

# RELIGION-AND-SOCIAL-SERVICE

## THE PRESBYTERIAN ATTACK ON DR. FOSDICK

**H**ERESY HUNTERS are on the war-path again, we are told, their latest attack being directed against Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, a Baptist minister preaching in a Presbyterian pulpit, who is charged with rejecting the four great doctrines of Christianity—the virgin birth, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the atonement of Jesus, and Christ's second coming. In the face of this "infamy," the Rev. Harold J. Hamilton, of Rochester, Mich., declares that "it is time for the Protestant churches to clean house and banish every modernist minister from his pulpit." Our churches, he says, as he is quoted in the New York *Tribune*, "have become hotbeds of infidelity, higher criticism and evolution. The monkey gospel is to-day predominant in the Protestant Church. The Bible has been reduced to a classic. The blood atonement is called a slaughter-house religion and a religion of gore."

The occasion of the onslaught on Dr. Fosdick is a sermon delivered by him in the First Presbyterian Church, New York, of which he is pastor. In this sermon he accuses the Fundamentalists of attempting to run out of the evangelical churches all who do not believe in the literal interpretation of the Bible and in the four cardinal doctrines of the Protestant creeds, and bespeaks a larger Church in which people of all beliefs may work and worship. But his real object, replies one traditionalist, is "to make Unitarians and rationalists of his generation." *The Continent* (Presbyterian), on the other hand, views the eminent preacher's attitude in a far different light, averring that any one who reads the sermon with an unclouded desire to be fair will see that he is attempting only "to propagate in the Church a spirit of tolerance and fellowship toward varying views of Christian fact and faith. He is laboring to establish friendly recognition of the equal right of all men to find a place in the Church who take Jesus for Lord and Master

and desire to preach for him and live for him as the only Savior of a sinning world." But many other Presbyterian leaders and journals indignantly repudiate Dr. Fosdick, and the agitation was brought to a head when the Presbytery of Philadelphia recently sent a formal protest to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church against the kind of preaching in the First Presbyterian Church in New York. The General Assembly does not meet until next May, and in the meantime one of the trustees of Dr. Fosdick's church is quoted in the New York press as saying that he "has the undivided support of our church. His Philadelphia critics have not fully stated his principles." He was not pleading for the

modern view or the more liberal view in the much discuss sermon on the Fundamentalists, we are told further, but for a church "big enough and comprehensive enough to hold both points of view." One of the immediate causes of the complaint is contained in the following excerpt from his sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Commenting on the "bitter intolerance" of the Fundamentalists and insisting that "intolerance solves no problems," Dr. Fosdick goes on:



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A MORE "HOSPITABLE" CHURCH.

This is the object of Dr. Harry E. Fosdick, who says "intolerance solves no problems."

"I know people in the Christian churches, ministers, missionaries, laymen, devoted lovers of the Lord and servants of the Gospel, who, alike as they are in their personal devotion to the Master, hold quite different points of view about a matter like the virgin birth. Here, for example, is one point of view: that the virgin birth is to be accepted as historical fact; it actually happened; there was no other way for a personality like the Master to come into this world except by a special biological miracle. That is one point of view, and many are the gracious and beautiful souls who hold it. But, side by side with them in the evangelical churches is a group of equally loyal and reverent people who would say that the virgin birth is not to be accepted as an historic fact. To believe in virgin birth as an explanation of great personality is one of the familiar ways in which the ancient world was accustomed to account for unusual superiority. . . . So Pythagoras was called virgin born, and Plato, and Augustus Cæsar, and many more. Knowing this, there are within the evangelical churches large groups of people whose opinion about our Lord's coming would run as follows: those first disciples adored Jesus—as we do; when they thought about his coming they were sure that he came specially from God—as we are; this adoration and conviction they associated with God's special influence and intention in his birth—as we do; but they phrased it in terms of a biological miracle that our modern minds can not use. So far from thinking that they have given up anything vital in the New Testament's attitude toward Jesus, these Christians remember that the two men who contributed most to the Church's thought of the divine meaning of the Christ were

Paul and John, who never even distantly allude to the virgin birth.

"Here in the Christian churches are these two groups of people, and the question which the Fundamentalists raise is this: shall one of them throw the other out? Has intolerance any contribution to make to this situation? Will it persuade anybody of anything? Is not the Christian Church large enough to hold within her hospitable fellowship people who differ on points like this and agree to differ until the fuller truth be manifested? The Fundamentalists say not. They say that the liberals must go. Well, if the Fundamentalists should succeed, then out of the Christian Church would go some of the best Christian life and consecration of this generation—multitudes of men and women, devout and reverent Christians, who need the Church and whom the Church needs."

It is worth remembering always, says *The Christian Work* (Un-denominational) that Dr. Fosdick did not start this controversy, that "the Fundamentalists did, with their proposal to cast out of the Church all who disagreed with them." And what suggestion of the spirit of Christ is there in the action of the Philadelphia Pre<sup>s</sup>bytery? asks this journal. "Can any man imagine Jesus Christ standing up in that meeting and demanding that Harry Fosdick be silenced in New York because he is telling the truth as God gives him to see it? Was He interested in the suppression of the fact<sup>s</sup> of history or of men<sup>'s</sup> interpretation of those facts?"

"If the Church is really God's Church, it must have the great freedom of God. A<sup>s</sup> Christians we can not help being free men, free to learn what God has to teach us, no matter what means He uses for His teaching, free, yes, eager, to learn, what He teaches through the rocks of the earth and the bones of prehistoric beasts, through the psychological development of man and the history of religion, through the Bible and through experience, both the experience of the race and of the individual."

