

FROM WITHOUT THE FLAMINIAN GATE: 150 YEARS OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN ENGLAND AND WALES, 1850-2000 edited by Alan McClelland and Michael Hodgetts *Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1999. Pp. xvii + 406, £24.95 hbk.*

This splendidly produced book is a worthy successor to the invaluable centenary volume for the restoration of the hierarchy, *The English Catholic 1850-1950*, edited by George Andrew Beck, subsequently archbishop of Liverpool, in that mid-century year. The present sesquicentennial volume is printed on far better paper than its predecessor (hardly surprising when comparing a book of the late 1940s, still affected by wartime economy, with a 90s publication), and enjoys the full critical apparatus which its predecessor lacks. Its eleven black and white illustrations, however, constitute a measly tenth of the array which *The English Catholics* presented.

Of the nineteen chapters of the 1950 compilation only one—on the imaginative literature produced by English Catholics—corresponds exactly to a chapter in the 1999 work. The areas where the older book is strong and the new has less to say are: diocesan organisation, the Universities, theology (at least as represented by Newman), converts, the Press, bishops, and the poor. But the honours balance out if we consider the themes of the seminaries, philosophy, the laity, family, marriage, politics, the Liturgy, art and music, popular culture—and, not least, Wales. It may be, of course, that the editors deliberately attempted to make good lacunae in the earlier collection: they do indeed declare 'little ... would be gained from attempting to replicate Beck' (p. xiii). Yet the chapters on the Religious Orders and the school system, while differently devised, cover—albeit in original fashion—the selfsame ground.

Something can be inferred, I think, from the choice of foci—(tentatively)—a weakened interest in conversion (less of it around), direct humanitarian action (in a Welfare State now confined to special minorities and cases), and administration (not so demanding in a shrinking Church: compare the contributor in Beck who opined that a 'false separation' between administrative ability and sanctity 'almost seems like asserting that faith will do without good works!'). By contrast, the emphasis on culture and politics, clergy and laity, and the worshipping arts, might be taken to reflect, however unconsciously, a Church more interested (if not especially proactively) in its relations with the wider community, to some extent bemused about its own internal structure, and with leisure aesthetically to enjoy. Where I feel on surer ground is in pointing out the difference in historical method between these two volumes: the appeal to statistical analysis in Beck, the use of anecdotal material typical of post-1960s 'oral history' in McClelland and Hodgetts. However, there is also more narrative history on the grand scale in the latter, in three superb chapters by Professor McClelland himself, Sheridan Gilley of Durham, and Edward Hulmes, the last also setting an agenda for a millennium's end.

But all the work in this collection is of a very high standard; there is no need to prise out jewels to commend it. A distinguished circle of collaborators spanning a wide spectrum of Church experience—from

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.

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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.