The Franciscan Robert Cowton¹ composed a Commentary on the Sentences² in Oxford ca. 1309–1311. Cowton, “an influential figure outside as well as within Franciscan circles”,³ draws heavily on Duns Scotus’ works without being a “Scotist”.

Cowton’s Commentary ostensibly provoked the reaction of the famous Dominican Thomas Sutton,⁴ who is well known as an enthusiastic defender of Thomas Aquinas’ teaching. This applies especially to Sutton’s Quaestiones in Sententias,⁵ a work composed near the end of

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⁵ There are no reasons to doubt Sutton’s authorship; cf. the evidence provided by B. Hechich, De immaculata conceptione (cf. n. 1), pp. 7–14.
his life. The questions of this work relating to book IV of the Sentences are directed against Duns Scotus. In the questions relating to books I–III Sutton attacks positions and arguments that occur in Cowton’s Commentary—therefore the titles Quaestiones [...] contra Robertum Cowton, Streitschrift gegen Robert Cowton, or Cowton Critique, and so on. Only a few questions of this work have been edited to date.

In questions 1, 3 and 4 edited here, which deal with the nature of theology as a science (q. 1: “Utrum de credibilibus revelatis possit aliquis habere scientiam proprie dictam simul cum fide”, q. 3: “Utrum Deus sit subjectum theologiae”, q. 4: “Utrum theologia sit speculativa vel practica”), Sutton firmly defends Aquinas’ positions: theology is a scientia proprie dicta; its subject matter is ens divinum cognoscibile per revelationem; theology is speculativa et practica, magis tamen speculativa.—Aquinas’ views on theology as a science are well known and need not be dealt with in detail here. Nonetheless, I would like to point out that, according to Sutton, Aquinas did not consider theologia nostra to be a scientia subalternata scientiae Dei et beatorum.

Two questions concerning the nature of Sutton’s Quaestiones in Sententias deserve to be touched upon:

The first question regards the title Cowton Critique. Sutton’s Quaestiones in Sententias may be best characterized as a selective commentary on the Sentences that takes up important questions where the Franciscan theological tradition, as represented by Cowton and by Scotus, differ from Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican theological

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6 F. Pelster connected the dating of this work with the Dominican General Chapter of Metz in 1313, where it was established that lectures on the Sentences should be based on Aquinas’ teaching. Cf. F. Pelster, “Thomas von Sutton O. Pr., ein Oxford-Verteidiger der thomistischen Lehre”, in: Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie 46 (1922), pp. 212–253 and pp. 361–401 (esp. p. 251).
8 Sutton’s defense of Aquinas’ teaching on theology as a science is briefly discussed in H. Theissing, Glaube und Theologie bei Robert Cowton (cf. n. 1), pp. 124 sqq., 140 sq., 197–204 and 239–246.
9 Cf. infra, q. 1, ad arg. 2 (p. 603, ll. 8–15): “Nec communis doctor dicit eam esse subalternatam scientiae beatorum, sed dicit eam habere aliquam similitudinem ad scientiam subalternatam, in quantum supponit sua principia ex scientia superiore. [...] Frustra igitur laborant probare contra communem doctorem quod theologia non est subalternata scientia, cum ipse hoc non dixerit quod sit subalternata”. 