The Canonizations of St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure: Why a Two-Century Gap Between Them?

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"Les canonisations de S. Thomas et de S. Bonaventure: Pourquoi deux siècles d'écart?"

1274—Année charnière—Mutations et continuités, 753-767 Edward Hagman, O.F.M. Cap.

In 1274, the year of the Council of Lyons, the Church suffered a double loss. Thomas Aquinas, summoned to the council by Pope Gregory IX, left Naples in bad health and was forced to stop at the Cistercian abbey of Fossanova in southern Latium, where he died March 7, at the age of 49. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, minister general of the Franciscan Order and cardinal-bishop of Albano, outlived him by a few months, seeing that he took part in the first sessions of the council before he himself fell ill and died in Lyons, July 15, 1274, at the age of 53.

Thus two of the thirteenth century's most outstanding figures in the theological and religious sphere and the most respected representatives of the two great mendicant orders passed away within a few months. Historians have been accustomed to link them together. They would surely not be opposed to this since, despite their doctrinal differences, they maintained a relationship of mutual esteem and friendship. Even during their lifetime, the two were regarded as equally distinguished for their learning and their holiness. Rumor had it that Gregory X was going to make Thomas Aquinas a cardinal, thus ranking him with the minister general of

the Friars Minor who had received the hat in 1273. Yet their posthumous fate in the Church would be very different. The Common Doctor was canonized by Pope John XXII in 1323, a little less than 50 years after his death; the Seraphic Doctor did not attain the honors of the altar until 1482, 208 years after the Council of Lyons. One cannot help but be struck by this fact, which cannot be merely accidental. It needs to be explained. We shall try to do so by putting St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure—figures who appear to us so timeless—back into their historical context and restoring to each of them anything in his personality or doctrine that might have favored or delayed his chances of reaching this supreme honor.

To project onto the thirteenth century modern or at least recent views about the place of St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure as interpreters of Christian doctrine would be to create a false picture of the situation. We should not imagine them as undisputed figures in their time whose reputation would have immediately stood out by itself. Quite the opposite. For a long time both were at the center of controversies that no doubt delayed their entry into the Church's universally recognized group of saints. At his death St. Thomas was simply one authority among others, and his authority was contested. As we shall see, it took some time before his full orthodoxy, and especially the superiority of his doctrine, was officially recognized by the magisterium. In a similar way, support for the personality of St. Bonaventure was far from unanimous within his order, where his

¹At the canonization process of 1319, Bartholomew of Capua mentions a remark of Brother Reginald of Priverno, who is supposed to have said to St. Thomas, after the latter had been summoned to the Council of Lyons: "Vos et frater Bonaventura eritis cardinales et exaltabitis ordines vestros" ["You and Brother Bonaventure will be Cardinals and enhance your Orders]. Naples Process, ed. A. Ferrua, *Thomae Aquinatis vitae fontes praecipuae*, Alba 1968, p. 317 (hereafter, Ferrua).

²The death of St. Bonaventure, which took place during the council, caused dismay and grief. The Pope personally presided at the funeral, and the Dominican Pierre of Tarentaise, cardinal-bishop of Ostia, preached on the text: "I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan" (2 Sam 1:26). Gregory X ordered all bishops and priests throughout the world to celebrate one Mass for the repose of his soul. The memory of St. Bonaventure is recalled in laudatory terms in the Acts of the Council: "He was a man of exceptional learning and fine eloquence, but outstanding above all for his holiness..., good, gracious, pious and merciful, rich in virtue, dear to God and men...." Mansi, 28, p. 532, see H. Wolter and H. Holstein, *Lyon I et Lyon II*, Paris 1966, p. 185.

action as minister general had been variously regarded during his lifetime. This was still true after his death. Moreover—and this point must be stressed immediately—the comparison we spontaneously make between the two saints is largely artificial. In Thomas Aquinas, his contemporaries and the next generations saw essentially the man and the theologian; in St. Bonaventure, they paid less attention to the person or his doctrinal works than to his action as head of the Franciscan Order. The fascination exerted by St. Thomas's personality plus the impressiveness of his philosophical and theological works, which were defended by almost unanimous decree of the Friars Preachers, favored the growth of devotion to him. The cult of St. Bonaventure, on the other hand, had trouble developing. His personal holiness, although beyond question, was hardly influential, either because it lacked that touch of the extraordinary which was essential for devotion to arise or develop in the Middle Ages, or again because his individual fate was so identified with that of the Order he led from 1257 to 1274 that it mirrored its ups and downs.

The differences between the two men are obviously accentuated by the sources, which are very different in the two cases. For St. Thomas Aquinas we have many witnesses who are contemporaries or at any rate prior to his canonization in 1323. The Flemish Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré already mentions him as a famous personality in his encyclopedic work, *Bonum universale de apibus*, completed in 1263.3 Another Dominican, Gerard of Frachet, devotes several paragraphs to him in his *Vitae Fratrum*, published in 1271 and dedicated to the glories of the order.4 After Thomas's death, his memory was recalled at length by Bartholomew of Lucca (also known as Ptolemy), who devotes considerable space to him in his *Historia*

³Text cited in Ferrua, pp. 387-88. It is an account of the obstacles the saint had to overcome as a youth in order to enter the Dominican Order. The text ends with the words, et digno remuneratus honore, ad decus ordinis incolumis perseverat, [and rewarded with a fitting honor, he continues to be an ornament of the whole Order] which clearly show that Thomas Aquinas was still living when these lines were written.

