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Neo-Thomism

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I. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

WHEN Pope John XXII canonized Thomas Aquinas (1225 to 1274) in 1323, he declared *"doctrina eius non potuit esse sine miraculo"* and that Thomas had done more to enlighten the Church with his gifts than all other teachers of the Church before his day. In 1279 and 1286 the Dominican Order chose Thomas Aquinas for its Doctor. In 1346 Clement VI enjoined on this Order to adhere strictly to the doctrines of St. Thomas. In 1368 Urban V instructed the university of Toulouse "to follow the teaching of the sainted Thomas as the true doctrine and to make every effort to disseminate it." Similar instructions were given by Popes Nicholas V, Pius IV, Pius V, Sixtus V, Clement VII, Paul V, Alexander VII, Innocent XI, Innocent XII, Benedict XIII, Clement XII, and Benedict XIV.[1] In every Council, beginning with the Council in Lyons in 1274 — so it is claimed by Roman Church historians — the spirit of St. Thomas was present, and delegates to these Councils made use of the weapons forged by St. Thomas.

Present-day interest in St. Thomas may be traced to August 4, 1879, when Leo XIII published his encyclical *Aeterni Patris.* In this encyclical, Leo writes: "Above all Doctors of the Schools towers the figure of Thomas Aquinas, the leader and master of them all, who, as Cajetan observed, 'because he had the utmost reverence for the holy Doctors of antiquity seems to have inherited in a way the intellect of all.' Thomas gathered their doctrines which had long lain dispersed like the scattered limbs as it were of a body and knitted them into one whole. He disposed of them in marvelous order and increased them to such an extent that he

is rightly and deservedly considered the pre-eminent guardian and glory of the Catholic Church."[2] Leo continues: "We earnestly exhort you for the protection and glory of the Catholic faith, for the welfare of society, for the advancement of all sciences to restore the precious wisdom of St. Thomas and to propagate it as far as possible." In a letter addressed to the Jesuits December 30, 1892, Leo wrote: "If there are doctors to be found who disagree with St. Thomas, however great their merits may be in other respects, hesitation is not permissible. The former must be sacrificed to the latter." On January 18, 1880, Leo ordered the Dominicans to publish, at the expense of the Holy See, a monumental edition of St. Thomas' works. On August 4 of the same year he placed all Catholic universities, colleges, faculties, and schools under the patronage of St. Thomas. In the *Brief* published on that occasion he expressed the conviction that "the Thomist philosophy pre-eminently possesses a singular power and energy to cure the ills afflicting our time. . . . His philosophy answers the needs not of an age only, but of all time."

Leo's successors shared his enthusiasm for St. Thomas. In his encyclical *Pascendi* (September 8, 1907) Pius X wrote: "We renew and confirm them [injunctions of Leo] and order them to be strictly observed by all concerned. Let Bishops urge and compel their observance in future in any seminary in which they may have been neglected. The same injunction applies also to Superiors of religious orders. And we warn teachers to bear in mind that to deviate from St. Thomas, in metaphysics especially, is to run very considerable risk." In his *Motu Proprio Doctoris Angelici,* Pius X wrote (June 29, 1914): "The capital theses in the philosophy of St. Thomas are not to be placed in the category of opinions capable of being debated one way or another, but are to be considered as the foundations upon which the whole science of natural and divine things is based. If such principles are once removed or in any way impaired, it must necessarily follow that students of the sacred sciences will ultimately fail to perceive so much as the meaning of the words in which the dogmas of divine revelation are proposed by the magistracy of the Church . . . and we solemnly declare that those who in their interpretation misrepresent or affect to despise the principles and major theses (*principia et pronuntiata*

majora) of his philosophy are not only not following St. Thomas, but are even far astray from the holy Doctor."

In the new *Code of Canon Law,* issued in 1917, Pope Benedict XV ordered teachers in Catholic schools "to deal in every particular with the studies of mental philosophy and theology and the education of pupils in such sciences according to the method, doctrine, and principles of the Angelic Doctor and religiously to adhere thereto."

In view of the above papal directions, Maritain concludes: "Thomas, therefore, is no longer proposed to us merely as one doctor of eminence among others. He is the Doctor *par excellence* and occupies an entirely unique place. He realizes in its fullness the title of *Doctor communis ecclesiae,* which was formerly given to him. So far as a philosopher is distinguished to an exceptionally eminent degree by the characteristics of a certain spiritual community, Descartes, Malebranche, and Auguste Comte may be said to be specifically French philosophers, Fichte and Hegel specifically German philosophers, St. Thomas, on the other hand, is the specifically Catholic Doctor, the philosopher and theologian of Peter and Catholicity."

