

# Richard Rolle and The Fire of Love

## INTRODUCTION.

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We are dependent for the dates of Rolle's birth and death on notes in the manuscripts of some of his works, and for the other facts of his life upon some autobiographical passages in the *Incendium Amoris*, which were introduced into his office. Though Rolle was never canonized, this office was compiled in readiness for that eventuality by the Hampole nuns with whom he passed the last years of his life. The outline, as supplied by these sources, is familiar: Rolle was born, about 1300, at Thornton Dale, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, and, according to the office, was sent to Oxford by the patronage of Thomas Neville, archdeacon of Durham about 1316. Scholasticism was not essentially hostile to mysticism, but Rolle, according to his own account, found the scholastic teaching at Oxford sterile and unprofitable, and about the age of nineteen returned to his Northern home, to enter upon the life of a wandering hermit. "I give thanks to God," he says in the *Incendium*, "Who, without any merit of mine, for my good and for His honour thus chastened His child, thus affrighted His servant, so that it seemed to me a sweet thing to flee the few and transitory delights of the world." Other passages bear witness to his disgust at the intellectual subtlety he found prevalent at Oxford, and at the "great theologians, wrapped about in endless questionings," and their teaching. Nevertheless, Rolle was not a mystic "in vacuo": he lived in the same century as Hilton and Julian of Norwich, Eckhart and Ruysbroeck, Tauler and Suso, Catherine of Siena and Dante Alighieri. The works of earlier mystics, Bernard, Bonaventura and the Victorines were studied by the spiritual guides of the day; and the teaching and methods of these writers appear in solution in Rolle's own writings. Rolle quotes, for a mediaeval writer, singularly little, owing probably to his manner of life, cut off from books, and this makes it difficult to assess the influence of particular writers upon him. But while all the evidence points to his having had only a secondhand acquaintance with the continental mystics, his inheritance of a deposit of mystical thought is quite clear.

### 39. HAMPOLE

Of Rolle's life and wanderings, from the age of nineteen till his death in 1349, little is known, except that his first patron was Sir John Dalton, whose son had been Rolle's friend at Oxford, and that he passed the last years of his life in a cell near the Cistercian Priory of Hampole, or Hanepole. The present village, a few miles north of Doncaster, lies at the bottom of a decidedly marked valley, along the southern ridge of which passes the road from Doncaster to Wakefield. The by-road to Hampole turns off at right angles, and crosses the valley and the little stream, by which the old Priory probably stood. The front gable of the village school has some old stones built into it, so that the peak of the roof now terminates in the empty niche of a saint, and a rather squat and

solid stone cross a probably mistaken local tradition regards these as having been taken from the site of Rolle's cell. Two stones now standing in a neighbouring cottage garden, the fretted pendant of groined roof, and a monk's head and shoulders which once formed a corbel, are much more probably remains of the Priory itself, of which even the exact site is now unknown. Here Rolle passed the last years of his life, and here probably he wrote the *Incendium*; but of his intermediate wanderings nothing is at present known. Some passages in the *Incendium* seem to shew that he was dependent, at different times, on different people for maintenance, but not that he was continuously wandering, depending on the chance alms of those with whom he came in contact. "It is no shame to a hermit to change his cell," he says, "though I am not speaking of wandering monks, who are a scandal to hermits." He defends himself vigorously in this book from the charge of vagabondage, put forward by those who regarded the recluse life as a perfectly normal social vocation. To understand the point of view of his "detractores," it should be remembered how common a feature of the fourteenth century was the recluse life, and that its apparent and distinctive sign was fixity of abode. The would-be recluse, before he could retire to his cell, obtained permission from the bishop, after shewing that he possessed means of sustenance; but when this permission had been granted, and the recluse had been solemnly enclosed by the bishop or his delegate, only danger to life itself, or the claim of canonical obedience, could withdraw the recluse from his cell. Instances have even been known when the recluse preferred to be burned to death, rather than leave it. The hermit similarly, though not always enclosed, was bound to one place of abode. Had Rolle chosen either of these vocations, and been formally "inclusus" by the bishop, he would have occupied a normal place in the social fabric, and been untroubled by "detractores": but he seems, from what he tells us, to have held himself free to leave whatever shelter he had found, when a prospect of greater solitude offered itself, or the demands of his own spirit urged him on. "For I withdrew from many, not because they fed me coarsely and hardly, but because our manner of life accorded not, or for another reasonable cause. For I dare to say, with blessed job, that fools have despised me, and when I withdrew from them, they slandered me. Nevertheless they shall blush when they see me, these who said that I would not dwell anywhere, except where I might be fed delicately."