But a shock of anger <sup>s</sup>trikes the traditionalists when they read Dr. Fosdick's sermon, for to them it breathes of sedition against the Scripture. *The Presbyterian* (Philadelphia) indignantly asserts that Dr. Fosdick, a Baptist, stands in a Presbyterian pulpit and denies Pre<sup>s</sup>byterian doctrine by pool-pooling the virgin birth, the Resurrection, and Christ's coming to judge the world at the la<sup>s</sup>t day. So.

"What i<sup>s</sup> all this but concentrated law<sup>l</sup>essness, and we ask Dr. Fosdick how, as a profest Christian, a gentleman, and a fair man, he justifies himself in being a party to such violence and lawlessne<sup>s</sup>s in thi<sup>s</sup> twentieth century? If a Presbyterian minister should appear in a Baptist pulpit every Sabbath and attack and belittle the adult immersion baptism and other cardinal teaching<sup>s</sup> of such a congregation, would he approve of it? How does thi<sup>s</sup> violence against the constitution of the Church differ in nature from violence of the bootleggers against the Constitution of the United <sup>s</sup>tates in its article on Prohibition? If this lawlessne<sup>s</sup>s is to continue in the Church, how is she to be of any power against the lawlessness in the nation and the world that is threatening to de<sup>s</sup>troy our civilization?"

### PAGANS CURSING CHRISTIANITY

**C**HRISTIANITY IS ENGAGED in one of its bitterest conte<sup>s</sup>ts with paganism and is being openly flouted by pagans, we are told, as the greatest piece of hynoerisv ever practised on an unsuspecting world. In the Orient opposing forces are said to be refusing to submit to the control of the Christian faith and to be seeking to defend themselves against the encroachments and claims of the missionaries who represent the "foreign" religion. Intelligent natives, says the *Western Christian Advocate* (Methodist), are hurling into the teeth of the mi<sup>s</sup>sionaries such caustic and formidable replies that they "are almo<sup>s</sup>t <sup>s</sup>taggering our leaders." Moreover,

"The native faiths are filling the Far Ea<sup>s</sup>t with a description of Western Christianity as a war-loving and war-promoting organization. They are claiming that Christianity, a cannonball, a <sup>s</sup>ubmarine, a gas-bomb, and a battle-ship all go togeth<sup>e</sup>r. They hurl into our teeth the accu<sup>s</sup>ation that Christ is the Prince of Peace and the Christian Church the instrument for making that doctrine effective throughout the world, but that the cold fact is that thus far Chr<sup>i</sup>s<sup>t</sup>'s teaching has not produced that result

even in nations where it has held a preponderance of the people under its control. It passes peace resolutions with armies training in the field. It proclaims the coming of the day of world peace with the navies at target practise in its sequestered harbors.

"These statements are but part of the many accu<sup>s</sup>ations now being made against Christianity, which threaten the ultimate success of our missionary program. We have anticipated the hour when pagan religions would come face to face with the claims of Christianity as a world religion. That day has arrived. It brings with it the most critical hour in the history of our Holy Christianity. If there was ever a time when we need to have faith in God and stand stedfast, unmovable, abounding in the works of the Lord, it is now. Let those who know how to pray remain upon their knees. Let those who know the value of intercession seek daily to increase that company by urging others to take the time to become interested and to pour out their souls for the ultimate <sup>s</sup>uccess of the faith upon which depends our immortal happiness and our eternal destiny."



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SEEKING THE UNCHURCHED.  
Dr. Roland Cotton Smith, president of the Modern Churchmen's Union formed to promote spiritual freedom.

### MODERN HUNTERS FOR THE TRUTH

"**T**HE TRUTH and nothing but the truth, if the heavens fall," is the avowed object of the Modern Churchmen's Union of America, recently formed in New York by a small body of Episcopal clergymen who claim the right to put their own spiritual interpretation on the creeds, in accordance with the results of modern science and of Biblical <sup>s</sup>cholarship. With this program the new organization hopes, according to its exponents, to "promote a new evangelism among the unchurched classes," to reach the young man coming out of college, and to reestablish a contact between the Church and those who "are frightened away by a sense of awe at its ultra-conservatism." As announced to the press, the tentative program of the union includes the following purpo<sup>s</sup>es:

"To maintain the right to interpret the hi<sup>s</sup>toric expression<sup>s</sup> of our faith in accordance with the results of modern science and Biblical scholarship.

"To advance, a<sup>s</sup> an aid to the ultimate reunion of Christendom, cooperation and fellowship between the Prote<sup>s</sup>tant Episcopal Church and other Protestant churches.

"To promote a new evang<sup>e</sup>lism among the unchurched classes of our population, which <sup>s</sup>hall win their allegiance to the religious and moral demand<sup>s</sup> of the Kingdom of God.

"To further the application of Christian principles in all industrial, <sup>s</sup>ocial and international relations.

"To promote the adaptation of the church services to the needs of the time.

"To emphasiz<sup>e</sup> afresh the nature of the Christian life as personal fellowship with God and to study with sympathy those movements and tendencies of thought which are mystical in character."

"Sinc<sup>e</sup>re and deep religious conviction, a spirit of honest and unhampered search after the truth, practical interest in the problems of social life and a purpos<sup>e</sup> a<sup>s</sup> churchmen to enlarge and in<sup>s</sup>pire the company of believers," comments the *Springfield Republican*, "are connoted by the program in its entirety. Whether it is entirely 'orthodox' depends, perhaps, upon its application." But it is to be applied with the modern spirit, <sup>s</sup>ays the Rev. Dr. Roland Cotton Smith, president of the union, not with the spirit of the man who "dissects a dead Christ and lets the Divine Spirit blow by him." Dr. Smith, who is rector emeritus of St. John's Church, Washington, D. C., announces further that the union's campaign of education will "rest upon