

ENRICHMENT OF THE PRAISE SERVICE.*

There are several branches of the praise service, such as the stated Sabbath services, the prayer meeting services, the Sabbath school services, Christian Endeavor services, etc.

Nowadays there are often separate books for all or most of these. I see no reason why one good book might not suffice for all. Such a book is now in preparation for the Presbyterian Church in Canada. I hope the book will be edited from a comprehensive and catholic standpoint.

It goes without saying, that unremitting attention should be paid to the praise service. Good preaching comes not of neglect and sloth, neither does good singing.

As to speed of movement, some psalms and hymns require a certain gravity, but the fault in nine cases out of ten is a sluggish, dragging movement—too slow! too slow! Cheerfulness, and spirit, and confidence in singing are not compatible with slow singing. Music can carry sad emotions as well as joy, but the main intention of the Creator in making sweet sounds possible was doubtless the purpose of praise. Praise to God is the chief end of music. Lugubrious praise is a contradiction in terms.

Some form of congregational training in singing is necessary, say once a month, on lecture night; learning time, and tune, and shading—in short, learning to sing with the understanding. Mere loudness is often out of place. Good singing is the minister's best ally; it could be made to add 50 per cent. to the effectiveness of his work. In the large sense, every minister should be his own choir-master, because, while time and tune are important, the bringing out of the thought is more important still.

By the way, speaking of prayer-meeting, some people think any sort of singing good enough for that. Shorter and less formal prayers and better singing would often mean the difference between a mid-week meeting that is "a time of refreshing," and a mid-week meeting a "weariness alike to flesh and spirit."

As to Sabbath school singing the same book should ordinarily be used in the school that is used in the church, for two reasons—first, that the hymns and tunes in the church book are apt to be better; and, second, because the children would thus be in constant practice and training to assist in the praise service in the church. In connection with every congregation, or every Sabbath school, there should be a week-day or week-night elementary class in music, a thing very common in England and Scotland.

Do not rush thoughtlessly into new tunes; but do not stick always to the old. A judicious mixture is better. Ministers should be careful not to explode a new tune without warning to either choir or congregation.

Canadian voices are not high in pitch. Tunes in high keys are always difficult and straining. Preference should be given to keys of moderate pitch. In many cases the organist should transpose the tune into a lower key.

There are churches which underestimate the sermon and overrate the service. I would not like the sermon to be let down. At the same time I would not like the rest of the service to be underrated. The Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, of Toronto, to take an outside example, is a good preacher, but his service is always specially helpful and stimulating, and in excellent taste and tone. I am sure the effectiveness of the service adds to the effectiveness of the preaching anywhere and everywhere.

The other Sabbath morning I took part in a service somewhat as follows:

1. Without announcement, two verses of the hymn, "Holy, Holy."
2. Invocation.
3. A psalm, sweet and grave.
4. Reading, Old Testament.
5. The long prayer. (In passing, I may say I think this prayer is generally too long, and is not generally followed.)
6. New Testament reading.
7. Announcements, and then collection, during which the Te Deum, "We Praise Thee, O God," was sung by the choir. (Better still, have the whole congregation sing it.)

* Paper read at a recent meeting of the London Presbyterian Council, by Mr. John Cameron, editor of the *Advertiser*.

8. Lord's Prayer, all joining audibly.
9. Sermon.
10. A word of prayer.
11. Hymn.

12. Benediction, the congregation remaining bowed in silence for a few moments longer. (This should be general. A simple request from the minister would generally secure it. There should be no unseemly rush out of church.)

Now, the enrichment of the service in the above was in the prelude "Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," and particularly in the glorious Te Deum, "We Praise Thee, O God." The audible joining in the Lord's Prayer was also helpful.

In church music I plead for good music, and good grammar, and good sense, as opposed to flimsy music married to doggerel verse.

Let us bring in more of the great hymns and great tunes of the Church Universal.

If there are 20 or 50 desirable hymns that are not to be found in our hymnal, why should not the congregation print a small supplementary collection, to be placed in every pew or in every book? Such a supplement would cost little and be worth much. There are many noble tunes that ought to be brought into use. Many a tune that is a little out of the simple harmonic chords sings itself into the memory all the better because of its individuality.

Where the prose version of the psalms is sung, both choir and congregation should be trained to avoid rapid, indistinct gabbling of the words. Good chanting differs from good reading mainly in the pitch. You cannot have good chanting nor good singing of any kind without good training from both pastor and choir-master. The elocutionary side of singing, the punctuation, the meanings, these are not to be neglected. And once more, the minister should not, under any circumstances, tolerate slow, dragging music. Let him say, as I have heard Spurgeon say: "Come, brethren, let us have the next verse a little faster and heartier."

