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THE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE THE FREE CHURCHES.

Part 2.—In the Matter of Worship and Fellowship.

By Rev. Arthur Dakin, B.D., D.Th.

In treating of worship and fellowship it is not possible to move with quite so sure a step as in dealing with the opportunity in the realm of thought. In the latter case the demands made upon the Church are so clear, and the needs of men so obvious, that it is not difficult to see the way however painful it may be to walk in it. But with regard to both worship and fellowship, while we are agreed that no religion can endure that is not based on the one for the purpose of promoting the other, it is not so easy to say along what lines we ought to move in order to reach the goal. One thing is certain—the Churches will have to apply themselves in an altogether more thorough way to the work of developing the spirit of worship and encouraging fellowship. That must be a steady conscious aim of the future, never lost sight of or abandoned. Probably no one would controvert the position that worship and fellowship have greater influence over the lives of people and are more fundamental than even instruction. Taking that for

granted, we have now to ask what opportunity the present situation affords in these respects, and how best the Church can take advantage of any opening that is presented. It will make for clearness if we separate the two and discuss first the opportunity in the realm of worship.

A first glance at the situation is sufficient to show that the present situation with regard to worship is very different from that which we saw obtained in the matter of thought. The war has provoked the outsider to enquire and question, but as yet we wait for even the first signs of any general desire to acknowledge God in direct personal approach. The "man in the street" does want to discuss, but not by any means is he ready to pray. Obviously the opportunity with him is not nearly so great in this respect—although his willingness to consider, his open-mindedness certainly does give the Church a chance to lead even him from the lower stage to the higher if the Church realises the situation and responds to it. However when we turn to Christian people themselves the case is different. We do find amongst them a new movement towards intenser worship. I know there are many things to which the pessimist can point, and I am aware he could make out a plausible case against that statement. Let it be granted that many are still in the old rut, it yet remains a fact that there is abroad a certain impatience of everything that smacks of formalism, a sort of revolt against the old routine, a feeling out after something more intense and real. (I myself take the decadence of our prayer meetings not so much as a sign of the departure of the spirit of worship, but rather as an indication that our methods of worship are no longer adequate; they will not stand the test of the modern passion for sincerity and reality). As we should expect this new movement is strongest among the ministers, with whom the subject has been very much to the fore of late, as is evidenced by the

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growing demand for the reconsideration of our ways and methods. The war has given new significance to the matter by helping us to see that if worship fails everything fails. Many have realised that the government of this world is a much bigger undertaking than our pre-war easy phrases suggested. Our little philosophies and petty systems have tumbled about our ears. Our much-repeated shibboleths, that appeared so comprehensive, have been revealed as mere baby talk by the gigantic complexity of events. There are, of course, still those who are prepared to say just what it is that God is doing and how; but by the side of such there is a great mass of thoughtful people whose highest philosophy is "Thou art God and we are men. Thy ways are not our ways." The gulf that separates God's wisdom and activity and vision from ours has appeared and we have looked into it, and a new sense of His unfathomable greatness has come to our minds. No longer can we even unconsciously assume that we know as much as He. We sit in astonishment. That in itself is surely a fine starting ground from which the soul may push out towards the unseen, and those who are feeling that are above all else ready to worship. But the point I am anxious to make here is, that this new consciousness of God has made clear to us the inadequacy of the old basis of Faith. Before the war, thousands were building their belief in God on what they thought they could understand of His way in the world. To-day they almost despair of understanding, although they believe it is reasonable if they could only find the key. What then, are they to give up their faith? By no means. Faith was never securely rooted there, although we may have imagined it was. We learn again that the only sure foundation is in the depths of personal experience. We can face the mystery only as we have and know Him—and we know Him not by laboriously

climbing the ladder of thought and seeing all things reasonable, but by the contact of spirit with spirit. We do not reach the mystery of love by starting out from the rationality of the world. Rather we come to believe in the goodness of the world because we have already seen the Father. God is not the great deduction, but rather the great interpretative idea, which casts a new light on all without and within. If, then, the true basis of faith is experience we see at once the supreme importance of worship. It is a sure way to Faith. It is the Faith nourished in worship that alone can withstand the shocks of time. May not the new stirring among our people be an indication of the fact that they are beginning, dimly it may be, to realise something of that. Events are impelling the deep-seated instinct to reassert itself. In part the opportunity of the present is the chance it gives us of making clear the reason for worship and insisting on the absolute necessity of it. I do not of course suggest that this is the only argument in its favour, or even the best. I merely point out that the present situation gives us a way of approach to people, along which we can hope to reach them with our conviction that direct contact with the Great Spirit is the only foundation of all true and triumphant life.

But even when we have persuaded people of the value of worship we are still faced with the greater task, namely, that of actually worshipping in such a way as to overcome all unreality. After all, the best commendation of worship is worship itself. How shall we bring ourselves and lead others to the only true devotion, which is in spirit and truth? One cannot but feel that a crying need of the Free Churches is a definite and clear view of what worship ought to be, and what it is intended to achieve. The High Anglicans have something here that we sadly lack. They do at least set an ideal of worship before the mind, they

know exactly what they mean by the term, and they are making determined strides towards securing it. Obviously before we can discuss the form our services ought to take, what modifications are necessary and so forth, we must possess some great regulative idea. It hardly comes within the scope of this paper to discuss what that idea must be, but it is urged strongly that we can make little real progress until we have first of all thought out the whole position. There is a Free Church ideal of worship as distinct as that of the High Anglicans—though, of course, very different from theirs. That ideal needs making explicit, and not until we have grasped it and made our people see it, are we ready to consider any practical policies that may be suggested. Some of the difficulties that we meet in trying to modify our customs are entirely due to the general haziness that exists on the point. In this, as in much else, we are taking the fundamental and most important thing for granted and imagining that it is already too clear to need precise definition. To attempt to reform our public worship in such unpreparedness is very much like a man trying to till the land without having at the back of his mind a solid basis of agricultural knowledge. Any man who would think the position out and state it for the rest of us would be doing a real service to the Church; or better still if we could have a group of qualified people working at it, it would be a real step towards that reconstruction of Church life which all hold to be inevitable. The position taken in the preceding paragraph obviously excludes all discussion of details here, but one or two general suggestions may be permitted. Whatever ideal of worship we adopt it must be one for the people and not merely for the parson. The idea that the congregation must worship is gripping up, and that is good, though, if one may say so, the expedient of asking the people to respond in chorus,

useful as it is, is yet by no means enough to meet the situation. My own conviction is that when we investigate the matter we shall find ourselves driven far beyond our public services. I am inclined to think that the failure or success in public worship goes back in the end to the failure or success in private devotion; and that perhaps is our greatest failure as Free Churches—we have not been able to engender in any adequate measure a spirit of real prayer in the individual. The call has gone out often enough for it, but how little effort has been made to teach people how to pray. Even our young folk are to a large extent left to find it out for themselves, and many never do find it, with the result that private devotion drops out of the life simply because people are at a loss to know what to do. To many of our Christians five minutes devoted to prayer would be something akin to torture. We shall have to go carefully into the reasons for that before we can hope to lift our services to that height of reality and power which we know to be our goal.

