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The National Preacher, Vol. 2. No. 6., Nov. 1827

FROM

Living ministers.

Edited by
Rev. Austin Dickinson,
No. 144 Nassau-street,
new-York.

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THE

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go ... Teach all Nations.... *Matt.* xxviii. 19.

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SERMON XXV.

BY WILLIAM PATTON, A.M.

NEW-YORK.

THE DUTY AND IMPORTANCE OF SPECIAL EFFORTS FOR THE CONVERSION OF CITIES.

LUKE xxiv. 47.--*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations,*
BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM.

Here the apostles receive from Christ a commission to commence in one of the chief cities of the world the great business of preaching the gospel to mankind. The fulfilment of prophecy required them to begin at Jerusalem. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." But there were other and more special reasons. It was at Jerusalem that the death and resurrection of the Son of God took place:---facts, on which Christianity rested all its claims: and it was fit that the enemies of truth should have every possible advantage for controverting those facts. In commencing at Jerusalem, an immediate and striking illustration was also afforded of the forgiving spirit of Christianity:---'Go at once, and preach unto these mine enemies repentance and remission of sins. Let them have the opportunity of salvation through my blood:---even that blood which their own wicked hands have shed.'

This direction to the first preachers of the cross, to begin at Jerusalem, suggests the general thought,

THAT IT BECOMES CHRISTIANS, IN ALL AGES, TO MAKE SPECIAL EFFORTS FOR THE CONVERSION OF CITIES AND LARGE TOWNS.

This thought may be illustrated and enforced, from the example and instructions of Christ and his apostles; from the early and signal visitations of the Spirit on cities; from the power with which Satan reigns in them; and from their relative importance, and influence on the world.

I. *Our Saviour devoted his personal ministry very much to cities and large towns.*

Says Matthew, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities." Mark speaks of Him as follows: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he departed into a solitary place, and there prayed: and Simon, and they that were with him, followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth." Luke informs us, that, on another occasion, He said unto those who sought him, and who urged him that he should not depart from them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent."

From many other passages of Scripture, also, we learn of Christ's preaching in cities. "And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus." "And all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him." He is also found in Jericho, and in Capernaum. His wonders are made known at Chorazin and Bethsaida. His walks are along the shores, where commerce and trade had congregated vast multitudes. Jerusalem he repeatedly visits:---especially on the anniversaries of religious festivals; when his instructions might fall upon the ear of assembled thousands; and through them be conveyed to every town and village of the land. On one occasion, when he was come near to the city, "he beheld and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now are they hid from thine eyes:---Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" On another occasion, it is said, "Then began he to upbraid the cities, wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Wo unto thee, Chorazin; wo unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee."

Thus it appears that the All-wise Saviour thought it proper to devote much of his ministry to cities and large towns.

II. *Christ, in his instructions to his disciples, particularly directs their attention to cities and large towns.*

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city." How solemn, yet well defined were these instructions. How strongly must the twelve have been impressed with the importance of special exertion in large towns and cities.

"After these things, the Lord appointed seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face, into every city and place, whither he himself would come. And he said unto them, Into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you, and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for that city." Wherefore should so much stress be laid upon cities, unless it was peculiarly important that they should be converted? And wherefore so heavy a curse, unless the power of their example was great?

But still more particular and urgent are his instructions---The disciples, when sent forth, were admonished that they would be "as sheep in the midst of wolves;"---that they would be exposed to many and severe trials. And surely, under such circumstances, human nature would plead, that, when persecuted in the city, they might turn to the less prejudiced inhabitants of the country. But no: the command is, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another; for, verily, I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come."

It is true, that in the last great commission, in which the world was spread before them as the field, every limitation was taken off, save that they should begin at Jerusalem. Still the example of the apostles is worthy of notice. For whilst several of them continued for years in Jerusalem,---notwithstanding the persecutions which they experienced---others went forth, and immediately preached the gospel of their ascended Saviour in other great cities of the world.

