

The Fraternal.

Vol. IX.

OCTOBER, 1915.

LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS for the FRATERNAL should be addressed to the Editor, Rev. F. C. SPURR, Regent's Park Chapel, N.W., and all other communications to the Secretary, Rev. E. D. deRUSSETT, Baptist Church, Harrow.

From the Editor's Chair.

A number of brethren have written with great appreciation of our last number. The article by Mr. James instead of provoking, as some thought it would, a storm of criticism, has elicited a chorus of praise. Indeed, we have had little criticism thus far, and not a single provocative letter. This may be good, or it may be evil. The *Fraternal* should not offer the aspect of a peaceful, unruffled lake. A little wind and a few waves save us from stagnation. Now—who will begin?

The contents of the present issue will, we hope, be found helpful. Mr. de Russett's article is written with the express purpose of inviting criticism. Dr. Dale had a good deal to say upon the same subject. Mr. Acomb has had a reputation for many years of being a thought-provoking speaker and writer. Mr. Emery touches a live spot in our Church life. Here is enough material for a fine discussion.

Have any of our brethren had any experience in speaking at the Camps, or in the Huts of the Y.M.C.A. at home? If so, and they have formed any clear impressions as to ways of working that may help others in reaching men who are generally regarded as "outsiders," they would render a service to their brethren by

setting forth in a succinct manner their ideas. These pages are open to brethren who can enlighten us upon this subject. We are told on every hand, but vaguely, that the war will have the effect of changing the character of some of our services, and the mode of our appeal. These vague hints do not carry us far. We want something more concrete and precise, based upon actual experience. We have already far too many theorists.

A remarkable book by Mr. J. N. Farquhar, M.A., on "Modern Religious Methods in India," published at 10/6, can now be obtained as a "remainder" (quite new) for 3/6, from Foyle, Charing Cross Road. Dr. Reavely Glover speaks most highly of this volume. He declares it to be one of the finest books on missionary work in India ever published. Some brethren may like to know of this 'lucky find.'

The Gaining of Attention.

Some penetrating sentences from Kennard's "Psychic Power in Preaching"

What then, is the process by which voluntary attention is gained? It may be reduced to the following single formula: To render attractive by artifice what is not so by nature; to give an artificial interest to things that have not a natural interest.

Continued attention speedily exhausts the power of listening. To preserve its freshness and elasticity there must be momentary rests for the mind to unbend: it will return enlivened. Voluntary attention, in its durable form, is really a difficult thing to maintain. The speaker should remember that.

Above all things, *disencumber* a sermon.

The Ideal Modern Minister.

By Rev. W. J. ACOMB (Birmingham).

[It has been said that Euripides describes things as they are, while Sophocles describes things as they ought to be. In this article the writer confessedly inclines to the Sophoclean manner, as in dealing with an ideal, he is bound to do. We are thinking then, just now, of a Modern Minister of Christ, as he ought to be, might be, and, happily, sometimes is.]

The Ideal Modern Minister regards the Master as his Model in the ministry. Our brother takes his cue from Jesus, rather than from Paul. Jesus was no theologian occupied with doctrine. He was everything but theologian.

To single out one of the characters which He presented, we will think of Him as a Divine Naturalist. If God was His Father, Dame Nature was His Foster-Mother. He constantly draws upon her resources, loves to quote from her volumes. He delights to spend a midnight with God on the mountain top, and would descend in the morning with garments wet with dew, and the smell of the wild flowers about Him, with His noble face purged from sorrow to begin anew His ministry.

The modern minister, too, profits from the object lessons which this bountiful Mother provides. Peter Bells' may scoff, but, like his Exemplar, he finds "tongues in trees, and sermons in stones," which interpret the deeper love of God in Revelation. Sometimes when in a quondary, he too goes into a desert place, and through the Presence which permeates the whole, he finds hanging on a thorn bush the clue by which to escape from his mental and moral labyrinth.

"I want fresh air!" cried one who had been "sepulchred alive" during a spell of unwholesome doctrine. Christ's sermons were full of fresh air, all out-doors, as it were, and our

friend does well in affectionately following His foot-tracks.

Like his Master, the Modern Minister has a touch of mysticism in his composition—a sense of the ensphering world—has been caught up to heaven at least once in his life, and “sees in man and things a grander beauty than the eye discerns.”

He does not keep all the secrets of God to himself, but spirits his hearers away from the mud flats of life up to the mountain peaks. To lead them in paths they have not known appears to him to be the ideal function of the Modern Minister. He knows the upward way, opens gates, lifts curtains, interprets dreams, makes them hear foot-falls on the borders of the unseen world. Under his magic spell the people obtain rest of heart and reverence of mind.

The Prince of Preachers would coin a parable while the people waited. Brand-new it would sparkle before them. If we would leave our musty, time-worn phrases and commonplaces, and take the trouble to frame our old pictures in new settings, what a relief it would be! Some have a genius for this. Our brother whom we are sketching began fable and allegory making as a novice; he seldom opens his mouth save in parables. His pound gained ten pounds. He is not the only one enriched.