As to anthems and solos, there can be no rule. The Salvationists truthfully say that without stirring music they could not have attained their great success. The Methodists sing their way into popular favor to-day as in the days of the Wesleys. Moody and all the great revivalists often find a spiritual song by a single voice a good preparation, or a good clinch, to an address. Perhaps the advantage of the single voice is that if the singer is competent you can make out the words.

When anthems are to be sung the minister should always previously read out the words.

The organ voluntary can be made a means of grace. A Canadian minister of my acquaintance once preached in Henry Ward Beecher's church. He arrived in the vestry a little late, a trifle nervous. Good old John Zundell, the organist and composer, was in the vestry awaiting the list of hymns. "Mr. Zundell," said the preacher, "I am unsettled and flurried; I wish you would take as your organ prelude something to quiet me." Zundell took his seat at the organ, whence issued the softest and sweetest strains, soothing and comforting as "the benediction that follows after prayer," leading on presently to tones of rising confidence and inspiration. The preacher stood up refreshed, ready for work, and preached a capital sermon. A word of caution: the organist should not drown his choir with noise. I need hardly say no organist should play the equivalent of a jig as the people go out of church after a sermon on death and eternity.

No music, no poetry can be too good for the praise service. But everything must be thought of from the standpoint of spiritual edification, never primarily from the artistic standpoint although I appreciate the latter. If in every congregation in Canada I could within three months ally with the preacher the full power and force of what I mean by good music, in not only its artistic but especially its spiritual aspect—a genuine singing with the understanding—there would be little risk in predicting a perceptible immediate strengthening of every good word and work in every congregation. The suggestion that the conductor of the musical work of the church should be designated and inducted as well as the minister or elder is worthy of consideration.

The power of good music, under the power of the Holy Spirit—for God works by means—is beyond calculation. The praise service, properly used, is a right arm to the minister. It uplifts or melts the congregation and makes it receptive. Its mighty latent forces should be used more freely, more systematically, more thoroughly, more prayerfully.

THE PSALMS, THE PSALMS!

MR. EDITOR,—Very far am I from being opposed to the use of hymns, as a supplement in the service of praise. But I am most strongly opposed to the abolition of the Psalms. I believe that in the course of a few years, scarcely a psalm will be sung in our churches. Many of our ministers seem to look on the Psalms as behind the age. My object at present, however, is not to discuss this question, but to give some extracts relating to the Psalms, from an article on Theodore Beza, in *Le Citoyen Franco-Américain*, of December 30th. They are as follows:

"Besides numerous and learned works, the French Reformation owes to Theodore Biza the translation into verse of a part of the Psalms, which, modified and modernized as to style, are still sung in our churches. Clement Marot had translated fifty of them. Theodore Beza translated the other hundred.

"When, in 1562, he published the complete Psalter, Beza dedicated it to the martyrs.

"For two centuries, the Psalms have been an unfailing source of edification and consolation to the persecuted. The fourteen Protestants of Meaux who were condemned to the stake, sang the 79th Psalm. The five students of Lausanne who were burned at Lyons, sang the 9th Psalm in the cart which bore them to the place of execution. Anne of Bourg, the upright magistrate who dared confess the Gospel before Henry II., sang Psalms in the iron cage in which he was shut up in the Bastille. Jean Rabec, whose tongue had been cut out, succeeded, however, in singing intelligibly, while his garrotted body was hanging over the flames.

"During the civil wars, the camps of the Huguenots rang with the singing of psalms. Coligny did not sit down to eat, even in camp, without having sung a psalm, standing, and he did not go into battle without having asked his chaplain to lead in prayer, and sing a psalm. The Huguenots often sang when they were going into conflict, the famous battle Psalm of Theodore Beza: 'Let God only show Himself' (most likely the 68th is here meant—'Let God arise').

"After the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the fugitives who were leaving the kingdom, rolled out on the way their well-beloved psalms. In exile, they sang them in remembrance of the country which had cast them out of its bosom. They were sung in prisons, and in the galleys, though when that was done, the Protestants invariably brought on themselves the bastinado, or increased punishment. They were sung in the conventicles in the desert, called together at night in the retired parts of the Cevennes mountains, 'We flew,' said Durand Fages, 'when we heard those divine hymns. However great our weariness might, at times, be, we thought no more of it when the singing of the psalms fell on our ears.' But often that singing pointed out to the soldiers the meeting which they sought, and a volley hushed the voice of the singers, and put them to flight. The three hundred Huguenots, shut up in a mill, near Nimes, there to celebrate their worship, perished in the flames, kindled by order of Marshal Montrevel, and from this immense stake, from which only a young girl escaped, was heard rising to heaven the singing of psalms.

