

YO CREO EN LA ESPERANZA! by José María Díez-Alegría. Editorial Española Desclée Brouwer. Bilbao, 1972. 197 pp.

This book, 'I believe in Hope', is one of a series of personal testimonies called, 'The credo that has given meaning to my life'. Its author is a sixty-one year old Jesuit professor of sociology at the Gregorian University, Rome. As befits a work in a series like this it is a personal declaration of faith, part autobiographical, part theological, and it is the fruit of many years thought and experience containing extracts from previous addresses and writings which illustrate the main theme. His desire to take full responsibility for what he says, led him to refuse to make changes in the text, and so he was asked by Fr Arrupe, the General of the Society of Jesus to seek simple exlaustration from the Society for a period of two years. How far his superiors have been aware of the trend of his thinking over the past twenty years or so, we do not know, but that they should be embarrassed by his ideas reaching a wide public, is understandable. Reaction to this book has been violent. There is no doubt that much of what he says is offensive to the pious ears of many churchmen and politicians. He hits at the sensitive spots. Capitalism and Christianity are incompatible. The study of Karl Marx has helped him to understand Jesus Christ better. He thinks it would be a good idea if the Papacy were to reduce its capital from 500 million dollars to a mere 50 million. He calls attention to the insignificance of the history of the church within the great stream of the history of mankind. He even dares to utter the cry 'No hay caballos blancos de Santiago'. His remarks about the general impression left by clerical attitudes towards sex and marriage bear out the childhood memories of people like Fellini and Buñuel and one realizes that some of the stranger manifestations of southern European eroticism are due to something more than the warm climate. The style of writing is not that usually associated with theology in the Peninsula. It is concise and to the point. Historical and biblical texts abound, but they are not presented in a seemingly detached and objective way but are used to illustrate a theme. He does not begin his enquiries with a consideration of the documents of the magisterium, in fact he clearly states that on one point at least the social magisterium of the church has been wrong. He will have nothing of the view, dear to many theologians of the Roman School, that the Pope is also infallible in his ordinary day to day teaching. This is not the sort of theology one expects from the Gregorian and it is no wonder that he has been

removed from contact with impressionable youth. What is surprising is that he should be now engaged in pastoral work in the working-class district of Vallecas and be answerable to the local bishop, Cardinal Tarancon of Madrid. One feels as if this cannot be an ultimate 'solution'. In fact, it indicates the delicacy of the situation. Two things still matter in Spain: family, what your name is: and patronage, who you can claim on your side. The name Díez-Alegría is already well known since the brother of the author is Chief of Staff and a pillar of the establishment (he recently visited London to take part in the talks about the future of Gibraltar). Now the public have to get used to the name standing for something rather different. As to support, the General of the Jesuits (who is incidentally a Basque!) does not want to have anything to do with him for the moment, neither presumably does Rome. Yet Cardinal Tarancon, who only last year secured Papal support in a brush with the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, is prepared to allow him to exercise his ministry in an area of his diocese that is potentially explosive, politically as well as ecclesiastically.

Those who are accustomed to the writings of people like Bernard Häring, Hans Küng, J. B. Metz, Harvey Cox and John Robinson, may not find much that is startlingly new in Díez-Alegría. But the importance of the book lies in the fact that many of the ideas put forward by such men are now able to reach a new and receptive public, and in their translation to the Spanish scene they emerge with their full political implications. Passages in the book put one in mind of Archbishop Helder Camara.

The main thesis is to be found in the chapter on True and False Religion. Here he makes a distinction between ontological/cultic religion and ethical/prophetic religion. The former sees human history as essentially circular, repetitive, and the only way for the individual to escape from this unending cycle is through the liturgical mystery, the vertical line to God. The alternative, corresponds to the biblical view of history as rectilinear. God effects man's salvation in and through history. God is to be sought on the horizontal plane in our fellow men. For the last two centuries Catholicism has been on the side of the ontological/cultic and so has merited the strictures of Marx that it is an obstacle to the real liberation of man. One could criticize the over simplification inherent in such a neat distinction, but putting it this way does provide a fruitful point of

departure for a reassessment of the nature of Christian prayer and spirituality. Naturally he pays great attention to the teaching of the Old Testament prophets and the definition of religion in James 1, 27.