One other point gives us hope. Free Churchmen in increasing numbers are coming to see that the sum total of wisdom in this respect is not their peculiar and exclusive possession. We are discovering that Anglicans and even Roman Catholics have something to teach us, and we are getting more willing to adopt whatever we find of good in the world, no matter what its previous associations. We shall not, of course, quietly assume that anything different from our own is of necessity better than ours (it is curious and interesting to note that while there is a tendency among some Free Churches towards a liturgy, there are those in the Anglican Church who are getting quite enamoured of the method of "free prayer,") but with that we shall, as we are wise, avoid the stupid attitude that crowns prejudice at the expense of enlightenment and progress.

The uniqueness of the opportunity before the Free Churches is that they are free to consider everything and to adopt or reject as the Spirit leads. There are at present men in most denominations who are launching out on new lines. It would be well if we could have experiments done in regular and ordered fashion, with different types of congregation, the people being of course taken into confidence and asked to collaborate, and then get the results collected and compared. We are seeking guidance and forgetting that there are ways of ensuring it. The time has come when we ought to use our resources of mind and spirit to secure it, and not any longer trust that somehow or other the Church will be sure eventually to stumble on the right track. Here again there is opportunity, but, as in the previous case, it exists only for the Church with the girt loin and the open mind and the courageous heart.

We turn now to the question of fellowship. The demand of the human heart is to-day the same as it always was. In this world fellowship is a necessity, and, without it, life's burdens cannot be bravely borne, its richest gifts cannot be truly enjoyed, nor can its tasks be satisfactorily accomplished. Before the war the Church had already come to a new estimate of the idea; the word had won its place in theological and ecclesiastical speech, and Christians were coming more and more to recognise that the achievement and promotion of it must be one of the conscious and indispensable aims of all real ministry. The happenings of these terrible months have uttered an emphatic "Amen" to that view, so that the importance of the matter is now obvious to all. We are in a position to admit to-day, as a result of all that we have felt and witnessed amid the horrors and marvels of a great war, that our success or failure as Churches can be measured by our achievement or non-achievement in the realm of fellowship.

Further, the war has brought the value of fellowship before the minds of those who are not specially religious. The soldiers have found it. They have learned what a difference it makes in life. They have seen hardships laughed at, incredible tasks carried through by men in company. They will return from all the glow and banter and freedom of the platoon life. They have experienced something which it will be very hard to give up. They will return to us not merely predisposed towards fellowship but positively hungering for it, expecting it. Nor is it only the soldier who has had his eyes opened. The civilian has stood astonished before the manifestation of cheerfulness and courage which has characterised men living amidst the most cruel horrors that this world has ever seen. In face of the spirit in the trenches the old familiar national life with its bickerings and quarrelings smites us in the face as something hideous and disgraceful in the extreme. Why cannot life always be like this? If men can live thus in the hell of war, why is it impossible in the heaven of peace? Many have caught a clear and thrilling vision of a new order of life based upon fellowship, and it ought not to be difficult now to persuade anyone that there is that in it which makes it worthy of the best endeavours and even of the most costly sacrifice. The war has torn the curtains from our eyes, and behold, we see.

Also, to some little extent, the way to it has been cleared of obstacles. Hope flickers up when one thinks of the mixing of the classes on the battlefields, of the new estimate of men, of the way in which the old habitual reserve has been broken down and some of our stupid conventions disturbed. However, we must not allow ourselves to be carried away by too much facile optimism. Fellowship is one of the greatest of all spiritual achievements. There is no easy road to it, and if we think that the platoon-atmosphere is

something that can be brought to the homeland as easily as, say, the soldier's kit, we are likely sooner or later to be rudely awakened. The war has not really done very much to make fellowship actually possible in ordinary life; the greatest thing it has done is, it has set the ideal before men, shown them how much it is worth and given some a passionate longing to attain it. There is the opportunity of the Church. Can she encourage men to cherish this ideal in their hearts, and to stand for it long after the present conditions have passed, and can she lead them out as campaigners in a sustained endeavour after it? Here again we find the door a little wider open than usual; it gives the Church a bigger chance.

The first requirement, of course, is that there must be a finer fellowship in the Church herself. It ought not to be necessary to urge, that for the Christian, sins against the brotherhood are as much bad form and as degrading as sins of the flesh. In this respect, the Churches are improving, but we still have to purge ourselves more thoroughly from such things as the readiness to take offence and the carelessness about giving it, the desire to have the chief seats, intolerance of mind and heart, and that indifference which is the negation of love. We need a deeper repentance as the foundation of a finer sensitiveness. Also new ways of offering men fellowship must be found. Plans must be devised which will make easier the sharing of one's life with others. Would it not be good to have meetings specially designed with that end in view? The social side has to be raised to its due prominence, and no longer regarded half suspiciously as something less than spiritual. Herbert Grey, in his excellent book, "As Tommy Sees Us," goes so far as to suggest that, at times, even the Sunday evening service should be turned into a social hour concluding with family prayers. That sounds revolutionary.

but one wonders whether it is more so than the situation demands. Anyway, why should not people be gathered together merely to talk among themselves. It would be worth while, even if they only discussed the topics of the hour. It would be more than worth while if they came eventually to talk over spiritual things. One can easily object that they would not do that, but is not the task of the Church to bring them to it, and is not the lower fellowship often the way to the higher? Are we sure, after all, that our assumption that religion can only be deepened by a religious service is correct. The Church or Chapel ought to be the centre of the life where at any time, good company can be found, where a chat can be enjoyed or a quiet hour spent; and our rooms ought to be at least as good and as comfortable as any in the neighbourhood. One has only to compare the average Church games-room with, say, that of some commercial syndicate, to see why the Church does not succeed more fully in bringing men together and helping them to break down the barriers. The truth is we have not put nearly enough brains and energy and money into this side of our activity—largely because we have failed to see the fundamental place it holds in life. Either we must cut it out altogether as unworthy of us, or else give up playing with it, and go for it with whole-hearted abandon. And we need to relate it all, not to some stupid apologetic idea of keeping young people off the streets, but to the great central thought of fellowship. Let the Church provide, in order to minister to what is after all one of the deepest needs of men. Perhaps the lesson of the Y.M.C.A. will not be lost. That organization has shown us new avenues of service into which the Church might push just now with real vigour—and if the rooms and the atmosphere could be got ready before the men come back from the Front, that in itself would make a

direct appeal to something which is very near to the heart of the average soldier.

It goes without saying that the ordinary services of the Church will have to be warm and homely. Any changes in our methods of worship will need to be thought out in connection with the idea of fellowship. We, of the Free Churches have something here which is of great value, though it cannot be said that even we have reached the ideal. How to make it real worship and yet keep it warm and friendly—easy, one might almost say—that is our problem. The great thing, it seems to me, is to get away from everything that smacks of formality and officialism—even the frock coat if need be—while far more variety and, above all, brightness are essential. And if a multitude of engagements sends us ministers inevitably into the pulpit with pale face and jaded spirits, then, in the interest of the real work of the Church, we shall be obliged to come to some arrangement, whereby on the first day of the week, at least, we can normally be found healthy and vigorous and happy.

