

acknowledged to be a judgment. The justice of God was confessed in arresting men in recklessness, extravagance and folly.

Before the commercial revulsion, the city and the country had been absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure and gain. Men were making haste to be rich, and to enjoy their riches. Recklessness of expenditure, extravagance in living, display in furniture, equipage, and dress, had attained a height unexampled in the previous social history of our country, and utterly inconsistent with the simplicity and virtue of our fathers.

These signs of prosperity had filled the minds of good men with apprehension and alarm before the panic seized the heart of the world. Christians who had kept free from the spirit of speculation and the mania for making money, had trembled for the future of a people so absorbed in the material, as to be oblivious of the spiritual and eternal. These pious people had been gathering in meetings for prayer, before the convulsion began. Now, indeed, the meetings received large accessions of numbers in attendance, and a new infusion of life from above. More meetings were established, and larger numbers attended.

So the work spread, until the year has become remarkable in the history of the church.



In the upper lecture-room of the “Old North Dutch Church,” in Fulton Street, New York, a solitary man was kneeling upon the floor, engaged in earnest, importunate prayer. He was a man who lived very much in the lives of others; lived almost wholly for others. He had no wife or children – but there were thousands with their husbands and fathers, without God and hope in the world; and these thousands were going to the gates of eternal death. He had surveyed all the lower wards of the city as a lay-missionary of the Old Church, and he longed to do something for their salvation. He knew he could do many things – he could take tracts in his hand, any and every day, and distribute them. He could preach the gospel from door to door. All this he had done. To reach these perishing thousands, he needed a thousand lives. Could not something more effectual be done? So, day after day, and many times a day, this man was on his knees, and his constant prayer was “Lord, *what wilt thou have me to do?*” The oftener he prays, the more earnest he becomes. He pleads with God to show him *what* to do, and *how* to do it.

The more he prayed the more encouraged he was in the joyful expectation that God would show him the way, through which hundreds and thousands might be

influenced on the subject of religion. But though he prayed and believed, he had not the remotest idea of the methods of God’s grace which were about to be employed. The more he prayed, however, the more confident he became that God would show him *what* he would have him do. He rose from his knees – inspired with courage and hope, derived from above.

[Mr. Jeremiah Calvin Lanphier] says: “Going my rounds in the performance of my duty one day, as I was walking along the streets, the idea was suggested to my mind that an hour of prayer, from twelve to one o’clock, would be beneficial to *business men*, who usually in great numbers take that hour for rest and refreshment. The idea was to have singing, prayer, exhortation, relation of religious experience, as the case might be; that none should be required to stay the whole hour; that all should come and go as their engagements should allow or require, or their inclinations dictate. Arrangements were made, and at twelve o’clock noon, on the 23d day of September, 1857, the door of the third story lecture-room was thrown open. At half past twelve the step of a solitary individual was heard upon the stairs. Shortly after another, and another; then another, and last of all, another, until six made up the whole company! We had a good meeting. *The Lord was with us to bless us.*”

It will be seen, that our missionary sat out the first half of the first noonday prayer-meeting alone, or rather he prayed, though the first half hour alone.

The second meeting was held a week afterwards, on Wednesday, September 30th, when twenty persons were present. It was a precious meeting. There was much prayer, and the hearts of those present were melted within them.

The next meeting was held October 7th. Speaking of this meeting, the private journal says: “Prepared for the prayer-meeting to-day, at noon. Called to invite a number of persons to be present. Spoke to men as I met them in the street, as my custom is, if I can get their attention. *I prayed that the Lord would incline many to come to the place of prayer.* Went to the meeting at noon. Present between thirty and forty. ‘Bless the Lord! oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.’”

This meeting was of so animated and encouraging a character, that a meeting was appointed for the NEXT DAY, at which a large number attended; and from this day dates the business-men’s union daily prayer-meeting. Of the meeting of the 8th of October, it is said, in this same journal: “A larger number present, and there was a spirit of reconsecration to the service of Christ, and a manifest

desire to live near his cross.” This meeting, as we learn from other sources, was one of uncommon fervency in prayer, of deep humility and self-abasement, and great desire that God would glorify himself in the outpouring of his Spirit upon them.

Passing on now to Oct. 13th, we find a rapid advancement in the intensity of religious feeling. “Attended the noon-day prayer-meeting, a large number present, and God’s Spirit was manifestly in our midst.”

And of the next day, Oct. 14th, it is said: “Over one hundred present, many of them not professors of religion, but under conviction of sin, and seeking an interest in Christ; inquiring what they shall do to be saved. God grant that they find Christ precious to their souls.”

Of the few following meetings, we find such notices as [this]: “A large attendance; a good spirit pervaded the place; a great desire to be humble before God in view of past sins. I feel that God’s Spirit is moving in the hearts of the people.”

The religious interest at the Fulton street prayer-meeting, as it was now commonly called, had gone on increasing more and more, till its influence began to be powerfully felt abroad in different and distant portions of the city. During the first month of these meetings, many city pastors, and many laymen, belonging to the churches of New York and Brooklyn, had been into one or more of these meetings, and had been warmed by the holy fire already kindled. And as the sparks from the burning building are borne to kindle other fires, so these carried the fire to their own churches.

The place of prayer was a most delightful resort, and the places of prayer multiplied, because men were moved to prayer. They wished to pray. They felt impelled, by some unseen power, to pray. They felt the pressure of the call to prayer. So a place of prayer was no sooner opened, than Christians flocked to it, to pour out their supplications together.

