

Christ—and Christ knew him well, as He knows you and me well, and he tested him as He tests you and me, as we need it—and he put before him this—that coming to Christ, as he seemed inclined to inquire about doing, would involve the sacrifice of his possessions, and he was not prepared for the sacrifice, and he turned away. I wonder if there be not Canadian young men and United States young men who sometimes in their secret hearts make calculations of this kind: “I cannot get the possessions I am aiming at and at the same time be a follower of Jesus, so I put him aside and try to realize the dream of my ambition.” I say, this too favourable attitude in which we have learned to put mammon indisposes our fellow creatures to come to Christ, and become as He is. It has other influences of which I will indicate one or two. It sometimes leads one to make a kind of compromise, to attempt a kind of compromise in the mind. “Here are that multitude of people, some of them good natured, kindly hearted people, not of course up to the Christian ideal, but in many cases excellent people and standing well with their fellow creatures—am I to believe that because they are not what the Bible makes out to be Christians, they are therefore under the divine displeasure, with God’s wrath hanging over them, and an eternity of misery and gloom before them? No, I cannot believe that this is so. There must be some alternative. There must be some other chance. There must be some way out of the darkness into the light for them, in this life or in the life that is to come!” You come to them with your Bible in your hand and you present text after text and truth after truth emphasizing this view—He that hath the Son hath life, He that hath not the Son shall not see life. You give word after word, text after text, and truth after truth. They say, “O that is the Old Testament.” You give them New Testament, but they say, “O, that is Pauline, he was ultra-logical and severe.” You give them the very words from the lips of Jesus, you tell them that it was Jesus, Love Incarnate, who gave us the verse—“Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.” Your arguments are unanswerable; then they say—“If that is the Bible teaching we will have none of it, we will have none of it. We will not accept truth so humiliating, so repugnant to our natural ideas and conception of things.” You say, “O, that is in delity.” Infidelity is a somewhat unpopular word, it is a good sign of our moral atmosphere that it is so. It is suggestive of a great deal that is disagreeable and unpleasant, and only a very small portion of the people on this American Continent are willing to be stamped as infidels, but there comes some one along, and with an air of lofty superiority he takes some such tone as this: “Why, I am not an atheist, I am not an infidel. I do not indeed accept these statements that are given upon the supposed authority of the Word of God, I do not know a really philosophical mind that does accept them. They may be true, they may not be true. In the nature of the case the thing cannot be settled, I am an agnostic. I do not pronounce against the thing. I cannot believe those who pronounce for it.” Here now is a comparatively new word, a portentous word, so some people think, and for many it gets rid of the difficulties and embarrassments that are associated with the avowal of infidelity; but it has all the practical effects of infidelity upon him who adopts that which the word represents. Well now, what comes of all that? Give us a population, the noticeable, influential, conspicuous part of which sets up Mammon instead of Christ—the sayings, the views, the examples, the influences of this powerful class will go down among the various strata (as we have come to say of society), and these views are accepted, this example is supposed to be good, these considerations are supposed to be conclusive. What then? Then there is no necessity for attaching so much importance to the Bible. Then there is no need for this rigid observance of the day of holy rest; then the Church is not of very great consequence, the ministry is not what our fathers held it to be; then the sacraments—well, they are a matter of course in some degree, and in some degree a matter of taste; then we do not feel ourselves under moral obliga-