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AQUINAS RESUSCITATUS.

HOWEVER far we may be removed from its immediate influence, the great revival of the study of St. Thomas Aquinas, now in its fiftieth year, can hardly fail to be a subject of interest to those who have the defence and spread of the Catholic faith at heart.

This movement owes its origin chiefly to Cajetan Sanseverino as far back as 1840. He was the first of any note who set his face boldly against that eclecticism in philosophy which had become almost universal in Europe, both among Catholics and Protestants.

The cause was then taken up, sustained, and furthered by Frs. Liberatore, Kleutgen, and a few others; and after a struggle of forty years, it took a more definite shape, when it was officially recognized, approved, and organized by the Encyclical "Aeterni Patris," October 4, 1879.

Its promoters are now very numerous, and as zealous as ever, and they have as their leader and patron the Sovereign Pontiff himself. They are professedly reformers, and that of no very compromising character; for they aim at nothing less than making the "Summa" of St. Thomas the text-book of Christendom, so that it shall be to its philosophy and theology what the missal and breviary are to its liturgy; that is, a universal standard to which all shall conform, whereby all differences shall be, more or less, eliminated, and all schools of opinion merged, as far as possible, into one great Catholic school.

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That this estimate of their views is not exaggerated, will best appear from the terms in which the practical conclusion of the Encyclical is summed up: "While, then, we enjoin that whatever wise things others have said, whosoever they be; whatever fruitful discoveries and inventions they have made, should be welcomed with a liberal mind; at the same time we most earnestly exhort you, venerable brethren, for the honor and defence of the Catholic faith, for the advancement of science, for the welfare of society, to restore and spread, far and wide, the golden wisdom of St. Thomas. We say the '*wisdom* of St. Thomas,' for if the scholastics have been in any way over subtle in their inquisitions, or if they have too rashly accepted traditions, or if they have said anything not in keeping with the proven results of later research, or in any way not susceptible of proof, it is far from our intention that they should be followed in these matters. But let carefully chosen professors strive to instil into the minds of their pupils the teaching of Aquinas, and to make them clearly see how it excels all other in point of solidity. And let the academies which you may have already founded, or shall found hereafter, explain and defend his teaching, and apply it to the refutation of prevalent error. And that there may be no confusion between the pretence and the reality, the poisoned waters and the pure, you must take care that this wisdom of St. Thomas is drawn from the fountain-head, or at least from those streams which flow from it, and are, in the unanimous judgment of the most learned, beyond all doubt still pure and undefiled."

Ten days later, referring to this Encyclical in a brief addressed to Cardinal de Lucca, Prefect of Ecclesiastical Studies, the Holy Father says: "We earnestly exhorted the bishops to join their efforts with ours, to restore to the Catholic schools that ancient philosophy which has been pushed out into the cold and almost abandoned, and to replace it in that position of honor which it formerly occupied."

The best commentary on all this is the fact that in the Roman Seminary, which is under the immediate supervision of the Pope, there is no text-book recognized except the "Summa" of Aquinas, pure and simple. Furthermore, when we look at the special edition of St. Thomas with its commentaries, and the various reprints of the old scholastics which have been issued in pursuance of the Holy Father's wishes, we cannot but think that by the "pure unmixed streams" from which beginners are to imbibe the system of Aquinas, are meant those interpreters who, like Cajetan, Ferrariensis, Alamannus, etc., simply sought to learn what their master meant, rather than those critical interpreters who do not scruple to depart from him when their reason suggests it, and might perhaps

in some sense rival him as masters themselves. Nor does this in any way lessen the honor due to those great originals, but merely implies that for those whose present and immediate aim is to understand St. Thomas, the more direct and easier route lies elsewhere. It does not mean that they are to be studied less, but later on. Lastly, in more than one case, men of high intellectual attainments and great originality, who were unable to fall in comfortably with the new requirements, and to adapt themselves without reserve to the spirit of the reform, have had to resign their professorial chairs and to give place to others, in some cases, it may be, of inferior genius.

From all this it may be concluded as evident, in the words of a writer in the *Dublin Review* (January, 1880): "that it is intended to effect a very great work; to bring about unity in Catholic philosophy, and that, by the universal adoption of the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas."

Now, the feelings with which this movement is regarded will vary according to the point from which it is viewed. There are, however, two very vigorous types of feeling, the one favorable, the other adverse to it, yet both probably based on an entire misapprehension of its true significance, which we propose to discuss briefly, and to point out the fallacies on which they rely for their intellectual basis. And here we must crave pardon if, for the sake of clearness, we seem altogether to exaggerate the views of those whom we oppose.

We do not pretend to represent any individual cases that have come under our notice, but rather two extreme types,—caricatures if you will,—towards the realization of which many are tending, more or less, but none or very few ever attaining.

