

may be more profitably made if the exposition of each article be read in conjunction with the parallel passage in the *Summa Theologica*, I-II, qq. 55-67. Even a cursory comparison will suffice.

Much like the *Summa*, this *Question* is not formally a philosophical inquiry; it is a supernatural, theological study in the fullest sense of the word. St. Thomas makes use of the rational method of Aristotle, but he canonizes the Philosopher's conclusions so that the outcome is clearly a question of Christian virtue and not properly of the acquired habits known to the pagan Greeks. Primarily a means, virtue is ordered to the attainment of supreme happiness, the Beatific Vision, which is man's true end and the true perfection of the Christian life.

The young translator's splendid Introduction provides a wealth of information for the reader who is not acquainted with St. Thomas and the scholastic method in general or who is not particularly familiar with the Common Doctor's less publicized works. Its scholarly invitation to the general reading of St. Thomas' works lends a charm that will entice readers of varied intellectual ability.

Parallel with the praise of the translator's Introduction, there runs that of the reader's gratitude for the many references and appendices which are not found in the original Latin text. The background and the relative doctrines of the matter of each article besides consolidating the doctrine of the virtues in the mind of the reader add further proof to the argument that this translation of St. Thomas' *Virtues in General* is a book worth reading.

E.G.F.

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**The Betrothed** (*I Promessi Sposi*). By Alessandro Manzoni. Translated by Archibald Colquhoun. New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1951. pp. 592. \$5.00.

It is superfluous to recommend a book that has already passed through more than five hundred editions, and rash to try to judge a book that has been praised and attacked by the best thinkers and writers of every shade of religious belief and philosophical and political persuasion of more than a century. *I Promessi Sposi* has been a classic since the eighteen thirties, ranking among the three or four greatest novels ever written. However, even among these three or four, it has a certain distinction, cause for blame to the infidel, but to the Catholic, cause to conclude that it is the only "greatest novel" deserving the name. This distinction is a simple and basic one; Manzoni knows that the fundamental issue

of human life is Divine grace. No matter how much richness and subtlety an author commands in drawing his human characters nor with what breadth he sets the stage, if God is not the beginning and end of the story, its meaning is lost. The meaning in this story is never lost.

Yet, *The Betrothed* is not merely another good Catholic story. God is always in His place, but He is not *Deus ex machina*. Nothing of the endlessly varied story of human motivation, nothing of the reaches of human understanding and emotion is lost to the telling of the tale. It is, in fact, almost certainly because of this keen appreciation of the workings of mind and heart that Manzoni's book, thoroughly Catholic, was widely welcomed and finally everywhere exalted, only in spite of its spiritual content, by a European literary milieu dominated by minds openly suspicious and avowedly hostile to the Faith and the Church of Rome. Praise from enemies carries weight. So, a Catholic picking up this book can promise himself the deep satisfaction of a work combining faith with artistry beyond the common degree.

The translation is complete and flows easily. While the translator admits, as all translators do, that "the cadence, the subtlety, the terseness, of the original prose" cannot be reproduced, for those who cannot read the original this is an excellent alternative.

M.M.S.

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**The Ascent To Truth.** By Thomas Merton. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951. pp. 342. \$3.50.

A brother Dominican a few years ago offered a lift to a young college boy out in Ohio. As they rode along, the Oberlin undergraduate began talking religion. He was the son of a Protestant minister. Yet he was enthusiastic about Catholicism. What caused it? Thomas Merton did; the Thomas Merton whose *The Seven Storey Mountain* was then being passed from one student to another at Oberlin, and no doubt at many another American school. Father Merton has his foot in the door of the house of America's heart. It is good then to see another book flow from his talented pen.

Father Merton knows his customers and so he is an aggressive salesman. He points out the need of our country, given as it is to a belief in action for its own sake, to action that has no worthwhile object since those acting are without faith. Their lack of faith he reduces to their crass ignorance. He then offers his medicine which consists in a turning to God, a turning to