

DR. BLAND CRITICISES CHRISTIAN CHURCH**Says it is Lacking in Enthusiasm and Real Power**

In a sermon that startled his audience by its passionate eloquence, Rev. Dr. S. G. Bland last Sunday night in Grace church denounced the modern Christian church as wholly lacking in enthusiasm or real power. He said it wrongly exalted theology and degraded social reconstruction. "It must either go rapidly into senile decay," he declared, "or undertake its proper task of working for justice and brotherhood in the world." While severe in the main, Dr. Bland expressed his faith that the church is the real hope of the world, and that its regeneration will come soon.

The latest novel of the American writer, Winston Churchill—"The Inside of the Cup"—afforded the occasion of Dr. Bland's sermon. The minister sketched the novel with running commentary, expressing his belief that it represented a high-water mark in current fiction. It deals with a wealthy church in a large American city, the minister being the central character. Finding that his congregation largely represents forces opposed to real Christianity, the clergyman changes his attitude from the inoffensive orthodoxy to militant revolt.

"I am sorry to say," said Dr. Bland, "that it is not the church which is representing, as they rise, the new ethical standards of our complex age. It is the new school of novelists—men like Galsworthy, H. G. Wells, Upton Sinclair, Jack London—and now Winston Churchill. These men are doing a work that I say with shame and sorrow the pulpit is not doing anything like the extent that it should. They are giving us new ethical standards, new insight into social and political abuses. They are making men discontented with things as they are, giving us a new sense of shame for wrongdoing and now imparting a new ideal of social service. This is a great work. I consider it exceedingly significant, therefore, that Winston Churchill should have taken a new line in his latest work, and have selected a minister of the gospel for his chief character."

Entering New Field

After reviewing the book, Dr. Bland cried: "I question whether there is one church in Canada or the United States which, in fearless loyalty to Christ, is really doing its work. Nevertheless, we are entering on a new field of Christian experience; and I believe that the church will respond to the call of duty. Christ came not to bring peace, but a sword. Peace is stagnation. We have passed through such an era, and we have had enough of it."

"At this moment there is no enthusiasm in any church in North America, or England, Ireland and Wales. If you look for any permanent glory or enthusiasm in the church of Christ today you will not find it. Enthusiasm is the lost quantity in the Christian church of these Christian countries. You can find enthusiasm in the foreign missions—in China, Asia and among savages. That is, because the missionaries are doing real work. You cannot find it among us because the church is doing nothing. You cannot find in the churches such enthusiasm as you will find among the socialists and the single taxers. Brothers, it is not here; we may as well confess the fact."

Steeped in Unrighteousness

"Don't blame the preachers, or the machinery of the church. The fundamental reason is that the church is declining its divinely-appointed task. When the leading citizens—the bankers and prominent business men—in this and other cities grapple with the real evils of life, you will need no foreign evangelists or choirs to hold up the church. But there will never be another great revival in the Protestant church until the leading men begin to act as though they believed God meant to set up His kingdom on earth."

"Society is steeped in unrighteousness, and nowhere as in this Canadian west. Our ethics are the ethics of the gambling saloon. We have the elements of moral destruction among us. I say frankly that you cannot expect a business man to live a Christian life today. Let us blame ourselves who have allowed conditions to become so utterly corrupt that men feel it is hopeless to succeed by being righteous. We must begin the great work of attacking all the cruelties of our commercial life, all the rascalities of high finance, all the abominations of our political system."

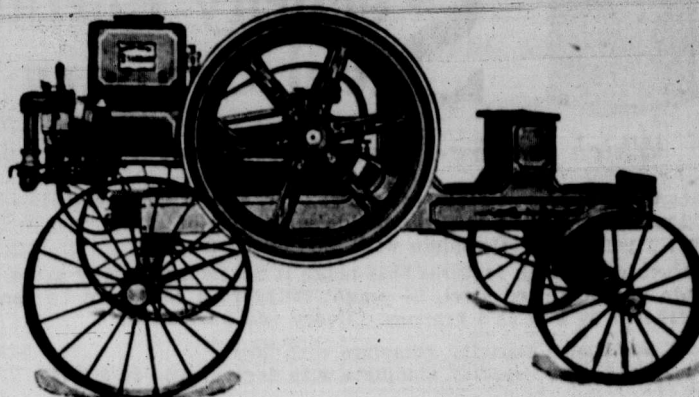
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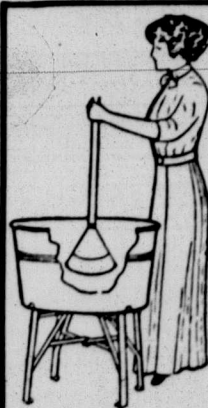
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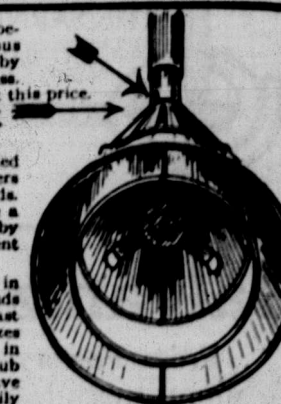
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