

Opus Dei to Heythrop, Downside to the Jesuit academies of America — has conspired to produce a volume which as a work of reference will surely enjoy the same longevity as *The English Catholics*. Where the authors turn futurologist (I was particularly surprised by Susan O' Brien's optimism about women's Religious life in England) their remarks carry less weight. Who could remember but wryly Bishop Beck's prognostication in 1950: 'The day of doctrine is returning and for that reason alone the situation provides an opportunity and a challenge to the Church in this century... The intellectual security born of certitude... will be perhaps the most powerful argument for Catholicism in the years which lie immediately ahead of us'. The Church in England (and Wales) in 2050 may look very different from what we suppose now—and not necessarily in the ways suchlike phrases most often convey.

AIDAN NICHOLS OP

THE UNKNOWN POPE: BENEDICT XV (1914-1922) AND THE PURSUIT OF PEACE by John F. Pollard, *Geoffrey Chapman*, London, 1999. Pp. xv + 240; £ 18.99 hbk.

This long-awaited biography of Benedict XV—a pope too quickly summed up by historians as the one who failed to bring peace to Europe—is somewhat disappointing. Professor Pollard's study initially awakens interest by the subject treated and also by the new material consulted, mainly the Della Chiesa archives (the pope's family). The appetite is whet, but the reader will put down this book unsatisfied. With a short introduction harbouring no real problematic, Pollard's study provides a chronological narrative lacking sustained analysis. Pollard does not appear to be much interested in new historical methods such as discourse analysis (which might be thought especially relevant to the present subject given the amount of letters and speeches looked at). Besides, despite the claim in the introduction that this book will shed new light on the pope thanks to the author's access to new archives, references to them in the footnotes are far less numerous than those to already published works.

The Unknown Pope is clearly written and chronicles well the major steps of Benedict's life and the numerous challenges he faced when pope. Indeed as the author announces from the outset, he puts Benedict XV in context. His efforts to rehabilitate this 'unknown pope' are constant and sometimes convincing.

Again, however, the reader looks for greater analysis on a number of important subjects: the new role, since Benedict XV, of the papacy as peace-maker and as a leading moral authority in the world (p.136), the alleged acceptance of the 'Deloncie Plan' by the Holy See in 1916 (p.151), the pope's conception of access to the Scriptures by the faithful in his encyclical on biblical studies (pp. 191-92), Benedict's modifications in the Sacred College of Cardinals and the motives behind his specific nominations (p.214). Sadly, after closing the book, the reader knows very little about Benedict's intellectual background or his personal spirituality—aspects one might have thought essential to an understanding of the political action of the leader of the Catholic world.

More seriously, some statements are quite debatable. Pollard's brief presentation of the relations between the papacy and France at the beginning of the century is almost caricatural (p.11). His interpretation (p.65) of Della Chiesa's attitude when elected by the conclave is rather naive (if faith was the reason for his acceptance of the papal tiara, what about the other popes?). His account of the reasons behind the creation of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church fails to highlight the most crucial factor of all: the imminent collapse of the Ottoman and Austrian empires (p.195). His suggestion that it was the shortness of Benedict's reign that prevented him from achieving more spectacular results might not stand up to a comparison with other popes with similarly short reigns, like Sixtus V or John XXIII. Finally, was the stronger international position of the Holy See in 1922 due effectively to Benedict and Gasparri's diplomacy (whose peace plans had been contemptuously rejected by all the belligerent parties) or to the international situation itself and the need for moral leadership after the great slaughter of WWI and the emerging threat of Bolshevism?

The reader should watch out for a few other difficulties. *Non expedit* was handed down in 1874 and not in 1864 as written (p. 171, presumably a typographical error and not confusion with the *Syllabus*). There is also an evident lack of precision on the status of Alsace-Lorraine after the Great War (p.156). One surprising absence in the bibliography is that of Emile Poulat on *La Sapinière*.

This book gives the impression of having been too quickly written. It is sometimes too obviously partial when opposing the conservative Pius X or the cunning Pius XI to the good and pious Benedict XV. It can be recommended as an introductory book for students, even if not really adding anything new. For scholars of the papacy, Benedict XV remains as unknown as ever.

ALBERT LAVIGNE

PHILOSOPHER AT WORK by Yves Simon, edited by Anthony O. Simon, Rowland and Littlefield, Maryland, 1999. Pp. xiii + 219; \$22.95 pbk.

Yves Simon, who died in 1961, is a Thomist of the classic tradition. In this volume of essays, newly collected by his son, one discovers both his familiarity with St. Thomas and the great commentators such as Cajetan and John of St. Thomas, and also the originality with which he meditates upon their insights. The prose is demanding, but exact, with many illuminating turns of phrase. Although Simon's best-known work is in the field of political philosophy, these essays treat principally metaphysics and the philosophy of nature.

Two great themes run through this book: the hierarchy of knowledge and the *mystery* of knowing. With regard to the first, the author praises Jacques Maritain for having surmounted the Wolffian division of the sciences that had dogged the Thomist revival in the nineteenth century and for having recovered the correct understanding of the philosophy of nature—which for Wolff had been a branch of metaphysics—by locating it on the same rung of abstraction as the