

A DISCOURSE

ON THE

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MORAL ASPECT AND DESTITUTION

OF THE

CITY OF NEW YORK,

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK.

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BY REV. WILLIAM BANNARD.

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NEW YORK:  
CHARLES SCRIBNER, 145 NASSAU STREET.  
1851.

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AT THE OPENING OF THE

PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK,

IN THE

RUTGERS STREET (PRESBYTERIAN) CHURCH,

OCTOBER 13, 1851.

BY

REV. WILLIAM BANNARD,

PASTOR OF MADISON AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

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TO THE REV. WM. BANNARD.

DEAR BROTHER:—

The Presbytery of New York, having listened with great satisfaction to your Discourse preached last Evening, has directed the undersigned to request a copy of the same for publication and distribution within its bounds.

Hoping that you will comply with this request, we remain,

Most truly yours,

JAMES M. MACDONALD.

JOHN M. KREBS.

GEORGE POTTS.

NEW YORK, *Oct. 14th*, 1851.

TO MESSRS. MACDONALD, KREBS & POTTS.

DEAR BRETHREN:

The Discourse requested for publication was prepared merely for the occasion on which it was delivered; but if in the judgment of Presbytery its circulation will tend to direct attention to the moral wastes within its bounds, or incite to increased effort for their cultivation, it is at its service.

Respectfully and sincerely yours,

WM. BANNARD.

NEW YORK, *Oct. 15th*, 1851.

## DISCOURSE.

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MATT. V. 14. "*A City that is set on a hill cannot be hid.*"

It will suit the purpose of this discourse to consider the text in its literal sense, though it was of course spoken as an illustration of Christian character and duty.

"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." It need not be actually situated upon an eminence to be a conspicuous object. Were its elevated location its only prominence, it would at best be seen but by few, and acquire but little distinction. But let a city be large, central, and populous; the seat of commerce, manufactures, literature, and wealth; the door of ingress and egress to a vast country, and it will become an object of universal interest. Emphatically may it be said, "*It cannot be hid.*" Its location cannot be unknown, nor its influence unfelt. Though upon its outer limits, it will be in effect the heart of a nation. Much of its wealth, enterprise, skill, and vigor, will be concentrated within it. Its resources will be drawn from all quarters. It will be the resort of the merchant and pleasure seeker, the artist and artisan. There will flow into it, as by a law of gravity, the productions of the country, which, with other causes, must render it the centre of its heaviest business operations.

On the other hand, from its public and social institutions, its laws of trade and of fashion, its presses and pulpits, its political and commercial associations, there will go forth an agency for good or for evil that will penetrate to its remotest districts. The city becomes thus, not only the emporium of commerce and the arbiter of fashion, but the patron of the arts and promoter

of civilization. Its abundance of wealth favors the progress of material improvements, by patronizing and perfecting every fresh discovery that may open new channels for its enterprise. Social and political changes are discussed and tested, if not oftenest originated, among its heterogeneous and crowded masses. Its necessities and rewards secure the labors of the most talented in the arts, and to no inconsiderable degree in science and literature. "The rays of a nation's genius," it has been said, "are converged through the lens of the Metropolitan Press, through its institutions of science and galleries of art."

Its moral is less decided than its social and political influence. The facility of access to it and readiness to follow its example give a power to its artificial and vicious customs which it would be difficult to measure. Life in the city is marked by restlessness and excitement. The hurrying to and fro in its great thoroughfares is but an index of the intense anxiety and incessant drive to which its business men submit. The outward display we behold, is but an expression of the levity of manners and recklessness of religion that characterize whole classes. To multitudes in the City, *home* is unknown except in memory or anticipation. The hotel, the club room, or the haunt of vice, is almost of necessity the substitute for its comforts. The exclusiveness and seclusion that are favored by the unsocial habits that obtain; familiarity by report, if not by contact, with poverty, suffering, and crime, tend to dry up the benevolent sensibilities, and foster the pride and selfishness of the heart. Its commercial spirit that "Winks at the tricks of trade," and magnifies the benefits of wealth, impairs the sensitiveness of the conscience and throws down the barriers against temptation. The corrupting influence of numbers brought into intimate connection, the arts of the wicked to ensnare the unsuspecting—appealing as they do to every infirmity and depravity of our nature; the facility for the gratification of every passion; the opportunity for concealment, so as to evade the knowledge of friends and the rebukes of society; the temptation to push for great or speedy riches, and the chances for dishonesty and unlawful indulgence, beset the path with perils, and create an atmosphere in

which piety and virtue too often die out or maintain but a sickly existence. Cities have been called "great sores," and with all their wealth and cultivation, it cannot be denied they are reeking with moral putrefaction. The most desperate and depraved make in them their haunts, and practise their villainies within their precincts.

What has been said of cities generally is eminently true of our own, whose increase in population, wealth, and power, has been unprecedented. The chief port of entry for a mighty continent; the avenue through which hundreds of thousands of foreign immigrants roll in a ceaseless flood towards the interior; the depot not only for a nation's, but a world's productions; the seat of the vastest schemes of commercial enterprise and philanthropic effort, our city stands conspicuous before the whole country, and its influence is co-extensive with its fame. What is done in its secret chambers is proclaimed by its presses through the remotest corners of the land; and the savor of its spirit is imparted not only to its own people, but in a degree to the myriads of its transient visitors, and even to those who have never witnessed its sights or breathed its air.

To preserve the masses of such a city from corruption; to maintain and extend in it the institutions of benevolence and religion; to reform its abuses, and create and diffuse such a public sentiment as shall make its great power tell for good and not for evil, is a work that might stimulate the ambition, as it would task the energies, of the most gifted and godly. The Christian Church—the institution of the gospel, are the salt to preserve it from decay. They furnish the leaven and the light which alone can dispel its darkness, and impregnate the channels of its life with the influences of virtue; and it therefore becomes the entire Christian community, but especially its pledged and accredited supporters, to feel the liveliest interest in all that pertains to its permanency and extension.

