

Great Head of the Church for the improvement of its members: and hence, genuine piety is rarely found existing at all where they are not enjoyed. Other means of grace besides the public ministry of the word which are of vast importance to the edification of christians, such as their private meetings for prayer and counsel, or active exertion for the furtherance of the Kingdom of the Saviour are yet all so dependent on the ministry that where it is not possessed they are rarely employed. Those members of our church therefore, who are only a few miles from our places of worship are unfavourably circumstanced for the culture of true piety; and those, by no means a small number are much more so, who can hear a sermon only at the expense of a considerable pilgrimage to one of our meetings, or on the casual visit of a missionary or minister.

Vital christianity may it is true exist apart from the social institutions of the Gospel, just as learning may sometimes be found in individuals who have lived remote from colleges and learned society: but, even in the rare cases of this kind in which true religion does exist, it is not likely to be in an energetic form so as to diffuse itself through a family. It must be difficult indeed to teach children a due reverence for the Lords day; who do not know it as a day for the gathering together of his worshippers. And then, it is to be kept in mind, that, in the life of the settler in our woods there is retirement without leisure. His must for a long time be a life of intense toil, which like the opposite extreme of luxurious ease is adverse to the culture of personal and family religion.

Thus from the physical condition of the country the spiritual labourer has some peculiar difficulties; so that in reference to these he may be said to go forth weeping, bearing precious seed.

Secondly, The present political state of the country occasions peculiar hinderances to the success of the ministry.

The body politic like the animal frame when under any morbid excitement refuses to admit any external influence that is of a soothing and healing nature. Hence violent political excitement greatly indisposes a people to submit to the benign and tranquilizing influence of the Gospel. Until very lately, our political contentions were not more vehement than those which exist in almost all civilized countries at the present day. But, these favoured by our geographical position and colonial relation, have issued in what may be regarded as their natural result—open warfare. Multitudes who had long borne the character of reformers as a cloak for their ambition and had never set about self reformation have been transmuted into Rebels: and associating with themselves men of a kindred spirit from the neighbouring states, have commenced war on our borders. Their assaults hitherto have through the good providence of God been impotent; but they have been sufficiently formidable to harass us with the alarms of war, and with preparation for it as well as to desolate not a few families.

And alas! the brazen notes of war do ill accord with the soft sound of the silver trumpet of the Gospel. The claims and invitations of the Kingdom of God can scarcely find a listening ear in those who are all concerned about their own perils or those of the state: though in truth the duties of scriptural religion do not stand opposed to the claims of true patriotism, but rather sanction them, albeit, that few in a crisis like the present concern themselves about the adjustment of these. Then again, those of our population who are in arms on the call of lawful authority, are exposed to strong temptations, as, to profaneness and intemperance, and I would add the adopting of maxims of honour which are repudiated alike by the letter and spirit of the law and gospel.

Many too who are not in arms are exposed to the temptations to speculation which the lavish expenditure of war always causes to those who are concerned in conducting it. In these and other ways a powerful impetus is given to profligacy and sin while, a corresponding check is given to the progress of truth and holiness. "The zeal of many waxes cold when iniquity abounds." When piety ceases to be diffusive, it is certainly declining.

Thirdly, The condition of the church of God in these times occasions some peculiar hinderances in our work.

The division of the Christian church into separate communities could not be regarded as any great evil, if the division turned on geographical limits, or diversity of regulations respecting government, and modes of worship, and if the separate communities were at the same time to keep up a good understanding amongst themselves as component parts of the same great Kingdom—the Kingdom of the son of God. But, it is quite otherwise, when different religious bodies agreeing in claiming Christ as their head, are yet separated from each other by creeds in many respects discordant, or, as is rather the case in this Province, by conflicting views and claims about the assistance to be given to the church by the state. Many it is to be feared not considering that the evil in all such contentions is with the men who profess a connexion with the Kingdom of the Saviour, and not in that kingdom itself, justify themselves from standing aloof from it altogether until Christians agree in belief as to its doctrines and laws, or in the practice of what they profess to believe.

Another unfavourable feature in the present condition of the church—amongst ourselves at least, I fear, is this, that no general effusion of the Divine spirit is experienced. The absence of a spirit of prayer in our congregations, the want of power in the ministry for the conversion of sinners and the building up of the people of God, the worldly spirit that characterises church members, and the low state of family religion are to me at least, indications that the spirit of God is restrained from us.—And most true it is, that this condition of things amongst us, if it do indeed exist, is referable to our own unfaithfulness, and that of the members of our churches. Were we to put away