

# REWRITTEN THEOLOGY

*Aquinas After His Readers*

Mark D. Jordan





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# Challenges in Contemporary Theology

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*Rewritten Theology: Aquinas After His Readers* Mark D. Jordan

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Mark D. Jordan



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# Contents

Preface	vii
Abbreviations and Editions	xi
1 St Thomas and the Police	1
2 The Competition of Authoritative Languages	18
3 Imaginary Thomistic Sciences	33
4 Thomas's Alleged Aristotelianism <i>or</i> Aristotle among the Authorities	60
5 The Protreptic of <i>Against the Gentiles</i>	89
6 The <i>Summa of Theology</i> as Moral Formation	116
7 What the <i>Summa of Theology</i> Teaches	136
8 Philosophy in a <i>Summa of Theology</i>	154
9 Writing Secrets in a <i>Summa of Theology</i>	170
Conclusion: Writing Theology after Thomas – and His Readers	186
Index	195





# Preface

“A small error at the beginning is great in the end, according to the Philosopher in *On the Heavens and the Earth* 1.” Thomas Aquinas begins his first treatise with that allusion. In a gesture typical of hasty reading, the opinion is now attributed to him. Such gestures are repeated at much larger scale. Many a fat book on Thomas is undone by hasty presuppositions about reading that occur in (or before) its opening lines.

Thomas could certainly have added a happier corollary from his own experience: a small inspiration in the beginning counts for much later on. When I was a junior in college, I finished reading Bernard Lonergan’s *verbum* articles and promptly wrote to him for advice (as undergraduates are liable to do). Lonergan wrote back a remarkably patient letter in which he explained that I should always read Thomas actively and comparatively, putting my mental habits at stake. His single letter sparked what other teachers, nearer to hand, had been saying. From them, I heard that nothing happens in the action of Platonic dialogues by accident (Jacob Klein), that attempting to *write* philosophy or revelation must remain a dangerous risk (Leo Strauss), and that Aristotle’s texts, in whatever form we inherit them, present consummate acts of teaching (Robert Neidorf). In graduate school, I heard from Louis Mackey that elaborate charts pretending to arrange all of writings’s possibilities should be painted only in sand. These inspirations helped me to read Thomas again – and better. If my style of reading still strikes many Thomists as eccentric, I would plead my genealogy not as an excuse, but as an argument. We should continue to worry about how we read Thomas not only because he is grandly canonical, but also because his practice of writing theology challenges (or rebukes) many who would write theology today.

What follows is offered as a book and not merely a collection of chapters. Though first drafts of its oldest parts were written 20 years ago, and published

in earlier versions over the years, the newest parts were written in the last months. No page of the whole has escaped rewriting. The order of consideration has been changed and changed again.

Any book on Thomas must be selective in its topics, but especially in its attention to scholarly publications. Two decades back, when Clemens Vansteenkiste sacrificed himself to publishing an annotated bibliography of books and articles on Thomas, the yearly total ran well over a thousand pieces. Today the total must be higher – and the sum of originality somewhat less. *Recentiores non deteriores*, the philologist's rule holds: more recent copies of a text are not necessarily worse. The rule applies to Thomistic reading as well, but only with the explicit caution also applicable to codices: more recent studies often add nothing to earlier ones. Sometimes they subtract. The latest scholarship can be astonishingly innocent of earlier discoveries. So I try to sample various strata in the last century's Thomistic scholarship, without pretending to be comprehensive. Those who want a bibliographic compilation, or even a recap of the last decade's publications, should consult the databases.

