

## CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

There is an air of comfort about Central Presbyterian Church which is very inviting to the casual visitor. The interior decorations, while thoroughly modern in character produce a refined and harmonious effect which is very restful and refreshing. The organ is a magnificent instrument which has recently been enlarged and re-built in order to add to its effectiveness in leading the congregational praise. The choir pew is a model example of the arrangement which I have recommended in previous articles. In some of the churches already mentioned the elevation of the pulpit platform has been insufficient to allow of the choir platform being raised sufficiently high for practical purposes, but in Central Church the renovation of both has been effected simultaneously. The seats are arranged in three rows, the third row being slightly elevated above the others. This is the only row which is divided by the organ console as the connecting apparatus is kept well under the pulpit platform, the projection being confined to the smallest possible limit. The choir numbers over thirty members. The constitution of the choir is such as has been found most desirable where well balanced part singing is required. The soprano and bass sections are the stronger, the former to lead, and the latter to provide an adequate foundation for the congregational singing. The contralto and tenor sections are very effective and blend well with the outer parts. I have heard one of the foremost choir-trainers of England compare a well balanced choir to a good sandwich which should have lots of bread and butter on top and bottom to give it body, and inside, just sufficient meat and condiments to give it richness and flavor. The choir of Central Church fully complies with this description. The opening voluntary was Smart's Andante in A which was exceptionally well played. Here, as in the majority of the churches already described the first place is accorded to a selection from the Psalms or Paraphrases. Par. 46 was first announced, and immediately the tune "Tiverton" was played over. The verses were then read, and part of the first verse re-read before the choir and congregation commenced to sing. This arrangement is open to several objections. When the Psalm or Hymn is first announced the organist, may not have had sufficient time to look up the tune, and an awkward pause is inevitable.—while the tune is being played over the attention of the worshippers is mainly given to a search for the number announced, and not to the tune which is being played especially for their benefit; by the time the verses have been read, the concept of the tonality of the tune may have become so indistinct that a prompt and spontaneous commencement is rendered impossible. When the verses are read before the tune is played over none of the above difficulties can possibly occur. In connection with the psalms or paraphrases, I should like to see a general revival of the good old Scottish custom of announcing the name and number of the tune to be sung, as is now done at St. James Square. Tune books are freely used by the worshippers of Central Church, and part-singing is fairly general throughout the congregation, still all cannot be expected to recognize the name of the tune by ear. The announcement of the tune would enable all who use music books to find it without trouble.

The congregation entered heartily into the singing, which was marked by clean cut rhythm and accentuation with careful attention to expression and phrasing. The evening lesson was read from Philippians 3rd chap. after which Hymn 77 was given out. This seems to be a general favorite as I have heard it sung in three of the seven churches visited during the past seven weeks. In King's excellent work on "Anglican Hymnology" it is accorded a place among hymns of the first rank with the following notes on the life of its composer which cannot fail to interest all. "John Newton, the

well-known hymn writer was born in London in 1725. He lost his pious mother when only seven years old, being much left to himself, to mingle with idle and wicked boys. For many years he led a wild profligate life: entered the navy, deserted, and was publicly whipped; then became a slave-trader, and was for a while captain of a slave-ship. At the age of twenty-four, while on a voyage, he picked up a copy of Thomas A. Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, and after perusing the volume the thought struck him, 'What if these things should be true?' This led him to solemn thought and forthwith he experienced a religious change. In 1764, at the age of thirty-nine he was ordained, and presented by the Earl of Dartmouth to the curacy of Olney where he ministered with much earnestness for sixteen years. Newton was a man of great zeal, and vigorously propagated Calvinistic doctrines. Once a week he held a religious meeting at a vacant house in Olney, known as the 'Great House,' belonging to the Earl of Dartmouth. He persuaded Cowper the poet to take a leading part in these meetings. Both wrote hymns for these weekly assemblies. In composing hymns for public worship, Newton tells us that his great object was to make them clear simple, and so that they might be readily understood by poor and unlearned, as well as by the rich and cultivated. 'Perspicuity, simplicity, and ease should be chiefly attended to, and the imagery and coloring of poetry, if admitted at all, should be indulged very sparingly, and with great judgment.' Newton subsequently became the well known Rector of St. Mary's Woolnoth, London, and died in 1807 at the advanced age of eighty-two years."

An anthem is usually sung by the choir after the offertory at Central Church, but at the evening service which is of a specially evangelistic character a selection of "Hymns of Consecration and Faith," compiled for the Keswick conferences, is substituted. On the occasion of my visit an excellent hymn by Dr. Horatius Bonar, commencing "O Light of life shine in" was sung. It is no easy matter to make a simple hymn of six stanzas so thoroughly effective or free from monotony, as to supply the place of an anthem in which each verse is set to music especially its own. This difficulty was overcome very satisfactorily by one verse being sung by soprano and contralto voices in unison, and another by the tenor and basses. The contrasts were very judiciously made, and combined with the pure blending of voices, and attention to details of light and shade, produced a decidedly impressive effect.

Dr. McTavish is known throughout the Presbyterian Church in Canada as one of the most earnest and consistent preachers of the Gospel of Christ. His sermon which dealt with "Aspects of the Life of St. Paul," was intensely practical.

The remaining hymns were Nos. 153, to "Mainzer" and 169 to "Mozart." In these as in those which preceded, the congregational singing was excellent. The choir shows evidences of careful training, with the specific purpose of leading the congregational praise as efficiently as possible. Miss Dallas who has sole charge of the organ and choir directs her forces with much skill and judgment. In her preliminary playing I noticed that the tempo was invariably the same as that employed during the congregational singing. While fairly active, there was an entire absence of all appearance of hurry, and the crisp, clean-cut accentuation of the choir made heaviness or dragging in the singing impossible. The congregation respond readily to the various changes of force, and tempo required for the expression of the verbal sentiment. The result is inspiring and uplifting in its effect on the worshippers who are irresistibly impelled to share in the song of praise. The service of praise seems to receive much careful consideration from the session of Central church, who keep in touch with the organist and choir, through their Psalmody committee. Dr. Wishart as chairman of this committee renders valuable assistance in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the choir and their work in leading the service of praise.—TEMP