But, after all, these things are details. We need to get to the root of the matter. The lesson of the trenches is very simple and yet wonderfully profound. There great feats are being accomplished, men "take even death in their stride" because they feel that they belong to each other. Yes, but is it not equally true that they feel they belong to each other just because they are yoked together in great service. Can the Church do big things without fellowship? But, on the other hand, can the Church achieve fellowship even within her own gates apart from consecration to a great nobler end? Is not the quickest route to it, after all, the way of the cross? If the fellowship in the Church to-day is not a magnificent impressive thing making a great impact on the surrounding life, must

we not seek the reason in this, that the Church has lost the consciousness of being a mighty army carrying on a great campaign? The world to-day is being taught the Church's true secret, not by the Church herself, but by those who are engaged in war. When one thinks of the magnificent heroism and good nature and mutual helpfulness of the soldiers, one cannot but feel that there in the trenches is the very thing the Church ought to produce in life. Why is she not producing it? Why cannot she make men burn in a sense of comradeship? Is it not because she is no longer conscious of striking for something and staking her very being on showing it? It is only then that human nature rises and shows itself more than conqueror over all hardship, and more than able for any sacrifice. And when that spirit is abroad fellowship is inevitable. The Church has to be brought back to that, and no reconstruction of the Church's life which fails to start from the campaign idea will be of much value. If we could recover that we should recover all. We shall get fellowship when we get again on the march.

And what is the great end for which the Church exists? Is it not well stated in terms of this very idea—Fellowship in the world, between man and man, between class and class, between nation and nation? Would not the establishment of fellowship in every relationship of life be indeed the Kingdom of God on earth? And to stand for that does mean a great campaign. It means a veritable life and death struggle with sin and selfishness, a bold front and vigorous attack against every form of tyranny and injustice, the invading of every department of life in the interests of righteousness and a witnessing for an altogether new social, industrial and international order. Fellowship on a great scale cannot be realised until changed conditions make it possible for men to be moved by the

highest motive; until, in fact, the present thought of dividends and wages is dethroned, and the thought of the common good set up in its place. When things are so arranged that a man finds he can best get a means of livelihood by rendering service to the community, then, and not till then, will it be possible to get men to realise that they are members one of another. To my mind it means substituting the idea of service for the notion of work throughout the whole of life, and that requires if not the elimination of the wage-system at least such a modification of it as will be its virtual elimination. The very consideration of the idea of fellowship brings the Church inevitably up against the fundamental problems. The attempt to achieve fellowship on any large scale commits us to the tasks of facing all problems. It is often said that all these problems of living would be solved if we could only get fellowship. I point out here that fellowship itself cannot be secured save as these problems are solved. Here again the call is for perfect candour and unflinching courage, clear thought and resolute action; and I for one believe that if the Church could make up her mind to go right through at any cost, she would meet with such a response as would surprise even the most-optimistic. Thousands to-day are asking for leadership. They seek some great guiding principle. And the Church could give it, for the Church has it as her Faith. Of course leadership involves risk. The question of the moment is "Will the Church take the risk?" If she does she may suffer somewhat, but if she does not she ceases to be the instrument of the Kingdom. For the followers of Christ, at least, the risk of unfaithfulness is the most serious risk of all.

One word in conclusion. The goal of the Church cannot be reached by any short cut. What is needed at the

present time is a clear wise programme, broad as the whole of life; and when we have the programme it will require for its carrying through years of patient spade work, and lives of devoted consecration. Our snare is to think that there can be "quick returns of profit." It has taken a long time for the Church to get astray, and it will take a long time to bring her back. But the point is, she can be brought back, if we only know clearly what it is we have to bring her back to, and give ourselves to it with a Christian energy and courage. At the moment we ask—who will give us the programme? The situation is really desperate. One is constrained to cry out to the leaders of the Free Churches in the sentiment of a famous Baptist of old—"For God's sake do something."

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THE MINISTRY SACRAMENTAL.

Thoughts from Dr. Forsyths "The Church and the Sacraments."

If a Church wishes to show its self-respect it will go out of its way to be respectful to its ministry—to its ministry as such and not merely to its lions. It will tend its lamps and not merely worship its stars. It is not well to idolise the genius and despise the office, nor to esteem only those whom it pays to push.

The Church will be what its ministry makes it. The first test of an effective ministry is its effectiveness on the Church; effectiveness on the *world* is a test of the Church which the ministry makes.

The ministry has not to reform the world, but to create a Church for the world's reformation.

The Gospel of God's reign carries social reform with it, but social reform does not carry with it the Gospel.

The ministry is effective as it is creative. It is creative more even than consoling, cheering or reforming. It first makes the Church and then it shapes the world.

Some preaching is like proposing the health of the Gospel. Some prayer is like moving a vote of thanks to the Almighty, with a request for favours to come.

The minister is neither the mouthpiece of the Church, nor its chairman, nor its secretary. He is not the servant, the employèe of the Church. He is an Apostle to it, the mouthpiece of Christ's Gospel to it, the servant of the Lord and not of the Church: he serves the Church only for that sake.

The Church needs men more than rites, movements, or money; but for her ministry it is sacramental men more than brilliant that she needs.

The Church is not to succumb at once to the gifted preacher, but to discern first the Apostolic note. The first requisite of the minister is not the preaching gift, but the Gospel within it.

A Mother Church must die daily in bringing the Gospel into the world—and especially in her ministry must she die.

Let us rise above the idea that the preached Word of God is a mere message warmly told. It is a creative sacrament

by the medium of a consecrated personality. It is more than good news fervently spoken; it is a soul's life and power from God. The Word's bearer is more than a herald; he is a hierophant from the holiest place. He is, as gospelling, more than a herald God sent, he is a living oracle of God.

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NEW LAMPS FOR OLD.

By Rev. M. E. Aubrey, M.A. (Cambridge).

Aladdin, bravely venturing into the home of unearthly spirits, possessed himself of a magic lamp. It was old and looked shabby, but when he rubbed it the Slave of the Lamp appeared, and performed Aladdin's will. He changed the face of the earth, built a palace in a night, and found the inevitable Princess for the wedding. At length the wicked uncle appeared, turned himself into a pedlar, and, when Aladdin was from home, tramped the city streets as he cried, "new lamps for old, new lamps for old." The hero's wife, albeit a princess, woman-like had an eye to a bargain. Remembering the shabby old lamp on the shelf she let it go for a glittering new one, of which she might have had a thousand for the asking, had she but known how to use the old. So Aladdin's prosperity passed away.

The old Arabian story has something better to tell us than merely that husbands should have no secrets from their wives! The invitation to barter old for new is always with us, and was never more loudly cried than it is now. It is perhaps worth while to listen even to a pantomime tale when it tells us to make sure of a bargain before we strike it.

