



Introduction

This November 2023 issue of *New Blackfriars* is a special one marking the seventh centenary of the canonization of Thomas Aquinas, which took place at Avignon in July of 1323. It consists of ten invited articles which reflect on different aspects of Aquinas's theology and philosophy, and one article putting his canonization into a serious historical context.

Aquinas died in the Abbey of Fossanova in 1274. At the time of his death he was highly regarded within the Dominican Order. After 1274 some of his teachings were challenged in a number of quarters. Ideas associated with Aquinas were condemned in Paris and Oxford in 1277. Aquinas also became a target of attack from some Franciscan authors. Around 1279, for example, he was censured by William de la Mare (d.1290) in a text called *Correctorium Fratris Thomae* (*Corrective of Brother Thomas*). William's *Correctorium* was officially adopted by the Franciscans, and in 1282 Franciscan authorities ordered that Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* should only be available to their friars of 'reasonable intelligence' (*rationabiliter intelligentes*), and only together with William's comments on it.

Despite the suspicion of the Franciscans, from around 1279 prominent figures in the Dominican Order expressed serious support for Aquinas as a philosopher and theologian and encouraged their brethren to learn from him. Critics of Aquinas remained vocal in this period, and some were Dominicans, such as Durandus of Saint Pourçain (d. 1334). Yet by 1323 almost all Dominicans had made the teaching of Aquinas their own and considered it a privilege and an obligation, to study and defend it.

This Dominican support for Aquinas as an academic played a significant part in Aquinas coming to be declared to be a saint, and references to his scholarship feature in the official formal proceedings that led up to his canonization. Also worth noting is that the pope who canonized Aquinas was John XXII, who read and admired Aquinas's writings and who bought many copies of them. But Aquinas was not canonized for his theological and philosophical skills. The two inquiries leading to his canonization (one in Naples, the other in Fossanova) focused on his sanctity, not his scholarship (cf. Kenelm Foster OP, *The Life of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Biographical Documents* [Longmans: London, 1959], pp. 82-126). People in and around Fossanova started to venerate Aquinas as a saint right around the time of his death. Reports spread of miracles occurring due to his intercession, and the monks in whose

abbey he died spent until 1369 trying to continue to be the guardians of his physical remains, which they took to be holy relics.

The ceremonies devoted to Aquinas's canonization lasted several days and were attended by some distinguished people: one pope, many cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, a king and a queen (Robert of Naples and his wife), and representatives of religious orders. Immediately following the canonization, Robert decreed that the city of Avignon should enjoy a public holiday so as to celebrate it.

In the last paragraph of his *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1974) James Weisheipl writes: 'The canonization of Thomas was an event never to be forgotten by those who were in Avignon in the summer of 1323. It was a memorable occasion, not only for them, but for the whole Christian world. His light still shines in the chronicles of history and in the minds of those who read and understand his works in their historical and doctrinal context — but Thomas is not confined to the chambers of history; he is accessible to all generations who know how to read'. I hope that people reading this special issue of *New Blackfriars* might end up seeing the truth in what Weisheipl says in that last sentence. I should add that, in this issue, the articles appear in an alphabetical order corresponding to the surname of each author.

Brian Davies OP
Editor of New Blackfriars