

ADVANCES IN OUR HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THOMAS AQUINAS

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A general exposition of the principal advances in the three great fields of contemporary Thomist historiography —biography, authenticity of Aquinas's works, and chronology—, and of the most promising lines of advance for future research.

Keywords: Thomas Aquinas, research, historiography, biography, chronology, authentic works.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary development in research concerning Thomas Aquinas has developed greatly in certain fields, —metaphysics or ethics, for instance—, and much less in others —such as the philosophy of nature or philosophical psychology. Historical investigations belong certainly to the first group. Throughout the 20th century, this research has flourished with remarkable quality, extension and diversity of contents. However, these remarkable gains are relatively little known, even among specialists in Aquinas. There are more than a few synthetic works destined to palliate this lack of knowledge, and over one hundred of historical and biographical introductions to Saint Thomas. Some are excellent and easy to read: for example, those by Walz,¹ Chenu,²

1. A. M. WALZ, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Ed.: P. NOVARINA, Publications Universitaires, Louvain - Paris, 1962, 245 pp.

Weisheipl,³ or Torrell.⁴ However, there remains the difficulty of a certain watertight compartmentalization of the scientific fields.

The theological or philosophical studies, naturally, are concentrated in doctrinal subjects, not in historical issues. Even the History of the Philosophy or of the Theology barely touch upon the biographical context of the great authors. In theology another discipline exists, History of the Church, whose approach is more historical than theoretical. Nevertheless, its content is too rich to be able to pay much attention to individuals, even in the case of someone as important as Thomas Aquinas.

Therefore, the properly historical disciplines are somewhat neglected in institutional courses of philosophical and theological studies. The situation is similar in the case of auxiliary disciplines, like paleography, studies of codices or —of course— statistics.

As part of the panorama of contemporary research in Thomas Aquinas, I will provide here a general vision of the historical studies concerning St. Thomas. The subject is, in itself, very extensive. I will omit, then, references to later Thomism,⁵ as well as the subjects of investigation that, although closely related to the historical context, are more thematic than properly historical — such as the study of the doctrinal sources of St. Thomas,⁶ or that of

2. M. D. CHENU, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, 3rd ed., Institut d'Études Médiévales, Montréal, 1974, 305 pp.

3. J. A. WEISHEIPL, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino*, 2nd ed., Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 1983, XII+486 pp.

4. J. P. TORRELL, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin. Sa personne et son oeuvre*, 2nd ed., Éditions du Cerf - Éditions Universitaires, Paris - Fribourg [Suisse], 2003, XVIII+646 pp.

5. There are 2,000 Thomist authors listed in the repertoire of L. A. KENNEDY, *A Catalogue of Thomists, 1270-1900*, Center for Thomistic Studies. University of St. Thomas, Houston, 1987, 240 pp.; and 662 commentaries to the *Summa Theologiae* in the catalogue of A. MICHELITSCH, *Kommentatoren zur 'Summa Theologiae' des hl. Thomas von Aquin*, Styria, Graz - Wien, 1924, 8+203 pp.

6. Cf., for example, D. A. CALLUS, "Les sources de saint Thomas. État de la question," in P. MORAUX; ET ALII (eds.), *Aristote et saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Publications Universitaires de Louvain - Béatrice - Nauwelaerts, Louvain - Paris, 1957, pp. 93-174; C. PERA; M. D. CHENU; C. J. VANSTEENKISTE, *Le fonti del*

doctrinal controversies—,⁷ or which concern more the written text than the historical event —such as studies on the manuscript tradition,⁸ etc. Therefore, I will limit myself to dealing with those areas that I consider central in properly historical investigation on Thomas Aquinas: his biography, the authenticity of his writings, and their chronology.

2. BIOGRAPHY

a) *The Sources*

The main advance in biographical knowledge of Thomas Aquinas was via the diffusion of the respective historical sources. Among these are two main documents: the biography of William of Tocco and the proceedings of the process of canonization celebrated in Naples.

William of Tocco⁹ was a disciple of St. Thomas shortly before the death of the Saint in 1274. He remained dedicated to the memory of St. Thomas, and he was charged in 1317 with

pensiero di S. Tommaso d'Aquino nella 'Somma teologica', Marietti, Torino, 1979, 123 pp.; S. T. PINCKAERS, "The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas," in S. J. POPE (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, 2002, pp. 17-29; T. L. SMITH (ed.), *Aquinas' Sources*, St. Augustine's Press, South Bend [Indiana], 2002, 480 pp.

7. Cf., for instance, M. J. F. M. HOENEN, "Being and Thinking in the 'Correctorium fratris Thomae' and the 'Correctorium corruptorii Quare': Schools of Thought and Philosophical Methodology," in J. A. AERTSEN; ET ALII (eds.), *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin - New York, 2001, pp. 417-435; É. H. WÉBER, *L'homme en discussion à l'Université de Paris en 1270*, J. Vrin, Paris, 1970, 328 pp.

8. Cf., for example, C. LUNA, "L'édition léonine de saint Thomas d'Aquin: vers une méthode de critique textuelle et d'ecdotique," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 89 (2005), pp. 31-110.

9. For the following informations, cf. the historical introduction of C. LE BRUN-GOUANVIC (ed.), *'Ystoria sancti Thome de Aquino' de Guillaume de Tocco (1323). Édition critique, introduction et notes*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, 1996, especially pp. 10 ff.

composing a biographical memorial for the canonization process, similar to that which would be called today the *Positio* of the Postulation. Over the next few years, until his death circa 1323, he visited diverse places in Italy, gathering testimonies on the life and virtues of St. Thomas. The fruit of these testimonies is his *Ystoria sancti Thome de Aquino*, a document of which are known four successive redactions (“recensiones”), the last one immediately subsequent to the canonization of Saint Thomas in 1323, shortly before William’s death.

The biography of Tocco has had a certain diffusion. It had a Spanish translation in the 14th century.¹⁰ It was printed first in 1588,¹¹ and later by the Bollandists in 1668.¹² D. Prümmer published in 1912 the first modern scientific edition.¹³ In 1987, a critical edition appeared in the form of a doctoral thesis at the University of Montreal, by Claire Le Brun,¹⁴ who would publish it in 1996.¹⁵ This critical edition showed the various changes made by Tocco throughout his successive redactions of the text, up through the definitive fourth *recensio*, which had remained

10. L. G. ALONSO GETINO, “El primer manuscrito castellano sobre la vida y obras de Santo Tomás de Aquino,” *La Ciencia Tomista*, 74 (1922), pp. 161-167; GUILLERMO DE TOCCO, *Leyenda de Santo Tomás de Aquino (siglo XIV)*. Ed.: L. G. ALONSO GETINO, Tipografía de la Revista de Archivos, Madrid, 1924, 220 pp. This ancient version seems ignored by Le Brun, who follows Shoener.

11. Cf. C. LE BRUN-GOUANVIC (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 76 ff.

12. GUILLELMUS DE THOCO, “Vita S. Thomae,” in J. BOLLAND; G. HENSCHENIUS; D. PAPEBROCH (eds.), *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. 6: *Martii* t. 1, Antverpiae, 1668, pp. 657-686.

13. GUILLELMUS DE TOCCO, “Vita S. Thomae Aquinatis,” in D. M. PRÜMMER (ed.), *Fontes vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis notis historicis et criticis illustrati*, t. 2, Revue Thomiste. Supplement - Privat, Tolosae, 1912-1913, pp. 57-152.

