

the more experienced, reminding all of us that what we long for is the good life, the satisfying life.

TOM WILSON

**HOLY TEACHING: INTRODUCING THE *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS** by Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Brazos Press*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005, Pp. 320, \$27 pbk.

In *Holy Teaching: Introducing the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt provides a significant introduction for individuals aspiring to discover what is arguably Thomas Aquinas's most revered text. On one level, the layout of Bauerschmidt's work is nothing novel. Similar efforts are found in Paul J. Glenn's *A Tour of the Summa* (Tan Books and Publishers, 1978) and Peter Kreeft's *Summa of the Summa* (Ignatius Press, 1990). Both of these works, along with Bauerschmidt's work, include selections from the *Summa Theologiae* and commentary concerning particular passages. On another level, what sets Bauerschmidt's work apart is how his selections highlight the aspects of the *Summa Theologiae* that embody Thomas's larger intention not only to preserve but also to advance *sacra doctrina*, or holy teaching. Like Glenn and Kreeft, Bauerschmidt demonstrates an implicit commitment to the notion that introducing the *Summa Theologiae* is best done when readers are confronted with the text itself. However, the emphasis upon *sacra doctrina* is what also allows Bauerschmidt to argue that Thomas Aquinas was first and foremost a theologian.

Prior to the publication of *Holy Teaching*, Bauerschmidt co-edited *Aquinas in Dialogue: Thomas for the Twenty-First Century* (Blackwell, 2004) with Jim Fodor, with whom he also currently serves as the co-editor of the journal *Modern Philosophy*. Prior to this work concerning Thomas Aquinas, Bauerschmidt published two books that concentrate primarily upon the nature of mysticism: *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1999); and *Why the Mystics Matter Now* (Sorin Books, 2003). In both of these texts concerning mysticism, perhaps a two-pronged effort is in place. Bauerschmidt offers an introduction to the works of various mystics, such as Julian of Norwich, while also demonstrating the significance of such efforts in light of the identity of their respective authors as theologians. *Holy Teaching* appears to be an attempt on Bauerschmidt's part to extend this two-pronged effort to the person and work of Thomas Aquinas as embodied in his *Summa Theologiae*.

In terms of providing his readers with an introduction to the *Summa Theologiae*, Bauerschmidt intends 'to make some of Thomas's texts more readily available' (p. 11). He serves this end not only by offering his own brief introduction to the life and work of Thomas Aquinas, but also through the particular selections he makes from the *Summa Theologiae* and the explanatory notes he offers in relation to such texts. However, what is important to note is that Bauerschmidt's efforts on all of these fronts reflect his conviction that Thomas Aquinas is a theologian. Contemporary scholarship often classifies Thomas as a philosopher; by contrast, Bauerschmidt contends that the identity of the *Summa Theologiae* is most appropriately viewed through Thomas's own assertion that his task is one of *sacra doctrina*. Well-known philosophical components of Thomas's work are what often garner him the reputation of philosopher. Such examples include Thomas's five-proofs for the existence of God and his understanding of natural law. However, Bauerschmidt argues that the true significance of the *Summa Theologiae* is only appreciated when this work is viewed within the context of 'an activity that is first

and foremost God's activity of self-revelation through the prophets, the apostles, and pre-eminently through Jesus Christ' (p. 12).

As previously mentioned, beyond his own introduction to the life and work of Thomas Aquinas, the majority of *Holy Teaching* is comprised of selections Bauerschmidt makes from the *Summa Theologiae* and the explanatory notes he offers in relation to those texts. Considering that his introduction consists of ten pages of the text as a whole, one is quickly confronted with Bauerschmidt's implicit commitment to the notion that being introduced to the *Summa Theologiae* is best facilitated by confronting the text itself. In terms of the structure of the particular texts that Bauerschmidt chooses to include from the *Summa Theologiae*, all five of the components involved in the scholastic mode of disputed questions are present. These components thus not only include the question, but also the negative responses, the argument, Thomas's proposed position, and refutations of the negative responses. On a larger scale, Bauerschmidt offers selections from all three parts of the *Summa Theologiae*. One telling sign of Bauerschmidt's commitment to interpreting Thomas as a theologian comes by virtue of the volume of questions he selects from the third part in which Thomas espouses his views on the sacraments. Although Thomas died before he could complete his *Summa Theologiae*, Bauerschmidt's effort to include these selections brings to light the fact that Thomas not only saw his discussion of the sacraments but also his project as a whole as one within the context of *sacra doctrina*.

The explanatory notes prove quite helpful, especially for individuals in Bauerschmidt's audience for whom this particular text is their initial confrontation with the *Summa Theologiae*. In particular, Bauerschmidt is to be commended for placing these notes at the bottom of the respective page as footnotes rather than placing them at the end of the chapter or the end of the text as a whole as end-notes. As a result, readers are able to switch back and forth between the text and the notes with relative ease. Of all of the things that Bauerschmidt brings to life through these notes, the most enduring acknowledgment is the fact that Thomas is a theologian with a great command of Scripture, the Church Fathers, the theologians of his age, and philosophers of the past. As a philosopher, Thomas is often thought of in light of his ability to draw upon the works of Aristotle. However, Thomas references both Scripture and the works of various theologians with greater frequency than the works of Aristotle. The role of theology and special revelation in Thomas's writing of the *Summa Theologiae* becomes clear in the selections that Bauerschmidt makes. One notable example of such an effort can be found in an explanatory note offered in relation to Thomas's refutation of the first negative response in Question 1.32.1: 'Whether the Trinity of divine Persons can be known by natural reason?' In particular, Bauerschmidt offers a concise, yet well-detailed, discussion of the appropriation of the Persons of the Trinity. This assessment includes not only an interpretation of Thomas's understanding of this concept but also how it stands in comparison to a variety of understandings (p. 89-90).

Overall, Frederick Bauerschmidt's attempt to provide an introduction to the *Summa Theologiae* by propelling readers to confront the text itself is a success. Through such an exercise, Bauerschmidt is also able to substantiate his claim that Thomas Aquinas was a theologian. As a result, *Holy Teaching: Introducing the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas* is helpful reading to adventurous laypersons as well as students pursuing formal courses of study in theology. At first, confronting Thomas's text proves to be a significant challenge. However, Bauerschmidt's introduction will help one to persist and, in the end, reap not only the theological insights present in the *Summa Theologiae* but also by the beatific vision which defines Thomas's work as one of *sacra doctrina*.

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