It remains only to thank my colleague, Lewis Ayres, for originally proposing this venture to me; David Mellott for his help in preparing the manuscript; Blackwell Publishers for bearing with my lengthy revisions; and the many colleagues who have spent the time, in print or in person, to challenge my readings and to correct my errors. I also thank the editors or publishers of the following publications who allowed me to revise earlier versions of some of the material that follows in order to present it here:

- Chapter 2: "The Competition of Authoritative Languages and Aquinas's Theological Rhetoric." *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 4 (1994): 71–90.
- Chapter 3: "Medicine and Natural Philosophy in Aquinas." In *Thomas von Aquin*, ed. Albert Zimmermann, pp. 233–246. *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 19. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988. "De regno and the Place of Political Thinking in Thomas Aquinas." *Medioevo* 18 (1992): 151–168.
- Chapter 4: *The Alleged Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas*. Etienne Gilson Series 15. Toronto: PIMS, 1992. 41 pp. (published and paginated separately). "Thomas Aquinas' Disclaimers in the Aristotelian Commentaries." In *Philosophy and the God of Abraham: Essays in Memory of James A. Weisheipl, O.P.*, ed. R. James Long, pp. 99–112. Toronto: PIMS, 1991. "Aquinas Reading Aristotle's *Ethics*." In *Ad litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, eds. Kent Emery, Jr and Mark Jordan, pp. 229–249. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992.
- Chapter 5: "The Protreptic Structure of the *Contra Gentiles*." *The Thomist* 60 (1986): 173–209.

- Chapter 6: “Aquinas’s Middle Thoughts on Theology as Science.” In *Studies in Thomistic Theology*, ed. Paul Lockey, 91–111. Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1995 [1996]. “The Ideal of *Scientia moralis* and the Invention of the *Summa theologiae*.” In *Aquinas’s Moral Theory: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, eds. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump, pp. 79–97. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999. © Cornell University.
- Chapter 7: “The *Pars moralis* of the *Summa theologiae* as *Scientia* and as *Ars*.” In *Scientia und ars in Hoch- und Spätmittelalter*, ed. Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg and Andreas Speer, pp. 468–481. *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 22. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994.
- Chapter 8: “Theology and Philosophy.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. N. Kretzmann and E. Stump, pp. 232–251. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. © Cambridge University Press.
- Chapter 9: “Esotericism and *Accessus* in Thomas Aquinas.” *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992): 35–49.



# Abbreviations and Editions

There is no single best edition for the works of Thomas Aquinas. When finished, the Leonine *Opera omnia* (so called because commissioned and funded by Pope Leo XIII) will be a superb edition of the complete works. The Leonine is likely to remain unfinished for a long time – and in two senses. First, not all of Thomas’s works have been edited for the series. Second, those works published before 1950 need to be revised in varying degrees. The best *complete* edition now available is the one published by Roberto Busa as a supplement to his computer-generated lexical analysis and concordance, the *Index Thomisticus*. Busa’s edition contains the best available texts as of December 1971, including then unpublished Leonine versions.

Many libraries lack both the Leonine and the Busa editions of the *Opera omnia*. Certainly many scholars do. They consult Thomas in a ragtag collection of different editions, especially those published by the Italian house of Marietti throughout the twentieth century. The Marietti editions often reproduce texts taken from earlier printed versions of Thomas, the so-called “vulgate Thomas.” They add to these not only notes of varying quality, but also an immensely useful system of paragraph or section numbers. These “Marietti numbers” are widely used for quick citation, especially for Thomas’s expositions of Aristotle.

Faced with the proliferation of printings, I cite Thomas’s works by their medieval textual divisions. These do vary occasionally from edition to edition, but they are the closest thing to a uniform system of citation. The citations are condensed. I do not specify, for example, the kind of textual division. “1.2” will mean question 1 article 2 in a series of disputed questions, but Book 1 chapter 2 in an exposition of Aristotle. A reader familiar with Thomas will know what is meant. A reader not yet familiar with him will be able to sort things out by taking the text in hand. When I refer to these medieval textual divisions, I use the conventional English terms even

when these are a bit misleading. For example, in the *Summa of Theology* the opening arguments are conventionally called “objections” in English – as though Thomas’s position were already established. In fact, they are dialectical arguments on the way to a determination, and Thomas frequently incorporates parts of them into his own position. Since English-speakers stubbornly continue to call them “objections,” that is the word I use in order to be clear.