14. C. LE BRUN, *Édition critique de l’“Ystoria sancti Thome de Aquino” de Guillaume de Tocco*, doctoral dissertation, Université de Montréal, 1987, 2 vols. The author follows H. V. SHOONER, *Listes anciennes des écrits de Thomas d’Aquin*, doctoral dissertation, Collège dominicain de Philosophie et de Théologie, Ottawa, 1974, pp. 230 ff.

15. C. LE BRUN GOUANVIC (ed.), “*Ystoria sancti Thome de Aquino*” de Guillaume de Tocco (1323). *Édition critique, introduction et notes*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, 1996, VIII+298 pp.

unpublished until the edition of Le Brun. One of these last changes, probably from 1323, is the attribution of the *Adoro te devote* to St. Thomas, “according to certain people”, says Tocco.¹⁶ It is the first time that this information appears.

Many of the early biographers of St. Thomas depend on Tocco, especially Bernard Gui¹⁷ and Peter Calo,¹⁸ whose works were also published by Prümmer. Historical investigation has reduced the importance given to their works. In fact, they add almost nothing of importance to Tocco, if we consider the last revision of his biography.¹⁹

The second highly important document for the biography of Thomas Aquinas depends on Tocco, namely the proceedings of the process of canonization celebrated in Naples in 1319. Most probably, William was in charge of selecting the witnesses whose information was most pertinent. He probably counted on the collaboration of his friend Bartholomew of Capua,²⁰ who was also a young friend of St. Thomas in Naples and, at the time of the canonization process, was nothing less than Chief Notary of the Kingdom of Sicily, something similar to a Minister of Justice. The testimony of Bartholomew is important, in particular, for the catalog of Thomist writings which were presented during the

16. *Ibidem*, pp. 197-198.

17. Cf. BERNARDUS GUIDONIS, “Vita Sancti Thomae Aquinatis,” in D. M. PRÜMMER (ed.), *Fontes vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis notis historicis et criticis illustrati*, t. 3, *Revue Thomiste. Supplement*, 8-10 (1925-1927), pp. 161-263; IDEM, “Cronica brevis de progressu temporis sancti Thomae”. Ed. J. A. ENDRES, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 29 (1908), p. 551; IDEM, “Flores chronicorum,” ad 1274, in J. D. GUIGNAUT; N. DE WAILLY (eds.), *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, t. 21, Imprimerie Impériale, Paris, 1855, pp. 702K-703B.

18. PETRUS CALO, “Vita S. Thomae Aquinatis,” in D. M. PRÜMMER (ed.), *Fontes vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis notis historicis et criticis illustrati*, t. 1, *Revue Thomiste. Supplement - Privat*, Tolosae, 1911, pp. 17-55.

19. Cf. C. LE BRUN-GOUANVIC (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 20-23.

20. *Ibidem*, pp. 8, 17, 25-27. On the close relation between Tocco and Bartholomew, vid. G. CAPPELLUTI, “Fra Pietro di Andria e i segretari di S. Tommaso,” *Memorie Domenicane. Nuova Serie*, 6 (1975), p. 159.

hearings, which I will discuss later in these pages.²¹ But in the proceedings of the Neapolitan process there are many other witnesses and informations of interest, and for a student of Thomas Aquinas it is advisable to read the complete document, published by the Bollandists and reedited by Laurent in 1937.²²

One should keep in mind that both the biography of Tocco and the Neapolitan process have their own aims, different from that which is of interest to a contemporary biographer. They try to prove the sanctity of Thomas Aquinas. With this aim, they contribute biographical events of great historical interest, but mostly they are dedicated to exposing the heroic virtues of St. Thomas, generally according to a pious and—in the case of Tocco and some other witnesses—learned mentality of the 14th century, which is different from ours. For that reason, it is natural that researchers have the task of selecting and of ordering these materials, to adapt them to a specifically historical purpose.

A different task is required with respect to the writings of another great early biographer, Tolomeo of Lucca.²³ He also knew St. Thomas at the end of his life, and he was even Aquinas's confessor, always conserving a great affection towards him. The interests of Tolomeo inclined towards history, and he provides us already with brief informations concerning Aquinas in the two

21. Lacking in the copy published by the Bollandists, this important passage of the testimony of Bartholomew was first published by Baluze in 1693. About this and other vicissitudes of the text, see H. V. SHOONER, *Listes cit.*, pp. 99-101.

22. M.-H. LAURENT (ed.), "Fontes vitae Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, 4: Processus canonizationis S. Thomae Neapoli (Texte établi d'après le ms. de Paris, B. N. Fonds lat. 3112)," *Revue Thomiste. Supplement*, 15-19 (1932-1936), pp. 265-510.

23. For Tolomeo's biography, see the introduction of B. SCHMEIDLER to his edition of THOLOMEI LUCENSIS *Annales*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores. Nova Series*, t. 8, 2nd ed., Weidmann, Berolini, 1955, pp. VII-XXI. See also A. DONDAINE, "Les 'opuscula fratris Thomae' chez Ptolémée de Lucques," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 31 (1961), pp. 165-169. More recent bibliography in E. PANELLA, "Rilettura del 'De operibus sex dierum' di Tolomeo dei Fiadoni da Lucca," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 63 (1993), p. 50, note 1.

preserved *recensiones* of his *Annales*.²⁴ But the first complete biographical profile of St. Thomas Aquinas is Tolomeo's *Historia ecclesiastica nova*, written between 1313 and 1316²⁵ and published by Muratori in 1727.²⁶ This document is prior, even, to the biography of Tocco, who began his work in 1317 and consulted precisely Tolomeo,²⁷ resident at that time in the pontifical court of Avignon. Tocco mentions the writings of Tolomeo and depends on them at some points, such as the catalog of Thomas's writings. However, whereas Tocco is writing hagiography, in order to prove the sanctity of Thomas, Tolomeo is an historian, who is concerned to describe the events in their order and context. For that reason, as mentioned before, the researcher does not first have the task of "filtering" Tolomeo to extract useful information, as was the case with the biography of Tocco, and with the process of canonization.

Here, the problem is different: Tolomeo of Lucca, towards 1315, was very old and had begun to suffer senile dementia, which would be the cause of his death some years later.²⁸ Forty years after the death of Thomas, it is not surprising that, in spite of his remarkable memory, there were names and events that Tolomeo of Lucca did not remember correctly. For example, he says that Thomas composed the *Quaestiones de potentia* at the end of his life, a contention which is nowadays rejected. Besides, the *Historia ecclesiastica* of Tolomeo is dated by reference to pontificates, so that the stages of Thomas's life are roughly tied to each Pontiff, although not with complete exactitude. Finally, Tolomeo, just as William of Sudbery and Bernard Gui after him, elaborated his listing of Thomist opuscula based on a bound collection dating

24. Cf. THOLOMEI LUCENSIS, *Annales* cit., ad 1274, pp. 176-177.

25. Cf. A. DONDAINE, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

26. The passages about Aquinas have been newly published by A. FERRUA (ed.), *S. Thomae Aquinatis vitae fontes praecipuae*, Ed. Domenicane, Alba, 1968, pp. 355-369. Those of the *Annales* are also found *ibidem*, pp. 371-372.

27. Cf. the testimony of Tocco himself in M. H. LAURENT (ed.), *Fontes vitae Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, 4: Processus canonizationis* cit., pp. 347-348.

