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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

The Week of Prayer for 1868.

The Evangelical Alliance has issued the following document:—Our Gracious God lends an attentive ear to the supplications of His people. The records of individual, family, and church life abundantly prove that believing prayer is followed by results that call forth gratitude and praise, and encourage renewed requests at the Throne of Grace.

In every land, and in most of the leading cities, the annual invitation of the Evangelical Alliance to observe the week of prayer at the commencement of the year has been largely and increasingly responded to. Multitudes have united with one accord to implore, in the name and relying on the merits and mediation of our Divine Lord, that the new year may be crowned with the goodness of God, and special blessings conferred both upon the church and the world.

The Evangelical Alliance, by its British and Foreign organizations, renew their invitation for the opening of the year 1868. In doing so, they express their profound conviction that passing events are more than ever furnishing motives for a closer union among all true followers of Christ, and for the offering of faithful, importunate prayer for things pertaining to the spirituality and spread of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fellow-Christians of every land and language:—In the prospect of the weighty interests and great responsibilities of the new year, let us again draw near to the Heavenly Throne, that common centre for universal prayer, and prove the Lord of Hosts according to His own word, wherein it is written:—"See if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

The following topics, amongst others, are suggested as suitable for exhortation and intercession on the successive days of meeting:—

Sunday, Jan. 5.—Sermons. Subject: The person, work, and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Monday, Jan. 6.—Thanksgiving for special and general mercies during the past year, to nations, churches, and families: and confession of sin.

Tuesday, Jan. 7.—Prayer for nations: for kings and all in authority: for the observance of the Lord's Day: for the removal of obstacles in the way of moral and religious progress: and for internal and international peace.

Wednesday, Jan. 8.—Prayer for families: for schools, colleges, and universities: and for sons and daughters in foreign countries.

Thursday, Jan. 9.—Prayer for Christian ministers, and all engaged in Christ's service; for God's ancient Israel, and for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Friday, Jan. 10.—Prayer for the sick and afflicted: for widows and orphans: and for the persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Saturday, Jan. 11.—Prayer for the Christian church: for increase of holiness and activity, fidelity and love: and for grace equal to the duties and dangers of the times.

Sunday, Jan. 12.—Sermons. Subject: Christian charity—1 Cor. xiii.

The Exploration of Palestine.

One of the most useful antiquarian explorations of modern times is that undertaken by the Palestine Exploration Fund. Already some really important results have been realized from the researches and excavations made in Jerusalem, under Lieutenant Warren's personal direction. It has been found that the south wall of the enclosure which contained the Temple is buried for more than half its depth beneath an accumulation of rubbish—"probably," observes Mr. Groves, the secretary of the Fund, "the ruins of the successive buildings which once crowned it—and, that if bared to its foundation, the wall would present an unbroken face of solid masonry of nearly 1,000 feet long and for a large portion of that distance more than 150 feet in height; in other words, nearly the length of the Crystal Palace, and the height of the transept." The wall, which has always been regarded as a marvel of construction, is already exposed to about one-half its real height. A passage has been discovered thirty feet below the "single gateway," and

it is believed that if the work of exploration is allowed to continue, further important discoveries will be effected. Mr. Groves considers that the work already done has completely changed the conditions of research in Jerusalem—being "nearly equivalent to the discovery of a new city." The public are earnestly appealed to for pecuniary aid. The fund is nearly exhausted just at a time when the researches are becoming most interesting. We hope that money will not be lacking to carry on a work that must bear directly on the illustration of the Sacred Scriptures.—*London paper.*

The Memorable Hymn.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

By C. H. Spurgeon.

(Concluded.)

The time has now come for me to say how earnestly I desire you to "sing an hymn." Whenever we repair to the Lord's table, which represents to us the passover, we ought not to come to it as to a funeral. Let us select solemn hymns, but not dirges. Let us sing softly, but none the less joyfully. These are no burial feasts; these are not funeral cakes which lie upon this table, and yonder fair white linen cloth is no winding sheet. "This is my body," said Jesus, but the body represented was no corpse; we feed upon a living Christ. The blood set forth by yonder wine is the fresh life-blood of our immortal King. We view not our Lord's body as clay-cold flesh, pierced with wounds, but as glorified at the right hand of the Father. We hold a happy festival when we break bread on the first day of the week. We come not hither trembling like bondsmen, cringing on our knees as wretched serfs condemned to eat on their knees; we approach as freemen to our Lord's banquet, like his apostles, to recline at length or sit at ease; not merely to eat bread which may belong to the most sorrowful, but to drink wine which belongs to men whose souls are glad. Let us recognize the righteousness, the duty of cheerfulness at this commemorative Supper; and, therefore, let us "sing an hymn."

