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# *The Journal* *of* *Theological Studies*

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## NOTES AND STUDIES

### INTELLECTUAL TOLERATION IN DANTE.

THE principles, the limits, and even the meaning of toleration seem almost to baffle definition. Were we to adopt as a likely point of departure the old Platonic distinction of knowledge and opinion, the way would at once become ambiguous. At first, perhaps, we might be disposed to argue that knowledge alone could justify coercion, inasmuch as it alone could claim the authority of truth. On the other hand, the very notion of 'orthodoxy', a term which again we inherit from Plato, is enough to point in the opposite direction. If certitude be indeed attainable by man, in mathematics or elsewhere, the failure of a few eccentric persons to enjoy it may be remedied by instruction, or dismissed with the plea of invincible ignorance. Dissenters of that kind will be subjects of laughter rather than of public reprobation; their destiny, at the worst, will be the asylum, not the dungeon or the stake. Opinion, as it now appears on second thoughts, becomes intolerable only when nothing better than opinion is to be had. The excuse for dogmatism, inquisition, and persecution is not knowledge but ignorance. Paradoxical as this version of the facts may sound, the explanation is partly to be found in the commonplace, that action in human affairs must often precede and outrun knowledge. The fabric of society rests at all times upon what men opine and believe, and the delicate task of 'authority' is to measure the limits within which heterodoxy may be licensed without entailing the risk of political disaster.

The Platonic antithesis of knowledge and opinion must, in any case, prove inadequate as soon as we begin to consider the position of the Church. The conception of 'faith', the claim to 'revelation', the formulation of a creed, and the gradual erection of a formidable ecclesiastical power were productive of difficulties, both intellectual and political, which had no real existence in the ancient world. Moreover, the demand for doctrinal orthodoxy by no means implied that the Church was guided only by opinion. Long before the ominous word 'infallibility' was inscribed on any banner, popes and councils were sustained by perfect confidence in the Divine illumination of their footsteps, to keep them in the highway of truth. And since it was upon

this truth, absolute and final, that salvation depended, to tolerate the errors of heretics was to imperil the fate of immortal souls. What room, then, could be found, in a society thus constituted, either for a theory of toleration or for practical concessions to liberty of thought? Yet in human constructions, where speculation is complicated with practice, the empire of logic is never complete. In surveying the mediaeval structure we need not dwell overmuch on inconsistencies due to the mixture of better and worse in human motives. It is enough to remark one inevitable consequence of organizing the Church into a visible society with a claim to moral jurisdiction over all mankind. The more the ideal of a Christendom united at least in acknowledgement of a Divine law superior to all human enactments was realized, the more certain it became that heresy must rank as a political offence. Heresy, in other words, could scarcely fail to generate schism, and schism was a menace to the order and security which every ruler was bound to maintain. Modern theological disputes and sectarian divisions are, perhaps, more likely to confuse than to aid our interpretation of the Middle Ages. The cry of heresy may still enliven a Church newspaper or perplex a bishop, but it will not cause a riot in the University of Oxford, much less provoke the citizens to rush to arms. And again, even students of mediaeval history may be deceived by the prominence of the conflict between spiritual and secular power. It is easy to forget that the most bitter quarrels of popes and emperors were conducted without prejudice to the common hypothesis, that the business of all rulers was to defend the faith. So, too, the canonists and civil lawyers might often fall into antagonism; yet between them they fashioned but one philosophy of Jurisprudence, in which the validity of all human laws was made to depend on their derivation from the higher law, alternately described as natural and divine. If, then, it is true that the intolerance of the Middle Ages was no mere affront to liberty of speculation in a field beyond the range of politics, another aspect of the same truth will be that accusations of heresy, condemnations and acquittals, were often determined by the needs of the political situation; and this not only in the larger campaigns of kings and prelates, but in more restricted areas, such as the University of Paris. It is, in fact, impossible to pass a sober judgement on the fortunes of men like Abelard, or Roger Bacon, or even Thomas Aquinas, without a careful study of the factions among schools and teachers, the hostility of seculars to regulars, the mutual rivalry of religious orders, the division of students into 'nations', the conflict of 'faculties', and indeed the whole position of universities in relation to the life of the age.

The mere thought of so large a programme is enough to exclude it from a paper of moderate dimensions. It will be enough if the mention

of these general considerations can serve as a preface to a brief visitation of Dante's mind, as revealed explicitly in some of his statements about philosophy, more obscurely in his treatment of certain historical persons who appear in the *Divine Comedy*. The story of his first attraction to philosophy Dante himself has briefly recounted. If the story is a little confused by his allegorical interpretation of the compassionate lady described in the latter part of the *Vita Nuova*, no doubts that we may feel about the true significance of that episode, or about the possible allusion to it in the reproaches of Beatrice, need disturb our estimate of the poet's general position. It may be true, as some have conjectured, that his enthusiasm for the triumphs of human reason was at one time extravagant, and that afterwards he was more inclined to dwell on the limitations of Virgil, as compared with the heavenly wisdom of Beatrice. The evidence for that opinion is not, however, decisive. It is hard to point to anything in the *Convivio* that calls for recantation on any ground of principle: enthusiasm for philosophy is still conspicuous in the *Divina Commedia*, so that even in the supreme moment of ecstasy, at the close of the *Paradiso*, one of the secrets revealed is the relation of substance to accident, a philosophical mystery, if we please so to call it, but a rather strange companion to the loftier mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. On the whole, I can find no definite evidence that Dante ever moved very far from the attitude towards human reason that a disciple of St Thomas might be expected to assume.

