamined both the relationships among the confessional traditions that developed in Europe after the Protestant Reformation and the continuities and discontinuities between Protestant theology and medieval theology. This reassessment has challenged (one might fairly say, overturned) several formerly settled positions from nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography, including the depiction of the Reformation and its confessional theologies as radical and comprehensive breaks from medieval theology and scholasticism. Only relatively recently has this development in the discipline of historical theology begun to find its analog in the study of early-modern ethics and economics. One still encounters, for example, the claim that Protestant ethics of the period was characterized by a thorough rejection of virtue ethics and Christian Aristotelianism. In the history of economics, even when it is granted that early-modern writers did in fact develop economic ideas, these writers are seldom given more than a mention in the typical story of economics, which often leaps from the classical period to a few medieval authors and then to the founder of the modern discipline, Adam Smith. Despite some significant studies on the late scholastics and the so-called ‘School of Salamanca,’ research into early-modern theologians’ economic contributions is arguably still in its infancy.

This Special Issue on interconfessional dialogues in early-modern ethics and economics is an exploratory contribution to a fuller understanding of the relationships among Protestants and Roman Catholics in the aforementioned disciplines. The articles here illustrate avenues by which ideas in practical philosophy, moral theology, and economics were received across confessional and national lines. Even in the midst of intense dispute among the adherents of the different confessional traditions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the exchange of sources and ideas in ethics and economics indicates that the boundaries in these fields were more porous than would appear merely from the consideration of the doctrinal and polemical literature of the era.


Overall, the articles in this Special Issue focus more on Protestant sources than on Catholic ones. This is not to suggest, however, that the traffic of ideas only flowed in one direction. Even given the fact that early-modern Catholic writers were officially forbidden from reading those Protestant authors and works which were listed in the *Index*, such engagement with Protestant writings still occurred. Thus, there remains an open field for further research into Catholic interactions with Protestant writings on ethics and economics. Also, to the extent that the moral and economic thought of this period has been studied, Catholic writers (especially the Salamancans) have received far more attention than Protestant orthodox writers. Among early-modern Protestants, however, we find a rich continuation and even flowering of the tradition of Aristotelian ethics and, as the research presented here indicates, Protestants were also contributing to the conversation about commerce and the new challenges of international trade.

As Manfred Svensson shows in his article, Protestant Aristotelianism was alive and well from the early Reformation to the end of the seventeenth century as Protestant professors developed moral philosophy curricula for their universities. Svensson unearths a treasure

trove of texts in Protestant practical philosophy, and his research serves as a veritable agenda for future scholarship on the history of Protestant ethics. In their respective articles, Andrew McGinnis and Paolo Astorri examine instances of Protestants critically receiving, and in some cases simply repeating, insights from Catholic and scholastic moral theology. McGinnis shows that the English conformist bishop Joseph Hall was not only conversant with Catholic casuistry, but mined late-scholastic Catholic sources for insights on ethical questions related to commerce. Specifically, McGinnis reveals that Hall closely read the work of the Jesuit theologian Leonardus Lessius. Turning to the Lutherans, Astorri draws attention to the ways that several theologians in this tradition were engaging Catholic and scholastic sources on the topics of property and restitution. Though not uniform in their approaches, Lutheran authors such as Friedrich Balduin, Balthasar Meisner, Conrad Horneius, and Johann Adam Osiander used both medieval-scholastic and early-modern Catholic texts as resources in their solutions to economic questions and matters of conscience. Lastly, Jordan Ballor and Cornelis van der Kooi examine a specific moral-economic question across several confessions within a single Protestant tradition, the Reformed one, and challenge the notion that Reformed and Calvinist theology universally disparaged the acquisition of wealth. The authors argue that no such universal condemnation of wealth appears in the official confessional documents of the Reformed churches. The Reformed were rather more nuanced in their evaluation of the moral status of wealth, and thus Ballor and van der Kooi have effectively laid some of the groundwork for further study of early-modern Reformed views of wealth.

Ultimately this Special Issue is meant to invite more research into the ways that ethical and economic ideas crossed the confessional divides in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Accordingly, we make no grand claims about this Issue's impact on such wide and diverse fields as the history of ethics and the history of economics. If, however, the Issue sparks more interest in early-modern contributions to ethics and economics, and if it encourages new studies of the traffic of ideas and sources across the confessional boundaries of this period, then we will consider this initial endeavor a success.

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