

The Fraternal.

Vol. IX.

APRIL, 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.

The present number of the *Fraternal* appears with an inscription printed on the cover, "For Private Circulation. This is done in the interests of the brotherhood. The articles in this magazine are intended only for those Ministers who belong to the Fraternal. They are not to be quoted in the daily or weekly press, nor in any way to be made public. Not that we have anything to be ashamed of; but if our discussions are to be fruitful they must be characterized by privacy, by perfect frankness, and by complete courtesy. The *Fraternal* should be regarded as a means of private communication between our members, otherwise no self-respecting man will be persuaded to open his mind freely concerning "things which matter."

We ought not to expect to completely agree with each other in many things. No man sees the whole truth of any matter. Every man should be prepared to regard with sympathy and courtesy the view of truth that his brother sets forth. It is only thus that at last we seize truth in its complete beauty and perfection. There is need that such an elementary statement as this should yet be made, for the Church, alas! has not wholly left behind the unhappy days when she made a man "an offender for a word." There are many things that need the fullest ventilation amongst us, and if we can only fully trust each other all will be

well. Unhappily, I know of more than one *Fraternal* in which frank speaking has cost a man the price of a martyrdom. This *Fraternal* may be an immense power for good, but only on the conditions already mentioned.

I have often thought that we need some literary medium of communication between the Ministers, *Deacons and Elders* of our churches. Even our elders do not always understand the inner problems of a minister's life; while in some cases they are actually out of sympathy with them. There are delicate questions of finance, of "position," of exchange, etc., that need the vitalizing breath of God's Holy Spirit, mediated socially through the fraternity of men who are engaged in the same holy service. Isolation is the bane, alike of ministers and officers. A sympathetic understanding of each others' lives and work would give us transformed conditions of church work.

The members of the *Fraternal* are asked to make this paper a living thing by contributing to it living topics. The Editor and the "Knights of the round table" will decide upon the policy of the paper, and what will be circulated through its medium. But there are many vital subjects that are occupying the minds of our brethren which might well be treated in these columns. Let us know what you are thinking; what failures you have encountered; what successes you have gained; what weaknesses you perceive; and in what ways we can make our church life more vigorous and worthy. There are many 'murmurs' heard in local circles: make them articulate, and let us *all* face the things that make for the general welfare. All contributions are private, and no names will ever be disclosed. Above all, we want facts and frankness.

The next number of the *Fraternal* will be published in July, and will contain one or two articles of living interest dealing with issues arising out of the war in relation to church life.

Our Public Prayer.

By Rev. R. H. COATS, M.A., B.D. (of Birmingham).

[The following paper by Mr. Coats raises one of the most vital questions of our public worship. Not only the minister, but the congregation has to be considered. The great problem is, how to conduct *congregational* worship, as distinguished from *priestly* worship, in which the minister is the chief figure. How can we provide a service which is truly congregational, and one in which all can take part? Brethren who have any light upon the subject are invited to give us the benefit of their ideas, or, better, send an outline of any service they have found effective, to the Editor, in as brief a space as possible, and as soon as possible.

—Ed.]

The Church of Christ may be said to have a threefold function to perform, according as it addresses itself (*a*) to those beyond its own borders, (*b*) to those within them, (*c*) to God the Father of us all. In the first of these relationships we have the Church witnessing, ministering, evangelizing; in the second, we have the Church comforting, strengthening, building up; in the third, we have the Church *worshipping*, in the spiritual exercises of communion, praise and prayer. In a sense, the last-named of these functions is the most important of the three, since it is the source and inspiration of the other two. The Church, if it is to make disciples of all nations, must first of all learn to tarry till it receive power from on high; if it is to expound the Word and bring up its own members in the faith, it can only do so as it continually depends on the gift of God's Spirit through the exercise of prayer. Indeed, the Church's communion with its Divine Master may be said to be the chief reason for its existence, and the highest and noblest mode of its activity. We desire that we may have fellowship one with another, and we desire that others may have fellowship with us, only that both they and we may have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

The entire ordering of the services of the sanctuary should have this in view. There is too much idolatry of preaching in Free

