

even conservative, and should not unduly upset those wary of Biblical criticism. For this reason his book can be recommended

to beginners: but they would be advised to use it under supervision.

ANTHONY PHILLIPS

THE WAY OF THE PREACHER by Simon Tugwell O.P. *Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979. pp xv + 200 £3.95.*

Anything that Tugwell writes is a pleasure to read, and worth reading, and the publication of this book fulfils his hope that it may be of service to the Dominican Order and to the Church. Those who have Dominican sympathies will find it fascinating to watch him rummaging about among the early Constitutions of the Order and the writings of the first generations of the friars. The more distant admirers will learn much from it, and will surely be convinced that the charism of preaching as it is expounded here is of great value to the Church; though they might be left in some puzzlement as to precisely what the charism and its value are.

The return to the sources places the book squarely in the category of writings responding to the call of Vatican II. The sources in this case are wide-ranging, including scripture, the desert fathers, early Cistercians and some Waldensians. None of these can be neglected in any attempt to assess what the founding Dominicans thought they were, but the reviewer must confess that this book has not really clarified his understanding of that question. Or perhaps it has: perhaps it is truer of the Dominicans than of most orders that they defy definition. Certainly what Tugwell says about the necessity of writing from within a living community, where all are trying after their own fashion to live out their vocation, conjures up the feel of more than one priory of Preachers in which there is a good deal more room for each person to respond differently to his calling than is the case in some other orders.

Another echo of Vatican II is the author's insistence that if a thing is good for the Dominicans it should also be good – in some way – for the Church at large and for each and every Christian. This theme has become a commonplace in the spate of post-conciliar declarations of religious orders. Tugwell does not fall into the trap

which has claimed some other victims, of a sort of imperialist triumphalism that says if you haven't adopted this or that recommendation of our holy founder/foundress you're not really a Christian yet.

He tells us he is after what is typically Dominican, not what is distinctively or exclusively Dominican (p 3). Yet he comes perilously close to the latter question on pp 130-131, which are among the most enlightening passages in the book. The discussion there of the paradoxical relations between holiness and grace in preaching is certainly something we can all apply readily enough to quite other areas of our Christian experience. Tugwell says he hopes to explore in future some of the other great themes of Dominican spirituality: he need not fear that Socratic temptations towards distinctive definitions will reduce the scope of applicability of his conclusions.

The difficulty in his treatment of the nature of the charism or grace of preaching no doubt stems partly from the fact that some of these chapters were written for other purposes before the book was conceived. But a firmer option for a starting-point among the contenders for what preaching is going to mean might have helped. Which is the primary analogue (if any): the preaching of a bishop or priest from the pulpit, the preaching of a Friar Preacher, or preaching in the sense of apostolic witness that we're all involved in whether we know it or not?

Appendix Seven, "On utilizing ancient sources" can be highly recommended for reading before, during and after the rest of the book, or even on its own, particularly for anyone else engaged in returning to his sources. Among other excellent insights it reminds us to watch out for what is not in the sources. We must ask why one medieval theologian has no treatise on grace, and why it never occurred to any of them to develop a systematic understanding of

vocation. The answer may be that they were deficient, but it may also be that we are wrong in wanting to force Christian living into those categories.

This is perhaps a particular case of a more general scruple the reviewer would have about theological discourse. Very strictly speaking, if God is simple, then nothing can be said about him, because everything that is said must be complex. So what we call theology is really not about God, but about creatures, notably about ourselves: about ourselves in relation to God, not (still very strictly speaking) about God in relation to us. So it is difficult in a discussion of grace, for example, to allow that God might give or withhold the charism of preaching, indeed that he might give different graces at all, as

is suggested by St Paul's list of the gifts of the Spirit. God can only give God, though we perceive this one gift under a multiplicity of categories. But perhaps this is a red herring. St Thomas's distinction in I-II.110.2 ad 2 between what grace is and how we receive it no doubt settles the question, and what sounds like anthropomorphism – much more frequently in St Paul than in Tugwell – is really only excusable shorthand.

Tugwell's book, with helpful historical contributions by Allan White, will be useful to any sort of preacher, and it does bring home the truth that we are all of us preachers.

PLACID SPEARRITT O.S.B.

HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE: Towards a Hermeneutics of Consent by Peter Stuhlmacher. *SPCK*, London 1979. £2.95.

This is a book to be read and understood on its own terms before there can be profitable dialogue with it. It is written for the German scene, with only one English-speaking writer cited; and though it speaks appreciatively of the contribution now being made within that scene by Catholic exegetes, its perspective remains that of the German Reformation, and the sacred text itself the true locus of the word of God, if approached with an adequate hermeneutic. Stuhlmacher sees the rise of historical criticism as not merely justified by, but a direct consequence of the Reformers' drive to establish the original meaning of the texts (*a retour aux sources*, after the prolonged dominance of the 'spiritual sense', which may be compared with that which in the second century, in reaction against Gnostic innovations, had brought about the formation of the New Testament Canon). A further impetus to its development, in his view, was the challenge to the hardened dogmatic positions of classical Lutheran orthodoxy which originally owed as much to pietism as to the Enlightenment (an interesting argument against retreating into fundamentalism, if not one that will survive transplanting into Anglo-Saxon soil).

Stuhlmacher writes very candidly of

the impasse in which his own tradition finds itself following the breakdown of the last major attempt at a post-critical hermeneutic, that of Bultmann. He is deeply disturbed by the tendency of many younger scholars (Catholic as well as evangelical) to advance ever wilder and more extravagant hypotheses about Christian origins (his list includes the attempt to identify a 'canon within the canon', theories of drastic interpolation of the Pauline epistles, the 'traditions in conflict' view of Mark, the pseudo-primitive theology ascribed to the so-called Q community, and the opposite extremes of a historical Jesus of whom nothing can be certainly known and one of whom enough can be recovered from analysis of the gospel texts to make (as Schlier put it) 'a fifth gospel and the test of the other four'). He is no less disturbed by the current radical response to the problem which short-circuits any attempt to establish the truth about these matters by taking refuge in a political theology for which truth is what we make true.

What specific has he for this situation? Not to jettison the critical method as discredited, not to modify its rigour in any way, but to reunite it with that from which it should not, at any rate outside the laboratory conditions of the university