1. Introduction

When in 1282 the capitulum generale of the Franciscan order instructed all its members to copy Thomas Aquinas’s works only together with the annotations of William de la Mare, not in the margins of the manuscript but on separate sheets, this decision surely gave credit to a reputed master of theology.¹ A few years earlier, this master had collected a series of critical remarks on several “sentences” held by Thomas Aquinas, mainly in his Summa theologiae. These remarks, which became known as the Correctorium fratris Thomae, provoked several counter-correctoria by Dominican and even secular defenders of Thomas and his doctrines. These rejoinders can be considered the roots of an early version of Thomism, as Maarten Hoenen recently emphasized.² Thomas was a highly reputed master when William produced his criticism of some of his doctrines. This high reputation can be seen in the use that William’s own commentary on the Sentences made of Thomas’s commentary on the same work; furthermore, the directive that the general chapter at Straßburg issued demonstrates the importance accorded to Thomas’s work.

Neither medieval life nor its philosophy or theology was ever without controversies. From the beginning of the reception of Aristotle’s philosophy, there were quarrels over the extent to which credit had to be given to this philosophy. There were those who, like Albert and Thomas, attempted to accept the challenge to the scientific character of theology that stemmed from the constraints on scientific knowledge formulated in Aristotle’s work. In the eyes of these theologians, there was a theory of science to which theology needed to adhere. There was, however, another line of theological thought that remained closer to the Augustinian and patristic tradition, with its preference

² Personal remarks to the author.
for Platonic principles. For the advocates of this approach, the task of theology was to promote faith and to pursue a good life as well as the perfection of the human soul, rather than scientific knowledge. Aristotle was well known to both parties, but there were differences in the importance attributed to certain themes and goals. Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure are the most prominent representatives of this second current of thought; we can point to John Peckham and Henry of Ghent as further examples, among many others. Within this line of theological inquiry William de la Mare occupies a prominent position, precisely because he was the one to throw these differences into sharp relief with his *Correctorium fratris Thomae*.

Nevertheless, William de la Mare cannot really be considered to have been hostile to Thomas’s theology from the beginning; indeed, I think that even his *Correctorium* is not truly hostile to Thomas, although it sometimes appears too harsh in its criticism. This criticism has to do with fundamentally different philosophical attitudes, even in the very interpretation of Aristotle’s philosophy. Furthermore, we have to take into account the fact that, between the time of William’s lectures on the Sentences and the redaction of the Correctorium, the condemnation of 1277 had occurred. This condemnation placed some of Thomas’s sentences in the vicinity of condemned theses, even if it was not in fact Thomas himself who was targeted by the condemnations. In addition, the Correctorium was obviously meant as a guide for those Franciscan friars who wanted to read Aquinas’s writings, which had become more problematic after the Parisian condemnations. In this introduction to William’s commentary on Peter Lombard, I will discuss some of the main differences between William’s and Aquinas’s respective approaches.

2. Life

As it is the case with many medieval figures, we do not know very much about the life of William de la Mare. Indeed, whereas for a good number of important personalities we can ascertain at least the date of their death, this is not so with William. There are only three dates that can be considered somewhat certain: the approximate date at which he composed his first version of the *Correctorium fratris Thomae*, namely, shortly after the condemnations of 1277, probably in the year 1278; the fact that in 1282 he must have been well known as a theologian among