

Christian denominations, the number and equipment of our various theological seminaries, with those of any former time, the improvement and advance are indisputable and marked; and this again is a sign that there exists a higher general estimate of the importance of the preacher's calling. He would not be more carefully trained if society felt that his vocation was losing ground.

If we compare the theological literature of our day with that of previous periods, we must conclude that Christian doctrine still commands earnest and widespread attention, and that there is no sign of conscious decadence in the ranks of the highest Christian scholarship.

If we compare the present attitude of the public press to the pulpit to that of any preceding time, we must certainly acknowledge that it is not more unfriendly, but that it has grown in respectful and appreciative tone. If the newspaper may be regarded as the mirror of popular judgment, the proposition that the Christian pulpit is suffering in the general estimate of its importance and usefulness cannot be successfully defended. Its anathemas are treated with slight courtesy, it is true, for its sacerdotal authority is denied, and we believe it never had any; its officious interferences with affairs of political administration are endured with impatience, for its secular power has departed, and we believe the alliance of Church and State was always an evil, engendering the bondage of the religious teacher; but wherever a true man speaks the message of God from the heart, the present time is ready to give him courteous and attentive hearing. The living preacher has not fallen in the general estimate, nor has he lost his power. I believe he never had so direct an access to men's heads and hearts, and his very independence of priestly assumption, and of political affiliations, gives increased weight to his burning words.

If the case be carried into the court of statistical evidence, the question under debate must still be answered in the negative. If the power of the pulpit may be measured by the relative increase of its hearers, and the consequent growth in church-membership and charitable gifts, there is certainly no cause for despondency. True, individual churches are all the while decreasing in numbers, decaying in energy, and ceasing their existence; but the losses are more than compensated for by the general gains; and the organization of new churches, the establishment of new Sunday-schools, show no sign of abatement. True, there are destitute and neglected centres in all our great cities, and there are thousands whose feet never enter our church doors. But the claim that the masses of our business men, and even of the so-called laboring classes, are indifferent or hostile to Christianity, has no very substantial basis. Careful canvassing of Eastern and Western cities, whose population is fifty thousand and more, reveals the fact that our merchants, and manufacturers and bankers never were so largely represented in the regular Sabbath congregation and in the