

A College Principal and His Hymns.

I RESPOND very readily to the Editor's request for a short article in his interesting series. The statistical lists of those who have already written have been quite revealing to myself, and make an interesting comparison with my own records. Not that a College Principal can be said to have a different attitude to the part hymns play in worship than any other minister. Of course, he has to officiate at more Induction and Anniversary Services: and, preaching in a different church each Sunday, he is not troubled with the problem of securing variety in the hymn service; and is accordingly inclined to fall back on his own favourites. The distinctive contribution which I have to make, therefore, as a Principal, is not important: except that I must say I have been impressed with the general excellence of the musical part of the services in the Scottish Churches it has been my privilege to visit during the past five years. There has been a high standard of organ playing, and reverence, and taste, in the rendering of the hymns, on which it has been a pleasure to comment elsewhere.

My own records cover a period of twenty years in the ministry, and include the use of two books—the Baptist Church Hymnal, unrevised and revised. Out of a total of 947 hymns available from the two sources, I find I have used 495: but this of course needs to be supplemented by the metrical Psalms and Paraphrases which are in general use in Scotland, in Baptist as in Presbyterian Churches. Some of the best of these, such as "The Lord's my Shepherd," and "Ye gates, lift up your heads on high," have been included in the Revised Edition (for the education of the Sassenach?). The best of these metrical versions are very good: the worst are pretty bad.

Five hymns have been sung forty times and more: the list being topped with "The King of Love my Shepherd is," with fifty: fifteen have been selected thirty times and over; thirty-five more than twenty times, forty-four, fifteen times or over, seventy-eight over ten times (a total of one hundred and seventy-eight); and the remainder less frequently. For the sake of carrying on the good work begun by others, I append an analysis, not on quite the same basis as either of the preceding ones:

			Hymns available.	Hymns used.
THE CALL TO WORSHIP	...	...	32	23
THE HOLY TRINITY	...	...	7	7
GOD THE FATHER				
His Attributes	...	...	17	9
Creation	...	...	7	1
Providence	...	...	19	8
Redemption	...	...	11	4
GOD THE SON				
The Eternal Word	...	...	3	2
Incarnation	...	...	22	12
Earthly Life	...	...	17	7
Death	...	...	18	10
Resurrection	...	...	11	7
Ascension	...	...	4	1
Priesthood	...	...	5	0
King	...	...	7	7
Name	...	...	6	5
Titles	...	...	13	9
Ascriptions	...	...	7	3
Coming	...	...	11	5
GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT	...	...	19	9
THE SCRIPTURES	...	...	16	6
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE				
Gospel Call	...	...	19	14
Call accepted	...	...	32	16
Cry—for Grace	...	...	14	3
Fellowship with God	...	...	21	14
Holiness	...	...	32	24
Joy	...	...	8	3
Union with Christ	...	...	19	13
Patience and Submission	...	...	29	17
Peaceful Trust	...	...	18	7
Service	...	...	31	23
Zeal	...	...	21	15
Guidance	...	...	17	13
Heaven	...	...	14	3
Victory over Death	...	...	12	3
Final Blessedness	...	...	11	5
THE CHURCH				
Unity	...	...	18	8
Baptism	...	...	19	9
Lord's Supper	...	...	28	14
Ministers	...	...	10	3
The Kingdom	...	...	46	30

			Hymns available	Hymns used
WORSHIP				
The Lord's Day	...	...	24	12
House of Prayer	...	...	16	11
Prayer Meeting	...	...	32	13
TIMES AND SEASONS				
Morning and Evening	...	...	45	21
New Year, etc.	...	...	22	7
Seasons	...	...	14	5
Hospital	...	...	5	3
Marriage	...	...	5	1
At Sea	...	...	3	2
National	...	...	19	8
CHILDHOOD				
Intercession	...	...	4	1
Aspirations	...	...	19	7
CHILDREN'S HYMNS	...	...	66	50
FAREWELL	...	...	2	1
			<hr/> 947	<hr/> 514

In some cases hymns have not been used as often as they might have been because the tune was unsuitable, or at any rate I did not like it—e.g., I have chosen the hymn "Immortal, invisible," much more frequently since the introduction of the Revised Edition, where it is set to "St. Denio." In many ways the revision has been a great improvement. It cut out a lot of dead wood: about a hundred and fifty hymns altogether have been omitted: and I was interested to find that I had scarcely used one of them during my ministry. One or two I have missed, such as "Work, for the night is coming," "Childhood's years are passing o'er us" (perhaps because these have associations with childhood), "Around a table, not a tomb": but most of the others "never would be missed." Some were doggerel, some utterly unreal and exaggerated, most of them uninspired. This is especially true of the section on Heaven, from which about half have been omitted: many of them were morbid, or cast in a theological mould that no longer appeals.

The omissions have been quite impartial and catholic. Watts has been the worst sufferer from the slaughter of the innocents; and others of the same period, Bonar, Doddridge, Montgomery, Toplady ("Your harps, ye trembling saints"). But hymns by modern writers have also been "scrapped": Rawson, Conder, Whittier, Geo. Macdonald. Even modern writers can be

uninspired. Many favourites of to-day may suffer the same fate to-morrow.

The additions, which are of two kinds, are both welcome: familiar hymns from other Church books, and new hymns like W. Y. Fullerton's. Again the selection is catholic—Milton, Samuel Johnson, Luther, Bunyan, S. Francis, Bishop Moule, Anne Bronte, Percy Dearmer and Silvester Horne. The inclusion of some of the great hymns of the Church is particularly valuable: such as "All creatures of our God and King," "Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire," "The strife is o'er, the battle won": and also of some of the best of the Sankey type of hymn, by which the evangelistic section has been strengthened. The National and Children's sections have also been enriched: but like Mr. Larcombe, I should be grateful for a larger selection suitable for Communion, and on the social application of the Gospel.

More and more, as my ministry went on, I found it necessary to spend time on the selection of the praise list week by week—as well as on the devotional part of the service. Choosing the hymns often took an hour and more: but it was time well spent. A praise list ought not, in my opinion, to be built up round the sermon, except in a small measure. It should aim at expressing in a harmonious whole the entire spirit of worship—adoration, thanksgiving, repentance, aspiration. If this is done thoroughly, it is wonderful how often the praise falls into line with the subject of the sermon—even when the hymns were chosen before the text!

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