I give below my abbreviations for the works of Thomas that I cite. Each abbreviation is followed by the standard title as in Torrell’s catalogue.<sup>1</sup> I then mention the edition(s) in which I read the text. For the so-called *Contra gentiles*, where the medieval divisions units are long, I supplement them with the section numbers from the edition of Pera, Marc, and Caramello. Some might have wished that I did this as well for Thomas’s expositions of Aristotle. My only plea is that the most efficient way to search for texts in Thomas is at the magnificent website directed by Enrique Alarcón from the Universidad de Navarra. It may be found at [www.corpusthomicum.org](http://www.corpusthomicum.org).

### Collected Works

Leonine *Opera omnia*: *Opera omnia iussu impensaque Leonis XIII. P. M. edita*, edited by members of Leonine Commission (Rome: various imprints, 1882–).

Busa *Opera omnia*: *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia*, ed. Robert Busa (Stuttgart – Bad Canstatt: Fromman-Holzboog, 1980).

### Individual Works

<i>Catena aurea</i>	<i>Glossa continua super Evangelia (Catena aurea)</i> . Busa.
<i>Coll. Symb. Apost.</i>	<i>Collationes in Symbolum Apostolorum</i> . Busa.
<i>Compend. theol.</i>	<i>Compendium theologiae seu brevis compilatio theologiae ad fratrem Raynaldum</i> . Busa.
<i>Contra err. Graec.</i>	<i>Contra errores Graecorum</i> . Leonine vol. 40 (1967–1968).

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Pierre Torrell, “Bref catalogue des œuvres de saint Thomas,” *Initiation à saint Thomas d’Aquin: Sa personne et son œuvre* (Fribourg: Éds. Universitaires de Fribourg, and Paris: Éds. du Cerf, 1993), pp. 483–525.

- Contra gent.* *Summa contra gentiles. Liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium seu "Summa contra gentiles,"* eds. Ceslaus Pera, Petrus Marc, and Petrus Caramello (Turin: Marietti and Paris: Lethielleux, 1961–1967).
- Contra impugn.* *Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem.* Leonine vol. 41 (1970).
- De art. fid. et eccles. sacr.* *De articulis fidei et ecclesiae sacramentis.* Leonine vol. 42 (1979).
- De malo* *Quaestiones disputatae De malo.* Leonine vol. 23 (1982).
- De potentia* *Quaestiones disputatae De potentia.* Busa.
- De rat. fidei* *De rationibus fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum.* Leonine vol. 40 (1967–1968).
- De regno* *De regno ad regem Cypri.* Leonine vol. 42 (1979).
- De spir. creat.* *Quaestiones disputatae De spiritualibus creaturis.* Leonine vol. 42/2 (2000).
- De unitate int.* *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas.* Leonine vol. 43 (1976).
- De verit.* *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate.* Leonine vol. 22 (1970–1976).
- De virt. comm.* *Quaestiones disputatae De virtutibus in communi.* Busa.
- Expos. Iob* *Expositio super Iob ad litteram.* Leonine vol. 26 (1965).
- Expos. Isaia* *Expositio super Isaia ad litteram.* Leonine vol. 28 (1974).
- Expos. Pauli* *Expositio et Lectura super Epistolas Pauli Apostoli.* Busa.
- Expos. Pery* *Expositio libri Peryermenias.* Leonine vol. 1★/1 (1989).
- Expos. Post.* *Expositio libri Posteriorum.* Leonine vol. 1★/2 (1989).
- Lect. Ioan.* *Lectura super Ioannem.* Busa.
- Lect. Matt.* *Lectura super Matthaeum.* Busa.
- Lect. Sent.* *Lectura super libros Sententiarum.* Oxford, Lincoln College MS 95.
- Post. Psalmos* *Postilla super Psalmos.* Busa.
- Princ.* *Principium "Rigans montes de superioribus" et "Hic est liber mandatorum Dei."* Busa.
- Qq. de quolibet* *Quaestiones de quolibet.* Leonine vol. 25/1–2 (1996).

