Four Chapters on Philosophical Errors from the Rudimentum Doctrinae of Gilbert of Tournai, O. Min. (died 1284)

SERVUS GIEBEN, O.F.M. Cap.

Introduction

It was Ephrem Longpré who, first of all, called attention to some chapters occurring in the Rudimentum doctrinae of Gilbert of Tournai, that by reason of their contents and their historical setting might prove interesting enough to be published. They deal with philosophical errors and are written at Paris, between 1259-1262. This is more than enough to excite one's curiosity. For, after the penetrating studies of F. Van Steenberghen and others, it is sufficiently clear that the years 1260-1265 are particularly important in the history of the mediaeval philosophical movement. They give rise to and expand those perilous doctrines that in 1267 would rouse the violent reaction of St. Bonaventure and on 7 March 1277 would solemnly be condemned. Since 1257 St. Bonaventure had finished teaching, Albert the Great was in Germany, St. Thomas reached Italy in 1259; so, there was no personality of the first rank at Paris in these years.


2 BAUDRY, op.cit., 30.

3 For a good survey with a large bibliography see A. FOREST - F. VAN STEENBERGHEHN - M. DE GANDIL-LAC, Le mouvement doctrinal du IXe au XIVe siècle (Flbchec-Martin, Histoire de l’Eglise, 13), Paris 1951, 265-322, on Siger of Brabant and on the condemnation of 1277, by Van Steenbergen; see also HADRIANUS A KRIEZOVÎJAN, O.F.M.cap., Controversia doctrinalis inter magistros franciscanos et Sigerum de Brabant, in Coll. Franc. 27(1957), 121-165.

4 VAN STEENBERGEN, op. cit., 271.
It has been observed that the errors with which Gilbert reproached the philosophers, are strikingly similar to those summarized in the well-known *Tractatus de erroribus philosophorum* of Giles of Rome. That should not be misunderstood; though I do not deny that there is some general resemblance in the description of a few particular doctrines, I hold that the main features of both treatises are strikingly dissimilar.

Giles' work is, despite its restricted content, an important analysis of the new literature of Aristotle, Averroes, Avicenna, Algazel, Alkindi and Maimonides, in its bearing upon the Christian view of the world. It is a compilation, with exact source references, of all the passages in the writing of these philosophers which were contrary to the Christian faith. Evidently, Giles was aware that the writings of the above-mentioned philosophers came into the hands of many people that were insufficiently provided with a critical spirit and, thus, endangered their faith. He wanted them to have a memorandum that was a stern warning and admonition to read critically and not to forget the teachings of the faith.

I could not say much of this about the chapters of Gilbert of Tournai. Both his purpose and working method are rather different. Gilbert is writing a large encyclopaedical work and, though the errors of the philosophers are not just incidentally treated, they are embedded in a wide vision and a detailed exposition of the final cause of knowing. Schematically outlining the exact place of the four chapters we are concerned with, we should give them the numeration: pars i, tractatus 1, sectio B, titulus d, caput 1-4. This needs further explanation.

The *Rudimentum doctrinae* is a work that, in its incompleteness, in the Laurenziana MS still counts 1200 written columns of 38 lines each. It was planned in four parts: 'Tractatus iste, qui dicitur rudimentum doctrinae vel erudimentum, quatuor habet partes de doctrina exsequen-

---

1 Baudry, *op. cit.* 35, note 1; 36, note 2; for the *Tractatus* we used the critical edition by Josef Koch: *Giles of Rome, Errores philosophorum*, Milwaukee 1944.

2 In the notes appended to the text edition I shall call attention to those resemblances.

3 Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum*, iii.

4 I may remark that the table of contents of the *Rudimentum doctrinae* E. Bonifacio copied (pp. 22-31) from MS. Firenze, *Bibl. Laurent.*, Plut. 36, dext. 6, gives by no means the real division of Gilbert's work. This table has been made by a later mediaeval student and is prefixed to the MS. proper. It seems, he had difficulty with the very large and detailed summary index he found preceding the *Rudimentum* on f. 14v-14v, which we think goes back to Gilbert.