A few other quotations from more recent popes will conclude this rapid overview of papal utterances enjoining the study of St. Thomas. In his *Apostolic Letter* of August 1, 1922, Pope Pius XI wrote: "Let teachers of philosophy, therefore, in lecturing to seminarians, be careful to follow not only the system or method of St. Thomas, but also his doctrines and principles, and the more zealously because they must know that no Doctor of the Church is so much feared and dreaded by Modernists and other enemies of the Catholic faith as Aquinas." The same Pope wrote in his encyclical *Studiorum Ducem* (June 29, 1923):

> If we are to avoid the errors which are the source and fountainhead of all the miseries of our time, the teaching of Aquinas must be adhered to more religiously than ever. For St. Thomas refutes the theories propounded by modernists in every sphere: in philosophy, by protecting, as we have reminded you, the force and power of the human mind and by demonstrating the existence of God by the most cogent arguments; in dogmatic theology, by distinguishing the supernatural from the natural order and explaining the reasons for belief and the dogmas themselves; in theology, by showing that the articles of faith are not based upon mere opinion, but upon truth and therefore cannot possibly change; in

exegesis, by transmitting the true conception of divine inspiration; in the science of morals, sociology, and law, by laying down sound principles of legal and social, commutative and distributive, justice and explaining the relation between justice and charity; in the theory of asceticism by his precepts concerning the perfection of the Christian life and his confutation of the enemies of the religious orders in his own day. Lastly, against the much vaunted liberty of the human mind and its independence in regard to God, he asserts the rights of primary Truth and the authority over us of the supreme Master.

Finally, Benedict XV declared in his encyclical *Fausto appetente die* (June 29, 1924) that "the Church has declared the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas to be her own special philosophy" (*cum Thomae doctrinam Ecclesia suam propriam edixit esse*).

The above quotations from papal encyclicals of recent popes suggest two observations. On the one hand, they reflect a serious attempt by the Holy See to re-establish the authority of St. Thomas in all higher schools of the Roman Church and in all areas of knowledge. On the other hand, they also compel one to assume that in certain quarters of the Roman Church there must have been at least some resistance to the revival of St. Thomas. The spirit of free inquiry ushered in by the Reformation and the Renaissance had made itself strongly felt in the nineteenth century also in Catholic circles. The scientific and philosophic revolutions and the development of new industrial societies in the past four centuries had made impacts even on the most cautious of Catholic minds. How extensive and intensive the resistance movement was, and which areas of knowledge revolted against the pontifical directions, may be difficult to determine. We do have some information, however, of an opposition movement in France which became so significant that Pope Pius XII himself called a halt to it in an address delivered by him in 1946. In this address he said that since Thomism is concerned about the very foundations of the "perennial philosophy" and theology itself, it should be respected by every type of thought which claims to be "catholic." The question is, so he continued, whether the system of St. Thomas rests on those solidly laid foundations which the bearers of Christian wisdom have in the course of centuries constructed; whether it could exist throughout all times and continue to be, in the current development of philosophy and theology, a safe guide and check. Yet this is, so Pope Pius concluded, what the Church claims, since she is con-

vinced that one who wishes to know and be certain of the truth must follow the course prepared by St. Thomas.[3]

In our own country the appeals of the popes, since Leo XIII issued his encyclical in 1879, have found responsive ears. Of all religious movements in our land, Neo-Thomism is without question the most virile and active. Every Catholic seminary, college, and university in the country is under the influence of the Thomistic revival. Centers of Thomistic philosophy are the Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C., St. Louis University, Marquette University in Milwaukee, Notre Dame in Indiana, Fordham University in New York, the seminaries of St. Mary's in Baltimore, St. Mary's of Cincinnati, and St. Francis in Milwaukee. In Canada the most important centers are Laval University at Quebec, Saint Michael's College connected with the University of Toronto, and the Institute of Medieval Studies, also at Toronto, under the direction of Etienne Gilson. Nor may one overlook the achievement of the American Catholic Philosophical Association and of the Aristotelian Society of Marquette University, Milwaukee. The latter has, over a period of years, published excellent monographs on some of St. Thomas's contributions to various areas of learning.[4]

Furthermore, American Catholic scholars have not been slow in making St. Thomas and his synthesis available in English. In 1941 a well-known Catholic scholar complained:

> Literal transcriptions of Aquinas have appeared. But they did not serve any general purpose. We are now in the adolescent period of Thomism. We need careful and intelligent expositions of the thought of Thomas. We have already good manuals, but not much in English. The best we can show is: translations of texts like Gilson's *Le Thomisme,* Grabman's *Thomas von Acquin,* Olgiati's *L'Anima di S. Tommaso,* and Maritain's *Introduction Generale a la Philosophie.* Great expository works are: Sertilanges' *S. Thomas d'Aquin* and Manser's *Das Wesen des Thomismus.*[5]

The situation is different today. In the forties appeared the excellent two-volume edition of the *Summa* edited by Anton C. Pegis, the three-volume edition published by the Benziger Brothers, and the four-volume edition for beginners in Thomism prepared by Walter Farrell under the title *A Companion to the Summa.* Jacques Maritain, who is now teaching at Princeton University, and Etienne Gilson of Toronto have been exceedingly active in producing works

on Thomism and have aroused a wide interest in medieval philosophy and theology also among many non-Catholics. The Catholic presses of Sheed and Ward, Herder, Benziger, Bruce, and Catholic universities are meeting the demand for textbooks grounded in Thomistic thought and dealing with every area of human interest from theology and metaphysics to recreation and sports. One discovers also in Catholic literature an intensive effort to train specialists in Scholasticism, especially in Thomism. Nor do Catholic professors neglect opportunities to attend conventions of learned societies and to give free expression to their Thomistic convictions. Special mention must finally be made of *The Thomist,* a periodical published since 1939, intended to keep alive and implement more fully the new interest in Thomistic thought.[6]

