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THE BI-CENTENNIAL OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.¹

BY THE REV. PROF. WILLIAM J. HINKE, PH.D., D.D.

In the month of October of 1925 the Reformed Church in the United States celebrated the two-hundredth anniversary of the organization of the first Reformed congregations in Pennsylvania. It was on October 15, 1725, that forty Reformed people met at Falkner Swamp, in the present New Hanover township, Montgomery County, Pa., to celebrate the first Reformed communion service in the province, with John Philip Boehm officiating as minister. This was followed by a similar service in November of that year at Skippack, and by a third service at Whitemarsh, near Philadelphia, on December 23, 1725. These three communion services are called by Boehm himself "the first beginning."² It was a very modest and small beginning, for there were but forty members at Falkner Swamp, thirty-seven at Skippack, and twenty-four at Whitemarsh, a total of three congregations, with 101 members. This was the small nucleus out of which there has grown in two hundred years a large church with 1,761 congregations, having a communicant membership of about 348,000.

In the same year, 1725, the first traces of Reformed church life appeared at another place, namely at Conestoga, in Lancaster County, now represented by Heller's Church, in Upper

¹ The substance of this article was delivered before the Synod of Ohio, at its meeting at Dayton, Ohio, October 7, 1925, on the occasion of the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Reformed Church in the United States.

² See *Life of Boehm*, p. 409.

THE REVEREND JOHN BROWNLIE.

BY LOUIS F. BENSON, D.D.

I

On Wednesday, November 18, 1925, at Crieff, Scotland, passed away as quietly as he had lived, the Reverend John Brownlie, D.D., Minister of Trinity United Free Church, Portpatrick.

Dr. Brownlie was born in August, 1857, in Glasgow, and there had his education in the schools, the university, and the Free Church College of his native city. In 1884 he became the assistant, in the following years the colleague, of the venerable Andrew Urquhart, pastor of Trinity Church. At the pastor's death, in 1890, Brownlie succeeded to the full charge of the congregation, and so continued during a ministry there lasting for forty years.

The radiant spirituality of his mental atmosphere, the beauty of his character, the faithfulness of that extended pastoral service, have been duly commemorated in press notices and at a memorial service held at Portpatrick by both congregations in the parish; thus prefiguring the union of the Scottish Churches the dead pastor had so long prayed for.

There is, however, an aspect of Dr. Brownlie's work, always close to his heart and hand, that was inadequately recognized during his life and is not widely known even now: and that is worthy of some permanent record in the *JOURNAL*.

In choosing as his special sphere of scholarship the hymnody that lies embedded in the voluminous service books of the Greek Church, and as his special responsibility the task of making it known to English-speaking Christians, Dr. Brownlie stands apart as a unique figure among the Presbyterian clergy of all times and peoples.

In this work Brownlie built upon the foundations laid by his picturesque predecessor, John Mason Neale, or at least

must be said to have followed the trail Neale had blazed over the vast and unexplored territory of the ancient Greek service books. But he did his own exploring and put his gifts of method and manner into the work of interpreting the Greek hymnody to his own generation. The spirit was deeply sympathetic with the Oriental point of view and fully appreciative of the Greek attainment in spiritual beauty, and the method of interpretation was that of transfusing the Greek originals into the manner and form of English congregational hymns.

In volume following volume through some score of years, Dr. Brownlie gave to the world his embodiments of the Greek Christian spirit and his recast of its letter; in these volumes including also some versions of old Latin hymns and a considerable body of original hymn writing.

This brief paper is by way of record rather than of eulogy or even critical estimate; proceeding from a desire to chronicle the extent and uniqueness of Brownlie's accomplishment rather than to emphasize its qualities. As to the devotional value and the even excellence of his work there can hardly be question. But in the case of hymns the final test must be pragmatic, and their practical value waits upon their admission to the church hymnals.

I shall therefore confine myself to a record of Dr. Brownlie's books so far as known to me, and to a note of such hymns as have made their way into the hymn-books.