First, then, we have those enthusiastic and not altogether discreet admirers of Aquinas, who seem to be quite intolerant of the existence of any other theologians whatever; who seem almost to wish to make the *ipse dixit* of their idol the ultimate solvent of all controversies, and that not only in matters pertaining to faith and philosophy, but even in things belonging to the domain of empirical science. It is his influence as an authority, not as a reasoner, which they desire to see exalted. They seem to regard the "Summa" as containing the last word that is to be said in the science of theology, which for them lies closed up between the covers of St. Thomas, as does the canon of inspired scriptures between those of the Bible. No doubt many, though not all, who incline to this extreme view belong to that school which claims Aquinas as its founder, and which has rendered valuable service to theology by much learned commentary on his works, and by pre-

serving the tradition which regards his system as the most perfect theological method.

We cannot, however, acquit them of the charge of over-exclusiveness in their devotion, in so far as they have sometimes been conservative of the letter rather than of the spirit of their master, who, in the words of Bacon (no friend of the schools), "had the largest heart of all the school divines."

It has often been said, and very truly, that the blind admirers of an original are his worst enemies, since they imitate him in everything except his originality—" *inimici hominis domestici ejus*;" his sayings, doings and institutions are petrified into models for slavish imitation; the principles from which they spring are trodden underfoot; the spirit which quickened them and moulded them to the circumstances of the past is forgotten. That this general law, founded in the weakness of our nature, has been to some extent verified in the school to which St. Thomas especially belongs, is of course to be expected. To some extent only; for in every school there are to be found many men of wide and comprehensive mind capable of truly appreciating the tenets and principles they profess to maintain, but the majority will necessarily be made up of unoriginal, imitative minds, and in most cases the numerical majority gives the tone to the whole. It may well be that some of these extreme enthusiasts hail with delight the revival of the study of Aquinas, and regard the patronage and approval which the Holy Father has accorded to it as a sort of *ex cathedra* declaration in favor of all exclusively Thomistic opinions. "*Roma locuta est*" they would seem to say—really meaning, therefore, that the question of physical predetermination and many others of the same kind are forever at rest.

Surely, this would be a complete misinterpretation of the mind of the Roman Pontiff. If, indeed, St. Thomas were to be taken as a guide in this exclusive sense, the narrowing result of such a system would be disastrous in the extreme. In no way would it be a true revival of the teaching of St. Thomas, while it would be the death-blow to theology as a living science, capable of indefinite evolution and perfection. And, indeed, it must be acknowledged that whatever efforts have been made in these latter days to arouse theology from its long-continued lethargy, whatever has been done in the way of reconciling differences and of meeting contemporary error on its own ground and combating it with its own weapons, is to be ascribed, as a rule, not to the exclusive followers of any of the old masters, but to eclectics who belonged to no particular school, while more or less approving of all.

And now, in direct opposition to these enthusiasts (whose tendency is somewhat retrograde, in that they regard a return to the

past as the only remedy for present evils), we have many very zealous Catholics who are keenly alive to the intellectual needs of the present day, and also to the inability of so many of our clergy to supply them. As in every other line, so in this—the harvest is great, the laborers few and inefficient. They are therefore impatient to see an immediate and direct application of clerical studies to the circumstances of our own times. It was not so in the days when theology was commonly regarded as the queen of sciences, and was by itself sufficient to rank a man with the most highly educated. Not only with a view to the work of education of youth, but in order to be able to understand the minds with which they have to deal, and to command that respect which is due to their office, it is needful that priests should be not only theologians, but also men of general education, which now-a-days requires a considerably prolonged period of preparation. And so they feel that the method of the old schools, with its lengthy lectures, its formal disputations (so unlike newspaper controversy), is intolerably cumbersome, and though respect seals their lips, they fret inwardly at what seems to them a short-sighted conservatism, lazily cleaving to an effete and unpractical system. Seven years seems to them far too large a proportion of one's education time to devote to the study of an antiquated form of theology which needs so much alteration before it can be applied to present purposes. "Why should we concern ourselves with the errors of Manichæus or Pelagius, of Avicenna or Averrhoes? It is not the Mahometan, but the atheist, the pantheist, the agnostic whom we have to encounter now. How can a book written to suit the needs of the thirteenth century be applied to those of the nineteenth? Heresy will soon be a thing of the past. Time is making evident to all what was always true, namely, the untenableness of any position between pure rationalism and absolute submission to a living revelation. Consequently, to be able to prove the existence of a revelation, to point to the Church as its only legitimate guardian and interpreter, is the most pressing, the only essential part of theological education in these days. And yet where are we to look in the "Summa" for a treatise *de vera religione* or *de ecclesia* as those questions have to be treated now? Where are we to find answers to those hosts of difficulties raised by sciences which had practically no existence in the days of St. Thomas?" "We have every respect," say they, "for St. Thomas, and we are always proud to be able to quote him in favor of our views. But as he was a man of his time, so let us be men of ours. Let us bring our philosophy to bear directly on the false philosophies of our contemporaries. Of course, we must first learn our own position. But for this let manuals suffice. After all, the authors of these manuals have

