

three books, of which the first is concerned with the active life, but even this is considered on a very high level. The book does not deal with active good works, but with the sort of self-training and discipline which the contemplative must have as a basis of his higher activity and also as a concomitant of it. Ruysbroek's whole conception of man's union with God is that of the supernatural indwelling of God in the soul and the soul's response, and it is significant that this is conceived in terms that are fully Christian. The divine action is described in terms of Christ's action on the soul.

The translator of a work such as this is necessarily faced with the problem of how to translate words which the author uses as more or less technical terms, and Mr Colledge has done the only possible thing in explaining in his Introduction the interpretation he has chosen. The Introduction provides much valuable commentary and makes good use of Ruysbroek's other works, but perhaps in so closely articulated a book it would have been helpful to supply a detailed plan of the sections and chapters into which it falls.

GERARD SITWELL, O.S.B.

THREE MYSTICS. Edited by Père Bruno, O.D.C. (Sheed and Ward; 25s.)

This splendidly produced album has some highly original features, not the least of which is the inclusion of El Greco as the third mystic. The other two, of course, are St Teresa and St John of the Cross. In the main, the book consists of extracts from the writings of the last two and reproductions of some of the pictures of the first. The mystical writers are anthologised with a pronounced and entirely legitimate bias: to exhibit them as supreme examples (as they were) of nobility and love. For both the Carmelite saints, the contemplative is a royal soul, the life of prayer the way out of the meanness of human living left to itself. For both, the love of God must overflow into the love of friends and of things. "The detachment that his soul demanded", says Père Bruno, speaking of St John, 'brought no diminution of friendship, but the very reverse. Friendship is itself only if virtue preserves it from a self-seeking sensuality and from animal passions.' (*Three Mystics*, p. 8.) He continues:

'Saint Teresa emphasises that it is an error to think that those who have set their foot upon the way of renunciation neither love nor can love anyone but God. "They love, and they love more than others, with a more genuine love and more passion and their love is much more profitable. In fact it is love".' (*loc. cit.*: the quotation from St Teresa is taken from *The Way of Perfection*, chapter VII.)

But when one comes to El Greco, one wonders whether Père Bruno has not made a mistake. The nobility and the love that make their

overpowering appeal in Teresa and John have a closer counterpart in painting in Velázquez. (And one recalls irresistibly the religious depths of a silver cup by Chardin or a Cézanne landscape.) In the *Burial of the Conde de Orgaz*, the lower half reveals the loving admiration El Greco felt for the nobility and religious feeling of these strange people he had come to live among, but the upper half, like all his scenes of supernatural subjects, shows us the verve and virtuosity of a manner, but not a mystical conviction. The foreigner too frequently mistakes Spanish intensity for hysterical theatricality. Zurbarán is the corrective. El Greco is a wonderful painter, and a worldly painter, as his secular portraits show, if nothing else. There is, it could be argued, more religious feeling in Velázquez's secular subjects than in El Greco's religious illustrations. But he has had his vogue and we may now watch him settle down into his true place. Most fortunately, there are in this beautiful volume illustrations of some of the sixteenth-century Spanish polychrome sculpture and painting—Morales, Hernández, Juní and others, some unnamed, and a reproduction of St John's own drawing of the crucifixion. The pure Spanish tradition of iconography in all its vicissitudes (romanesque seated Madonnas which become conical robed images in the fifteenth century, renaissance painting with a Flemish rather than an Italian influence) is immensely more mystical than El Greco.

This interesting book contains also a graphological study of the handwriting of the two Saints and an attempt to suggest a theory of art out of the writings of St John. Perhaps the best thing is Père Bruno's own account of St Teresa and St John.

EDWARD SARMIENTO

UNSEEN WARFARE. By Lorenzo Scupoli, Nicodemus the Hagiorite and Theophan the Recluse. Translated by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer, with an introduction by H. A. Hodges, M.A., D.PHIL. (Faber and Faber; 25s.)

In 1796 there was published at Venice a Greek version of the *Spiritual Combat*, with the *Path to Paradise*, of Lorenzo Scupoli, adapted for readers in the Eastern Orthodox Church by Nicodemus the Hagiorite, a monk of Athos. This attained a considerable popularity; and soon after 1866 a more drastic revision and adaptation of Nicodemus's version was made by Bishop Theophan the Recluse, who translated it into Russian. He had in view a more restricted audience, of monks and nuns, than either Scupoli or Nicodemus, and his new matter, notably the chapters on prayer, were written accordingly. He also was more concerned than Nicodemus to get rid of anything that might be interpreted as specifically Western.