

triumphantly to the conclusions set before their face. That was the lesson that the Lord taught to His Church, in what we call the days of primitive apostolic simplicity. How little the twelve had behind them, how few and feeble were the visible resources upon which they could count; but they had the Word of the Lord, they had the Spirit of the Lord, they had the promise of the presence of Jesus, and as you know, all of you who have thought of the matter, as long as the Church of Jesus held to this simplicity of faith, so long did she continue to make safe and honourable progress. It was when she forgot this and began to place undue confidence in the backing of civil rulers and political authorities that she lost her spiritual influence, and to some degree her standing, and that her interests became complicated as they did. When Christian people began to put reliance upon the strength and assistance that they could have from mere civil rulers like Constantine or Charlemagne, that moment they began to suffer and to lose the spiritual energy that Christ would have His people to possess. I say "complicated," for whenever this state of things began to exist there was a certain kind of sway over the Church claimed on the one hand, sway that belonged to Christ; and the Church, on the other hand, began to exercise a certain kind of sway that was not always good for her, and that was not always good for those over whom the power was exercised. It had been well for Christendom if Christian people had kept to the principles on which Christ sent forth His disciples, and had maintained that reliance that the prophet inculcated upon the Lord's servants in the ancient days,—not by might, nor power of a created and visible kind, but upon the power that is exercised by the Spirit of the living God.

Well now, brethren, we are interested, all of us, in this kingdom of our blessed Lord, in its progress and in the agencies by which it can be advanced; and, by consequence, in the difficulties that stand in the way of it. We need to know them, that we may be upon our guard. We need to know them, that we may reflect upon the particular agencies that we can use in the face of them, and probably you will agree with me that it is not unfitting that our attention should be called to a matter of this kind, under the circumstances in which we are gathered together. We are here to promote the circulation of the Word of the Lord, the instrument that the Spirit of God has condescended to use. We may well raise the question in our minds, What are the difficulties that have to be faced and overcome in the building up of the spiritual temple, or, to drop the figure, in the spreading of the Word, and the bringing of souls to the saving knowledge of Jesus. Allusion was made a moment ago to the fact that Zechariah's habit of thinking and representing things was probably affected, in some degree, by his contact with the Babylonians. It is in human nature that man is influenced in some degree by his associations, his surroundings and his education. I should be very sorry if it entered into your minds that the things that are to be stated to you now are due in some degree, on the part of him who states them, to training, education or local surroundings. Many of you know that there was a Convention of Christian people in connection with the Evangelical Alliance that met in Washington during the past winter. The papers that were read to that gathering have very properly been put into print, and I have had the opportunity of looking at them. It may be a little reassuring to you to state that when I speak to you to-night of the difficulties that are in the way of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus I shall dwell upon the facts, in a good degree, that are brought to our notice in those admirable papers. I would indeed describe some of them probably in a different manner, grouping them together probably in a somewhat different fashion, but I want you to feel that it is not the particular or peculiar views of the speaker that you are to attend to,—that the facts, in substance, have been brought to the notice of the Christian public already, and that the presentation of them is not due to anything peculiar or individual in him who speaks to you, and I trust the