"During that long and last persecution which lasted three-quarters of a century, the singing of psalms ceased not to rise to heaven as an appeal and a protest. Francois Teissier, Viguier de Dufort, the first martyr of that period, mounted the scaffold in 1686, two days after the Revocation, singing the 31st Psalm: 'Into Thine hand I commit my spirit,' etc.

"Seventy-six years later, pastor Francois Rochette, the last martyr, before giving himself over to the executioner, sang these words of Psalm 118: 'Behold the joyful day (no doubt, v. 24, 'This is the day which the Lord hath made,' etc.).

"This psalm-singing of the martyrs did not cease, so to speak, during these three quarters of a century. All the pastors of the desert who were condemned to the gibbet, went up the steps of the fatal ladder, singing a psalm. The Fulcran Reys, the Etienne Arnauts, the Jean Martins, the Alexandre Roussels, the Pierre Dortials, the Jacques Rogers, the Louis Rancs, the Francois Benetzets, and the Francois Rochettes, welcomed death with the strengthening words of our old Psalter on their lips.

"Dear friends, when we sing any of our psalms, let us remember that they have been the consolation and the joy of our fathers, in the midst of persecution. And let us not forget to bless God who permits us to-day to sing them with perfect freedom."

The Covenanters—the Scotch Huguenots—sang psalms in circumstances of the very same kind as those above described.

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GOD'S CARE FOR HIS OWN.

BY REV. W. S. McTAVISH, B.D., ST. GEORGE.

April 20.—Psalm ciii 1-22.

When we come to this theme, we are like children playing on the shore of the mighty ocean, we can see only a little around the coast, and must leave great portions unexplored. We are like a man standing beside a great, perennial spring, for we can drink only a small quantity of the water that bubbles up. Let us try to sample what is here.

1. God forgives all our iniquities. This truth embraces the fact not only that our past sins are blotted out through the atonement of Christ, but that our daily sins are likewise forgiven. It is a sad fact that we sin against God daily in thought, in word, in deed. But we can place beside it another and more comforting truth, that God forgives all our iniquities. Sins of omission, sins of commission, sins of intention and sins of actual fact, all these He forgives. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." (1 John 1-9.)

2. He healeth all our diseases. He is Jehovah Rophi, the Lord our Physician. He never fails in His diagnosis of a case, neither does He err in the application of the remedy. George Horne says, "The body experiences the melancholy consequences of Adam's offence and is subject to many infirmities; but the soul is subject to as many. What is pride but lunacy; what is anger but a fever; what is avarice but a dropsy; what is lust but a leprosy; what is sloth but a dead palsy?" But it matters not what the malady of the soul may be, God has some remedy which can cure it. He heals all diseases.

3. He redeems our life from destruction. There were many times in David's life when he could have said, as he did on one occasion say, "There is but a step between me and death" (1 Samuel xx. 3). But God redeemed his life from destruction, when he was a shepherd boy; when he was a fugitive in Gath; when fleeing from the face of Absalom. How many dangers seen and unseen does God deliver us from! There was also a penalty of death hanging over us once, but God through the sacrifice of His Son, provided means whereby that death-penalty was removed. When we were utterly undone, he provided a ransom.

4. He crowns us with loving-kindness and tender mercy. How some have schemed and plotted and planned for the honor of wearing an earthly crown! How wretched some of them were when they had accomplished their purpose! "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," an earthly crown. We who have been made kings unto God are crowned by Him with what always gives peace, joy and pure satisfaction. What were we, or what was our father's house that we should be thus honored? What claims had we upon His mercy? None; and yet when we recount His loving-kindness and tender mercies we might well say with Cowper:—

"When all Thy mercies, O my God!
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise."

5. He satisfies our mouth with good things. Satisfies! How much that word implies! Where did men ever find satisfaction apart from God? Can they find it in wealth, honors or fame? No. They who seek satisfaction in these things are like a man drinking salt water, the more he drinks the more he burns with thirst. Sometimes men are satiated but not satisfied. But God satisfies us with good things.

6. He executeth righteousness and judgment for us. He rights all our wrongs; He justifies our conduct; He interposes on our behalf; He brings forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noon-day.

These are only a few of the things in which God shows His care for us. If He did no more, surely this should satisfy! Even these are more than we deserve, and more than we have a right to expect. What then? Let us call upon our souls and all that is within us to be stirred up to praise and magnify His name.

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