

THE WHIG INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY. Herbert Butterfield. (Bell; 7s. 6d.)

THE AGE OF TERROR. Leslie Paul. (Faber; 18s.)

The reissue of Professor Butterfield's *The Whig Interpretation of History* comes at a moment when he has recently put us in his debt by his larger thesis on *Christianity and History*. In this earlier work he is concerned to show the falsity of the claim of the Whig historians, the Macaulays, Trevelyan and the like, that the Protestants in the sixteenth century won their battles against the Catholics because they were the party of inevitable 'Progress'. He shows that, if anything, the original Protestants were reactionaries. This demonstration leads him to a further point; history is an extremely complex interweaving of motives and personalities, and to attempt to connect, by a simplified line of causation, modern phenomena which may be labelled 'progressive' with events as remote as the Renaissance and Reformation, is bound to lead to a falsification of history. To simplify is to distort; we must not make judgments of the past on our contemporary standards; and, anyway, the historian is not a moralist.

Professor Butterfield seems, then, at first sight, to condemn the object of Mr Leslie Paul's book *The Age of Terror*, for this latter book seeks in the past, and sometimes quite remote past, the causes of our present political and social anxieties. But Mr Paul has said in this book so much of what the reviewer has long wished to see in print, and is distinguished by so admirable a common-sense and moderation in his commentary, that he seems almost above criticism. His purpose is, it is true, didactic and moral, but he does not judge from contemporary standards and he cannot be accused of distortion and over-simplification. He does make a general statement that the modern world is afflicted by the possession of enormous powers together with a lack of principles for their use. That is hardly deniable. He does trace this fact back to the Renaissance and the Reformation, the former giving an enormous impetus to the development of power in politics, science and economics, while the latter removed great regions of Europe from the guidance of the Catholic Church. It is a thesis that many will defend. Perhaps we may say that the writers of history should stick rigidly to an analysis of what really happened, while the teachers of history must draw lessons from their work. It is impossible, seeing how serious are the times we live in, not to try to remedy the present in the light of the past, if one knows anything about it at all. Mr Paul is a teacher, and a very good one. His description of Mediaeval Christendom, for instance ('it cleared an area of freedom for man's spirit'), of the Liberal and Conservative parties and of Marxism, could scarcely be bettered. It is in these analytical and informative historical summaries that the great excellence of *The Age of Terror* lies.

P.F.