

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