The *Incendium Amoris* itself is a rambling biography, an explanation of "how Richard Hampole came to the Fire of Love": or, as one MS. puts it, perhaps copying his own note: "How I came to the Fire of Love." The purpose of the book is described in the Prologue;

"I have wondered more than I can tell," Rolle says, "when first I felt my heart grow warm, and glow with no imaginary, but with a real, and as it were, sensible flame. So I marvelled, when that flame first burst forth in my soul, and was in unwonted peace, through the unexpectedness of this abundance.... For I had not reckoned that such a warmth could happen to any man in this exile, ... for even as a finger, placed in the fire, is clothed with heat which it feels, so the soul, kindled in this manner, as I have told, is sensible of the most real heat; but now fiercer and greater, now less, even as the frailty of the flesh allows... . Therefore I offer this book to the sight, not of philosophers and wise men of the world, nor of great theologians wrapped in endless questionings, but of the simple and untaught, those who seek to love God rather than to know many things. For not by disputing, but by doing is He known, and by loving.... Wherefore, because here I incite all to love, and I shall seek to explain the burning and supernatural feeling of love, let this book be allotted the title of Fire of Love."

The book itself takes forty-two chapters to accomplish this end, and is quite without the structural plan, so dear to mediaeval writers, and in particular to S. Bonaventura. It is, indeed, rather a series of discourses on subjects connected with the life of the solitary than a complete didactic scheme. In the Prologue, Rolle states his own desire to prove to others the joy of the life he had himself chosen; the next eleven chapters are devoted to considerations preliminary to the undertaking of such a life; then come two chapters where he passes from advice to autobiography and which contain most of the passages quoted by the Hampole nuns in the office. The remaining chapters are mainly a series of discourses strung together with no particular plan, on the various difficulties of the contemplative life, interspersed with prayers and meditations which are the Latin counterpart of Rolle's better known Middle English work. There is a great deal of repetition, and a good deal of fairly commonplace mediaeval sermon: but the exuberant zeal of the writer saves the most rambling passages and most frequently repeated thoughts from dullness. The main idea of the book is simple: that the solitary finds Him whom he loves with a rapture and completeness which no other life affords, and that the devotion offered by such a life to the "Omnipotens Amator" is supreme, both as to merit and reward. "Magna est uita heremitica, si magnifice agatur."

The *Incendium* has one or two references to social life in the fourteenth century. "One woman reproved me," Rolle says, "because, wishing to correct their madness in luxury and daintiness of dress, I gazed too long at their outrageous adornments; and she said to me that I ought not to look upon women enough even to know whether they wore horned headdresses or not;

and methought she fairly answered me." He refers in another place to the awe-inspiring size of their horned headdresses; "the women of our time are much to be blamed, for they have invented new ornaments for their heads and bodies, and clothed themselves in them with such great and marvellous vanity, that they strike terror and amazement into beholders. Not only do they, contrary to the word of the Apostle, go in gold and braided hair, serving pride and wantonness, but they even transgress human decency and the nature given by God, and wear upon their heads horned head-dresses, broad, and of a terrifying size, made of hair not growing on their own heads. And some of them, seeking either to hide their ugliness or increase their fairness, paint and whiten their faces with the dyes of deceitfulness. Both men and women in their vanity wear clothes carven in the newest mode, and they pay no heed to what beseems nature, but to what the last rumour of vanity has introduced, at the devil's prompting." In another place, Rolle denounces those who counsel women to their hurt, and "lest they be offended, either will not or dare not forbid those things which it pleases women to use, although they are evil."