<i>Scriptum Sent.</i>	<i>Scriptum super libros Sententiarum</i> . . ., eds. Pierre Mandonnet and Maria Fabianus Moos (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929–1933).
<i>Sent. De anima</i>	<i>Sententia libri De anima</i> . Leonine vol. 45/1 (1984).
<i>Sent. De caelo</i>	<i>Sententia super librum De caelo et mundo</i> . Busa.
<i>Sent. De gener.</i>	<i>Sententia super libros De generatione et corruptione</i> . Busa.
<i>Sent. De sensu</i>	<i>Sententia libri De sensu et sensato</i> . Leonine vol. 45/2 (1985).
<i>Sent. Ethic.</i>	<i>Sententia libri Ethicorum</i> . Leonine vol. 47 (1969).
<i>Sent. Metaph.</i>	<i>Sententia super Metaphysicam</i> . Busa.
<i>Sent. Meteora</i>	<i>Sententia super Meteora</i> . Busa.
<i>Sent. Phys.</i>	<i>Sententia super Physicam</i> . Busa.
<i>Sent. Politic.</i>	<i>Sententia libri Politicorum</i> . Leonine vol. 48 (1971).
<i>Summa theol.</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i> . Leonine vols. 4–12 (1888–1906). I collate this with <i>S. Thomae de Aquino Ordinis Praedicatorum Summa Theologiae</i> , ed. Institut d'Études médiévales d'Ottawa, rev. edn. (Ottawa: Commissio Piana, 1953).
<i>Super De causis</i>	<i>Super librum De causis</i> . Busa.
<i>Super De div. nom.</i>	<i>Super librum Dionysii De divinis nominibus</i> . Busa.
<i>Super De Trin.</i>	<i>Super Boetium De Trinitate</i> . Leonine vol. 50 (1992).
<i>Super Ieremiam</i>	<i>Super Ieremiam</i> . Busa.
<i>Super Threnos</i>	<i>Super Threnos</i> . Busa.



## Chapter One

# St Thomas and the Police

If only we could read Thomas Aquinas without encountering some other of his readers – especially the police.

“The police” refers literally or figuratively. Figuratively we use the term to describe self-appointed guardians of social norms, as in “the decency police” or “the style police.” Literally we use it to refer to the forces that keep internal order – municipal or state officers, the army on civic duty, and every other monitor or enforcer with the power of approved violence. Here I have both meanings in mind, beginning with the literal. It is a remarkable fact about Thomas Aquinas’s texts that they have been quoted so regularly by the police of various regimes – by papal or local inquisitors, of course, but also in service of Franco’s victory in Spain or of the Argentine security forces during the 1970s and 1980s.

Here is a single case. In 1971, the Argentine writer Carlos Alberto Sacheri published and widely distributed his broadside, *The Clandestine Church*.<sup>1</sup> Sacheri had been a student of the eminent Thomist Charles de Koninck at Laval in Québec, but in this book his aim was not academic. He accused prominent priests associated with liberationist groups of direct links to Communist cells, and he called for action against them by the state and the Catholic church.<sup>2</sup> The book became famous – infamous – as justification for more brutal repression. Sacheri himself was assassinated in reprisal during December 1974. The year following his death, a series of his essays was published under the title, *The Natural Order*.<sup>3</sup> This collection has a

<sup>1</sup> Carlos Sacheri, *La Iglesia clandestina* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Cruzamante, 1970). The book is a collection of journalistic pieces originally published during 1969 (p. 7).

<sup>2</sup> Sacheri, *Iglesia clandestina*, pp. 93–98 (on the Communist connections of Ramondetti, Borzani, Paoli, and Viscovich) and pp. 136–140 (on “conclusions” and the call for action, noting the mentions of the “social order” and the final invocation of “Christ the King”).

