

DOMINIC BANEZ

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Dominic Bañez (1528 – 1604) studied under Melchior Cano at Salamanca and later held for 20 years the “Chair of Prime” at the university.

While at Avila he became spiritual director and confessor of St. Teresa and remained so until her death in 1582. He was the defender of her reform as well as her writings. His influence explains the Thomistic cast of mind underlying her spirituality.

Banez's commentary on the “Summa Theologica” is perhaps the most profound and exact written in the sixteenth century. No one of his contemporaries grasped better than he the meaning and implications of St. Thomas' doctrine of being. Provoked by the misunderstandings of his confreres, he complained: “And this is what St. Thomas so often exclaimed, and what Thomists will not hear, that *esse* is the actuality of every form or nature ...” (Commentary on Prima Pars of the Summa, vol.1).

Both Capreolus and Cajetan come under his criticism for failing to understand this essential point of Thomism. Cajetan, he says, reduced the *esse* of a substance to the substance itself and failed to see that it is the act whereby a substance is a being; moreover, he identified *esse* with the actual being acquired by a substance at the end of its production and not with the primary and most perfect actuality within a being.

Although statements like these give the impression that Banez had a deep understanding of the thomistic notion of being, other remarks of his give the reader pause. For example, he considers it only probable that St. Thomas taught the real distinction between essence and existence, both of which he describes as “things” (*res*).