

BREAKDOWN OF MATERIAL CIVILISATION

RT. REV. F. STAKES ON THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH'S OPPORTUNITY

KINGWILLIAMSTOWN, Thursday.

—The Right Rev. F. Stakes last night delivered his inaugural address as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, his subject being "The Task of the Church in the Present World Situation."

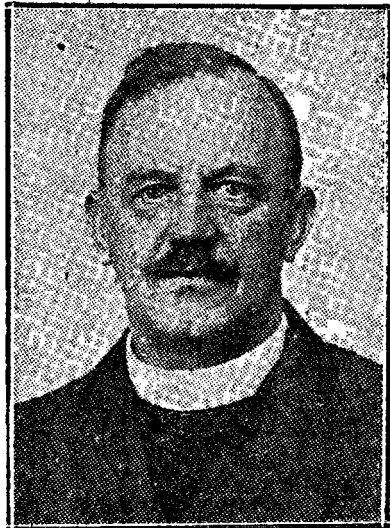
It would be a very bold man, he said, who claimed the ability to fully analyse and explain the causes of the world's present confused conditions. The ground swell following the storm of the Great War had not yet subsided, many countries being heavily handicapped with war debts and reparations, which had hindered their efforts to rebuild national life and stability.

Financial distress and the depression of trade had resulted in unemployment and privation on an unprecedented scale. The Church had nothing to do with economics or political policies, except where these were affected by Christian principles, but the Church was concerned with "the spiritual and ethical breakdown consequent on our lopsided material civilisation." Their bounden duty was to carry the ethic of Jesus over into the new economic order, partly created by the increase of machinery.

A BANEFUL INFLUENCE.

In South Africa the suspicions and bitterness of racialism had spread a baneful influence over all sections of the people. The colour bar had entered into the creed of many European Christians, who treated the native either with disdain or suspicion. The attitude of many Church people to native well-being and betterment was not merely un-Christian but glaringly anti-Christian. Much of recent legislation on native affairs was repressive, and reflected fear and suspicion rather than moral responsibility and helpful guardianship.

But it was not only in relation to the Bantu people that the evil spirit of racialism was seen. When language, and not ideals and policies, was made the dividing line between men, every high and holy cause was thereby hindered. He appealed to Europeans in all sections of the Christian Church to set aside their prejudices and race differences, and join hands and hearts in a united service. The Christian Church had never had a greater opportunity. The native people needed all the help and guidance that could be given to them in their reasonable



The Rt. Rev. F. STAKES,
Moderator of the Presbyterian Church.

struggle, for a fair deal and a place in the South African sunshine.

A living Church could not ignore the danger threatening the land through the revived efforts of the liquor trade to find new markets for the sale of intoxicating liquor, encouraged by the promise of the Minister of Justice to bring forward an amending Bill introducing the tot system to natives in the Transvaal.

This proposal was fraught with the gravest consequences to both natives and Europeans, and must be strenuously opposed by every section of the Christian Church. Public opinion must be aroused and organised, and brought to bear upon Legislators to make it impossible for such a blot to be placed on the Statute book.

These matters, as well as the growth of the gambling spirit, the sad laxity regarding the sanctity of the marriage tie, and vigilance in the censorship of films and posters, all called for a bold stand by the Church. The need for the closing of the Christian ranks had become imperative.

There was a growing impatience among the younger people at denominational divisions. The matter of closer co-operation between Churches in South Africa would be brought before the Assembly, and he commended it to their serious and prayerful consideration.