To what extent American Catholics have yielded to the very letter of the encyclicals quoted above, is difficult to say. Being exposed to the pragmatic atmosphere prevailing in American life, they no doubt find it difficult at times to reconcile their Thomistic ideology with non-Thomistic currents of thought. It appears, however, that American Thomism is in no sense repristination, a return to the very letter of St. Thomas. American Thomism appears rather latitudinarian to a degree which in instances comes dangerously close to a mere compromise with, and even denial of, basic Thomistic suppositions. The following quotation from Robert E. Brennan illustrates how broadly even a Jesuit interprets Neo-Thomism:

> Neo-Thomism is not a call for a resurrection of the dead. Rather it is a beseeching for a return to the spirit of Aquinas; to his wholemaking views of life and reality; to his reverence for religion and its ethical norms; to his zeal for study; yes, even to his apostolate of the pen. . . . Therefore go back to the freshness of the original text, and sift out what is of lasting value. . . . Modern Thomism is to be a continuance of the philosophic tradition of centuries, a creative amalgamation of what is true in the old with what is true in the new, to the advantage of learning, of the liberal arts, of the natural sciences, of ethics, politics, sociology, and education.
>
> The return to Thomas is rather the return to the truth he so ably represents, that is the *tradition* [italics his], the truth about reality wherever we can find it (Babylonians and Assyrians, the Chinese, Hindus, Egyptians), just as Aristotle got his ideas from all over, from an ancient tradition. To return to Thomas is to return to the living stream of philosophic speculation of which he was the outstanding exponent in his day. Much of the truth of Thomas's synthesis has been lost to the modern

world. The tradition has suffered badly since the 16th century. We must embrace with its sweeping reaches all the whole of life and learning. Metaphysics has been the very essence of the stream. The revival of the traditional philosophy must move on apace to a larger renascence which will be supernatural as well as natural, scientific as well as philosophic, literary as well as historical. Thomas's philosophy is like man: body-becoming; soul-being.[7]

II. Features of the Neo-Thomistic Synthesis

Like neo-orthodoxy, Neo-Thomism is a reaction to the disruptive character of modern life. Neo-Thomists maintain that, as a result of the Renaissance and the Reformation, our civilization has lost unity, direction, and depth, and has fallen a victim to agnosticism, secularism, and individualism. Chiefly responsible for this state of affairs are Luther, Descartes, Rousseau, and Kant. The true greatness of the scholastic period consisted in its unified Christian world view. In that period, faith and reason, religion and philosophy, Church and State, the arts and the sciences, and all the handicrafts constituted an inseparable whole and served the Church. In our day, so the complaint continues, there exists no such unified world view and no common unifying principle. Economics is separated from political science; art from the Church; nationalism from world government; the natural from the supernatural; man from God. Robert E. Brennan summarizes the situation in the words:

> The Spinozan metaphysics blotted out the fundamental dualism of the Creator and His creation. Berkeley and his followers made a figment of the universe of matter. Hobbes, declaring for the other extreme, gainsaid all reality to the world of spirit. The rationalist laughs at the idea of a supernatural life and being. The positivist refuses to set any value on philosophic speculation. The Cartesian rejects the substantial unity of man. The Hegelian absolutist impugns the sacrosanct character of the human person. The pragmatist disavows the notion of continuity in the historical ordering of truth. . . . One by one the truths of the "perennial philosophy" have been called into court, pilloried on the rack of ignorance and irrationality, and exiled into oblivion. . . . With the passing of the ideas of Thomas, went the broad daylight of common sense and the consciousness, shared by the brotherhood of men, of the *reality of things.* Gone was the ancient wisdom that could reconcile the highest feats of metaphysical speculation with the lowest matters of everyday experience. This appeal to the fundamental truth of public experience has always been the heart and soul of the Thomist learning. . . . It is founded on the universal conviction that things exist, that we can know them, that our ideas really have an objective value. Its appeal lies in its very reasonableness. . . . The dethronement of God and the apotheosis of human

reason is a tearing asunder and a denial of the whole order of reality. It is insanity. . . . Reason without reasonable bonds gives way to a categorical imperative, then to an absolute spirit creating its own consciousness, then to unconsciousness, then to a will-to-power, then to an *elan vital* of cosmic entities, whereupon it is reason no longer. The supremacy of the irrational has brought us to the zero value of manhood. . . . Chaos in human thinking and human acting has become the order of the day.[8]

Furthermore, Neo-Thomism is a protest against every form of humanism which does not take into account the total human personality. According to Maritain, true humanism must consider man in the totality of both his natural and supernatural being, and it may not draw an arbitrary and *a priori* line of distinction between the divine and human in man. But this harmony between the human and the divine in man, and, therefore, a totally integrated human personality, is possible only if there exists in man a harmonious conjunction of faith and reason, of the natural and the supernatural, of philosophy and theology. This harmony can be achieved, for, according to St. Thomas, faith and reason are both divine gifts and are, therefore, never in conflict with each other. Thomistic humanism, which views man as a totally integrated personality, recognizes, on the one hand, the worth of natural man because it takes into account also the capacities which man has by nature. But, on the other hand, this humanism recognizes also the "light which lightens every man coming into the world" who is born not in a natural, but in a supernatural way. Inasmuch as Neo-Thomism recognizes in man both the speculative and the religious element and reconciles tensions by depending on the power of both faith and reason, it alone is able, according to Thomists, to confront and to deal with man as a fully integrated personality.

