

L'ÉGLISE NE S'EST PAS TUE. Dossier hongrois 1940–1945, by Jeno Levai, pp. 142. Paris: *Editions du Seuil*, 1966.

The fate of the Jews of Hungary under the Nazi occupation has already figured as part of the documentation for Rolf Hochhuth's *Representative* and, in relation to British policy, in Joel Brand's account of his attempt to trade lives for lorries with Eichmann. Catholics who have been – and with good cause – disturbed by Hochhuth's formidable battery of accusation against Pius XII will find part of the balance, at any rate, redressed by a distinguished Hungarian Jewish historian, Jeno Levai. M. Levai shows in this short and very readable book that Mgr Angelo Rotta, the Apostolic Nuncio in Budapest, actively intervened on behalf of the Jews in Hungary, and did so specifically at the request of the Holy See, that the German Foreign Office was sensitive to, and irritated by these interventions, and that they had some effect on the Hungarian Government itself, at least until it lost all control of its own policy. Once the Nazis took over the country completely, then of course mere protests were inadequate to resist the cruel force of Eichmann's death squads. Even so, M. Levai lists over thirty Catholic communities and institutions which sheltered some of the persecuted.

In addition, the bishops of Hungary acted in their own name, intervening in the first instance to attempt to save Christian Jews. Although from the perspective of the present this restriction may seem regrettable, it was, pragmatically speaking, a sensible thing to do since some kind of case for exemption could be made out for them; and saving even a few was better than saving none. An interesting note, dated 27 June 1954, addressed to the Prince Primate of Hungary, Cardinal Seredi, shows that Pius XII thought the bishops should make some positive intervention: '... the Hungarian body of bishops must make a public stand on behalf of Christian principles, in the interest of their fellow-countrymen unjustly hit by racist decrees, and particularly for the protection of Christians. This must be done so that the Hungarian body of bishops be not judged unfavourably as time-servers, which would harm both themselves and Hungarian Catholicism.'

The answer of the Hungarian bishops was negotiation and pastoral letters – actions within the radius of familiar routine for familiar problems, but, one wonders, how effective in the unspeakable context of the Nazi deportations? A diplomatic style which is accustomed to working in euphemisms and circumlocutions is

inapt for the proclamation of decisive protests (and this is where Hochhuth *had* a valid point). Nevertheless, within the linguistic limits, the protest *was* made – and the most forthright pastoral letter of 29 June 1944 was promptly confiscated by the Hungarian authorities who were successful in preventing its diffusion but could not prevent Cardinal Seredi having his priests read out a declaration to the faithful to the effect that the hierarchy were actively negotiating with the government to better the lot of the persecuted Jews.

The abundant documents produced by M. Levai include German Foreign Office press reports which contain references to telegrams in clear from Pius XII to the Regent Horthy, asking him to intervene on behalf of those who were persecuted on racial or religious grounds and they show that the Hungarian hierarchy at any rate did what it thought within its power to do in the face of an irresistible tyranny; and, if one is to take the case of Hungary separately, the same is true of Pius XII. It is good to see the case so judiciously and carefully made by a Jewish historian; and it is regrettable that Gerald Reitlinger, one of Hochhuth's chief sources, has refused to alter later editions of his book, *The Final Solution*, in the light of M. Levai's findings.

But, of course, the point is not there. Just as it savoured of impertinence for any German, even one so naively well-intentioned as Herr Hochhuth, to divert any of the fearful guilt for Auschwitz and the other camps onto the person of someone who, at the most, might only be said to have sinned by omission, so it is a little too simple for the Catholic peoples of Europe to feel they can breathe easily once the figure of Pius XII has been rehabilitated. However successfully we may exculpate this or that individual, it is still an appalling fact that the mass murder of the Jews took place in countries with often a millennium of Catholic civilization behind them, and with either the passive permissiveness or the active collaboration of large segments of a Catholic population: Germany itself, Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, and so on. The Church may, when the crunch came, have done her best to prevent the deportations and mass-murders of 1940–1945. But what had she done before then to form the kind of consciences which could refuse to take part in them? Is it not true that we still have a lazy unthinking acquiescence in the prejudice which is the seed-

