

not to say that the Christian biologist finds it at all easy to live with both; but I believe this is mainly because most of us find it very hard to enter into modes of thinking alien to our own subject.

One of the best things in the book is the historical introduction. Enlivened with quotations from the main combatants, it recreates for us the authentic flavour of the early years of this great debate. The documentation is excellent.

E. WANGERMANN

FOR MEN OF ACTION. By Fr Yves de Montcheuil. (Geoffrey Chapman; 11s.)

This is a profoundly interesting book. It should be read not only by those who are trying to live a full Catholic life in the world, but also by those whose task it is to guide such people. The book should be read slowly for it is closely written. It pulls no punches, demanding the highest standards and ideals from those who would follow what it teaches. The chapters on 'The Catholic Concept of Vocation', on 'Unconditional Commitment' and the final one discussing 'Temporal Action', are all memorable for their wisdom and insight; I look forward to rereading them often.

Amongst his other activities, Fr de Montcheuil was spiritual adviser to the students at the Sorbonne and the general approach of this work makes it particularly valuable for those who have to advise students. The author was killed by the Gestapo in August 1944. This book was compiled from his unpublished notes. Fr de Montcheuil has, however, been ill-served by his American translator; the English of this rendering is stilted, many of the sentences are of inordinate length, whilst the punctuation tends to be both rudimentary and erratic. Furthermore, the book is printed in a most unattractive type. The result is that *For Men of Action* is frequently far more difficult to follow than it need be. This is most unfortunate because readers who could gain help and encouragement from these pages may thus be discouraged from attempting to follow Fr de Montcheuil's closely reasoned thoughts.

Two quotations must suffice to show the quality of the matter of this book; also, the first one is typical of the badness of the translation. '... for every Christian, the vocation is a source of an uninterrupted dialogue with God, in which no other can take part and which constitutes the very essence of the inner life; a dialogue in which our question, "Lord, what do you wish me to do?" are already but a response and an acquiescence to His hold on us.' (p. 49.) Secondly, 'If the faithful do not have the courage to assume their responsibilities and if they develop the habit of trying to cover themselves unnecessarily with a decision of authority, there is the danger of giving the

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