

In these times, the position of the clergy is a most trying one. Turned as their thoughts constantly are to these questions, and with the knowledge which they professionally possess, it is impossible that their minds should be free from the general disquietude. Ever and anon, indeed, a secession betrays the conflict which has been going on and which, we may be sure, is not confined to the breasts of the seceders. Some of these men, perhaps, have gone into the ministry as men have gone into other professions, for a piece of bread, but most of them may fairly be supposed to have chosen their calling as the most spiritual, and thus to be peculiarly sensitive to the prick of conscience. The taunt of hypocrisy, flung against them by writers and declaimers of an extreme school, is uncharitable as well as discourteous. If, in despite of growing doubt, they cling to the formularies to which they have subscribed—which many of them subscribed before serious doubt had arisen—it may fairly be assumed that they are moved as much by the fear of a general catastrophe as by that of losing their own subsistence. Their best justification and comfort in adhering to an equivocal position will perhaps be found in the fact illustrated in our last number, that scepticism is unable to devise any code of Ethics better than a rationalized Christianity. But those who have any misgivings ought at least to promote, to the utmost of their power, the extension of mental freedom. Perhaps the day may be not far distant when we shall see how alien it is to the spirit of the Gospel, as well as to reason, to impose tests on any one, above all on those who are specially dedicated to the service of Truth.