sanctified, in a human, temporary or incidental sense, the names of Knox and Wesley, the sanctity of the apostles has yet to be proven as having been attached by divine right to either the Roman or Anglican polity from the very earliest days. There is, therefore, as much to be set aside for the moment in the one case as in the other—a polity that has developed a sanctity, and a sanctity that can only be assumed to have originated in polity. And it is my firm opinion that once the assumptions upon assumptions which have given warrant to the doctrine that stands as a century bulwark in the way of union, have been valued at their proper value by Anglicans, we will find the bit of neutral ground from which the proposals for a wider union than that of three churches may safely and successfully be discussed. In my next article it may therefore be worth while to examine these assumptions upon assumptions—reader and writer freeing themselves, as far as may be, from all emotional traditional prejudice.

CHURCH MUSIC.

With a view to increasing the interest of our readers in matters musical, it has been decided to open this department which it is hoped will be found practically helpful to organists and choirmasters as well as to ministers and their congregations.

Under the above heading will be found from time to time, articles, having for their titles, "The Right Attitude Between Minister and Organist", "Hints to Organists", "How to Conduct a Choir Practice," and other kindred subjects.

This week will be found an article that should be of general interest, viz., "A Plea for Better Congregational Singing." Probably some of the views expressed therein may be at variance with those of some of our readers, in which case we shall be glad to hear from them. We solicit correspondence, and trust to the kind co-operation of our readers to make this department a success. Properly authenticated reports of musical services will gladly be inserted.

All correspondence relating to this department should be addressed to Cyril J. L. Rickwood, Box 221, Perth, Ont.

"A Plea for Better Congregational Singing.

Now that the holidays are over, and our churches are becoming better filled, it may not be out of place to write a few words on a subject that is, or ought to be of interest to all. That there is a lamentable lack of good congregational singing, in the majority of Presbyterian churches, no person will deny. Surely this fact alone is sufficient excuse (if, indeed, any is needed) for this article.

Any who have had the privilege of attending the Torrey and Alexander meetings held recently in Toronto, Ottawa, and elsewhere will unhesitatingly endorse the opinion that the singing is as important a factor as the preaching in bringing souls to Christ.

Assuming good congregational singing to be a desirable feature in our church services, what are the essential elements to bring about this result?

First and foremost, that every individual member of the congregations should sing or attempt to do so.

Some may say "I cannot sing," others "I never sang a note in my life." In the majority of these cases, however, it will be found that the persons making such statements have never tried to sing. It would of course be idle to say that everyone has the same vocal ability, or the same ear or taste for music—that would be unreasonable and unnatural, but this cannot be considered an excuse for refraining from singing. God does not listen to the quality of the voice—it is the spirit which prompts us to use His gift in His praise.

Some may not be able to sing correctly, but the mere fact that they are doing their best will have the effect of encouraging others to try more. The more you join in, sing out, and endeavor to conceive by heart the words, even those members of the congregation who are accustomed to sing, very seldom continue singing until a verse is completed — or nearly so. Many more not even found the place. There is no excuse whatever for such carelessness, which is the only term by which it can be characterized. The hymn tune is played over by the organist, for two reasons—in the first place to give time in which to find the place, in the second, having found it, to indicate to which tune the hymn is to be sung. Whilst it is being played over, every one should listen with an attentive ear, in order to be quite sure of the tune when it is time to sing. This is especially necessary in the case of a Psalm selection, as there is a great similarity between some of the tunes. There can be no excuse, then, for neglecting to start, seeing that all the places are found and every one has been reminded of the tune.

It has been well said that "The Start is Half the Battle"—a statement that is especially applicable to congregational singing.

However, there may perhaps be a certain lack of unanimity as to how fast or how slow to start. How is this matter to be regulated? Primarily by the organist and secondarily by the choir.

It is usual for the organist to play over the tune at the rate at which he wishes it to be sung; the choir take their time from this, and the congregation, in their turn from the choir, but as all have an equal chance to hear it played over, there should not be the necessity to take the time from the choir.

In this connection it may be well to correct a common impression that the choir is supposed literally to lead the congregation. It is not unnatural for one to arrive at this conclusion, seeing that it is so common for the choir to be about one word ahead of the congregation. The function of the choir is to support, not to lead the singing: that is, using the word lead in its literal sense implying following.

The effect should be that of the organ, choir and congregation as a united whole, not as three separate organizations each trying to go their own way.

It is not essential, nor is it desirable that every individual should sing at their loudest. Most people, however, unmusical they may be, are more or less familiar with the marks of expression now to be found in all hymnals worthy of the name.

As a general rule, these marks of expression are good, but in the opinion of the writer, should be regarded more in the nature of suggestions, rather than hard and fast rules to be slavishly followed. The best possible guide is to sing with a full appreciation of the meaning of the words—trying to think of every word as apply to one's self. Sung in that spirit, there is little doubt that the proper expression will result.

It is important to remember that there are no marks indicating cessation of singing. In this connection it may be said that everyone who ceases to sing has a deteriorating effect on the whole congregation, the fact that one ceases to sing has a tendency to make his neighbor cease also, or at least he will not sing with the same vigor as before.; thus it does not take many to affect a whole congregation.

Another important factor in good congregational singing is the proper enunciation of the words. It frequently occurs that the words are not sung as an choir by the choir or congregation. This comes more properly under the heading "Choir Training", and will be treated in a subsequent article, but it cannot be too strongly emphasized, it is as important to the congregation as to the choir.

It is important to remember that all music is written according to certain recognized rules in the matter of time. Even the unmusical will have noticed that certain notes are held longers than others, and this matter is mentioned chiefly to impress upon all the importance of holding notes to their full value, especially the notes at the ends of lines.

Not every hymnal has long notes at the end of a line, but such as have should be sustained to their full value. Those people who are not familiar with musical characters, must be guided by those who are, but there are very few nowadays who do not possess at least an elementary knowledge of music.

In the case of a new tune, it is very helpful to listen during the first two verses, as they are sung by the choir, after which it might be well to join in softly, gradually increasing the tone as the tune grows more familiar. By this means the tune ought to be known to everyone by the time the last verse is reached (say a hymn of six or seven verses). It is a great mistake not to attempt to sing a new tune. It cannot be learnt mentally except by a first-class musician.

There is no necessity to point out the advantages to be gained from good hearty singing—they are obvious.

Congregational singing tends to promote a brotherly feeling between individual members of the congregation—it forms a sort of bond of union between them. It is not enough for a person to attend church as a listener only. Such a person is not taking as active part in the worship of God as he should be. Surely he has no need to be afraid to use the voice that God Himself has given him. To what better use could he put it than by singing his praise. It is therefore incumbent on every member of the congregation to do his or her best to improve this phase of church work, and if done conscientiously, the results will not be long forthcoming.

The words of the Psalmist may be quoted as an encouragement to all: "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

Cyril J. L. Rickwood.

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