

NATURE AND GRACE, by Karl Rahner; Sheed and Ward, 8s. 6d.

According to one American commentator, the list of Fr Rahner's writings contained, nine years ago, two hundred and ninety-nine titles (cf. McCool, in *Theological Studies*, 22, 1961, p. 559, n. 29). This prodigious output has to be borne in mind when trying to assess the value of any of his 'occasional essays'. At a time of intense theological activity he refuses to withdraw from the world and to construct an 'armchair theology'. The keynote of his writing is its 'actualité'—the questions for theology are the problems of actual Christian existence. The theologian must think about, and talk about, the world he lives in.

Sometimes Fr Rahner sets out to provide a 'careful and disciplined theological investigation' (Rahner, 'The Prospects for Dogmatic Theology', in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 1, p. 6) of a question. When he does so, as in the title-essay of this book, the result is technically complex but unfailingly repays the effort it demands. This essay adds little that is new (except for a useful comment on the ecumenical relevance of the problem pp. 18-19) to two earlier, and much fuller essays on the relationship between nature and grace ('Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace' 1950, slightly expanded 1954, published in English in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 1, 1961) and on the theology of uncreated grace ('Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace', Original version 1939; published in English in *Theol. Investigations*, Vol. 1)—but it is a good example of his method and also, for the question is far from being merely academic, a useful introduction to the recent controversies on the subject. This essay is valuable although, being originally written several years ago, it is not the latest contribution to these debates (cf. for example Fr Burrell's invaluable essay 'Indwelling: Presence and Dialogue' *Theological Studies*, 22, 1961, especially p. 13).

But much of his writing is concerned less with adequate theological analysis than with the 'spotlighting' of a problem, to make his reader see it, perhaps for the first time, and to start doing some hard thinking. The three essays—on 'Dangers in Catholicism Today'—that form the second half of this book belong to this category. In the final essay, for example, he focusses on the danger of silent rebellion, 'mute heresy', and its counterpart—a dead orthodoxy 'which only speaks in correct statements and keeps silent on those which do not suit it . . . the heresy of indifference and a theologically sterile integralism' (p. 130). Authority cannot react against this by magisterial pronouncement, but only by condemnation and suppression—which makes matters worse. Fr Rahner's method of approaching the problem is somewhat unconvincing; but this is a cautionary tale, rather than a theological thesis.

The essay on 'The Appeal to Conscience' is also an attempt, not to solve a problem, but to indicate a frequently unrealised danger. Its importance lies not in his rejection of extreme situation-ethics, but in his warning that, at a period when social and cultural upheaval have made objective standards difficult to

discern, and even more difficult to live by, those whose duty it is to interpret universal norms of morality in the concrete situation can too easily encourage the very relativism they deplore by shirking their responsibility and 'leaving it to the individual conscience'.

The first two essays in this part of the book are complementary. In both he is concerned to show that the Christian's twofold situation as a unique individual, and as a member of a society governed by general moral laws, must create a fruitful tension. Fr Rahner considers the problem from the point of view now of the individual, now of the Church, and it is characteristic of his method that he never considers either in isolation; he does not *dissolve* the tension, he *grasps* it—by always giving full value to each term of the dialectic. Unfortunately, in the first of these essays, he seems to relax this tension by too complete a distinction between the 'visible organised Church' and the 'community-by-grace of the redeemed in Christ' (p. 65). This impression may be the result of a flaw in translation; Fr Rahner's German is notoriously difficult to translate and, for the most part, the English of these essays is commendably clear.

NICHOLAS LASH

IN THE REDEEMING CHRIST, by F. X. Durrwell, C.S.S.R.; Sheed and Ward, 15s.

FROM GLORY TO GLORY, texts from Gregory of Nyssa, selected and introduced by Jean Daniélou; John Murray, 25s.

HUGH OF SAINT-VICTOR: SELECTED SPIRITUAL WRITINGS, translated by a Religious of C.S.M.V., with an Introduction by Aelred Squire; Faber and Faber, 25s.

'The sacraments exist to make contact between men and the Word of God at the point when that Word is pronounced for our salvation: in the man Jesus and in his action redeeming us. Their name, "sacraments", means "mysteries", because by them the mystery of "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" is accessible to mankind. Holy Scripture, too, is a kind of sacrament . . .' Like the seven, it is intended to link us with the world of salvation in the redeeming Christ, Fr Durrwell reminds us. Scripture establishes a communion, different from the eucharistic one, but real nonetheless—'a communion of thought between two people who love each other and talk together, one of whom is Christ'. These words occur near the beginning of Fr Durrwell's book, in a chapter entitled 'The Sacrament of Scripture', and indeed it would be difficult to think of a book more completely scriptural than this, unless we turn to the kind of writing that was produced in the early centuries of the church, in which the whole Christian life was elaborated in biblical imagery—Exodus, banquet, bride and dove.

Scripture is meant to be a meeting point with Christ, but the approach of each succeeding age of the Church to this point has something individual about it. In our time, with so much *ressourcement* going on in the field of theology, we are