

Christianity in the New Age

than many are ready to admit from the perversity of preachers who imagine that it is over the bodies of their people, so to speak, that they can best march to the conquest of the masses.

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All this does not imply, as many seem to think, a narrow "conventicle ideal," which construes the Church as a "little Bethel" for a few pale and pious souls, regarding a small membership as the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. What it does imply is a firm resolve to appeal to what is at once the deepest and the most universal instinct in man—his affinity for the living God, and to recall men from the surface life of the senses and the brain to their hidden Centre. To say that this narrows the Church is a libel on mankind. The Church that resolutely stands for the spiritual first, and for social interests only as the natural outcome of a truly spiritual conception of life, may not appeal to the masses in the sense of gathering large crowds (except to hear preachers of outstanding ability); but it will appeal to the best in every man, and her very existence will be a wholesome prick, a haunting reminder, in the minds of thousands who never darken her doors. To insist that mass-attraction is the criterion of the Church's health is to fall back into that vicious habit which sees the supreme object of