Our Lord commanded that his gospel should first be preached in a city, "beginning at Jerusalem;" and as a matter of policy, as well as duty, his apostles gathered in cities their strongest and most flourishing churches. Their example ought not to be over-



looked. Now, as then, cities afford the amplest scope for Christian effort, and present the most pressing need of its conservative influence ; while the power of religion, as there exerted, or the manner in which it is there treated, must affect the regard in which it is held throughout the state or nation.

Let us consider, then, for a moment, some of *the moral features* of our own city, and the call there is, in the Providence of God, for *increased diligence and self-denial in religious effort* on the part of the Christian community generally, and on our own part in particular, as the *representatives of a numerous and influential* denomination.

As we look around us, then, we behold a vast and rapidly-increasing population. The prosperity of our country is imaged in the growing wealth, luxury, and, as it would seem, wickedness of our city. We meet in our streets individuals of almost every race, and hear the language of almost every nation under heaven. Every shade of opinion is held, and unrestrained liberty granted for its propagation. The field is open alike to the friends of truth and the friends of error ; and it must be therefore to the discredit of the Christian Church if the enemies of righteousness continue to maintain the ascendancy in numbers, if they do not in power. As facts now are, however, the adherents of a single community of errorists equal in number the members of all the evangelical denominations among us.

The habits and associations of city life are averse to godliness ; and in this fact we may find one reason why our religious has not kept pace with our temporal prosperity. The increased luxury and expensiveness in the style of living consequent upon increased wealth have indeed manifested themselves in costly edifices and sumptuous arrangements for public worship, but neither the numbers nor efficiency of Christians, has multiplied in the ratio of our population or resources. A barren formalism is too generally accepted for a living piety. Religious zeal is rather for denominational enlargement than for the rescuing of perish-

ing sinners—for the shibboleth of party, than the glory of Christ's kingdom. There has been no general or powerful awakening among the churches for many years. The gospel is preached with faithfulness, and heard with interest, yet few comparatively seem moved by it to a reception of its offers of salvation; while the piety of too many of these even, through the untoward influences around them, seems sickly and feeble, like the health of a child that has breathed only the impure air of a stifled chamber or unwholesome locality.

The growth of churches, if they grow at all, is due rather to the changes and the increase of the population from abroad than to accessions from the world. If new edifices have been erected, and new congregations formed, others have been sold and disbanded; and the actual progress is not commensurate with the growing numbers. While some parts of the city are well supplied, others are left almost entirely destitute, and that too though the population in these destitute parts is not decreasing, but, since this process has been in operation, has actually and largely increased. Some twelve or fifteen Protestant churches have been removed from the lower wards, which now number over 28,000 more inhabitants than they did ten years ago.

Meantime, error is rife and active, the churches and associations it has gathered flourish with appalling vigor. The numbers they already reckon exceed by 20,000 the members of evangelical churches—50,000 being the estimated number of church members connected with the several Protestant evangelical denominations, while 70,000 is the number claimed by the different sects of errorists. And all these do not include the multitudes that think with them, but who make no public acknowledgment of their faith. It does not include the thousands who practically have no regard for the merest forms of religion, nor the avowedly atheistic and infidel, whose numbers are by no means small, and whose influence, though it come not under our special observation, is by no means limited or powerless.

We consider ourselves, brethren, in an enlightened Christian city, and yet there are portions of it as destitute of gospel privileges, and as truly mission ground, as countries we have been

went to regard as heathen. A writer in one of our papers (*N. Y. Observer*) says: "The first five wards of this city, with a population equal to that of the Sandwich Islands, are not as well supplied with ministers and churches. In these wards, with a population of 84,000, there are 18 churches. In the Sandwich Islands, with a population of 84,165, there are 22 churches and 25 ministers. And if we compare the whole city with those islands, we shall see, that of the proportion of evangelical church members they have two to one as found in our city. Here, out of a population of 500,000, we have 50,000 members of evangelical churches; while in the Sandwich Islands there are 17,000 out of a population of 84,000; one in ten here, one in five there."

And it will be found, moreover, that there are thousands here as truly heathen in their views and practice, and it might almost be said, under existing arrangements, as hopelessly heathen, as if they had never seen the light of a gospel land—the children of poverty and vice, who have grown up in utter ignorance of the way of Salvation, and whose habits and preferences hinder them from all desire and opportunity of improvement. They live within sight of evangelical churches, and pass within sound of their services, yet die unreached and unbenefited by them. Multitudes, doubtless, have broken away from the restraints of home and of early religious instruction, to run their brief and reckless career of misery and crime; but others do literally grow up and die the veriest heathen we could imagine.

According to Henry Mayhew, in his "London Labor and London Poor," there are in that city 30,000 "Costers," a class by no means so degraded, in a social point of view, as some others, and who are as absolutely ignorant of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel as though they were Mohammedans or Hindoos.\* And

\* An intelligent and trustworthy man, until very recently actively engaged in costermongering, computed, that not three in one hundred costermongers had ever been in the interior of a church, or any place of worship, or knew what was meant by Christianity. The same person said: "The costers have no religion at all, and very little notion, or none at all, of what religion or a future state is." Again; "Religion is a regular puzzle to costers. They see people come out of church and chapel; and as they're mostly well dressed, and there's very few of their own sort among the

in our own city, doubtless, the number of such, though less startling, would, on investigation, be found actually appalling.

We have of late heard much said respecting the increase of crime in this community. Our prisons have overflowed with criminals. Our police returns show that nearly 10,000 arrests are made per quarter. Our daily journals teem with the harrowing details of odious and overt acts of wickedness; and these are occurring with alarming frequency. Since the first of January last, it is stated, there have been sixteen trials for murder; and within the past three months, sentence of death has been passed upon ten individuals for that crime alone. New York is acquiring an unenviable notoriety among her sister cities in this respect.

