

The Wesleyan.

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THE NEW HYMN BOOK.

I. OMISSIONS.

A list of the hymns marked for excision at Quebec, for the information of the General Conference, has been published, and doubtless, closely scrutinized. Of the 599 hymns in the "Collection," that part of the book under which gathers the most venerated associations, about *Seventy*, for various reasons, have been omitted. In looking back over the list of excised hymns, it is difficult to believe that the action of the Committee could with advantage be reversed. The plea,

"Woodman, spare that tree,"

has been repeatedly and eloquently urged. But in no case has the axe been laid to the root of the tree. It has not been mutilated by the severance of one living, graceful bough or branch. A few excrescences have been removed—nothing more. The first hymn omitted

"Let the beasts their breath resign,"

has less adaptation for purposes of congregational worship than two by which it is accompanied, and which exhaustively embody the inspired appeal. The next hymn of that excised list contains a verse that few would desire to retain:

"No longer we join, While sinners invite,
Nor envy the swine Their brutish delight."

The Crucifixion hymn, in two parts, next in order, has been left out by the conservative Wesleyan Committee of Revision in England. There is a literalness, and detail of tragic scene, unsuited for poetic expression; and in the latter part, forming the twenty-fifth hymn, there is an unwarranted exaggeration of sentiment:

"Help me to catch Thy precious blood,
Help me to taste Thy dying love,"

Then follows the stanza:

"Give me to feel Thy agonies,
One drop of Thy sad cup afford."

The inappropriateness of the closing lines would alone constitute a sufficient vindication of the course pursued by the Committee.

"My inmost bowels shall resent
The yearning of Thy dying love."

The same kind of objection has been urged as a reason for leaving out the 27th hymn,—on the Saviour's passion:

"Break this stony heart of mine;
Pour, mine eyes, a ceaseless flood;
Feel, my soul, the pangs divine;
Catch, my heart, the issuing blood."

The 48th hymn has also been omitted from the Wesleyan Hymn Book; and, though the judgment of the Committee has been impugned, there cannot be any propriety in, as sometimes has been done, asked congregations to sing:

"With solemn delight I survey
The corpse, when the spirit is fled,
In love with the beautiful clay,
And longing to lie in its stead."

The 53rd hymn, "On the death of a Widow," the soul hath o'er taken her mate," in the Wesleyan revision has also been replaced by a composition of grater utility. There has been, on the other side of the Atlantic, an occasional complaint that the Hymn Book has "come from the hands of the revisers bereft of familiar and favourite hymns." But whatever value, in a book of devotional poetry, to which properly these compositions belong, might be assigned to them, there were valid reasons for excision from a book of congregational hymnody. Two or three Judgment hymns, 58, 60 and 64, capable of misconstruction, have been replaced by others upon the same subject: equally impressive, and with, perhaps, more accuracy of Scriptural expression. The 90th hymn, a portion of Charles Wesley's paraphrase of a chapter in Isaiah—added after Mr. Wesley's death, of no special worth in its abbreviated form—containing such verses as

"The Rise and End, the First and Last,
The Alpha and Omega I;
Who could, like Me, ordain the past,
Or who the things to come descry?
Foolish is all their strife, and vain,
To invade the property divine;
'Tis mine the work undone to explain,
To call the future now is mine,"

has been omitted to make room for a more useful hymn. In the next excision, hymn 64, there are elements of sublimity; but all of special value, in unexceptionable style for purposes of congregational worship, has been brought out in other hymns of the same class. Two others, 94 and 98, speak for themselves; and there can be little doubt

that, in regard to 108, the judgement of the Committee will be fully endorsed:

"Enslaved to sense, to pleasure prone,
Fond of created good,
Father, our helplessness we own
And trembling, taste our food."