28. Cf. the historical introduction of B. SCHMEIDLER (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. xx.

from the beginning of the 14th century, to which a fair number of spurious writings had been added. This error would propagate into Tolomeo's catalog, and later to Tocco and those who depend on him. Fr. Antoine Dondaine wrote a beautiful article on the matter in 1961, which contained a critical edition of the catalog of Thomas's writings composed by Tolomeo of Lucca.²⁹ In spite of the reservations resulting from his not always trustworthy memory, Tolomeo is the first author to produce a more or less ordered biography of St. Thomas, and it transmits unique information to us: for example, that St. Thomas was the author of the Office of Corpus Christi, or that he composed, while in Rome, a new commentary on the first book of the *Sentences*. The most recent investigations seem to confirm these affirmations of Tolomeo of Lucca, which —because of their originality and the errors of Tolomeo— were viewed with caution by contemporary critics.

Another very early source on the biography of Saint Thomas is the Dominican Nicholas Trevet, who writes his *Annales sex regum Angliae* some time after 1307 and before 1323. The passages relative to St. Thomas were published in 1723, and the complete work in 1845.³⁰ Nicholas knew and made use of excellent sources: probably, the *Annals* of Tolomeo and the *Vitae fratrum* of Frachet —which I will discuss shortly— among others. In particular, he seems to know the same catalog of Thomist writings used by Bartholomew of Capua in the Neapolitan process of canonization, which —as we will explain— belongs to the most reliable historical tradition. However, Trevet adds information of his own, which do not appear in any other place. The most famous and characteristic assertions are that Thomas produced six *quaestiones quodlibetales* in Paris and five in Italy. We know that at the beginning of the 14th century, the *quodlibeta* of St. Thomas were distributed in two groups, of six and five. However, it has

29. A. DONDAINE, "Les 'opuscula ...' cit., *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 31 (1961), pp. 142-203.

30. NICHOLAI TRIVETI *Annales sex regum Angliae, qui a comitibus Andegavensibus originem traxerunt* (A.D. M.C.XXXVI.-M.CCC.VII.) Ed. TH. HOG, Sumptibus Societatis [Historicae Anglicae], Londini, 1845.

been demonstrated that both groups were disputed in Paris. For decades, nobody paid attention to the information provided by Trevet, who seems so well informed in other respects. In defense of Nicholas, I would like to call attention to an aspect not considered before, perhaps for lack of an ability to verify his information. While, without a doubt, both groups of *quodlibeta* were disputed in Paris, it is possible and even probable that their final writing was delayed until a time when Thomas was less occupied. This seems to be the case for Quodlibet XII, which has been transmitted only in the form of rough notes, which were awaiting their final editing. So, it would be possible to interpret Nicholas Trevet as meaning that six of the *quodlibeta* were edited in their final form in Paris, and the other five in Italy. Specifically, the word *determinare* used by Trevet could have the special sense of “finishing” the *disputatio* by means of producing the final written version. Why do I highlight this possibility, which might seem gratuitous? I do so because the provisional results of my study on the chronological evolution of the Thomist lexicon reach the very same conclusion. They are, I repeat, provisional results, but the coincidence with an early witness, with such excellent information as Trevet, cannot fail to be striking.

The information of Trevet, apart from reliability, have a limited value due to their being very brief. A similar case occurs with both of the earliest authors who wrote on the life of Thomas Aquinas. The first, and most trustworthy, is Gerald of Frachet. Fr. Antoine Dondaine has written an interesting article³¹ concerning the circumstances that led Frachet to discuss certain anecdotes of the life of Thomas. Dondaine suggests that Gerald had the idea of gathering in one book edifying anecdotes of the lives of Dominicans who lived in those first decades of the Order. This would have been the source of his *Vitae fratrum*,³² the very first

31. A. DONDAINE, “Saint Pierre martyr. Études,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 23 (1953), pp. 67-162.

32. GERARDI DE FRACHETO *Vitae fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum necnon Cronica Ordinis ab anno MCCIII usque ad MCCLIV*. Ed. B. M. REICHERT;

document where appear some anecdotes of Aquinas's life, without naming him explicitly. Gerald would probably have gathered them in May of 1256, when the General Chapter of the Order met in Paris, and Thomas, in the midst of great opposition to the mendicants, had just been promoted to Master in Theology. Another Dominican, Thomas of Cantimpré, would write a similar work,³³ with a parallel anecdote about St. Thomas, but very exaggerated.

Aside from these authors, there exist dozens of historical documents of all sorts which make reference to Thomas Aquinas or his nearer relatives. Fr. Laurent published an excellent collection in 1937³⁴ and since then little has been added: as an example, the passages of the sermons of Remigio Fiorentino with his personal memories of Thomas Aquinas.³⁵ There are other known mentions to Aquinas not included by Laurent in his collection, even if present in important documents,³⁶ for they add nothing to what we already know. The documents published by Laurent strengthen, summarize or complete the biographical profile provided by the first biographers. One brief enumeration can give an idea of the type of information contained in Laurent's precious collection: the two letters written by Pope Alexander IV to the Chancellor of the University of Paris in 1256, referring to the promotion of St. Thomas to Master in Theology; the proceedings of the actions undertaken by the Holy See against those who were against this

J. J. BERTHIER, *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, 1, E. Charpentier & J. Schoonjans, Lovanii, 1896.

33. THOMAS CANTIMPRATANUS, *Miraculorum et exemplorum memorabilium sui temporis libri duo*, Duaci, 1597; IDEM, *Bonum universale de apibus*, Baltazar Bellerus, Duaci, 1627. Frachet's and Cantimpré's passages about Thomas can be found also in A. FERRUA (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 379-381, and 387-388.

34. M. H. LAURENT (ed.), *Fontes vitae Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, t. 6: Documenta*, Revue Thomiste, Saint Maximin [Var], 1937.

35. Edited by E. PANELLA, "Note di biografia domenicana tra XIII e XIV secolo," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 54 (1984), pp. 264-268.

36. For instance, STEPHANUS DE SALANIACO; BERNARDUS GUIDONIS, *De quattuor in quibus Deus Praedicatorum Ordinem insignivit*. Ed. TH. KAEPPELLI, *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, 22, Institutum Historicum Fratrum Praedicatorum, Romae, 1949.

promotion; another pontifical letter, of 1259, on the disturbances against Thomas, which continued three years after his promotion to the degree of Master; some notes referring to the designation of Thomas as General Preacher of the Dominican Province of Rome; etc. The most attractive aspect of these documents for the historian is that, often, they constitute official documents that attest highly contemporary events.³⁷ They have, thus, a great reliability. On the other hand, it is impossible to produce a biographical profile of Thomas only on this solid base, because it is too fragmentary. The earliest biographers remain a most valuable complement to these writings.

I mentioned above that these sources are the fundamental basis that has made possible the development of historical studies on Thomas Aquinas. However, their value is based on their *antiquity*; for that reason, it is possible to ask what they contribute to our discussion of *contemporary* research. The answer is that, although many of these sources were known by the main historians of recent centuries —Oudin,³⁸ Echard,³⁹ Touron,⁴⁰ de Rubeis,⁴¹ or Berjón,⁴²

37. Examples of the sources used by Laurent are: H. DENIFLE; AE. CHATELAIN (eds.), *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, t. 1: *Ab anno MCC usque ad annum MCCLXXXVI*, Ex typis fratrum Delalain, Parisiis, 1899; B. M. REICHERT (ed.), *Acta capitulorum generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica, 3, Typographia Polyglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fidei, Romae, 1898; Th. KAEPPELI; A. DONDAINE (eds.), *Acta capitulorum provincialium provinciae Romanae (1243-1344)*, Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica, 20, Institutum Historicum Fratrum Praedicatorum, Romae, 1941.

