

obfuscation, concludes his introduction with a *Chapter Outline* section. There is much more here than the name suggests. In fact it offers a useful preparation of the reader to what is to follow. The first chapter *Measured Body* focuses on embodiment in its mere materiality and thus highlights the notion of *diastema* (Greek for 'extension' or 'interval') i.e. the space in which the material exists and is perceived by measurability. The essential importance of this notion was already highlighted by Hans Urs von Balthasar in his *Presence and Thought*. Boersma boldly challenges the present scholarly *communis opinio* whereby the diastemic existence of the material i.e. the created - is an endemic and eternal characteristic. In other words mankind has been destined by the Creator to live in a gap which will keep him in eternal distance from God also in the world to come. Boersma gives us a riveting analytical discussion which demonstrates an opposing view. He argues that although Gregory always retains deep awareness of divine transcendence, this Cappadocian Father 'regards materiality – including the human body – as fluid in character, since the convergence of properties is subject to a variety of configurations' (p. 50).

Boersma's fundamental interpretation of materiality and embodiment in Gregory's speculative ontology becomes in the ensuing chapters the framework of a thorough investigation of major themes in Gregory's thought, each of which identified as a different category of embodiment. Scripture and exegesis are 'Textual Body'. Gender and sexuality are examined under the title 'Gendered Body'. Asceticism, self-mortification and bereavement are addressed together in the chapter 'Dead Body'. Gregory's concern with social justice which – as Boersma reminds us – 'pervades his entire corpus' (p. 175) – is dealt with under the conceptual umbrella of the chapter title 'Oppressed Body'. Gregory's analogical reflections on the Christian Church embodies, along the same lines, the chapter 'Ecclesial Body' and Hans Boersma brings his study to a close by a chapter, plainly entitled 'Virtuous Body', which is a demonstration of Gregory's insistence on the fundamental dependence of any virtue in human life solely on Christ. It follows, according to Gregory, that any manifestation of human virtue is primarily the result of God's assistance. Boersma's conclusion, a compelling reading of Gregory's *De Vita Moysis*, ends with the assertion that Gregory's reaffirmation of the virtuous character, embedded by God in human embodied existence, ought to be understood as a right reminder 'that we are led upward in continuous participation in the eternal life of God' (p. 250).

This study offers not only a new ground-breaking reading of St Gregory of Nyssa. Imbued with the spirit of its theme, Hans Boersma's latest book offers us an uplifting experience of a rare scholarly achievement.

CYRIL CHILSON

THEOLOGY AFTER POSTMODERNITY: DIVINING THE VOID – A LACANIAN READING OF THOMAS AQUINAS by Tina Beattie, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, pp. xiii + 424, £75.00, hbk*

This book considers Thomas Aquinas alongside Jacques Lacan. It seems that Lacan had some interest in Thomas, speaks of what it is like to read him, and knows about Gilson's existentialist interpretation of Thomas's metaphysics.

The book unfolds in five parts. 'Being and Desire' introduces Lacanian psychoanalysis and summarises the thought of Thomas. I cannot judge the accuracy of the presentation of Lacan but for Beattie he is 'an atheist Thomist'. Certainly his account of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary is of great interest in its own right. Beattie argues that reading Thomas's theology in a Lacanian key releases important insights about 'the incarnate Other of Thomas's One God', glimpsed in many parts of his work but always quickly repressed because of his attachment to Greek philosophy.

'Ordering Desire' gives the main critique of Thomas: because he was such a brilliant re-thinker of earlier traditions, and because of his own later authority in the Church and beyond, he played a significant part in entrenching a patriarchal order which has dominated the Western intellectual tradition from Parmenides to von Balthasar. On the basis of a gendered cosmology coming from Aristotle, but at key points influenced by Plato and Neoplatonists, Thomas strengthened an understanding of law, politics and Church order which at worst excluded women (from the universities, e.g.) or at best included them in a purely passive and receptive capacity (in the Church, in medieval romance, in romanticism). For Beattie, the seed of all this is the distinction between matter and form understood as feminine and masculine, passive and active – everything follows from that and so one must return to that point in order to think it out again. Where others might finger Descartes, Duns Scotus, or 'modernity' as the culprit in subverting some wonderful synthesis which the patristic and medieval periods supposedly constructed, Beattie shows, convincingly, that we must step much further back, implicitly agreeing with Anscombe's comment that Western thought is a series of footnotes to Parmenides rather than to Plato.

Part Three is entitled 'Conquering Desire' and looks at what the Reformation and Enlightenment did to solidify further the dualisms already established and to copper-fasten the objectification of the body and the rejection of desire. Whatever hope there might have been to save something from the Fathers of the Church or the medieval scholastics is decisively removed by Protestant theology, scientific positivism (Galileo as a baddie!), the Cartesian subject, and Kant's ethics of duty without desire. So we end up with the bifurcated world in which we live, scientific achievement and technology raping nature on one side, pornography, poverty and oppression endured by so many, mainly women, on the other. If it is not Kant, then it is the Marquis de Sade: postmodernity honours both, with no attempt to resolve the contradiction they represent.

