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The Ministry—A Divine Aphorism.

By Rev. T. THOMSON, M.A.

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God”—that is perhaps the most remarkable bit of autobiography in the whole realm of literature. In the Greek, the Apostle contrives to put it into ten words: Παυλος, δουλος Ιησου Χριστου κλητος αποστολος αφωρισμενος εις ευαγγελιον θεου. Into four of these words are compressed all that we can learn, or that Paul had to tell about himself. Δουλος, slave; κλητος, called; αποστολος, sent; αφωρισμενος, separated;—there is his whole life and destiny. It would be a profitable exercise for every minister and for every ministerial student to ponder this four-fold self-characterisation. For the present I concentrate upon the fourth of these great master-words, viz., αφωρισμενος. When reading in this epistle recently, my attention was arrested by it, and, recalling the significance of the word, I made the jotting in my note-book, “Paul’s life was a life with boundaries.” Then it passed out of my mind, or rather it passed into that mind under the threshold, where suggestions lie waiting to be recalled to the surface of consciousness by a new stimulus. A month or two after, in Coleridge’s *Aids to Reflection*, I came upon this: “Exclusive of the abstract sciences, the largest and

worthiest portion of our knowledge consists of aphorisms; and the greatest and best of men is but an aphorism." That struck the chord and recalled Paul's autobiographical note. Aphorism—*ἀφωρισμενος*, the very word that the Apostle employs of himself is the word which according to Coleridge contains the description of every great and good man. When Paul says that he is *ἀφωρισμενος*—separated—he is stating a fact which Coleridge would have illustrated by saying that Paul and Paul's ministry were God's aphorism.

Let me quote Coleridge once more. "Aphorism . . . from the Greek *ap*, from; and *horizein*, to bound or limit; whence our horizon . . . Draw lines of different colours round the different Counties of England, and then cut out each separately, as in the common play-maps that children take to pieces and put together, so that each district can be contemplated apart from the rest, as a whole in itself. This twofold act of circumscribing, and detaching, when it is exerted by the mind on subjects of reflection and reason, is to aphorise, and the result is an aphorism."

So far Coleridge. To begin with, however, the process of aphorising was applied to objects more concrete than those of reflection and reason. Among the Greeks, to aphorise was simply to mark off. When they fixed the frontier between their different states, they aphorised. When they erected a fence, they aphorised. When they devoted a piece of land or the spoils of war to the service of their temples and their gods, they aphorised. To aphorise, to separate, was to set up a boundary. It was this selfsame word the Septuagint translators employed when they rendered from the Hebrew text that passage in the Book of the Exodus: "And the Lord said unto Moses: Thou shalt *set bounds* unto the people, saying, Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the mount or touch the border." Sinai was aphorised. So when Paul says that he has been aphorised unto the

gospel of God, he implies that some very distinct boundary lines have been traced in his life; yes, and in his mind, his conscience, and his heart.

A whole world of interesting speculation opens out the moment we attempt to explore the content of the Apostolic separation and to reduce it to logical categories. How far was the delimitation of his action above, and how far dependent on his own moral agency? Were the bounds self-imposed or God-imposed, or both? If both, to which must priority be accorded? Is it possible for the Divine determination to act independently of the human will, which alone can guarantee that the Divine action shall be operative in a human soul and within the conditions of a human experience? We are back to the old antinomy between Determinism and Free-Will. Interesting as it would be to gather illustrations of that insoluble dilemma from the matter in hand, I do not propose anything so abstract in this paper. My purpose is more practical, and I would content myself with following the clues provided by Paul himself, keeping steadily in view the ethical and spiritual, rather than the philosophical implications of the subject in hand.

(1). First, then, there is no room for doubting Paul's conviction that the Divine Will had pegged out a claim in his personality and career—a claim whose title was beyond all dispute. The historian of the Book of the Acts records that at the commencement of his missionary career, the Holy Ghost said: "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." The same note is struck by the Apostle himself, when in a deeply impressive passage he says: "When it was the good pleasure of God, Who separated me from my mother's womb, I conferred not with flesh and blood, but I went away into Arabia." God separated me: He drew the line round me—that is Paul's own account of the matter. Thus he interpreted his destiny. The interpretation was retrospective, for there had

been a time when he had no consciousness of it. When did it come to him? It broke upon him on the road to Damascus, when against all expectations he was hedged in by God. Suddenly, all the frontiers of his spiritual world altered. The lines which Self-Will had drawn round the fields of purpose and of action were obliterated: new, inviolate boundaries emerged, traced in flame. When, in after days, Paul referred to it, it was with bated breath. A Higher Determination than his own had delimited his career. Thinking back from Damascus to all that had gone before, he realised with awe that the marches of his life had been marked out from the first by the finger of God. His apostleship was not from men, neither by man, but from Jesus Christ and God the Father. Necessity was upon him. He had been separated, aphorised unto the gospel of God from before his birth.

