



IN THE MATTER OF THE CLERGY

YOU may have noticed the other day that a young man was commissioned by the New York Presbytery to preach the Gospel who stated that he did not believe—among other things—in the flesh-and-blood resurrection of Christ. Now I have not the remotest intention of discussing with you whether that young man was right or wrong; but it does seem to me that such cases as his give ground for an appeal to the clergy to be honest with the people. The business of preaching is surely an ethical business; and one of the first essentials of good ethics is to tell the truth. Lying, deception, suppression of the truth, deliberately leaving a false impression with one's auditors, is hardly the sort of conduct we have a right to expect from men who take our money on the understanding that they will hold up before us the doctrine of pure righteousness; and who, moreover, profess to have received a commission to preach this righteousness to us in an admonitory way from the Deity. That is, they are the men who are charged by the Deity with the duty of urging us to be truthful and honest and straightforward; and they collect salary on that understanding.

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NOW, that being so, the clergy ought surely to be entirely frank with their congregations as to what they believe and what they do not believe. There ought to be no preaching with the tongue in the cheek, or with a "mental reservation" like a dishonest witness. We want no religion of the sort practised by the pagan priests of old who could not meet each other in the street without grinning. The preachers should get up boldly in the pulpit and say exactly what they think; and if they are afraid to do that for fear they will "lose their jobs," they have no business in the pulpit at all. They are cowards, liars and obtainers of money under false pretences. For such men to profess that they are ethical teachers is an insult to every decent citizen to whom right ethics is not a sham nor a method of making a livelihood. We hear it said occasionally that the theology which passes in the city would not do in the country, for the country people have not been "educated up to it." Are the country people then fed falsehoods, fables and legends because they will not pay for anything else? Is preaching a kind of trade in which customers are sold the sort of goods they will buy, being given "shoddy" when they do not know enough to appreciate better stuff?

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IT may seem unfair to attach all this preachment to the case of the young man in question who was certainly honest and barely escaped punishment for it. But you have already perceived in what

direction the incident has carried my thoughts. You probably know yourselves clergymen who hold a different tone in the "study" where they meet "the elect," whose reading and thinking has been "progressive," than they do in the pulpit within hearing of the whole congregation containing all sorts and conditions of people from those who swallow Jonah to those who prefer to sup up Jackson. Now it is against preachers of this class that I am raising my voice. A three-card-monte man can afford to deceive us if he can, for that is his trade; but a teacher of ethics and a preacher of the Gospel should possess at least the fundamental virtues of truthfulness and honesty.

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TO my mind, the case goes even farther. What is the position of the Church? It cannot have two opinions on such a question as whether Christ rose again or not. It is not like a political party which can compromise anything so long as it assembles a majority of votes. Its only claim upon public confidence and support is that it bears a message from the Most High; and it surely ought to know what that message is. If, for instance, there is any doubt about the Resurrection of Christ, how does it know that there will be a resurrection of anybody—that there is a future life—that man has any relations with God? It seems to me that the removal of the Resurrection is the pulling out of the corner stone. The Church may continue to be a very fine ethical society—though it will have to readjust its ethical system to a one-world measure—but it would become a purely human society of ethical study; and my "guess" would be just as good as that of any Conference or Synod in existence.

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THE Church—all the Churches—are constantly coming to us with the request—and often the demand—that we give them of our money to promote their cause. They take one man's money and another man's son or daughter and send them off to China or India to preach—what? That is something which the man who gives his dollars and the man who gives his children have a right to know. Will these missionaries preach Christ risen, or will they tell the "heathen" that the circumstantial account of that affair given in the Bible is a "fake"? Whichever they propose to preach, they should certainly make no secret of it here where we are doing the paying and the sending. Some of us might be willing to pay for one and some for the other; but it is not likely that any of us would be willing to pay for both. Honest dealing is not too much to ask of the leaders of Christendom. Is the Bible a divine book; or has it only what our American cousins would call "spotted divinity"? Is it all true; or are there things in it calculated to mislead the unlearned in German research? The Church might be right if it took either position; but which does it take? It cannot take both. Our religious leaders ought to realise that they cannot expect the plain citizen to regard them as the Heaven-inspired, God-sent preachers of a divinely revealed religion, which man must accept or be forever damned, when they let one man preach who insists on everything from the Fall of Adam to the Resurrection of Christ and then permit another man to get up beside him who calls Adam a tribe and the Resurrection a parable.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

PAYING ATTENTION TO RIFLE SHOOTING IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



A Front View of the 500 yard Butt.



A View of the Butt from above.



Col. F. S. Moore, D.O.C., President Provincial Rifle Association and Capt. Watts, Sec.-Treas. Charlottetown Rifle Association, on the bank is "Bisley" Jones.