

# JOHN PECKHAM, O.F.M., ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, VERSUS THE NEW ARISTOTELIANISM

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RECENT studies by two eminent medievalists, M. D. Knowles<sup>1</sup> and D. A. Callus, O.P.,<sup>2</sup> have dealt with the position of John Peckham, O.F.M., Archbishop of Canterbury, in his controversies with St. Thomas Aquinas and his disciples of the University of Oxford. The study of Dom Knowles does little more than re-state the views of P. Mandonnet, O.P., and that in spite of recent criticism of that writer's airy historical constructions.<sup>3</sup> The study of Fr. Callus is more thorough but does not take into account sufficiently the nature of the opposition encountered by Peckham from the Oxford Thomists. In the following pages I shall discuss the question from a purely historical point of view, leaving aside, in so far as possible, any judgment on the theological and philosophical issues involved.<sup>4</sup> No estimate of the character of the actors in this too, too human drama is possible if the purely historical problem is subordinated

<sup>1</sup> "Some Aspects of the Career of Archbishop Peckham" in *The English Historical Review*, lvii (1942), pp. 1-18, 178-201; *The Religious Orders in England*, Cambridge, 1950, pp. 224-232.

<sup>2</sup> *The Condemnation of St. Thomas at Oxford*, Oxford, 1946.

<sup>3</sup> P. Mandonnet, O.P., *Siger de Brabant et l'averroïsme latin au XIIIe siècle*, 2nd ed., in *Les Philosophes Belges*, vi-vii, Louvain, 1911-1908. Cf. F. Van Steenberghe, *Siger de Brabant d'après ses oeuvres inédites*, vol. ii, *Siger dans l'histoire de l'aristotélisme*, Louvain, 1942; E. Gilson, *Dante et la philosophie (Études de philosophie médiévale, xxviii)*, Paris, 1939; J. D'Albi, *Saint Bonaventure et les luttes doctrinales de 1267-1277*, Paris, Tamines, 1923; *Alexandri de Hales Summa Theologica*, vol. iv, *Prolegomena*, Quaracchi, 1948; T. Crowley, *Roger Bacon: The Problem of the Soul in his Philosophical Commentaries*, Louvain, Dublin, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> It may be remarked here that the main question at issue between Peckham and St. Thomas Aquinas—unity or plurality of forms and theological implications of both doctrines—has ceased to arouse scholastic passion. The problem can therefore be studied in its historical setting without fanning into flame the cold ashes of the past.

to considerations of *amour-propre* or scholastic prejudice. The problems raised by Peckham's letters must be treated and solved by the application of the simple principles of historical criticism.

The belief that the thirteenth century witnessed a struggle for supremacy between an 'Augustinian' and an 'Aristotelian' school of thought has pervaded writings on medieval philosophy since the introduction of the terms 'Augustinianism' and 'Aristotelianism' by Franz (later Cardinal) Ehrle, S.J., in 1889.<sup>1</sup> Conflict, culminating in the condemnations of 1270, 1277 and 1286 and in the embittered controversies to which these condemnations gave rise, certainly existed. But the tenets of the opposing parties were not such as are conveyed by the terms 'Augustinianism' and 'Aristotelianism'. Cardinal Ehrle was careful to point out that he meant much more by 'Augustinianism' than the authentic teaching of St. Augustine—so much more in fact that his choice of this particular term to designate what he had in mind is to be regretted. By 'Augustinianism' he meant what we may for convenience sake term the pre-Aristotelian phase of scholastic thought as represented by Alexander of Hales, William of Auvergne, Roland of Cremona and others. This older school did not remain aloof from the great Aristotelian revival of the thirteenth century; it continued to exist side by side with the new school of St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas. It assimilated the theorems of the Stagirite but more slowly, with greater caution, through better translations and purified from the influence of Arabic commentators. In spite of this, however, the new school had the advantage in that its assimilation of Aristotle was more unified and systematic and this was due to the surpassing genius of St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>2</sup> This view has

<sup>1</sup> F. Ehrle, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Scholastik, II, Der Augustinismus und der Aristotelismus in der Scholastik gegen Ende des 13 Jahrhunderts" in *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters*, Band 5 (1889), pp. 603-635; "John Peckham über den Kampf des Augustinismus und Aristotelismus in der zweiten Hälfte des 13 Jhs." in *Zeitschrift für katholischen Theologie*, 13 (1889), pp. 172-193.

