



## Reviews

### **AQUINAS AT PRAYER: THE BIBLE, MYSTICISM AND POETRY** by Paul Murray OP, *Bloomsbury*, London, 2013, pp xii + 275, £16.99, pbk

From *Ritual Poems* (1971) to *Stones and Stars* (2013), Paul Murray OP has demonstrated that he is a poet as well as a theologian. The question is whether the same may be said of Thomas Aquinas. That he was a ‘man of prayer’, and a true ‘Christian contemplative’, Murray establishes in the first part of this book, not a contentious thesis one might have thought, except that he starts with some extremely negative ‘revelations’ about Thomas’s inner life that we owe to Adrienne von Speyr, the mystic friend of Hans Urs von Balthasar. Murray examines in detail four prayers that seem to owe a good deal to Humbert of Romans, fifth Master OP (1254–63), which thus place Thomas in an emerging tradition of Dominican spirituality.

In the second part of the book Murray presents Thomas the exegete, taking soundings particularly in the commentaries on Paul and in the late, incomplete commentary on the Psalms, long neglected though beginning to be regarded as one of his finest works. For years we have been reminded that Thomas was primarily engaged, both at the university in Paris and in Dominican houses, in expounding Scripture. Students of the *Summa Theologiae* have long been advised that, while it is no doubt his greatest work, he can never have intended it to be studied in isolation from Scripture. As Murray shows, Thomas’s theology is deeply Pauline (however much indebted at key points to Aristotle). The psalms, recited every day, contain the whole of the Gospel, or so Thomas believed.

Finally, in the third section, we turn to the texts that Thomas composed for the Office and Mass of *Corpus Christi*, going on to consider the ‘*Adoro te devote*’, ‘the finest prayer of Aquinas’. This is Thomas the ‘poet of the Eucharist’, as Murray puts it.

There is a problem. While Murray thanks Adriano Oliva OP of the Leonine Commission for help with texts as yet unpublished, including the *Corpus Christi Lessons*, he makes no reference to Oliva’s aside (in an article on quite unrelated matters), to the effect that ‘the Leonine Commission does not regard “*Adoro [te] devote*” to be an authentic work of St Thomas’ (see *The Thomist* July 2012: p. 398). That sounds pretty definitive.

One problem has always been that it apparently took fifty years after his death before Thomas’s authorship was mentioned. Then, doctrinally, the line ‘Seeing, touching, tasting are in thee deceived (*fallitur*)’ has seemed incompatible with Thomas’s repeated insistence that there is no *deceptio* in this sacrament (e.g. *ST IIIa* q.75 art.5 ad 2m).

As regards the delay, Claire Le Brun-Gouanvic, in her edition of William of Tocco’s *Ystoria sancti Thome de Aquino* (Toronto 1996), surely demonstrates that this text, by a much younger friar who actually knew Thomas in his last days at Naples, includes, in its fourth and final version (1323), the ‘*Adoro te*’, attributing it to him. Then, as regards the doctrine, it is sight, touch and taste that are ‘deceived’, precisely in contrast to hearing (the words of consecration), which is not a thought that Thomas would have self-evidently rejected.

On the other hand, in his excellent brief biography (*Albert & Thomas Selected Writings* 1988) Simon Tugwell OP declares Thomas’s authorship ‘very unlikely’. In the standard biography (1996), however, Jean-Pierre Torrell OP leans towards

authenticity, relying on the study by Robert Wielockx of both the manuscript tradition and the theology, in *Christ among the Medieval Dominicans*, the splendid volume edited by Kent Emery Jr and Joseph P. Wawrykow (1998). In *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, edited by Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (2012), Torrell states firmly that the authenticity, admittedly long suspected, 'is no longer in doubt thanks to the work of R. Wielockx'. (Torrell and Wielockx have been members of the Leonine Commission.)

For those attracted by the idea of 'Saint Thomas the poet', to pick up Marie-Dominique Chenu's phrase (*Introduction* 1950), the liturgical poetry helps to counteract the picture, still quite prevalent, of Aquinas the syllogizing rationalist. In his wonderful essay 'Poet and Priest', introducing poems on priesthood by Jorge Blajot SJ (1958), Karl Rahner asked whether Aquinas merely versified what he put more adequately in the *Summa*, or, rather, stated what he expounds in the *Summa* 'more originally, more pregnantly, and in this sense more truly' in the liturgical poems (*Theological Investigations* III, 1967).

More recently, in *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (2013), Denys Turner refers to the 'Adoro te' as 'one of Thomas's Eucharistic hymns' (while citing a line that actually comes from the 'Pange lingua'). Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, in his monumental *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ* (2013), declaring that Thomas's authorship is 'now widely accepted', goes on, explicitly in the wake of Robert Wielockx, to develop a rich account of the 'Adoro te' as the prayer that encapsulates Thomas's eucharistic theology. Olivier-Thomas Venard OP, in the third volume of his even more monumental reflections on 'literary Thomism', again citing Wielockx, also treats the 'Adoro te' as the key to Thomas's eucharistic theology (*Pagina sacra: Le passage de l'Écriture sainte à l'écriture théologique*, 2009).

Obviously the authenticity of the prayer remains in question. Intended originally as a private prayer, Murray thinks, the 'Adoro te' has long since become a widely shared and much loved expression of devotion to the real presence of Christ in the Mass, for example in the version by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Murray offers us his own new translation: a fitting conclusion to this very readable and accessible introduction to the commonly neglected poetic and contemplative side of St Thomas.

FERGUS KERR OP

**A COMPANION TO THE CATHOLIC ENLIGHTENMENT IN EUROPE** edited by Ulrich L. Lehner and Michael O'Neill Printy, Brill, Leiden, 2010, pp. 462, €170.00, hbk

The *Brill Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe* omits to define either Catholicism or the Enlightenment. This is understandable as to do either would be fatal to the enterprise itself. The main problems with this useful compilation are its oxymoronic title and this refusal to define terms. However, the failure of so many people both in the eighteenth century and now to see that a 'Catholic Enlightenment' is a contradiction in terms is an historical phenomenon in itself of great significance and in need of investigation. Nevertheless, one cannot help but feel that this investigation would be better conducted by scholars who appreciated its paradoxical nature from the outset or at least understood why it might be seen in this light.

The problem of paradox and definition is admitted if not precisely met head on in Ulrich Lehner's introduction, which is clearly sympathetic to the idea of 'Catholic Enlightenment'. Its study was, Lehner explains, impeded from the late