

FOSDICK and the Fundamentalists

by
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A Review of the
Great American Controversy
in the Protestant Church

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THE whole religious world, last fall, anxiously awaited the announcement of Dr. Fosdick's decision with regard to the demand of the Judicial Commission of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church that he become a full-fledged Presbyterian minister or leave the church. Dr. Fosdick decided to resign, and submitted his decision in a carefully written statement which was published in the New York newspapers on the morning of October 7th last. The headline of one newspaper report read:—"Fosdick Quits under Attack of Presbytery! Technical Victory for Fundamentalists!"

Popular opinion has been made by such headlines. The net impression gained by the man in the street from news reports, especially those in Fundamentalist organs, is that a dangerous heretic has been forced from an influential Presbyterian pulpit because of violently radical religious views. For instance, I heard one man sarcastically say, "I see they've unfrocked this heretic preacher who wants us to believe we came from apes." Even in liberal journals, where fair play is expected, there has been some distorted comment. For example, the *Christian Century*, a progressive journal of religion published by the Disciples, stated that Dr. Fosdick was bound to lose whichever way he handled the demand of the Judicial Commission. And the *Christian Register*, as well as other Unitarian publications and individuals, have heaped scorn and condemnation upon the head of Dr. Fosdick, declaring him to be an insincere straddler, afraid to take the full step forward which liberal ideas inevitably demand. Confused by conflicting reports, the public mind is now in a deplorable state of ignorance. Accurate information concerning the "Fosdick Controversy," the man in the case, and the issues involved seems to be at present a public necessity!

The man in the case is the Reverend Harry Emerson Fosdick, D.D., L.L.D., a young (he is only forty-six) Baptist clergyman, who was called early in 1919 to the preaching ministry of the First Presbyterian Church of New York City. This church housed a congregation composed of three churches, the Old First, Madison Square, and University Place. There, while still teaching at the Union Theological Seminary, Dr. Fosdick began his ministry in company with the Reverend George Alexander, D.D. and the Reverend Guthrie Speers. The preaching of Dr. Fosdick met with such immediate and remarkable response that the seating capacity of the church had to be enlarged, and even then crowds became so great that Monday morning headlines like the following

were frequent: "Church Crowd Blocks Fifth Avenue," "Hundreds Turned Away from First Church." Under conditions of such inspired leadership the First Presbyterian Church of New York City entered upon a period of prosperity and wide Christian service which has not, perhaps, been duplicated by any other church in modern times.

All went well until one eventful Sunday in 1922, May 21st to be exact, when Dr. Fosdick preached his now famous sermon: "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" This sermon was printed and widely circulated. In it Dr. Fosdick made a plea for tolerance. He asked that the door of Christian fellowship be left open to all who sincerely desired to follow Christ, regardless of specific creedal belief. It was not long before a tempest of protest and indignation was raging around Dr. Fosdick. The storm had its source among the Fundamentalist group, chiefly recruited from the extreme conservative wings of the Presbyterian and Baptist denominations.

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, convened at Indianapolis in the spring of 1923, the presbytery of Philadelphia brought an overture which branded Dr. Fosdick's teaching with the stigma of heresy and demanded action against him. The Assembly condemned the preaching of Dr. Fosdick and commanded an investigation by the New York presbytery and a full report to be given at the next General Assembly. The 1923 Assembly actually went on record as holding that five dogmas were essential to Presbyterian teaching: the Virgin Birth, the Atonement, the Inspiration of Scripture, the Miracles, and the Second Coming of Christ. The New York presbytery, acting under Assembly orders, appointed a committee which investigated the preaching and teaching at First Church, New York, and reported to the Assembly of 1924, convened at Grand Rapids, that they found it in accord with Presbyterian standards. The Fundamentalists made violent attacks upon this report and it was referred to the Judicial Commission, a church Supreme Court of lawyers and ministers. Their decision, after hearing evidence and testimony, was that Dr. Fosdick must take upon himself the vows of a Presbyterian minister, which implies acceptance of the Westminster Confession, or quit the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church! Dr. Work, chairman of the New York presbytery committee, conveyed to Dr. Fosdick by letter the decision of the Judicial Commission. Dr. Fosdick replied by resigning. The First Church was loath to lose Dr. Fosdick, and an attempt was made to retain his services, at least until the whole matter could be thrashed out again before the next General Assembly. Dr. Fosdick,

