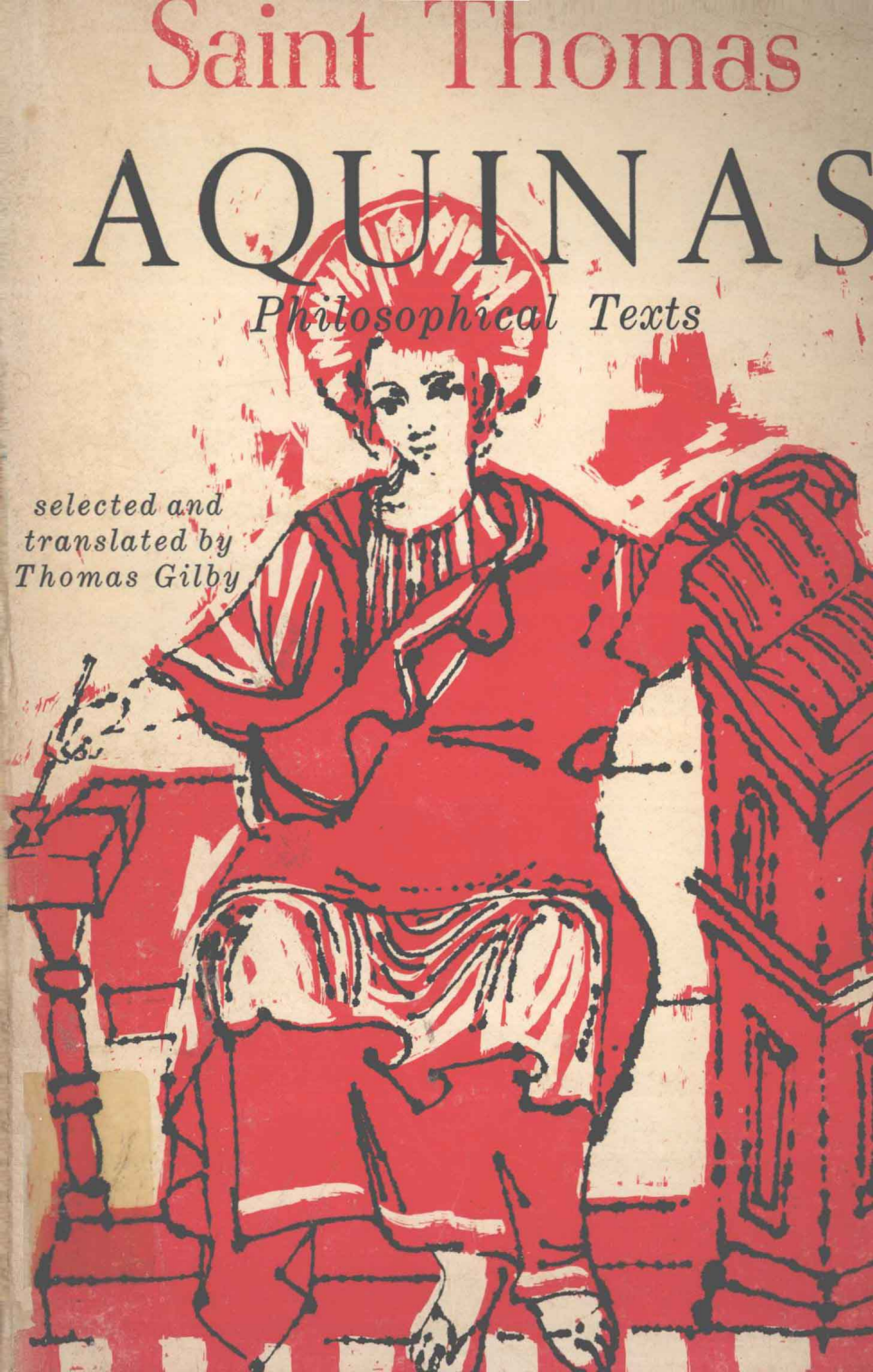
Saint Thomas AQUINAS

Philosophical Texts

selected and translated by Thomas Gilby



St. Thomas Aquinas

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Preface

St. Thomas Aquinas left nearly one hundred works behind him, some of great size: nine of biblical exegesis, twelve commentaries, some incomplete, on the Aristotelean corpus, eight large systematic works of his own, apart from the long expositions included among the forty-five *opuscula*, numbered in this collection according to the arrangement of Pierre Mandonnet. By their circumstances of composition they may be divided into his prepared lectures, thus his commentary on the *Sentences*; his debates, thus the *Quaestiones Disputatae* or ordinary discussions that were weekly features of his lecturing and the *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* which are the record of his disputations on special occasions; and his own free compositions, which are either systematic studies, such as the *Summa Theologica*, or monographs in response to a demand, such as most of the *opuscula*. Some he wrote down himself, others he dictated, others we owe to a reporter.

