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THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 1868.

### THE WORLD'S PRAYER UNION.

It is a sublime and cheering spectacle that meets the eyes of the Christian in every part of the world, during the present week. Angels themselves, it may well be believed, look down with interest upon a Christian World's week of united prayer. The simultaneous observance of such a season, among all denominations and in all parts of the world, must be recognized as a mark of progress. The suggestion came originally from a single foreign missionary, but the Christian world was ripe and ready for it; and the Week of Prayer has become almost a settled institution of the evangelical church. The significance of this observance appears to consist in such particulars as these:

1. It shows that belief in the efficacy of prayer is not diminished, but rather increased in the church in this age. The simple exercise of united prayer furnishes no attractions to men in whom faith is decaying. Men cannot be persuaded to establish a new custom in this practical age unless they believe there is something in it. If unbelief prevails and abounds in this world; if the very air we breathe is devalued by a subtle rationalism; if materialism is rampant, and if science is forcing upon us a universe which is only a stupendous and perfect machine, without miracles and without a personal God, the Christian World still prays—prays as it never did before; raises up in the sight of all men, in the opening week of every year, a universal memorial to the efficacy of prayer and the reality of spiritual things.

The universality of this observance testifies to the reality and power of the convictions that underlie it. Difference in language, race or denomination will not hinder any one's participation; wide oceans will interpose no barrier; recent converts from heathenism will perfectly comprehend and enter into the observance, as readily as the descendants of a score of Christian generations. What world's celebration could, with any imaginable purpose, be made, for a single year, to approach the universality and heartiness of this annual festival of a purely spiritual character? This prayer union, therefore, is a powerful protest against the materialism and practical atheism of the age.

2. In this exercise, the evangelical church proves its unity. Without machinery, without authority, at a suggestion which touches a universal chord of Christian sentiment, the whole evangelical church voluntarily unites, for the first entire week of the year, in the same simple, devotional exercises; dwells upon the same general round of topics; pours forth the same spiritual desires. Amid all its seeming diversities, it agrees in the supreme purpose to set up the kingdom of Christ upon earth; in dependence on divine power for accomplishing the result; in confidence in the promises of a covenant-keeping God. The world sees that the separate branches of the Church have higher than merely denominational ends; that they are not merely rival clans selfishly aiming at their own aggrandizement; but bands with different organizations for convenience' sake only, and with a common end for all. They are regiments and divisions and corps of one grand army, moving with increasing unity of plan against the same foe.

The amount of good done among Christian people by this expression of unity, is incalculable. It is related of an intelligent convert from heathenism, that the first impression made on his mind in favor of Christianity came from the opening words of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father!" The unfathomable depths of sympathy implied in that language may well have touched the heart of the heathen. It is when unitedly falling before the throne, that Christians get a sense of their essential spiritual brotherhood. It is sweet, refreshing, and within the promise when only two or three thus unite. But when the tide of simultaneous prayer rolls up from all Christian hearts, when it is a world pleading the promises, when Christians round the world join hands and hearts in one sublime service, then how happy and how strong does each one feel in the intercession of every other one for himself and for the objects he holds most dear! How the church realizes the wealth of its spiritual resources! How heart is freshly knit to

heart, and what power descends upon a church whose deepest and richest sympathies are thus revived, and whose consciousness of brotherhood is thus elevated before the throne!

3. The Providence of God in the outward conduct of the Church, mysteriously coincides with the inward experience of his people. The system of grace is as much under law, as is that of nature. Prayer and its answer are knit together by the eternal decree of God. When God's people are led to unwonted fervency and importunity in prayer; when the whole Christian world is impelled to observe protracted seasons of united supplication; we may take it for granted, that some gracious development of God's purposes to his Church, is at hand. When Christians are assembled with one accord, not only in one place, but in every possible place of assembly, we may count on the descent of the Holy Spirit in extraordinary measure. And so it has proved. These years of united prayer have been years of unwonted progress in the kingdom of Christ. The week of prayer is the invariable beginning of revivals. So numerous and so widespread have become these seasons of special interest, that we feel ourselves approaching the era of continuous and universal revival. The secret purposes of God to his Church, obscurely hinted in prophecy, are, we may be sure, nigh to unfolding. The world, girt around with such a broad band of prayer, is surely lifted nearer to the source of divine favor; is more likely to be saved by salt so wisely distributed, and so clearly possessing its needed savor. Though the resistance of evil is still desperate, symptoms of victory on the side of spiritual and evangelical influences are multiplying; and prayer and the Holy Spirit's influences and divine love are enfolding our fallen world, over more closely, in their redeeming embrace.

