

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

An Introduction to St. Thomas: Aquinas Search for Wisdom

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Philippine Studies vol. 15, no. 2 (1967): 367–370

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

the proper role of the hierarchy. Like the Constitution on the Church, Anciaux's article treats the apostolic functions from the viewpoint of the Church as the mystery of God (in contrast to the post-Reformation emphasis on authority). In this context authority itself takes on a salvific aspect: it is needed so that each individual may give a free response and contribute his active cooperation to his own redemption.

The second article, "The episcopate as sacramental reality," studies the relationship between the episcopate and the Pope's primacy. This article is so full of interesting explanation and valid theological insights, that I would do it injustice to even attempt to summarize it. Suffice it to say that this is the more rewarding of the two articles in this book. It gives us a satisfying synthesis of the hierarchy's unity and its collegiality, of episcopate and primacy, of jurisdiction and orders, of obedience and freedom in the Church.

I regret to say that this article especially is mutilated in the English translation. Thomas' translation is a very free one. Throughout the book phrases and even entire sentences are dropped and others inserted with a view to a clearer and more interesting reading for the uninitiated. But this advantage is more than offset by the inaccuracies which have crept in, especially in the second article. Most of these inaccuracies manage to preserve the author's general message. But a few actually contradict the original meaning.

I call attention especially to page 52 (p. 56 in the French). The English translation reads: "The royal aspect of the ministry has caused so much controversy, because it seems to run counter to the aspect of obedience to authority." In fact, where this royal aspect is resented, the reason is precisely because it *contains* the aspect of obedience and authority and some people see only these aspects in it. As the French has it: "parce que trop souvent on n'y a vu que l'aspect d'autorité et corrélativement d'obéissance."

Two similarly important errors occur on page 59 (compare with page 63 of the French). But enough of mistakes. For in spite of all the mistranslations the author's general message comes through and the appeal of Anciaux's ecclesiology does not lose too much of its lustre.

THOMAS J. O'SHAUGHNESSY, S.J.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ST. THOMAS

AQUINAS' SEARCH FOR WISDOM. By Vernon J. Bourke. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965. x, 244 pp.

Author Vernon J. Bourke (who also wrote *Augustine's Quest for Wisdom*) tries in this book to introduce St. Thomas and Thomism

to the reader of little or no philosophic training. Biographical details are given in the odd-numbered chapters, while the even-numbered chapters set forth the development of the Saint's thought. The reader is invited to proceed any way he likes: by reading all the odd-numbered chapters first and then to start over with the even-numbered chapters, or to read then successively.

Hardly more than a broad outline of the life of Aquinas is known. Many of the stories about him were brought up nearly forty-five years after his death at the first canonization investigation, and as far as we can guess, many are pious fabrications. It is believed that he was born in 1221 at Roccasecca near Naples, but the fact that documentation turns up several men named Thomas of the Aquinas family does not do much to pinpoint him. He probably spent his early years as a student with the Benedictines at Monte Cassino, transferring to the Imperial University of Naples when he was fourteen. During his five year stay there, he studied logic and was introduced to Aristotle's *Organon* in Boethius' translation. (It is probable that Aquinas did not know Greek, got to know Aristotle mostly from translations and commentaries and never had a chance to read the original dialogues of Plato!) From Naples, he was sent to Paris, after having made his novitiate as a Friar Preacher, and there while finishing his doctoral work, he was able to witness the faculty squabbles between the mendicant friars and the secular clergy. Everybody there was fighting tooth and nail for important positions and imposing his ideas. It was in Paris that Aquinas must certainly have known St. Bonaventure but because of their difference in age and the separation of their convents, it is hardly possible that they were the bosom friends that has been built up by tradition.

A key teacher in the formation of Aquinas was Albert the Great who met up with him in Cologne, Paris, and Orvieto. Albert, whose learning was wider than it was deep, had a tremendous liberalizing effect on Thomas. While Albert tended toward Neoplatonism which culminated in the mysticism of Meister Eckhart, Aquinas was too much impressed by the empiricism and naturalism of Aristotle to adopt a metaphysics which ultimately ran the risk of merging the reality and activities of created things with the transcending unity of the divine *Esse*.

This book gives all of the documentation possible in rounding out the life of Aquinas and all those about him, even including the text of his first lecture as a magister, the first time it is presented in English. (This lecture is in a very formal academic, even stilted, style and includes scripture texts in almost every sentence. It concerns God making Himself known to us by communicating spiritual wisdom under corporeal metaphor—a theme almost too boldly stated

for a fledgling teacher, yet the one which in its full development is the very backbone of Thomism.)

