

'one pious practice', with this growth in the image of God. But not only is this silence and simplicity an ascetic discipline which facilitates the work of God in the soul, restoring his image, it is itself a reflection of the simplicity of the divine nature. . . . Parallel with this reflection of the unity and simplicity of the divine nature . . . goes a reflection of the immutability and eternity of God in so far as the will is continuously united to the will of God.

The presence of God, union with God, the image of God—each implies the other: as the soul grows in one the others are more perfectly realized in it. The image of God, conformity to the Word made flesh, assimilation to the life of the Blessed Trinity in the depths of the soul, all are coherent in the simple, unified vision of Sister Elizabeth. Miss Hilda Graef writes of her Trinitarian Prayer, and Fr Thomas, O.D.C., of her as 'The House of God'. We miss perhaps her great theme of *Laus Gloriam* in which she described her life, the life of every good Christian, as 'the praise of glory'—she was nothing if not Pauline in her theology of the spiritual life.

Sursum Corda, the Australian review for priests and religious, gives us another good number with its August issue. Of particular note is a theological article on the Mass as the same sacrifice as that of Calvary.



COMMENT

A Text-Book for Beginners

MOST lay people regard the *Summa Theologica* with awe, if only because of the space it takes up on a bookshelf. And few would ever dream of attempting to read it. Yet St Thomas himself described it as a text-book for beginners. Indeed, as one comes to know and love it, it reveals St Thomas as a great and most patient teacher as well as one of the world's greatest thinkers. One can almost hear the master dealing with his students; here are the simple examples, often, like the 'whiteness of Socrates', over-worked; here is the skilful repetition of basic arguments, so that the student is constantly being reminded of what he ought to know.

And it is precisely as a text-book for beginners that the *Summa* is being used today in the University of London Extension Courses given on the *Teaching of Aquinas*, year after year, by a Dominican lecturer. In fact, St Thomas would probably be surprised as well

as delighted if he could stroll into the National Book League on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings in the winter, and see the odd assortment of beginners for whom his teaching has such a fascination that some veterans have attended one course ever since it began, over thirty years ago.

Here, lawyers and accountants, business men and men of letters mingle with social workers and teachers, artists and housewives. Many of these beginners have no pretensions to learning, yet they derive as much pleasure and profit from the course as those with more academic background. Almost every age-group is represented; there are young men and women on the threshold of their careers, those who are well established in their professions, and at least three grandmothers.

So great is their enthusiasm that a high proportion of the students take the annual examination set by the University. Last year, there were twenty candidates: all passed, six with merit and five with distinction; and among the distinctions were two grandmothers, among the merits several housewives.

To them all, as they learn to read the text, at first with difficulty, then with ease and pleasure, St Thomas becomes a constant source of inspiration. One student, with no academic training whatever, declared: 'It's well worth swotting for the exam. Even if I only know one tiny bit of the *Summa* really well, I find that my whole mind is lit up; it's not just that I've been taught to think rightly about some of the truths of the Faith: I am richer all round: I get so much more out of everything I read and all that I do.'

The study of this text-book for beginners has become so popular that this year two courses will be given, one on the Trinity, principally for veterans, and one on Law and Justice.*

The object of the course is not to cram the beginner with theology, but, by the careful and patient study of one treatise at a time, to introduce him to St Thomas, and to teach him to think. Then, if he is lucky enough to possess even a few volumes of the *Summa*, these will no longer gather dust on the shelves, and St Thomas himself will be his teacher.

* Particulars and syllabus of these courses are obtainable from Miss D. Finlayson, 23 Primrose Hill Road, N.W.3.