

ECUMENICAL COUNCILS AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. An Historical Survey.

By Hubert Jedin. (Herder-Nelson; 21s.)

The usefulness of this small handbook is guaranteed by the learning of its author, well known for his monumental history of the Council of Trent, and the skill of his translator, Dom Ernest Graf, O.S.B.

It is not a collection of texts, nor does the author give copious references to sources, though there is a good, but not of course exhaustive, bibliography. It deals with all the important Councils of the Church in East and West, dividing into four sections: (1) The eight Ecumenical Councils of Christian Antiquity; (2) The Papal Councils of the Central Middle Ages; (3) The Council above the Pope; (4) The Religious Division and the Council of Trent. Each Council has a synopsis of matters dealt with and background of events. The Councils of Trent and Vatican are specially well treated. There is a useful introduction, 'Explanation of Terms', which summarizes the historical development of Councils and what distinguishes them from each other, and their place in the teaching magisterium of the Church.

This handbook should be used by amateur students of history who have not got access to larger works, though it will be of use to many who have. It should be in the hands of Sixth-formers too, to accompany the study of the Church history they ought to be being taught and often unfortunately are not.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY. By Etienne Gilson. (Doubleday; \$5.50.)

As a historian of medieval philosophy and theology M. Gilson is without a rival. He has helped our understanding of so many major figures, and put us greatly in his debt with accurate accounts of the minor ones whose original texts none but the professional medievalist would think worth the trouble of examining in their entirety. But his philosophical thinking is less satisfactory, as has become increasingly evident with successive editions of *Le Thomisme*. The present work develops the more controversial parts of that book's later form. 'Christian Philosophy' is only St Thomas' philosophy, and in justice the publishers ought to indicate that in the title by adding 'according to St Thomas Aquinas', should a further edition be called for.

In the first half of the book Gilson's historical sense is seen at its best, for if any man has helped us to see St Thomas straight, without the crowd of buzzing commentators, it has been he, and though this very success makes his work seem, in 1960, less exciting than once it did, he is hardly to blame for that. In Part I we must, I think, agree with the view that for St Thomas *sacra doctrina* ('theology') was not restricted to revelation in the narrow sense, but contained much that has since been separated as philosophy. For St Thomas, however, though it did not cease to be rational, this philosophical matter was seen and judged in the light of faith, and presented in the order proper to theology. Gilson disagrees with the common practice of botching-up a philosophy *ad mentem Sancti Thomae*; he presents here a Christian philosophy that differs both in content and in order from its sources in