

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ST.
BONAVENTURE AND OF
ST. THOMAS

(Continuation)

ST. Bonaventure's touchstone in philosophy was exemplarism. A philosophy is true or false according to its acceptance or refusal of the ideas. It was then natural that his preference would be given to Plato, who, because of his discovery of the reality of ideas, was in his eyes the most excellent philosopher, to whom the gift of wisdom was fittingly appropriated. Aristotle, on the contrary, a great scholar but a bad philosopher, built up a philosophy of the useless: his philosophy is irrelevant to the real, and hence worthless. Aquinas's keystone, on the other hand, was that doctrine, so typically Aristotelian, of actuality and potentiality; accordingly, it is no matter of surprise that he should hold Aristotle in such esteem, for the latter's metaphysics and his whole philosophy are pervaded throughout by the doctrine of actuality and potentiality, built up on this as upon two pillars.

To view a problem from the wrong angle leads inevitably to disastrous consequences and utter failure. Aquinas made his own, as a fundamental basis of all his enquiries, the Aristotelian principle, stated also by Boethius, that it is a scholar's duty to formulate his belief about anything according to its real nature.¹ As each science has its special subject-matter, which constitutes it as a particular science and distinguishes it from any other, so it has to be dealt with according to its proper method, strictly adhered

¹ S. Thomas, *Contra Gentiles*, I, iii, referring to Aristotle's *Ethics*, I, ii, 1094 b; Boethius, *De Trinitate*, ii,

to and used rigorously according to its special nature; consequently nothing adventitious or extraneous ought to be introduced in the process, if utter confusion and gross blunders are to be avoided. Not every truth is to be investigated and made known in the same way; hence philosophical problems are to be approached in a purely philosophical manner, and likewise theological topics are to be dealt with in a theological way.

Now there are natural truths and supernatural truths. The former are the subject-matter of philosophy and are within the reach of the human mind; neither faith, nor divine illumination or any other added light is needed to enable reason to attain and grasp whatever is within its own sphere. The others belong to theology and are its subject-matter, and because they surpass the power and capability of the human mind, are made known to us through revelation and held by faith alone. It follows that faith and reason are mutually exclusive in the sense that it is self-contradictory to assert that the same proposition may be held both by faith and reason at the same time, in the same sense and under the same aspect, since, whilst what we grasp by reason is evident to us, what we believe remains in itself obscure and we adhere to it simply on God's authority. Philosophy and theology, then, are not only two distinct sciences, but each one is autonomous in its own sphere, with its proper subject-matter, proper line of approach and special method of proof and process.

But while theology and philosophy are distinct, they are not antagonistic, but rather in complete accord and harmony one with the other. Truth cannot contradict truth; the false alone is against truth. God is the author of all knowledge, natural as well as supernatural; and, as it is impossible that God could contradict Himself, so it is impossible that there could exist a contradiction between natural truth and truths in the supernatural order. Whatever, therefore, is alleged in contradiction to a revealed truth is assuredly false; it does not rightly proceed from the

first self-evident principles instilled by nature; hence it lacks the force of demonstration, and is either a probable or a sophistical argument, and consequently it is always possible to overthrow it.

Although the human mind is unable to prove and understand the mysteries of faith, it shows us that faith is in conformity with reason inasmuch as it tells us that the divine authority, on which our belief rests, must be absolutely infallible, since it is essential truth. Moreover, human reason is able to put together probable arguments and reasonings in support of our faith, which reasonings, however weak they may be, are useful so long as the human mind does not pride itself on having thereby comprehended the truth of faith, since, though our view of the sublimest things is limited and weak, it is most pleasant to be able to catch but a glimpse of them.²

This is, in its main lines, St. Thomas's teaching on the distinction of philosophy from theology and the harmony between faith and reason.