In another place Rolle describes the men whom he considers most sure of future damnation, *perpetratores*, a word translated a century later by Misyn as *purchasesours*, i.e. probably those who bought to sell for exorbitant profits, offending against the mediaeval doctrine of the just price.. "Among those forsooth who are bound by the vices of this world, of none of them is there, as it seems to me, so little hope of salvation as of those whom the common people call '*perpetratores*.' For when they have spent all their youth and strength in obtaining other men's goods, lawfully or unlawfully, in their old age they rest, as it were, in peace, and keep what they have unlawfully obtained. But because their conscience is afraid, and their sin bears witness of damnation, they merely cease from unjust exactions, but fear not to use the goods of others as if they were their own." "The great also, and rich men of the world, who burn ever with hungry desire to acquire other men's possessions, and grow into greatness and worldly power by their wealth of goods, and buy for a small price what will be (according to worldly wealth) of great value; or who, when they are given office by the king or nobles, take many presents undeservedly and unearned," - let such men hear what blessed Job said, etc; and he launches forth into texts against them.

Rolle has as hard things to say against the current piety and current learning of his time, as against worldliness and current fashions. "The wicked however, behave altogether foolishly toward God..... They enter the church, fill the walls, beat their breasts, give forth deep sighs,-but feigned ones clearly, because they reach the eyes of men, not the ears of God. For when they are in church in body,

they are distracted in mind with those worldly goods which they either have, or desire to have: and thus their heart is far from God.... Many give bread to the poor, and perhaps clothes to the shivering, but when their alms are done in mortal sin or for vain glory, or assuredly from those things which they have unjustly gained, they are in nowise pleasing to the Redeemer, but provoke the judge to wrath.... For the devil owns many whom we reckon good. For he has men who are almsgivers, chaste, humble, that is, men who confess themselves sinners, wear sackcloth and afflict themselves with penances..... For he has some zealous in labour and instant in preaching: but there is no doubt that he completely lacks those who are burning in love, and ever thirsty to love God, and uneager for vanity." In other passages Rolle complains of the insincerity and half-heartedness of almsgivers, and the impossibility of friendship between the poor and the rich. "For some men have so loved one another, that they have almost believed that there was but one soul in them both. But he that is poor in worldly goods, though he were rich in mind, is far distant from such a love. For if a man must ever take, and can rarely or never give, strange indeed would it be if he had a friend whom he could trust in all things. Yet it would profit a rich man to choose a holy poor man, even for his special friend; for Christ said, ` Make to yourselves friends, that is, holy poor men, who are the friends of God. For I have found certain rich men who gave food to those whom they reckoned holy poor men: but they would not give clothes or other necessaries, thinking they had done enough if they had given food: and thus they make to themselves but half-hearted friends; or they care no more for the friendship of holy poor men, than of evil; and of all that they might give, they keep aught that is precious for themselves or their children, and what is worse, oftentimes the poor seem but a burden to the rich." In this passage Rolle is obviously reminiscent, and the frequency with which he reiterates that friendship is impossible between a rich man and a poor is perhaps an allusion to some difficulty between himself and his first patron, Sir John Dalton.

Beside the passage in the Prologue, where Rolle dedicates his book "not to philosophers, nor wise men of this world, nor great theologians wrapped about in endless questionings," he inveighs in other places against those who have, as he phrases it, "inter sapientes insanos seminaverunt superbiam." (Among foolish wise men they have spread arrogance) He quotes the saying of S. Anselm, that "an old wife is often more expert in the love of God than the theologian," "because he studies for vanity that he may be known and appear glorious, or that he may acquire pensions and honours: and he deserves to be esteemed no wise man, but a fool." "Philosophers have toiled much, and yet have passed away without fruit: and many who seemed Christians have done great things and shewn wonders, and not merited salvation: for not to doers,

but to God's lovers belongs the abundance of the heavenly crown." In another place Rolle complains of the inadequacy of the descriptions of these doctors as compared with his own experience, and the remark is evidence that he had not derived his theories from any one special mystical writer: "Thus it happens to this manner of lover, what I have never found or seen expressed in any doctor's writings: namely, that song shall burst from his lips, and his prayers shall be sung with spiritual symphony and heavenly sweetness." The humble contemplative, he says, shall be taught with wisdom from on high: "But those taught by wisdom acquired, not inshed, and those swollen with folded arguments will disdain him, saying ` Where did he learn? Under what doctor did he sit? ' For they do not admit that the lovers of eternity are taught by a doctor from within to speak more eloquently than they themselves, who have learned from men, and studied all the time for empty honours<sup>2</sup>; but these fools, who are puffed up with acquired learning, not filled with the divine wisdom, judge falsely of themselves."