To call Dante a disciple of St Thomas is no misuse of language. For though he would never have ranked any modern teacher with Aristotle and the ancients, his own Aristotelianism, and indeed his whole method of handling philosophy, agrees so nearly with Thomist principles that the glorification of St Thomas in the *Paradiso* is only the magnificent confession of an evident debt. Now the work of St Thomas, in one of its clearest aspects, bore directly upon the question of toleration. For his whole defence of philosophy, his plea for liberty of thought, as we may fairly style it, was based on a division of provinces between faith and reason, and on his firm conviction that between the two there could be no essential discrepancy. This *duplex veritatis modus*, as he called it, though it could have no existence in the Divine understanding, was a necessary accident of man's finite mind. Certain doctrines peculiar to the Church could be neither proved nor disproved; they were matters of faith, yet not of credulity, since personal acceptance of them implied a genuine illumination of the mind. How, then, did the separation of this theological province from the philosophical affect the exercise of 'authority' and the demand for an orthodox profession of faith? In the sphere proper to reason the appeal to authority could

only be a *locus infirmissimus* : there was no philosophical orthodoxy, and no ground for disciplinary measures against the recalcitrant. But did it follow that no question of heresy could arise in relation to truths demonstrable by reason? Unfortunately the situation was not so simple as that. The power of reasoning philosophically is confined to the few, and even those few must await the arrival of intellectual maturity. Meanwhile it may be essential to salvation that certain truths, in themselves demonstrable by reason, should be believed by all. Thus the existence and unity of God, or the personal immortality of man, were, in the opinion of St Thomas, not beyond demonstration. But the arguments were high and difficult, incomprehensible to the majority, whereas the need of embracing these truths was imperative for all. It followed that there must, in practice, be some overlapping between the propositions discoverable by reason and the articles of Christian belief. Nor, again, would it be legitimate, merely because the being of God was demonstrable, to deny His being on philosophical grounds. The negative arguments might be refuted philosophically, but the conclusion itself no Christian could lawfully defend. Hence it would not be a wholly unfair account of St Thomas's position to say that philosophers were at liberty to debate the problem, but were only allowed to arrive at one conclusion. Whether that criticism be adequate or not, we shall at least be right in attributing the gravest importance to the actual overlapping of conclusions at once established by reason and demanded by faith. It was precisely within this ambiguous territory that the most conspicuous disturbances of the thirteenth century arose. No one then proposed, with any hope of general support, to deny the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection of Christ. On the other hand, to maintain that philosophy (represented for the moment by Aristotle) discountenanced belief in personal immortality or freedom of the will was both possible and frequent. Still worse was it when a sophistical attempt was made to mend the situation by declaring that the same propositions might be false in philosophy, yet true as matters of faith. Nothing exasperated St Thomas so deeply as this parody of his own position : nothing, perhaps, could persuade him, despite his ample charity, that a man could sincerely combine the profession of faith with the assertion that his unaided reason would have led him to an infidel conclusion. Whether so painful a distraction of mind may not in fact be possible we need not stay to enquire. That one with the clear and candid judgement of St Thomas should have doubted it will at least be readily understood.

Now Dante was far removed from the station and career of Aquinas. He was not a professed theologian ; he was never called upon to advise a pope about the licensing of Aristotle, or to compose an alarming faction in the University of Paris. Yet the character of his poem

gives him an unexampled opportunity of anticipating, if one may so express it, the judgements of God. His own faith and his protestation of orthodoxy are plainly declared on his pages. Were he convinced, then, that any notorious person was heretical, and should he think fit to encounter the delinquent in course of his pilgrimage, we should certainly expect the meeting to take place in Hell. At the same time, we learn from definite examples that Dante sometimes contrived to place the figures of his Comedy in positions scarcely justified by their moral or doctrinal past. Thus is Cato found on the shore of Purgatory; thus is Manfred credited with a deathbed repentance, and Statius with a secret conversion to the faith; thus is Rhipheus exalted, on the wings of a Virgilian epithet, to the joys of Paradise. None of these, however, can properly be styled heretics; and what I wish to enquire more particularly is whether there are any cases in which Dante appears to be moved by the spirit of toleration, or at least by intellectual sympathy, to better the *status post mortem* of men technically qualified as heretics for one of the infernal circles.

There are, in fact, some three or four cases susceptible of this interpretation; but, before proposing any names for discussion, it will be worth while to glance at such evidence as Dante provides in his writings of his general aptitude for toleration or for the opposite temper. It is obvious, in the first place, that Dante did not set up to be an original thinker, or even an independent critic of philosophies already established in fame. There is, indeed, the rather puzzling claim to originality at the beginning of the *Monarchia*, but that particular treatise scarcely affects our main enquiry. The *Convivio* is his most considerable essay in philosophical exposition, and the *Convivio* combines the ardour of a missionary with the modesty of an amateur. 'Blessed are those few', he says, 'who sit at the table and eat the food of angels'; but he is not himself one of these. He is but 'a picker up of learning's crumbs', one who has fled from the pastures of the vulgar and now is moved by compassion to prepare for those left behind so much of the better food as they can hope to digest. Approaching his task in this spirit, Dante not unnaturally displays a respect for authority, especially that of Aristotle, which almost amounts to passive obedience. The supreme Philosopher is clothed in *venerabilis auctoritas*; as *maestro e duca* of human reason, as the consummate exponent of his craft, he is most worthy of faith and obedience. In his historical (or unhistorical) retrospect of the ancient schools Dante regards them all as superseded or absorbed by the Peripatetics, whose teaching, he says, now dominates the world, and may almost be styled the *cattolica opinione*. Thus, to judge by his explicit statements, and to some extent by his practice, Dante goes far nearer than St Thomas to uncritical acceptance of Aristotle's teaching; partly