<sup>2</sup> "Dieselbe löste sich viel langsamer von den Bänden, welche sie an den hl. Augustin fesselten, und nahm die Theoreme des Stagiriten viel bedächtiger in sich auf, wodurch sie allerdings den Vortheil erlangte, dass sie dessen Lehre in einer gereiftern, durch bessere Uebersetzungen geläutertern und von den

had to be profoundly modified in the course of time, and with the progress of medieval studies it seems as if it will have to undergo greater modification still.<sup>1</sup> To take but one example, Roger Bacon is generally classed as an 'Augustinian'. In my recent study of Bacon I was led to conclude that the influence of St. Augustine on Bacon was practically nil and that Bacon believed himself to be a faithful follower of Aristotle. Even the very theses which decided historians to number him among the 'Augustinians' Bacon considered to be the authentic teaching of the Stagirite.<sup>2</sup> If Bacon is opposed to St. Thomas, it is not as a disciple of St. Augustine to a disciple of Aristotle but as one interpreter of Aristotle to another. The same thing can be said for Kilwardby and Peckham. The terms 'Augustinianism' and 'Aristotelianism' convey, therefore, a wholly false impression of the tenets of the opposing parties. Furthermore, the Aristotelianism of the 'Augustinians' is far from pure; the influence of Arabic and Jewish commentators was responsible for the development of some of their fundamental doctrines.<sup>3</sup> It would not be accurate, on the other hand, to hold that the authority of St. Augustine was invoked in favour of these theses only as a ruse to combat St. Thomas.<sup>4</sup> These theses had their origin in the new literature which penetrated

Einflüssen der Arabischen Commentatoren gereinigtern Gestaltung erhielt. Doch hierfür besass die neue Schule den Vorzug, dass sich dieser Umbildungs-process in ihr durch die eine, überlegene Geisteskraft des Aquinaten einheitlicher und systematischer vollzog." F. Ehrle, *Der Augustinismus* . . . , p. 608.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. F. Van Steenberghen, *Siger de Brabant* . . . , ii, 718. What ridiculous confusion the use of these terms has created may be illustrated by the following passage: "In 1284 he (Peckham) undertook a rigid visitation of the University of Oxford. . . . His predecessor in the primacy, Robert Kilwardby, had condemned several 'errors' . . . Kilwardby had prohibited the teaching of Aristotle's works on physics and metaphysics . . . Peckham, however, was a militant Platonist and appealed to Augustine as the ultimate authority, using all his strength to oppose the advance of the Aristotelian flood" (*Archbishop Peckham as a Religious Educator*, by J. L. Peckham (*Yale Studies in Religion*, 7), Scottsdale (Penn.), 1934, pp. 44 f.).

<sup>2</sup> T. Crowley, *Roger Bacon* . . . , pp. 202 f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. De Wulf, *Histoire de la philosophie médiévale*, vol. ii, Louvain, 1936, pp. 354 f.

