

our idealisations about the nature of perfection have meant that Mary too has been misunderstood. She argues that Mary's role as the Mother of God has been taken by the Church as an ideal of motherhood (under patriarchal law, of course). West suggests that we have imposed our understandings of perfection on Mary. Young, female, virgin, mother. No woman could imitate these circumstances even if she wanted to! The problem as West sees it is that men idealise Mary in women. If, however, our focus is on Mary as an icon of the Church we can be liberated from such idealisations. The primary issue is not that we are called to be virgins and mothers but that we, men and women, are called like Mary to be bearers of the Word. And, like Mary at the foot of the Cross, we are called to places of crucifixion, to places of innocent suffering.

My main criticism in an otherwise important and challenging book is this: that West wants to play down the feminism of Greenham in the 70s and 80s rather than see it as a necessary part of the feminist process. She is, I think, unnecessarily dismissive of the achievements of feminism—of which she was a part. Moreover, she is somewhat harsh on the radical feminists. Could it not be that for some women it is a question of *integrity* to leave the Church—not so much an adolescent outburst as a mature and no doubt painful decision? Whilst agreeing that protest theology is not *necessarily* radical, her choice of Daly and Hampson as examples does not really convince us of this. Arguing from within the tradition, Daly's talk of "rape by the Holy Spirit" as an account of Mary's consent to be the Mother of God sounds pretty radical to me.

CLODAGH M BRETT

**ARISTOTLE'S ECONOMIC THOUGHT** by Scott Meikle. *Clarendon Press, Oxford 1995, Pp. viii + 216, £25.00*

It has always seemed to me that one of the greatest strengths of *New Blackfriars* has been its consistent ability to reveal that thinkers and philosophers that have been dismissed as hopelessly conservative and old fashioned by the general culture, including that of much of the Church, turn out on closer inspection to have urgent things to say to us. Scott Meikle's book on Aristotle's economic thought, a careful, sober and scholarly treatment, is written very much in this spirit.

Perhaps to most readers of this journal Aristotle is a figure of importance because they associate his work with the philosophical underpinnings of Catholic theology and most especially, in recent years, with the philosophy of ethics thanks to the revival of virtue ethics by such figures as Alasdair MacIntyre. But as Scott Meikle points out the influence of Aristotle's economic writings down the centuries has been enormous. Not only was it central to medieval and scholastic thought about commercial relationships (see Meikle's fascinating article 'Adam Smith and the Spanish Inquisition', in *New Blackfriars*, February 1995) but also continues to inform some elements of current Catholic social teaching and also influences Islamic thought on the economy. Many schools of modern economic thought continue to regard Aristotle as having provided the first

analytical treatment of the subject and acknowledge his influence. These schools would include neoclassical economics, Jevonian utility theory and, of course, Marxism. This impact becomes all the more striking when one realises that Aristotle's writing about economics amounts to no more than half a dozen pages of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*.

The widespread historical acknowledgment of Aristotle by so many interested parties is, for Meikle, part of the problem: he suggests his book is needed because the state of interpretation of Aristotle's few pages is 'chaotic'. Most intriguingly he shows that chaos of interpretation is of recent origin, occurring over the last 120 years. (Aquinas is noted as having no problems with interpreting the texts, p 2) The basic problem, Meikle argues plausibly, stems from the attempt to impose modern economic thought on the study of the ancient world. He takes the reader carefully through the debate in classical studies about the ancient economy, between 'modernists' and 'primitivists', in chapter 8 of the book, noting weaknesses on both sides, though clearly coming down firmly on a revised version of the primitivist view, which escapes the ahistorical weakness of neoclassical economic accounts of the ancient world.

An understanding of the real historical context of Aristotle's economic writings is for Meikle a necessary but not a sufficient condition for adequately interpreting them. For this Meikle argues it is necessary to relate them to his metaphysics. The core of Aristotle's thinking on economics lies in the distinction he carefully draws between use-value and exchange-value. As Meikle notes, 'The problem of the commensurability of goods in exchange presents itself acutely for Aristotle because of his theory of substance and categories.' (p.13) This means that Aristotle is unlikely to overlook the difference in kind between a thing which is a substance and that which is an attribute.