because the work of St Thomas had actually established the pre-eminence of Aristotle, but still more, perhaps, because the genius of Dante belonged to poetry, while in philosophical construction and criticism he possessed no exceptional gifts. The implications of his deference to Aristotle require, however, to be carefully examined. He does not think it necessary, as might be expected, to prove the supremacy of one philosophy by vigorous refutation of others. The point is rather that Aristotle is the arch-representative of a profession in which all the reputed teachers are worthy of honour. The Master, as we see him in the *Inferno*, sits in the midst of the *filosofica famiglia*, and receives the homage of his extremely various assessors. Their differences are forgotten; their common pursuit of knowledge remembered. In like manner, Dante himself, when he discusses varieties of philosophical doctrine, is more disposed to dwell on their several merits than to expose the falsity of all but one. When, for example, he reviews the ethical schools of antiquity, not only do Zeno, Socrates, and Plato receive honourable mention, but even Epicurus is treated politely and dismissed without rebuke. A brief explanation of Hedonism is offered, and an illustrious Roman who followed that way of life is named. In other passages we find a still more striking expression of this general toleration. Thus, after recounting (*Conv.* iv 21. 25 sqq.) the various opinions about the human soul bequeathed by Avicenna, Algazel, Pythagoras, and Plato, Dante makes the following comment: 'if each were here to defend his own opinion, it may be that the truth would be seen to be contained in all. But since, at first sight, they appear to be a little remote from the truth, it is expedient to proceed, not according to them, but according to the veracious opinion of Aristotle and the Peripatetics.' In the same spirit, but with a still bolder thought of reconciliation, he declares in *Conv.* iii 14. 133 sqq. that by means of the three theological virtues 'si sale a filosofare a quella Atene celestiale, dove gli Stoici e Peripatetici ed Epicurei, per l'arte della Verità eterna, in un volere concordevolmente concorrono'. The admission of Epicureans to the celestial Athens does not, it is true, agree with a passage in the *Inferno* which will presently be considered, but the conception of a final harmony between the three great rival schools is none the less remarkable. Remarkable we may fairly call it, yet, on the whole, it is not surprising. For Dante only expresses the prevailing tendency of his age. The entire dialectical movement, from the lean antitheses of Abelard to the massive 'objections' and responsions of Aquinas is a movement towards reconciliation. As in the systematizing of Canon Law Gratian reveals his intention by his very title, *Concordantia discordantium Canonum*, so in the grander edifice of the *Summa Theologica* St Thomas incorporates materials drawn from every Pagan and Christian source, resolving con-

traditions and healing old antagonisms by the purifying alchemy of his critical art. Moreover, this steady progress towards the formation of a *cattolica opinione* in philosophy was assisted by historical transformations going deeper than the conscious effort of any individual writer. Although St Thomas himself was bent on disentangling the real Aristotle from distorting accretions and perverse interpretations, neither he nor any of his contemporaries could escape the influence of Neo-Platonism, or pierce beyond the colours imparted to ancient philosophy by the manifold new lights of Christianity, and even by the oblique illumination of Islam. The result of this general intellectual tendency upon Dante's work is easily discerned. Despite his avowed and sincere allegiance to Aristotle, I venture to doubt whether Aristotelianism is really the determining element in the composition of his mind. On many definite occasions, usually when he is making some deliberate appeal to argument, he does invoke the philosopher's authority. But in his maturest work, when he had moved far beyond the rather naïve enthusiasm of the *Convivio*, the texture interwoven of philosophy and poetry is of Platonist rather than of Aristotelian quality. To quote but one example, the doctrine of the diffusion of the Divine goodness, which permeates the structure of the *Paradiso*, has nothing to do with Aristotle. It comes from Dionysius 'the Areopagite' and from the *Liber de Causis*; or, in other words, it descends by two independent channels from Proclus, and thus is derived from Plotinus or, more remotely, from Plato himself. Facts such as these are no evidence of a calculated policy; nor can we speak of toleration, save in a very general sense, when no immediate question of orthodoxy is involved. Nevertheless, it remains true that the tendency, conscious or unconscious, to embrace in one vast synthesis the divers aspects of truth revealed by philosophies ostensibly conflicting was active in the moulding of Dante's mind. Hence the right hypothesis with which to approach his treatment of philosophical heretics is that he would always be disposed to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Armed with this charitable assumption, let us now inspect the specific facts that call for remark. And first of all, is anything to be learned from the circle of the Heretics, adorned by the magnificent Farinata, whose contempt for most of his neighbours unfortunately forbids him to honour them with names? A similar reticence is preserved by Dante himself as represented by Virgil. At the end of the ninth canto of the *Inferno* the 'heresiarchs of every sect' are mentioned collectively, and at the beginning of the eleventh we have the name of him who led Pope Anastasius astray, but without specification of the error. The tenth canto deals with only one group, Epicurus and his followers, who are condemned for asserting the mortality of the soul. If a suggestion



that I have made elsewhere be correct, Dante's reason for this strange selection of an ancient philosopher as the single named representative of heresy was his desire to make the whole scheme of the *Inferno* appropriate to Virgil's condition. He could not wholly omit the sin of heresy, but he could give it a Pagan flavour by enrolling the Sadducees of his own age in the sect of Epicurus. The implied exclusion of the Epicureans from the 'celestial Athens', wherein the more hopeful theory of the *Convivio* had promised them a home, need not be taken to signify any definite change in Dante's position. Denial of immortality had consequences too grave to be disregarded; and if heresy, as a sin of the intellect, was somehow to be presented in ancient dress, no better device was open to Dante than to derive a doctrine incompatible with Christianity from a Pagan source. To slay the soul with the body was, as we know, a heinous offence in Dante's eyes. In *Conv.* ii 9. 49 sqq. he denounces it as the most brutish form of stupidity, and we may note, in that context, that he affirms the general consent of all philosophers in teaching some doctrine of immortality. No mention of Epicurus as an exception is made; which again suggests that in the *Inferno* Dante sacrificed this one ancient philosopher only because he saw no other means of depicting heresy in a form agreeable to Virgil's status and knowledge.

