

still to be achieved. It is to be hoped that this book will do as much to foster discussion on the topic in this country as it has done in France.

P.M.

UN EDUCATEUR MONASTIQUE: AELRED DE RIEVAULX. By Amédée Hallier, O.C.S.O. (Gabalda; n.p.)

This doctorate thesis presented in Rome at San Anselmo is the first large-scale study of the doctrine of St Aelred to appear since 1936, when Dom Boniface Pedrick published his study of the doctrine of charity in Aelred. The usual approach to the authors of the twelfth-century Cistercian school is to see their doctrine as describing the soul's withdrawal from God by sin and its return to God by conversion. But Fr Hallier's method is to see Aelred's teaching in the light of its specifically monastic tone and to examine it as something springing from the personality of a teacher who formulated his ideas with an abbey of monks in mind. The plan of the book is therefore to show Aelred in his historical setting, and then to show his teaching on man and God, using the formula so beloved of the early Cistercians—*noverim me, noverim te*; then the monastic life is examined under its essential aspect as the straightest and surest road of the return of the soul to God, which is the basic end of such a life.

Aelred was admirably suited by his personality to be the abbot and spiritual guide of monks, and all his writings are directly connected with his work as father and head of the monks at Rievaulx, the source of the rapid spread of the order throughout the north of England and Scotland. His brilliance is not to be sought in the influence he brought to bear on the ecclesiastical and political life of his time, but in the more hidden and difficult art of directing and educating souls in the monastic life, a task to which almost the whole of his religious life was devoted. We must therefore always try to picture Aelred at Rievaulx and see him in the context of the life he led there, not only among his chosen friends, but also as active and attentive in all the matters that concerned the material and spiritual welfare of the whole of the huge establishment which the abbey became under his rule. Replaced thus in his context at Rievaulx, he appears as a spiritual master who assimilated with great skill the monastic tradition, grasped and expressed the spirit of primitive Cîteaux, and added to it that charm and dignity which belonged to him alone.

Fr Hallier in this welcome book has shown how the teaching of Aelred is always practical and concrete, being often based on personal experience and often found in passages which are obviously autobiographical. For those who are looking for an introduction to the life and thought of Aelred this thorough and excellent book may be

warmly recommended, for it shows how the ideal of the monastic life was in the closest connection with Aelred's teaching in an abbey where his warmth and sympathy made him a true father and teacher of his large community.

ADRIAN WALKER

MYTH AND REALITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Brevard S. Childs.

The author starts his work by presenting us with a finely pointed and well-balanced picture of myth as an understanding of reality. Over against this in contrast he sets the Hebrew use of similar and analogous forms of expression. In considering a series of such passages he shows the way in which the mythical form has been used by the biblical author, and the way in which this form has been distorted. He shows that there is always, not only a satisfactory adaptation of the form which enables it to be used in the context peculiar to the thought of Israel, but also an unresolved element remaining in opposition. It is by seeing the interaction between these two aspects of the form as it is found in biblical hands that the thought and intention of these passages is revealed. The consistency of attitude in the progress of thought which is thus shown is remarkable, and in the light of this the author is able to present a systematic comparison of the old testament's concepts of time and space with those of mythical thinking. Throughout this he is at his best when he is considering those cases where the mythical form is most prominent and the duality most significant (e.g. Genesis i, 1-2; iii, 1-5). This forms the main part of the work and herein lies its greatest value; but a conclusion of some sort is needed. This the author attempts in an appraisal of Israel's sense of her own reality and significance. We do not think in fact that this is possible unless there is taken into account at this point a consideration of the unique quality of the meditation upon her origins to be found in the prophetic movement. This would admittedly be going beyond the original intention of the work, but there is another factor which prevents this conclusion from maturing. The author has a violent distrust for and dislike of 'abstraction'. This distrust is insufficiently critical and his idea of 'abstraction' is insufficiently developed. He is unable to distinguish between abstraction in a narrow and literal sense and abstraction as transcendence. This leads him to reject the relevant thought of Bultmann, Cullmann and Barth, which he considers, as merely unreal 'abstraction'. This is a pity; and it leaves him able to say little more than that Israel saw her reality in terms of remaining faithful to her origin as a chosen people.

The awareness of Israel's reality to herself has indeed a transcendental nature, and thus her history is pointedly significant from within. This