As the text references will show, the philosophy of St. Thomas should be sought even in his mystical and biblical works. The major sources can be grouped under five headings. First, the early commentaries on Boethius and the Pseudo-Dionysius composed between 1257 and 1261, namely the *Expositio in librum Boethii de Hebdomadibus*, *Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate*, and *Expositio in Dionysium de Divinis Nominibus*. Secondly, the commentaries on Aristotle composed between 1266 and 1272, notably *in libros de Anima, lectura in librum I* (written up by his secretary), and *expositio in libros II et III*; *in XII libros Metaphysicorum expositio*; *in VII libros Physicorum expositio*;

in X libros Ethicorum expositio; *in libros Peri Hermeneias expositio* (completed to Book II, *lect.* 2 inclusively); *in libros Posteriorum Analyticorum expositio*; *in libros Politicorum expositio* (completed to Book III, *lect.* 6 inclusively). To these may be added *in Librum de Causis expositio*, a commentary on an extract from the *Elementary Theological Instructions* of Proclus, credited before St. Thomas's days to Aristotle.

In the third place come the three great systematic treatises, the *Scriptum in IV libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*, written about 1255; the *Summa contra Gentes* (Book I, 1259; Books III–IV, 1261–3); and the *Summa Theologica*, started in 1266 and completed as far as the Third Part, question XC inclusively, in 1273. Fourth come the disputations which often offer St. Thomas's most developed treatment of a subject: *de Veritate* (1256–9), *de Potentia* (1265–7), *de Malo*, *de Spiritualibus Creaturis*, *de Anima*, *de Virtutibus in communi*, *de Virtutibus cardinalibus* (all after 1266 and before 1272). Mandonnet reckons 1259–63 for *de Potentia*, and 1263–8 for *de Malo*. The twelve groups of *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* were probably reported at various dates between 1265 and 1272.

The fifth heading covers the *opuscula*; the authenticity of thirty-one of these is generally accepted, including the *Compendium Theologiae ad fratrem Reginaldum socium suum carissimum*, *de Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas Parisienses*, *de Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, *de Regimine Judaeorum ad ducissam Brabantiae*, *de Aeternitate Mundi contra murmurantes*, and *de Ente et Essentia ad fratres socios*. The authenticity of the *de Regimine ad regem Cypri* has been questioned on internal evidence; Ptolemy of Lucca is certainly the author from Book II, chap. 5.

The translation is a compromise between a paraphrase and an exact and literal rendering such as will be found in the versions of the *Summa Theologica*, the *Summa contra Gentes*, and the *de Potentia* made by Laurence Shapcote and published by the English Dominicans. Sometimes sentences have been transposed, at other times clauses have been omitted to avoid repetition. St. Thomas is his own best interpreter; consequently cross-references have been preferred to footnotes,[1] and even to parentheses in the original. Terms have been inflected from their sense in parallel passages and occasionally according to the living tradition of his school. Many of the texts are taken from works not yet critically edited.

I gratefully acknowledge the help of David Slattery, Elizabeth Gully, Drostan Maclaren, and Stanislaus Parker in preparing this collection. To Henry St. John and Richard Kehoe it is inscribed with affection.

T. G.

BLACKFRIARS, CAMBRIDGE

1950

[1] Cross-references, to other sections of this book by number, are given immediately below the text at the left. Biblical references (in the footnotes) are to the Vulgate: this should be noted particularly with the Psalms, where the numbering from Psalms 10 to 146 in the Vulgate is one less than in the Authorized and other English versions, and 1–4 Kings, which are called 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings in the English versions.

Introduction

FEW voluminous writers have been less autobiographical than St. Thomas. An impersonal and self-effacing disposition is suggested but not much more of his character, except that he was singularly free from bad temper in controversy, took an interest in everything, found nothing incongruous in the works of nature, and combined an immense reverence for his predecessors with an originality eased, and perhaps sometimes disguised, by the traditional phrases he adopted. He was, however, a famous figure among his contemporaries and greatly loved, seemingly more by the arts students than the divinity professors. A giant of a man, with a complexion compared to corn, large regular features and a steady gaze, he was lordly yet gentle of bearing; frightened only of thunderstorms. The tales of his absent-mindedness testify to his powers of abstraction: that he was remote and ineffectual is not confirmed by the consultative demands made on him by rulers of Church and State, nor by his interests when he lay dying—a treatise on aqueducts, a commentary on the *Song of Songs*, and a dish of herrings.

