

## EDITORIAL

Rationalistic criticism has decimated the Bible for a large segment of modern scholarship. The deistic insights of the eighteenth century undermined the foundation for man's belief in God. Subsequently man's worth and dignity were seriously brought into question. A logical sequence to a disbelief in God was the question of man's origin and destiny. The creation of man as an act of God as well as man's future hope are garbled in the theology of modern scholarship as the Scriptures are approached with varying presuppositions. For naturalistically minded scholarship of the Bible it seems difficult to maintain any semblance of a message of saving faith for man. If the reliability of the Gospel accounts or the rest of the New Testament are subject to question then the ultimate problem is apparent—can the account of the death and resurrection of Jesus be used as the basis of our faith. In an intercollegiate discussion on this subject a student raised this incisive question: "If I cannot believe that Jesus said 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' then what can I believe?"

The biblical scholar who confesses his hope for salvation in the here and now as well as in eternity can scarcely adopt the decimated Bultmanian appraisal of Christ who is alive only in the words confronting man in the existential situation in life. A Christology that offers a foundation for salvation must rest finally in the written word of God.

The Christian scholar often faces the question of how much of the naturalistic scholarship he can adopt and yet maintain the basis for his faith in Christ. Unfortunately this question is sometimes reduced to a choice of Christ or the Bible. This is hardly the alternative for the committed Christian scholar. His commitment to Christ cannot be separated from the Bible which provides the historical basis for his faith.

How much or how little of the Bible must a Christian scholar retain for the basis of his faith? Some in practice propose that the New Testament is crucial to our faith but by silence ignore the Old Testament. Others adopt and indorse rationalistic attitudes and theories concerning the Old Testament failing to recognize the supernatural aspects during Old Testament times. Revelation and inspirations are often reduced to humanistic conceptions and cultural perspectives in their historical setting. Others take this same attitude toward the New Testament record projecting a purely naturalistic Jesus but insisting that only at the point of death on the cross God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

More common within the evangelical community of scholars is the perspective of selection. Believing that the Bible is the trustworthy or infallible guide for faith and practice they propose to delineate between that which the Scriptures "teach" and that which they "touch." In matters of doctrine the Bible is reliable and trustworthy but where the Bible

touches history, science, and other areas the Bible reflects the errant views of the times in which it was written. In this position the Christian scholar assumes the responsibility of deciding whether or not a given passage is included in the Bible for the purpose of teaching man or whether it is simply included to provide the context for the teaching material. Whereas the doctrinal passages are regarded as inerrant and trustworthy the other passages may be erroneous.

Other Christian scholars within the evangelical community regard the entire Bible as trustworthy not making the distinction between what the Scriptures “teach” and what they “touch.” Jesus, the Apostles, and New Testament authors shared this attitude toward the Scriptures as commonly held in their generation.

When Christian scholars who are committed to Christ as their only hope of salvation, propose to draw a line of demarcation between doctrine and other matters in the Bible is it any wonder that the prophetic “thus saith the Lord” is frequently missing in today’s pulpit? This was characteristic of the prophets in the Old Testament. They spoke with certainty the message given to them by God. The Apostles under the ministry of the Holy Spirit used the Old Testament scriptures with authority—history as well as doctrine—making people conscious of “thus saith the Lord.” Is Christian scholarship meeting its responsibility constructively by assuming the responsibility of distinguishing between that which is trustworthy in Scripture and that which is not? Are we thereby providing support to the minister in the pulpit to preach courageously “thus saith the Lord?”

Would not Christian scholarship make a greater contribution by accepting the entire Bible as trustworthy, reliable, and inerrant and constructively devoting itself to the problems that develop from that perspective? The committed Christian scholar would constantly have the obligation of research to gain as much insight and understanding regarding apparent contradictions and errors in our present text as possible. Facing insoluble problems the Christian scholar graciously admits his limitations and reserves judgment. In this way scholarship does not assume the responsibility of decimating the authoritative Word of God.

S. J. S.