

In the event the Augustinians were right: one did have to choose between political systems based on extremes of faith and reason, between a divine right papal absolutism and the lay writer's ultimate popular sovereignty. A denial of one opened the door to the other, and it was Marsilius's Averro-Aristotelianism which triumphed. By granting nature its place in the universe Aquinas aided this trend of the age. It is true that Aquinas himself made no attempt to apply his theories to specific contemporary problems. Nor did he clarify his views. Simplification, says Father Gilby, is dangerous. Aquinas favoured the oblique approach. But circumstances forced his successors to simplify, to clarify, and to apply. Perhaps they did deprive Thomism of its founder's 'spirit' (pp. 276-7); probably their conclusions would have been unpalatable to Aquinas himself; certainly they were highly dangerous to the existing order—but they were also irresistible. It was the legal implications of Aquinas's political philosophy which were a vital factor in the growth of the modern European state, and for which he deserves due appreciation. For this reason Father Gilby is to be thanked for emphasizing a highly important subject with a book which will stimulate interest and debate.

MICHAEL WILKS

LETTERS FROM HILAIRE BELLOC. Edited by Robert Speaight. (Hollis and Carter; 30s.)

It might well be thought that for the present no more could be published about Belloc; that nothing was left that could illuminate that loved figure. There are already, and above all, his own varied and voluminous productions, with their extraordinarily wide range of subject, mood, style and treatment. There are critical assessments of his work. There are reminiscences by his family and his friends. There are those two complementary full-length studies which together give the reader the sense both of knowing him and of knowing about him: Mr J. B. Morton's book, which carries as it were in colour and mass and sound the immediate impact of his personality, and Mr Speaight's concise and comprehensive biography, showing in what matrix that personality developed, its interactions with time and place and people and events, and its objective achievements.

Yet, surprisingly, there *is* more to be known, and it appears in happy accumulation in these letters; in accumulation, since only relaxed continuous reading shows to what extent he wrote differently to each one of his many friends, instinctively tuning himself to the pitch, adjusting himself to the tempo of each separate personality with whom he felt himself alone and at ease. In general talk he was apt to speak—sometimes over-vehemently—through the *persona*, or rather the set of *personae*, those masks exuberant, gay, bluff, sad, ironic, dogmatic,

assertive, comic, sometimes even grotesque, which like many vulnerable men he assumed for social defence, civil or uncivil. His created prose, though not hammered into beauty with such intent and deliberate detachment as was his verse, was nevertheless a thing consciously made, and separate from himself. Here is that self talking in unarmoured simplicity to other selves. Here is the figure of Belloc illuminated from within; and without knowing it, and without reflection.

Thus, one letter will declare 'I have no more inner life than a Hippopotamus'; while another contains the most exact and moving sentences on the permanence of the soul, conscious of 'its immortal habitation', sure that the great emotions 'are of a quite separate quality . . . incommensurably superior to the rest; as much as music is to the clichés of talk, or . . . the recognition of a person to the mere catalogue of qualities, or the thing to the name'. Yet another broods on 'the contrast between the present objects and the originals of religion', 'the saint surrounded by sphere on sphere of cult and homage . . . and the man himself. St Dominic sitting in the north gate of the Siguadon as a young man not very clear what he is about, and seeing an odd light on Prouille. Or our Lady wondering at Cana in the whitewashed room of a farmhouse what was really going to happen', and concludes with splendour that the old and the new 'are part of a living thing in which I am—not a document or a mere record. And that living thing is not of man. It is for man from that by which man is, and by which we have knowledge of any and of all beauty.'

Belloc's writing on such themes as these is startling and rewarding to the reader inclined to be on the defensive against his more familiar approach to religion, from the trumpet fervour which seemed to associate it with the medieval romanticism of the Crusades to the ferocious joking gusto of

'May all my enemies go to Hell
Nowell Nowell Nowell Nowell'

Here in his letters there are gentleness, recognition, understanding; a massive patience and fortitude; and flashes of extreme clarity, such as the remark that God is personal, not impersonal, *because* 'possessed of conscious will' (very illuminating in a country where the word 'personal' is associated with triviality, irrationality and tactlessness). In this connexion his discussion of the difference between French words, clear cut and exact as new coins, and English ones full of association and atmosphere, both singly and in combination, is very relevant.

Among the most delightful of all are the letters to Maurice Baring, each one tinged, somehow, with the urbane tenderness, the affectionate understatement, of the man who was to receive them. Those in verse are full of a gaiety without bitterness, witness the charming

'To sacrifice our pleasure for the good
Of others, breeds an irritable mood'

and the limerick excursions.

May it be hoped that there are more to come? Family letters, perhaps; or letters to children; or to Father Vincent McNabb, of whom he wrote with reverence, but to whom there is only one unimportant note about a journey?

RENÉE HAYNES

THE LITTLE BREVIARY. (Burns and Oates; leather £5 5s., rexine £4 4s.)
A FORM OF COMPLINE FOR CONGREGATIONAL USE. Translations by
Sebastian Bullough, O.P., and music by Anthony Milner. (Novello;
8d.)

The Little Breviary is the English edition of a reduced version of the Roman Breviary, prepared by Father T. Stallaert, c.ss.r., and already available in several European languages. It is intended for religious Brothers and Sisters, not obliged to the recitation of the Divine Office, whose knowledge of Latin, as the Archbishop of Westminster remarks in a commendatory foreword, is 'scanty or lacking altogether'. It provides greater variety than the Little Office of our Lady, and its general fidelity to the structure of the Roman Breviary will unite the prayers of countless religious, hitherto largely cut off from the liturgical life of the Church, to those of the priests and cloistered religious whose apostolate they share.

The pattern is simple. The only important difference from the Divine Office is the reduction of Matins to three psalms and one nocturn (three lessons from Scripture, with the substitution of an abbreviated life of a saint or homily on a Sunday or a feast day). This means that the Psalter does not appear in full, and the choice of psalms (each one is preceded by a brief summary and a hint at its spiritual sense) is therefore able to eliminate the merely historical and deprecatory psalms.

The English edition has been entrusted to the Benedictine nuns of Stanbrook Abbey, who, at the request of the late Cardinal Griffin, have used the Knox version throughout for scriptural passages, and have sensibly used the Burns and Oates Missal translation of the collects. The choice of the Knox version was obviously right if the only alternative was the Douay, since there would be little virtue in providing a vernacular office if its meaning were often obscure. Yet one must be permitted to wonder whether the virtues of the Knox Bible (and especially of the Psalms) are those which will make a choral recitation smooth and united. There is unquestionably a lack of musical rhythm (which does not matter so much in private reading), a repetition of highly idiosyncratic tricks, a frequent inversion—all of which may be justified in a 'personal' version but seem almost assertive in communal