He was born in the castle near Aquino commanding the Liri Valley. His family, probably of Lombard origin, was related by service, and probably by marriage, to the Hohenstaufens. His mother, it has been said, was of Norman stock. The influence of his people, though considerable, was uneasy in those marches between the Patrimony of Peter and the Kingdom of Sicily; its allegiance was not to be easily settled in the imbroglios of Papalists, Suabians, and Angevins. He was sent to the neighbouring Abbey of Monte Cassino

for his early education. The Benedictine peace seems rarely to have deserted him, though after leaving the monastery for the university his life was to be lived trudging the roads of Europe and busied in the throng of lecture-rooms and courts. He was not to know this cloistral calm again until he returned to die, thirty-four years later, among the monks of an abbey in the hills south-east of the beaches of Anzio.

The University of Naples was about as old as the young undergraduate. Founded in 1224 by the Emperor Frederick II at the meeting-place of Greek, Latin, Saracen, and Norman cultures, and Suabian customs, it was to shine perhaps more with the glint of a State service than with the glow of passion for science, jurisprudence excepted. Yet nearly four centuries later another Dominican Thomas was to come from Naples to startle the conventions in the name of a fresh and candid study of nature. Thomas Campanella, however, was more careless and erratic than his master, and his works were not to become part of the canon.

Though by temper Thomas Aquinas was to be a man of Paris rather than of Naples, or even of Bologna, a philosopher and theologian rather than a lawyer or official; already as an undergraduate he studied scientific method under Martin of Dacia and natural science under Peter of Ireland. Then to the energetic displeasure of his powerful family he joined the Order of Preachers, an association of wandering scholars, Guelph by sympathy, urban-minded, not at all feudal in temper, clerical in status, disinclined to dance attendance on magnates. Neither violence nor allurements from *curia* and courtesan could shift him from his purpose, and after various adventures the Dominicans kept their prize, but sent him out of reach beyond the Alps, first to Paris, probably, and then to Cologne for his

professional studies under Albert the Great, a wizard in legend but a dogged experimentalist in fact, whom he was to surpass in power of synthesis, though not in learning.

His teaching career, which began in 1252, falls into four periods—Paris, Rome, Paris again, Naples. Academic politics were factious and suspicious, and papal pressure had to be applied before he was admitted as a Master of Theology by the Faculty of Paris, jealous for its privileges and hostile to the new religious orders. Yet his intellectual work began quietly enough with a commentary in the approved manner on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, expositions of Scripture, and of traditional texts of Boethius and the Pseudo-Dionysius. Moreover, he was much occupied with the general organization of studies for his Order. Nevertheless three works of the period presage the change that was to come, the tractate *de Ente et Essentia*, the disputations *de Veritate*, and the start of the *Summa contra Gentes*, addressed to the Muslim and Jewish world.

In 1259 he was called to the papal court, and the ten years that followed were the period of his most massive work, challenging alike the current Platonism of the schools and the new Latin Averroism. He was presently joined by his old master, Albert, and by his friend the Flemish Hellenist William of Moerbeke, who provided him with revised and fresh versions of the texts of Aristotle. His scientific philosophy grew at once more adventurous and confident with the commentaries on the *de Anima*, the *Metaphysics*, and the *Physics*, the disputations *de Anima*, *de Potentia*, and *de Spiritualibus Creaturis*, the completion of the *Summa contra Gentes*, and the beginning of the *Summa Theologica*. The legacy of credit left by the great Innocent was still unspent, and Thomas enjoyed the confidence of Rome: from

this centre he was always to receive understanding and unwavering support, whatever might be the condemnations of provincial authorities for his profanity, novelty, and materialism.

The third period opens with his return to the Priory of the Jacobins at Paris. The current controversies had come to a head. The attack on the friars may be neglected: it was the flood of Averroism that was the threat, the spread of the doctrine that the light of intelligence was not personal to men and that matter lay outside creation and providence, of the suggestion that we could hold by divine faith what is unfounded in reason. Yet Thomas was fighting on two fronts, for behind him the cautious theologians objected to his readiness to engage the Averroists without privilege on their own ground and to his thoroughgoing conclusions that the spiritual soul is primarily the substantial form of the human body, and that creation does not involve a beginning in time. Their objections were to culminate in his censure by the Bishop of Paris three years after his death, a ban afterwards lifted. The two spirited treatises *de Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas Parisienses* and the *de Aeternitate Mundi contra Murmurantes* are typical of this period, but throughout these controversies he was pushing on with the *Summa Theologica*, conducting the disputations *de Malo*, composing his commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the logical works of Aristotle.

