

Comment on Current Books

The Church and the Social Problem A wholesome and a tonic book is this from the President of Lawrence University, Wisconsin. It has been prepared by request to meet a need in the Methodist Church—a need, it must still be said, which exists in all churches, in which those who adequately realize the gravity of the present social problem, superficially economic but centrally moral, are comparatively few. There has been, as Dr. Plantz shows, a vast betterment going on for many years in the condition of the laborers, but justice, he contends, demands much more, and the Church is not yet actively sympathetic with the demand. Hence she is regarded with contemptuous indifference or bitter hostility. The facts presented in detail are enough to sting every nerve of effort to roll away deserved reproach. It is quite plain that the social half of the Gospel is not yet preached or exemplified in the churches as a whole, however many noble exceptions exist. What the churches can and ought to do to meet the crisis which threatens their moral leadership of the community is stated sanely, plainly, and in ample detail. Fault is not all on the side of the churches; fault on both sides is impartially recognized; but the duty of the churches to lead in amendment is the paramount consideration, and the way to lead is well laid out. It does not seem, however, that Dr. Plantz is judicious in narrowly

identifying "Socialism" with the theories of Mr. Debs and Herr Marx, and attacking it as irreconcilable with Christianity. He, as well as they, insists on a reconstruction of the social environment, though in other points parting company. Nor is it correct to set Jesus' religion in antagonism to "Socialism" as "emphatically individualistic," seeing that he appealed to individuals with the ideal of a social good. But these one-sided views are canceled in the subsequent discussion by large admissions, at the cost of some incoherency. The book, as a whole, verifies the remark long ago made by the Belgian economist Émile de Laveleye, "The Church can never get rid of her socialistic base." (The Church and the Social Problem. By Samuel Plantz. Eaton & Mains, New York. \$1.25.)