

The Thomist Tradition^{*}

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THE TWENTIETH CENTURY was a difficult one for the Thomistic school. In effect, whereas the Thomists of the first half of the twentieth century gladly referred to the works of their illustrious predecessors, the “commentators,” and drew generously from the well of their ancestors’ thought—to the point that Jacques Maritain saw himself unjustly reproached for being more of a “John of St. Thomist” than a Thomist—the Thomism that has prevailed since has not been sparing in its critique of the school. Perhaps because they suspected a causal link between the massive reference to the school and the historical downfall of the Thomistic renewal in the twentieth century, most Thomists have adopted the hardly glorious strategy of condemning the disciples in the hope of better saving the master. In order to preserve the future of Thomism, St. Thomas has been unburdened of a Thomistic school judged as compromising, obsolete, and even unfaithful. In the diligently pursued trial of the school, many have taken an odd pleasure in emphasizing the undeniable divergences between the commentators and their proclaimed source, and in opposing the authentic doctrine of Thomas, finally restored through historical studies, to the Thomistic perversions. Some lament that the school misunderstood the most original and most fruitful of Thomas’s theses, and instead has offered a thin, indigestible scholastic-Wolfian broth, whereas the contemporary understanding expects the hearty and perpetually fresh bread of pure Thomism. In short, a rallying cry has spread: *Zurück zu Thomas*, bypass the Thomistic school!

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The Necessary Reference to the Thomistic Tradition

I will certainly not dispute the value of a direct reading of Aquinas. But is this incompatible with a prudent reference to the school? Must one set up the systematic mistrust of the Thomistic tradition as a methodological principle, almost as a dogma? It seems strange to think that the painstaking and assiduous research of the Thomists that spans multiple centuries has absolutely nothing to offer to our understanding of Thomas's text. Besides, it is precisely the historical approach that demonstrates the profoundly traditionalist character of Scholasticism in general and of Thomism in particular, regardless of the eventual divergences between Thomas, John Capreolus, Domingo Bañez, and Marie-Michel Labourdette. In effect, for Thomas, the exercise of thought—both theological and philosophical—is inconceivable outside of a reference to the authorities, to foundational texts, and more, to the foundational texts tightly inserted within a living tradition of interpretation that has handed them on in a concrete way, even to the present day. The personal exercise of thought is conditioned by the reference to something known by a tradition which, far from sterilizing the effort of reflection, grounds, orients, and stimulates it.

It is thus paradoxical that the Thomism of the second half of the twentieth century has espoused a typically “modern” structure of thought which, in antithesis to the Scholastic spirit, obscures this constitutive relation to a living tradition. On the contrary, everything indicates that, if it is going to be faithful to the very nature of Thomism as a Scholastic form of thought, the effort for the renewal of Thomism cannot think of itself as an excavation that skips the layers of several centuries in order revive the cadavers that lie underneath. One must therefore take into consideration the Thomist tradition posterior to Thomas.

Undoubtedly, this tradition is not the homogeneous and harmonious development of Thomas's doctrine that some have imagined it to be. Etienne Gilson had good reasons to ridicule the conception of the Thomistic school as undivided and unfailingly faithful to the authentic Thomas: “The legend, given credence by certain popes, that the Dominican school has never diverged from the doctrine of the master ‘even by an inch’ . . . suffices to prove that papal infallibility has its limits” (*Lettre d'Etienne Gilson à Jacques Maritain*, 217). But the Thomist tradition is also not a pure and simple betrayal of Thomas either. As with every living doctrinal tradition, it produced certain regrettable deviations from its source, even alterations that verge on corruption. Yet it also contains gems of faithful creativity. In short, a study of the relation between Thomism and its history is not optional but rather a necessity.

