

By thus unfolding the truth in its fulness, and uttering it with the fearlessness and earnestness of men, who feel that they "stand between the living and the dead" you will probably offend many, but then you may be instrumental in this way in saving not a few. But whether men will hear or forbear your cry must be—"What meanest thou 'O sleeper' arise and call upon thy God." Nor must you wonder, if, even when you give the Gospel trumpet no uncertain sound, you fail to arouse some to a sense of their danger. This will be painful to you, but then you will have the consolation that you have done your duty to these men, who will not be warned. But if you do not warn them as you ought, what must your reflection be, if after many years in the ministry among a people, you have to look on a widely diffused formality around you, and conscience shall whisper—if conscience can still whisper—that you have all along been uttering smooth things, although in a *Gospel accent* and saying in effect, peace, peace, to those, to whom you were bound to declare that for them there was no peace. If it be sad by your imprudent tone, to see you preach men back into the ranks of the world, it must be even sadder to see you preach in a strain, that shall soothe men of the world into a false peace within the pale of the Church. Serious misunderstandings and resentments betwixt a minister and his people, must in all cases impair, and in many cases utterly destroy his usefulness. But when a people sunk into utter formality, are on good terms with their minister and he on the whole well pleased with them, although he sees no signs of spiritual life among them, then there is a spectacle even sadder than that of dispeace. The minister may be to such a people "as one that playeth very pleasantly on an instrument," yet little as he thinks of it, he is playing a very terrible kind of dead march.

The peculiar forms which infidelity is assuming in the present age, should engage the serious attention of those preparing for the ministry.

The ministers of religion should not only be able to teach the truth, but to defend it against all enemies, and should be able to do this with clearness and force when its foundations are assailed. No doubt there are communities in which there are no persons who either avow or propagate infidel opinions. In such places, ministers may fancy that they have no call to war against an enemy not in the field. Yet it might be well not to conclude too hastily that there are none amongst their flocks, who seek to subvert the grounds of their faith. Besides it should be kept in mind that young men, who are brought up where this danger does not prevail, may, when they go forth into the world, find in the first counting house, or workshop in which they are to labour, some avowed enemy of their faith. It cannot be well to permit pious but simple minded lads to enter on life wholly unprepared to meet the assaults of glib and subtle sceptics. That they be well grounded in the faith and influenced by right motives, furnishes unquestionably the best protection against the dangers of unbelief, as well

as the seductions of vice. Yet, powerful as the opposition of mere silence, sustained by a consistent walk, may be, it is not in all cases creditable to a man's understanding, or the faith he professes, when that faith is openly assailed. The truth is, that persons of some education ought not only to be able to give a reason for their faith, but also to shew, that infidelity is wholly without reason when it assails Christianity. But if a man can neither give clear reasons for his faith, nor clearly reason against infidelity, although a good man, he not only runs the risk, by his silence or absurd replies, of confirming the infidel in his opinions, but of shaking the faith of others who may be listening. Every educated man ought to understand to some extent, the leading arguments in defence of revealed religion. The time has come when this must be done, and done too in a way that shall enable Christians to meet infidelity, in the new forms in which it is now coming forth.

If infidelity does not in our day invent many new arguments it displays at least wonderful art, in presenting its old sophistries and dogmas in new and imposing methods. In former times, infidelity generally lay imbedded in a bulky volume of metaphysics, which few read and fewer could pretend to understand. In our day although infidels vaunt as much as ever of their philosophy, and indeed pretend to press into their service no small portion of modern science, yet they have the art now of disseminating their scepticism in popular forms, so as to suit the tastes and gratify the passions of all sorts of readers—now making high pretensions to critical knowledge in ancient records—at another time professing to draw conclusive arguments from geology or ethnology, and anon, when it suits their purpose appealing directly to the sensual passions, or merely sneering at what they call superstition and human weakness. Verily infidels have in their own way, and for their own ends, become all things to all men. Hence they adapt their teaching to all sorts of thinkers, and especially to that large class, who have a smattering of learning, but not enough ever to think to any good purpose. If pride be the chief source of infidelity, assuredly infidels never succeed so well, as when they appeal to that vanity in their readers, which lives on the *assumption* of knowing much. If Christianity can fearlessly boast that she has no dread of true philosophy in any one of its departments, yet it cannot be denied, that many good but ill-instructed Christians have much to dread from philosophy falsely so called. It is at once a pleasing and painful reflection, that the simple minded and honest man, is, from his very honesty apt to be sadly perplexed, when he has to deal with that sophistry in argument, which he never employs. The truth of the matter is this—Christian men ought not only to be furnished with a clear outline of the argument for revealed religion, but should also be taught, how contemptible the sophistries are by which sceptics seek to overthrow their faith. There are many books which, if carefully read, would admirably ans-

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