

is also not true that literacy was confined to state or temple administration. At Oxford, Michael C. A. Macdonald has done research on documents dating from the beginning of the 1st millennium BC onwards that were incised on palm-leaf stalks and sticks and have been discovered on the Arabian Peninsula. *Ezekiel* 37:16 may be referring to this form of writing. Such palm-leaf stalks were a cheap means for archiving prophetic oracles like on modern file cards.

We know from Assyrian sources how concerned the state administration was about the violent deaths of king Sargon and king Sennacherib. They were conceived as a divine punishment. It was crucial to find out what had aroused the god's wrath. One can hardly underestimate the shock provoked by the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom among their southern kin in Jerusalem. They saw it as a divine punishment. Scribes in 8th century Judah may have received either the prophet Hosea himself or some of his disciples among the refugees and edited a draft of the book of *Hosea* in order to warn their king and people and avoid divine judgment.

Apart from containing some good observations, above all the covenantal structure of Hosea's prophecy, the dissertation reveals the heap of hypotheses the 'new paradigm' is built on.

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THOMAS AQUINAS: FAITH, REASON, AND FOLLOWING CHRIST by Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Oxford University Press*, Oxford, 2013, pp. xii + 142, £60.00, hbk

Aquinas is often read as a university teacher concerned with what contemporary readers would characterize as philosophy. In this excellent and thoroughly judicious volume, however, Bauerschmidt makes it clear why that understanding of Aquinas is wrong, or at least open to serious challenge. He patiently explains how Aquinas, who spent only a short period of his life teaching at university level, should be viewed as chiefly concerned in most of his writings to teach Christian doctrine to believing Christians.

In establishing his case, Bauerschmidt does not overstate it, as some authors have done. He recognizes, for instance, that there are explicitly philosophical works by Aquinas, such as the *De Principiis Naturae*. But, so he plausibly holds, Aquinas was first and foremost a Dominican preaching friar whose concern to present sound Christian teaching was what chiefly motivated him as a writer. Aquinas, he shows, 'sought to properly relate faith and reason for the sake of following Christ. One risks misunderstanding Thomas's intellectual project unless one sees it as a form of discipleship' (p.x).

Bauerschmidt makes a compelling case of his own as he develops this thesis in detail, but he also appeals to the writings of the late Leonard Boyle OP and to Michel Mulcahy's book *First the Bow is Bent in Study: Dominican Education before 1350* (1998). I suspect that in doing so Bauerschmidt at one point commits himself to more than he ought as he argues that Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* was intended for 'run of the mill Dominicans', to use a phrase of Boyle. The *Summa Theologiae*, says Bauerschmidt, 'was not a university text, but was intended to serve the educational needs of the average Dominican friar, preparing him for the task of preaching and hearing confessions' (p.22). Given the complexity of the *Summa Theologiae*, and given its presentation of seriously technical arguments, many of which presume a considerable knowledge of Aristotle's writings, this

conclusion seems questionable. Yet Bauerschmidt himself more or less seems to agree that this is so because he later entertains the view that Aquinas might have intended the *Summa Theologiae* for elite Dominican readers destined for advanced studies and for teaching other Dominicans. Indeed, says Bauerschmidt, we are ‘perhaps on firmer ground’ in taking the *Summa Theologiae* to be ‘a teacher’s manual rather than a textbook, and in such a role a text that would be useful to Dominican teachers across a range of institutions’ (p.31). Aquinas was clearly happy to have the *Summa Theologiae* available for purchase at the University of Paris, which suggests that he thought of the work as at least marketable to university students.

Bauerschmidt’s book is a generous introduction to Aquinas’s thinking and compares very well to some other recent works on Aquinas such as Bernard McGinn’s *Thomas Aquinas’s ‘Summa Theologiae’* (2014) and Denys Turner’s *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (2013). Both of these are very fine volumes, and both of them correctly emphasize the extent to which Aquinas writes as a believing Christian. Yet Bauerschmidt is more concerned with details than they are. So, he presents some splendid and well documented chapters on Aquinas on faith and reason, God and the world, faith, the Incarnation, and human beings. In doing so, he reports at length, and with great erudition, on many of the arguments that Aquinas offers with respect to these topics. He also provides a fine account of how Aquinas’s thinking has been received over the centuries. His reading of Aquinas has evidently been influenced by authors such as Victor White, Herbert McCabe, and David Burrell. So, he stresses what we might call the ‘apophatic’ or negative character of Aquinas’s thinking about God. He argues, for example, that, for Aquinas, God is not something whose nature we understand, that God is not a ‘being among beings’, and so on. Contrary to what some writers have claimed, Aquinas does not present a treatment of God that depicts him as something alongside what is in the world with which we are familiar, as being the ‘top person’, so to speak. Aquinas’s approach to divinity is highly anti-anthropomorphic, and Bauerschmidt splendidly makes this clear. He also shows how, in conjunction with his theistic apophaticism, Aquinas treats of such important Christian doctrines as that of the Incarnation and the Trinity – but always with an eye on Aquinas as a preacher and not simply an academic concerned with technical questions for their own sake.