Therefore, if there is reason to rejoice in the immense effort that has been expended to restore Thomas's *corpus* to its proper historical context, a work that enables a better expression of its intelligibility, one would be wrong to stop there, as if ending a journey mid-way. For to abstract Thomas—no matter how well he has been contextualized—from the tradition that has brought him to us is to end up falling into a trap that one ought to avoid, which is to turn Thomas into a thinker who hovers above history, and thus to turn Thomism into a Platonic Idea. Thomas vigorously fought the platonizing theory of “the giver of forms” that posited a supernatural intervention for the appearance of any new form, including forms in the physical world and in the realm of knowledge. He thought that this theory undervalued the immanent causalities at work in nature. And yet, is this not precisely what happens when one isolates Thomas from the Thomist tradition? Is Thomism passed on through an infusion and a new creation in each era? Or rather, is it transmitted by a kind of generation, that is to say, by virtue of a fleshly continuity that binds one age to another? In fact, the doctrinal complex that originates in the work of Thomas is not a pure abstraction but a yeast that operates at the heart of the contingencies of doctrinal history. It is therefore most advantageous for contemporary Thomism to reread the “commentators” in a critical manner, and thus to give careful attention to the history of the Thomist tradition. The primary focus ought to be on the history of Thomistic doctrine. One should also research the fascinating cultural history of Thomism, a history of the interactions between the Thomistic doctrinal tradition and literature, the arts, politics, etc.

The Doctrinal History of Thomism: Methodological Questions

The historian of Thomism must face some formidable methodological problems whose solution is, in the final analysis, philosophical. Hence, there is a properly Thomistic methodology for the history of Thomism.

The first and quite crucial problem involves the criteria that allow us to classify an author and his or her work as Thomistic. There are two such criteria, and these should not be separated. One is external or institutional, while the other is internal or doctrinal.

A history of doctrines that claims to be Thomistic ought to give much consideration to the sociological conditions of doctrinal life. It should grant the institutional criteria of membership in the Thomistic tradition their full importance. This approach has been neglected far too often by an idealist history. In fact, Thomism has always incarnated itself in certain institutions—in the Order of Preachers for seven centuries, in the *bursa Montana* of Cologne in the fifteenth century, in the Higher Institute of

Philosophy during the era of Cardinal Désiré Mercier, etc.—and membership in these institutions is a first exterior sign of one's membership in Thomism. Thus, unless there are clear counter-signs, one will presume that a "Jacobin" (that is, a French Dominican) author of the seventeenth century is a Thomist by profession.

That being said, these external criteria are insufficient, for they must be confirmed by the properly doctrinal criteria that remain the determining factor. However, a work could be considered as doctrinally "Thomist" when the teaching it contains presents a certain *identity* with that of Thomas. Like Maritain, one could approach this identity with the model of the substantial identity of a living, developing organism:

This work (of the development of Thomism) should be accomplished through vital assimilation and immanent progress—if I may say so, by the progressive formation of the same spiritual organism; by a kind of perpetual growth and maturing; by a kind of transfiguration of which we find a rather imperfect image in the growth of corporeal organisms. Consider a small child that becomes an adult. His metaphysical personality has not changed. Rather, it is still fully present. No heterogeneous parts have been grafted onto him from the outside. Yet everything has been transfigured in him, has become more differentiated, stronger, and has attained a more perfect proportion.¹

Thus, according to Maritain, the Thomism of the commentators is nothing but the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas. It is the same doctrine, but at a later, more mature period of development.

To this optimistic model, one might prefer the more flexible metaphor of a line of ancestors or the members of a single species spanning different generations. The same specific essence is transmitted to a plurality of distinct individuals by way of generation. The Thomism of Thomas of Vio Cajetan or Maritain is another doctrine than the Thomism of Thomas. However, since these Thomisms have been engendered in a certain way by Thomas's corpus, they demonstrate a specific resemblance with his thought.

And yet, the real problem is not the choice of a model with which to conceive the unity of the Thomistic tradition. Rather, the greater difficulty is how to determine whether this presumed unity corresponds to the historical reality! Is there a doctrinal unity of the Thomistic tradition? Do the differences and variations that have been found within the Thomistic tradition remain on the plane of individual differences within a single species, or do these differences place the specific identity into question?