however, wisely declined to acquiesce in such an arrangement, and insisted upon a definite date when his relations with the Presbyterian church would terminate. Accordingly, the severance of his relationship with the First Church occurred on March first.

A superficial judgment of the whole episode would naturally be that the Fundamentalists had triumphed, that the influence of Dr. Fosdick had been seriously damaged, that his preaching and teaching had been discredited, and that the liberal cause in the Evangelical churches had been dealt a serious blow. That is the opinion, to be sure, which is held by a great number of good people. But it is a notion created entirely by false propaganda and wrong representation, scattered abroad by people who ought to know better. What is the truth?

I

The truth is that, Dr. Fosdick has come out of the controversy, triumphant, because the principles for which he contested have been clearly vindicated. Three vital issues may be discerned in the Fundamentalist-Modernist debate. Stated briefly they are: Shall subscription to some ancient creed be made an essential test of Christian discipleship? Shall the main business of the church be to send out people who are theologically orthodox or to send out people who are Christ-like in character, love and service? Shall isolated sectarian loyalties and narrow denominational lines be held more important than loyalty to Christ and the broad, universal Church which He founded?

These issues have sharply separated two distinct groups within the evangelical churches of American Christianity. On one side are the so-called Fundamentalists, holding rigidly to ancient creeds as absolute essentials of Christian discipleship, insisting that the main business of the church is to rear men and women who hold the "faith once delivered to the saints," and prizing as vital blessings sectarian conventionalities and denominational idiosyncrasies. On the other side are the so-called Modernists, feeling there should be tolerant liberty with regard to creedal subscription, believing the main business of the church to be the creation of Christ-like character in the individual, love and goodwill among men, and service for humanity's sake, and considering denominational preferences quite secondary to loyalty to Christ and His universal Church.

Through this controversy Dr. Fosdick has steadfastly championed the liberal position. He has been a peacemaker rather than a controversialist. He has desired that Fundamentalists and Modernists alike

might dwell together in unity and work together in peace. His great sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?", was an earnest attempt to repair the breach which the Fundamentalists were rapidly making in the church and, at the same time, a determined effort to keep the door of Christian fellowship open to educated people. His was the plea of a strong conservative, and not a radical, when he said: "Is not the Christian Church large enough to hold within her hospitable fellowship people who differ . . . until the fuller truth be manifested? They say 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."

To accuse this preacher of gross heresy is to expose one's ignorance. Such accusations are the result of imagination rather than actual knowledge. Those who know Dr. Fosdick best do not misunderstand his preaching; they see it rather as a magnificent effort to express in cogent, modern terms the abiding message of the old Gospel. His confession of faith, as expressed in a letter written to the committee of the New York presbytery late in 1923, reveals his conservative Christian convictions: "In spite of sharp difference of opinion between two prevalent schools of theological thought, and in spite of the fact that I am committed to the side called 'liberal', I confess that I have been surprised at the misinterpretation of my position which has been spread broadcast . . . These are days when the Christian faith is being resolutely assailed, when materialistic naturalism is presenting a perilous problem, when many are in doubt, when Christianity faces alike one of its supreme crises and supreme opportunities . . . I believe in the personal God revealed in Christ, in his omnipresent activity and endless resources to achieve his purpose for us and all men; I believe in Christ, his deity, his sacrificial saviorhood, his resurrected and triumphant life, his rightful Lordship, and the indispensableness of his message to mankind. In the indwelling Spirit I believe, the forgiveness of sins, the redeemed and victorious life, the triumph of righteousness on earth, and the life everlasting . . . I am not, therefore, an enemy of the Gospel of Christ . . . Nor as I understand it are those who like me are called liberals. We are men at the center of whose life is a profound faith in God revealed in Christ for man's salvation, and we are facing with passionate earnestness the needs of this disturbed, doubting, and often wistful generation,

endeavoring as our fathers did in their days to interpret the everlasting Gospel to our own time in terms that our own time can understand."