The bounds, therefore, which gave direction to Paul's life were fixed by the Divine Purpose. Long ere the winter snows melted, the channel has been formed: its course defines their flow, and determines the shores to which they will be carried. Paul believed, with all his soul, that what he was, *that* God had intended. At first, he may have shrunk from so awful a conclusion. Moses shrank from it: John Knox shrank from it. A persuasion, at once so daring and so humbling, can only be thrust upon the soul. The logic of experience must bring it home. Where the fact exists, the conviction will follow. Every great servant of God, sooner or later, comes to a sense of destiny. From Augustine to Spurgeon, from Francis of Assisi to Florence Nightingale, such have been overborne by the Might of the Nameless One, with Whom Jacob wrestled till the breaking of the day. And in the ministry, above all other callings, there should be a sense of destiny. God forbid that we should degenerate into 'mongers of platitudes about a Divine call to the ministry. Perhaps that kind of talk has been overdone. A fact

so tremendous does not admit of much utterance, and those who feel most deeply may say the least. It may well be, indeed, that to begin with there is some misgiving. Have we in truth been separated unto the Gospel of God? The days to come will tell. It is when the spikes of hyacinth shoot forth that we divine all that was involved in the folded bulb. All that can be said is that unless in our ministry there is a deepening sense of Divine Purpose, we have missed our way somewhere. No ministry can be effective that is not uplifted on the current of a Will other than our own, and one can desire no more precious thing for his life-work than that it may be the means of convincing him that he has been separated unto the Gospel of God.

There is one aspect of the Divine separation that remains to be noticed. Included in the larger delimitation of his life, there was a narrower one always present to the Apostle's thought. In the shaping of his career, Paul felt the presence of the aphorising hand of God; and to the bounds thus fixed he constantly related all those intimate, personal, individual limitations, handicaps, idiosyncracies which made him the man he was. With the conviction ever gaining ground in his soul that he was God-ordained, he was early faced with the problems involved in those disabilities which seemed to conflict with the Divine Purpose, those hindrances which seemed to eddy against the deeper currents which bore him along. His bodily presence was weak, and his speech of no account. It took long and painful pondering to reduce such facts into coherence with the larger Purpose of which he was so sure. Here again he felt himself to be up against the circumscribing action of God. "We will not glory," he said, "beyond our measure, but according to *the measure of the limit* which God apportioned to us." God was aphorising, tracing the limit. If the disadvantages of his bodily presence were aggravated by the effect of his occupation as a tent-maker, and of the severe mishandling he had suffered from time to time on the part of his persecutors, here also he finds the clue in that Divine hand

which set the limit. "I bear branded on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Even the thorn in the flesh was but another evidence of the same thing. So he gloried in his infirmities God sets boundaries, not hinder but to help, and the Pauline ministry would not have been the great thing it was, but for the characteristically Pauline difficulties. By virtue of them the Divine strength was made perfect in weakness. The limitations imposed turned out to the furtherance of the gospel. They made his witness more intense, as a fire burns the more fiercely when confined in a furnace, or a lamp shines the more brightly by reason of the containing glass. Fences against which the natural man might chafe became a means of grace through the power of Christ overshadowing him. Yes, his life was circumscribed, a line had been drawn round it, but because God had drawn the line it but served to compact all the experience, the capacity, the disabilities even, into something like the swift concentrated power of a torpedo.

(2). Let us pass on to another side of the theme. We have been looking at Paul's ministry from the Divine side. But the Divine agency become effective through human choices. "Our wills are ours to make them Thine." Yes, our wills are ours to give effect to Thine. The King's writ has no chance in running save in willing lives. If in the aphorising unto the Gospel there are limitations imposed by God, let us remember, effect is given to them by the limitations we lay upon ourselves.

Any rule of life, even the lowest, such, for example, as is based on purely prudential considerations, is simply a boundary set up within which men limit their action. It is the mark of rational existence, as it is the concomitant of civilisation, that custom, social usage, rules of conduct, law, should define the limits inside which well-ordered life can be lived. And when we go further, we discover that the highest kind of life is the life that moves strictly within the limits imposed by the enlightened moral sense of mankind. That the removal of ancient landmarks and containing walls is the road to emancipation, is the grossest

delusion that can afflict a reformer or a moralist. Liberty is ever strictly conditioned: the most enslaved man is the man of what is called free morals. On the other hand, when the truth makes men free, they are free indeed.