The next in order of omissions, 111, a fragment of one of Charles Wesley's compositions, extending in its original form to sixty-four stanzas, representing a class of hymns that has failed to vindicate a right to continued place in our Church psalmody. In 126, "Too strong I was to conquer sin," with the verse,

"Because I now can nothing do,
Jesus, do all the work alone,"

and 129, "Adam descended from above," with

"Our Surety, thou alone hast paid,
The debt we to thy Father owed,"

the question of revision, or the alternative, of excision, was judiciously, we think, decided in favour of the latter process. There is in the best of these verses a kind of sentiment and expression that may be found abundantly in many other hymns. To 153, where twice in three stanzas the objectionable expression "bowels" occurs, and to 153, with the line

"Force me to be saved by grace,"

the same law as in the previous case was legitimately applicable. In hymn 160 there is a coarseness of expression and a mixture of metaphor which warrant expulsion. Another, hymn, 195, has been left out because of some exceptional phraseology; and because, in abundance, we have Incarnation hymns of a high order. Then follow, in this list of excision, two others, 200 and 212, both of about equal merit, omitted chiefly because of excess in that particular class of hymns. The Atone-ment hymn, 261, with nearly all hymns of that order which have been omitted, has been left out for a very sufficient reason. It was justly felt by the Committee that upon the stupendous themes of which they treat, there ought to be faultless accuracy of expression.

"When Israel out of Egypt came," 223, has sublimity and force, but its distinctive qualities belong rather to religious poems than to hymns available for sanctuary worship. The plurality of persons in the Godhead, in hymn 256, implicates "Council" mysteries in a form scarcely warranted by Revelation. The poetic merit of hymn 274—

"O my old, my bosom-foe,
Rejoice not over me!
Oft-times thou hast laid me low,
And wounded mortally,"

put it low down in the scale of devotional composition; and in some lines it breathes a spirit of defiance unsuited for congregational worship. The "David and Goliath" hymn—

"Who is this gigantic foe
That proudly stalks along
Overlooks the crowd below,
In brazen armour strong?"

comprises fifty-six lines; and 263, another hymn of the same style and sentiment, contains nine stanzas. They have failed through a whole century to make good their position; and the valuable space obtained by their excision can be utilized for the introduction of hymns that have struck home to the heart of the Church. Hymn 310 expresses essential truth, but in objectionable form:

"Into a world of ruffians sent,
I walk on hostile ground;
Wild human bears on slaughter bent,
And ravening wolves, surround"

The second part of the paraphrase on Isaiah xxxv.—

"Where the ancient dragon lay,
Open for thyself a way"

could be safely omitted, on the ground that the previous hymn contained amply sufficient in that strain. The spirit of hymn 362, Mortification of Sinful Sense, is good; but infelicity of expression constitutes a warrant of excision:

"Withhold whate'er my flesh requires;
Poison my pleasant food;
Spoil my delights, my vain desires,
My ail of creature-good."

The want of symmetry, and some other defects of the 368th hymn—

"Father, see this living clod"—

are sufficiently accounted for in the fact that the four verses of which it is composed, are taken from as many different compositions. A somewhat ponderous hymn, 382—

"O great mountain, who art thou?"—

can be safely omitted. Whatever of special value it possesses comes to us in more available form in other hymns of Charles Wesley. The same canon applies to 402,

"O might I this moment cease," and to 432:

"Father, into Thy hands alone
I have my all restored."

Three hymns beginning with 438, all "12-8s," are not well adapted for sanctuary service, and it has been deemed expedient to retain only the last part. With the same unanimity as in most other cases the hymns 442 and 442 have been left out. Protest against error, and loyal testimony for the truth, may certainly find more suitable occasion and expression than in the strong lines:

"The Unitarian fiend expel,
And chase his doctrine back to hell."

There are several other hymns in the same section, "For Believers Interceding"—447, 448, with lines such as "Cruel as wild beasts we are"—449, with the query:

"When shall all thy people meet
In amity sincere?
Tear each other's flesh no more?"

—452, on the restoration of the Jews—453, for England—454, against lukewarmness—459, for the fallen, with "the two sticks," and 460 forming, in the original publication, part of the same hymn—461, having primarily allusion to differences between Moravianism and Methodism—463 and 464, have all been omitted for reasons which we think will be obvious. Apart from objectionable elements, and matters of detail in poetic merit, they do not reach the level desirable for a standard of congregational worship.

Two other hymns—465, "For the King," and 470, "For Masters"—have failed to vindicate their claim to continued position. The hymn for masters has no fitness for public service, and most pharisaic would be he who, with complacency, in private devotion, could adopt the sentiment:

"Inferiors, as a sacred trust,
I from the Sovereign Lord receive,"

and

"As far from abjectness as pride,
With condescending dignity."

