

better if it had never been introduced, or if it had been abandoned many years ago, and that its supporters and laborers have expended their means and strength to little purpose. The superficial character of such inferences will be shown presently. We should do violence to our convictions, and impeach, as we believe, the wisdom of our Divine Head, if we traced our present subordinate numerical condition to our principles, and regarded it as the result of their legitimate operation. The present feebleness of Christianity—to say nothing of its extinction—in many of the cities and provinces where Apostolic Churches once flourished, is not attributable to the proper working of Christian principles; nor is the unfaithfulness of the Churches the *only* reason for such feebleness. It would take too much time to trace out these causes, and it would be difficult to adjust them in such a manner as to exhibit their relative proportions. It is sufficient for our present purpose—which is simply illustrative—to call attention to their existence, believing, as we do, that when all the causes have been marshalled and exhibited, it will be found that the most important—the cause for which adherents are most responsible—was unfaithfulness. “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent,” is an explanation as instructive as it is solemn.

Our Churches in these Provinces are few, and comparatively feeble; why is it? Without attempting to furnish an exhaustive answer, and passing by subordinate causes, let us boldly lay our hands upon the most mischievous of them all—you anticipate it—it has been named already in another connection—*Unfaithfulness*. Let us look at it a little in detail. And

1. Our Churches have been, to some extent, unfaithful to *their own principles of fellowship*. That Church is sectarian, according to our theory, which excludes from its fellowship any who give credible evidence of discipleship, and consent to walk with God's people in the fear of the Lord. In some of our Churches in years gone by, Christians holding certain views of doctrine—views almost universally held among us to-day—and Christians desiring more genial modes of social fellowship than then prevailed, were virtually thrust out; some of them to fall into excesses, which brought Christianity into contempt; and many to be absorbed by other Churches, made more antagonistic by the absorption. The loss thus sustained was very great, and some of the best material for the erection of the spiritual edifice was built into rival denominations, while those who remained suffered themselves to be beguiled into unprofitable controversy, and became more wedded to the peculiarities of doctrine and fellowship which had occasioned the damage.

2. Our Churches have been, to some extent, unfaithful in *the administration of discipline*. This is too well known to be denied. “We are become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us,” is language which has fallen from the lips of some, whose tears have been their meat day and night, and whose hearts have been well-nigh broken by the sight of evils which the Church has refused to rectify. No Church can thrive, no Church ought to thrive, in these circumstances; and to those who think profoundly the impossibility of perpetuating such a Church on *Congregational principles* is a strong argument in favor of their divine origin.

3. Our Churches have been, to some extent, unfaithful to *the missionary spirit of Christianity*. Efficient pastoral oversight is essential to the development and usefulness of the Churches; but no Church ought to be satisfied