bed of murders, often in the most familiar parts of our liturgy? John XXIII's action with relation to the Good Friday prayers obviously sprang from a compassionate and historically informed conscience. But, following on from this, how can we go on, year after year, solemnly reciting the sadistic and unscriptural Station of the Cross in which our children hear it proclaimed that the Jews 'fearing He would die on the way, whereas they wished Him to die the ignominious death of the Cross, constrained Simon the Cyrenean to carry the Cross behind Our Lord'? And all the Passiontide references in St John's Gospel to the generalized 'the Jews' which need so much contextual explication, blithely trotted out in sermons without the

restrictive warnings they require. One of the reasons why anti-semitism is an endemic condition in Europe and its heirs is the complacent anti-Jewishness which runs uncritically through some of our popular devotions; and, in the case of France, in many school manuals, as Fr. Demann has so amply shown in his work on French catechisms. How can this fail to have given an impulse to ostracism and worse on peoples who were not subtle enough to theologise about what they were hearing?

So let us think twice about the sigh of relief we undoubtedly heave when we read M. Leevai's important little book. The evil is still with us.

LOUIS ALLEN

LIGHT ON THE NATURAL LAW edited and introduced by Iltud Evans, O.P. *Compass Books, London; Burns and Oates, 10s 6d.*

This book consists of an Introduction by the editors, and five papers, beginning with The Traditional Concept of Natural Law by Fr Columba Ryan, O.P. There follow papers by an historian of Political Theory, by a lawyer, by a doctor, and by an anthropologist. All are concerned to establish whether there is a universal natural law. While discussion about natural law continues to be focused on its precepts, the confusion that bedevils it will also continue.

First, to call a view based on St Thomas a traditional view is somewhat ironic. St Thomas is now in eclipse again. He has always been in eclipse. Sir Francis Walshe points out (p. 95) that 'the scholastic philosophy of the middle ages did not preserve the clarity and renown lent to it by St Thomas Aquinas'. The scholastics including the Thomists descended upon his writings like a bomb disposal unit and took out the detonator. What indeed would have been the subsequent history of thought if St Thomas had had the slightest influence! Not only should we have been spared the sort of casuistry that Sir Francis Walshe here exposes so adroitly; we might have been spared Moral Theology itself. It should never have become detached from theology to circle like a satellite in dubious association with Canon Law.

The concept of natural law as found in St Thomas is an analogous concept (not equivocal as suggested on p. 10). Unfortunately for later clarity, it spans two different fields, the moral and the legal properly so called. These are not incommensurable but they are separate (a court of law is not a court of morals). The principal analogue is civil law which after a period of

gestation comes into being by enactment and promulgation. In the case of natural law quite the reverse is true. Natural law is in being from the first awareness of 'ought', without which no human act would have integrity. Though defined as '*dictamen practicae rationis*', it is part of a homogeneous process, and even this dictate is only a midway point in the whole process of transforming the first intuition of 'ought' into individual acts. The dictate is not exclusively the moment when natural law comes into being, and stays in being; it is part of a living process: here is the source of confusion. Civil law of its nature should be judged by the content of its enactments. To do the same with natural law is to disregard its nature. For a common lawyer to look at natural law through his own spectacles is little better than Chesterton's figure of fun who tried to dig up the square root of four with a spade. Dr Walshe criticises the casuists for being abstract, whatever that word means. I hope he would not extend the same criticism to St Thomas' concept of natural law. There is nothing abstract about the immediate insight that gives to human living its specifically human dimension, where man is master in his own house, made in the image and likeness of God, with his own life as his creation.

This book shows, amongst other things, what little agreement there is amongst the theorists (Bernice Hamilton); how far the casuists are from being of any help to doctors faced with immediate situations (Sir Francis Walshe); on the other hand Fr Philip Ekka, who has a very clear view of the limits of his field of enquiry, shows what remarkable results are to be had