

the movement. Thus, Dr Rankin rightly allows the views on Tertullian of Augustine and Jerome, writing two centuries later, no weight at all in the understanding of his real opinions. Instead he concentrates exclusively on the evidence from his subject's own period, and in consequence produces an excellent and stimulating short analysis of the state of the Church in north Africa under the Severan dynasty, and of the social pressures that were then affecting it.

From this he goes on to argue that this was a vital period of change, in which for Christianity concern for the preservation of authentic doctrine started to give way to arguments over discipline. In this context he sees Tertullian functioning as a spokesman for the 'New Prophecy' movement, a term to be preferred to 'Montanism', and in particular articulating its disapproval over the lax penitential discipline exercised by some of the African episcopate. He shows how Tertullian came to be drawn into the movement by its moral zeal, and at the same time argues forcefully that 'New Prophecy' was not in any sense schismatic. It operates within the Church and was in no way hostile to the Catholic hierarchy *per se*. The crucial areas of disagreement were over the re-admission to church membership of adulterers and those who had remarried. The willingness of some members of the hierarchy, whom Tertullian designated the *physici* or 'fleshly-ones', to permit this was regarded with horror by the rigorists for whom he spoke. The question was thus one of discipline, with the 'New Prophecy' arguing for the permanent exclusion of such offenders. While the issue would be different, this division of the African church into tolerant and exclusive wings mirrors the Donatist controversy that would be generated less than a century later. This is but one way in which the reader can be led into broader speculations by this stimulating and well argued book.

ROGER COLLINS

## Book Notes: Aquinas Studies

In **Saint Thomas Aquinas Volume 1: The Person and His Work** (The Catholic University of America Press 1996, cloth £35.95, paper £23.50), translated by Robert Royal, Jean-Pierre Torrell, a Dominican of the Toulouse province, now teaching at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), gives us what must remain the standard biography for many years to come. Simon Tugwell's essay (in his *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*, 1988) remains indispensable; but Torrell surely takes the place of James Weisheipl's biography (*Friar Thomas D'Aquino.*, 1974), pioneering in its day but overtaken by the immense amount of research into Aquinas's life and times in the last twenty years. If the eclipse of Thomism after the Council freed Thomas from the burden of

ecclesiastical endorsement so that he could be taken seriously again as a philosopher (as Anthony Kenny has maintained), the time has perhaps now come to rehabilitate him as a theologian. That will become more evident in Torrell's second volume (**Saint Thomas d'Aquin: Maître Spirituel**, Cerf 1996, 240 FF), which should soon appear in English. His thesis is that, far from being a theological *system* that some *intellectuals* may enjoy, but which needs to be supplemented with instruction about prayer, the interior life, etc., the major theological options that Aquinas proposes are themselves a *spirituality*. The first volume aims to show that the man cannot be separated from his reflection as a believer, the second seeks to bring out the radically contemplative orientation of his theology.

The many new details, supplements and corrections, will not dramatically alter the average student's understanding of Aquinas's work. His date of birth is still 1224/25; his family was somewhat less grand than sometimes supposed; he was five or six and accompanied by his nurse when he was sent as an oblate to Monte Cassino, and fourteen or fifteen when he left. He thus had, or could have had, a fairly lengthy and profound grounding in the (or a ) Benedictine tradition. What he learned, personally or theologically, remains anyone's guess. He was introduced to the works of Aristotle at the emperor's new college in Naples (the first non-papal university) when studying there was still prohibited in Paris (though the prohibition was so often repeated that it must have been little respected); Peter of Ireland was not so important in Thomas's formation as some have supposed; in short, 'we do not know anything precise about these years of study in Naples'.

Thomas received the Dominican habit in April 1244 or slightly earlier, Torrell thinks; he was kidnapped by the family and held for a year; he remained on good terms with them for the rest of his life, however, and Torrell throws no more light than anyone else on their motivation. He was the 'dumb ox from Sicily', but this need not be pejorative: the mother of one of his closest friends in the Order recalled that when he was trudging along country lanes 'the peasants in the fields left their labours and came near to look at him, full of admiration for a man of such corpulence and beauty'. The lean and hungry look was evidently not a medieval ideal. Thomas studied in Paris and Cologne with Albert the Great; he lectured on Lombard's Sentences in Paris 1252-56; he was regent-master in Paris 1256-59; he taught in Orvieto and Rome 1259-68; he lectured again in Paris 1268-72; he returned to teach in Naples and died in 1274 on his way to the Council of Lyons. Thomas is so often associated with Paris that it is worth setting out the dates just to show how much of his teaching took place in Italy.

