

Our City Work.

An Essay prepared and read before the Sunday School Convention, in San Francisco, May, 1881, by Elder J. H. McCollough. Published by request of the Convention.

All the churches mentioned in the New Testament were in cities. This is a significant fact. Why was it so? When the Lord sent out the twelve, telling them to "preach saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand," he sent them into the cities of Judea. When he told them to "go teach all nations," they were to begin at Jerusalem. Next they were sent to Samaria; and afterward to the uttermost parts of the earth.

In carrying out the command, we find the apostles and evangelists going from city to city, throughout all the region they traversed. Philip preached in all the cities from Azotus to Caesarea. Saul of Tarsus was engaged in persecuting the disciples from city to city, which shows us that the work of the apostles had been in the cities. After his conversion, as we follow him in his career, we find him planting churches in the principal cities of Asia. Titus was sent into Crete, to set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city. New Testament precedent makes cities important. But it is unnecessary to multiply examples as to the method of these men. We inquire if there was anything peculiar to the organization of society, political or religious, in that day, which made it wise, but which does not obtain in our day?

The countries over which these men traveled were anciently included in the Greek and Roman republics, and in Palestine. If we examine the ancient maps, the division of land, and the division of government, was similar to what we find in the United States of America.

Under the providence of God, there is, in this country, a field for the restoration of the primitive church similar to that prepared for its planting.

In Palestine, the general government was in Jerusalem. The government of each tribe, in that which was local, was in the principal city of that tribe. The heads of families had their precinct and a seat of justice. Where there was a government over a given portion of land, as in Bethlehem, it was called a city. The Greek polis included the state over which its rule extended. Into this outer wheel of political and commercial government Jesus put the inner wheel of Christianity, and thus the vision of Ezekiel was fulfilled. He saw a wheel within a wheel, and when one moved, the other went with it, and the wheels were full of life. The plan of the Divine government is from within. Christ's throne is in the heart of the individual, and his church should be in the centers of influence in society.

Here, in the United States, God has prepared the outer wheel, much as it was at the first. Our states answer to the provinces of Greece and Asia Minor. Our state capitals, and great commercial cities, to the principal cities throughout all that country where the Gospel was first preached. Our counties answer to the *komoi*, and our county seats to the seats of government over the *komoi*. Our townships correspond to their precincts. But we have a division still smaller than the township, to which there was nothing in these ancient republics to correspond, our school districts. But the inner government that rules by righteousness, can go into this also, for where there is a common school, there ought to be a Sunday, or Bible school.

Let us suppose this whole country to be without churches and we wish to plant the cause of Christ. If we proceed after the apostolic plan, we would first plant a church in Washington City; then in the state capitals and the great commercial centers; then in our county seats, and finally in every township, where the popula-

tion is dense enough to need it. There would be only one church in each city, for although there might be more disciples than could meet in any one house, there would be such unity in organization and work, as to be essentially one church. The different places of worship, to illustrate, could be designated as the congregation worshipping on the corner of Post and Mason Streets, or in "Berean chapel." Each worshipping assembly could be designated by locality, or by the name of their house of worship. The meeting of the elders of all these different congregations would be the elders of the Church of Christ in that city.

Such an union of God's people is greatly to be desired, and would prepare the way for such a Sunday school work as the world needs. Such a union of all the Disciples of Christ is in harmony with the Savior's prayer recorded in the 17th chapter of John, which oneness is declared by Jesus to be in order that the world might believe.

Do you say this view is Utopian. We think not. We are much nearer such a church now than we were ten years ago. If we compare the present state of mind of all believers, with what it was 40, 50 or 100 years ago, we discover that we have been on converging lines. If we study the history of Sunday schools we shall find that the development of these has been about in the same ratio of the converging of denominational lines. The last decade, in which the International Series of Sunday School Lessons have been in use, has been more marked in this progress toward union than any preceding decade. The laying aside of creed and catechism, and coming to the children with the simple word of God, makes each successive generation see nearer alike, and so denomination lines converge, and we are able to see, just ahead of us, the church of the future united in spirit and in work. For such an union the devout have been long praying, and now God seems to be about to bring it to pass through the training of our children. The Bible school movement has come like a wave over the land, and now, as creeds are receding, and old systems are crumbling, it becomes us to study how we can best teach and enforce the pure word of God. Death will soon remove the old. The middle aged, like a forest, will soon fall, and if the children can only be rightly taught, many of the difficulties that have been insuperable will give way. If they are not taught of God, atheism will follow, for that word means "without God." Atheism leaves a vacuum which will soon be filled, for nature abhors a vacuum in spiritual things as well as in material. That capacity, prepared for the throne of God in every heart, must soon become a cage for unclean birds, if not occupied by a Savior.