¹ *Sept leçons sur l'être* (Paris: Pierre Téqui, 1940), 18.

Gilson—who never hid his profound dislike for Cajetan, *corruptorium Thomae*, and other commentators—tended toward the second solution to this question. But it seems to me that this negative judgment rests on a highly disputable approach to the nature of doctrine and on an all-too-Cartesian excess of systematization. For Gilson, Thomism is a “system” structured and specified by a single principle, which alone gives meaning to the whole. This principle is the “fundamental truth” of Thomism, to take up an expression of Norbert Del Prado. For him, this truth, this cornerstone of the Thomistic system, is the thesis of the real distinction between being (*esse*) and essence in creatures, and its necessary complement, the thesis of the real identity of being and essence in God. In other words, as Gilson will specify, this fundamental truth is a certain understanding of the mystery of being as existential act. This first principle, which can be grasped only intuitively, is the soul of Thomism. In this perspective, those who overlook this principle miss everything, no matter how great their subjective desire for fidelity to Thomas may be, and they are left with nothing but a Thomistic corpse. Since most “Thomists” have not understood being the way Gilson has, a veritable massacre follows. There is no history of Thomism, just a history of the forgetting of Thomism.

This apocalyptic historiography of the Thomist tradition rests on the postulate according to which Thomas’s thought is so systematized and unified that we find ourselves in the binary logic of “all or nothing.” There is no Thomism without an understanding of the first principle! It is true that philosophical or theological thought cannot dispense itself from the search for a unifying principle. Furthermore, by its very nature, philosophical and theological thought tends toward systematization. But in the concrete, a doctrinal teaching such as that of Thomas integrates a plurality of principles that are not tightly interconnected. The Thomism of Thomas is a complex, articulated whole that includes certain theses which are relatively independent of one another. Thus, a “commentator’s” shortcoming in a certain domain does not ipso facto entail a disqualification of his entire work. For example, one can maintain very authentically Thomistic positions in morals and politics, as Francisco de Vitoria did in the sixteenth century, without necessarily adopting Thomas’s view of the relation between being and essence. The weakness or regress of a body part has repercussions for an entire organism, but it does not necessarily cause death. Consequently, one can have limping Thomisms, or those afflicted with a horrible Scotistic swelling of the throat, which nevertheless merit the name of Thomism. In short, Thomism is an analogical reality. There are more or less profound, more or less perfect, Thomisms, yet they still partake in the same heritage.

The historian of the Thomist tradition is thus invited to combine the doctrinal and the institutional criteria. Yet in each case, these criteria must be carefully contextualized. This is obvious for the institutional criteria that are by their very nature historical. Thus, the institutional connection between Thomism and the Dominican Order has known its ups and downs, as it still does today. This is just as true for the doctrinal criteria. It is not possible to define the Thomist tradition *a priori* using doctrinal criteria that are extrinsic to the historical context of a certain era without being anachronistic. To be a Thomist at the end of the thirteenth century did not mean defending an Augustinian conception of predestination against improbable Molinists, for an Augustinian doctrine was still admitted by everyone and remained unquestioned. Rather, to be a Thomist meant maintaining the unicity of substantial form and the superiority of the intellect over the will against a very active Franciscan opposition! To be a Thomist in the fifteenth century meant fighting the Scotistic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and not the promotion of the notion of *esse* as existential act! Thus, one must avoid projecting the doctrinal criteria that characterize one era of Thomism onto another historical period of Thomism.