The main purpose of the *Incendium* is the vindication of the life of the hermit or solitary, not merely from the charge of laziness and vagabondage, but of inferiority to the busy and active prelate, or the devout monk. To do this, Rolle quotes the example of John the Baptist, "prince of hermits after Christ," and of the north-country saint, Cuthbert, and the Breton Maglorius. "The hermit life therefore is great, if it be greatly led. For blessed Maglorius also, who was full of miracles and rejoiced from his childhood in angelic visitations, was made archbishop according to the prophecy of blessed Sampson his predecessor. And when he was warned by an angel who visited him, he put away the archbishopric, and chose the hermit life, and at the end of his life he was (divinely) warned of his death. So also blessed Cuthbert passed from a bishopric to the life of an anker. If therefore men like these acted thus to obtain greater merit, what thinking man shall dare to set any state in the church about the life of the solitary?"

Rolle's reference to S. Cuthbert is natural, for S. Cuthbert, whose shrine he might well have visited at Durham, was among the most popular of north-country saints. The source of his reference to S. Maglorius is less obvious, for the Breton saint can scarcely have been much venerated in England. Rolle's words read as if he were acquainted with the *Vita S. Maglorii*, which relates how Maglorius, bishop of Dol, was bidden by an angel "that he might seek to offer ceaseless praises to the Lord, to go forth from hence, and set forth to lead a solitary life in some desert spot." and how Maglorius then left his flock and "betook himself to the desert, where he attained great holiness, and shone with many miracles." Actually, however, he seems to have founded a monastery at



Sark, and not, as Rolle implies, to have lived as an anker or hermit. These two saints are the only authorities quoted in the Incendium, an exceptional feature in a mediaeval theological treatise.

Although Rolle's estimate of the worthiness of the solitary life is more mediaeval than modern, his estimate of the asceticism which should accompany it is more modern than medieval. His advice accords much more closely with the dicta of modern psychologists than with that usually given by mediaeval religious to those whom they were instructing. "For he who would sing in the divine love, or rejoice and burn in song, let him dwell in solitude, and not in too great abstinence, nor let him give himself to any superfluity. For it would be better for him in ignorance to exceed the mean in a small matter, while he does it with a good will to support nature, than to begin to flag with too much fasting, and through bodily weakness have not strength enough to sing. For the true lover of Christ, and him taught by Christ, doth with as great zeal beware of having too much, as of having too little." The passage is similar in thought to that in the Prologue, where Rolle says that the "outpouring of eternal love came not to him when resting at ease, nor when he was too fatigued in body through walking, or even when he was beyond measure occupied with worldly cares," and many other passages.

In chapter 13 Rolle speaks of the relative worthiness of life in a community, and as a solitary. "There are some," he says, "who rank life in a community far higher than the life of a hermit, and say that we ought all to hasten to join a community if we wish to reach the highest perfection. With these men we have little cause of dispute, because they merely praise that life which they desire to lead, or at any rate with which they have some acquaintance. For there is a life which no man living in the flesh can know, except him to whom it is granted by God to lead it, and surely no man may judge rightly of this matter, while he as yet knows not what it is and in what manner it is led. Most surely I know, that if they learned to know it, they would praise it more than other men. Others err more greatly, for they cease not to blame and slander the hermit life, and say, 'Woe to him who is alone.' They do not explain 'alone' as meaning 'without God,' but as 'without comrade': for that man is alone, with whom God is not..... For to him who chooses the hermit life for God's sake, and leads it rightly: to him it shall be, not 'Woe ' but 'Winsome virtue.' Moreover, as far as I could read in the Scriptures, I found and learnt that the highest love of Christ consists in three things: in heat, and song, and sweetness; and these three, I found in my own mind, cannot long remain without great quiet." "In the wilderness indeed they are more clearly present: for there the beloved speaks to the heart, even as a bashful lover, who does not caress his love before all men, nor does he kiss

her as his friend, but only in the common manner, as a stranger."