We cannot, however, expect to learn so much from those actually classed as heretics as from those who might be but are not. In this latter category the *Inferno* supplies two examples, Averroes and Avicenna; while in the *Paradiso* we have Joachim of Flora and Siger, the notorious Brabantine, described, to the astonishment of posterity, by St Thomas himself as one who 'syllogized invidious truths'. Avicenna and Averroes, though not of equal importance, will naturally be classed together. Both were Mohammedans, both interpreters of Aristotle, both, in some measure, opponents of the Christian faith. With what right, then, do they appear in the Limbo of the unbaptized, who were innocent of mortal sin? They cannot plead infancy; they did not live *dinanzi al Cristianesimo*; they knew of the Christian faith and deliberately refused to accept it. To assume that Dante would naturally rank them with Pagans like Virgil and Aristotle is to misunderstand the mediaeval attitude towards Islam. Mohammedans were heretics, or at least schismatics, and Dante's agreement with this common estimate is proved by the situation of the Prophet himself, who is placed with the schismatics for no other possible reason but that he had divided the religious empire belonging of right to the Church. Moreover Averroes, not content with hostility to the Christian and, for that matter, to the Mohammedan faith, was the author of a deadly schism within the Peripatetic school. If Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law, was to be condemned

for dividing his own household of faith, why not Averroes, who had brought discord and faction into the Aristotelian camp, so that St Thomas was moved to say of him, *non tam fuit Peripateticus quam philosophiæ Peripateticæ depravator* (*De Unit. Int. contra Averr.*)? He it was, as Dante knew very well, who had preached the doctrine of the soul least compatible with the Christian assertion of responsibility before and after death. In a word, there was every reason for banishing Averroes to the company of Mohammed, or possibly of Farinata; and no excuse whatever for associating him with the sages who lived before the advent of Christ, except that he was the author of the great commentary and, for all his errors, an Aristotelian of almost unrivalled fame. The artistic propriety of joining him to Aristotle's *filosofica famiglia* is obvious enough; but it is somewhat remarkable that Dante, ignoring the judgement of St Thomas, should treat him, not as the corrupter, but as the great exponent of Peripatetic truth.

Since the greater includes the less, the case of Avicenna need not detain us. There remain the two questionable inhabitants of Paradise, both encountered by Dante in the heaven of the Sun. The Abbot of Flora's reputation for saintliness and prophetic insight doubtless outweighed, in common esteem, the formal condemnation of his teaching. Nevertheless, he was in some sense the originator of the heresy of the Eternal Gospel, and his works had been banned in 1260, some fifty-eight years after his death. More significant, perhaps, in relation to Dante, was the earlier repudiation of him at the fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Joachim had written a tract, no longer extant, in which he indicted no less a person than Peter the Lombard for heresy in Trinitarian doctrine. The Council, however, upheld the *Magister Sententiarum*, and condemned his critic. St Thomas afterwards wrote a comment upon this decision and observed that Joachim, being only *rudis* in the subtleties of doctrine, had misrepresented the Lombard's meaning. Some of these details may have been unknown to Dante, but it is interesting to find that he places the former antagonists in the same heaven. They are not in immediate conjunction, for it was natural, in view of their different modes of thought, to associate Joachim with Bonaventura, and Peter with Aquinas. Yet in the scene described in *Paradiso* xii the two circles of saintly doctors are closely surrounding Dante, in the perfect harmony of the celestial Athens.

In passing from Joachim to the more disputable case of Siger we may begin by observing a small, but possibly significant, point of resemblance. It is that both are mentioned last in the lists of names recited severally by Aquinas and Bonaventura. If not merely accidental, this seems to throw a certain emphasis on their presence, as though Dante, instead of slipping his dubious cases into the middle of a catalogue, were

determined to allow them a special prominence. Be that as it may, the transformation of the discredited and once infamous Averroist into *l'eterna luce di Sigieri* cannot, at first sight, be other than surprising. Why Dante should have ventured upon this hazardous beatification the commentators have been much exercised to discover. That he was himself tainted with Averroism, and therefore anxious to proclaim its fallen champion a martyr in the cause of truth, is an untenable hypothesis. Not only is the whole character of his Aristotelianism opposed to that suggestion, but in *Purg.* xxv 62-66 he deliberately puts into the mouth of Statius a refutation of the Averroist heresy about the soul :

Quest'è tal punto  
 Che più savio di te fe' già errante ;  
 Sì che, per sua dottrina, fe' disgiunto  
 Dall' anima il possibile intelletto,  
 Perchè da lui non vide organo assunto.

And further, since it is St Thomas himself who pays the tribute to Siger in *Par.* x, we should have to suppose that the saint was making a kind of recantation, and confessing that, after all, it was Siger who had interpreted Aristotle aright. To call this incredible is scarcely to say too much. What alternatives, then, remain? So far as I know, the only current explanation plausible enough to deserve serious criticism is simply that Dante was ignorant of the facts. If he was unacquainted with the nature of Siger's teaching, and if, perhaps, he had picked up some romantically inaccurate account of the man, the translation of him to Paradise would be intelligible. This suggestion acquires, too, a certain colour of possibility from the fact that William of Tocco, pupil and biographer of St Thomas, makes notable blunders about Siger's career, and appears to couple him with William of St Amour, who had disturbed Paris by attacking the religious orders, but had no connexion whatever with Averroism. If the good William could thus go astray, why not Dante likewise? The question is fair and not without force. Nevertheless I shall reject it as an evasion, and shall venture to advance the opposite hypothesis, that Dante was familiar with all the important facts, and consequently that his reconciliation of the heretical Aristotelian with St Thomas was perfectly deliberate, yet perfectly free from any insinuation that St Thomas himself had erred.

