

ST THOMAS AQUINAS: SUMMA THEOLOGIAE. Vol. XXX: The Gospel of Grace (IaIIae cvi-cxiv), by Cornelius Ernst, O.P. *Blackfriars; Eyre and Spottiswoode*, London; *McGraw-Hill*, New York, 1972. xxvi + 258 pp. £3.

Both for the understanding of St Thomas's own thought and for the needs of the present ecumenical situation the treatise on Grace is of central importance. Several years ago Fr Ernst, reviewing Fr Henri de Lubac's book *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (*J.T.S.* n.s. xx (1969), p. 366) could write of the view that 'man is ordained by nature to an end, the possession of God in vision and in love, which he is not able to obtain by his natural powers' that 'it should be said straight away that as an interpretation of the medieval scholastics this thesis is hardly open any longer to dispute', and this conclusion is confirmed by the quite excellent translation of the Angelic Doctor with which Fr Ernst has now provided us. What could be more explicit than this: 'God ordained human nature to the end of eternal life as something to be obtained not by its own power but by the assistance of grace' (IaIIae, cxiv, 2 *ad* 1)? And how much confusion and contention might have been avoided if it could have been recognized earlier that this is a perfectly coherent doctrine!

Ecumenically, too, the qualms of Protestants should be mollified by St Thomas's emphatic insistence on the sheer gratuity of grace, a conviction which is not in any way weakened by his very carefully nuanced doctrine of merit. More than this, however, as the Report (*The Theology of Grace and the Oecumenical Movement*, London 1961) of the conference between Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Calvinists held at Chevetogne in 1953 makes plain, the traditional Catholic doctrine of 'created grace', which, from diametrically opposite standpoints, has been such a stumbling block for both Orthodox and Protestants, does not exclude, but rather synthesizes, both the sheer gratuity of grace and the deification of the Christian man; Fr Ernst is able to stress both St Thomas's recognition that grace is primarily God's own action upon us (p. 128) and the thoroughly 'Greek' character of his doctrine of participation (p. 146).

In spite of his own extraordinarily wide range of acquaintance with modern writings, both Catholic and Protestant, Fr Ernst frankly

recognizes that St Thomas, when discussing such matters as justification and merit, did not have the controversies of either the sixteenth century or the twentieth century in mind (cf. Appendices I, III and IV) and he resists any temptation to insert the discussions of the Angelic Doctor neatly into the niches and slots of a later day. He admits more than once the disabilities under which St Thomas laboured; 'It is hardly necessary', he remarks, *a propos* of the question whether grace is simply a virtue, 'to point out that the Aristotelean categories and their subdivisions are creaking a little under the strain of theological applications' (p. 120). He points out that, in one place at least, St Thomas writes from an 'ontological' rather than a 'personalist' perspective on grace (p. 123); nevertheless he insists that, on justification, 'the human "nature" about which St Thomas is speaking here is not a pure Aristotelean nature, but a "nature" created by God as part of a total divine plan for its final transfiguration into glory' (p. 199).

One of the most useful features of this volume consists of the clear and succinct footnotes with which most of the articles are introduced.

It is interesting to place this volume by the side of Fr Bernard Lonergan's *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*. Fr Lonergan emphasizes the development that took place in the Angelic Doctor's doctrine of grace: 'In the *Commentary on the Sentences* actual grace is neither operative nor cooperative. In the *De Veritate* it is said to be cooperative. In the *Summa Theologiae* it is both operative and cooperative' (p. 40). And he draws attention to 'the declining importance of habitual grace in St Thomas's successive works' (p. 41), a point of some significance in view of the present tendency to reverse the text-book order and to see habitual or sanctifying grace as prior to actual.

