



The Challenge of the Present Crisis (1917)

Harry Emerson Fosdick

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Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878 – 1969) was an American pastor. Fosdick became a central figure within American Protestantism in the 1920s and 1930s and was one of the most prominent ministers of the early 20th Century.

In this book Fosdick writes:

"I did not intend to write an essay on the War, and I am glad to see that I have avoided doing so. Many informing treatises are throwing light on every aspect of the great struggle, and it is not likely that there will be lack of more. But when all the special treatises have had their say, an inner problem still remains unsolved. In what mood shall a Christian, or for that matter an idealist of any kind, face the catastrophe? With what considerations and insights can he support his faith and hope? And how can he harmonize his ideals with his necessities of action in a time of war? The morale of our people critically depends upon their answer to such questions.

"If one attempts to write upon the War with these needs in mind, the result cannot be an impersonal treatise. One must say out what his own thought has done in adjusting life to the strange and horrible events of these days; he must plead for the attitudes that seem essential to the saving of man's spiritual treasures. This little book, therefore, is a message, not an essay, and while the pronoun of the first person is absent, the background of the argument is none the less the struggle of the writer to see his way and keep his soul alive in this terrific generation. If taken, then, for what it was intended, it may be worth the reading to some other who is finding this a difficult time in which to think, believe, and live. At least, in this hope, it has been written."

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