

atory, beyond a doubt. It is a social and civilizing force, contributive to the world's betterment in morals. But it gets its grand leverage for this social and moral uplifting from man's need as a sinner and its power as a salvation. And it is weakened even as an agency of education and reform, just as it fails to go to the roots of human society with its divine doctrine and life. Let its efficacy be made unmistakable there, and society throughout all its ramifications—socially, civilly, politically, educationally—will feel the outpush and the uplift.

Hence the political power of the pulpit need not enter into this discussion; nor the educational power; nor yet the literary; and certainly not the sacerdotal. When the pulpit's sacerdotal power was almost supreme, its might of spiritual transformation, by which "living epistles" are made, was at its lowest; whereas the world can furnish no such signal illustration of the potent voice of the pulpit in politics as that given during our Civil War—the potency being due to the very freedom of the American pulpit from priestly assumption and State alliance, and to its fidelity to the great commission unto the fulfillment of which it was ordained.

To this vital point, therefore, our question presses us: Is the pulpit declining in its power of commanding men's consciences, of holding them in a decent and reverent regard for God's Word, and of bringing them into harmony with the divine order and the power that "makes for righteousness?"

Those who hold that this decline of pulpit power has actually taken place, point to *certain conditions of society* as furnishing, in part at least, its cause and explanation. Some refer to the wider diffusion of knowledge in our time, the greatly quickened mental activity, and the far larger number of educated and trained minds, as the conditions making it impossible for the pulpit to hold its old place of influence. Others point to the rival agency of the press thundering the truth by metallic type, and multiplying the proclamation by the countless leaves of literature, as having lessened the power of the pulpit. Others, still, insist that the spirit of the times, as manifested in the prevalent form of unbelief, is at once both proof and cause of a waning pulpit power.

But it can easily be shown that the pulpit, relatively to the pew, has fully kept its place in the march of educational progress and scholarly culture. Undoubtedly the pulpit has quite wholly ceased to be that "Sir Oracle" on almost all matters, in which light it was sometimes viewed a century ago in exceptional and isolated localities. But just as undoubtedly the pulpit has kept pace with the world in improved educational processes, enlarged intellectual equipment, and riper and wider scholarship.

"The press," as an agency in more widely diffusing knowledge,