



Reviews

AQUINAS ON FAITH, REASON, AND CHARITY by Roberto Di Ceglie, *Routledge*, New York and Abingdon, 2022, pp. viii + 196, £120.00, hbk

Faith, according to St Thomas Aquinas, as Professor Di Ceglie reminds us, is ‘an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth at the command of the will moved by the grace of God’ (*Summa Theologiae* 2a 2ae q2 article 9). This fine book is the latest in Routledge Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, the first on Thomas Aquinas, or indeed on any single Christian thinker on his own, in this highly diverse series of heterogeneous monographs, each of which offers some challengingly original key idea. What Di Ceglie starts from is the observation that, whether by loyal admirers or resolute adversaries, the interplay between faith and reason in Aquinas’s thought is usually expounded, evaluated, and sometimes elaborated, but without explicitly mentioning the part assigned to the impact of divine grace on the believer’s will — that is to say, to the effect on the believer of the theological virtue of charity, which, in one of St Thomas’s favourite sayings, is ‘form’ of the virtues, including of course that of faith (2a 2ae q23 article 8). In short, a person’s faith in divinely revealed truths is ‘perfected’ (‘realised’, ‘actualised’, ‘enacted’, as we might say) in the context of charity, the love of God and neighbour, which is the ‘root’ and ‘mother’ of all the virtues, as Aquinas also says, thinking analogically and more metaphorically.

The book derives from recently completed doctoral research in the Divinity School at the University of Edinburgh, supervised by Professor David Fergusson (departed now to the Regius chair in Cambridge). The author has taught at the Pontifical Lateran University in Vatican City for almost twenty years. It would be a mistake, however, to expect his work to represent some version of neo-Thomism, welcome or otherwise, a supposedly typical product of a long-time staff member at what is colloquially known in Rome as ‘the Pope’s University’. Di Ceglie cites Fabro, Gilson, Mandonnet, Maritain, and other such major authorities in the Thomistic tradition, extending to Ralph McInerny, Anthony Kenny, John Wippel, and Eleonore Stump. He is completely at ease in their work. But it is obvious that he found the three summers which he and his wife spent at Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana, of decisive importance for his construal of Aquinas. To locate his place in the cartography of Aquinas scholarship even more specifically, he is greatly indebted to John Jenkins, in particular to his *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (1997), an

Oxford doctorate). He grants that he is not the first to highlight the crucial role that affectivity plays in Aquinas's account of the act of faith. Besides the Jenkins book he mentions John Lamont's *Divine Faith* (2004), another Oxford doctorate. Older hands may be pleased to be reminded of *Neutrality and Commitment* (1968), Basil Mitchell's inaugural lecture in the philosophy of religion chair at Oxford, in which we explore the relationship between the ideal of objectivity in rational argument and the experience of faith as trust in divine intervention. Moreover, it is a pleasure to find the Cambridge philosopher, Renford Bambrough, cited also (see page 90), with another analytical-philosophical treatment of 'Reason and faith' (1992), somewhat indebted to Wittgenstein. Above all, however, Di Ceglie declares what he owes to conversations with Alvin Plantinga, the eminent Calvinist philosopher then teaching at Notre Dame, whose *Warranted Christian Belief* (2000) he translated into Italian (2014), surely the most influential book in recent Anglo-American analytical philosophy of religion. Indeed, the first sentence of *Aquinas on Faith, Reason, and Charity* carries a quotation from Plantinga. In short, this book is the product of an author who combines mastery of current analytical philosophy as well as of the last hundred years of Thomistic scholarship.

In this journal, with Di Ceglie's article "Aquinas on Faith and Charity" (*New Blackfriars* July 2021: 550–569) we have a very useful trailer for the book, so richly footnoted that it would count even as a summary of the whole. Putting it very simply, the basic idea is that, in the considerable shelf of books about faith and reason, including those by widely read non-Thomists like John Hick and Richard Swinburne, the perspective is usually set by natural theology, understood as purely rational arguments ('proofs') for the existence of God, hailing them as the preamble to, and even necessary foundation of, Christian faith — leaving out Aquinas's emphasis on the effect of divine grace on a person's will. Faith, in 'the Thomist- Catholic analysis', as Hick confidently asserts (see page 88), is 'intellectualist' — a reductive description projected on the characterisation of faith with which Aquinas starts his analysis but which is regularly taken as not fundamentally ungrounded.

Thus, while Aquinas's thought is customarily regarded as a uniquely exemplary balance between faith and reason, commentators, as the opening chapters of Di Ceglie's book demonstrate, often pass over his inclusion of affectivity (the will), and even the climactic reference to divine causality ('the grace of God') in the constitution of an act of Christian faith. Thus, if we think of faith not only or anyway principally as assenting to revealed truths (understood as beliefs) but pay attention as well to what leads and sustains believing at all — namely, the communion with God that is granted in the gift of the theological virtue of charity — then the role of rational investigation will aim at confirming what the believer already loves. In case of contradiction between rational argument and revealed truth, as Aquinas often says, reason must be considered mistaken and the

rational investigation be started anew. In any case, as he says (*Summa contra gentiles* 1, 4), ‘if this truth [the divine revelation] were left solely as a matter of enquiry for human reason... few would possess knowledge of God’. While belief in the existence of God is the result of philosophical argument (the Five Ways), most believers in practice take it as a matter of faith, so Aquinas explicitly held. Moreover, by simply reminding us of the role of will and divine grace in his account of the theological virtue of faith, Di Ceglie clears Aquinas of the widely accepted Protestant criticism (Arvin Vos as well as early Plantinga, see page 25) that, by supposedly placing confidence uniquely in the act of intellect which is assent to revealed truth, the conversion of heart on the believer’s part is damagingly compromised if not quite overlooked. By reminding us of the role he attributes to the effect of divine grace on the believer’s will, Di Ceglie simply gives us St Thomas Aquinas’s full analysis of the reality of Christian faith. Finally, as the intellect’s assent to divinely revealed truths is brought about by the impact of divine grace on the believer’s will, to quote Aquinas’s characterisation of faith once again, this does not diminish the need for activity on the part of reason. On the contrary, as Di Ceglie insists in concluding: Christians with a faith that is a virtue granted by God, occurring as ‘perfected’ by charity, would love exploring whatever invites engagement by our powers of reasoning. In the final footnote, we are referred to recent debates on the effects of faith in the constitution of the intellectual virtues (Grant Macaskill and Kent Dunnington) — ‘Aquinas beyond Aquinas’ (page 159), as Di Ceglie puts it, perhaps somewhat too cautiously at the end of this splendid book, at least for readers who are well versed in the ‘virtue ethics’ of St Thomas Aquinas.

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FAMILY AND IDENTITY IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES [Studies in Cultural Contexts of the Bible, 7] by Bruno J. Clifton, Brill, Schöning, Leiden, 2022, pp. xii + 225, €99.00, hbk

I should probably start with a disclaimer: the author is Bruno J. Clifton OP, a brother of the English Province whom I know well. Indeed, he was kind enough to mention me in the Preface of this book, and I recall – it must have been fifteen or more years ago – teaching him Old Testament at Blackfriars, Oxford. This is very much a case of the student surpassing the teacher, and the book represents the fruits of many years study at Oxford, the Biblicum in Rome, and then Cambridge. If this initial offering