Aquinas shifted around a good deal, mostly watching over the studies of the young friars in different places and trying to give sensible answers to dull superiors who looked to him for guidance in what were the perplexing philosophical and theological questions of that day. Aquinas took a rather cautious view about what seemed so concrete in these questions: whether angels move stars, if there is anything in fortune-telling, the usefulness of astrology in knowing the occult workings of nature, etc. When it came to usury, he made certain distinctions that show the rise of modern business methods and mentality, based on freedom in entering contracts. Much space in the book is taken up in telling what he did and said. More space is used to show how these things were impossible, improbable, either at all or at that time at that place. Guesses are made as to what he was probably writing at certain times along with short dubious anecdotes describing his humility, obedience, etc. As Aquinas matured into middle age, the usual picture most students have of him as an enormously fat, good-natured friar are hardly born out by the sober description given of him toward the end of his life as a serious, soft-spoken man, tall, hefty, and balding at the forehead.

St. Thomas died near the place of his birth at the age of about fifty. He was stricken while walking his way to the Council of Lyons and brought to a nearby Cistercian monastery where he lingered a short time. The cause of his death is not exactly certain, and even poisoning is given as a possible explanation. In the year previous to this, he was known to have suffered severe depressions and could possibly have been suffering from a stroke or an aneurysm. In any case, the immediate cause is usually given as the complications following his accidentally striking his head on a tree branch. It is interesting to note that his dying wish was for fresh herring and this was miraculously supplied. His dying words: "I have taught and written a great deal about this most holy Body and the other sacraments, in the faith of Christ and the holy Roman Church, to whose correction I submit and leave it all." A sad sign of the times in which he lived is that his body was fought over by the Cistercians and the Dominicans. His head and hands were detached for souvenirs, and years later when the body was exhumed and re-assembled, it was noted to be incorrupt except for an indentation of the nose, like a mouse bite. Eventually it was boiled down until only the bones remained. These can be found today in the church of St. Sernin at Toulouse, but his right arm is at the Minerva in Rome while his left arm is in the cathedral in Naples.

As far as Aquinas' orthodoxy is concerned, Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* in 1879 has completely placed it beyond question. This was

not so during the later part of his life and right after his death when he was attacked from all sides: for what some considered his defense of certain Aristotelian conclusions, for his theological opinions where everybody had his own notion of what is meant by substantial form, and even in his professed religious life where the secular clergy seemed loath to admit the possibility of the perfection of a vowed life. They must have been tedious disputations for the Saint but from them come some of his most mature work. Eventually, the *Summa of Theology*, unfinished in its third and last planned part, was composed as a primer for the young friars so that they might get their definitions straight and see the whole theological vista in one panoramic glance. It should be said in passing that we happily have his works as copied by secretaries for as he grew more and more mature, Aquinas' hand-writing degenerated into an almost unbreakable cryptogram.

Author Bourke's even-numbered chapters, showing the evolution of the thought of Aquinas, are less than satisfactory. The titles and probable dates of his works are of course carefully given along with the authors who influenced him and the events that brought them into life. Selected samples are given, it seems, for atmosphere. However, the problems are framed always in neoscholastic terminology and things are let go at that. There is a certain quaint thirteenth century aspect to the whole thing. The specific problems explored are hardly relevant to the modern reader. Almost completely ignored is the whole existential side of the Saint's thought. If the author had developed that aspect, the reader approaching St. Thomas for the first time would accept him as the true genius that he was, a creative, courageous torch-bearer for the perennial philosophical and theological problems and mysteries that are as alive today as they were then or at any time. It would be in this that a modern popular life of St. Thomas would be welcomed and would be significant in clarifying some of the truly important and as yet uncrystallized philosophical and theological thinking that is going on today.

GABRIEL POORE, F.S.C.

VASSAL TREATIES AND DAVID'S KINGSHIP

DYNASTIC ORACLE AND SUZERAINITY TREATY. By Philip J. Calderone, S.J. Loyola Heights, Q.C.: Loyola House of Studies, *Logos* 1, Ateneo de Manila University, 1966. 80 pp.

This volume is the first in a series of scholarly publications published by the Loyola House of Studies. The series will cover various subjects in the fields of Scripture, theology, philosophy. The present