<sup>3</sup> Sacheri, *El orden natural* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Promoción Social Argentina, 1975).

eulogy-prologue by the Archbishop of Paraná that opens with an epigram from Aquinas (p. v).<sup>4</sup> In the body of the posthumous book, Sacheri cites Aquinas to establish “the origin and function of authority” from the notion of the common good.<sup>5</sup> Thomas appears again to underwrite the critique of liberal democracy, to restrict any right of revolution, and to subordinate state to papacy.<sup>6</sup> In context, given Sacheri’s martyrdom, Aquinas must seem to endorse the increasingly violent reaction of the Argentine authorities, civil and religious, against real or imagined revolutionaries.

More often Thomas has been the darling of figurative “police,” of the forces of one or another orthodoxy who have wanted his authority. Thomas has been an authority within his own Dominican order since shortly after his death.<sup>7</sup> He has been favored at the papal court at least since his canonization. He has towered over the Catholic church of the Counter-Reformation from its creation at the Council of Trent until its attempted redirection at the second Vatican Council. If his authority waxed and waned during those centuries, if it varied by religious order and by academic field, Thomas was still the common doctor to such an extent that his opponents too had to speak something of his language. Hence the Thomas industry. Hence the sad fact that the largest readership for Thomas has most often been coerced. Thomism as policy hands Thomas to the figurative police.<sup>8</sup>

This official past confronts most readers of Thomas before they reach his texts. A lucky few may begin to read him without having heard about his authority – though I know of no edition of Thomas that doesn’t register it in some way. Many more readers will reach Thomas’s texts after they hear of his authority – and perhaps only under its impulse. However one arrives at these texts, the old fondness for them among the police, once discovered,

<sup>4</sup> The front matter also reproduces an earlier letter from the nunciature in Buenos Aires, which quotes in turn an approving letter from the Vatican’s Secretariat of State (p. viii), both significant to the book’s framing.

<sup>5</sup> Sacheri, *El orden natural*, parenthetical back reference on p. 154 to the chapter that begins on p. 149 with references to the exposition of Aristotle’s *Politics* and the *Summa theologiae*.

<sup>6</sup> Sacheri, *El orden natural*, pp. 178–179, 181–184, 185–186, respectively. The passage quoted from “De regime principum” 1.14 is in fact not by Thomas Aquinas. For the system of citing works by Aquinas, see “Abbreviations and Editions.”

<sup>7</sup> See most recently Elizabeth Lowe, *The Contested Theological Authority of Thomas Aquinas: The Controversies between Hervaeus Natalis and Durandus of St Pourçain* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> The word “police,” as Foucault insisted, is cognate with “policy.” Indeed, in eighteenth-century German *Polizeiwissenschaft* meant not the methods of a particular agency, but comprehensive state regulation. See Michel Foucault, course summary for “Security, Territory, and Population” [1976–1977], in Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), pp. 70–71.

may push a reader to pose sharp questions. If these texts are good teaching, how could they give rise to such a violent posterity? Is there something in them that aids or abets the police?

In this introduction, I consider responses to such sharp questions, but chiefly in order to make the questions sharper still. My timeline is odd. First I tell a story backward, from the present to the early modern period. Then I tell another story forward, from the death of Thomas to the early modern period. By that point you will have gathered that I am not interested in narrating a continuous Thomism. Rather the opposite: I break through continuous narratives to make room for the sharp questions about Thomas's authority. The questions do not fall neatly onto a timeline because they require a curious simultaneity, the simultaneity of a rhetorical structure and its remembered receptions. On the one hand, I suspect that what makes Thomas most attractive to contemporary police is not something *in* him, but rather the circumstances of his having already been abused for the purposes of coercion. On the other hand, I want to pursue the sharp question, whether something in Thomas might have solicited the attention of the police – or failed to prevent it. Behind both suspicion and provocation lies the confidence that Thomas's books lead us to think about theology and power.