But St. Bonaventure would not have it in this way. The point of contention lies briefly in this. The possibility of an autonomous philosophy not dependent on theology did not even arise in St. Bonaventure's mind; in his eyes all evils in fact spring precisely from positing the independence of philosophy from theology. 'If God is indeed the proper object of philosophy, our reason, though specifically distinct from faith, is incompetent in fact to construct a philosophy. Its ignorance of all outside its province necessarily introduces uncertainty and falsehood even within the bosom of what it knows: a metaphysic of pure reason, then, of set purpose cuts itself off from the condition in which its object is knowable and must fail in its enterprise, unless aid comes from above to support and guide it.'³

² *Contra Gentiles*, I, ii-viii; *In Boet. de Trin.*, qq. 1-2; *cfr.* Manser, *Das Wesen des Thomismus*, 103-117.

³ Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

To grasp more thoroughly the point at issue and to appreciate more fully the doctrinal implications involved in this basic problem, let us view it in its historical setting and in its true light.

It is no slight merit on the part of Professor Gilson, in reconstructing St. Bonaventure's philosophy, to have introduced in some profusion—and he was the first to do so—the profound philosophical and theological teaching embodied in the Seraphic Doctor's *Collationes*. The value of this contribution cannot be over-estimated. Nevertheless, in making use of the *Collationes* one or two pertinent questions suggest themselves quite naturally to us, which ought to be taken into account, if this far-reaching problem is to be viewed in its entirety and in its right perspective.

The first question concerns textual criticism. The *Collationes*, as is well known, are not original writings, but *reportationes*; that is, they were not written and edited, as we have them now, by St. Bonaventure himself, but were taken down whilst he was delivering them by one or more of the *socii*. A *reportatio* was worked out in this way: the 'reporter' usually noted briefly the main lines and most characteristic features of a sermon or lecture; later on, at his leisure, he would set down with the help of these notes the sermon or lecture as well as he could recall to his mind. Obviously, then, a *reportatio* is supposed to represent faithfully the doctrine and thought of the preacher or lecturer, but does not necessarily record his actual words and phrases, which often were to a large extent the reporter's own. It follows clearly that its value depends entirely on the faithfulness, capacity and accuracy of the reporter. Hence several *reportationes* of the same sermon or *quaestio* frequently differ widely one from the other.

This is exactly what befell the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, which have come down to us in two different *reportationes*; one was published by the Quaracchi editors of the

*Opera omnia*⁴ and the other quite recently by Père F. Delorme.⁵ The latter was known to the Quaracchi editors, but they found it so abridged and its phrasing so different from the text adopted by them that they dismissed it as worthless. Yet its value, if we accept the reporter's evidence, is undeniable, since it seems to be the basis of the other, and, what is more important, received the approval of St. Bonaventure himself.⁶

A comparison between the two *reportationes* will prove most instructive; but above all one feature appears at once strikingly significant, and it is this. Almost all those strong invectives against Aristotle, the philosophers, and the Alberto-Thomistic teaching evident in the Quaracchi edition, which cause so much surprise to all who know St. Bonaventure's meekness and gentleness, are in the Delorme's *reportatio* either altogether omitted or much modified. One or two instances, chosen from those passages quoted by Gilson, will suffice for the purpose.

The strong condemnation of theologians and philosophers:

praecessit enim impugnatio vitae Christi in moribus per theologos, et impugnatio doctrinae Christi per falsas positiones per artistas,⁷

is omitted. Again, the sarcastic remark:

philosophus dicit quod magna delectatio est scire quod diameter est asymeter costae; haec delectatio sit sua; modo comedat illam,

is so mitigated that in effect it disappears completely:

⁴ Vol. V, pp. 329-449.

⁵ *S. Bonaventurae Collationes in Hexaëmeron ad fidem codd. MSS.* edidit F. Delorme, O.F.M. Ad Claras Aquas, 1934.

⁶ Delorme, *op. cit.*, p. 275; *cf.* the editor's *Praefatio*, pp. x-xvi, where the relation between both *reportationes* is discussed.