38. CASIMIRI OUDINI *Commentarius de scriptoribus Ecclesiae antiquis illorumque scriptis tam impressis quam manuscriptis ...*, 3 vols., M. G. Weidmann, Lipsiae, 1722.

39. J. QUÉTIF; J. ECHARD, *Scriptores Ordinis praedicatorum recensiti, notisque historicis et criticis illustrati, opus quo singulorum vita, praeclareque gesta referuntur, chronologia insuper, seu tempus quo quisque floruit certo statuitur*, 2 vols., J. B. Ch. Ballard & N. Simart, Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1719-1721.

40. A. TOURON, *La vie de S. Thomas d'Aquin, de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs, Docteur de l'Eglise. Avec un exposé de sa doctrine et de ses ouvrages*, Chez Gisse, Bordelet, Savoye et Henry, Paris, 1737. Proof of the importance of this work is the early Italian translation by De Rubeis: *La Vita di S. Tommaso d'Aquino dell'ordine dei FF. predicatori, dottor della Chiesa, colla sposizione della dottrina e dell'opere di lui scritta in lingua francese dal R.P. Antonio*

for instance—, until quite recently their reliability and relative weight as historical evidences was not clear. Even in 1911, as great a scholar as Prümmer could be mistaken when thinking that Peter Calo was the oldest and most important biographer of Saint Thomas, the source for Tocco, Gui, etc.⁴³ Only in the 1920's — although with precedents—⁴⁴ would be published definitive critical studies on the order and relative importance of these biographical sources: thus, the articles of Pelster⁴⁵ in 1920 and Janssens⁴⁶ in 1924. Certainly, there have been later discoveries: for instance, the already mentioned fourth *recensio* of William of Tocco's *Ystoria*, that showed that information supposedly due to Bernard Gui was, in fact, based on that final version of Tocco's work. But, even with these exceptions, the most important bases for the knowledge of Aquinas's biography were definitely laid after 1920.

The instrumental condition for these studies, and for the consequent advance in historical knowledge, was —as I alluded to before— the general diffusion of these sources. The main

Touron religioso dello stesso ordine e tradotta nell'idioma italiano, Occhi, Venezia, 1753, 2 vols.; and the also contemporary Spanish version: *Vida histórica de Santo Tomás de Aquino, de la Orden de Predicadores, Doctor de la Iglesia, con exposición de su doctrina y de sus obras*. Transl. J. DE VELASCO, Imprenta Real, Madrid, 1795, 2 vols.

41. I. F. B. M. DE RUBEIS, *De gestis et scriptis ac doctrina Sancti Thomae Aquinatis dissertationes criticae et apologeticae*, J. B. Pasquali, Venetiis, 1750, XVI+316 pp.

42. A. BERJÓN Y VÁZQUEZ REAL, *Estudios críticos acerca de las obras de Santo Tomás de Aquino*, Est. Tip. de la Viuda é Hijos de Tello, Madrid, 1899, 409 pp.

43. Cf. Prümmer's introduction to his edition of PETRUS CALO, "Vita S. Thomae Aquinatis," in D. M. PRÜMMER (ed.), *Fontes vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis* cit.

44. For example, P. MANDONNET, "Pierre Calo et la légende de S. Thomas," *Revue Thomiste*, 20 (1912), pp. 508-516.

45. F. PELSTER, "Die älteren Biographien des hl. Thomas von Aquino. Eine kritische Studie," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 44 (1920), pp. 242-274, 366-397.

46. E. JANSSENS, "Les premiers historiens de la vie de Saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue Néoscholastique de Philosophie*, 25 (1924), pp. 201-214, 325-352, 452-476.

instrument of this task, in my opinion, was the *Supplement* of the *Revue Thomiste*, which from 1911 to 1937 published the six volumes of the *Fontes vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis notis historicis et criticis illustrati*, published first by Prümmer and later by Laurent.⁴⁷ By means of the *Revue Thomiste*, the biographies of Tocco, Gui, and Calo, along with the documents of the canonization process, and the various texts collected by Laurent, were accessible to all in a comfortable, reliable, and partly annotated edition. It is true that certain other lesser sources were not included there. Yet, this publication and the subsequent critical studies permitted that a group of historians would give to us, in the following years, a definitive advance in our historical knowledge about Thomas Aquinas.

b) *The Biographers*

One of the earliest critics of the relative value of the sources published in the *Revue Thomiste* was Pierre Mandonnet, who in 1920 wrote the first—if I am not mistaken—complete biographical framework of St. Thomas in the light of these publications.⁴⁸ Shortly after, in 1925, the publisher of the collection, D. Prümmer, produced a similar work.⁴⁹

47. The complete series of documents was reprinted as a book: D. M. PRÜMMER; M. H. LAURENT (eds.), *Fontes vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis notis historicis et criticis illustrati*, repr. 1st ed., Privat, Tolosae, 1937, 6 vols., 532 pp. Later on, A. Ferrua published another useful collection, with some important differences in the selection of documents, and using the standard Latin spelling: A. FERRUA (ed.), *S. Thomae Aquinatis vitae fontes praecipuae* cit., 411 pp.

48. P. MANDONNET, "Chronologie sommaire de la vie et des écrits de saint Thomas," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 9 (1920), pp. 142-152.

49. D. PRÜMMER, "De chronologia vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis," in S. SZABÓ (ed.), *Xenia Thomistica*, t. 3: *Tractatus historico-criticus continens*, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, Romae, 1925, pp. 1-8.

Following this series of publications, a young Dominican, Angelus Walz, presented in 1927 as a doctoral thesis in the *Angelicum* his *Delineatio vitae S. Thomae de Aquino*.⁵⁰ Along the following years, the study of Fr. Walz would mature, until it became the first biography of quasi-universal reference. While the biography published in 1941 by Taurisano⁵¹ was, to a certain degree, the most up-to-date work; nevertheless —perhaps due to political circumstances— it never enjoyed the same number of translations that would end up giving universal prominence to the work of Walz, whose biography of St. Thomas would be published first in Italian, in 1945;⁵² it would be later translated to English in the United States, in 1951;⁵³ it had a German edition in 1953;⁵⁴ and, finally, in 1962,⁵⁵ arrived the French version prepared by P. Novarina, which would be the one that truly would prevail: this is also probably due to postwar circumstances.

The success, and the set of translations that followed, would be repeated in 1974 with the biography of Fr. James Weisheipl,⁵⁶ which replaced the one of Walz as the preferred reference point.

In addition, in 1993, the biography of Fr. Jean-Pierre Torrell⁵⁷ was published, soon translated into the major languages, and that

50. A. M. WALZ, *Delineatio vitae S. Thomae de Aquino*, Pontificio Collegio Angelico, Romae, 1927. Cf. IDEM, “Chronotaxis vitae et operum S. Thomae de Aquino,” *Angelicum*, 16 (1939), pp. 463-473. In 1925, Walz had published already his article “De Alberti Magni et Sancti Thomae Aquinatis personali ad invicem relatione,” *Angelicum*, 2 (1925), pp. 299-319, and also his study “De Aquinatis e vita discessu,” in S. SZABÓ (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 41-55.

