

EDITORIAL

Can we have Christianity without the Bible?

Can we have Christianity without Christ?

Can we have Christianity without God?

Historically the Bible was read and interpreted in its most natural sense and regarded as the divine revelation which was sufficient for man to have an eternal hope. The Bible—with its miracles, its revelation in which God communicated with man, its inspiration in which the Holy Spirit enabled man to express in writing that which was essential to unfold God's redemptive plan and its salvation provided through the God-man Christ Jesus—was regarded as the basis for the Christian faith. The Bible in its *entirety* was accepted as *trustworthy, true, reliable, and inerrant*.

Familiar to the twentieth century scholar is the decimation of the Bible during the last two centuries to a naturalistic perspective. As the basic teachings of the Bible faded into insignificance under this viewpoint a bold attempt was made to retain Jesus as the object of faith. Although many reduced the life of Jesus to a purely naturalistic plane some theologians asserted that Jesus was fully limited to humanity during his life but at the point of his death on the cross God was in Christ. This divine aspect was considered essential in order to provide salvation.

Gradually this naturalistic scholarship was reflected in the pulpit so that the church became deeply religious with a viewpoint of Jesus that was primarily human. Religiosity in the seminary and the church was so agnostic and meaningless that a man like Keith Miller (*A Taste of New Wine*) had a most difficult time to discover a fellowship in which a divine Christ was a vital reality in daily life. In the course of time religious leaders reacted against a Christianity which required that Jesus was to be worshiped. Having abandoned a divine Christ twentieth century Christianity apparently reserved worship for God.

The assertion that Christians must do without God—since “God is dead”—and “be satisfied with a religion of Jesus” has created some concern. A godless Christianity abandoned to a worship of Jesus—who is not recognized as being equally divine with God—brought the reaction by J. Edward Carothers that “Christianity without God is unthinkable.” (Cf. *The Pusher and Puller*, Abingdon Press, 1968). Although he offers an interesting approach to a concept of God from the twentieth century perspective he confidently asserts that the concepts of God held by previous generations, including the concept Moses had when God revealed Himself, is not adequate for our generation with its advanced scholarship and understanding.

Historic Christianity has always considered the Bible as basic to any

concept of God as well as of Jesus Christ. Any constituency that regards itself as evangelical or Christian in the biblical sense accepts the concepts of God and Jesus Christ expressed in the Bible as crucially important. Consequently the questions of Christianity without Christ or without God are answered in the negative by the evangelical.

The crucial problem within evangelical scholarship is the question of the Bible. "How far can we trust our Bible?" or "How much of the Bible can be accepted as trustworthy, reliable, or inerrant?" Although the papers and discussion at the nineteenth annual meeting of our society held in Toronto focused attention upon the questions of faith and history, and theological methodology, some of the participants seriously raised the questions concerning the extent to which the content of the Bible can be regarded as trustworthy and questioned whether or not the doctrine of inerrancy was taught in Scripture.

The common ground for all evangelical scholars is the assertion that the Bible is the infallible rule for faith and practice. All agree that in revelatory matters the Bible is trustworthy. The crucial problem is whether or not the Bible is trustworthy in matters that are not revelatory and whether or not the Bible teaches inerrancy. Since these problems were so pointedly raised we are sharing them with our readers as published in our Bulletin this year. It is hoped that they will stimulate more intensive scholarship by those who consider the Bible as basic to our concept of God and Jesus Christ.

If the Bible is trustworthy and inerrant only in matters of faith and practice then several questions emerge for the inquisitive mind. What part of the Bible is essential for man's doctrine and practice? If the rest of the Bible is not trustworthy what basis is there to assert that the revelatory matters are genuine and true?

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