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ALL AUTHORITIES AGREE

Every now and then in my reading I run across a statement which always causes me to wince. It says, "All authorities agree that..." It is so seldom that a fact of any nature is agreed upon by all authorities that one questions or has a right to question any statement that begins with "All authorities agree..." In the first place it must be doubted if there is any satisfactory explanation as to what constitutes an authority. So the question of who is an authority or what constitutes an authority is always in order.

Authorities do not always agree in history or historical criticism and certainly the "authorities" would not agree on interpretation of scriptures. It is doubtful that one can interpret the scripture without finding some place to inject his personality and subject his leaning into it. Among the greatest scholars of this day and of the age that preceded us were men whom I have come to love and admire devotedly. Yet unconsciously there creeps into their writings their own

peculiar leanings. This is only human because we are persuaders by our interpretations of facts. Actually what a man means when he says, "All authorities agree..." is that those who agree with him agree. They may or may not be an authority. Most assuredly one could find a collection of writers who follow one point of view, for in this day of crass plagiarism one cannot escape agreement when he has practically appropriated the writing of his predecessor. So don't you accept it when you read that some position is "supported by all authorities."

ABOUTS GNATS AND CAMELS

Not too long ago I sat down beside a pastor and heard him talk about the fine work that his church was doing. Everything about his work was challenging; many people had been won to Christ; others had been led to be more Christian in their attitudes. As he talked to me about matters that were deeply spiritual he became agitated and reached over to pick up his cigarette. Then he puffed and talked about the church, the people, and his opportunities. He pulled

vigorously on the cigarette.

I have some friends who would not have enjoyed this conference because smoking tobacco has become the sort of sign of worldliness, impiety, and careless spiritual living. As I listened I was thinking about another conference I had driving along beside a beautiful lake shore with a pastor who was condemning one of his brethren for smoking. "I could not do it Brother Gallman," said he. "My Lord would not let me touch tobacco. I do not believe the Lord is happy to see his ministers puff and blow smoke." On and on he went. It could have been an impressive conference. Yet as I listened to it his story went on to relate how unfortunate his married life had been, how it was necessary for him to leave the wife he married in youth to find a soul mate who understood him.

I do not advocate tobacco smoking, and I have not touched one since I was sixteen years old; but I do advocate Christian attitudes. The purist should be a purist throughout or he may be accused of "straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel."

BOOK REVIEW

Primer on Roman Catholics for Protestants. Stanley I. Stuber. (New York: Association Press, 1953) \$2.50.

This is a must for your library. This book will give you a real basis for interpreting the church we meet more often now than ever. It is a fair factual presentation, unemotionally stated, and freely documented.

Doctrines, practices, and

policies are carefully examined. In addition to its free use of sources, it offers lists of works on the subject of each chapter (but no Bibliography).

"COME ON AND FIGHT"

The preacher looked sternly into the eyes of his people and challenged: "If there are any evolutionists, agnostics, skeptics, or infidels in this crowd, I'm talking to you! Come and fight! I'll fight you till I die." His congregation was impressed. When had they listened to such a courageous preacher? How could any man "sit on the fence" any longer. The preacher had declared war and the church was behind him. A youthful singer kept asking himself, "How many of these folk, twenty miles from the county seat, ever heard of evolution?"

It doesn't take courage to preach to people in such a manner as this. But had the preacher found an issue that was real to the situation he would have needed the courage he seemed to have. There are enough areas of sin, selfishness, worldliness, and unbelief about us to keep us forever on the job without resorting to simulated conflicts with clay pigeons far away. Preaching consists of bringing God's word into pertinent situations. It consists of creating a deep sense of one's need of God, then of offering God's remedy. When the Spirit-led conscience cannot avoid the conflict between sin and the Gospel, the preacher must preach his conviction. But real issue with folk involved should be a greater challenge than such as the one mentioned above.

Statistical report: Correspondence students 1270.