

EDITORIAL

1960 marks the fortieth birthday of this review, and it might be salutary to ask how its founders' hopes have fared. The aim of **BLACKFRIARS**, its first editor explained, was simply to tell the truth, and Fr Vincent McNabb, in a characteristic comment on so guileless an ambition, prophesied that the review might prove to have as short a career as the Holy Innocents. In that he was wrong, for **BLACKFRIARS** has survived and we hope that its essential purpose has remained unchanged. But the world that lies open for its scrutiny has indeed changed, and in next month's issue Father C. C. Martindale (who contributed to the first number an article on the Cinema, as usual far in advance of his time in seeing that 'the thing can be used as well as misused, like thyroid or theology') will be considering how great that change has been.

In the course of this year we shall be introducing some new features which may strengthen the review in its discussion of those issues in the contemporary world which call for a Christian judgment. Each month, apart from the principal articles, a survey in turn of recent work in such fields as ecumenical theology, education, the social sciences and technology, will try to give the general reader some of the evidence he needs when confronted with the claims of specialized disciplines. Each month, too, some indication of what is appearing in foreign reviews—French, German, Italian and Russian periodicals will be dealt with in turn—will seek to lessen that intellectual provincialism which is endemic in the Catholic life of this country. A series called 'Personae' will provide authoritative studies, by writers who know their subject well, of men and women who are important for the present-day life of the Church, but who may be little known in England. There will be a regular commentary on the arts, and in particular on the Cinema, and, as hitherto, there will be extended book reviews.

The realization of such a programme depends not only on the energy of the editor and his contributors: it looks to the practical support of those who believe that there is nowadays more than ever a need for such a review. It is perhaps from the greatly increased number of Catholics in the professions and at the universities that we can most expect a sympathetic interest in the work of intellectual reciprocity that should be taking place between the Church and informed lay opinion. As yet in this country we have been spared the sort of anti-clericalism which

assumes the Church's interests to be always vested and reactionary. But there can nevertheless be a serious lack of communication between the 'official' Church, concerned as it can seem to be with so much administration and an endless preoccupation with raising hard cash, and the actual situation of the intellectual. The dilemmas which confront the Christian who is professionally involved in the modern world, where in fact his vocation lies, can be cruelly complex.

We can speak of a work of reciprocation, because the truth which the theologian seeks must never seem to despise the truth that is the object of any honest human work. The one is not more true, though it may indeed be higher in the hierarchy of truths to be sought. And judgment takes place in the arena of human experience and not in the hypothetical world of a seminary lecture room. That is why the moralist in particular must have a sensitive regard for the facts of the case: the Balbus of his case of conscience must be given a likelier name. There are nowadays many difficult moral issues, in the experience of individuals and nations alike, which call for resolution—not only in terms of a bare reiteration of the undeviating moral law, for that is usually forthcoming, but, too, in terms of an informed awareness of those circumstances which can make the dilemma seem impenetrably hard to solve. The habit of the theologian or the moralist is to generalize, and good and evil are indeed poles which are not shifted by particular currents of intellectual fashion. He is asked to explain—if not to explain away—the justification for condemning contraception in the light of overpopulation and the possibility of world famine, or the apparent acceptance of inherently evil means to defend essential human liberties. Or, in the more neutral field of social policy, he may fall back on rough and ready cheerfulness: the testimony of simpler days and happier ways, bring back the birch, don't let people be pampered. It can seem a breezy club conversation; after all it never rains indoors. There is much that the moralist needs to know, much that he needs to be told, if his words are to command more than the good-natured obedience of those who are already convinced or who have never known the agonies of decision. After all, he speaks not to mankind but to men.

Karl Rahner's recently published *Free Speech in the Church* (Sheed and Ward) is a German theologian's recognition of this need. His appeal is for candour, for the realization that 'every Christian is responsible in his own day and way for the Church and the life of the Church'. He must inform, and be informed, and it is this end that BLACKFRIARS hopes to continue to serve.