This view of man is possible for Neo-Thomism because of its view of the relationship of philosophy to theology, of reason to faith. Philosophy and theology are, because each operates on principles *sui generis,* wholly independent of each other. In relation to each other the one is the *heteron* of the other. Yet both are concerned with absolute truth. Therefore they cannot contradict each other. As Manser says: "Cum igitur gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat, oportet, quod naturalis ratio subserviat fidei." In Thomism, philosophy and theology are thus joined into a great synthesis where reason and faith meet as friends. Nature serves as the foundation

of *gratia,* and philosophy as the *praeambula fidei.* Philosophy also demonstrates that the declarations of faith do not contradict reason. The link which joins natural being with supernatural being, the bridge from the one to the other, is the principle of the *analogia entis,* that difficult concept which is one of the chief cornerstones in the entire Thomistic structure, but which one hesitates to analyze in a brief study such as this.

Neo-Thomism is therefore both: theology and philosophy. Both together constitute an inseparable whole. One may, indeed, concentrate for a time on either one of the two areas, but never in the sense that one may wholly leave out of consideration the other. Whoever studies Neo-Thomistic theology, must study also Neo-Thomistic philosophy, and vice versa. Faith in revelation is indeed the only way to know God and the truth of salvation, and reason may never be permitted to operate in this realm. Nevertheless it is not only possible, but also inevitable, for reason to draw inferences from the truths revealed to faith and to systematize the truths of faith into a whole. Furthermore, it is possible for reason, up to a point, to discover truths about God, the world, and man. Yet these truths are revealed fully only in Scripture and can be comprehended in their most complete meaning only by faith.

Etienne Gilson, who has produced some of the most brilliant studies on Thomism, is also a champion of Neo-Thomism. In his great work *Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*[9] he attempts to show that in the history of Christian thought, theology and philosophy have been on friendly terms, that the Early Church did not separate them into two wholly distinct realms, that faith stimulates the inquisitive bent of reason, that a Christian philosophy is not only possible, but inevitable, and that philosophy when it believed it had completely shaken off the shackles of theology, nevertheless continued to be influenced by theology. Gilson's argumentation must be faced — and answered. To do this huge task lies not within the compass of this article. One may not dismiss Gilson, however, even in this brief analysis of Neo-Thomism without letting him speak a few lines for himself. The following seem most pertinent:

> The effort of truth *believed* to transform itself into truth *known,* is truly the life of Christian wisdom, and the body of rational truths resulting from the effort is Christian philosophy itself. Thus the content of Chris-

tian philosophy is that body of rational truths discovered, explored, or simply safeguarded, thanks to the help that reason receives from revelation. (Pp. 34—35.)

Insofar as the believer bases his affirmations on the intimate conviction gained from faith he remains purely and simply a believer, he has not yet entered the gates of philosophy. But when amongst his beliefs he finds some that are capable of becoming objects of science, then he becomes a philosopher, and if it is to the Christian faith that he owes his new philosophical thought, he becomes a Christian philosopher. (P. 36.)

No philosopher is invoked as intermediary between reason and the supreme Master; but forthwith, after the act of faith, philosophy begins. Whoever believes by faith that God is being sees at once by reason that He can be nothing but total being, true being. (P. 52.)

If medieval thought succeeded in bringing Greek thought to its point of perfection, it was at once because Greek thought was already true, and because Christian thought, in virtue of its very Christianity, had the power of making it still more so. When they raised the problem of the origin of being, Plato and Aristotle were on the right road, and it is precisely because they were on the right road that to go further along it was a progress. In their march towards the truth they stopped short at the threshold of the doctrine of essence and existence conceived as really identical in God and really distinct in everything else. There we have the fundamental verity of the Thomist philosophy and also, we may say, of all Christian philosophy whatsoever. (Pp. 82—83.)

There was bound to be a philosophy as soon as there were philosophic Christians. There was nothing that forced them to philosophize, but neither was there anything to forbid them. But such a reply would be superficial. The truth is that in fact, if not in right, the formation of a Christian philosophy was inevitable, that it still is today, and will so remain as long as there are Christians, and Christians who think. (P. 419.)

There are good historical reasons for doubting the radical divorce of philosophy and religion in the centuries that followed the Middle Ages; at least we may reasonably ask whether the classical metaphysic was not nourished on the substance of Christian revelation to a far greater extent than we usually imagine. To put the question in this form, is simply to re-state the problem of Christian philosophy in another field. If pure philosophy took any of its ideas from Christian revelation, if anything of the Bible and the Gospel has passed into metaphysics, if, in short, it is inconceivable that the systems of Descartes, Malebranche, and Leibniz would be what in fact they are had they been altogether withdrawn from Christian influence, then it becomes highly probable that since the influence of Christianity on philosophy was a reality, the concept of Christian philosophy is not without a real meaning. (P. 18.)