The hymn next in order, 471, amongst those published by Charles Wesley in his hymnal for his families, in a measure is open to the same objection as in the previous case. Baptismal hymns have been all too few in the "Collection;" but the ritualism of 447 forms a valid reason for its omission. The quaintness of 487—

"Two are better far than one,"

and the unsingleness of 489, justify their exclusion. The Unity hymn, 490, with many very inferior lines, contains some good verses; and though at first marked for excision, the proposal was subsequently entertained for admitting it in an abbreviated form. In 496, the three stanzas are all of inferior quality; and there are some other hymns—513, "Jesus, with kindest pity see"—517, "Christ our Head"—524, "Our friendship sanctify and guide"—531, "Christ, whose glory fills the skies"—538, in which occurs the singular line:

"Glide with down upon thy feet,"—

which have, principally on the ground of low poetic grade, been omitted.

The chief interest in regard to revision centres in the "Collection;" and it has been thought expedient to indicate very fully the extent and groups of revision.

Want of space precludes the possibility of extending the same kind of review to the Supplement. In a few cases hymns which in that section were marked for omission in the Montreal list, have, upon re-consideration, been retained. There was one hymn:

"All ye that pass by
To Jesus draw nigh,"

to which on purely doctrinal grounds exception was taken:

"Your debt He hath paid, Your work He hath done,"

and

"Aquit I was,
When He bled on the cross."

The hymn has unique qualities, and a power which has been felt in congregational worship. It has been decided, therefore, that with certain important omissions, and with some verbal alterations, it might still hold a place with other glorious "Atone-ment" hymns.

In the work of revision there has been an omission of verses, and some alterations of form and phrase, reported at Montreal which, in the limits assigned, cannot be brought within the range of this paper. Though, compared with the varied lyric excellences of Charles Wesley's matchless compositions, the defects indicated are only as the small dust in the balance, there has been a consciousness that objectionable features brought into group and distinctive relief might tend to an unfavorable impression. It is therefore only fair to emphasize the conviction expressed in our article on "Methodist Hymnody," deepened by more recent examination of several thousand hymns, of their immeasurable superiority for all purposes of worship.—*Rev. J. Lathern, in Canadian Magazine.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. EDITOR,—Among the questions of invitations will you permit one who has as much interest in it as any other, to say a word. One of your correspondents was right in affirming that the resolution that prevailed in Conference was allowed as a "compromise: the opponents of invitations feeling that they might possibly be going too far in sweeping away invitations altogether; that is, they did not wish to give offence to those who were for invitations; so the resolution prevailed.

The position was assumed, and very justly, that the present system of inviting ministers to circuits, that obtained among us, was creating and fostering great "heartburnings," and "dissatisfaction," both among ministers and circuits. On the part of ministers, it was shown that while every brother stood before the Stationing Committee, on a footing of equality, to be assigned a place such as his age and standing in the ministry entitled him to; that is to say, that while every brother was at the disposal of the committee, according to the usage of Methodism from time immemorial: every brother did not stand in such a position of equality, nor was every brother at the disposal of the Stationing Committee at all; for the Stationing Committee was bound from immemorial usage, to entertain invitations from independent circuits: provided they paid the removal expenses of the invited ministers: however these invitations were obtained, and whether they represented the congregations interested or not. Thus a favored class of ministers stood every year before the Stationing Committee: already assigned to the best circuits; while it could not be denied that a large number of good men and true, who had purchased to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith, and who had large families dependent upon them, were compelled to take such circuits as were left, or were available, even though—as was actually the case—some of those circuits had asked for young men and could only raise enough when supplemented by all the grant available to pay the expenses of such young men. The injustice of this was keenly felt.

These were some of the grounds of complaint as they affected ministers, which led to an effort to sweep away invitations altogether. I leave it to men among us—as I think there are still some remaining who love and respect Methodist ministers and their families as a class, and who "esteem them very highly in love for their works sake," to judge as to whether these grounds of complaint are entitled to any respect or consideration? or as to whether the Methodist Church ought to remove them?

I forbear to do more than touch the question, as to how the dependent circuits, who were not able to invite their ministers, because they were not able to pay their salaries: much less their removal expenses, looked upon the ministers sent to them. They had not an equal choice in their ministers. Could it be wondered at if they did not feel an equal interest in them? Their ministers were forced upon them.

The writer is not blind to the difficulties involved in the question; but he thinks it fair to state the historic grounds of the late attempt to sweep away a system fraught with "heartburning" among Methodist ministers and people. All he has affirmed is involved in the original discussion in Conference; and is brought out with more or less force, by different speakers; and has since been freely discussed in Methodist circles.