For as long as possible, I will set aside another sort of narration as well: the chronicle of when Thomas's texts authorized particular acts of physical violence. It would be a grim task – and a long one – to list assaults committed after invoking Thomas. Of course, the list would not establish a causal relation of readings to crimes. As Sacheri's assassination shows, hatred of official Thomism can be used as easily as official Thomism itself to authorize killing. Leaving aside the chronicle of crimes, I ask how Thomas's texts have been made to support constructions of *textual* authority and whether his authorship can be blamed for them. Authorship, I say, thinking of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms as fictitious authors known through the operation of texts attributed to them. I am interested in Thomas Aquinas as the author of texts whose "intentions," if we want to retain that word, are discerned by looking to their rhetorical features. I am not interested in authorial psychology; I am interested in rhetorical force, in how the voices of theology become the summons of the police.

### The Fantasy of Order

Many contemporary readers testify to finding in Thomas absolute orderliness, irresistible control. This is the testimony, for example, of a youthful poem written by Josef Knecht, the protagonist of Hermann Hesse's novel,

*The Glass Bead Game*. The poem speaks wistfully of forgetting one's turbulent self in the tranquil "*Summa*-temple" of Thomas's *Against the Gentiles*.<sup>9</sup> Similar testimony is given, in less polished form, by other contemporary readers.<sup>10</sup> Thomas's writings appear as monumental discourses that subsume everything within a single "system" or "synthesis." Indeed, that familiar phrase, "the Thomistic synthesis," records this pattern or prescription for experience.<sup>11</sup> The experience is a fantasy. Thomistic synthesis or system is the fantastic wish for a precise resolution to every philosophical or theological question that can appear.

The fantasy draws energy from the nineteenth-century project of neo-Thomism promulgated (though not invented) by the papal encyclical *Aeterni patris* (1879), which endorsed Thomas as the comprehensive synthesizer:

Their teachings [i.e., of the patristic authors], like the scattered members of a body, Thomas gathered and joined, distributed in admirable order, and increased with such great additions, that he is rightly and deservedly held to be the unique bulwark of the Catholic faith . . . There is no part of philosophy that he did not treat at once acutely and solidly: he considered the laws of reasoning, God and incorporeal substances, man and other sensible things, human actions and their principles, so that there is lacking in him neither the abundant field of questions, nor the apt disposition of parts, nor the best way of proceeding, nor firmness of principles and strength of arguments, nor clarity and appropriateness of language, nor a certain facility in explaining abstruse things.<sup>12</sup>

Leo XIII even quotes Cardinal Cajetan to the effect that Thomas inherited in his one mind the most important thoughts of his predecessors. He is no simple synthesizer: he is the culmination of the history of reason.

<sup>9</sup> "Nach dem Lesen in der *Summa contra gentiles*," in Hermann Hesse, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, from the appendix "Josef Knechts Hinterlassene Schriften: Die Gedichte des Schülers und Studenten."

<sup>10</sup> For a recent example, see François Daguet, *Théologie du dessein divin chez Thomas d'Aquin: Finis omnium Ecclesia* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2003). By way of conclusion, Daguet praises Thomas's teaching on the divine "economy" for possessing "a very great coherence, a firm structure founded on perennial principles" (p. 515). He then links it to the teaching of Pope John Paul II.

<sup>11</sup> The phrase circulated widely enough to become a sort of token of Catholic identity – not least for satirists. In Nathanael West's *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933), a young woman in a bar attempts to ingratiate herself with a Catholic writer by saying, "Get me a drink and please continue. I'm very much interested in the new Thomistic synthesis." See West, *Novels and Other Writings*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (New York: Library of America, 1997), p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical letter *Aeterni patris* [August 4, 1879], *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, ed. Iosephus Pennachi and Victorius Piazzesi, vol. 12 (Rome: Typographia Polyglotta, 1894), 97–115, p. 108. There are no paragraph numbers in this edition, but the passage is found in no. 17 of the now standard numbering.