drawn, directly or indirectly, from the old masters all that is best and most needful for present emergencies. And by this means we shall have leisure to read up Kant and Hegel, Spencer, Mill, Bacon and the rest of these great bugbears; and having read them, to write clever articles about them in their own easy, self-confident style; we shall be able to prepare ourselves for the lecture-room and for that glorious arena of small controversy, the railway carriage; we shall be able to *think* in English, and, consequently, when we do appear in print, to express our thoughts in a manner intelligible to our contemporaries, and not in the rigid mould and pedantic phraseology of antiquity. In a word, we shall be up to date, and shall be men of our time in every respect consistent with our duty as Catholics."

To those who look at the matter in this light, the revival of the study of St. Thomas is by no means welcome, except as an index of the general reawakening of mental activity in the interests of theology. They sacredly believe and hope that it is only a passing phase, perhaps a passing craze; that as it owes its strength mainly to the influence of the present Pope, so when that influence is withdrawn the "Summa" will once more be put on the shelf, and text-books, as before, will increase and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it.

There is much, very much, to sympathize with in the position of these well-intentioned utilitarians, and yet, while admitting many of their premises, we cannot but think that their practical conclusion is rather rash and short-sighted. We think that they are looking to the greatest present result, and not to the greatest eventual gain; that they are considering the solitary laborer, and not him who is but a part of one great mechanism. The perfectly isolated worker, if such there now be, may direct his preparation exclusively to those needs and opportunities with which he will come in direct personal contact. If a philanthropist, he may prepare himself to do as much good as lies within the power of one man to effect in the course of a short life, and without assistance. But if he be a man of wider views, he will see that in most cases he will effect far more good eventually by performing his duty as a member of an organized body devoted to philanthropic ends, however remotely that duty may bear on the happiness of others, however impatient he may naturally be to see the fruit of his labor, however unwilling to be able to claim a merely fractional share in the result.

Now the Church is an organized body, of which the clergy are active members. She looks at the present with loving anxiety and pain, but she has also to look far into the future, and to consider the millions of her yet unborn children, and the manifold thorny

dangers which, now only in seed, may spring up hereafter to choke the good grain. She knows how false a zeal it is which would "take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs," that would turn away the intellectual energies of her priests from the work of illustrating and harmonizing the mysteries of faith, by which the minds of her saints are fed and enlightened, in order to silence the barking of dogs, who deny the very existence of that faith. To preserve and cherish the souls within her pale is her first care; her second (not co-ordinate but subordinate), to save the wanderers without, and draw them into the fold. As it is by sanctifying himself, and in no other way, that a man best consults for the sanctification of his neighbor, so it is by turning our energies inward, and by perfecting ourselves as a body, that we shall actually and most effectually exercise our apostolate to the world at large. Controversy and polemics have their legitimate sphere, but they are not the be-all and end-all of theology. It is well and needful for the faithful to see that their religion is able to defend itself against the charge of unreasonableness. And for those who are already sincerely seeking the truth, whose will has been, by other means, disposed toward the Church, the solution of difficulties is often a necessary condition for the completion of the good work, a *causa removens prohibens*. But if we look for the motive power, the efficient cause, it is by the cords of love and through the will that men are drawn into the Church, and not by the haggling of controversy. It may be the beauty, sublimity, and intimate harmony of Catholic doctrine which first exerts a spell; it may be the repose and peace which submission to an infallible authority affords to the thought-wearied mind; it may be the help and consolation of the sacraments, the Eucharistic *Schechina* which hallows our churches; it may be the gentle glory of the Saints, the only adequate fruit of the Catholic religion by which the tree can be tested; it may be the self-sacrifice of such men as Father Damien, and hundreds of men and women, who, in or out of religious orders, lead lives as heroic as his; it is often admiration for what the Church has done in advocating the cause of the poor, in maintaining liberty and order in due proportion; it is sometimes even the grace and dignity of her rites, the majesty of her temples, which gives the will its first bent contrary to that which it received by education. These are the arguments that tell; these the weapons of the most fruitful controversy of all.