Nor is it difficult to assign *causes* for this melancholy fact. The absence of all religious principle and religious restraint would account for much of abounding crime. When men have literally no fear of God, or of coming retribution, it is easy for them to give way to their passions, and to commit acts for which, at the worst, they apprehend only a civil penalty. Multitudes among us are unquestionably in that position. They know no higher tribunal than that of man, to which they are amenable; and from its condemnation they deem it by no means hopeless to escape.

*Intemperance* is another, and the most immediate and fruitful source of crime. To it may be directly traced a large proportion not only of the petty, but of the flagrant acts of violence and wickedness that occur. Eleven-twelfths of the convicts in our city prisons, it is affirmed, are persons of intemperate habits! "Out of 21,299 commitments to prison in 1850, there were 18,853 confessedly intemperate."\* And while there are open, by the direct authority or indirect permission of the city government, more than 6,000 places for the sale of spiritu-

church-goers, the costers somehow mix up being religious with being respectable, and so they have a queer sort of feeling about it. It's a mystery to them. \* \* \* "If a missionary came among us with plenty of money," said another costermonger, "he might make us all Christians, or Turks, or any thing he liked."—*London Labor and London Poor*, pp. 21; 22, Part I.

\* Fourth quarterly report of the National Temperance Society

ous liquors, we may look for little abatement in the numbers of the criminal. And this evil is aggravated immeasurably by the fact that these places are open not only night and day, but over 4,000 of them are open on the Sabbath also. The day of rest and leisure becomes thus doubly the day of temptation and of sin. The hours of the laborer and the artisan, that might otherwise be spent with his family, if not in the house of God, are too oiten spent in the society of boon companions, in the grogery or gambling-house. Evil habits are formed, and expenses incurred, that introduce strife and poverty into families, and ultimately lead to positive crime. Lads and young men by thousands are lured thereby to a flattering but destructive career of self-indulgence, that terminates in disgrace or beggary, if not in a premature and shameful death.

*The desecration of the Lord's day* is in itself a stupendous evil, as well as a fruitful occasion of crime. We may attribute it, if we will, to the foreign population; but though it should be confined chiefly to them, the evil is not on that account diminished. Our streets are still thronged, the suburbs of the city crowded, public conveyances in active operation, and drinking, rioting, and profanity disturb the peace of quiet and moral citizens. An example most painful to consider is set before our youth, who are but too ready to overleap the bounds of religious restraint, and "follow the multitude to do evil." Nor is its effect confined to youth: others who have been instructed to respect the Sabbath—from the country, for example, as well as those brought up in the city—have their reverence for it diminished, and are led, insensibly to themselves, both to its neglect and to indifference to its religious observances. They seek their own pleasure in the retirement of their own homes, if not in the open pursuit of their business, or in public excursions and amusements. It is true we may not have our Sunday theatres, as in some cities of Europe, but are we not approaching them in our well-patronized "Sunday evening concerts," and in the undisturbed opening of our "dance-houses," and other places of the lowest description? Nor is it impossible that professing Christians may give a countenance they little think of to the present un-

blushing violation of the Sabbath, by their *habitual* use of public conveyances on that day. Their moral sensibilities, it is feared, become blunted by this practice, and are in this particular, so that they do not consider they may thus indirectly sanction many of the abuses that flow from the violation of the Sabbath, and also contribute in no slight degree to undermine this divinely-appointed institution, which has but to be overthrown, and irreligion and crime will hold undisputed sway.

It is customary to refer much of our growing wickedness to the foreign paupers and foreign criminals that are daily flocking to our shores. Nor can the correctness of this view be disputed. Our city is the grand depot of immigration, and the focus of travel; and amid its immense and changing population, these characters find the amplest scope for, and will commit, their depredations. But it is not the previously abandoned that alone become criminal. The thrusting together of so many strangers in a stranger land, the crowded state of every avenue to employment, the difficulty numbers have to find the bare necessities of life, the impositions practised on them by the cruel and merciless, lead not only to poverty but to crime.

There exists, too, a spirit of lawlessness and violence—an excrescence, or abuse, if you will, of our free institutions—and winked at, rather actually encouraged, in certain quarters, for political ends. This spirit is exhibited in constant petty acts of annoyance and disorder, at elections, at fires, and in nightly brawls. It is not confined to foreigners, though foreign feuds are here perpetuated. It exists among natives, and occasionally breaks out in fearful deeds of violence and blood, as in the Astor Place and Hoboken riots. We may consider it incidental to our dense and heterogeneous population; but it is, nevertheless, fraught with danger, and calls most loudly for the application of civil, but especially of moral and religious correctives, which are alone effectual in their reforms, or truly saving in their power.

Akin to this, and increasing its virulence, is a covert or open hostility to obnoxious laws, which has been studiously inculcated, and to an alarming extent, together with an excessive sympathy for the criminal, which would make him the victim of the

neglect or wrongs of society, and not the responsible author of his own sins. In certain efforts at reform, the attempt has been made to create a public sentiment that should demand the abolition of some of the most conservative institutions of society; and doctrines have been broached that have unsettled the views of many, and impaired that respect for the sanctity and authority of *law*, both human and divine, which is essential to its execution under our government.