When, therefore, it is said that it is the part of wise men to have preferences, but no exclusions, we may concede the justice of the remark, if the intellectual life is in question; but it does not hold in the sphere of action, least of all in that which is governed by moral purpose. Exclusion is but the reverse side of the moral aim. The life that shuts nothing out will shut nothing in. Spiritual force gathers a more impetuous volume the narrower the narrower the banks that confine its current. "One thing I do"—the positive selection of one purpose involves the deliberate disallowance of many others. God's separation of a man unto the Gospel involves his own voluntary separation from everything alien to the Gospel.

So God's dominating Positive, set up in Paul's life, resulted in many Negatives. "I keep my body under and bring it into subjection." "Though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all that I might gain the more To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I am become all things to all men that I may by all means save some." "If meat maketh my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I make not my brother to stumble." "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." How clear were the lines Paul drew, separating him off from a deal that other men might engage in or enjoy! He keeps his body under: he wont risk offending a brother by self-indulgence, and, foregoing much that is interesting, will only preach Christ. There were a good many exclusions for Paul, and the need for them he frequently enforced. To obtain the mastery the athlete must be temperate. The good soldier has to go without. "No man that warreth entangleth himself

with the affairs of this life." It was a law that held even in the case of our Lord, Who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being found in fashion as a man—the Eternal Word submitting to a life with boundaries, a life of self-limitations. The aphorised life involves this deliberate exclusion of much which else were allowable, were there no need, no sorrow, no sin in the world.

This, then, is our calling. It involves concentration upon a single, supreme issue. The Gospel demands our exclusive loyalty. It is too great, too absorbing, and its sovereign claim too exacting, to admit the competition of other aims or the distraction of other pursuits. The Gospel is a calling more than enough for the biggest brain and the stoutest heart. How far a minister may allow himself latitude in side issues, in what degree (if in any degree), he is bound to stand aloof, is a larger problem than we can discuss now. Grist has recently affirmed that while doubtless the ministers of all churches to-day fulfil important duties and contribute greatly to the general weal of the communities in which they live, nevertheless the Kingdom of God needs men who will follow Jesus even to the exclusion of all that the civilised world esteems so highly in regard to wealth and comfort. It is something to ponder. The object of our ministry is "to use temperament to convey something." To let men see Christ through a personality. How rigorous, therefore, must be the self-limitation. Personality and Temperament must be strictly subordinated to the end in view—aphorised unto the Gospel of God.

(3). Let us now return to our starting-point. Paul was ἀφωρισμενος—he was God's aphorism.

An aphorism is a general truth expressed in a short and pithy sentence. "Life is short, art is long." In such a sentence as that a truth is laid hold of, it is put within limits, it is marked off. "Now," says Paul, "I am *aphorismenos*," and albeit the fact may not have presented itself to him in this light, has not our dis-

cussion led straight to the conclusion that he was an aphorism; it was as if God had something to say in brief, and He said it in and through Paul.

Instantly we recall how John calls Christ the Word. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." In Christ God spoke: He was the Word of God. The Divine Love found self-utterance in Him. It was a *complete* self-utterance. "God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions"—does not that look like aphorisms?—"and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son." Christ is the complete speech of the Father. But He has also spoken through men—in divers portions, in such brief, fragmentary revealings as it is possible to convey within the limits of human personality. He spoke through Isaiah, through Amos, through Micah, through Paul. God apprehended them and separated them: they were *aphorismenos*—aphorisms, little bits of Divine Truth, something that God had to say, pithily expressed within the compass of single lives. The surrendered, separated life became the means of utterance to the Divine Purpose and the Divine Love. God saying something through it, His saying, His aphorism.

Now it becomes clearer why it is necessary to be separated, marked off; why, unless a life has boundaries, it will be useless as a means of God's self-expression. Unless there are lines delimiting our lives from the world, how can there be a house indwelt by the Spirit of God? Can the Divine find utterance in a life with no moral frontiers? No more than truth can be expressed except by being marked off from what is not true. And God is asking from us ministries that are willing to be separated that some of His truth may become vocal through us in a living message to our generation.

Lord, speak to me that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone.

Moderatorships.

By Rev. J. SCOTT JAMES.

