

## BLACKFRIARS

mystical applications involve very matter-of-fact circumstances; though, it should perhaps be added, he has a wonderful way of making the matter-of-fact appear anything but prosaic, as, for example, in the paragraph about the night watchman (p. 33), which ends characteristically: "He has probably more wisdom than the Stock Exchange. I hardly ever presume to be so impertinent as to talk to a night watchman." Yet we would not give the impression that this book is just "clever" or even merely paradoxical in flavour; it is the spontaneous word of a great Preacher speaking to earnest souls upon a theme that is dearest of all to him and to them. HILARY J. CARPENTER, O.P.

ANGLICANISM IN TRANSITION. By Humphrey Johnson. (Longmans; 6s.)

Fr. Humphrey Johnson of the Birmingham Oratory attempts in this ably written book to answer an important and difficult question: Whither is the Church of England moving? He writes of the spirit of Anglicanism in all its phases with a sympathetic understanding born of considerable acquaintance. His tracing of the evolution of events and processes by which the Church of England has come to be what it is to-day, is grounded upon accurate knowledge of the intricacies of Anglican history and will be invaluable to Catholics who are anxious to understand its complex nature. It seems less certain that his forecast of the future tendency of the Church of England is equally well grounded. He believes that the lessons of the past all seem to indicate the probability that a slow process of peaceful adjustment will take place between the moral standards of Church and nation; that the victory of those who attach more importance to the national character of the Church than to its fidelity to fixed standards of belief is assured and that it is entering upon an age of relative tranquillity in which there will be no controversies because the liberal principle of comprehension, which will admit the legitimacy of any interpretation, however "symbolic," of the Christian revelation has won the day.

It is true, as Fr. Johnson points out, that the Church of Church, as a whole has always reflected with singular fidelity those English modes of thought and feeling which are the essential constituents of the broad stream of national life, though it is also true that it has always contained elements which have done very much more than this. These elements have often been and still are logically incompatible and this is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the Report of the Archbishop's Commission on Doctrine which was published last January. A careful reader of this report can be in no doubt that Anglo-Catholicism has

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largely permeated the Church of England as a whole, but he will also be inclined to suspect that some of the so-called Modernism to be found in all parties within the Church of England is at bottom an immanentism the logical result of which would be the denial of revelation in any but a naturalistic sense, however little the likelihood of that result may sometimes be suspected. Are we justified in deducing from this that the Church of England will continue to adjust itself to the changing moral standards of the nation; that it will go on from partial toleration of birth control and compromise in regard to divorce to extend such toleration to Euthanasia and companionate marriage (page 218) and will thus continue to reflect the tendency of the broad stream of national life?

So long as there continues to be a broad stream of English national life it is fairly safe to predict that the Church of England as a body will reflect it and will weather every crisis, as it has done in the past, by the compromise of comprehensiveness. Fr. Johnson seems to envisage the indefinite continuance in the future of such a broad stream with its accompanying modes of thought and feeling; a perpetuation so to say of the outlook of the *Times* newspaper. It seems however that signs are already beginning to show themselves of a sharp cleavage in our national life between those who accept the revelation of God given us in Jesus Christ and those who decisively reject it. Ultimately this acceptance or rejection depends humanly speaking upon theology and must be worked out explicitly in terms of theology. But Englishmen and even English scholars are not primarily theologians or theologically minded and in consequence very many of them are able to remain either in suspense between rejection and acceptance or holding principles which must ultimately lead to rejection while in practice they quite honestly accept. The world in which we live is sharply and bitterly divided; the issues upon which this division turns are not yet clear to the majority but they cannot long remain unrealised and as they become clearer every Englishman will find himself involved in the question: Am I for Christ or against Him? Is the world to be ruled by a self-sufficient humanism or by the law of Christ? When these questions come to be generally asked a decision will have to be made. Then the broad stream of our national life will indeed be divided and the modes of thought and feeling which have hitherto characterised it will pass away. The Church of England too will have to make that decision. Is it fantastic to suppose that its decision will carry it a long way towards vital contact with and fellowship in the living continuous tradition of historic Christendom?

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