Bauerschmidt is very approving of Aquinas. Not in an ‘in your face’ or hec-toring way, but as someone expounding Aquinas with obvious sympathy. He is evidently a fan of Aquinas, though he self-deprecatingly refers to himself as a ‘Hillbilly Thomist’ (p.xi). My view is that his presentation of Aquinas’s thinking is, as Americans say, ‘on the nose’ again and again. Here are some choice quotations: ‘If we take Thomas’s prologue to the *Summa Theologiae* as indicating something of how he understood what he was up to, then it is clear that he saw himself as *catholicae veritatis doctor* — a teacher of Catholic truth’ (p.45); ‘Thomas is also clear that created causes are real causes’ (p.120); ‘Because God is the source of all perfections, our perfection terms can be used analogously of both God and creatures without our having to claim that we know what they mean when applied to God’ (p.139); ‘The knowledge of God that we have through faith is no less a seeing in a mirror, darkly [than the knowledge of God we are able to attain through natural reason]; in faith, no less than in reason, God’s essence remains unknowable to us’ (p.150); ‘The claim that “God” and “human being” are not contradictory terms in the way that “donkey” and “human being” are grows from the view that God is not a being alongside other beings, but rather the reason why there are beings at all’ (p.199); ‘It is helpful in understanding Aquinas’s account of the moral life not to isolate natural law from other sorts of law, nor to isolate law from powers, virtues, and graces’ (p.241). Readers of

Bauerschmidt's book will find many other quotations worth taking note of when it comes to what Aquinas has to say.

So I heartily commend his book as an excellent account of its subject matter. Insofar as I have reservations with it, I feel that it sometimes proceeds too quickly on the assumption that some key philosophical ideas of Aquinas pass muster. For example, I worry that Bauerschmidt does not refer to some of the problems that have been raised concerning Aquinas's theory of knowledge and his account of divine causality and human freedom. I also worry about what, given what Bauerschmidt says, is left of Aquinas's view of faith if, like many New Testament scholars, we do not suppose ourselves to have direct and historically accurate access to the words of Christ, or if we do not suppose we have as much access as Aquinas thinks we do. Aquinas holds that what he calls 'the articles of faith' cannot be demonstrated to be true, and he makes a very good case for this conclusion. So, on what does he take Christian faith to rest? He thinks that it rests on, and is derived from, the teachings of Jesus, who, as God, knows what he is talking about and is the 'primary teacher' of the faith. He holds that, for example, Christ effectively taught the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Incarnation. In taking this view, of course, Aquinas (among other things) is assuming a very strong position when it comes to the historicity of the gospels and our ability to determine this. But what if that position is open to question given developments and disagreements among biblical commentators that have arisen since Aquinas's time? Bauerschmidt rightly emphasizes Aquinas's role as a commentator on Scripture, and, with many other good things to say, he provides a sensitive account of Aquinas's inaugural lecture as a Parisian Master of Theology, which focuses on *Psalms* 103:13, which Aquinas reads as providing guidance for those professing *sacra doctrina* (holy teaching equivalent to the articles of faith derived, he thinks, from the Bible). On the other hand, Bauerschmidt also observes that 'Thomas's approach to the sacred text might seem somewhat alien to us today, conditioned as we are to a largely historical approach to biblical texts' (pp.62f). He adds that the approach of Aquinas's biblical commentaries 'common in the thirteenth century, may well seem unfamiliar to us today' (p.63). And Bauerschmidt is right here. When it comes to the gospels, at any rate, Aquinas's somewhat fundamentalist approach (one presuming literal and historical inerrancy) is unusual in some circles, though clearly not in others. And this leaves me wondering what confidence can be given to Aquinas's assurance that he knows that Christ taught the articles of faith. At any rate, there is a question here on which readers of Bauerschmidt's book might care to brood.

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GOD THE FATHER IN THE THEOLOGY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS by John Baptist Ku, *Peter Lang*, New York, 2013, [American University Studies: Series VII, Theology and Religion, vol. 324], pp. xvii + 378, £60.00, hbk

This work is a systematic and careful study of what St Thomas Aquinas says of God the Father. Obvious as this subject might seem, it appears that it has not been discussed extensively until now. In fact, as the author points out (p. 3), not just St Thomas's 'theology of God the Father', but the 'theology of God the Father' as such hardly exists as a separate area of study; witness the fact that we have 'Christology' and 'Pneumatology', but no corresponding word for this discipline, the term 'patrology' already being taken for another use.