But it is needless to pursue this theme. These facts have been suggested that the nature of the work, and the necessity of its performance, may be perceived. In the Providence of God, there is a wide field for purely missionary labor in our city; and there are motives for its prosecution that should quicken us to renewed diligence. "The leaven of conservative Christian influence," it has been said, "must be diffused throughout this great community, or there will accumulate in it a combination of destructive elements that will explode and scatter into fragments the existing structure of society." There is a sense in which, according to the same writer, "the cause of the race, in future ages and in all lands, may be narrowed down in its problems to the compass of a single city. \* \* \* If the present experiment of American society prove more auspicious than those of the Old World, it must be by some wiser regulation or improvement of the condition of large cities. If the decay and ruin of other cities may be traced to the insufficiency of false religions, or the insufficiency even of the true, when grossly perverted, our hope must have respect to our purer faith, its superior wisdom, and more effective philanthropy, as the main element of our perpetuity and prosperity." Never was there a community where the cementing and purifying influence of the gospel was more needful, or where a wider field was opened for its triumphs. The diverse, unsettled, and fluctuating character of our population, renders the process of their fusion into one homogeneous society, under the power of Christianity, exceedingly difficult, and yet to the last degree desirable. And whatever be the promises of pseudo-reformers, or whatever the contempt that infidelity

pours upon it, *the gospel* alone can truly conserve what is good, and correct what is evil in a community.

As a further illustration of the nature of the work, and of the practical difficulties that beset it, we notice briefly the different classes for whose religious welfare our Christian obligation and the true interests of society require us to labor.

Foremost, then, in point of numbers and influence, are *Romanists*, chiefly foreigners, of whom 70,000 are reckoned to be Irish, and a smaller number Germans and other Europeans. In consequence of their presence, the institutions and pretensions of the papacy are here put forth and established. Its doctrines are freely proclaimed, and its ceremonials observed. Its strength is expended without prohibition or restraint, both in preserving its own adherents, and in making converts from the Protestant community. It has not only a religious but a social and political influence, which is felt in our families, in our schools, and at the ballot-box. Here, too, as in other lands, though modified in its aspect or in its tactics, it is essentially the same, in spirit and in purpose, the enemy of the truth, and of all civil and religious freedom. These suggestions are made not by way of complaint at its presence, for it is here by the Providence of God, and, doubtless, for wise and gracious ends; nor with the design of intimating aught against the right of Romanists to hold and teach their doctrines; for this is not the land, nor is ours the church, to deny the freedom of conscience or of speech; but they are made to remind you of the simple facts, and as the foundation of the question, What are we as a church, what is the Protestant community, doing for the suppression or curtailment of this system of error? If Romanists are allowed undisputed liberty to spread their doctrines, and to make converts to their church in this Protestant country, why should not we be active in counteracting their influence, and in winning their deluded votaries to the truth? Since we are forbidden to enter the domains of the Pope, and are so remote from most Romish countries that we can do little for their conversion, Providence is sending them to our shores. Already is it publicly announced,



that there are more of the Irish people in America than in Ireland ; and though it be not now literally true, at the present rate of immigration it must soon be the fact. Three millions are here already, and these, with their descendants, and those who shall hereafter arrive, will be sufficient, it is claimed, to Catholicise the whole country. Who knows, too, but in the expected convulsions of Europe, other Romish nations will follow their example, and their numbers and influence become indefinitely multiplied ? We are wont to rely on the intelligence and religion of our people for the permanency of our institutions ; but if we have among us a powerful class differing in religion, and owning an allegiance to a present priesthood or foreign potentate superior to any they can owe to the civil government, what security have we for the preservation of our dearest rights and privileges ?

We have, then, a personal interest in this subject, both as Protestants and citizens of a free republic. But independent of all this, we have in the presence of this class a vast missionary work brought to our very door. And what, it may be asked, are we doing for its cultivation ? While as a denomination we have two missionaries to the Jews in this city, a far less numerous body, who of our entire number feels it his special duty to labor for the Roman Catholics ? Our system of city missions and tract distribution may reach them to a limited extent, but who shall say that, as a church, we may not employ a more distinct and effective agency ? If those who have been educated in other lands, and in all the bigotry of the man of sin, seem to us hopeless—though this is by no means the fact—cannot something be done to save from infidelity, or at best utter irreligion, the generations that are born and educated on our own soil ? Their number, already great, is rapidly increasing, and, under the influence of our free institutions, they grow up with neither the fear of the priesthood before their eyes, nor the slaves of early superstition ; but alas, too often in ignorance of, and hostility to, religion, if not, in many cases, a terror and a peril to society.

There is, further, that large class, nominally Protestant or Papist, as the case may be, practically nothing in religion.

Some of them are in circumstances of comfort, some of them in affluence, but the majority in poverty. Outcasts from good society, familiar with vice, they are a burden and a dread to the well disposed and respectable. Can nothing be done for their reformation and salvation? We cannot doubt the *power* of the gospel to redeem the most abandoned. We cannot question the *grace* of Christ, when we see it exercised towards a Mary Magdalene and a thief upon the cross, towards his own murderers and the persecutors of his disciples; cannot, then, something be done to bring these abandoned ones within its influence? Men, we are taught, must hear before they can believe or be saved; and if they shun and despise the very mercies they need, shall not this fruitful age discover some method by which, in spite of their depravity and obstinacy, they may be reached? Has the effort indeed been made in the spirit of self-sacrifice that Christ manifested when he came from heaven to seek and to save the lost? or with that devotion to his service that Paul showed, when he testified, that he warned men, "night and day, and from house to house, with tears?"

In the large cities of Great Britain, schools for the young of this class have been established with an encouraging degree of success. At the earnest solicitation of such men as Chalmers, a system of thorough visitation, under Presbyterial or sessional supervision, was adopted, and schools and mission churches established. Preaching in the streets, parks, or on the docks, in the open air, has been recently introduced, and though a novelty in our day, or engrossed and perverted by the fanatical, it has in its favor the example of our Lord and some of his most successful ministers in other periods, and may we not hope it will have also in our own?

In our own city, a beginning has been made in the way of "boys' meetings" and mission Sunday schools, and also in the establishment of an institution for reclaiming vagrant and vicious boys; but has this work been taken hold of to the extent and with the liberality that its importance demands? Have the influential denominations, as such, or have prominent and wealthy individuals come forward and enlisted with zeal and

faith in its prosecution? Have we as a Presbytery given it the consideration that it merits? What has been accomplished is due to the personal activity and denials of a few who surely ought not to lack the countenance and aid of those who might give their money, if not their time, to this needful work.

