

## AN EXPLANATION.

During the past three years many things have been said in the Church papers relative to my connection with the Hymnal; and I have read not a few of the letters of correspondents with regret that it should have been thought by any one—as was sometimes charged, and more frequently intimated—that I had abused the trust committed to me by the Hymnal Committee, and had taken advantage of my position as their agent, to “tamper with” or change the text of hymns, and to make other alterations in the Hymnal, to suit my own ideas. In *The Churchman* for August 2, 1873, there was such a communication, containing some pointed strictures; this was copied into several Church papers, and called forth some comment. I have taken but little notice of these charges and insinuations, because I preferred to wait until the General Convention of 1874 should take final action on the Hymnal, and for other reasons satisfactory to myself. Once or twice in different Church papers I have made the general statement that no changes were made in the book except by authority; but this statement has not seemed to satisfy all the critics. I desire now, therefore, as the recent Convention has acted on the Hymnal, to make a more detailed statement, to show, if possible, to all interested in the subject, that I did not overstep the proper limits of the duty and obligation entrusted to me. And this statement seems the more pertinent just now as the Hymnal Committee stated in their report to the Convention that their “curator may have stretched his authority somewhat.” I dissent from the justice of even this limited censure.

Before making this statement, however, let me explain the occasion of the differences in the text of some editions of the Hymnal; for considerable complaint has been made on this score, and the blame has been laid at the door of certain publishers. Originally, ten sets of plates were made for as many publishers duly licensed to publish the book. Simultaneously with the furnishing of these plates, there appeared one hundred copies of the book (printed from one of these sets of plates) which were distributed among the Committee, and forwarded, one each, to every Bishop of our Church. Within a few days of the issue of these copies, some typographical errors were discovered, numbering, I think, about twenty; one more serious error was found in Hymn 496, requiring the insertion of one verse, and the transposition of others. It certainly was to have been greatly regretted that any errors existed; but that there were some errors cannot be considered very strange; for rarely does the first edition of any book appear without the discovery of errors more or less serious. The very week our Hymnal appeared, I received a copy of an English hymnal edited by two very learned hymnologists, in which the editors themselves called attention to twenty-three mistakes; and in the “Standard Edition” of our Book of Common Prayer, I find a “Corrigenda” which particularizes twenty-four corrections to be made. As soon as the errors in the Hymnal were discovered, the chairman of the committee was notified; and it was proposed to him that a circular embodying the necessary corrections should be printed at once and sent to the publishers, with the request that such corrections should be made in the plates before any further editions of the Hymnal were printed. This plan was approved by the chairman, who wrote: “I hope that you will notify the publishers of the errors which you have detected; the book is in this respect so nearly perfect now, that you may as well aim at absolute perfection.” The publishers were thus notified, and I think that every one of them who published a second edition, incorporated therein the corrections. If publishers failed to make the corrections, or if they afterward altered the text (of which I have never seen any evidence), neither the committee nor their “curator” is to be blamed.

And now in reference to the general work of preparing the Hymnal for the press. I was asked by the committee, or rather by their chairman, during the session of the General Convention at Baltimore, to superintend the publication of the first edition. Assenting, I subsequently had one interview with the committee, and one with the chairman. At the former I endeavored to acquaint myself with the wishes and views of the committee. I inquired if Scripture texts were to be prefixed to every hymn, or to none, or to some and not to others, as in the edition presented to the Convention. I was instructed to place them before all. I inquired if pronouns referring to the Persons in the Godhead should be capitalized; my instructions were in the negative. I submitted a system of metrical designation adopted in some of the best English hymnals, but it was not accepted. I was told to look to the chairman of the committee for further instructions in the conduct of the work.

At an interview with the chairman on the evening of Saturday, October 21st, (an interview lasting several hours, and at which I made a memorandum still in my possession,) the whole Hymnal was gone over, and many suggestions were made for my guidance. I submitted the importance of restoring the text of certain hymns, not because they were so written, but because they were so used by the vast majority of Christians in the Church of England, and in the various denominations around us, and because I believe that such a course would be the only creditable one to our Church and to the committee which had this work in charge. Among the hymns thus demanding restoration, I specially mentioned at that interview, the hymns “Rock of Ages,” “Jesus, Saviour of my Soul,” “Glory to Thee, my God, this night,” and “Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah,” and I was directed to print the generally accepted version of these hymns; other changes were discussed and decided upon. I was so pleased with these instructions, that on my return to my lodgings, I immediately wrote to a friend expressing my joy at the prospect of this improvement in the hymnody of our Church, and stated as examples of this promised improvement, the changes to be made in the hymns indicated above. This letter was recently shown me, confirming the memorandum I had made, and the opinion which I have entertained, that in changing those hymns in the Hymnal, I only carried out my instructions.

tions. But there is other evidence that I did not make the alterations on my own responsibility.