In Part Four, 'Sexing Desire', Beattie seeks to give voice again to the body and the body's wisdom. She believes that in spite of the problems she has identified with it, there is potential in Thomas's thought that would support a Lacanian reading of his work. Does Lacan's 'real' function as Thomas's 'God'? Does Lacan offer 'an inverse but truer Thomism' in which the radical implications of creation, incarnation and resurrection are allowed to develop? The strength of the first part of her argument, that Thomas is a key culprit in developing the dire situation in which we find ourselves, seems to cancel out the second part, that there are some parts of Thomas's work that are redeemable. So her main argument fails, for two reasons. One is that the 'good bits' of Thomas she presents seem trivial by comparison with the metaphysical and philosophical principles that structure his theology. One or two nice texts cannot count for much against the massive structural problems she has identified in his work. The second reason it fails is because the teachings in Thomas's theology in which she finds hope are not special to Thomas: they are the orthodox Catholic doctrines of creation *ex nihilo*, redemption through the enfleshment of the Word, and a life of grace sustained in the sacraments of the Church. None of that belongs to Thomas Aquinas. In the end, it is not clear why one would now need to read him except as part of the long history of Western thought, including its exclusion of women, to which however unwittingly he was a major contributor.

Catherine of Siena is the heroic figure in the last part of the book, 'Embodying Desire'. She made the central Christian doctrines her own, translating them into her intellectual, physical and emotional experiences in a way that illustrates what a future Catholic theology might look like. So she speaks of creation *ex nihilo* (God is, Catherine is not), the purposelessness of creation emanating from the mad love of God, the maternal Trinity who gathers the world into her outstretched arms (which are the Son and the Spirit: Thomas's wonderful text on this, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q.43, gets no mention), the incarnation of the Word whose feet can now be kissed, whose wounded side can be suckled, whose mouth can be covered by that of the

desiring creature, the feeding that is the Eucharist, and so on. Catherine's language is clearly more sensuous than that of Thomas, her recorded engagement with the divine mystery obviously more holistic. It illustrates well how the patriarchal systems imprisoned men as well as women albeit in different ways: Thomas felt he had to choose between 'what I have now seen' and the lifetime's work he dismissed as 'so much straw'.

Although the argument gets a big ragged in places, and her account of Thomas's thought needs correction and completion at many points, this book is interesting and stimulating throughout, encouraging many thoughts and associations along the way. Whether there is to be such a thing as a Lacanian Thomism, who knows. At the end one feels that it is Catherine of Siena, believer and lover, mystic and activist, Doctor of the Church, who holds out the best hope for a feminist Catholic theology

VIVIAN BOLAND OP

RICHARD HOOKER, OF THE LAWS OF ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY: A CRITICAL EDITION WITH MODERN SPELLING edited by Arthur Stephen McGrade, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, Vol. I, pp. cxiv + 242, Vol. II, pp. viii + 334, Vol. III, pp. viii + 418, £275.00, hbk*

Last November, on a visit to St Stephen's House Oxford, I met an American called Hooker who said he was a descendant of Richard Hooker; a relation of whom he was deeply proud. *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* is the best known work of Richard Hooker (1554-1600). Books I-IV of the *Laws* were published in 1593, Book V in 1597, Books VI and VIII in 1648-1651, and Book VII in 1662. This monumental treatise (which draws greatly on the work of Aquinas, Calvin and others) not only represents a defence of the system of governance being developed for the established Church of England at this time (subject to royal supremacy), but also an immense contribution to Anglican thought generally, theology (particularly ecclesiology), political theory (it was relied on by such thinkers as John Locke and Edmund Burke), and, indeed, English prose. It has a very special place, therefore, in the scholarship of Anglican theologians today and was used recently in debates about possible adoption of an Anglican Communion Covenant. However, remarkably, its profound insights into the place of law in ecclesial life, do not generally make an appearance in the scholarship of modern Anglican canon lawyers nor in that of historians of English ecclesiastical and canon law: there is no mention of Hooker in the index of either the seminal study of John Baker (on the English canonists 1300-1900) or that of Richard Helmholz (in his recent book on the English ecclesiastical jurisdiction 597 to the 1640s). Though Hooker was a cleric, not a lawyer, perhaps this is in part due to the impenetrability of the *Laws'* language, particular prose style, and very long sentences (which carefully unpack propositions). But things have changed.

For the first time, Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* is presented in an accessible modern English-language edition. This is a result of painstaking and meticulous work by the distinguished Hooker scholar Arthur Stephen McGrade, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Connecticut. McGrade's interest in Hooker derives from what he considers an 'extraordinary' treatise in 'its range, both intellectual and historical', in the breadth of sources used (from biblical and classical, through patristic and medieval, to Renaissance and Reformation), its 'striking combination of wide perspective on human nature and history with intense engagement in the issues of its time and place', in the 'coherence of [its] argument', 'original organization', and its provision of 'the template for the English high style, for Gibbon, Burke, and Ruskin'. Another function is to build on previous