Having thus pointed out these two contrary, and we believe quite incorrect, views of the significance of the Thomistic revival (a term whose misinterpretation has now been guarded against), we may venture to give what we believe to be the true interpretation of the mind of the Holy Father as shown in the Encyclical *Acterni*

Patris, and in his subsequent action in furtherance of the wishes therein expressed.

While, on the one hand, we should not exaggerate, on the other, we should not underrate so solemn and deliberate a disciplinary measure of a Pontiff so eminently liberal-minded and enlightened, keenly alive to the peculiar needs of the Church in the nineteenth century ; of one so conciliatory, so utterly incapable of imposing his private opinions and idiosyncrasies on numbers of men of opposite views without grave and wide-spreading reasons. Nor is it likely that in a matter so intimately connected with the evolution, defence and spread of the Christian faith that the assistance, or even the guidance of the Holy Spirit would be wanting.

It will help very much to the formation of a correct opinion on this subject to have a clear idea of the distinction between positive and scientific or scholastic theology. Positive knowledge in any department is that acquaintance with facts, conclusions, or even arguments, which is acquired by way of information, whether for the sake of one's own mental improvement or with a view to imparting the same to others. It remains in the mind as it entered it. It is not dissected or analyzed, with a view to extracting the principle involved, or separating the general from the particular. Thus, one may acquire historical knowledge, to gratify his natural and laudable curiosity, or with a view to teaching others, or in order to furnish materials for the scientific historian and the sociologist. But the latter values this information, not for what it is in itself, but for what he can draw out of it, namely, the theories and laws of social life and its conditions.

Now the scientist, in whatever department, needs a long and careful preparation for his work. First of all, he must know what a science is, and for this he must go to logic, which treats about science in general, and as a practical issue lays down those rules for the conduct of reasoning which constitute the art of speculation. Besides knowing the art, he must acquire skill in the application of its rules, and for this it will be well to apply them first to some of those sciences the nature of whose object is wholly comprehensible to man, being in some sense the creation of his own mind, such as numbers, measurements, mechanical contrivances, and the like. Here the terminology can be most exact and free from ambiguity, and there is no room for other fallacies than those of form. When he has acquired some skill in these matters, he may pass on to those sciences which deal with natures more or less obscure, and where the terms are open to ambiguous interpretation, and there is need of very careful distinction in order to guard against "real" fallacies. According then to the complexity of the subject-matter, the scientist will need more or less gymnastic train-

ing in the subtillies peculiar to it before he can even begin to labor at the extension and improvement of the science in question.¹

Now it will be quite plain to the most casual reader that the Encyclical has in view the scientific (that is, the scholastic) and not the positive theologian. The distinction is one that has been always recognized *theoretically*, and is most necessary for the work of the Church. In old times, the episcopal seminaries were schools of positive theology, while the university course was scholastic or scientific. To know the received conclusions and the arguments by which they are defended from ordinary objections is the part of the positive theologian. To find new arguments, to advance to new conclusions, to be ready for all possible difficulties, is, among other things, the part of the scholastic theologian. Positive theology is a weapon offensive and defensive for particular foreseen emergencies; scholastic theology is a weapon of universal applicability, or rather a skill to fashion weapons suited to the most unforeseen assaults. A course of positive theology is something final, at the end of which a man is fit to preach and catechise; a course of scholastic theology is essentially preparatory, at the end of which a man is not fit to teach, but only to prepare himself for teaching theology to others. In an examination, an unsound opinion is a fatal error in the positive theologian, while a fallacious argument is but venial; whereas the converse is true as regards the student of scholastic theology. To be perfect in either sphere requires powers of a very high order, though wholly distinct in kind. Those necessary for the positive theologian are more generally useful and fortunately more widely diffused.

Practically, however, the distinction has been much overlooked, owing, no doubt to the almost complete oblivion into which scholastic philosophy had fallen, until about fifty years ago; and so we still find many who speak of the difference as one of degree rather than of kind. "The scholastic theologian shall go *more* into the reasons of things," say they. And if we take up text-books professing to belong to these different departments, we often find little beyond the title-page and the dimensions to tell us to which we should assign it. All alike argue successively from Scripture, from the Councils, from the Fathers, from reason, varying, perhaps, only in the proportion of the ingredients. All are padded with exegetical and historical discussions and controversies set forth, as a rule, not in the clear, unpretending scholastic dialect, but in dis-

¹ By *subtily*, here and throughout, we do not mean that ingenious trifling with which the later schoolmen have been rightly or wrongly accredited, and which cannot be too severely condemned, but that accuracy and keenness of perception, that exactitude of expression which is the antithesis, not of depth, but of obscurity; not of breadth, but of vagueness.

cursive and would-be rhetorical Latin which disgusts the learned and puzzles the unlearned. All seem to suppose—what in most cases is quite true—that the student is never to have leisure to study Holy Scripture, or the Councils, or the Fathers, for himself, and therefore must find within the limits of one or two small volumes, all that he is ever to know of scholastic, dogmatic and patristic theology.