While Dr. Fosdick strongly leaned toward a conservative position, he felt that the illiberal demands of the Fundamentalists created issues so vital to the future welfare of Christianity that it was his clear duty to defend the principles of toleration, Christian love, and inclusive brotherliness which he firmly believed to be part and parcel of the Christian revelation.

Against the demand of the Fundamentalists that subscription to a given creed be made the final test of Christian discipleship, he placed his clear conviction of freedom in Christian thinking: "In answer to this proposal I must in all honesty set my long standing and assured conviction that creedal subscription to ancient confessions of faith is a practice dangerous to the welfare of the church and to the integrity of the individual conscience." Emphasis by the Fundamentalists upon theological orthodoxy instead of practical Christian service for a needy world has been consistently repudiated by Dr. Fosdick. He insisted, in the sermon: "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?", that men who spent their time in splitting hairs over theological technicalities were playing with 'the tiddleywinks and peccadillos of religion' while colossal human issues were at stake. He compared these men to the Pharisees of whom the Master said that they tithed mint and anise and cummin but left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith!

He faced with deep regret the denominational narrowness of so many members of the Presbyterian church who were greatly disturbed because a Baptist was preaching in a Presbyterian pulpit. This sectarian selfishness he roundly arranges in his letter of resignation: "It was the interdenominational character of the arrangement which chiefly attracted me. Here was an object lesson in the new freedom with which Christians could regard denominational lines and work together. The arrangement at the First Church has been so regarded in popular thought and I have rejoiced in that aspect of the relationship. The proposal of the General Assembly, however, would reverse all that . . . It may not enact a rule but it suggests a precedent. It encourages a return to the principle of a denominationally 'closed shop'. It represents, so it seems to me, a retrograde sectarian movement. As a convinced interdenominationalist, therefore, who does not believe in an exclusive but in an inclusive church, I must not consent to the decision. To concur with it would be to agree with an attitude with which I radically disagree, to fall in with a denominational spirit which I regret and deplore."

The answer to the question "Did Dr. Fosdick Lose?" depends largely upon the gain or loss of those principles which Dr. Fosdick defended, the principles of tolerant liberty, the supremacy of service, and the spiritual unity of the Christian Church. If these principles, made clear by controversial debate, are being upheld as fundamentally sound, then Dr. Fosdick has not been defeated but has been entirely vindicated.

Unmistakable signs within almost all the communions of American Christianity confirm the fact that these principles are slowly, surely, and inevitably gaining ground. The real state of mind of the majority within the Presbyterian church with regard to Dr. Fosdick is set forth in the pages of a recent number of the *Continent*, a conservative Presbyterian weekly. Speaking anent the pronouncement of the Moderator, Dr. Macartney, after the resignation of Dr. Fosdick, the *Continent* says: "When the moderator yields to the temptation to speak from his high office as the mouthpiece of a party, though his utterance may be sincere and well intended, he fails to contribute to that unity and solidarity which he is properly expected to further The moderator has no power to declare the attitude of the denomination and there is no justification for the implication that the church at large is unsympathetic with one of its congregations or unfraternal in its attitude toward ministers of another denomination." Surely that is a definite rebuke to intolerance!

Another instance of the growing religious freedom is that which occurred at the Texas Baptist Convention last fall. In that convention, Dr. Norris, one of the fundamentalist leaders in this country, and his Fort Worth delegates, were repudiated and refused admission to the convention because of the vicious campaign of intolerant intimidation which they had carried on against pastors, evangelists and teachers throughout the state. The convention termed this Fundamentalist propaganda "cruel criticism" which "misrepresents, discounts and brings into shame the testimony of truth-loving Baptists around the world" and which "sows the seeds of discord and division." This Texas incident is of national importance because it indicates that the spirit of toleration and religious liberty is gaining ground even among the most conservative groups.