### (3) ROLLE AND OTHER MYSTICS.

The question of the influence upon Rolle of other mystics cannot be satisfactorily answered by a study of the *Incendium*, but depends rather on the solution of the problem of the authorship of several minor tracts, sometimes ascribed to Rolle. In some of these, passages are quoted from the Fathers: Gregory, Augustine, Bernard, etc., by name: but such quotations occur only in the tracts whose authorship is uncertain, and not in Rolle's more important Latin works: the *Comment on the Canticles*, the *De amore Dei contra amatores mundi*, the *Regula vivendi*, etc. In the *Incendium* itself the only verbal quotations are from the Vulgate, although passages occur which suggest an acquaintance with the thought of the pseudo-Dionysius, the Victorines, and Bernard. All these passages might have been derived from an indirect acquaintance with these writers, or merely from participation in the current theological thought of the day.

### S. BONAVENTURA.

Horstman, in his *Richard Rolle and his followers*, suggests that the influence chiefly traceable in Rolle's writings is that of Bonaventura. Since Franciscan influence was strong during Rolle's stay at Oxford, this is not improbable; and Miss Hope Allen, who has studied the works of Richard Rolle as a whole, considers that some of them contain a good deal of the teaching of Bonaventura in solution. The influence is, however, not at all apparent in the *Incendium Amoris*, although a very interesting confusion has occurred between the Prologue of the *Incendium*, and Bonaventura's *De Triplici Via*. It is clear, however, that here a passage from Rolle's work was incorporated by a scribe in that of the Italian mystic (see below). Though Horstman does not mention this confusion, it is possible that, without having worked the matter out, he believed Rolle to have borrowed the passage from Bonaventura, and to have founded the *Incendium* upon it; and that this accounts for the predominant place which he assigns to Bonaventura among those who influenced Rolle. This however is surmise, as Horstman gives no indication in his writings that he was acquainted with the confusion between the *Incendium* and the *De Triplici Via*.

Comparing the *Incendium* with Bonaventura's writings on the same subject, I can find no resemblance. Rolle's rambling and diffuse style is as far removed as possible from Bonaventura's carefulness of design, and lucidity of expression. Bonaventura's *De Triplici Via*, which through the above-named confusion was

till recently known also as the *Incendium Amoris*, deals, like Rolle's with the stages of the contemplative life: but the lack of design in Rolle's work contrasts strongly with Bonaventura's divisions and sub-divisions: his three degrees of prayer, six degrees of perfection, seven steps respectively towards the attainment of peace, truth and love, etc. The rhythm also of Rolle's long, involved sentences differs greatly from Bonaventura's careful pauses, and balanced antitheses. In their respective outlook, Rolle and Bonaventura differ even more widely while Rolle revolted against the scholastic method of his day, Bonaventura accepted it fully and expressed himself by its means.' Thus while Rolle in the *Incendium* speaks of the three stages in his own spiritual life, he uses the terms "fervor," "canor," "dulcor," which are drawn from his own experience, and can only roughly be equated with those used by other mystics. They certainly do not correspond with the three stages of "purgation," "illumination," and "union" of the normal mediaeval scheme. Bonaventura, however, adopted this traditional division in the *De Triplici Via*, and elaborated it. Thus in neither style nor thought can the *Incendium* be said to have derived much from Bonaventura.