It is often said that a Baptist or Congregational Church is a democracy, but this is only true in a very modified sense. Such churches may be founded on the will of the people, or rather we should say of such portion of them as have believed in Christ, been quickened by His Spirit, and stand in the world discerning His presence and power. In reality the church is a kingdom, Christ Himself being King and Law-giver; and the people are Christ's freemen ruling themselves by His laws.

This is the New Testament conception of the church. Ideally it is perfect and grandly noble. It is a community of men ruling themselves by Christ's Standard—not *being* ruled, but striving of themselves to attain the highest purity and life. Practically, our churches never quite reach to this ideal. If they did, they would influence the world marvellously, and might accomplish any work set before them—"Cities set on a hill," they could not be hid; the light that is in them would shine out and illumine the world. But however far our churches may fall from this, we should not improve matters by removing the authority that has been vested in them by Christ. It is the church ruling itself that is the highest thing. The church directing its worship, controlling its service, choosing its officers, and doing all this in reverent dependence on the will of Christ. This is the ideal our Lord sets before us.

Nor would it be true if we asserted that the poorness of the church's life was always the cause of its failure. Not infrequently it is our methods that are faulty rather than our faith, and our lack of wise arrangements that prevents the real goodness of the people from having its due effect. Indeed, we may safely conclude that wherever there is friction in the churches, or wide-

spread discontent, that there is something wrong in the methods we adopt, and enquiry should be directed towards it.

And this is the case with our methods of selecting a minister for a vacant pulpit. Theoretically it seems the easiest thing possible to do. There are hosts of men ready to come; the people are eager to settle, and probably think they know what they want. It is doubtful, however, if they do. At all events, men come and preach to them—good men, often suitable men—men who have rendered good service elsewhere. Of these, one or two may awaken attention; but the mass of them leave disappointed and disheartened, often feeling that they have not had fair play. And this is repeated at almost every vacant church, until the despondency of our ministers becomes a serious question. Many want to leave, but no one seems to care for them or desire their services. With such results, can we be wrong in saying our methods are faulty? for often our best men are passed over.

We must ask, too, is this "interregnum," conducted as it is at present, good for the churches? It usually lasts twelve months, not infrequently twice that time. The church becomes simply a place for preaching and for criticising the sermons afterwards; and so the spiritual force that should spring from them is dissipated. Further, no Pastor is seen in the houses of the people; the sick and the suffering are uncared for; attendance at the week-night services falls off; the people get into irregular habits, for all the varied kindly duties of the Pastor are missed, and the vitality his presence should supply. This interval is always injurious, in some cases even serious. Cannot the evil in it be mitigated in some way, or some method evolved that would lessen the strain? We have taken for granted that it is inevitable, and so have borne it; but heavy has been the penalty we have had to pay.

It is true the solution of the difficulty may not be easy, though probably this arises more from the fact that we are so used to our

present methods that we have ceased to realize their serious disadvantage. Moreover we shrink from all new proposals, and to do so would be right if they interfered with any vital principle; but so long as the unfettered freedom of the church is maintained, we need not fear. New methods may mean new life, and an escape from that which was crippling us, and the advantages may be great.

Recognising thus the vital element in our church life, we may go forward and ask: What is the first imperative duty facing a church on the resignation of its Pastor? The one thing considered in almost every case is, how to get another as speedily as possible. But surely that ought not to be the first question. A minister is vastly more than a preacher, and his personal influence more than his words. The spiritual wisdom with which he discharges his various duties, and wins the confidence of the people of his charge, tends much to the prosperity of the church. All this cannot cease for twelve months or more without serious loss, and the question paramount for us to consider is, how to minimise the effects of this loss.

Next to this unquestionably comes: What steps should be taken to fill the vacant pulpit? Here, unfortunately, our churches seem at once to fall into the same routine. A vacuum has been created, and immediately there is a rush from every side to fill it up. Letters innumerable are poured in upon the deacons—candidates are suggested by all kinds of people. Some of these are invited to preach, and they come and go until someone catches the ear of the people. He is considered, and perhaps invited—perhaps not. Then the same process is repeated, until at length—often a far distant length—someone is invited, and he settles, and the church has a minister again. Frequently the only test applied by the people has been: “Can he preach?” and that, as sore experience teaches, is rarely by itself enough.

And yet, behind all this, the church has been with earnest

desire waiting for a settlement; longing for it; praying for it. Again and again I have felt how staunch and true the Christian life in them must have been, otherwise discontent and quarrelling must have set in, and disorganization resulted. This does happen sometimes, but as a rule it is splendid to see how often, under a new minister, the people will rally, and with a real earnestness strive to recover lost ground. The vital Christian life in them is their salvation.

