

rather too much Thomism of the mid-century or earlier: the last chapter of Bouyer's *Introduction to Spirituality* would have been more to the point (the book is not included in the otherwise excellent bibliography). But some six

hundred closely printed pages – thirty six essays, mostly of high quality – are good value for the money, and Fr Woods is to be congratulated on completing his mammoth task with so much success.

ILLYD TRETHOWAN

**REFLECTIONS ON THE BEATITUDES: Soundings in Christian Traditions, by Simon Tugwell O.P.** Darton, Longman & Todd, London 1980. pp 180 £4.50.

One of the most popular devotional works of recent times was an English Dominican's 'study in the social implications of the Beatitudes', the late Fr Gerald Vann's *Divine Pity*. Fr Simon Tugwell has now given us his own *Reflections on the Beatitudes*, which in its turn promises to become a classic of modern Catholic spirituality.

Fr Tugwell presents us, first of all, with the strange and paradoxical picture of the man whom Jesus pronounces blessed: he is a hungry, down-trodden pauper, but at the same time a peacemaker and son of God, the inheritor of heaven and earth. Such a paradox is, of course, only a consequence of the greatest paradox of all – the mystery of the Incarnation, whereby God in his omnipotence came to us in weakness. The paradox of Our Lord's life and teaching is, according to Fr Tugwell, a challenge to us to learn the 'sublime art of weakness', to face up to poverty, helplessness and dependence on God. The Beatitudes encourage us in honesty of vision, seeing ourselves for what we are: 'God never says to us, "I want you to become something else" without also saying, "I love you as you are"' (p 15); 'The gospel is proclaimed to what we really are, whether we like it or not. God's call to us now is, as it was to Adam, to come out of hiding' (p 130). Such honesty of vision, though, comes not from mere introspection but from contemplation of the Crucified. There we are, in a double sense: 'his agony, his helplessness, his dying, they are all ours. But even worse, that is what we are: we are the people who do that, who kill and torment, who react to love, even to God's love, with that kind of fury' (p 62).

As he discusses each of the Beatitudes, Fr Tugwell returns, time and again, to this theme of honesty and realistic self-acceptance.

In a most moving chapter, he tells us that 'Blessed are those who mourn' is 'an apologia for authentic emotional responses' (p 60); Christ pronounces his benediction precisely on 'those searing and humiliating times when we are too distressed to accommodate ourselves to the requirements of our unsympathetic world, when even the church tends to confront us with its wooden-faced puritanism of "joy"' (p 61). When discussing hunger and thirst, Fr Tugwell tells us that the point of Christian asceticism is its fundamental realism: we have to discover our real needs and appetites. Evagrius, in the *Praktikos*, says that gluttony is a bogus hunger, a hunger in the mind, the product of daydreaming. 'Hunger must be restored to the stomach, it does not belong to the imagination' (p 72). Again, in connection with peacemaking, Fr Tugwell says that authentic peace comes only through the acceptance of truth: 'if we accept the truth of ourselves . . . and constantly give it over into the truth and peace and wholeness in Christ, to which we have access in the church, then we shall be in fact in peace, whether or not we feel ourselves to be at peace' (p 114).

I felt myself personally addressed by this book, struck in a new way, *compunctus*, by the familiar words of the Beatitudes. In these admirable *Reflections* Our Lord's teaching is mediated to us as much by the author's compassion and humour as by the wisdom of the Christian traditions upon which he draws. Fr Tugwell's English is limpid and a pleasure to read; he has also happily solved the vexed problem of notes and bibliography: for every author we are given details of both critical edition and English translation (where available). All in all, here is a book for every Christian to read and make his own.

JOHN SAWARD