⁴Text cited in Ferrua, pp. 379-81. Gerard of Frachet recalls four episodes of his life but does not mention him by name (*frater quidam qui erat magister Parisius in theologia*) [a certain friar who was a Master of Theology at Paris].

Ecclesiastica Nova, finished in 1316-1317, as well as in his Annales. From the standpoint of the canonization, there is the great Hystoria beati Thomae de Aquinate written in 1318 by the Dominican prior of Benevento, William de Tocco, who had been a student of St. Thomas in Naples from 1272 to 1274.6 One of the best sources for our knowledge of the saint's life, it was reworked and embellished by Bernard Gui in 1324 under the name Legenda Sancti Thomae Aquinatis. Lastly, we are lucky to have the statements from the two inquiries conducted in Campania by order of John XXII on the life and miracles of St. Thomas. The first of these canonization processes, which took place in 1319 in Naples, allowed 42 witnesses to give depositions: a dozen of them had known the saint personally.8 The second tells us especially about the miracles that took place at his tomb at the abbey of Fossanova and in the vicinity. Because of this the personality of St. Thomas. those traits his contemporaries found most striking, is rather well known to us. Possible gaps in the picture were filled in by later hagiographic tradition 10

On the other hand, we have no life of St. Bonaventure prior to the fifteenth century. The few references to him in the Franciscan hagiographies are quite brief, at least until the *Book of Conformities* by

⁵Ferrua, pp. 355-69 and 371-73: praeclarus doctor frater Thomas de Aquino. [The famous doctor Thomas of Aquinas.] See also MGH SS VIII, pp. 146-47 and 176-77.

⁶Ferrua, pp. 29-123. French translation by Th. Pegues and Maquart, S. Thomas, sa vie par Guillaume de Tocco, Paris 1924, 402pp.

⁷Ferrua, pp. 129-95.

⁸Ferrua, pp. 197-350, reprints the edition given by M. H. Laurent in the Fontes Vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis, St. Maximin 1937, pp. 265-407.

⁹Ed. M. H. Laurent, *Fontes Vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis*, pp. 405-510. Father Ruis Serra has published another edition according to a manuscript found in the Vatican Archives; see *Analecta Ordinis Praedicatorum* XXII (1936), pp. 509-29 and 576-631. But Laurent has not acknowledged the superiority of the Vatican manuscript to the one he used; see ibid., pp. 632-39.

¹⁰See especially M. H. Laurent, "Un légendier dominicain peu connu," in *Anal. Bolland.* LVIII, (1940), pp. 34 and 42-43.

Bartholomew of Pisa, which dates from 1399.11 We do have the acts of the canonization process, drawn up in Rome, Bagnoregio and Lyons between 1476 and 1480.12 But one suspects that these inquiries conducted over two centuries after the saint's death provide few precise facts about his life, not even about the prehistory of his cult. And so it is very possible that the different image we have of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure—the one known even in the details of his biography and innermost life, the other by what little of his personality he reveals to us in his theological works—is simply a reflection of the sources available to us. Still, is it not revealing that no one could be found inside or outside the Franciscan Order to write a life of the Seraphic Doctor? This was a time when the least penitent or pilgrim who died in the odor of sanctity became the object of a cult and was provided with a biography after death, even though legendary and fictitious. A historian can say no more but is forced to note that before the fifteenth century St. Bonaventure was never a popular saint or even a person especially venerated within his order.

It may seem surprising and even a bit paradoxical that the author of the *Summa Theologica*, even while he was alive, enjoyed a reputation for holiness that extended beyond the tight circle of theologians and "experts." But that was the case, and many circumstances contributed to it. First of all, there were his distinguished origins: he belonged to the family of the counts of Aquino and was, as his biographer says, "predestined to holiness by the nobility of his ancestors." More specifically, his kinship ties gave him a network of family connections that played a definite role in the spread of his cult in Campania. ¹⁴ The difficulties he met with in his Dominican vocation

Franciscan hagiographic collections, see L. di Fonzo, s.v. "Bonaventura da Bagnoregio" in *Biblioteca Sanctorum* III, Rome 1963, pp. 251-52.

¹²The Acts of the Roman Process are still unedited. The Franciscans of the Seraphic College in Rome, who are preparing an edition, did not allow me to consult the text. The Acts of the Lyons Process have been published by B. Marinangeli, "La canonizzazione di S. Bonaventura e il processo di Lione," in *MisFran XVII* (1916), pp. 77-86, 105-20 and XVIII (1917), pp. 125-35, following a manuscript from Assisi.