The second methodological problem that the doctrinal history of Thomism presents involves a particular application of a general philosophical problem: what is the engine or explanatory principle of doctrinal history? Here, one should avoid two tempting extremes. The first or "idealist" temptation suggests an explanation of doctrinal development using only the logic of ideas. Thus, the history of doctrines appears as nothing but the unfolding of the logical consequences of a set of initial doctrinal options. For example, G ry Prouvost, taking up one of Gilson's intuitions, thinks that the history of Thomisms is in the service of "an experimental laboratory which seeks the secret or un-thought tendencies" of the doctrine of Thomas.² Prouvost proposes that "perhaps the diversity of Thomisms finds its first source in the very ambiguity of Thomas's text" (17). Thus, they reveal "*aporias* and speculative dissonance" (126). The conflicting interpretations inside the Thomistic school thus appear as nothing but the unfolding and actualization of an ambivalence already virtually present in the works of Thomas himself. Although this type of approach is not un-interesting, it hardly corresponds to the historical conditions of doctrinal history; at the same time, moreover, it flirts with an "idealist" approach to history that is hardly in harmony with the principles of Thomistic anthropology.

² *Saint Thomas et les thomismes* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 33.

The “materialist” temptation is to reduce the development of ideas to a “real history,” to the evolution of infrastructures and sociopolitical life, an evolution of which doctrines will be only an epiphenomenal reflection. Yet a good understanding of the connection between the proper finality of the doctrinal act and its sociopolitical inscription excludes this kind of reductionism. The doctrinal act, however conditioned it may be by its social context, is not reducible to it (this would mean the end of philosophy, theology, and the history of doctrines), except when thought degrades itself into an ideology, that is to say, when the doctrinal act is directly governed by goals that are radically extrinsic to the quest for the truth. Again, in the face of every temptation toward a simplistic univocity, the historian of doctrines must demonstrate a sharp and discerning spirit.

Highlights from the History of Thomism

Thomism experienced a painful birth, first as a reaction to an anti-Thomism. The 1270s were marked by a growing suspicion that culminated in the doctrinal condemnations of 1277 directed at an Aristotelian naturalism and certain theologians who had integrated this philosophy into their thought. The first Thomism, essentially Dominican, focused primarily on a defense of certain controversial doctrines in Thomas’s works against the attacks of some Franciscans and the reaction that has been called (rightly or wrongly) “neo-Augustinianism.” The main points of conflict were the same as when Thomas was alive. Are there multiple substantial forms in the human being, or only one? Is a created eternal world possible? Does the intellect play a more determining role in human liberty than the will? This was the time of the *Correctoria*. Just before 1279, the Franciscan William de la Mare’s *Correctorium* pinpointed a number of controversial aspects in Thomas’s doctrine. The Dominican response to the *Correctorium*, re-baptized as the *Corruptorium*, was not long in coming. It consisted of five refutations of William de la Mare’s work. This literature is the first manifestation of a Thomistic tradition. It emerged from the two great centers of the Thomistic resistance: Paris and Oxford. Indeed, while Oxford, with Robert of Kilwardby and John Peckham, was at the heart of the anti-Thomist offensive, its Dominican priory also housed a young and dynamic team of Thomists who engaged in a thorough defense of “our doctor,” Thomas Aquinas. Among these were Richard Knapwell (†1289), author of the correctory *Quare* and proto-martyr of Thomism, and Thomas Sutton († after 1315). While Sutton did not compose a *Correctorium*, he was very active in the defense of Thomistic ideas. He also seems to have been one of the first Dominicans to engage in the debate with Scotism, which was destined to last.

In the closing years of the thirteenth century, the literary genre of the *Correctorium* was succeeded by that of the *Impugnatio*, a genre in which the Dominican Bernard of Auvergne († after 1304) distinguished himself. These treatises offered a systematic Thomistic critique of the new theologies that emerged at the end of that century, including a critique of their philosophical foundations. The thinkers targeted included Henry of Ghent, Godfrey of Fontaines, and Gilles of Rome.

