

try of the edifice. Second, by inserting anything for which the divine architect has not made provision in his plan. Another way in which a real enemy of Christ may be known is by his supplying the place of the good and imperishable material with something that has no durability. 'The "wood, hay and stubble" may be so artfully introduced that the ignorant or inexperienced see nothing to regret in the change of materials. It is however a violation of the commands of the great Master, and must incur his displeasure. And "the fire shall destroy them."

For us, who have within our reach the experience of the church as recorded in history, to suppose that there is no danger from such things, would be childish folly. Human nature is still the same; and in similar circumstances we may expect that the evils of the past will be reproduced; we may also expect that they will creep in very silently and almost without observation. In my opinion the evils of the past already exist to such an extent as to warrant very serious searchings with regard to the cause.

In the first place, if we consult the writings of the best and most eminent men of the past century, is there not reason to suspect that both the standard of doctrine and discipline in the church is lowered? It sounds very well to hear ministers talking of the "glorious reformation" in the time of Luther, Calvin, and Knox; and ringing the changes on the stereotyped phrase "Justification by faith, the article of a standing or falling church." But such expressions do not convey to our congregations correct ideas of justification, or of Christ's imputed righteousness, through which alone it can be obtained. I am far from hinting that these vital subjects have no place in the ministrations of preachers in general; but without hesitation I give as my opinion, that they are not dwelt upon with as much fulness and plainness as they were by the most eminent and successful divines of a past generation. And, brethren, I fear that the great reason for the change, in this respect, is the belief that such preaching would be less interesting

and popular. Yes, I confess it with shame, for I dare not say that I am guiltless. We have to too great extent preached ourselves, not Christ. With some kind of vague fear that these old-fashioned doctrines would be unpopular, we have either substituted for them the "wood, hay and stubble," or, we have failed to present them as if we considered them the very life and soul of preaching. Ah, beloved, seeing we have to render an account of this our stewardship, might it not be well for each of us, some day, to enter into an honest review of his sermons, for one year, or for five or ten years, to see how much, or rather how little we have really said to magnify Christ and hold him up as the only hope of dying man? The temptation to such trifling with the gospel is, in our day, not small.—There are many in the church who have no relish for the gospel, and who can only listen patiently when it is served up in some concealed way. If the dish prepared be garnished with such a profusion of beautiful flowers that the food is almost or altogether concealed, they are satisfied. But such a sermon as that of Edwards, where he describes "Sinners in the hand of an angry God," or one that would be a plain answer to the question "What must I do to be saved," would find no acceptance with them. In fact, the taste of the church is being corrupted by the religious literature of the present day; and the servants of Christ are in danger of losing sight of the main object of preaching, in their efforts to imitate the modern, and, as some think, improved style of preaching the gospel.

Then, again, the discipline of the church—another of Christ's ordinances—is not maintained as in the days of our fathers. I fear there is less caution exercised in admitting to church membership, and the persons received are not sufficiently impressed with the fact that the church is a society distinct from the world. Then, again, the rivalry among different denominations or communions tends to increase the evil; for it is a notorious fact, that fugitives from discipline in one church, are often received with open arms, when they offer themselves to some different and rival communion. In