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take leave to doubt his success or even the value of his effort. No development of Christian doctrine can be held to be legitimate which fundamentally alters the facts of the Christian faith, and certainly this modern interpretation, however excellent, is not recognizable as the faith once for all delivered to the saints. To waive aside the historicity of the Resurrection, to treat the gospel narratives as in great measure legendary, to discuss Paul's interpretation and John's as interesting speculations will appear to ordinary minds as the renunciation of what has hitherto been understood as Christianity; and it is astonishing how able men can delude themselves into the belief that the Christian faith can survive the destruction of its historic foundation, or that a vigorous Christian life can be nourished upon thin air.

Hymn-Mending.

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One happy result of recent consideration of the Church Hymnary has been the discovery of the keen interest which the members of the Presbyterian Churches take in the congregational praise. Clearly the experience of the past half-century has drawn them into a deep appreciation of the materials provided in the hymn-books now in common use. This was specially manifest during the meetings of the Assemblies. Not having the Draft of the Revised Hymnary in their hands and therefore left to depend on references to it in the correspondence of the newspapers, the people of Edinburgh were constantly questioning ministers they entertained in their homes regarding the grounds on which it was proposed to reject certain hymns they had been singing from childhood and introduce others that seemed to them not a whit superior. These changes became a theme of discussion even in the short journeys of the street cars. Many people did not hesitate to enter into conversation on this topic with ministers to whom they were entire strangers. To see in their hands copies of the 'daily proceedings' was enough to raise the whole question. The same feeling doubtless prevailed in the towns and villages of the provinces.

One is glad to know that the privilege of examining the Draft is no longer to be confined to those who happened to be members of the Assemblies, but that copies are being sent to all ministers of the Churches throughout the land. The issue can only be for good. The ultimate form and contents of the Hymnary will be all the more widely acceptable if it bear upon it the stamp of the mind of office-bearers in all the Churches concerned.

Discussions in Presbyteries—perhaps even in some kirk-sessions—will naturally turn first on the method used in selecting the best hymns for inclusion in the new book. But there is another question on which something ought to be said, namely: What attitude should be taken towards the precise form of the hymns that are chosen? Are we at liberty to make any changes in the language and phrasing of the hymns we select? Or, are we morally bound to retain the exact forms they had as they left their authors' hands? To me the question seems sufficiently important to merit more consideration than is accorded to it.

The opinion commonly held in Scotland for more than fifty years past has been opposed to taking any liberties whatever with the original text of hymns. Changes of any sort were regarded as showing a lack of gratitude and respect for the writers. In a collection of hymns for week-day services and Sunday schools, published last century, a prominent minister in Edinburgh ventured to change the opening line of J. H. Newman's hymn, *Lead, kindly Light* into *Lead, Saviour, lead*; and the result was a sharp animadversion upon what a reviewer called an unwarrantable and needless innovation. Similar views were expressed in the recent Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Hymns, it was contended, were the fruit of the writers' travail of soul and should be kept immune from alterations.

The primary source of this view was a protest against changes in hymns which John Wesley made in his preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists*, published in 1779. 'Here,' Wesley says in par. 7, 'I beg leave to mention a thought which has been long upon my

mind and which I should long ago have inserted in the public papers, had I not been unwilling to stir up a nest of hornets. Many gentlemen have done my brother and me (though without naming us) the honour to reprint many of our hymns. Now they are perfectly welcome to do so, provided they print them just as they are. But I desire they would not attempt to mend them; for they really are not able. None of them is able to mend either the sense or the verse. Therefore I must beg of them one of these two favours; either to let them stand just as they are, to take them for better for worse; or to add the true reading in the margin or at the bottom of the page; that we may no longer be accountable either for the nonsense or for the doggerel of other men.'

In spite of this candid claim, however, it is by no means certain that Wesley did not take certain liberties in dealing with some hymns he printed or translated. He had a very sensitive critical faculty in dealing with other men's language; and it is a well-known fact that he exercised it to the full in dealing with the lyric work of his brother. As James Montgomery said in his introductory essay to *The Christian Psalmist*, 'It is probable that the severer taste of his brother, the Rev. John Wesley, greatly tempered the extravagance of Charles, pruned his luxuriances, and restrained his impetuosity, in those hymns of his which form a large proportion of the Methodist collection; the few which are understood to be John's being of a more intellectual character than what are known to be Charles's, while the latter are wonderfully improved by abridgment and compression, in comparison with the originals, as they were first given to the public' (p. xxv).