Paul and Barnabas are found at Antioch, the capital of Pisidia. From Antioch they went to Iconium, the metropolis of Lyconia. Thence to Derbe, another city of Lyconia. In that embassy, they also preached at Lystra, and Perga, and many other cities. Soon after this, Paul said unto Barnabas, "Let us go again, and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." Paul expressed an ardent desire to be at Jerusalem on the feast-days:---"For he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem, the day of Pentecost;" for then thousands of strangers would be there assembled---"Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers of Mesopotamia," and of many other places. In Rome, too, that imperial city, did this apostle continue for two years, preaching the gospel of Christ. There he established a Christian church, to which he addressed the noblest epistle ever written. Of Philip it is recorded, that "passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea." The apostles and disciples, then directed their attention very particularly to cities.

III. *Cities were the theatres of the Holy Spirit's first and most illustrious achievements.*

Open the book of the Acts, and mark how and where the Spirit of God accompanied the labours of the apostles. It was at Jerusalem, the city whose million voices had just before demanded the death of their Lord, and imprecated his blood upon their own heads, that the first and greatest effusion of the Holy Spirit took place. *There* was spiritual wickedness in high places. There iniquity was strongly intrenched. The strong arm of the civil as well as ecclesiastical power was its defence; and human calculation could look for no visits of mercy. Still the Savior's command, to begin at Jerusalem, was obeyed. Nor was it long before that city was filled with the presence of the Most High---before the Spirit came down in

power, and thousands were converted to Christ.

But this is not a solitary case. At Antioch, also, the Spirit was poured out. Indeed, there are two places of this name mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles;---both visited in saving mercy. One, the capital of Syria, a city of great note. It was about ten miles in circumference; and, in population, wealth, and splendour, esteemed the third city of the age. Here Paul and Barnabas preached. Here the disciples were first called Christians. Here the Church continued long to flourish. Here the eloquent Chrysostom, at the close of the fourth century, preached with great power and success: and here the Holy Spirit descended. "Now they, which were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." So great was this work, so important this field of usefulness, that to secure the best assistance, "Barnabas departed to Tarsus to seek Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people." So powerful was this work of God, as to demand, for a whole year, the special labours of two of his most favoured servants.

The other Antioch, mentioned in the Acts, was the capital of Pisidia; a place where many things opposed the advance of holiness. But there also Paul and Barnabas laboured; and there souls were born into the kingdom. The record is, "They came to Antioch, in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." And Paul preached of Jesus and the resurrection, and faithfully warned against lightly esteeming the work of God. "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, which ye shall in nowise believe though a man declare it unto you. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached unto them the next Sabbath. And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together, to hear the word of God. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region, and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."

Ephesus, too, was visited by the Holy Spirit. This was one of the most famous cities of Asia Minor. By historians, it has been called the ornament of Asia---the greatest and most frequented emporium of the continent. Here stood one of the seven wonders of the world---the idolatrous temple of Diana. Paul paid two visits to this city: the first, a very short one. After some months, he returned, and continued for three years, and had great success. Many things opposed the influence of truth. Iniquity was deeply rooted: their established religion was a source of revenue; and countenanced them in unhallowed courses. But the Spirit of grace prevailed. The result was, "that many that believed, came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them, also, which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men. And they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver;" or, according to our currency, nearly twenty-eight thousand dollars. Thus multitudes made a public renunciation of idolatry, and a public profession of their faith in Christ. "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

The last city that we shall mention, as blessed with a revival, is Corinth, the capital of Achaia. Here stood the temple of Venus; for the support of whose costly and debasing services, a thousand human victims were continually kept!---The multitude in this city were given to a species of crime, most deadening to the conscience, and damning to the soul. Yet all this did not discourage the intrepid apostle. For, about the year of our Lord fifty-two, he came to Corinth, and "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath day, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." The persecuting spirit of the Jews was marshalled against him. Yet he was successful, for *God was with him*. "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee,

and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." And so great was the work, and so important the station, that "he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." Here a large church was gathered, to which he addressed two epistles.

