

ST THOMAS AQUINAS: *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*. Vol. XXVII: Effects of Sin, Stain and Guilt (Ia IIae lxxxvi-lxxxix), by T. C. O'Brien. xviii + 154 pp. £2.75. 1974. Vol. XLVII: The Pastoral and Religious Lives (Ia IIae clxxxiii-clxxxix), by Jordan Aumann, O.P. xviii + 288 pp. £3.75. 1973. *Blackfriars*; London: *Eyre and Spottiswoode*; New York: *McGraw-Hill*.

As Dr O'Brien remarks in his introduction, Volume 27 of the new edition of the *Summa* needs to be set in the context of the preceding volume, of which it is really the sequel, for the effects of sin are closely linked with original sin, from which they ultimately derive. And it was a wise decision of the Editors to commit both volumes to the same translator. To many people today the topic of sin and its effects will no doubt seem old-fashioned and even morbid and to be matter rather for the psychologist than for the theologian, though it is said that some psychologists are considering seriously the possibility that what causes certain types of mental disturbance is not the feeling of guilt but guilt itself. Nobody who is concerned with moral questions will find it a waste of time to read these questions of the *Summa*, on the stain of sin, the guilt of punishment and mortal and venial sin; even the discussion 'whether the designation of venial sins as "wood, hay and stubble" is apposite' manifests important insights. But the main point which Dr O'Brien stresses in his voluminous notes and four appendices is that St Thomas's discussion is dominated by the theme of charity and what he describes as 'a moral of the good'; from the fourteenth century, he asserts, moral theology has been dominated by a quite alien concentration on sins and prohibitions, which has treated all who live under the New Law as if they were living under the Old (p. xvii). For St Thomas, he tells us, 'reason and eternal law are introduced into the explanation of sin, not to substitute external obligation for inner finality, but because of the proper and formal way in which man is subject to his own inner finalisation' (p. 101). Because of Christ, he asserts, St Thomas transforms the meaning of punishment as being contrary to the will into expiatory punishment, accepted through charity, 'The distinction is not a scholastic convenience. The whole Christian message and world-view are at issue' (p. 107). 'A sin is

morta! by opposition to charity rather than by opposition to specific commandments. . . . I is only because God has freely called man to live the life of grace and love that man can sin mortally' (pp. 110, 113). The final appendix comments on St Thomas's approach to the problem of the salvation of the unbeliever.

Volume 47, on the Pastoral and Religious Lives, comprises St Thomas's lengthy discussion of the 'States of Perfection', Fr Aumann points out that the limitation of these to the episcopal state and the religious state is largely determined by the thirteenth-century set-up of society and the controversies, especially about the religious orders, which were taking place at the time. He adds, however, that much that a modern reader would wish to find treated under this heading is in fact dealt with elsewhere in the *Summa*. And here again charity is central. 'The theological core of this volume', he writes, 'is the discussion of the state of perfection in general and of charity as the principal element of Christian perfection. Question 184 is at once a synthesis of Thomist spiritual theology and the crown of Thomist moral theology. . . . Only after he has established the universal doctrine on the interior perfection of charity does St Thomas turn to the external, social, juridical concept of "state of perfection" as a perpetual, exterior commitment to God and the Church by means of religious profession or episcopal ordination' (p. xvi). In the notes, which are plentiful, reference is made to a certain number of developments that have taken place since St Thomas's time, especially as regards non-solemn vows. And Fr Aumann concludes his introduction with this quotation from St Thomas's treatise *De perfectione vitae spiritualis*: 'The spiritual life consists principally in charity which, if one does not have it, he is reputed spiritually as nothing. Therefore *simpliciter* one is perfect in the spiritual life if he is perfect in charity'.

E. L. MASCALL

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION. A definition, by E. Bolaji Idowu. *SCM Press*, London, 1973. 228 pp. £3.25.

If loss of nerve be the occupational disease of theologians, the author of this book, a well-known Nigerian Methodist, is splendidly immune. Professor Bolaji Idowu is thoroughly in favour of religion and religions, particularly Christianity and African traditional religion.

The book would appear to be based on introductory lectures given by the author to students at Ibadan University, where he holds the chair of Religious Studies. It would, I think, be unfair to read this book as though it were either a textbook or an attempt to find