

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