As to A. W. N.'s statement that all dependent circuits may now claim the right to invite their ministers without the fear of paying their removal expenses. Does he not see that even if the Conference Resolution made it lawful—which it does not: for it is only a law in anticipation—subject to the approval of the Quarterly Boards, it would aggravate rather than remove the grievance: for it may be fairly presumed, that a majority of dependent circuits will not invite their ministers; and then they must suffer loss in their grants, by the payment of removal expenses of those dependent circuits

which do exercise the prerogative: for right it is not. If all the circuits invite their ministers: then the Stationing Committee is abolished. We are no longer Methodists, but Congregationalists. Can we not see now, that that Resolution of Conference (clause I.) "approved" of the congregational system in preference to our time-honored system of allowing a committee to station each minister in the Methodist Church? It remains for the Quarterly Boards to decide whether "they approve" of such a committee stationing the ministers? This is really the question now before them! The Methodist people throughout the world, and all other denominations as well, will watch the issue with no little interest: for it involves great and solemn principles of love and fidelity to each other and to Methodism. Ever faithfully yours,

G. W. TUTTLE,
River Philip, March 1, 1880.

MR. EDITOR.—The correspondence on the invitation question, is becoming so voluminous, and is so steadily and rapidly accumulating that in your issue of the 27th ult., there were no less than four letters relating to this subject. Very many of your subscribers, are beginning to feel a degree of dissatisfaction at having the columns of a paper, they prize so highly as the *WESLEYAN*, so largely occupied with correspondence, advocating the introduction of a system in the economy of Methodism that cannot harmonize with its general understood principles of which is, to send the gospel out into the world without waiting for invitations, and in the cosmopolitan language of its revered founder, to consider "The world as its parish." The time honored old way of the Stationing Committee chosen by the Conference, selecting for each minister his field of labor for three years, is a system that is co-existent with the Church, and has been found to suit the interest of Methodism so admirably, that if it should be, in the least degree departed from, it will appear to the vast number who are receiving spiritual food from her communion, as if a surrender had been made of one of the grand features of the church, and her efficiency impaired.

We have reason to believe that, this new fangled idea of invitations, is more popular among the ministers as a body than among the laity. If the Conference continues to encourage this movement, it will ere long, we fear, more than on the horns of an awkward dilemma—the nature of the movement being of such a character, as to create jealousies among the ministers, as well as in the circuits. Entertaining these views respecting this matter, we hope the impending Conference, will take such steps with reference to this question, as shall stay its progress, and roll back the little tide of opinion that is beginning to run in that direction—to the old way of detailing their staff—and thereby save the church as a whole from what may threaten its spiritual and financial decline. March 5, 1880. NON-INVITER.

TRIBUTE TO THE PRINCIPAL OF THE LADIES' ACADEMY, SACKVILLE.—The following letter so creditable to the writer, as well as so justly complimentary to the Principal of the Institution, to whom it is addressed, fully explains itself:—

SACKVILLE, N.B., March 2.
To Rev. Dr. Kennedy, Principal of the Ladies' Academy, Sackville.

MY DEAR SIR: As I am about to leave Sackville, I wish through the *Telegraph* newspaper, to thank you and the staff of teachers in the Sackville Academy for the kindness which my daughter May, and my niece Rose, have received while pupils in that Institution.

I have, as you know, frequently attended the classes of which my girls were members then taught by Miss Bennett, and by Miss Jackson, and by Miss Waitfield. I have been struck with the ladylike tone of the pupils, the very unusual good order which prevailed, the persevering and determined moral force exerted in teaching and stimulating the more inert pupils. In many respects, I was astonished at the mastering of their young ladies, especially in the algebra class. The English history class was especially satisfactory to me; the girls seemed to be alive in a very unusual degree the life and spirit of the various acts of our history. Miss Waitfield's success in making my girls understand grammar has been a benefit we shall not soon forget. Miss Bennett's class in rhetoric was more intelligent in the general answering than the classes in most Universities, and above all, Dr. Kennedy, your English literature class, showed the working of this admirable academy in carrying to the highest point the work of female culture. The moral tone of this academy bears witness to the firm will and conscientious care of its Principal, and as a Church of England clergyman, I could wish my daughters and no better moral and Biblical teaching.

I am, dear sir, yours truly,
CHARLES PELHAM MULLER,
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