Church services, too little recognition of the importance of seemingly and reverent devotion. All the other elements of worship, prayers, hymns, offertory, Scripture reading, have even been grouped as 'preliminaries'—abhorred word!—something to be got over and put out of the way, so to speak, in order to clear the ground for the supreme climax of the service and that display of sacred rhetoric of which it is to be the occasion. In denouncing all this, there is no need that we should disparage the function and place of preaching in the ordering of Divine worship. God has associated the gift of grace and the outpouring of the Spirit with the proclamation of the Gospel, and a sermon may be quite as much a means of blessing to a congregation as a hymn, a prayer, or even a sacrament. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Yet, because we exalt preaching, it does not therefore follow that we should neglect praying. Rather we ought to raise it to a place of equal prominence and regard. Each of these exercises should fertilise and enrich the other. Prayer should create the most favourable conditions for successful preaching, as sunshine and rain prepare the soil for the planting of the seed; preaching should incline the soul to prayer, as all the best sermons invariably do. In a rightly conducted service man's approach to God in praise and prayer will be as much held in honour as God's approach to man in grace and gospel.

It should be remembered that in the prayers of the sanctuary the minister ceases to be a *prophet* and becomes a *priest*. He then voices, not the authoritative Word of God to man, but the humble supplicating cry of man to God. This single fact should vitally affect our conception of the whole service and the various parts thereof. In prayer, the minister does not confront the congregation as its minister and instructor; he rather ranks himself with it as its mouthpiece and representative. He is in the pulpit not so much as the ambassador of Christ, beseeching men, in His stead, that they be reconciled to God; rather he is there as the

chosen priestly spokesman of his fellow-sinners, one taken from among his brethren and compassed about with infirmity even as they, presenting the spiritual sacrifices of all before the throne of grace. In both cases there is need of much inward wrestling; but in the former case it is a wrestling with men in their souls and consciences; in the latter it is the far more awful wrestling with God in the Holy Spirit.

I.

It is evident, then, that public prayer is one of the most sacred functions of the Christian ministry. The difficulties which beset the worthy exercise of this holy office are correspondingly great. A few of these may here be specified.

(a) Some difficulties arise out of the *special conditions and peculiar psychology of public worship*. The leader in the prayers of the sanctuary has to address God, yet be overheard by men. His aim is, by one and the same act, to plead with the Father and also to kindle and impress His children. In secret prayer the minister need think of no one but himself and God. The study door is closed, the world is shut out, and there is nothing to distract the mind from its close intimacy and absolute privacy of communion with the Father. But when the minister stands up in the pulpit, he has to pray in a crowd, or, what is still more difficult, in a company of widely scattered people occupying a number of half-vacant pews. His spiritual consciousness is at once changed. He is immediately aware *that he is addressing two classes of hearers*, man and God, and that he must adjust himself aright to both. Two deadly perils lie before him. If he forget his earthly, human auditors, his prayer will soar to a detached and too private colloquy with the Father; if he forget that he is speaking into the ear of God, his prayer will degenerate into a homily or an exhortation addressed to men.

(b) A further difficulty is that the impression to be made upon the congregation by means of public prayer, must be made

through the medium of one sense only, the sense of hearing. When a sermon is being preached, the listeners present can make full use of their eyes; and what a gain that may be, every minister knows. The various attitudes of the body, the gestures and movements of the limbs, the quick play of expression on the living countenance, all tell in a sermon, and will be eagerly followed by an attentive congregation. But in prayer all appeal to the souls of men through this important avenue of sense is quite shut out. The eyes of the worshippers are closed, or they ought to be; and men yield themselves to such spiritual stimulus as may come through the hearing only. In reality, this leads not to a contraction but to an expansion of the powers of the soul. In preaching we *want* to see the minister, and that with the bodily eye; in prayer we desire only to see God, and that with an inward spiritual vision. The minister is not then addressing *us*; he is speaking to the Father, and we through him, so that the fixing of our attention on his bodily presence would be not a help, but rather a distraction. We rightly, then, commit the most spiritual part of our worship, which is prayer, to the exclusive keeping of the most spiritual of our senses, which is hearing. But it should be remembered that, in so doing, we limit the range of the minister's self-expression, in so far as it acts upon the personality of his hearers.

(c) Another difficulty of public prayer arises from *the variety of types represented in the congregation*. These include young and old, learned and ignorant, rich and poor. Here is a soldier, there a young widow, yonder a little child. One comes to church overflowing with good spirits and in the mood of praise; another is overwhelmed with life's griefs and sorrows, and longs to pour out his complaints before the Father; a third is burdened with the consciousness of sin, and looks for some word of confession and forgiveness. Nor are these all. The minister's task, heavy enough in any case, would be infinitely lightened if he had only to voice the needs of those who *want* to

pray. In addition, he has to lift up the dead weight of those who confessedly do not. He has to quicken the lifeless, warm the cold-hearted, show Pisgah visions to those who grovel in the dust, and win over to the mood of prayer those who came originally to scoff. This kindling, this melting, this *stirring up* of men to lay hold on God, is perhaps the hardest part of a minister's public prayer, the part in which he is most conscious of his need of that loving Spirit who is expressly given to help us in our infirmities.

