

Á C D F G K M P R S T V W

Gói Gon

Gonçalves, Gaspar

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Life

Since Barbosa Machado reports in *Bibliotheca Lusitana* that on May 25, 1556, at the age of 16, Gaspar Gonçalves joined the Society of Jesus (see Machado 1747: 354-5), we know that Gaspar Gonçalves was born in Coimbra around 1540. Between 1557 and 1560, at the Coimbra Jesuit College, Gaspar Gonçalves attended the course of Arts under the direction of Pedro da Fonseca, becoming afterwards master of the first class of Rhetoric (1561-1566). From an early stage Gonçalves revealed an inclination to the fine arts and a remarkable proficiency in Latin. Next he headed to Évora, where he taught Theology; there he also earned a doctorate from the faculty, on October 26, 1572. Gonçalves was soon appointed to lecture “Vespers”. In 1584 the General of the Society of Jesus sent him to Rome. In Rome, on September 29 of the same year, Gaspar Gonçalves took perpetual vows. He resided there until he passed away in 1590. Gonçalves was among the theologians who were commissioned by Pope Sixtus V to revise and amend the biblical text published under his auspices. On March 23, 1585, Gaspar Gonçalves uttered an *Oratio* before Pope Gregory XIII, introducing the young Japanese ambassadors who were sent to render obedience to the Pope on behalf of their fellow countrymen *Daimyō* (大名) who had been converted to Catholicism; this was the only one of Gonçalves’ works to be printed during his lifetime (Pinto 2016). Also in Rome, he was among the Jesuit priests responsible for writing the final version of the *Ratio Studiorum*, which would be first released in 1599. Gonçalves was a highly prestigious preacher and was very much esteemed by the Portuguese royal family. Perhaps the silence around his name and works, mostly unpublished to date, can be traced back to his extraordinary modesty (Stegmüller 1959: 57-58). The first chronicler of the Society of Jesus in Portugal, Father Baltasar Teles, was well aware of his confrere’s high literary merits and of how unfairly his works had been overlooked. As a matter of fact, a few lines after describing Gaspar Gonçalves as “one of the most lauded adventurers

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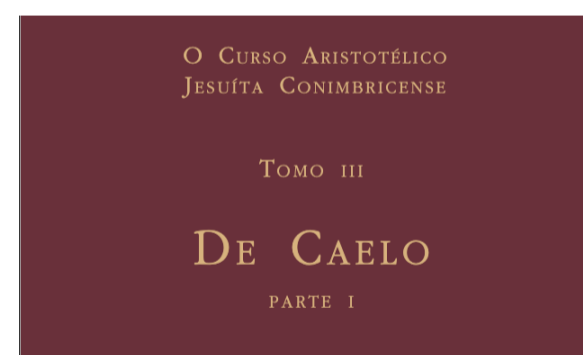


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entering the flowery meadows and learned forests of poetry and oratory [*um dos mais louvados aventureiros que entraram pelos floridos prados e doutas florestas da poesia e da oratória*],” Teles expresses his disappointment regarding the iniquitous obscurity of the name of Gonçalves in the *Respublica Literaria*: “since (as Cicero said of Isocrates) his works did not come to light, although he was a great speaker and a supreme master, his glory remained confined within the walls of oblivion [*posto que (como Cícero disse sobre Isócrates) sendo grande orador e perfeitíssimo mestre, suas obras não saíram à luz e ficou tanta glória metida entre as paredes do esquecimento*]” (Teles 1647: 469-70). Gaspar Gonçalves practiced almost all literary genres, both in prose and verse, in elegantly refined Latin (Pinto 2020). Besides his strictly literary works, he also authored theological and canonistic texts meant to be read during the university professorships he directed. Gonçalves also wrote a series of legal reports in Latin, mainly dealing with matters pertaining to the Brazilian colonial reality (Pinto 2018). Not surprisingly, all these writings are models of crystal-clear language and elaborate articulation of thought.

English translation by Robert Junqueira

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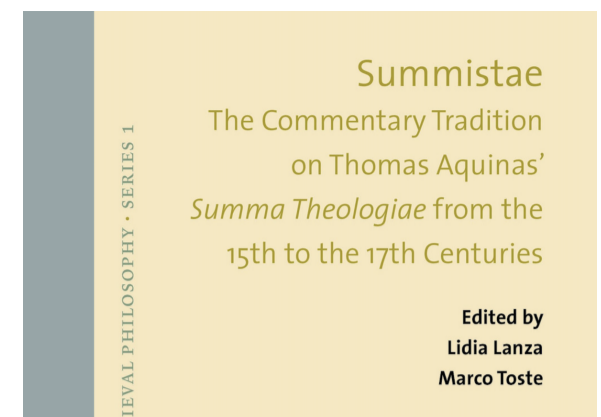
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