

this on the assumption that I am speaking to a body of Christian people, familiar in a good degree with the lines of truth that have been indicated, perhaps a little less familiar with the particular aspect of the case that I shall now try to present to you. I shall seek to indicate a few of the good tendencies of the time in which God has cast our lot, and to suggest the connexion between these good tendencies, and the duty and privilege that we have immediately before our minds; and you will understand readily that when one speaks about tendencies there must necessarily be a certain generality, perhaps it may even seem to some a certain vagueness. A tendency is not a distinct and tangible force that you can handle and measure as you can a bullet. It is rather vague and seemingly nebulous like the atmosphere, and yet the atmosphere can be measured in a certain degree, and so tendencies can be approximately also. It seems to me that we have in our time to rejoice over a greatly increased personal activity among Christians. It is not commonly thought enough in our best churches, that persons be entitled to seats, and make a little contribution towards the common cause. Our living churches look for working members, and we have in consequence many Christian organizations that are doing great and good work.

Look for example at the various forms in which young men are being employed, and in which their good is being sought through organizations, not to speak of the great Young Men's Christian Associations that are in our cities. We see similar gatherings at the same time in our healthiest and most laborious churches. For this we ought to be deeply thankful. The same is true in the teaching of the young; it is much more systematic than it used to be; a larger number of teachers, male and female, are engaged in the work. I think the plans never were so good as in the present year, and when we think of the estimate of some twelve millions of the young people under regular and systematic teachers, with better facilities on the part of the teachers for making themselves competent instructors than they ever had before, we may well rejoice and give thanks. But these are only forms of effort to which many additions might easily be enumerated. In the Christian poor, in the effort to lift them up, in the doing of work that was properly given to the deacons in the ancient Church, there is much for which we ought to be thankful to God Almighty. The Church of Christ never was a working church in so great a degree as in the year in which we now live. (Hear, hear.) There are some things of course that we have to keep in mind. Prosperity has its perils just as surely as adversity. It will not do for us, for example, to substitute these external activities for inner growth in grace. It will not do for parents to relegate the teaching of their children to Sunday-school instructors however admirable they may be. It will not do for young men to make their Associations a substitute for the Church of Jesus Christ (hear, hear), and it will not do for Christian people to make their benevolent efforts a substitute for personal growth in grace and individual consecration to God. If there are any workers here in danger in these directions, I don't forget that I am a minister of the gospel, and I don't hesitate to say to them: "Make sure that you maintain personal consecration, heart consecration to the Lord and Master. That which you do will depend in a great degree upon what you are." God had respect to Abel and to his offering, Abel first and then his offering; and it will be so with you. Christian people, Christian workers, be ready in yourselves before God that the work which you do may be through Jesus accepted of Him. What has been the inspiration of that Christian activity? It has been this book. Then if we want to extend the Christian activity, extend the use of this book.

In the second place it seems to me that the time in which we live is marked in an encouraging degree by practical estimates of things. We don't