The Bishop of Western New York has stated in public (*vide Standard of the Cross*, April 17, 1873) that the first of these hymns (“Rock of Ages”) was altered without the authority of the committee. He has also said privately—though to such an extent that it has become public report—that many other alterations were made without the committee’s authority. I trust that what I have already said will prove a sufficient answer to his statement though another answer may be found in the latter portion of this communication. But on this point, the statement of the Bishop of Central Pennsylvania—a member of the committee—is most conclusive. He says (*vide Episcopal Register*, July 26, 1873) of the change in hymn “Rock of Ages”: “The change was deliberately made. It was done by the committee, not by a presumptuous proof-reader. The committee carefully considered and determined on the restoration. The change is either defensible on its own merits, or the committee have fallen into a grievous error of judgment,” in giving me instructions to make the specified changes; therefore the changes may be supposed to have carried out the wishes of the committee.

Some things have been said about the non-appearance in the Hymnal of certain hymns included in the supplementary report presented to the Convention at Baltimore, and adopted by that body; and the introduction of hymns not thus included in the committee’s report. Whatever was done in this direction was done only with the approval of those to whom I was told to look for instructions. Thirty-one additional hymns were adopted by the Convention. Copies of thirty of these were placed in my hands. One was wanting. In answer to my inquiry for that hymn, I learned that it had been adopted by the committee on the recommendation of one of their number; but the first line only had been given to them. I searched for the hymn in all the hymnals I could find in the Baltimore bookstores, but did not succeed in getting it; and I was accordingly instructed to omit it if it was not forthcoming in due time. Of the thirty-one reported, twenty-eight appeared in the Hymnal; for the three omitted others were substituted, with the approval of the chairman. In addition to these changes, by the direction or with approval of the chairman, fourteen hymns were added, or substituted for hymns which were thought to be decidedly inferior. Let us see what these fourteen hymns were, and whether their addition could be considered an improvement of the book. They were the following, viz:

47. Sons of men, behold from far.
65. O Thou from Whom all goodness flows.
78. We sing the praise of Him who died.
81. See the destined day arise.
92. All is o’er, the pain, the sorrow.
114. Hail the day that sees Him rise.
177. How bright these glorious spirits shine.
200. Pleasant are Thy courts above.
230. When Jesus left His Father’s throne.
262. Safe home, safe home in port.
275. This stone to Thee in faith we lay.
288. O’er the gloomy hills of darkness.
446. God of my life, to Thee I call.
473. O God of Bethel, by Whose hand.
506. Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us.

With the exception of No. 262, which is not generally adopted in hymnals, and Nos. 81, 92, and 288, which hold an intermediate position, all these hymns are among the best hymns in our language, and it seems to me, could have been omitted from the committee’s first report only by mistake. That they were subsequently wisely adopted, I think few will question. That their insertion was the work of the curator, the curator cannot for a moment admit, although he would be very glad to have the honor, if he could properly claim it. It is quite likely that he suggested some of the hymns to the consideration of the committee; but to them belongs the credit of authorizing their admission into the Hymnal. Had the curator been entrusted with the power of omitting, or adding, or substituting hymns according to his own discretion, or had he imagined that he possessed such power, he is very sure that he would not have been satisfied with the few changes alluded to.

It is now rather late in the day to discuss the question whether the committee exceeded their authority in making or sanctioning such changes. The chairman of the committee certainly supposed the committee had such power, as is evident from the foregoing statement. Other members of the committee thought they had the power, for more than one of their number, during the progress of the work through the press, desired material alterations to be made. Many of the clergy and laity thought the committee had such power; at least I should suppose so from the fact that during the three months which followed the General Convention, I received about six hundred letters, containing thousands of suggestions, which the writers desired to have incorporated in the book. Not a few of the Bishops thought so, if one might judge from the tone of their letters after the appearance of the Hymnal. And the recent Convention thought so, since by its action it approved the great majority of alterations and changes introduced by the committee.

But this, after all, is a question which has not much importance now, and one with which I have never had anything to do. My work was entrusted to me by the committee; they were my authority; and my responsibility was to them, and to no one else.

I have referred to the statement of the Bishop of Western New York that the hymn “Rock of Ages” was not altered with the approval of the committee. A second statement by the same Bishop is that such change “was not the final action of the committee.” (*Church Journal*, Aug. 21st, 1873.) The statement of the Bishop of Central Pennsylvania, already quoted, is perhaps sufficient on this point. Yet as some persons have inferred from the statements of the former Bishop, that my only authority was the desire of a single member of the committee to have the changes made, in justice to all the members of the committee, I may say a few words in reference to this matter.

