

CITEAUX AND HER ELDER DAUGHTERS. By Archdale King. (Burns and Oates; 30s.)

This work deals with the five leading Cistercian abbeys: Citeaux, the mother house and her first four daughter houses, La Fette founded in 1113, Pontigny founded in 1114, Clairvaux and Morimond in 1115. It covers their history from the foundations up to the suppression of religious houses during the French Revolution and, in the case of Citeaux, this history includes its re-occupation by Cistercians in 1898 and gives the line of abbots down to the present day.

This survey is particularly interesting because, although the early history of these abbeys, and especially that of Citeaux and Clairvaux, has been much written about, their later history has received far less attention. We must also be grateful to Mr King for bringing together in one convenient volume a wealth of material which otherwise could only be acquired by lengthy research, often into not easily accessible documents.

The book is a mine of fascinating information. There is, for example, an extremely vivid and detailed description of Clairvaux as it was seen by the Queen of Sicily in 1517. The horses of Morimond, we are told, were renowned for their breed and many knights from the neighbourhood bought their horses for the second Crusade from the monastic stables. Clos de Vougeot, a name familiar to any wine lover, belonged to Citeaux and in 1667, during a dispute between the Cistercians of the Strict Observance and those of the Common Observance, we find a religious of the former complaining that it would be useless for his congregation to attend the General Chapter because the Abbot of Citeaux would be able to sway the assembly by liberally pouring out for them his excellent wine.

One thing which stands out amidst a welter of detail is the very swift decline of the Order from its pristine fervour; as early as 1181 Clairvaux, St Bernard's own monastery, was receiving serfs in absolute contravention of Cistercian statutes. This decline does not seem to have been into real decadence but rather into a respectable mediocrity, where the emphasis tended to be on scholastic attainments, on the maintenance and increase of property and on the embellishment of monastic buildings.

In his introduction, Mr King admits that his method, which is to recount the history of each house by way of short accounts of the particular happenings under each abbot, lies open to many objections. To the present reviewer it seems that one of the most serious objections presented by this method is the difficulty of following up any one topic consecutively. This difficulty could be overcome by an adequate index, but, unfortunately, this is not the case here. For example the

topics of serfdom and tithes, both with important bearings on Cistercian development through the centuries, are unmentioned in the index although there are numerous references to these questions scattered throughout the book.

Quite a full bibliography is given, though it is a little surprising to find Dom J. Leclercq's name absent from it. His article on Geoffrey of Auxerre (*Les écrits de Geoffrey d'Auxerre Rev. Bened. Nos. 3-4* 1952) might have been used to explain Geoffrey's mysterious deposition or resignation in 1165. Dom Leclercq suggests that this happened because Geoffrey remained on good terms with Henry II of England which displeased Louis VII of France and his brother Henry, Archbishop of Reims, as Henry II had incurred papal displeasure over the murder of Becket.

Regarding the question of Cistercian exemption from diocesan control, Mr King remarks with truth that this was the result of a succession of papal privileges. Might it not also have been in some measure due to the Cistercian Constitutions themselves, by means of which the disciplinary machinery of Citeaux became far greater than that wielded by any bishop, and the abbatial elections were so elaborately safeguarded that episcopal intervention was unnecessary?

A map showing the abbeys mentioned would have been a useful addition to the text.

A. J. MEIKLE

A CHRISTOLOGY FROM THE SERMONS OF ST VINCENT FERRER. (Selected and translated by S.M.C. (Blackfriars; 12s. 6d.)

These sermons are selected from the many thousands contained in the five volumes published by the Dominicans of Valencia in 1591, sermons preached by Master Vincent during the phenomenal apostolate up and down Europe which occupied the last twenty years of his life, 1399-1419. As S.M.C. points out in the Preface, they are something unique in spiritual literature, in that they are not studied treatises, but actual notes of sermons either jotted down before delivery or taken down during and after St Vincent's discourse. In contrast to most published medieval sermons, and many modern sermons for that matter, they bring one into contact with the personality of the preacher, and one can almost picture the scene as he held spellbound the vast throngs that flocked to hear him wherever he went. That he was endowed with the gift of tongues seems the only explanation of the fact that he managed to make himself understood by so many different nationalities, since the only language he could speak was the Valencian dialect of Spanish.

S.M.C. has selected and translated some twenty-four of St Vincent's