Being satisfied on this point, perhaps you ask, "What hymn shall we sing?" Many sorts of hymns were sung in the olden time: look down the list, and you will scarce find one which may not suit us now.

One of the earliest of earthly songs was the war-song. They sang of old a song to the conqueror, when he returned from the battle. "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Women took their timbrels and rejoiced in the dance when the hero returned from the war. Even thus of old did the people of God extol him for his mighty acts, singing aloud with the high-sounding cymbals: "Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously." . . . The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name." My brethren, let us lift up a war-song to-night! Why not? "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Come, let us praise our Emmanuel, as we see the head of our foe in his right hand; as we behold him "leading captivity captive," ascending up on high, with trumpets' joyful sound.—Let us chant the psalm; let us shout the war-song, "Lo Triumphant!" Behold he comes, all glorious from the war: as we gather at the table, let us salute him with a psalm of glad-some triumph.

Another early form of song was the pastoral. When the shepherds sat down amongst the sheep, they tuned their pipes, and warbled forth soft and sweet airs in harmony with rustic quietude. All around was calm and still; the sun was brightly shining, and the birds were making melody among the leafy branches. Shall I seem fanciful if I say, let us unite in a pastoral to-night? Sitting round the table, why should we not sing, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." If there be a place beneath the stars where one might feel perfectly at ease, surely it is at the table of the Lord. Here then let us sing to our great

Shepherd a pastoral of delight. Let the bleating of sheep be in our ears, as we remember the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his flock.

You need not be reminded that the ancients were very fond of festive songs. When they assembled at their great festivals, led by their chosen minstrels, they sang right joyously, with boisterous mirth. Let those who will speak to the praise of wine, my soul shall extol the precious blood of Jesus; let who will laud corn and oil, the rich produce of the harvest my heart shall sing of the bread which came down from heaven, whereof if a man eateth, he shall never hunger. Speak ye of royal banquets, and minstrelsy fit for a monarch's ear! ours is a nobler festival, and our song is sweeter far. Here is room at this table to-night for all earth's poetry and music. For the place deserves songs more lustrous with delight, more sparkling with gems of holy mirth, than any of which the ancients could conceive.

"Now for a tune of lofty praise
To great Jehovah's equal Son!
Awake, my voice, in heavenly lays
Tell the loud wonders he hath done!"

The love-song we must not forget, for that is peculiarly the song of this evening. "Now will I sing unto my well-beloved a song."—His love to us is an immortal theme; and as our love, fanned by the breath of heaven, breaks into a vehement flame, we may sing, yea, and we will sing among the lilies, a song of loves.

In the Old Testament we find many psalms called by the title, "A song of Degrees."—This "Song of Degrees" is supposed by some to have been sung as the people ascended the temple steps, or made pilgrimages to the Holy Place. The strain often changes—sometimes it is dolorous, and anon it is glad; at one season the notes are long drawn out and heavy at another they are cheerful and jubilant.—We will sing a "Song of Degrees" to-night. We will mourn that we pierced the Lord, and we will rejoice in pardon bought with blood. Our strain must vary as we talk of sin, feeling its bitterness and lamenting it, and then of pardon, rejoicing in its glorious fulness.

David wrote a considerable number of psalms which he entitled "Michtam," which may be called in English, "instructional psalms." Where, beloved, can we find richer instruction than at the table of our Lord?—He who understands the mystery of incarnation and of substitution is a master in scriptural theology. There is more teaching in the Saviour's body and in the Saviour's blood than in all the world besides. O ye who wish to learn the way to comfort, and how to tread the royal road to heavenly wisdom, come ye to the cross, and see the Saviour suffer, and pour out his heart's blood for human sin.

Some of David's psalms are called "Michtam," which means "golden psalms." Surely we must sing one of these. Our psalms must be golden when we speak of the Head of the church, who is as much fine gold.—More precious than silver or gold is the inestimable price which he has paid for our ransom. Yes, ye sons of harmony, bring your most melodious anthems here, and let your Saviour have golden psalms.