*Aeterni patris* avows a utopian wish to remedy the problems of the modern world by giving to philosophy an unassailable stability – so that philosophy could, in turn, shore up both civil culture and Christian theology. The wish bears many marks of nineteenth-century Catholic thinking, including a recoil from liberalism and a nostalgia for lost order. Still the Thomistic fantasy of *Aeterni patris* was not fabricated out of thin air. The encyclical invokes centuries of earlier appropriations of Thomas. Leo XIII and his advisers were convinced that they could stand atop a monumental Scholasticism: St Thomas as the sure foundation; then the rising edifice of the approved Thomistic commentators from early modernity on – Capreolus and Antoninus, Cajetan and Sylvestris, Victoria and his school at Salamanca, including Cano, Soto, Bañez; then the Jesuits, especially Suarez; but also the anti-Jesuit teams of Carmelites known as the Salmanticenses and the Complutenses. As Leo XIII imagines it, “the minds of all, of teachers as well as students, rested in wonderful concord under the teaching and the authority of the one Angelic Doctor.”<sup>13</sup> The fantasy of synthesis in *Aeterni patris* is a fantasy of progressive unanimity among commentators, of a monument built on and out of authoritative consensus.

The fantasy of concord among Thomists has consequences for Thomas. In his manual, *The Thomist Synthesis*, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange explains his method immediately after citing *Aeterni patris*: “The purpose of this work is to present an exposition of the Thomist synthesis based on the principles commonly received among the greatest commentators of St Thomas and often formulated by him.”<sup>14</sup> Note the order: the unanimous commentators first and only then the formulae of the saint himself. In order to create an illusion of Thomistic fixity, one has to suppose that it is possible to rewrite Thomas over and over again into new forms.<sup>15</sup> I mean “rewriting” literally. If every reading might be considered somehow a rewriting, there remains the much stronger rewriting that substitutes a new text for Thomas’s own: rewriting as replacing. To produce the illusion of Thomistic

<sup>13</sup> Leo XIII, *Aeterni patris*, p. 109 [no. 20]. Consider the long list of religious orders and schools, p. 109 [nos. 19–20].

<sup>14</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *La synthèse thomiste* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946), p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Not to say, by denying any number of dialectical complexities in his teaching. See, for example, Wayne J. Hankey, “Pope Leo’s Purposes and St Thomas’s Platonism,” in *S. Tommaso nella storia del pensiero: Atti dell’VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, vol. 8 and Studi Tomistici 17 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 39–52, and Hankey, “Making Theology Practical: Thomas Aquinas and the Nineteenth-Century Religious Revival,” *Dionysius* 9 (1985): 85–127. The most perceptive study in English of the speculative anxieties leading up to the promulgation of *Aeterni patris* remains Gerald A. McCool, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989).

unanimity, you must suppose that you can copy what is essential in Thomas from one form to another without any important loss: Thomas's essence transmitted without change through a hundred genres. By the time of *Aeterni patris*, any sense that there might be something wrong in claiming to reproduce Thomas by rewriting him could be dismissed by pointing to the long line of predecessors. The encyclical only calls for the familiar when it calls for displacing Thomas instead of reading what he wrote.

The claim of every monumental Thomism is that it is a faithful copy.<sup>16</sup> The fact of every monumental Thomism is that it rewrites Thomas while denying its rewriting, while claiming that the substitute is just as good as the original. Or perhaps even better. By contrast, I hold that rewriting Thomas erases a decisive feature of his texts, namely, their pedagogical structure. But even if I were to succumb to the project of strong rewriting, I could not agree that the generations of rewriting from 1450 to the present could be summed in a single history, as *Aeterni patris* wishes. If there might be successful rewriting of Thomas, the modern rewritings we actually inherit do not make a coherent narrative. It is not helpful to speak of a "Thomistic tradition" as if there were one "system" or "school" or "tradition" passed down through the last seven centuries.<sup>17</sup> There has always been fierce rivalry among claims on Thomas's authority. "Thomist," like "Christian," is a term that stakes a controversial claim, not one that records a neutral designation. Indeed, a principal Thomistic pastime has been casting doubt on the Thomism of one's rivals. And there have been so many rivals! In the decades since *Aeterni patris*, we can distinguish the Thomisms of the Angelicum,

<sup>16</sup> I mean here to echo Nietzsche's notion of "monumental history." See Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben," *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* 2, in his *Werke* 3.1, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1972), especially p. 254.

