

they begin, to pause, and solemnly ask 'what am I going to ask for?' It would be well for Christians to have written down a list of subjects, some of them stated and perpetual, others special and recurring at intervals, which should be brought into their supplications to God. The same remark applies to social prayer. It would be greatly to edification, if the pastor were to select topics of prayer, announce them at the commencement of the service, and request the brethren to confine their petitions to the subject so selected. Let any one consider how many objects are before the public mind, in this extraordinary age, how many agencies are engaged in the various societies which are formed for the conversion of the world, in the various aspects of its population, all of which should be made the objects of special prayer. It is not enough to pray for these in the mass, as means for spreading the gospel; but they should be the matter of specific and appropriate intercession. How deep an interest would be excited in the welfare of these various institutions; how much more would be known about them, if they were thus separately taken up at our prayer meetings, introduced by the pastor with a few explanatory and hortatory remarks, and then laid before God with solemn entreaty! I have drawn out a list for the whole year, which I intend to make the directory for the prayers of our meetings, and which includes every distinct object of importance, which is now sought by religious zeal.

I am aware that an objection will be raised, on the ground of the difficulty of keeping the brethren who engage in prayer to the point, and the probability of each going over the same ground. To avoid this I would suggest, that the first prayer be general, and the least gifted brother be called upon to take it; that the second should refer to the special object, and should be assigned to one whose command of thought and language is greater; and the pastor might, in his concluding devotions, resume and continue the given subject. This plan would have a great tendency to keep up the life and spirit of prayer-meetings; for it must be admitted, that they are sometimes very dull, and a dull prayer-meeting is a very dull exercise; while the repetition of them, has a very injurious influence in deadening the spirit of prayer altogether, both as regards our social and private devotions too.

1. Nothing, however, tends so much to flatten a prayer meeting, as long prayers; and nothing is more conducive to this prolixity, than the idea, so prevalent, that each one who engages is expected to continue for at least ten minutes, and to go through the whole round of common place topics. On the contrary, how interesting and delightful would it be, to hear a Christian breathe out his desires, if it were only for five minutes, upon one subject somewhat in the form of the collects of the church of England, in a manner which indicated that his heart was much set upon the matter

of his petition, and carried the hearts of all present with him.

Much depends upon the judgment of the pastor, as to the interest of these meetings, and it is perhaps a part of the pastoral duty which has been far too much neglected.

The spirit of prayer is the life of religion, both in individuals and communities, and every thing should be done that is lawful and proper, both by pastor and people to maintain its vigour and efficiency. A praying ministry is usually a successful one, and a praying church a prosperous one.

A MORNING AT THE FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

A recent experience in Scotland encouraged me to write a few lines to those who are thinking about theological training and yet find themselves a little hesitant about the unknown. I am an Australian and while nearing the end of an overseas holiday had the unexpected opportunity in Edinburgh to attend a morning's lectures at the Free Church College. The whole scene was completely new to me, having had no previous experience of a theological college and knowing next to nothing of the life which goes on there. I suppose we all have many preconceived notions about the unknown, not all of them worthy ones. By the time I entered the college, in its impressive position at the head of the Mound, exhaustion had overcome my nervousness – the result of running down the High Street for fear of being late for my appointment with Professor Donald MacLeod! A warm greeting set my mind at ease and after talking briefly together I was introduced to the students who were assembled for Professor MacLeod's first morning lecture. After a brief prayer we sat down to an address on 'The Significance of Christ's Resurrection'. It was the sort of lecture which you wish all your friends and relatives back home could be there to hear. Rather than being a cold doctrinal dissertation, it was warm and very moving.

Although I only came for one lecture originally, I was asked if I wanted to stay for more. It was like giving a hungry man a morsel of chicken and asking if he wanted the rest. Of course, I said 'yes'! Thus I sat in on two more lectures, one by Principal Graham on pastoral theology and another by Professor MacLeod. These were divided by morning tea which allowed me to get more acquainted with the students who were warm, helpful and very friendly. A short time of worship was enjoyed by all students and staff which included prayer, the singing of a portion of the Psalms and Bible reading. The hour before lunch was spent relaxing in the common room where I learnt of the varied backgrounds of the students many of whom were in their first year and still finding their way around. One came from the Channel Islands and another from my own country. I do not know if the Free Church College favours such visits from prospective theological students but in my case it was certainly a most helpful experience as I look forward to study next year.

The above was contributed by Jeff Kendal who is now studying at the Presbyterian Theological Hall, Melbourne.