⁷ Coll. I, n. 9, Quaracchi edit., p. 330.

non sic de triangulo, de quo licet aliquo aliter delectetur sciens quare tres habet angulos intrinsecos aequipollentes duobus rectis extrinsecis, tamen ignorans non tristatur.⁸

Further, that other famous phrase against Aquinas's thesis of the unity of substantial form in one and the same individual:

insanum est dicere, quod ultima forma addatur materiae primae sine aliquo quod sit dispositio vel in potentia ad illam, vel nulla forma interiecta,

becomes:

hic nota quod non est verum quod ultima . . . ;⁹

the opposition to the thesis is the same, but its harshness is quite smoothed away.

There is no need to multiply instances, for the same contrast persists throughout the whole work; neither do I propose to discuss which of the two *reportationes* represents more approximately the Saint's actual wording, or which is more in harmony with all that we know of him. My only point here is that the actual phrasing of a *reportatio* is never to be stressed as if it were the faithful echo of the original; what must be taken exclusively into consideration are the ideas themselves rather than the fashion in which they are expressed.¹⁰

This leads us to a no less relevant question, namely to determine St. Bonaventure's purpose and aims in the *Collationes* and to define the special literary genus to which they belong. Just as it is not the same thing to write a history or a historical novel, a popular book on animals or a technical treatise on zoology, even if the historical novel contains many historical events, or the popu-

⁸ Coll. XVII, n. 7, Quar., p. 410; Delorme, p. 196.

⁹ Coll. IV, n. 10, Quar., p. 351; Delorme, p. 54.

¹⁰ *Cfr.* the pertinent remark of the Quaracchi editors: 'Unde sequitur, ut verba scripti non sint premenda.' Vol. V, p. xxxviii.

lar book accurate scientific data; likewise, it is not irrelevant to trace and define the purpose and object of the work and the peculiar frame of mind of the author.

The *Collationes* were usually held, and still are held by many, to be mystical works; Gilson ranges them amongst the philosophical and theological writings. A new theory has been suggested quite recently that they were simply polemical treatises for the purpose of fighting the unorthodox doctrines of the Averroists as well as of St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas. Accordingly, Père Jules d'Albi,¹¹ considering the *Collationes* as sermons addressed to the University of Paris, claims that St. Bonaventure's aim was exclusively controversial, to engage in combat against, and to denounce, the current errors as taught by the Averroists and by St. Thomas alike. Tinivella¹² hesitatingly proposes that the attempt to separate philosophy from theology undertaken by the Averroists and by the Aristotelian-Thomistic school—though in different ways and with different aims—was merely the means to a further end. The true object was to show in a wide synthesis the means by which man, the microcosm, may attain to perfection; how even profane science leads through Christ to Christian wisdom. In expounding his thesis he does not fail, when occasion offers, to single out and oppose those false doctrines which alienate man from that goal.

In my opinion, the *Collationes* are neither University sermons nor philosophical or theological treatises. From the mistaken idea that they were solemn sermons addressed

¹¹ Jules d'Albi, O.M.Cap. *Saint Bonaventure et les luttes doctrinales de 1267-1277*. Tamines-Paris, 1923, cc. vii-viii. This work contains some good things which are, unfortunately, spoiled by the bias, the uncritical method and the combative spirit of the author.

¹² F. Tinivella, O.F.M. *De impossibili sapientiae adeptione in philosophia pagana iuxta Collationes in Hexaëmeron S. Bonaventurae*, in 'Antonianum,' 11 (1936, pp. 31-33. An accurate study, conscientious and balanced on the whole).

to the whole University of Paris the belief arose that they were meant as a direct attack on the Faculty of Arts and the Aristotelian-Thomistic school. Undoubtedly, St. Bonaventure did not favour this new intellectual movement and resisted it with all his power; this, however, was not the main purpose of his *Collationes*. Again, as one would expect from such an eminent Doctor, they are evidently saturated with philosophical and theological wisdom; yet they are not, strictly speaking, philosophical or theological treatises. In point of fact they are purely and simply *collationes* in the true meaning of the word; to wit, informal discourses, familiar instructions or conferences on spiritual or mystical topics, held usually at evening in the refectory after supper, or in the chapter room, or in the lecture hall, but never, or very seldom, in the church.¹³ To the Franciscan friars assembled in Paris for their studies, and exclusively to them, St. Bonaventure addressed in Lent, 1267, his *Collationes de Decem Praeceptis*,¹⁴ in Lent, 1268, his *De septem Donis Spiritus Sancti*,¹⁵ and again in 1273 (April 9th—May 28th) his *In Hexaëmeron*.¹⁶ To this measureless and unceasing effort we owe his most personal works, in which the human virtues and the supernatural aids they receive are ranged in order according to an architecture ever more comprehensive and more perfectly balanced, up to the perfection of the *Hexaëmeron*—