There are now three questions before us to be considered. *First*—How to minimise the spiritual loss to the church caused by the absence of a Pastor. *Second*—How most efficiently to supply the pulpit during the vacancy. *Third*—How best to introduce a candidate to the church for their consideration as Pastor. It would be hard to say which of these is the most important.

What then do we need? Is there any further arrangement that can be brought in to supplement what is already in existence? We think there is. Some of us have been brought into close touch with churches passing through this trying ordeal, and others have been thrown into positions in which we could help them, and from this have gathered how much can be done to relieve the difficulty. When the Pastor of a church has retired, some man of wide Christian experience, preferably a Minister, because of his intimate knowledge of all phases of church life, might be selected as Moderator. We have happily a large number of retired Ministers—men who for some reasons are not equal to the full charge of a church, but who in the past have rendered splendid service, and who are still equal to such a position as I propose. Some of them have already fulfilled its duties, being called "Pastors pro tem," and I am surprised that this has not become more general, so well have most of them fulfilled their duties.

It has become the fashion to call these men "Moderators," which, as it is distinctive, may prove a good name. I mean by it

the taking of the oversight of a vacant church by some responsible Minister during the interval between the pastorates, who by his experience could aid both in the management of the church, and in securing a better settlement in the pastorate. I understand it is the custom in the Presbyterian Church of England to appoint a Minister as Moderator in a vacant church. It is, however, not the church that appoints the Moderator, but the Presbytery, and then not necessarily, but "if it see fit." I am assured, however, that it is usually done, and that it works most happily, and to the advantage of the churches.

My first experience in this kind of work was with an entirely new effort, and if I may be excused for speaking of my own service, it may possibly better illustrate what I mean than any other method. When I took it in hand there was no organization whatever—no church, no deacons, no building of any kind, simply a few people meeting in two cottages thrown into one. But there was a fine spirit among them, an eager earnestness to do God's work—so eager that its very fulness constituted a danger. It had to be held back, but never discouraged, being too sacred a thing for that. Then we formed committees to direct the work; hired a hall, which brought us out more into the front. We grew in numbers and influence; we formed a church, elected deacons, and organized a Sunday School. Eventually we purchased a site and erected on it an introductory school and chapel, to hold about four hundred people. There were many things to be done—things about which at times we differed strenuously, and had need of patience with each other. But we had such patience, and our work prospered.

In this case I was not there as preacher mainly, only preaching occasionally. I got the Ministers around to exchange with me, and thus not only lessened the expense, but gained a fine service for the church. It was a mission into which our men entered with great heartiness, as I am persuaded they would

always do whenever the same appeal was made to them. For many of our vacant churches such an effort would be an advantage, and be amply repaid in the growth of the congregation. In my judgment this interregnum might be used for the development of the church by bringing some new kinds of work to the fore.

It was only during the latter part of the time I was there that I occupied the position a Moderator would take in a vacant church. The mission had grown into a church, and at length was in a position to invite a Minister—it could pay him a sufficient stipend. We, however, made no change in our method; I continued to exchange with other Ministers. This had its advantages. At first no Minister was invited to come “with a view.” Some, doubtless, had such “a view,” but we were not parties to it. They came simply as supplies. The advantage of this to the church was, that the people came to listen rather than to criticize; preachers were heard with much pleasure.

Of course there were men who were asked “with a view” to the pastorate, but as they were simply asked to “supply,” if they attracted no special interest, as little pain was given as possible by their being passed over. Others came to whom the people listened eagerly, and would gladly have welcomed as Pastor; but before they were asked a second time, I talked the matter over with them, and if they refused to entertain the matter they did not come again, much as we valued their services. We aimed high; we got well served; we did not play with the Ministers, nor did they with us. We acted in a business-like fashion and on honourable lines. In a few months we achieved a most happy settlement, and with the coming of the new Minister I resigned my charge, and to-day the church bids fair to be one of the most vigorous in North London.

I have ventured to give some account of this work in detail, because I think it exemplifies more clearly what I mean than any

other way I could adopt. Other men have followed the same line of work with equal success, and there has grown up in our minds a very strong conviction that in this line of things lies a remedy for most of the difficulties now found in dealing with vacant churches. It keeps out that spirit of criticism which often eats like a canker into the spiritual life of the church. It provides temporarily a Minister to whom the people can come in their need, one who presides in their meetings, and whose counsel with the deacons is of the greatest advantage. A Moderator is present not to rule the church, but to be its leader and counsellor. He should keep, with the deacons, in touch with all that is going on. The work is one of great importance, full of dignity and honour. By wise and loving courtesy he may bring a new spirit into the church, and leave behind him a heritage of blessing.