In the first half of the fourteenth century, the thought of Thomas Aquinas continued to inspire to varying degrees a number of Dominicans. In the south of France, Bernard of Trillia (†1292) had already distinguished himself as one who was, in the words of Bernard Gui, “richly impregnated with the teachings and nectar of Brother Thomas,” and did not recoil before outright plagiarism. One should also mention Cardinal William of Peter Godin (†1336), the first provincial of the Dominican province of Toulouse and author of a commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* hailed as a *lectura thomasina*, as well as the exegete Dominic Grima, and Armand of Belvézer († after 1348), who was the first commentator on the *De Ente et Essentia*. In the north of France, one must mention Hervaeus Natalis (†1323), perhaps the most controversial figure in medieval Thomism (he rejected the real distinction of being and essence!), but one with considerable influence. Natalis made himself the promoter of institutional Thomism. In addition, one can mention Peter of Palude (†1343), a man of little speculative talent, though he was well known for his moral and sacramental theology. Among the Italians, Remi dei Girolami, Gui Vernani, and especially John of Naples were well deserving of the title “Thomist.” In Germany, Albertism remained so dominant that, after the condemnation of Meister Eckhart, two Toulouse Dominicans were commissioned to bring their German brothers into the Thomistic fold.

Two major phenomena marked the Thomistic tradition in the first half of the fourteenth century. First, Thomism became the official doctrine of the Dominican Order, not only in their university teaching but also in their internal formation, with all the consequences that this Thomistic penetration can have, given the Dominican influence on socio-cultural life at that time. Here, the “affair of Durandus of Saint-Pourçain” marks a turning point. The direct inheritor of a pre-Thomist Dominican vein, Durandus opposed numerous Thomistic positions in his teaching. The scandal was considerable. A number of Dominican theologians—led by Hervaeus Natalis—felt obliged to refute the theology of their excessively independent confrere. The institutional reaction was no less firm. In 1313, the Order of Preacher’s General Chapter at Metz declared:

Since the teaching of the venerable doctor, brother Thomas Aquinas, is regarded as the most sound and the most common, and since our Order is especially obligated to follow it, we strictly forbid any brother in his courses, determinations, or responses to have the audacity to maintain and propose as true the contrary of that which is commonly believed to be the opinion held by the doctor.

With the help of the canonization of Thomas by Pope John XXII in July of 1323, this institutionalization of Thomism even began to extend itself to the universal Church. The recognition of Thomas's sanctity occurred in a very particular context, that of the controversy about poverty between the Franciscans and a papacy that regarded the theology of Thomas Aquinas as a precious ally. Thomas's canonization contributed greatly to the establishment of his doctrinal authority, as did his solemn doctrinal rehabilitation by the University of Paris in 1325, an event that later Thomists will recall time and again.

Yet Thomism also suffered the repercussions of the profound mutation in Scholasticism in the fourteenth century, a change both in Scholasticism's methodology and in the problems with which it dealt. This was a century of critique rather than a century of decadence. This shift can be explained by the end of the "great translations," of the *translatio studiorum*, which closed the Latin mind in on its own history, as well as by the growing separation between philosophy and theology. These developments—aided by other mediating factors that cannot be explained here—were expressed in a new "style" of thought. This new thought was characterized by the inflated role that it granted to logic and epistemology.

Beyond this change in "style" that also marked Thomism, doctrinal life in the first half of the fourteenth century was characterized by the predominance of a certain number of challenges, in which one can distinguish two kinds. First, the constellation of problems was directly tied to the critical problem, that is, to epistemological questions that focused on the status of theology and its scientificity, and other problems related to the theory of knowledge. Thomism responded with a defense of an Aristotelian noetic system, which had found much opposition. Second, we find three problems tied to the great sociocultural conflicts of the era. First, there was the fight between the papacy and certain temporal powers that led to the emergence of a political philosophy and theology. The Thomists oscillated between a strict theocracy (especially the Italians, including John of Naples and Gui Vernani) and a more refined sense of the autonomy of political realities (especially among the French, e.g. John of Paris). Second, the revived conflict between the

mendicants and the secular or diocesan clerics stimulated a reflection on the internal structure of the Church, and in particular, on the proper role of the pope within that structure. The Thomists showed themselves to be fully convinced supporters of the papacy, whatever the differences in their approaches to the problem of the relationship between the Church and civil society. Third, the above-mentioned conflict between the papacy and the Franciscans encouraged a deeper reflection on the theology of religious life and in the areas of social and political philosophy (for example, on the question of property).