<sup>4</sup> This opinion has been expressed by M. De Wulf, "L'Augustinisme 'avicennisant'" in *Revue Néoscholastique de philosophie*, xxxiii (1931), pp. 32-33; *Histoire* . . . , ii, pp. 358-359.

directly into the faculties of arts and directly and indirectly into the schools of theology. In the schools of theology it was but natural that they should have become linked up with the predominantly Augustinian tradition of these schools and that support should have been sought for them in the works of St. Augustine.<sup>1</sup> In fact, I have found that for all but one of these theses the authority of both St. Augustine and Aristotle is invoked, and that long before 1270. The exception is the doctrine of plurality of forms, particularly as it applies to man. On that question the Augustinians were more Aristotelian than the Aristotelians.<sup>2</sup>

In the use of the term 'Aristotelianism' to designate the teaching of St. Thomas care must be taken to avoid exaggeration. In the first place, all the great scholastics were Christians and were careful not to incorporate the errors of the great pagan philosopher in their syntheses.<sup>3</sup> In the second place, St. Thomas was far from being a mere commentator; he constructed an original synthesis which profoundly modified the teaching of Aristotle and *this was felt even by his contemporaries*.<sup>4</sup> Cardinal Ehrle has stressed this point; the teaching of St. Thomas was new, a novelty. This was the opinion of friend and enemy alike of the new school. It is important to keep this in mind. The testimony of William of Tocco, the biographer of St. Thomas, stressed the novelty of the Saint's method: "Erat enim novos in sua lectione movens articulos, novum modum et clarum determinandi inveniens et novas reducens in determinationibus rationes, ut nemo qui ipsum audisset nova docere et novis rationibus dubia definire, dubitaret quod eum Deus novi luminis radiis illustraret, qui statim tam certi coepisset (esse) judicii, ut non dubitaret novas opiniones docere et scribere."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As an example of this tendency the reader may be referred to the study of Thomas of York by D. E. Sharp, *Franciscan Philosophy at Oxford in the Thirteenth Century*, Oxford, 1930, pp. 53-112.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. T. Crowley, *Roger Bacon . . .*, pp. 134-136.

<sup>3</sup> It has been asserted that in his admiration for Avicenna Roger Bacon taught the necessity of creation. I have dealt with this in my work *Roger Bacon . . .*, p. 206, n. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. F. Van Steenberghen, *Siger de Brabant . . .*, II, pp. 481 f.

<sup>5</sup> F. Ehrle, *Der Augustinismus . . .*, pp. 608 f.; M. De Wulf, *Histoire . . .*, ii, 179.

A third school of thought, also Aristotelian but frankly heterodox, appeared in the second half of the thirteenth century. This tendency has been called Latin Averroism. Again, the denomination is misleading. The only specifically Averroistic thesis defended by Siger of Brabant, and that at one period of his career, was that of unity of the possible intellect or passive reason.<sup>1</sup>

In the second half of the thirteenth century we find therefore three main currents of thought all claiming the patronage of Aristotle. One of these was openly heretical. Another so-called Augustinian current claimed to represent orthodoxy and tradition. The third current, Thomism, proclaimed its orthodoxy but had its claim treated with suspicion and hostility. How were the forces divided in the principal centres of learning? At Paris, the hub of the intellectual world in the thirteenth century, 'Augustinianism' was firmly entrenched in the faculty of theology, certainly up to the year 1277. Admirers of St. Thomas were principally found among those teaching in the faculty of arts.<sup>2</sup> Herein lay a danger to the new school, as it was in the faculty of arts that the heterodox current had its protagonists.<sup>3</sup> Even within the Dominican Order Thomism had, and continued to have to the end of the thirteenth century and even to the beginning of the fourteenth century, opponents. But the opposition to Thomism was strongest at Oxford. There 'Augustinianism' held sway not only in the faculty of theology but also in the faculty of arts and opposition to Thomism was only to be expected.<sup>4</sup> At Rome, too, as has been shown by A. Callebaut, the Augustinians were in the ascendant up to the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>5</sup> The intellectual climate was, consequently, little favourable to the new movement initiated by St. Thomas. His substitution of novel doctrines for those already received and consecrated in the schools of theology

<sup>1</sup> Cf. F. Van Steenberghen, *Siger de Brabant* . . . , ii, 490-497, 660-662.

<sup>2</sup> P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant* . . . , p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> F. Van Steenberghen, *Siger de Brabant* . . . , pp. 490-497.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. T. Crowley, *Roger Bacon* . . . , pp. 134, 151.