It is impossible to keep in touch with the rapid progress of so many movements and changes in every department

of human thought and activity. Old values are being questioned. No institution is so sacred or venerable that its authority may go unchallenged. The modern temper is as ruthless in its dealings with religion and with fundamental moral conceptions as with its questions of the state, property and law. Many Christian teachers seem only just to be awakening to the fact that those moral axioms, to which in youth Robertson of Brighton, pinned his faith when all else seemed lost, are for many no longer axioms. Men have been asking whether it really is better to be chaste than vicious, to love than to hate. Religion itself has been dismissed by not a few as a symptom or manifestation of sex feeling. These radical and wide changes in mental and moral outlook have come home, I gather, to not a few earnest men in these days with an effect comparable to that of a Zeppelin bomb bursting under the bedroom window. It is clear that new questions must be met with new answers, and it is fairly certain that the Christian Church has diminished its own power of defence and attack by a too easy assurance and a persistent habit of lagging behind the times. The big modern guns have been trained upon our fortress, and we have not provided and exercised ourselves enough with modern artillery to make effective reply. There are signs that the Christian Church is beginning to realise how matters stand. So this peril appears that, shaken out of our old slumber rather rudely, we may rush at the tasks of the new day in a temper that touches the other extreme, inconsiderate, careless, panicky, seeking to do anything, everything, so long as *something* is done. Perhaps, as we stand between the old and the new, a note of caution as well as of adventure is in place.

Serious men are turning with new interest to religion. Diplomacy, armaments, education, travel, trade and sport

have been tried, and all have failed to save the world from tragedy. Can religion succeed where these have fallen short? Reformed, remodelled, abridged, expurgated, simplified, elaborated, decorated and brand-new religions are all being offered to us as substitutes for an old-fashioned Christianity. The old lamp has burned dim and there is no denying its age. Will the new lamps, so glittering, give a better light?

It is beyond argument that every revival of religion has some new element. The ark of the Lord is often lost in the battle by those who profess to value it, but it comes home again, yet always *on a new cart*. We must abandon entirely the attitude that says, "The old was good enough for our fathers; it will do for us." The golden age is in the future, not in the past. We worship a *living* God, and life without change is unthinkable. Revelation grows from more to more. It is continuous. There is more light to break forth. That is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord Himself was unsparing in His condemnation of the men who would not receive new light. They were the people to whom He most heartily "preached Hell", as the modern phrase goes. The men who shutter their souls' windows against new light have no part in Him and quench the Spirit. We must not be as Stevenson's lanthorn-bearers who played among the sand-dunes with their old, smoky lamps hugged close to them beneath their jackets. It was a great game, but it meant darkness and a savour that was not sweet smelling. Happily there is no need to fight over again the old battles for freedom to open the mind and heart to all new truth, and to press on with all honest inquiry. Our Churches have come to realise that the voice of God could speak through Charles Darwin, as well as through Charles Spurgeon. We no longer fear the earnest man of science seeking to unravel the wonder of God's

creation and thinking out His thoughts after Him. We know he helps us to a new wonder, love and praise, as we trace the divine purpose and power with fuller understanding.

The movement for consecrating the best of intellect to the study of the growth and meaning of Scripture, which somehow got labelled "Higher Criticism," need no longer alarm even Mr. Despondency and his daughter Much-afraid, if they will but judge it by but a small part of the precious and positive results gained. We are more willing to listen than we used to be. Truth is a bigger thing than it once seemed to us, too big for one man or one book or one Church to possess it all. God is so great that though all the ages uttered His praise and all the sons of men spake His word the half could not be told. The past was rich. The future will be richer still. New thoughts, new hopes, new purposes, new answers, new revelations, new teaching-to this heritage will the Spirit of God lead those who are willing to follow.

Yet an extreme radicalism is not Christian. Our Lord "came not to destroy," and St. Paul had no respect for the Athenians who were always looking for some new thing. There is no great merit in trying to smash the past. Wisdom will not

"Cry aloud to lay the old world low
To clear the new world's way."

True Christian feeling has always combined with a courage ready to explore the vast unknown, a real reverence for the truth attained and held so often at terrible cost.

In our anxiety to put aside old forms of truth, let us handle them as we should fine old porcelain, even if time has flawed it, precious for the ancient price at which it was bought, the hands that fashioned it, and for that which once it held, the fragrance of which lingers about it still.

Do not let us give encouragement to any to despise the old simply for its age, or because it is shabby and apparently outworn. That was how Aladdin's Princess came to grief. We may be sure that no institution or creed or custom would have weathered the centuries had there not been in it some correspondence with reality that gave it worth for men. We know how Matthew Arnold puts the thought at its widest—

Children of men! The unseen Power, whose eye
 Ever accompanies the march of man,
 Hath without pain seen *no* religion die,

Since first the world began . . .

Which has not taught weak wills how much they can?
 Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?
 Which has not cried to sunk self-weary man,
 "Thou must be born again"?

There is exaggeration here, but let us remember that we are trustees of the *whole* Truth of God. A creed, an article of faith, a form of worship are all endeavours to crystallise the experience and emotion of men at a particular stage into a definite form that the precious substance may be preserved. These must inevitably be outgrown and superseded at later stages, but they are never cancelled. The truth that was in them is truth still, a faith once and *for ever* delivered to the saints. So they cannot be scrapped, any more than a tree in bud can be scrapped that we may have a tree in full fruit. Advance must normally be by way of development, though drastic pruning, or even destruction, may be necessary on rare occasions. Our trusteeship is a very solemn responsibility. If the shrine in our souls is open wide to new impressions and new thoughts, there is laid upon us a charge to guard well the gates that nothing trivial and foolish find lodgment there, and that no rude hands are suffered to enter in and

rob the treasury. The old lamps that burn about the altar may need reburnishing, trimming, and a new supply of oil, but not seldom we may find that they have more power of miracle in them than many of the new and gleaming offered in their stead. When in the hour of need David was offered the old weapon of Goliath that had been laid aside, he said, "There is none like that; give it me." Let us give diligence in these days of change to our examination of both old and new, unhasting but unresting in our endeavour to learn and teach God's word for men. With tender reverence and care let us search out the truth hidden in the old and the spirit enshrined there, and see that nothing is lost. With equal humility let us inquire of the new, weighing its value, sifting the temporal from the eternal, with a holy fear lest the voice of God speak and we do not hear.

Violence in speech or method will not serve us here. God does not work so. His way is evolution and not revolution. France suffered for generations for the shedding of her best blood in the days of terror. The extreme actions of the State reformers in England defeated their own end and brought the Restoration in eleven years. In the changes that are bound to come we must neither be out-distanced nor stampeded. A welding together of old and new in the glow of a new devotion is best. Old things may become new—in Christ. Sometimes the old spirit in a new form is what we need, sometimes a new spirit in the old form vitalising and developing it from within.

