

THE ENGLISH CATHEDRALS. By Herbert Felton and John Harvey. (Batsford; 18s.)

THE ENGLISH INHERITANCE. By G. Kitson Clark. (S.C.M. Press; 15s.)

THE BRITISH FAMILY OF NATIONS. By John Coatman. (Harrap; 10s. 6d.)

The connection between the three books under review is obvious enough when one remembers that the English Cathedrals are, almost exclusively, the work of the Catholic England of the Middle Ages, when one perceives that Mr Kitson Clark's long essay is mainly concerned with the formation of the English conscience in its Protestant form, whether Anglican or Nonconformist, and Mr Coatman's work is a description of the political structure which has given the widest expression to the workings of that conscience. It is interesting to notice that, whereas the first of these books is concerned exclusively with the translation of religion into structural form, the second is an examination of the inter-relations of religion and politics, while the third never mentions religion at all.

The great series of books produced by Messrs Batsford recording the English achievement of the past will surely rank as a major cultural event in our history. It is difficult to praise them too highly, with their scholarly texts, their wonderful illustrations, their very reasonable price; their enticement from the bookshop shelves is, to the impecunious, almost unfair. This volume on the Cathedrals is no exception. Mr Felton's photographs are brilliant, and Mr Harvey's text tells us so much of what we want to know about the construction of these superb episcopal and monastic churches raised in the ages of Faith; especially valuable is the information he gives us about the architects like Henry Yevele and William Wynford. There is, however, a passing sadness in the contemplation of these glorious achievements, the thought of how much else we have lost, practically the whole monastic treasure of building done to dust at the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The frontispiece, a beautiful Turner watercolour of Salisbury, showing the cloisters in a state of romantic decay in 1796, emphasises the appeal which is going out today from the impoverished Church of England for the preservation of such masterpieces as York and Salisbury itself, which were neglected in the days of that Church's wealth and supremacy. The recent Gower report on the country houses, so many of which owe their existence to monastic spoils, is a further ironic commentary of time on the old theme that only the supernatural can preserve what is secular.

This thought pervades the mind as one reads Mr Kitson Clark's essay on the influence of religion in the formation of our modern English conceptions of society and the state. It is an ungrateful task to criticise so high-minded, liberal, devout a commentator. His general

thesis is unimpeachable, that no society can stand on law alone, that its essential bases are the moral tenets of its members, that those tenets must be based on religion, on other-worldly sanctions, that the omnipotence of the state is a sure sign of the decay of a nation. He describes the exhortations and examples to morality of Anglican, Puritan and Nonconformist admirably; he is only very occasionally anti-Catholic; but, by implication, he traces unwittingly the gradual decay of the nation's morality as a result of its lack of an assured doctrinal authority and sacramental life. This decay, and its causes, is as palpable a thing today as the decay of the great Cathedrals, and it is not unfair to compare those Cathedrals, and the life they represent, with the shining vigour and splendour of Westminster Cathedral, or the Abbeys of Buckfast and Downside. Mr Kitson Clark describes himself as belonging to the 'undistributed middle' of the Church of England. One does not wish to make a smart debating point out of what is obviously an unguarded phrase, but it does, unfortunately, sum up precisely the impotence of the Protestant bodies to be a vehicle of divine truth. An undistributed middle cannot produce a valid conclusion.

We must, none the less, admit that, despite savagery and stupidity, Protestant England, precisely because of its insistence on morality to the exclusion of dogma, produced in the nineteenth century a very high level of political probity and behaviour. It is this achievement extended in large measure to the British Commonwealth, that has made possible the maintenance of that Commonwealth without formal sanction and ties. Mr Coatman's description of the working of this political conglomeration is admirably clear and comprehensive. He lays proper emphasis on the development of rapid means of communication which have so greatly contributed to making any centralised organisations in the Empire unnecessary; but hardly enough on that common tradition of co-operation and reliability which alone could make such a loose organisation workable and which derives from the moral tradition of which Mr Kitson Clark speaks. If that moral tradition, so long divorced from its doctrinal sanctions, crumbles away like the Cathedrals, the work of the Church, the mother of England and builder of the cathedrals, will be to do again. As Chesterton said:

It is only Christian men  
Guard even heathen things.

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**CATHOLICISM.** By Henri de Lubac, S.J. Translated by Lancelot C. Sheppard. (Burns Oates; 15s.)

An English edition of Pèrè de Lubac's book was long overdue. When it first appeared in France in 1938, many readers found it quite an eye-