There are some churches where the bringing in of a Moderator might be of immense value. Especially would this be the case when disputes or difficulties have arisen, and the church needs a time of quiet and rest before a new Minister comes. Sometimes, too, when a church has run down, and the members become few, a wise Moderator might render inestimable service in increasing the congregation by his preaching or arrangements. Or again, a church may need to step out of its old ruts, and the Moderator might venture to do what the regular Minister would fear to attempt.

Of course, in such a position difficulties may arise. Indeed, it is just because there *are* difficulties that a Moderator is suggested. But tact, that greatest quality a leader can have, will help him to surmount them, especially if joined to forbearance and wisdom. In the meantime, when the church needs him, he stands in their midst unbiased, not in any sense a partisan, not personally interested in any dispute that may arise; indeed, he may be the one disinterested person in the place—a Moderator in fact, as his name imports.

We have thus outlined what we think will prove a valuable suggestion for a crucial period; a time when, with the church, the old has passed away, and the new not yet dawned; when much of its strength and usefulness will depend upon the choice made for its future; when the spirit of prayer for guidance in such choice needs encouragement; then, we feel assured, the presence of a wise judicious counsellor would be of invaluable assistance. We may even hope that the combination of the wisdom and experience of the Moderator, with the fervour and energy of the people, would result in a settlement that would lead to continued success. For these reasons we venture to urge on the Free Churches the adoption of some such scheme which, wherever wisely conducted, has been fraught with blessing.

New occasions teach new duties;
Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still and onward
Who would keep abreast of truth.

J. R. Lowell.



Christ's faith makes but one Body of all souls,
And Love's that Body's soul;
What soul soe'er in any language can
Speak Heaven like her's is my soul's countryman.

Edith Gell.

A Ministerial Bureau.

A SUGGESTION.

[It was intended that this paper should have been read by one of our members at the Halifax meeting, but the Council of the Fraternal Union takes no responsibility for it.]

There is a growing sense of the need for an organisation which would devote itself almost exclusively to the welfare of the ministers of our denomination; but the difficulty lies in the desirability felt by many that it should be unofficial, so that the independence of both churches and ministers should be maintained.

Such work might well be accomplished by a Ministerial Bureau conducted under the ægis of our Fraternal Union, even if at first the benefits thereof were restricted to our members.

It might be well to indicate a few specific directions in which such work would prove very useful and effective.

1.—List of Vacant Churches: A quarterly list of vacant Churches might be printed in the *Fraternal*, giving the following particulars, besides those in the Handbook:—

- (a) Name of late minister.
- (b) Salary (whether manse is provided or not).
- (c) Date of close of last ministry.

This could also be issued separately and sold at 6d.

2.—List of Ministers requiring Churches: Every three months a list of our members who are without a pastorate could be prepared and posted to the secretaries of vacant churches, and this would contain the following particulars in addition to those in the Handbook:—

- (a) Offices of honour held during the previous three years.
- (b) Names and addresses of two referees, who are laymen and not officials of either the Union or the Local Association.

A fee of 5/- be charged for inclusion in this list for one year.

- 3.—List of Ministers willing to preach "with a view:" Under a pledge of secrecy, secretaries of vacant churches will be supplied with a list of ministers who have intimated to the secretary of the Bureau that they are willing to preach "with a view" at that particular church. This list will be obtained by allowing any minister to select ten churches from List 1 to which he would like to be introduced.

A fee of 5/- will be charged for inclusion in this list.

This whole matter is one of such delicacy that hitherto most plans have proved unsuccessful; but could not the experience of the past help to guard this one from failure?

- 4.—Holiday Exchanges: Through the medium of the Bureau ministers may intimate their willingness to accept holiday engagements, especially when they desire to give such services in exchange for use of the manse or the minister's private house.
- 5.—Lecture List: A list of lectures which have been prepared by ministers, and especially those they are willing to deliver if their out-of-pocket expenses are met, would be of no little benefit to churches and societies, whilst it would encourage our men to produce valuable lectures,

as they would have a much larger constituency than usual to which to deliver them.

These would have to be confined to large centres, and probably each district would require its own list.

A small charge would have to be made to those secretaries requiring this list.

The secretary of the Bureau would gradually collect data as to benefits for widows and orphans, grants to necessitous ministers, scholarships, educational advantages, and in fact anything which would be useful to our ministry.

