

THE PROMISE OF CHRISTIAN HUMANISM: THOMAS AQUINAS ON HOPE by Dominic Doyle, *Crossroad Publishing*, New York, 2011, pp. 236, \$34.95

Born in London, with his first degree from the University of Cambridge, the author teaches systematic theology at Boston College, Massachusetts. The book, one of the winners of the 2010 John Templeton Award for Theological Promise, explores the theological foundations of 'Christian humanism', doing so by bringing Thomas Aquinas's conception of the theological virtue of hope into conversation with recent work particularly by Charles Taylor and Nicholas Boyle.

The plot would not be unfamiliar to those who saw the author's review (in *The Heythrop Journal* April 2004) of Boyle's great book *Who Are We Now? Christian Humanism and the Global Market from Hegel to Heaney* (1998), or the essays, 'Retrieving the Hope of Christian Humanism: A Thomistic Reflection on the Thought of Charles Taylor and Nicholas Boyle' (*Gregorianum* 2009) and 'On *Spe salvi*: A Thomistic Critique of an Augustinian Encyclical' (*Theological Studies* 2010), which bring into the argument Taylor's Edinburgh Gifford Lectures (*A Secular Age*, published in 2007) and Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical letter ('Saved in hope', also 2007). Since these highly respected periodicals are not easily available outside theological libraries, it is good to have these challenging essays collected and developed in this accessibly written and thoroughly documented book. As admirers of the work of the young Cambridge scholar Emile Perreau-Saussine, shockingly dead last year aged only 37, we may be permitted to suggest that the debate might be fruitfully augmented with the reflections on *une spiritualité démocratique*, extending to Alasdair MacIntyre as well as Taylor, which, sadly, we shall not see fully developed.

The topic is obviously of great interest. Doyle's goal is to demonstrate that belief in a transcendent God does not inhibit our flourishing as human beings, as a number of observers these days would claim. No doubt, the very idea of 'humanism' in a professedly Christian form would excite the vociferous pack of anti-Christian polemicists to paroxysms of derision. More worryingly, in another corner of the arena, there is an influential bevy of Catholic intellectuals, not only in North America, who scorn the very idea of 'Christian humanism' as camouflage for 'liberalism', 'secularism', and other such supposedly nefarious tendencies in the post Vatican II Church. Doyle's book, in effect, offers a very sensible and attractively argued defence of a decent and acceptable Christian humanism.

The argument goes as follows. The analyses of 'secularization' and 'globalization', by Taylor and Boyle respectively, suggest how we might understand what it is like to be Christian these days in the liberal-democratic West. (We are not concerned with the fate of Christian minorities in the rest of the world.) Both Taylor and Boyle rely on Hegel, not on Thomas Aquinas, as Catholic thinkers have usually done hitherto. Moreover, neither Taylor nor Boyle claims any expertise in theology, beyond their allegiance as lay Catholics. In contrast, Doyle invokes Jacques Maritain and John Courtney Murray, Thomistically inspired thinkers with more or less explicit Christologically grounded versions of humanism. The motivating insight of Doyle's book is that their faith in the doctrine of the Incarnation needs to be broadened to include the divinely infused virtue of hope, understood as desire for the future, difficult, yet possible, good of eternal happiness with God.

This takes us to Thomas Aquinas: first an exposition of his doctrine of creation, (chapter 3) and then detailed exegesis of his treatment of the infused virtue of hope (chapter 4). The 'humanism' that pervades Aquinas's theology, it will not surprise old hands to hear, rests on his metaphysical vision of the non-competitive relationship of creation to Creator (God does not eliminate human freedom); secondly, on his philosophical claim that we naturally desire to see God; and

thirdly, on the axiom that God's grace perfects human nature. Since hope is only one of the triad of theological virtues, Doyle situates it alongside faith and charity, thus giving a richer account of its meaning and function within Aquinas's theological system (where it does not receive all that much attention in terms of space). All this is clearly expounded.

The virtue of hope, understood in these theological terms, captures what is meant by religious transcendence – transcendence as cruciform and eschatological (chapter 5). Finally, secular hopes are sustained and their reasonableness protected by eschatological hope (chapter 6). Hope, in effect, incorporates into the movement into the divine reality secular longings for the world, truth, goodness, and so on, as how the believer attains the goal of eternal happiness.

There are too many interesting suggestions in this book to comment on. In a coda Doyle addresses the conflict of interpretation over *Gaudium et spes*, the sometimes maligned 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World', recalling that, as it says programmatically, 'nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in the hearts [of the followers of Christ]' and, correlatively, 'it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear'. Doyle takes up the challenge laid down by Tracey Rowland's *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II*, in which she synthesizes Radical Orthodoxy, Alasdair MacIntyre, and the *Communio* school of post-Balthasarian theology, seeking to remedy the Thomistic tradition's supposedly inadequate grasp of the significance of culture for moral formation. Her more culturally aware 'post-modern Augustinian Thomism' would ground theological engagement with modern culture in specifically Christian 'cult'. Doyle refuses to share what he takes to be her 'global rejection of modern culture'. There is something positive to learn from modern culture, he contends, in the wake of thinkers like Maritain, as well as Taylor and Boyle.

Sketching another implication of his study of Aquinas Doyle considers the significance of religious fundamentalism. A distinction that St Thomas makes is illuminating: 'Hope', he says, 'considers the good to be sought; security regards an evil to be avoided' (*ST* I-II.40.8 ad 1). Made in passing as it of course is, this distinction, Doyle suggests, captures the difference in sensibility and outlook between a humanist Christianity and Christian fundamentalism: each reacts to the same radically unsettling changes in modern identity, the fundamentalist typically by seeking security, a Christian humanist, on the other hand, facing the same changes, drawing on the divine virtue of hope. Doyle contrasts trusting acceptance of providence with fearful avoidance of history – not that he expects this suggestion to persuade any fundamentalist. At best he hopes to have articulated reasons for rejecting the argument that humanism and Christianity are absolutely incompatible. This he has certainly done, on the basis of a convincing account of the virtue of hope in the thought of St Thomas Aquinas.

FERGUS KERR OP

THE RENEWED CHURCH: THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL'S ENDURING TEACHING ABOUT THE CHURCH by Kenneth D. Whitehead, *Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University*, 2009, pp. xvii + 260, \$25

The title stems from the heartfelt wish expressed by Pope John XXIII at the outset of the Second Vatican Council that the Council would lead to a renewal of the Church. The Council has occurred and has been followed by the Pontificates of two particular Popes, John Paul II and Benedict XVI – in the words of the author, 'men of Vatican II' – under whose inspired leadership the work of the