As regards some of the most discussed issues, Torrell takes it that Pierre-Marie Gy has shown that Thomas composed the Office of Corpus Christi. He argues that (*pace* Gy with his doubts about the

Thomist orthodoxy of the theology) he was probably also the author of the *Adoro Te*. As for the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Torrell dismisses the story that it was intended for missionaries hoping to convert the Muslims in Spain but, in the plethora of suggestions, cautiously advances the view that it is simply Thomas's most personal and free-standing exposition of Christian theology, the only one that he completed. About a third of the *Contra Gentiles* survives in Thomas's own handwriting: Torrell recalls the labours of Pierre-M. Gils on the almost indecipherable script which displays a 'man in a hurry', impatient, distracted, fatigued, lacking the serene composure commonly ascribed to the Angelic Doctor. His handwriting perhaps brings us closer than anything else to the real man. Around 6 December 1273 Thomas had the ecstasy while celebrating Mass that led him to stop writing and dictating, saying that all he had written seemed to him as 'straw' in comparison with what he had seen. Torrell insists that this simply means that he had seen the reality beyond anything that could be put into words — not that he considered his work as completely useless, the silly view that has some currency. Weisheipl's theory that the ecstasy might have been connected with physical breakdown due to a stroke or (more likely) years of overwork, Torrell regards as 'plausible'.

The sooner we have a translation of the second volume the better. It will then become clearer that, as Torrell says, context is indispensable to a proper understanding of many of Thomas's works. He had a 'tumultuous existence'; his 'search for eternal Truth' was 'carried on under conditions of urgency and precariousness'. We can know a good deal more about his 'personality' than has often been supposed. But 'growing reflection on the faith was the path to sanctity for Thomas and it shows in his works' — it is the task of the second volume to demonstrate that.

Good detailed studies continue to appear from a new generation of American scholars. A Yale University thesis, supervised by the distinguished Lutheran theologian George Lindbeck, has recently appeared: Joseph P. Wawrykow's *God's Grace and Human Action: 'Merit' in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame Press 1996, \$39.95). (Lindbeck's first major published work, it should not be forgotten, in *Franciscan Studies*, 1957, deals with participation and existence in Aquinas's thought.) The first chapter surveys and evaluates previous research (Lynn, Pesch, Lonergan, Bouillard and Pfürtner); the second and third offer detailed readings of Thomas's texts, roughly in chronological order, showing that the account in the *Summa Theologiae* brings in his ideas about creation and grace; while in the fourth and final chapter Wawrykow speculates tentatively about the relationship of Thomas's views to those of Augustine and Paul, concluding that Thomas 'has successfully incorporated the subtle nuances of Paul's understanding of reward into his own presentation of the place of merit in human salvation'.

This book would be a good introduction to Thomas's theology as a whole. Unlike most of the neo-Thomist expositions of Thomas's thought, which either ignored or played down any significant *development*, Wawrykow shows how he suddenly incorporated much wider considerations in his later discussion of merit, prompted evidently by further study of Augustine. In effect, however, he was only following his own project of relating everything in theology to God (cf. *Summa Theologiae* 1, q.1, article 7). His doctrine of God requires us to believe that God deals with us, even in our fallen state, with a certain respect for the nature with which we have been created. The possibility of merit, far from involving a crypto-Pelagian exaltation of human dignity, is actually one more demonstration of the goodness of God.