In executing the Savior's great commission to "go teach all nations," one great error of our times is to labor an undue proportion of our time with grown people; whose characters are already formed. We don't do this way in any other branch of education. In other things we educate the young and expect them to become laborers when they grow up in whatever calling their education fits them for. In religion we, too often, hunt out such as will give evidence of fine development, and get them all together and keep stuffing them. You can't make a fat soul the same way you fatten a goose. Souls must go to work in order to grow fat and rejoice. Teaching presupposes an untaught audience, and when it is otherwise the sermon passes from the teaching style to an effort to entertain, until we reach the modern lecture. The energies of the church should be devoted more to the untaught, calling all who have been taught to the labor of teaching others. Of the untaught, children are the more teachable; hence, if we cannot

teach all, we should cultivate that field which yields the largest return to the Lord.

A wise farmer will plant the rich, clean soil, rather than foul and rocky ground if he cannot cultivate the whole, so we should sow the good soil of childhood, rather than the stony and thorny soil of older persons. We sermonize too much. The sermon is adapted to mature people, and it is rare that a public speaker makes himself understood by children. One sermon, each Lord's day, in connection with the public worship and the ordinances of the Lord's house, would be sufficient to edify the church. This public meeting of the whole congregation could be held in some central place, say at 11 A. M. The afternoons and evenings should be given to Sunday school work and teaching the word.

For the purpose of suggesting something practical, in the way of method, we propose the following:

ORGANIZATION.

Let the church of any given city divide up its entire membership into as many bands of workers as their numbers and talents will justify. If the unity of the Church of Christ, we have before described, obtained, so much the better; but if not, and it is well for us to consider the state of believers as it is, let each congregation do this, forming as many corps of laborers as would be efficient. Let each corps be assigned within certain bounds, or in a certain quarter of the city. Let each corps then proceed to organize its own forces, with a view of gathering in all the children accessible, into some hall or chapel procured by the church. Let each corps hold its Sunday school in the best way they can, and at such an hour as will best suit the people among whom they labor. Besides this hour devoted to the children there should be an evening meeting conducted by this same company. This evening meeting should be with the view of teaching the older people. Instead of the one meeting in the same place where the general meeting of the church was held at 11 A. M., we could have several, if the church was numerous. Instead of the sermon these meetings might be conducted after the style of the meetings of the Bible Christians of London; not in speech making, but in searching the Scriptures by topics and a free exchange of views in a conversational style. The meeting would be presided over by some one who would act as moderator, and who could turn the meeting when desired, into prayer, exhortation or praise service. In this way the talent of the church could be discovered and brought out. Teaching talent would be more in demand, and the useful would be cultivated rather than the esthetic. These corps could be reorganized from time to time, as might be needed, in order to the highest efficiency, and in order to prevent the breaking off into parties controlled by local interests.

One great advantage of a system of work like this would be, to cause the church to act upon society like a diffusive stimulus. The extremities of society, now so cold and lifeless, could be reached with the word of light and life. The whole church would come together in the morning and wait on the Lord, thus renewing their strength. In the afternoon she would resolve herself into a school or schools, and labor with the children in her school capacity. In the evening all would gather in various groups with their neighbors and friends to inquire directly of the Lord in the study of the word. It is believed the era of universal education, which is now upon us, will necessitate a change of method from the rostrum and orator, which was adapted to an age when the art of reading was confined to the few. Now, when there is so much good reading at hand, and so cheap, the pulpit is losing its power.

The press, the printed page, is now the great power that leads the people. In this age of universal education, the number of teachers could be greatly multiplied, compared with the ancient times; and the companies assembled to be taught could be smaller and freer. Some one, perhaps, is waiting to ask what will the pastor have to do under such an order of things? He would have rather an easy time, would he not, preaching his *one little* sermon per week? We would have him diffuse, as well as the rest. He could meet with some one of these companies every Sunday afternoon and evening. He would act as general director of the whole work, and bestow his labors wherever he could do the most good.

Such a contact with the lost, as we have contemplated, would discover a great many opportunities for effective labor. In these neighborhoods where schools were held, arrangements could be made for preaching service when needed. The preacher could hold a meeting of this kind here, and there, as there might arise a need. It may be objected to this plan, that people would run off to theaters, and other places of amusements, rather than go to such meeting. Not if they were properly educated. The 40,000 "Bible Christians," of London, have demonstrated that a large per cent. of the whole membership attend, than in churches that depend on the Sunday evening sermon. What has proved successful in the largest city in the world may succeed in smaller cities. The problem of successful church and Sunday school work in our large cities is a difficult problem. We realize that we are not reaching the masses as we should. We do not see the whole lump leavened. Especially is this true in San Francisco. The Gospel is still God's power unto salvation to those who believe; and the people need salvation, yet they are not reached. May there not be a lack in our existing methods? We all understand the Lord's command "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature," "Go teach all nations," but to do this we need system so that each individual can bear some part.