(d) Finally, there are the difficulties which are inseparable from *human frailty and its changeful moods*. At the very moment when this sacred, priestly duty is laid upon the minister, when all sorts and conditions of men expect that he should lead them into the holy place, and when he himself is most anxious to do his best, a thousand circumstances conspire to disconcert him. He has awaked that morning from sleep with a bilious headache; the day's correspondence has brought bad news; his nerves have been irritated by late or hurried meals or some household wrangling; a moment before, in his private vestry, a jocular or fussy deacon has dragged his soul earthwards when it would fain soar heavenward, or someone has burst in to plead for a good announcement of an approaching concert; in the pulpit itself, when he rises to offer prayer, he is harrassed by incessant coughing, or the banging of a door, or the whispers of the choir, and, alas! he can hardly give wing to his own devotions, much less feel that he can lift and sustain the flight of others.

II.

The discomforts and distractions attendant upon public prayer, however, are not felt only by the presiding minister. The *congregation*, too, may have its uneasy moments, even its bad quarters of an hour. If, from the standpoint of the pew, to be obliged to listen to bad preaching is to be chastised with whips, then, obviously, to be obliged to listen to amateur and crude praying in the pulpit is to be chastised with scorpions.

The complaints which long-suffering congregations make with regard to the public prayers of the sanctuary, in the Free Churches, may be summarised as follows :

(a) *They are too perfunctory.* A familiar series of stock phrases and hackneyed, threadbare expressions is repeated regularly, without unction, without freshness and without variety. It almost seems as if the minister, instead of being "content to fill a little space, if God be glorified," were bent on filling a large, twenty-minute space somehow, whether God be glorified or no.

(b) *They are too illiterate.* Vulgarisms, solecisms, errors of taste, ungrammatical and uncouth expressions make the hearers wince. It is not denied that incoherent and troubled prayer may be warm with the spirit of devotion, and far more acceptable to the Father than the icily cold phrases of flawless but insincere petition. What is urged is that we ought to offer to God not merely what He is willing to accept but what He is worthy to receive, and that surely includes correct language and a properly constructed sentence.

(c) *They are too irreverent.* The gushing and colloquial language of intimate and even amorous endearment is felt to be unbecoming in sinful mortals addressing the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity.

(d) *They are too didactic.* Either they set out to inform God of many things, with the superfluous preliminary reminder that He already knows them; or else they are not primarily directed towards God at all, but obliquely scold, warn, rebuke, flatter or exhort the members of the congregation. Prayers offered at bazaars and public meetings often grievously offend in this respect. Those who offer them sometimes forget that, although in Latin *orare* means 'to pray,' and a place of prayer is rightly called an oratory, prayer itself is not therefore an *oration*.

(e) *They are far too long.* Many a devout minister prays his people into an excellent frame of mind, only to pray them out of it again, long before he has reached the end of his supplications. Wearisomely prolix, he rambles meanderingly on, leaving his hearers groaning and sighing for the Amen.

III.

It is not surprising that in some cases both ministers and congregations turn eagerly to a *liturgy* in the hope of spiritual relief from a too unchartered freedom in devotion. The advantages of a prescribed form of prayer in public worship are many and obvious. It provides for the regular expression of the most common and universal desires of the human heart, in language the most chaste and reverent that the tongue of man can utter. A good collect is like a pebble or a proverb that has been rounded and polished in the wear of centuries, until it has reached a form that cannot be improved. It is true its diction is stereotyped and familiar, but it is no more so than the language of free prayer is apt to become, while it has the distinct advantage of being in itself a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. The very fact that a liturgical prayer is said over and over again in the same words, endears it to the worshipper, who finds in every utterance of it inexpressible suggestions and haunting memories of childhood, as well as a link binding him to distant ages and the universal church throughout the world. As for the minister, he turns to them thankfully, feeling that he cannot improve upon what has sufficed for the piety of the saints in all generations, and that, to his great peace of mind, he is not called upon to try. A prescribed form of prayer relieves him who conducts the service from a great burden of anxious responsibility; it protects the congregation from being at the mercy of the moods, vagaries, idiosyncracies and perhaps vulgarities of the presiding minister; and it secures that an ordered and worthy utterance shall be given to the most permanent and comprehensive aspirations of the human heart.

