

MORALS AND MAN

THE EDITOR

WITH this number of BLACKFRIARS there begins a series of articles on some contemporary moral problems. The Bishop of Lancaster, writing on the natural law, provides an introduction to a discussion which, however concerned it may seem to be with particular questions of concrete moral choice, must always find its context in an acceptance and understanding of principles about the nature of man as made by God. For the Christian, indeed, there must be something inadequate in the language of 'natural' virtue. He lives within the economy of grace, of that supernatural sharing in the inner life of God which is the effect of the redemptive work of Christ. But all is rooted in a pattern and purpose that are universally given by God, and law is not law 'which alters when it alteration finds'.

Increasingly, and such is the price of the secularisation of society, the Christian view of morality is regarded as a denominational oddness, a minority view. Thus in a prolonged discussion of Sex and Marriage in a popular weekly, in which sociologists and anthropologists and planners of several sorts gave expression to their views, the Christian contribution was by way of a post-script. The defender—and in fact he was but a half-hearted defender—of a traditional teaching of the purpose of marriage and all its consequences was left as a lonely exponent of what the specialists (and, one supposes, most of their readers) regarded as simply a survival of a former sanction.

A pragmatic debate about this or that moral dilemma can do little unless it is consistently concerned with the principles which human conduct declares or denies. The need is for their re-statement, in a language that may hope to have meaning for those who are wholly ignorant of the niceties of a formal moral theology, and which shall be exact and motivated by the charity which even a 'natural' virtue must serve. For Christians themselves it may be a reminder of what they have to defend and of the need for its utterance.