A final feature of Neo-Thomistic thought is its emphasis on free will. According to Neo-Thomism, man is not free in the absolute sense. Man's will is dependent on norms determined by Christian reason and by God. But the Christian is free in the sense that,

being a Christian, he can leap across the causal nexus with which nature holds him fast and can share the freedom enjoyed by the First Cause, that is, God. His nature being both natural and supernatural, he participates in the freedom of the supernatural which penetrates the totality of realities, but he is limited in his freedom since he also participates in finite nature. If one were to eliminate from this interpretation of Neo-Thomism all philosophical ingredients, one might find a measure of theological truth in this interpretation. The fact of the matter is, however, that supporters of Neo-Thomism ascribe considerably more freedom to the will of man than the above limitation warrants. To quote Gilson once more:

> Neither the Jews, nor the Greeks, nor the Romans to whom the Gospel was preached ever took this preaching as a negation of nature, even fallen nature, or as the corresponding negation of free will. In the first centuries of the Church, on the contrary, to be a Christian was essentially to hold a middle position between Mani, who denied the goodness of nature, and Pelagius, who denied its wounds, and therewith the need of grace to heal the wounds. St. Augustine himself, although the anti-Pelagian controversy made him the Doctor of Grace, might equally well be called Doctor of Free Will, for, having begun by writing a *De Libero Arbitrio* before coming into contact with Pelagius, he judged it necessary to write a *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio* in the height of the Pelagian conflict. If you would have a *De Servo Arbitrio,* you must look to Luther. . . . Where there is no free will, there can be no struggle against vices, no painful achievement of virtues, and therefore no place left for morals. If the natural world is altogether corrupted, who would waste time over Aristotle's physics? (Pp. 420—422.)

III. Lutheranism's Reply to Neo-Thomism

If Neo-Thomism rested its case on purely metaphysical assumptions, any one of which pure reason might prove or disprove, and if it operated wholly in areas in which God's revelation provided no information, one might dismiss Neo-Thomism as simply one metaphysical structure of which there have been legion in the history of human thought. But, as has been pointed out, Neo-Thomism is both philosophy and theology, it challenges both reason and faith, and it operates in both realms, the natural and the supernatural. It has, oftentimes on good grounds, been compared to the magnificent cathedrals built in the late Middle Ages. Furthermore, Neo-Thomism is making an undeniable appeal to many religiously minded people who refuse, however, to accept the most basic truths

rediscovered by the Reformation. And, finally, there is inherent in Thomism a power of attraction which no one can escape who has seriously considered the developments in philosophy and science since the days of Descartes. What shall be Lutheranism's reply to the challenge of Neo-Thomism?

1. Every informed Lutheran regrets certain developments in the area of thought since the Renaissance and the Reformation. Whatever the first causes may have been, for instance, of the rise of rationalism in all its forms from Descartes to our day — and who will dare to isolate and articulate these origins? — the fact remains that rationalism did follow in the wake of the Reformation and the Renaissance. The fact also remains that in the area of theology, in any case, rationalism did untold damage. Every informed Lutheran regrets also some of the developments in nineteenth-century thought resulting from Auguste Comte's positivism, developments which are known as materialism, naturalism, agnosticism, and forms of humanism, whose essential features find their almost exact counterpart in the anthropocentric humanism of the Renaissance. Allowing for every blessing developed by modern science and for the consideration that some modern scientists have emphatically declared themselves to be theists, the informed Lutheran regrets that the idol of scientism is everywhere present and that there are millions upon millions who are bending their knee before this modern Frankenstein. One need not become a Neo-Thomist to discover that Western civilization is in many respects in a bad way — Oswald Spengler has long ago said enough on this — and that it lacks integration in spite of the efforts of the UN Assembly and the optimistic faith of many in "eternal peace" through some kind of world government.

But the question arises: Is the diagnosis of Neo-Thomists correct, and is the cure which they prescribe the best and safest remedy? In reading their literature one cannot escape the impression that they are moved by a nostalgic love for the Middle Ages, that period in history when there existed a semblance of harmony and unity and when Plato's *Republic* was — so some believed — fully realized. Indeed, there did exist in the Middle Ages a kind of synthesis which attempted to regulate even the details of private life. There was a degree of order and peace. But Neo-Thomists so

often fail to tell about the price paid by medieval society for the achievement of this order, unity, harmony, and peace. They say nothing about the avowed ambitions of the Church to wield both swords, nothing about the manner in which those were silenced who dared to revolt against the autocratic government of the Church, nothing about the treatment accorded some of the mystics, the Waldensians, Wiclif, Hus, Luther, Galileo, Giordano Bruno, and others. When one carefully examines the writings of Descartes, a Jesuit, one is led to suspect that his rationalism was at bottom a revolt against medieval Scholasticism and only secondarily the evolvement of a new metaphysics.

2. In his defense of the Thomistic synthesis, Gilson attempts to demonstrate that theology inevitably begets philosophy and that a Christian philosophy has therefore existed in some form or other throughout the history of the Christian Church. Emil Brunner shares Gilson's position.[10] What has Lutheranism to say to this thesis?