With such a man Christ inevitably becomes the be-all and end-all of life and labour. None stands on His level. Charles Lamb once confessed Christ amid a group of literati: “If Shakespeare came into this room, we should all stand up; if Christ came into this room, we should all kneel down.” That precisely hits the relative attitude of the Modern Minister towards great men, and towards the Divine Man. In the presence of Shakespeare, his intellectual self respectfully stands; in the presence of the Son of God, his whole manhood prostrates itself.

This matter needs emphasis, for sometimes discourses re-

lating to Jesus Christ are uttered with no more expenditure of soul than is observed in the postman when he delivers the letters which may wreck the hopes of a dozen people. Only a postman in the pulpit, "with no feeling of his office." Preaching before the people is not the same thing as preaching to the people with a live message from God.

The Modern Minister regards his own individuality as a sacred trust, and he never aspires or descends to be a mere copy or echo of somebody else. Sir Roger de Coverley used to meet his Chaplain at the church door on Sunday morning with, "Well, and whom are we to have to-day?" Now, I would not guarantee the well-being of any man who met our prophet Amos with such a question. You cannot think of our independent brother as pacing his study floor on the Saturday night, absorbing somebody else's intellectual effort that he might make a fair show in the flesh tomorrow morning. On the contrary, his mind is so troublesomely full of explosive and expletive that Sunday affords him a safety-valve. From all the books of God, Nature, History, Experience and Revelation, contributions rain upon him a beneficent supply of suggestion, illustration and moral.

We have known imitation, shoddy men, who came to nothing. One had a fancy for Dr. Parker's style—a comical duplicate of the great Northumbrian. He could bellow, could whisper, could shake his elephantine head, but there the matter ended. Others have tried Spurgeon, without his spiritual personality. Alas! think of a caterpillar without wings.

The Modern Minister rightly holds that every period has its own—its own type of man, its own outlook, its own message; also that every man must minister in that which has been given him, as a good steward of God.

The Modern Minister is careful to preach the Gospel, which he understands to mean "good news," or "good tidings."

What is the Gospel? is a moot point. A deacon used to pray for the writer, "Lord, bless the preaching of the Gospel; but, Lord, let it be the Gospel!" Well, that was all right; if the Lord is to show the preacher what the Gospel is, all will be well. It is when feeble minds want to have the ordering of things, and claim to know what is absolutely the pure gospel, that the difficulty begins.

"Good news," or "Good tidings," is evidently something not worn threadbare by repeated use. "Same old stuff!" grumbled a starved chapel-goer one night. The "same old stuff" is not gospel; it is wanting in the essential, new information. It is like war news a month old. There are no eggs in last year's nests.

Our friend avoids the mistake of the man resembleable to a tethered horse in a meadow, starving himself and people while a waving acreage remains untouched. We believe in the inspiration of the Bible—not perhaps in "the letter, which killeth"—and that every page of it will yield intellectual and spiritual value to the intelligent student.

Some will say, "Look at Paul and his resolve not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Yes; but Paul lived in a day when the alphabet of the Cross had to be learned and understood, and hence it was "line upon line." To-day our people learn it before they know the map of England.

Whenever I hear that resolve of Paul quoted—and it too frequently is, to excuse indolence or lack of intellectual enterprise—I remember that the Apostle was not bound by that rule at Athens, the Oxford of the Greek world of that day. (Read Acts 17.) At Thessalonica he endeavoured to prove to the Jews that Christ must needs have suffered; but at Athens he adopted other tactics. Beginning with "the altar to the Unknown God,"

he led them step by step by the truths of natural religion unto the resurrection and the judgment day, with never a word about Jesus crucified.

With an audience of Stoics and Epicureans, the elite of the literary world, Paul had the chance of his life for setting forth the atonement. No, he met them on their own ground. Wise as a serpent, he caught them with guile. To the Jew, then, we see he became a Jew; to the Greek he became a Greek. Had he lived now, to the Briton he would become a Briton, and would employ the language of the market, as did George Whitefield.

The modern minister has no wish to side-track any cardinal truth, but is careful to maintain the proportion of faith. He holds that exaggerated truth is no longer true, and that over-emphasis here or there involves injustice to other lines. Our friend has learned from the zeal without discretion sometimes exhibited, to avoid the heresy of extremes, and goes his way, holding fast to his golden rule, viz., to be intolerant of nothing but intolerance.

The Modern Minister's conception of a true ministry is one in which many are turned to righteousness, and this not in any fictitious sense, but in a very real sense. To this end our friend preaches the law with directness—the law with spiritual extension, as Christ enforces it, in which hate becomes murder, and lascivious thought becomes adultery. He holds that to give eternal prominence to the remedy before the guilt is proved, is bad business. An evangelical preacher of some repute said to me just after the Liberator collapse, "We must give up our 'Come to Jesus' sermons, and pay a little more attention to the morals of our people." A truly sorrowful confession was involved in that remark, reflecting on both pulpit and pew.