One of the most frequent, it might be added *popular*, calumnies of infidelity in our day is, that the present type of Christianity is a failure. It cannot cure the ills that exist, and that it has labored for centuries to reform. And for proof of this we are pointed not only to the lax lives of its professors, but to the tens of thousands who remain in ignorance, and perish in vice, beneath the shadow of its temple walls. And has there not been an apathy and criminal neglect in reference to this class, that furnish some ground for the reproach?

And here it may not be amiss again briefly to direct attention to the religious destitution of the lower wards of the city. Is there an inexorable necessity for their remaining in this condition? Though the population be transient, changing, if you please, every month, they are still in need of the gospel. Though self-sustaining churches cannot be gathered among them, this can hardly be a sufficient reason for removing all the churches, at least for giving them no others in their place. Though they do nothing to provide them for themselves, or would not care to receive them, this is the weightiest reason for their establishment. It shows their lamentable condition. Why may not mission churches be sustained there as well as in small country places, or in foreign lands? With a population increasing more rapidly than in many large cities, with numerous families of the very class that may urge the strongest claims for missionary effort, with thousands of young men, and other permanent and transient residents, that occupy the hotels and boarding-houses of these wards, it would seem that at least an effort should be made to render the ordinances of religion accessible. The temples of error in these neighborhoods, it is said, are thronged, especially by young men; might not some of these be induced to listen to the Word of God? And while this view of the case seems generally admitted, and we hear on all hands

the common lamentation that our lower wards should be deprived of all their churches, what movement has actually been made to remedy the evil? The field seems absolutely abandoned to error and irreligion. And encompassed, as the subject confessedly is, with difficulties, were they faced in a spirit of Christian zeal, or with the energy with which an undertaking that demands mere capital and enterprise for its achievement, is wont to be met in this community, who doubts but they might be removed, and that some scheme might be devised that, with the Divine blessing, would be successful? And if intelligent Christian men would enlist with earnestness and faith in this work, what is to hinder them from putting a preached gospel within reach of all in our lower wards that could be induced to hear it?

Among the other classes that call for missionary effort are the colored people of the city, numbering, as has been estimated, from 14 to 18,000, though rapidly diminishing by removals to Williamsburgh, and other places in the vicinity. From their past history and present social condition, they present peculiar claims to Christian sympathy and benevolence. Their long period of dependence or bondage, their numerous and oppressive civil disabilities, the prejudice with which they must contend, and their consequent poverty, render it probable that for a time, if not always, they will be compelled to look to their more favored brethren for aid in sustaining their religious institutions. And surely they, if any class, need the consoling and elevating influences of the gospel, while they are as susceptible as any of improvement under it. What has been done among them ought not to be considered a burden, but rather a privilege. And though larger draughts are made upon our Christian liberality, even without the prospect of gathering self-sustaining churches, who will say they shall be sent empty away? or that the means requisite for the permanent establishment of congregations among them shall not be furnished?

There are also the Jews, for whose spiritual necessities we are, perhaps, doing more than for other classes; yet in view of their numbers and accessibility, their claims on us as the seed of

Abraham, and the intimate connection which their conversion shall have with the prosperity of the whole Christian Church, we certainly are not doing too much.

There are again the tens of thousands of seamen that frequent our port, and who, transient and uncertain as they are, require, at our hands, some effort for their spiritual improvement. Other denominations have their chapels and chaplains; and though something is done in our own, by individuals and Churches contributing through the agency of others, we are doing nothing for them in our denominational capacity.

But not to dwell on these, a brief allusion may be made to the growing German population. Industrious, economical, and thriving, they are destined to become an influential portion of the community. Many of them are Roman Catholics; though it is believed numbers of them have thrown off their allegiance to their Church, not to become Protestant and Evangelical, but too often to become infidel or practically indifferent to all religion. Many are rationalists, while even the grossest form of atheism is tolerated among them. They deny the existence of a personal God, and scoff at the doctrine of a personal immortality. Monstrous as are these sentiments, they have spread far and wide among the Germans.\* Hundreds are professed Atheists. "There is no God," is their watchword, and the theme of public harangues at their Hoboken summer conventicles, and at their three places of Sabbath meeting in this city. They scorn the gospel, with the remark, "I have done with that." Their atheism too is married to socialism of the rankest school. They declaim against the rights of *property*, denounce the marriage institution, and cry "Down with the Church!" "Down with that lie about religion!" "Long live universal anarchy!" Elsewhere, and doubtless here also, efforts are made to spread the works of Paine and Voltaire, and a zeal shown in the propagation of their errors, worthy of a better cause.

Sad must be the condition of our city and country should such sentiments prevail. Imminent too is the peril to which

\* See *American Messenger*, for March, 1851.

the better instructed and the youth among them are exposed by these pestilential doctrines.

There are indeed Evangelical men among them, and their number, it is hoped, is increasing. There are also those who in the Providence of God are able and willing to preach to them the gospel in their own language. Shall not the Churches rally around and sustain them by their cordial sympathy, and by furnishing the pecuniary means requisite to support the institutions of religion?

But finally, there is another, and to us as Presbyterians, an interesting class for whom we should manifest a special concern. Reference is had to the Presbyterians who come among us chiefly from Scotland and Ireland. Their number is, at the lowest estimation, thirty thousand. Naturally and by sympathy, they belong to our body, and many of them do in fact make their home in our Church. But thousands, bringing with them the preferences, and if you will, the prejudices of early education, are repelled from us by slight differences, relating chiefly to our mode of worship. Our practice of reading sermons, our psalmody and choirs, are so much at variance with their previous associations, that though of little moment in themselves, they become barriers to their union with our Churches. They long, as David did, when cut off from the sanctuary, for the spoken word and ancient version, to which from time immemorial they have attached an almost sacred reverence. Many find their way, it is true, into Churches in which these things are ordered to their taste. Others who cannot from location, or other circumstances, find such Churches, and cannot overcome their first impressions, absent themselves from religious ordinances. And strangers, as many of them are, among strangers, and unrestrained by former influences, some—many, it is feared—become lost alike to religion and to the Church of God.

