

debate and rhetoric, his excessive use of the paradox. But on the whole we were less aware of the faults which he shared with his age. It took a dictator and gas ovens to open our eyes to the evil of anti-semitism (and now that the horror is receding I sometimes wonder if our eyes are closing again) and missionary bishops are still straining to convince us that Europe and the faith are not synonymous.

It is true that Chesterton's false notes are often an echo of Belloc. But we thought him a prophet and prophets should not be led by the nose. He was a prophet, and when he spoke in his own voice he spoke of things that endure. This is borne out when we ask which of his books first spring to mind after thirty-odd years. They are *Orthodoxy*, *The Everlasting Man*, *The Ballad of the White Horse*. Here he echoes no one; he speaks in his own voice and his eyes are set on the horizon. He writes about ultimates, good and evil, truth and falsehood, creator and creature, the dignity of man. In an odd way—at least it seems odd now—he did not need a crisis to remind him of the great truths. He lived intimately with them. When we discover a man to be this sort of contemplative we cannot believe that he is touched by evil, the trivial squalor of everyday. But more than once Chesterton declared that he became a Catholic because he needed to have his sins forgiven. The average sensual man finds this hard to credit. And the only hint of an explanation that Chesterton gives is that during his time at the Slade he indulged himself in a period of sceptical solipsist speculation which contaminated him. That seemed to me a very rarefied kind of wrong-doing until Mr Hollis offered an explanation which he illustrates through the Father Brown stories. Some of the crimes, e.g. in *The Secret Garden* where the murderer substitutes the head of a guillotined criminal for the head of the man he has murdered, 'are so horrible and obscene that . . . we shudder a little at the mind that could

have composed such a picture'. Chesterton had so metaphysical a mind that he could almost render evil incarnate. Sin for him meant something beyond our sordid imaginings; it meant the ultimate monstrous disruption of reality and goodness that comes when man denies his natural roots. Chesterton recognized that this, terrifyingly, is within the reach of us all. Mr Hollis implies the timeliness of a Chesterton revival when he makes this clear without labouring the point or dragging in comparisons with world-poverty or Vietnam. When Chesterton wrote in *The Man Who Was Thursday* that he had no doubt there was a 'final adversary' and that 'you might find a man resolutely turned away from goodness' it might be Archbishop Helder Camara speaking.

This was all of a piece with the optimist who lived aware of the pervading presence of the good God. A man can only live with such a clear comprehension of evil if he is aware of the power and presence of God. This was the source of Chesterton's sense and wit and optimism and all the good things we remember of him. This sense of the ultimate sanity of things (if only man didn't confuse the issue) appears in surprising ways: the solutions to many of the Father Brown stories, the least didactic of books, depend on the marvel of everyday things and the inability of man to see the obvious.

Mr Hollis writes discursively and easily out of his own experience. He sometimes wanders from the point. He never canonizes his subject and speaks at length of his faults, his childish obsession with swords, blood and battles and the limitations of his mythology. Chesterton has something to say for the seventies; we need his voice, for some of the obscene horrors that he apprehended too clearly to describe are now actualities; a Chestertonian sanity stripped of its eccentricities and mannerisms might do much to purge such evils.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

**LETTERS TO HIS FAMILY, 1901-1962**, by Pope John XXIII. *Geoffrey Chapman*, London, 1970. 18+833 pp. £4.75.

Pope John was welcoming Governor General Vanier of Canada and his family to Mass in his chapel. It was the first time they had met since they were friends in Paris. 'Mon cher ami', said the Pope. 'Je suis toujours Roncalli; mais maintenant je suis le Vicaire du Christ.'

These letters, 727 of them, are the letters of the Roncalli he was proud to be, 'the son of

humble but respected parents' whose family had since 1429 farmed the few acres at Sotto il Monte, often in real poverty (28th May, 1945). They show, for those not so sophisticated to be blind, how, under the Providence of God, there arrived in the chair of Peter, just as the mass media was able to show him to the ends of the world, this archetypal Christian, who was

hungrily recognized as such by almost everyone, of every nation under heaven, Parthians, Medes and Elamites. . . .

'What was it our mother used to say about over-anxiety?' he asked his sisters (6th January, 1928). 'The best medicine is a trustful reliance upon his providence, while we hold ourselves ready for anything.'

After twenty-five years with Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece as his patch—an apparent might-have-been in the diplomatic service of the Holy See—suddenly he was transported like a Daniel to the lions' den. De Gaulle was demanding the removal of all the French bishops who had collaborated with Pétain, including the incomparable Suhard—'there are very sharp thorns, certain grave and important questions' (28th May, 1945)—but with patience, understanding, diplomatic skill and peace of mind, the nuncio got the ban withdrawn on almost all the bishops.

About his cardinalate, he wrote to a nephew (Christmas, 1952): 'I was glad to receive your congratulations on my imminent nomination as cardinal, which will leave me as modest and

simple as before. . . . You must pray the Lord to grant that your uncle who, coming from the obscurity of Sotto il Monte, has known the splendours of Eastern and Western Europe, may remain faithful to the principles by which he was reared.'

To another nephew, a seminarist, he characteristically signed himself '+Angelo Giuseppe, your uncle the Cardinal and Patriarch, but first and foremost the Lord's humble priest' (22nd February, 1953).

In the last days of Pius XII's life he wrote: 'It is our duty to fear nothing, because the Lord rules his Church. We must live day by day' (6th October, 1958).

The new Pope, John XXIII, wrote to his brother (31st January, 1959): 'Above all I beg you to have patience and charity and preserve your peace of mind. Take no notice of any worldly gossip and do not be upset by anything. To keep yourselves in your present simplicity is the surest and happiest way to do honour to yourselves on earth and in the sight of heaven.'

BEDE BAILEY, O.P.

VOM JUNGEN ANGELO RONCALLI (1903-1907) ZUM PAPST JOHANNES XXIII (1958-1963), by F. M. William. *Verlag Felizian Rauch*, Innsbruck, 1967. 166 pp.

Franz Michel William is well known to 'Newmanists' as one who has explored in detail the influence of Archbishop Whately on the young Newman, and the resulting Aristotelian component in Newman's thought; in particular, his preference for inductive, cumulative patterns of proof and argument. In this book it is the formative years, not of Newman, but of Angelo Roncalli, that he puts under his microscope. His thesis is that Roncalli, coming across Aquinas through his seminary training, and Newman (especially the *Essay on Development*) through the writings of Loisy and his personal friendship with Buonaiuti, forged his own 'via media' between Modernism and the un-historical scholasticism of the period. By extending the Baconian experimental method to positive theology, and by using concepts such as 'substance', 'accidence' and 'convergence', he was able—as early as 1907—to give his own meaning to the key term 'adaptation', the

necessity of which he appreciated, but which the Modernists had interpreted 'transformistically'.

The evidence that Roncalli knew Newman's *Essay* well is impressive (cf. e.g. the interesting point that the constant appeal to Bacon in a lecture given in 1907 is surprising: one would have expected an Italian to invoke Galileo in this context, cf. p. 92).

Dr William tends to overconcentrate on individual terms, rather than on the whole drift of a writer's thought. As a result, the argument tends to be somewhat too abstract, and his case looks, perhaps, more watertight than it is. Nevertheless, as a stimulus to historians to explore further, the suggestion that John XXIII's 'motto' of *aggiornamento* was born, under the influence of Newman, at the height of the Modernist crisis, is fascinating.

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