Nevertheless, the religious instinct of most of Free Churches has rejected the liturgical form of worship, although it was retained by Luther, Knox, Calvin and others at the Reformation. In theory a liturgy has much to recommend it, but in practice it does not always come up to expectation. A good choir and organist are almost indispensable, besides a minister and people

thoroughly conversant with it. Moreover, a liturgy cannot be made to order. It should be the slow growth and outcome of the general mind of the whole Church, and dabblers in the art of prayer-book making are apt to stumble into many pitfalls. It is found, too, that liturgical prayer easily becomes cold, formal, lifeless and mechanical, requiring no real spirituality of mind in him who offers it, and making but little spiritual demand on the fervour and attention of those who follow. Besides, if liturgical prayer provides for the adequate expression of man's common and universal wants, it is a poor instrument for the uttering of his spontaneous and fluctuating desires, those warm longings and aspirations which the Spirit Himself inspires.

No doubt the ideal service would be one in which the advantages of each could be secured without the disadvantages of either. We should then avoid slovenliness and frigidity alike. But this perfect goal is hard to reach; for, the more excellent the rendering of either the free or the prescribed form of prayer, the more difficult it becomes to pass from the one mode of worship to the other. As a rule, it is best to keep them separate. The opening call to worship, and appropriate regular intercessions for various classes of people in the community, may well assume a prescribed liturgical form in which all may join. But in every service there should be at least one opportunity for the free untrammelled outpouring of the spirit of supplication.

IV.

For the ideal offering of the public devotions of the sanctuary, three conditions are necessary.

(a) *The preparation of the prayer.* This does not necessarily mean that it should be carefully written out and memorised beforehand. The prayer that smells of the midnight lamp, or that betrays a conscious effort to be literary and rhetorical, is generally a failure. Moreover, nothing is more likely to bring

about a collapse in public prayer than the effort to maintain a dual consciousness in devotion, and to speak freely and naturally to the Father while endeavouring to recollect the particular phrases of a written manuscript. When the minister rises to pray, he should throw all plans and sketches to the winds, and soar on the wings of a free spiritual devotion. But this does not preclude the giving of previous attention to the general *outline* of public prayer, its logical ordering, for example, into invocation, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession. Every good prayer should be an organic whole; it should be held together by a real, though concealed, structure of bones and tissues. There should be movement and progress in it, and perhaps a climax, so that it may be readily remembered and gladly followed. For this purpose, nothing could be better than a study of the Church's prayer-books and ancient liturgies. The minister who would be *thoroughly* furnished unto every good work will give as much attention, in his reading, to the prayers of the saint as to the sermons of the prophets. He need not slavishly copy them, of course, or use them as a substitute for his own. But he may study them, as an artist might study Raphael, in order to be inspired for some fresh impulse of original spiritual creation.

(b) *The preparation of the congregation.* Quite half of a minister's ease and liberty in prayer is contributed by the responsive sympathy of those who pray with him. It is possible to be immediately sensitive to the great differences which exist among congregations in this respect. In some places of worship it is almost impossible to pray. The people sprawl, or shuffle, or lounge, or look about them; there is not the least attempt to observe any uniform or devout *attitude* in prayer; one feels that the great bulk of the worshippers are cold, or critical, or bored, and that the really praying souls are very few. In other churches, how different the experience! The solemn hush; the reverent kneeling; the quiet, momentary thrill of expectancy and faith; the indefinable, secret communication of sympathy and love between

soul and soul—all betoken a people *used* to pray, and aware of the part which *they* must contribute to the warmth and spirituality of public worship. Could not more be done to create this helpful atmosphere? Will the day ever come when kneeling-stools or hassocks shall be considered to be as necessary parts of church furniture as umbrella-stands? Must Free Churchmen for ever be put to shame by Anglicans and Roman Catholics in all that concerns the outward decencies of devotion? These things are external, but they are not unimportant, for the mind is profoundly influenced by the doings of the body. A praying people, show their prayerfulness by reverence of demeanour, will greatly lighten the task of the presiding minister.