Naturally enough, the beginner wonders if three years' drilling in scholastic philosophy is really such a very essential prerequisite to the study of theology; and whether common sense and a few weeks would not be amply sufficient for the purpose. In truth, the tradition dates from the time when scholastic theology was in full vigor. But for one who really appreciates what is meant by scholastic theology, and the relation (so well set forth in our Encyclical) which Aristotelian philosophy bears to it, three years is even too short a time to leave any room for those encounters with current philosophical heresies, with which so much of that valuable time is wasted, and to so little purpose.

Of course, the scholastic theologian before he can teach, must know all that the positive theologian knows, and much more; but his aim as a *student* is to cultivate the subtle habit of mind needful for one who intends to *work at* the science eventually. This is not simply to practice logic, as some may object, but to practice the *application* of logic to the most difficult and complex matter, and to get well acquainted with the windings and turnings of the way. We can well understand how it is possible, and not uncommon, for a man to know a text-book of scholastic theology from end to end, to repeat the arguments glibly, to solve the usual objections, and, at the same time, to be a mere intellectual cripple as far as any original work is concerned—much as little boys who are crammed rather than taught, will rattle off the propositions of Euclid and as many problems as have been done for them, provided the letters are the same and the figures not turned topsy-turvy.

This sort of thing will no more make a theologian than to learn a volume of sermons by heart will make a preacher; this will in no way conduce to that subtle habit of mind which will make it possible to solve new and unforeseen difficulties by recourse to first principles however remote. He alone can alter and adapt, who thoroughly understands the principles of construction.

The greatest difficulty presented by this high standard of the requirements of the scholastic theologian is that relating to the time to be consumed in merely preparatory work. There are now "so many worlds, so much to do," so great a harvest, so few laborers. Besides the ministry of the Word, there is the ministry

of the sacraments, the education of youth, the service of the poor, all matters of urgent importance for the Church. Certainly, if a man is to be an accomplished theologian, he cannot hope to be a distinguished historian, mathematician or linguist; if at the end of his seven years he is only fit to begin to *work at* the science, how long shall we have to wait for him if he is to be an active missionary, an eloquent preacher, a finished mathematician, or a profound classical scholar? In truth, nothing can be done now-a-days without specialization and co-operation. To be perfect in any one of the above lines is the work of a lifetime; and for the rest, a man must be content with just sufficient ability to enable him to act as a stop-gap on an emergency. This is the sacrifice which all must now make, who desire to be masters in any one of the many mansions of knowledge.

As regards the preservation, defence and spread of Christian doctrine, it is quite sufficient for the large majority of the clergy in their ordinary intercourse with the world, to know clearly the explanations, arguments and solutions that have been elaborated by proficients in theology. But this supposes that there are some—and they need not be relatively many—who are set apart for this work of elaboration, who supply the weapons to others, or alter them to suit new requirements. For these, indeed, long training and life-long devotion is almost indispensable.

The writer in the *Dublin Review*, already referred to, predicts that in order to carry out this new reform, it will be found necessary to prolong the time given to the study of theology. This only shows how impossible it is to suppose that it is intended to subject all the clergy indiscriminately to so elaborate a training, for where is the time to come from? Therefore another consequence will be that fewer will be able to attempt the higher course of theology. And since it is impossible to have a double staff of professors in every theologate, for the sake of ten per cent. or less of the students, we might predict as another consequence, the specialization of colleges to each of the branches, positive and scholastic.

We have next to consider the expediency of imposing as a standard upon all students of scientific theology, during the period of their preparation, the works of some great master, such as St. Thomas Aquinas. The reasons are very urgent, and we think very obviously so.

No one can fail to see how needful it is in a world-wide perpetual institution, like the Christian Church, to have a catholic language, such as Latin, which from the very fact of its being a dead language, can be used to register and express ideas with an exactness approaching that of purely arbitrary signs, retaining the same value

