

extremely useful, and should provide a starting-point for much useful work on the theology of preaching.

*Master Sermons Through the Ages* is an ambitious title, and suggests a balanced cross-section of sermons from all periods of Christian history. In fact, of the thirty sermons included, only two are patristic and one medieval, while twenty-one of them were preached during the last century and a half. And while it is true that a consistent emphasis on the importance of the preached Word is one of the glories of the Reformed Churches, it is surprising to find as many as sixteen Protestant (as opposed to Catholic or Anglican) preachers represented. The Eastern Churches are only represented by one sermon of Chrysostom's.

In spite of the imbalance of the selection, many of the sermons included are of great beauty and interest. But it hardly seems matter for regret that the preaching style of the nineteenth century is a thing of the past.

In the Catholic tradition, the sacramental Word has for too long been impoverished by the silence of the proclaimed Word. In the Protestant tradition, the proclaimed Word has been impoverished by abstraction from the sacramental. We are both learning again that the Word was made flesh.

NICHOLAS LASH

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE FATHERS, by Louis Bouyer; Burns and Oates, 63s.

LA PRIÈRE, VOL. II, LES TROIS PREMIERS SIÈCLES, par A. Hamman, O.F.M.; Desclée et Cie, n.p.

'This history will be, in the final analysis, the search for and the bringing to light of the integral witness of tradition and of Christian experience to the whole concrete reality of "life in Christ Jesus".' So writes Fr Louis Bouyer in the preface to this masterly account of the spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. Inevitably one thinks of Pourrat, but Bouyer has written a very different kind of book and one, too, which shows on every page how much research has been going on in this field since Pourrat's pioneer work. Using the fruits of this research as well as his astonishing familiarity with the sources, Bouyer has written a history which the specialist will use with the utmost respect and the non-specialist will go to as an authoritative yet extremely readable account.

If he has set himself the task of bringing to light 'the integral witness . . . to the whole concrete reality of "life in Christ Jesus",' he has in fact concentrated more on the genesis and the development of the great seminal ideas of the Judaeo-Christian tradition of spirituality. For the reader to whom the New Testament is more familiar than the Fathers, the first section of the book will prove a continuous source of new insights. In fact the chief merit of the book is the thoroughness with which Bouyer has rooted his account in the New Testament.

Later, the reader might feel that in the labyrinths of gnosis, neo-platonism, or *apatheia*, he seems to have wandered far from more familiar ideas. Yet he has at hand a guide to trace for him the continuous thread of Biblical theology. He shows, for instance, how gnosis is already a part of Judaism and is taken over by Christianity where the key to it becomes Christ and his 'mystery.' It is only on the fringes of the Christian tradition or outside it altogether that a degenerated gnosis is submerged in dualistic asceticism, in phantasmagorical speculations and visions under waves of influence from the East. For Clement of Alexandria, for instance, gnosis is 'the knowledge of and the understanding of the gospel'—a definition which, as Bouyer says, 'might have come from all the first generations of Christians and from the Christian groups that were most purely biblical and Jewish in their formation.' The problem for the historian is not Christian gnosis at all but those heresies 'to which the nineteenth century applied the name "gnostic" to the point of making this name their exclusive prerogative'. For the early Church these heretical speculations were never more than a pseudo-gnosis; true gnosis is reserved for the Catholic Church alone.

Bouyer dwells long and lovingly on the Alexandrian 'school' and particularly on the towering figure of Origen, only recently discovered as a spiritual rather than an intellectual theologian. He underlines the differences between Origen and Clement, showing how, with Origen, 'the love of God, of Christ, is of a vehemence that contrasts strikingly with Clement's aspirations, so facilely serene. As we go from one to the other, the Cross of Jesus, grasped with something of that spiritual passion characteristic of St Paul, comes back into the foreground'. It is this inspiration drawn from the Cross which gives rise to the theology of martyrdom and the eschatological slant given to thought on baptism and the eucharist. It is out of this thought and this inspiration, with the cross as the centre of his mystical asceticism, that Origen lays the foundation for, and gives a theology to, monasticism.

From Clement and Origen, Bouyer passes to Basil and the two Gregories, and it is this axis of Alexandria-Cappadocia which provides the backbone of the whole book. He treats of the three great Cappadocians separately at the same time convincing us of the overriding importance of Basil the Great. From the rather formless and essentially unstable vagaries of early monasticism, Basil builds up an organised institution giving it both a legislation and a spirit which were to influence every subsequent monastic experiment. Seeing man as primarily a social being he throws the weight of his learning and his authority behind the cenobitic rather than the eremitical tradition. For him the Christian message is a social one shot through with the Pauline concept of charity. This is the foundation of all his organising work and the tradition which, paradoxically, has passed more surely to Western monasticism than to his own professed followers in the East.

The Western Fathers themselves have received what is almost perfunctory treatment though there is justice in Bouyer's comment that 'if St Augustine had not existed, Latin patristics—apart from Tertullian—would be reduced to

works of translation, popularisation and of adaptation of Greek patristics.' It still remains something of a harsh judgement, though presumably the balance will be redressed somewhat in the second volume. Yet a book such as this must focus its interest on the meeting of Christian spirituality with the cultural world of Hellenism and on the origins of monasticism as the most perfect expression of that spirituality. Both demand that the limelight plays on the Greek rather than the Latin world. It is at least a salutary reminder to a generation which is only beginning to realise that the *Latin Church is not the whole of Christianity* that its debt to the Greeks is very great indeed.

Where Bouyer is concerned with the doctrines which underlie Christian spirituality and the thought which went into giving it systematised expression, Fr Hamman uses only the prayers, above all the liturgical prayers, of the Church. If the axiom, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, is true we might have expected the two books to have produced much the same result. Yet there is a world of difference. The more concrete and existential approach makes *La Prière* a much more attractive book. But the best thing about it is the way in which it underlines how all the prayer of the early Church was conceived and expressed in a liturgical setting—a timely reminder to us in whom the liturgical revival produces so much self-conscious elitism. Writing of St Ignatius of Antioch he says, 'The ambivalence of the expression *Eucharistia*, which means at once prayer of thanksgiving and the Eucharist properly so called, unites as one reality prayer and liturgy, the one inconceivable without the other'. This is the point of view he adopts in discussing all the prayers which have survived to us in the works of the early Fathers and the high-point of the book is an analysis of the liturgical texts themselves. He shows the ancestry of the Christian liturgy in the communal meals, called *chaburah*, which the rabbis took with their disciples in order to weld them into a community, the ritual of which could well have been used by Jesus on Holy Thursday. It would at any rate have been in the course of the Paschal thanksgiving prayer that Jesus announced the new Pasch, a greater deliverance and a new creation of the people of God. Fr Hamman then goes on to analyse the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus and concludes the chapter with a number of reflections on the liturgical ideas of the early Church. Finally, he gives an account of the first treatises on prayer, with which he begins to leave the more concrete and direct evidence of the first two centuries and enters the world of the more sophisticated theological investigation which has so fascinated Bouyer.

The apostles went to Christ and asked him to teach them to pray. Both these books show in their own way how completely that lesson was learnt and how faithfully the early Church prayed in the spirit of the incomparable answer that Christ gave.

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