51. I. TAURISANO, *San Tommaso d'Aquino*, Marietti, Torino, 1941.

52. A. M. WALZ, *San Tommaso d'Aquino. Studi biografici sul Dottore Angelico*, Edizioni Liturgiche, Roma, 1945, 238 pp.

53. IDEM, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: A Biographical Study*, The Newman Press, Westminster [Maryland], 1951, xi+254 pp.

54. IDEM, *Thomas von Aquin. Lebensgang und Lebenswerk des Fürsten der Scholastik*, Thomas Morus Verlag, Basel, 1953, 152 pp.

55. IDEM, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Ed. P. NOVARINA, Publications Universitaires de Louvain, Louvain - Paris, 1962, 245 pp.

56. J. A. WEISHEIPL, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works*, 1st ed., Doubleday, Garden City [New York], 1974, xii+464 pp.; 2nd ed., The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 1983, xii+486 pp.

immediately became the new reference point, that has lasted until today.

It is worth considering several points about this succession of biographies.

In the first place, we recall that there are more than one hundred books published in the 20th century that are biographies or introductions of a historical character to St. Thomas Aquinas. Very few of them are translated to other languages. A lesser number have been translated, like those just mentioned, to all the western languages. Such success indicates the quality of these selected works.

Allow me a very condensed judgment of them: the quality of the biography of Walz is found in its properly historical and geographic contextualization of the life of St. Thomas. Of the three authors, Walz is the only one that is primarily a historian, and—in my opinion—the value of his work has not been surpassed by his successors. On the other hand, Walz does not discuss the doctrinal questions thoroughly: both Weisheipl and Torrell surpass him in this sense. Finally, the work of Walz, while it continues to be valid in the basic scheme of Aquinas's biography—that I will discuss shortly—it has nevertheless aged in regards to the findings of the other two thematic nuclei of the Thomist historiography: the authenticity and the chronology of his writings.

On the other hand, the work of Weisheipl, according to what he himself says in the prologue, is not the result of years of work as a biographer, but only of his desire to render a personal tribute to St. Thomas in 1974, on the seventh centenary of his death. However, the scientific quality of Fr. Weisheipl, one of the greatest students of St. Albert the Great in the 20th century, is visible, such that his work nobly meets the purpose of informing us about the biography of Aquinas. Weisheipl, while does not make use of all of the excellent bibliography available, does deal with the

57. J. P. TORRELL, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin. Sa personne et son oeuvre*, 1st ed., Éditions Universitaires de Fribourg - Éditions du Cerf, Fribourg [Suisse] - Paris, 1993, xviii+592 pp.; 2nd ed., 2003, xviii+646 pp.

most important works. His main contribution, in my opinion, is his great narrative quality. There are, perhaps, no other biographies of St. Thomas as pleasant as the one by Weisheipl. In this, it remains unsurpassed.

Finally, the biography of Torrell is also not that of a professional historian. As the author tells us, he wrote this book due to the circumstance, rather fortuitous, of having had to write the article “Thomas d’Aquin” for the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*: that is precisely the reason of the special subject of the second volume of his work, “Thomas Aquinas, Spiritual Master.” However, Fr. Torrell has an exceptional knowledge of the Thomist bibliography, and his book serves to bring the reader up to date as to the state of historical studies (except, perhaps, for specific subjects and specialized readers). This is, I think, the greatness of this work, which justifies its present position of reference.

Based on what I have said, I would like to draw a conclusion: the works of biographical reference, for many decades, have not surpassed one another from the strictly biographical point of view, because they depend on the same sources, and these have been known and, in general, properly valued from the 1920’s onward, or if preferred, from the publication in 1937 of the final volume of the *Fontes vitae*. From another point of view, it could be said that all of these works surpass one another by means of their own particular merits, which in general have remained valid. On the other hand, the modern works far improve on the older in the fields of the authenticity and of the chronology of Aquinas’s writings, a fact that indicates a *certain* independence—I emphasize “certain”—of these thematic nuclei with respect to the biographical sources, which I will comment upon later.

Something similar occurs with some old publications of prominent scholars which deal with *specific* aspects of the life of St. Thomas. An example is the long series of seven articles published between 1924 and 1925 by Mandonnet on Thomas

Aquinas's time as a Dominican novice:⁵⁸ his entering the Order, his confinement by his family, his studies in Paris and Cologne under the guidance of St. Albert the Great. This skillful investigation, although outdated in some points, continues being an unsurpassed reference for this stage in the life of St. Thomas, and its full content is not found in the books that we have commented. This could equally be said of the studies on the family and childhood of Thomas written in 1923 by Pelster⁵⁹ or in 1901 and 1924 by Scandone.⁶⁰ Similarly, there are articles of Walz on concrete points of Aquinas's biography that are not included completely in his book: thus, for example, his articles on Thomas's stay in the papal court of Urban IV, published in 1952;⁶¹ or on Aquinas's presence in the papal court of Viterbo, published in 1955;⁶² or on his trip to the Council of Lyon, published in 1961;⁶³ etc. And, in addition, there is an entire book by Walz dedicated

58. P. MANDONNET, "Thomas d'Aquin, novice prêcheur (1244-1246)," *Revue Thomiste*, 29 (1924), pp. 243-267, 370-390, 529-547; 30 (1925), pp. 3-24, 222-249, 393-416, 489-533.

59. F. PELSTER, "I parenti prossimi di S. Tommaso d'Aquino," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 74 (1923), pp. 299-313; IDEM, "La giovinezza di S. Tommaso d'Aquino. Studio critico sulle fonte," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 74 (1923), pp. 385-400; IDEM, "La famiglia di S. Tommaso d'Aquino. Studi sulle fonti," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 74 (1923), pp. 401-410.

60. F. SCANDONE, *Documenti e congetture sulla famiglia e sulla patria di S. Tommaso d'Aquino*, M. D. D'Auria, Napoli, 1901; IDEM, "La vita, la famiglia e la patria di S. Tommaso," in *San Tommaso d'Aquino O. P. Miscellanea storico-artistica*, A. Manuzio, Roma, 1924, pp. 1-110. It could be said the same of many other articles, such as, for instance, P. MANDONNET, "La Carême de S. Thomas d'Aquin à Naples (1273)," in *San Tommaso d'Aquino O. P. Miscellanea storico-artistica* cit., pp. 195-212; IDEM, "Thomas d'Aquin lecteur à la curie romaine. Chronologie du séjour (1259-1268)," in S. SZABÓ (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 9-40; etc.

61. A. WALZ, "L'Aquinate a Orvieto," *Angelicum*, 29 (1952), pp. 176-190.

62. IDEM, "L'Aquinate a Viterbo," *Memorie Domenicane*, 72 (1955), pp. 189-202.

63. IDEM, "Le dernier voyage de saint Thomas d'Aquin. Itinéraires de saint Thomas," *Nova et Vetera*, 36 (1961), pp. 289-297. Cf. IDEM, "Wege des Aquinaten," *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 77 (1958), pp. 221-228.

to the places in which St. Thomas lived or stayed⁶⁴, which are only tangentially touched upon in his biography of Aquinas.

