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THE BETTER WAY

A chance word shunts me into the darkened maze  
Of near-forgotten past.—Soon memory flings  
Its way aback the laughing years, the days;  
And scenes leap up, and quaint recall of things,  
Of joys, of loves, of sorrows,—these I find  
Far sweeter now. At times it almost seems  
They are in breathless haste to lure my mind  
And shackle its senses to perennial dreams.

One word shakes off the dream. For, from above  
Christ calls . . . the eyes . . . the wounds . . . our sins . . . our fall.  
For ankind this? I'll work for Thee, O Love—  
To these, to Thee. This rule sufficeth all.

So brightly is the Light of Heaven gleaming  
Who could content himself with childish dreaming?

—SISTER ISABELLE CLARE '51

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## RECRUDESCENCE OF REASON

Throughout the ages there have been many saints—saints of every clime, of every culture, of every country—men differing in background, in disposition, and in talents. From out this myriad of the pious, each generation selects one as its special patron: each generation instinctively seeks the saint for which its need is the greatest: each generation turns to the saint who has what it most lacks, who contradicts it most. "So", maintains G. K. Chesterton, "as the nineteenth century clutched at the Franciscan romance, precisely because it had neglected romance, the twentieth century is already clutching at the Thomist rational theology, because it has neglected reason." In the very blindness of our irrationality we are drawn to the great Scholastic of the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas.

Thomas Aquinas was born near Naples in 1226, the seventh son of Landulf, Count of Aquino. Though from childhood it was



apparent that Thomas was destined for the Church, the great feudal house of Aquino, one of the foremost families of Europe (Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor, was Thomas' second cousin), was shocked when he became a begging Friar, a Dominican, for at that time the 'beggars' were held in but small repute by the nobility. His brothers seized him as he was travelling to France to begin his training and imprisoned him for a lunatic. Eventually, however, he escaped, some say with the aid of his sisters.

After he was safely established with the Dominicans, Thomas went to Cologne to study under St. Albert the Great. Because he was so slow and seemed such a dunce, he was soon nicknamed 'the Dumb Ox of Sicily'. It was probably Albertus Magnus himself who first saw signs of the youth's genius. Certain it is that when Albert was summoned to Paris to defend the Friars, he took Thomas with him as his assistant. It was this storm against the Friars which led also to Thomas' friendship with Bonaventure, the Franciscan. Shortly afterwards Thomas and Bonaventure successfully defended in Rome the freedom of the Friars. Thomas was already famous, but his philosophy was yet to come.

Christian philosophy had begun by being somewhat Platonist in outlook. Partly through Greek influence, partly through a sublime asceticism, the early Christian ages had disregarded the body almost completely, and had come near to Manichean mysticism. Thomas Aquinas thought it only right to correct Plato by an appeal to Aristotle. This, of course, went against the grain of many pious men of the time, especially the Augustinians. St. Thomas faced the gigantic task of convincing these men that an Aristotelian could be a Christian. In time he succeeded, and the philosophy of Aristotle and St. Thomas received the official sanction of the Church.

It was over the question of the unity of truth that St. Thomas fought his greatest philosophical battle. Siger of Brabant, a professor at the University of Paris, maintained that there are two truths—the supernatural and the natural. The Church must be right theologically on the supernatural level, but she may be wrong scientifically on the natural level, he said. St. Thomas pointed out that faith, because it is truth, cannot contradict science, for there is only one truth. Some truths we may know by our natural powers of reason, but others surpass the power of



the human intellect, and these we must accept on faith. There can be no conflict between religion and science, though many misguided modern materialists have claimed the contrary.

After returning from the combat with Siger of Brabant, St. Thomas told one of his companions that he could write no more, and soon afterwards he died of illness at the comparatively early age of forty-eight. Had he not been thinking combatively even when he was not writing, Thomas Aquinas could not possibly have written as many tomes as he did in his short life. He left, for all time to come, a lucrative legacy of priceless wisdom. He bequeathed us a philosophy of common sense which can guide us out of the labyrinthine maze of uncommon absurdity which in this modern age passes for philosophy. This is the age when we boast of our supermen, our superbombs, and our supermaterialism. Would that we could boast of our Thomism—the superphilosophy!

The difference between St. Thomas and the Neo-Platonists of his day was merely a difference of emphasis. But in a later age arose an extremist who placed far too much emphasis in the wrong place—Martin Luther. For four centuries the mountain of sophistry raised by Luther blocked St. Thomas from sight, but now it is disintegrating. Luther's theology—one of complete pessimism—has long since disappeared, and his influence as well is now waning. There is a resurgence of interest in the way of truth. Men are beginning to realize their precarious plight, and are seeking the alleviation of the pungent pangs of a barren mind and a famished heart. They will eventually come to realize that the only true standard of morals in our social existence is the reasonable, rational and realistic philosophy of St. Thomas.

Today the depressed and oppressed peoples of the world are in the dark depths of doubt and disillusionment, despair and death. They can be revived only by a religious rebirth and regeneration, only by a renaissance and resurrection of the philosophy and theology of Life, only by a recrudescence of reason. Our aim, as Catholics, must be to strive for the glorious dawn of Thomism, when its lucent beams will dash across the firmament, dispelling the shadowy gloom of the prince of darkness by their resplendent radiance, bathing the whole world in the effulgence of the philosophia perennis, the Everlasting Philosophy.

—MARK MacGUIGAN '51