

Our Christian Faith: Fact or Fancy?

I. The Description of the Christian Faith.

- A. Christianity is based on divine revelation. Hebrews 4:1-4.
- B. Christianity revolves around a Person, Jesus Christ, Colossians 1:10-23.
- C. Christianity is final authority, Colossians 2:3; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 10:9,10; Hebrews 12:25.

II. The Characteristics of the Christian Faith.

- A. Christianity is historical – it is not a myth or legend.
- B. Christianity is supernatural – it is not a result of human desire or natural law.
- C. Christianity is redemptive – it is not mere religious advice.
- D. Christianity is representative – it is more than a religious philosophy.
- E. Christianity is personal – it is not theoretical or abstract.
- F. Christianity is revelatory – it is not an ambiguous guess.
- G. Christianity is authoritative – it is not a compilation of subjective human opinion.
- H. Christianity is covenantal – it is not a powerless invitation of dubious promise.
- I. Christianity is exclusive – it is not the highest form of the human religious quest.
- J. Christianity is demanding – it is not a weak, sentimental, permissive avocation.
- K. Christianity is contemporaneous – it is not a specimen of an antique religious practice.

III. The Evidence for the Christian Faith.

A. Areas of Evidence.

- 1. The origin and characteristics of Israel's religion.
- 2. Prophecy.
- 3. The Person and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 4. Miracles.
- 5. The existence and Spread of the Early Church.
- 6. The experiential implications of regeneration.
- 7. Early Christian literature and creeds.
- 8. Archaeology.
- 9. The manuscript copies and early versions of the Bible.

B. Illustrations of such Evidence.

- 1. Israel was monotheistic – the surrounding nations were polytheistic.
- 2. Israel worshipped a sovereign Cod – the surrounding nations worshipped a "god of the land" deity who had only local sovereignty.
- 3. Israel worshipped without religious symbols – the surrounding nations were idolatrous.
- 4. Israel's worship was moral – the surrounding nations were often immoral in their religious practice.
- 5. Israel's worship had a unique prophetic element – the surrounding nations often utilized some form of divination.

C. The literature of the Early Church.

1. Clement of Rome and his Epistle to the Corinthians.

a. Clement was born about 30 and died about 100 A. D. He wrote his letter to the Church at Corinth in 95 or 96. It is a brief statement of Christian doctrine as a practical exhortation to unity. It is now in the British Museum as part of two fourth-century Greek manuscripts.

b. Text.

The Apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ (has done so) from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the Apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and, being fully assured by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the Word of God with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand

(The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol, I, p. 16)

2. The interchange of letters between Emperor Trajan and Governor Pliny.

a. In about 111 A. D. Trajan asked Pliny to accept the governorship of Bithynia in northern Asia Minor.

b. Text. (Pliny to Trajan)

In the examination of Christians I have never taken part Those who confessed, I asked a second and a third time, threatening punishment. Those who persisted I ordered led away to execution The matter seemed to me to be worth deliberation, especially on account of the number of those in danger. For many of every age, every rank, and even of both sexes, are brought into danger; and will be in the future. The contagion of that superstition has penetrated not only the cities but also the villages and country places; and yet it seems possible to stop it and set it right

(A Treasury of Early Christianity, Anne Fremantle (ed.) pp. 253-255)

IV. The Method of Verifying the Christian Faith.

The rational task of the apologist for Christianity is just the natural task of the advocate and exponent of any great generalization of science, to vindicate it, on the basis of evidence, as the most reasonable hypothesis to explain undoubted facts Christian apologetics is the explication of the fact that the Christian religion explains the world, man, and human history more comprehensively and more satisfactorily than any other explanation which can be devised.

(The Verification of Christianity, L. M. Sweet p. 17)

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