<sup>5</sup> A. Callebaut, "Jean Pecham, O.F.M. et L'Augustinisme. Aperçus Historiques (1263-1285)" in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, xviii (1925), pp. 441-472.

naturally aroused suspicion and hostility. The simultaneous growth of a heterodox movement that was subversive of Christianity did not help to clarify the issue nor make for calm and deliberate judgment.

The first indication we have of official opposition to the teaching of St. Thomas is contained in one of Peckham's letters.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine at stake was that of unity of form. In the presence of the Bishop of Paris and masters of theology he was taken to task even by his own confreres until he submitted *all his opinions which might need correction* to the judgment of the masters. According to Roger Marston, who was present at the séance, the Thomist opinion on unity of form was condemned as contrary to the assertions and doctrines of the Fathers, and particularly of St. Augustine and St. Anselm.<sup>2</sup>

It is commonly held that two doctrines of St. Thomas came up for discussion in connection with a batch of heretical propositions condemned in 1270. This is far from being established; it is quite certain that at least one of the two doctrines in question bears no relation to the teaching of St. Thomas.<sup>3</sup> On 7th March, 1277, a series of 219 propositions which were being taught in the faculty of arts at Paris were condemned by Stephen Tempier, Bishop of Paris. Nine of these propositions were common to St. Thomas and to the masters of the faculty of arts.<sup>4</sup> On 18th March of that same year, Robert Kilwardby, O.P., Archbishop of Canterbury, condemned a series of propositions *In Grammaticalibus, In Logicalibus, In Naturalibus*. Of the

<sup>1</sup> *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckham Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, ed. C. T. Martin, iii, London, 1885 (RS), DCXXV, p. 871, DCXXII, p. 866.

<sup>2</sup> M. De Wulf, *Histoire . . .*, p. 256.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. D. A. Callus, *The Condemnation of St. Thomas . . .*, pp. 11-12. Fr. Callus, following P. Mandonnet, sees in the two theses referred to 'the two fundamental Thomist theses of the immateriality of spiritual substances and the Unity of Form, under the aspect of one of its theological implications'. But F. Van Steenberghen (*Siger de Brabant . . .*, p. 722) points out that one of these theses had nothing at all to do with the teaching of St. Thomas and that the other probably concerned a more radical position than that adopted by St. Thomas. The two propositions are quoted by Fr. Callus, *op. cit.*, p. 12, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. H. Denifle and A. Chatelain, vol. i, Paris, 1889, no. 473, pp. 543-555; F. Van Steenberghen, *Siger de Brabant . . .*, ii, 728 f.

propositions condemned *In Naturalibus* more than half affected the teaching of St. Thomas.<sup>1</sup>

There is this difference between the action of Stephen Tempier and that taken by Robert Kilwardby. The former was supported in his action by doctors of sacred scripture and other prudent men, the latter acted with the consent of all the masters of the University, regent and non-regent.<sup>2</sup> It is of little avail to explain or, worse still, to explain away the opposition of Kilwardby to the teaching of St. Thomas. What is significant is the complete lack of support for the teaching of St. Thomas among the masters at Oxford in 1277. Kilwardby stresses, in his reply to Peter of Conflans, that he was supported not only by theologians but by philosophers as well: "*Solus non fui in ista prohibitionem, immo, ut scripsistis, omnium magistrorum Oxoniae assensus accessit et etiam multorum magis provectorum, quam sim ego, theologorum et philosophorum suasio compulit ad hoc ipsum*".<sup>3</sup>

It is important, too, to remark that Kilwardby does not rely solely on the authority of St. Augustine to provide a refutation of the opinions of St. Thomas; on the contrary, he relies mainly on Aristotle. It is quite certain that Kilwardby opposed St. Thomas not as an 'Augustinian' opposing an 'Aristotelian' but as a Christian philosopher opposing what he considered doctrine savouring of heresy.

