

eration of the human mind that we must blame for whatever consequences are supposed to attach themselves to free thinking and unbelieving speculation. Well, you don't need to be told that there was enough to deplore since the time of the Reformation. The love of many waxed cold ; strifes and divisions came in ; worldliness gained the better of many who had the form of godliness, but were ignorant of the power of it. And as I shall mention in a little time, in the last century there was much to be grieved and humiliated for, even over the best parts of Christendom. But in the beginning of this century God wrought great changes. Societies sprang into existence ; Christian men and women were led to take up the work of God in a spirit of true aggression ; churches were constrained to put their resources to the doing of aggressive spiritual work, and it is not too much to say, that there never was since the beginning of the world such a general missionary work being done as is being done in the year in which God permits us to live. Let me mention this single circumstance. Those of you who have seen the book by Dr. Dorchester, upon "The Problem of the Time" will see statistics that, as far as I know, in the course of two or three years that the book has been before the public, have not been impugned. He gives us the statement that at this moment there are, clerical and lay, about forty thousand good men and women engaged in purely missionary work that God has given to His Church ; and how many doors He has opened, and how wide they are, and how many forces He has taken and utilized,—human ambition, human pride, human greed, scientific eagerness,—these, and a thousand other agencies God has taken hold of and used, so that regions like the dark continent are now thrown open, and forty thousand men and women missionaries are engaged in taking possession of these open fields, and sowing upon them the good seed of the kingdom. For this we ought to be deeply thankful to God Almighty. But some one says, "The progress is after all comparatively slow." Comparatively slow ! Comparatively in view of what consideration ; what is the comparison ? Again I ask you to look at figures which cannot be absolutely proved, but regarding which we have a good degree of moral certainty. The estimate is that by the close of the eighth century of the Christian era, there were about thirty millions of professing Christians in the world. At the end of eight centuries about thirty millions. That will seem to you a comparatively small number, but you will have to allow for the limited population one thousand years ago, and you have to look over the field in its character, and when you do that, you will probably come to the conclusion that thirty millions of professing Christians is not far from the right estimate at that time. But since the beginning of this century, since the year 1800, in the United States alone, thirty-five millions professing Christians have been added to the Christians of the world. (Applause.) Comparatively, I say then, the progress is not slow ; it is rapid and encouraging without any precedent in history. Now why should we rejoice over this spirit ? Because we love Him who hung upon the tree for our redemption, whose hands were pierced, whose side was pierced that we might be forgiven and have eternal life ; and who, as He took His departure from the earth, said to the little band of His followers, "Go ye and preach the gospel to every creature." So He said to His apostles. We want to be apostolic ; we want to be apostolic churches ; we want to get the apostolic spirit ; we want to do the apostolic work ; we want to do it, in an apostolic way. How can we speed on this gracious work better than by spreading this truth of the living God ?

There is yet another line of thought, which, as I draw to a close—because it is neither right or desirable that your patience should be unduly taxed—I shall venture to suggest,—the tendency of our times to the independence of mind by which the age is characterized. But there was a time when the human mind was far from free. There was time for example, when in