It is essential that the Bureau should keep its funds separate from those of the Fraternal Union, so as not to involve the latter in any liability, but in due course it should not only be self-supporting, but be able to benefit the Union funds substantially.

Needless to say the publication of the Baptist Union scheme for the settlement of ministers may necessitate some modification in the above suggestions, and it would be vital to the whole working of the Bureau that there should be most cordial relationship existing between us, and also no small measure of co-operation.

[Any suggestions as to further usefulness and also criticisms will be cordially welcomed, and should be addressed to the secretary of the Fraternal Union at 10 Macaulay Rd., Clapham, S.W.]

God asks not what, but whence thy work is—
from the fruit

He turns away, to prove the inmost root.

Trench.

From the Secretary's Desk.

For the last time I take up the pen as the Secretary of the B.M.F.U. My removal to Newcastle necessitates my resignation of the office. I should like to say in a few words how much I have enjoyed my service for the brethren, and the wide fellowship that has been mine, for the Secretary gets most out of our *Fraternal* in the way of fellowship—he is in constant touch with men in every part of the kingdom, and in distant parts of the foreign field. This privilege has been greatly appreciated by me.

The committee have been very fortunate in securing my successor to the secretarial office—the Rev. E. D. deRussett, M.A., of Clapham—who has consented to serve in that capacity. Mr. de Russett has had considerable experience, I believe, of Fraternal work, and will bring to his office a riper knowledge than his predecessor. I feel that I have done the Fraternal Union a service in making room for him. Let us all do everything in our power to support him in his work for us. There are times when the work of the *Fraternal* makes heavy demands upon a man who has his own church duties pressing upon him. Let all who have not yet paid their subscriptions send in at once to Mr. deRussett. This will save him a great deal of trouble.

Every reader of this journal will hear with regret that we have lost the services of the Rev. J. Landels Love as Editor. Mr. Love is now in Canada. He has been indefatigable in his labours, and largely owing to his efforts the journal is now in a satisfactory financial condition. We are greatly indebted to him, and pray that God will greatly prosper him. At the time of writing we are unable to announce the name of his successor.

Amongst the minor evils that the calamity of war has brought upon us is the necessary abandonment of our Autumnal Gatherings. Our Fraternal Conference is amongst the slain. We were going to have a good time. Mr. Wm. Thomas, of Hebden Bridge, had invited us to tea; and our chairman, Rev. W. W. B. Emery, had consented to be the speaker at the Conference. We believe in both cases it is only a matter of postponement. We shall surely be invited to Halifax next Autumn, and Mr. Emery will give us his address at the next Conference, I have no doubt.

Before us all lies a hard and anxious winter, a time of great stress, but of unbounded opportunity. May God grant to all the brethren grace and power sufficient for the task.

T. J. WHITMAN.

The nurse of full-grown souls is Solitude.

J. R. Lowell.



What is Freedom, but the unfettered use
Of all the powers which God for use hath given?

S. T. Coleridge.

“The Christian Life.”

R. H. COATS, M.A., B.D. T. T. Clark. 6d. net.

This is just the little book for which many of us have long been waiting, that we may use it as a text-book for Bible Classes and Study Circles, and that we may present each new member with a copy on reception into the church.

Mr. Coats is one of our own members, and the *Fraternal* has reason to be proud of one who can produce so excellent a piece of work. Those who know “Types of English Piety” will know how clear and strong and nervous is Mr. Coats’s literary style. The arrangement of the book strikes one as inevitable. There are four chapters, dealing with “The Christian Life.” (1). Its Nature and Origin. (2). Its Maintenance. (3). Its Beliefs. (4). Its Duties. By a simple system of marginal figures the chapters have been divided into sections and sub-sections adapted to daily reading and weekly discussion in an eight weeks’ course, and an appendix gives a valuable series of suggestions for Study Circle work. In the hands of a reasonably competent leader Mr. Coats’ book will go far to supply an instructed young membership, “furnished completely unto every good work.”

He seeks not that His altars
Blaze,—careless how so that they do but blaze.

R. Browning.

Prayer Union Notes.

I have have been asked by our General Secretary to contribute some notes to the *Fraternal* from time to time, especially addressed to the members of the Prayer Union, and I comply with his request with much pleasure.

