

The Hub of Christianity

One of the gravest dangers to contemporary Protestantism is its obsession with the rim of Christianity to the neglect of the vital centre of the Christian faith. To the observer of church life it becomes increasingly clear that much of the activity takes place around the rim of a wheel whose spokes are made of innumerable committees, conferences, meetings and organizations.

I am not implying that the rim is an unimportant part of the wheel, for it is at the rim that the wheel becomes effective. In like manner, the church must make effective contact with the world if it wants to be true to its calling.

However, just as a wheel collapses unless its spokes are firmly centred in the hub, so a church cannot be effective if it is not firmly centred in the basic doctrines of the Christian faith.

The doctrines of the Scriptures are of vital importance for the Christian life. The teachings of the Scriptures ought to be translated into life. But nowadays the word "doctrine" has become an ugly word in many Protestant circles. There seems to be a distaste for the studying of the system of Bible truth.

The great stress today is upon the word "do."

We hear a great deal about the "prophetic role" of the church. Prophetic a church must be! But to be prophetic seems to mean today to be socially involved, to be concerned with the basic problems behind the social injustices of community and society, youth problems and the like. This prophetic role is usually at the expense of the heart of man's dilemma – man's separation from the just and holy God.

The prophetic message must not only deal with the problems of the "here and now" but above all with how a man separated from God can get right with God through the Death of Christ at Calvary. If the church is only concerned with solving the problems of society at the expense of man's need to get right with his God, the church has lost the "prophetic" message. It puts then a band aid upon a cancer spot.

If the church is only concerned with the rim and not with the hub of the wheel, then its words have no effect. Consider the early church. This church was active, but its rim and spokes of activity were solidly attached to the hub of Christian doctrine.

These early Christians had a deep and living faith, in the Christ who died on the cross for their sin and who rose again from the dead to secure their resurrection. These men were able to give a reason for the hope which was in them and for their ceaseless activity.

Many Christians today seem to be swayed so easily. Doctrinal preaching and teaching are belittled as "divisive. Yet, a return to basic Bible teaching and preaching is needed if the church wants to remain a church. A Christian man can only be really effective in the

"here and now" if he has been molded by the Word of God. The prophetic message of the church still is "Christ died for our sins, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

Let each Christian study again the motivation for his activities. As someone said, "For a change, let us start with the hub of Christian doctrine and begin building the wheel of Christian conviction, organization and program soundly on it."

Johan D. Tangelder
June, 1969