

those who give no evidence of the possession of religious life, without exhibiting any lively solicitude for their condition, or putting forth any considerable efforts to change it. There is little travail, as in birth, that Christ may be formed in them—little of the divinely sanctioned violence under the pressure of which those still without the Kingdom, might be brought in. There is hardly any aspect in which the state of our religious life can be contemplated, that is more discouraging than this. It is altogether too tolerant of the presence of indifference and irreligion. Its depth, if not its sincerity, is thereby brought into question. It were only to repeat an oft mentioned story, if I were to dwell here, on the conformity to wordly maxims and habits which is almost more generally prevalent than in any preceding age. The summons is not one which has taken powerful hold of almost any branch of the church in these days—"Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

A more important question than the one what is the absolute condition of religious life among us, or what is its condition compared with that which obtains in other parts of the Christian world, is the question, what is its condition in comparison with what it was years ago. Is the tone of piety rising or falling? Is the sense of divine things—the apprehension of the unseen and eternal—becoming stronger or weaker? The question is one to which it is very difficult to give a certain reply; and to which, especially, we should be slow to give an unfavourable one. Doing this, the words of the wise preacher are at once recalled to memory "Say not thou what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning them."

It is not difficult, however, to recognise certain influences at work in our day, of an antagonistic kind, which, while not peculiar to it, are yet more powerfully operative now than at previous periods. I may mention first, here, the increasing boldness of the infidelity of the period, the high pretensions to which it lays claim to scientific knowledge, the degree in which these find currency in the popular literature. I do not say, that it has never in any previous age, been so bold and wide-spread. In the end of the last century, and the beginning of this one, it was perhaps even more so. It has made great advances, however, in certain circles during the last quarter of a century; and the effect is seen among ourselves, not perhaps in any as yet general adoption of infidel or semi-infidel views, but in a certain unsettlement of religious thought, which is only less injurious. A degree of uncertainty is made to attach to divine things, which renders it greatly easier for irreligious and wordly men to live in neglect of them, to indulge, with less of solicitude as to the result, their love of wealth or ease, or even sinful pleasure, and to postpone that decision for Christ, which, under other circumstances, they might feel to be at once urgent and imperative, if not, to dismiss all purpose and thought of it whatever. It is more difficult to discover what we can do in these provinces, to check this evil. Important contributions on the questions at stake between science and religion, can hardly be expected to come in the meantime, from the churches of Canada. The speculative issues must be mainly fought out in countries where there is more leisure and more opportunity for enquiry. A revived piety, however, would do much, not only to protect us against the unsettlement of belief, which controversies, respecting the very