Certain psalms in the old Testament are entitled "Upon Shoshannim," that is "upon the lilies." O ye virgin souls, whose hearts have been washed in blood, and have been made white and pure bring forth your instruments of song:—

"Hither, then, your music bring,
Strike aloud each joyful string!"

Let your hearts, when they are in their best state, when they are purest, and most cleansed from earthly dross, give to Jesus their glory and their excellence.

We have not half exhausted the list, but it is clear that, sitting at the Lord's Table, we shall have no lack of suitable psalmody. Perhaps no one hymn will quite suit the sentiments of all; and while we would not write a hymn for you, we would pray the Holy Spirit to write now the spirit of praise upon your hearts, that sitting here, you may "after supper sing an hymn."

For one or two minutes let us ask, "WHAT SHALL THE TUNE BE?" It must be a strange one, for if we are to sing "an hymn" to-night, around the table, the tune must have all the parts of music. Yonder believer is

heavy of heart through manifold sorrows, bereavements, and watchings by the sick. He loves his Lord, and would fain praise him, but his soul refuses to use her wings. Brother, we will have a tune in which you can join, and you shall lead the bass. You shall sing of your fellowship with your Beloved in his sufferings; how he, too, lost a friend; how he spent whole nights in sleeplessness; how his soul was exceeding sorrowful. But the tune must not be all bass, or it would not suit some of us to-night, for we can reach the highest key. We have seen the Lord, and our spirit has rejoiced in God our Saviour.—We want to lift the chorus high; yea, there are some true hearts here, who are at times so full of joy that they will want special music written for them. "Whether in the body I cannot tell," said Paul, and so have others since, when Christ has been with them. Ah! then they have been obliged to mount to the alto notes, to the very loftiest range of song.

Remember, beloved, that the same Saviour who will accept the joyful shoutings of the strong, will also receive the plaintive notes of the weak and weeping. You little ones, you babes in grace, may cry, "Hosanna," and the King will not silence you; and you strong men with all your power of faith, may shout, "Hallelujah!" and your notes shall be accepted too. Come, then, let us have a tune in which we can all unite; but ah! we cannot make one which will suit the dead—the dead, I mean "in trespasses and sin"—and there are some such here. O may God open their mouths and unloose their tongues; but as for those of us who are alive unto God, let us, as we come up unto the table, each contribute our own share of the music, and so make up a song of blended harmony, with many parts, one great united song of praise to Jesus our Lord!

We should not choose a tune for the communion table which is not very soft. These are no boisterous themes with which we have to deal when we tarry here. A bleeding Saviour, robed in a vesture dyed with blood—this is a theme which you must treat with loving gentleness, for everything that is coarse is out of place. While the tune is soft it must also be sweet. Silence, ye doubts; be dumb, ye fears; be hushed, ye cares! Why come ye here? My music must be sweet and soft when I sing of him. But oh! it must also be strong; there must be a full swell in my praise. Draw out the stops, and let the organ swell the diapason! In fulness let its roll of thundering harmony go up to heaven; let every note be sounded at its loudest.—"Praise ye him upon the cymbals, upon the high-sounding cymbals; upon the harp with a solemn sound." Soft, sweet, and strong, let the music be.

Alas! you complain that your soul is out of tune. Then ask the Master to tune the heart strings. Those "Selahs" which we find so often in the Psalms, are supposed by many scholars to mean, "put the harp strings in tune;" truly we require many "Selahs," for our hearts are constantly unstrung. O that to-night the Master would

"Teach us some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above!"

We close by enquiring WHO SHALL SING THIS HYMN?

Sitting around the Father's board, we will raise a joyful song, but who shall do it? "I will," saith one; "and we will," say others. What is the reason why so many are willing to join? The reason is to be found in the verse we were singing just now—

"When He's the subject of the song,
Who can refuse to sing?"

What! a Christian silent when others are praising his Master? No; he must join in the song. Satan tries to make God's people dumb, but he cannot, for the Lord has not a tongue-tied child in all the family. They can all speak, and they can all cry, even if they cannot all sing, and I think there are times when they can all sing; yea, they must, for you know the promise, "Then shall the tongue of the dumb sing." Surely, when Jesus leads the tune, if there should be any silent ones in the Lord's family, they must begin to praise the name of the Lord. After Giant Despair's head had been cut off, Christians and Mr. Greatheart, and all the rest of them, brought out the best of their provisions and made a feast, and Mr. Bunyan says, that af-