When, in April 1908, it was resolved that an amalgamation of the Prayer Union and the Fraternal Union should take place, it was by no means intended that the Prayer Union should come to an end, but only that we might be saved from the necessity of maintaining separate organizations, issuing two magazines and paying two subscriptions. Nevertheless, we fear that in many quarters, and especially of late, the Prayer Union has been regarded as defunct. Indeed, I have received many letters lamenting its decease, and expressing a desire for its resuscitation.

No doubt the cessation of the *Remembrancer*, which for nearly twenty-one years was issued to all the members of the Prayer Union, mny have given rise to this mistake. It must also be confessed that very little has been heard of the Prayer Union, and of late the space which, at the time of the amalgamation, it was agreed should be given to its interests in each issue of the *Fraternal* has not been made use of, and hence the Prayer Union and its doings have very largely faded from view. Now this was never intended by the leaders of the Prayer Union and the Fraternal Union, for in the basis of union which was adopted by the two Societies, provision was made for the carrying on of the work of the Prayer Union as heretofore. It was agreed that a Sub-Committee of the Fraternal Union General Committee should be formed, which should be charged with the arrangement of devotional meetings, and that this Sub-Committee should appoint

its own Chairman and Secretary, and that one of its members should conduct that portion of the *Fraternal Magazine* which was to be allotted to the Prayer Union.

It appears that, except for the first year or two, this arrangement has fallen into abeyance, but we hope that it may now be revived again. It is certainly the wish of the Officers and Committee of the Fraternal Union that the spiritual side of its work, for which the Prayer Union stands, should have the prominence to which its supreme importance entitles it.

We hope in succeeding issues to set out practical proposals to this end. In the meantime we would remind all former members of our Prayer Union that our simple bond of fellowship—mutual remembrance in prayer in the early morning of each Lord's Day—is happily independent of all organization, and may be maintained in the absence of magazine, or committees, or meetings. Let us then resolutely maintain this bond. With many of us it has become a fixed habit, and as each Sunday morning comes our thoughts instinctively turn to our widely-scattered brethren, and as we remember them at the Throne of Grace, we are strengthened in turn by the assurance that they also are praying for us.

I have still in hand a number of the Prayer Union membership cards. They read as follows—"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 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 all Christian workers in all lands who are this day going forth to serve our Lord. Thy kingdom come."

Any brother who would like to join this brotherhood of

prayer can obtain a copy of this card by writing to J. E. Martin, the Manse, Erith, Kent.

The following message from Dr. F. B. Meyer will be received with great interest by the members of the Prayer Union,

Dear Brothers,

This is an hour when we must specially betake ourselves into the secret place of the Most High. It is so difficult to look at things calmly, quietly, or dispassionately. The fever of the war news, the elation or depression of the community, the natural impulse of patriotic feeling, are apt to steal into our hours of meditation and prayer, and becloud our vision of the near and heavenly horizons. For myself, I have had to make a solemn vow that I will not look at the morning paper till the usual time of devotion has been fulfilled. We must keep the ring-fence around Mount Olivet, and guard against it being invaded by the rabble crowd. Then we can go amongst our people carrying with us the leaves of the tree of life, which will be for their healing. We shall be finding many new doors of usefulness open to us. Men and women are unusually disposed to take serious views of life, and it is easier than ever to lead the individual or the crowd from the war to the things of eternity. In adversity, patient and persistent; in success, humble and thankful; in all things showing ourselves the pitying, sympathising, interceding, forgiving, helpful friends of ALL.

Your friend,

F. B. MEYER.

No brother served the Prayer Union with greater devotion than Rev. J. C. Foster, formerly of Forest Hill, and it has been

with deep sorrow that we have heard of his enforced retirement from the active ministry owing to an affection of the throat, resulting in loss of voice. It is now a year and nine months since our brother was able to preach. In a recent letter he says: "I am still compelled to keep silence and to abstain from all public work. I am not able to carry on a continuous conversation in what is at all times an audible voice. I have consulted the first Specialists in throat trouble in London, and cannot receive a definite promise of recovery from any of them; the best they can offer is a hope that time may do something for me. And so I wait and pray, and do what I can, and manage for the greater part to keep cheerful. In all the confusion and chaos of ones ideals and plans, one thing remains unshaken—the reality of the interior life. Conscious comfort and power passing into the soul through communion with the Divine, have been so sensibly realized as the warmth imparted by the sun. There are strongholds of peace and confidence in the God-garrisoned heart that disappointment and adversity cannot invade. Meekness bows before the present storm, while faith builds her palace that shall abide in the eternal kingdom of unshakeable realities."

We thank our dear friend for his helpful testimony, and shall remember him in our prayers.

J. E. MARTIN.