Now in view of these facts, the question occurs whether our system does not allow of such a degree of expansion as to admit these persons *on their own terms*. May we not with Paul “Be all things to all men, if by all means we may save some?” Should we not accommodate ourselves in things indifferent to

the preferences of those who, in many cases, would choose to be with us could they do so in conscience and to edification. It has been suggested that the attempt might be made to gather in Churches in which the psalmody and preaching should be according to strict Presbyterian usage, *as they have known it*. It is thought that in suitable locations such an experiment would be successful; and that ultimately through their ecclesiastical and fraternal connection with us, they would from choice conform to our customs, and become fully identified with us. It is not improbable too, that such a step would be preparatory to the incorporation with us of other Churches from which we are now separated by the narrowest limits, and whose union with our body might result in the happiest consequences to both parties. Is not the matter worthy of the consideration of this Presbytery, involving, as it does, our own extension and the welfare of thousands who belong to the same great family?

It will be seen, that extended as have been these remarks, mere hints only have been given; a mere outline has been sketched of the work to be performed. Nothing has been said of the neighboring cities and suburban towns, in some of which the population is increasing in a rapider ratio than in the city proper. Brooklyn, *e. g.*, essentially a part of New York, and already boasting a population of above one hundred thousand, whose wants and characteristics are similar to ours, and whose territory comes within our bounds; Williamsburgh, whose rate of increase has been greater than either, and where, if possible, there is more decidedly missionary work to be done. But it would be needless to enumerate the numerous places that lie upon both rivers, and upon the waters of our harbor, and that line the several railroads, radiating in all directions from the great centre. Here the families of the merchant and artisan may enjoy the benefits of a country residence, while themselves continue to carry on their business in the city. Here we may look for a permanent population; for the main inducement to settle in these places is, that those who do so, can thus become freeholders. Openings for the formation of Churches will con-

tinually present themselves, and such Churches too, as will probably be self-sustaining and stable. We owe it, therefore, to the cause of religion and to the Church we serve, to be on the watch both for opportunities of usefulness and of extension wherever they occur. The members of our Churches, and others who might be brought into them, will wander away to other denominations if they are not tempted to criminal neglect of all religious ordinances, unless the means of grace are provided for them. The field in which we fail to sow the good seed will be filled with tares. Or, if positive errorists do not take possession of it, it will be cultivated by those whose doctrines and practice are less conducive, in our opinion, to the good of society and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. It is well, indeed, for this vast and growing community, that there is a higher degree of activity in other bodies than our own; otherwise multitudes that are now reached would be left uncared for. And though we regard our own views as preferable, we cannot but rejoice that Christ is preached, as we believe he is, by many of them with both power and success.

On this point, brethren, or in the direct matter of Church extension, it would not be difficult to show that we have little occasion to glory, when our achievements are contrasted with our resources and opportunities. In this city, *e. g.* to say nothing of adjacent places, if we leave out of the account the labors of a single family, there have been gathered as the fruits of Presbyterian enterprise, two, or at most three churches since 1840. One of these, now wealthy and vigorous, derived no aid from other churches, except from the colony by which it was commenced. And omitting this also, we then have as the result of ten years effort, the Church at Yorkville and the Colored Congregation at Cottage Place. In the meantime our population has increased at least 220,000, while about 100 congregations have been gathered and churches erected by the combined labors of all other denominations. *Let this fact be noted.*—Two churches, but one of which has a building, and whose united membership hardly equals one hundred, gathered in ten years out of a population of nearly half a million, by confessedly one of the most



intelligent and influential bodies of Christians in the city or in the country.

It may be said this is not an impartial statement. Much more has been actually accomplished. Abroad unquestionably much more has been done. Large sums of money have been contributed, by which churches have been built and missionaries sustained in this and in foreign lands. A fair proportion too, of the means requisite for supporting our 21 city missionaries, for distributing the tens of thousands of tracts, the Bibles, and other good books that are annually put in circulation here, has come from our churches. (Nor have they been backward in contributing to the various institutions for relieving the bodily wants of the needy, sheltering the homeless and aged, and healing the sick, and for which our city is distinguished.) But in the matter of our enlargement through the efforts of Presbytery or its churches *as such*, two feeble congregations are the mortifying result. Some six or seven other churches have indeed been added to our body since 1840, but they have been gathered under the auspices of individuals or transferred to us from other denominations.

This is not the occasion to contrast the superior activity and success of others with our rate of progress. It is, however, proper to allude to it, and also to inquire why we could not have made similar advances, had we been animated by a corresponding zeal and liberality. Facts show that the thing can be done. If openings are seized—and there is no lack of such within our bounds—if suitable men are employed, and churches erected, the people can be induced to attend them; but if others are allowed to step in and take possession of the ground, while we are deliberating about the expediency of occupying it, we shall lose, as we have done, the favorable moment for action and for usefulness; and worse, the advocates of error will often precede, if they do not effectually supplant us.

But this subject is not to be viewed as a mere question of denominational extension: there are destitutions to be supplied which demand, and which afford scope for the activity and sacrifices of all, and in which our duty, and our interest, alike call us to share.