### VACANCIES AND SUPPLIES.

One of our Philadelphia Presbyteries is just now applying itself to the mixed problem of vacant pastorates and unemployed ministers. There is no disguising the fact that it is, at the present moment, one of unusual seriousness in this city, made so, by the dismissal, within the last eighteen months, of nine pastors in our connection, the places of only two of whom have been filled. The existence, side by side, of churches in need of ministers, and ministers waiting for employment, is a state of things abnormal to our Presbyterianism; and the question how it shall be corrected, though confessedly difficult, still forces itself along to the point where it must be met. The case is well provided for in our Form of Government, but in the matter of Presbyterian oversight of all its licentiates and ministers, and guardianship of its vacant churches, we have for a long time been sliding out from the provisions of the Constitution.

Our United and Reformed Presbyterian brethren have done better in this respect. When they license a candidate, they make it their care to find work for him, and they send him to it; and, if we are correctly informed, they do the same by any minister who happens to be afloat, unless some reason exists why it is better to retire him from the work. When the pastorate of a church becomes vacant, the Presbytery assumes it, providing, in concert with the Session, for all gospel ministrations there and other pastoral supervision, until a new pastor is properly inducted. This is good Presbyterianism, and it would be found—for churches; much more wholesome than the present modes of piloting the perilous passage of a vacant pastorate,—for ministers much more salutary than to be turned out to preach, teach, sell dry goods, or take clerkships in Washington, as the fancy or interests of the moment may dictate.

Both men and churches are so jealous of anything that looks like trenching upon their independence, and so easily excited to revolt by the gentlest breathing of the word usurpation, that a return to our ancient usage will not be an easy work, or one which should be attempted without bringing all our wisdom and prudence into requisition. But short of this, we have heard of no rational plan for meeting the evil referred to—an evil encroaching at a rate which threatens to de-Presbyterianize our whole system of Presbyterian Supervision. The Divine guidance of those profound and

far-seeing minds to whom, under God, we are indebted for this system, is nowhere more strikingly exemplified than in this, that in all our church history, difficulty and disorder have been the sure result of falling off into a shabbiness of Presbyterian administration. If to our present law there could be added the much needed provision for a demitting of the ministry by persons who have manifestly mistaken their calling, either on their own motion or that of the Presbytery, and if our system of supervision thus amended, could be restored to living activity, we see no reason why it should not take care for the *ad interim* wants of every vacant church, and aid it to a permanent supply, and find appropriate work for all its ministers, and lay it to their hands to be done.

### THE CANDID POLICY IN RE-UNION.

There are two classes of persons laboring for re-union in our church; one sort may be termed the hushing-up, and smoothing-over class, who wish to ignore all differences, who argue for re-union on the ground that we are one in sentiment and who deplore and denounce all doctrinal *ecclesiasticism* as disguised hostility to reunion. They want nobody alarmed or aroused, and aim, by re-union, to sweep in every shade of thought and opinion, without calculating the effect of an incompatibility of temper and belief discovered too late. This is an unwise and unmanly course. We have never sympathized with it in any fibre of our constitution. We prefer by far that class of unionists, who are neither afraid or ashamed to recognize those honest, and utterly unavoidable shades of opinion, which the intelligent acceptance of the great doctrines of Calvinism brings with it. Let us have union with a full and frank avowal of differences in non-essentials, and let that avowal be incorporated in the very instrument on which we unite. Let it be put there so plainly as to suffice, in the judgment of the best legal minds, for the protection of those who thus differ in all their ecclesiastical rights, in all time to come.

The thanks of all friends of a right union in the Presbyterian church are due to the Presbytery of Ontario for the clearness with which they have announced the candid policy in Re-union as their own. In their action as published in our last number they resolved, that we should deplore a union formed by ignoring our nice shades of theological differences, under the impression that time has so modified as virtually to destroy them. We would have their existence recognized, and a general understanding provided for their continuance, without abridging the personal liberty or affecting the individual standing of any minister or congregation in the united body.