While the Hymnal was passing through the press, I submitted the copy, as fast as it was prepared, to the chairman of the committee, for his final revision, intending, also, to submit the proofs to him as I received them from the printer. After I had thus forwarded about fifty pages of copy, I received from him a request, that on account of the delay arising from sending matter through the mails, and the possibility of losing it, I should submit the remainder of the copy to the Bishop of Western New York, in whose See city I was then residing. Accordingly, I at once prepared the whole of the remaining portion of copy, from about Hymn 100 to the Index, and handed it to the Bishop referred to. In this copy were included all the hymns (with the above exception), precisely as they afterward appeared in the Hymnal, except that possibly some marks of punctuation were subsequently changed. The hymn “Rock of Ages,” and other hymns, were given just as they were afterward printed in the book. Was any objection then made by the Bishop of Western New York to the “change” in that hymn, or any other? None whatever; no allusion was made to it, when after several days the copy was returned, corrected only by the substitution of certain Scripture texts, for some which had been previously selected. The only inference there can be from this, is that the Bishop approved the text of these hymns, or did not examine the copy sufficiently to see what the text was. To my inquiry, whether I should bring to him daily the printer’s proofs for his inspection and correction, the Bishop replied that, as he frequently passed my house, he would call in and examine the proofs whenever he wished to see them. No call was made until more than three hundred and fifty pages of proof had accumulated; and to the examination and approval of these *five min.* were devoted. No other call was made to see the remaining pages of proof. Since, therefore, both copy and proof were submitted to the Bishop, whom could he blame but himself if he failed to notice the changes which had been made? If both were thoroughly examined, the changes must have been seen, and the curator might naturally have supposed, from the Bishop’s silence concerning them, that he approved them. If neither copy nor proof was examined by him, as they might have been, it was no fault of the curator, who endeavored to provide for the Bishop every facility for doing what his position as a member of so important a committee seemed to require of him. And further: Although I saw the Bishop very frequently during the next three months after the Hymnal appeared, he made no allusion to the changes in any hymn; nor did I ever know that he took exception to any changes until I read his statement concerning “Rock of Ages,” in one of the Church papers. On the contrary, I supposed he was entirely satisfied with the curator’s performance of his duties; for under date of April 20th, 1872, three months after the publication of the Hymnal, he wrote concerning my connection with the work, in terms of commendation, which I should be unwilling to quote in this communication.

With the appearance of the Hymnal in January, 1872, and the disposal of the “Standard Edition,” my duty as the curator ended, and my connection with the work ceased. No member of the committee has ever intimated to me that he thought I exceeded the limits of the duty imposed upon me. On the other hand, I received letters from several of them, expressing their satisfaction and gratification at the results of my work. The chairman of the committee wrote: “I have given the Hymnal a thorough examination. Every emendation, I think, is a decided improvement, and has my unqualified approbation. In all respects, it is a great improvement upon the original Hymnal, and I am entirely satisfied.”

In conclusion, therefore, I would state distinctly, that I made no changes in the text of any hymns without the approval of the chairman of the committee; that all additions and substitutions of hymns were also submitted to him and approved; that the copy of the whole book (excepting the Index) was in the hands of one or more members of the committee, and was not subsequently changed, except in some cases of punctuation; that proofs of the whole book (excepting the Index) were offered to the member of the committee appointed for the purpose, and the larger portion was in his hands; and that in no way did I “tamper with” or alter the Hymnal, except as hereinbefore stated. I do not see how I can make the statement any plainer; and this must be my answer to the many disagreeable and unpleasant things that have been said on this subject, during the past three years. I remain your obedient servant,

CHARLES L. HUTCHINS.

Grace Church Rectory, Medford, Dec. 10th, 1874.

For the Church Journal and Messenger.

## THE HYMNAL.

Messrs. Editors: I have read in the *Churchman* the Rev. Mr. Hutchins’ “Explanation” of his connection with the Hymnal. From this I learn that the whole responsibility of changes, emendations, improvements, etc., rests with the committee. This is quite satisfactory. We know now whom to censure and whom to commend. I have no doubt that others besides myself will be pleased to be assured on this point, for I am satisfied that many had formed a very different conclusion, misled no doubt as I was by the following paragraph in Mr. Hutchins’ standing advertisement:

It is by this time no secret, that, to the judicious revision, supervision, augmentation, and expurgation which Mr. Hutchins most providentially had the opportunity of exercising in connection with the Hymnal, we are indebted for a compilation far superior to that presented to the last Convention. And we must now thank him for a veritable Thesaurus of information concerning the hymns provided for our use. In short, this handy and beautifully printed volume places before readers generally, a mass of information which heretofore could only be obtained by a laborious hunt through dozens of books. No one can now complain of not being able to make himself acquainted with the history of the hymnology of our Church,