I have seen a garden in Pompeii that lay under ashes for eighteen centuries. With exquisite care and patience it has been excavated and restored. The paths run where they used to and they are paved and edged with the old bricks. The statues and pillars stand where they did. The

beds have the same shape. Men have planted such shrubs and flowers as grew there in ancient days. It is an old garden, but it is also new. There in the old setting the new life is always springing, beautiful and sweet, and it is the blend of old and new that gives it charm and richness and a power to touch the heart that no other garden I have seen can ever have. There is our parable of Christ's way with men—restoring the defaced image of the Ancient of Days and thus making the new man. The New Age must be built upon the past. Nonconformity cannot afford to neglect history. We may soon be writing a new chapter, but of the same story.

It is not so much a new religion men are seeking as a new discovery of the power that in bygone days has quickened life, recreated a society and revealed truth; and can do all this again; not a new Church or Saviour, but a new devotion to Him Who, by His Spirit, still maketh all things new.

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***RECONSTRUCTION IN CHRISTIAN PUBLIC
WOHSHIP.**

By Rev. J. H. Rushbrooke, M.A.

(Published by special request.)

I am not conscious of any special qualifications for addressing you upon the subject of "Reconstruction in Public Worship," but the responsibility of doing so is not mine. However, I may claim that no one has a keener sense than I of the value of this Board as a clearing house of ideas, and as affording an opportunity of frank exchange of views

*Paper read before the Baptist Board.

among brethren; and then I am genuinely interested in the particular subject. My purpose is not to advocate a policy, or dogmatically to set forth any settled opinions; all of us, I assume, are seekers after the best. We are ready at any fit season to criticise our customs to "prove all things." We realise the peril of settling into ruts. If we adhere to use and wont, we desire to be certain that we are not controlled by mere lethargy or unintelligent conservatism, but are "holding fast that which is good."

Do we concede too much if we start by admitting that the conduct of public worship receives as a rule far too little attention among us? In our theological colleges it has no established place among the subjects of study. Homiletics, of course, we do not forget: the sermon class holds its secure position; practical pastoral service is winning larger recognition, and some guidance is now forthcoming as to the ministers' attitude towards the social issues that bulk so largely in modern society. None of us, it may safely be assumed, is prepared to belittle the importance of preaching. Our Free Churches are the outgrowth of the preaching of the Word; our strength over against Anglicanism has centred in the pulpit. It is not an accident that in the characteristic arrangement of our meeting houses our people see the rostrum or pulpit where the Anglican or Romanist sees the altar. Nor have we the faintest sympathy with the attitude indicated in a phrase that fell some little time ago from the lips of a well-known London minister: "If he had to choose between the pulpit and the altar," he said, "he would unhesitatingly choose the altar." To us the setting forth of Christ crucified is the supreme task of the *preacher*; an altar in the Roman sense we repudiate, and in this we are in line with the Apostle Paul, "O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you—you who hold Jesus the crucified placarded before your

very eyes? I simply want to ask you one thing; Did you receive the Spirit by doing what the law commands, or by believing the gospel message?" (Gal. 3, 1-2; Dr. Moffatt's trans.). The collocation is significant: the spoken message was to Paul the placarding of Jesus as crucified. But while we rightly value preaching, and glory in what has been accomplished by preaching, it is well to enquire whether a due sense of proportion has been observed, and whether our emphasis upon preaching has not had evil as well as good results. Has not this exceptional and exclusive stress often issued in spiritual mischief in the minister's own life? We meet High Church curates, and listen to their self-revealing conversation. They speak naturally and directly about their devotional habits: it is more natural to ourselves to talk of our search for texts, our methods of sermon preparation. An intellectual rather than a spiritual bias is apt to manifest itself. Nor is the evil confined to the minister: it has largely infected our hearers. The idea that the sermon is everything leads to the hateful newspaper description of the remainder of the service as "the preliminaries." Worse still: the sermon being everything, and men and women naturally seeking the best, we find what in my judgment is one of our gravest weaknesses as Nonconformists—the exaltation of the "star preacher," in comparison with the pastor or leader of worship. There are so-called "Churches" that are no Churches—the congregation has no function save that of hearing and incidentally of paying. Their neighbourhood is uninfluenced by them; missionary work is not sustained; there is no real fellowship. Hearing is the end of their existence, and almost its sum-total. Happily few, if any, Baptist Churches could be so described, but the evil exists among Free Churchmen, and it represents an extreme development from the exclusive emphasis upon the sermon.

Their exclusive emphasis upon the sermon then, in my judgment, operates mischievously in several directions. It does harm to the ministers' spiritual life: it injures worship by destroying the sense of the value of other elements; it leads to a neglect in our seminaries of due training for leadership in worship. Outside our borders liturgiology is as serious a subject of study as homileties, but few of us—and I set up no claim to be included among the few—have any serious acquaintance with it. We are awakening I think to a sense of its importance. Of course the liturgiology that is to be commended as a study for ourselves is not a mere knowledge of historic forms of devotion, valuable as these may be, but of liturgy—leitourgia in the wide sense. We have no literature upon the subject—a book here and there upon the conduct of public worship, but nothing that has emerged as a result of a sustained effort of common thinking, nor can it be said that there has been any wide demand for anything of the kind. In fact, serious and systematic attention to this aspect of our work is conspicuously absent: rightly or wrongly we have as a rule acquiesced with the very slightest modifications in inherited and traditional customs. Hence the need of candid enquiry: are our public services satisfactory. Are they worthy when considered as an offering to God? Are they adequate as an expression of the devotional life of our people? Are they effective as strengthening and deepening the devotional life?

To begin at the beginning, consider our conception of the place of worship. "The Lord's house" is an old-fashioned phrase—but I confess I love it. By all means let us rid ourselves of superstitious notions concerning "consecrated buildings": the Puritans knew that worship may be as true in a barn as in a cathedral; Bunyan finds that the stable, the milkhouse, the close where God did visit the soul has become a Hill Mizar. Yet it is increas-

ingly evident that our rejection of the notion of a consecrated building has been so expressed that instead of securing the sanctity of all places where men pray, it has succeeded only in secularising the regular meeting place of the Church of God. I would have no such rigid separation as would prohibit a so-called "secular" meeting in a Church; recently a lecture was given in our own Church by a returned exile from Ruhleben on behalf of the funds of a local hospital. But I respected the sentiment which on that occasion subdued the applause. Years ago I recall hearing a well-known entertainer give a "musical sketch" in a metropolitan church. Quite innocent, uproariously funny; but the more I reflected the less I liked it. When I was a student pastor in West Nottingham my people once arranged on a Saturday evening a concert on behalf of some charity. It included comic items: one or two approached dangerously near the limits of good taste. But assume that all had been in that regard perfectly correct—why was it that the building seemed to me next day to be spoiled? Not because of any superstition as to the sanctity of the bricks and mortar and timber that constituted the fabric: but for another and deeper reason. Incidents leave their impressions; memory weaves its associations about a familiar building; one's whole mental attitude is affected by the characteristic atmosphere of a place. Consider your mental states in visiting, say, Maskelyne and Devant, the British Museum, Westminster Abbey, the Baptist Mission House. I forbear working out the details of the psychical analysis; this is the point—there are psychological conditions favourable to worship and others unfavourable, and the associations of a building enter largely into the shaping of these conditions. A tone of easy-going, careless, comfortable familiarity is as incongruous to the occasion of worship as boisterous jesting in

