

threatened; (2) the permission of abortion when previously authorized, by independent officials, under defined but ampler categories of medical, psycho-medical, or quasi-medical conditions; (3) the permission of all abortions save those performed by persons unqualified to carry out the medical procedures involved' (173-4). A shift from (1) to (3), such as happened in England in 1967, will threaten 'the sanctity of life' (202). It is not always clear to what point the masses of statistics are being adduced, but in the text, in the 127 footnotes and in two appendices, they certainly are. In 'Constitutional Balance' (220-60), David W. Louisell and the editor ask: 'Is it constitutional for the State [e.g. Ohio] to regulate abortion? Is it constitutional for the State not to regulate abortion?' (220). They answer 'Yes' to the former, 'No' to the latter question. This is a good paper, and not a few interesting cases are cited, though their opponents could claim that the questions in the form in which they are put by Louisell and Noonan only conceal what should be made clear: like the

fabulous Jesuit's request for permission to meditate while smoking. They conclude: 'Historically the United States has been a professed defender of those values ["the dignity of the individual and the inviolability of innocent human life"] and has committed much to the effort to establish them internally and espouse them internationally. It would be tragic now by example to lead the world to the opposite view that human life is disposable, for utilitarian purposes, at the political will of those who hold power' (260). Many Vietnamese could comment suitably on this: were they alive to do so. The book ends with an index, a table of statutes and a table of cases.

There is some editorial confusion between England, Great Britain and U.K. And for 'Aertyns' read 'Aertnys' throughout. It may be worth observing that in a book treating a problem which no man has ever, save as an unreflecting foetus, had to face for himself, there is not so much as a single contribution from a woman.

LAWRENCE MOONAN

THE END OF RELIGION, by Aelred Graham. *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich*, 1971. 292 pp. £2.25.

This book is, as the author warns us, a series of 'autobiographical explorations'. That is to say, it is a personal, rambling meditation rather than a rigorous analysis of religion. Dom Aelred reflects, in view of his various experiences especially his meetings with other religions, on the nature of 'religion', and suggests that we in the Catholic Church must broaden our outlook and ask ourselves what religion is *for*, what need in man it attempts to meet.

It is a disarming book, the author is so very gentle and affable. I would almost like to surrender to him. I found myself often nodding in agreement, about the tediousness and futility of institutional oecumenism, for instance; or when he suggest that the real distinction is not between radicalism and conservatism, but between radicalism and superficiality. Most of the discussions at the Council were superficial in this sense. I was inspired by the discussion Dom Aelred had in India about fearlessness: the ideal being that we should be freed from our own fears, and so inspire no fear in others.

But somehow, I cannot but suspect that it is the charm of the siren. It may just be that I opt for many of the things that Dom Aelred opts against—like eschatology, prophetic religion,

biblical religion. Perhaps I am simply falling into the very trap he wants to warn us about.

But perhaps it could also be that the kind of urbane disengagement that Dom Aelred shows has, after all, little to do with the core of all religion, and more to do—if I can say this without offence—with being a well-educated Englishman, and an English Benedictine at that.

'Christianity originated against a background of crisis. If it is to survive, it must be reinterpreted to meet a situation in which the originating crisis is no longer believed to be relevant'. Dom Aelred, in fact, disapproves of crisis *in genere*. His words, I suspect, would have sounded more convincing half a century ago. 'Back to Christ', a cry he deplors, makes more sense to more people, I think, than Dom Aelred quite likes. And it is surely the actual facticity of Christ and of the redemption in Christ, the *fact* rather than, say, its religious appropriateness, that more and more of us are feeling after.

And we need not be too coy about this. All the major world religions make universal claims in their own distinct and particular ways. That this should be so poses insoluble conceptual and methodological problems;

but it is so. There is no vantage point from which to survey all religions, except that of complete scepticism, which is the very anti-thesis of religion. We can only meet each other's religions by going more deeply into our own. And Christianity, in the last analysis, is surely a prophetic, eschatological, narrow-minded, evangelizing religion. To be too *déjà* is to miss the point.

It is in a way nice to see someone standing out (or perhaps, rather, sitting down) against the prevailing winds of historicity, eschatology, biblicism, and all that. There is a danger that we turn all these things into idols and forget the living God they were meant to lead us to. The God of the historians and the scripture scholars (or Bible-bashers) may be no more real than the God of the philosophers. I doubt if Abraham or Moses would have had much more use for Heilsgeschichte than Dom Aelred has. And I am quite prepared to allow that part of the antidote is Dom Aelred's kind of benign and cultured humanism.

But, after all, we are manifestly living in a

time of crisis. It is the gospel of the 'last days' that makes sense. There is an urgency in the air which we cannot afford to overlook. The issue, finally, is not whether we need new ways of meditation or a less authoritarian Church (though both are eminently desirable), but whether Jesus Christ has really 'overcome the world' and freed us from our sins (taken, if you like, all bad karma upon himself). If he has, it is worth knowing, because it is the most important fact in the whole universe. How one shares it with India or Thailand or, for that matter, with modern man in the West, is a serious problem. But no kind of relativizing or subjectivizing can be a real solution. Living out its implications in joy and peace, in faith and hope and love, is rather more promising; but then one could hardly write 'explorations' about that, let alone autobiography. Dom Aelred is, after all, a humble man. And, in this book, he has, I think, at last, come straight with us.

SIMON TUGWELL, O.P.

MAN WITHOUT GOD. An Introduction to Unbelief, by John Reid. *Hutchinson & Co. Ltd*, London, 1971. 306 pp. £4.00. Theological Resources.

The author of this theological study of modern unbelief feels that there is too much journalism in this field, and he hopes that his book will rise above that level (xvi). Alas, he failed sadly in achieving this goal—*Man Without God* is a very good (or bad) example of such theological journalism.

From cover to cover the book is filled with 'vagrant musings' (the author's own judgment, p. 236) and, perhaps slightly more entertainingly, some detailed information about the workings of Vatican II, the Roman Secretariat for Non-Believers (to which the author is a consultant), the Christian-Marxist dialogue, and such matters—all rather superficial and very Roman Catholic. Exceptions are, perhaps, the useful bibliography and the forty eight pages of notes at the end of the book with some interesting references. The notes should certainly have been incorporated into the text, and the vacated pages could then have been used for the numerous and lengthy digressions in which the author spells out his own incompetence. The text must speak for itself, and it does so with embarrassing honesty. I single out the paragraph on Paganism (one of the Counterparts of Unbelief) as particularly revealing. Reid seems to regard Paganism with its

multitude of deities as something rather daft, beyond belief, and quite outside the perspective of both Christians and Modern Man. Of course, there are angels, etc., but the Christian 'never regards them as literally divine' (19). Unfortunately for Reid, that is precisely what the Bible seems to do on several occasions, e.g. Psalm 8 and Job 1. This may create a problem for a certain type of metaphysical monotheism, but it also shows that the Scriptures are quite unfamiliar with the hollowed-out concept of the totally transcendent God which Reid propagates. God's transcendence is stretched to its absolute limits—and even beyond—when we read that: 'The mysteries of faith are inexpressible' (176)—one wonders how we are to know about them.

This concept of God is eminently suited for a dialogue with the sort of unbeliever the book is mainly concerned with: modern sophisticated man who is conscious of his autonomy and his dominance over the world through science. This God is so completely transcendent that he cannot be a rival to man's autonomy, he will not hamper man's development, but truly bring it to fulfilment. Listening to the criticisms of the unbeliever, the Christian will be inspired to purify his own concept of God.