All the same, this view of Wesley was never fully accepted. From 1779, compilers of hymn-books constantly made such changes as suited their taste. The evangelistic preachers of the United States of America have always been very prone to fall in with this practice. Mr. Paxton Hood was specially severe on Unitarian compilers for altering evangelical hymns to suit their own dogmatic position. Instead, for example, of singing with Charles Wesley:

> Jesus, Thine all-victorious love
> Shed in my soul abroad,

they shrank from the direct address to the Saviour, as if the writer had ascribed to Him an unmerited place and substituted the word, *Father*.

Even the compilers of our Scottish Paraphrases did not hesitate to make what alterations they deemed suitable on some of Isaac Watts' hymns. In dealing, for instance, with what we know as the 54th, they changed the third and fourth lines of the first stanza, which originally ran:

> Maintain the honour of His Word,
> The glory of His Cross.

The first two lines of the third stanza were as Watts wrote them:

> Firm as His throne, His promise stands,
> And He can well secure.

Unlike John Wesley, James Montgomery, while doubtless averse from thoughtless and arbitrary changes, was apparently quite prepared to submit his original hymns to any improvements which the experience of respectful compilers might suggest to them, for in the essay already referred to, published in 1825, he uses these words concerning his own lyric work: 'Tried by the standard which he has himself set up, every one of them would be found wanting. He might perhaps be able to assign reasons for the failure of each, independent of positive incapacity in himself; but the judgment he leaves with his readers to whom he humbly presents these gleanings under the perfect conviction that they will be thoroughly sifted and the chaff burnt up, and the grain, if there be any, gathered into the garner of the true Church' (p. xxxiii).

The present writer has no doubt whatever that this is the right attitude to take up on the whole question of hymn-mending. When a gifted hymnist writes and publishes a hymn, he really imparts it as an offering to the Church over all the world. It is indeed a transcript of his own travail of thought and feeling and prayer, and it should always be received with grateful remembrance and treated with respect. But just as poets like Wordsworth and Tennyson, after publishing their works, did not feel bound to avoid improving them in many details, so, where absolute necessity calls for it, we may well feel at liberty to accept and yet revise the hymns bequeathed to us by the best hymnists of earlier centuries. Everything in the result depends on the spirit in which this work is done, and of course, above all, on the experience and skill of the revisers that undertake it. Individual students are entitled to use their critical faculty, but no

compilation should be published in which any proposed changes are inserted unless these have been in some way first submitted to the judgment of a competent representative body of experts and cordially approved of by them.

How well on the whole this kind of revision has prospered may be illustrated from changes made in one or two of our best known hymns.

In the instance of Isaac Watts' great hymn, one of the finest, as Matthew Arnold held, in the English language, little actual change was required. But what in these days would be thought of a minister who was so obsessed by a narrow conservative spirit as to demand the retention of a stanza which was the fourth of five in the original form of the hymn as Watts himself wrote and published it?

> His dying crimson like a robe
> Spreads o'er His body on the tree.
> Then am I dead to all the globe,
> And all the globe is dead to me.

Very properly has this stanza been omitted in all recent Hymnaries. Quite suitably too has the word 'present' been changed to 'offering' in the last of the four stanzas we now have: for 'offering' alone retains the idea of praise as a sacrifice so frequent in the Scriptures. If I may venture to indicate a change which might well have not been made, it is the omission of an adjective which, I have read, was originally attached to 'Prince of glory' in the form of the hymn as Watts first wrote it:

> When I survey the wondrous Cross,
> Where the young Prince of glory died.

For myself, I confess that I do not envy the man who, for the sake of obtaining a clearer definition of locality changed 'where' into 'on which' and omitted the pathetic epithet of the poet. In these days, as ever, we surely need to be reminded that Jesus died for us in the flower of early manhood, and, as the Lamb of God on the throne, is still clothed in the beauty of eternal youth.

A still more striking example of the necessity of revision is afforded by the changes made in the hymn so familiar and dear to us in Scotland from its opening words, 'O God of Bethel.' It was written by Dr. Philip Doddridge in 1737, and was published in England in its first form in 1775. A glance at the original was sufficient to show that as a whole it was not composed in Doddridge's best manner. It was felt to be a too literal and somewhat prosaic reproduction of the scene depicted in the story of Jacob's dream at Bethel; as, for example, in stanzas 3 and 5:

> If Thou thro' each perplexing Path
> Wilt be our constant Guide,
> If Thou wilt daily Bread supply
> And Raiment wilt provide.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> To Thee as to our Covenant God
> We'll our whole selves resign,
> And count that not our tenth alone
> But all we have is Thine.