It is not easy to arrive at the facts ; but it has been estimated, that at least 100,000 of our population have no stated place of worship, probably seldom or never attend any. It is also computed that the number of sittings in all the churches of all denominations in this city amount to but 200,000. And granting, then, that only half the population can conveniently attend religious services at the same time—a very moderate estimate—the other half being kept away because sick, or too young, or because attending upon these, and performing other duties, it will be seen that the 100,000 who never attend could not do so for want of church accommodation ; in other words, not only do one-fifth of the population absent themselves from God's house, but they could not find sittings there were they disposed to come. And further ; on the supposition that but half could attend at once, were it possible by any means to persuade these 100,000 absentees to meet for divine worship, there would be needed for their accommodation 50 additional churches, each one of which would seat 1000 persons.

A glance at the figures will show this more distinctly, thus :

Population of the city, say,	- . . . .	- 500,000
Number of church sittings,	- . . . .	- 200,000
These accommodate four-fifths of the people, or	- . . . .	- 400,000
Number of non-attendants,	- . . . .	- 100,000
Number of sittings needed for their accommodation,	- . . . .	- 50,000
Or fifty churches, each seating	- . . . .	- 1,000

These figures show there is work to be done, show there are destitutions to be feared and lamented, enough, it would seem, to call forth all our energy and piety. But a nearer inspection would also show, that very few of the existing churches are filled to their capacity from Sabbath to Sabbath;\* and therefore that the practical disregard of public ordinances is even more striking than has been supposed. If we add to this fact the further consideration, that nearly half of the attendants on religious services hold what we consider fundamental error, we have a slight conception of the vast missionary field in which

\* The average attendance on all the churches is about 175,000.

we are called to let our light shine by zealous self-sacrificing labor. Moreover, the facts and reasoning here presented are equally applicable to the neighboring cities, according to the population; and if we add these tens of thousands to our own, we may perceive still further the necessity of doing with our might "what our hand findeth to do."

In the opinion of many, the time has come when this whole subject demands a careful consideration; and already, indeed, it is become one of the prominent topics of the day, as is seen by the tone of the press and action of religious bodies.\* On this account, therefore, as well as from its intrinsic importance, it is brought to your notice on the present occasion. We ought to look our position and responsibilities in the face, and while each one is diligent in building over against his own house, he should also devise means for meeting the wants of our growing population and alarming destitutions. This Presbytery, "set as a city on a hill," situated in the metropolis of the country, of necessity holds a conspicuous place in the eyes of the whole Church. Its example must be powerfully felt, as its efficiency and liberality have, in many respects, been admired. A great *home* work is thrown upon its hands. It is called, in the Providence of God, to preach the gospel to tens of thousands of the poor, of the abandoned, and the ignorant. Errorists from all lands are here perishing for the bread of life. The interest, it may be the existence, of society, demand the conservative influence that our doctrines and church are capable of infusing into it. While we do not neglect the claims that foreign objects have upon us, are we not called upon to gird ourselves anew for the extending and pressing work we find within our own limits? Cannot some means be devised, some policy adopted, by which our efficiency and prosperity can be increased? Is it *necessary* that multitudes in this Christian city, should remain, for aught of effort they receive at our hands, as virtually heathen as if they were living on the shores of Africa? Cannot a preached gospel ordained to be the power of God unto salvation, be carried to *them*, though

\* Since this sermon was preached, two large meetings of the clergy of this city and vicinity have been held to consider this subject.

they refuse to come to *it*? May it not reach them in the free mission church, or even in the open air, upon the docks, and in the parks and streets, if in no "more excellent way?" Can nothing be done to save the thousands of youth who, under their present training, will become a burden and terror to society, and whose very existence seems a curse to themselves? Cannot we keep pace, in the gathering and erecting of churches, with the growth of the population and the progress of other denominations?

Money, it will be urged, among other things, is needful for such an enterprise. But is there not money in our churches? and when it is required for the erection of costly edifices, either for religious worship, or personal convenience, can it not be procured? There is money for the adornment of our persons and the embellishment of our houses, and shall there be none for the salvation of souls? There is money for worldly enterprises of every description, and is it not possible so to set forth the claims and importance of this object as to turn a portion of it into this channel of Christian benevolence? Could but a moiety of the sums annually expended in this city for vicious indulgences or vain amusements, be redeemed for this object, there would be vastly more in its treasury than could be profitably expended upon it. They who have examined the subject consider 60,000 dollars per day, or 22,000,000 annually, a moderate estimate of the amount expended in this community for spirituous liquors alone. This is the sum supposed to be actually paid for this pernicious beverage, and does not include the \$1,000,000 of direct taxes which intemperance annually imposes upon our citizens for the support of almshouses, prisons, police, etc. And though it were half the amount, or \$30,000 daily, and \$11,000,000 annually, it would still be enormous.

Again; \$70,000 per week is the estimated sum paid in this city for nightly amusements—an amount almost equal to that annually contributed by the churches in our body to the entire cause of foreign missions. And while money is thus freely lavished upon vice and folly, shall not something be bestowed to dry up the fountains of human misery, and give the

bread of life to the famishing? Could it be saved but from these, which are only two of the many ways in which it is worse than squandered, there might be raised in this city alone more than enough to carry on all the benevolent operations of all denominations.

It is not to be inferred indeed from what has been said, that nothing is accomplished. Our city Tract and Bible societies, our associations for the poor and other benevolent institutions, effect great good and do much to relieve the swelling tide of ignorance and suffering. Their operations too are conducted and supported chiefly by Christian people and by those who are influenced by their example, and may therefore be regarded as a fruit of the gospel. Without it, indeed, they would be unknown here, as they are in lands that have never been blessed with its heavenly influence. But notwithstanding all this, tens of thousands are still unreached, less perhaps through our neglect than their own perverseness. Yet shall they be left to perish? While we send men and books to the heathen—a work in which our labors are by no means to be remitted—shall we not provide for the heathen at our doors? Cannot, at least, something more be done for their salvation than has hitherto been attempted?