If we are to believe P. Mandonnet and Dom Knowles this action of Kilwardby brought about his removal from the See of Canterbury.<sup>4</sup> *Promoveatur ut removeatur!* The manoeuvre is not unknown in ecclesiastical diplomacy but it certainly does not apply in Kilwardby's case. Pope John XXI died on 20th May, 1277, and his successor, Nicholas III, was elected on 25th November of the same year. On 12th March, 1278, the new Pope created nine cardinals including two Dominicans and two Franciscans—all four representatives of the 'Augustinian'

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, i, no. 474, pp. 558-559.

<sup>2</sup> *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, i, no. 474, p. 558.

<sup>3</sup> This letter has been edited by F. Ehrle, *Der Augustinismus . . .*, pp. 614-632. The passage quoted above occurs on p. 614.

<sup>4</sup> P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant . . .*, i, 252 f. The opinion of P. Mandonnet is accepted by Dom Knowles, *The Religious Orders . . .*, p. 229.

school.<sup>1</sup> At about the same time or, perhaps, a little earlier, John Peckham was appointed *lector palatii* in the Roman Curia.<sup>2</sup> On 28th January, 1279, Peckham was appointed to the See of Canterbury and his confrere, Matthew of Aquasparta, a disciple of St. Bonaventure, became *lector palatii* in his place. Kilwardby, therefore, is not likely to have suffered because of his anti-Thomist attitude. Besides, if the Thomists were in any way responsible for Kilwardby's removal from Canterbury they assuredly showed little *savoir faire* since he would be a much more redoubtable enemy at Rome than at Oxford. It may be asked, too, if they were influential enough to have Kilwardby removed from Canterbury, why did they not succeed in preventing the appointment of Peckham whose teaching was well known at Rome, at Paris and at Oxford?

The action of Kilwardby in prohibiting the teaching of certain theses of St. Thomas, in particular that of unity of form, was continued by Peckham. But the circumstances had changed in one important respect. In 1278, at the general chapter held at Milan, the Dominicans decreed that an inquiry should be instituted without delay into the conduct of those Dominicans in England who had spoken adversely of the writings of Thomas Aquinas, and the visitors charged with the inquiry were given full power to punish, exile and deprive of office those who had so acted.<sup>3</sup> In 1279, the general chapter assembled at Paris decreed that all those who spoke or wrote irreverently or in unbecoming fashion of St. Thomas or his writings should be severely punished.<sup>4</sup> As the result of these decrees, the situation during Peckham's tenure of office was a much more difficult one for all concerned. In fact the story is rather a tragic one.

When we come to examine the scope, the nature and the result of Peckham's intervention in these scholastic debates, our only documents are a series of letters, some written *motu proprio*, some provoked by the attacks of which he, in his person,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Callebaut, *Jean Peckham . . .*, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. G. Little, "The Franciscan School at Oxford". *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, xix (1926), pp. 852 f.; A. Callebaut, *Jean Peckham . . .*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> For the text see A. Callebaut, *Jean Peckham . . .*, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> A. Callebaut, *Jean Peckham . . .*, p. 26, n. 4.