### CHICAGO CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR AMERICAN:—We are safely through with what good old Doctor Cox calls the "hollow days," and are launched forth upon the swelling tide of the New Year. May it prove a happy one to each of your readers, and not the least so to those to whom it may prove their last. Our secular papers are largely occupied with reviews of the business of the city, during the year 1867. These statistics, while they show a falling off in some branches of trade, as compared with the previous year, exhibit a marked increase in others, and upon the whole, a prosperous season to most. The receipts of grain, owing to the diminished crops of 1867, have fallen off from those of 1866, but still show Chicago the largest grain mart in the world. It is estimated that ten millions have been expended in buildings during the last twelve months. Very great material improvements have been consummated, or begun and pushed onward toward completion, all destined to add to the salubrity and attractiveness of our metropolis. Nor have material enterprises only engaged the thoughts of the people. The interests of science and art, of literature and social culture, of morals and religion, have not been overlooked in the eager prosecution of wealth. On the whole, the expiring year has left to its successor a legacy not unworthy of the place it holds in the brief history of our city.

The New Year opens hopefully. Should no unfriendly legislation cloud the prospect, it is believed that a year of activity and business prosperity is before us. Never were more extensive preparations making for a

great expansion of trade, never were projects so grand on foot for indefinite future growth. We indulge in no prophecies, content to chronicle results.

### "A STREET OF CHURCHES."

I notice that in your last, your correspondent "A. H. N.," of St. Louis, offsets and overtops the statement that your "Broad Street" in Philadelphia, has upon it "thirteen churches," in a length of "eleven miles," by another to the effect that "Locust St.," (St. Louis) has "ten church edifices within two miles of its extent." Let me inform that good brother that our Wabash Avenue boasts thirteen such edifices, several of them among the finest specimens of ecclesiastical architecture in the west, within the space of about one mile and a half, with several others within half a square, at its sides.

### CHICAGO BIBLE SOCIETY.

This Society held its regular annual meeting on Sabbath Evening last in the First Presbyterian Church. The report showed that over \$10,000 had been collected and paid out during the past year. Interesting addresses by men of different denominations filled the house.

### MR. D. L. MOODY.

The efficient President of the Y. M. C. A. and well known lay evangelist, was the recipient of a pleasant "surprise" on New Year's Day. Mr. M. had hired a house which only approached completion. On the day above named he was invited to visit the premises, and witness the state of forwardness. Arriving there he found the tenement completed and handsomely furnished from cellar to garret, and in possession of a party of friends who were making a New Year's call. A deed of the furniture, and a paid up lease of the premises for one year, were some compensation to his wounded feelings for so cavalier treatment. In his reply to the address by which the gift was accompanied, Mr. Moody gave some account of the manner in which he is and has been supported now for some years in his Christian work, "during all which time he has been in receipt of no stipulated salary, has often been reduced to the greatest straits, and yet has always found himself provided for, at the critical moment, in ways which could never have been anticipated. In its way the narrative is equal in striking answers to prayer, and singular interpositions of providence to Müller's; whose accounts of his work it much resembles in these features.

It pains me to say that Rev. E. A. Pierce, of Calvary Church, has been compelled by ill-health to abandon temporarily his work. His request to his people to unite with him in seeking a dissolution of the pastoral relation was met by an offer of a furlough for six months. Most heartily will his brethren unite with his sorrowing people in their prayer for his restoration to health and to their service in the ministry.

Rev. W. C. Dickinson fills the pulpit in the interim.

Rev. J. McLeish is invited to become the stated supply of the 7th Church and accepts the invitation.

But what shall be said of the rumour that your own Calvary Church has had the audacity to attempt the abduction of the accomplished and beloved pastor of our First Church, Rev. Dr. Humphrey? If considerations touching the health of his family should make the acceptance of a call to some other place imperative, in the view of bro. H., his church and congregation, his brethren and the community at large will submit, as to a fiat of Providence; but not, I believe, to anything else. We shall earnestly hope and pray that Philadelphia may be compelled to look elsewhere for a supply of her wants.

