

love, in it we know ourselves; and it is in thus knowing that we can know that which gives self to what we are. It is from this silence that is uttered the word which is our knowledge of ourself. It is in this silence that rests our love. It is here at this centre-point of silence that we can both find ourself and find God.

By living towards this point, so that we can come to dwell in this point, this point—our very self—grows, not in quantity, not in quality even, but in intensity—the intensity of the power of life which flows from it giving life to all. This is the point of contact of the soul with God. This point of silence is itself the image of God, echoing silently back to him the supreme silence of God—the mystery of the blessed Trinity.

REVIEWS

LE MILIEU DIVIN. By Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. (Collins; 18s.)

In his preface Père Teilhard says that his book is addressed to '... the waverers, both inside and outside [the Church], that is to say for those who, instead of giving themselves wholly to the Church, either hesitate on its threshold or turn away in the hope of going beyond it'. The burden of what he has to say to the 'waverers' is summed up in a paragraph on page 20: 'Nothing is more certain, dogmatically, than that human action can be sanctified. "Whatever you do", St Paul says, "do it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And the dearest of Christian traditions has always been to interpret those words to mean: in intimate union with our Lord Jesus Christ. St Paul himself, after calling upon us to "put on Christ", goes on to forge the famous series of words *collaborare, compati, commori, con-ressuscitare*, giving them the fullest possible meaning, a literal meaning even, and expressing the conviction that every human life must—in some way—become a life in common with the life of Christ. The actions of life, of which Paul is speaking here, should not, as everyone knows, be understood solely in the sense of religious and devotional "works" (prayers,

fastings, almsgivings). It is the whole of human life, down to its most "natural" zones, which, the Church teaches, can be sanctified. "Whether you eat or whether you drink", St Paul says. The idea is, of course, excellent; much of modern theology is concerned to show, in similar terms, what is meant by the Christo-centricity of the universe. Clearly, the book must be judged by the degree of success the author achieves in showing his readers that this is the case, and I am far from certain that he does so.

Teilhard de Chardin wrote *Le Milieu Divin* in the years 1926-27, and it is interesting as a sidelight on the religious life of an important man, but its power to speak to 'waverers' of 1961 is largely vitiated because its speech belongs to a fast disappearing theological age. Had he been writing now I think that he would have had far more overt dependence on scripture and on theological as opposed to 'spiritual' ideas. His work gives the immediate impression of belonging to a time when theology was regarded as a 'science' for an élite; it takes time to realize that he does not, in fact, think this. The language alone makes me feel that the book is unlikely to achieve the object intended, but it is not altogether certain that we need take Teilhard's end as the only one; it is, I think, worth considering what he has to say, and to see whether it can enrich the world of the non-waverers.

We often object to the degradation of man implied in thinking of workmen as 'hands', but I feel that it is sometimes overlooked that a precisely similar degradation is implied when we talk of men as 'souls'. Division in these terms is a false one, we are whole men. This is not to reduce the meaning of the word 'soul' or that of the word 'body', but it is rather to show that consideration of the one without the other is to consider something less than a man. Now in one sense or another this division seems to me to lie deep at the root of Père Teilhard's thinking, and in examining this element of his writing it is necessary to go beyond his apparent denial of the division. It does not always appear in quite the crude form in which I have just given it.

One of the forms of the distinction that I find especially curious is that which Teilhard makes between our activities and our passivities. He rightly stresses that our activities can be divinized, and he means by this our worldly activities, whatever they may be, but he fails to make what I consider to be a point of cardinal importance, that it is *through* these activities that we must work out our salvation; he then goes on to say that our 'passivities' are capable of divinization just as surely, *and* that to be fully Christian we must make the effort so to *divinize them*. He repeats, on page 52, an earlier remark that 'The passivities of our lives . . . form half of human existence'; he goes on, 'The term means, quite simply, that that which is not done by us, is,

by definition, undergone'. He says that although we tend to regard what is done by us as being the most important and obvious part, '... in the reality of things the passive is immeasurably the wider and deeper part'. He divides 'passivities' into two sections, those of growth and 'the two hands of God', and those of 'diminishment' in which he includes evil, both physical and moral, and death. In order to arrive at these passivities a self-examination, startlingly like that in Descartes' *Second Meditation*, is recommended, a self-examination which will culminate in '... the deep abyss whence I feel dimly that my power of action emanates'.