in his Order or in his Office, was the object. In considering the second type of letter an attempt must be made to determine the nature and tone of these attacks; the letters cannot be interpreted apart from the historical context in which they were composed. It appears to me that neither Dom Knowles nor Fr. Callus have paid sufficient attention to this aspect of the problem, with the result that they do not present a complete and unbiased account of Peckham's action. In November 1284, Peckham, in the course of his canonical visitation, visited the University of Oxford and renewed Kilwardby's condemnation, making special reference to the doctrine of unity of form.<sup>1</sup> Several questions arise in connection with this act of Peckham. In the first place, was his visitation of the University a routine affair or did Peckham, as Dom Knowles suggests, act with special design? In the second place, did Peckham make known beforehand that while at Oxford he would proceed against supporters of the doctrine of unity of form?<sup>2</sup> There is no reason to believe that Peckham's visit was other than routine. As early as 16th July, 1284, he had announced his intention to postpone his metropolitanical visitation of the diocese of Lincoln until the day after the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross; this he did to accommodate both clergy and people.<sup>3</sup> In his visit to Oxford, consequently, there is no sign of intemperate haste, no indication that Peckham was haunted by the spectre of unity of form. It is but natural to infer that a certain agitation would be caused among the masters of the University, particularly among those who disregarded Kilwardby's condemnation and were familiar with Peckham's views, which had been openly professed for many years at Oxford, at Paris and at Rome.<sup>4</sup> In addition, feeling at Oxford must have been against the young and ardent Thomist school. But seven or eight years before, all the masters, regent and non-regent, had concurred in the condemnation of the Thomist teaching. There is nothing to show that the attitude of masters not in the Dominican Order

<sup>1</sup> *Registrum Epistolarum* . . . , ed. C. T. Martin, iii, DCVIII, pp. 840-843.

<sup>2</sup> M. D. Knowles, *Some Aspects* . . . , p. 187; *The Religious Orders* . . . , p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> *Registrum Epistolarum* . . . , iii, DLXXVI, pp. 788-789.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, DCXLV, p. 900.

had radically changed in the meanwhile. The masters who were hostile to the teaching of Thomas Aquinas and who, in good faith, genuinely believed it to be hostile to the Catholic Faith, would have appealed to Peckham to take the necessary steps to prevent the spreading of false doctrine. In the instance, Peckham's silence would have been as eloquent as the pronouncement he actually made. No more than this is required to explain the visit of the Dominican Provincial, William of Hothum, to Sonning on 22nd October, 1284. In the course of an interview, Peckham informed him that, on the occasion of his visit to Oxford, he intended to renew Kilwardby's condemnation of Thomist teaching on unity of form. Are we to infer from this that Peckham's action at Oxford, 'was not due to any information brought to his notice in the course of his visitation'?<sup>1</sup> To do so would be to over-simplify the question. It is quite improbable that the Oxford masters who had anti-Thomist leanings and who had concurred in Kilwardby's action had not already made representations in the proper quarter. In fact Peckham had been informed that the 'errors' condemned by Kilwardby had again been resuscitated. Roger Marston, Peckham's pupil, was regent in the Franciscan school between 1280 and 1284,<sup>2</sup> and Fr. Callus has recalled Marston's 'impetuous invectives' against Thomas Aquinas.<sup>3</sup> It is unlikely then that Peckham was not perfectly well informed on the point of issue because of information received. In the course of the interview at Sonning, Dom Knowles informs us that Peckham 'asserted somewhat disingenuously, that he was not going to Oxford to attack the Preachers or their opinions, but merely to reiterate some decrees of his predecessor affecting the faculty of arts'.<sup>4</sup> We are not told what purpose this disingenuousness could serve, nor are we told whom Peckham was trying to deceive. In fact, there is no disingenuousness in Peckham's statement. He informed Hothum that he intended in no way to abuse the

<sup>1</sup> *Registrum Epistolarum* . . . , iii, DCXXII, p. 865; M. D. Knowles, *Some Aspects* . . . , p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. G. Little and F. Pelster, *Oxford Theology and Theologians (1282-1302)*, Oxford, 1934, pp. 94-95.

<sup>3</sup> D. A. Callus, *The Condemnation* . . . , pp. 32-33.

<sup>4</sup> M. D. Knowles, *Some Aspects* . . . , p. 187.

