

The Revised Church Hymnary.

THE Revised Edition of the 'Church Hymnary' was published in September last, the revision having occupied a Committee of the various churches engaged in its production for about five years. The Churches whose names appear on the title page include practically all those within the British Empire holding the Presbyterian form of church government, with the exception of that of Canada. The Churches of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, while not directly represented, were kept closely in touch with the work by correspondence, and two members of the Revision Committee acted in the interests of these Churches. The Southern Cross as part of the device on the cover, and the presence of such hymns as "God of Eternity, Lord of the Ages" (642), emphasise the inclusion of the Church overseas.

Some months having now elapsed since the publication of the book, it is possible in some degree to estimate to what extent it has been adopted, and with what measure of acceptance it has met. So far as circulation goes, its reception may be regarded as encouraging. Up to the end of 1927 as many as 250,000 copies had been sold, and the demand since that date has been as great, if not greater. In particular, the "Melody" edition (containing the air in both staff and sol-fa, without the other parts) has proved extremely popular, and is in the meantime sold out. Evidence of a quickening interest is also shown in the large circulation attained by the 'Handbook to the Church Hymnary,' edited by Dr Moffat; as also by the extremely well-written text-book, 'The Story of the Church's Song,' by Dr Millar Patrick, published at two shillings by the Scottish Churches Joint-Committee on Youth.

A book produced under the conditions of the 'Church Hymnary' must necessarily take some time to win its way into the confidence and affection of the people. The number of co-operating Churches, each with its own atmosphere and traditions both as to words and music, make inevitable a considerable amount of "give and take" if a book even moderately satisfactory to all is to be the result. Every member of Committee must have frequently

voted in the minority during the many hundreds of divisions taken. The book therefore cannot be altogether what any single member of Committee would have desired, and still less can it be expected completely to satisfy every worshipper in the Churches that have adopted it. Yet it may be held with some reason that this "give and take" is not merely a necessity but a distinct advantage, as securing that hymns which have obtained a wide acceptance in one communion are at least brought to the notice of others. And when it is realised that Scotland, in spite of the many sweet singers it has produced, cannot claim anything like a leading place in hymnody, it will be evident that our country stands to gain rather than to lose in taking advantage of contributions from richer stores of sacred song than its own.

On the whole it may fairly be claimed that, while the best of the old book has been retained, the new is enriched by the addition of much valuable material from both ancient and modern sources. And it may be said, further, that the new Hymnary marks an advance in the direction of fulfilling those ideals of worship for which the Church Service Society has always stood.

If we take as our guide for Church praise the counsel given in Ephesians v. 19—"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,"—and the corresponding counsel in Colossians iii. 16, it is evident that these recognise two main purposes which Church praise is to fulfil. The psalms and hymns and songs are spoken of as addressed both to a Divine and to a human audience; "to the Lord" yet nevertheless "to yourselves." Praise, while it speaks to God, speaks also to him that utters it, and to his fellow-worshippers. It may be at once prayer and sermon; offering and teaching. Its ends may be spoken of as Adoration and Edification.

Some hymns minister chiefly to one of these ends, some to the other; and in a certain type of religion the hortatory or didactic hymn has acquired far too great a preponderance, just as the sermon, important as it is, has undoubtedly occupied an inordinate place in the current Scottish conception of Divine Worship. It may be too rigid a rule to demand that every hymn should be a direct address to the Deity. Didactic hymns such as "Onward, Christian soldiers" and "Courage, brother, do not stumble" will always have a place. But it is not too much to demand

that the lifting up of the soul to God is the primary function of praise. And it is pleasant to observe in the revised Hymnary a revived emphasis given to what may be called the hymn of pure praise or adoration. Examples of this are Herbert's "Let all the world in every corner sing" (15); "Praise the Lord, His glories show" (16); "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation" (22).

Allied to this is another good feature of the book—the large number of hymns it contains which are versions of the psalms, about thirty in all. Nothing is more regrettable than the way in which the use of the Psalter is decreasing in many of our Scottish Churches. Doubtless the uncouthness of much of our present metrical version, and the unwillingness of many to attempt the rendering of what, for want of a better name, we have come to call the "prose" Psalms, partially accounts for this. The loss will in some small degree be atoned for if some of the psalm versions in the Hymnary are allowed to occupy as good a relative place in our services as they have in the book.

As regards the two seasons of the Christian year which are pre-eminently associated with song—Christmas and Easter—the book is enriched, as it was right it should be, by a number of new hymns. Of Christmas hymns, for example, the former book contained seventeen, while those in the new number twenty-seven. Among these one is glad to see Byrom's classic hymn "Christians awake!" (54) and carols such as "The First Nowell" (45) and "Good Christian men, rejoice!" (58). Among additions to the Easter Hymns are Fortunatus's "Welcome, happy morning!" (115) and also an old favourite from the 'Scottish Hymnal,' omitted in the former edition of the Hymnary, "The Lord is risen indeed" (120). A larger selection is made, too, from the hymns of the Passion, and, as before, each of the Seven Words from the Cross has its appropriate hymn, though one misses the solemn Litany of the Seven Words (No. 66 in the former Hymnary).

