

## REVIEWS

CHRIST, OUR LADY AND THE CHURCH. By Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P.  
Translated with an introduction by Henry St John, O.P. (Longmans;  
8s. 6d.)

In 1952 Père Congar published *Le Christ, Marie et l'Eglise* to commemorate the fifteenth centenary of the Council of Chalcedon. It was marked by the characteristics of all his work: grace in style and charity in disagreement. Father St John has now translated this admirably and tersely, and with Père Congar's consent he has adapted and revised some passages.

It is possible to find three main contentions in this short study. The first is that the Catholic doctrines on the privileges of our Lady and on the nature of the Church are rooted in a Christological context. No historian of the development of dogma could disagree with this. Any development in the Church's teaching on our Lady can only come through entering more deeply into the meaning of the definition at Ephesus that termed her 'God-bearer'. That in turn only came through entering more deeply into the nature of the Incarnation. It seems at least tenable to hold that the modern tendency to write of 'Mariology' or 'Ecclesiology' as independent subjects has its dangers, and that it is preferable as well as ultimately more traditional to see both as necessarily linked with the treatise 'de Verbo Incarnato'.

Secondly, with much gentleness Père Congar suggests that at times in these matters 'there is a false situation in the minds of the faithful'. Here surely most priests of experience would agree, just as every student of Christian art must regret that the most sacred and central of all Catholic images, that of the Mother and the Child, is vanishing so rapidly from our parish churches and convent chapels. When Père Congar goes on to discuss certain views in Marian theology or devotion which seem to involve a monophysite flavour in regard to Christ himself he is on more debatable ground. For my part, though I have come across some strange echoes of devotions and revelations, I have always thought that their danger lay rather in the development of superstition than of heresy and that their source lay rather in a divorce from Christology than in a tendency to Christological error.

All this culminates in the central theme of this study. It is suggested that divergences between Catholic and non-Catholic as to the nature of Christ's Church or the position of his Mother are rooted in a divergence in Christology. Clearly such a thesis contains an important element of truth. It cannot be a total explanation. Many of us have

known many non-Catholics who accepted the Chalcedonian definition simply and devoutly and were divided from us by historical accident, or inherited misconception, or by poverty in Catholic apologetic. But it is undeniable that there are novel emphases in the Christology of Martin Luther and that these affected his whole conception as to the possibility of any human co-operation in our salvation. It is more questionable that these new emphases can be related to any of the fifth-century controversies. Père Congar perhaps tends to use the term monophysite too easily.

This may suggest one blemish. The patristic apparatus is slightly slipshod for a study rooted in patristic theology. It is a pity that Apollinaris of Laodicea should be six times called Apollinarius, that the note on Eutyches should be so inadequate and that on the origins of monophysitism misleading, and that the exact patristic references should be so few. It seems probable that an undue reliance has been placed upon the patristic summaries of Père Mersch. It is even possible that there is an occasional confusion between monophysite and apollinarist. But none of this should be taken as a criticism of either Father St John or Père Congar. It is a criticism of patristic specialists in their own Order who might have helped them and did not.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

IN A GREAT TRADITION. By the Benedictines of Stanbrook. (John Murray; 25s.)

Dame Laurentia McLachlan had many claims to be regarded as one of the really great women of her generation, and this tribute to her rightly insists on the traditionally Benedictine character of her life and achievement. At first sight it must seem surprising that an enclosed abbess should be a scholar of international repute, the close friend of men so diverse as Sir Sidney Cockerell and Bernard Shaw, and a wise and perceptive observer of the world outside her convent walls. The secret lies in the strength and serenity of the true contemplative vocation. Where first things are securely established at the centre, the circumference can be astonishingly diverse. There is no contradiction, for all is related to the enduring and truly humane values of the religious life. Here the onlooker can not only see much of the game, but, from the detachment of the cloister, can—paradoxically enough—understand it too.

Much publicity has been given to Dame Laurentia's long and intimate correspondence with Bernard Shaw, and it does indeed throw a new and arresting light on a man who could seem so irresponsibly eager to live down to his reputation as an iconoclast. Confronted with the nun's wisdom and peace of mind, the fireworks became squibs,