A few words as to the present attitude of our work in this city now:

1. We need a house of worship of our own, centrally located, and of easy access from all parts of the city. Such a house as this we are now meeting in during this convention. This house is now for sale, and good judges of property say it can be bought cheap. This house, if owned by us, would meet this want.
2. We would need all the Disciples in our city to take membership, and thus present one grand united, front meeting at 11 A. M. each Lord's day for worship and celebrating the Lord's supper, and keeping the ordinances of the Lord's house generally.
3. We would then be ready to form the different companies contemplated in this paper and assign them their respective fields.
4. We would want to buy lots and build small chapels in each one of these fields where we establish a corps of laborers, a Sunday school, and Sunday evening Bible reading service.
5. We would then need an efficient teacher in each one of these fields, in each one of these chapels to teach a Scripture school, each day of the week, much as we now teach our regular common schools.

This school would do the work we now are striving to do in our Sunday schools, but do it much more effectively.

Our common school system is going out of the hands of religious instructors more and more, and is becoming secularized. This is inevitable, and now, to meet a great want, the education of the masses in the Holy Scriptures, we must have some more efficient method of educating our children in the word of the Lord. Weak churches could combine the

pulpit, and the teachers work securing a preacher with the qualifications for both. Strong churches could employ several teachers, and leave the pastor for other duties.

Our sisters could be efficient helpers in the ministry, as of old, by a system such as we have out-lined.

These suggestions we respectfully submit for the consideration of the Convention.

Around Farragut Square.

Farragut Square lies a little north of the White House. Handsome dwellings look down on its gay parterres, in the centre of which is now placed the first monument that the American people have reared to any of their naval heroes. On one side of the square are houses that have an aspect of years; on another stand new, superb residences finished an ornamental brickwork; the west side of the square is occupied by a fine modern row erected by ex-Governor Shepherd, in one of which now resides Col. Bonaparte, which is now handsomely draped in stars and stripes. Madame Bonaparte, had invited the diplomatic corps to a breakfast, the morning of the unveiling, at which nearly all were in attendance except the Chinese legation, and that had that morning received news of the death of the wife of the Emperor of China. The banquet was spoken of as one of special elegance.

On a fourth corner of the park stands the house of the late Gamaliel Bailey, and this was also richly draped in the national colors. Dr. Bailey, was the first editor who dared publish an anti slavery newspaper at the Capitol. And by the way, it is known that four literary women who have since achieved fame were employed on that journal, and to some extent directed and encouraged by Dr. Bailey: Mrs. Southworth, who it is said learned grammar of the editor; Grace Greenwood; Miss Dodge, (Gail Hamilton), who not only wrote for the editor, but taught in his family; and Mrs. Stowe, whose "Uncle Tom's Cabin" first appeared in its columns as a serial, the editor paying the author \$1,000 for the copyright. Dr. Bailey, who might have won a fortune by it, kindly relinquished his right when he learned its rare value—a shining example of Christian benevolence. Dr. Bailey died on board ship, on his return from Europe several years ago. Some of his family reside here.

The only remaining corner of the park has now been taken by Mrs. Hoxie, on which she has erected a large stylish residence, having a piazza and tower with cupola. It is worthy of note that the indefatigable sculptor has by her art work purchased a home for her parents on the avenue, and built his handsome residence. And last, certainly, not least, she has won a husband, an elegant looking man of fine abilities, of excellent character and good life position in the army. At present he is highly useful as Chief Engineer of the District. What American woman artist has achieved a prouder success?—*Rural Home.*

—Worldly faces never look so worldly as at a funeral. They have the same effect of grating incongruity as the sound of a coarse voice breaking the solemn stillness of night.

LEAF MOLD.—If you take the well-decomposed leaf-soil and sift and examine it, you will find that it is altogether a mass of worm-casts. Rough-rooting plants take kindly enough to this, but tender and delicate-rooting ones do not. In order to make it good and ready food for all, I rub it hard between my hands till it feels as mellow as flour. In this state, and mixed with its bulk of clean sand and a little mellow loam, almost any "hasty" seed will grow in it; but for palas, fraxinellas, peonias, and other seeds that take months, a year or more to germinate, I do not use it, as I have found it has a tendency to rot the seeds. Leaf-mold is a capital thing for potting or boxing-off seedlings, rooted cuttings, or winter-stored roots or other plants.—*Country Gentleman.*