II

1. *Hymns of Our Pilgrimage* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1889). 16mo., pp. 136.

These are original hymns. Issued through Horatius Bonar's publishers, they seem to take their themes from Bonar's conception of life as a pilgrimage rather than from Greek examples. But they are not imitative. It was, however, Dr. Brownlie's opinion that Bonar's hymns reflected the spirit of the Early Church poetry.

2. *Zionward: Hymns of the Pilgrim Life* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1890). 16mo., pp. 71.

These also are original hymns in the same manner; evangelical, devout, melodious.

3. *Hymns of the Early Church: being translations from the poetry of the Latin Church, arranged in the order of the Christian Year; with hymns for Sundays and Week-Days. With historical Introduction and biographical Notes by the Rev. C. G. M'Crie, D.D.* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1896). 16mo., pp. xxvii, 159.

A first step backward toward the Greek hymns, with a foreword regretting Scottish and Presbyterian indifference toward Latin hymnody. Dr. M'Crie's sketch suggests that this tide of indifference has begun to turn.

4. *Hymns from East and West: being translations from the poetry of the Latin and Greek Churches, arranged in the order of the Christian Year; with hymns for Sundays and Week-Days* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1898). 16mo., pp. xii, 153.

A considerable number of Greek hymns for the first time, with a note as to the sources, and the Greek text itself of eight of them.

5. *The Hymns and Hymn Writers of The Church Hymnary* (London, etc.: Henry Frowde, n. d. [1899]). 16mo., pp. viii, 364.

Prepared as a popular hand-book of information for those who were to use the recently published *Church Hymnary*. An excellent and authentic book of its kind; unhesitatingly critical when needful.

6. *Hymns of the Greek Church: translated, with Introduction and Notes* (Edinburgh and London; Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1900). 12mo., pp. 110.

In the preface he takes up Dr. Neale's challenge, "I first adventure: follow me who list;" and explains the spirit and structure of Greek hymnody. The book opens winsomely with "Far from Thy heavenly care."

7. *Hymns of the Holy Eastern Church, translated from the Service books, with introductory chapters on the history, doctrine, and worship of the Church* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1902). 12mo, pp. 142.

The introduction of 68 pages is especially important, not only for the understanding of Greek hymnody but for the understanding of Dr. Brownlie.

8. *Hymns from the Greek Office Books; together with centos and suggestions* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1904). 12mo., pp. 110.

Suggestions, echoes, of Greek thought, rather than literal renderings.

9. *Hymns from the East: being centos and suggestions from the Service Books of the Holy Eastern Church; with Introduction* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1907). 12mo., pp. 141.

The method of suggesting rather than rendering the Greek original is even more freely followed in this volume, and in the preface explained and justified.

10. *Hymns of the Apostolic Church: being centos and suggestions from the Service Books of the Holy Eastern Church: with Introduction and historical and biographical Notes. Fifth Series* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1909). 12mo., pp. 237.

One of the most important and most interesting of the series, for the scholarship of the notes and the freedom and ease of the transcriptions of the Greek spirit.

11. *Hymns from the Morningland; being translations, centos and suggestions from the Service Books of the Holy Eastern Church: with Introduction. Sixth Series* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1911). 12mo., pp. xxvi, 188.

There is no falling off in method and style; rather an advance and assurance. There is also a vindication of the Greek Church from its critics. Dr. Brownlie was better satisfied with this than with any of the earlier volumes.

12. *Hymns of the Early Church translated from Greek and Latin sources; together with translations from a later period; centos and suggestions from the Greek; and several original pieces* (London: Morgan and Scott, Ltd.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1913). 12mo., pp. 202.

A rich and more eclectic collection that brings Dr. Brown-

lie's work down to the time when he went into service as chaplain to the Scottish forces in the Great War, and the last volume of his great endeavor he sent me, perhaps the last he wrote. Its concluding lines are:

"The joy of morn shall linger
Throughout a joyous day,
And in the night the gladness
No gloom shall chase away."