Dominican Order or its opinions *pro eo quod sunt ordinis*<sup>1</sup> but for other reasons. He was actuated not by animosity towards the Dominicans but by love of what he conceived to be the Catholic truth. Before reaching Oxford, Dom Knowles asserts, Peckham "took care to enlist the support of the diocesan, the Bishop of Lincoln".<sup>2</sup> But, it may be asked, did Peckham need to enlist the support of the Bishop? Was the Bishop of Lincoln indifferent to what was being taught at Oxford? We know that he was one of the Bishops present at the Council held in London on 30th April, 1286, at which the opinions of the Thomists were condemned.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps he was the one who informed Peckham in the first instance that the thesis of unity of form was again being taught at Oxford. There is no reason to insinuate that Peckham was the originator and prime mover in a campaign to have the Thomist thesis condemned. To dissociate Peckham's action from its immediate and mediate historical context can only lead to misunderstanding and misrepresentation. In one only of the series of letters dealing with this episode do we find the 'emphatic' language which Fr. Callus so strongly resents.<sup>4</sup> Whether, even in the letter to which I refer, the language is 'unrestrained and undignified' is a matter of personal appreciation. In the Middle Ages authors more frequently resorted to biblical metaphor in the composition of their epistles than we do in this twentieth century, and those familiar with medieval documents will not be shocked at Peckham's vocabulary. The provocation was indeed great. Apart from the letter to which I refer, the force of the seventh proposition condemned by the Council of London can scarcely be understood. This proposition reads: *quod qui vult ista docere non tenetur in talibus fidem adhibere auctoritati papae, vel Gregorii vel Augustini et similium, aut cuiuscunque magistri; sed tantum auctoritati Bibliae, et necessariae rationi.*<sup>5</sup> Dom

<sup>1</sup> *Registrum Epistolarum* . . . , iii, DCXXII, p. 865.

<sup>2</sup> M. D. Knowles, *Some Aspects* . . . , p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> *Registrum Epistolarum* . . . , iii, DCLXI, p. 921.

<sup>4</sup> This letter, one of the most abstruse in the collection, is essential to an understanding of Peckham's action. *Registrum Epistolarum* . . . , iii, DCXLV, pp. 896-902.

<sup>5</sup> *Registrum Epistolarum* . . . , iii, DCLXI, p. 923.

Knowles is of the opinion that this proposition 'can scarcely have been held in that form by Knapwell'.<sup>1</sup> But Peckham's letter of 1st June, 1285, addressed to the Bishop of Lincoln, reveals the possible source of this error as a *maledicta pagina et infame folium* circulated by a Dominican—one who had no small opinion of himself—*non modicus suo sensu*. The description is not exaggerated: the writer compared himself to the apostle Paul withstanding Peter—*Paulo se Apostolo comparavit, Petrum deficientem humanitus arguentum*. If the writer of this pamphlet was really Knapwell, the sentence of excommunication passed on him by the Council of London need cause no surprise, for the pamphlet, of which Peckham's letter gives us some idea, contained statements that no ecclesiastical authority could tolerate. Fr. Callus assures us that the 'Dominicans stood for the noble ideal of greater freedom of thought and a more complete intellectual emancipation'.<sup>2</sup> This may well be; but one of them at least carried the campaign too far. Respect for properly constituted ecclesiastical authority imposes obligations which are sometimes trying and we can sympathise with victims of harsh or ill-considered action. But rebellion is scarcely the weapon with which to vindicate right in matters of ecclesiastical discipline.

It is to be noted how Peckham contrasts the attitude of the *humilis doctor*, Thomas Aquinas, of whom he never speaks in an unbecoming manner (unlike some Dominicans, as we may infer from the decrees of the general chapters of 1278 and 1279), with that of his disciples at Oxford. Perhaps the disciples were not worthy of the master. It is to be noted, too, with what care expressions occurring in Peckham's letters should be interpreted. Considering the circumstances under which these letters were written and the nature of the campaign being carried on at Oxford, too great importance should not be attached to those passages in which Peckham appeals to the authority of St. Augustine. I am inclined to consider them rather in the light of a defence of the authority of St. Augustine than as a manoeuvre to discredit his opponents. To consider three passages from these letters as a kind of manifesto of medieval Augustinianism

<sup>1</sup> Some Aspects . . . , p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *The Condemnation* . . . , p. 20.