Also from the Yale stable, though dedicated to Victor Preller, we have received **Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God** (Notre Dame Press 1996, \$34.95), by Eugene F. Rogers, Jr. The simple idea here is to compare how the two theologians interpret the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Natural theology, understood as cosmological arguments for the existence of God starting from phenomena in the world from which God is bracketed out, and conducted by philosophers who have bracketed out their moral sensibility and spirituality, was, as Barth insisted, 'the invention of the Antichrist'. Whether this is as fair an account of the Five Ways as neo-Thomist exponents and their critics in modern philosophy have supposed is exactly what Rogers is out to examine. He begins by reminding us that the *Summa Theologiae* is explicitly an aid to reading Scripture. Of course, if expositors like Gilson are right, the arguments can and should be extracted from their theological context and judged from the point of view of natural reason as purely philosophical conclusions. On the other hand, if the second question of the *Summa* is read in the light of the first (and why not), it turns out to be saying nothing substantially different from what we find in Thomas's exposition of Romans 1:20. Thus, if the natural knowledge of God which he finds in his exegesis of Scripture, where it is at home, is the same as the natural knowledge of God which he expounds in his guide for novice-theologians, the whole idea of purely philosophical theistic argumentation becomes a good deal less obviously '*secundum mentem Sancti Thomae*'. Furthermore, if nature as it actually is is always already shot through with grace, and human reason is never entirely detachable from affectivity and sensibility, which are surely not very contentious Thomist thoughts, the kind of natural theology that Barth feared may not be rightly ascribed to Aquinas. Natural knowledge of God *without grace*, Rogers shows, is not something that Thomas entertains. The function of the cosmological arguments in the *Summa Theologiae* is to 'fulfil the charge of sacred doctrine to leave no part of the world God-forsaken' (page 183).

For Barth, anything moved by God must be moved by *grace*; grace and nature are mutually exclusive categories; thus nothing moved by

God can be *natural*. For Thomas, however, as Rogers insists (and again: whatever neo-Thomists may have held), any such conception of nature would have been unintelligible. Thomas inhabited a world, a culture and a theology, where nature was always already graced. Modern theologians, by contrast, live in a world from which God is supposedly absent.

Much of Barth's polemic, in the first volumes of *Church Dogmatics*, is directed against the very idea of an ungraced and Christless world. He has no difficulty, however, in his exegesis of Romans 1:20, in acknowledging the existence of a knowledge of God: 'Objectively the Gentiles have always had the opportunity of knowing God. ... *And again, objectively speaking, they have always known [God]*'. In the end, if Barth was wrong in attributing a notion of graceless nature to him, his objections to natural theology *as Thomas understood it* collapse. On the other hand, Barth's admission that a certain knowledge of God has always been available to those who have not received the Gospel frees him from the standard charges of radical fideism, arguably at least. Of course the thesis requires much further discussion, but Rogers has given us a splendid book. Unsurprisingly, the issues at the centre of the great nature/grace controversies in the early decades of this century remain on the agenda.

With *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God* (Avebury 1996), Patrick Quinn makes the case for Thomas's being much more of a Platonist than an Aristotelian, at least in his account of how the human mind comes to know God. In effect, so long as we are alive, all our knowledge, including that of God, is sense-based; when we are dead, and if we are granted the beatific vision, then our knowledge of God occurs independently of our senses and of the body. Since the latter is the most sublime kind of knowledge, according to Quinn, we need to be more attentive to the problematic character of the knowledge that we have in this life. In an essay in *The Heythrop Journal* (October 1993), 'Aquinas's Concept of the Body and Out of Body Situations', Quinn makes the interesting suggestion that, when Thomas thinks of the human body, he has the risen body of Jesus in mind as the paradigm.

Bonnie Kent, in *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century* (The Catholic University Press of America Press 1995), reminds us that, though Thomas Aquinas posited virtues in the emotional part of the soul, much as Aristotle did, just thirty years later Duns Scotus argued that all moral virtues belong to the *will*. The standard story, promoted by Gilson in his learned studies and revived by Alasdair MacIntyre in his increasingly influential appeal to Aquinas, is that Scotus is the one who destroyed the Thomist synthesis of 'Aristotelianism' and 'Augustinianism'. Above all, by replacing virtue ethics with voluntarism, Scotus and his disciples opened the slippery path to Ockham, Kant and, eventually, once God was expelled, to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Bonnie Kent contests

all this. She argues that we need to understand a great deal more than we do at present about thirteenth-century efforts to reconcile Christian doctrine and Aristotle's ethics. Enough detailed research has taken place, however, for her to be able to propose, as an 'open question', that 'the decline of virtue ethics', far from being a 'monumental tragedy', was 'unavoidable' and 'gained' as much for Western moral thought as was 'lost' (page 35). She provides a detailed and thorough account of quite complicated discussions of freedom of the will (chapter 3), moral weakness (chapter 4) and virtues of the will (chapter 5). Needless to say, her references need to be checked and her interpretations verified. Going down into the nitty-gritty of these debates is bound to leave the reader somewhat bemused. What is abundantly clear, however, is that she has undermined the standard story of how Scotus with his voluntarism wrecked Thomas's virtue ethics. She even suggests, with a certain *chutzpah*, that the move from virtue ethics to the Kantian good will already started in the works of Aquinas!