for all differences of place and time. Now theology, like every other science, is forwarded and perfected by nothing so much as by the interchange of ideas between men of different countries and different casts of thought, and by the comparison of the past with the present; and everything that facilitates this communion and intercourse, is, so far, to be desired. It is with a view to this, that Latin has been adopted in the West as the common language of the schools and Councils. But, in the case of very abstract and subtle questions, such as occur in philosophy and scientific theology, this alone is not sufficient to secure this interchange of ideas without much friction, waste of time and energy, and other grave inconveniences. For here it is necessary, sometimes, to coin new words and phrases, and sometimes to take old words and phrases which, by nature signify ordinary and familiar notions, and to apply them to the expression of reflex ideas, often differing from one another by the merest shade of meaning. No common language is fit for this purpose, save by the use of such circumlocutions as would make converse impossible. If, in natural philosophy, a fixed terminology and symbolism is necessary, how much more so in mental philosophy. When there is question of naming an external object, we can point to it and say: "Let us call this *e.g.*, a zoophite, and that a trilobite"; but when we have to name mental processes, modes, ratios, abstractions, analogies, and the like, it is very difficult to be sure that each has the same idea in his head; for, we cannot read the thoughts of another, save in the blurred type of material signs. It is just possible, by a tedious process of induction, and after many mistakes and explanations, for two minds to be certain that each has the same thought as the other; and then, indeed, if they agree about terminology, it will be possible for them to converse intelligently about it afterwards. But a like labor must be undergone by every other mind in order to understand the term in question; and this it is that makes abstract studies so very difficult, and why, in old times, they were deferred till the mind was matured and hardened.

All this shows the great need of having one way of looking at and speaking of philosophical notions; and this can only be secured by taking some one mind as the standard for all; not a living, changing mind; but a mind registered and fixed for ever on paper. There are few students who have not lost hours and hours of time, and suffered endless annoyance, owing to the diverse senses which authors attach to the same terms. A very slight error in terminology is usually enormous in its consequences—a little thing in itself, but quite capable of throwing the whole machinery of the mind out of gear. Is it too much to say, that at least half of the internal controversies of Catholic the-

ologians and philosophers, which fill the pages of our textbooks, and puzzle and discourage the beginner, owe their origin to the lack of this strict uniformity in the use of terms? How else is it possible that, in most of these disputes, each party claims St. Thomas in support of his opinion? Or, that men can refer to his writings for years, and yet deny that he taught principles which those who have made him their special study declare to be essential to his system, and to permeate his thought from beginning to end? When we have such able men, on both sides, is it not much more reasonable to impute these differences to some variety in the meaning attached to elementary terms and axioms, than to the stupidity or ignorance with which they are sometimes inclined to upbraid one another? Nor is it altogether with a view to interchange of ideas, but even for the successful issue of our own solitary reasoning, that an accurately-defined terminology is needed. As a matter of fact, though we might, yet we never do, determine within ourselves to give a fixed meaning to a certain expression, but we take words as we find them used by others, with all that ambiguity and vagueness which makes thought tiresome and profitless.

Allowing the need of choosing some of the great doctors as a standard, the reasons for giving the preference to St. Thomas, which are so fully set forth in the Encyclical "Aeterni Patris," are not likely to be disputed. It may, not, however be amiss to quote what has been so well said by Rev. Dr. Wm. Barry, in the *Contemporary Review*, for November, 1883 ("The New Birth of Christian Philosophy"): "In this name (St. Thomas Aquinas), so well known to Catholic metaphysicians—so dim and distant to the world at large—the strength and beauty of mediævalism, as a system of thought, are forever expressed. Aquinas is the thinker, as Dante is the poet, of thirteenth-century Christianity; and the 'Paradise' of Dante, which to Carlyle seemed inarticulate music, borrows its noblest rhythms, and most lovely conceptions, from that other poem, the 'Summa Theologica'; or, employing a more suggestive comparison, as the modern world reads Aristotle with the eyes of Kant, so the mediæval read him with those of the *Angelic Doctor*—as Catholics style St. Thomas. Others were as original, or more so; and one, Albertus Magnus of Cologne, possessed a knowledge of natural science, which in the 'Summa' we do not find; but none were so faithful to the spirit of Aristotle, or comprehended with so clear a glance the bearings of Christian doctrines on Christianity as a whole. His characteristic is *balance*, or the power of adjusting seemingly opposed statements, so that they shall throw light upon each other—a power which might be termed artistic by the Greeks, and architectonic by Aristotle. It is the faculty of

proving by systematizing; of winning a demonstration by marshalling a number of theses in their metaphysical order; or, of indicating the composition of thought in its relation to being."

And further on with reference to his style and terminology, he says: "No writer has ever been more lucid; and he possesses the charm of lucidity; for, to read him refreshes, and does not tire. His Latin, which is curiously like Greek in construction, and what I may call tone, is a subtle instrument, never rhetorical, eschewing the slightest ornament; but, full of the peculiar grace of an exquisite logical arrangement, it has the conciseness and strength of the highest algebra. He is never ruffled, or moved from the calm that mediæval cloisters created around him; his dispassionateness, in our times, would, by the superficial be suspected as indifference, for in all he has written, there is no word of personal rebuke for his adversaries. He cannot be angry; and his only way of striking an enemy down, is to offer him a fresh argument."