From the Lutheran point of view the basic consideration in this involved question is not whether a Christian philosophy is possible or even inevitable. One may arrive at varying solutions of this problem, depending on one's concept of faith and reason and the meaning, content, and purpose of philosophy. Attempted solutions have therefore not always proved satisfactory, because authors failed clearly to define terms. Lutherans are chiefly interested in the question whether the Thomistic synthesis of philosophy and theology, of reason and faith, of nature and grace, exalts the God of Scripture, the *Christus solus,* the *sola gratia,* the *sola fides,* and the pure Gospel more than a studious effort to keep both realms separate or whether the reverse is true. Here is the real parting of the ways for Neo-Thomists and Lutherans.

St. Thomas believed that the *Deus semper maior* and the *soli Deo gloria* were not only safe and secure in his synthesis, but that he had exalted the God of revelation in the highest possible degree — and who dares question his integrity and supreme devotion to this task? Furthermore, St. Thomas was acquainted with *gratia, gratia efficax,* and the *donum gratiae vocantis per misericordiam.* For him even the *facere quod in se est* and the removal of hindrances ultimately stem *ex dono gratiae.* Even the *opera meritoria* are the

result of grace according to St. Thomas. But there have been those, and among them particularly Luther, who just as honestly believed that in all medieval syntheses, including St. Thomas's, such concepts as *Deus semper maior, soli Deo gloria,* and others referred to above suffered seriously as a result of the intrusion of Aristotelian and Platonic ideas into theology. Gilson is very sensitive to the criticism that philosophy raised havoc in theology, and whereas he appears composed throughout his brilliant volume, his blood pressure rises when he discusses the most serious objection to medieval syntheses, the combination of philosophy and theology into one system. His criticism deserves to be quoted:

> The charge of having sacrificed too much to philosophy is at once the oldest and the most banal of all objections that have ever been directed against the Christian philosophers. Protestantism, even today, considers it its duty to "react against the invasion of the Church by the pagan spirit," considers it its duty moreover that this was one of the chief ends that the Reformers of the sixteenth century proposed to themselves. Very true: there are plenty of texts of Luther to witness to it if they are wanted. But the objection, although it can be taken in a specifically Protestant sense, is not necessarily Protestant in essence. Malebranche was not a Protestant, but poured out bitter enough complaints about the pagan character of Scholasticism, this "philosophy of the serpent."
>
> Erasmus was no Lutheran, nor ever wished to be one, but that did not prevent him from protesting, with Luther, against the mixture of Aristotle and the Gospel that proceeded from Albert the Great, St. Thomas, and Duns Scotus; for him, too, the "philosophy of Christ" is the "Christ without philosophy," that is to say, simply the Gospel. But even in the Middle Ages itself St. Peter Damian, all the anti-dialectitians, even the Popes, had no need to wait for the Reformers to warn theologians solemnly of the way in which they imperiled faith when they turned philosophers. With what vigor does not Gregory IX remind the Masters of Theology of the University of Paris that philosophy, this handmaid of theology, is bidding fair to become the mistress! These theologians, who ought to be "theologues," have they not become mere "theophants"? With them, nature takes precedence of grace, the text of the philosophers replaces the inspired Word of God, the Ark of the Covenant stands next door to Dagon, and by dint of wishing to confirm faith by natural reason, faith itself is rendered useless, since there is no longer any merit in believing what is demonstrated there.

3. Gilson's criticism brings into the foreground Martin Luther. Granted that before Luther's day there were those in the Roman Church, including popes, who warned against the marriage of theology to philosophy and called attention to the evil products of that union, Gilson will, we trust, concede that the one individual

who far more than any other succeeded in tearing asunder this union was that man Martin Luther. Why did Luther do it? Because he failed to understand what the medieval schoolmen, including St. Thomas, were trying to do when they hitched theology to philosophy? [11] Was it because he was so thoroughly biased against philosophy that he saw no use for it whatever? To answer these questions is like carrying oranges to California. They have been answered so often and so adequately that it should not be necessary to reply to them once more.[12] Nevertheless a few observations are in order because even Lutherans are not always aware of what God did through Luther.

The great Reformer was desperately determined to keep separate reason and revelation, philosophy and theology, because he was painfully aware of what had happened to Biblical theology as a result of that union. He stressed the *soli Deo gloria* and the *Deus semper maior* because he stood in holy awe of the God who speaks to man in the First Commandment. From this vantage point he complained bitterly about the idolatrous practices in the Roman Church which had tended to level out the *Deus solus* of the First Commandment. And Luther saw very correctly that if the *Deus solus* is not taken at its face value, there can be no radical knowledge of sin.

But Luther's constant insistence on the *Deus solus,* as Eduard Ellwein points out,[13] compelled him to insist also on the full and unadulterated meaning of *Christus solus.* For Luther, Christ was the center of the circle. From this center all radii proceed to the circumference, and all radii anchored in the circumference necessarily move toward, and lodge in, the center. And this *Christus solus* implied in Luther's theology also the *sola gratia* and the *sola fides.* Yet again, the *solus Christus* and the *sola gratia* and the *sola fides* are all grounded and offered in the one Gospel of salvation, and therefore this Gospel must be proclaimed in its purity without additions and subtractions.

4. Lutheranism, too, directs itself to the total man. But this total man is for Lutheranism not a *quasi* philosophical embodiment of the natural and supernatural, but the *simul iustus et peccator.* The Christian man is in Lutheranism a sinner and under the wrath of God. But — and this is the greatness of Luther's insight into

the meaning of "righteous" — he is also a justified, pardoned, and saved sinner. He is one who daily sins, but also one who daily rises to a new life in Christ through repentance and faith.

