

REVIEWS

IN the first of his four volumes of analysis and synthesis of Ruysbroek's mystical teaching, *DE GRONDLIJNEN VAN RUYSBROEC'S DRIEENHEIDSLEER ALS ONDERBOUW VAN DEN ZIELEOPGANG* ('The Fundamentals of Ruysbroek's Doctrine of the Trinity as Basis for the Soul's Ascent to God'; *Studien en Tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf*, Tiel, 1950), Albin Ampe, S.J., is concerned to demonstrate from the works how the great mystic's teaching of the One and Triune God pervades his entire system. He sees the similitude and image of the Trinity in the whole universe, and especially in man: 'that is why his teaching about planets and men, about spirits and angels, is ultimately teaching about God: teaching towards God, "theology" in the deeper etymological sense in which this term was used by the Fathers': and he is the greatest exponent of *Bildtheologie*, *theologia imaginis*, 'the theology of the image'. Yet it was his peculiar achievement to reach a harmony between his Trinitarianism, Western in characteristics though in many respects peculiarly his own, and Neoplatonic and Dionysian thought and language, especially concerning the concept of *regiratio*, in which all things are seen as flowing out from divine unity and returning to that unity again. These two principles are to be seen in a perfect concord in his conception of Trinity: on the one hand there is the Word, the very image of the Father, in which all life has its being, and, on the other hand, there is the One Godhead from which the Persons proceed, into which They return, in which to attain to Their essential and fruitive blessedness. (Why, one wonders, does one try to obscure Ruysbroek's homely language by using such polite evasions as 'fruitive', 'otiose'? He says, just as the author of *The Cloud* says, that God in his essence is 'simple and idle'; and where a recent French work translates a phrase from *The Twelve Beguines* as 'Dieu met en nous ses complaisances et nous le Lui rendons', we find that he wrote 'God pleases us, and we in return please him'. This is the simple idea, simply expressed, which we wrap up in such jargon as 'fruition' and 'complaisance'.) One of Fr Ampe's greatest services in this study is that he, endowed with linguistic knowledge as exact and profound as his theology, can examine and expound the strict rules which governed Ruysbroek's use of such terms as 'essence' (*wesen*), 'by means of created things' (*creatuerlijcker wijs*), 'through means' (*in middel*), and can relate them to the Latin vocabulary and thought on which he drew, and, a step further, to those Greek ideas of which he, knowing no Greek, was yet aware in his innermost being. Perhaps one of his most wonderful, admirable

attributes was his ability to expound the mysteries of his doctrine in language of such amazing clarity and directness: yet—and here Ampe is of the greatest help to us—Ruysbroek, like every mystic, was also a poet, relying sometimes on a mantic use of common terms, sometimes on words which he or his peers had invented. One thinks of Evelyn Underhill's brilliant 'somehow, nohow', and one wishes for such help in translating *isticheit*: 'essentiality' or 'beingness'? Yet finally one is always led back to the same conclusion, that the chief limiting factor in all such studies is our inability either to intensify the clarity of Ruysbroek's thought or to simplify his language. This Ampe has not tried to do: but what he has attempted he has perfectly achieved, a study which can only direct us to the works themselves, which will, one hopes, encourage more students of mystical theology (and to them the concluding Latin summaries of these volumes are commended) towards the not impossible task of mastering medieval Dutch so that they can see for themselves how true is the judgment here that 'Ruysbroek wrestled with the debility of human reason and with the poverty of language, in order to make divine transcendence comprehensible to men'.

ERIC COLLEDGE

THE CISTERCIAN HERITAGE. By Louis Bouyer. (Mowbrays; 22s. 6d.)

It is appropriate that the firm which has done more than any other to make early Cistercian writings available in English should have undertaken to publish a general study of that important school of spirituality. It is only to be regretted that an English scholar with a knowledge both of early Cîteaux and of those abiding elements in English piety which have always found this school so sympathetic, could not have been found to fill the gap. The present volume is a translation of a rapid sketch of Père Bouyer, *La Spiritualité de Cîteaux*, which was avowedly written as a 'tract for the times', and it is fair to warn the reader that it is not altogether free of the marks of current theological fashion in France. Thus we are told that the psychology of Aelred's sermons 'betrays the influence of Origen too clearly to leave any doubt that Aelred had himself drawn from that source' (p. 132), and that in the third chapter of the *Speculum Caritatis* 'we pass from Augustinianism to a very faithful and profoundly re-thought Origenism'. That there is an undoubtedly puzzling, but quite elusive, Greek element in some passages of Aelred's writings may be freely admitted, but it shows some want of balance to attribute this confidently to a knowledge of Origen in a study where the readily-establishable importance of Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram* is not even mentioned. Dom Déchanet's valuable contribution to our understanding of William of