The second half of the fourteenth century was a kind of journey through a desert for the Thomist tradition. In general, this era was doctrinally poor, yet the decline of Thomism is also explained by the success of another kind of Scholasticism, one that later solidified itself into the *via moderna*. Thomism's decline was also reinforced by its memorable defeat in the debate on the Immaculate Conception. One thinks especially of the conflict between John of Monzon and the University of Paris (1387–89), from which the Dominicans were temporarily excluded.

We find the first “Thomistic renewal” in the fifteenth century. It occurred in the general context of a return to the thirteenth century. A romantic image of the 1200s had emerged, of an era of harmony between faith and reason, one exempt from the deviations of the fourteenth century. The monumental Thomistic work of the fifteenth century—the *Defensiones theologiae divi Thomae* by the French Dominican John Capreolus (†1444)—offers a good example of this project. Capreolus sought a return to Thomas himself, to Thomas *sui interpres*, by means of a critique of the fourteenth-century critique (Duns Scotus, Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, Peter Auriol, Gregory of Rimini, etc.). However, it was not in France but in Germany and in Italy that Neo-Thomism flourished. At Cologne, the Thomistic torch passed to the secular clerics, with the *bursa Montana* and its masters, such as Henry of Gorcum (†1431), Gerard of Monte (†1480), and their confrontation with Neo-Albertism. This Colognian Thomism exercised a considerable influence on the universities in Germany and in Central and Eastern Europe, institutions that were then in full bloom. In Italy, the success of Thomism was inseparable from the reform movement within the Dominican Order, especially at Bologna, where Dominic of Flanders (†1479) and Peter of Bergame (†1482) taught.

But in fact, the fifteenth century marked the arrival of a new kind of Thomism. A Thomism of inspiration was succeeded by a Thomistic school that distinguished itself by four traits. The first was literal fidelity to Thomas. In a context where the category of doctrinal certitude tended

to follow right after the category of truth, the cult of the *ipissima verba* of Thomas became a kind of ideal. But this “canonization” of Thomas’s text had some fortunate results. It caused a somewhat timid manifestation of the first beginnings of textual and historical criticism. It also produced the genesis of an unprecedented exploration of Thomas’s *corpus*, one that included the immense work of indexing, whose greatest accomplishment remains Peter of Bergame’s *Tabula aurea*. The second trait of the Thomistic school in this era was, fittingly, the reduction of Thomas’s *corpus* into the form of a textbook. Here we find the first Thomistic manuals. Thus, Henry of Gorcum was a good pedagogue and an author of manuals rather than an original thinker. This was also the age in which the first commentaries on the *Summa theologiae* appeared (by Henry of Gorcum, the Dominicans Laurent Gervais, Gerard of Elten, and others). These were works whose pedagogy targeted a very broad audience. The third trait was the solidification of the boundaries between the schools. The doctrinal debate degenerated into a “war of positions,” a “trench war” in which each camp defined itself by simple and well-defined theses that were opposed to the theses of the adversarial camp. Finally, the last trait, one that especially pertains to the end of the fifteenth century, is the appearance of a tradition of interpretation. To be a Thomist meant not only to refer oneself to Thomas but also to read him with the help of a certified series of Thomistic authors.

The Thomists of the fifteenth century also sought to construct a systematic Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy. One finds it especially in their commentaries on Aristotle, works largely inspired by Thomas’s own Aristotelian commentaries. In theology, the school took part in the great controversies of the era, especially the ecclesiological debates brought about by the Great Western Schism. In general, Thomism became the great defender of papal authority against the conciliarists. A good example is found in the work of John of Torquemada (†1468), author of the first *Summa de ecclesia*. This pro-papal tendency in Thomistic theology was not unrelated to the renewed support from Rome that Thomas would enjoy henceforth.