We could mention other ancient cities as blessed with revivals. We could tell you of Athens, the eye and glory of Greece; of Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia; of Iconium, "where a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed;" of Rome too, and many others; but we forbear, since enough is already before you to illustrate the position, that cities were the theatres of the Holy Spirit's first and most illustrious achievements. Indeed, what is the book of the Acts, but one continued history of revivals in cities and populous places?

IV. We should seek the conversion of Cities, because in them the Adversary reigns with peculiar power.

Experienced Generals bend their most powerful forces against those positions most strongly intrenched; well knowing, that if these are subdued, the courage of the enemy is daunted, his plans marred, and that what remains may fall an easy conquest. Why then should Christians leave to Satan the quiet dominion of cities? He would rather give up a thousand inland posts, than these strong holds of his empire. But, Oh, could he be dislodged from these, how paralyzed would be his arm---how feeble his resistance---how lost his influence! Would you see the power of Satan in cities? Cast your eye back upon the past. What were Sodom and Gomorrah? What were Tyre, and Sidon, and Ninevah? What was Babylon? What was Jerusalem in its latter days, when given up accursed of God? What were they, but sinks of pollution and fountains of ruin? And could we draw aside the curtains of darkness, what might we see in modern cities! Oh, the pollution, and dark waters, that are open to the eye of God! Oh, the thousand lures to vice! Oh, the frauds, the oppressions, the numberless wrongs, which break down the integrity of the young; which harden the middle-aged, and cover gray hairs with shame, and wretchedness, and ruin! Oh, the dissipations, over which custom has thrown an influence well nigh omnipotent! Oh, the tauntings, and the high looks, the stiff neck, and the contemptuous sneer, with which wealth and station conduct themselves towards the lowliness of Christian meekness! Oh, the power that nerves itself against holiness! Wealth and imposing splendour, eloquence and numbers, are in its ranks. Perjury and cruel mockings are among its weapons. Oh, the chains of darkness and gates of death, with which the strong man armed here holds his prisoners! How loudly then do these demand the commiseration and special effort of those, who would proclaim liberty to the captives, and life to the dead! And for the encouragement of the faithful, we add,

V. There are peculiar advantages for the promotion of Religion in cities.

God is wont to accompany the efforts of his people with special grace, whenever they are exposed to extraordinary hazards. So, where peculiar difficulties obstruct the advance of truth, there will also be found other circumstances, which, if properly seized, will greatly facilitate the work of reformation.

In cities, ministers and good men can readily and effectually co-operate in plans of usefulness. The inhabitants of smaller towns and villages are too scattered to allow of ready co-operation; but in our cities, a few minutes may assemble many of those who love the Lord. The dangers which threaten, or the hopes which gladden, quickly circulate. The weakness of one portion may be readily sustained by the greater strength of some other portion. In the multitude of professing Christians, may be found men of wisdom, of wealth, of enterprise, of leisure, of devotedness; all of whose varied gifts and talents may be concentrated for good. Surely these are advantages peculiar to cities. Too long have we looked upon the might of opposing interests, and neglected the power which God hath given us. Too long have churches stood alone, and feebly exerted their separate influences. But in a union of the efforts of churches the increase of power may be immense; for whilst "one shall chase a thousand, two shall put ten thousand to flight."

It is by the means which cities afford for ready co-operation, that Satan and his followers have in all ages achieved so much. *They* make common cause. They suffer no differences to divide their strength; knowing "that an house divided

against itself cannot stand." They combine their forces, in any plan which promises injury to the Christian interest. Cities furnish to Christians the very same opportunities for united effort, and thus present peculiar advantages.

Again, cities also furnish advantages for individual exertion. Here a minister's influence may at once reach, not merely to his own congregation, but far beyond. Every month he is brought in contact with some thousands, who may be affected by his faithfulness. And under his influence, many benevolent and pious institutions may rise and shine to bless the world.