Three years later he was back in Italy, directing the studies of his own provincial group, dictating the *Compendium Theologiae* to his secretary, Reginald of Piperno, preaching in the Neapolitan vernacular, treating his students to a gaudy, busied with the troubles of his hot-blooded and tragic family. Then towards the end of 1273 he fell into a trance, and on coming to declared

that his writings now seemed to him like so much chaff compared with what he had experienced. Courteous but rather remote, he still continued to work. Early in the following year, on his way to assist at the Council of Lyons, he fell sick and died, not many miles from his birthplace: in the words of an early biographer, *ut cantando moreretur et moriendo cantaret rogatu monachorum Fossae Novae cantica canticorum exponens majoris vi amoris quam morbi ad caelum raptus.*

Hellenism had re-entered the West, bearing with it the stranger learning of Arab schools from Baghdad to Cordova. Aristotle was the Philosopher, Averroes the Commentator, Maimonides a revered guide in divinity. From Avicenna, high and clear, came the first notes of the metaphysical reality of many things and the transcendence of their Creator. In the sudden mingling of wilder strains with patristic theology, Neo-platonic philosophy, Stoic morals, and Roman jurisprudence, one fact was certain. The frontiers were open.

Christian thought henceforth was never to lose the temper of science, nor science the sensibility of matter. Nature was recovered from pledge, invective was replaced by irony, devotion was to be matched with irreverence. What Thomas had done seems to have been appreciated more keenly by his opponents than by many of the orthodox. Whatever its reputation some centuries later Aristoteleanism stood in the thirteenth century for a free and impenitent spirit of rationalism and unfettered investigation, a strong sense of the truth here and now, a dialectic of control, not of escape from the present world: all this had been practised by religious men before, but in future it was to be defended as well. To the great prelates who had administered a world they did not believe in and the lawyers who had run the machinery of a Rome salvaged from the scrap-

heap of the Caesars were added the clerks of the new universities, humanists more convinced, if less graceful, than the men of the Renaissance.

In the lifetime of St. Thomas his great antagonist, Siger of Brabant, became one of his admirers; after some hesitation the English Dominicans swung over to his side, and Oxford bred some of the greatest of his followers in the generation after his death. Nevertheless, it may appear to the historian of philosophy that his friends have recognized his true stature only within the last few decades. He was canonized, true, declared a Doctor of the Church, and by the sixteenth century his *Summa Theologica* had displaced the *Sentences* as the classical work for scholastic commentary. But while he was now the major authority among Latin theologians, his philosophical thought had become, as it were, tamed. Most of his followers expounded it rabbinically, or treated it as a utility for something else. It was not until after the revival inaugurated by Leo XIII that the grand whiggery was recovered; a system that might be recommended, but not demonstrated, by official reception; the spirit of a patrician, not of a functionary. Many of his present admirers, incidentally, would not claim that they had a system, still less that they belonged to a school, since the sectarianism suggested does not accord with the *philosophia perennis* for which they follow him.

Without distorting their proper natures, St. Thomas sees parts steadily in the whole. The entire universe is all of a piece, the most fugitive phenomenon is not a metaphysical outcast; there are tensions, but not contradictions, in the order of being. This is the background to the universal method of analogy he uses with such effect in his approach to the meaning of the world and its maker. Contrasts are struck for the harmony of

extremes in a higher principle, not as a prelude to the rejection of one or the blurring of both. Synthesis, rather than compromise, is the result from such issues as that of the One and the Many in metaphysics, deduction and experiment in scientific method, nature and grace in theology, pleasure and duty in moral philosophy, law and liberty in social philosophy, body and spirit in psychology. Though the refinements and complications of sensibility and empiricism had not then reached their present pitch, and his world was simpler than ours, his vast work is a feat of coherence: there are so many and such various parts, yet all are quickened by the same reasons and values and compose interlacing societies of the sciences free alike from eclecticism and totalitarianism.