a sick chamber. One of the immense advantages which the normal Anglo-Catholic service has—but ought not to have—over many Nonconformist assemblies is in the note of reverence and awe that pervades it, and this is due in no slight measure to the fact that the place of prayer, of praise is kept free of discordant associations. Let me repeat in order to emphasize—it is not for a superstitious veneration of buildings that I plead, but for a recognition of psychical facts and the influence of association. I have no word of adverse criticism of the carrying on of mission work in public halls in the interests of the people who shun churches; nor do I shrink from such a position as I once heard strikingly put by Dr. Clifford: “If there were any innocent effective counter attraction to the public-house,” he said, “and no other means of providing it he would gladly open Westbourne Park Chapel every evening for the purpose.” But I would stress the proviso that such a use of the church should be *necessary*, and even in that case would regard it as a *necessary evil*. Normally we do well to reserve the place of worship as such, and to guard it against the intrusion of foreign elements. To serve God acceptably demands “reverence and awe.” “Come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” It may be worth saying that architectural considerations are not despicable in this connection; good taste and dignity are not without spiritual value. And demeanour in worship—even posture—though an external thing—is not to be ignored. Nothing is unworthy of attention which expresses and harmonises with the conception of worship as the approach of man to an exalted and Holy God. And the more completely we shed the robes and trappings of ecclesiasticism, the more necessary it becomes to study and respect deep and true religious instincts. The fact that Churches of another order have

often exploited these religious instincts in the interests of a sacerdotalism which is foreign to Christianity must not blind us to the need of giving them due expression. To secularise the atmosphere of the Church is not the way to spiritualise the atmosphere of the world.

I am aware that what has been said, and, still more, what remains to be said, meets with strongly opposed tendencies of to-day. A well-known journalist has written a great deal concerning the Church and its worship in advocacy of methods from which in general I profoundly dissent. The Churches, he says in effect, are hidebound by tradition; their fixities have become a peril to religion: from the Brotherhood Movement, the Quakers, the Plymouth Brethren and the Y.M.C.A. but he expects deliverance. "Canteen Christianity" holds the future rather than "Church Christianity," and underlying these ideas is a profound distrust of the ministry. We may concede that the "parson" is as such not popular; but nevertheless the illustrations of my journalistic friend are unfortunate. Quakerism has had an innings of nearly three centuries—and it has only a few thousand adherents in the land. Plymouth Brethrenism is the sorriest exhibition in history of unchristian Christianity. The Brotherhood Movement has local successes, but nearly always as an adjunct to a Church and under ministerial leadership; it has lately made a desperate effort to save itself from disastrous collapse by calling in a ministerial secretary and by choosing the most eminent of living Baptist ministers as President. A Christian too mean to support a ministry has no future, as it has no root in the N.T. or in the experience of the Christian centuries. We do well to think nobly of our office—the ministry saved the Church in the early centuries from dissolution; it secured the N.T. canon. Luther's first concern was to replace the discredited

mediæval priesthood with an efficient ministry—if only he had not blundered by putting it under the State! Calvin stressed polity and especially the ministry; John Wesley no less. A priestly caste we reject utterly; traditional forms of appointment are immaterial, but a Christian Church without a ministry is unthinkable. And that means that whatever healthful reconstruction in worship is to be achieved must be especially the achievement of the ministry—our achievement, yours and mine. And in any effort to bring it about, we must dare to act as leaders, believing in our divine vocation. Our task is to instruct our people; we must carry them with us, but it is not for us merely to take orders from them, and still less to yield imcritical respect to demands from without the Church. Furthermore, it is open to grave question whether the opinion that is noisily represented by journalistic critics is real. “When the boys come home” things are to happen, we are told. Enthusiastic for the irregularities of the Y.M.C.A. hut, they will demand freedom in the Church—a kind of go-as-you-please service, everything of the “brief, bright and brotherly” order. Preaching will be at a heavy discount; popular tunes, sentimental solos, very short prayers, a minimum of scripture, addresses of either an elementary evangelistic type or of a political-social type—the whole under the control of a committee. Such apparently are the terms of the ultimatum which not a few expect “the boys” to present to the Church. We will “wait and see”! Meanwhile, let me record my opinion that nothing of the kind will occur. The “boys” are intensely grateful, as we all are, for the fine work done for them by the Y.M.C.A., but if I may draw conclusions from the letters of my own lads, they are not dazzled by the glamour of “canteen Christianity.” They miss the Church, and long for its fellowship. These irregular ser

vices are a welcome relief under present conditions, but after all they are only a second best—part of that sum-total of things with which they are “fed up,” and on which they will gladly turn their backs. So far as those are concerned who were in fellowship with the Churches before the war, their loyalty to Church and ministry is deepened; deprived of their Sundays and their religious opportunities, they have come to value them more highly. Beyond a doubt those lads have revealed qualities of which we shall have to take account: the Church must find them larger opportunities; her life must be deeper, more intense, more heroic; but the expectation that they will return as hostile critics of the Church, foes of the ministry, devotees of “canteen Christianity” is a delusion. They will not claim to dictate, but they will be sensitive to reality and brotherhood; it is for us to offer them, so far as grace and wisdom are given us, the highest and most helpful types of worship. But in my judgment no special question arises as to revolutionary changes to meet a demand of our returning soldiers; our task is to find the ideal for all our people—including the young women and the older, and the men who are now with us; what meets their need will meet the need of the “boys.”

Now what are the special points calling for our attention as leaders in public worship? It is unwise to ignore a not inconsiderable dissatisfaction with that whereto we have attained. Our services are said to be “bald,” and often they are. Last month a letter reached me not from a young aggressive person, but from a former Baptist deacon, now seventy years of age, staying in the West of England and attending a well-known Baptist Church. He laments the music—always hymns from one of our older hymn-books, never a chant or an anthem; he tells me that he goes from time to time to the cathedral to listen to

some really devotional music. Brothers, we have to take account of him and his like. Standards of taste have risen and are rising, as well as standards of education; long since freed ourselves of the notion that English grammar is a negligible factor in ministerial work.

Let us dare to draw freely upon the treasures of classical praise: our devotional life is the poorer if this is neglected. And if it be the case that for the moment the congregation is not equal to chant or anthem, why not occasionally devote an after-meeting to the practice of congregational psalmody or of some of the great but less familiar hymns? Our worship might in this direction be greatly improved.