It is almost certain that within the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist and Congregational denominations the majority of ministers and laymen would stand with Dr. Fosdick upon the liberal platform which he has maintained. Recently a large number of Presbyterian ministers signed a declaration of intellectual freedom which practically constituted a certificate of support for Dr. Fosdick. As a result of this controversy

already all over Christendom the new light of truth is beaming, a new illumination is filling the religious sky, and the feverish efforts of the Fundamentalists cannot hold back the dawn!

II

The truth about this controversy, secondly, is that Dr. Fosdick comes out of it not a loser but eminently victorious, because his conduct during the whole episode has reflected the very highest type of Christian character, while frequently that of his opponents has been anything but Christian. For two full years Dr. Fosdick has been the target for vehement and scurrilous attacks. His mail has been cluttered with many letters of a denunciatory character. In sermons and fanatical journals he has been painted in lurid and heretical figures. One Fundamentalist, waxing warm in characteristic Fundamentalist language, called him a 'Baptist bootlegger, a Presbyterian outlaw, and the Jesse James of the theological world!' But this form of abuse has acted like a boomerang upon those who have employed it. It has served to heighten the ludicrous character of the Fundamentalist cause and to bring into disrepute the men who resort to personalities to cover up weak argument. The ancient proverb has again been established: "He who throws mud will have dirty hands!"

Before this torrent of attack Dr. Fosdick has remained patient and uncomplaining. Whimsically, however, in his letter of resignation, he refers to these disagreeable onslaughts as 'uproar from a distance.' From his Christian brethren in the First Church he had nothing but unfailing friendship and generous support.

The superb self-control exercised by Dr. Fosdick in this ordeal is noteworthy; throughout he has maintained a magnificent spirit of Christian goodwill. While the behavior of his detractors was characterized by cruel scorn and biting sarcasm, his quiet courtesy has been amazing. The letter of Norman Twiddy of New Haven, published in the *New York Times*, forcefully expresses the feeling of many: "Did I know nothing of the merits of the situation in which Dr. Fosdick has been involved by these contemporary descendants of the gentlemen who used thumb-screws and torture racks to enforce their opinions, I should, nevertheless, be inclined to favor the side of a man who, forced to suffer the results of misunderstanding, blind prejudice, bigotry and acrimonious assault in a way that only a high-souled person can suffer, has yet been characterized by poise and charity and forbearance. The controversy has not embittered the soul of Dr. Fosdick. He has not fought fire with fire. No

mean, cutting words have come from his lips. He has been a Christian gentleman through it all!"

One might paraphrase Markham's poem, and imagine the lines very often upon Dr. Fosdick's lips:

"They drew a circle that shut me out,
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout;
But love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took them in!"

The unethical behavior of the small minority of bitter conservatives might be anticipated. From the Presbyterian church as a whole Dr. Fosdick should have received every courtesy. Unfortunately, the behavior of the General Assembly toward him has been far from courteous and very close to unethical. In the first place, the General Assembly of 1923 condemned Dr. Fosdick without a hearing upon the unreliable testimony of furious Fundamentalists. In the second place, the General Assembly of 1924 did not extend to Dr. Fosdick a courteous invitation to become a minister in their church; they held over his head a camouflaged club, with a hidden statement which Dr. Fosdick could well read: "Conform or get out!" Before him was no open door of hospitality with a welcoming and friendly hand extended in cordial greeting, but a veiled trap with a hidden fist behind it ready to strike should Dr. Fosdick accept. The very words used betray this fact: "If he desires to occupy a Presbyterian pulpit for an extended time, he should enter our denomination through the regular method and become subject to the jurisdiction and authority of the church. If this is done, much of the cause of irritation would be removed." Here was no cordial welcome but a cold and repelling document. They do not promise that *all* irritation will be removed. And they seem anxious to have him *subject* to the "jurisdiction and authority of the church." In the third place, the General Assembly of 1924 cleverly tried to obscure the real issue. The real issue was one of bigoted orthodoxy versus so-called heresy; the General Assembly covered this up by attempting to make the issue that of a Baptist preaching irregularly in a Presbyterian pulpit. But that is no issue; there are many Baptists in the pulpits of Presbyterianism entirely unmolested today! Even the Presbyterian Continent says: "No one can question the right of a Presbyterian church to invite a minister in good standing in another evangelical denomination to preach from its pulpit." Why then should this august Assembly veil their real purposes of bigoted persecution for heresy under this cloak of denominational custom? They dodged the