(c) *The preparation of the minister himself.* After all, the only road to success in public prayer is diligence in private prayer. What a minister is on Sunday in the sanctuary, betrays what he has been during the week in the secret place. The only way to pray well, whether in public or in private, is to “dwell with the King for His work,” and to keep untainted the springs of the inner life. He who, like Moses, converses much with God in the solitude of the mount, will not be able to conceal the marks of that high converse when he is called on to lead the devotions of his fellows.

Good praying in public is rarer than good preaching, because it is an art far more difficult to acquire. But all the greater in consequence is the reward. It is gladdening, no doubt, to hear a man say, “I *did* admire the sermon you preached last night. It was really most eloquent, and I agreed with every word of it.” But who would not rather a thousand times receive the swift look, and the gratefully pressed hand, and the whispered word, “Thank you, thank you so much for your prayer!”

The Minister's Library.

Messrs. Duckworth & Co. are rendering a signal service to ministers and students by the publication of the series of books, "*Studies in Theology*." The latest of these, published early in the year, is, *The Environment of Early Christianity*, by Dr. S. Angus. Within its limits, it is one of the best books we have seen. Its purpose is to survey the ancient world in which Christianity was first planted, reviewing the conditions which would favour or retard the spread of the Gospel, and to present a brief account of the genius and achievements of the three great peoples to whom the Gospel was first offered. A survey is given of the period 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. The study is invaluable, and no serious man can dispense with it.

I have been reading, over again, in the same series, Dr. Garvie's "*Handbook of Christian Apologetics*." It is a most fascinating volume, both in matter and style. The sanity of Dr. Garvie appeals to me more and more. He is both liberal and conservative in theology. This book shows him at his best. The old Apologetics are quite inadequate to meet the new situation. A book of this kind was badly needed, and it is not likely to be superseded for, at least, a decade. It is alive with suggestions for preachers.

Two other volumes in the same series deserve special mention. "*The Christian Hope*," by Dr. Adams Brown; and the "*Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*," by Prof. Wheeler Robinson. The first of these is a closely-reasoned and comprehensive study of the evidence for immortality. The subject is approached from every point of view, and the conclusion is irresistible. The second is what we have come to expect from the pen of Mr. Robinson: a learned and extremely lucid statement of his subject. His "*Christian Doctrine of Man*" established his reputation, and this new book will enhance it.

Themes that have helped.

[Members are invited to contribute to this column. Let the brethren know of any theme that has been *especially* helpful to yourself and to your people. The majority of ministers are always on the look out for vital themes. The following have been sent in response to the request in the January number of *The Fraternal*.]

The Christian spirit in the midst of war: "Love your enemies.—A.R.

Luther's Psalm (46).—Sent by several.

The soul a moral spectroscope for discovering the nature of God.—

("If ye then being evil . . . how much more . . . your Father."—*Matthew 7, 11.*)

The imperfect instrument, man, can thus discover much of God. How much more the perfect instrument, Christ?—A line marked out by Dr. Gordon, of Boston.

Law set to music—

("Thy Statutes have been my songs."—*Ps. 119.*)

For most men, law means submission: it invokes no enthusiasm. Show how the law of God, operating in a man's life, leads to exultant song.

The meaning of the long way round in providence.

(*Exodus 13, 17/18.*)

God has a great good for the world; why is He so slow in accomplishing it? Slow reforms, slow evangelisation, etc. Develop the theme to show that God's long ways are the nearest. Illustrations from history. Forced goals are always fatal. A very fruitful theme just now.

Our attitude to Missions during the War Crisis—*Isa. 21, 11/12.*

I. *How the War has affected Missions adversely.*

- (1) Entire stoppage in places. (2) Shortage Funds.
 (3) Disorganization of Work. (4) Name of Christ dishonoured in face of heathen.

II. *Signs of Encouragement amid the gloom.*

- (1) A recognition of failure of cultured paganism. (2) A new spirit of humanity. (3) Manifestation of unity.
 (4) Renewed generosity to Missions.

III. *Our present Opportunity and Duty.*

- (1) To maintain Mission work in crisis. (2) Lay plans for new conditions after war. (3) Believe God will overrule present evil for extension His Kingdom.

W.D.R.

The Rev. Principal Gould, M.A., writes to the Editor saying that our brethren should invite Sir Frederic Lely, K.C.I.E., C.I.E., to lecture in their churches on "The Empire, and what it stands for." Sir Frederic held an influential position as Lieut.-Governor in India for a number of years, and his lecture will be a revelation to our people of what India owes to British government. It contrasts this rule with the German ideal practice elsewhere. The lecture is illustrated by lantern slides. Sir Frederic gives his lecture quite freely, asking only for the use of a lantern, which the church must provide. At the present time such a lecture should be a great means of Imperial Education. Sir Frederic's address is, 25 Hanover House, Regents Park, London, N.W.