There is, however, an interesting confusion between Rolle's *Incendium Amoris* and Bonaventura's *De Triplici Via*, due to the occurrence of the last part of Rolle's Prologue (" Evigilans vero animam meam ... . iscius libri titulus incendium amoris sorciatur"), in a few late Bonaventura MSS. Rolle's Prologue is an autobiographical note, describing his own mystical experience, and the class of reader for whom he designs the book: it is found in all the complete MSS. of his *Incendium*, both in the long and short forms of the text. Miss Allen pointed out, in her *Authorship of the Prick of Conscience*, that this passage was printed in the older editions of the *De Triplici Via* (the so-called *Incendium Amoris*), but there seems no doubt that it is the work of the English; and not the Italian mystic. It is indeed, so obviously foreign to Bonaventura in matter and style, that some of his early critical editors, perceiving this, rejected the whole work as spurious. The Quaracchi editors, however, discriminated between the Prologue and the body of the work, and while rejecting the Prologue as of unknown authorship, print the so-called *Incendium Amoris* among the genuine works of Bonaventura, under its old title of *De Triplici Via*. Their conclusion was based on the discovery that only three out of the 299 Bonaventura MSS. contain the passage, while one of these. shews the transition stage at which it became incorporated, and has the Prologue at the end, instead of the beginning of the work.

An Indulgence, written on the fly-leaf of a Cambridge MS. of Rolle's *Incendium*, suggests the council of Constance as the possible medium by which the fusion

between Rolle and Bonaventura occurred, and there is no chronological difficulty in accepting this theory, since the Quaracchi editors class all the three "contaminated" MSS. as belonging to the fifteenth century. The indulgence states that Thomas (Spofforth), bishop of Hereford, the archbishop of York, and certain other bishops whose names enable the indulgence to be dated at 1452-7, have granted an indulgence of forty days to the devout reader of a chapter of the *Incendium*, at the request of Christopher Braystones, a monk of S. Mary's, York. A memorandum in a different fifteenth century hand follows, by a monk of the Carthusian house of Beauvale in Nottinghamshire, asking the prayers of the reader for Christopher Braystones, once monk of S. Mary's, York, then chaplain to Spofforth, and finally monk at Beauvale, to which house he gave the book. The curious fact that Spofforth's name takes precedence of the archbishop of York's in the indulgence suggests that his own chaplain, Christopher "Braystones" or "Brestons," may himself have copied the Indulgence into the book which he so highly esteemed, and the different forms of the chaplain's name also suggest this. Braystones is a little hamlet near S. Bees, Cumberland, and while Brestons would be the form which the Carthusian monk of Beauvale would write, Braystones would be the Northern dialectal form, natural to Christopher himself. Thomas Spofforth, his patron, was abbot of the Benedictine abbey of S. Mary's at York from 1405 till 1421, and bishop of Hereford from 1442 till his resignation in 1448. In 1415 he was one of the additional ambassadors sent by Henry V to the council of Constance, where he remained for two years, and was one of the presidents of that provincial chapter held at Petershausen in 1417, which played so important a part in German Benedictine reform. It is possible that the monk I who was afterwards his chaplain attended him as part of his retinue, and was one of the 373 Benedictine monks mentioned as present at that chapter; and that Spofforth and the chapter of Petershausen were the means of communication by which Rolle's *Incendium Amoris* travelled to the Continent; at any rate, an admirer of the *Incendium* had considerable intercourse with an assembly which must have included some interested in Continental mystics. Braystones' interest in the *Incendium* is indicated, not only by his application for the grant of the Indulgence to its readers, but by his passage from the Benedictines to the strictly contemplative Carthusian order. While his own admiration for Rolle is clear, that of Spofforth his patron is implied not merely by the association between the two men, but also by other Rolle MSS. These shew that Rolle was popular at York, and among those in touch with St. Mary's, while Spofforth was abbot there. As ambassador at Constance, Spofforth seems to have taken no prominent part in the political labour of the council: the real field of his activities was the adjacent abbey of Petershausen. The chapter held there was ordered by the fathers of Constance themselves, to promote the internal revival

