

as I approached the door, I suddenly observed that there hung over it a striking portrait of Aunt Agatha, from the waist upwards. In making my entrance, I had, of course, missed this, but there it had been all the time, and now it caught my eye and halted me in my tracks as if I had run into a lamp-post.

It was the work of one of those artists who reveal the soul of the sitter, and it had revealed so much of Aunt Agatha's soul that for all practical purposes it might have been that danger to traffic in person. Indeed, I came within an ace of saying 'Oh, hullo!' at the same moment when I could have sworn it said 'Bertie!' in that compelling voice which had so often rung in my ears and caused me to curl up in a ball in the hope that a meek subservience would enable me to get off lightly (J., 177-78).

The horrific impact of Aunt Agatha is also admirably suggested in this novel by the terror of her evinced by her husband, Uncle Percy, otherwise the most formidable person of the novel (a little vulnerable to attack from his daughter Florence but her range of interests is limited). I recall seeing a similar effect in Mitchell Hedges's account of a vast sea-monster caught by him which bore on it the scars inflicted by some greater and almost unimaginable beast.²⁵

²⁵*Heroes of Modern Adventure: Mr Mitchell Hedges Among the Monsters of the Deep.*

Reviews

THEOLOGY IN RECONCILIATION. Essays towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West, by Thomas F. Torrance. *Geoffrey Chapman*, London, 1975. 302 pp. £5.50.

Any book by Professor Torrance is full of sound learning and responsible theological reflection, and the present collection of essays and lectures is on the same high level as his other writings. The theme is plainly stated in the title and subtitle. Throughout the Christian world today there is a remarkable convergence in theology, and differences that once seemed intractable are being overcome. This is happening not through compromise, but through a more comprehensive grasp of the tradition.

Professor Torrance draws upon many sources, but perhaps three may be mentioned as particularly significant in this book. The first is the classical theology of the Church, as formulated by such men as Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria. Though it needs to be rethought and updated at many points, it continues to supply a foundation for our theology today. Next, one perceives the continuing importance for Professor Torrance of the Reformed tradition, from Calvin to Barth. Third, there are a number of references to the

new world-view of contemporary science. There has taken place a revolution in our conception of the physical universe, so that the old dualisms have been overcome. Professor Torrance believes that since Einstein there has emerged a way of conceiving the world that is much more hospitable to belief in God's action in it than was the nineteenth century view. He makes the interesting point that Athanasius too was open to some new scientific insights of his day.

The first essay in the book is a long history of the ecumenical movement, with some reflections on its present state and future prospects. The essay is marked by its fairness. Both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are criticised for their tendencies to absolutise their respective positions, and a good deal of attention is paid to the part which cultural influences have played. Important in this essay—and, indeed, throughout the book—are the author's reflections on God. Like many other contemporary theologians, Professor Torrance is seeking to show the closeness of God to his world. He believes we are still suffering from the deistic separation of God and world—a separation which left God presiding rather uselessly in a vacuum, while the world became a self-contained "godless" mechanical system. Both contemporary science and classical theology expose the shallowness of such a view.

There are important essays on baptism and the eucharist, and then a long discussion of worship. The treatment of worship is one of the most important contributions of the book. Impressed by Jungmann's thesis that in the early period liturgical prayer was always addressed to the Father through the Son, and that it was in reaction to Arianism that there grew up the

practice of addressing prayer directly to Christ in the pulpit liturgy, Professor Torrance claims that the true place of Christ in worship has been progressively lost, and we have fallen into a kind of Apollinarianism. It is necessary once again to pray *with* Christ, to let our prayer participate in the human mind of Christ. The implications of this teaching for meditative prayer are obviously important.

There is a masterly study of Athanasius before we come to the last essay, which is also the most controversial. It was given originally as a lecture to a conference of British church leaders at Birmingham in 1972, and the present reviewer well remembers its electrifying impact on that occasion. Professor Torrance's critique of the present state of the Church is wide-ranging, and he touches on a number of the points already mentioned in this review. But the essence is that 'our modern mind lacks ontological depth' so that 'even the Christian religion seems to be trivialised among us'. Instead of combatting these tendencies, the Church seems rather to be determined to take part in 'the sickness of society'. In the name of 'involvement' the Church is in peril of losing its identity in the service of every passing political and social current.

One might raise many questions about this book. Does the author present us with a clear alternative to the social activism which he criticises? Is he quite fair in his severe references to empiricism and existentialism? Does he attribute too much to cultural factors in the divergence of Protestantism and Catholicism? But however one may answer these questions, one must acknowledge that this book constitutes a major contribution to contemporary Christian theology.

JOHN MACQUARRIE

YES TO GOD, by Alan Ecclestone, *Darton, Longman & Todd*, London, 1975. 133 pp. £1.85.

It is probably a measure of how far many of us are from a real integration of our 'religious' life and 'secular' experience that such a gentle book as this continually brought me up short. Not that it acts like a series of hammerblows—the 'gentle plucking' at the reader's sleeve of which Alan Ecclestone talks in his introduction is immeasurably more effective. 'It is the job of

prayer to assimilate the stuff of all experience and to look beyond'. This is precisely what the author attempts to do as he explores the directions contemporary spirituality must follow.

The book is an attempt—and an effective one, I believe—to highlight the crisis of modern Christianity. The theme which runs through it is the sterility which Christians are likely to