
Boekresensie/Book review

B.J. van der Walt. 2017. ***Thomas Aquinas and the Neo-Thomist Tradition***. Potchefstroom: The Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa, pp. 242.

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Already during his postgraduate studies, Bennie van der Walt showed a keen interest in the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. The book under review is the latest of the author's works on Aquinas. He discusses Aquinas' philosophy in eight chapters, and adds the bibliographies of chapter 1-8, as well as acknowledgements and an appendix with engravings illustrating the life of Aquinas. The impression prevails that the work was not conceived as an academic, coherent, and systematical treatment of Aquinas' philosophy, but reflects the author's ripened views on particular issues gathered over a lifetime of academic involvement with particular themes relevant to Aquinas' thought: Chapter 1 deals with the religious direction of the philosophy of Aquinas. Chapter 2 utilizes the idea of law as a key to the philosophical understanding of Aquinas' work. Chapter 3 contains an analysis of the ontology of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Chapter 4 covers the Thomist Anthropology and epistemology. Chapter 5 addresses the issue of divine providence in the philosophy of the *Doctor Angelicus*. Chapter 6 deals with the Christianization of Hellenism. Chapter 7 covers seven centuries of Neo-Thomist thinking after Aquinas, and chapter 8 applies the problem-historical method of analysis to Neo-Thomist scholarship.

Although the author treats several issues relevant to Aquinas' philosophy, ethics and theology, the book is rather an attempt to trace the historical flow and development of ideas originating from Aquinas' philosophical approach. To the reviewer, the positive aspects of the book are contained in the idea-historical perspectives emanating from the author's comments about

the lasting world-influence of Aquinas, Aquinas' impact on the Reformed theological tradition, his influence on Reformational philosophy and the ongoing interest in Aquinas' thought in the neo-Thomist tradition. Although the work does not contain an in-depth discussion of the intricacies of Aquinas' philosophical system, it introduces aspects of Aquinas' thought relevant to the current Aristotelian-Thomist philosophical revival. Furthermore, it provides a useful guide to trace sources relevant to the idea-historical development of Aquinas' thought and the impact Aquinas had on later philosophical and theological traditions.

The work is recommended to students and academics interested in the impact Aquinas' philosophy and theology had on scholars in other/later academic traditions. Of particular value are the chapters dealing with Aquinas' thought on Reformational and Post-Reformational traditions. Because the work is mainly a compilation of completed research and brief discussions on particular aspects of Aquinas' philosophy, the book lacks a clearly conceived structure and flow of academic treatment of the chosen topics. Notwithstanding the lack of systematical treatment of the issues under discussion, Bennie van der Walt produced a useful work for those wishing to acquaint themselves with idea-historical issues associated with Aquinas' magisterial contribution to Western philosophy and theology.