But it is not to ministers alone, that cities present large fields for exertion. Private Christians also have abundant opportunities for usefulness. In the walks of business, the influence of one inflexibly just man is felt as far as his name is known. If Christians, in our cities, would conduct themselves agreeably to the Bible, how awful to the wicked would be their example! What reformations would be wrought among the worldly and profane! How many haunts of poverty and wretchedness would be searched out! How many souls, once in communion with the saints, would be brought back from their wanderings! How many children, rescued from vice, would be brought to the Sabbath school; and there, perhaps, be taught of God to become themselves angels of mercy! How many meetings for prayer and exhortation would every week be sustained among the poor and the wretched! How many of these degraded immortals might be rescued from temporal and eternal darkness, to become lights in the world, and stars in the kingdom of our Father's glory! What field then offers so rich and large an harvest to faithful labour? The same exertion, that would instruct hundreds in the country, may reach thousands in the city. Public sentiment has too long checked the movements of sympathy for these congregated thousands. A voice, almost unbroken, has sounded out; 'Peculiar and insuperable difficulties prevent a general revival in cities: such are the occupations, such the habits, such the temptations, and such the superabounding iniquity, that it were visionary to hope for any general and powerful work of mercy.' Well, then, had we not better give all up; and let human nature here sink into its natural channels; and let multitudes before our eyes continue to crowd the gates of the second death! O God, forbid such cowardice, cruelty, and treachery in thy servants! No; we will not thus surrender immortals. While there is grace or even nature in our hearts, we will not. We have, indeed, heard of difficulties, till the heart is pained, and the soul is wearied. But where are these insuperable difficulties to be found? Not in the Scriptures of God, surely; not in the result of apostolic labours; but in the unbelief and inaction of modern Christians. "God is no more hostile to cities than to villages: his Spirit is as free, and his offers of salvation as full, to the people of the crowded city, as of the open country." Let the advantages then be embraced. Let the power be concentrated. Let the sacramental host arise; and the work is done. And instead of being overwhelmed with shame and deserved reproach, we may joyfully say to such as pass by; "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever." "Then the sons also of them that afflicted Zion shall come bending unto her; and all they that despised her shall bow themselves down at the soles of her feet; and they shall call her the City of the Lord---the Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

VI. A sixth reason for special efforts in behalf of Cities is, the influence which they exert on the country and on the world.

Look to any nation, whether ancient or modern; throw the map before you; fix your eye upon the spots that bear rule; that command the attention of the enterprising, and busy the thoughts of statesmen. You have fixed it upon the cities of the world. Where was the strength of Italy, if not in Rome, once mistress of the world? Where the strength of Greece, if not in Athens, the mother of arts and refinement? And where is the strength of our Republic, if not in our cities and large towns? There talent in every art and profession is fostered, and exerts peculiar influence. There wealth concentrates its millions upon millions, to exert extensively a blasting or brightening influence on society. There the press daily sends out its thousands and its tens of thousands of winged messengers, to excite the passions, to influence the opinions, to control the energies of a nation. Powerful as is this engine, for corrupting or sanctifying the people, who does not know that its munitions and magazines of strength are placed principally in cities; and that the character which the press there sustains is diffused throughout the land? In cities, commerce is concentrated. The products of the soil flow from every

county, town, and village, to the cities; and thence they are distributed to the world. The riches, the luxuries, the products of other climes and nations are brought to cities, and thence distributed through the land. How manifest then, that cities must exert a mighty influence on the country and on the world. Who, that reflects on their extended intercourse, does not know, that they regulate the prices of commodities; that their fashions are imitated; that their maxims of trade are common law; and that their moral habits and opinions, good or bad, have an influence on the whole community? Their influence is great, whether we consider them in a moral or political point of view. The capture of a city has decided the destiny of nation. When Babylon was taken, a mighty empire was given to the invader. When Jerusalem was vanquished, all Judea was subdued. When ill-fated France was tossed with revolutions and counter-revolutions, the possession of her metropolis gave to either party the supreme command.