It is doubtful whether the effort has been fairly made, or the duty of Christians in this matter pressed home upon their conscience. Might not these among other means be employed? Let men of influence and piety be encouraged to detach themselves from larger congregations and enlist in new enterprises, by way of colonizing or gathering fresh congregations, especially if called for in their own neighborhood? There will often be found a field for lay effort and usefulness, in this respect, and feeble churches might thus be greatly strengthened. There are too the intelligence, the wealth, and other qualifications requisite among the members of our churches could they be induced to diffuse them as they have opportunity, rather than concentrate or even bury them in congregations that afford no room for their activity. It is feared the sense of personal responsibility, the obligation to make sacrifices and labor with dili-

gence for Christ, by bringing the ignorant and destitute to him, or by building up for others, as well as themselves, the institutions of his church, is lamentably weak in this community. Money is given more freely than time, or direct personal effort. If their own tastes are gratified, their own families provided with the means of grace, too many have little regard for others, or for the interests of the church in general. And there are temptations to overlook rather than correct this state of feeling, while, in the tendency of things, the evil will naturally increase and not diminish.

Surely, my brethren, in view of the facts here presented, and our solemn obligations, we are not, either ministers or people, to live unto ourselves, but unto Christ. And where opportunities of serving his cause present themselves, we ought to stand ready to embrace them, though at the expense of our own ease, or at the sacrifice of our pride and preference.\*

Again ; Why may not more vigorous efforts be made for the salvation of the young who are growing up by thousands with only the education of the streets? If Robert Raikes was moved to institute Sabbath-schools for this very class in his day, shall we not return to his primitive practice, and if any are to be debarred the privileges they afford—a result to be sincerely deprecated—let it be those children who enjoy all the advan-

\*The following is an example in point :

“In 1834, one of the two elders of the recently formed Brainerd Church, the excellent Harlem Page, was called to his rest. It was felt then in our city more than now, that missionary service should neither be confined to the clergy nor to heathen ground. Some friends of the bereaved church, accordingly, having knowledge of Mr. Brewster's spirit, made a formal appeal to him to take the vacant place in the new enterprise. They found him in his spacious and well-furnished mansion in one of the most pleasant parts of the city. They found him too, in agreeable and profitable Church relations. They laid their case before him. He took it into serious consideration ; \* \* \* and decided to “join the Brainerd Church, \* \* \* of which he was installed an elder. \* \* He not only gave liberally of his substance [to this enterprise,] he threw his whole soul into the work. \* \* He made even his domestic arrangements subservient to the building up of Christ's Kingdom. \* \* He left his pleasant mansion in Fourth Street, and fixed his abode under the very shadow of the newly-erected sanctuary. There, for more than half the period of his Christian life, he served God and his generation, how zealously and faithfully you who knew him scarce need be reminded.”—Sermon of Rev. Asa D. Smith, D. D., on the death of Mr. Joseph Brewster.

tages of religious instruction at home. Among the ragged and vicious that congregate in our streets and avenues on the Sabbath, is a field of labor that would entitle those who should undertake its cultivation to the name of missionary, though they never went beyond sight of their own church steeple. Shall not the hearts of the few that are already engaged in this labor of denial and of love be cheered by the co-operation of many others? It has its difficulties unquestionably, but they are not insuperable, as has been proved in other cities as well as in our own. Why should not the time and energies of our talented and pious laymen then be more generally and earnestly directed to this subject? Surely they might discover some method by which many of the obstacles to its prosecution could be removed, and with the divine blessing, might be permitted to rescue some of the young from infamy and perdition.

This whole subject, it cannot be denied, is encompassed with difficulties. Past failures are disheartening and embarrassing; but the work presses upon us, and God has not left us destitute of all ability or resources. There are among us men of experience and intelligence; of influence and piety; and to them and such as them the appeal may be made. Heterogeneous as is the population, and varied as is the work to be done, Providence has brought together here a great variety of laborers. There are in our own body those who speak most of the languages used by the several races in this community, or who are descended from and connected with them. We have, as is often urged, in an eminent degree the respect and confidence of the people. The tendency of our doctrines and institutions is confessedly salutary and improving. Our external prosperity in many respects is striking. Unanimity of sentiment and harmony of effort prevail within our communion. We are certainly in a position to do more than has been done, though not everything that is needed. We may also confidently expect the blessing of God in the future as in the past, and in greater measure as we increase our diligence, and honor him by our faith and zeal. That blessing has rested upon our missionary enterprises at home and abroad, and to them and his blessing on them must we look for our

prosperity, if not for our existence. We must be a missionary, as well as a witness-bearing church, would we fulfil the demands of the age, or grow with our widely extending country. Let our missionary efforts be remitted, and we shall inevitably stagnate and retrograde, as we shall certainly degenerate into error and formalism, should God on this account withdraw his gracious presence from us. We must not only grow in grace as individuals, but in zeal and efficiency as a church, or the work we are now called to do will be performed by others; while the blessings now within our reach will be taken from us and bestowed upon those who, by their superior diligence and devotion, shall prove themselves worthy of them.



THE Presbytery of New York, at their sessions, October 14, 1851, adopted the following resolution in relation to the subject of Missions.

*Resolved*, That the Presbytery views with feelings of profound commiseration, the condition of the many thousands of persons in this city and vicinity, who are living and dying without hearing the gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath; and, in view of the apparent impracticability of bringing multitudes of this class within the sanctuaries for public worship, and the importance of going to them with the messages of divine truth, the Presbytery express their opinion that missionary stations in this city and vicinity ought to be greatly multiplied, and that those pastors and other ministers of our body, who have strength and time for the work, will, in the judgment of Presbytery, be usefully employed, and may expect the divine blessing when they preach the gospel, on suitable occasions, in the streets and the market-places, and wharves and parks, and wherever congregations may be assembled to hear, in accordance with the municipal regulations, to which obedience is due.

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C. W. BENEDICT, PRINTER, 201 WILLIAM STREET, N. Y.