¹³Tocco, Hystoria, 38, ed. Ferrua, p. 82; see ibid. p. 83: se ostendit esse sanctae generationis heredem.

¹⁴In 1288, his sister Theodora, countess of San Severino, obtained from the abbot of Fossanova one of Thomas's arms. In 1309, she gave it to the Dominican

created an aura of legend around him, even while he was alive. Was he not imprisoned in a tower for two years after he ran away from his family who opposed his joining the Friars Preachers?¹⁵ The episode of the young man's temptation by a lovely young women who was charged with seducing him. and whom he put to flight by the sign of the cross, gave rise to the belief that God had assured him that he would always remain chaste.16 It expressed itself later in the devotion to the cinculum castitatis of St. Thomas.17 Even his physical appearance made a strong impression on his contemporaries. His portliness, his appearance of massive strength impressed everyone, and when he was young it earned him the nickname "Dumb Ox," or later, "Sicilian Ox."18 The mother of Brother Reginald of Priverno, his regular socius, testified that when Thomas was about to pass by, "peasants in the fields would guit their work in order to see him and would run out to meet him. admiring the imposing nature and the beauty of his human appearance. They were attracted to him more by his good looks than by his holiness or even his nobility."19 At the canonization process one of the better educated witnesses, Bartholomew of Capua, logothete of the Kingdom of Naples, states: "The Holy Spirit was in him, for his face was always seen to be happy,

house in Salerno, where miracles soon began to occur. Her nephew Thomas, count of Marsico, and her cousin Catherine did everything in their power to further the canonization of their distinguished relative.

¹⁵The incident had already become a legend during St. Thomas's lifetime; see Gerard de Frachet, *Vitae Fratrum: de iuvene nobili qui contra voluntatem parentum ordinem intravit*, Ferrua, p. 379.

¹⁶This incident is already mentioned by Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale de apibus*, Ferrua, p. 387. Like the preceding episode, it was long repeated and developed by later hagiographers, as well as by witnesses at the Naples canonization process in 1319.

¹⁷See A. Walz, Xenia Thomistica III (1925), pp. 486-87.

¹⁸Hystoria, XIII, Ferrua, pp. 44 and 46.

^{19&}quot;Adeo magnus erat quod propter sui corporis magnitudinem vocabatur bos Siciliae. Ideoque mater fratris Reginaldi socii sui dicebat quod vulgus, dum esset in agriculturis, dimittebat agriculturam ut videret eum et occurebat sibi obviam, tam magnam corporis quantitatem et pulchritudinem in humana specie admirantes, quia plus obviabant et propter pulchritudinem quam propter sanctitatem nec etiam nobilitatem." M. H. Laurent, "Un légendier dominicain peu connu," in *Anal. Bolland.* LVIII (1940), p. 43.

gentle and sweet."²⁰ In any case, his simple appearance certainly made a strong impression on those who got close to him, some of whom later declared that it was a special grace just to look at him.²¹ His complete indifference to material things, especially food and clothing, was no less impressive—even though when near death he asked his entourage for smoked herring, which cannot be found in Campania but was obtained for him miraculously.²² His absent-mindedness was proverbial. One day when he was having dinner with St. Louis, he pounded on the table and exclaimed, "Now I'm done with the heresy of the Manicheans," continuing in his mind the proof he had begun before going to table. But even this fault was proof to his followers that he was completely given over to contemplation of heavenly things.²³

In dealing with St. Thomas, the anecdotal details and minor incidents of his life are obviously not enough to account for his reputation for holiness. Even to people who had never read a line of his or could not do so, the Common Doctor appeared first and foremost a master and inspired writer whose works aroused respect and admiration. At the canonization process in 1319, one witness said that his knowledge "could not have been the result of natural genius but must have been acquired through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit." This idea would be repeated by John XXII in the bull of canonization when he said, "The number of miracles worked by St. Thomas is as great as the number of questions he settled." It

²⁰Naples Process, c. LXXVII, Ferrua, p. 315.

²¹Tocco, *Hystoria*, c. XXXVII, "Ex qua benignitate caritatis mirandus affectus ex solo aspectu corporali videbatur oriri, ut nemo ipsum aliquamdiu alloquendo et conversando potuisset aspicere, a quo non contingeret gratiam specialis consolationis haurire," Ferrua, p. 82.

²²Tocco, *Hystoria*, c. LVII, Ferrua pp. 104-05, and the Naples Process ibid., pp. 274-76.

²³Tocco, *Hystoria*, c. XLIV, Ferrua, p. 90.

²⁴At the Naples Process, Bartholomew of Capua mentions the words spoken by James of Viterbo O.E.S.A., archbishop of Naples: "quod ea quae scripsit frater Thomas erant potius ex cogitatione spirituali per illuminationem spiritus sancti quam per humanum ingenium acquisita," Ferrua, p. 326.

