

## Editorial

'He became that awkward challenge to routine piety – neither a little flower nor a South sea martyr – but a strictly contemporary English saint.' This is Mr Coulson's contemporary judgment on J. H. Newman, in his review (printed below) of Miss Trevor's new *Life*. If the Church does come to recognize officially, in a solemn act of beatification, that Newman's life was indeed that of a saint, a deep sense of satisfaction will be felt by every section of the Christian community, even in his own country. Yet this could hardly have been said sixty, even thirty years ago. Of course there have always been, as in his life-time, the few friends to understand him and appreciate him; what is new is the extent of that appreciation today. Yet it is we who have changed, not Newman. He has become our contemporary as we have grown to meet him. The events of the last few months at Rome have put the final seal on a magnificent Christian response already made to the challenge of the times. We have learned that for effective fighting the decks must be clear of useless lumber. We have learned that in a rapidly changing world, where every value is being called in question, Christian life itself must be open and questioning, throwing over whatever cannot prove its worth. It is 'routine piety' which is in full retreat, and no nostalgia for the past, however forcefully expressed, can arrest the development of a people determined to grow mature in Christ.

All this Newman would have thoroughly understood. At the heart of the revelation given to the faith of the Church he spoke of the original unified 'idea' or 'divine fact' whose meaning had to be drawn out through the Church's history. It is only by fixing her gaze, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, on that idea at the source, that the Church can be sure that the changes it initiates are indeed developments, rather than corruptions. But given this guarantee, then change is the very nerve of a living Christianity. In Newman's own well-known words: 'In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often'.