Take another element in our congregational worship—the reading of the Scriptures. Speaking for myself, I regret intensely the growing practice of reading only one short lesson. Undeniably, Anglican congregations hear more Bible in their morning or evening service than as a rule our congregations hear, and the loss is the greater since Bible-reading has not the place in the home it once had. We need not labour the subject, but two or three suggestions may be made: (1) that we adopt some plan in the selection of lessons that shall deliver us from the danger of obtruding merely the sections of the Scripture that appeal to ourselves; (2) that we do not slavishly respect the division into chapters, but choose sections that are true wholes: the paragraph arrangement of the R.V. is here most helpful; (3) that a few pointed words of comment may at the outset prepare the people for hearing, or at the close may enforce the message read. This should not become a fixed habit, and such comments need to be brief and pointed: dull loquacity or stress on the obvious merely offends. And (4) it appears to me that in connection with the reading of the Scripture there is a fine opportunity

for associating our people with us in worship. Anglicanism recognises the "lay reader": in our Churches there are not a few who are quite as capable as ourselves of publicly reading the Scriptures, and we should do well to make larger use of them. The reproach of the "one-man service" would be in some degree met by such action. The only difficulty is found in the existence of the self-assertive man who may enquire why he is never asked to read, but a minister endowed with an average measure of discretion and firmness will not find that difficulty insuperable.

There is a growing tendency to take direct notice of the presence of the children and to fence off some portion of the Sunday morning service in view of their need. A children's address and hymn and sometimes a children's prayer are now included in many churches. We may regard this custom as entirely healthy: of that I have not the faintest doubt, especially since it has been my privilege to watch its effects in my own home, and to know the keen interest which it evokes. Moreover, it assists our people to realise the ideal of which we ought not to lose sight—worshipping families, not merely "worshipping children," but since the family includes the child, the child should be remembered. A few practical hints may be offered: (1) find out the hymns that the children are learning in their day-schools, and the tunes to which they are singing them; it is amazing with what delight the younger children welcome something of which they are able to say, "I know that." (2) Talk to the children as children—not as adults. That is, talk in simple, direct, concrete language. Let the *form* be carefully considered; children are very much more sensitive to form than we realise; sprawling verbosity, lack of thought, vulgarity, not only make the children's portion of the service a tor-

mentary intrusion to the adults, but repel the children themselves. (3) Remember that the children's section should be brief. After all the ordinary public worship is not *especially* for them, and the whole of the service may suffer by prolixity at this point. A seven-minute address already risks being too long; a five-minute is better, and four minutes an improvement on that. To repeat: above all let the children's portion of the service be really theirs, and even the grown folks will enter into it. As to subjects and lines of approach to the child—the more varied the better. Bible story and missionary story, nature parable, historical incident—there is plenty of material, especially if we have no scruple about plagiarism!

We must press on to what is the most vital matter connected with our public worship—the congregational prayer and praise. One aspect of the subject has been touched in what has been said concerning music, but the other aspects are more difficult and more important. No authoritative directions bind us in leading the devotions of our people; except the hymns there is no prescribed form of words. True, there is an "unwritten law" operating in many places, to ignore which would be to risk a stormy Church meeting, but as a rule our people have left us wide liberty as leaders of their worship. Have we risen to the opportunities of that liberty? Or have we somewhat slothfully chosen the easier well-beaten paths? In an address by Mr. Gillie at the Free Church assembly in Bradford, I find all the things that I should wish to say, much better said than I could say them. May I commend to my brethren the study of that address in the Free Church Council's official report? We should probably all associate ourselves with our brilliant Presbyterian brother in the conviction that the method of "free prayer" which we follow is an effort to attain the highest ideal, but what

shall we say as to his contention that it is not the only method that may be used with advantage, and that when it is exclusively used devotional expression is impoverished and devotional culture is arrested? When our people talk frankly to one another—not so often to ourselves perhaps—about that standing feature of most of our services, the “long prayer,” what is their report? They “don’t follow it,” or they were “thinking about so and so,” or—well, there are many variant phrases. The “long prayer” is not a popular feature of our services—even among the choicest of the saints. That is simple matter of fact. In its most characteristic development our method of “free prayer” fails to satisfy and to edify. Brethren will remember that we are not condemning free prayer: it is essential; the individual must express his needs in his own terms; the minister must be free to express the needs of himself and his people in the words which the Spirit at the moment teaches: the question concerns the exclusive use of free prayer in public worship.

The conviction is steadily growing that the “long prayer” must go, and in some Churches it has been replaced by shorter prayers distributed through the service. Adoration, confession, supplication, intercession—to these various aspects of worship separate attention have been devoted, all, however, still under the conditions of “free prayer.” I believe this modification to be a gain; but in my judgment it still leaves grave defects in our public prayer; (1) it fails to elicit the active co-operation of the people, for nothing beyond quiescence is demanded from them; (2) it leaves the worship of each separate congregation too dependent upon its ministers’ idiosyncrasy or mood; and hence (3) it often lacks those elements of universality which make the soul conscious of wide horizons, of oneness with believers in all the ages, in all lands. Why be afraid of

the time-honoured terms of the General Confession or of the General Thanksgiving? To join in these, to repeat them together, is a means of grace. The attitude of opposition to printed and agreed forms of prayer is perplexing and illogical; if we may sing the same words of petition and praise, why may we not say the same words? We all know the objection of a generation ago to the use of the Lord's Prayer—that our Master did not say, "In these words pray ye." He said, "After this manner." But surely nothing could be such a safeguard of the substance of prayer as the use of the very words themselves, and they come laden with associations that link us not only with our Lord but with over sixty generations after Him that have prayed "after this manner" and in these words. And why be afraid, when Sunday after Sunday petitions have to be presented in respect of great common needs (say those connected with the war) of formulating those petitions in terms that are fitting and adequate, using the same words from time to time, and associating our people with the petitions by appropriate spoken responses? Prayer is not "free" when it is forbidden to use such liturgical methods; it is free when it is at liberty to choose any method that is profitable for the edification of the Church.

It may be freely granted that experiments in the direction of prescribed prayer for special occasions have often been unfortunate; take, for example, the Free Church Council's order for the recent day of National Prayer—which, apart from the Lord's Prayer, allotted only one unvarying formula of response to the congregation. But Hunter's well-known collection of devotional services, or Sir John McClure's book used at the Mill Hill School, reveal fine possibilities; and these are not alone.

And here I may put in a brief plea for the new method of "guided prayer," introduced I think at the Edinburgh

Conference, and frequently used since. It has doubtless become familiar to most of us. I bear witness to its value in public worship, as well as to the value of occasional periods of silence. The method often followed at the Queen's Hall prayer meetings of suggesting a response in which, when the leader pauses the people shall unite, is also one that I have found my congregation welcomes.

Other possibilities which we should sympathetically consider are the "Sanctus" at the commencement, followed by a few Scriptural sentences of exhortation to worship. These set the tone, and all that comes afterwards gains thereby.