This late-medieval renewal prepared the way for the sixteenth century. This was the golden age of Thomism and the era of the great “commentators.” In Italy, Thomas of Vio, *alias* Cajetan (†1534), and Francesco Silvestri (†1526) composed the two classic commentaries on the *Summa theologiae* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*, respectively. In Spain, Francisco de Vitoria (†1546), initiated into Thomism at Paris, was the first of a series of illustrious masters that included Domingo Soto (†1560) and Melchior Cano (†1560), the men who formed the Thomistic school at Salamanca.

More attentive to morals than to metaphysics, and anxious to integrate the contributions of the humanist tradition and positive theology into Thomism, Vitoria had the great merit of applying Thomistic principles to the elaboration of a theory of international law and the defense of the natural rights of the indigenous people in the Americas. On these points, his ethical doctrine rested on the Thomistic conception of the distinction between nature and grace. This Iberian Thomism produced a plentiful late harvest that continued into the seventeenth century, with the systematic Thomistic courses of John of St. Thomas (†1644) and the Carmelites of Salamanca (*Salmenticensis*).

The Thomists were soon confronted by the drama of the Reformation. They opposed a narrow Protestant theology that reserved all efficacy to God with Thomas's conception of the non-competitive relation between the first and the second cause. This conception provided the foundation for the principle of mediation, including mediation in the order of salvation. In this context, it is understandable that the Thomistic theologians were omnipresent at the Council of Trent, where they directed in a decisive way the Christian reflection on the great questions concerning justification, the sacraments, et cetera. The proclamation of St. Thomas as Doctor of the Church by St. Pius V in 1567 marked the zenith of this Thomism. This school provided the doctrinal structure for the Catholic Reform. Thomism also took an active part in the spiritual movement that distinguished the great French century. Authors such as Louis Chardon (†1651), Vincent Contenson (†1674), and Antoine Massoulié (†1706) built the foundations of a spirituality shaped by Thomism. The Dominican reform of S. Michaëlis effectively produced a plethora of solid Thomists in the south of France, both at Toulouse and at Bordeaux. Here one might mention Vincent Baron (†1674), the intemperate anti-Jesuit polemicist Antoine Réginald (†1676), Jean-Baptiste Gonet (†1681), and Antoine Goudin (†1695). These men dedicated themselves to the development of Thomism's potential as a "third way" between the Molinist and probabilist theologies of the Jesuits and Jansenism.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were largely occupied by the endless controversies about grace. The Society of Jesus had quickly rallied to the Thomistic cause and given it Francisco Suarez (†1617), an extraordinary thinker whose connections with Thomism still need to be clarified. Nevertheless, the Jesuits, heavily influenced by modern humanism, felt extremely uncomfortable with the traditional doctrine of grace as efficacious by itself, one that was inspired by St. Augustine and defended by St. Thomas. To the Jesuits, it seemed to leave too little initiative for human liberty in the work of salvation. In addition, the way Protestantism

employed Augustinianism seemed to confirm the need for a profound revision of this part of the Christian faith. In his celebrated *Concordantia*, Luis Molina (†1600) elaborated a general system of relations between divine causality and human liberty. He consistently made the efficacy of divine grace depend on the prior consent of human liberty. In the face of this subversion, Thomists such as Peter of Ledesma (†1616), Diego Alvarez (†1635), Thomas of Lemos (†1629), and especially the great Domingo Bañez (†1604) made themselves the champions of the primacy of grace, of a grace efficacious by itself and not in virtue of the prior consent of human liberty. The free consent to grace already appeared to them as an effect of grace. The human being and God are not in competition, simply because the first and the second cause are not on the same plane. Furthermore, it is God himself who gives the free choice of the creature all of its (determined) reality. Confronted with the immense mystery of predestination and the unequal distribution of grace, one ought not to propose a “solution,” but to situate the mystery in its proper place: in the fathomless liberty, goodness, and wisdom of God, and not in the “no God’s land” of a human liberty improperly raised to the rank of a secondary divinity. Henceforth, Bañezianism—and the thesis of physical premotion—became the official doctrine of the Dominican Order. N·V