Again, a writer in the *Dublin Review*, for April, 1880 ("Text-books of Philosophy") says: "It is indisputably true, that scholastic philosophy owes its form, its compensative completeness, its harmony with Revelation, and the subtle illumination which it derives everywhere from Revelation, to St. Thomas of Aquin. But what he in Latin began, his successors and disciples in Latin continued. St. Thomas may be almost said to have invented a new dialect of Latin. Without denying the power and influence of those who preceded him, and especially of Blessed Albert the Great—who would have been a worthy leader and patron of the great Dominican school, had there been no Thomas to succeed him—it may be said, with perfect truth, that he formed a language, somewhat in the sense in which the 'Divina Commedia' formed a language. The Latin of the 'Summa Theologica' is as remote from the Latin of Cicero, or even of Seneca, as is Italian or Spanish. But it is a true language, having a body of terms, a regular and unique construction, a perfect flexibility, and above all—what may be considered as the test of a cultured language—an altogether marvellous capacity for the deft expression of abstract thought and speculation."¹

It may perhaps be objected, that it will be morally impossible now, to fix the precise meaning which St. Thomas attached to the terms and axioms which he used. In reply, it may be said, that to do so indeed is a work of laborious induction and comparison, far beyond the power of any solitary theologian; and involving a comparative study, not only of all the works of Aquinas, but of those of his contemporaries and immediate followers. This is a task for a college or school such as the present "Accademia di

¹ Cf. Milman's *History of Lat. Christianity*, viii., p. 265, sqq.

San Tommaso ;" and will for a time no doubt, give rise to a certain amount of dispute ; but must be eventually completed. No private individual, unassisted by a commentary, could determine the exact shade of meaning which many common words bore in Shakespeare's mind, but this has now been fairly determined by the continual labor of commentators ; and as long as these commentaries themselves are not antiquated, the meaning of a word used in the Shakesperean sense is something fixed and unalterable for all time. For the student of St. Thomas, such a guide or commentary will a ways be needed, and it will be the duty of those who undertake to supply such a want to divest themselves of all prepossession as to what they would *wish* the text to mean, and confine themselves strictly to proving by induction what it does mean. How often do we find books professing to be introductions to the study of St. Thomas, whose sole aim is to read into the words of Aquinas, the peculiar opinions of the author or his party.

And so we may conclude, that as he who wishes to be a profound lawyer will not think it waste of time to study the pandects of Justinian, and ancient codes relating to long-forgotten politics, whose value does not lie in their immediate applicability to present circumstances, but to their embodying and exemplifying all the principles of just legislation, and serving as a guide for the construction and alteration of modern codes ; so for a deep and thorough mastery of theology it is a most necessary preparation to master that great master who, with his eyes fixed on the crucifix drew his wisdom *ex fontibus Salvatoris*.

It is then, to the trained scholastic theologian alone, that the Church must look in the future for the intellectual defence of the faith ; for he alone will be able to supply weapons to those whose ministry leaves them no time to forge them for themselves.

Even for the advance and improvement of apologetic theology, for the critical study of scripture, of ecclesiastical history, for the refutation of sophistical philosophy in every department, nothing is so primarily necessary as the power of seeing far into the remotest consequences of principles, and detecting the fallacies lurking in the labyrinths of plausibility. He who has thoroughly mastered any one system, whatever it be ; who has not been mastered by it, or enslaved to it, but has trained his intellect to abstract from its private assents and prepossessions and to follow the workings of another mind, will be able with least difficulty to comprehend the ideas of a different system.

Of course, it will be needful for the scholastic theologian, as soon as he has secured his own fortifications, to familiarize himself with the enemy's ground, and with a view to active operations he must acquaint himself fully with the language and terminology of his

opponents. But it may be questioned whether the failure that has sometimes attended the attempts to put Catholic theology and philosophy into English garb, is not just as much due to hazy and indistinct notions as to any literary deficiency. Certainly, it is the experience of most, that as one's own ideas grow more clearly defined, it becomes easier to express them in the mother-tongue.

Finally, the interests of moral theology will be best cared for by this new system if it should ever prevail. Here, if anywhere, there not only remains much to be done yet in the way of organizing and completing the science; but there is always a standing need of new adaptation to the ever-varying circumstances of social life. And for this work of completion and adaptation he will be most fit who has been well drilled in the second part of the "Summa," for he alone can adapt who understands the principles of construction, as has been said before. It is needless to say that, as a direct preparation for the work of the confessional, manuals will always be necessary and sufficient, since to a great extent the knowledge required is positive, and to dream of confining one's attention to St. Thomas in such matters would be wildly impractical. Yet after this necessary knowledge has been secured, its fruitfulness may be multiplied thirty-, sixty-, or a hundred-fold by digging deep about its roots.