of the Benedictine order, and Spofforth was called upon to help in reforms similar to, though wider than those which had been carried out in his own abbey in 1390. In that year a commission had been issued by the archbishop of York to inquire into and reform the observance of the Benedictine rule at S. Mary's: the commission had sat under the presidency of the abbot and the archbishop's two commissioners, the senior of whom was John Newton, a student of Rolle, and the owner of Emman. MS. of his *Incendium*. The reforms were mainly liturgical, and were embodied in the *Consuetudinarium* of St. Mary's. There is evidence that the *Incendium* was in use as a monastic text-book at S. Mary's during the period following the reforms, since Braystones was a monk there, and another important *Incendium* manuscript belonged to "Iohannes Hanton, monachus Ebor." It seems therefore possible that the *Incendium* became known to the continental Benedictines through Spofforth, when they met to draw up a scheme of internal reform similar to, though wider than, the one at S. Mary's; if the monk Braystones, afterwards his chaplain, accompanied Spofforth to Constance, either man may have been the means by which the *Incendium* disturbed the history of Bonaventura's work.

Spofforth's presence at Constance, together with FitzHugh and Richard Clifford, is interesting as regards a possible connexion between Newton and Sion Abbey. Spofforth was well acquainted with Newton, and he was here fellow-ambassador with FitzHugh, the first patron of Sion, and Clifford, afterwards bishop of London, and mentioned in the *Sion Martiloge* more than once as a benefactor. Political interest at the council of Constance centred in the healing of the schism, and the efforts of European rulers to help or hinder it; but to contemporaries and ecclesiastics, the canonisation of Bridget of Sweden loomed very large, as a topic of interest. To FitzHugh, who in 1414 had been working for six years to found a Brigittine monastery in England, the canonisation must have been of special interest. Gascoign, the author of the *Liber Veritatum*, a friend of Fishbourn and Robert Bell, the first and second confessors general at Sion, twice mentions the presence of Spofforth at Constance: "Et predicti Johannes Huss et Jeronimus de Praga fuerunt combusti ut haeretici in Constancia, tempore consilii Constanciensis, ut dixit mihi doctori Gascoiyne bonae memoriae.

In one MS. of the *Incendium*, the last chapter is imperfect, and is joined without break or division to part of the ninth of Bernard's *Sermones in Cantica*. Bernard's work is then copied to the middle of Sermon 32, where the MS. ends imperfectly. The *Incendium* is often found in the MSS. joined, without any break, to Rolle's own *Comments on the Canticles*; but the confusion here is merely scribal. Nevertheless, Rolle in the *Incendium* borrows many of the

thoughts and phrases of his own Comments on the Canticles, and in both his Incendium and Canticles there is a good deal of resemblance to Bernard, though no direct quotation from him. In Rolle's Comments on the Canticles (verse 1, "Oleum effusum nomen tuum,") there is no suggestion that he was acquainted with the thought which is uppermost in Bernard's sermon on the same verse,-that the soul should be a reservoir for grace, storing it till in its abundance it overflowed to others, and not a canal, too ready to pass on what it had not as yet itself thoroughly gained ; and there is no more direct resemblance between the comments of the two men on verse 2. The interpretation given by them to the same text is generally different, very often because Rolle wrote for the solitary, Bernard for his monks of Clairvaux. Thus Rolle reiterates again and again the duty of joining in the angelic songs of praise; but it was while he sat alone in the chapel that he heard, as it were, the sound of chanting, "quasi tinnitus," above him; Bernard wrote "Associate yourselves, then with the sweet singers of heaven to chant in common the praises of God," but he was thinking of the common recitation of the office, which Rolle found not a help, but a hindrance to such song. I have been unable to find any passage in Bernard's works which is obviously quoted in the Incendium, though Rolle was probably acquainted with them, at least at second hand.

