reading of Scripture is refreshing: one finds references to Thomas' scriptural commentaries – and not just the two Summas – at every turn.

There is much else to be commended in this book, not least Healy's reflective structuring of his work which does not seek to follow slavishly the form of the *Summa Theologiae*. The emphasis on the dialectical relationship between faith and reason is fascinating and there are some interesting proposals, not least the claim that Aquinas' ethics of virtue is quite different to that of today's neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists (pp.153-154). Healy shows consistently that all knowledge for Aquinas is illumination by the Word of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and testified in Scripture. This makes apparent some of the more exciting and 'radical' elements of Aquinas the pre-modern theologian.

These three 'versions of Thomism' will appeal to very different students of Aquinas. Healy's contribution adds significantly to the recent secondary literature on Aquinas and, for the present reviewer, he offers the most compelling reason for engaging intensely with Aquinas' deceptively 'clear and succinct' writings: one might learn how to be a more faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

SIMON OLIVER

CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT: TWILIGHT OR RENAISSANCE? Ed by J.S. Boswell, F.P. McHugh and J. Verstraeten, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium CLVII, *Leuven University Press and Uitgeverij Peeters,* **Leuven 2000, xxii + 308 pages, £42.00 pbk.**

This book grew out of collaboration between the Von Hügel Institute in Cambridge and the University of Leuven. Together they organised a conference at Cambridge in 1999 on 'Catholic Social Thought in Transition'. The papers of the Conference, re-worked in the light of the work that took place at it, make up this book.

The papers are gathered in five sections, the first of which offers two interpretations of the last hundred years of Catholic social thought / teaching. Jean-Yves Calvez gives an autobiographical account of his engagement with 'Catholic Social Thought', speaks of the strengths and silences of the great 'encyclical tradition', and believes that there is still significant life for this kind of Papal contribution. For Staf Hellemans of Utrecht 'Catholic Social Teaching' as traditionally understood is irredeemably tied to 'ultramontane mass Catholicism'. The demise of the latter brings the former also to an end. This does not mean that 'Rome' no longer has a contribution to make but the situation to which it must speak, and how it can effectively do so, are radically altered. Attention to the structural base of social problems is one aspect of this new situation as is a readiness for political risk.

Already a difficulty emerges which is part of the complexity and richness of this book. Are we to refer to Catholic Social 'Thought', 'Teaching' or 'Thinking'? 'Teaching' is taken here to refer to the encyclical tradition, the others to contributions from what is variously called 'independent' or 'non-

official' Catholic social thinkers. The interesting thing, as more than one contributor points out, is that these two cannot be understood without each other. The occasions, individuals and movements behind the composition of the great encyclicals are generally well known so that official teaching has tended to appear not out of the blue but as an endorsement of thinking and action already underway in the Church. At the same time the encyclicals have stimulated research, thinking and action among the independent teachers and thinkers on these matters. It may be that the political risks, to which Catholic social teaching invites, are more easily taken by the Church's unofficial teachers. In fact their relationship in the area of social thought might well provide a model for how 'official' and 'unofficial' Catholic sources work in other areas.

Another level of the book's complexity / richness, and one of its most interesting themes, is the question of 'middle-level social thinking'. On the one hand it is fine for the Church to enunciate inspiring ideals in relation to social questions. On the other hand is the challenge of bringing those ideals to birth in the concrete social, economic and political circumstances of individuals and communities. Between the two comes a level of what one might call 'secondary principles' or 'values', which serve this work of mediation. Jonathan Boswell explains it most clearly in his quest for the 'distinctive value pattern' of Catholic social thinking. The broad gateway concepts of 'the dignity of the human person' and 'the common good' provide a kind of prologue or precondition. The distinctive form or identity is supplied by the equal prominence given in Catholic social thinking to the ideas of solidarity, subsidiarity and justice. This triad of inter-related social values, with solidarity as its pivot and organising principle, suggests broad policy thinking on the one hand while showing affinities with core characteristics of Catholic belief and practice on the other (reaching even to the theology of the Trinity).