I began by disclaiming any dogmatic purpose; I would not have our services to follow any one model, even though the model were excellent in itself. My plea is for the serious study of the question and for open-minded experiment. Nothing suggested to-day is inconsistent with our Free Church position. The ends to be kept in view are the making of our services at once more reverent, more helpful, and more congregational. All developments must be guided by loyalty to the inward evangelical spirit of our Free Churchmanship. Nothing could do more harm than slavish imitation or the borrowing of trappings as incongruous as Saul's armour upon David. "Hold fast that which is good"—the sermon, the extemporaneous prayer, the hymn that is linked with the soul's experiences; but "prove all things," assert your right to appropriate everything that helps; do not permit prejudice to repel methods merely because they are novel or because they have originated in churches from which we differ on many points; regard it as a welcome ancillary in worship. So long as the central position is securely held, we may safely have regard to the mental attitude and even the changing taste of our generation that thereby we may the more surely capture it for God in Christ.

PRAYER UNION NOTES.

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

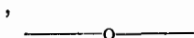
The moment seems opportune for a word of enquiry as to our Prayer Union. At the heart of our fellowship is the pledge to pray for one another on the morning of the Lord's Day. Are we fulfilling the pledge? Is there a real bond of mutual intercession? Or, amid the distractions of the time, have we been letting this matter pass somewhat out of sight? In any case let us now make a new start as a band of brothers, seeking for one another the added strength inevitable from a regular union at the mercy seat.

Pondering the subject one afternoon I saw as in a vision the scene as it might be at the given time on the morning of the sacred day.

I saw in a multitude of homes the head of the household kneeling in his study. There were the city minister, the pastor of the village church, the missionary out in India or Africa, the chaplain with the forces, but all were one in quest of the grace that transforms life and service, and each was thinking not of himself but of his brethren. As I looked, the geographical differences utterly vanished in the unity of the spirit, and the whole company seemed enclosed in one Upper Chamber with tongues of fire descending upon them and a new power entering their souls. And I knew that from such a fellowship and such an enduement great things would be wrought in the world of men through the name of the Holy Child Jesus.

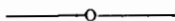
Among the topics of prayer just now one cannot be forgotten—the sorrow which has come into so many ministers' homes in the passing away from earth of soldier-sons. This is a grief of which one cannot speak lightly. Only the Divine Physician knows how, with tender and healing touch, to minister to a wound so deep. May every sorrowing heart be comforted and made strong, and out of experiences at once poignant and precious may there come a new power to help others in their distress!

Prayer is also needed for our brethren who are serving as Chaplains, or as Y.M.C.A. workers. In moments of confidential chat with these when on leave we sometimes gain glimpses of the hell of temptation which confronts our young soldiers, and it is good to know that experienced ministers of Christ are near to help them, providing them with moral support, spiritual fellowship and counsel, and all the inspiration of a right example. It is evident that the evangelistic opportunities of this work are innumerable, and added to these are all the ministries of the hospital. Many of our brethren have found in this service to men the occasion of the calling forth of unsuspected powers in themselves, as well as the discovery of a richer field than they ever dreamed of, in which to sow the seed of their Master's Kingdom. Let us pray for them, and for the work they are doing, with which is bound up much for the future of our nation.



Ought we not also just now to pray much for the Russian pastors? Their lot must be very difficult. Surrounded by political unrest and strife, they need to be ever watchful and wise, that, uplifted above party, they may prove leaders of their flocks in the paths of righteousness and truth, and guides of their nation towards true liberty and strength. Let us ask that they may be prophets of the Lord, ever holding aloft the light!

As my devotional classic for this number I have chosen Brainerd's Journal, that book of which McCheyne wrote in his diary:—"Life of David Brainerd. Most wonderful man! What conflicts, what depressions, desertions, strength, advancement, victories, within thy torn bosom! I cannot express what I think when I think of thee."



Brainerd was born in 1718 in Haddam, Connecticut, his father being a Counsellor of the Colony. From childhood he felt an interest in religion, but not till the age of 20 was he deeply concerned about it. For a time he was repelled by the strictness of the Divine Law, by the sovereignty of God, and by the demand for faith in the Saviour. One Sunday morning in 1739, however, as he walked in a grove the companion of sad thoughts, the glory of God was re-

vealed to him. There was no outward sensation, but a new inward apprehension of God in His holiness, His mercy, and His truth. He now saw the beauty of the way of salvation through Christ, and trusting in Jesus realised peace and joy.

Entering Yale College to study for the Ministry, he met with a great mishap. Speaking one day in criticism of one of the tutors, he was overheard, and in consequence expelled. Grieved and ashamed, he still pursued his chosen plan, studying under a minister, and in 1742 he was examined by the leaders of the Association and licensed to preach. After working awhile among the New England the backwoods, and was accepted for this work by the New York Committee of the Scottish Society for propagating Christian Knowledge.

He now commenced his apostolic labours as a missionary working at Kaumaumeeek, in New York state; at the Forks of Delaware, in Pennsylvania; and at Crosweeksung, in New Jersey. His work involved frequent journeys on horseback through forests and over mountains, and he was often exposed to storms and to peril in fording rivers, as well as from wild beasts. The result was the failure of his health. Yet through it all there burned in him the ardent spirit of a pioneer for Christ, for the extension of Whose Kingdom he thought no effort or suffering worthy to be considered. He died at the age of 29, in Northampton, in the house of Jonathan Edwards, who afterwards edited and gave to the world Brainerd's precious journal. I append some passages of the journal which reveal the spiritual conflicts of this flaming soul, and the secrets of its victory.

Longing for Holiness.

"Felt much pressed now, as frequently of late, to plead for the meekness and calmness of the Lamb of God in my soul. . . . All I want is to be more holy, more like my dear Lord. Oh for sanctification! My very soul pants for the complete restoration of the blessed image of my adored Saviour."

Agonising for Souls.

"I wrestled for absent friends, for the ingathering of multitudes of poor souls, and for many that I thought were the children of God, personally, in many distant places. I was in such an agony, from about sunset till near dark, that I was all over wet with sweat; yet it seemed to me that I had **wasted away** the day, and done nothing. Oh, my dear Jesus did sweat blood for poor souls!"

Difficulties in Prayer.

"It is good, I find, to persevere in attempts to pray, if I cannot pray with perseverance, i.e., continue long in my addresses to the Divine Being. I have generally found that the more I do in secret prayer, the more I have delighted to do, and have enjoyed more of a spirit of prayer; and frequently have found the contrary, when with journeying or otherwise, I have been much deprived of retirement."

Low Estimate of Self.

"This day, while riding, I was much exercised with a sense of my barrenness, and verily thought there was no creature that had any true grace, but what was more spiritual and fruitful than I; could not think that any of God's children made so poor a hand of living to God as I."

Reluctance to find time for Sleep.

"But, oh, with what reluctance did I find myself obliged to consume time in sleep! I longed to be as a flame of fire, continually glowing in the divine service, preaching and building up Christ's kingdom, to my latest moments.

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Early Morning Thoughts.

(Reported by Jonathan Edwards.)

"He said to me one morning as I came into the room, "My thoughts have been employed on the dear old theme, the prosperity of God's church on earth. As I waked out of sleep, I was led to cry for the pouring out of God's Spirit, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom, which the dear Redeemer did and suffered so much for. It is that especially makes me long for it.'"

Some Last Words.

"Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Oh, why is his chariot so long in coming."