### NEWSPAPER CHANGE.

The "Christian Times," of Chicago, the "Witness" of Indiana, the "Christian Herald," of Michigan, Baptist papers are consolidated, and now appear as "The Standard," a handsome double quarto sheet, of this city. The old editors retain their posts.

A mass meeting called for the purpose of raising money to aid the Erring Women's Refuge was called in the Lecture room of the Y. M. C. A. building on the evening of Dec. 16. The meeting was addressed by Rev. J. P. Gulliver, Rev. W. H. Ryder, B. F. Jacobs and Mr. Wood. The necessity of such an institution was clearly shown and a resolution to apply to the various

pastors of the city for liberty to hold a meeting in their respective churches for its benefit, was adopted. NORTHWEST.

Prof. J. A. Hodge's late work on the Atonement is learned, able, and important, but it is controversial and sometimes severe, and even arrogant in its assumption of exclusive orthodoxy. We do not intend to complain of this in Professor Hodge. It comes to him by "ordinary generation" as much so as any other of the consequences of the fall. Blood will tell. But we have a right to complain that at this stage of the negotiations between the two branches, a book which really represents but a single class of views in the orthodox Reformed Churches should be issued by the Publication Board of the other branch. It is, so far as it goes, an open rupture of the truce between the two bodies.

Goon.—We have once or twice noticed the activity of the Philadelphia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in promoting the arrest and punishment of wretches, who are merciless toward the portion of God's creation which is mute and helpless in the hands of men. The good work does not slacken. On the 8th ult., two persons were sentenced to two days' imprisonment each, and to pay the costs of prosecution, for wanton abuse of a dog. On the 6th, a man was arrested for endeavoring to force a mule, with a large raw sore on its shoulder, and totally unfit for work, to draw a heavy load. He was bound over in \$600 bail, to answer. On the 9th, the driver of a cart was arrested. The horse was feeble, scarcely able to walk, and fell under the effort to haul a heavy load of bricks. The Recorder, on examining the driver, concluded that the owner was the more guilty party, and accordingly issued a warrant for his arrest. If a few of this kind of cases should reach our Quarter Sessions without being smothered on the way, we believe an example would be made of them. Backed by such support, any humane citizen passing along the street, and becoming a witness to one of those outrages upon helpless brutes which have been one of the common sights of our thoroughfares for years, could arrest it by a simple protest, accompanied, if need be, by a significant reference to the police.

PHILADELPHIA HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY.—The fewest words for describing the work of this Society, will be to say that it is, to the poor and suffering of our city, what the Christian Commission was to the army, bearing in one hand relief for temporal distress, and in the other the bread of everlasting life. As an example of its efficiency in the former, we see from the Report presented at its Thirty-second Anniversary, on the evening of the 10th inst., that during the year, its General Agent has made 4,650 visits to the needy, poor and sick, carried relief to 2,330 families and persons, supplied 105 families with medicines, and given out 661 articles of clothing, 901 orders for groceries, and 659 orders for coal, the latter amounting in the aggregate to 221 tons. The year was begun with a balance in the treasury of \$1,317.29. The receipts, (including \$992.26, special contributions for the relief of sufferers by the Sansom street explosion,) have been \$7,280.06. There have been disbursed in the meantime, \$6,831.63, leaving \$1,765.72 for a start in another year's work. At the Anniversary, George H. Stuart, Esq., presided, and addresses were made by Rev. Messrs. Richard H. Allen, A. J. Kynett and J. Spencer Kennard. The Society has a strong hold upon the confidence of our benevolent citizens, and the fruits of their benefactions are too obvious to leave any need of more extended commendations.

A GERMAN THEATRE.—We see in our city dailies that \$90,000 of stock for the erection of a German Theatre in Philadelphia, has already been taken, and that no doubt of the perfect success of the enterprise remains. Papers in the service of immorality have already set up the Parisian Sunday as the *beau ideal* for the Sabbath of American cities; and we venture the prediction that this German theatre will become the scene of the first attempt of a Sunday theatrical performance in this city,—especially if a complaisant city magistracy should direct the police to suspend the law to give convenience to the goddess proclivities of another Sangerfest.