

verification that may take place regarding such intelligible unities and relations. Once that particular obstacle is overcome, the obstacle constituted by a basic misunderstanding of what knowing is, then a valid metaphysics becomes possible and answers can be found to the tendencies to reductionism and the denial of finality and causality – and ultimately the scepticism – to which empiricism is prone.

One of the very good things about Beards' treatment of Lonergan is the way in which he shows how Lonergan from early on was engaged in a critical appropriation of the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition; so successful have been Lonergan's efforts in this regard that Beards suggests that the tradition be re-named the 'Aristotle-Aquinas-Lonergan' tradition. This evaluation is not the wishful thinking of a fond admirer but comes from a hardheaded engagement with such issues in contemporary metaphysics as first-person ontology, substance, 'thisness', causality, finality, development and supervenience, etc. In handling all of these and other issues (such as the individual and the social) with considerable finesse and not a little wit, Beards brings out the remarkable versatility of the cognitional theory that underpins Lonergan's critical realism and, more broadly, of the tradition to which Lonergan belongs and which, with his grasp of the methods of modern science, modern mathematics, and modern scholarship, he has helped to develop further. Alongside his depiction of Lonergan's critical retrieval of the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, Beards positions Lonergan in relation to Descartes, showing both where he is at one with Descartes in attending to mental acts and in disagreement with him on the issue of universal doubt. This is a very helpful manoeuvre since both contemporary Anglo-American philosophy and continental phenomenology have positioned themselves by redefining where they stand in relation to Descartes. This strategic dimension is a valuable component of the book which at times is in danger of losing the reader in the thickets of individual philosophers' idiosyncratic thinking, and the book might have benefited from more of this kind of strategic mapping.

Throughout his book, Beards' approach is conciliatory: where he can, he points up agreements between Lonergan and the philosophers whose ideas he examines and makes suggestions on how what he perceives as their shortcomings might be overcome. He presents Lonergan as a broad yet precise thinker whose philosophy has the resources to act as a bridge between competing positions. The book deserves to be read by anyone interested in the revival of metaphysics in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy.

JOSEPH FITZPATRICK

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD: ESSAYS CATHOLIC AND CONTEMPORARY
by John Haldane (*Gracewing, Leominster, 2008*) Pp.228, pbk £9.99

John Haldane is a philosopher with large interests and sympathies. Raised a Catholic by music loving parents in Scotland, with Irish, English and Protestant elements in his ancestry, he trained as an art teacher before turning to philosophy. His approach to that subject combines the rigour of the anglophone analytic tradition with the comprehensive metaphysical range of Thomism and the cultural breadth of his inheritance. He reads widely in both religious and secular literature and uses philosophy to reflect upon politics and ethics, science and history, art and education, and the role and condition of the Church. This volume collects a lightly revised set of occasional pieces on themes of particular Catholic interest. The majority of these were originally published in newspapers or popular journals, and they are highly accessible in style. Philosophically minded readers will wish

at times that Haldane had developed his arguments more fully: in this respect the pieces betray their origins, as does a little carelessness in the final editing.

The book has five sections, focusing on the Church and wider society, on leading ecclesial figures, on faith and reason, on ethics, particularly sexual ethics, and finally on art and education. However, Haldane's vision is highly integrated, so that his major themes are interwoven through all the sections.

The essays are shaped by their historical context, as Haldane reads it. The Catholic Church in Britain, after several hundred years of open persecution or hostility from the majority, became part of mainstream society. In Scotland, conflict and bigotry among the denominations has been replaced to some extent at least by ecumenism. Catholics are mostly no longer poor and uneducated, but comfortably middle-class, sometimes even national figures. This has been achieved, however, just at the point when secularism and hedonism have come to dominate society. This has had two effects upon the Church. On the one hand, the Catholic Church in particular, because of its public fidelity to religious orthodoxy and moral conservatism, has become the target of secular attacks. On the other hand, most Catholics have largely conformed to the values of wider society; they no longer preserve a culture distinctively shaped by faith and by grace.

Culture and counter-culture are prominent themes, therefore, throughout this volume. Haldane argues that Catholics should enthusiastically employ the best of human culture in the service of the faith, while at the same time resisting the culture that now pervades Western, and increasingly global, society. His favourite example of a potentially positive element of culture is visual art, and he uses James MacMillan's discussion of anti-Catholic prejudice in Scotland to argue that the Protestant suspicion of imagery has impoverished Scottish culture. Elsewhere he shows how religious art might be used to educate children into religious imagination and sensibility, and outlines a philosophy of religious architecture whereby stone, wood and glass become bearers of symbolic meaning.

