

**KNOWING WHERE WE ARE GOING. CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH** by A. N. Tsirintanos. *Cassell*, 1977. £3.50 net.

There is nothing very original about the content of this little book; but the way in which it is written is unusually fresh and forceful.

Modern man, as the author says, has lost his way. He desperately needs the kind of orientation which can be given only by a very general overall conception of his place in the world and the nature and aims of his life. Such a conception, to be of any real use, must meet certain conditions. It must be consistent with modern knowledge; it must be accepted without coercion; it must be able to serve as a guide and a support through the pains and perplexities of human living.

It seems certain that no mortal man is qualified to provide what is needed on his own authority. The most intelligent man that modern civilisation can boast is no better off in this respect than the most ignorant savage. There is a vast amount that we do not know, and much that we cannot know owing to the limitations of the human mind as such. Here the author is Kant-like: 'Beyond the boundaries of knowledge there is faith, whether it is our faith or the faith of those who oppose it' (p. 15).

Still, even though proof or conclusive argument is out of the question, it is quite properly repugnant to modern man to

commit himself where there is no evidence to support such commitment. The author is impressed by the fact that belief in a Creator who is also governor and provider, in the possibility of making personal contact with this being, and in some kind of life after death, has been so widespread among men always and everywhere. But he insists that the most telling evidence for the truth of Christianity is and must be the quality of Christian life. It is the task of Christian believers to set a human ideal before mankind; this should be *based on* a comprehensive knowledge of what man is, but not *confined by* it. And they should clearly recognise where the moral emphasis of the Church up to now has been distorted. On the whole, up to the present, 'Christianity has not tried to shape the man who would put matter under control; it has tried to shape the man who would regard matter with contempt. This definitely has to stop' (p. 111).

The author has no patience with those who ask whether one can be a Christian today, and roundly accuses them of stupidity or cowardice. In what respect, he asks, are the issues fundamentally different from what they were in previous times? (p. 45 ff.).

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