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All communications for the Editorial, News of Churches, and Correspondence Columns should be addressed to the Managing Editor, Box 2648, P.O. Toronto.

Pastors and church officers are particularly requested to forward items for "News of the Churches" column.

THE PRAYER MEETING.

THAT the weekly assembly for prayer is in many localities in a state of chronic languor is known to all who keep their eyes open. It has long been a problem with many devout men as to how this state of things can be remedied. Such a meeting, with poor attendance and no inspiration, takes all heart out of the pastor and his body-guard of Christian assistants. Besides it attracts no one whose sense of duty and whose prayer meeting instincts are not very strong. And so it lingers along in its decrepitude, a weariness both to flesh and spirit. It is almost a pity that some prayer meetings do not die right out, so that the church might be startled into some measures for a new order of things. A prayer meeting that is worthy of the name is a confirmation to a Christian's hope and a helper of his piety. But such a meeting in a decline is a tax upon patience, and a stimulator of bad temper.

The weekly meeting, to be attractive and useful, must have certain indispensable features about it, to which we would give emphasis. One is *good singing*. It often occurs that while poor psalmody will not be tolerated in the Lord's day services, anything is esteemed good enough for the meeting for prayer. Hymns droned out to some tunes which ought long since to have been superannuated, have no inspiring effect. Sharp, clear, rousing hymns and tunes are never more in place than in the prayer meeting. A special choir for the week night service, composed of ten or a dozen of boys and girls from twelve to sixteen years old, and all singing in unison, would be a wise provision. With a little Christian pressure such a choir could be secured in almost any place. Then there should be *variety and brevity in prayer*. In some meetings the same persons pray night after night, and in almost the same rotation. One can almost predict with dead certainty who will pray and in what order. To avoid sameness, there should be a constant change made in the persons called on to pray. A new voice is generally regarded a treat by frequenters of a prayer circle. Variety should be studied. As to brevity, few ever sin against it by being too brief. The tendency is rather to length and thus to tediousness. Nobody can follow a man who capers over the whole theological field, and maintain a calm and Christian spirit. To present a few simple and earnest requests, and those only which are felt by the person praying absolute needs, is an art we all need to study. Long prayers are not the compliment to the Lord which some people think them to be, while they keep away many people most effectually from the prayer concert. *As to the address, let that be short*. We do not want a sermon with numberless divisions and sub divisions at a prayer meeting. There is too much preaching, and not enough conversation, as a rule, at such a gathering. As a Sabbath school teacher is not so successful who does all the talking instead of making the class talk, so the conductor of the weekly meeting who preaches is far behind the one who has the happy art of luring remarks from others. To take some special subject, such as "Amusements for the young," or "Preaching," or "Benevolence," or some other, and have it duly announced from the pulpit the previous Sabbath, and then have a downright good conversation about it, is a capital plan. Suggestions both novel and useful often come out during such a talk. Then as to attendance, *solicit persons privately to come*. Scores are only waiting for an invitation. To oblige a friend they will come at first, and if the meetings are interesting, they will soon come through interest. If every person who has found help at the prayer meeting

were to become a Christian courier of its blessings, a Christian solicitor of others, the now empty or half-filled benches would soon present a different appearance.

Common sense must guide men into the right conduct of this means of grace. Technical rules cannot be laid down, for communities differ. It is one thing to go to a weekly meeting along the lighted streets of a city, and another thing along the dark roads of the country. But by the application of common sense, and earnestness, and devotion, there is no good reason why our prayer meetings in every place should not find a great and blessed increase in attendance and in power.

UNITY—HOW ARE WE TO SEEK IT.

IN our reflections on the hindrances to Christian unity, we were led to observe the fact that our denominations, for the most part, are close corporations for the promulgation of special aspects of Gospel truth. The Episcopal Church presents Christ through the Book of Common Prayer, the Presbyterian insists upon a Calvinistic Gospel, the Methodist upon an Arminian, whilst, as a recent occurrence in Don Mount evidences, the Baptists insist upon the quantity of water as a necessary requisite to an accredited post in their close communion. Plymouthism is Pharisaism run mad, and is only useful in teaching the lesson of the utter hopelessness of finding unity by breaking asunder from denominational lines. There remains practically but the one path, viz., infusing into our denominations the spirit of catholicity, by means of which they unconsciously find middle walls melting away and thus gain closer communion, less envying, and a growing unity.

The Reformers, in their contest with Rome, found it necessary to appeal, as against the fathers with their conflicting traditions, to an older standard, the Bible; from the mediæval to the primitive Church; and none will deny, unless it be for controversial purposes, that to the New Testament days Christianity may look back as those of her surest faith and most earnest life. What lessons may we learn therefrom?