The charge which is sometimes levelled against "the flimsy evangelism of the South" is, that it is not constructive—does not

aim to produce the ethical temper; does not tend to create instinctive righteousness.

It is allowed that it does start men and women on a new kind of life—a go-to-meeting life—but “the sensibility of sin, the pain to feel it near,” is not pronounced enough. A new standard is created—a chapel standard—but too frequently a strain on the moral nature reveals the unstable foundation. The modern minister will always be more anxious to write the law in the mind and heart than to add their names to his list of membership, and he would probably imitate Mr. Dobney, of Maidstone, who left a church in London because they were “up to everything but righteousness.”

The Modern Minister is a man of this world, for many good reasons. Time was when Christians had a very slender hold of the world that now is, and had to balance matters by a firmer grasp of the world to come. Looking for a social and political cataclysm, they set their affection on things above. Today, if the saints do not “take the kingdom,” they very largely control its affairs. They share the responsibilities, and give tone to the press, the legislature, and education. The minister who is so short-sighted and ill-judged as to isolate himself from all the movements of God in the manifold departments of life, is an anachronism. Other worldness is a poor qualification for one commissioned to help those battling with the uncanny forces of this.

Our brother is too healthy a soul, too human, to luxuriate in a spiritual dream-world while his brothers and sisters groan under angular burdens in a very real sphere of actualities. Hence he, from nature and from sympathetic necessity, is a man of this world.

Tempora mutantur. In the olden days the words, “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s,” were interpreted to mean, “abstain from politics, and regard lightly the obligation of citizenship.” They are now

seen to mean, "Meet all obligations on the secular side of life as faithfully as those on the religious side."

Fifty years ago, for a minister to step aside from the so-called sacred functions of his office was to outlaw himself; to-day he sometimes more than takes his share in the common burden of civil life. It is well to remember Christ's warning: "If ye have been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" By the unrighteous mammon we understand the secular side of life in contrast to the eternal side.

A man once said of his minister, "He never says anything on a Sunday of what we have been thinking about all the week." Now here was a gulf between pastor and people unbridged by a saving sympathy. It is submitted that we must consider the whole man—body, soul, and spirit, with their interest of interests. To talk only of "the never-dying soul" to the neglect of all else, is to scamp our work.

The Modern Minister realises that he is called to be a leader of men, not simply a servant of men, but a leader of men. To this end both moral and intellectual ascendancy are essential, and to command this ascendancy he must possess superior qualities and resources.

Some, perhaps conscious of their defects, endeavour to obtain it by meddling, getting their finger into every church pie, putting their personal stamp on all endeavour, plan or purpose. Mischievous church factotums are such—not leaders by any means—suppressing all developments, paralysing all initiative but their own, reducing church and congregation to the level of a school class.

Far otherwise acts the born leader. He takes his place "by sovereignty of nature"—does not manœuvre for it, but takes it. From this coign of vantage he inspires the brain and heart of his

people; inoculates men with his courage; fertilizes the minds of others; charms the evil spirit out of them, and makes them want to get up and do something for God.

In some churches the minister is expected to teach the people their duty on Sunday, and then do it for them on the week-day. This is unfortunate all round. The people lose vitality and power of endeavour; the pastor sinks to the level of the schoolmaster. Sometimes, however, the shepherd does not lead the flock into pastures new. To impel them to scale the higher ranges of experience and service, we must supply the higher incentives of further discovery of truth, and enlarged knowledge of God and His Christ.

The Modern Minister refuses to stultify his reason (we may well call it sanctified common sense), feeling that as ours is a reasonable service the nobles faculty must be pressed into a service which demands all our powers.

Shakespeare well says that "God has not given us that God-like reason to rust in us unused." If so in the common affairs of life, how much more is it in demand in dealing with the subtleties of our religion!

The attitude of an independent mind is well portrayed in Tennyson's—

"He would not make his judgment blind,
He fought the spectres of the mind,
And laid them."

We may ask Pilate's question without Pilate's cynicism. Possibly we shall be reminded of that overworked expression, "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned," and hasten to reply that the modern minister stands on the same footing as the superlatively orthodox brother. As no Scripture is of private interpretation, i.e., none can infallibly claim absolute certainty of in-

terpretation, thus the Holy Ghost is no private monopoly, but is common property as much as the oxygen we breathe.

It is well to be reminded that God always has appealed to this highest faculty—"Come now, and let us reason together."

The Modern Minister is also emphatically an inspired man. He who is not inspired has missed his vocation, has climbed up some other way, and must not be taken seriously. The man on whom the Divine afflatus has fallen dare not venture to preach without a message from God. He has known the discomfort of changing his topic in the pulpit in obedience to an uncontrollable impulse. He who passes off a reel of memorised commentary, or a second-hand edition of someone else's mental output, is not troubled thus. He is simply wound up like a clock, runs on for twenty or thirty minutes, and stops.

