

clergy the unfortunate habit of intervening too much in the choice of temporal institutions.' (p. 155.)

EVERSLEY BELFIELD

THE STRANGE ISLANDS. Poems by Thomas Merton. (Hollis and Carter; 15s.)

This sombre little volume contains poems written mainly during the last few years. In language and feeling it is not very different from the selection that appeared in 1952, and such lines as 'This afternoon let me / be a sad person . . .' set the tone. It includes a rather facile morality on Babel, in which Raphael tells Thomas all the answers before the action has had time to begin, and there is much that calls to mind what Brinnin felt after the impact of Dylan Thomas, namely that 'our representative poetry is careful, learned, but quite immovably anchored to acceptable forms and intellectual clichés'.

There are, however, towards the end of the book, some promises of new possibilities. We have a 'Severe Nun' who is observed with a delicious blend of humour and compassion, and an elegy for a burning barn which only a monk could have written. This, one feels, is the contribution that would be most welcomed from Father Merton. We are not really interested in his, or anyone else's, hypersensitive reactions to our Big Cities and Fort Knoxes. Most of us achieve our own means of coping with these unpleasant things, and naive horror of the sort that would discourage us from the consumption of tobacco and newsprint is no longer to the point. What we would most appreciate from Father Merton is some specifically monastic expression of the enclosed life—the oasis in our desert. Let him speak to us of that. There is evidence here that he can.

GEOFFREY WEBB

GOD'S INFINITE LOVE AND OURS. By Robert Mageean, C.S.S.R. (Dublin: Clonmore and Reynolds; 12s. 6d.)

COME O HOLY GHOST. By Adrian Lyons, O.F.M. (Dublin: Clonmore and Reynolds; 12s. 6d.)

We have here two short books which are part treatise, part meditation manual, which is as it should be, since doctrine will never really be grasped save by prayer. Both books make full use of Scripture and contain much material from the great writers of the past. Father Mageean's book is described as a 'popular' work but it must be admitted that the style is that traditional in works of this nature. It does not read easily and should only be given to someone already accustomed to the practice of prayer. This criticism must be tempered by a word of commendation for some of the extremely apt comparisons which

the author finds in order the better to explain the workings of Grace. One fails to see why Father Mageean should feel himself obliged to excuse himself for beginning his work with a few introductory remarks on love in general. Surely to speak of the love of God to someone who had no experience of human love would be impossible! Nevertheless the author does not see fit to set forth this argument, proposing others which seem secondary to it. No doubt for one who desires a straightforward treatise on the love of God there are other more academic works which will render better service, but for the support of prayer this little work will be found useful. It assembles a great variety of ideas and some interesting quotations.

The first half of Father Lyons' book sets forth Christian teaching on the Holy Ghost, the Gifts, the Infused Virtues, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, etc. It is excellent and calls upon Holy Scripture and other sources. The language is simple but the thought probes deep and the book should be most useful for any priest having for ministry the introduction of layfolk to the things of the spirit. 'Temples of the Holy Ghost' is a chapter particularly to be commended. The second half of the book contains prayers to the Holy Spirit culled from a wide variety of sources, meditations for four novenas to the Holy Ghost and a number of similar exercises. These will be useful to the priest who is frequently called upon to provide talks and recollections, often enough to the same audience. He will find much to set his thoughts in motion. Both these books contain constant reference to the sources of Christian doctrine and piety both in Scripture, Papal pronouncements and in citations from the Fathers and Theologians.

RICHARD BLUNDELL, S.J.

**ST ANTHONY: THE MAN WHO FOUND HIMSELF.** By Norman Painting and Michael Day, CONG. ORAT. (Burns and Oates; 12s. 6d.)

The claim made on the inside of the dust-cover that this book is 'strictly accurate in all its details' is misleading. A much more correct idea of its nature is given in the 'Authors' Note' at the very end, where we read, 'The story of St Anthony is a true story. It is based principally on the writings of the saint's contemporaries. Ruggiero and Helena, Gratiano and Elias, Ugolino and Ezzelino, for example, are all historic characters, but we have used the liberty accorded to story-tellers in our attempt to bring them back to life.' Some of us do not like our history mixed up with fictitious conversations, but that there are many who do like this type of writing is shown by the increasing vogue which it has enjoyed during the last few years. The authors certainly succeed in making the story come alive, and thus will reach a much wider public than they would do if they kept strictly to the facts. The aim