During the last summer of his life, Dr. Brownlie had suffered much with neuritis and he went to Crieff for special treatment. Pleurisy set in and unexpectedly proved fatal. During his last days his thoughts and words were turned not toward the unique work he had done for his generation, but toward the larger work that awaited him in the day that was dawning.

III

With hymnologists his work will always abide. It was a gallant work and it remains the fullest presentation we have of the spirit of Greek hymnody, not made conspicuous by some outstanding triumph so much as by its general excellence.

It may well, also, take a permanent position among the resources of the quiet hour by reason of its supreme devotion to Christ as King of All, and the appealing melodiousness of its expression of that devotion.

In these days of redundancy, when our church hymnals are swelling to encyclopædic proportions, it cannot be expected reasonably that a large proportion of Brownlie's work shall find place in them for actual congregational use.

Perhaps the fullest recognition of that sort his work has found was in *The Church of Scotland Mission Hymn Book*, the draft copy of which contained six of his renderings from the Greek. In the draft of the forthcoming revision of *The Church Hymnary* the only thing from his hand my eyes have discovered is his rendering of Gregory Nazianzen, beginning "O Light that knew no dawn" (No. 438). It is characteristic enough of Brownlie's manner, but represents neither him

nor Greek hymnody at its best. His "Gone are the shades of night" (No. 346 in the earlier edition of *The Hymnary*) does not appear in the new draft.

Among recent hymnals of England, Brownlie is without representation in *The Congregational Hymnal* or the Anglican *Church Hymns* and *Hymns ancient and modern*. *The English Hymnal*, the most interesting of twentieth century hymn books, has no less than four of his renderings from the Greek:

"Thou, Lord, hast power to heal" (349);

"O King enthroned on high" (454);

"Lord, to our humble prayers attend" (650);

"God of all grace, Thy mercy send" (652).

In this country I introduced three of his hymns into *The Hymnal revised* of 1911:

"The King shall come when morning dawns" (263);

"Let Thy blood in mercy poured" (329);

"Far from Thy heavenly care" (462).

The first two of these were taken over into the new hymnals of the Protestant Episcopal and Lutheran communions. The later edition of Henry S. Coffin's *Hymns of the Kingdom* presented also "The time is drawing near;" a more Christian, and hence more cheering, work-song than Mrs. Coghill's "Work, for the night is coming." "The King shall come when morning dawns" is included in Littlefield's recent *Hymns of the Christian Life*, and set as a C.M.D. to the familiar "Materna."

IV

There can be no impropriety in closing this memorial notice of a very striking and unusual achievement by quoting some words of the one who knew Dr. Brownlie best that are descriptive of the spirit in which his work has carried on:

"I am not able to judge of his work, . . . but I know what joy it gave him and how gladly he pursued it. How well I remember one day coming in from a round of calls and proceeding to tell him about it as I always did. 'Oh!' he said, 'I've been among the angels.' He had been translating a beautiful hymn.

“He was a very retiring man and liked being in a quiet corner. So it suited him to live in this lovely picturesque village for all these years, and his preaching was much prized by natives and visitors alike (for there are visitors from all parts); and all his extra time was given to his beloved study.

“He had such a bright spirit that would not be held down by discouragements or disappointments or the dead weight of indifference. He rose above it, and sang on. He still climbed the ‘heights and pierced the azure.’”

“My friends call me a mediævalist,” he wrote me in 1911. “Perhaps a continual groping among the treasures of the past has made an impression upon me. Perhaps. But I sometimes think that we are traveling too fast, and are dropping by the way much that we should carry with us.”

And so “he rose above the dead weight of indifference” and “sang on” till the end. His last letter to me (January 17, 1923) notes: “The hymns of the Greek Church continue to give me new suggestions, and the using of them renewed pleasure.”