The secret of inspiration lies somewhere here. The mechanical preacher knows an historical God who intervened far back in the centuries, and a Redeemer enshrined in the old Book, like a fly in amber—the whole thing a matter of past history. The God of the modern minister is the living God, the Father of men, with Whom is no past, and no future: the Spirit of Whom energises every consecrated soul as much to-day as in any period of church history. God's great heart is ever wide open to the children of men. Christ ever knows and "bears the weary weight of all this unintelligible world." The present truth is, that from the Fountain of Life there flows a stream into every human spirit capable of containing it.

Inspiration! Who can measure its value? It is the soul of all enterprise; lends motive power, bridges gulfs, lifts the human to the Divine, conveys to others its own temper, outstrips the mechanical, revels in the impossible.

In Kingsley's "Saints Tragedy" figure two ecclesiastics.

The Superior for an hour leaves the subordinate in charge. He neglects some trifling duty. On the Superior's return, laments his lack of attention. Said the greater man, "I should have felt the same an hour ago." He had in that brief absence had a vision, a larger outlook, caught the inspiration of a grander view. The trifling mechanical bit of routine did not count. Thus when we get our vision, our wider conception, our flood-tide of inspiration, we have wings, and escape from Little Pedlington for ever.

The ideal minister must command these two endowments—inspiration and reason—the one the complement of the other, the co-ordinate of the other. The equipoise makes the properly equipped servant of God. He who possesses inspiration only, may become a visionary and develop all sorts of ideas and ways. He who only boasts of reason, and looks askance at inspiration, is likely to finish as a rationalist, and dry up like a tree void of sap.

The combination of a heaven-inspired nervous force blended with a well balanced mind results in the ideal Modern Minister.

Attractiveness is the sceptre of attention. It may reside in personality, in subject, in delivery, or in all three. . . . Bigness is a prominent bane of attraction. . . . Pettiness is the bane of our pulpits. The men who command attention deal with the great vital questions which affect the men and women of to-day for weal or woe. . . . It grates upon men to be asked to assist in the slaughter of some comatose heresy when they are hungering for the solution of the problems of their daily life.

From J. S. Kennard's Psychic Power in Preaching.

The Problem of the Prayer Meeting.

By Rev. W. W. B. EMERY.

[The following paper raises a question of the supremest importance. We hope that it will evoke a 'live' correspondence.—ED.]

The troubles and distresses of our time are influencing Christian life in many ways. Most of all perhaps, in the matter of prayer. In present conditions prayer has a new value for us. We are more conscious than ever of our need of God. We need Him for a refuge, and for guidance, strength and comfort. The impulse to pray is intensified. All Christian folk are feeling this, but we ministers most of all. Upon us devolves the responsibility of leading our people into the presence of God, and many of us have been feeling this a heavier burden than we can bear. In these days of sorrow, anxiety and perplexity, rare powers of sympathy and of expression are needed if we are to utter what is in the heart of even the most ordinary congregation. Few of us, indeed, feel equal to the task, or can look back upon our performance of it with any degree of satisfaction. Yet even this is not our hardest task in the ministry of prayer. Far more difficult is it to lead the Church to fulfil its great function of priesthood—bearing on its heart the sins and sorrows of the world, mediating and interceding for men before God. There is a ministry of the whole church. It should gather together for this express purpose and utter itself in united supplication and intercession. Such common ministry, such fellowship in prayer, is a natural instinct of the Christian soul and, in the circumstances in which we are now living, should be felt as an imperative necessity. How can we guide the expression of such prayer? What channels are provided through which such united intercession can flow? With what measure of success is the church actually performing this function? These are searching questions which we cannot face without a very real sense of shame and humiliation.

Naturally we have turned to that time-honoured vehicle of the

church's devotion—the Prayer Meeting. With what results? Has the prayer meeting proved itself a satisfactory and an adequate instrument of the church's supplication and intercession? These questions will receive varying answers according to our differing experience. But there is undoubtedly a large mass of experience which goes to show that the prayer meeting has fallen far short of its purpose. An outstanding instance of this is provided in the history of the United Services of Intercession, organised by the Free Church Council at the outbreak of the war, and held daily in the City Temple. Beginning with a large attendance, the numbers soon fell off until only a small group was present, and the meetings were ultimately abandoned because they could not be sustained. Certainly this is a fact of grave significance. But what is that significance? It has been quoted generally as a proof that the Spirit of prayer is weak in our churches, a very distressing conclusion if it be true. The fact, however, is susceptible of another interpretation. It may be an indication that the form of meeting adopted proved to be an unsuitable medium for the devotion of our people. This is not an isolated experience, but only one example of what is taking place on a large scale among our churches generally, and in view of such facts it is high time that the whole question of the prayer meeting should be frankly faced and fearlessly discussed. Naturally we all shrink from the onus and possible odium of such a task. The meeting of the church for prayer is one of its most solemn assemblies. As an institution, the prayer meeting has a traditional sacredness. That it is the test of a standing or falling church is generally assumed to be axiomatic. One of our leading ministers recently wrote in the *Baptist Times*: "If we want to clear our eyes of all illusion, let the compiler of the Baptist Handbook report the numbers present at the prayer meetings." Some hardihood is needed to call in question what is so confidently assumed as self-evident. There is no small possibility of misunderstanding, yet it is precisely that such vital and delicate matters may be discussed without the risk of railing accusations that the B.M.F.U. exists. Within the circle of our brother-

