

Flashlights of Famous People

Face to Face With Harry Emerson Fosdick

Eloquent New York Exponent of
Modernism in Religious
Beliefs

By JOE MITCHELL CHAPPLE

The crowds were gathering at the church night unto the borders of Greenwich Village, New York. The people gathered early in the morning and were lined far up the street. The side chapel and galleries were filled and many were standing. The choir was singing, but all eyes were centered on the man sitting in the center of the row on the pulpit platform.

The people were crowding even to the altar steps—to hear his words. His immobile face, all during the reading of the service, little indicated the passion of the orator. This little figure with the shock of black hair began to speak with peculiar gestures as if analyzing and dissecting the subject before him. When he paused to refer to the reconciliation of ecclesiastical cynicism with that of the gospel of hope with the picture of the life of St. Paul, you began to feel the thrill.

“As a boy I was sent to gather berries on my birthday. Reluctant and unwilling I started towards the task given me by my mother. I resented working on my birthday. Then the thought came to me. I will pick two quarts of berries and surprise my mother.”

And he did. In this incident of his life was reflected the philosophy of Harry Emerson Fosdick. He lives in the life of today. Sometimes he feels that he is misunderstood in his ardor and zeal in preaching the gospel of today.

As his little body swung to and fro on the pulpit high above, almost on a level with the galleries, Harry Fosdick was the evangelist, and little was left to suggest the critical.

Harry Emerson Fosdick is a preacher, pure and simple, and he has a message that rings with conviction. There was not a person in that room that did not feel better as they passed out into the sunlight on Fifth Avenue with his words ringing in their ears.

“Remember there are two things—clean misfortune or honest purpose that seek no ill to mankind. Many things that seem like good and true living according to the rules is not virtue. It is the purpose that lies in the heart—the outpouring of love to others that joins the world in love. Everything is done for love and the man



HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK says:

“There are many men resting under the stigma of crime whose hearts are whiter than those who condemn.”

who cannot found his religious faith on naught else is a failure.

“Many who have lived apparently sinless lives are, after all, the greatest sinners. They have not loved. Many who have done things that may not seem to accord with the belief of others are at heart pure and undefiled. There are many men resting under the stigma of crime whose hearts are whiter than those who condemn.”

Harry Fosdick was born in Buffalo and very early wandered away as a vagrant, in fact as a hobo, resisting all the entreaties of home ties; but with all this aspect of Vagabondia, he was going forward with his interpretation of God's mission.

As professor of practical theology in the Union Theological Seminary, he has touched the lives of many young men entering the ministry. Even that night, tired as he was, he was going to preach for Newton Dwight Hillis, who was stricken in the church of Henry Ward Beecher.

Although ordained to the Baptist ministry, and preaching in a Baptist Church in Worcester and Montclair, New Jersey, he has made the Presbyterian Church on Fifth Avenue famous.

The church is a combination of several churches in the neighborhood and was formerly occupied by Dr. Parkhurst.

Harry Fosdick is an exponent of Modernism. His convictions seem to indicate a faith in Fundamentalism, but with fundamentals as something that reflects the beliefs of the modernists.

And there you are.

Editor's Note: Send ten names of your favorite famous folk now living to Joe Mitchell Chapple, The Attic, Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York City. The readers of this paper are to nominate for this Hall of Fame.

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