Very soon, therefore, compilers began the work of revision; and a version of the hymn with some few changes appeared in the Scots *Paraphrases* of 1745. Yet, in spite of this patent fact, in 1781 the Rev. John Logan of Leith reproduced it in his own volume of Poems without the slightest acknowledgment of Doddridge, though with certain emendations of a very superior kind; and in this later form, as we now have it, it was included in the Paraphrases of that same year. But from what source did these finer changes in phraseology come? Students of the question like Dr. Mackelvie, Dr. A. B. Grosart, and the late Mr. Mackenzie of Edinburgh are confident that a writer who was guilty of doing what Logan had the audacity and folly to do, could not have made them. By this time, Logan had in his possession the MS. of a collection of poems by Michael Bruce, a student of Divinity in Kinnesswood, Lochleven, which he destroyed soon after Bruce's early death; and these writers became assured that the ultimate reviser of the hymn was none other than Bruce.

In the opinion of the present writer, the internal evidence of the language used—for that is the only kind now left to us—is entirely in favour of this conclusion. To a careful reader of Michael Bruce's other undoubted poetical works, every line speaks to us of his pure taste and noble trustful spirit. The propriety of revision is thus confirmed in a hymn which became as precious to men like Lord Strathcona, the Ex-Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, as it has been and will be to thousands of the humblest Scottish peasants at home and abroad.

If hymn-mending, however, has been happily practised in bygone days, the necessity for it has by no means passed away. To show this, I may be permitted to refer to some hymns which are still widely in use in Church praise.

A simple change, for example, would be very welcome in the well-known hymn, 'Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah.' It was written by W. Williams, the distinguished Welsh evangelist and published by him in Welsh in 1744. Shortly thereafter, it was translated into English and then adopted by the author himself in the form now in common use. Williams was a fervent Calvinist, and to this predilection is evidently due the very harsh and prosaic line of the third stanza, 'Death of death and hell's destruction.' In the circle in which I lived as a child, this line was strongly objected to. A devout Christian mother, whom I often heard singing this favourite hymn in the midst of household duties, never uttered these words; and the reason was that in the hymn-book she used while attending a Bible class conducted by Mr. Robert Lee of Tweedmouth (afterwards Dr. Lee of Greyfriars, Edinburgh), the third and fourth lines of this stanza were printed thus:

Bear me o'er the swelling current,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.

Surely this change made as early as 1830 would be felt still to be a distinct improvement. It maintains the harmony of the symbolic picture, while the language of the original line is as incongruous as it is needless.

We enter on more delicate ground, when we take up Zinzendorf's *Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit*, so well known and highly esteemed through John Wesley's translation:

Jesu, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.

Wesley seems to have felt nothing out of place in these lines. Rather were they acceptable to him as a starting-point for the sense of gladness inspired by the conviction that there is now no condemnation in heaven or earth, in time or eternity, to them that are in Christ Jesus. But he is not supported by the more sensitive spirit of these less exultant days; and to the disappointment of many earnest evangelistic workers, the hymn is omitted in the Draft Hymnary of the Presbyterian Churches. With all deference, I would suggest that the hymn might be retained with this change:

Jesus, Thy robe of righteousness
My beauty is, my glorious dress;
'Mid flaming worlds in this arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

For 'blood' cannot be strictly taken, like righteousness imputed and imparted, as a feature of the dress of the saints (Rev 19^{8}). It is always the element in which their robe is washed and made white (ch. 7^{14}). If on any other ground this hymn is to be given up, its place might well be taken by Charles Wesley's grand utterance, 'Jesu, Thou art my Righteousness' (*Book of Praise*, p. 157).

The feeling about the danger of losing Cowper's 'There is a fountain filled with blood' is still more intense. It has held its place so long in our service of praise and is so closely associated with memories of telling evangelistic sermons or addresses on the Dying Robber of the Cross on Calvary, that multitudes will be disappointed, if they are not to be permitted to sing it in ordinary worship. I can indeed readily understand why not a few would be prepared to part with it: for the language of the first two lines is, to speak strictly, neither Biblical nor evangelical. Nowhere does Scripture give countenance to the idea of the blood of Christ as a big bath into which the sinful souls of men are to be plunged. Such sensuous conceptions can only be set down to the highly neurotic temperament of a man of genius who, unlike Charles Wesley, had no literary friend to call for the expunging of such phrases. Yet the verse is surely not beyond the art of a sane reviser. Why may we not use these words?

