

*Friday, Jan. 8.*—FOR NATIONS: For Kings, and all who are in Authority—For the Cessation of War—For the Prevalence of Peace, and for the Holy Observance of the Sabbath.

*Saturday, Jan. 9.*—Generally for the Large Outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the Revival and Extension of pure Christianity throughout the World,

*Sunday, Jan. 10.*—SERMONS: Subject.—The Christian Church: its Unity, and the Duty and Desirableness of Manifesting it.

## CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH POLITY.

The Congregational Churches hold in common with the entire church of God all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, which, derived from the New Testament, have been taught everywhere from the apostolic age, and so denominated catholic, or universal. In then. they have fellowship with all the faithful—with “all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ their Lord.” On questions of *church polity*, however, they have been compelled, in the exercise of their own judgments upon the language of the New Testament and the records of primitive Christianity, to adopt principles distinctive from those maintained by other ecclesiastical communities; and these are briefly set forth in the following particulars.

I. Congregational church polity is distinguished from all sorts of Prelacy, Roman, Oriental, Anglican, and Wesleyan, by the principle that all Christ’s servants in the ministry of the gospel *are equal in rank*.

The pre-eminence of one servant of our Lord to another appears to be inconsistent with the genius of Christianity; for he has said, “The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you,” Matt. xx. 25, 26. “One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren,” Matt. xxiii. 8. The apostle Peter assumed not this superiority—“the *presbyters* who are among you I exhort, who am also a *presbyter*. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the *oversight* (ἐπισκοποῦντες discharging the duty of *bishops*) not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being *lords* over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock,” 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. The identity of the terms *presbyter* and *bishop* is obvious on the very face of the apostolic writings, the *bishops* being called *presbyters*, and the *presbyters*, *bishops*. In Acts xx. the same persons who, at the 17th verse, are termed elders, or *presbyters*, are in the 28th verse called overseers, or *bishops*. In his epistle to Titus, Paul, after having declared it to have been his design, in leaving the evangelist in Crete, that he should ordain *elders* in every city, at once proceeds to enumerate some of the principal qualifications by which they should be distinguished, and in the midst of the recital he says, “for a *bishop* must be blameless,” &c., Tit. i. 5-7.

As prelatical superiority is unscriptural, so it is found to be *useless*. In those communions where such gradations are acknowledged, peace is not secured by the concession, but rather discord. The evils arising from ambition, pride, and tyranny, the natural fruits of such ascendancy, are far more destructive to the interests of true religion than the differences of opinion which equality produces. Diversity of judgment may be silenced, but cannot be prevented by an appeal to authority.

II. Congregational church polity is distinguished from Episcopacy and Presbyterianism by the principle—that the only organized church it owns is