

among the heresies to be abjured by ordinands, it was 1889 before this prescription was cancelled.

Less exotically, the Church of Scotland minister in Banff in the mid 1670s was directed by the General Assembly to 'endeavour to prevent the spreading of errors, and in particular of popery and quakerisme, among his flock' (Cramond, *Annals* ii, 43). These may seem unlikely errors, a hundred years after the former Catholic priest John Knox liberated the Scots into Presbyterianism (as the story goes); the tiny minorities of surviving Catholics and committed Quakers, as Raffé rightly says, were, amazingly enough, 'figures of fear and hatred for Presbyterians and Episcopals alike' (p. 3). Dr Raffé does not overlook the execution in 1697 of the 20-year-old Edinburgh student Thomas Aikenhead for blasphemy, rightly putting it down to fears on the part of the local Presbyterian ministers that the ecclesiastical arrangements settled in 1690 might not be quite secure.

People in all social ranks and all over Scotland (apart from the then extensive Gaelic-speaking region) delighted in religious controversy. Dr Raffé analyses the arguments about religious dissent and persecution (chapter 4). He traces and documents the ways in which opponents stereotyped one another as 'fanatics' and 'enthusiasts' (chapter 5). He examines disputes about the morals of the clergy, customarily intent on discrediting individuals (chapter 6). By seceding, temporarily or permanently, dissenters displayed their dissatisfaction with the established order (chapter 7). There is quite a history of rioting and rabble rousing (chapter 8). Bringing all this to a head, Dr Raffé establishes a new conceptual framework for discussing and understanding the dynamics of public debates, with the religious controversies in Scotland as a paradigm. While the book makes fascinating reading for students of Scottish history, Dr Raffé prepares the way successfully to open up wider and more general questions about the possibilities and practicalities of whatever forms of pluralism and dissent in any given public arena.

FERGUS KERR OP

THOMAS AQUINAS'S SUMMA THEOLOGIAE: A BIOGRAPHY by Bernard McGinn, *Princeton University Press*, Princeton and Oxford, 2014, pp. xi + 260, \$24.95, hbk

This excellent and beautifully written book is a fine introduction to the *Summa Theologiae* and to how it has been regarded over the years. It invites comparison with Jean-Pierre Torrell's *Aquinas's 'Summa': Background, Structure, and Reception* (2005) since McGinn and Torrell appear to be trying to do exactly the same thing in their different works. McGinn's volume, however, is, I think, better than that of Torrell since, while not being much longer, its scope and theological interest is wider, and since it is more comprehensive when it comes to the ways in which the *Summa Theologiae* has been evaluated since Aquinas died. It is also written in a more engaging style for people approaching the *Summa Theologiae* for the first time and with wide-ranging interests in the history of theology. McGinn is now Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago and has published a number of distinguished studies on Christian thought. His new book is well up to the standard of his much acclaimed previous ones. In his preface to it he says that he found it 'scary' to turn to the *Summa Theologiae* since he is not 'a card carrying member of any Thomist party' and since he has written little on Aquinas during his career (p.ix). My view is that McGinn is being unduly modest here. I think that his new book is one of the best introductory

works on Aquinas currently in print. The high quality of the scholarship behind it might not be obvious to people turning to it with little or no knowledge of Aquinas and what has been written about the *Summa Theologiae*. Yet those with more understanding of Aquinas and the secondary literature on him will quickly note how extensive and accurate McGinn's grasp of Aquinas's thinking is and how equally extensive and accurate is his grasp of ways in which Aquinas has been interpreted and misinterpreted. This is a book in which McGinn wears his expertise lightly to the benefit of his intended readers.

McGinn begins by placing Aquinas historically (Chapter One is titled 'The World That Made Aquinas'). So, he explains the significance of the papacy in the thirteenth century, describes the rise of the European universities, and comments on the nature of medieval scholasticism. He then moves on in Chapter Two ('Creating the *Summa Theologiae*') to offer an account of Aquinas's life and writings. In this second chapter McGinn also turns to the plan and purpose of the *Summa Theologiae*. In doing so, he spends quite a bit of time focusing on the phrase *sacra doctrina* (sacred teaching). And rightly so, since the *Summa Theologiae* is basically an extended essay on what Aquinas took to be *sacra doctrina*. As McGinn says: 'Thomas uses reason and philosophical modes of arguing throughout the *Summa*, but it is not a work of philosophy, or even of philosophical theology. The *Summa Theologiae* is fundamentally a work of doctrinal theology, however much it makes use of philosophy and philosophical theology' (p.54). McGinn goes on to observe that Aquinas says that *sacra doctrina* is a *scientia* (science), but, as McGinn rightly says: 'It is clear that *sacra doctrina* is [for Aquinas] an unusual "science", one that while it may fulfill the basic premises of Aristotle's view of science as sure knowledge, stretches Aristotle beyond what he would have recognized' (p.57). Here we find McGinn touching on a point to which he helpfully returns at several places in his book: that the teachings of the *Summa Theologiae* seriously differ from what we find in Aristotle, even though Aquinas is often wrongly described as a straightforwardly Aristotelian thinker. Another point that McGinn's book usefully and correctly stresses is that Aquinas is very much struck by our ignorance of God's nature. In Chapter Two, McGinn observes that, for Aquinas, 'the true wisdom of the theologian is to know that he or she does not know' (p.63). Later in his book he writes: 'In Thomas's view, the wisdom of *sacra doctrina* is not learning more of what can be said about God, but in coming to appreciate more and more fully the mystery of God's unknowable existence by exploring how language falls short of knowing or naming God' (p.85). That Aquinas was influenced by apophatic or negative theology such as that found in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius is not always sufficiently appreciated, but McGinn is up to speed on this matter.