hood, prayer is not an open question. We are all ardent believers both in personal prayer as a vital element of the Christian life and in corporate prayer as an essential function of the Christian Church. We are deeply committed to belief in prayer, not only as Christian men and as ministers, but as a body which sustains a Prayer Union for the express purpose of fellowship at the Throne of Grace. The strength of this conviction is the measure of our concern about the present condition of united prayer in our churches, and of our anxiety to secure a more adequate organ for the churches devotional life. It is in this spirit that we enter upon our present enquiry whether the prayer meeting in its customary form provides such an organ, or whether some better method may be found.

The distinction between prayer and the prayer meeting must first be quite clear in our minds if we are to enter upon such a quest with any hope of profitable discussion. This is a point upon which there seems to be much confusion of thought. Prayer and the prayer meeting are absolutely identified in the minds of many who speak on this subject, as witness the sentence just quoted from the *Baptist Times*. No sooner is the subject of prayer introduced for discussion in our churches and denominational assemblies, than someone immediately tacks on the word "meeting," and the discussion proceeds on the assumption that the two things are identical. We submit that they are separable both in thought and in fact, and that the subject of prayer is larger and more vital than any devotional institution, however sacred it may have become by long association. This confusion of thought results in much distress of mind, which is the more deplorable in that it *may* be groundless. Moreover, it is likely to turn us in the wrong direction in our search for a remedy. We must not jump to the conclusion that prayer is necessarily dying out because a traditional mode of social prayer is languishing. After all, the emphasis of the New Testament falls much more upon personal and secret than upon social and public prayer, and it may be that this is the habit of the modern Christian. But we fully grant that, on any view of the

subject, the decline of fellowship in prayer must mean a serious maiming of the spiritual influence and ministry of the Church.

What, then, are the facts about the prayer meeting? A prayer meeting, really devotional, spontaneous, hearty, full of spiritual power, fervent in intercession and sustained by a worthy proportion of church members week by week, as such a meeting should be, is a very rare phenomenon in church life. On all hands we hear the same complaint. The prayer meeting is declining, or is maintained only with great difficulty. Moreover, a minister is often surprised by the fact that it is his most loyal workers who do not attend. In churches where every other institution flourishes, and where much genuine spiritual work is done, the prayer meeting is often an anxiety and a problem. Nor can one be altogether surprised that this is the case. The plain fact is, that the meeting itself is a great disappointment, even to those who most fervently believe in it. Ideally the most beautiful and inspiring and helpful of all Christian assemblies, it is actually, and in plain fact, the most drearily depressing and unhelpful—formal, prolix, discursive, lacking both in the beauty and elevation of a liturgy and the heartiness and freedom of extempore prayer.

Probably there will be some difference of opinion as to the extent to which this is an accurate description of facts. It is doubtless subject to many exceptions. All we claim is, that it is sufficiently true to make the form and method of the church's corporate prayer to be a very urgent and pressing question. Questions of form and order are, we admit, of only secondary importance, and are very apt to be exaggerated. Nevertheless they have an importance of their own, and that consists in their fitness and sufficiency as a vehicle of the church's life. We have no intention of advocating one form of worship as against another. Our concern is simply that Christian prayer should not be limited to one channel; that the one spirit should have more various ex-

pression; that where the Spirit of the Lord is there should be liberty.

The present form of prayer meeting was doubtless the product of vital impulse. It sprang into being in response to a conscious need. Wherever that remains true to-day, the same kind of prayer meeting will continue, and ought to continue. But where it is failing or growing inadequate, we should not at once despair of the church's prayerfulness, but rather reconsider the method of expression. We should frankly ask ourselves such questions as these:—Are we trying to perpetuate, in normal conditions, a kind of devotional meeting more suited to times of revival or special epochs when there is some intense consciousness of a common need? Has some subtle change passed over the general mind? Is Christian devotion being restrained and cramped by some unfitness in the only organ the church provides for its expression? Has the time come for more elasticity in method, more variety of utterance?

Many ways of common prayer are open to us besides the time-honoured custom of calling on one brother to lead the devotion of the assembly in some unpremeditated strain. It seems strange that, while many other methods are well known to ministers, so little use should be made of them in conducting the worship of the church.

