

ELECTED SILENCE, the autobiography of the world-famous Cistercian Thomas Merton, has not unexpectedly attained its sixth impression since it first appeared in 1949 in England. Burns and Oates have presented it in a smaller and handier format for 10s. 6d.

THE CONVENT AND THE WORLD, by Sister M. Lawrence, O.P. (Blackfriars; 9s. 6d.), is virtually also a reprint of a successful work, for it contains under one cover the three shorter works, *She Takes the Veil*, *Within the Walls*, and *They Live the Life* with which in correspondence style the authoress leads her reader into the cloister of a contemplative Order and very happily expounds the objective nature of the life of a nun behind a grille.

THE Anglican nun, 'A Religious of C.S.M.V.', who has done so much good work in translating St Bernard and other Fathers, has followed up her own original work on *The Coming of the Lord*, by one on the Church, *As in Adam* (Mowbray; 6s.). The Catholic reader may be amazed at the extent to which he finds himself in agreement with the authoress, and indeed the lessons he can learn from her. But this is one of the mysteries of divided Christendom.

FORMATION DOCTRINALE DES RELIGIEUSES (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars; n.p.) is the latest volume in the series *Problèmes de la Religieuse d'aujourd'hui*. The conference, the papers of which form this volume, was considering to what extent the modern nun can give herself to study, and in particular to the careful study of sacred doctrine. There is a problem here both for the active religious—especially the teaching religious—and the contemplative. The topic was discussed with regard to the problem and to its solution so far reached among French Congregations and finally what has yet to be achieved. The relevant parts of the volume are being translated into English as the subject is of the greatest importance also in English-speaking countries.



EXTRACTS

LA MAISON-DIEU published in its 40th number (Editions du Cerf; from Blackfriars Publications 4s. 5d. post free) the papers read at a conference held at Versailles last September. The theme was '*Evangelisation et Liturgie*' and the speakers were mostly concerned with the question of the 'assembly' (which we might call the 'congregation' had not the word too many unfortunate associations), and the preparation for a

truly liturgical assembly. Père Bouyer tackled the difficult question of what remains static and what changes in the liturgy. The liturgy is a movement which is apostolic and therefore thrusting out into the world; yet it remains centred on the permanent priestly action of our Lord. The balance between these two is not easy to maintain and for a long period after the sixteenth century the static element predominated, to give way in recent years to a great 'movement' of activity and adaptation which needs always to watch its connection with the central, unchanging priestly action.

Another essay in the same volume links closely with the articles in the present issue of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*. Fr Vincent Ayel deals with the liturgy in its modern surroundings of 'technique mentality'. The *homo technicus* is only an abstraction; the professional man absorbed in his pursuit of effective, material techniques, is also a man with a special temperament, a member of a family, of a social class; and it is here that the liturgy takes its place. Yet the modern technicological civilization makes it increasingly difficult for the modern professional man to become assimilated to the ceremonies and public services and sacrifice of the Church because of his one-sided development. Fr Ayel considers in detail the danger of materialism, the cult of progress, rationalism and the supreme test of efficiency.

Whilst itself being adoration of the one God, proclamation of his divine transcendence, the liturgy uses concrete nature to the maximum; it is solidly anchored in the prime realities of space, time and their natural rhythms, material creation and its simplest elements. So in opposition to the technological *milieu* . . . the natural *milieu* brings man into direct and daily contact with these primitive elements of the cosmos—the passage of solar day, the night, the moons, the course of the stars, the seasons, rain, heat, rocks and wood. . . . In the technicological civilization all this seems to be passing more and more, the enforced reign of the artificial brings with it a break with concrete nature; the abstraction of time and measure loses contact with concrete material.

Yet the author suggests that we should not despair and that there are certain elements in the techniques of the day which are closer than we imagine to an authentic liturgical spirituality. He lists these points as the rejection of a de-incarnated spirituality, a taste for action, a sense of solidarity and of the universal. All these things are hopeful, and yet they need the 'myth', the sense of mystery to make them prime matter for the liturgy.