

crowded life. But such details are available elsewhere. (One minor point: on page 120 Newman's remark that 'unless one doctored all one's facts one would be accused of being a bad Catholic' refers, according to Ward, not to the writing of books but to the proposed starting of an historical Review). The most significant events and their causes, such as his becoming a Catholic, are well-treated. He also makes clear that the framework and setting of Newman's Catholic life was his Oratory, which he loved

dearly, and whose members shared his own setbacks and triumphs.

This book is another pointer to Newman as the man for our time, a fact clearly proclaimed during the second Vatican Council. His life was, as Fr Dessain puts it 'a sacrifice for the truth' – the truth which he saw as needing no protection against error: 'Truth has a power of its own, which makes its way'. This book is a first-rate introduction to a great and holy Englishman.

GEOFFREY PONTON, O.P.

LETTERS FROM A TRAVELLER, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: *Fontana Books*. 317 pp., 5s.

'The secret of the world lies wherever we can discern the transparency of the universe' writes Teilhard in the first letter of this book. His search to break through appearances and his resulting two-fold vision – i.e. of the encounter in the human consciousness between the evolutionary forward progress of mankind on the one hand, and on the other the upward climb of mankind to (and in) Christ in whom it will all be completed – form an undercurrent running through all these letters.

For it becomes evident that he actually lived for his vision – '... this "great Christ" alone can animate my life' – as a man whose trust in God involves (in a phrase which admirably sums up both the traditional foundation and the breadth of his thought) 'an active abandonment of self in a universe on the road to christification'. It is part of the fascination of this book to see him working this out in every sphere. Thus he tells a friend that his business enterprise is forming him within the world, and helping the world to form itself around him; and that he is not to worry if he is unable to spread the fire within him – the essential thing is that the fire should be born: it will 'bear the world's homage to God'. An interesting sidelight perhaps on Teilhard's approach to the refusal to publish his books. Stuck in Peking during the war he sees a new development of humanity based on this universal understanding as the only solution to the issues of the war. As a scientist he is convinced that it is only the 'science of Christ running through all things' that really matters: it was essential for him to establish himself as a

specialist in the past to speak with authority about the future – to discover the measure and place of the phenomenon of man and establish the unity of all human knowledge.

All this is a current in what amounts to an exciting travel book, and an explorer's one. The first letter was written in 1923 on a ship for China, the last in 1955 from America just before Teilhard's death. There are letters also from Ethiopia, India, Burma and South Africa, and a few written from Europe; but mostly they are from China: a China which seems very far off now. There is something of travel, the country and the people – and their turmoil – and always Teilhard's developing mind. In 1923 he saw in China 'no promise of progress, no ferment, no burgeoning for mankind of tomorrow', by 1931 he is saying 'how profoundly the spirit of the country has changed'. There are glimpses of politics, too, some shrewd – the assessment from America of Eisenhower's election perhaps; some maybe less so – in 1936 Teilhard writes from India that he thinks the Indians probably incapable of self-government.

There is an informative and penetrating introduction by Claude Aragonnes (the name under which the late Mlle Teilhard-Chambon, Teilhard's cousin, wrote) whose notes very successfully link the letters and cover the inevitable gaps, sometimes commenting. Mostly the letters were written to Mlle Teilhard-Chambon, the Abbé Breuil (a friend and colleague) and to Joseph Teilhard de Chardin (Teilhard's brother).

ANTHONY ARCHER, O.P.

COMMONWEAL. Vol. LXXXV, No. 18, 10th February, 1967. Special issue on GOD.

THE GOD I WANT. Edited and introduced by James Mitchell. *Constable*, 1967, 21s.

Why is it not possible in this country to support a weekly magazine of the excellence of *Commonweal*? This fact needs explaining and it is a great lack which we English Catholics should feel deeply. This issue is the first of a series called

'Commonweal Papers' which will deal with broader and more difficult topics than is usually possible. To start the series the subject is 'God' and seven stimulating articles by American scholars treat the problem from the point of

view of the theologian, the scripture scholar, and in particular, the philosopher. The overall impression one gets from reading these articles is that the present age is in the position of recognizing that the Church's thinking has slowly but surely fallen behind that of the contemporary world over many centuries. Thus a very interesting article by Leslie Dewart shows that the attempt to unite transcendence and immanence in God by the concept of analogy has proved more and more inadequate; it can only be preserved by the Church withdrawing from an increasingly large area of life where such concepts no longer make sense. Further, the Hellenic concept of nature, and hence 'super' – nature, has led to the seeking of grace as the way to God, instead of God himself. God gets further and further away, and people come not to believe in his immanence any more. David Burrell also deals with the question of God's transcendence and thinks we need to redefine our concepts of worth and value for the modern world. The problem of Christian symbolism is discussed by Louis Dupré, who argues that they are sufficiently flexible for continued use. John Dunne says that Jesus has turned into a divine culture hero and thinks that Jesus's humanity and the mental and intellectual development this implies can be illustrated by examining his relations with John the Baptist. Gabriel Moran describes how our attitude of considering God's revelation as over and done with has made us neglect God still revealing himself in history. He illustrates this strikingly by pointing out that post-biblical Jewish history is ignored by Catholics in spite of St Paul (Romans II) and the second Vatican Council. Bruce Vawter writes on the God of the Bible who reveals himself in historical experience. To discover this requires thorough historical enquiry and continual translation of the Bible in terms understood by modern man. The lack of full communication between philosophers and 'theistic believers' in the American scene and possible ways of overcoming this are summarised by James Collins.