First of all, then, is it a tenable opinion that Dante was misled by ignorance? Given that William of Tocco, and also the early commentators, are hazy about Siger's teaching, it by no means follows that Dante was in the same predicament. William was a careless historian, and the commentators were mostly devoid of that acute interest in philosophy which Dante so clearly betrays. The mere fact of Siger's appearance in the Divine Comedy is enough to prove, at least, that he

was, in Dante's eyes, a person of note. For what is it that Cacciaguida says to Dante in *Par.* xvii 136 sqq.?

Però ti son mostrate in queste rote,  
Nel monte, e nella valle dolorosa,  
Pur l'anime che son di fama note.

Dante's steadfast adherence to this principle will scarcely be disputed. Hence, if he decided to make room for Siger on his canvas, we can be certain, not indeed that the portrait was lifelike, but that the original was famous, and also that the fame was of a kind to appeal to Dante. On no other hypothesis is it conceivable that the eternal light of the Brabantine should have been eulogized by St Thomas himself. With this much established, we may proceed to estimate the chances of Dante being accurately informed. Siger did not belong to ancient history; on the contrary, he died at Orvieto when Dante was not less than sixteen, and possibly as much as eighteen or nineteen years old. Assuming too, as is reasonable, that he came straight to Italy when he fled from Paris in 1277, he had been living in the country for at least four or five years before he fell a victim to the knife of a crazy clerk. He may even have passed through Florence on his way to the papal court; or, at least, it would be surprising if Dante, in his wanderings through Italy, had never met with any one who had known the unhappy exile and heard his own version of his misfortunes. Incidentally, one may risk the suggestion that Dante, who had tasted the bitter salt of exile, was touched with pity for one condemned to drag out weary years in a foreign land. This would well account for the description of Siger as a spirit:

che in pensieri  
Gravi a morir gli parve venir tardo (*Par.* x 134 sq.)

The crucial question, however, is whether Dante understood the character of Siger's doctrines and the reason for the ban pronounced on him at Paris. Certainly there is no proof that he did, but, once more, I believe, it would be very surprising if he did not. For the act of authority which swept away Siger and the Averroists was no trifling incident. It was embodied in a document containing no less than 219 'distinct damnations'; it reverberated, as we know, in Oxford; it brought Albertus Magnus back to Paris from Cologne; it stimulated literature and encouraged Ramon Lull to write a book glorifying the 219 propositions as the death-knell of philosophers who claimed independence of theology; it was taken up by the Inquisitor of France, who, not satisfied with the episcopal action, indicted Siger and Boethius of Dacia for the crime of heresy in the realm of France. And though all this happened in Dante's lifetime, we are asked to believe that he endowed the villain of the piece with eternal bliss without ever troubling

to discover the character of his opinions. And again: Dante learnt his philosophy, as he tells us, 'in the schools of the religious'; which, in all probability, would mean that he sat under Dominican masters. Now the Dominicans, as we shall presently see, were directly affected by the 219 propositions, and were vitally concerned to declare their own position in relation to them. There was constant movement in those days between one educational centre and another. Like Aquinas himself, a teacher would go from Italy to Paris, and then, a few years later, would return to Italy; so that the absence of railways, telegrams, and newspapers was quite compatible with the rapid circulation of ideas. I find it impossible, therefore, to believe that Dante lacked either opportunity or inclination to acquaint himself with the doctrines of one whom he proposed to place in so grand a constellation in the heaven of the Sun. That he had actually read Siger's *De Anima Intellectiva* is, I think, improbable; that he had read the answer to it by St Thomas is possible but uncertain; that he was so ignorant of the whole affair as inadvertently to unite the two protagonists of the controversy in the same heavenly mansion is almost beyond belief. He did it, I feel perfectly convinced, on purpose: it only remains to ask—why? Broadly speaking, it was, I believe, for the same reason that induced him to prophecy a final reconciliation of Stoics, Epicureans, and Peripatetics in the light of the Eternal Truth. Beatrice herself does not discourage this hopeful anticipation when she offers a charitable interpretation of Plato's apparent error about the return of souls to the stars (*Par.* iv 58). And when she notes the lack of uniformity in human teaching—

Voi non andate giù per un sentiero

Filosofando—

(*Par.* xxix 85).

she adds that, in Heaven, such diversity is counted more tolerable than neglect or perversion of the Scriptures. As regards Beatrice, however, the point to remember is that she represents the Divine Wisdom, for which there is, as St Thomas says, no *duplex veritatis modus*. In other words, she recognizes no distinction between theological and philosophical truth; and hence it is natural for her to mention the errors of Parmenides and Melissus in the same breath with the heresies of Arius and Sabellius (*Par.* xiii 125). Dante's position is different. He has only to consider whether Siger's false interpretation of Aristotle was compatible with his profession of the Christian faith. For further light on this question we must examine the career of Siger, so far as it is known, and the particular circumstances of his expulsion from Paris.

