



A Short History of Thomism

Romanus Cessario

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Since the first followers of Saint Thomas Aquinas took up the task of explaining and defending his writings, Thomists have influenced deeply the Western intellectual tradition. Together they form a school called Thomism that can claim an uninterrupted history since the end of the thirteenth century. Using carefully selected resources, Romanus Cessario has composed a short account of the history of the Thomist tradition as it manifests itself through the more than seven hundred years that have elapsed since the death of Saint Thomas. *A Short History of Thomism*, originally published in French as *Le Thomisme et les Thomistes*, supplies a need that has not been met in over a century, and is the first such comprehensive account written in English.

The author, who has worked in the field for more than thirty-five years, brings to his study an appreciation for the place that Saint Thomas Aquinas holds as a perennial teacher of Christian theology, and for the influence that the Common Doctor has exercised on all stripes of theology and philosophy. The book suggests suitable criteria for including and excluding authors from the catalogue of Thomists, and proceeds to identify the principal periods during which Thomism fared both well and less well. Appeal to broader historical contexts helps the reader locate Thomism within the flow of intellectual history as it unfolds in the West.

Representative figures in the history of Thomism are named and their literary compositions described in order to show the variety of ways that these authors have carried on the tradition. To enable the reader to learn the positions that are commonly identified with the Thomist school, the book includes an exposition of its major theological and philosophical themes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Romanus Cessario is Professor of Theology at Saint John's Seminary in Brighton, Massachusetts, and Associate Editor of *The Thomist*. He is the author or editor of numerous works including *Introduction to Moral Theology*, *On the Virtues*, *Christian Faith and the Theological Life*, and *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*.

PRAISE FOR THE BOOK:

"While this is a very brief history of Thomism, Cessario has the brevity of a scholar who has mastered a topic, and is nothing less than impressive in summarizing the figures and topics of a continuous tradition grappling with diverse questions. . . . The wide Thomism of Cessario is a very attractive account of how a tradition can work and retain unity over seven hundred years of sea-changes in science and politics. . . . The quality of this fine little book ensures that it plays a part not only in recounting the tradition but in continually creating it. . . ."R. J. Snell, *Christian Scholar's Review*

"A breathless overview of the influence of Thomas's work throughout history."?Commonweal

"A very lucid and well documented introduction to seven centuries of reading Thomas Aquinas."?Fergus Kerr, O.P., *New Blackfriars*

"A marked success and should be extremely useful to those just beginning to take an interest in exploring the career of Thomism after 1274."?Timothy B. Noone, *The Thomist*

"In no way does this survey of seven centuries fail to satisfy the reader who is looking for a brief overview of the tradition of those who think *ad mentem Sancti Thomae*. As Cessario's work does not aim to be exhaustive or definitive, so much more impressive is the fact that this brief volume manages to touch on over one hundred thinkers in or associated with the Thomistic tradition. Via his accessible discussion, Cessario is able to catalogue not only the names, dates and locations of Thomistic thinkers, but also, when available, their associations, rivalries, mentors, and bibliography. . . . A book that is well-worth examination for

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