

OUR LIFE IN CHRIST; by J. K. S. Reid; S.C.M. Press, 21s.

This book is a model of stringent and methodical theological argument of a kind which is, unfortunately, very rare among English, as opposed to Scottish theologians. Its point of view is more or less identical with that of Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics*. But it has one quality not shared by the *Dogmatics*: terseness. The first of the following paragraphs will be devoted to a summary of Professor Reid's argument, the next to some criticisms of it. It must be said at the outset that the book is very good indeed. But its conclusions are inconsistent with Catholic doctrine; and it is thus presumably not without interest to Catholics whether these conclusions follow from the premisses, and whether the premisses themselves are beyond doubt.

The argument runs thus: the Biblical view of man's essential being as one of relationship to God in utter dependence, which was lost by the fall and is restored in Christ, has been mitigated in Christianity from the end of the second century onwards by a conception of man having in some degree an existence independent of God. There naturally follows from this a problem, which the Biblical authors themselves did not and could not envisage, of how God's action for man's salvation is appropriated by man himself. St Augustine's theory, that the natural desire of all men for happiness was a quality in them which of itself made them capable of receiving the grace of God, pre-supposed that something remains after the fall of the readiness for God with which man was created. The effect of contrasting God and man as independent agents is either that God's omnipotent grace is represented as coercing an utterly incapable human will, or else that the human will is held to contribute a part to its salvation quite independently of God. The first line of thought, which was Calvin's, dissolves human responsibility; the second, which is characteristic of Roman Catholicism, contradicts an essential element of scripture. But the dilemma only arises at all if grace is set against nature, and nature considered as something with which grace has to come to terms. The predestination of the elect must not be thought of as a kind of impersonal force which cramps their liberty. The fact is that the whole being of a Christian is characterised by his being in Christ—there only remains for him to be what essentially he already is. What Christ has done *once and for all* has not 'indeed to be supplemented, but only implemented' by Christians. 'Not that they are left to do this on their own' (p. 134). That we have the duty of so implementing the redemptive work of Christ prevents us from saying dogmatically that all are saved; but one must equally avoid asserting definitely that some are not saved. The answer 'No' to God's demand that we should be what we are is evil, and therefore incomprehensible. All we can say is that there is a possibility that some may make it. The treatment of the bearing of modern biblical criticism on these questions, though of great interest, is only marginally relevant to the main thesis, and therefore is omitted from this summary.

Professor Reid has two fundamental objections to the Catholic doctrine: that it presupposes a 'substantial' view of man (that man does not exist only in

relation to God, but has some kind of independent being with which God has to reckon); and that, as a consequence of this, it is forced into a 'synergist' conception of man's appropriation of grace. But in fact the Catholic view of the matter is that man, even when fallen and unredeemed, depends for his being entirely upon God, who has not only created him but conserves him from moment to moment. (On p. 108, the author remarks that Aquinas in his treatment of the problem sees more to the heart of it than either Augustine or Luther. One wishes he had given some space to a comparison of Aquinas' theory with his own). Professor Reid's insistence that man should not be thought of as having a 'substantial' existence, but only an existence in relation to God, is in all but verbal agreement with the Thomist doctrine of God as necessary being, and the whole creation, including man, as contingent being. But if man depends for his existence *totally* upon God, and man's relationship to God is *totally* ruptured by the fall, as Professor Reid appears to hold, then the singular conclusion follows that man ceased to exist altogether at the fall. Catholics, of course, would accept the major premiss but contest the minor, holding that even when man falls away from God's grace, he is still essentially related to God as creature to creator. This disposes of the first of Professor Reid's objections; his own arguments lead either to an absurd or to a Catholic conclusion. As to 'synergism', Professor Reid rejects as Catholic the Pelagian view that man appropriates grace without being moved thereto by grace itself; but even a Molinist, who lays the greatest emphasis possible within the limits of Catholicism on the place of the human will in justification, would agree with him there. The passage quoted from page 134 is, of course, entirely Catholic. In fact Professor Reid only avoids dogmatic universalism or double predestination by admitting that each man has the power of saying 'Yes' or 'No' to God's salvific will for him. And it is simply the conviction that man has this power, which the various Catholic theories which describe the relation between grace and free will are attempting to safeguard. If the existence of evil is really 'incomprehensible' on a theory of grace, as Professor Reid, following Barth, insists that it must be, it follows either that evil does not exist, or that the theory of grace is invalidated as failing to deal with one of the principal facts with which such theories exist to deal.

In fine, Professor Reid's arguments against Catholic doctrine, in as far as they are not really consistent with it, and indeed a salutary re-emphasis of some of its central features, result in intolerable antinomies. The book as a whole is an illustration of the interesting paradox that it is just those theologies which most intransigently uphold their own special traditions that have most of real value to contribute to the ecumenical debate.

HUGO MEYNELL

FACING DEATH, by Alfred Delp; Bloomsbury, 22s.

Alfred Delp was a German Jesuit who acted as adviser to the group of Christian anti-Nazis led by Count von Moltke. After a farcical trial he was executed for