

WHO KILLED THE PRAYER-MEETING?

1. The pastor killed it. Although he gave notice from the pulpit on Sunday that there would be "a prayer-meeting" in the vestry on Wednesday evening, he changed it into a lecture when the evening came. As a lecture it was a great success, as a prayer-meeting it was a lamentable failure. After the learned man had taken twenty minutes himself, every one else felt that whatever else he might say would seem very tame. Young John Evans wanted to say a word or two, telling how the Lord Jesus had satisfied his hungry soul, and then utter a short prayer of request for other hungry souls, but his poor little word was nowhere. Indeed, he didn't say it. O, the pauses of that meeting! Surely the clock in the corner never ticked so loudly.

2. The deacon killed it. It was the next week. This time the pastor went in with a warm heart. He opened the meeting with a short, tender prayer, and then, in a brief word, told, as a child might tell it, the preciousness of the Lord's presence. And it seemed as if nothing could prevent it from being a helpful, quickening season. Something did prevent it. The grand old deacon was a little tired and sleepy, but he thought he must do something to take up the time. He began away back in the sin of Eden, and did not stop until he reached the year 1885. And then he said, "Let us pray." Was that really "praying," that ten minutes description of the plan of salvation which followed? Was this what, that discouraged man over there in the corner wanted from the meeting? Alas, the deacon killed it all!

3. The thoughtless member killed it. She is at the meeting, although not always there. Next to her sits a friend who is out of Christ. The thoughtless member whispers during the pastor's prayer, giggles at every mistake, and turns over the leaves of the hymn-book when any one talks. The people within a radius of ten feet each way are disturbed. The spirit is grieved, and that too, by one who is professing to seek the glory of God. And that killed the prayer-meeting.

4. The officious member killed it. One of the weaker brothers offered a prayer and made a mistake in it. Another brother misquoted a text. The pastor never corrected an error during a meeting. He

thought the correction more fatal to the spirit of the meeting than the mistake. Not so with the officious brother. He rose and corrected each mistake, and that killed several meetings.

5. The six members who took ten minutes each killed it. It was a fine symposium on the theme, "Christ the bread of life," but it was not a prayer-meeting. It overran the hour, and the only prayer was the opening prayer.

6. The faultfinding member killed one precious meeting. His prayer was a real lecture to God, reminding Him of the failings and wickedness of the church. When Christ said to his disciples, "Give ye them to eat," did he mean gall or wormwood, or the Bread of Life? Would not one earnest prayer at home before the meeting have brought as its answer a sweeter spirit?

How many ways there are of killing the prayer-meetings! How many a church has, this year, lost its Week of Prayer through thoughtless, indifferent careless members! Do we have enough of praying? Do good people ever err by too brief prayers?

Dear reader, don't kill any more prayer-meetings.—*Congregationalist*.

Joseph Cook well states the Pressing need of this present time, theologically, when he says: "The supreme need of the home is a religious awakening that shall bring back to their scriptural positions of authority the three central doctrines of an aggressive and scholarly Christianity—the necessity of the New Birth, the necessity of the Atonement, the necessity of Repentance in this life." It is just at these three vital points that the "new theology" of which we hear so much just now is weak. Councils supposed to be "orthodox" vote to install ministers who explain away the new birth, who reject a vicarious atonement, and who hold out a hope of future chances of repentance for those who are impenitent here. "Ye must be born again." He is the propitiation for our sins," "God now commandeth all men every-where to repent," are texts that must be preached in all plainness and power.—*Id.*

The proposed federation of the Australian and Tasmanian Presbyterian Churches has advanced considerably, and it is expected that the first federal Assembly will be held next July in Sydney.