The mention of the 'Scottish Hymnal' recalls the fact that it still commands the affection of many in the Church of Scotland, and particularly in the Church Service Society. It may therefore be worth while to refer to a few other instances in which its hymns or tunes have been restored in the new Hymnary. Charles Wesley's fine hymn, "O Thou who camest from above" (471), is a case in point. The better version of the *Stabat Mater*—"At the Cross

her station keeping" (99) is restored. The Hymnal tunes of "All things bright and beautiful" (18), "Thou didst leave Thy throne" (67), "Ride on, ride on in majesty" (92), "Blest morning, whose first dawning rays" (116), "Nearer, my God, to Thee" (475), and "Courage, brother, do not stumble" (529) have their place. Satisfactory also is the restoration of a better text in such lines as "As of old Saint Andrew heard it" and "Jesus, Son of Mary, hear."

Only the slightest attempt at a historical survey can be made within the limits of an article such as the present; but a few instances may be cited to show that the book's claim to represent all ages of the Church is not ill-founded. As Dr Moffat points out, only three centuries—the tenth, the eleventh, and the fourteenth—are unrepresented. Songs of pre-Christian days are found in *Benedicite omnia opera* (719) and "Let us now praise famous men" (726). The New Testament, in addition to the three canticles from S. Luke's Gospel, contributes "The Commandments of the Lord Jesus" (721). From the early days of persecution came the *Ter Sanctus* (713) and the children's hymn by Clement of Alexandria, "Lead, holy Shepherd, lead us" (569). The early Eastern Church yields S. Gregory Nazianzen's "O light that knew no dawn" (458) and Bishop Synesius's "Lord Jesus, think on me" (403), and the early Western Church S. Ambrose's "O Trinity, O blessed Light" (4) and the great hymn of the Crucifixion (108)—

"Sing, my tongue, how glorious battle
Glorious victory became."

From the Celtic Church we have S. Patrick's "Breastplate" in two forms (505, 506), and the hymns ascribed to S. Columba—"Christ is the world's Redeemer" (179) and "O God, Thou art the Father" (454). Specially attractive, by the way, are the Irish airs set to all of these. The Monasteries yield us, in addition to material already familiar, Abelard's *O quanta qualia*—"O what their joy and their glory must be" (224). The two great medieval Orders contribute their hymns, the Dominican yielding S. Thomas Aquinas's Hymn of the Sacrament—"Thee we adore, O hidden Saviour, Thee" (319), and the Franciscan its founder's wonderful Song of the Creatures—"All creatures of our God and King" (13).

With the Reformation a new tide of sacred song begins to flow. The hymns of Luther and his successors, with

their strong Chorale tunes, form a large (possibly too large) element in the book. The seventeenth century, with its struggles between Presbytery and Episcopacy, Puritan and Cavalier, affords hymns by Anglicans like Herbert, Vaughan, and Ken (whose Morning Hymn, by the way, will be sung the oftener by its division into two parts), while the other side is represented by the rugged verses of Bunyan, "He that is down needs fear no fall" (557) and "Who would true valour see" (576), the finer strains of Baxter—"Ye holy angels bright" (39), "He wants not friends that hath Thy love" (225) and "Lord it belongs not to my care" (459), and psalm versions by Milton—"Let us with a gladsome mind" (11) from Psalm cxxxvi, and "The Lord will come and not be slow" (151).

Of the hymns of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries one must speak in even less detail, if only because of their vastly greater number. Suffice it to say that the great hymn-writers of the eighteenth century—Addison, Watts, the Wesleys, Cowper, Newton, and Toplady—are given due place; that a good selection from the Scottish Paraphrases is inserted; that the Romantic revival, the Oxford movement, and the various schools of modern religious thought have all yielded their offering. America's services to hymnody are not forgotten, while those of Scotland, if not conspicuous in volume, are worthily represented by the hymns of Horatius Bonar, George Matheson, Norman Macleod, and others.

Still more difficult is it to write of the hymns of the present day, or to venture any prophecy as to their lasting value. It was only to be expected that the new emphasis laid on the Church's social mission would be reflected in the hymnody of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One often felt that the older hymn-books were deficient in the note of service and brotherhood. Dr George Matheson wrote, "I don't think our hymns will ever be what they ought to be until we get them inspired by a sense of the enthusiasm of, and for, humanity." It is due to the revisers of the Hymnary to say that this defect was before their minds and that they have tried to remedy it. It is less certain that their efforts have been successful. Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Rudyard Kipling, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, Basil Matthews, and many others, have been drawn upon; but the result, to the present writer at least, is disappointing. Is it that

men have lost the art of writing hymns? Could not the League of Nations, for example, have inspired some less dreary production than the hymn "Father Eternal, Ruler of Creation" (645) chosen to commend it?

