

Phila

The Mutual Benefit Life Ins. Co.,
 89 Market Street, Opp. Post Office and U. S. Court House,
 Portland, Maine

November 28, 1922.

Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick,
 First Presbyterian Church,
 606 West 122nd St., N.Y. City.

My dear Harry:--

Now you have gone and went and done it!

Did I not tell you, after I had enjoyed the privilege of hearing your splendid sermon, that if you had preached that same sermon in that same church 20 years ago you would have had your throat cut and your body generally dismembered? It appears now that you must have disturbed some of those good old Presbyterians who have been sleeping the sleep of the just, and evidently the rumble of their remains has reached the ears of the leaders of the Congregational Church, and now they are after your scalp.

I heard one eminent New York gentleman make the dreadful criticism of you, that you preached the things that people wanted to hear.

Horrible! Horrible! Horrible! A first class Doctor of Divinity in the Presbyterian Church should distinctly preach to people the things they don't want to hear. This saves the wear and tear on the pews, the wear and tear on the carpets, and saves a lot of work on the part of the janitor, for with empty pews there is only the dust to be removed, and the few regular attendants can dust their own pews and it does not make any difference whether the empty ones are dusted or not.

But you miserable old sinner, you! You have insisted upon preaching the things that people wanted to hear, and you have not only filled the Church, but from the looks of the congregation, you must have stretched and strained the walls, as well as putting a tremendous amount of wear and tear upon the carpets and upon the pews.

Did I not try to teach my little Harry military ethics, including obedience to orders? And here you do not take orders from the Presbyterian Church but insisted upon preaching the things that people wanted to hear. However, I think you and I both learned together how to fight as well as to obey, and I think we learned to take orders from our conscience rather than taking it from a lot of elders or youngsters or even from fossils.

You told me very plainly you were not a Presbyterian, and your sermon had certainly prepared me for that statement; but of course it is just possible that the gentlemen representing the Church when they fell all over themselves to secure your services, may have had a faint inkling of the fact that you were not a Presbyterian.

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Well you are getting some good advertising, for your handsome face appeared even in the Portland paper in connection with the horrible charge that you are not preaching what the Presbyterian Church ordered you to preach but that you are constantly committing the heathenish crime of preaching the things that people want to hear, and to fill your church to overflowing.

Well if they unfrock you or dismember you or disbar you or do anything else that is horrible to you, come on into the life insurance business with me. The life insurance business has ever been the place of refuge for those who failed in other lines of work, and if an old gray haired Son-of-a-Gun like myself can make a good living in the business, I presume that a young, aggressive and able man like you would not starve.

The predestination preached by the Presbyterian Church infallibly pointed to the fact that in due season they might find out that you were not a Presbyterian. You see I was even bright enough to suspect that myself the first time I was privileged to hear you preach. Of course it is just possible that you will remain with the First Presbyterian Church and that you may succeed in bringing the Presbyterian Church up to the present century. I surely would like to be present when you come up for the terrible ordeal of your trial, and if you feel the need of a friendly presence or if you feel the need of a pair of good stout fists and a good sharp tongue, please ask me to come along and see fair play.

I suppose I should be tactful or keep silent on this matter, which of course must be very close to your heart, and perhaps I should not make fun of a matter that seems so serious to some people. But knowing as I do, of your splendid character and the splendid work you have been doing in the Church, I could not resist the temptation to write you a friendly word of sympathy and friendship, and to congratulate you upon your independence of thought and speech, even though it may have offended some of the dear old he ladies as well as some of the dear old she ladies.

With a great deal of love from each of us, and with most delightful remembrances of our association together, I am

Very sincerely,

WDM/HB