²⁵The best edition of the bull of canonization of St. Thomas Aquinas was given by A. Walz in *Xenia Thomistica* III (1925), pp. 173-86.

would be wrong to think that this reputation was restricted to tight circles of learned scholars. At the process of 1319, did not the logothete Bartholomew of Capua—a layman—say that St. Thomas was particularly in favor among the rich and powerful, in other words among the educated aristocracy, for "all could easily derive benefit from his writings according to their intellectual abilities." He added that "even lay people with very little education wanted his writings and were trying to get a copy for themselves."

These circumstances make it easier to explain the origin and development of the devotion to Thomas Aquinas that immediately followed his death at Fossanova. At the time of his funeral, the Cistercians thought it would be unworthy of him to celebrate the Mass for the Dead and so decided on their own to sing in his honor the Mass Os justi, generally reserved for holy confessors.²⁷ A pilgrimage was quickly organized.²⁸ The sick flocked to lie on his tomb or to place objects on it in order that these might experience the salutary radiance that emanated from his relics.²⁹ The latter were transferred several times, the main reason being the Cistercians' fear of seeing the precious remains carried away. The University of Paris and the Dominican Order had been demanding this of them as early as 1274.³⁰ The miracles that took place at Fossanova and other parts of Campania, where some pieces of relics had been taken, were not written down immediately. But they were circulated by Thomas's regular socius, Brother Reginald of Priverno, who helped make known his reputation as a wonderworker inside and outside the Dominican Order.

²⁶Ferrua, p. 327.

²⁷According to the testimony of Abbot Nicholas; Naples Process, Ferrua, p. 215.

²⁸Process of Naples, Ferrua, pp. 276-77.

²⁹Process of Naples, Ferrua, pp. 258-59 and 270.

³⁰Lettre de l'Université de Paris in Denifle-Chatelain, Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis I, Paris 1889, no. 447, p. 504. On the vicissitudes of St. Thomas's relics, see C. Douais, Les reliques de S. Thomas d'Aquin, Toulouse 1903, and E. Delaruelle, "La translation des reliques de S. Thomas d'Aquin à Toulouse (1369) et la politique universitaire d'Urbain V," in B. Litt. Ecclés. LVI (1955), pp. 129-46.

One is not a saint except for and by others, as certain contemporary sociologists have rightly noted. In the case of Thomas there were others. whether we are referring to his human or his spiritual family. The veneration paid him would surely have remained a simple local cult had not the Dominican Order come out at once in favor of his theological doctrine. The acts of the general chapters of the order show massive support for Aquinas's works. In 1278 at Milan, in 1280 at Paris, and again at Paris in 1286, sanctions were taken against any friars, especially in England, who had been allowed to criticize the works "of the venerable father, our brother Thomas Aquinas."³¹ After 1300, these measures disappear, and there is no longer a question of opposition. In 1309, it was decided that the works of St. Thomas would be placed on the same level as the Bible and classified among the books that may never be sold. At Metz in 1313, it is stipulated that the Dominican houses should send to the studium in Paris only those friars who have studied St. Thomas for three years.33 The order unites around the Common Doctor. But was this position not implicit in the apologia of St. Thomas, delivered in 1274 in Paris by his master Albert the Great, who is reported to have said: "Brother Thomas in his writings imposed a limit on all workers forever; henceforth all would labor in vain."34

On a more down-to-earth level, the Dominican Order no doubt played a considerable role in the proceedings that led to his canonization in 1323. At the general chapter of the Province of Sicily, which met at Gaeta in 1317, it was decided to petition for it. The general chapter of Pamplona pursued on its own this initiative which had already been considered during the pontificate of Benedict XI. The responsibility of recording the miracles and writing a life of the saint was entrusted to William de Tocco, who was soon helped by Bernard Gui, procurator general of the Order in Avignon. The three curial cardinals who were Dominicans—Nicola Alberti, Nicolas

³¹B. M. Reichert, *Acta capitulorum generalium ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum*, t. I, Rome 1898, pp. 199, 204, 235 passim.

³²Ibid., vol. II, p. 38.

³³Ibid., vol. II, p. 40.

³⁴Naples Process, Ferrua, p. 325: "idem Frater Thomas in scripturis suis imposuit finem omnibus laborantibus usque ad finem seculi et quod omnes deinceps frustra laborarent."

³⁵ According to Bartholomew of Capua, Naples Process, Ferrua, p. 320.

de Fréauville and Guillaume Pierre Godin—did not remain idle.³⁶ Solidarity extended even to the financial level, for in 1320 every Dominican house had to contribute a florin apiece to cover the expenses of the canonization process that was going on.³⁷

