

penance; much could be said for taking grace or virtue as hinges. There is a striking statement, worth pursuing, that post-Tridentine theology down to our times has completely dismissed the ecclesial dimension of sin. Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* n. 11 was the turning point. The treatment of the virtue of justice, covering such topics as contrition, confession and satisfaction, will dovetail into the canonical use of those terms.

The second part of the book deals with the sacrament. One wonders why the sacrament is described as that of reconciliation, given that both the Latin and the Eastern Codes call it the sacrament of penance. Moreover the author, unlike the Codes, persists in talking about mortal sin: the reader will need some explanation for the divergence from the term grave sin. There are chapters on the sacrament itself, on the minister, and on the penitent; reminiscent of the three corresponding chapters in the 1983 Code. But there are also separate chapters on the power of the keys and on the sacramental seal.

The canons we have today still contain many technicalities, some of them affecting the validity of the sacrament and others exposing the confessor to severe penalties. In these matters, Cuschieri is a good guide, combining canonical exegesis with wider theological concerns. The frequent comparisons with the 1990 Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches are instructive. Some particularly fascinating questions raised by Cuschieri concern the validity of the deprecatory form of absolution, the reservation of sins by a bishop, and whether the word *licite* in canon 967 § 3 of the 1983 Code should really be *valide*.

All those training to be priests (and some already ordained?) should read the chapter on the power of the keys, which situates the intricate rules on faculties for confession in their ecclesiological context. Experience shows, alas, that priests who are religious have not all grasped that when they are transferred from one house to another in different dioceses they are deprived of their faculties for confession (p.238). Incidentally, are all priests as clear as Cuschieri that a confessor could be soliciting, in the canonical sense, if he advises the penitent contrary to Catholic teaching on sexuality (p. 276)?

Both in terms of theological reflection and of practical casuistry, there is much to be gained from reading this unexpected book on what could well be the most delicate and fragile of the sacraments.

ROBERT OMBRES OP

PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS AND THE METAPHYSICS OF AQUINAS by Fran O'Rourke. **STUDIEN UND TEXTE ZUR GEISTESGESCHICHTE DES MITTELALTERS, XXXII.** E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1992. Pp.xvi + 300. £53.00.

Pseudo-Dionysius (or Denys/Dionysius the Areopagite) was once commonly thought to be the Athenian convert of St Paul mentioned in Acts 17:34. Current scholarly opinion reckons that he was a fifth or sixth century Christian, probably writing in Syria. Whatever the truth of the

matter, there is no question but that he had a considerable theological influence from the seventh century to the thirteenth century and beyond, comparable even to writers like Augustine and Boethius. Themes and teachings to be found in his writings (chiefly *The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*) crop up in the work of Scotus Eriugena, Peter Lombard, Hugh of Saint Victor, Robert Grosseteste, Albert the Great, and Bonaventure. They are also to be found in the writings of Aquinas. Denys is one of his most quoted authorities. Aquinas even devoted a whole book to Denys—a commentary on *The Divine Names* (*In Librum Beati Dionysii De Divinis Nominibus*). Nobody concerned to understand Aquinas properly can afford to neglect Denys and the role which his teachings play in Aquinas's overall output.

A complete English edition of Denys's works appeared in 1987 as part of the Paulist/S.C.M. series 'The Classics of Western Spirituality'. Following the appearance of this text English readers were treated to Andrew Louth's excellent study *Denys the Areopagite* (London, 1989). But there is little on Denys and Aquinas as a pair which is readily available to readers who are unable or unwilling to do some hard research in libraries. There are a number of unpublished theses. There are also many articles in journals and collections. As far as I know, however, the only book-length study of Denys and Thomas apart from that of Fran O'Rourke is J. Durantel, *Saint Thomas et le Pseudo-Denis* (Paris, 1918). So the present book fills a definite gap. And, quite apart from that (not minor) fact, it is a splendid study in its own right. Readers who want to see how Denys and Aquinas may be connected will learn a great deal from it. They will also find themselves with plenty to aid them in research of their own, should they choose to pursue it.

O'Rourke's aim is to cover all the main points of contact between Denys and Aquinas. So his emphasis falls on our knowledge of God and on notions such as being, goodness, causality and creation. Some readers of Denys, especially those who find a key to him in 'liturgical' matters, might wonder about the extent to which O'Rourke's account of the relationship between Denys and Aquinas does enough to convey an accurate sense of Denys in his own right. And some readers of O'Rourke might wonder whether the impression given by him of the relationship between Denys and Aquinas does less than justice to the fact that "Dionysian" teachings found in Aquinas can nearly always be related to those of other writers (in particular, Aristotle, Avicenna, and Maimonides). But there is no doubting the fact that Aquinas saw himself as able to draw on and agree with Denys; and O'Rourke leaves one seeing in detail how this is so. He also shows how one may read Aquinas as refining or amending what he found in Denys.

Denys is not exactly popular reading today. Like Aquinas, however, he deals in a theologically penetrating way with some key theological and philosophical issues. O'Rourke's treatment of both authors shows that he believes this and is anxious to convey his belief. His clear and enthusiastic style of writing (rare in volumes belonging to the series in

which it appears, most of which, scholarly though they often are, are mind-blowingly boring to read) does as much as his scholarship to indicate that what he writing about is not to be treated lightly. Just because his book has this virtue, I think it worth adding a criticism related to the virtue. This amounts to wishing that O'Rourke had done more than he has to show how what Denys and Aquinas say can be said in a different way to readers unfamiliar with theses familiar to experts on medieval texts. I am thinking, for example, of ideas (ascribable to Denys and Aquinas) like *omne agens agit sibi simile* (which O'Rourke renders as 'every cause necessarily produces an effect bearing a resemblance to itself'). The thesis seems *prima facie* false. Glaringly false. But, as O'Rourke knows very well, the most likely objections to it based on the *prima facie* appearance will not engage with what the thesis is propounding. Commentators on Denys and Aquinas therefore owe their readers an explanation of why this is so. O'Rourke, I fear, does not have as much of an eye as he might on the debt in question here. And, more often than I would wish, he settles for repeating, without acknowledgement of difficulties concerning them, formulae common to Denys and Aquinas.

This, however, is a criticism which is probably irrelevant given the readership of the book which I presume to be intended by the publisher. I presume that Brill expects it to sell to teachers who specialize in medieval theology and philosophy (whose needs will force them to beggar themselves and spend £53.00 on it) and to libraries, in which students of what is now a very specialized field may consult it (though, doubtless because of publication procedures, they will find its bibliography lacking some relevant books published in the last few years—e.g. Louth's *Denys the Areopagite* and Wayne Hankey's *God in Himself* [Oxford, 1987]). But the criticism I make is relevant if, as I think, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* is a generally splendid book which, to a high degree, is more than a merely historical and scholarly essay.

BRIAN DAVIES OP

LONERGAN by Frederick E. Crowe S.J. *Geoffrey Chapman*, London, 1992. xiv + 146 pp.

Fr. Crowe is not only the most lucid of Lonergan's expositors, but also the most well-informed, having had a close personal acquaintance with his subject for more than forty years, as well as possessing an unrivalled knowledge of his writings both published and unpublished. In this book he outlines the progress of Lonergan's thought against the background of his life. One can see good reasons for this procedure, as it was Lonergan's way to stress the mental processes with which the scientist or scholar worked rather than finished results; and yet I cannot help feeling that it was in some ways regrettable, given that the main focus of