Important consequences flow from these distinctions when we realise that use value and exchange value are on an Aristotelian reading fundamentally different things, for as Meikle puts it: 'use value is essentially qualitative, heterogeneous, and unquantifiable, and exchange value is essentially quantitative and homogeneous, so that they are features of logically different kinds.' (p.593)

Meikle shows (Chapter 3) how Aristotle's basic metaphysical distinctions allow him to draw important conclusions in his analysis in the *Politics*. The logical difference in the categories leads inexorably to a difference of purpose or end. The actions that a person is led to in pursuit of one form of value are different from those which they would pursue in relation to the other form. It is clear that Aristotle sees moral dangers from confusing or mixing these different ends, e.g a doctor who pursues exchange value instead of his true end, the health of his patient. Meikle reveals Aristotle to be a thinker profoundly subversive of the assumptions of a society largely subordinated to the pursuit of exchange value. In this his account adds a powerful dimension to MacIntyre's Aristotelian critique in *After Virtue*, of modern society endangered by the institutionalised pursuit of external goods rather than the internal goods of our practices. Neo classical economics that tries to combine the use and exchange value distinction via the concept of utility is shown by Meikle, (Chapter 9) to have

'ridden roughshod' (p. 190) over category distinctions by smuggling in Humean rather than Aristotelian assumptions (p. 116). Marx is also shown in the final chapter to have understood and built upon Aristotle in *Capital* and much of the standard criticism of Marx is seen to rest upon an often unargued choice in favour of Humean rather than Aristotelian metaphysics. In short this is an important and fascinating book that should be read well beyond the natural audience in classics and Aristotelian studies. For Meikle has shown us an Aristotle with much to teach us about our "free market" world.

PETER McMYLOR

**THE ELDERS** by R. Alastair Campbell, *T & T Clark* 1994. Pp. xiv + 309  
**PAUL IN HIS HELLENISTIC CONTEXT** Edited by Troels Engberg-Pedersen *T & T Clark*. 1994. Pp. Xxvi + 341  
**THE DOUBLE MESSAGE** by Turid Karlsen Seim *T & T Clark* 1994. Pp. x + 301

New Testament studies has its roots in theology much more than in classical studies, even though many biblical scholars up until recent years were classically educated. One result of this was a tendency to treat the documents of the New Testament as being quite separate from the classical world in which they were written. There was always an awareness that the actual figures of the New Testament had some relationship to the outside world but this was the historical figures as reconstructed by scholars. The actual documents were interpreted as being disconnected from this wider Hellenistic world. In recent years, that has changed. T & T Clark's series, 'Studies of the New Testament and its World', three of whose volumes I wish to review show evidence of this. Although the title of the series might suggest a series of books on social history or archaeology, the books in the series contain a great deal about the nature of the texts treated as typical forms of writing which could be found in the ancient world, both pagan and Jewish..

Alastair Campbell's *The Elders* tries to re-examine the nature of 'the elders' in the New Testament. We are given useful surveys of the use of this phrase in the Old Testament, the deuterocanonical writings, Aristeas and Josephus, in Graeco-Roman society, in the letters of St Paul and in the Acts. Finally there is an examination of the topic in the Apostolic Fathers. Although Campbell is trying to examine the nature of the role of the elders in the early church, in effect what we have is a study of the use of the phrase in documents which are regarded as being in a natural progression. Campbell sees the elders as a being "more a way of speaking about leaders than an office of leadership itself" (Pg. 140). His problem which he doesn't do a lot to solve is the use of elder in the singular as in Peter's fellow elder, (1 Peter 5:1) and the term 'the elder' in the introductory verses of 1 and 2 John. In these cases, 'elder' does seem to refer to a particular office.

Paul in his Hellenistic context is a collection of articles based on a conference on Paul and his Hellenistic background held in Copenhagen in 1991 which taken individually are more convincing than when seen