The attractions of the standard story for thinkers like Alasdair MacIntyre are not hard to understand. Kantian ethics, insisting that it is in virtue of their autonomous wills that persons are 'ends in themselves', opens the way, once Kant's Lutheran piety dissolves, to modern conceptions of the totally unconstrained will creating its own values in arbitrarily free choice. Such conceptions seem frighteningly like justifications of a great deal of the behaviour, in public and in private life, that seems to display nothing but sheer will to power. The hope is that we may be able to get back behind the morality of the autonomous self to an earlier conception. This would be pre-Christian for philosophers like Martha C. Nussbaum (who equates Kantian Lutheranism with Christianity), pre-Reformation for Dominican moralists like Servais Pinckaers (who blames Ockham for ruining the medieval synthesis), and simply pre-Enlightenment for the increasing number of thinkers who (as Maritain did) trace the disasters of the present age to Luther, Descartes and Rousseau.

**Aristotle and Moral Realism**, edited by Robert Heinaman (UCL Press 1995, £35), is a fine collection of essays by a dozen classical scholars and moral philosophers, exploring the way that Aristotle justifies the claim that our ethical beliefs rest on some objective foundation — which is none the less perfectly compatible with the thesis that what determines the right thing to do in a particular case is what the virtuous person would do. In **Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty**, edited by Stephen Engstrom and Jennifer Whiting (Cambridge University Press 1996, £35), an equally good collection (John McDowell is the only contributor in both volumes), the stereotypes about the supposed opposition between Aristotle and Kant are challenged. MacIntyre, as the editors say, thinks it necessary, in order to recover Aristotle's insights about virtue and happiness, to reject the Enlightenment conception of reason as hopelessly flawed by its reliance on impartial and universal principles that transcend history.



Many of us, however, remain attracted by Enlightenment ideals of autonomy, impartiality, etc. The essays in this collection suggest that Aristotle is more 'Kantian', and Kant more 'Aristotelian', than the conventional wisdom assumes. McDowell, for example, argues that Aristotle's practical reason is perfectly Kantian in the sense that it stands in need of no external or extra-ethical validation. Barbara Herman, on the other hand, suggests that, if we attend to more than the usual narrow selection of texts, Kant's ethics focus on the good, like Aristotle's, and not just on duty. Upbringing and character, rather than law and rules, are important for Herman's Kant as for McDowell's Aristotle; while neither reduces practical reasoning to (utilitarian and consequentialist) weighing of the relative costs and benefits of competing alternatives. In the end, as the Stoics show, the allegedly opposed visions of ethics, teleological versus deontological, have always proved to be compatible. Like Aristotle, the Stoics appealed to happiness as the ultimate source of moral motivation and justification; like Kant, nevertheless, they could articulate a conception of moral duty, based on natural law and the universality of reason.

Meanwhile, in *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Georgetown University Press 1996), Joseph J. Kotva, Jr., argues that, while he was not right in every detail, Thomas's rethinking of Christian moral theology in terms of Aristotle's ethics is precisely what best expresses the moral vision that arises from Scripture. While basing himself on admired precursors (Stanley Hauerwas, L. Gregory Jones, James F. Keenan SJ, Gilbert C. Meilaender, Jean Porter, Paul J. Wadell CP), Kotva sketches neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics (MacIntyre, Nussbaum, Nancy Sherman), deplores the absence of interest among Christians (they think ethics is about duty, not virtue), insists that it connects well with concerns in Christology and theological anthropology, and contends that it fits smoothly especially with Matthew and Paul. Deontological (i.e. Kantian) ethics is no better than consequentialism at providing 'algorithmic moral principles', we are told (page 32). One need not be a Kantian to question whether Kantian ethics was ever a type of ethical theory that 'promises a type of moral calculus'. Kotva tends to caricature the ethical theories he hopes to displace. He needs (as we all do!) to reconsider some of the stereotypes in the received account of the history of ethics. On the whole, however, he has provided a very lucid exposition of what an explicitly Christian virtue ethics would look like.