

OUR CHURCH LIFE AND WORK.

THREE GREAT FEATURES OF IT.

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Spiritual Life, Parental Training and Church Work for the young, are three important subjects mentioned by Rev. P. Wright, of Portage la Prairie, in his report to Assembly on Church Life and Work. Read and think.

The deepening of Spiritual Life and the exhibition of Christian Morality by members and adherents in relation to social and commercial life.

"It was not expected that definite and formulated proof of spiritual quickening could in every case be furnished by our Sessions. Their own honest conviction that there is a deepening of spiritual life, even though it has not come "with observation" and has made little report either to the eye or ear, should be accepted with gladness. It is surely something to say with *Kingston* "in many places there is felt the earnest yearning for a true, whole consecration of those who name the name of Christ." We can also fully sympathise with the sentiment of *Huron*, that "The sphere of outward effort may not fully express the depth and power of secret prayer or the strength and growth of vital godliness."

While replies are cautious, and information sparingly furnished, to that part of the question that bears on spirituality, yet a few speak decidedly and cheerfully. *Pictou* speaks of Sessions that "have not been dismayed by this formidable question," and cites in proof of a deepening religious life "increased delight in prayer in the home and in public, greater earnestness in Christian service, etc." *Montreal* says, "a deepening of spiritual life, especially among the young, is observable; but the reports distinctly reveal the need of a great revival." While *Glengarry* has some Sessions that report "spiritual life deepening among the young," it has others that admit that "worldliness has been getting more and more hold of their congregations." *Chatham* speaks hopefully here, and so do a dozen others. And though no Presbytery ventures to use the language of exultation when dealing with this deeply important part of the Assembly's enquiry, yet there is emphatically

an upward tendency, and a growing conformity to the image of Christ.

But when we come to inquire regarding those more tangible fruits of the Spirit, as embodied in the social and commercial life of our people, all hesitation disappears from the replies, and Sessions and Presbyteries seem to vie with one another as they speak in strains of superlative praise. Only a few quotations can be made room for here, but let it be borne in mind that they are representative, and are given on the principle of "ex uno disce omnes." *Halifax* says, "Many are beginning to realize more fully that religion can and must manifest itself in the daily life," and again "it is a patent fact those who violate social laws and commercial integrity are very rarely Presbyterians." *Orangeville*: "In every case but one the Christian morality ranks high," and again, "the three great evils of modern society,—drinking, dancing, and card-playing,—are on the decline." *London* has about twenty sessions reporting that "a deepened spiritual life has exhibited itself in purer social life and a higher tone in the commercial life of members and adherents." *Brandon* says, "Our members as a whole have been upright and of a high moral character." And *Westminster* illustrates, by profuse quotations from Session reports, its own Presbyterial judgment, "that the Spiritual life and Christian morality of our people is speedily attaining a higher level."

This testimony is cheering and is scarcely affected by any rebuttal evidence, though one or two Presbyteries speak with considerable reservation, as *Edmonton* when it says "careful qualification is made even in the cases that report favorably." And this high standard of public and social morality must lend a power to the testimony of our Church that will become irresistible in proportion as it reaches perfection and universality. The work of the Church is to manifest the truth. If therefore the truth be obscured or perverted by the imperfection of the human medium, to that extent is the strength of the Church weakened and her aggressive power abated. But where the spiritual forces in the Church exert their transforming energy on the souls of men and are revealed in loyal and consecrated lives, then human life is perfected and crowned. Religion is no more a bur-