

COMMENTAIRE DE L'ÉPITRE AUX ROMAINS suivi d'une Lettre à Bernard Ayglier, abbé du Mont-Cassin by Thomas d'Aquin, trans. Jean-Eric Stroobant de Saint-Eloy OSB Cerf, Paris, 1999, Pp. 650, FF370.50 hbk.

The theology of Thomas Aquinas springs from his evangelical vocation, as M.-D.Chenu used to say. This is not the impression students gain from the standard readings, focussing as they usually do entirely on the *Summa Theologiae* and often on the early, apparently more philosophical questions at that. For decades, it is true, we have been recommended to consult his biblical commentaries in order to supplement and indeed correct our understanding of the *Summa*, no doubt his greatest work but by no means his most characteristic. The readily accessible editions are so badly printed that even readers with facility in Latin are easily put off. In any case, given the collapse of Latin studies, we need translations. We are not badly served: Aquinas's commentaries on *Ephesians*, *Galatians*, *1 Thessalonians*, *Philippians*, *Philemon* and *John*, as well as on *Job*, all exist in English. The main gap is Thomas's commentary on the *Letter to the Romans*. A translation into English is currently being prepared by Steven C. Boguslavski. (The Leonine Commission is at work on the critical edition but it is far from ready to publish.)

We now have this splendidly produced translation into French, annotated by Jean Borella and the translator, with a ten-page preface by Gilles Berceville OP. (The translator has already given us a French version of Aquinas on the Psalms, with a preface by Mark D. Jordan, Cerf, 1996.)

Luther and Calvin regarded the *Letter to the Romans* as the decisive text in the New Testament, as Berceville reminds us. We might recall also the remarkable second edition (1922) of Karl Barth's commentary on Romans: a turning-point in twentieth-century theology. Berceville insists that Aquinas's commentary is the key to the rest of his work. According to the best scholarly estimate, it represents the course which he gave in Naples in 1273-74, in his last year of teaching. It might even be regarded as his crowning achievement; it certainly gives us his final thoughts on grace, justification, original sin, election, predestination and divine foreknowledge. Indeed, as Berceville says, the theological insights newly discovered at the Reformation are already entirely familiar to Aquinas, albeit in a perspective which is comparatively 'sereine, large et équilibrée'. (Aquinas's lack of *angst* often alienates the otherwise sympathetic modern student.)

This edition is provided with copious footnotes throughout, as well as indices of biblical references, of parallels elsewhere in Aquinas's works, and of authors cited either by him or in the notes. Above all, the analytical table of concepts, which runs to forty pages, opens what is probably the best way for a modern reader to get to

grips with Thomas's understanding of Paul's theology. The systematic way he expounds Scripture, as well as his frequent allusions to Aristotle, would no doubt repel many new readers unfamiliar with this form of exegesis. Following up the references to Christ, God, the Holy Spirit, faith, grace, and so on, would, on the other hand, soon reveal how 'evangelical' Aquinas's theology actually is.

The letter to the abbot of Monte Cassino, discovered there in 1875, was written probably in mid-February 1274, about three weeks before his death. The monks were worried about a passage in the *Moralia* of Gregory the Great about the relationship between God's foreknowledge and human freedom. The text shows how friendly the relationship was between Thomas and the Benedictine community in which he received his early education.

From the outset of the *Commentary* Thomas characterizes the Gospel as proclaiming the threefold union between humanity and God: the Incarnation, the grace of adoption, and the glory of eternal life. This *Commentary* should persuade students to read Aquinas in the light of the beatific vision, rather than that of natural theology.

FERGUS KERR OP

THREE THOMIST STUDIES by Frederick E. Crowe SJ, ed. by Fred Lawrence, Supplementary issue vol. 16 *Loneragan Workshop*, Toronto, 2000. Pp.xiv + 260, \$40.00 hbk, \$14.00 pbk.

This volume of studies, written by the distinguished Jesuit scholar Fr Frederick Crowe, brings together for the first time a group of articles initially published in *Sciences Ecclesiastiques* and *Theological Studies* between 1955 and 1961. Fr Crowe, whilst freely acknowledging his indebtedness to the inspiration of Bernard Lonergan, aims in these studies not so much at a presentation of his celebrated confrere as at an exegesis of the texts of St Thomas himself in a number of complex areas. The author draws on a wide variety of St Thomas's texts, proceeding with a meticulous attention to detail, and a great care not to claim to have established more than can be manifestly proved.

The first of the studies was written as a contribution to the debate on 'situation ethics'. The author is responding to the claim that no moral norm can ever be of universal application, given the uniqueness of every human situation and the potentially infinite variety of moral circumstances. Approaching the question in a very general way, he takes a chapter to consider how any universal knowledge can ever be applied to individual objects of the senses. He emphasises the role which the agent intellect has to play in this domain, not only in the initial abstraction of a universal concept, but also in the very application of the concept, where it provides the light necessary to see some individual thing in its relation to universal concepts. It follows that in the moral life, judgments of value and obligation are not to be reached by the simple shuffling of concepts, but