5. Lutheranism has, in its Confessions, said a great deal about freedom of the will. It has never denied that unregenerate man is able to perform works of benefit to mankind through the exercise of his free will. It has, however, expressed itself with regard to these works with restraint for the reason that Lutheranism believes with Scripture in the total depravity of man and therefore has little faith in natural man's moral rectitude. Lutheranism has never shared Kant's optimistic "You ought, therefore you can," nor does it share, without making serious modifications, Gilson's statement: "Where there is no free will, there can be no struggle against vices, no painful achievement of virtues, and therefore no place left for morals." What Lutheranism discovers in its critique of man is the fact that in so many, many instances, natural man does not appear to struggle against vices and to pursue virtues, and that where such a struggle appears, it is a struggle only against overt vices and a struggle, furthermore, carried on wholly for selfish ends. Lutheranism therefore views even the most exalted systems of moral idealism with a justifiable degree of doubt and misgiving.

Conclusion

Lutheranism rejoices in the evidence that Roman theology is becoming more Scripturally centered than it has been in the past. One would have to have a blind spot not to note this phenomenon. Werner Elert of Erlangen even goes so far as to write: "Not only in systematic and historical, but also in exegetical theology the Roman Church has stolen the march on the Protestants," and Professor Gloege of Jena startled the conference at Bad Boll last July with the statement: "Kittel's *Theologisches Woerterbuch* is used more extensively by Catholics than by Protestants." There is no question in this writer's mind that Neo-Thomism with its sense of urgency, its devotion to a great cause, and its program of activism which reaches down to the parish level, is largely responsible for this great interest in the Holy Scriptures. It follows that Lutheranism may not stand idly by and rest on its achievements in the various theological disciplines. Lutheranism needs to re-examine

itself in terms of Scripture and the Confessions.[14] Lutheranism must clearly express itself regarding its beliefs with constant reference to current thought patterns. In short, it must exploit its heritage with all the tools available in our age. Only then will Lutheranism be able successfully to meet the challenge of Neo-Thomism and other forms of religious thought which are at the present time seeking to capture the minds of millions of people in our land.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

[1] J. J. Berthier's *Sanctus Thomas Aquinas Doctor Communis Ecclesiae* (Rome, 1914), I, *Testimonia Ecclesiae,* contains 250 pages of statements of popes, which commend the study of St. Thomas.

[2] This and the following quotations from encyclicals are taken from Maritain, *St. Thomas the Doctor of the Church* (New York, 1931), pp. 167—190.

[3] *Klerusblatt, Eickstaett,* I, pp. 12 and 48, quoted in *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (Muenchen, October 31, 1949), p. 307.

[4] Cf. especially *St. Thomas and the Life of Learning* (1937); *St. Thomas and the Gentiles* (1938); *St. Thomas and the Greeks* (1939); *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil* (1942).

[5] Quotation from Robert E. Brennan's article "The Thomist Revival" in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* (January, 1941), pp. 12—25.

[6] *The Thomist,* "a Speculative Quarterly Review," is edited by the Dominican Fathers of the Province of St. Joseph. Vol. V (1943) is dedicated to Jacques Maritain on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday.

[7] From Robert E. Brennan's article referred to under 5, pp. 15—16.

[8] The quotation from Brennan is an example of the authoritarian manner in which some Neo-Thomists pontificate on most abstruse problems in epistemology. The reason is, of course, that a devoted Thomist who has pledged allegiance to the basic metaphysical principles in Thomistic philosophy, is necessarily critical of every other solution of these problems. With due respect to the great mind of St. Thomas, even the "Angelic Doctor" was not inspired by God to reveal to man the final answers in epistemology.

[9] Quotations in this section are from Gilson's *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy.* Gifford Lectures 1931—1932. Trans. by A. H. C. Downes (New York, 1936). In the concluding paragraphs of this book, Gilson discusses the reasons for the decline of medieval Christian philosophy. He finds these reasons not in weaknesses inherent in medieval Christian philosophy, but elsewhere. But whatever the reasons may have been, so much is certain that this philosophy has tumbled from its high pedestal, like other medieval idols, and that the most concerted and energetic efforts of modern Thomists will not succeed in again elevating it to the exalted position it enjoyed in the classic period of Scholasticism. In deference to Gilson, we are quoting his words:

"Christian philosophy died, primarily, of its own dissensions, and these dissensions multiplied as soon as it began to take itself for an end, instead of serving the Wisdom which was at once its end and source. Albertists, Thomists, Scotists, Occamists, all contributed to the ruin of medieval philosophy in the exact measure in which they neglected the search for truth to exhaust them-

selves in barren controversies about the formulae in which it was to be expressed. The multiplicity of these formulae would have constituted no drawback, rather the reverse, if the Christian spirit that kept them in unity had not been too often obscured, sometimes lost. When this happened, medieval philosophy became no more than a corpse encumbering the soil of a Christendom that could not live without it, and without which it could not live. Failing to maintain the organic unity of a philosophy at once truly rational and truly Christian, Scholasticism and Christendom crumbled together under their own weight.