The Friars Preachers' enthusiasm and zeal for St. Thomas contrasts strikingly with the passivity and, one could say, the relative indifference of the Friars Minor vis-à-vis St. Bonaventure during the same period. Yet people had lamented the news of his death. We find this echoed in the letter of Brother Illuminato of Chieti to Brother Angelo of Perugia. The text, known by the title O Lugubris Ecclesiae planetus and attributed to Francis of Fabriano, is actually just a paraphrase.³⁸ But the laments did not last long, and criticisms soon began to surface; not all of them were kind toward the former minister general. Salimbene, in his Chronica, already speaks of him quite discreetly. He does mention the very flattering opinion of his friend. Brother Mark of Montefeltro, who wept when recalling the saint of Bagnoregio. But he himself sticks to rather general formulas (multa bona fecit) and describes his writings as "useful and solemn," which is not, after all, a great compliment.³⁹ Behind all this and what was to follow lies the affair of John of Parma. We recall that the Pope had forced him to resign in 1257 because of his Joachimite views. John himself had suggested to the general chapter that Bonaventure succeed him, and this was done. But in 1262, Bonaventure began real proceedings against his predecessor, whom he supposedly tried to have condemned, no matter what the cost, and who was saved from prison only through the intervention of Cardinal Ottobono

³⁶On the circumstances and development of the canonization process of St. Thomas Aquinas, many studies are available, the principal ones being: P. Mandonnet, "La canonisation de S. Thomas d'Aquin," in *Mélanges Thomistes*, 1923, 48pp; A. Walz, "Historia canonizationis sancti Thomae de Aquino," in *Xenia Thomistica* III (1925), pp. 105-72; L. Gerulaitis, "The Canonization of Saint Thomas Aquinas," in *Vivarium* V (1967), pp. 25-46; A. Walz, "Papst Johannes XXII und Thomas von Aquin, zur Geschicte der Heiligsprechung des Aquinaten," in *St. Thomas Aquinas*, 1274-1974, Commemorative Studies, Toronto 1974, I, pp. 29-47.

³⁷B. M. Reichert, op.cit. II, p. 123.

³⁸As has been shown by P.A. Abate, "Storia e cronologia di S. Bonaventura," in *MisFran* L (1950), pp. 97-130 (see pp. 121-25 passim).

³⁹The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam, trans. and ed. J. L. Baird (Binghamton, NY: MRTS, 1986) pp. 308-09..

Fieschi. 40 Whatever the facts may be, it is certain that Bonaventure treated John of Parma harshly, just as he had been harsh with Gerard de Borgo San Donino, the famous Joachite whom he condemned to life imprisonment in 1258. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the spiritual current in the order the one most marked by the eschatology of Joachim of Flora and by a strong attachment to poverty—was initially hostile to the author of the Apologia pauperum. His chief spokesperson, Olivi, has left us a rather sympathetic portrait of him. While saying that "he was no stranger to human weakness" and "he closed his eyes to certain abuses," he also stresses that "he never preached anything that was not absolutely pure doctrine."41 But after him, and as internal tensions developed within the order, various sides began to criticize the via media which the Seraphic Doctor had tried to impose during his generalate. Most of the friars found his notion of usus pauper still too strict, while the Spirituals criticized him for having put up too long with infringements of the Rule and for leading the order down a foreign path by accepting the cardinal's hat.42

Ubertino of Casale's *Arbor Vitae* and Angelo Clareno's *Chronicon* are unsparing in their criticism of him. Ubertino accuses him of having concealed, in his *Legenda maior*, St. Francis's criticism of those who were watering down the severity of the Rule.⁴³ Angelo, who regards the fourth tribulation of the order as beginning with him, reports a vision (also mentioned in the *Fioretti*) of Brother Jacopo della Massa, who told of a dream in which he saw St. Bonaventure rush at John of Parma with sharp fingernails of iron. When John screamed, Christ gave St. Francis a very sharp stone, which he used to file down Bonaventure's iron nails and render them harmless.⁴⁴ Of course these hostile remarks were offset by others, more complimentary, which are found in various early fourteenth-century

⁴⁰At least this is the claim of Angelo Clareno, *Chronicon*, ed. A. Ghinatto, (Rome 1959), pp. 126-28.

⁴¹Text edited by F. Ehrle, "Olivis Leben und Schriften," in *Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte* II, p. 516.

⁴²On this point see the interesting study by R. Manselli, "S. Bonaventura e l'ordine francescano nel secolo XIII," in *Doctor Seraphicus* XII (1968), pp. 39-49.

⁴³Ubertino of Casale, Arbor Vitae, Venice 1485, f° 445-449.

⁴⁴Angelo Clareno, *Chronicon*, ed. A. Ghinatto, Rome 1959, pp. 118-22. *Fioretti*, ch. XLVIII, ed. Th. Desbonnets—D. Vorreux, Paris 1968, p. 1310.

Franciscan hagiographic collections.⁴⁵ Yet they must have left a definite impression. Even in the middle of the fifteenth century, the Franciscan theologian and humanist Francesco Micheli del Padovano, although a member of the conventual current, notes in a treatise that "it was revealed to some who were trying to canonize blessed Bonaventure that, although he was holy, his canonization would not be pleasing to God and St. Francis because of the people he had persecuted when he was minister general."

