

Seldom did the preacher need a more definite faith, a stouter hearted courage of conviction, or a more unswerving loyalty to truth than at the present time. Most powerful and hostile forces are around us neutralizing our influence, and undoing our work: and in weak moments we will be often tempted to abandon the unequal strife. What mean the echoes of a conflict like a civil war which have scarcely died away from some of the States of the neighboring Republic? Are these the first throes of a gigantic social struggle in which the class degradation, and the political and economic abuses of all Europe will be painfully atoned for by every land?

What means the march of our Churches up among the habitations of the wealthy and away from the dwellings of the poor in almost all our large centres of population? Is the gospel of Jesus Christ to become a perquisite of the cultured and well-to-do, and for that reason an offence to him who most needs its consolation and its inspiration to righteousness?

Has the honest artisan been soured and made the enemy of God's truth, by the careless contempt of an aristocratic Christianity? If so, it will be largely in vain for us to try to reclaim him by the city missionary after he has been alienated in spirit. We had better make heroic efforts to maintain the primitive ideal of the house of God, where the rich and the poor meet together before the Lord who is the Maker of them all.

The most cultured and radical scepticism the world has ever seen is quarry-

ing the foundations from beneath our most holy religion and some of the ablest exponents of scientific thought are marvelling that any honest man of fair intelligence can still avow himself a Christian. The list of eminent men who have ceased to believe in Christianity as a Divine revelation is a long one.

The worship of material things has in many quarters wholly superceded the worship of God. Unscrupulous methods in public life are applauded by a large part of the population as consummate statesmanship. A black dismal stream of poverty, anguish, and crime is flowing all over the land, from the organized iniquities of the liquor traffic. Gambling is still the amusement of many and the serious employment of not a few. Conscience and self respect are foreign ideas to a vast number of men.

Within the pale of the Protestant Church there is much well fitted to make a timid man uneasy. The great question with many able scholars is, Have we a supernatural revelation at all or have we simply a sacred literature, which is so far the highest expression of the religious faculty in man, but which in its turn will be supplanted by something higher and better in the great evolution of humanity under the influence of the *Zeitgeist*. Among some believers in a revelation the Atonement is repudiated at least in its old historic sense, and the appeal is once more to the Covenant of works. That sacerdotal system which connects all grace with a figment of apostolic succession grows daily more arrogant and uncom-