

their very listlessness and inability to ignore it, proves it to be something they cannot disdain. But, (2) with all this, our times are marked by an outpouring of blasphemy and by the outbreak of offensive forms of irreligion which are appalling. A frantic impiety among women as well as men, in many parts of our country, is manifested in new and revolting forms; the gathering imposthume of Mormonism threatens our civil existence in certain regions; but more generally, the blank irreligion of millions of our countrymen presents a spectacle which ought to animate all who love the Lord Jesus Christ to compose differences and move upon this stronghold of the evil one in the spirit of primitive Christianity.

Yes, the pulpit has lost much of its power; but to reach these evils the teacher must go out of the pulpit into highways and hedges, in the spirit of John the Baptist. A certain man built a sawmill on the top of the mountain, where strong winds could always be depended on to work his instruments, and it was a demonstrated success so far as the winds and wheels were concerned; the perpendicular motion he secured was all that was promised. The mischief was that nobody could get the saw-logs up there to be converted into planks. And "the pulpit" is, *ex vi termini*, powerless as to the masses, because it stands where those who need it cannot reach it. The times demand the mission of the Baptist once more.

By "the pulpit," however, we must understand what is commonly meant in America by that word: it means the regular preaching of the Word in organized congregations of believing men. Not to wander from the point, this pulpit has declined in power over these very congregations, and the reason *why* is not difficult to discover. Men cannot serve God and mammon. "Their heart goeth after their covetousness," said Ezekiel, accounting for the like phenomenon, in his day. Observe how many are the warnings against this specific sin in Holy Scripture; it is pronounced "Idolatry"; "let it not be once named among you," says the apostle, using like words only of the most shameful vices. Now, we complain of the "secular spirit" of our days; but this, being interpreted, is mammon-worship. We talk of "Materialism," but this, too, means mammon. Observe the excitement and feverish haste and rash adventure of the times. What is it all about? The answer is, "hasting to be rich." And the enormous winnings of some stimulate all to this "accursed hunger" and thirst after gold. The land becomes one gambling hell from Wall Street to the quays of San Francisco. The telegraph wires, the railways, the steamers, are tokens of this vivid vice and force compelling the universe to yield up its treasures and to exchange them, not in any primary sense to feed and clothe the human race, but, first of all, to enrich the prime movers, who have made these wants of the race their dice and counters and cards in playing their gigantic games.