

**CAN WE DISPENSE WITH
CHRISTIANITY? THE QUESTION:
ITS CRUX AND IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE MODERN MIND**

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Can we dispense with Christianity? The question: its crux and implications for the modern mind
by F. W. Butler

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BY

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PREFACE

I HAVE sought to state, briefly but with a proper placing of emphasis and with a just sense of the values and interests involved, the bearings of the much debated question which forms the title of this book. There is, I am confident, a crux to this question and something in the light of which that crux may be both stated and solved.

Dr. Bernard Bosanquet strongly and most rightly insists that genuine thought is not "a reproduction of reality with omissions." I have been anxious not to come short of a true explanation by an undue simplification. If I am right in my sense of what is of importance in the question my effort will not have proved vain. The question in its contemporary form and with its present insistence reaches down to a real and important base in the central problems of the life of the spirit. In the light of those problems it seeks, and, I believe, will find its answer.

I am, of course, very conscious of the brevity of this book since I am also confident that what I have sought to explain is at the root of all discussions in the philosophy of religion and regarding the value of Christianity for life and thought. Critics and

readers have been so kind as to give a good reception to my earlier books, and I hope this one may not be without use. There are many who are rather shy of a large volume, and that consideration gives me encouragement. A map on a small scale may be as accurate as, and even more useful than, a great and detailed chart. So I hope it may be with this book, though there is always the difference between ideal and attainment.

My indebtedness to the current literature on this and related topics is very great, and my sense of obligation is not limited to those books with which I am, more or less, in agreement. The standpoint adopted throughout is my own, and mine is the sole responsibility for the views and opinions advanced.

I have sought to commend my argument to those who ask, "Are these things so?" To such, possessing the honest and sound mind, and, therefore, "the scientific habit of thought," this little effort makes its appeal and cares about their verdict.

The candid, and also some of the self-confident, who are ever with us, may be inclined, as Browning noticed, "of late to opine that 'the Christian faith proves false.'" The great poet affirmed one quite unexpected reason among "reasons on reasons" why he still believed it "to be true." There is always something unexpected about the real arguments in favour of a religion which has the courage and power to say, "Your time is always ready, but

my time is not yet fully come." I hasten to add, however, that I have been very anxious not to sacrifice truth on the altar of "originality."

It will be noticed that I have often given quotations in illustration or in support of the opinions which I have expressed. I do not myself feel any obligation to apologise for this occasional preference of the words of some of our contemporary thinkers above any that I might myself have used. Quite often it simply arises out of a reasonable humility when I compare my own phraseology with that of the extracts which I have used. The sources of such quotations I have—almost without exception, I think—acknowledged at the foot of the pages. I am grateful not only to those to whom these acknowledgments are made, but also to many whose writings I may not have called to mind and whose very words I may have forgotten, but who, none the less, have afforded inspiration or provoked enquiry.

My warmest thanks are due to my wife for encouragement and help in preparation of this volume for the press, and also to the Rev. Hugh Martin and the Rev. F. A. Cockin for their kindness in reading the proofs and for most helpful suggestions.

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