

philosophers who read only British analytical ethics, even if they are a dying breed. But given that this work has already long been under way, more than an empiricist reconstruction of Aquinas's natural law now seems possible and desirable. Concentration on Aquinas's essentialism may win a few supporters from the camp of Putnam and Kripke but unless this goes hand in hand with work on his theory of practical reason it risks losing supporters from the broad spectrum of moral views now sympathetic towards Aristotelianism.

HAYDEN RAMSAY

TERTULLIAN AND THE CHURCH by David Rankin, *Cambridge University Press*, 1995, Pp. xvii + 229.

To say that this is not a book for first-time Tertullianists is a comment neither upon its scholarship nor upon the readability of its author's prose, both of which are impeccable. Dr Rankin is taking part in a long and slowly evolving debate on Tertullian's ideas, here concerning the nature and functioning of the Church, and does not provide the novice with more information about the subject of his work than is necessary for the understanding of the arguments that he is advancing. He does, however, place those arguments in the widest possible historiographical context, citing the opinions of a broad range of authors across the whole span of the present century. This shows, not least, how many mutually contradictory interpretations of Tertullian's life and work there have been, and how he has been used to support a bewildering array of modern positions on questions concerning the Church, the episcopate and the role of the laity. The book itself, after a brief introduction, is divided into three sections. These comprise 'The Historical Questions', 'Tertullian's Doctrine of the Church', and 'Tertullian's Doctrine of Ministry and Office'. They are followed by a useful and lucid drawing together of the various strands of argument into 'General Conclusions'. Indeed, the lucidity and the cogency of the arguments throughout the book constitute one of its finest features, even if those of an opposing view-point may not wish to accept them all.

It is no criticism to say that the first section is the most challenging and exciting, in that the other two serve to complement it by drawing out the textual evidence for themes that are most boldly displayed in the opening chapters. Thus, in the second section there is some particularly interesting analysis of the different images that Tertullian used when talking of the Church. Dr Rankin clearly aligns himself with those, like T.D. Barnes, who see Tertullian as a layman who never became a priest. He rightly sees his own contribution as part of a wider process of the re-evaluation of Tertullian's place in the history of early Christianity. In particular, he takes issue with the previously dominant tendency to dismiss Tertullian as unorthodox and in consequence to diminish his significance. This has resulted, not least, from labelling him a Montanist and interpreting the meaning of this in the light of the later reputation of

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