I have tried to show you, then, a double paradox: on the one hand, the best biographical publications do not subsume one another, with each usually containing additional information that does not appear in later works; on the other hand, those same publications share the same fundamental biographical nucleus, at least since 1920 or, for some aspects clarified by Laurent's collection of documents, since 1937. The permanence of the basic evidence and the richness of the posterior historical research is due to the meritorious task of the diffusion of the sources and their proper critical analysis.

c) *Periodization*

Which would be, then, the basic scheme of the biography of St. Thomas, which has been accepted for years? We could summarize it as follows:⁶⁵

Thomas was born at the beginning of 1225 or shortly before, probably in the castle of Roccasecca, to the north of Naples, which was imperial territory at that time. The younger son of a noble and numerous family, his parents sent him, when he reached five years old, to the monastery in Montecassino, where he learned his first letters.

When he turned fourteen years old, he was sent to the University of Naples. There he obtained an early knowledge of the doctrines of Aristotle and Avicenna, which were beginning to be assimilated in the West.

64. IDEM, *Luoghi di San Tommaso*, Herder, Roma, 1961.

65. Cf. the biographical works of reference mentioned before, especially A. M. WALZ, *San Tommaso d'Aquino* cit.; J. A. WEISHEIPL, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino* cit.; J. P. TORRELL, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin* cit.

Still more determinative of the life of Thomas Aquinas was his contact with the Dominicans of Naples. From them he discovered his vocation to constant study and unconditional teaching of the truth. But, as usually happens with new institutions in the Church, the recent Order of Preaching was seen with distrust even by excellent Christians, such as the mother of Thomas, who was head of the family at that time. Received as a novice at the beginning of 1244, his superiors decided to secretly send him to France, a powerful kingdom where the influences of the Aquinas family in the imperial court would not have any effect. As is natural, this did not please the family. When they discovered the plan, the mother ordered him detained, and locked him up in a castle belonging to her estate. After approximately a year, his family freed him, and he was able to continue his way to Paris.

In Montecassino, St. Thomas assimilated the old monastic culture. In Naples, the new Greek and Arab philosophy. During his forced confinement, he assimilated the Bible, the main object of study for traditional theology. He still lacked a synthetic vision, which Thomas would find in Paris, which was then the most important city of Europe and the seat of its main University. There in 1245, St. Albert the Great had been assigned to occupy a Dominican chair of Theology. A dense and erudite thinker, the most prestigious of his time, Albert soon discovered Thomas, and in 1248 he took Thomas to Cologne in order to found a *studium* of the Order. From then until 1252, Thomas learned from this exceptional teacher, who would cultivate his privileged intelligence and would bring him to maturity. That year St. Albert was asked to designate a candidate for the Dominican Chair of Theology in Paris: he had to insist that Thomas, at that point only 27 years old, would be accepted.

According to the established custom in the University of Paris, St. Thomas commented on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard: it would be his second longest work, and in it the characteristics of the Thomist doctrine are already found. In April or May of 1256, he obtained the degree of Master in Theology. During the following years he composed his *Quaestiones disputatae de*

veritate and commented on the *De Trinitate* of Boethius. Supported by his already excellent prestige, he took part in the defense of the mendicant orders, which were being attacked by large part of the university faculty. Perhaps the tensions of this long controversy caused his return to Italy, towards the end of 1259.

In 1260, Thomas was named General Preacher of the Roman Province of his Order. A year later, Urban IV acceded to the Papacy, and brought together a select group of men of science in his court in Orvieto. Along with them, St. Thomas collaborated in laying the intellectual foundations for the reintegration to the Catholicism of the Eastern Churches, which was obtained transitorily few years later. His *Catena aurea*, composed by express desire of the Pope, marks a landmark in the progressive assimilation of the Greek theological tradition by Latin theology. Also by order of Urban IV, who instituted the solemnity of Corpus Christi, Thomas composed perhaps its liturgical office. He began to receive consultations from all over Europe, which dealt with extremely varied subjects, as the treatment due to the Jews or the interest due for sales which allowed postponed payments.

Urban died at the end of 1264, and Thomas was ordered the following year to found a Dominican *studium* in Rome. There he initiated the *Summa Theologiae*, his greatest work and the most classic exhibition of theological science. Also dating from this time are some of his writings of greater speculative depth, like the *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*. He initiated, in addition, his commentaries on the works of Aristotle. For this undertaking, he used the new translations of William of Moerbeke: Thomas was, at the very least, a most privileged recipient of his works.

In 1269, Aquinas returns to his chair in the University of Paris, to take part in the second antimendicant controversy and to fight against the so-called *Latin Averroism*. Meanwhile, and until he died, Aquinas also continued his commentaries on Aristotle, his writing of the *Summa Theologiae*, and expounded the Pauline corpus in masterful classes. Three years later, his intervention in

Paris had transformed the intellectual atmosphere of the University, and he returned to Italy.

Thomas established a chair of Theology in the convent of Naples, where he would produce his last writings. There, in addition, he carries out pastoral work in service to the town: according to contemporary witnesses, the entire city went to listen to his preaching in the cathedral.

Twenty years of incessant work, with days of many hours and part of his nights dedicated to prayer, nevertheless does not seem to have left him tired. But, around the 6th of December of 1273, he underwent an intense inner experience, and his health declined quickly: *In comparison with that which has been revealed me*, he had to confess to his secretary, *everything that I have written seems to me like straw*. On his way to the II Council of Lyon, he passed away in the monastery of Fossanova, on the 7th of March of 1274. He was 49 years old.

This constitutes, in general terms, the scheme common to all the contemporary biographies, derived from the best knowledge of the main sources. But, as I also have mentioned to you, based on this common structure, the various biographies take different forms. These complements are due, in good part, to the extremely extensive field of the historical study, that is not limited specifically to the biography of Aquinas. To give some examples, there is research on the intellectual life of the Dominican Order in the Medieval Age;⁶⁶ on the terminology of the medieval university;⁶⁷ on the secretaries of St. Thomas;⁶⁸ etc. The field is immense and we can not deal with it here even in a summary way.

66. Cf., for instance, W. A. HINNEBUSCH, *The History of the Dominican Order: Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500*, Alba House, New York, 1966-1973, 2 vols.

67. Cf., for example, O. WEJERS, *Terminologie des Universités au XIII^e siècle*, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, Roma, 1987, XLII+437 pp.

68. Especially A. DONDAINE, *Secrétaires de Saint Thomas*, Editori di S. Tommaso, Roma, 1956, 2 vols.

3. AUTHENTICITY OF THE WRITINGS ATTRIBUTED TO AQUINAS

On the other hand, it is necessary to review, even if briefly, the other two great nuclei of contemporary historical investigation: the authenticity of Thomistic writings and their chronology. These are the two fields where it is possible to find clear advances in contemporary historical studies. This, obviously, indicates a variation in method, since—as I have mentioned—the biographical sources are common ground for all studies. The advance, then, comes from another source: mainly, as I will show next, from the earliest catalogs of the Thomistic corpus, and from the analysis of the manuscript tradition.

The preparation and use of catalogues to establish what works were composed by St. Thomas is ancient: the oldest copy that we have is, probably, from around 1297⁶⁹ or perhaps 1293.⁷⁰ If we consider the official lists of books for sale at the University of Paris, that date is pushed back to 1275, approximately.⁷¹ However, the various catalogs differ from one other, so that their use as proofs was not always trustworthy. The great change, in my opinion, began to occur in 1899, when Antonio Berjón recompiled most of the oldest catalogs and compared them to each other, in order to establish the authenticity (or not) of writings traditionally attributed to St. Thomas.⁷² The result remarkably improves upon

69. S. THOMAE DE AQUINO *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, t. 40: *Introductio generalis. Les opuscules de Saint Thomas*, Ad Sanctae Sabinae, Romae, 1969, p. VI, note 8.