For very many years Díez-Alegria has been interested in the social problems of wealth and property. He shows that the right to private property, including the means of production, is not something that derives from the natural law, rather it is due to a positive law, the *jus gentium*. The way the church's social magisterium has insisted on the right to private property is not in accord with either the New Testament or patristic tradition and is in fact erroneous. What has happened is that the church has sold out to nineteenth century bourgeois liberalism. *Gaudium et Spes* of Vatican II marks a return to a more correct way of speaking. His big complaint is that the church in her social teaching has not really become incarnate. She has multiplied her good works and services to the less fortunate but all the time she has kept herself aloof and not identified herself with the poor. This is reflected in vocations to the religious and priestly life. A great many of the vocations come from the working classes but they are taken from their origins, incardinated into an ecclesiastical world and then they proceed from this new position to minister to the world from which they have been taken. So much of our social programme is geared to a closer collaboration between the classes whereas it should be working towards the abolition of class. 'It is not true that Jesus did not wish to take sides between the rich and the poor, it is the church that does not want to take sides.'

His views on sex and marriage are dealt with very fully in a chapter on celibacy. Either you

have a charism for celibacy or you have not. If you have not, it is no use trying to acquire it by rigorous ascetical practices. In analysing the nature of this gift he dismisses the utilitarian argument that it renders a man more available to the service of others. He is aware that the surrender of conjugal love can easily lead to the selfish egoism of the bachelor. It is not good for man to be alone. But the true celibate is not alone since he finds God in the void, in the absence of conjugal love. There is something very Spanish about this talk of the positive qualities of the void, the *nada*, and it is not surprising that the most moving part of the book is where he reflects on his own death. In the tradition of Seneca and Spanish stoicism, he remarks that at the human level a willing acceptance of death need not involve a belief in an after life. It could simply be a way of expressing gratitude for the gift of life and a desire to rest from labour. The peace that comes from the consideration of a job well done, rather than from the expectation of future delights. But when, in 1971, during a serious illness he was confronted with death and saw the sadness of his many friends, such a selfish view was seen to be inadequate. He began to realize that the Christian hope of something beyond the grave was not based on some apocalyptic vision of the future, but rather, rooted in an experience in this life. It is in his contact with working people and with university students rather than his being in an ecclesiastical 'state of perfection' that has taught him the meaning of Christian love. To be with the poor and the oppressed is to be with Jesus. The experience of brotherly love and knowing what it is to hunger and thirst after justice are the real grounds for his eschatological hope.

M. E. WILLIAMS

WHY NOT? PRIESTHOOD AND THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN. A theological study edited by Michael Bruce and G. E. Duffield. Marcham Books, Marcham Manor Press, 1972. 144 pp. (no price given).

When most readers today are alert for any instance of male chauvinism, it takes some courage to write on the issue of women as priests by attacking the feminist position.

The contributors to this volume dedicated to the case against ordaining women are not lacking in courage, though they are somewhat short of humour. This lack of humour is well illustrated in the review of feminist literature which starts the book. That there may be problems for Christians in accepting some of the implications of radical feminism is undoubtedly true, but these difficulties are not presented with any degree of clarity in Gervase Duffield's paper. Nowhere does he indicate that the contemporary feminist movement contains not one

but a wide variety of perspectives and forms. Christianity and women in history are quickly dealt with (in one paragraph to be precise). We are told Margeurite of Navarre wrote 'high class mystical poetry' (sic). Possibly one or two of the women so quickly dealt with in this paragraph wrote 'higher class prose' than the contributor. The work of Mary Wollstonecraft is mentioned fleetingly, but instead of reviewing the contents of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mr. Duffield appears to consider her 'chaotic life' a more appropriate object for attack. She is referred to by her first name only, presumably in consequence of this way of life. This perspective is unlikely to move a generation accustomed to discrepancies