Haldane's counter-culturalism is always judicious and precise. In the sphere of political culture he distinguishes carefully between the type of liberalism that is incompatible with Catholicism and the respect for liberty that the Church ought to welcome. When it comes to relativism, materialism or hedonism, however, his comments are consistently critical. Catholics should first resist these themselves and then prepare themselves to speak and act against them in public. Haldane is keenly aware of the damage, both personal and ecclesial, caused by clerical sexual abuse, and he treats this as an instance of the hedonistic culture that results from an abandonment of traditional training in self-discipline, whether in the seminary or in the home. On the political level too, he identifies the danger of the homogeneous globalised consumerism that is destroying the local cultures that give people their identity and security, foster family life, and liberate us to pursue thoughtful and creative lives.

A second major theme is the necessity for British Catholics to rediscover an intelligent faith. Haldane sees the level of thought diminished at every level: ordinary Catholics are ignorant of the basic arguments in defence of their faith; Britain (more, it seems, than Europe) has lost a flourishing Catholic intellectual culture. In the early- and mid-twentieth century the list of intellectuals who converted to Catholicism was impressive. The Church does not live in a vacuum: wider society has swapped serious principled discussion of fundamental choices, in politics for example, for consumerist preferences, while English-speaking philosophy for a long time all but abandoned its task of seeking wisdom. A significant number of philosophers, including Catholics, have begun to rediscover what John Paul II called the 'sapiential dimension' of philosophy. Christians need to educate themselves to expose the intellectual weakness of secularist and sceptical assumptions.

While the faithful have mostly been content to follow secular trends, some Church leaders have had the courage to challenge even the world to examine

its sloppily relativist assumptions. Haldane's assessments of John Paul II and Cardinal Winning, both effectively obituaries, and of Benedict XVI, written just after his election to the papacy, present them in different ways as prophetic figures. A fourth prophetic figure that impresses Haldane is Frederic Ozanam, who founded the Society of St Vincent de Paul in 1835. His example shows the contemporary world how to combine study with both prayer and the dedicated service of the poor.

A refreshing feature of Haldane's writing is his avoidance of polarisation or ideology. He argues that both 'right' and 'left' in the Church (labels which he thinks in any case misapplied here) have focused on externals, whether the liturgy or social action. Meanwhile we have neglected the spiritual formation and devotional life that ought to nourish both theological discussion and practical action. Hence Haldane's respect for Ozanam whose life held all these elements in balance. Orthodoxy need not, indeed should not, stifle creativity; we need both fidelity and imagination, both prayerfulness and justice. The vision that Haldane outlines is both coherent and challenging: a courteous but uncompromising call to the Church in Britain to wake from its slumbers.

MARGARET ATKINS

RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE: MUST FAITH BE PRIVATISED? by Robert Trigg
(Oxford University Press, 2008) Pp.272, pbk £14.99

While the media continue their insistence that Members of Parliament should keep their religious faith to themselves, strident religious voices are demanding that 'Catholic MPs' 'defend the Catholic Faith in the Commons'. Clearly there could be a real tension for any democratically elected politician (of any party) between their faith and what is generally regarded as 'the State' for which now read wider mediated 'secular society' and not just the House of Commons debating chamber. Some now insist that 'religious politicians' should resign from the Commons. As Cardinal Keith O'Brien turned up the oppositional heat against abortion, Jackie Ashley responded with: 'If any MP really thinks their personal religious views take precedence over everything else then they should leave the House of Commons. Their place is in church, mosque, synagogue or temple. Parliament is the place for compromises, for negotiations in a secular sphere under the general overhead light of the liberal tradition. So liberalism is privileged is it? Yes, for without it none of these religions ... would have such an easy time. Cardinals come to terms with the society we live in' (*Guardian* 4th June 2007).

Commentator Janet Daley stated: 'In the contest between the principles of modern democracy and doctrines of faith, democracy and the rule of secular law must always win' (*Daily Telegraph* 11th February 2008). Yet at the same time, along the corridors of the Palace of Westminster, the House of Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences in England and Wales boldly declared 'the UK is not a secular state'.

Every day 'faith schools', 'religious curriculum', the Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill, abortion and euthanasia, blasphemy laws and the wearing of distinctive religious symbols and clothing, equality laws and adoption societies, the extent of Sharia based laws, Sunday working, food preparation regulations, state funding of religious based charity organisations, even the appointment of Bishops to the House of Lords and the legal restrictions on the Monarch's faith commitment, all demonstrate that faith matters naturally leak into the political system. There is not a single department of state that can avoid engaging with religious approaches.