"Let us at least hope that the lesson will not be thrown away. It was not modern science, that grand uniter of minds, that destroyed Christian philosophy. When modern science was born, there was no longer any living Christian philosophy there to welcome and assimilate it. The architect of peace had died of war; the war came of the revolt of national egoism against Christendom, and this revolt itself, which Christian philosophy should have prevented, came of the internal dissensions that afflicted it because it had forgotten its essence, which was to be Christian. Divided against itself, the house fell. Perhaps it is not too late to attempt its reconstruction; but if Christian philosophy is to start on a new career, a new Christian spirit will have to be everywhere diffused, and philosophy will have to learn to absorb and retain it. That is the only atmosphere in which it can breathe." (Pp. 401—402.)

10 Emil Brunner carefully discusses the problem in *Revelation and Reason* (Philadelphia, 1946). See especially the chapter titled "The Problem and the Idea of Christian Philosophy," pp. 374—396. The topical sentence reads: "Christian philosophy is a fact." A further discussion of the problem may be found in *Christendom* (Winter, 1947) under the title "Is a Christian Philosophy Possible?" by Roger Hazelton. The author answers the question in the affirmative. For him "faith is belief as well as trust and therefore must be everlastingly concerned with its own truth."

11 The question to what extent Luther was acquainted with the writings of St. Thomas is discussed by Wilhelm Link (cf. Note 12). Perhaps the most significant statement Luther made of St. Thomas appears in his *Table Talks* (1532), where he said: "In all of Thomas there is not one word which might arouse in one confidence in Christ" ("Im gantzen Thoma ist nicht ein wort, das einem mocht ein zuuersicht zu Christo machen"), quoted by Link, p. 191.

12 Luther's attitude to philosophy has been studied in great detail. See in particular Wilhelm Link, *Das Ringen Luthers um die Freiheit der Theologie von der Philosophie* (Muenchen, 1940) — a thorough investigation of the problem by a young scholar at Tuebingen who died in an accident when he was about to rise to a high pinnacle of fame. See also Otto Scheel, *Dokumente zu Luthers Entwickelung* (Tuebingen, 1929), *passim*. Still useful is Ferd. Bahlow's *Luthers Stellung zur Philosophie* (Berlin, 1891), in which the reader finds a catalog of juicy epithets hurled by Luther at Aristotle and medieval Aristotelianism. Luther's influence on Melanchthon covering the years 1518 to 1522 is ably presented by Peter Petersen, *Geschichte der Aristotelischen Philosophie im Protestantischen Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1929), pp. 24—38. Still pertinent is Walch's summary of Luther's position. Cf. St. Louis edition of *Luther's Works,* XVIII:12-13, the last sentences of which read: "If at times Luther voiced such bold expressions which make it appear that he wrote too harshly and bitterly, one must remember that he was a human being and meant better than his words indicate. He was no enemy of philosophy as such, and he recognized later that philosophy, if it is properly used and applied, has merit." A good summary may also be found in Richard McKeon, "Renaissance and Method in Philosophy" in *Studies in the History of Ideas* (New York,

1935), though McKeon is chiefly interested in the effect of Aristotelianism on Luther's hermeneutical principles. For statements by both Luther and Melanchthon on philosophy, Aristotle, Scotism, and Scholasticism the reader should consult the index in the *Triglot.* Such a search in the *Triglot* will yield astonishing and fruitful results. Two quotations will suffice at this point. Melanchthon writes: "Theologos constat plura ex philosophia admiscuisse doctrinae Christinae quam satis erat" (Apology III, 269, *Triglot,* p. 24) and "Aristoteles de moribus civilibus adeo scripsit erudite, nihil ut de his requirendum sit amplius" Apology IV (II), 14, *Triglot,* p. 122).

[13] Eduard Ellwein, *Dozent* at Neuendettelsau in Germany, has for some time carried on discussions with Neo-Thomistic scholars. In his article on Neo-Thomism in *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (Muenchen, October 31, 1949), pp. 306—309, he notes that Neo-Thomists have exemplified an undeniable interest in Scripture, but that Luther's fundamental strictures are still applicable. In Hans Asmussen's recent work titled *Warum noch lutherische Kirche?* (Stuttgart, 1949), pp. 70—71, appears this significant note: "The essential thing which we find in Melanchthon's analysis in the Apology of the fourth article of the Augsburg Confession, *De Justificatione,* is its beginning. Here he develops the thought that his opponents speak about justification on the plane of philosophy. He writes: 'If we accept the teaching of our opponents . . . we have already become Aristotelian and are no longer Christian, and there is no difference then between honorable, pagan, between Pharisaic and Christian life, between philosophy and the Gospel.' This is spoken on the evangelical plane. With this slogan something is said by Melanchthon which belongs to the very essence of the Reformation. Melanchthon and Luther may here and there have erred in the interpretation of their opponents, but here they are dealing with the real issue. *And never has Rome been able to rid herself of the charge that she has blotted out the borderline between philosophy and the Gospel, between morals and salvation."* (Italics my own.)

[14] For the Lutheran theologian the course of investigation begins with Scripture, leads through the Confessions, and returns to Scripture. In short, his first and final court of appeal is Scripture.

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