Frank McHugh argues for a renewal of (rather than 'return to') natural law thinking (re-described as 'common social wisdom') as a discourse better fitted to serve Catholic social thinking than the currently in-vogue virtue ethics approaches can. Jean Porter's recent work shows how the ethics of Aquinas need always to be sounded in two keys, those of 'virtue' and 'law'. McHugh does it here by stressing the links between natural law thinking and the virtues of prudence and justice, its openness to political implications and its need for a theology of creation. Johan Verstraeten complements this by bringing ideas of Alasdair MacIntyre to bear on Catholic social teaching understood now in terms of 'tradition' and 'narrative'. It enables him to begin to identify the root-metaphors (mainly scriptural) and key narratives that must continue to inform this teaching and that support an understanding of Catholicism as 'social tradition'.

Walter Lesch of Louvain sounds the strongest discordant note so far. He follows a 'non-specificity of Christian ethics' line, arguing that Catholic social thinking 'has no privileged access to some arcane knowledge that could not be shared by other people' and proposing a 'self-secularisation' to establish a dialogue with non-believers at a minimal level of shared

conviction and philosophical reason. This would make it possible for Catholic social thinkers to meet the requirements of discourse ethics so as to dialogue more effectively with thinkers such as Rawls and Habermas.

The third section offers evidence that, whether Catholic social thinking is considered distinctive *à la* Boswell or secular *à la* Lesch, there are many instances of it engaging with some success in secular debate. Chantal Delsol sees it making a contribution at the level of philosophical anthropology, offering a balanced and balancing vision of humanness. Alois Buch considers problems about the communicability of Catholic social teaching *ad intra* and *ad extra* while Julie Clague considers human rights discourse as the current *lingua franca* of social ethics, a discourse enthusiastically embraced in post-war Europe by Jacques Maritain and John XXIII, but now radically questioned by MacIntyre as 'a dubious idiom and rhetoric'.

Next comes a fascinating set of papers from scholars in Italy (Zamagni, Beretta, Bruni), Belgium (Van Gerwen) and France (Perret) on various aspects of 'humanising the economy' and the implications of globalisation. These bring into focus many of the issues already considered: whether Catholic social thinking is distinctive, whether its most important contribution now is at the level of anthropology, whether civil and humane relationships (social, economic, political) can be established without a theological vision of humanness and community. Their radical questioning of the omnipotent 'market' from within the discipline of economics itself is gratifying and encouraging. If Catholic social teaching is 'liberal-personalist' or 'communitarian-liberal' it is made very clear that this is not just a matter of political philosophy or social ethics but of theology too, embracing *communio* in all its senses.

Other contributions on praxis and policies deal with Trocaire, the Irish Bishops' development agency (Linda Hogan), current self-understanding within Catholic institutions in France (Alain Thomasset) and the option for the poor (Donal Dorr).

John Coleman offers a transatlantic response to the entire collection. He endorses a broader understanding of Catholic social thinking or 'social Catholicism' as he calls it. He speaks of the ambivalences and strengths of its relationship with secular thought, and recalls its encounters (as a 'third way' long before the phrase became popular in other quarters) with Marxism and liberalism. He criticises the Euro-centrism of the tradition up to now (still evident in this collection) and concludes by outlining new contexts within which it can be developed and new possibilities for dialogue.

Both 'twilight' and 'renaissance' seem too dramatic for the state of Catholic social thinking as represented in this book. Here is a contemporary reading from within a distinctive tradition, work that is robust and thoughtful, steadily and seriously engaged with contemporary trends and ideas, and confident in raising questions for economics, ethics, politics, philosophy and theology. Its aim of retrieval and development with a view to supporting 'an effective Catholic intellectual presence in public debate' seems already significantly advanced by this collection itself.

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