issue! The General Assembly dealt with Dr. Fosdick not as a gentleman deserving every courtesy and consideration but as a heretic deserving rebuke and punishment!

Alas, what shall we say about these modern inquisitors, who have beams in their own eyes and suppose that they see motes in the eyes of a brother, who outwardly are clothed in lambskins, but inwardly are ravenous wolves! The words of Paul are appropriate in this connection: "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His!" Can any one doubt where the spirit of Christ is in this controversy? On the one side caustic sarcasm, acrimonious scorn, ill-feeling, undisguised animosity, unfair dealing; on the other, quiet courtesy, unfailing fairness, indomitable goodwill, sacrificial love! As one looks upon the spirit of Dr. Fosdick through all the storm and stress of this controversy, one feels instinctively that here in the life of a modern man is Christ's spirit incarnate.

III

Thirdly, the truth is that Dr. Fosdick has not lost but gained in the controversy because through it the popularity of his preaching has grown immensely, and he has entered into a position of spiritual leadership in the English-speaking world which is unparalleled in modern Christian history. In his superb farewell address to the First Church, preached March 1st, Dr. Fosdick said the Fundamentalists had succeeded in building behind him an effective sounding board which was carrying his message twice as far as it ever went before! How true that is!

It was expected, when Dr. Fosdick went abroad last summer to receive an honorary degree from a great Scottish university that he would create unusual religious interest in England and Scotland. But the reception and high praise which he received has surpassed all expectations. A writer in the *British Weekly*, after hearing him in the City Temple, London, wrote: "His was regal eloquence, which made us prouder than ever of our communion in language with the United States. . . Dr. Fosdick is the true successor of Phillips Brooks. . . As the great throng moved slowly out of the Temple, expressions of admiration and wonder were heard on every side!" Writing in the *Christian World*, Dr. Charles Brown said: "The City Temple in all its fifty years' history was never fuller than when he preached on May 14th, and it could easily have been filled over again by the crowds who wanted to hear him. Never since the visits of Henry Ward Beecher to this country has an American preacher aroused such eager interest, and Dr. Fosdick by his sermons and addresses is going to leave a deep and permanent impression on the

religious life of this country." In the Yorkshire Observer of May 24th appeared the following: "Dr. Fosdick has had a great welcome in England and for the last three days Scotland, as represented by Glasgow and Edinburgh, has been sitting at his feet . . . Dr. Fosdick was well known because of his stimulating books on prayer and service and his bold defense of the modern interpretation of Christianity, but his personal charm has laid hold of the crowds here." Many similar testimonials might be quoted to show what a profound and lasting spiritual influence Dr. Fosdick left behind him in our brother land across the water.

