

Dating the *De Unione*

The treatments given in the *Disputed Questions Concerning the Nature of the Word Incarnate* are fragmentary and do not parallel the categories in relevant discussions in other works very closely (esp. *De Unione* art. 1). This is partly a result of the fact that article 1 of this work runs together issues which Aquinas is careful to treat separately elsewhere. The problem posed in D.Q. Inc. a. 1, is "Whether this Union was brought about in the person or in the nature?" Elsewhere Aquinas devotes an article to the nature and the person separately (E.g. *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 2 aa. 1-2). Further, Aquinas' discussion in this article focuses more explicitly on the various Christological heresies and their condemnations than the other works. The summary nature of the discussion, its tendency to run together issues that are treated separately elsewhere and its relatively poor organization lead me to believe that the *Disputed Question* may well be an early work. Fr. Torrell, on the basis of the as yet unpublished findings of the Leonine Commission concerning the ancient catalogues, tells us that its authenticity can no longer be questioned. He dates it as a late work (April or May, 1272) due to the "connection" between the discussions of the unity of Christ's *esse* in a. 4 and S.T., III, q. 17, a. 2. In light of this relation Torrell says, "it is highly implausible that Thomas would have inserted this dispute in his teaching program, outside of any link with works underway or foreseen for the immediate future." Consequently, he sees it as almost contemporaneous with the beginning of the *Tertia Pars*.

The problem with this rationale is that it seems unlikely that St. Thomas would change his, elsewhere firm, position that Christ has one *esse* in writing a preparatory work for the *Summa* only to revert to his original position in that work itself. Further, Fr. Torrell's dates D.Q. Inc. only in terms of article 4, but as I have suggested above article one is much less developed than the parallel texts in the *Summa* (or even those in *III Sent.* d. 6 for that matter). Further, article 3 (which precedes the central article on Christ's *esse*) about whether Christ can be called one in the neuter has no direct parallel in the *Summa Theologiae*. In the *Summa* the article previous to that on Christ's *esse* asks whether Christ is one. While the subjects dealt with are similar the approach and structure of these articles seem somewhat different. This seems unusual if it were in fact preparatory to that work as Fr. Torrell argues.

Reading the D.Q. Inc. as an early work mitigates these concerns, notably the one concerning Christ's *esse*, as it is more believable that it was written at a stage where his views were not yet fixed than to claim that he wavered on the issue (i.e. of Christ's *esse*) during, or immediately prior to, the writing of the *Summa*. This view also fits with the fact that other articles of the work show themselves to be less developed than the parallel discussions in the *Summa*. Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Volume I The Person and His Work*, Tr. Robert Royal, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 206 and 336-337. Of course, until the complete findings of the Leonine Commission are made public any conclusions drawn here can only be considered provisional.

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