

MY DEAR TIMOTHY. An Autobiographical Letter to his Grandson. By Victor Gollancz. (Gollancz; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Gollancz is concerned less with autobiographical facts as such than with the ideas, ideals, theories, causes, which the facts elucidate. (Thus the massive chapter XX on Socialism occupies more than a hundred pages.) The canvas is a broad one: Jewish orthodoxy, music, Italy, flowers, war, birth control, Oxford, Christianity, geology, New York, evil, sorrow and joy, the sense of wonder. Different readers may well find this or that section too long drawn out; and indeed the book would perhaps have benefited by judicious pruning, though part of its charm lies in its conversational atmosphere—which, it must be added, does not detract from the faultlessness of the style. No doubt also the author's views, political and religious, are such as to rouse strong opposition. Revolting from Jewish orthodoxy he moved towards Christianity; but as he speaks of 'My Socialism', so he must speak of 'My Christianity', for to 'institutional' Christianity he cannot give his allegiance though at Oxford he nearly did so. (His reactions to the Law, 'obedience' to God, institutional religion, faith, dogma, the Church, tempt one to sense a common source in an opposition to the Pauline 'bondage of the law'—intellectual here as well as moral—but stopping short here instead of going on to that 'freedom of the sons of God' which comes, not from rejecting the law, but from seeing it and living it as identical with Love not written in stone but inscribed in the heart, so that obedience is child-like willingness to be guided by the Father, the Church is object of faith and loyalty, and faith itself is a personal trust and devotedness springing from an inner conviction motivated by love.)

It would be a great pity if *longueurs* or provocative views were to dissuade anyone from reading the book, however, for it is full of valuable things. A few examples must suffice: 'I was not content to live in joy when joy was vouchsafed to me, and otherwise with that quiet acceptance of the moment which, had I but known it, is precisely the same joy' (p. 161); 'to live in the moment as eternity and in eternity as the moment' (p. 162); 'all physical things are sacraments' (p. 22); 'a Socialist must be specially, almost desperately scrupulous about regimentation of any kind' (p. 308); 'there are people who desire, morally as well as otherwise, too quiet a life' (p. 56). However one may dissent from views put forward, one cannot fail to learn from a book in which there is so much sincerity and charity, so deep a wisdom and, if one may say so, so deep a spirituality.

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