

## A Lay Preacher and his Hymns.

LIKE most lay preachers, I have a system which tells me at which places each sermon has been preached, and what sermons have been preached at each place. But I used to keep no record of hymns; and it occurred to me about three years ago that I might be getting into a rut, and using too small a range of hymns. I have, therefore, kept my service papers, or most of them, and have now analysed those that are available, and find that in announcing hymns 538 times I have used 239 hymns. I happened to mention this to two friends, one of whom, a pastor, thought that the range of hymns was wider than the average. The other, a fellow lay preacher, who is our Editor, asked for an article, and put some questions to me.

It is a surprise to me that certain hymns occur so rarely in my list. Possibly during these three years I have unconsciously refrained from using some of my favourite hymns as often as I formerly did. 115 hymns have been used once, 56 twice, 27 three times, 14 four times, 12 five times, 9 six times, 1 seven times, 2 eight times, 1 nine times, and 2 fourteen times.

The hymns have come from *Psalms and Hymns*, the *Baptist Church Hymnal*, and its Revised version, *Sankey's Hymns*, *Redemption Songs*, the *Methodist Hymn Book*, and at least two other books. The two hymns that were used 14 times were Hart's "Come, Holy Spirit, come," and the Scottish "The Lord's my Shepherd." The latter hymn is in the *Revised Baptist Church Hymnal*, but not in the old book or in *Psalms and Hymns*.

As to the subjects of the hymns, the headings in various books differ much; but taking the *Baptist Church Hymnal* I find the grouping to be:

|                     |     |     |          |          |
|---------------------|-----|-----|----------|----------|
| Call to Worship ... | ... | ... | 14 hymns | 31 times |
| The Holy Trinity    | ... | ... | 3 "      | 9 "      |
| God the Father—     |     |     |          |          |
| His Attributes      | ... | ... | 4 "      | 13 "     |
| Creation            | ... | ... | 1 "      | 5 "      |
| Providence          | ... | ... | 7 "      | 24 "     |
| Redemption          | ... | ... | 6 "      | 14 "     |
| God the Son—        |     |     |          |          |
| Eternal Word        | ... | ... | 1 "      | 1 "      |
| Incarnation         | ... | ... | 6 "      | 6 "      |
| Earthly Life        | ... | ... | 1 "      | 1 "      |
| His Death           | ... | ... | 9 "      | 34 "     |
| Resurrection        | ... | ... | 3 "      | 3 "      |

|   |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|
| Ascension ... ..  | 1 hymns | 2 times |
| Priesthood ... ..   | 3 "     | 12 "    |
| King ... ..   | 5 "     | 13 "    |
| Name of Jesus ... ..  | 5 "     | 8 "     |
| Titles ... ..   | 3 "     | 8 "     |
| Coming ... ..   | 3 "     | 3 "     |
| Holy Spirit ... ..  | 4 "     | 26 "    |
| The Scriptures ... ..                                       | 7 "     | 21 "    |
| Gospel Call, The Call Accepted,<br>and Cry for Grace ... .. | 8 "     | 20 "    |
| Fellowship ... ..   | 2 "     | 4 "     |
| Holiness and Joy ... ..                                     | 10 "    | 25 "    |
| Union with Christ ... ..                                    | 7 "     | 22 "    |
| Discipline of Sorrow ... ..                                 | 2 "     | 4 "     |
| Peaceful Trust ... ..                                       | 1 "     | 2 "     |
| Christian Service ... ..                                    | 3 "     | 7 "     |
| Zeal ... ..   | 5 "     | 12 "    |
| Divine Guidance ... ..                                      | 2 "     | 6 "     |
| Final Blessedness ... ..                                    | 1 "     | 1 "     |
| Church of Christ—   |         |         |
| Unity ... ..  | 2 "     | 9 "     |
| Baptism ... ..  | 2 "     | 4 "     |
| Lord's Supper ... ..  | 6 "     | 11 "    |
| The Kingdom of Christ on Earth                              | 1 "     | 1 "     |
| The Lord's Day ... ..                                       | 2 "     | 2 "     |
| House of Prayer ... ..                                      | 9 "     | 20 "    |
| Prayer Meeting ... ..                                       | 8 "     | 17 "    |
| Morning ... ..  | 1 "     | 2 "     |
| Evening ... ..  | 2 "     | 2 "     |
|   | 160     | 405     |

There are some hymns from later sections, but these are chiefly children's hymns.

