

logian, without garnishing his signature with the alphabet soup of degrees that usually goes after the names of those pretending to such a competence. Chesterton's sense of paradox, as Hugh Kenner suggested in his little book on the same topic, reflects the Thomistic analogy of being. Any man who could speak of the Blessed Trinity as a "Holy Company" and who could state quietly that "we trinitarians have known that it is not good for God to be alone," and to write these words as he contemplated the vast deserts of Africa and the negations of Islam, is a man impossible to explicate in one study dedicated to one admittedly important aspect of his thinking. A gigantic man, physically as well as spiritually, Gilbert Keith Chesterton will perforce be approached from the prejudices and predilections of those who first come to know his thought. (Chesterton, of course, is read everywhere today in the Christian academic underground even as he is ignored officially everywhere.)

He was neither a politician, a novelist, a man of letters, an historian, a polemicist, a poet, or anything else. He was all of these things but none of them defines him. I rather imagine that he was a latter day Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church.

Reviewed by FREDERICK D. WILHELMSSEN

In Search of Identity

In Search of History: A Personal Adventure, by Theodore H. White, *New York: Harper & Row, 1978. 561 pp. \$12.95.*

PLUNGED INTO JOURNALISM with little experience, Theodore H. White quickly became *Time* magazine's star reporter in wartime China. In time, as he observed the horrors of war and the miseries of a country which had been under brutal Japanese assault since 1931, White allied himself with General Joseph H. Stilwell and the group of Foreign Service officers who sought the switch of American support from

Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists to the Communist forces in Yenan. This led to his break with Henry Luce.

White's book *Thunder Out of China* (written with Annalee Jacoby and coincidentally published at the time of his departure from the *Time* inner circle) was, however modestly he may disclaim it, a major factor in the turnaround of public opinion from pro-Chiang to complacency about the Chinese Communists. It also depicted Chou En-Lai, who had become one of White's friends, as a charming and brilliant leader who would bring social justice to China.

Since then, White worked for Henry Wallace's *New Republic*, the ambiguously liberal/left *Reporter* magazine, and the dying *Collier's*. But his most significant impact as a journalist has been in a series of volumes, *The Making of a President*, which beginning in 1960 were in-depth and frequently brilliant accounts of the process whereby Americans nominate and elect their Chief Magistrates. In 1972, he decided that there was a discrepancy between living reportage and the fabric of history.

In Search of History was the product of this decision. As the autobiography of a boy brought up in Boston's depression-ridden Jewish ghetto and a socialist milieu—and whose years as one of the country's top reporters brought him in contact with world leaders in several continents—the book is both fascinating and valuable. And because White writes engagingly and well, projecting the personality of a sensitive and decent man, it is a pleasure to read. The title is pretentious and misleading because White's real search is for his political identity, but this is a small matter.

The great and deeply disturbing flaw is one which marred White's earlier reportage. He is by nature an "advocacy journalist" fighting for causes who must square his earlier enthusiasms with his later and more mature perceptions. His heroes remain enshrined even when he has discovered that they have clay feet or carry bloody swords. He can continue to glorify a "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell whose hatred of President Chiang was a key factor in the Chinese Communist victory and yet admit, almost in passing, that Stilwell was withholding

critically needed arms from the Nationalists, and that he was describing the Chinese leader he was supposed to be helping as "an ignorant, illiterate, superstitious, peasant son of a bitch."

White inherited that hatred of Chiang from Stilwell. But a reviewer wonders at his perspicacity when, after a long catalogue of Chiang's alleged venialities and stupidities, White remarks almost casually that the source for most of these horrendous charges was Chou En-lai. The reviewer also asks how, in his warm descriptions and anecdotes about the Foreign Service officers who worked so zealously for the Chinese Communists, White makes not a single mention of the infamous *Amerasia* espionage case which involved some of them.

The same raptures over Stilwell and Chou carry over to American politics in White's treatment of the "glitter" and "bravado" of John F. Kennedy. The hero-worship shows through when White describes, almost with approval, how the Kennedy forces stole the Illinois vote and therefore the 1960 election. It is glaringly apparent in White's two glancing mentions of the Bay of Pigs, with no discussion of Kennedy's traumatic blundering.

In pursuit of his advocacies, White can never be faulted—except in the case of Chiang—for being vindictive to his enemies. Naive, yes. In defending his wife against State Department charges that she was a Communist, he argues that "her father was then president of his local Chamber of Commerce and considered Senator Taft a liberal." The charges were false, but the defense somewhat weird from a political reporter who has already noted that Chou came from a prosperous and conservative family.

These criticisms aside, White's book will be a considerable source of fact and color for those to whom history is not a search but a discipline. When he writes of the many notables he interviewed, the reader is certain that he quotes them accurately and in context, whatever conclusions he may draw. His portraits of the world's great are often sharply revealing, though not always quite in the way he meant them to be.

Allan Nevins once wrote that history is narration—and Theodore White, like all fine journalists, knows how to tell a story excellently. But a story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end—and the journalist seldom gets beyond the middle. The historian will have a point of view, but he cannot be a crusader. He must be a Lecky, not a Carlyle.

In Search of History, therefore, remains the account of a confused hegira. White remains a crusader—though one, in the New York East Side expression, with a Jewish heart. His book would have been a more significant contribution if he also had a Talmudic mind. Someday, perhaps, he will reexamine his notes and re-sort his recollections, forgetting his advocacy and ignoring the very human need for self-justification. Then Theodore White's search for history will be ended. He will be writing it—and writing it well.

Reviewed by RALPH DE TOLEDANO

Medieval History and the Modern Imagination

A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century, by Barbara W. Tuchman, *New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978. xx + 677 pp. \$15.95.*

AT THE END of the nineteenth century Henry Adams looked out upon a world that was falling apart. This scion of one of America's most remarkable families, and, in his own right, a formidable man of letters, felt intensely the social disorder wrought by the modern financial and industrial world, lamented the divisive tensions and general pettiness of democratic politics, and feared greatly for a civilization whose spiritual core had long ago been hollowed by the centrifugal forces of cultural modernism. Henry Adams pursued the recovery of