

## The Changing Scene and the Unchanging Word

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### What Shall We Think of Kagawa?



Dr. Machen

A GOOD many people are asking the question what we ought to think of Kagawa. It is natural for them to ask this question both because of Kagawa's present tour in America and also because of the great influence which he undoubtedly wields in Japan.

In the opinion of some people, indeed, it is rather an impertinence for us to raise the question at all. Here is a man bearing the name of Christ. He is obviously sincere. He is obviously animated by very high motives. Ought we not therefore simply to rejoice in his great popularity and give him God-speed in his work?

Well, that just raises the preliminary question what our standard of judgment is. If our standard of judgment is found in the degree of popularity which any teacher possesses or in the degree of fervor or sincerity which he shows, then indeed we ought simply to accept Kagawa without further question. But, you see, our standard of judgment is entirely different. Our standard of judgment is found in the Bible. If Kagawa's teaching is contrary to the Bible, then we cannot support it, no matter how fervent and sincere it is and no matter what apparent success it may be having.

That is the real question, then. Is Kagawa's message in accordance with the Bible or is it contrary to the Bible?

I am bound to say that I think the second answer to this question is correct. The message of Kagawa seems to me to be contrary to the Bible, and it seems to me to diverge widely from the truth of the gospel.

The way in which I come to this conclusion is simply the way of comparing Kagawa's most recent book—at least it seems to be the most recent in the English translation—with the teaching of God's Word. The book to which I refer is "Meditations on the Cross" by Toyohiko Kagawa, trans-

lated by Helen F. Topping and Marion R. Draper, and published by Willett, Clark & Company, Chicago and New York, 1935.

It is not altogether an easy book to review, because the author throws out assertions in such profusion and with such disregard of logical concatenation as to make quotation of individual sentences somewhat misleading. One could quote a good many individual sentences that are dreadfully erroneous, but then he might also quote some individual sentences on the same subjects which in themselves are true.

What we really ought to do in dealing with such a book is to try to get at the heart of it in order to see whether the heart of it is or is not contrary to the Bible.

Looking at the book then in that way, we notice in the first place its strong anti-doctrinal bias:

"The only value that there is in doctrine is that it is an explanation of one's actions" (p. 168).

In accordance with this depreciation of doctrine we have the familiar claim to stand above "Modernism" and "Fundamentalism":

"Fundamentalism, therefore, is only a partial explanation of the love of God, and Modernism sees only the surface and does not dig down to the root of the matter. Here in Japan it is my earnest hope that our young people may not be carried away by either of these 'isms.' I do not want to emphasize theological controversies. I hope that our young people may rather give their whole energies to the realization of sacrificial love as wide as the whole of society and as broad as the entire universe. I pray that they may penetrate beneath the surface agitations of doctrine and dogma to the great underlying law of love" (p. 132).

This depreciation of truth, this belittling of the controversy between believers and unbelievers, this notion that truth is merely the expression of life instead of being the foundation of it, is contrary to the Bible from beginning to end. Like the great majority of those who claim to stand

above "Fundamentalism" and "Modernism," Kagawa has here shown that he is at bottom very much of a Modernist himself. The quintessence of Modernism is exactly this belittling of doctrine or of truth.

In the second place, the book holds an evolutionary view of human history and regards Christ essentially as a phase (even though a unique phase) in that history.

I do not mean to say that there are not some utterances in the book which taken by themselves would involve a higher view. The author does speak, for example, of the sinlessness of Christ. He does try to retain some kind of notion of His uniqueness. But a central thought of the book is that in Christ the human race came to full consciousness. Take, for example, the following passage from the verses at the beginning of the volume:

"The Omnipotent Love of the Universe—

It is its fruitage that we see in Jesus. Christ is the first man to awake to full consciousness of the Universe, The first to realize his responsibility even for sinners." (p. 4).

Or take such passages as these:

"Human history was at first unconscious; then, up to the time of Christ there was the epoch of semi-consciousness; and since Christ the human race is very gradually becoming fully conscious" (p. 34).

"From unconsciousness to semi-conscious awakening, and then onward to full consciousness—the Scriptures record the development of the human race, and it is a long story" (p. 153).

It would be difficult indeed to square these passages, and other passages in the book, with the deity of Christ, as it is taught in the Bible. The trouble is, moreover, that these passages are not merely isolated utterances in Kagawa's book, but are quite at the heart of what he has to say.

In the next issue of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, I shall probably want to say something further about Kagawa, particularly about his view of the Cross of Christ.