Of these 160 hymns, 33 are by Watts, 16 by the Wesleys, 14 by Cowper and Newton, 8 by Doddridge, and 7 by writers before Watts; which means that half the hymns from the *Baptist Church Hymnal* are not less than 140 years old. We are grateful for many hymns of later date; but some of the old hymns, written by men who had had deep spiritual experience, are still unsurpassed in the way in which they express the grace and glory of God, and the needs and aspirations of men.

Among the hymns in my list is one that is in *Psalms and Hymns*, was omitted from the *Baptist Church Hymnal*, but has

been included in the *Revised Hymnal*, and I am glad to see it there:

Lo, God is here, let us adore

Eight of the hymns were in *Psalms and Hymns*, but are not in either edition of the *Baptist Church Hymnal*. One of these, "Behold the glories of the Lamb," is not one of Watts' best; but it was his first hymn, and has historical interest.

Among the eight are:

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove  
 Jesus, my All, to heaven is gone  
 Jesus, the Lord, our souls adore  
 Weary souls that wander wide  
 Ye humble souls that seek the Lord

There are not many London churches that still use *Psalms and Hymns*, but if these five were in the *Baptist Church Hymnal* I should be glad to use them sometimes.

There are in my list twelve hymns that are in the *Baptist Church Hymnal*, but not in the *Revised Hymnal*, and I note against each the number of times that I used it:

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Eternal Power, whose high abode        | (4) |
| How sweet and awful is the place       | (2) |
| How sad our state by nature is         | (1) |
| Let everlasting glories crown          | (3) |
| Lord Jesus, are we one with Thee?      | (1) |
| My soul, repeat His praise             | (5) |
| Not what these hands have done         | (4) |
| No more, my God, I boast no more       | (2) |
| O Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head  | (2) |
| Salvation, O the joyful sound          | (1) |
| Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb         | (8) |
| With all my powers of heart and tongue | (4) |

In my opinion, "Thou dear Redeemer" is one of the best Communion Service hymns in the book.

The following were not in the original *Baptist Church Hymnal*, but appear in the *Revised Hymnal*. Again I give the number of times used:

|                                     |      |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| Book of grace and book of glory     | (3)  |
| Day is dying in the west            | (1)  |
| God loved the world of sinners lost | (2)  |
| I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus      | (1)  |
| I to the hills will lift mine eyes  | (3)  |
| I need Thee every hour              | (1)  |
| Lo, God is here, let us adore       | (4)  |
| Man of Sorrows, wondrous name       | (2)  |
| The Lord's my Shepherd              | (14) |

The Editor has asked whether I keep a note of the hymns in such a way as to use the same hymns if I preach that sermon elsewhere. I do not do so; but choose the hymns afresh, and sometimes a different Scripture reading.

The grouping of the hymns in the *Hymnal* is not necessarily a guide to the subjects of the sermons. The principle upon which I work is that the people do not come to hear a sermon, but to worship God; the sermon being part of the worship. The hymns, therefore, should not be regarded as "preliminaries," or chosen merely because they accord with the subject of the sermon.

My general practice is to begin with a hymn of adoration, and a short prayer upon the same line. Let God be first in the order of the service, and let the preacher seek from the beginning of the meeting to lead the people into the presence of God.

Without any fixed rule, it is a good plan to let the second hymn be one that refers to the work of the Holy Spirit, or to the Holy Scriptures that He has inspired.

If it is not a service at which a children's hymn is required, it may be well to have, before prayer, a hymn that directs attention to our Great Mediator and High Priest in the heavens.

After prayer, the service is usually interrupted by notices, most of which are unnecessary. There then remain the hymns before and after the sermon, and the preacher may think it well that these shall have some bearing upon the message for that service.

Despite the opinion of many eminent preachers, I believe that the preacher should remain standing during the singing of the hymns, and should join in the singing. It is his business to lead the worship of the people. If he prefers to spend in prayer the time while the hymn before the sermon is being sung, well and good. But let him join with the people in their act of worship in singing the other hymns.

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