¹³ Vide a good description of 'collationes' by the Quaracchi editors, *Prolegomena*, c. vi, Vol. V, p. xxxvi.

¹⁴ In the Quaracchi edit. of the *Opera omnia*, V, pp. 507-532.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 457-503. By a strange oversight, both in the French and in the English editions of Gilson's *Phil. of S. Bon.*, the title of this work is given throughout as *De decem Donis S.S.*

¹⁶ See nn. 4 and 5, *supra*, p. 253. For the date of the *Collationes* cfr. P. Glorieux, *La date des 'Collationes' de S. Bonaventure*, in 'Archivum Hist. Franciscanum,' 22 (1929), pp. 257-272.

the masterpiece which death did not allow him to complete.'¹⁷

It would be preposterous to suppose that St. Bonaventure, instructing his friars, professors and students in the greatest house of studies of the Franciscan Order, in the midst of heated controversies, would not denounce vigorously and oppose unflinchingly the dangerous doctrines, or what he regarded as such, of his day. Knowing the uncompromising answer he gave to the problem of the relations between faith and reason, we should naturally expect him to discuss and solve it according to his own teaching. His commentary on the *Sentences*, Gilson assures us, contained, virtually or actually, all the ultimate lines along which his thought was to develop. 'But as we come closer to the year 1270, we find him increasingly concerned to arrive at a definitive statement of his thought on this question of the exact place that belongs to philosophy as of right. It was not St. Bonaventure who changed, but the world that changed about him.'¹⁸ I should go further and say, with Tinivella, that the controversies of the day provided him with the occasion of dealing with certain topics as subject-matter for his *Collationes*. And not only the question of the relation of philosophy to theology, but all the problems relevant to his theme, like poverty and spiritual perfection, are discussed and dealt with.

Nevertheless, this is far removed, much too far removed, from the other picture in which St. Bonaventure is presented to us as sounding the trumpet and calling upon master of the University and ecclesiastical authorities to fight Aristotle, Siger de Brabant and Thomas Aquinas. It was owing to his *Collationes*, we are told, which the whole

¹⁷ Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 36. As a slight detail of fact, the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* were not left unfinished by St. Bonaventure's death, which occurred a year later, July 15th, 1274, but by his elevation to the Cardinalate on May 28th, 1273.

¹⁸ Gilson, *ibid.*, p. 29; see also p. 35.

intellectual Parisian world rushed to listen to,¹⁹ that he engaged in the fierce battle which led on to, and was crowned by, the famous condemnations of 1270 and 1277.

But, in truth, the *Collationes* are not a plan of campaign. St. Bonaventure did not mean to wage war, but to propose to his friars, professors and students (the future teachers in the schools of the Order all over the world), in the intimacy of the monastery, by means of informal, familiar instructions, the Franciscan ideal of study. St. Francis, who seems to have reached the degree of the contemplative, is proposed as their pattern.²⁰ He refused to enter into discussion with the Sultan, because faith is above reason, being proved by revelation and miracles alone.²¹ Again, to show that to acquire the spiritual food of the perfect much labour is required, he introduces a saying of the Blessed Francis that before bread is ready for food several processes implying hard work are needed.²² To encourage them in the struggle against evil, he again adduces the example of St. Francis, who was prepared to fight even against 5000 devils.²³ No outsiders were present at his talks, but the brethren assembled in great number; for the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* there were about 160, amongst them several masters and bachelors in Divinity.²⁴ Of their number, perhaps, were Walter of Bruges, John Pecham, William de la Mare, Matthew d'Aquasparta, Roger of Marston, who at one time

¹⁹ E. Longpré, O.F.M. *Saint Bonaventure*, in 'Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques, IX, coll. 777.