The early dawn of the revival was marked by love to Christ, love for all his people, love of *prayer*, and love of personal effort. The conviction was conveyed to all minds that this truly is the work of God. The impenitent felt that Christians loved them; that their love of souls made them earnest. The truth now commended itself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. They felt that this was not the work of man, but the work of God. They were awed by a sense of the divine presence in the prayer-meeting, and felt that this was holy ground. Christians were very much humbled. Impenitent men saw and felt *this*. They felt that it

was *awful* to trifle with the place of *prayer*; sacrilegious to doubt the spirit, the sincerity, the efficiency, or the *power of prayer*.

It is very interesting to look, at this stage of the revival, at the character of the preaching which began to prevail, and the kind of subjects which were presented. The Holy Spirit seems to lead the minds of ministers to those portions of his word which he designs to make the fire and the hammer to break the flinty heart in pieces.

When we come to the history of the third month of prayer, what a change we find rapidly taking place, not only in the city, but all over the land. It was everywhere a revival of *prayer*. God was preparing his glorious way over the nation. It was the desire to *pray*. The same Power that moved to *prayer* in Fulton street, moved to prayer elsewhere. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon these assemblages, and it was this that made the places of prayer all over the land places of great solemnity and earnest inquiry. Men did not doubt – could not doubt – that God was moving in answer to prayer. It was this solemn conviction that silenced all opposition – that awakened the careless and stupid – that encouraged and gladdened the hearts of Christians – causing a general turning to the Lord.

The great features of all these meetings were union, and prayer, and corresponding effort. A careful inquiry in regard to the facts, convinces us that not less than one hundred and fifty meetings for prayer in this city and Brooklyn were held daily at the time of which we are now writing – *all*, without one single exception, partaking of the same general character.

In February, Philadelphia established a noontday prayer-meeting, commenced, at first, in a church in Fourth street, but soon removed to Jaynes' Hall. Soon the entire accessible places were filled – floor, platform, galleries, boxes, aisles, and office. Never was there, scarcely on the face of the earth, such meetings as those in Jaynes' Hall. The work spread, from Jaynes' Hall, all over the city. Prayer-meetings were established in numerous places – public halls – concert-rooms – engine and hose company's houses, and in tents, till the whole city seemed pervaded with the spirit of prayer.

Prayer-meetings almost simultaneously were established in all parts of the land, both in city and country – Boston, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, New Orleans, Vicksburg, Memphis, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, and other cities, shared in this glorious work. The whole land received the "spiritual rain." The spirit of the revival spread everywhere,

and seemed to permeate every nook and corner of the great republic. The subjects of the revival included all classes – the high and the low – the rich and the poor – the learned and the ignorant. The most hopeless and forbidding were brought under its almighty power. From the highest to the lowest and most degraded in society, the trophies of God's power and grace were made. Persons of the most vicious and abandoned character, supposed to be beneath and beyond the reach of all religious influence, by having lost all susceptibility, were brought to humble themselves like little children at the foot of the cross.

Christians were themselves astonished and overwhelmed at those displays of divine mercy. They felt that God was saying to them, anew, and by a providential revelation – "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Christians became emboldened to ask great things and expect great things. There was humility, and yet there was a cheerful, holy boldness in the spirit and temper of the religious mind, and duty was attempted with the expectation of success. It seemed to be upon all hearts as if written with the pen of a diamond – "My soul! wait thou *only* upon God, for my *expectation* is from *him*."

Christians gathered for prayer, and asked for large measures of the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them; and the Spirit was sent down in copious effusions in answer to prayer. Conversions multiplied, so that there was, after a little, no attempt to compute their numbers. In some towns nearly all the population became, as was believed, true and faithful followers of Christ.

But with the most diligent and earnest use of means, the deepest possible conviction seemed to be, "The power *belongeth unto God*." No wonder, then, that everywhere there was the universal acknowledgment of God's hand in the revival; and no matter what men did to promote it, to God was ascribed all the glory of it.

The change which came suddenly over the church was most welcome. It was a blessed spectacle presented to the world, a church alive, a church active, a church of prayer. No wonder that Christians felt joyful in the Lord, when this new element of usefulness and power was found.



—Condensed from *The Power of Prayer, Illustrated in the Wonderful Displays of Divine Grace at the Fulton Street and Other Meetings in New York and Elsewhere, in 1857 and 1858* by Samuel Irenæus Prime

Power Belongeth unto God

The pen of an angel might well be employed to record the wonderful works of God in the city of New York, during the years 1857-8. The history will be a memorial of divine grace. In all future time it will proclaim the readiness of the Lord God Almighty to hear and answer prayer; of the Holy Spirit, to descend and convert sinners; of Jesus Christ, to forgive and save. To GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON, AND GOD THE HOLY GHOST, BE ALL THE PRAISE!

The autumn of 1857 was signaled by a sudden and fearful convulsion in the commercial world. That calamity was so speedily followed by the reports of revivals of religion and remarkable displays of divine grace, that it has been a widely received opinion, that the two events stand related to one another, as cause and effect. In the day of adversity, men consider. When the hand of God is suddenly laid upon city and country, it is natural to believe that men will look away from themselves, and say, "Verily there is a God, who reigns." As in the time of an earthquake, or wreck at sea, men's hearts failing them for fear, they will cry to Him who rides upon the whirlwind, so it was believed that the financial storm had driven men to pray. And it doubtless did. Never was a commercial crisis so inexplicable under the laws of trade. It was