is to ignore the nature of the documents and to disregard their historical context.<sup>1</sup> Peckham is not making charges; he is answering them. He shows no hostility to Aristotle; on the contrary, Aristotle is for him *clarissimus philosophus*. Peckham combats the philosophy of Aquinas by arguments drawn from Aristotle as well as from St. Augustine. His identification of the active intellect (*intellectus agens*) with God, a doctrine which some consider the hall-mark of medieval 'Augustinianism', Peckham confirms by an appeal to Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> A struggle (*Kampf, lutte*) against Aristotle is one campaign in which Peckham took no part.

I have previously referred to the tragic element in the situation which had arisen between Peckham and the Oxford Dominicans. If Kilwardby and Peckham were animated by motives of pride or personal animosity, their action should be severely judged. There are no grounds, however, for suggesting, as P. Mandonnet and Dom Knowles do, that Kilwardby feared loss of popularity or of prestige. Such a motive would not have merited for him the everlasting blessing that he thought he deserved: *Et reputo me pro facto meo benedictionem sempiternam meruisse*.<sup>3</sup> Few will question the good faith of either Kilwardby or Peckham and, granting *bona fides*, few, I believe, will be surprised that they condemned what they considered contrary to the Catholic faith.<sup>4</sup> The action of the Council of London was, however, too drastic and betrays a lack of balanced judgment in condemning *as heretical* the doctrine of unity of form. Was

<sup>1</sup> This is the procedure adopted in the article "Augustinisme" in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, i, 2e partie, col. 2508.

<sup>2</sup> "Intellectus siquidem agens, de quo Philosophus loquitur, non est usquequaque pars animae, sed Deus est, sicut credo. . . . Ipse enim solus est, cui conveniunt omnes proprietates illae nobiles, de quibus loquitur Philosophus. Quia est immixtus, impassibilis, et semper omnia intelligens, cuius substantia est sua actio. . . ." (*Iohannis Pechami Questiones tractantes de anima*, ed. H. Spettmann: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, xix, 5-6, Münster, i. W., 1918, p. 73).

<sup>3</sup> F. Ehrle, *Der Augustinismus* . . . , p. 632, l. 27 f.

<sup>4</sup> Of Kilwardby's action Fr. Callus writes: "The good faith and sincerity of Kilwardby are beyond doubt. His deep conviction of the opinions he upheld, his loyalty to what he considered to be the truth is evident in each line of his writings" (*The Condemnation* . . . , p. 16). The tribute can, of course, be extended to Peckham.

Rome unaware of this act? Peckham's relations with certain cardinals of the Rome curia seem to me to render this improbable. Whatever the answer to this question, it remains that Peckham's final action in the drama was too severe and, as Fr. Callus has pointed out, was so judged by his contemporaries.<sup>1</sup>

Dom Knowles seems to think that Peckham's reputation for sanctity was undeserved. Does any historian need to be reminded that even in religious Orders (should I write 'especially' in religious Orders?) reputations for sanctity are not easily acquired. To discuss whether this reputation was merited or not in Peckham's case would be beyond the scope of the present article. Judgment on Peckham's personal sanctity of life is a matter which could quite prudently have been left to his contemporaries. But in discussing Peckham's relations with Thomas Aquinas there is one point which should not be overlooked, and it is this. In a controversy which was often bitter and in which the opinions of Thomas and of Peckham and his Order clashed; in a controversy in which Peckham's personal character was defamed by his adversaries, and, lastly, in a controversy in which Peckham represented might if not right, not one word escapes Peckham which does not redound to the personal glory of Thomas Aquinas. No more effective refutation of the legendary John of Pisa (!) of Bartholomew of Capua could be desired.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Condemnation* . . . , p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant* . . . , ii, 98-103; J. D'Albi, *Saint Bonaventure* . . . , pp. 109-138; A. Callebaut, *Jean Peckham* . . . , pp. 443-451.