

drive out of England, one hopes forever. We owe to the combined forces of both that palmy period of the pulpit in America, which is now suspected to be in decline; but take "the pulpit" as it is popularly accepted in our day, and does anybody imagine that its power and influence are really impaired, in comparison with what it was in the earliest stages of our history as a nation?

Yes, I do not deny that the tokens which suggest the inquiry are real, and force us to recognize what may be a temporary phase, only, of our social character, that our times are impatient of being taught, except by those who flatter them, while yet they are to be credited with a wholesome scorn for those who flatter them from the pulpit. These tokens do not alarm me, because the evangelized world has passed through such stages before. Take the age of Frederick and Voltaire, for example, as it stood confronted with "the foolishness of preaching," but rather with "the preaching of foolishness," by which Germany and France were so conspicuously degraded in that age. Observe the impressions of which Goethe and Schiller were the inheritors, in the next generation. Read the instructive pages of Kahnis and reflect upon the prostrate condition of religious orthodoxy at the moment when the States General were convened in France, to make practical the theories of "philosophers." Where and what was the pulpit then? Under the *Grand Monarque* it was fashionable to frequent the great preachers. But was ever the eloquence of the pulpit so powerless as that which glorified the literature of the period, but produced no impression upon the hearts and conscience of the French people? In the succeeding generation the Jansenists were driven out of France because they were in earnest. Religious fermentation rose to fever heat, but it had nothing to do with godliness. It was occupied with words, not things; and a catastrophe was at hand.

The age in which we live presents two very remarkable features in contrast: (1.) There is a vigor and vitality of religious thought in Christendom never before paralleled in any period. Everywhere the press teems with the product of earnest Christian hearts and minds, and land and sea bear witness to a marvelous Christian activity. Contrast the actual state of the German intellect at this moment with what it was even fifty years since, with respect to the Gospel, and it seems to be life from the dead. Even such writers as Renan prove that France is not incapable of faith, though their effort is undisguised to propagate new doubts and a new sort of unbelief. The Papacy, itself, after setting foot on the human head, pays tribute to the spirit of the age, in permitting some activity to mind, provided it will consent to go back to the Schoolmen and think in the formulas of St. Thomas Aquinas. Christianity everywhere is awake and in earnest, and men cannot be idle if they hate it;