

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.