The mixed assessments of St. Bonaventure's action as head of the Order are not enough to explain the fact that he fell rather quickly into relative oblivion. The fact that his body remained in Lyons, far from his native land of Italy (a favored place for saints' cults), must also have played a part in this relative erasure. But the essential point is that St. Bonaventure was identified, for better or for worse, with the history of his Order. That is how Dante has presented him in the *Divine Comedy*: "I am the living light of Bonaventure / of Bagnorea; in high offices / I always put the left-hand interests [i.e., material concerns] last."

In view of the preceding, the question historians ask themselves is not so much why St. Bonaventure was not canonized at the same time as St. Thomas, but why Thomas was not canonized earlier. Here again the contrast between the two men resurfaces. To canonize St. Thomas Aquinas meant, for the Church of his time, to proclaim the holiness not only of the man, but of his doctrine as well. But here the primacy of Thomism was not immediately recognized. His theology, which we have been led to regard as the official teaching of the Catholic Church, was the object of bitter

⁴⁵In part, in the *Catalogus Sanctorum fratrum minorum*, ed. L. Lemmens, Rome 1903 (written somewhere between 1325 and 1335), p. 27, and in the *Chronicle* of John Elemosina (1336) where Bonaventure is called "homo sanctae vitae et multae orationis" [a man of holy life and much prayer].

⁴⁶R. Pratesi, "Francesco Micheli del Padovano di Firenze, Teologo ed umanista francescano del secolo XV," in *AFH* XLVII (1954) p. 351. The passage in question is from the *Tractatus de S. Francisco ad plebem Veronensem*, *Biblioteca Laurenziana*, Cod. Plut. XXVI, fol. 71r.

⁴⁷Dante, *Paradiso*, XII, vv. 127-29. Previously (vv. 31-45) Bonaventure had sung the praises of St. Dominic.

controversies at the end of the thirteenth century.48 Its main adversaries were the Franciscans. Had not their general chapter, which met in Strasbourg in 1282, forbidden the Summa to be circulated in the friaries? The greatest names of the order—John Peckham, Duns Scotus, William de la Mare. Olivi-issued repeated warnings that Aquinas's approach was too "philosophical." He was making too much room for Aristotle and the Arab philosophers.⁴⁹ The condemnations issued in 1277 by the bishop of Paris, Stephen Tempier, might lead one to believe that the Franciscans had won the battle. In fact, the debate was not simply theological. The attacks of a Spiritual Franciscan such as Olivi against St. Thomas were also against a man who advocated a very flexible attitude in the area of religious poverty, which Aquinas saw as a simple means to perfection and not an end in itself.⁵⁰ The alliance between the Franciscan theologians who followed Bonaventure (and thus Augustine) and the followers of absolute poverty created a formidable anti-Thomas front. Until the very end it tried to prevent the spread of Thomistic doctrine and the Common Doctor's canonization. ⁵¹ We see proofs of this, for example, in the references to St. Augustine in the Naples Process. Several witnesses said they had seen St. Augustine in a dream, and he had told them that the teaching of St. Thomas was in accord with his own, and that Thomas was even holier than he on account of his virginity.52

⁴⁸For a less than peaceful controversy between John of Peckham and Thomas Aquinas while the latter was still alive, see Ferrua, p. 316.

⁴⁹M. Th. D'Alverny, "Un adversaire de Saint Thomas : Petrus Iohannis Olivi," in *St. Thomas Aquinas*, 1274-1974, Commemorative Studies, t. II, Toronto 1974, pp. 179-218.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 188-90.

⁵¹An echo of these conflicts can be detected in certain fourteenth-century hagiographic documents; see M. Grabmann, "Hagiographische Texte in einer H.S. des Kirchenhistorisches Seminars der Universität München," in *Arch. Fr. Praedicatorum* XIX (1949), pp. 379-82, where the following phrase occurs: "Dum tractaretur de canonisatione viri Dei [St. Thomas], fratres minores ex invidia, quae est mos dyaboli, beati viri canonisationem omni modo quo potuerunt invidebant." [Regarding the canonization of the man of God, the Friars Minor, out of envy, which is the characteristic of the devil, hindered the canonization of the blessed many in any way they could.]

⁵²During the Naples Process (Ferrua, pp. 298-99), the Dominican Anthony

Indeed, it was no longer a question of rearguard actions. With John XXII, the Avignon papacy chose to break with the Spirituals, Fraticelli, Beguines, Brethren of the Free Spirit and all the currents stemming from the popular religious movements of the thirteenth century.⁵³ In the face of increasing perils, the Church hierarchy felt it necessary to rely on a solid doctrine, that of St. Thomas, and a homogeneous Order, that of the Friars Preachers, who were obedient to the decisions of the Roman Church and united in common veneration of the holy Doctor. In 1317, the same year the Fraticelli were condemned by John XXII, the Pope purchased the complete works of St. Thomas for the Apostolic Library. The next year he favorably acceded to the petitions of the Dominican Order and Angevin rulers of Naples, with whom he had close personal ties. On July 18, 1323, the Pope canonized St. Thomas Aquinas in the presence of King Robert of Naples, who bragged to the friars of his decisive role in the happy outcome.54 The bull of canonization is more explicit. Against the wave of heretical doctrines—those of the Spirituals, the Averroists and the nominalists—the Church has decided to rely on a clear and unshakable doctrine. Against the enthusiasts of poverty and the Franciscan Order in crisis John XXII sets the Order of Preachers "whose heavenly splendor delights us and whose stability makes us rest easier."55 Praising his perfect submission to the Roman

