

everything, a challenging and purifying effect on the human spirit, and his ideal of peace was not that of a state of quiescence but that of a 'sublimated form of war' in which men would 'fight together for a goal which unites our energies instead of dividing them'. Chastity is related to passionate love in a similar way. Père de Lubac draws attention to the part played throughout Teilhard's writings by the vocabulary drawn from the word 'passion'. Translation robs this vocabulary of some of its force: ever since the time of Corneille and Descartes, the French term, 'la passion', has had a great many overtones, and only a few years before Teilhard's poem Péguy had been writing of the transforming power of 'la passion de la gloire' in the plays of Corneille, by which 'L'héroïsme temporel (fut) promu en héroïsme de sainteté'. Teilhard's conception of purity as 'an inward tension of the mind towards God', sustained by an attitude of 'passionate indifference' and of an upwards convergence on God, thus belongs to an already established secular vocabulary of spirituality: his originality lies in his extension of this spirituality into an entire theory of the Universe.

Père de Lubac's commentary on *The Eternal Feminine* is masterly and detailed, and affords probably the best available assessment of Teilhard's literary method in his prose poems. The volume contains a second essay, entitled *Teilhard and the Problems of Today*, which is both more general and less interesting than the first, and which covers fairly predictable ground.

Teilhard's insensitivity towards the religions of the East, in spite of his long sojourn in China, is so well known that Professor Zaehner's title comes as something of a shock. Sri Aurobindo, who brought to the Hindu tradition a western experience of the impact of the theories of evolution and socialization, is akin to Teilhard in his mystical approach to both themes and in his preoccupation with the future of mankind. Professor Zaehner's book consists

of a series of lectures delivered to Christians in India, and its ecumenical value is plain: it amounts to an act of reparation for the West's centuries-old indifference to Eastern culture and an attempt to help Indian Catholicism to situate itself in the most positive way within its own cultural and religious ethos. Of four lectures, only the first two appear to be predominantly concerned with Aurobindo and Teilhard: the central theme is increasingly the general one of the underlying confrontation between mythologies hitherto considered alien but now shown to have close affinities as they each approach the same centre. This is an extremely articulate tour de force—in the best sense—in comparative theology. One has the impression that Teilhard's presence is fortuitous, and there might be those who would find it distracting; but equally this might be to miss one of Professor Zaehner's main points, which is that Christian and Hindu are drawn together precisely by the modern intuition of an evolution towards cosmic consciousness, and that Teilhard was, after all, much nearer the East than he thought. This is a pioneering work in dialogue; the territory will seem strange to most readers of Teilhard, but no less rewarding for that.

Teilhard's commentators are almost invariably too uncritical in one respect, that of language. There is a great deal in his writings that is turgid and even incomprehensible, and those who suspect that French is a language in which moderate writers can get away with murder are not entirely wrong. However, the marvel is that Teilhard, like his eminent compatriot Thérèse de Lisieux, remains very appealing in spite of everything, and the English reading public must be grateful not only to Renée Hague for his excellent rendering of Père de Lubac but to the publishers for the admirable level of presentation. Collins have served Teilhard as well as he deserved.

DOMINIC MILROY, O.S.B.

**THE SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE OF RELIGION**, by Thomas Fawcett. *SCM Press Ltd*, London, 1970. 288 pp. £2.75.

Mr Fawcett is, so his publishers tell us, Principal Lecturer and Head of the Divinity Department at Chester College of Education. From the evidence of this book it is clear that he is a Protestant Christian who combines a deep love of the Bible with a concern for any light on the human condition which can be found in non-Christian sources. In writing *The Symbolic Language of Religion* he has sought to provide an

introduction to comparative religion from an explicitly Christian position, by building a bridge between the 'comparative religionists' like Eliade and that tradition of Protestant Biblical scholarship which has emphasized the historical-mindedness and anti-mythological quality of biblical language.

