

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