Ministers as Listeners.

I am, and always have been, a great friend of the clergy. When they are attacked in my presence I always defend them, for I believe in their mission. And what I now say is for their ears alone. I have observed, quite frequently, that while they may expect from their ordinary congregations (and to this they are entitled) a courteous and earnest attention, they are tempted to withhold the same from certain of their brethren of the same cloth when, at conventions and conclaves, they find themselves compelled to listen to them. To the Archbishop, the popular Dean, the aristocratic Canon, they offer a courteous demeanour; but to the ordinary parson they are often discourteous, not actively, but passively. I have watched them, their heads lowered, their eyes wandering, their expression slightly cynical, as if the speakers were beneath contempt. Doubtless some of these speakers are trying: they cannot express themselves, and what they say may not be of the finest quality. But then, my clerical friends, some members of your congregations do not think much of *you*, yet they suffer you. I have often wondered at what I call clerical discourtesy in the sanctum. My reverend friends, if you wish us laymen to show you continued respect, you must set us a good example by showing respect to each other, however trying the situation may be.

EMERETT.

Prayer Union Notes.

In taking up my pen to write these notes, I feel that my first word must be one of grateful acknowledgment of the service hitherto rendered to our Prayer Union by our brother, Rev. J. E. Martin, in the conduct of this page. Both in this and in other ways, Mr. Martin has given himself with loving devotion to his brethren's cause, and has had a great share in laying the foundations of the fellowship of which the *Fraternal* is the outward sign. I can only desire that something of his spirit may be mine as I follow him in the preparing of these messages to the brethren.

.

Just now, the problem of the churches is the theme of discussion in our denominational press, and various views are being put forth as to the ways in which the churches may be revived and strengthened. But we ministers know, and most of our people realise, that the prime factor in the condition of the church is the personality of the minister. If we are afire, the church tends to be warm; if we are cold, the church declines. If we have power, the church feels its impulse; if we are weak, the church grows inert. Our moods are reflected in the people. Do not many of us feel that, with the passing of the years, the pressure of our work and the discovery of our limitations, the vision that once inspired us tends to grow dim; and "where there is no vision, the people perish?"

.

How can we gain the renewal of the vision? We know the way. It is the old way—the way to the mercy-seat and the sprinkled blood, the cherubim and the glory. We must go in daily to the Lord. We must spend time in the Sacred Presence. I know the difficulty, in these days of multiplied demands upon the ministry, of finding quiet and leisure for the cultivation of the inner life. But after all it is the centre and spring of everything.

If we have not to realise God and hear the Voice and receive the Spirit, we cannot really do anything effective at all. As the Dutch proverb, quoted by Andrew Murray, says, "Things that *are* heaviest, must *weigh* heaviest."

Our concert of prayer on Sunday morning constitutes a helpful bond. It is good to know when we kneel alone at the outset of our great day that we are units in a brotherhood of intercession. Who can tell, as Dr. Horton reminded us at the Free Church Council in Manchester, how much of the new knowledge of God, or of the joy in and love to Him, which comes to us from time to time, does so as the breaking of a tide of grace set in motion by the prayer of a friend?

Dr. Newton Marshall, whose home-call left us with so keen a sense of loss, was thinking much during the last few months of his life, of the desirability of holding ministerial retreats for the quickening of the soul's life. Certainly, ever since the retreat in the Upper Room, which ended in the effusion of Pentecost, such retreats have been signally blessed by God, and have often proved the beginnings of revival in the church. Could we not arrange such retreats in the coming season? We need not go far away from our own districts. One of the most helpful seasons I have known was spent in the vestry of a London church, in which during four consecutive afternoons the ministers of the district met for prayer and fellowship. Others have found similar refreshment on the margin of a lake, in the bosom of a wood, or on the slope of a hill. The great thing is, detachment from the routine of life, joined with the opening of the soul's windows towards Jerusalem.

Can we not, during this time of war-strain, increase our value to the suffering, anxious people around us, by obtaining a new spiritual quality—a new vision and power—through fresh contact in the company of kindred spirits, with the Redeemer and Lord of our life?

JOHN W. EWING.