There is *Liturgical Prayer*. Judging by the number of Prayer Books issued for use in the Free Churches, one would suppose that there was some movement in this direction. But that movement has hardly touched the Baptist Churches. Is it that the ministers are under the impression that they can make no use of such books until the church has formally decided upon their adoption, and arrangements have been made for the people to join in the responses? Speaking from experience, we have found it quite possible to introduce forms of prayer, especially prayer of intercession in the Sunday services, at the prayer meet-

ing, and in the Sunday School, with much acceptance to people quite unaccustomed to such a mode of worship. After all, why not? The principle is already admitted by most churches in the case of weddings and funerals. We commend to our brotherhood the use of prayers from such collections as, "An Anthology of Prayer for Public Worship," the "Service Books" of John Hunter and James Burns; "Let us Pray," by Silvester Horne; and the "Book of Prayer for Students," lately issued by the Student Christian Movement.

There is *Silent Prayer*. Probably it is only within narrow limits of time that this can be profitably introduced into our services and meetings. Not many people are capable of concentrated thought or sustained attention without external aid for more than a few moments. But there is too much talk in our religious gatherings. We are all too much under the delusion that nothing can be done except by someone speaking. There is a vast worship-value in silence. We are discovering it, and must use it more than we have done.

There is *Directed Prayer*, in which the leader suggests from moment to moment topics for silent prayer in which all should unite. This happy medium between the irresponsible discursiveness of silence or extemporaneousness and the rigidity of a liturgy has been found very useful by many who have used it.

All these, and many other methods of corporate prayer, are available for us if we will use them. And why should we not use them if we are finding the present methods of prayer unsatisfactory? The form of worship is, in any case, a subordinate matter, a mere instrument, a means to an end. However excellent any one from may be, there is no reason why it should exclude all others. However well a given mode may fit a given time or a particular church, there is no need to be wedded to it for all time and in every church. We are Free Churchmen, but

there is nothing in that fact if we live as Bound Churchmen. As a fact, we might as well be bound by Act of Parliament or by Bishop to worship in a certain way, for all the use we make of liberty. Our forms vary as little from year to year as do those of the Anglican or Roman Church. We often speak of the great cost at which our liberty was purchased. Does it never occur to us that unless our liberty is used, and wisely used, that cost was wanton waste? The church must change in order to remain the same. If the church of to-day is to be the same as the church of the past in its ability to express the contrition and intercession of the people of God, it may be necessary to change its organ of utterance. Such change may not be needed everywhere, but wherever it is, we should use our liberty. A church that has no mode of worship to offer except the sharp alternative of a preaching service or a prayer meeting, will make but a limited appeal to the complex spiritual life of our time. The people who find help in Anglican Evensong or in the devotional meetings of the Quakers, the Student Christian Movement or the Fellowships, are not likely to find such a church fit their need. Let us face the facts. By common consent the corporate devotion of the church is flagging; accustomed forms have admittedly broken down in many quarters. Why not use our freedom by adjusting our methods to new conditions, and providing appropriate channels for the constant flow of the river of prayer which makes glad the City of God?

People wake up when they not only *hear* of the historical Christ, living in Judea twenty centuries ago, but *see* the living Christ shining through the minister's face and sermon as through a lattice.

*From J. S. Kennard's Psychic Power in
Preaching.*

Do we Communicate ?

By Rev. E. D. deRUSETT, M.A.

In matters which are essentially spiritual, it is of the highest importance that we should carefully examine ourselves as to whether we are actually experiencing those blessings which we profess to enjoy.

This is particularly desirable in connection with the ordinance of the "Lord's Supper," for it is quite easy for us to declare that we have "partaken" of that spiritual feast, when in truth we have merely physically taken the sacred emblems; and we may be under the impression that we have truly communicated and yet have been entirely deceived and mistaken

In the case of the Roman Church the matter is far more simple than it is in the Protestant Churches, for the former claims that by an act of the priest the wafer has become the actual body of our Lord, so that the simple reception of this in itself is a partaking of the sacrament, it is a material and physical act.

But in the case of the Churches which deny both Transubstantiation and Consubstantiation it is important that it should be made quite clear as to wherein the actual partaking consists.

It is obviously not enough to say "we partake by faith," which is often paramount to saying that we believe we have partaken, and therefore we have!

On one occasion a well known Christian teacher and leader declared that it was unnecessary to use any physical force to prevent a man coming to "The Table" against the will of the

Church, since the mere taking of the elements did not constitute "partaking," for no one would contend that a dog had so done if he had snatched some of the sacramental bread off the table. Not with us it is not merely a physical act.

But we may well ask, is there an actual partaking of that sacred Body and Blood which constitutes true communion so actual as to be unmistakable?

Now in the mental realm we are conscious of a process by which we really "take" of the personality of some great thinker to such a degree that he becomes our very "meat and drink," and in fact in due course part of our being.