²⁰ *In Hex.*, coll. XXII, n. 22, Delorme, p. 256; Quaracchi, p. 440.

²¹ *Ibid.*, coll. XIX, n. 14, Delorme, p. 217; Quar., p. 422.

²² *Ibid.*, coll. III, n. 1, Delorme, p. 33; Quar., p. 343.

²³ *Ibid.*, coll. XVIII, n. 23, Delorme, p. 209; Quar., p. 418.

²⁴ Delorme, *op. cit.*, p. 275. *Cfr.* also Tinivella, *op. cit.*, p. 33. It is clear from the context that the masters and bachelors present were not *seculars*, but friars: 'praesentibus aliquibus magistris et baccalauriis theologiae et aliis fratribus.'

or the other were in Paris between 1267 and 1273, each one of them amongst the staunchest supporters of the Augustinian-Franciscan tradition.

St. Bonaventure evolves, in these series of conferences, the theme that Christ is our one Master. He is the only Doctor who has, indeed, the words of life; in Him alone is true wisdom, because He alone is the tree of life. Therefore study for men devoted by profession of life to the pursuit of perfection, as were the Franciscans, must be pursued on the lines of Divine Scriptures and theology. Many dangers beset the student: too much curiosity, too much care, too much anxiety in searching after learning, the striving to know everything. Even in theological studies there is sometimes danger, if one seeks too eagerly after countless questions and the *Summae Magistrorum*; students are not seldom drawn away from the Scriptures because they find the *Summae* more attractive, more satisfying to their curiosity. Not even the study of the Fathers of the Church is free from danger; some in fact prefer them to the Scriptures, since their style seems to them more beautiful. Above all is to be avoided the spending of time on useless studies and absorption in too many and diverse speculations. Life is short; it is quite enough to know the truth necessary for eternal salvation. Why, then, wear out your days in unnecessary studies? Like those children, who after wandering for long in various streets, forget their way home, so he who goes in pursuit of many and diverse sciences finds himself lost in the labyrinth of Daedalus.²⁵ Not that secular learning is to be condemned in itself, yet it must not be pursued for itself, but exclusively as a means for refuting errors, or for the better understanding of divine teaching. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil planted by God in the garden of Eden was pleasant to the sight and good for food; nevertheless, it was forbidden

²⁵ *In Hex.*, coll. XVII, n. 25, Delorme, p. 200; Quaracchi, p. 413.

to eat its fruit. Likewise, secular sciences are a delight to the eyes and most attractive, but full of dangers; hence they are to be touched upon from distance and always in passing and with fear. St. Bonaventure is aware that sometimes it is necessary and lawful to study these *merces Aegypti*, inasmuch as it is lawful 'to despoil the Egyptians and enrich the Hebrews'; but he is never weary of warning masters and students of the perils inhering in such a pursuit. He shows from past and present history the dreadful errors into which Aristotle and the philosophers, and their followers, in the past as well as in his own days, were plunged. It is, then, no wonder that he dwells at length upon the errors of his own time and inveighs so strongly against them. Yet his indignation is aroused most severely in denouncing those religious, who by profession are bound to dedicate themselves chiefly to the study of the Scriptures, yet, forgetful of their state and Order, give themselves instead entirely to *scientias inhonestas*,

qui ex professione sui status et Ordinis principaliter sacrae Scripturae sunt et debent esse mariti: ex quorum coniugio nascitur Esau pilosus, strips nefanda ventrem matris Ecclesiae concutiens, venaticus, in habitatione divisus.²⁶

