

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

entirely new approaches to the subject. The purpose of introductory lectures should be, not so much the provision of information, as rather the creation of the attitudes of mind required by the subject, and its siting with regard to the students' previous academic landscape. From this point of view, Professor Bolaji Idowu must be a lecturer of considerable calibre, since what were presumably his spoken words survive the transition to cold print remarkably well, although the hammering-home of points, necessary for, and even enjoyable by, a lecture audience, can seem excessive and repetitious. Thus, a little too much space is surely given to questions of definition, and many readers will be disappointed that only one chapter is given to the substance of African religion.

A great deal of value can be found in what Professor Bolaji Idowu has to say, particularly with regard to the attitude of mind required by any student of religion. He argues forcefully against those who would generalise about African religion from evidence referring to limited areas of the continent, or who would seek to impose one model, whether ancestorship or animism or the Bantu philosophy, on Africa as a whole. Yet he seems not wholly to maintain his own 'presuppositionless' stance, and would appear to be setting up a mono-

theistic model of African traditional religion, very similar to that proposed by the Kenyan scholar, Professor J. S. Mbiti. One may certainly agree that much of the evidence for African theism has been unduly neglected in the past; but Professor Bolaji Idowu's readiness, on finding particular practices which do not fit this pattern, to condemn them as the result of 'priestcraft', which 'is quite capable of inventing spurious objects of worship' (p. 173) makes one feel very uneasy. More than this, the current of thought represented by Professors Bolaji Idowu and Mbiti, while surely right to emphasise the riches of African belief and worship, seems curiously to neglect the elements of criticism, scepticism, secularity, and even iconoclasm, which are surely just as much a part of the African tradition.

Readers outside Africa will find this book useful as helping to show how Africans see their religious heritage at the present time: but it would be fairer to see it as part of the teaching work of Professor Bolaji Idowu and his Department, and to join with the author in his hope for many studies of African traditional religion, carried out by those who are native speakers of the languages used in worship and belief.

ADRIAN EDWARDS, C.S.Sp.

DURHAM PRIORY 1400-1450, by R. B. Dobson (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, third series, vol. 6). Cambridge University Press, 1973. xiii + 428 pp. £7.20.

Dr Dobson has written a pleasantly old-fashioned book. It is less of a monograph than the title suggests, since he begins with an account of the legend of St Cuthbert and the establishment of his cult at Durham, and constantly refers to the periods before and after 1400-1450. Indeed he will sometimes dip into the archives of the post-Dissolution chapter of Durham cathedral. His study of the central fifty years gives a comprehensive, though not exhaustive, account of all aspects of the life and organisation of a great Benedictine monastery. These include relations and contacts with bishops, kings, popes, lords, townsmen and tenants. The survey cannot be exhaustive because the material is too rich and so much research remains to be done, as he points out. There is still no systematic economic and social history of this northern area in the late middle ages. The Durham records are abundant and still largely unpublished. Earlier scholars have necessarily used them in a partial and uncritical way. Dr Dobson has an admirable mastery of the archives, and of medieval literary sources, as well as of the vast amount of secondary material, much of it scattered in journals on local history. This is a ripe work, solid and yet written with

enthusiasm. Pressure to publish often forces the university teacher to rush into print before he is ready. Dobson has contented himself with writing specialist articles to prepare the ground and has given his D.Phil. thesis time to grow from a sapling into a gigantic tree. It is comforting to find that this can still happen.

The theme has unity. We watch a conservative body of men passing through a period of equilibrium. The age of growth had passed. The number of monks was stabilised, of set policy, to about seventy, of whom some thirty lived temporarily or permanently in dependent houses. Economic conditions obliged the monks to turn themselves into rentier landlords; even the tithes from their appropriated churches were farmed out to collectors. They adapted their budget to a static income, seldom getting into the red and finding means to carry out an ambitious building programme of repair and reconstruction of their living quarters. Litigation to defend the rights of St Cuthbert continued, but on a less heroic scale. A good neighbour relationship, secular rather than spiritual in tone, was reached with the bishop of Durham, who had been the