In Chapter Three ('A Tour of the *Summa Theologiae*') McGinn embarks on the seemingly impossible task of surveying the contents of the *Summa Theologiae* in around forty pages. But he rises to the job with great skill and provides the best short summary of the *Summa Theologiae* known to me. In doing so he emphasizes those aspects of its teaching that are central to it – such as Aquinas's conviction that creatures are made to exist for as long as they exist by God. 'For Thomas', says McGinn, 'when we think about the world we are confronted by the question "Why is there anything?" One might be tempted to reply, "Who cares? That's just the way it is". Thomas, of course, does care. His search for ultimate answers led him to conclude that all the beings we know need not have been ... The fact that they do exist requires a being whose essence (what it is) is identical with existence (it is), and that such a being is one and the same as the God of Exodus 3:14, who said, "I am who am"' (pp.83–84). You will, I hope, see from this quotation how well McGinn is able to capture what Aquinas teaches while expressing himself in clear and non-obfuscating prose.

The remainder of McGinn's book (Chapters Four ['The Tides of Thomism'] and Five ['The Rise and Fall of Neothomism']) take us through the way in which people have reacted to Aquinas and the *Summa Theologiae* since Aquinas's death. There is a long and complicated story to tell here, one in which both friends and foes of Aquinas feature. But McGinn tells it very well while being brief and to the point, and he manages to do so without having a pro-Aquinas or an anti-Aquinas agenda. The result strikes me as a balanced and non-partisan account of considerable value.

If pressed to find fault with McGinn's book I would suggest that it might have noted how much of the teaching of the *Summa Theologiae* is open to question because of its commitment to a kind of biblical fundamentalism that requires us to read the book of *Genesis* as literally true and which also requires us to think that the New Testament gospels give us accurate information when it comes to what Jesus of Nazareth did and said. Much of what Aquinas writes in the *Summa Theologiae*, especially what he says concerning Adam and Eve, rests on the assumption that the book of *Genesis* can be read as an historically accurate document. And Aquinas's account of the theological virtue of faith assumes that we have very thorough access to the words of Jesus. Aquinas takes those with faith to be believing what God has said to us in the teachings of Jesus, who is God incarnate. That the theology of the *Summa Theologiae* rests on such assumptions has to be reckoned with by people trying to defend Aquinas these days since the assumptions I now refer to have been seriously challenged by many biblical scholars, scientists, historians, and theologians. And even those scholars who think that they can give us an accurate account of the life and teaching of Christ seem to present us with remarkably different accounts of 'the historical Jesus'.

BRIAN DAVIES OP

DUST BOUND FOR HEAVEN. EXPLORATIONS IN THE THEOLOGY OF THOMAS AQUINAS by Reinhard Hütter, *William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company*, Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K., 2012, pp. x + 511, £ 32.99, pbk

The latest book by Reinhard Hütter is a real *tour de force* spanning the thought of Thomas Aquinas and many of its interpretations. Converted to Catholicism with his wife in 2004, Hütter – as Professor of Christian theology at Duke University School and as a lay Dominican – expresses in this book his deep conviction about the actual importance of Aquinas in the field of Catholic theology. Written to convince of the 'perennial relevance of the theology of Thomas Aquinas' (p. 1), *Dust bound for heaven* intends to overcome the common objection to the cultural actualization of this medieval thought. For Hütter, 'the very indetermination of the late modern supermarket of ideas' (p. 4) permits a new reception of the Common Doctor in order to re-think the contemplative and sapiential character of theology. This programme is called by Hütter 'ressourcement in Thomas' and aims to offer the light of Aquinas's anthropological insights (hylemorphic body/soul and ordination to the eternal communion with God) as an answer to the double Western crisis of reason and faith. So the 'Prelude' is devoted to showing how 'Thomas's account presupposes the very horizon of a redeemed judgement in which theology's discursive knowledge is informed by *sacra doctrina* increasingly bearing the stamp of the *scientia Dei* itself' (p. 45). In assonance with the relationship