of Brescia mentions a vision of St. Augustine had by Albert of Brescia. At the end, the bishop of Hippo is reported to have said concerning St. Thomas: "mihi in gloria est aequalis excepto quod ipse in virginitatis aureola me excedit." [He is my equal in glory, except that he surpasses me in the halo of virginity.] See ibid., p. 300, for a Benedictine's testimony on the same subject, and pp. 325-26 which insist that James of Viterbo and Giles of Rome, both Hermits of St. Augustine, spoke very highly of Thomas's doctrine, in which James found communis veritas, communis claritas, communis illuminatio.

[&]quot;In 1318, William de Tocco reported that during his lifetime St. Thomas had been involved in the controversy, "de errore novi spiritus libertatis et tertii status mundi." [about the error of the New Free spirit an the Third State of the World] A. Walz, "Abt Joachim und der «neue Geist der Freiheit» in Toccos Thomasleben, c. XX," in *Angelicum* XLV (1968), pp. 313-15, has shown that this insistence was by no means accidental and could not help but please Pope John XXII.

⁵⁴On the role played by the King of Naples and his mother, Queen Mary, see the contemporary accounts cited by M.H. Laurent, *Fontes Vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis*, pp. 513-18.

⁵⁵ See n. 25 above.

Church, he canonizes not only the great Doctor, but even more the concept of religious life Thomas had defended, especially in the area of ownership. In the Pope's eyes, common ownership of sufficient goods was the best way for clerics to avoid excessive concern about earthly things. And he was not wrong on that score: the canonization of St. Thomas caused a considerable stir at the time. In particular, it was seen as an outright provocation by the followers of voluntary poverty. This is very clear in the confession of Dame Prous Boneta, a Beguine from Carcassone, who in 1325 declared to the Inquisition that in raising St. Thomas to the altar, John XXII had raised a murderer. For just as long ago Cain had killed his brother Abel bodily, so Thomas Aquinas had spiritually killed Peter John Olivi, the only true and authentic saint in the Church of that time.

We must still explain—briefly, for it is less interesting—the circumstances in which St. Bonaventure was finally canonized.⁵⁹ First of all, his works became newly influential in the fifteenth century, when the great theological syntheses were in crisis and mystical tendencies were on the rise. In a letter of 1426, Gerson was deeply shocked that the Franciscan Order had not shown more zeal in promoting the canonization of the Seraphic Doctor, whom he considers the most reliable and most commendable theologian. The Council of Florence in 1440 also reintroduced the works of Bonaventure, in view of negotiations with the Byzantine Church, and used them to great advantage. Around 1450, the saint's remains were moved in Lyons. On that occasion there was an official identification of the body, during which it was noticed that his tongue was still intact. Although it quickly vanished and was never found again, it was enough to give rise to a

⁵⁶Especially in his sermon preached on the occasion of the canonization, cited by M.H. Laurent, op.cit., p. 513.

⁵⁷M. Grabmann, "Die Kanonisation des hl. Thomas von Aquin in ihrer Bedeutung für die Verbreitung und Verteidigung seiner Lehre in XIV Jahrhundert," in *Div. Thomas*, I (1923), pp. 233-49

⁵⁸W. H. May, "The confession of Prous Boneta, Heretic and Heresiarch," in *Mélanges A.P. Evans*, New York 1955, pp. 7-30 and R. Manselli, *Spirituali e Beghini in Provenza*, Rome 1959, p. 239f.

⁵⁹Unfortunately I was unable to use the article by Stanislao da Campagnola, "Le vicende della canonizzazione di S. Bonaventura," in *S. Bonaventura francescano*, Todi, 1974, pp. 211-55, which appeared after this paper was published. It contains all the details about the history of the cause.

popular cult and produce miracles in the new church of the Friars Minor.60 But things began to turn around when Francesco della Rovere, former general of the Franciscan Order, was elected Pope in 1471 and took the name Sixtus IV. During that period, causes for canonization that had lain dormant for centuries were resumed. In 1481 this Pope canonized the Franciscans who were martyred in Morocco in 1218. One after the other, a distinguished Observant, James of the March, then the master general of the Conventuals, François Samson, appeared before the Pontiff to ask that justice be done to the memory of the Seraphic Doctor. 61 The Pope, who had a deep appreciation for the doctrine in which he had been formed, must also have seen the canonization as a chance to join in a common devotion the two branches of the Order, Observants and Conventuals, whom he was trying at the time to reunite. At any rate, it was he who ordered inquiries to be opened concerning the life, and especially the miracles, of St. Bonaventure which took place in Rome, Bagnoregio and Lyons between 1476 and 1480. The results were rather meager. Two hundred and eight years after his death, the memory of the "Devout Doctor," as most of the witnesses called him, was that of a pious and learned prelate. Some clerics were familiar with his Commentary on the Sentences, and some of the faithful had heard Franciscan preachers extol his merits. Many in Lyons had heard of the miracle of the tongue, but few-just two people-had seen it with their own eyes. 62 Only one miracle was attributed to him during his lifetime, that of the host which entered his mouth by itself one day when, out of humility, he was abstaining from communion. The canonization was

⁶⁰ See Lyons Process (1480), ed. B. Marinangeli, art.cit., p. 82.