Now suppose that all this influence of cities is of a worldly, immoral, irreligious character; what must be its blasting power on the general interests of religion! It was when the pretended successor of Peter established his authority in Rome, that that mystical Babylon became "the mother of harlots," and "made the nations drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornications." And not until the angel shall "cry, with a mighty and strong voice, *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,*" will the strong man armed be vanquished, and the earth be encompassed with glory. Not until the evil influence of cities shall be arrested, will the mighty obstacles to the world's redemption be removed. How immeasurably important then, that great efforts be made for their conversion; and how merciful in God to destroy such of them as will not repent. Oh, it was mercy infinite, that rained down fire upon Sodom, and poured it heavily upon Gomorrah; and thus saved millions from the contagion of their wickedness!

But suppose that all the influence of cities were of an heavenly character---suppose the intelligence could be circulated along all our navigable rivers and canals---suppose it could be communicated from village to village, and from family to family, throughout the country, that the Spirit of God, as on the day of Pentecost, had come down in awful majesty and power among us; that all our men of business, and youth of folly, had been arrested in their worldly career; that all our theatres and resorts for vain pleasure had been forsaken; that our temples were crowded and overflowing with devout worshippers, and anxious inquirers; that the universal voice of our city's population had become, What shall we do, that we may glorify God and extend his kingdom? Suppose, I say, that this mighty change in our city could be told throughout the country; who can estimate the overwhelming influence it would carry along with it? Where is the solitary village that would not feel the impulse, and have its eye and heart lifted to Heaven, in view of the bright cloud of incense, ascending from these hundred temples, and these thrice ten thousand family altars? And to extend our view still further; suppose that every city of our land---that every city of the world---should experience such a change; what almighty strength and zeal would it give to the Angel having the everlasting Gospel to publish! How soon would the universal acclamation of mankind be, "Glory, and honour, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne!" And how soon would that blessed voice be heard from the heaven of heavens, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord, and his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever!"

These are not mere pictures of the imagination. The realities are at hand. And the influence of cities, in introducing them, must be felt. For "they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth." "The name of the city from that day shall be, *The Lord is there.*" "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, it shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts." Thus the day shall yet be, when the presence and power of the Holy God in cities shall so absorb the affections, and command the energies of their inhabitants, that, throughout the land, they shall be known and celebrated, not for their wealth, their splendour, their numbers, or their worldly enterprise, but *as the places where God has fixed his tabernacle*. Yes, the day shall yet come when the intercourse between cities shall be chiefly for purposes of religious improvement---when combinations for political intrigue, or mercantile speculation, which now waken such intensity of interest in our cities, shall dwindle to their comparative nothingness; and when the world's redemption shall assume its proper magnitude; and all be stimulated to more holy devotedness, and more heavenly effort. Oh, what a day, when all our increasing facilities of intercourse with the land, and with foreign nations, shall be

used mainly for advancing that kingdom which consists in righteousness and peace!--when thousands shall prayerfully wait the arrival of every post, and hail the coming in of every vessel, for intelligence, not of this world's riches and glories, but of the glories and victories of Zion.

Such, however, is the present power of the adversary in cities, that no ordinary effort will dispossess him. Still it must be done. The triumph of the cross, the salvation of the world can never be perfected without it. I know there are difficulties;--that cities do congregate vast assemblies of active depravity;--that they present multiplied enchantments to ruin;--that in every city wickedness displays a stern and lofty front. But I also know, that before the coming Spirit of God these obstacles shall melt away like wax, and vanish like smoke; "for strong is his hand and high is his right hand."

It was when revivals prevailed in cities, that the gospel spread with such amazing rapidity: and so, when the Spirit shall again descend upon them, will the work of reformation move forward with such power and grandeur, as shall make manifest that God is in Zion; "that the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels;" and that "the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." Let all, then, who love Zion, seek for the reviving influences of the Spirit upon cities. While every hand is faithful in the discharge of duty, let every heart be impressed with the sentiment, *Not by might, nor by power, but by my SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts*; and let every eye be directed to Him who hath promised, that *when iniquity cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard*.

