

and a real desire to master and to understand them. The mental habits thus formed at school were afterwards transferred to the ordinary everyday occupations of life, and the result was thorough and successful work in many an undertaking, and capacity for advancement and responsibility whenever an opportunity occurred. After all, the greatest and most important factor in the work of education is the personality of the schoolmaster and the religious belief that is in him, and the sooner we abandon our fads and get back to this truth, which was old long before the days of Dr. Johnson, the better for our schools and for our scholars.



A Rearrangement of the Psalter.

BY THE REV. S. C. LOWRY, M.A.

FOR two hundred and fifty years our English Prayer-Book has maintained its present form. Any alterations made therein have been slight and insignificant. Practically it stands to-day as it existed in the Stuart dynasty. This feature is esteemed and prized by a certain type of mind, conservative of accustomed methods and apprehensive of any change. To such the rigidity of the Prayer-Book makes for calmness and quietness, is a guarantee of continuity, and an evidence of the unity of, at any rate, the Anglican branch of the Church. They find pleasure in the thought that from generation to generation the same time-honoured services have been held, the same prayers read, the same Psalms sung, without alteration or, at any rate, without any serious break. To others, however, this unchangeableness, this rigidity, is a matter for regret rather than satisfaction. They think that grooves are dangerous and may be sometimes deadly. They consider that progress is a note of a living Church, and that progress may mean the adaptation of the services to the needs of successive ages. They feel, for

instance, that if we were to be forced to use the hymnals of one hundred years ago, and no other, the bondage would be intolerable ; and they do not see, if our books of Common Praise are subject to frequent enrichment, why some additions should not be allowed, at longer intervals, to our Book of Common Prayer. They wonder why we should still continue to have precisely the same form of prayer in the evening as in the morning, and they question whether it is not time that there should be more variety, more flexibility, and more adaptation in the services of the Church.

The subject of Prayer-Book Reform is a large one. The present paper will be confined to the need of rearrangement in our method of reciting the Psalter.

The use of the Psalter has varied somewhat in the Eastern and Western branches of the Church, and in Dr. Neale's book on the Psalms an elaborate disquisition will be found on the subject. It is enough here to say that in the *Western* branch in the centuries preceding the Reformation it was designed that the Psalter should be read through *weekly*. The Book of Psalms was divided into seven portions, and on each day it was contemplated that in the various services a portion should be read, while in addition there were certain fixed Psalms invariably used at certain offices. This methodic weekly recital of the Psalter was an ideal, however, rather than a fact, since on Saints' Days (and every other day at least was a Saint's Day) it was subject to interruption by special Psalms belonging to those Saints' Days ; and thus, as the Preface to the Prayer-Book tells us, one-half of the Psalms were never read, and several were begun and never ended.

At the Reformation the systematic and consecutive reading of the Psalter was again asserted, but a *monthly* recital was substituted for a *weekly*. The Psalms, as all know, were divided into sixty portions, two for each day of the month, with Proper Psalms for only six days in the year. This system has continued since the Reformation, and it is endeared to many by long-established usage. Its chief advantages are that it is simple

and straightforward, that for the clergy and those who attend daily morning and evening prayer it insures a complete familiarity with the whole book, and that it secures uniformity wherever our Prayer-Book is used. But it is a matter for consideration whether in arranging our Church services, especially our Sunday services, we should not consult the interests of the many rather than the few. Those who attend week-day services are but a fraction of the whole. The great majority come to public worship on Sunday alone, and of these some come only in the morning and some only in the evening. Is it not, therefore, to be desired that on Sunday at least the Psalms selected should be those which are most helpful, most inspiring, most appropriate, and that they should not be simply regulated by the fact that there happen to be thirty days in the average month? The imperfection of the present system may be illustrated by a very simple parallel. In "Hymns Ancient and Modern" there are just six hundred hymns, of various degrees of merit from the highest excellence to the feeblest verse. Imagine "Hymns Ancient and Modern" divided into sixty portions of ten hymns each, and that we were compelled on the Sundays to choose from the portions allotted to the day without any consideration of fitness and appropriateness. Should we consent to a bondage such as this? Should we not find the burden intolerable? According to this plan we should be compelled to sing nothing but Morning and Evening Hymns (1 to 20) on All Saints' Day, and nothing but Passion Hymns (100 to 120) on the Epiphany.

(a) The present arrangement of the Psalter is often *inappropriate*. Familiarity with the book as a whole is dearly purchased when it involves singing hymns which are unsuited to the day or the season. In Holy Week, if it occurs at the end of March, we may be singing the most jubilant of all the Psalms. On the first Sunday after Easter, if it occur on April 10, our Psalms for the day will touch the lowest depth of humiliation in the *Miserere*. Who has not felt the need of a larger number of special Psalms for special occasions? If the

reader fails to agree with the rest of this paper he will, at least, admit that a much larger number of Proper Psalms is something to be desired.

(b) The present arrangement is commonly *too long*. Our services are too long; our Psalms are too long. Let us again take the analogy of a hymnal. Would it be rational and edifying to sing three hymns consecutively, without a pause or break between them? Is it not now a common canon in hymn-books that, whatever the length of the original, the cento should not, with rare exceptions, exceed seven or eight verses? Opinions will differ as to the best length to aim at; but it is probable that if the selection of Psalms were decided by what is most likely to be beneficial, and not, as at present, by the fact that there are thirty days in the month, the selection would be shorter than it is at present. In the case of the longer Psalms, it might easily be possible to sing part and not the whole, just as we read parts of certain chapters in the Lectionary.

