

The Reconstruction of the Church. By Paul Moore Strayer. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1915. 309 pp. \$1.50 net.

A study of contemporary church history is made here to reveal the weakness and inadequacy of religious organization for real efficiency. While admitting that "efficiency for organization purposes has reached its maximum in the Roman Catholic Church," the author contends that "efficiency in spiritual leadership and community service has not been attained by any large number of Roman or Protestant churches." The world is full of religious feeling, of brotherly kindness, of ethical conduct, which are in no way identified with the church; modern life is aflame with social feeling; but this notable advance has not registered proportionately in an awakened and conquering church. "The church is suffering under the law of diminishing returns." More brain and heart, more time and money are invested in it than ever before, but the investment is not bringing in adequate returns. The church need have no fear of utter failure, the author thinks, for it deals with an ineradicable religious instinct and this is by no means an irreligious age. "I have a resolute faith in the church," he says. "I am enthusiastic over my calling and believe that the Christian ministry offers the greatest opportunity for moral and spiritual leadership in the world today." But, he argues, the time has come when the church must either do big business, or be content to "decrease," while competing interests "increase"; "must capture the world, or stand aside and see the world pass by." To this end the church needs reconstruction with regard both to its message and its program. Its eternal message needs to be reclothed to meet the demands of this new age. The church itself needs to be Christianized by bringing the daily life and business practices of its members into line with the law of Christ. The call of God is loud and clear to this effect. It has become unmistakable since this sudden insanity of war has fallen upon Europe. Christianity has made less impression on our Western Civilization than we thought, and unless we Christianize Christendom we must stand before the religions of Asia silent and humbled. The challenge is not to Europe only, the challenge is imperative

to the churches of America, for the same fear and distrust of man for his fellow man, the feelings of national pride and prejudice and the commercial greed, which gave birth to militarism there, and precipitated this horrible cataclysm, are to be found in great measure in our own social and industrial life. America is yet to be Christianized. Part I of this volume deals with the need and nature of a revised message for today; Part II is a diagnosis of the situation in the light of this larger purpose, with special reference to program and method; and Part III points out the directions in which reconstruction is most needed, and offers suggestions for greater efficiency, growing out of actual experience. "I have had chiefly in mind," the author says, "those in the church who have a sturdy faith in organized religion, who believe that the church has a work to do in our changing social order and who are seeking the best methods by which it can fill its place." Each church, of course, must recast its program and decide upon its methods in the light of the needs of its own community and the forces available to meet them; but the study of so vital a book as this will help it no little in achieving its ends.

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The Crisis of the Church. By Wm. B. Riley, M.A., D.D. Charles C. Cook, New York, 1914. 197 pp. \$1.00 net.

The Building of the Church. By Charles E. Jefferson. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1910. 306 pp. \$1.00 net.

The Rural Church Movement. By Edwin L. Earp, Ph.D. (Leipzig). The Methodist Book Concern, New York. 177 pp. 75c net.

Next to its doctrine of Christ what presses most on Protestantism, it is coming to be felt, is the reconstruction of its doctrine of the church, and of the church itself. In the last resort, Christ and faith are for the Protestant, as over against the Roman Catholic, higher categories than Church, and he is not slow to criticise all existing "Churches" through them. This critical process has gone far in our day and to a large extent the church has been discredited. Even among those who loyally adhere to the institution in some form, there is an uneasy feeling