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How Long?

By Gordon H. Clark

When a presbytery ordains men who deny the virgin birth; when the church with schisms is split asunder, with heresies distressed, the cry naturally goes up, How long, O Lord, how long? We all have faith. We know that the faith once delivered to the saints shall never perish. The truth of God will surely triumph. But when? And how?

If there is any truth in the statement that history repeats itself, now is the time to utilize that truth. Heresy is not new. The church, as an outward organization, has been decadent before. To recall those times and study their scenes may help us. Preceding the Reformation came Erasmus. There are men like him to-day. A wise man and cautious he was, sincerely seeking the best solution and the most complete reform. Erasmus was a diplomat and wanted to save the organization along with the church spiritual. But his remedy was not drastic enough. His clean-cut and fearless edition of the New Testament reached only the monks and the clergy. The people had not information regarding conditions and the impending storm. Then came Luther. Perhaps he did not want to break away from the Roman Church. Its corruption showed him the need of reform and its politics drove him out. And his break was successful, because had the people behind him. The common people heard Christ gladly; so also Luther.

If we study the details of that period, we will easily note striking similarities between then and now. And just as the study of God's Word by the laity brought results in 1500, only so can it be in 1900. The laity must save the church. Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin were the leaders. But, from the human standpoint, it was those who were led that brought the victory. It took some time for conditions to grow bad enough; it took a while to find fearless leaders; then the people had to be aroused. This order is being repeated to-day. Conditions are quite bad enough. When one lone committee-man opposes twenty-two others, we know we have fearless leaders. Now to arouse the slumbering hosts.

The glory of the Presbyterian system is the layman's voice in government. The man in the pew has his say. And when he uses that force, he will be astonished at its power. It is the

individual Christian who must get out his Bible, and open it. He must pore over it. More than likely he will not use the terms of technical theology. Deity or divinity, vicarious atonement may bring only hazy ideas. But he will ponder over Christ's words, "I and my Father are one." He will examine the charge on which Caiaphas condemned Christ. He will meditate on the note of a substitutionary sacrifice in Isaiah 53. Then reverently he will say, Christ is God, and he died in my stead.

The individual, every-day Christian has been taking Christianity too easily. He forgets the price which was paid by Christ to found it and by the saints to continue it. He is asleep. One feels like calling, Awake, thou that sleepest and arise from the dead! When he will be fully awake, that is all that is necessary. The alert orthodoxy of the man in the pew will be the church's salvation. As soon as that man sees clearly the present danger, the danger will turn pale, turn tail, and join the Unitarians. When the Christian awakes, all will be settled. But, oh, for an adequate alarm clock.