70. This was the reading of Shooner: cf. J. P. TORRELL, "La pratique pastorale d'un théologien du XIII^e siècle. Thomas d'Aquin predicateur," *Revue Thomiste*, 82 (1982), p. 14, note 6.

71. Cf. J. DESTREZ, *Études critiques sur les oeuvres de saint Thomas d'Aquin d'après la tradition manuscrite*, t. 1, J. Vrin, Paris, 1933, p. 63, n. 3. See also the introduction of P. M. GILS to the Leonine edition of *De malo*, p. 3*, n. 8.

72. Cf. A. BERJÓN Y VÁZQUEZ REAL, *Estudios críticos* cit. The precedents of this methodology begin in the 17th century, with the Spanish scholar Pedro de Alva y Astorga, according to H. V. SHOONER, *Listes anciennes* cit., p. 1-2. Oddly enough, Shooner, who has known the work of Berjón, ignores him completely in his history of this method: cf. *ibidem*, p. 2.

the collection of Aquinas's works published in Parma⁷³ and Paris⁷⁴ a few decades before, or the catalogue of the contemporary great scholar Ulysse Chevalier,⁷⁵ although it has some small —and easily explainable— errors.

A few years later, in 1909, Pierre Mandonnet published a series of eight articles,⁷⁶ with similar content as that of Berjón (who, oddly enough, is not even mentioned). Mandonnet increased the number of analyzed catalogs, and he grouped them, establishing families according to their mutual dependency. With great shrewdness, he emphasized the special value of the catalog presented in the process of canonization by Bartholomew of Capua, the Chief Notary of the Kingdom of Sicily and friend of the Postulator William of Tocco. For decades, and under the influence of Mandonnet, this catalog would be considered the “official” amongst scholars.⁷⁷ Its main peculiarities are, first, that it is very sparse, and second that its author seems to have reliable knowledge of the intervention of one or several other secretaries of St. Thomas. With very strict criteria, and —according to scholarly opinion today— correctly, Mandonnet defended the authenticity of

73. Cf. THOMAE DE AQUINO *Opera omnia ad fidem optimarum editionum accurate recognita*, Typis Petri Fiaccadori, Parmae, 1852-1869, 24 vols.

74. Cf. THOMAE DE AQUINO *Opera omnia ...* Ed.: S. E. FRETTE; P. MARÉ, Apud Ludovicum Vivès, Parisiis, 1871-1879, 32 vols.

75. Cf. U. CHEVALIER, *Catalogue critique des oeuvres de St. Thomas d'Aquin*, 2nd ed., Sibillat, Romans, 1888, 16 pp.

76. Cf. P. MANDONNET, “Des écrits authentiques de Saint Thomas d'Aquin,” *Revue Thomiste*, 17 (1909), pp. 38-55, 155-181, 257-274, 441-455, 502-573, 678-691; 18 (1910), pp. 62-82, 289-307. It was published shortly afterwards as a book, promptly improved and reedited, that became the edition of reference: *Des écrits authentiques de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Revue Thomiste, Toulouse, 1910, 142 pp.; 2nd ed., Imprimerie de l'Oeuvre de Saint-Paul, Fribourg [Suisse], 1910, 158 pp.

77. Cf., for instance, the now obsolete P. SYNAVE, “Le catalogue officiel des oeuvres de S. Thomas d'Aquin. Critique - Origine - Valeur,” *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 3 (1928), pp. 25-103.

writings contained in this catalog, and rejected, except for very solid reasons, any works absent from this list.⁷⁸

In 1931, Martin Grabmann published a similar study,⁷⁹ an improved edition of the one he had published in 1920.⁸⁰ Grabmann was less strict than Mandonnet in his selection of authentic works, but contributed documents of extreme importance: two catalogs conserved in Prague, of content very similar to that of Bartholomew of Capua.⁸¹ Years later, and as I mentioned before, one of this ancient catalogues was dated circa 1297 (perhaps even 1293), and the other to a similar date. This moves back by no less than 20 years the origin of the catalog used by Bartholomew in the canonization process. His list was no longer the “official” catalog, prepared for the canonical process, but it was found even oldest.

In the end, this family of catalogs, completed with some other elements that I will mention shortly, has provided the main basis for determining the works of St. Thomas. The clearest sample of this is the introduction placed by the Leonine editors at the beginning of their edition of Aquinas’s *opuscula*, in 1969.⁸² In this brief exposition, that sets the ground for the selection of the authentic *opuscula* of Aquinas to be edited, the alleged catalogs and ancient collections are precisely those used by Grabmann in 1931: a remarkable fact, because the Leonine Commission was able to perform a much more complete tracking of manuscripts,⁸³

78. Cf., for instance, the criteria of the Leonine editors in S. THOMAE DE AQUINO *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, t. 40 cit., p. III-X.

79. M. GRABMANN, *Die Werke des hl. Thomas von Aquin. Eine literarhistorische Untersuchung und Einführung*, Aschendorff, Münster in Westfalen, 1931, XV+372 pp.

80. M. GRABMANN, *Die echten Schriften des hl. Thomas von Aquin. Auf Grund der alten Kataloge und der handschriftlichen Überlieferung festgestellt*, Aschendorff, Münster in Westfalen, 1920, VIII+275 pp.

81. M. GRABMANN, *Die Werke* cit., pp. 91-99.

82. Cf. S. THOMAE DE AQUINO *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, t. 40 cit., p. III-X.

83. H. F. DONDAINE; H. V. SHOONER, *Codices manuscripti operum Thomae de Aquino*, t. 1, Commissio Leonina, Romae, 1967; H. V. SHOONER, t. 2, 1973; IDEM, t. 3, Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal, Montréal - Paris, 1985. The

and Shooner even produced his splendid doctoral thesis on these old lists of Thomist writings in 1971.⁸⁴

The use of the ancient catalogs has been a great help, indeed, to find which writings attributed to Aquinas are truly authentic. However, some doubts remain. Occasionally, in the ancient catalogs, some writings of St. Thomas are alluded only in a generic, imprecise way: thus, for instance, the sermons, that are only mentioned as a group. There are also writings mentioned by other relevant sources, that in the catalogs are not mentioned at all. In such situations, is required a study case by case of the manuscript tradition, the sources employed, the doctrine expounded, etc. The results are convincing in some cases, in others not so much.

It is important to find new ways to clarify the remaining doubtful cases; and, for this, the first biographers of Aquinas, our main source of information about his life, have been found unreliable. The reason is that their catalogs depend on some ancient collections of Thomas's writings, and the analysis by the Leonine Commission has shown that, beginning already in the first years of the 14th century, new —and surely inauthentic— *opuscula* were being added quite indiscriminately to them.⁸⁵ These contaminated compilations were copied, extending the attribution errors. The consequence is that the primitive biographical sources are not trustworthy, as far as the authenticity of Thomist *opuscula* is concerned. For that reason, as I indicated above, while the strictly biographical scheme of St. Thomas is based fundamentally on the diffusion and criticism of these sources, the most recent biographies far surpass the older ones in regards to the authenticity

following volumes are being prepared presently, although the basic work is already done.

