

University of Notre Dame
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An Alumnus Asks For Suggestions.

An alumnus, in a letter of thanks for the Alumni Religious Survey, proposes the following common problem:

"Many times one has occasion to be in mixed groups where someone throws a bomb by declaring: 'I don't care to attend church; there are so many hypocrites there;' or a smaller bomb by saying: 'I see no reason why there should be any church-going at all - "the kingdom of God is within you,"' and immediately everyone else shrinks into himself and remains silent. Again, some well-meaning person proclaims adherence to the Golden Rule as his guiding principle, and seldom does anyone offer advice about a better one. Will you make a few suggestions as to taking issue with argumentative persons or offering help to those who are groping for it?"

As for argumentative persons, the best general rule is not to take issue with them - to let them argue within themselves. An apt word, closing the issue, is not out of place; if you can't think of the apt word, remain silent.

When a man tells you that he believes in the Golden Rule and practices it, ask him why. If he replies, "because it is intrinsically reasonable," ask him to look into the intrinsic reasonableness of the rest of the teachings of The One Who gave it to us in its full form. And then ask him what to do with those who do not practice the Golden Rule; ask him to think where civilization would be today (it's bad enough now) if it had continued on the downward path, if Christianity had not taken hold when it did. Know a bit of the history of civilization: read, for instance, the first chapter of Scott's "Credentials of Christianity;" read Walsh's "The World's Debt to the Catholic Church."

When a man tells you "the kingdom of God is within you," ask him: "Who said that?" Then remind him that Christ also said, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; he that despiseth you despiseth Me; he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me;" "He that believeth not shall be condemned;" "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." A general who picks out one page or one line of his text on military tactics and makes it a hobby, ignoring the rest of the book, will never win a war. Life is a warfare; and we need the whole book, not one single line, for a text. If God had not told us how He wanted to be worshipped, we would be free to draw up our own religion according to the laws of reason; but He has told us, and we are not free to pick and choose what to believe and what to reject in His teachings.

If a man tells you he stays away from church because so many hypocrites go, ask him why he does not get out of business because there are so many hypocrites in trade, why he doesn't avoid theatres, social gatherings, clubs, and the like, which all have their share of hypocrites. Remind him of the parable of the Pharisee and the publican; it was the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as the rest of men, and the publican who said, "O Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." It was the publican who went out justified, and the Pharisee who added a sin to his total - but note that both of them went to church. Tell him to go there and strike his breast, and acknowledge his own sinfulness - and add that if he keeps his eyes cast down, as the publican did, he won't know whether there are any hypocrites there or not.

Finally, remind them all that as we have testimonial banquets to prominent citizens and patriotic gatherings on Washington's birthday and similar occasions, so we have social duties to God. Remind them of Russia, where the principle of "each man a law unto himself" hasn't worked out so well. (The gunmen follow it here.) And give them a copy of Bishop Noll's little pamphlet, "It Is Time To Try Religion."

PRAYERS: Gerald DuWan's mother has just undergone a serious operation. Emil Jano's mother is ill.