

THE CHALLENGE OF THE PRESENT CRISIS

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The Challenge of the Present Crisis by Harry Emerson Fosdick

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HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

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HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

*Author of "The Meaning of Prayer," "The Manhood of
the Master," etc.*

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THE AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

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 hor-

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rible 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.

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK.

September 1, 1917.

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I

The first question to be answered by any individual or by any social group, *The real handle to a difficult situation* facing a hazardous situation, is whether the crisis is to be met as a challenge to strength or as an occasion for despair. Henry Fawcett, a young Englishman, hunting with his father, suffered an accident staggering enough to break the nerve of ordinary men: his father shot at a partridge, hit his son's eyes, and entirely blinded them. Writing about the matter afterward, young Fawcett said, "I made up my mind inside of ten minutes after the accident to stick to my main purpose as far as in me lay." He kept his word—worked his way