These are not the expressions of a controversialist whose exclusive or main aim is to denounce the errors of his opponents; but of a mystical doctor instructing his audience in the way of life; of a Minister General, a father who, aware of the risks to which his children were exposed, trembles for them and attempts to preserve them by guiding them amidst the darkness and dangers of the way and by giving definite rules for following the right path. They are the more sincere and persuasive since they proceed from that inner conviction resulting from all his studies and the whole of his life. They are the fruit of that mystical experience in which the soul, immersed in the con-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, coll. IV, n. 16, Delorme, p. 59; Quaracchi omitted.

templation of God, becomes weary of anything else besides God. Hence St. Bonaventure's exclamation: Is there a need of the light of a candle when the sun is shining? It is the same mystical experience that made St. Thomas, just three months before his death, put aside his pen and regard all his writings as straw in comparison to the vision of God shown to him on St. Nicholas' day.

It follows from the foregoing that in interpreting the *Collationes* such phrases as *insanum est*, and other strong expressions, are not to be unduly stressed. Further, the supposed exclusive or main controversial aim of denouncing the Faculty of Arts, or the Aristotelian-Thomistic school, is not to be so viewed as to give a false perspective to the whole, turning the mystical into the polemical. Still, the fact remains that the outlook of St. Bonaventure and of St. Thomas on the chief point at issue, namely the relation of philosophy to theology, was definitely diverse.

Both Doctors aimed to serve the same cause, that of God, of the Church, of truth; but they viewed it from a different angle and their primary preoccupation was not the same.

Both agreed that theology was the supreme wisdom to which all other sciences owed due respect and honour, or according to the cherished phrase of the time, theology was the queen, whereas other sciences were only her handmaids, *philosophia theologiae ancilla*. Both denounced the Averroist tendency and effort to render philosophy *absolutely* independent of faith and theology. Obviously, nothing is further from the truth than to represent Aquinas as a modern rationalist, or a free-thinker, unconcerned with what faith has to say on the matter, proclaiming the complete and supreme autonomy of philosophy from theology, denying any subordination of reason to faith. St. Thomas was, and meant to be, above all a Catholic Doctor. Their diversity consists mostly in defining the kind of service the 'handmaid' (to retain the same metaphor) is supposed to render to her 'queen.' St. Bonaventure recognizes her freedom in theory, but in practice denied her

any liberty of movement and action independently of her mistress; indeed, he regarded her as a true 'slave.' St. Thomas, on the contrary, looked at her rather as a lady-in-waiting to the queen, or, according to Origen's graphic expression, as an assistant or colleague in the same work, the search for truth. Whereas St. Bonaventure does not leave to philosophy any field of its own over which theology does not exercise jurisdiction, Aquinas allows it a complete freedom of action and movement in its own domain, within its own limits and in its proper sphere.

St. Thomas was convinced of the inherent weakness of human intellect and of the liability to error in philosophical speculation, particularly in consequence of original sin. That is why he repeatedly states that the divine clemency fittingly revealed to man even that truth about divine things which reason can reach by itself, so that all may share in the knowledge of God easily, and without error or doubt.²⁷ This, however, does not alter that freedom of philosophy whereby it has its own independent domain with its own subject-matter, method and aims.

St. Bonaventure's preoccupation was lest students might be attracted towards sources of errors, if their masters were to praise philosophers too highly. Seeing Aristotle so great and reliable in other sciences, they might be unable to believe that he did not speak the truth on all questions alike.²⁸ Consequently, he insists in showing at length the dreadful errors in which philosophers were plunged; 'and these errors are not yet dead; the key of the bottomless pit has not turned upon them.'

In contrast, St. Thomas dwells with emphasis on the harmony of reason with faith, on the impossibility that divine revelation could be contrary to our natural knowledge. His only anxiety was the purity of faith and the

²⁷ *Contra Gentiles*, I, iv; *In Boethium de Trin.*, q. 3, a. 1; *S. Theol.* I, q. 1, a. 1.

