

# Literarische Berichte und Anzeigen

## Allgemeines

E. Harris Harbison: *Christianity and History*. Princeton, N. J. (Princeton University Press) 1964. 292 S., geb. \$ 6.50.

This volume of collected essays by the Princeton renaissance and reformation historian, E. Harris Harbison, appeared just a few months after his untimely death. It gives us an insight into his view of history with six essays pertaining to the Christian understanding of history, and it occasions genuine regret that no further pieces of historical analysis will come from his pen with six essays illuminating facets of the Protestant reformation – three previously unpublished.

The essays on the understanding of history reflect, as the author repeatedly notes, the revival of interest in this subject which has occurred in the past forty or more years. One essay is devoted especially to Arnold J. Toynbee, although written before the latter's *A Study of History* was completed. Of Toynbee Harbison says, "Possibly the most interesting thing about him is his magisterial attempt to reconcile his two vocations as historian and as Christian." The analysis is carried out in an illuminating fashion by comparison with Augustine and Machiavelli. In conclusion Harbison marks as faults in Toynbee's integration of his callings as historian and Christian, first, his dislike of paradox, e. g., the antinomy between uniqueness and recurrence in history, second, his underemphasis of the anonymous forces of history, e. g., the technological and economic, and third, his inadequate "sense for the critical importance of the unique event as an integral part of the self-revelation of the hidden God of history."

Two other essays in the first section, "Religious Perspectives of College Teaching: History" and "Liberal Education and Christian Education", concern perennial problems of the American educational scene. In a sense they are the problems of faith and reason, Christianity and humanism. Indeed the same themes appear throughout all the essays of this section. One notes the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr, and at several points Harbison expresses his admiration for Herbert Butterfield's *Christianity and History*. The reader almost comes to feel that Harbison has no distinctively new position to defend. This feeling is, however, representative more of the theologian familiar with current theological interpretations of history than of the "secular" historian – including Harbison himself as a member of a university history department – who would be less accustomed to examining presuppositions of religious faith or questions of ultimate meaning and purpose. Harbison is in fact that uncommon scholar who is by calling and commitment a Christian and a historian.

Nonetheless the more enduring essays are in the second section, especially "Freedom in Western Thought", "Will versus Reason: the Dilemma of the Reformation in Historical Perspective", and "The Intellectual as Social Reformer: Machiavelli and Thomas More." Machiavelli and More, together with Augustine and Calvin, are Harbison's favorites. He skillfully employs their writings and thought to penetrate the nature and meaning of historical process, and in his essay devoted to them he demonstrates how "they represent the first tough-minded but imaginative thinking about modern political, social, and economic problems" and illustrate the attitudes of the "realist" and "moralist" toward these problems. Harbison succinctly paints the age of these two scholar-statesmen. "The political thought of the brilliant generation that included Machiavelli and More was the result of two things: the social tensions accompanying the dissolution of medieval institutions, and the simultaneous impact of the classical revival."



Machiavelli was both scientist and humanist, seeking new truth independently and conserving the wisdom of tradition. He saw the physical and intellectual dimensions of power but missed the moral dimension. It was his own unique personal experience which accounts for this blindness to the reality of spiritual forces in men and events. More grew up in a different environment but faced many of the same problems. In his *Utopia* he sought to describe the ideal society based on reason alone, but unlike Machiavelli's conception of society, More's was completely static. "To Machiavelli the real world is a continuous struggle for power between competing vitalities; to More, in *Utopia*, it is a world in which power can be controlled and disciplined, nay even rendered harmless." Whereas Machiavelli only took up his pen after losing his political position, More gave up his career as Christian humanist and social reformer to enter the service of his king. Harbison believes that the tension between their views of society and reform, i. e. between the realist and the moralist still prevails.

The other essays in the second section include a concise analysis of the Protestant reformation for laymen and two studies on Calvin, "The Idea of Utility in the Thought of John Calvin" and "Calvin's Sense of History". All the essays in this volume underscore the historical world's loss of a colleague known at home for his teaching and at large for his perceptive scholarship.

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Friedrich Gontard: *Die Päpste und die Konzilien*. München (Kurt Desch) 1963. 638 S., 158 Abb., geb. DM 18.50.

ders.: *The Chair of Peter. A History of the Papacy*. Trans. by A. J. and E. F. Peeler. New York (Holt, Rinehart and Winston) 1964. 629 pp., 169 illustrations, \$ 12.50.

It is becoming increasingly common for important books to appear virtually simultaneously in two or more languages. Most often it involves books commanding a wide audience. Such is the case here, for Gontard has written his history for the general reader whose interest has been aroused by the current Vatican Council or the recent change of pontiffs. His work makes no claim to be a scholarly history of this ancient and complex institution. It presents rather a panorama of the popes, a lively but episodic narrative, concentrating on the personalities – sometimes famous, sometimes obscure, yet always fascinating. Thus although it is a big and handsome book with over 500 pages of text, it reads well, in translation as well as in the original. The scholar, however, will have occasion to ponder the source of the author's information and his conclusions.

Unfortunately no bibliography is provided, not even suggestions for further reading, although the German edition includes a long list of names of writers on the papacy. Likewise there are no footnotes. One learns from the American publisher that Gontard is a Protestant but could infer it from the absence of the imprimatur. His qualifications as a scholar are left unstated, and he must be judged by his product. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to expect what he does not intend to give, a scholar's account of the papacy. He makes no claim to be a Caspar, Seppelt or Ullmann, although their names are on his list. In reading him with a critical eye one ought not to underestimate the task which he has faced in compressing nearly 2000 years of history into one volume of fairly continuous narrative free from evident partisanship.

What then does the general reader find? First, he will be struck by the "flash-back" or "in medias res" technique which is used repeatedly. Gontard is disposed to skip from one exciting event to the next, picking up the intervening developments, including often several pontificates, in brief summaries. The net effect is twofold: a sense of constant forward movement and a confusion over chronology. Indeed even in discussing a single pope the chronology frequently appears jumbled. The author's skipping across decades and generations may not be judged a serious fault; it is a necessity if the narrative is to be held within bounds. Generally, Gontard has