

tisme total'. (He has, 'pour la première fois du monde', been designing an electron, a proton, a meson, a pi-meson, 'et même la structure molle par excellence—de cette novissime "glu cosmique" de laquelle je parle souvent de manière presque obsessionnelle'. We are also given a photograph of his dramatic *Christ de Saint-Jean-de-la-Croix* which is contributing so expensively to the culture of Glasgow, if not to the painter's association.

There are excellent individual contributions to this volume, such as we have learned to expect from *Les Etudes carmélitaines*. The *ensemble* is very cultured, very contemporary, very *chic*, very *parisien*; yet somehow a trifle snobbish, even a trifle priggish, and more than a trifle absurd. Perhaps we only expose our own stuffiness and English insularity when we whisper that it is not quite what we look for from Carmelite editorship and guidance.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

WHAT ARE THESE WOUNDS? By Thomas Merton. (Clonmore and Reynolds; 15s.)

In writing this short biography of St Lutgarde, the Cistercian mystic of Aywières, Thomas Merton was satisfying the claims of family. Undertaken before *Elected Silence*, it was certainly a task presenting no little difficulty, and he has carried it out with some success. The atmosphere of those numerous convents in the Low Countries which in the thirteenth century came under Cistercian influence is hard to convey. They represent both the strength and the weakness of the movement, held for a moment in a delicate equilibrium. Since St Gertrude speaks so eloquently for herself, she may safely be taken as a reliable, if somewhat sophisticated guide to the feeling of the period. One grasps at once the underlying sanity springing from a well-grounded monastic and liturgical tradition, and also the less admirable tendency to a multiplicity of often quite fanciful devotions which, in religious less holy and intelligent than the saints of whom we are speaking, could easily degenerate into somewhat childish piety, disconnected from any solid understanding of doctrine. An unadorned translation of the life of St Lutgarde, written with considerable verve by her Dominican confessor, Thomas of Cantimpré, would have shown the same factors at work. (The reference to this life in the 1867 edition of the *Acta Sanctorum* should incidentally read June iv, not June ii.) Thomas Merton has, however, preferred to retell the story, using his own undeniable gift for straight narrative. If this has involved some sacrifice of local colour, perhaps he was justified in not straining after it, for as he feels it necessary to say towards the end of the book, 'these . . . mystics with whom we have mostly been dealing do not present the pure Cistercian spirituality that characterised the first century of the Order's history'; and that first century gave all the rest the very breath of life.

It is therefore a little disappointing that when he does speak of the early Fathers of the Order, one gets the impression that Thomas Merton is harassed by an unconscious desire to measure them by the standards of a later and alien spirituality. Why is it, for instance, that when one turns to his account of St Aelred's sure and clear teaching on spiritual friendship one reads by way of introduction that: 'Theorising upon this point may be rather confusing, it is too abstract to be clearly grasped.'? Certainly there is nothing 'confusing' in St Aelred's carefully developed thought—unless, of course, one wished to accommodate his conception of friendship as a genuine ascesis and school of perfection, which like all schools takes in beginners with their lopsidedness and their defects, to a rather different ideal of disembodied relationships which he scarcely envisaged. It would have seemed incongruous to St Aelred—as indeed it would have done to St Thomas—that God's servants should ignore what we here find referred to as the 'merely' natural and human qualities of their friends when God himself does not ignore them. Is it not precisely nature and particular individuals that grace comes to restore and sanctify? It is wholesome occasionally to remind ourselves that we can become so concerned to avoid anything that might injure the supernatural life that we also succeed in preventing it ever producing the smallest effect on our wounded nature, or drawing into its orbit the entire personality. Yet this is the goal of all prayer and all mysticism. The early Cistercians had a particularly sound and certain grasp of the effect of the whole of Christ on the whole man, and it seems a pity to make them appear at less than their true stature. AELRED SQUIRE, O.P.

THE FATHERS OF THE WESTERN CHURCH. By Robert Payne. (Heinemann; 21s.)

ST BERNARD: ON THE SONG OF SONGS. Translated and edited by a Religious of C.S.M.V. (Mowbray; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Payne uses the technique of the poster—bright colours, simple outlines and a dash of modernity. In some ways it is a pleasant change from the conventions of hagiography, but it does not inspire confidence in the accuracy of the pictures drawn: it succeeds best perhaps in the chapters on Ambrose and Augustine; in particular scenes—Ambrose's grief at the death of Valentinian II, Augustine's winter in retirement before his baptism; and it fails worst in attempting to present something of the mind and thought of the Fathers in so brief a compass. Since, surprisingly for a novelist, Mr Payne seems to have little sense of period, this treatment becomes ludicrous in the case of St Thomas, for the author's idea of a Father of the Church is elastic enough to include him and St Francis, but not St Bede or St Anselm. One can only hope that, like a poster, this book will attract the hitherto uninformed to the Fathers themselves.