

EDITORIAL

Facts and insights concerning the canon of the Bible are offered to our readers with the hope that they will stimulate continued scholarship in this area. Our resources for research are limited, especially when we extend into the pre-Christian era.

What happened during the rise and growth of Christianity when the New Testament canon was acknowledged can be ascertained with much more assurance than the developments during the centuries when the Old Testament canon was written and recognized as authoritative. The literature contemporary with and immediately following New Testament times provides a fruitful area for continued research and investigation as numerous questions are posed in our day concerning the canonicity of the New Testament.

For the Old Testament canon neither historical nor archaeological sources have offered much help prior to the Judean or Dead Sea Scrolls era of the first two centuries B. C. Consequently we are faced with the simple yet profound consideration of the two sources available for our investigation, namely, the Old Testament itself, and the teachings of Jesus as they come to us in the New Testament.

During the last century a large segment of scholarship has concluded on the basis of their appraisal of the contemporary culture and the humanity of Jesus that He was primarily a man of his times. Consequently Jesus was in error when He acknowledged the reality of demonology in his teaching and ministry. Likewise Jesus was in error in his eschatology since the apostles and the New Testament church believed in the imminent return of Christ but did not experience His coming in power and great glory. Furthermore Jesus and the apostles were wrong in their cosmological views which according to some interpretations offered in the twentieth century were limited to the first century perspective and therefore regarded as mistaken. Currently it is asserted that Jesus was wrong in His theology in claiming God as His Father and thus asserting divine sonship. Consequently the historical reality of the resurrection is in question.

Ultimately this approach to the teachings of Jesus brings into focus the question of Man's eternal hope in Jesus Christ. Invited to another campus for a seminar on the Bible I was pointedly confronted with this crucial question by a very able philosophy major. Having been introduced into this area of study by reading Rudolf Bultmann's *Kerygma and Myth* she asked: "If I cannot believe that Jesus actually said 'I am the way, the

truth, and the life' what can I believe?" Consequently it becomes vitally important to each individual finally whether or not the teachings of Jesus are accepted as trustworthy. On what basis can scholarship decide that Jesus is reliable in his teaching on matters of eternal life and not in his teaching in other areas including the trustworthiness of the Old Testament?

Since literature of Old Testament times offers no direct references to the writing of the Old Testament and the formation of the canon a reasonable option is to consider seriously the claims the Old Testament makes for itself. Modern scholarship offers numerous theories usually based on its interpretation of selected parts of the Old Testament. Whereas some of these theories have in times past been considered the assured results of critical scholarship it is now recognized that they are in a state of flux. On the other hand a scholarly comprehensive approach to the Old Testament—regarding it as a trustworthy source conveying to us that it was written by Moses and the prophets and providentially recognized as canonical—is still a reasonable option in answering the current problems concerning canonicity. So far no factual data has invalidated the claims and attitudes of Jesus that the Old Testament cannot be regarded as a reliable and trustworthy body of literature.

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