This surely is very odd. Apart from the obvious objection that passion as it is described by Teilhard cannot be regarded distinctly from action, all the forms of passion described are so interwoven with our action of one sort or another, that the self-examination implies stepping outside ourselves on to a sort of external platform in order to have a good look. It is as though our visual angle could be widened if we didn't take ourselves as its apex; in fact, of course, this simply destroys our ability to see at all. It all seems painfully similar to the way in which Descartes formulated the *Cogito* principle.

The third section of the book is called *The Divine Milieu*. It is quite the most difficult section in the book to discuss, simply because there is so little of value to take hold of. The author continues his treatment of the divinization of man in terms of the rest of creation. An interesting light is cast upon Teilhard's thought by this part of the book, for the world is seen simply in terms of 'what I see out there'; the sense present, in embryo, in the beginning of the book, that creation is Christocentric, here seems to me to be entirely lost. It is still obvious that the only genuine fulfilment to be found is in Christ, but the world is very much something that is 'undergone'. It is clear that this attitude was largely unconscious, but it illustrates the basic fault in Teilhard's thinking. He simply has not worked out clearly what he thinks a man is, or what he takes the world to be. It is another form of the distinction I remarked upon earlier. It is however possible to discount this element to a certain extent, or at least to make allowances for it, and to look at what Teilhard has to say on the subject of the world Christ-centred. I know nothing of the theological climate of the twenties, and it may be that what we find here was new then, but now we can only regard it as theologically commonplace. Recent Continental theology has made such enormous advances that, as theology, this work seems very badly thought out by comparison.

My final criticism may simply spring from English insularity. The book is full of purple passages. On page 121 we find the sentence: 'Yes, Lord, not only the ray that strikes the surface, but the ray that penetrates,

not only your Epiphany, Jesus, but your diaphany'. The italics are Teilhard's. I begin to get a faint glimmering of what people mean when they say that he is a poet. There is another passage on page 118 which strikes me as a little odd: '*Disperse, O Jesus, the clouds with your lightning! Show yourself to us as the Mighty, the Radiant, the Risen! Come to us once again as the Pantocrator who filled the solitude of the cupolas in the ancient basilicas.*' Again the italics are the author's. Passages like this can be found on almost every page, mixed up with some scholastic terms. Perhaps the most distressing instance of this sort of writing is to be found in the phrase 'universal Smile'. I mention this element simply because that sort of writing made it very difficult for me to take the book seriously.

In short it would seem to me that the idea Teilhard is trying to put across is a good one—I say 'idea' not 'ideas' advisedly because the entire book depends upon the notion of the divinization of man—but he fails hopelessly because his picture of what man is will not do. Although the book is a failure, it is a very fine failure. The impressions of charity, honesty and enthusiasm that one gets, in spite of the wrongness and the style, are really quite considerable.

NEIL MIDDLETON

WORK: AN INQUIRY INTO CHRISTIAN THOUGHT AND PRACTICE. Edited by John M. Todd. (Darton, Longman and Todd; 30s.; paper-bound, 21s.)

This is the third symposium to be published by the Downside discussion group which has given us *The Springs of Morality* and *The Arts, Artists and Thinkers*. Like the previous volumes in the series, *Work* is not intended either as a manifesto of dogma or as a salvo of apologetic. The aim of the discussions it records was, in the word of the editor, 'to arrive at an expression of the Church's traditional teaching about man's work in harmony both with the experiences of a number of individual Christians and with the results of an enquiry about how work should be organized to permit and encourage Christian lives—these being set against a historical description of work and man's understanding of it in Europe'.

The book is firmly anchored fore and aft with solid and scholarly essays. In Part I, which is devoted to the historical roots of our practice and ideas, Professor A. H. Armstrong and Dr R. A. Markus present for us, with elegant erudition, the attitudes to work which were current in classical and Christian antiquity; while Mr P. McGrath presents a fascinating anthology of opinions on work culled throughout English writing from Piers Plowman to Samuel Smiles. In the final section of