

he will be surprised, we hope gratified, to find that he can count them on his fingers. No, Canadian society is not honeycombed with infidelity, at least, of the theoretical kind. The returns at the annual ecclesiastical parliaments nearly or never fail to show that most of the churches are continually growing in numbers, influence and financial resources.

Ministers are too often carried away by this cry about the growth of scepticism. They mistake noise for power, forgetting that anybody who has access to a newspaper can make a noise. Noise does not indicate progress. An old, leaky steamer standing still in a fog blowing her fog-horn can make a great noise; but she is not coming any nearer her landing nor adding anything to the commercial power and wealth of the nation. Too many ministers, especially in the United States, defend the Gospel rather than preach it. They stand in their pulpits and beat back imaginary hosts of sceptical scientists and other dangerous people. This kind of a fight is often a farce—a solemn farce, it may be—but a farce all the same. The sceptics are not there. Even if they were, the average preacher must rely on the scientist for the very facts he has to use in dealing with him, and in any discussion when you have to rely on your opponent for your facts you are in his power. Moreover, nine-tenths of the people don't trouble themselves to distinguish between Huxley and Hannibal, between Darwin and Julius Cæsar. What the people all need and what many of them want is spiritual food. A number of them hear all they ever do hear about scepticism from their own ministers. The error is perhaps remembered longer than the truth that was intended to explode it. Perhaps, indeed, there was no explosion that amounted to anything. Poison may be retained in the system when the effect of the antidote is gone. Error should be combated by men whose special duty it is to combat error and who are specially qualified for the work. Specialists should reply to specialists. None other can without doing more harm than good.

The worst foes the Church has to fight are within her own household. The enemies that hinder our work are not professed infidels. The Church suffers a thousand-fold more from the conduct of men within her own pale than from all outside influences. The worldly, careless men hanging on the edges of the Church or outside altogether, are often kept out by the conduct of those within. They see men who profess to be, and perhaps are, Christians, wrangling over little matters that have no more to do with vital godliness than the wart on Oliver Cromwell's nose had to do with the English Revolution, and they conclude the whole thing is a farce. Who can blame them if they do?

Here is a congregation wrestling with a question of millinery. Hundreds of men around their church

never darken a church door; men within the sound of their church bell are going down to perdition every day; the heathen are perishing; sin is rampant; vice in its most brazen forms is stalking about the streets, and these men who say they were bought with the blood of Christ are doing what? Wrangling about the colour of their minister's gown.

Here is another congregation greatly exercised over a momentous question. What is the question? Is it, How shall we increase the spiritual power of our people? or, How shall we gather in sinners? What means shall we use to help our pastor and make his preaching more effective? What method can be adopted to bring the young to Christ? Oh, no. The momentous question with which these blood-bought men wrestle is: Shall we have a small melodeon in the Sabbath School? Such small matters as the salvation of sinners, the edification of saints, the progress of Christ's cause, the promotion of the glory of God through and by His Church, are laid aside or trampled in the mire and these heirs of glory proceed with their wrangle over a second-hand melodeon! And when the wretched wrangle is over, and the name of the congregation has been made a stench in the community, the chief pugilists usually leave the wreck they made and attend some other church in which an organ is used in every diet of worship! One such wrangle does the cause of Christ more harm in three months than all the infidels in Ontario can do in a year. And yet some of the pugilists talk unctuously about the inroads that are being made by infidelity.

Here is a third congregation contending about posture in singing with ten-fold more earnestness than many of them ever tried to save a soul. They fight for sitting or standing in praise much more vigorously than they ever fought against the world, or the flesh or the devil.

Here is a fourth congregation greatly exercised about hymns. Their consciences will not permit them to sing: "All hail the power of Jesus' name," "Jesus, lover of my soul," or "Nearer, my God, to Thee." "Men of the world," as they are called, know that some at least of those who say their consciences will not allow them to sing these hymns, drink whiskey quite freely, and that some others have been found on the market with two kinds of grain in their bags and the best kind was not in the bottom. "Men of the world" know that in other matters some of them are not one whit more conscientious than their neighbours. And they won't have anything to do with a congregation that quarrels about such matters. If anyone's conscience is so tender that he cannot sing a hymn and if his conscience is *tender all round* he never hurts Christ's cause. Such men are often the excellent of the earth and wherever they are they ought to be respected. The men who hurt the Church are