

CHRISTIANITY AND HISTORY by E. Harris Harbison. *Princeton University Press : Oxford University Press, 52s.*

This collection of essays makes agreeable reading: humane, unhurried, literary, careful, clear. I would pick out especially the chapters on the teaching and writing of history as useful introductions to recent work; that on Toynbee as a penetrating demonstration of his swing away from Christian faith after 1940; the critique of the voluntarism of Protestant theology; the discussion of Machiavelli and Thomas More as social reformers and of the idea of utility in Calvin's thought. The coolly rational temper of the book will be attractive to anyone brought up in the Catholic tradition of scholarship.

What is disappointing about it is the lack of serious dialogue with philosophers and theologians of our own school, who have written such a vast amount on these topics in the last hundred and fifty years or so. One would have expected attention somewhere to Newman, so great is Dr Harbison's concern with education, conscience and freedom; but not a word. The impression is given of a liberal scholar whose horizon is still uncomfortably bounded by Luther and Calvin, who is trying to extend his scope but who knows all too little of the Catholic alternative. It is decidedly odd to find it still being said that the Protestant reformation restored a sense of dynamism and divine purpose, as if there had been no other intellectual and spiritual revival, not to mention missionary expansion, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; to find so rational a man decrying pretensions on the part of theo-

logians to develop a 'science', or so scholarly a teacher telling us that St Thomas was not interested in history and that it took Joachim of Flora to bring in the idea of progress.

Professor Herbert Butterfield once told us to hold on to Christ and for the rest to be totally uncommitted. Dr Harbison admires Butterfield and seems to be applying the principle. His writing serves to illustrate its fundamental flaw. If we are to hold on to Christ, what field of action or thought is there left in which we are free to be uncommitted? If Christian liberalism is to be authentic, it must be shown that all its principles come from Christ. I am not convinced that either Professor Butterfield or Professor Harbison have succeeded in doing that. The answer lies in a hint on page 169 of this book:

'The earliest Christians never made the mistake of succumbing either to a radical individualism or to totalitarianism . . . Perhaps we are beginning to recover the early Christian insight that freedom and community are not opposites, but complementary terms, as liberty and law are.'

Perhaps the rough and tumble of daily life in the Catholic Church has preserved that early Christian insight all along; and perhaps it will be clarified and confirmed by a statement this year from the Ecumenical Council, gathering together in a single document the teaching of Popes, doctors, martyrs and confessors over the past generations.

*Michael Richards*

TRADITION AND THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH by Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P. Faith and Fact Books: *Burns and Oates, 9s 6d.*

Père Congar has already written an important study of tradition in two bulky volumes published in 1962-3. In the present short book he covers much the same ground. A discussion of this theme by a theologian of Père Congar's stature is not just another volume in a series. Even considered as no more than an *oeuvre de vulgarisa-*

*tion* it bears the marks of its author's distinction of mind.

More important, the book is probably the first presentation in English on a popular level of the traditional theology of tradition: of the theology which suffered a partial eclipse between the Council of Trent and the second Vatican Council.

With the rejection of the wording 'two sources of revelation' on November 20th 1962, the Fathers of Vatican II indicated their refusal to endow a widely current theology with conciliar authority. In doing so they solved no theological problem; on the contrary, they gave full scope to theological discussion of a problem left open by the Council of Trent. Père Congar's book is an exploration of this traditional understanding of 'tradition' in the Church in the sense that he goes behind the once almost universally current interpretation of the Trent formula, on which, for instance, theological text-books based their alternatives: 'proof from Scripture', 'proof from tradition'. The concept of tradition in Père Congar's book is closely related to Scripture on the one hand, and to the whole intimate richness of the life of the Spirit in the Church on the other.

The need for condensation has not, unfortu-

nately, contributed to giving Père Congar's treatment greater clarity than that characteristic of his more extended study. At key points in the argument even a careful and repeated re-reading sometimes fails to disclose the author's exact meaning. A case in point is the section on 'tradition as objectively containing things not contained in Scripture' (pp. 96–105), in which the sharpness of focus is continually blurred, and in which I have found, apart from innuendo, no answer to the question implied in the title prefixed to the section. This is a pity; but it must not be allowed to obscure the fact that the book effectively outlines – in an astonishingly brief compass – a very much profounder view of tradition than most Catholic lay people are likely to have come across.

R. A. Markus

THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN ARGUMENT by Hans Joachim Schoeps; *Faber and Faber, 30s.*

Professor Schoeps is a leading authority on Judaism and Jewish Christianity and is well known for his controversial study of St Paul now translated into English under the title of: *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*. This book was first published in German in 1937 and had gone through three editions before this present translation into English was made. In it he recounts with great sympathy and insight the history of the relationships between Judaism and Christianity from the earliest times. But even in an age of more irenic dialogue, Professor Schoeps is rightly under no illusions about the greatness of the gap which still separates the two religions. The belief that all things have been made *new* through the second Adam and a Covenant which embraces *all* mankind, is the greatest stumbling block to the Jew. For him none of this can be true since Israel has already been elected by God and those of the seed of Abraham have no need of rebirth in the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is a denial of God's love for man to say that he could die on a cross, forsaken.

In Professor Schoeps' view it was St Paul, especially, who radically misunderstood the Covenant in this respect.

Such a position seems far removed from Christianity but Professor Schoeps sees in the dialogue which took place between Martin Buber and Karl Ludwig Schmidt in 1933, a possibility for development of Jewish thought which becomes the basis for his own view. With Buber he would want 'to grant belief to the Christian witness that God has dealt with the world and a new revelation has taken place outside the Covenant of Israel'. This is an offering of salvation which is not on the same plane as that made to Israel and so the world cannot yet be regarded as redeemed. Such a view raises many questions, not least of which would be how compatible with a true understanding of the Old Covenant is this independent Christian witness. But such problems serve to stimulate the reader to a greater understanding of his own beliefs and the book can only be regarded as a very interesting and worthwhile study.

Mervyn Davies, O.P.