

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

During the past three months I have visited twelve representative Presbyterian Churches in order to study the manner in which the service of praise is conducted, and point out the merits and demerits by which each was distinguished. In criticising the various Churches, I have endeavoured to be strictly fair and impartial, and have recorded the results of my observations without fear or favor. The mission of the true critic is not to scatter compliments indiscriminately, or to confirm the good opinion which people may have formed of themselves, but to give a faithful report of matters as they exist, and suggest in a kindly spirit such improvements as may be deemed necessary.

In reviewing the various services which I have attended, it may interest the readers of the REVIEW to learn what order of service seems to be most commonly adopted. I am unaware of the existence of any formal declaration on this subject by the Church Courts, and have frequently been questioned by ministers and elders, regarding the matter. It has been suggested that I should give a plan of the order of service as I have found it, and in compliance with this suggestion the following is submitted.

ORDER OF SERVICE.

Organ Voluntary.
Doxology.
 Prayer.
 Praise (usually a Psalm).
 Reading from Old Testament.
 Prayer.
 Praise.
 Reading from New Testament.
 Prayer (usually the Lord's Prayer).
 Announcements.
 Collection or Collection } together.
Anthem or *Anthem.*
 Praise.
 Sermon.
 Prayer.
 Praise.
 Benediction.
Organ Voluntary.

The above seemed to be the order of service in nearly all of the twelve churches, with the exception of the items printed in italics. It will be observed that the churches are not in accord in the use of the Doxology, Organ voluntaries, Anthems, or Solos. The following table will enable the reader to form an accurate opinion of the extent to which these are adopted or rejected in the service.

		Opening Doxology	Hymns	Organ Voluntary	Anthems	Solos
No.	1 church	0	0	0	0	0
"	2 "	1	1	1	1	1
"	3 "	0	1	1	1	1
"	4 "	1	1	1	1	1
"	5 "	1	1	0	0	0
"	6 "	0	1	1	1	1
"	7 "	0	1	1	1	0
"	8 "	1	1	0	1	1
"	9 "	1	1	0	1	1
"	10 "	1	1	1	1	1
"	11 "	0	1	1	1	1
"	12 "	1	1	1	1	1
		7	11	8	10	9

From the above it will be seen that no definite rule or principle prevails. In seven churches the service is opened by the singing of "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," and in one only do we find the use of hymns forbidden. Five churches employ all of the forms of worship under discussion, while two have adopted the use of anthems, including vocal solos but have rejected organ solos. On the other hand one church permits organ solos and anthems, but the anthem must not include a solo. Should it contain a part written for a solo voice, this must perforce be sung in unison by all the voices of the part to which it is

ascribed. Surely, here is inconsistency indeed. If one individual be permitted to *play* a solo on an instrument, what reasonable objections can be urged against a sacred solo, when *sung*, and supplemented by the addition of sacred words? One may reasonably enquire why these inconsistencies should exist, and some would fain argue the matter hotly with those whom they are not slow to accuse of bigotry, because of their conservatism in opposing the introduction of what they consider to be unwarranted innovations. Arguments are seldom effective in altering convictions regarding forms of worship. Any of the above inconsistencies may be easily explained by a reference to the history of the Presbyterian Church. When John Knox entered upon the work of the Scottish Reformation every adjunct of the service of the Romish Church which appealed to the senses was discarded as superfluous. The essence of worship was direct communion between God and man; it was a purely spiritual act, and in its awful solemnity any attempt at human effect was a mockery that was intolerable. Everything that savoured of the artistic in church buildings, instruments or the service of praise was swept away and trampled upon with scorn. In the service of praise metrical psalms, only were employed and only the proper or common tunes, numbering twelve in all were permitted to be used. Even part-singing was forbidden, and in the first edition of the old Psalter the melody alone of the tunes was given. The reaction was a violent one, and every attempt to re-introduce part-singing, hymns, anthems, organs, choirs, solos, or in fact anything other than what was authorised by the "First Book of Discipline," was opposed as unscriptural, and tending towards a return to Papacy. Battles long and bitter have been fought over each of the above points in turn and in the majority of instances the introduction of any of them has been the result of a compromise, between the opposing factions. In some cases the conservatives have surrendered to the anthem, and remained firm in opposition to solos or organ voluntaries; in others the organ has been admitted, but only in so far as it may be used as an adjunct to congregational praise. It is well for the Church that we have some of the good old conservative stock with us still. Without them, liberty might degenerate into licence and our Presbyterian service would be in danger of parting with the characteristics from which it derives its strength and individuality. But, with the conservatives rests a grave responsibility. They must show that the means at present employed are sufficient by developing them to their utmost extent. Nothing can ever supplant good, hearty congregational singing in the Presbyterian Church, but it must be in keeping with the spirit of the times. The rising generation will not be satisfied with poor singing, and unless trained to take an intelligent part in congregational praise will remain silent and look to the body of singers concentrated in the choir pew to supply their demands. I have had ample proof that this state of feeling already exists in some quarters. It may be asked, why point out the imperfections without suggesting a remedy? But I have no intention of shirking the duty which has been entrusted to me, and will proceed to point out the means by which our congregational singing may be elevated to its true position, according to the best of my ability.

1st.—As to the duty of the General Assembly. I would suggest that instruction in Practical Music, and in the History of Presbyterian Psalmody form an essential part of the training of all students in attendance at Theological Colleges. It is not sufficient that a glee club be formed from among the students who may be possessed of fair voices and musical ability. Every minister should be qualified to give intelligent support and advice to his leader-of-praise, which would in many cases obviate the difficulties which are continually arising in connection with the praise service. Not, ministers alone, but choirmasters should be trained for the adequate performance of the