

CREED OR COMMON SENSE. By Charles Jeffries. (Faber; 5s.)

This is an important book : written by a layman for laymen, it aims at vindicating the claims of Christianity from an Anglican standpoint. Two assertions make a foundation on which to build : " Modern Man must be judged in relation to Christianity, not Christianity in relation to him " (p. 11), and " the immediate effect produced by Christ on those who came into contact with him was not that of a moral teacher " (p. 31), the objective reality of the Christian creed, and the key position of the *Person* of Christ—" the stone which the builders rejected "—in the Church. An excellent foundation. But it is followed by rickety building : the idea that God would not really allow anyone to go to Hell, that infallibility is only a sop for the unthinking, a suggestion that at any rate there is no harm in trying Christianity, with the implication that faith comes as the result of a process of reasoning, and the conclusion that the true church does not yet exist but still has to evolve.

This logical weakness is hard to explain. If the Christian faith is God's truth fundamentally unchangeable, and if the Church is Christ's Mystical Body, then the existence of this church and its infallibility, God's application of justice to its members and the supernatural nature of the gift of faith all follow by logical necessity—given, of course, the Incarnation and the facts of the history of the early church. Maybe this sounds a cold inhuman approach, lacking somewhat in that fullness one expects to perceive in God's greatest gift to man. But unless our love of God and our neighbour is based on such logic of facts it is a sentimental chimera. This after all is what Sir Charles Jeffries implies when he asserts that the Person of Christ is the centre of Christianity—in other words morals must find their source in dogma—Christian living in Christian belief. If therefore we may be permitted a tentative guess, perhaps it is mistrust of human reason, or at any rate a disinclination to apply it ruthlessly, which underlies the incoherence of this otherwise excellent book. Yet until we learn that thought is not a spider's web process generating and consuming itself but an infallible faculty which grasps and analyses facts from outside, we shall never dare to think about our faith and it will remain cut off from life, an obscure, ill-digested mystery.

Hence the importance of this book. Men nowadays want to think about and discuss their beliefs, but they are imbued, in England at any rate, with an instinctive distrust of reason, with the result that their thought, though it begins often enough from sound principles does not persevere in the application and lacks that sure-footedness which comes from the conviction that reason is a God-given faculty capable of unravelling many of the truths of revelation. It is for the Thomists of to-day to dispel these clouds of a dying agnosticism with the light of reason directed by faith.

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