Here is a prophet, however, who is not without honor in his own country. Here is a preacher of the new day who has stirred the religious consciousness in thousands of his fellow countrymen. Here is a modern man who has thrown wide a door of rich spiritual experience through which multitudes have entered into a new faith in and a new fellowship with the Christ. One person in attempting to express her feeling of gratitude for what Dr. Fosdick had done for her religious life, could only exclaim: "Thank God for Dr. Fosdick!" How many persons, in every hamlet, village and city in America, might say the same thing? Certainly many feel like the recent writer to a metropolitan paper: "When a noble preacher like Dr. Fosdick comes with a real message for thinking people, giving them something to live for and by, these so-called Fundamentalists, but in reality Pharasaic Trivialists, attack him and force his resignation. Would to God we had more ministers like Dr. Fosdick!" And the words of Nolan Rice Best, writing in Christian Work, phrase a truth which every one of his detractors should read and ponder: "The voices of those who thank God that this man's preaching has enabled them to shake off benumbing doubts about Christ and His Church with joyous and aspiring zeal, are as the sound of many waters."

What a vast influence Dr. Fosdick has, also, over the young men of the world today! In seminary and college he is the most popular and inspiring messenger Christ has. At the summer conferences his inspiring voice is the source of great enthusiasm and power. No wonder that the men of the Christian Associations rally to his support. Here is a statement which appeared in the editorial pages of Association Men: "Over the whole world today one may find thousands of Association members who owe to him a new loyalty to the Master and a new comprehension of faith, prayer and service, mediated through translations in French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Danish, Norwegian, Greek and other languages . . . As an Association man do not forget that this wholesome, straight-dealing Christian gentleman has always been our loyal friend."

The publishers now announce that the Fosdick books have passed the million mark in circulation. Quite fittingly the advertisements read: "Once it was Beecher and Brooks, now it is FOSDICK." "No religious books" said a recent writer, "are more widely read than Dr. Fosdick's on both sides of the Atlantic. It seems but a year or two ago that a friend of mine told me that he had come across a little book called 'The Manhood of the Master' by a writer named Fosdick, and that it was worth its weight in gold. I quite agreed with him when I got the book, which was immediately. Fosdick was an unknown man then but now his writings are known all over the world!"

It is unnecessary to array the hundreds of quotations easily available to prove that Dr. Fosdick's influence today is as wide as the world. The Manhood of the Master, The Second Mile, The Meaning of Faith, The Meaning of Prayer, The Meaning of Service, The Assurance of Immortality, Christianity and Progress, Twelve Tests of Character—these books today are doing an inestimable amount of good from one end of Christendom to the other. They are bringing the rich blessings of new faith into the hearts and homes of modern civilization.

His greatest book is doubtless the Yale lectures for 1924 called "The Modern Use of the Bible." It is a work which will long mould the thinking of men on the great book of the ages—the Bible. It is a masterpiece of clear reasoning combined with deep spirituality. "To be the friendly interpreter" says a Congregationalist editorial concerning this latest book, "of the old and the sweet-spirited champion of the new; to prove, like the Master, that in the field of pure religion the new truth is come not to destroy but to fulfill; to lay reverently but remorselessly aside outworn categories of thought while freeing and glorifying the abiding spiritual realities—that is a great and difficult task in which Dr. Fosdick achieved not merely a success but a triumph. For the devout follower of Jesus who accepts the accredited knowledge of the Twentieth Century, many feel that, so far as the present situation is concerned, these lectures are not only fine but final!"

What is the secret of the power of this man who has been called 'the Caruso of the pulpit' and 'the prince of preachers?' How shall we explain the grip which this modest, even-tempered Christian has upon the world today? Anyone who has heard Dr. Fosdick preach knows: a rich voice, pleasing in quality and full-toned; a frank sincerity of purpose, bodied forth in words which convey a moving depth of conviction; a radiant personality, charged with irresistible magnetism and passionately earnest about Christ and His Kingdom; a brilliant intellect, which rests

every appeal upon masterful logic and straight thinking, yet human and intelligible to the average man as well as to the highly educated; and a delightful spirit of heart-friendliness, within which circle of warmth no cold-heartedness can abide! One cannot listen to what he says or read what he writes without feeling that here is the genius of a rare combination: a scholarly mind, a noble character, a loving heart!

