

**FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNITY: THE MONASTIC EXPERIENCE  
350—1250** by Brian Patrick McGuire. *Cistercian Publications*,  
Michigan, 1988. Pp.1 + 571. \$52.95 (h) £19.95 (p)

With the steady erosion of conventional institutions in the life of the West it is to be expected that the subject of friendship, in theory and practice, will often be discussed in the next twenty years, especially if the 'failure to produce viable communities in which individuals can find meaning and inspiration in each other' continues, as it seems likely to do. Noting this tendency in his preface and adding that 'the aspect of community, not that of sexuality, provides the central interest in the pages that follow', Dr McGuire indicates his chosen limitations as an historian and, later, his explicit desire to avoid a head-on collision with John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* of 1980, where they happen to cover areas of common ground. However, as anyone with experience of life in a monastic community will know, the dimension of community is, in its way, nearly as delicate and difficult a matter to handle with honesty and objectivity as the complexities of sexuality in a celibate group, since either are often known only on the basis of inference, a less reliable source the further we are from the materials on which this is based. This is freely admitted in an early chapter which begins with a discussion of the friendship vocabulary of Bede, where *amicitia* is commonly used 'in a political rather than a personal context.' But here McGuire also finds what may be the earliest use of the phrase *spiritalis amicitia* in connection with a friendship of St Cuthbert. It is indeed one of the valuable aspects of an industrious book that it keeps its eye on precisions of language and varieties of friendship during the period when 'friendship is as well defined and ephemeral as monastic life itself'. The heritage from the Christianity of Late Antiquity has been examined in two opening chapters, where the contrast between East and West may be somewhat overdrawn, but where perhaps it is true that there is a relatively unexamined continuity with the classical tradition on the subject of friendship, particularly in a writer like Ambrose, who becomes important again for the Cistercians of the twelfth century in quite different physical and social circumstances. But, after the living letters of Boniface and Lull and the more self-conscious products of Alcuin, on the fringe of monastic life, an almost total reticence descends on the evolving world. During the period 850—1050, which McGuire characterizes by 'the eclipse of friendship' tenth-century St Gall has not been forgotten, or the glimmers of light around some of the early abbots of Cluny, but he feels unable to make the evidence substantial enough for his standards. That he should fail to look in the direction of the proliferation of Italian solitaries—important though they are as forerunners of the movement of reform and renewal for at least a century—is by these standards inexcusable, especially as some of the most telling evidence for the circle around Romuald did not emerge until the nineteenth century and has still not been put together as it might be. Romuald's disciples frequently lived in shared cells, as they continued to do at the Fonta Avellana which Peter Damian entered, and in whose thought McGuire rightly sees a positive evaluation of the place of friendship in monastic life. With Anselm and his circle we come into somewhat clearer

48

light, and it is possible to establish fascinating networks of friendship for the period 1120–1180. McGuire has done a good deal of close work on the literary and human connections that prepare for this, and everyone concerned for his subject will read him with a real interest.

It is only a disappointment that the chapter devoted to Aelred of Rievaulx, when it comes, is not similarly prepared for by at least a sketch of the spiritual theology of love that crystallized around Cîteaux, in which Aelred's thought finds its most intelligible place. McGuire has unfortunately allowed himself to be too worried by the sexual implications of some of the evidence—more inconclusive than some modern writers like to suggest. Sooner or later this needs to be examined in the light of a more explicit theoretical study than either he or Boswell try to give it. An attempt has been made in the right direction—though not precisely in relation to Aelred—in Anna Riva's *Amicizia—integrazione dell' esperienza umana* (Milan, 1975) but more work will need to be done by others with psychological competence. In writing of 'continuity and change' in the years following Aelred until 1250, something is said about the opening to relationships with women, and here are included the early friars, with special reference to the Dominican Jordan of Saxony. The rather unsung Thomas of Cantimpré with his chaplain's duties and several lives of women saints lies, of course, just beyond the time-scope of this book. In the epilogue, which ventures further, into Italian humanism, Giustiniani is mentioned among the Camaldolese, but not the earlier Traversari, whose many friendships with important quattrocento personalities were vital to his attempt to revive patristic studies and essential to the part he played in connection with the Council of Florence. But, as the author modestly says in his introduction to this ambitiously extended survey, 'my results may well seem limited and quite preliminary, but what follows can be looked upon as a point of departure for more profound studies which must consider more closely the various languages of friendship in their varying cultural contexts.' There is indeed, always more work to be done.

AELRD SQUIRE, O.S.B. Cam.

**THE CREATIVE SUFFERING OF GOD** by Paul S. Fiddes. *Clarendon Press, Oxford 1988. Pp. xix + 281, £29.50.*

Those who share the author's presuppositions about what he calls 'this central theme of Christian faith' (vii) will find this book of the greatest interest and usefulness. Those like myself, for whom any marring of the Trinity's eternal joy is unthinkable, may well need to read it if only to appreciate the growing extent of the opposition to their main point of view. They will be rewarded with much good argument in criticism of other writers who believe that God suffers. The book is described in the Preface as 'a survey of thought' on the topic 'in the theology of the nineteenth and twentieth century ... not, however, presented for the most part thinker by thinker, but in the course of considering various facets of the theme ...' Expectedly, there are detailed discussions of Barth, Moltmann, Jüngel, Whitehead and his successors, Hegel and 'death of God' theologians. None of them gets off scot-free. Many others are more briefly treated. All the time Fiddes is building up his own synthesis. There are eight pages of indices,