Our creeds are exclusive; is exclusion unity? And how did the early Church preserve its unity? for such it manifestly had. In all the controversies regarding the apostolic Church why has the question been not only unasked but evaded, Did Christ and His apostles demand, either from disciple or teacher, conformity to any ecclesiastical polity or formulated faith? Then follows the very inconvenient inquiry, On what New Testament ground does any Church that aims at being more than a sect demand such subscription now? Of course these irrepressible inquiries do persistently crop up, and the answer generally is: Apostolic authority was unquestioned, and therefore, in their day, no other criterion of truth was needed. Unfortunately the answer does not meet the facts of the case. There were divisions in the apostolic Church, not only among brethren, as at Corinth, but between apostolic teachers and companions. Yet were these divisions not treated with majority votes or ecclesiastical excommunication, but with Christian forbearance and continued work.

Dr. Killen, a thorough-paced Presbyterian of Ireland, in his "History of the Ancient Church," has expressed his views of apostolic unity, and his words, coming from an upholder of one of the most systematic and elaborate standards of modern times, are certainly not biased by any opposition to creed and polity. They are a two-edged sword—we may be tempted to say it cuts the hand that wields it—but they are true:

"The unity of the apostolic Church was not perfect, for there were false brethren who stirred up strife, and false teachers who fomented divisions. But these elements of discord no more disturbed the general unity of the Church than the presence of a few empty or blasted ears of corn affects the productiveness of an abundant harvest. As a body, the disciples of Christ were never so united as in the first century. Heresy had yet made little impression; schism was scarcely known; and charity exerting her gentle influence with the brotherhood, found it comparatively easy to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The members of the Church had 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism.' But their unity was very different from uniformity. They had no canonical forms, no clerical costume, no liturgies [we would

add, no creeds]. The prayers of ministers and people varied according to circumstances, and were dictated by their hopes and fears, their wants and sympathies. The unity of the apostolic Church did not consist in its subordination to any one visible head or supreme pontiff, for neither Peter nor Paul, James nor John, pretended to be the governor of the household of faith. Its unity was not like the unity of a gaol where all the prisoners receive the same rations, and dwell in cells of the same construction, wear the same dress and submit to the orders of the same keeper; but like the unity of a cluster of stalks of corn, all springing from one prolific grain and all rich with a golden produce. Or it may be likened to the unity of the ocean, where all the parts are not of the same depth, or the same colour, or the same temperature, but where all are pervaded by the same saline preservative, ebb and flow, according to the same heavenly laws, and concur in bearing to the ends of the earth the blessings of civilization and of happiness."

We need to consider more this early unity, to which we the rather look for the healing of our divisions in their utterness than to the *adum theologicum* or dogmatic theology.

In another paper we shall consider "creeds" and their relation to unity.

THERE is a proposal presented to the Irish Congregationalists to commemorate the jubilee of their union by raising £2,000, to be the nucleus of a building fund or to assist in opening new fields of labour. We hope our Irish brethren will adopt some such scheme as this. Ireland needs more Protestantism than it has, and Protestantism of the most pronounced type too. And where will it find more thorough Protestantism than in Congregationalism?

THINK of it. The Reformed Episcopal Church of America, intending to do something for foreign missions, chose the American Board as its agent in spending its money. We are sorry that the scheme has fallen through. The Reformed Episcopal brethren feel that at present they are hardly strong enough to enter upon foreign work. That may be a mistake, though. But what a rebuke the scheme would have been to narrow sectarianism and what a testimony to the unity of Christ's followers!

HERE is a definition of religion that will puzzle any one. It is from the Rev. John W. Chadwick, a very radical Unitarian minister of Brooklyn, N.Y. Mr. Chadwick is a poet as well as a theologian, and this fact may account for the "mysticism" of his language. Religion, means according to him, "to thrill with recognition of the tender grace and awful sweep of things, and to convert this passive recognition into a voluntary energy of devotion to the eternal order in which we find ourselves embosomed." That definition is no improvement on the old ones.

THE well-known Dr. Christlieb, of Bonn, Germany, gives to the world some missionary statistics. From him we learn that there are now in operation 70 missionary societies; 27 of them being in Great Britain, 18 in America, and 9 in Germany and Switzerland. They employ some 2,500 European preachers, and 23,000 native teachers and helpers. There are now connected with the various missions about 1,650,000 converts, of whom 60,000 were won to Christianity in 1878. The money raised by the societies annually amounts to about a million and a quarter pounds sterling, of which about one-half is contributed in Great Britain. The Bible has been translated into 226 languages, and the copies circulated number 128,000,000. If these statistics mean anything, the Church of Christ is aggressive in these days. Of course, there is room for improvement; but there is no reason for fear or complaint. The nations are evangelized. The Church of Christ is on the whole faithful to its mission.

THE candidature of Dr. Parker to which we alluded a week or two ago, has been met, as was to be expected, by strong denunciations of the impropriety of his course in entering the political arena. To this the doctor replies as follows:

"No cant that is talked in this age of cant is so repulsive to me as this sickly sentimentalism about ministers keeping to 'their own proper work.' What is their own proper work? Will you shut them up in the pulpit, or the study,