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What Shall We Do?

By Gordon H. Clark

A FELLOW STUDENT at the University of Pennsylvania was telling me of a questionnaire his minister had sent out. "What kind of sermons do you like best?" The truthful young man replied, "None." "Does education tend to break down religious faith?" And again he answered, truthfully, "It certainly does."

At this point I asked him if he really thought it did. He was emphatic. Before he entered college, he "used to believe in that stuff, but not any more." All the courses he had taken tended to prove the opposite of Christian teaching. "Well," said I, "do you not believe that Christ rose from the dead?" "No." "Would you like to believe what you once did?" He was not sure, he rather thought so; Christianity was certainly better than the emptiness, the agnosticism in which the professors had plunged him. But he could not believe Christianity.

I asked him how he could explain the rise of Christianity by the preaching of the resurrection. How could he explain the empty grave, and the disciple's statements that they had seen Jesus?

A few more questions made him say that the body was probably stolen and that the appearances were visions. I had recently been studying "The Truth of Christianity," by Lieut.-Col. Turton, who gives much space to this subject. So in the limited time I gave him, as best I could, the other side of the story. But the bell rang and we had to go to class.

I cite this because it is a typical case. I sympathize with him. He and I are in the same classes. I have the same teaching as he. And judging by this type of many others and by the teaching I have had to listen to for the past three years, it is conservative to say that ninety per cent of all university men are more nearly anti-Christian than evangelical.

If the Bible is touched on in class, it is from a destructively critical viewpoint. Orthodoxy is sneered at. And even Christianity in its broadest and weakest sense is ridiculed. One professor that I had to listen to went so far as to compare Islam favorably with Christianity and to extol the

virtues of the former. Well and good, if Islam has avoided the curse of drunkenness so prevalent in Christian countries, but when the same man never loses an opportunity to slam Christianity, Catholic and Protestant alike—you get tired of it, to say the least.

Ask other professors about Christianity or the Bible, and they will say: Certainly, we believe in the Bible; it is a wonderful Book; but as denominations differ in interpreting it, so do we. We all have the same Bible, it is merely a matter of interpretation. Yes, merely a question of whether you interpret it as a truth or no, whether you interpret it as history or myth.

What shall we do? It is no original statement to say that we have commenced a great religious war, a war to determine that Christianity shall survive. Nor is there anything especially brilliant in the idea of preparedness. But there is a tremendous need of putting that idea into practice. The rationalists are going to try to force their way into the church. They want to gain political control. We must try and force them out. And by ambiguous language they will claim the orthodoxy they abhor. They will change the meanings of words and prostitute their significance. The word “divinity” no longer means what it once did. So the faithful found another word, and now we say the “deity” of Christ. Let them continue. When “man” will mean “monkey,” and “god” merely “man,” then another word will be ready. You may call a rose only a cabbage, but that does not change its odor nor deface its beauty. We may deplore the substitution of names and long for the purity of our tongue, but the Being who Abraham, Isaac and Jacob worshipped, the Being who died on the cross for our sins, and he who comforts and strengthens the Christian, will remain forever unchanged and unchangeable.

If the church's adherence to Christ is going to discourage young men from entering the ministry, fine! Tell Drs. Fosdick and MacColl that we want to discourage that type of young men. To keep such men out of the ministry and to put out those who have already perjured themselves in, is the solemn duty of presbytery as presbytery. But to keep such young men from becoming such, to prepare the church for battle and to win the war, is the duty of the individual Christian. And this must take place before they enter college.

It is easy, perhaps too easy, to criticise. However, I hope this will be of the constructive variety. The first problem of the orthodox church is to increase its teaching efficiency. Some one has said that a man never gets a new idea after he is twenty-five.

An eminent worker among boys gave me figures showing that the State spends 47 per cent of the taxes for education, and that the church invests two per cent. It seems impossible. But examine your budget.

But the Sabbath-school alone is not enough. Nothing is enough. As a young man interested in young people's work I have gathered together ten or fifteen of the most promising boys and girls of our Sabbath-school and formed a Bible League. I take no credit for the idea, I just want to pass on what someone, now a minister in Philadelphia, gave me. For two years we have been together, now studying the chapter by chapter method, now as a catechetical class, and again taking up a series of lessons on the Apostle's Creed. Imagine boys and girls of about twelve years of age, studying the great doctrines of the Holy Catholic Church. It is not impossible to teach them to youngsters. It is all a question of finding illustrations in baseball, jumping rope, or school life.

Picture to yourself, if you can, the result of fifty churches in every presbytery instituting such studies among the future leaders. Christian Endeavor is an organization for expression. Now if we can impress something first, think of the advantage.

But we cannot stop here. If the older people are to instruct the young, they must know what to teach or they will be in Tolstoi's predicament, a teacher ignorant of what to teach. So let the minister utilize the prayer-meeting the best he can. I know of some who have done this, and of others who use the Lord's Day service.

There is nothing romantic about this preparation. It is hard work. But it must be attended to immediately. As one of Billy Sunday's hymns says, "Do not wait until some deed of greatness you can do." We, the workers, must take the attitude of Arnauld when he was fighting the Jesuits in France. Some of his friends asked him to take a rest for his health's sake. "Rest," he exclaimed, "have I not all eternity in which to rest!"