There is a fountain dyed with blood
Sprung from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners sprinkled with that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

As Toplady's 'Rock of Ages,' following the fourth Evangelist (ch. 19^{34}), reminds us, out of the Saviour's side flowed both water and blood, the blood staining the water. Assuming that the water was the larger element of the two, we might speak accurately of a fountain stained or dyed with blood, with which the conscience could be cleansed from sin (He 10^{22}, 1 P 1^{2}).

The sixth and seventh stanzas are really superfluous in a hymn which finds a natural close at the fifth. To me they sound as an afterthought which the passionate love of a truly Christian heart induced the poet to tack on to a hymn already complete.

At this point may I dare to advert to a glaring mixture of metaphors in Cowper's other hymn,

'God moves in a mysterious way'? In stanza 5, he writes:

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

But who tastes buds or eats sweet flowers? Perhaps this change may commend itself to some revisers:

His purposes will grow apace,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may wear a sullen face,
But bright will shine the flower.

This kind of verbal alteration may, of course, be easily overdone. A specimen of such hypercriticism is seen in the precious hymn of Dr. Edwin Hatch, 'Breathe on me, Breath of God' (Draft No. 183). In the Draft, as in its predecessor, the second line of stanza 3 is given as:

Till I am wholly Thine.

But on looking into the little collection of his Poems so carefully edited by his wife, one finds that this line is:

Blend all my soul with Thine.

The original form is surely much better. If the change made was due to a reluctance to ascribe 'soul' to the Spirit of God, it need only be said that the theme of the whole hymn is anthropomorphic, and that to use the term 'soul' in connexion with 'breath' is quite natural and shows no lack of spiritual perception.

Our last illustration, out of many I have not space to deal with, shall be taken from a hymn of James Montgomery. Happily no correction is needed either in single lines or verses. It is rather a question of the re-arrangement of stanzas so as to secure consistency of thought and feeling. From the accident of his birth in Irvine, Ayrshire, Montgomery has often been regarded as of Presbyterian origin. In reality, he was, like his parents, an Irish Moravian; and the greater part of his education was received in a school of that connexion in Yorkshire. It is necessary to remember this fact, for it largely accounts for the buoyancy and exuberance as well as vigour of one of his finest hymns, known by its opening line as 'For ever with the Lord.' In its original form it has no less than twenty-two stanzas, presented in two parts, one of nine stanzas and the other of thirteen; and it has given rise to various selections suitable for worship.

The arrangement followed in Scottish Hymnaries is by no means free from objection. Montgomery said that a hymn should be marked by unity: with a beginning, middle, and end in full harmony with one another. This is not found in the order of stanzas commonly adopted. At the very middle of the hymn, a divergence is made from its main theme of the unseen heaven becoming visible to faith, to a present realization of God's indwelling in the soul. This last idea is beautifully developed by the poet in the second division of the hymn; but it should belong to a separate lyric. Instead of the last two double stanzas ordinarily found, there should be inserted other two from the immediate sequel of the first two. They are seen at a glance to be of the highest worth:

Anon the clouds dispart,
The winds and waters cease,
While sweetly o'er my gladdened heart,
Expands the bow of peace.
Beneath its glowing arch,
Along the hallowed ground,
I see cherubic armies march,
A camp of fire around.

I hear at morn and even,
At noon and midnight hour,
The choral harmonies of Heaven
Earth's Babel tongues o'erpower.
Then, then I feel that He,
Remembered or forgot,
The Lord is never far from me,
Though I perceive Him not.

If to any readers this suggestion may not commend itself, I can only reply that the last stanzas commonly adopted are not to be found in the form of the hymn chosen by any critic of eminence, while those I have quoted are the only ones accepted by Sir Roundell Palmer (*Book of Praise*, p. 440) and Dr. Philip Schaff (*Christ in Song*, p. 523).

In any case, I hope I have shown that the work of revision in the materials of congregational praise is not yet finished. On the contrary, it is a task which the Church of each generation has to do for itself; and, if I may venture to speak of my own experience, it is one that, highly responsible as it is, is always fraught with inspiration and joy to a student's heart.