Prologue: 'There is one who enlightens every soul born into the world'. But this is precisely the alternative reading which P. Boismard, after careful consideration, rejects! Repeatedly one feels that the quotation as provided in this translation is so different from P. Boismard's rendering that it largely fails to illustrate the point which it was originally introduced to support.

It must also be said that the *format* of this book is somewhat inferior to that of the original. The well-emphasized divisions and clearly differentiated print which made the original French easy and delightful to refer to, give way in this version to a relatively amorphous tract of undifferentiated print in which the landmarks fail to stand out, and in which it becomes a rather slow and painful process to find specific references. In the verse-by-verse analysis we no longer have each verse quoted in italics at the head of a fresh page. No attempt has been made to separate the concluding summary from the exegetical discussion of verse 18. The index of biblical references, so useful to a careful reader, has been omitted altogether, as has the table of contents for Part I.

However, readers perceptive enough to realize that these defects are eminently worth enduring may be assured that they have in this book a substantially accurate, clear, and readable translation of one of the most important Catholic books on St John's gospel which has appeared in recent times.

JOSEPH BOURKE, O.P.

RICHARD OF ST VICTOR—SELECTED WRITINGS ON CONTEMPLATION. Translated with an introduction and notes by Clare Kirchberger. (Faber and Faber; 21s.)

Perhaps only those who have themselves worked on Richard of St Victor can realize fully how much Miss Kirchberger has achieved. She has made a clear and very readable translation from a text in Migne that is often difficult and at times obviously corrupt. She has chosen an ideal selection from an author who is very hard to anthologize. Doing so, she has rendered very real service to all students of Christian spirituality and mysticism. For Richard, the 'Scotus' who died as Prior of St Victor at Paris in 1173, was to be a crucial influence on many later developments in mystical theory partly in his own right but perhaps most of all through what he transmitted.

So important a work deserves a detailed criticism. It might be carping to complain that Miss Kirchberger describes Richard as a Scot; by the twelfth century 'Scotus' could mean Scot as well as Irish. But I cannot myself agree with her interpretation of the modes of contemplation described by the Areopagite as straight, spiral and circular, and I doubt its relevance to the particular passage in Richard's writings

(page 140). Much more important, I am inclined to think that Miss Kirchberger misplaces Richard's influence among the schools that follow him, that she under-estimates his influence on the Rolle circle and over-estimates it on the 'Cloud of Unknowing'. Above all, much more might have been made in the introduction of the close relation between Richard's teaching on Contemplation and ecstasy and that of St Thomas. Among medieval schools of mysticism, the Thomists were the heirs of the Victorines just as the Franciscans were the heirs of the Cistercians.

But these are only minor criticisms of a book that should be in every library that has a section on Christian Spirituality.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

THE SILENT LIFE. By Thomas Merton. (Burns Oates; 16s.)

A popular book on the monastic orders has long been needed, and Fr Merton has provided it. This short work of 134 pages (and 16 plates) examines monastic life in general, then its cenobitical form as realized by Benedictines and Cistercians, and its eremitical form as lived by Carthusians and Camaldolese monks. One welcome feature is the frequent citations of the older monastic spiritual writers, another is the author's deep sympathy, absent from his earlier books, with forms of monastic life other than his own. In spite of too much emphasis on the scholarly work of the Solesmes Congregation and the attribution to Dom Gueranger of a passage from Dom Delatte, the section on Solesmes is most welcome, especially for its emphasis on its doctrinal influence on all the monastic orders of today. The interesting section on the Camaldolese hermits emphasizes the ecclesiastical character of the solitary life.

A few minor criticisms might be made. It seems a pity that in this English edition of the work there is no account of the Benedictine monasteries of this country: the Anglo-Benedictine Congregation is scarcely mentioned, while the author seems to think that those of the Subiaco Congregation reproduce almost exactly the observance and spirit of La Pierre-qui-Vire. There are misprints on pp. 63, 71 and 128: the last is the most important because a negative has dropped out. This sentence should read: 'The God he is approaching is a mere object *unable* to be contained within the limits of a concept.' And why was *In tabernaculo Altissimi* translated as *In the highest tabernacle*? But these are small blemishes in a book, not the least of whose merits is to stress both that the monastic life is ultimately for God alone (not to be justified by utilitarian considerations), and that it is best understood in function of the Mystical Body as a whole. Both considerations are necessary if the nature of and the present-day need for the cloistered life are to be properly understood.

HUGH FARMER, O.S.B.