

LETTERS FROM PARIS 1912-1914, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, with Introduction by Henri de Lubac, S.J., translated by Michael Mazzaresse. *Herder and Herder, New York; Burns and Oates, London, 1967.* 157 pp. 30s.

CORRESPONDENCE, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Maurice Blondel, with Notes and Commentary by Henri de Lubac, S.J., translated by William Whitman. *Herder and Herder, New York; Burns and Oates, London, 1967.* 174 pp. 40s.

These two further additions to the translated Teilhardiana are very different in both style and content. The first can be dealt with briefly. It consists of the second part of what was originally published as letters from Hastings and Paris 1908-1914. A Hastings volume is still presumably to come in English. The letters were written to his parents, and like the earlier ones from Egypt they show keen powers of observation and expression, great good humour and filial piety and affection. It is clearly important that they should be made available to the reading public. But some of the letters consist of no more than a few conventional words of greeting, which in this edition are surrounded by oceans of blank page. The book was printed in America, and its price is outrageous.

The second work is extremely important, for all that the original material is also very brief. During the single month of December 1919 Auguste Valensin, close friend and counsellor of Teilhard within the Jesuit Order, and former pupil of the distinguished philosopher Blondel, acted as a channel of communication between them. Blondel had been sent some of Teilhard's essays by Valensin, and we are here given in translation a series of two papers and their accompanying letters from Blondel, together with two replies by Teilhard and one letter. These seven documents together occupy just over thirty pages of the volume. The rest is mainly de Lubac: a preface, two excellent commentaries in article form, and, for every item listed, a set of detailed notes and abundant cross-references produced by an acknowledged master of the art of scholarship. The book concludes with a gracious, if slightly flowery, homily preached by Père André Ravier on the tenth anniversary of Teilhard's death.

There are those who say that inadequacies in Teilhard's grounding in formal philosophy

and theology, coupled with his devotion to natural science, led him to take up unacceptable positions in the former. The publication of this courteous exchange of profound and hard thinking should alone prove enough to satisfy the doubters as to Teilhard's competence to discuss fundamentals. The correspondence is analysed and annotated throughout with meticulous care by one of the foremost philosopher-theologians of our time. The exchange was typical of the method Teilhard constantly used to correct and modify his hypotheses and conclusions: it is a myth that he worked wholly *in vacuo* without the benefit of informed criticism.

A remarkable degree of agreement emerges between these two fine thinkers, particularly, on the significance of Christ, the Cosmic-Christ of St Paul. Both saw the need to reformulate St Paul's teaching in terms of the cosmogenesis that modern knowledge has substituted for the static cosmology of former ages. Blondel tends naturally always to emphasize God's transcendence, and Teilhard, to whose thought the Incarnation was central, characteristically His immanence. But each is careful to allow the importance of the other's emphases. de Lubac's essay on 'Ascent and Descent' is a brilliant analysis of these different ways of looking at God's dealings with His people.

Teilhard concluded the exchange with: 'Goodbye—do convey my deep thanks to Maurice Blondel for trying to help me see my way through these problems. Tell him too that I am grateful for the salutary influence which his particular approach (more traditional and "orthodox", finally, than mine) may have on my thoughts in the future.'

This is essential reading for anyone who wishes to discuss Teilhard at a serious level.

BERNARD TOWERS

SEX AS GIFT, by Ian Fraser. *S.C.M. Press, 1967.* 5s.

This book is by way of being an exploratory comment on the work of the Scottish Church Commission on sex. The main idea behind it seems to be to acquaint people with the work of the Commission and to present adults with their duty to 'arm young people with knowledge

and stand by their side'. The work of the Commission is indeed very important and the more people who know about it the better. The duty of adults could, however, be better expressed (to do Mr Fraser justice the phrase is not his but that of the Schofield report). It is quite true