

as a handy guide and history, but for greater detail one will still turn to Lord Beveridge's *Voluntary Action* and *The Evidence for Voluntary Action*.

JOHN FITZSIMONS

CHRISTIANITY AND FREEDOM: A SYMPOSIUM. By a Team of Experts including Gustave Thibon and Daniel-Rops. (Hollis & Carter; 6s.)

This is an altogether stimulating book. Its theme is freedom 'studied from a very definite angle: that of the historical and sociological relationship which in our opinion exists between the Church of Christ, Catholic and Roman, and the state of freedom in various societies'. The 'our opinion' is that of a real team; for we have here ten papers read to the 'Centre Catholique des Intellectuels Français'.

The perspective is set in Gustave Thibon's introductory chapter on the decline of freedom at the present time. He sees the problem thus: 'To be free is to have the power to develop one's nature, not in accordance with one's arbitrary will but in obedience to the eternal laws of that nature'. That is the classic Catholic formulation. It would be invidious to single out particular parts of the book, since each contributor is a proved and revered master in his own field. But the English Catholic reader will find most enlightening of all Père Congar's chapter on the Eastern Orthodox conception, with its gentle explanation of why the Latin West is thought to be so legalist and 'externalized' by the Orthodox no less than by Western Protestants; and Robert Flacelière's delightful survey of the Hellenic inheritance—so much in tune with Sir Richard Livingstone's now famous insistence that Christianity did not 'complete' the Greek philosophical view of God but corrected it radically; and the two chapters on Islam and the Mohammedan State (by Nadjm Oud-Dine Bammate and Louis Gardet), which in some ways approximate more to the Western outlook than does the philosophy of Hinduism—though Fr D'Souza, S.J., brings out forcefully the contemplative strength that Indian Catholicism can bring to bear. This last point links up with what André Railliet and Daniel-Rops have to say on the interior and spiritual conditions necessary if any revived notion of freedom in the contemporary world is to endure.

This book ought certainly to be at the disposal of the top forms in Catholic grammar schools, as a discussion-book for all those practical problems where the social Encyclicals touch ground.

A. C. F. BEALES

THE ARABS. By Edward Atiyah. (Pelican; 2s. 6d.)

With rose-coloured spectacles one sees everything 'en rose'. So, when one is a 'son of Arabs' (*vide* page 209 of this book), and has also been creator and organizer of the Arab Office, one sees everything and

everybody 'en Arabe'. The 'great idea' has only to extend its radius a little further and we shall all be Arabs. Is not Arabic the perfect language, the language of Allah himself, the language of a Paradise in which all hope to have a share? Still, Mr Atiyah, in his attractive little book, does make concessions. He excludes the Persians and the Turks, although they too had Arabic 'offered' to them in the Koran, with a sword hard behind. Both peoples preferred to remain 'solidly in themselves', and who can blame them?

We must add that Mr Atiyah is an Arab with a difference: such difference as comes from being married to a Scotswoman, from living permanently in Surrey, etc.; an Arab who handles English with vigour and verve: in fact, an Arab who does not correspond at all with one's mental picture of the picturesque Arab beloved of Colonel Lawrence and Gertrude Bell.

The result is a thoroughly competent and well-informed account of the Arabs, more especially of the present-day Arab world, with its political seethings and writhings. Over against the heroic Arab nations the author consistently depicts England and France as the villains of the piece, but he does this in the spirit of an Anglo-Arab Liberal, more in sorrow than in anger.

The author has a robust faith in the power of the Arabic language to bind the Arab peoples together. There is, however, another point of view: Cairo broadcasts in classical Arabic are largely a closed book even to Egyptians, let alone the Sudanese who, we are told, have now been vouchsafed the revelation that they are an Arab people.

Mr Atiyah's rose-coloured, Arab spectacles make him blind, or oblivious, to the grave moral and social deficiencies of such Mahometan countries as unhappy Egypt, although they are only too evident to those who have lived there any length of time.

For a Christian, Mr Atiyah is peculiarly complacent to the Moslem outlook on things. Thus he says (on page 50): 'It was they (the Arabs) who gave light to the Mediterranean world between the great dawn illumination of classical antiquity and the noontide blaze of the Renaissance.' One cannot but feel some faint surprise at a presumably Christian author who thus substitutes Islam for Christianity as light-bearer in the Mediterranean world.

In minor matters he occasionally slips up: for instance in his etymologies. One page 52 he derives *sofa*, mistakenly, from 'suf', and his derivations of 'mattress' from 'matrah' and 'cheque' from 'saqq' (*sic!*) are dubious.

Last, but not least: there is no index.