This unusual capacity enables him to do better the very things which Fundamentalists, Unitarians, liberals and scientists want to do. He can and is doing the thing the liberals want; he is presenting the eternal truth of Christianity in modern terms! He can and is doing the thing the Fundamentalists want; he is conserving the saving truth of God in Christ in a perilous age! He can and is doing the thing the Unitarians want; he is making the combination of intellectual honesty and real religion possible! He can and is doing the thing which the scientists want; he is giving the world a comprehensive and satisfying interpretation of the universe! Such a man is not as Dr. Stratton said 'a bootlegger in religion'! He is more truly what the First Presbyterian Church committee said: 'the foremost preacher of our time, in his ability to meet the religious difficulties and aspirations of the new generation.'

Ages ago another prophet of God preached the glorious Gospel, and men misunderstood Him, persecuted Him, crucified Him! Jesus preached pure truth, yet they called Him a madman, a blasphemer, a devil! But out of His magnanimous soul He returned good for evil, tenderness for cruelty, love for hate. Since the Church began, the adversaries of liberty and the advocates of intolerance have crucified the truth-seekers, and often in the very name of Jesus Himself! Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, speaks of the experience he had in his day: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of goodwill! The one preach Christ of contention, the other of love!" The Fosdick controversy presents another analogy: a group preaching a Christ of envy and strife, a faithful disciple preaching the Christ of love.

The decision of Dr. Fosdick is now in history. He has been forced from the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church. Has he lost his fight for spiritual liberty? Has he lost his prestige in the religious world? If devotion to high principles, Christian gentlemanliness, and increased popularity as author and preacher are losses, he has lost! However, it looks as if the real losses will be suffered by the First Church of New York, the New York presbytery, and the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. The First Church

loses the premier Gospel preacher of the generation; the presbytery loses the fellowship of a charming Christian; the Presbyterian Church at large loses the confidence of the world by rejecting the man who holds so high a place in the hearts of men. The final situation is admirably summed up in a New York Times editorial: "It is plain that the whole loss will fall not upon Dr. Fosdick, but upon the Presbyterian Church. It will have convicted itself in the eyes of the public not only of a certain denominational narrowness, but of the folly of giving up the services of a preacher whose good report has filled the whole city, become known throughout the entire country and reached the knowledge of the churches in England. Such a voice as that of Dr. Fosdick's is in no danger of being silenced by any technical ecclesiastical veto. He has but to speak, anywhere, and people will flock to hear him. Without artifice in the pulpit, or the slightest trick of ministerial sensationalism, he has moved thousands by the sincerity of his religious emotions. When a church, no matter of what denomination, has at its disposal such a preacher of spiritual power in a time of dominant materialism, it is so stupid as to be almost wicked to let him go. It seems very close to a violation of the Scriptural injunction to quench not the Spirit. But Dr. Fosdick need not think of abandoning his great following or his high mission. If not in one pulpit, then eventually in another, his exceptional vocation for the ministry will, no doubt, be exemplified so long as strength and life do not fail him."

Dr. Fosdick did not lose! Multitudes have been saved to the church! The unexampled admiration of all has been won by his spirit of Christian patience! The traditions of American Christianity have been greatly enriched by a superb exhibition of loyalty to Christ! He has given this generation a glorious Gospel, four-square with scientific thought, brilliant with fine spiritual discernment, winsome with attractive goodwill, and shining with a spiritual splendor which has brought more men to the feet of the Master than any other apostle since Paul! He has become the great pioneer of that New Reformation of the Twentieth Century which will purge modern Christianity of bigotry, superstition, intolerance and complacent indifference, and will set men and women to the real task of building God's Kingdom in the world!

If Dr. Fosdick has lost, what a glorious defeat it is! If the Fundamentalists have won, what a hollow victory! For that phrase of another robust apostle of spiritual freedom, Rabbi Wise, expresses the emotion which the name of Fosdick calls forth from the hearts of countless companies of men and women round the world today: "Fosdick—the least hated and best loved heretic that ever lived!"

