

desirous to promote. Third. There may be mentioned, as connected with the foregoing, a very general readiness to engage in such work as Sabbath School teaching, district visitation, and other forms of personal Christian effort. It is safe to say, that the various agencies of the kind referred to could not be maintained in the state of efficiency in which they exist, and, considering the demands they make on the time and energy of the workers, without a deep and general appreciation of spiritual things, and an earnest desire on the part of many to advance the honor of the Saviour. No motive, less pure and commanding could keep in a busy age so many unremunerated workers at their posts, and for so long periods, as not a few of these have occupied them. Other features of an encouraging character will readily occur to any attentive observer. One cannot become intimately acquainted with any considerable circle of the membership of our church, without having pleasing evidence of the power of religion in moulding the characters and controlling the lives of not a few composing it. The extent to which in some quarters young men are uniting for the purposes of prayer and of spiritual improvement generally, is another gratifying indication. And, as in full keeping with it, there may be mentioned the greatly increased number of pious youths, who are now coming forward as candidates for the Christian ministry.

Among the indications of a less favourable kind, as to the state of religious life among us, I am led to mention, first, what appears to be a decline in reverence, in the feeling of solemnity awakened by the truths of religion. How little there is of the fear of God, in that sense of it, in which it bows the spirit down in presence of the Divine perfections! How few are awed under the apprehension of the purity, the faithfulness, the almightiness of God! Does religion, even where it does not lack sincerity not seem to be losing something of its former depth? If it finds expression, in words more readily and more frequently than it did once, this is not as often connected with a deminution in the depth and sacredness of the emotion as with an increase in its force and fervour. The branch of the church with which it is our honor to be connected has a work to do, in influencing and influencing for good, the religious life of the community in this aspect of it. It has a reputation to preserve and guard here. From the beginning it has aimed at promoting a piety of a deep and reverential, while at the same time, tender kind. It has been accused sometimes of undue austerity. It has never been charged with ministering to irreverence or frivolity. Our strength lies—does it not? in keeping true to this, the well-known historical spirit of the Presbyterian body. Instead of seeking to make the religious services of our church more attractive to wordly minds, by changes which do not fully harmonise with what may be called the ground-tone of its former life, how much better to aim at maintaining and extending the influence of the truth by that bold, solemn, yet also tender and affectionate presentation of it under which the frivolous are awed, and the indifferent aroused, and even the believing and holy are solemnized. The charge of severity is one under which a church may be well content to lie in this soft and self-indulgent age.

But to return to a survey of the religious life around us in some of its less satisfactory aspects, I notice, in the second place, the small measure in which earnest desire and effort for the conversion of the ungodly are evinced by the professed followers of Christ. The vast majority,—or if that be too strong a statement—very many are content to live for years along side of