

The internal economy of the great city was widely different from the present. No omnibus lines promoted the circulation of its life from one point to another. No railways were constantly carrying thousands to and from the city, and offering a standing temptation to well-to-do citizens to take up their abode beyond the city limits. Whether a man resided near the active centre of business, or in some suburban mansion, was not, as now, decided by the one consideration of financial ability. The men of vast wealth, the prosperous tradesmen, the rising middle class, constituted a large, thoughtful, and most influential population in the midst of the city. Upon such a community Binney came to exert his influence. He saw before him, from Sabbath to Sabbath, the representatives of the sovereignty of gold, men of acknowledged influence in trade, the untitled princes, and citizens of the greatest mart of the world. Such circumstances could only fail to develop a truly great preacher where no great power had originally been bestowed; but this was by no means true in the case of Binney.

Although when he came to London he was in the maturity of his manhood, ripening to his prime, yet his fame was not yet made; and when we consider the line of ministers he succeeded, it is not a little surprising that he was elected to the place at all. The Congregational pulpit was then a model of conventional propriety. Its ministers were masters of fashionable decorum, and, especially, the standard of ministerial deportment was maintained with despotic rigour. A gentlemanly air, and the art of easily mastering all the appendages of polite society, were considered in the qualifications for pulpit preferment, as well as transparency of language and pungency of thought. In public ministrations, the fear of giving offence had developed a style of speech highly polished and pleasing, but strikingly unconvincing and unaggressive. Taken as a whole, the Independent pulpit partook too largely of conformity to the world on the esthetic side; to be quite consistent with the denomination constituting the vanguard in the conflicts of Nonconformity.

Binney's immediate predecessors, though by no means inferior or weak men, were held in slavish subserviency to the conventionalities of the time. Now, his nature was not at all adapted