²⁸ See *Blackfriars*, March, p. 163.

proper place and honour due to theology. The insufficiency of reasoning in support of Catholic truths he always considered as giving 'occasio irrisionis infidelium.' Hence the rejection of St. Anselm's proofs of the existence of God, and current arguments used to refute the eternity of the world; he felt indignant at the ridicule to which theology was exposed by those who claimed to prove that the world had no origin by frivolous arguments:

et hoc expresse apparet in rationibus hic inductis, quae derisibiles sunt et nullius momenti.²⁹

For the rest, he will give complete freedom in every sphere of speculation where faith is not concerned. The only restrictions are the demands of reason and truth. It is of very little importance what Aristotle or Plato might say on this or that question; what really does matter is what the truth is.³⁰ The purpose of the study of philosophy is not that we may know what opinions men have held, but what the truth about things really is.³¹ No other fear ever troubled him. For those who feared that Aristotle would entice students he would have given the same answer that Clement of Alexandria gave to the Christians of his days: 'Some people are as terrified of Greek philosophy as children are of hobgoblins.'³²

²⁹ St. Thom., *Quodlibet* III, p. 31: Utrum mundum non esse aeternum possit demonstrari. Disputed at Easter, 1270, against Gerard D'Abbeville; *cfr.* P. Glorieux, *Pour une édition de Gerard d'Abbeville*, in 'Recherches de Theologie ancienne et médiévales,' 9 (1937), pp. 58-60. *Cfr.* I, p. 46, a. 2: 'Dicendum quod mundum non semper fuisse sola fide tenetur, et demonstrative probari non potest'; *Contra Gentiles*, II, 38; *De aeternitate mundi contra murmurantes*.

³⁰ St. Thomas, *Declaratio quadraginta duo quaestionum*, q. 33. The whole opuscle is to be read; it is most illuminating with regard to this question.

³¹ *In de Coelo et Mundo*, I, lect. 22.

³² Clement Alex., *Strom.*, VI, 10 (P.G. 9, 301).

St. Thomas agrees with St. Bonaventure that the true object of metaphysics is God. It is the special business of the metaphysician to consider the highest causes, as Aristotle puts it,³³ to wit, the last end and the first beginning of all beings; therefore, being and its first causes are the subject-matter of metaphysics. But philosophical speculation must rise up from being in general to the supreme cause of all beings. Again, truth corresponds to being. Now First Philosophy, as Aristotle says, is the knowledge of truth, not of any truth, but of that truth which is the source and the principle of all truth, namely God. The supreme object, therefore, of metaphysics is God³⁴; hence the whole setting of the First Philosophy is directed towards the knowledge of God as to the last end, and accordingly is rightly termed the *Divine Science*.³⁵

However, this must not lead us into confusing the domain of philosophy with that of theology. Besides the fact that there are countless problems which form an essential or integral part of philosophy but do not appertain to theology, even where their speculation covers a common ground philosophy differs in kind from theology, and in no way is the former to be treated as a branch or particular department of the latter. Both view the same topic from different angles, they proceed in working it out through different principles, their scope is different. The theologian's speculation tends towards God as He is in Himself and known to us by faith, and towards creatures in respect of their relation to God, or as means conducing to God and to eternal salvation; in a word, his field of learning is the supernatural, or the natural as an object of Divine revelation. The philosopher's consideration, on the other hand, is directed to God inasmuch as He is know-

³³ *Metaphysics*, A, i, 981 b; ii, 982 b.

³⁴ *Contra Gentiles*, I, i; *In II Sent., Prol., cfr. In Metaph.*, IV, lect. i.

³⁵ *Contra Gentiles*, III, xxv (*edit. minor Leon.*, p. 252 b).

able by human reason and by natural means as the supreme Being, the first Cause, the last End of all things. It is therefore beyond question that the subject-matter of philosophy and theology, though materially the same in certain respects, is formally and specifically distinct, as are their methods and approach.³⁶

Obviously, since human reason derives the source of its knowledge from sensible things, which bear but an imperfect likeness to God, the philosopher's speculation on things divine prove to be an imperfect and inadequate manifestation of God's substance. Consequently philosophy is incompetent to demonstrate or grasp God as He is in Himself; this task belongs to theology alone, which is therefore rightly styled the greatest wisdom and the queen of all sciences, whereas philosophy is merely her 'handmaid,' *ancilla*.³⁷