All these articles are full of good stuff to provoke thought and discussion, and convincingly show that an unsatisfactory concept of God is at the root of the present malaise. All the contributors write from the specific position of believing in the need for a working concept of God. No one here is prepared to argue that the concept of God has entirely outlived its usefulness. Another question one would like to have seen developed is that nagging horror, the problem of evil. The contributors to *The God I Want* do not

all write as Christians, and again all admit the need for a God of sorts, but some of them do face up to evil. H. A. Williams's essay (the best in the book) argues that we probably have to find God in evil as well as in good – as Simone Weil puts it: 'to love God as the author of the evil which we are actually hating'. This brave and terrifying conclusion follows his rejection of the search for an objective theology as the unconscious desire for an impregnable, intellectual fortress, and his discovery of God in himself and yet as greater than himself. For Williams, as for A. Stephan Hopkinson and Bernadine Bishop it is Christ who ('inexplicably and against all odds') is the God they want. The idea of knowing oneself to discover God occurs more than once in other essays. A point developed by A. S. Byall and Werner Pelz is that it is God's required perfection which makes him so unattractive. Humanity is fascinating because it is not perfect; the perfect is cold, impersonal and repels. David Burrell puts the opposite view in *Commonweal*, and so does Anthony Burgess in a discussion which he conducts with himself in this book. Burgess's God is a paradigm like the pattern of a declension of Latin nouns, remote, self-sufficient, beautiful, intellectual. Of course all the writers emphasise that in this age of psychological insight we know we cannot attain to a completely objective knowledge of God. The editor, James Mitchell, calls the book an exercise in psychological projection. Charles Rycroft, a practising psychoanalyst, unashamedly uses the concept of God simply to provide for people's need for a sense of continuity. Catholic contributors seem to have had a struggle to shake off the vindictive, punishing God of their childhood, and no Catholic can read Andrew Boyle's account of his first communion without a sense of sorrow at the state from which the Catholic Church is now emerging.

Both *Commonweal* and *The God I Want* do shed light on the ideas of God we have rejected and on the ways we can reformulate our attitude to him. This is going to be a long, hard struggle with a good deal of incomprehension to overcome on all sides. The need for a true God is still strong in many minds and hearts. But as well we have the growing phenomenon of indifference to the question among millions of people. Only David Burrell in *Commonweal* attempts any sort of explanation of this and suggests a possible line of approach to it by believers. The conclusion one reaches after reading these studies is that we are at a cross-

roads. In the confusion of new ideas and the rejection of the old we can see that our old concepts of God are being replaced by new ones based on a deeper self-knowledge, a knowledge of man the individual and in historical community. The God of the future will be closer to us than ever before. When the pains of first discovery are over we can expect to have experienced something the like of which has not been seen since the early days of the great religions. God has not yet deserted his people.

GEOFFREY PONTON, O.P.

THE LIVING ROCKS: INTRODUCTION TO BIOPHILOSOPHY FOR TECHNOLOGICAL AGE MAN, by A. Harry Walters. *Classic Publications*, hard bound, 25s.; paper bound 10s.

The first section of this book purports to be a commentary on the beginning of Genesis (what the second section is supposed to be is anyone's guess) which will bring 'Technological Age Man' to religion, and in order to do this Mr Walters uses all his experience as 'Consultant and Associate Lecturer, Dept. of Food Science and Technology, Borough Polytechnic'. Mr Walters does warn us in the first chapter that 'Much else has come in and got itself included in what follows and will show to the world the depths of my ignorance' (p. 4), and there follow a hundred and eighty pages of sentimentalism written with a rhetoric like treacle; at times the pages seem quite sticky with verbiage. He writes a gracious introduction in which he thanks, among others, 'Mr Akarawit Sumawong, through whose kindness I was able to meet a Wise Man from the East . . . and Michael Williams who told me about a Mate's life at sea and taught me about the sextant' (p. ix). The author tells us that Mr Anthony Woollen had said, 'Had this book been published four hundred years ago, you would have been burned at the stake'. (p. ix). An enlightened age.

Mr Walters performs a feat which few other men could achieve; for a whole chapter he discusses 'Horizontalism and Verticalism' without actually telling us what Horizontalism and Verticalism are. His insights on the world include, 'Today, every scientist and technologist, when he leaves the Horizontalism of the university and enters industry, can feel at once the rotation of the axis to Verticalism, and then become aware of the Other Face in the Big Act' (p. 113). However the theologian and the scientist 'do represent the opposite poles of the same process, a yang and a yin, and they might find it possible to join forces' (p. 126). As Mr Walters himself says, 'The obscurity in the writing persists' (p. 81). GEOFFREY TURNER, O.P.

"To my doppelgänger, it seemed as though I was in some sort of vacuum within the Old Order, quite disconnected from the upheaval, the simmering cauldron of revolution, in the Technical Age . . ."

Does this not sum up the situation in our own society among the technically orientated and those who are influenced by them? Contemporary theologians e.g. Congar, de Chardin have recognised these symptoms in modern man and now in THE LIVING ROCKS an eminent microbiologist spells out clearly the bio-philosophy which equates Christian thought and behaviour with technical and scientific achievement. For him there is no conflict. Every theologian, every parish priest, every curate will want this book so that they too can pass on to their flocks the real – not the pseudo – assurance that is needed.

THE LIVING ROCKS

by A. Harry Walters, F.INST.BIOL.,
F.I.F.S., F.I.F.S.T.

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