Such an attempt might have had very interesting results, if the tension between the

two positions had been recognized and maintained. Unfortunately, Mr Fawcett, perhaps through a desire to give fair play to the holders of different positions, has not made sufficiently clear the contradictions between the two points of view, and in consequence has been unable to reach a synthesis.

The author's failure in criticism thus results in a failure in integration. On different pages of the book opposing propositions are offered to the reader without any attempt at either elimination or synthesis of the opposing terms. Thus on pages 249 ff. there is a fierce onslaught on the use of metaphysics to interpret Christianity, with such remarks as 'Ontologism slammed the door on personal relationship with God' (p. 252), ontologism being Mr Fawcett's term for patristic and scholastic thought. Yet on pages 264-5 the author seems to regret the desymbolization characteristic of the Reformation: 'modern man under Protestantism was left with a natural world devoid of any clear means of being the revelation of the sacred—God had been separated from the world'. But he has already attributed a similar result to the influence of metaphysics in the patristic and scholastic periods. 'The Church tried to maintain its sacramental doctrine of the embodiment of the divine in the things of the world, but against the background of doctrine

framed in ontological rather than in kerygmatic terms, it was virtually impossible to succeed.' (pp. 251-2.) If this had been happening from the fourth century onwards, why later ascribe the same result to early Protestantism, as though it was an innovation?

I must also protest at the way our old friend, primal symbolic man, who conceives of everything in a religious light is once again brought on stage, with, as testimonials, snippets from various religious systems. Surely by now there is plenty of evidence as to the significance of rational, technical, and even sceptical thought in tribal and 'archaic' societies? But Mr Fawcett has a definite taste for excessive generalizations. Thus as a proof of his proposition, 'Desacralization was, of course, accompanied by secularization' (p. 193), he states: 'The Old Testament prophets spent much of their time attacking the injustice of the law courts'—but this hardly proves the point, unless religion and a concern for justice are seen as incompatible.

There are, of course, positive elements in this book. The author, like Peter L. Berger (and this reviewer), approves of angels. The opening chapters provide convenient distinctions of the different categories of analogical speech. But, on the whole, it is disappointing.

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**GOD EXISTS, I HAVE MET HIM**, by André Frossard, trans. Marjorie Villiers. *Collins*, 1970. 125 pp. £1.05.

**THE WORLD IS NEW**, by Joel S. Goldsmith. *Allen and Unwin*, 1962 (reprinted 1970). 206 pp. £1.50.

**THE TESTAMENT OF TRUTH**, by Clarice Toyne. *Allen and Unwin*, 1970. 203 pp. £2.25.

These are all rather depressing, though in different ways. Frossard simply relates his life, up to the time of his conversion to Catholicism. The book is not meant to hold together, his chief point being that his life did not in any way lead up to his conversion, which came suddenly, indisputably and totally, within a matter of minutes, in a convent church. He did not *become* a Catholic, he suddenly found that he was one; the very few remarks at the end of the book leave us in no doubt as to the reality of this. It is an authentic testimony to grace in our own day. The only trouble is that, somehow, it doesn't actually come over like that. I think the title gives the game away; I mean, grace doesn't, surely, prove the existence of God. Rather, it conveys the reality and power of salvation, something like that, doesn't it? I find it sad that so much Christian argument (for and against) centres

on the question 'Does God exist?' often with the suggestion that God is really wishful thinking, opium. I can't help feeling that that kind of God is not worth proving, even if he does exist. Where is the awe, the sheer terror of God, the even more terrifying knowledge of his love, his forgiveness, his providence? Is it so obviously a 'good thing' that God exists? Is God the answer to any human question, and not rather the question that shatters all our answers? The Christian proclamation is not that God exists but that 'Jesus is Lord and Christ' and all that that entails. Of course, an experience like that of Frossard can be, in his case certainly was, a genuine experience of grace, of the triumph of Jesus Christ; I am not quarrelling with that, in fact I am not, primarily, quarrelling with him at all (though, to be quite frank, I found his book boring); my quarrel is with a whole kind of theology