Whenever we take up the words of a writer, and in a sympathetic frame of mind ruminates over the thoughts expressed there, we absorb them into ourselves and we become more like that person; he not only moulds our thoughts and views, but our character, our very selves.

Hence we see that two things are requisite in order to truly feed upon Christ—sympathy and meditation; and these features are provided for in a most remarkable degree by our Lord in the institution of the Lord's Supper, and if these are duly observed, they ensure this mental and spiritual process taking place under almost ideal conditions.

Take the matter of *meditation*. By enjoining that the service should be "in remembrance of Me," He is claiming the exclusive right to monopolise the mind for the time being, and to entirely concentrate all thought upon Himself.

Added to this, is the requirement of *sympathy* if the soul is to truly "feed and drink;" for absorption needs sympathy and harmony, and surely the contemplation of His supreme sacrificial act which demonstrates His love and devotion to us, cannot fail

to strongly influence the soul in this direction; and both sacred emblems, which, from the day of the institution of the sacrament to the present time have been deemed essential to the service, present this afresh each time they are partaken of. Thus sympathetic meditation, which is the only true communion, is provided for and made possible to the humblest soul.

Faith sees the sacrifice, and by meditation we partake of Him the Sacrificial Lamb, not in theory only, but as an actual and glorious psychological fact, and this is after all, the great Christian Ideal expressed by the Apostle in the words "Christ liveth in me," and "that Christ may be found in you."

However, it is obvious that this process only takes place so long as the mind is dwelling exclusively upon our Lord Himself, and consequently immediately any other thoughts intrude themselves, we cease to communicate; it must be realized that however lofty these may be, although they may centre round one very dear to our heart, yet they are out of place at that moment; in fact, every moment we allow other thoughts to occupy the mind, we are feeding upon something other than upon "His Flesh;" we are drinking something other than "His Blood," hence we must be constantly on the alert lest anything whatever prevents our communion or obliterates our vision.

It therefore comes to this, that the Romanist in his service designated by the Anglican Prayer Book, "a blasphemous fable," and the High Churchman in the midst of his elaborate ritual, actually visualises Jesus Christ and dwells in thought upon Him at that supreme moment, thus truly partaking of more than the elements themselves.

There is in fact a "Real *Presence*" in the soul of the devout communicant, though not in the wafer—even Christ Himself; whilst we who profess to have risen superior to those "fables" because we so often fail to think, ponder, and meditate, seldom really com-

municate "not discerning the Lord's Body."

Now it is imperative that the Church should see that due provision is made to obviate this and facilitate true communion, and it will most effectively be accomplished by seeking to create an ideal atmosphere in which the commemorative service shall be held.

First by preparation of the soul, by a clearly setting forth of the meaning of the sacrament, and by a service designed to promote self-examination and the realization of the presence of Christ.

Then by preventing distractions far as is possible and providing that all service shall be unobtrusive, thus obtaining a great stillness.

The individual cups and plates might with advantage be distributed before the service, and so obviate all movement and activity on the part of the deacons, which not only distract the thoughts, but prevent these brethren from truly partaking.

It is obvious that an unveiling of our Lord to the soul and also to the Church under such circumstances would cause spontaneous adoration and thanksgiving. It is remarkable that not only has the Apostle Paul indicated that that should be the actual attitude of the mind by suggesting that "giving thanks" should precede the partaking; but the Church has for centuries designated the service "the Eucharist"—the Thanksgiving.

In fact it is the only service of the Church in which prayer is totally excluded and where thanksgiving, and consequently appropriation and enjoyment, is the prominent, if not *the exclusive* feature.

It is almost impossible to compute the accession of power which would accrue, if this were the experience at each celebration; gradually the whole assembly would be remoulded, evangelistic

fervour would be generated and the world become conscious of the Church as a force, as it were, of a new and vast Incarnation.

But without some such assistance as this, this sacred and sublime service must continue to be observed by many of our people simply because it is a rule of the Church, or out of loyalty to Christ, without receiving the intended benefit and blessing, whilst members of other Churches do not thus suffer, because the vivid symbolism of the ritual makes the presence of Christ very real.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to true communication is the nature of the prayer which is usually substituted, without Scriptural warrant for the "giving of thanks."

The Deacon to whom this is entrusted, leads the minds of all present to think of absent friends, Christian service, Spiritual blessings, in fact anything but Christ Himself, whilst it is almost the rule for petition to be substituted—again without divine sanction—for appropriation or thanksgiving.

It is too much to hope that some officers might be led to realize something of the nature of the solemn ministry they are participating in, and so feel it worth while to prayerfully prepare for it; theirs is the privilege of leading the whole of the gathering in that solemn act of receiving the Christ into the soul, and by true and grateful thanksgiving demonstrate that they have seen Him who is "in the midst," and thus help kindred souls to be lost to all in the contemplation of Him.