His name is unknown to history until the year 1266, but the events of his life must be interpreted by the whole story of Aristotelianism at Paris during a period of about seventy years, a story which clearly illustrates the political character of intellectual struggles. The reading

of Aristotle at Paris was prohibited in the years 1210, 1215, 1231, and 1263. The earlier edicts were only local, and we gather that at Toulouse, in 1229, the study could be freely pursued. In fact, it was not until 1245 that Gregory IX's prohibition of 1231 was extended to Toulouse. Meanwhile the University of Paris soon ceased to take these pronouncements seriously. In 1252 the *De Anima* was officially recognized, and in 1255 the Faculty of Arts prescribed virtually the whole of the Aristotelian canon as part of the regular course. Now it was precisely in this period, from 1252 onwards, that St Thomas was studying and teaching at Paris; and whether or no he actually read the text of Aristotle in public, it is certain that he taught the Aristotelian doctrines, in spite of the papal command. Still more interesting, therefore, is the prohibition of 1263 by Urban IV. For at that time St Thomas was teaching at the papal court, and was collaborating with William of Moerbeka for the production of better translations. Why, then, did Urban seize this moment to inhibit Aristotle at Paris? There is no definite evidence, but the answer I should give with some confidence is that the virtual author of the manifesto was St Thomas himself. That Urban should not have consulted him is incredible, while the action which I conjecturally ascribe to St Thomas could be justified by two good reasons; first, that they were preparing a kind of authorized version in Italy, and wished to suspend inferior interpretations until it was ready; secondly, that the factions at Paris, due partly to the rise of Averroism, were threatening serious disturbances. Not in 1263 alone, but at every important date in the romance of Aristotle at Paris, it is tolerably clear that variations in the official attitude had remarkably little to do with any general principle of toleration or intolerance. Some of the decisions were governed by considerations of university discipline and public order; while all of them, probably, can be traced in some degree to the rivalry of the old school and the new, the Augustinians or Platonists on one side, the Aristotelians on the other, either of whom might succeed in getting the ear of the Pope. Now the great trouble about Averroism was that it brought a new perplexity into the campaign. Its partisans were more royalist than the king; they were fanatical Aristotelians, and thus far allies of the Dominican masters. On the other hand, they threatened to ruin the whole cause of Peripateticism by insisting that doctrines plainly incongruous with the faith were upheld by Aristotle and only to be rejected on the ground of revelation. Nothing could have helped the reactionary party more than this. The dangers of the new philosophy were now visibly exposed; the seculars were provided with a new **weapon** against the regulars; in fact, nothing could save the Aristotelian **fortress** but the expulsion from within of part of the garrison.

At what date this Parisian Averroism first became prominent is uncertain. In 1256 Albertus Magnus wrote, by invitation of Alexander IV, his tract *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroem*, but it was the Master rather than contemporary disciples that he attacked. Fourteen years later there was a crisis at Paris, and between these dates, in 1266, Siger appears on the scene. Nothing is yet heard of his doctrines; all we learn is that he was a turbulent fellow, involved in a riot against the French 'nation' of students, and accused of a mild assault on a respectable canon. He must, however, have begun already his career as a teacher; for only four years later the first condemnation of Averroism took place, and Siger was then in the foreground. His treatise *De Anima Intellectiva* was probably in circulation, and St Thomas replied to it in the same year, 1270, with his masterpiece of controversial writing, the *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas*. The crisis evidently was serious. The return of St Thomas to Paris in 1268, or early in 1269, was due to the gravity of the situation, and about the same time an appeal was sent to Albertus Magnus to express his opinion on the truth or falsity of fifteen suspect propositions. He replied in the tract *De Quindecim Problematibus*, lately published by Mandonnet, and we find that thirteen of the fifteen were identical with the propositions authoritatively condemned in 1270. The other two are of peculiar interest, because they appear, though not very distinctly, to express opinions maintained by St Thomas; which shews that an attempt, unsuccessful on this occasion, was made to implicate the Dominican teaching with the errors of Averroism. The renewal of this project on a larger scale in 1277 will presently be considered. But first we must briefly inspect the two treatises on the Intellect which express the opposed contentions of Siger and Aquinas. The technicalities of the problem, and the comparative merits of the rival interpretations of Aristotle it will be needless to discuss, so long as the general tone and basis of the controversy are sufficiently understood.

Siger's *De Anima Intellectiva* is the work of an able man, with no small talent for presenting a case. At the request of his friends, he says, he will propose certain questions about the soul, and will explain *quid sentiendum sit secundum documenta philosophorum probatorum, non aliquid ex nobis asserentes* . . . After a few pages of argument, he observes that *praecipui viri in philosophia, Albertus et Thomas* maintain certain opinions, which in fact *deficiunt ab intentione philosophi, nec intentum determinant*. Proceeding to refute them, he declares that his sole business is to expound the meaning of the philosophers, especially of Aristotle, *etsi forte Philosophus senserit aliter quam veritas se habeat, et per revelationem aliqua de anima tradita sint quae per rationes*

*naturales concludi non possunt.* He is not, he adds, enquiring *de Dei miraculis*, but *de naturalibus naturaliter*. So again, a page or two later, he gives what he believes to be the *sententia Philosophi*, but allows that, if the philosopher's view is opposed to the *sententia Catholicae fidei*, the latter is to be preferred. Towards the end of the treatise, after debating some difficult points, he says that, after hesitating for so long, *quid via rationis naturalis in praedicto problemate sit tenendum, et quid senserit Philosophus*, he has come to the conclusion that the only way is to adhere to the faith, *quae omnem rationem humanam superat*.