84. Cf. H. V. SHOONER, *Listes anciennes* cit.

85. Cf. S. THOMAE DE AQUINO *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, t. 40 cit., p. III-X.

of Thomistic writings, because the study of the manuscript tradition, in particular, continues to shed new light on the subject.⁸⁶

A promising methodology of general utility in this field of the authenticity of Aquinas's works derives from computer science and statistics. Specifically, Fr. R. Busa's *Index Thomisticus* allows to perform sophisticated stylometric studies for establishing the Thomist authenticity (or not) of a writing,⁸⁷ as well as its relative chronology, which I will discuss next. I expect that this way of study will develop to become one of our main sources of knowledge in these regards.

4. THE CHRONOLOGY OF AQUINAS'S WRITINGS

It remains to touch upon the field of the chronology of Thomistic works, in which even today we continue to make advances. There exists, of course, the testimony of the sources, but this is relatively sparse and not always trustworthy. The primitive catalogs have almost nothing to say on the date of composition of the works. The study of the manuscript tradition occasionally gives some data, but rarely. The comparison of mutual influences, sometimes easily deceptive, is also sparing in its results. In these conditions, the fundamental advance of the 20th century, which has made possible a great progress in this field of the chronology of Aquinas's works, has been the criterion of sources.⁸⁸

86. In this field, it is particularly expected the next publication of Fr. A. OLIVA, *Les débuts de l'enseignement de Thomas d'Aquin et sa conception de la Sacra Doctrina. Édition du prologue de son Commentaire des Sentences de Pierre Lombard*, J. Vrin, Paris, 2006, 432 pp.

87. Cf., for example, E. NORVELLE, *The Authorship of the 'Roman Commentary': Stylometric and Semantic Approaches to Authorship Identification*, Master's thesis, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, 2005, ix+137 pp.

88. As instances of the intensive use of this methodology, see R. A. GAUTHIER, "Introduction historique," in ST. THOMAS D'AQUIN, *Contra Gentiles. Livre premier*, P. Lethielleux, Paris, 1961, pp. 7-123; and P. MARC, *Introductio*, in S. THOMAE AQUINATIS *Liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium*

There are works contemporary to St. Thomas, and used by him in some of his writings, whose date of composition is known. The most famous of these are, perhaps, the translations of Greek commentators on Aristotle made by William of Moerbeke,⁸⁹ of whom St. Thomas was one of the first users. Therefore, if, for example, we know that Moerbeke, in the colophon of his translation of the commentary to the *De anima* of Themistius, mentions the date of the 22nd of November of 1267,⁹⁰ it is very probable that the works of St. Thomas that use this translation are later than that date: very probable, because there are cases in which Moerbeke had produced a previous and fragmentary version, as is known to be the case with his translation of the commentary on the *De caelo* by Simplicius.⁹¹

By this route, researchers have been able to fix a “terminus a quo” for many of St. Thomas’s works. Another method, which can add a possible terminus *ante quem*, is the alternation in the use of sources. The most famous case, although not the only one, is that of the diverse Latin translations of the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle.⁹² Without entering in details, it suffices to say that

seu Summa contra Gentiles, t. 1, Marietti - Lethielleux, Augustae Taurinorum - Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1967, xxxiv+683 pp.

89. Cf. W. VANHAMEL, “Bibliographie de Guillaume de Moerbeke,” in J. BRAMS, W. VANHAMEL (eds.), *Guillaume de Moerbeke. Recueil d'études à l'occasion du 700e anniversaire de sa mort (1286)*, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 1989, pp. 301-383.

90. Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 310, 356-357.

91. Cf. F. BOSSIER, *Filologisch-historische navorsingen over de middeleeuwse en humanistische Latijnse vertalingen van de Commentaren van Simplicius*, doctoral dissertation, Leuven, 1975; IDEM, “Une traduction fragmentaire du commentaire In De caelo de Simplicius et son influence sur le commentaire In Metaphysicam de Thomas d'Aquin,” in *Proceedings of the World Congress on Aristotle (Thessaloniki, August 7-14, 1978)*, t. 2, Publication of the Ministry of Culture and Sciences, Athens, 1981, pp. 168-172; W. VANHAMEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-313, 354-356.

92. As examples of the first investigations in this field, cf. B. GEYER, “Die Übersetzungen der aristotelischen ‘Metaphysik’ bei Albertus Magnus und Thomas von Aquin,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 30 (1917), pp. 392-415; A. MANSION, “La théorie aristotélicienne du temps chez les péripatéticiens médiévaux. Averroès, Albert le Grand, Thomas d'Aquin,” *Revue Néoscholastique de Philosophie*, 36

St. Thomas changed to another Latin translation the *Metaphysics* whenever he found a better one.⁹³ According to the one which he uses, the text of St. Thomas can be located in chronological order. There are other similar techniques: the use of complete versions in preference to incomplete ones —this explains the famous variance in the numbering of Book Lambda of the *Metaphysics*—;⁹⁴ the change in naming a text when a new translation differs in its title —as in the case of the *De partibus animalium*—,⁹⁵ etc.

This method of sources has been a true goldmine for chronological discoveries. Nevertheless, it has important limitations. On the one hand, not all Thomas's writings can be dated in this way. In addition, many times the dating is only a *terminus a quo* or *ante quem*. And, in that time of manuscripts and no printing, we do not always know for certain if the quotation of a dated source belongs to the original redaction of a text, or it is a posterior annotation. Given these limitations, the method of sources, having fulfilled its remarkable services, seems to be practically exhausted. What more can be done to clarify the chronology of the Thomistic corpus? The answer, in my opinion, lies with stylometry: the statistical study of the evolution of the Thomist lexicon, with the aid of computer science, and relying on a powerful instrument like the *Index Thomisticus*, can provide the next set of future valuable results.⁹⁶

(1934), pp. 275-307; F. PELSTER, "Die Uebersetzungen der aristotelischen 'Metaphysik' in den Werken des hl. Thomas von Aquin," *Gregorianum*, 16 (1935), pp. 325-348, 531-561; (1936), pp. 377-406. See also the historical introductions of recent Leonine editions.

93. Cf. J. P. REILLY JR., "The 'alia littera' in Thomas Aquinas 'Sententia libri Metaphysicae'," *Mediaeval Studies*, 50 (1988), pp. 562-563, 568-569.

94. Cf. R. A. GAUTHIER, "La date du commentaire de saint Thomas sur l'Éthique à Nicomaque," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, 18 (1951), pp. 66-105.

95. Cf., for instance, P. MARC, *op. cit.*, pp. 367-368.

96. Cf., for example, E. ALARCÓN, *Evolución léxica y cronología del corpus tomista*, doctoral dissertation, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, 1998, 429 pp.

5. CONCLUSION

I have tried to portray, in broad strokes, the main advances in the three great areas of contemporary Thomist historiography. From that which has been said, we can draw several conclusions for our future work:

- First, the great importance of the diffusion of documents for the advance of the research, as was proved by the *Supplement* of the *Revue Thomiste*, with its collection of biographical sources.
- Second, the importance of the research on manuscripts, as performed especially by the Leonine Commission, to further clarify the list of authentic writings of St. Thomas.
- Finally, the necessity of using stylometric studies to corroborate the authenticity of texts and to fix their chronology.

These are, in my opinion, the lines along which future research will develop.

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