The systematic exploration of different branches of knowledge is called science, their arrangement into a unity is the work of wisdom, the knowledge of things by their ultimate causes. There are two wisdoms, he held, natural and supernatural; the acquired knowledge of things in their highest rational causes, and the infused knowledge of things in the revelation of the divine mysteries. The texts that follow are selected to illustrate the former; it is hoped that they may be succeeded by an anthology of his Christian theology, or *sacra doctrina*. The supernatural he preaches is gracious in the ordinary sense of the term; morbidities, violences, and many miracles he would relegate to the preternatural. His theology starts with an examination of the truly scientific status of argument from the premisses of revelation, and then successively considers the intimate life of the three blessed persons in the Trinity, the primitive production of man aright in a state of integrity, the lapse into original sin, and the new birth into grace; the activity of the supernatural virtues, with particular reference to

the assent of faith, obedience to Church authority, the adultness and heroism of charity; finally the Incarnation and the sacramental economy.

But it is impossible to understand his theology without appreciating the rational foundation on which he built. The distinction of nature and grace is a question that calls for the greatest delicacy of treatment. Certainly the corresponding conditions cannot be separated like different phases of history. Man has always lain under the law of grace, and though this may not require a clearly articulated awareness of the Christian covenant, his state has always been one either of acceptance or rejection of the revelation of God. There never was a purely natural man for St. Thomas; though scientific generalization demands reference to pure types, his abstract and concrete terms, the philosophical deductions, and the statements of a theology based on the *gesta Dei* are often as textually intermingled as men and women in a crowd.

Moreover, he possessed a ranging and communicative mind; ideas in one department are shot through with likenesses from another. Analogy is used, not merely as rhetorical comparison or as a logical method of sampling from particulars in order to frame a general law, but as standing for a complexion of being itself, revealing the kinship in difference of all things and calling for a sympathy rather than a technique. Consequently natural philosophy is written in the theological scene, and humdrum facts are not awkwardly taken along with the highest mystical contemplation. He has no special tone of solemnity, no consciousness of bathos. His teaching on a point is not always best consulted by turning to the appropriate section-heading: biology is likely to appear under law, and the analysis of knowledge under spiritual substances. And for a connected reason he is an

intractable author for an anthologist; he rarely goes in for passages of fine writing, epigrams are few, and often these are echoes of Aristotle or Augustine; his mind works laconically at a level and sustained speed, not in a series of spurts; the unit of thought is the treatise, not the phrase; the style is sober, expository, and repetitive; the ideas more exciting than the images and richer than the vocabulary. Extracts cannot show the close backing of the whole to every part; they should be taken more as manifestoes than as complete proofs in themselves.

Nevertheless, it is possible to perform an excision of the purely rational organs incorporated in the living unity, and find oneself then faced with a prospectus of pure philosophy, coherent, consistent, and as complete as can be expected; an independent prologomenon to belief which may be of special, and even urgent, interest to those who find themselves alien to the official organization of Christianity. Here also may be associated, if not for agreement then at least for conversation, not only Christians of different loyalties, but also those with no religious convictions but who would accept the reasonable life and are not insensitive to hints that there may be something more generous beyond it. A philosophical attitude may not be enough for health and happiness or for complete adaptation to reality, but it is a sound beginning.

This selection is offered in the hope that it will not be scanned as a set of archaeological fragments, but that the crabbed words will not be allowed to hide the ardour and generosity of a mind marked by the disinterested curiosity of the Greeks and the practical good sense of the Romans, and uttering convictions that may be heard echoing through wider regions and more lasting periods. Perhaps St. Thomas himself had little

sense of history, at least as we understand the word; certainly he treats his great forerunners as though they were speaking to him then and there. His own writing attempts, not a personal proclamation, but a tracing of the perennial patterns of reality; his debates expose the permanent crises for the human spirit.

The texts themselves are arranged according to the order of subjects in his final systematic work, the *Summa Theologica*, though many are from other places, and have not hitherto been translated into English. The plan begins by broaching the possibility of a rational science, or sciences, able to deal authentically with our environment, and then proceeds to the question of the existence of God, who is the ground of reasonableness, and to the examination of his being and activity. The world itself is seen streaming out of God, wholly dependent by creation and contrived by him in all its distinctions, though the fissures of good and evil running throughout set up a special problem. We are on the frontier between matter and spirit; the treatment of human nature constitutes the philosophical psychology of the *Summa Theologica*, and contains the thesis on the psycho-physical unity of man which was St. Thomas's most dramatic entrance into the play of religious philosophy. In this part may also be placed his analysis of the problem of knowledge and of the limits of human freedom. Then man is seen returning to God as to his home; the moral theory that is developed is founded on scientific humanism. Right activity is considered first in general terms, and afterwards in the details of the four cardinal virtues and their auxiliaries. The good life does not lie in conformity to an artificial scheme however august; the essential rational measures are not civilized mannerisms; friendship is the climax of the code.

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