This is perhaps the most successful volume of the new *Summa* that has yet appeared, both in content and in execution. A few final remarks may be made. 'Freely bestowed grace' is a happy rendering of *gratia gratis data*. It is sur-

prising to learn that the Second Council of Orange was apparently unknown in the thirteenth century; is this altogether a matter for regret? It is interesting to find St Thomas trying to cope with such a modern problem

as that of the density of the time-continuum (p. 189). Misprints seem to be very rare, but on page 198, line 2, *Augustinus* is mis-spelt and on page 204, line 26, *divine* should be *divina*.

E. L. MASCALL

ORTHODOXY AND THE DEATH OF GOD: Essays in Contemporary Theology. Studies Supplementary to Sobornost. No. 1.

THE TRADITION OF LIFE: Romanian Essays in Spirituality and Theology. Studies Supplementary to Sobornost. No. 2.

Both edited by A. M. Allchin. *Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius*. 40p (fellowship members 20p).

These two collections are the latest of many to appear under the aegis of the Fellowship of St Alban and Sergius, an association originally founded to foster relations between Orthodox and Anglicans, but which has long embraced, not least at its annual conferences, a much wider ecumenical spectrum.

Orthodoxy and the Death of God is misleadingly entitled, since only one of the essays specifically discusses this question, and that (understandably, since its author is a Greek lecturing in Athens) in terms of Nietzsche rather than Thomas J. J. Altizer. But all of them are written from the conviction that the debate about God of the past decade is essentially a phenomenon of western Christianity, stemming from the conceptualization of theology in the scholastic west, its divorce from spiritual experience and its expression in cataphatic, *via affirmativa* terms. A return to the emphases which Orthodoxy has never lost, apophaticism and the unity of theology and spirituality both characteristic of the Greek patristic tradition from the Cappadocians down to St Gregory Palamas, is the prescription they offer. Behind this thesis lies Lossky's *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, which has been with us (in the French original) nearly thirty years, and which addressed a Catholic scholasticism which knew neither the great revival of interest in the Greek Fathers of the early post-war years nor the regular injections of Heideggerian existentialism to which theologians in the Thomist tradition have more recently been submitting themselves. It may be significant that the 'new theology' which this collection reviews is basically a protestant phenomenon. Yet the messages demands a further hearing. Its most persuasive advocates here are Olivier Clement, whose essay 'Purification by atheism' combines Gallic clarity with the enthusiasm of a convert (from *l'église réformée*? I cannot otherwise explain the uncalled-for superiority of his asides on Barth and on the platonic character

of Protestant worship), and John Musther, a young Anglican religious in a contemplative community which bases itself firmly on the Greek ascetic tradition, who offers a sympathetic examination of *Exploration into God*, Dr John Robinson's recent essay in theological retrenchment.

One of the things that Musther fastens on in Robinson is his recognition of the profoundly Christian quality of the Romanian novel *Incognito* (by Petru Dumitru), and its capacity to speak, if only implicitly, from the spiritual tradition of an Orthodox country to the secularized west. The Romanian Church has traditionally, for cultural reasons, been the most open to the west of the Balkan Orthodox churches; it has also been strikingly successful in maintaining the essentials of its life and tradition under a Marxist regime (those whose picture of its position is derived solely from the writings of Pastor Wurmbrand should be advised of the latter's one-sidedness). It deserves to be better known in the English-speaking world, and towards that end the essays in *The Tradition of Life* are a modest beginning. They range from studies of St Callinicus of Cernica, a nineteenth-century monk and bishop canonized by his Church in 1955, through an account of the place of liberty in the Orthodox monastic tradition which will awaken echoes in those who now question the more rigid structures and attitudes to obedience in the west, to Fr Dumitru Staniloae's study of Christian responsibility in the world, which shows both a real grasp of some contemporary cultural issues and resources for the theological understanding of them. The overall impression is of a Church which drew much from the spiritual tradition of Athos when that was in full vigour, and has made it sufficiently its own to be able to meet the immense strains of the post-war years without being submerged by them. The west is in no position to criticize.

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