<sup>17</sup> In saying this, I am not sure whether or not I disagree with Alasdair MacIntyre in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopædia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990). On the one hand, MacIntyre will write that Thomas's texts were misread almost from the beginning (p. 135) or that the papal announcement of neo-Thomism could only "lead in a variety of alternative and conflicting directions" (p. 73). On the other hand, he will speak of "the tradition which Aquinas reconstituted" as the only site for accurate readings of the *Summa theol.* (p. 135) and regularly uses the analogy to craft to argue for a continuous "tradition" of Thomism (pp. 65, 128, and so on). MacIntyre does not specify the historical community that carries this tradition of Thomism, unless it is the "historical scholars of the [modern] Thomistic movement," identified as "Grabmann, Mandonnet, Gilson, Van Steenberghen, Weisheipl" (p. 77). The list is unhelpful, because the authors named have neither any strong institutional connections nor any deep agreement about the theological or philosophical implications of the historical reading of Thomas. Whatever MacIntyre's meaning, part of the work of this book is to reconstitute the category of tradition by introducing the notion of rhetorical inheritance or posterity (see especially the conclusion).

Louvain, Munich, Le Saulchoir, Toulouse, Salamanca, Laval, River Forest, St Louis, Notre Dame, Navarra, Utrecht, Cornell, and Oxford. Any narrative about a grand tradition of Thomism will be both a selective story and a tendentious one.<sup>18</sup>

Neo-Thomist interpretations have also been rather selective and tendentious with respect to Thomas's texts. They must be if they are to project a monumental Thomism. More importantly, they must be in order to construct Thomas as the sort of authority who can serve as foundation for a monument. Let me illustrate the principles of selection and the procedures of construction from some late medieval and early modern rewritings of Thomas's *Summa of Theology*. For the moment, I will assume what I can argue only later: the structure of the whole *Summa* is decisive for the work's pedagogy. I want then to notice that the structure of the *Summa* was one of the first things to be erased by its readers – I mean, its rewriters.

### Rewriting the *Summa*

It is not hard to show, from internal and circumstantial evidence, that Thomas wrote his *Summa of Theology* as an ideal of curricular reform for Dominican theology, that is, for the teaching of his own religious order, and by extension for other Christian priests or religious.<sup>19</sup> The chief accomplishment of the reform is to incorporate moral and pastoral topics within the pattern of the great Christian creeds. (You can begin to appreciate the challenge if you remember that the ancient creeds contain no moral clauses.) Thomas's reform is written into the very structure of the *Summa*, which carefully locates its moral teaching between a first Part that corresponds to the opening of the creeds and a third Part that follows those creeds from the

<sup>18</sup> Compare Leonard A. Kennedy, *A Catalogue of Thomists, 1270–1900* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies/University of St Thomas, 1987), p. 10: “The most difficult problem has been: who was a Thomist? There are no criteria universally agreed on. The criteria used in this Catalogue are fairly liberal, such as an indication in the title of a work (*ad mentem Divi Thomae*), or the nature of a work (e.g., a commentary on Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*), or a statement of alleged Thomism by an author himself or one of his historians, unless this is contradicted by other evidence.” The history of Thomism becomes a list of claims, genres, and rumors. Prouvost puts the underlying difficulty precisely when he writes that “almost all of the essential theses of Thomas were, in the course of history, either contested by or unknown to one or another ‘Thomist.’” See Géry Prouvost, *Thomas d'Aquin et les thomismes: Essai sur l'histoire des thomismes* (Paris: Éds. du Cerf, 1996), p. 9. He goes on to show the incoherence of criteria that invoke institutional geography or metaphysical doctrines, even after distinguishing between constructive and exegetical Thomisms (pp. 11–12).

<sup>19</sup> I will present the evidence at several points below, but especially in chapter 6.