A section of the book which will be found of great value is that containing hymns for evangelistic and mission services. Some of these are standard hymns that have proved their worth. Others, while more open to criticism from an artistic point of view, have been found successful in reaching hearts that find the normal church service lacking in warmth and directness. This was an admittedly difficult section to compile, and the Committee, while endeavouring to banish what savoured of mere cheap emotionalism, have recognised that hymns for such special services must have an arresting message and make a direct appeal.

To the place of children's hymns in the new book very careful consideration was given. By many it has been felt that the practice of segregating such hymns in a compartment by themselves has tended to make children unfamiliar with many other hymns which they would do well to know. The line between a child's and an adult's hymn is often very difficult to draw. As a general rule one may say that the best children's hymns can quite well be sung by adults, and the best adults' hymns by children. The method followed in the Hymnary has been to distribute most of the hymns for the young under the various general headings, with the exception of a few belonging more definitely to home and school. A glance at the careful index embracing all hymns deemed suitable for the young will probably cause the reflection that something is missed when we fail to familiarise children with hymns likely to be of value to them in later years.

While a hymn-book can never take the place of an anthology, there are many devout people whose hymn-book is the only collection of sacred verse they possess. This fact goes far to justify the inclusion of several pieces not likely to be frequently sung, but valuable for home reading, besides being really good poetry, which many hymns are not. Milton's "Ring out, ye crystal spheres" (61), William Blake's "And did these feet in ancient time" (640), Arthur Hugh Clough's "Say not the struggle naught availeth" (536), Tennyson's "Strong Son of God, immortal Love" (142), and some of Christina Rossetti's lyrics, may be cited as examples.

Another departure from traditional practice is the placing of the author's name and date, when known, at the foot of each hymn. In cases of translation, moreover, the first words of the original are quoted for reference. This should awaken fresh interest on the part of readers, and conduce to a more intelligent use of the Hymnary. Many who sing hymns regularly have little idea of their authorship or history, and would be surprised to learn, for example, that "Let us with a gladsome mind" (11) is by John Milton, "God moves in a mysterious way" (31) by William Cowper, or "When Israel of the Lord beloved" (367) by Sir Walter Scott. Often, too, expressions which would be unnatural if written to-day are seen in their true perspective when it is realised that they date from an earlier century, or are translated from another language.

As to the music of the book, one who is not himself in any sense a musician must speak with all due diffidence. There can be no doubt that the new Hymnary, like the 'English Hymnal' and other recent publications, is expressive of a reaction from the type of hymn tune popular in Victorian days, and represented by such composers as Dykes, Barnby, and others. Such tunes are now frequently described as "sugary," and no doubt the epithet is justified; though one is sometimes tempted to pursue the metaphor a little further. After all, the absence of sweetness is no commendation; and it cannot be denied that some of the musical fare provided in the new book is of a severe if wholesome type. Considerable education will be needed before some choirs and congregations learn to appreciate the stately and solemn music of the German chorales, or the restored slow pace of the psalm-tunes with their long opening note. Should these reflections be deemed heretical, they may be corrected by reading Dr Wauchope Stewart's very able and comprehensive article (in the Handbook) on the music of the Hymnary, or possibly by an article on its music in a future number of this Annual, by one better fitted to commend it.

A subsidiary but by no means unimportant matter is that of indexing, which has received very careful attention. In addition to the usual alphabetical and metrical indexes, there is the index of hymns for the young already mentioned, and two alphabetical lists, one of composers, arrangers, and sources of tunes, and another of authors, translators, and sources of hymns. Besides these, which are bound up with the Hymnary itself, the 'Handbook'

gives a historical account of every hymn and tune so far as these can be traced, a biographical note on every author and composer, a Calendar of the Hymnary, an index of Scripture texts (which should be useful to preachers), and an index of subjects—all of which should prove valuable helps.

In commending the revised Hymnary to the general body of church people, Ministers and their musical advisers will do well to “hasten slowly.” Nothing could be more fatal to its reception than the precipitate introduction of new hymns and tunes, especially if these be of a difficult metre or unfamiliar type. A good method is to have these sung at first by the Choir in place of an anthem, and thus made gradually familiar to the congregation. A series of historical lectures on the Church’s sacred songs, illustrated by hymns of each period, may also be helpful. Given reasonable time and wise choice, the Hymnary will be valued by our people as a rich treasury of song, and a worthy means of expressing their offering of praise to Almighty God.

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