But the church has not discharged her obligation where due provision has been made for an orderly and quiet service, with everything conducive to meditation of our Blessed Lord. She must take into consideration that the majority of our members are quite unused to concentration of mind upon one subject, particularly in perfect quietness.

What is normal for the student and thinker, is quite abnormal

for the average man and woman, and therefore involves great effort, consequently the communion service is a time when many suffer from wandering thoughts.

This should be seriously faced, for it is a condition of mind which is only too common in the absence of ornate ritual, or of the feeling of awe inspired by a belief in Transubstantiation.

Probably nothing would help more than a carefully prepared manual which should consist of passages of Scripture directly bearing upon each part of the service, and with suggestions as to the response of the soul to these, e.g.—

Declaration.

“God so loved the world that
He gave His only begotten Son.”

“Drink all of ye of it.”

Response.

“Thanks be unto God for
His unspeakable gift.”

“I will take the cup of
Salvation.”

Such a publication would be invaluable to a large number of our people, and if used without prejudice and without formalism, would conduce to a due and profitable observance of this rite which is too often only a piece of ritualism, even in communities which flatter themselves that they are free from that reproach.

When these matters are seriously considered, and when the Lord's Supper is once more truly observed by our Churches, then the Spirit of Christ will be manifest in our midst, and our much-longed-for and much-prayed-for revival will have come.

Self-sacrifice, humility, purity, and holy zeal will characterise the Church as they did her Lord, for she will have partaken of Him in truth.

THE FRATERNAL
Prayer Union Notes.

By Rev. J. W. EWING, M.A., D.D.

“Let me remember that I am one of a company of Baptist Ministers and Missionaries who have promised, by God’s help, and so far as possible, to pray once a week (preferably on the early morning of each Lord’s Day) for an increase of spiritual power both for ourselves and our churches.

“Let me also remember Christian workers in all lands who are seeking to serve our Lord.

“Thy Kingdom Come!”

.

The neat little card bearing the above, hung up on the study wall, forms a pleasant reminder of the act of intercession which is the central bond of our fellowship. Brethren who have lost their cards, or others wishing now to join us, may obtain cards on application to the Secretary of the Prayer Union, Rev. J. E. Martin, The Manse, Erith, Kent.

.

It is hoped shortly to publish a list of members, and Mr. Martin would be glad to receive a post card from all those who observe our weekly union of prayer.

.

Among those whom we remember before God, there are some who have a unique claim upon us—I mean our brethren who are acting as Army or Navy Chaplains. They have gone forth to a difficult and often perilous service, leaving dear ones behind. Let us pray that they may not only be sustained in their exacting work, but may have a vivid sense of the hourly companionship of Christ, through which every message, whether to

the fighting ranks or to the wounded and broken, may be charged with power and tenderness.

In a former issue of *The Fraternal*, I referred to the value of ministerial retreats for the purpose of the quiet realisation of things unseen, and I am glad that arrangements are being made for such a retreat in November for London members of our Union. I hope that in time similar retreats will be organised in other districts.

It has been suggested that it might prove helpful if in these notes I sometimes drew attention to one of the devotional classics which have been, and are, springs of spiritual refreshing. I gladly take up the idea, and begin with the "Theologia Germanica," that treasure of the late Middle Ages to which Luther said he owed more than to any other book except the Bible and Augustine.

Its anonymous author was doubtless one of the "Friends of God," the group of mystical believers who arose in Central Europe early in the fourteenth century. Their age, like ours, was one of conflict. Frequent wars and church quarrels distracted the nations, and the European sky was dark. But amid the darkness some of the finer spirits saw the light of the spiritual kingdom whose principles and joys are set forth in the "Theologia Germanica." This little book comes to us, after six centuries, still fragrant with the dews of the love and faith of spirit-wakened hearts.

The leading idea of the book is to trace the way by which a man may pass into perfect union with God. There are three stages—(1) The Purification, (2) The Enlightenment, and (3) The Union. Each of these is realised in three ways—*The Purification*, through contrition for sin, confession, and amendment; *The Enlightenment*, through "the eschewal" of sin, the

practice of virtue, and the willing endurance of trial; *The Union*, through singleness of heart, love, and the contemplation of God.

If one desires a clearer presentation of the great evangelical truths, one must remember two things—the book is a feeling after the light, and it nourished the spiritual life of Luther. It is a precious document of the human heart in its search for the Divine.

A handy edition is published in English by Macmillans, in the "Golden Treasury" Series at 2/6.

A RETREAT for Baptist Ministers will be held (by the kind permission of Rev. J. H. Rushbrooke, M.A.) in the Free Church, Hampstead Garden Suburb, N.W., on Tuesday, November 9th, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Retreat will conclude with the Lord's Supper. It is hoped that many brethren will be present. The entire day will be occupied in devotional exercises and in waiting upon God. The critical period through which we are passing makes it desirable that we should meet in some such way as this.