In urging the importance of special effort and prayer for the renovation of cities, we do not overlook the interests of the country; but would thus guard every town and village from an influence heavily impregnated with moral poison and death. The merchants of the interior, in the prosecution of their business, regularly visit the metropolis. Many of them, on the enticement of friends and acquaintance, attend the theatres, and other places of vain amusement and sin; they become familiar with their glare and dissipation. They return, and tell what their eyes have seen, and what their ears have heard, and thus create in the bosom of the young, the ardent, the rich, and the worldly, a thirst for similar pastimes, and a disrelish for sober realities. Many faithful pastors in the land weep over the growing immoralities occasioned by the influence of cities. Many churches lament the defection of their members, having become worldly in their spirit, and vain in their imaginations, by reason of their frequent intercourse with cities. If such, then, is their influence upon the country, well may the churches, planted throughout the land, feel deeply interested in the moral character of cities, and pray for their conversion to God.

Let our cities become places of holiness: let holiness to the Lord be written upon the heart of every merchant, of every mechanic, of every statesman, of every counsellor, of every officer, upon every hall of legislation, and every splendid edifice; and an influence sweet, holy, and happy, shall go forth to revive the hearts of God's people, to awe and confound opposers, and to dress up the wilderness "like the garden of God."

O, what a scene of grandeur and glory, when the thousands of the saints shall wrestle in the spirit of Jacob for the blessing: when they shall rise up in the spirit of their Master, and display an untiring zeal for the salvation of man! O, what a scene, when the immense crowds of immortal beings, who throng our streets, shall be deeply impressed with the conviction of their accountability!--When every man shall feel that he is acting continually under the eye of God, and in full prospect of the judgment. Let these scenes be realized, and already I see "the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And I hear "a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Friends of the Redeemer, the hastening of this blessed consummation depends very much upon your will. God has intrusted great power in your hands. In the revelation of his Son, he has given you that word, which is "as a fire, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces." In shedding down a spirit of union, and guiding to the formation of great benevolent associations, he has given you facilities for extended influence hitherto unparalleled. He has given you

wealth, and knowledge, and all the means for using these facilities. And in the article of prayer, he has endued you with a power well nigh omnipotent. His condescending language is, "Concerning the work of my hands COMMAND YE ME." I see among you men of wealth, who can count your tens, your fifties, and your hundreds of thousands,---all of which has been solemnly consecrated to God. I see among you men of talent,---"capable of intimidating the collective vices of a nation or an age." I see among you men of enterprise, and courage, and resistless perseverance. I see among you men, who have strong confidence in God. And shall these varied powers of resistance and aggression be circumscribed by the walls of individual churches? Shall they not rather be combined for raising a higher and higher tone of moral feeling, and Christian enterprise? Shall they not send a strong, concentrated light into every dark retreat of wickedness? Shall not the tide of dissipation, and crime, that would overflow and mar every thing sacred, be met and turned back? Shall not thousands and tens of thousands on our borders, and in our midst, be rescued from the iron sway of the destroyer, and be saved from going down to the pit? Shall not new temples be opened for their reception? and shall not "God, even our God, be a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them?"

Do you ask more particularly, how this shall be done? Plant, for instance, an able and devoted minister in the most degraded portion of our city. Let him employ his time in the cultivation of one thousand of these minds. Let him, by the aid of self-denying brethren, assemble them in one place on the holy sabbath. Let him visit their houses, and pray with them, every month. Let him collect the children and youth into sabbath schools and bible classes. Let him encourage among them every means of intellectual as well as spiritual elevation; and how astonishing will be the change wrought, even in the course of one year. Instead of being objects of pity, shame, and aversion; many of them become pillars of light, and exert a purifying influence upon others. Is not this elevation worth more than all the necessary expense, even leaving out of the account all the eternal results? Let, then, another and another degraded portion be selected, and in like manner be regenerated and ennobled. Especially let no one who feeds at the table of our common Lord, and lives from week to week on the provisions of his house, refuse, promptly and vigorously to co-operate in the work of mercy, while a soul is perishing in ignorance and sin!

In the mean time, let our civil fathers look well to the execution of laws, which themselves have made, for the suppression of sabbath-breaking and immorality. And let them inquire seriously, Whether all our children and youth may not be brought under the influence of instructors of good character, and other moral restraints, a thousand-fold more efficacious, for preventing crime, than statutes, and prisons, and chains.

