

UNDECEPTIONS. Essays on Theology and Ethics, by C. S. Lewis. Edited by Walter Hooper. *Geoffrey Bles*, 1971. £2.25.

To review a book of previously unpublished snippets and articles by C. S. Lewis is a peculiar task. The fact that such bits and pieces are thought worth publishing is an indication of the importance of a man's contribution to Christian thinking. It is also likely to show up his weaknesses, since what one says in a radio discussion, or a polemic review, is not necessarily what one wants posterity to remember. And the weaknesses are certainly there—the romantic anti-feminism, which is so unassailable because it thinks it isn't anti-feminine; the fascination with violence which much more obviously mars the 'Narnia' books; above all, the bland certainty of rightness which is most evident in the careful humility of replies to hecklers, live or in print. He's always saying, 'I don't know enough to be sure', or 'I may well be wrong', but these (perfectly sincere) admissions grow out of an assured, reasoned belief so profound and immovable that it becomes almost impossible for him not to feel a certain compassionate contempt for those who can't understand. Hence the constant guard against any appearance of arrogance or dismissiveness. The book's title indicates one important aspect of this attitude: the desire to unuddle the muddled people, to undeceive the wilfully deceived, was a strong compulsion with Lewis.

This type of Christian is at present out of fashion, though he was once admired and valued. Perhaps we are wrong to withdraw our admiration. The arrogance of people whose soap-box is the utter obviousness of their faith is real, but it can give way to sanctity, just as the doubt-ridden-but-struggling-on type can also come to sanctity. At the moment we tend to admire and understand the latter and regard the former with suspicion. We need both, and both need *real* humility if they are to fulfil their faith. Lewis's ability to argue the Christian case with clarity and bite in terms of his philosophy is off-putting to people who have been put

through the existentialist and/or phenomenological mangle and emerged with their intellectual processes rather felted, but it often appeals to the young, who have a craving for certainty, even at second hand.

It seems to me that we have reached a stage where this kind of book must be a salutary experience. The combination of openness and curiosity with an incisive common-sense, a refusal to be intimidated by other people's aggressive doubts, is stimulating, and provokes a useful searching of the contemporary Christian heart. The 'occasionalness' of the book becomes its special virtue, because it shows a man, deeply and fervently Christian, coping with questions and contemporary topics, as they arose. His weaknesses are exposed, but so is the way his faith was far more important than these.

This is clear, for instance, in a sermon printed later in *The Guardian* (in 1945) called 'The Grand Miracle'. It is characteristic and, I think, excellent. In it Lewis compares the attempt to judge the 'probability' of Christianity with the attempt to decide whether a newly discovered part of a symphony, or a novel, really can be the essential missing section which was needed to make sense of all the rest. Such a judgment cannot be purely rational, it depends on a sensibility to the meaning and quality of the whole work. It requires knowledge of its history and form but also a sort of passion for the discovery of truth—not just intellectual truth, nor merely personal truthfulness-to-self, but the deep integrity of life itself, human and non-human. Lewis himself sometimes failed to have this breadth of awareness, but he knew it was necessary. And he did not make the mistake of supposing that fear of using the wrong language and of looking foolish is the same thing as the necessary humility which is an awareness of human inadequacy before great mystery.

ROSEMARY HAUGHTON

SHADOWS OF HEAVEN, by Gunnar Urang. *SCM*, 1971. 184 pp. £2.25.

Subtitled 'religion and fantasy in the fiction of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams and J. R. R. Tolkien', this is a critical and, to some extent, theological study of the three myth-

makers of our generation. Professor Urang brings out well that what all three are engaged in is a kind of natural theology of the imagination. They are using what they believe to be a