Now Siger may have been an impostor, an atheist, or what you will. The secrets of his conscience must elude us; not even to his contemporaries can they have been fully disclosed. As the treatise stands, it is impossible to brand it as heretical; for it professes to demonstrate only one thing, the incompatibility of certain Aristotelian doctrines with the Catholic faith. Moreover, this conclusion, when accompanied by the author's repeated protestations of orthodoxy, must have placed Aquinas in a very awkward position. For he was himself by no means committed to the infallibility of Aristotle, and with regard to some other matters, not connected with the analysis of the soul, he had pointed out the discrepancy between Aristotle and the faith, and had argued that Aristotle was wrong. The difference was, however, that in those cases St Thomas was prepared to differ from Aristotle on philosophical grounds, while Siger clearly implied that Aristotle represented the verdict of reason, which could only be corrected by faith. Not unnaturally, therefore, St Thomas was roused to vigorous opposition. To accept Siger's view was, in the first place, to strike a blow at the study of Aristotle; and, secondly, to allow that, in at least one vital respect, faith and reason were antagonistic. In his answer to Siger he writes, as always, with gravity and restraint, yet with a scarcely concealed scorn of his opponent's pretended erudition, rising at the end to a defiant note of challenge. If the man has anything to say, let him come out into the open. *Non loquatur in angulis, nec coram pueris, qui nesciunt de causis arduis iudicare, sed contra hoc scriptum scribat, si audet.* In spite of his exasperation, and in spite of his evident disbelief in Siger's profession of faith, St Thomas, like a true dialectician, is ready to argue on the ground chosen by his adversary. It is not our business, he says, to shew that the aforesaid opinion about the soul is repugnant to the Christian faith, for that is obvious, but only to prove that it is *non minus contra philosophiae principia quam contra fidei documenta*. Conforming strictly to this principle, he refrains from appealing to authority of any kind; and when he has shewn that Averroism is unfaithful to the Aristotelian tradition he is careful to



add the statement: *hoc autem praemisimus, non quasi volentes philosophorum auctoritatibus reprobare supra positum errorem, sed ut ostendamus quod non solum Latini . . . sed etiam Graeci et Arabes hoc senserunt.* Siger, in fact, had claimed the support of tradition, but St Thomas is able, by his superior learning, to disallow the claim. It is not authority alone that refutes the Averroists. They destroy the principles of moral authority; they deny the existence of personal responsibility, and then profess to hold to it *propter revelationem fidei*; whereas the truth is, says St Thomas, that, far from following reason, they are striving *contra manifeste apparentia*.

Such, then, was the character of this remarkable controversy; and no better refutation could be found of the popular fallacy, that in the Middle Ages an appeal to reason was always met with an appeal to force. All the more instructive is it to examine the gesture of authority which did in this same year, 1270, condemn the thirteen Averroist propositions already mentioned. Whence did it originate, and what was its effect? For my own part, I decline to believe that St Thomas had anything to do with an act so foreign to his own genius as the forcible suppression of a rival philosopher. The chief point, however, is that the judgement upon Averroism in 1270 proceeded in fact from Étienne Tempier, once Chancellor of the University, and thereafter Bishop of Paris. Now Tempier was no mere critic of Averroism. He detested the whole school of Aristotelians, or detested them, perhaps, because they were mostly Dominicans; and his comment upon the arguments of St Thomas would probably have been, *Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis*. It is important, therefore, to bear in mind that, if ever Siger was convicted of heresy, St Thomas, so far as we know or can reasonably conjecture, had nothing to do with it. Moreover, to speak of conviction of heresy in relation to the year 1270 would be wholly inaccurate. For one of the most obvious facts is that Tempier's demonstration had no serious effect. Not only did Siger remain in Paris for another seven years, but the teaching of Averroism must have steadily continued; for otherwise the greater crisis of 1277 would lose most of its meaning. Now in 1272 St Thomas was recalled to Italy, and in 1274 he died. Hence we can assert with confidence that, during the lifetime of his most eminent antagonist, Siger had never been condemned for heresy, but had merely suffered the *brutum fulmen* of an episcopal rebuke. St Thomas may or may not have believed him to be heretical, but he treated him only as a muddle-headed Aristotelian, who defended reason on irrational grounds.

And now for the events of 1277. The denunciation of the famous 219 propositions is aptly described by Mandonnet as 'the condemnation of Peripateticism'. The *praecipui viri in philosophia*, as Siger had styled

them, were no longer to be feared. Thomas was dead, and Albert was growing old in Germany. And so the Bishop of Paris, our same friend Étienne Tempier, judged that the hour for launching a more imposing thunderbolt had arrived. Though many of the 219 propositions are clearly Averroist, modern scholars have discovered at least twenty which belong to the teaching of St Thomas. Personally I feel some doubt about the details, for most of the statements are so brief and so devoid of commentary that their exact implication remains uncertain. No doubt was felt in Paris, however, that the Peripatetic cause was in jeopardy, and in Oxford that fact was still more manifest. Tempier and Kilwardby (himself, strangely enough, a Dominican) were probably in collaboration; and, since Thomism did not flourish at Oxford so strongly as at Paris, it was possible there to condemn even the 'unity of substantial forms', a doctrine steadfastly upheld by St Thomas. The condemnation of 1277 was, in fact, no authoritative decision of the Church, but the high-handed act of a turbulent bishop, proceeding from a plot hatched in Oxford and Paris. Pope John XXI had sent to Tempier for a report on the doctrinal situation; but Tempier, without wasting time on reports, seized the opportunity to strike. In earlier years protests against his arbitrary actions had been made at the papal court, and now once more the protests broke out. Albert, despite his years, came back to Paris to defend his pupil's reputation; the Dominican Order was strongly incensed against Kilwardby, and we may fairly assume that the Pope himself was far from pleased. Some months later, when the Inquisitor of France took a hand in the game, he was content to indict Siger and the rather obscure Boethius of Dacia, who lacked the powerful support of the Friars. It seems, however, that they had already fled the country, and this brings us to the consideration of Siger's final years.