⁶¹The preliminaries and details of the canonization of St. Bonaventure were minutely described and analyzed by L. Spätling in the introduction to his edition of the "Tractatus pro canonizatione divi Bonaventurae a fr. Antonio de Vercellis conscriptus," in *AFH* XLVIII (1955), pp. 381-92.

⁶²Lyons Process (1480), ed. B. Marinangeli, art.cit. Only the first and thirty-fifth witnesses are definite on this point. Witnesses 2, 3, 7 and 9 heard of the miracle through hearsay; the others know nothing.

⁶³Examination of the theological and canonical problems posed by the canonization of St. Bonaventure was entrusted by the Pope to the Dominican John Baptist de Giudici, bishop of Ventimiglia, who drew up an outstanding report: "Baptistae Vintimilliensis...de canonizatione Beati Bonaventurae olim cardinalis..." in Baluze, *Miscellanea*, t. IV, Lucca 1764, pp. 471-87. The restrained description of the

proclaimed by Sixtus IV, April 14, 1482, in the church of the Holy Apostles in Rome. People made sure to stress that it was all the more glorious since it had been so long in coming.⁶⁴ The bull, of course, praised Bonaventure's theological works. Yet one cannot help thinking that this time he was extolled primarily as a distinguished member of the order. What had hurt him at the beginning of the fourteenth century helped his cause at the end of the fifteenth, in a historical context that was totally different. The value and greatness of his works were not widely recognized until later, in the sixteenth century, a fact which earned for him the title "Doctor of the Church" in 1588 from another Franciscan pope, Sixtus V.⁶⁵

Our study comparing the canonizations of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure is in no way meant to set up a hierarchy between them as far as holiness is concerned. Even though his canonization was late, St. Bonaventure was surely no less virtuous than Thomas Aquinas, for Alexander Hales had said of him "that it seemed as though Adam had never sinned in him." But already in the Middle Ages, canonization was not just recognition of the holiness of a servant of God, but also papal approval of an already existing cult, which it seemed particularly opportune at a given moment to extend to the entire Christian world. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Bonaventure's holiness did not meet these criteria. His dynamic concept of the history of the order, whose development he saw like that of the early Church "quae primo incepit a pescatoribus simplicibus et postmodum profecit ad doctores clarissimos et peritissimos" [which at first begain through simple fisherman and then advanced through brilliant and

miracles (healing of a child by the saint during his lifetime and the tongue found after his death) is found on p. 481. In his request for canonization presented in the name of the cardinals to Sixtus IV, the consistory judge, Octavianus a Martinis Sussanus recalls other miracles worked through his intercession. See *AA.SS*. III, pp. 788-94.

⁶⁴Office of the Transfer in Wadding, Annales Minorum, ad an. 1482, n 31: quamvis autem canonizatis diu dilata fuerit, tamen quo tardius eo gloriosius peracta est....

⁶⁵A. Abate, "Quando S. Bonaventura fu dichiarato «Dottore della Chiesa?»" in *MisFran* XXXVII (1937), pp. 98-207.

⁶⁶ Chronica XXIV Generalium in AF III, p. 324.

very learned teachers],67 ran counter to the feelings of many of the Friars Minor. For them, perfection consisted in absolute conformity to the life led by St. Francis and his first companions in the early days of the Assisi fraternity. No matter how worthy of respect and even veneration the cardinal-bishop of Albano seemed to them, his figure did not correspond to their idea of Franciscan holiness. The absence of cult and miracles along with the crises within the Franciscan Order at the beginning of the fourteenth century are enough to explain the rest. On the other hand, St. Thomas was totally in line with the Dominican ideal which is defined, as we know, by the formula contemplata aliis tradere. Therefore the Friars Preachers had no difficulty seeing themselves in him and identifying with his doctrine. It is revealing that in 1323 the general chapter of the order placed him, in the hierarchy of Dominican saints, immediately after the founder but ahead of St. Peter Martyr, the inquisitor from Milan who was murdered by heretics in 1252.68 As for the Franciscan Order, it is only when it shed its reservations about roles of authority in the Church and about the doctoral magisterium that it obtained—in a context from now on very changed—a canonization that testifies in a way to the abandonment of its primitive ideal.

⁶⁷Epistola de tribus quaestionibus n. 13 in S. Bonaventurae opera omnia, t. VIII, p. 336. See D. Monti, trasn., St. Bonaventure's Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994) p. 54.

⁶⁸B. M. Reichert, op.cit. II, p. 151.