Yet, however imperfect and inadequate the natural knowledge of God may be, it neither follows that it is false, nor that human reason, without the aid of faith, is incompetent to build up a philosophy, within its own limits and in its proper sphere. Its incompleteness, and the fact that many a philosopher had erred on several, and often most important, topics, do not render the philosophical edifice, or parts of it, doomed to failure. Of course natural philosophy does not, by itself, lead to the knowledge of the Blessed Trinity, or of Christ, or of eternal reward or punishment. It is true that we do not find any mention of the devil in Aristotle. But one may pertinently ask whether these and similar topics really enter into the field of philosophical speculation *as such*. To each science is reserved its proper domain and its own sphere of action and investigation, outside which it has no business to interfere. As Cardinal Newman says: 'From religious investigations, as

³⁶ *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 1, a. 1, particularly *ad 2m*; a. 7; *Contra Gentiles*, II, iv.

³⁷ *Contra Gentiles*, II, iv; I, q. 1, a. 6.

such, physics must be excluded, and from physical, as such, religion; and if we mix them we shall spoil both. The theologian, speaking of Divine Omnipotence, for the time simply ignores the laws of nature as existing restraints upon its exercise; and the physical philosopher, on the other hand, in his experiments upon natural phenomena, is simply ascertaining those laws, putting aside the question of that Omnipotence. If the theologian, in tracing the ways of Providence, were stopped with objections grounded on the impossibility of physical miracles, he would justly protest against the interruption; and were the philosopher, who was determining the motion of the heavenly bodies, to be questioned about their Final or their First Cause, he too would suffer an illogical interruption The inquiry into final causes for the moment passes over the existence of established laws; the inquiry into physical, passes over for the moment the existence of God.' ³⁸

Professor Gilson, in that excellent work, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, justly remarks: 'If you want a theology in order to bring all other sciences back to God, your first requisite is of course a theology; and if you want to refer your philosophy to God, what you need first is a philosophy—a philosophy, I repeat, that is wholly and exclusively a philosophy, and which because it is a philosophy can be related to theology without being reduced to it. Despite his marvellous gifts as a theologian and as a philosopher, it must be said that St. Bonaventure's remarkable achievements in both sciences would have been still greater had he not failed to perceive that difficulty.' ³⁹

In conclusion, we may ask whether St. Bonaventure's teaching is opposed to that of St. Thomas. I feel inclined to endorse Gilson's statement that 'they neither conflict

³⁸ Card. J. H. Newman, *The Idea of a University*. London, 1902, pp. 221-222. *Cfr.* St. Thomas, *Contra Gent.*, II, iv.

³⁹ E. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*. London, 1938; p. 51.

nor coincide.' They represent two *diverse* points of view, two *diverse* approaches, and therefore mark two *diverse* attitudes.⁴⁰ St. Bonaventure's outlook is that of St. Augustine, of St. Bernard, of St. Francis of Assisi, of the *Imitatio Christi*: a philosophy is worth studying only if it posits Christ as its centre; philosophy and secular learning are only a means to rise to Heaven. St. Bonaventure is a great philosopher, but his philosophy is not a philosophy *qua* philosophy, but a philosophy of Mysticism. St. Thomas's outlook was that of a metaphysician; his search was the quest for truth, not of any truth, but simply and purely of *the* truth. His philosophy is not merely a philosophy, but philosophy *qua* philosophy; his intention was to construct a metaphysics in complete harmony and accord with faith, but formally and specifically distinct from theology, a metaphysics *qua* metaphysics. This he did.⁴¹

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⁴⁰ For the distinction between *different* and *diverse*, cfr. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 3, a. 8 ad 3^m.

⁴¹ For the significance of St. Thomas' synthesis see E. Gilson, *La signification historique du Thomisme*, in 'Études de Phil. Méd.', Strasbourg, 1921, pp. 76-124.