Besides the vaguer references in Dante and the poem entitled *Fiore*, the one definite piece of evidence is the statement in a Brabantine chronicle, to the effect that Siger, *eo quod quasdam opinioniones contra fidem tenuerat, Parisiis subsistere non valens, Romanam curiam adiit, ibique post parvum tempus a clerico suo quasi dementi perfossus periit*. To this may be added some words from a letter written by John Peckham in 1284. He mentions neither Siger nor Boethius by name, but, in an almost certain allusion to them, he states that 'they are said to have perished miserably in Transalpine parts, since they were not natives of those parts'. By *miserabiliter* he probably means no more than that they were exiles, and therefore miserable. What evidence is there, then, that Siger was ever found guilty of heresy? The answer is—none whatsoever. *Adiit curiam Romanam*, says the chronicler, but how soon he went there, whether he was officially summoned,

or went to make an appeal, we are not informed. Paris was too hot to hold him, and he went, let us suppose, to invoke the protection of the Pope, or perhaps to clear himself of damaging imputations. That he was never convicted of heresy in the gravest sense is proved by the fact that he lived to be assassinated. Mandonnet assumes that he was condemned to some kind of loose imprisonment, and forbidden to leave the papal court. But even this is uncertain. He may only have become a hanger-on of the Court, who dared not cross the Alps to France, and had nowhere else to go. He may have recanted his errors, or convinced the Pope of his orthodoxy; he may have died, for aught we know, a little hastily indeed, but in the odour of sanctity. There is no need, however, to erect a stained-glass window to his memory. The only important question is whether Dante, as a good Catholic and devout Aristotelian, had any pretext for reconciling him to St Thomas in the glory of Paradise. My own reply must be that this is exactly what we should expect Dante to do.

The commentators, for the most part, have approached the problem with wrong hypotheses in their minds. They have assumed that Dante lived in an age of general intolerance, that Siger had been condemned by the Church, and that the Dominican Order, inspired by St Thomas, had instigated or acquiesced in the condemnation. None of these things is true. It was an age, for philosophers at least, of dialectical reconciliation and enormous intellectual charity. Siger was not condemned by Rome; he was driven out of France by a turbulent bishop, a notorious enemy of the Dominicans, who had dared to condemn, along with Siger, the doctrines of Albert and Thomas, men whom Siger himself had allowed to be *virī praecipui in philosophia*. And again, the commentators have failed to grasp the significance of another important fact, Dante's treatment of Averroes. Even one so learned in mediaeval writings as Rashdall allows himself to state that, in Dante's eyes, Averroes was simply the arch-heretic; whereas the whole point is that Dante, far from damning him with the heretics, allows him the high privilege of consorting with the philosophers who were saved from eternal torment because they had never heard the name of Christ. Of the two cases, as they appear in the Divine Comedy, Averroes is, to my mind, more remarkable than Siger. Dante, as we know, was quite capable of treating the damned with a certain measure of respect. He might, on clear doctrinal grounds, have placed Averroes in an infernal circle, and yet have allowed him such marks of honour as he grants to Farinata or Brunetto Latini. On the other hand, it was impossible to deal with Siger by any lenient compromise like residence in Limbo. He must be damned or saved without qualification. Dante might, indeed, have ignored his existence, but, since he deemed

him worthy of mention, his only excuse for classing him with the heretics would have been the official verdict of the Church. But no such verdict had been uttered. He decides, therefore, to accept Siger's profession of loyalty to the faith, and to assure him by the solid fact of his personal salvation that his former interpretation of the *De Anima* was wrong. If it be asked, finally, what were the *invidiosi veri* taught by Siger, the answer is not difficult. Along with his errors, he had taught much sound Aristotelianism, and, in particular, he had defended, in company with St Thomas, the unity of substantial forms, which Tempier, Kilwardby, and Peckham had the effrontery to deny. Peckham even went so far as to insinuate that Siger and other secular persons were the authors of that doctrine, while in fact it was essential to the Thomist position. Although Dante, very probably, had never heard of Peckham's allegation, from Dominicans in Italy he would have heard a version of the year 1277 which would strongly incline him to sympathize with one driven into exile by Tempier and his friends. What further details of Siger's life in Italy he may have known it is impossible to say; but in no case can I find it inexplicable, or even very surprising, that one deeply imbued with the spirit of St Thomas should have chosen to adorn the memory of an exiled and murdered philosopher with the radiance of eternal light.

W. H. V. READE.

### THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE *QUICUMQUE VULT*.

PROFESSOR R. SEEBERG of Berlin in the new edition of his great work on the History of Dogmas<sup>1</sup> has done us good service by recalling attention to a remarkable dissertation by a Jesuit scholar, Heinrich Brewer, 'The so-called Athanasian Creed a work of Saint Ambrose'.<sup>2</sup> I confess that after my first reading, ten years ago, I put it away unconvinced, but under the stimulus of Seeberg's lucid summary of the argument I turned to it again and found that one after another of my former difficulties melted away.

In 1905 Dr K. Künstle published a book with the title *Antipriscilliana*,<sup>3</sup> in which he warmly espoused my theory that the *Quicumque vult* was written to meet the heresy of Priscillian, and endeavoured to prove that it was written in Spain. The first section of Brewer's book deals

<sup>1</sup> *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* ii 165.

<sup>2</sup> *Das sogenannte Athanasianische Glaubensbekenntnis ein Werk des heiligen Ambrosius in Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur- und Dogmengeschichte*, herausgegeben von Dr A. Ehrhard und Dr J. P. Kirsch, ix. Band, 2. Heft, Paderborn, 1909.

<sup>3</sup> Freiburg, 1905.