

SILENCE IN HEAVEN. A Book of the Monastic Life, with text by Thomas Merton and ninety photographs. (Thames and Hudson; 35s.)

Thomas Merton has become the most popular interpreter of the religious life to our generation, but hitherto he has told his own story—for even his studies of monastic history bear the special mark of his experience and of the streamlined prose he has developed to record it. But *Silence in Heaven* is a book of photographs, mostly illustrating the daily monastic duties in Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries in France, and accompanied by texts from the Scriptures, the Rule of St Benedict and monastic writers. Thomas Merton's contribution is a characteristic introduction to the monastic vocation in terms of 'entering into the hiddenness and silence of God'.

The French edition of this book was prepared by the monks of La Pierre-qui-Vire, who explain in a foreword that the idea for it came from their observation of visitors to monasteries who invariably were impressed with the sacred silence of the monastic life. And so they chose ninety photographs from a possible thousand which might hope to give some indication of the secret springs of a life so utterly unlike that of the contemporary world. The photographs are wholly admirable, alike in choice of subject and in treatment. Here are no sensational snapshots with dramatic captions: rather, they record with calm and discretion the essential rhythm of the life of the cloister—showing the sweeping of a floor as well as the singing of the Divine Office, emphasizing the sacredness of things—bread and stone and clothes—and never needing to point a moral. And the reproduction of the photographs has a purity and grace that matches their theme. *Silence in Heaven* is a book for meditation, most eloquent as it is of the things of God. I.E.

CATHEDRAL AND CRUSADE: STUDIES OF THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH, 1050-1350. By Henri Daniel-Rops. (Dent; 42s.)

This is a book which will probably appeal to all those who believe that there is such a thing as Catholic History. It has been admirably translated and has been written with imaginative enthusiasm. Many Catholics will wish that the historic role of the medieval church had been that described by Mr Daniel-Rops.

Quite clearly the study is based on a very wide if perhaps slightly haphazard reading of primary sources. I have noted between thirty and forty factual errors, but most of these are trivial. If the reader should end with the impression that northern and central France is the Faith and that the Faith is northern and central France it must be stressed that this is never stated explicitly. Even those of us who believe that history can no more be Catholic or Protestant than can arithmetic or cooking will still appreciate *Cathedral and Crusade* as Catholic historical fiction of a high order.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.