

starting point in the present confusion. (It is also presumably the ground on which parents rely who decide not to follow the recommendation of the General Catechetical Directory.)

This is a book for teachers, and it will be extremely useful to them. It includes four 'resource units' containing source material, further discussion, and suggestions for teachers.

ANTONY ARCHER, O.P.

**GRACE AND FREEDOM: OPERATIVE GRACE IN THE THOUGHT OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS**, by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, edited by J. Patout Burns. Darton, Longman & Todd, London and Herder and Herder, New York, 1971. xii + 186 pp. £4.00.

A study of the development of Aquinas' thought on the recondite topic of the distinction between *gratia operans* and *gratia cooperans*, originally published in a periodical thirty years ago, written in an uncompromisingly technical language (in which terms such as 'prevent' and 'inform' are Anglicized Latin rather than the Queen's English), costing £4.00 for less than 150 pages of text. Clearly, Lonergan's *Grace and Freedom* is not going to sell in large numbers on railway bookstalls. Yet there are several reasons why the publication of this beautifully edited version of the articles on *gratia operans* is an important event.

The topic is of abiding, and crucial importance. Any religious tradition that attempts to come to grips with the autonomy of human freedom, and the sovereignty of divine activity—with the impotence of man, and his liberation by God—is likely to return, from time to time, to thinkers of the stature of Augustine and Aquinas who, within the limitations imposed on them by their cultural contexts, sought for some understanding of the mystery of God's gift of man's freedom. Whether or not Lonergan's exegesis of Aquinas' development is historically satisfactory must be decided by experts in medieval studies. But, for one who is not such an expert, not the least important thing about Lonergan's study is his refusal to abstract Aquinas' thought from its historical setting. Precisely because he lets us see Aquinas' mind on the move *in* that setting, he helps us to tackle the same problems very differently in our very different context. The notion of the 'supernatural' may be unfashionable, but the problems which that notion was elaborated to illuminate are still with us.

Today, Lonergan's work centres on problems of theological method and, in particular, on the notion of 'conversion'. Reading *Grace and Freedom* again, I saw more clearly than when I first read it some time ago, how central these same concerns already were, for Lonergan, in

the nineteen-forties. So far as the question of method is concerned, this early study may still serve as a stimulus and a corrective. There is a tendency, in some circles, to press for a unified pattern of religious discourse. Theological writing that is not 'affective', 'non-technical', 'personal', tends to be dismissed as arid, abstract and irrelevant. The language of the economist, the astronomer, or the physicist may have less immediate appeal than the language of the poet, the novelist or (hopefully) the preacher, but to dismiss the former as 'abstract' would be foolish, and to confuse the two would be unhelpful. The distinction which I am indicating is that for which, in *Insight*, Lonergan used the terms 'description' and 'explanation'. Further back, it was expressed by Newman in his distinctions between 'real' and 'notional assent', and between 'religion' and 'theology' (and the *Grammar of Assent* exercised a considerable formative influence on Lonergan).

David Tracy has said of *Grace and Freedom* that 'Lonergan's chief personal discovery was his realization of the possibility of a strictly theoretical approach to theology'. But his recognition of the importance of this discovery went hand-in-hand with a vigorous rejection of the endemic tendency, in Christian thought, to confuse the use of two languages with the perception of two orders of reality: 'To apprehend *going faster* one has only to drop from a sufficient height. To apprehend *acceleration* one has to master the somewhat difficult notions underlying the differential calculus. Both *going faster* and *acceleration* apprehend the same fact' (p. 13); '... the idea of the supernatural is a theorem, ... it no more adds to the data of the problem than the Lorentz transformation puts a new constellation in the heavens' (p. 16). This thirty-year-old study of the movement of a thirteenth-century mind may yet serve as a Tract for The Times.

NICHOLAS LASH