Our hearts rejoice to see new blocks of buildings going up to decorate our city. But what is that to the present and eternal elevation of these thousand minds? Should we not then exult in the privilege of lifting all the degraded portions of our city, and of our land, into intellectual and moral grandeur? What object of ambition could there be, equal to that of thus creating an empire of righteousness---a world of intellect? Such monuments of glory shall remain, when earthly governments shall be no more, and the earth itself shall have passed away.

Never, methinks, was the language of God more distinct, than at the present crisis. To the rich he is manifestly saying, "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes; and all nations shall call you blessed." To the ministers of religion, and to all his chosen, he is manifestly saying, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up; be not afraid; say unto the cities; Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created, shall praise the Lord. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem."

These are great privileges for God to confer on such worms as we are. Yet God has indeed placed them within reach. And if we will but do our duty here, we are only ripening for infinitely greater privileges and higher honours. He that is *faithful over a few things*, shall be made *ruler over many things*. Yes; when all our cities, and the earth itself, and these heavens shall be "wrapt in consuming fire," we may, "with the great multitude found faithful," enter that *City, which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*. In that City, "THERE SHALL BE NO MORE CURSE, BUT THE THRONE OF GOD AND THE LAMB SHALL BE IN IT, AND HIS SERVANTS SHALL SERVE HIM. AND THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT THERE; AND THEY NEED NO CANDLE, NEITHER LIGHT OF THE SUN; FOR THE LORD GOD GIVETH THEM LIGHT: AND THEY SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER."

APPENDIX.

The population of New-York city, in 1820, was 123,706. In 1825, it was 166,086: making an increase, in 5 years, of 42,380. Allowing the same ratio of increase, there is now a population of 185,000. There are in the city 101 churches, or houses of public worship: Of which 4 are Roman Catholic, 1 New-Jerusalem, 2 Unitarian, 2 Universalist, 2 Jews' Synagogues, 15 Baptist, 13 Methodist, 17 Episcopalian, and 34 Presbyterian churches, including the Scotch and Reformed Dutch. The remainder are Lutheran, Moravian, Friends, German Reformed, and Independents. The average number of regular attendants is estimated, by such as have made it a subject of special examination, not to exceed 400 to each house; which makes the number of those stately attending public worship 40,400. After deducting 50,000, for children, for the sick, and for others necessarily absent, there will still remain NINETY-FOUR THOUSAND AND SIX HUNDRED, or *more than half the population, absenting themselves from the public worship of God!*

There are in the city 4 theatres and 2 circuses: most of which are opened from 4 to 6 nights every week. The number of shops and other places licensed to sell liquor by the small measure, is three thousand; or about one to every SEVENTH DWELLING-HOUSE! In addition to the violations of holy time, occasioned by steam-boats, and other public conveyances, by butchers, grocers, and other traders purchasing their stock from boats arriving from the country, upwards of ONE THOUSAND *shops, and other places, are opened for the sale of liquor or other things on the Sabbath!*

Nor is this view peculiar to New-York. A critical investigation of facts in other cities will develop similar results. In London, the whole number of churches and chapels of all denominations is estimated at 400. "If we calculate," says a late English writer, "that the average attendance is 500; which is certainly the greatest extent we can allow, and add 250 more for the fluctuating hearers, it will give a result of 300,000 persons. The population of this metropolis is estimated at 1,274,800. From which subtract the feeble minority above, and we find NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED *persons neglecting the public worship of God!* It appears that of the commercial papers published in London on the Sunday, there are circulated, on the lowest estimate, 45,000 copies; and that upon the most moderate computation, between two and three hundred thousand readers of these papers are to be found in the metropolis alone. While the great number of pressmen, distributors, master-venders, hawkers, and subordinate agents, of both sexes, and of all ages, who are employed on the Sabbath, all tend to the most flagrant breach of the day of rest."

In the mean time, the number of deaths in New-York is about *five thousand* annually: in London, about *thirty-three thousand*.

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