Before concluding, the writer would wish to guard against any misapprehension that might arise as to the practical bearings of this article from his very hasty and inadequate treatment of so difficult a question. It is *not* contended here that every priest shall receive his theology directly from the "Summa Theologica," but only those, and all those, whose duty it will be to teach that science to others; those, in other words, who are studying for the doctorate. This will be quite sufficient to secure the desired uniformity in method and terminology; for the large majority of the clergy, text-books will still have their legitimate use.

It is not supposed that the young student of scholastic theology should be allowed to flounder about in the "Summa" in a desultory fashion, but that he should hear an orderly course of lectures on the text by efficient professors, themselves masters of the system. It is not for a moment intended that Suarez, Billuart, De Lugo, Gonet, Petavius, etc., should be studied less than heretofore, but that they should be approached with a mature mind already master of one system, and not at an earlier period when their study would be productive of confusion rather than of light. Lastly, it is contended that if the standard for the doctorate in theology be raised, and the time of preparation lengthened, the gain will, in the long run, be enormous for the Church, although the relative number of such specialists will necessarily decrease.

And now, if the Angel of the Schools, that wide and gentle spirit, comes amongst us once more with his "golden wisdom," he comes to a world older and wiser by centuries of bitter experience. Look at his philosophy, even as it is now, just awakening from its long torpor, and shaking itself free from the grave-clothes in which it has been cramped and confined. Is there any other system like it which has been so widely received,—as widely as the Catholic faith itself; that has had so many master-minds at work upon it, and that for so long a time, whose every point has been so keenly contested, over and over again, that from the very nature of the case it is impossible to find it at variance with itself? Has any philosophy ever had such a genesis, such a trial as this, the philosophy of the strong common-sense of mankind; that realism which is engrained in our very nature, and cannot be shaken off in practice even by its most bitter opponents, but must and therefore will prevail as long as man is a "rational animal," and continues to be born with five senses and a mind as blank as a clean sheet of note-paper.

It was by stimulating thought that scholastic philosophy began first to be felt as a power, and gradually filled the mediæval universities with thousands of eager, active minds, all speaking, as it were, one great mind-language, and at last culminated in the production of the "*Summa Theologica*" of Aquinas.

But as soon as the worship due to the spirit was insensibly diverted to the letter; as soon as the "*ipse dixit*" of St. Thomas took the place of the criterion by which he himself was guided; as soon as the system changed its political sway for a despotism, opposing itself to the irresistible force of progressive thought, it began to sink into that oblivion which eventually became its grave. And as it withered away, there grew up in its place the false spirit of eclectic philosophy, whose disciples went about plucking the prettiest flowers along the wayside and arranging them in bouquets, lifeless and rootless, destined to fade in the hand of the gatherer, and to be then thrown away and forgotten. And so for a remedy it will not be sufficient to return to St. Thomas unless we return to him in his own liberal spirit, with his large-hearted sympathy for others, and his single intention for the glory of God and the honor of His Holy Church.

One who had the kindness to read this paper through and to make valuable suggestions, asked, amongst other things, if St. Thomas were alive now, would he recommend the study of his own "*Summa*?" Would he not rather sit down and write a philosophy directed against the errors current in our own day? But it seems to me that this question is somewhat beside the mark. We may confidently appeal from what St. Thomas did to what he

would do. He saw that the mastery of Aristotle was eventually the shortest way to master and refute the errors of the thirteenth century. So we may presume that were it possible to find some one now precisely like-minded with St. Thomas, he would for similar reasons recognize the study of the thirteenth century Doctor as the fittest foundation for ecclesiastical training. What can be more in the spirit of modern enlightenment than the critical study of the thought of distant ages and countries. Of course, were such a study not conducted with a broad and open mind; were it directed to the formation of premature assents, it would infallibly produce that narrowness and mental paralysis which it is precisely designed to correct. All attempts to modernize and adapt St. Thomas imply that he is to be studied as a rule of philosophical and theological certitude rather than as a pattern of ancient method and forms of thought. Studied in an enlightened spirit, even his physics would be both interesting and instructive. By not forcing the beginner to yield a premature assent to what he really does not yet understand and cannot accept, he will eventually be led to accept a great deal more than he would otherwise be inclined to do.

No doubt were St. Thomas to come on earth again, he would make many alterations in his writings, but they would rather be in the direction of separating abstract philosophy more entirely from physics than of adapting it to modern discoveries and hypotheses, and would render it to a still greater extent independent of the vicissitudes of experimental science. For certainly the fault of metaphysicians in the past has been an over-readiness to yield credence to the physicist.