There is considerable resemblance between Rolle's style and thought in the Incendium, and in the mystical works of Hugh of St. Victor. Rolle uses the word "arrha" (pledge), to describe the earthly joy of the soul in relation to the heavenly, in a way that suggests that he was acquainted with Hugh of St. Victor's De arrha animae. In Hugh's 'Soliloquium' between man and his soul, the soul asks how it can love that which it cannot see or know, and is told that "Sponsum habes, sed nescis. Pulcherrimus est omnium, sed faciem eius non vidisti: ... . si adhuc scire potes qualis ille sit, qui te diligit, considera saltem arrham, quam dedit ; ... . vere ille est dilectus tuus qui visitat te, sed venit invisibilis, venit occultus, venit incomprehensibilis. Venit ut tangat te, non ut videatur a te; venit ut admoneatur te, non ut comprehendatur a te; venit non ut totum infundat se, sed ut gustandum praebeat se.... Et hoc est quod maxime ad arrham desponsationis tuae pertinet, quod ille qui in futuro se tibi videndum, et perpetuo possidendum dabit, nunc aliquando (utquam dulcis sit agnoscas) se tibi ad gustandum praebeat. Dilige illum, dilige te propter illum, dilige dona illius propter illum. Dilige illum ut fruaris illo, dilige te quod diligeres ab illo. Dilige in donis illius, quod data sunt ab illo. Illum tibi, et te illi dilige, dona illius ab illo tibi, propter te. Haec pura et casta dilectio est, nihil habeas sordidum, nihil amarum, nihil transitorium, decora castitate, jucunda dulcedine, stabili aeternitate." The rhythm and vocabulary in this and other passages very much

suggest Rolle, and Rolle's thought is in many places so similar, as to suggest he was much influenced by this work. In cap. 29 he uses "arra" to express the sweetness granted to contemplatives while still on earth: "Anima autem relinquens stulticiam iniqui amoris viam arte vite ingreditur, in qua arra dulcedinis superne vite raptim gustatur." In cap. 37 he explains that "iscius modi raptus magnus est et mirabilis; excellit namque, ut arbitror, omnes acciones vite, quia quedam pregustacio estimatur suauitatis eterne. This is similar to St. Hugh's "Venit (dilectus) non ut totum infundat se, sed ut gustandum praebeat se." Rolle perhaps also refers to Hugh of St. Victor's sentence "Non est solitarius, cum quo est Deus," in his words "Dicunt 'Ue soli,' non exponentes solum 'sine Deo,' sed 'sine socio'; ille enim solus est, cum quo Deus non est." Deum habeat, et vos quotidie, qualiter vivere debeatis, verbo et exemplo doceat." A passage in the middle of the letter describes how every good or bad action proceeds from the will, and this passage, beginning "Omnis actio laudabilis," is found, unmarked, and embedded in Rolle's work, in all the MSS. which contain this set of extracts from the Incendium. I believe, however, that the confusion was not due to Rolle himself, but to the scribe who produced the series of extracts and the short form of the text, and who was perhaps one of the Hampole nuns.

## PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS.

There is not much trace in the Incendium of the influence of the mystical writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, or only of second-hand influence. John the Scot and Hugh of St. Victor had translated the *De Mystica Theologia* of the latter into Latin, and Grossetete himself had written a translation and commentary on the same work, of which the commentary at least was original; but the fact that he had done so seems to shew that the earlier translation of Hugh of St. Victor was not very generally known. It is doubtful whether the works of Dionysius obtained a first-hand influence in England much before their translation into English by an unknown fifteenth century scribe. Bonaventura frequently quoted Dionysius, and it is probable that Rolle obtained what knowledge he had of Dionysius from him and similar writers. Rolle refers occasionally to successive orders of angels, but rather, probably, in accordance with current mediaeval theology than with direct reference to the Celestial Hierarchy of Dionysius. There is no reference in the Incendium to the "negative method" of contemplation, which is such a prominent feature in the teaching of Dionysius, and which is recommended by Bonaventura in the *De Triplici Via*, cap. 3. "Sed alia (via) est eminentior," he says, "scilicet secundum viam negationis, quoniam, ut dicit Dionysius, 'affirmationes incompactae sunt, negationes verae,' licet enim minus videantur dicere, plus dicunt." There is

nothing so philosophical as this in the *Incendium*.

Thus, as regards Rolle's sources, it is difficult to prove that he was directly influenced by any particular school of mysticism, although the thought and language of the *Incendium* approach more nearly to Hugh of St. Victor's works, and especially the *Soliloquium de Arrha Animae*, than to either those of Bonaventura, Bernard or Dionysius. Such influence as these latter had upon him was probably due to their position as the classics of contemporary mystical theology.