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spirituality as a science." "From the time of St. Dominic, great as was the influence of the Order of Preachers on European learning, their spiritual influence was, if anything, still greater. They organised the whole teaching of spirituality from that time. Illustrations are abundant, and the list of their saints is their crown."

The teaching in the doctrinal sections is most helpful and illuminating. "Virtue is the strength, put to use, to live aright, in regard both to God and to man, the making a man the best that he can be." And speaking of the Unitive Way it is emphasised that "every other 'way' is a true degree of perfection, capable of producing the highest sanctity." And all may aspire after this sanctity, since "in principle, at least the Way of Union is open to all."

We have only been able to give the briefest account of some of points treated of in this book which is rich in wisdom and learning. But perhaps enough has been said to recommend it highly to all who are desirous of a better understanding of spirituality in its history and in the Christian life.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

INTRODUCTION AU "LIVRE DE RUTH": TEXTE INTEGRAL DE L'OUVRAGE DE L'ABBE TARDIF DE MOIDREY. par Paul Claudel. (Desclée de Brouwer; 21 frs.)

The Abbé Tardif de Moidrey must already be familiar to many as a figure who appears in Léon Bloy's writings and takes a place among the very few who are there allowed to be on the side of the angels. To Bloy it seemed that he *was* an angel, an angel of light. For it was from him that Bloy learned the art of the mystical way of understanding the Scriptures, which thereafter provided him with the chief instrument of his thought. A first-hand specimen of the Abbé's art is here made accessible. Claudel has taken over Bloy's role of champion and interpreter. He likewise is an adept in this mystical art: he has practised it directly in a number of scattered essays, and its influence has long been apparent in his whole outlook and artistry. His present Introduction is a vehement defence of its practice and principles and at the same time a brilliant example of its use.

It is perhaps the theological postulates and implications of this essentially Catholic art, even more than any particular biblical findings to which its practice may lead, which establish its great value. It cannot be intelligently brought into play without refreshing and deepening a man's belief in the divine authorship of the Scriptures and in the reality of God's creatorship and providence. The Mystical sense of the Scriptures (otherwise

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known as the Spiritual, the Typical or the "Allegoric") is to be understood in contrast to the Literal sense, upon which however it depends, from which it takes its flight. By the Literal sense is meant that sense in its entire scope which it is supposed that the inspired human author had it in mind to express (whether by means of "literal" or of figurative language. The terminology of the subject is seen to overlap very confusingly). Out of this Literal sense a Mystical sense arises, on the assumption that God, the transcendent author of the work in question, has intended that what is contained in the Literal meaning should also carry with it for our minds (that is to say, over and above its *complete* Literal meaning, beyond the range of the hagiographer's whole literary purpose) an extra allusive, symbolic meaning. Of this meaning God is the sole proper author: He achieves it, not by inspiring the human writer to co-operate deliberately in expressing it, but by so ordering his writing that it carries an extrinsic reference and takes on an overtone of meaning, unknown to himself.

It is an art which it belongs to God as author of history, or more precisely as artifex of the whole economy of the two Testaments, to exercise. Every component detail of that economy—every saying, event, person or thing that is to be found in the bible—fits organically into the whole divine plan, is part of a work which in fact culminates and centres in Christ. For a mystical meaning to be present in the bible what is required is that God should have willed that some item or other should there appear under such a Literal form that something of its hidden, mysterious connection within that whole plan, something of its existential relevance to Christ should become visible with the force, with the light of a symbol. (That it should be apparent to historical criticism is quite another matter, pertains to another use of the bible—one which, incidentally, it may be remarked that Claudel does not seem to understand.) So, for example, the Scriptures themselves instruct us to find in the Jewish Pasch a symbol of the Holy Eucharist, and in the figure of Melchisedech a type of Christ. It is part of Claudel's purpose, however, to exhort us not to be content to gather up those mystical meanings which have been more or less officially, authoritatively indicated to us by the Scriptures, the Church, or the Fathers, but to seek after such meanings for ourselves—for our private or at least unofficial joy and edification. This being part of our privilege as friends or as children of God, to whom this mystical sense is addressed as an esoteric love-language.

It is a vast subject, to which a more stimulating introduction could not be found than this of Claudel's. Nor could a better

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modern exhibition-piece be found than the Abbé commentary on the Book of Ruth: even though its biblical foundations were not considered to be valid, it would still be found to be a most noble treatise on the meaning of the Religious Life.

But it needs to be said that Claudel's treatment of his subject contains a great deal that is defective or erroneous. For one thing he badly confuses the Mystical and the Literal senses. He makes them overlap and treats as a Mystical sense what is only Literal-figurative (Literal-symbolic, for example). Yet this mistake is in part a happy one: it has lead him to cover in his treatment the whole figurative and poetical character of the Scriptures, a subject which he handles magnificently. But his depreciative treatment of the Literal sense—partly explained by his mistake as to its nature—is entirely deplorable. His outlook is that of an extreme Alexandrian biblicist. At least it *seems* to be his conviction that the mystical sense is all-present in the bible, lurking behind every Literal meaning; and certainly he represents it, not as a gracious but strictly dispensable overtone of biblical meaning, but as a sort of rival sense that is irked to find itself so prosaically accompanied, and sometimes he will allow it to oust the literal sense entirely. That is to say, there are passages where he considers that a Literal sense is wanting and the Mystical sense is its substitute. For example, having asked what divine significance is now to be found in the Levitical listing of pure and impure animals, setting over of the cudshewers, and having decided that there is none, he concludes that the only sense to be attributed to the passage as a strictly biblical sense is a mystical one according to which some allegory or other touching the four evangelists is to be found. Claudel could have done very well, in fact, with a few lessons from those Literalist exponents of the Scriptures whom he denounces so bitterly, so brilliantly—in part at least, so justifiably. They might have taught him something of the Antiochian art of a historical approach to the bible.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

HISTORY

GIOVANNI DI MONTENERO O.P.: DIFENSORE DEI MENDICANTI, by G. Meersseman, O.P. Istituto Storico Domenicano. S. Sabina, Rome. (n.p.)

Since the rise of the mendicant Orders of friars in the thirteenth century, the Holy See has shown them constant and consistent trust, and has continually regarded attacks on them as attacks on herself, and nowhere has she found greater defenders of her prerogatives than in their ranks. This was proved very early in the first century of their foundation, when, annoyed by the