(c) But the third fault in the present method is that it is sometimes *unedifying*, and that it involves singing a few Psalms which may not only be inappropriate to the particular season, but which are not best suited for Christian worship in a Christian church.

The most obvious instance is an *Imprecatory* Psalm like Psalm 109, where we have such words as these: "Let his prayer be turned into sin; let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow; let the wickedness of his father be had in remembrance in the sight of the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be done away." Whatever interpretation we may give to these sentences—and our readers will be familiar with the usual explanations—their suitability for *Christian* worship may be questioned. For these sentences are not, like the sentences in the *Commination Service*, an assertion of a present fact, nor, as in the *Quicumque Vult*, a prediction of a future doom. They belong to a different category. They are what we call *Optative*, and when we say them we are open to the rebuke with which our Saviour rebuked the disciples who wished to follow the precedent of Elijah and

call down fire on an inhospitable village: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

And if it be said that it is not for us to pick and choose amid the inspired words of Holy Scripture, the answer is that in the first lessons we already have established the principle of selection. Certain chapters are read; others are left out because they are less important or less edifying. We do not think it necessary to read every chapter in the Old Testament; some are plainly unsuitable for public recitation, and if selection be admissible in the lessons it is surely admissible in the Psalms. The Jews did not think it necessary to read every Psalm in their public services. In the Jewish Rituals more than a third of the Psalms (fifty-six Psalms) are unread. The chief Imprecatory Psalms are absent. Surely a similar power of selection should be allowed to Christians.

The reasons, therefore, why the present system is unsatisfactory are these: That it is often inappropriate, that it is too long, and that it involves the singing of Psalms which are not best suited for Christian worship. To turn now to the positive and constructive side of the subject, it is only possible here to sketch the broad outlines of an alternative system, but we venture to give the following suggestions:

1. It is desirable that in the case of the greater festivals the Proper Psalms for these days should be used throughout the Octave.

2. For the seasons of Advent, Epiphany, Septuagesima, etc., and Lent, the Sundays after the Octave of Easter, and, lastly, Rogation-tide, certain Psalms should be used appropriate to those seasons—Psalms more or less sombre and penitential for Advent and Lent; jubilant Psalms for Epiphany and Easter. For the Sundays in these seasons either specified Psalms might be allotted to each Sunday, or a certain number of Psalms allotted to the season, and the selection left, as in the case of hymns, to those who are responsible for the conduct of the services.

3. There should be special Psalms for Saints' Days, Dedication Festivals, and other special occasions.

4. For the Sundays of the half-year following Trinity Sunday, when appropriateness to the season is less urgent, the present system might continue, or, preferably, a separate list might be compiled for each of the Sundays after Trinity.

5. On week-days other than Saints' Days the monthly recitation might continue as at present, with discretionary power, perhaps, to substitute certain Psalms, if thought desirable. This power of altering according to discretion is granted in the Prayer-Book of the American Church.¹

6. If all Psalms were clearly numbered with Arabic instead of Roman numerals there would be no more difficulty in finding them than is experienced in finding hymns.

7. One other point may be added. There are splendid lyrical passages in Isaiah and other prophets. These might well be added as an appendix to the Psalter.

The system, in conclusion, that is here advocated is, broadly, the selection of particular and, where possible, appropriate Psalms for Sunday worship, greater frequency of use being given to those Psalms which in spiritual vigour and literary grace are felt to be most helpful and most inspiring. For those who do not or cannot attend daily services it is much better that they should be familiar with a smaller number of Psalms than that they should have a slight acquaintance with the whole. At present many of our morning worshippers never hear the *Evening* Psalms; many, shall not we say *most*, of our working classes never hear the *Morning* Psalms. The fault may be theirs, but it has to be reckoned with. It would probably be a gain to the heartiness of worship if, owing to their frequent repetition, the worshippers became well acquainted with certain Psalms during certain seasons, and the echoes of such Psalms would be more likely to make themselves heard in the strain and stress of daily life. In the Psalter we have a unique collection

¹ In the American Prayer-Book a series of groups of two or three Psalms are printed, which may be used at discretion instead of the Psalms for the day.

of sacred poetry suited to the varying moods of the Church's year; but we fail to avail ourselves of the wealth of our resources, because we allow our reading to be regulated by the Julian Calendar, and not by the principle of fitness and appropriateness. The present system of recital has lasted long enough, and to many it will appear that the change here advocated is an improvement.

And if it be said that we may talk of change, but that no change is possible, if it be urged that the Church is powerless to adapt her services to the needs of successive ages; then, if we are thus trammelled and fettered, there is the more cause for those who have her interests at heart to throw themselves into the movement for Church Reform, whose object is to restore to the Church her legitimate rights and duties.

Freedom to regulate her services—with due regard to ancient tradition and custom—ought to be the prerogative of a National Church, and for this we should aim, though it may have to be acquired at a great price.



“No, not for an hour.”

BY THE REV. CANON RANSFORD, M.A.

SUCH was St. Paul's answer to certain false brethren who were plotting against the truth of the Gospel. Give way to them? No, not for an hour. And such is my answer to all and sundry who would deprive me of the liberty which I have in Christ Jesus, and in His Church. Give place to them? Let them have their way, just for the sake of peace? “No, not for an hour.”

And the question is one of hours, of the twenty-four hours of the day, and of how many of them I will allow to be dragged away from the highest service of God. As I understand my redemption by Christ, and the consecration of my Baptism, and the surrender of my Confirmation, I am altogether Christ's,