

The tares are being sown on every hand with enormous industry: and if our eyes are holden so that we fail to recognize our spiritual opportunities and to pre-occupy the soil, the sheaves ultimately to be garnered will not be pleasing to the Lord of the Harvest.

Our social and ecclesiastical conditions are unlike those of the days gone by. We seem to need the Pentecostal gift of tongues to reach the men of many nationalities, the aborigines and the immigrants. In the separation of Church and State, which throughout most of the Christian era had been in close alliance, we are thrown back upon the voluntary offerings of the faithful for the support and extension of the church; and our hearts are ready to break sometimes because we seem to be losing our power of MISSION. No money is laid at the feet of the Apostles, to be dispensed with reference to the greatest good of the greatest number. After the utmost endeavour of our Missionary Societies, we seem little able to send the Gospel save to those who can defray the costs of its ministrations.

On every side we recognise needs peculiar to the age and country: felt necessities in which we have few precedents to guide us, requiring wise adaptation and prudent invention.

We are confronted with an unbelief of singular audacity, penetrating all popular literature and infecting even the illiterate. Time was, within the ministry of many among ourselves, when the Christian and the unbeliever could, before they parted asunder, join hands and say one fragment of the Creed together, I believe in God the Father Almighty. But now, alas! Infidelity has become Atheism pure and simple, or else utters the language of contemptuous Agnosticism.

Neither may we shut our eyes to the increase of practical irreligion and indifferentism. Copies of the Bible are multiplied, but it enters less and less into the popular reading. Churches and meeting-houses stand in rivalry in every village or at every cross-road, but church-going is more and more neglected. What revolt is there against the restraints of Sunday rest from traffic and travel: against the indissolubleness of the marriage bond!

How is disbelief in any life after death evidenced by the vast increase of murder and suicide!

Brothren, I am no pessimist. I have not a doubt or a fear as to the ultimate issue.

I am not insensible to the many tokens of God's favor and blessing in the wonderful religious activities of the day, in the growth of our own communion in the land, and in the examples of self-sacrifice and saintliness already inscribed in the comparatively brief annals of your Church and of our own.

You will pardon me if I urge upon you my own profound conviction, that while we devoutly recognise the mercies of the past, and hopefully anticipate the hastening of Christ's kingdom: for all this, never in the history of particular or national churches, never has a graver responsibility rested on men that now rests upon ourselves. Never have the bishops and priests, to whom